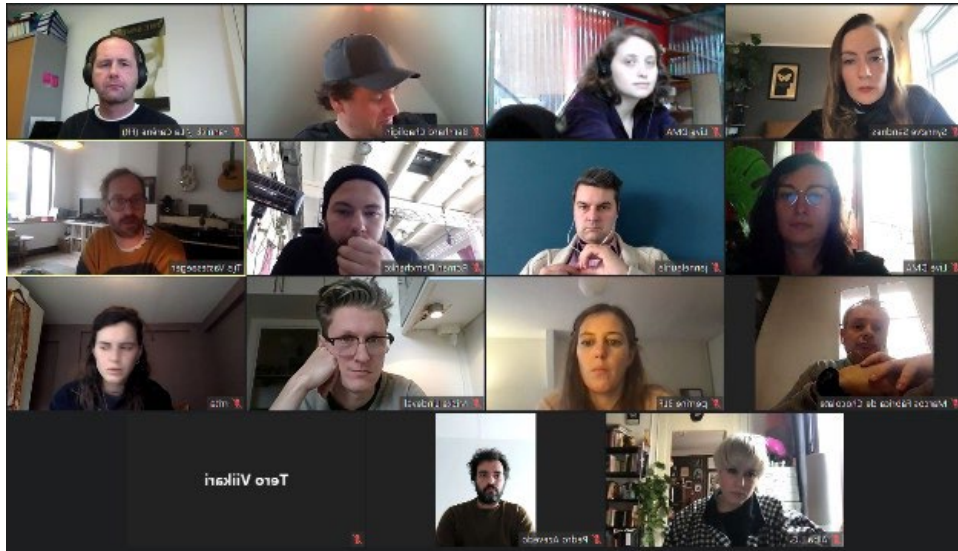


REPORT

LIVE STYLE EUROPE WORKING GROUP

Bookers in live music venues: towards a European Fair Practice Code?

Second online session – 18th of February 2021



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Moderation: Tijs Vastesaeger (Doenker)

CONTEXT

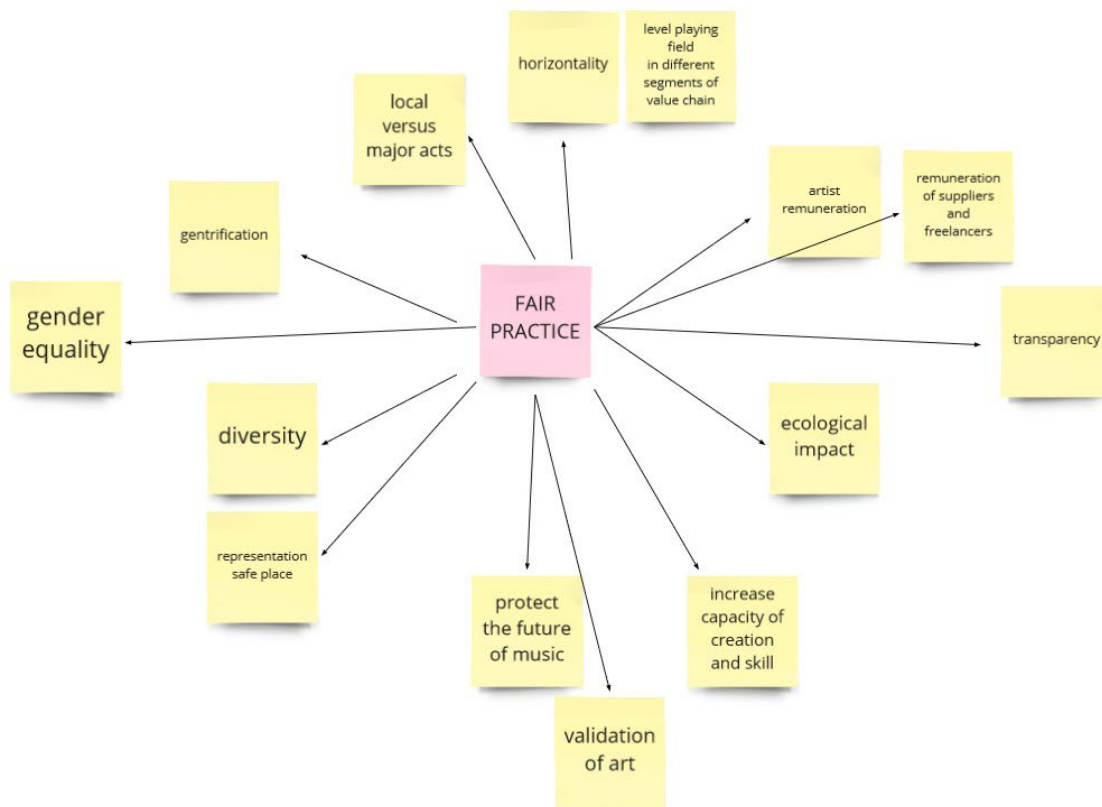
Find [here](#) the report of the first session of this Working Group.

During this session participants tried to do what others did in several months: define the ambitions they share for a code of conduct, and the difficulties they see to achieve this goal. Imposing everything is not possible because of budget or responsibility venues have or haven't.

“A code of conduct is something people want to live by.”

One part of participants' ambitions is they want to be treated in a fair way. As for the second part, they as venues cooperating with artists, freelancers, suppliers, and as employers and in relation with society and community, want to act and operate in a fair way.

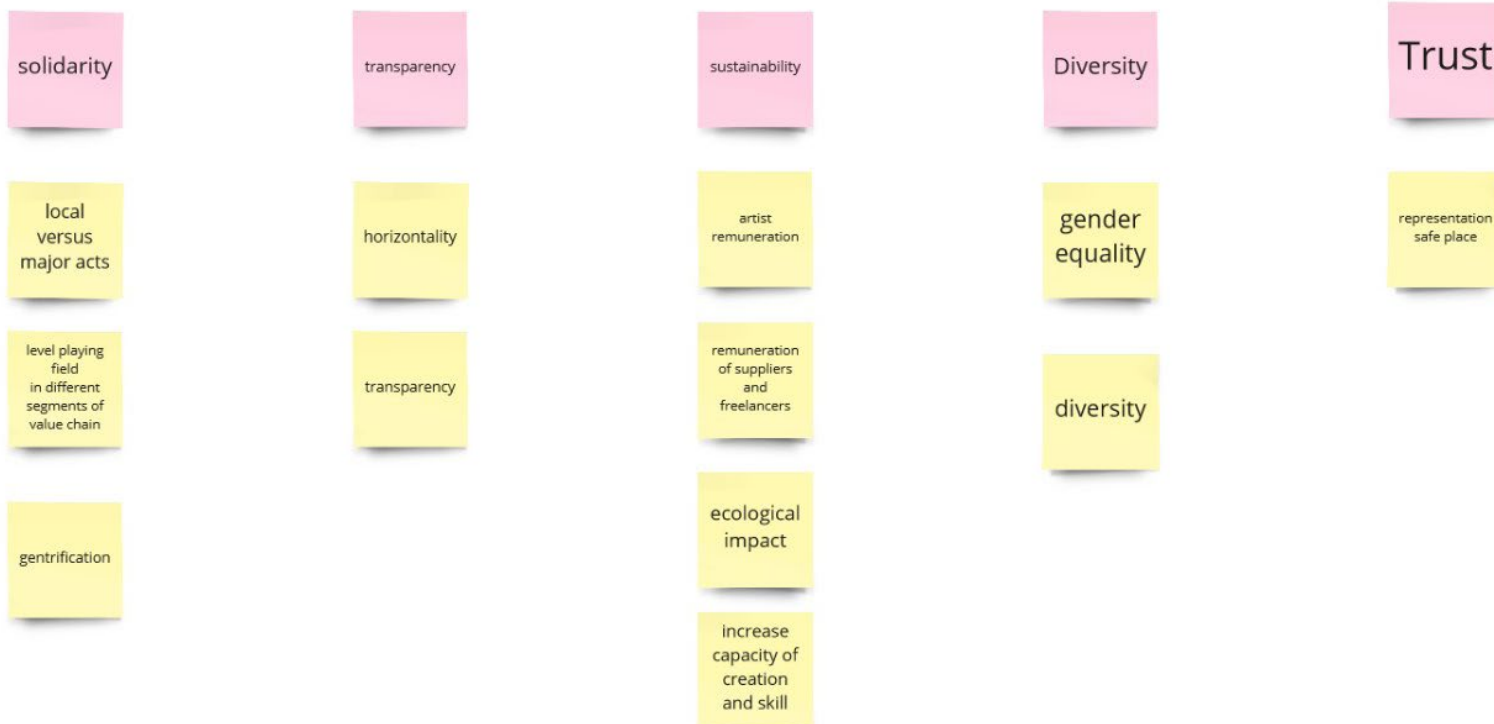
PART 1: WHERE WE ENDED LAST TIME



Tijs' proposal to re-arrange the items under themes, based on the example of the [Dutch Fair Practice Code](#):

FAIR

- fair pay
- Fair share
- Fair chain



PART 2: OPEN DISCUSSION

We decided to stay in a plenary session instead of breaking out in smaller groups to allow everyone to take part in a common conversation. Participants were asked to react on the categorization done by Tijds for the themes and choose the ones that were most important, in their opinion.

The discussion started with participants noticing that all the key-themes chosen were all linked in some way. One participant said that every theme should be included under **TRUST**. We thus chose **TRUST** as a starting point and as an important theme.

ELEMENTS OF TRUST (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)	
= transparency / honesty / openness	= a timed process (need to gain trust)
= respect	= personal relationships
= quality (of relationships, of work, of programme)	= reciprocity: everyone involved must commit and engage
= communication / dialogue	= proactive in managing conflicts: how to express and manage them?

- **Trust** is an important part of a fair practice code or conduct.
- Trust means **honesty, respect and transparency**.
- **Dialogue** on what we are able to do in the negotiations with artists and bookers
- We want to be **transparent** in the means we have to try to make a fee that makes sense
- Aiming for **quality** means artists selection but we **commit to be open** to artists and explain them why we don't book them
- We use an **attitude** of not hiding stuff
- But we have to be careful not making ourselves **vulnerable** by disclosing contracts clauses
- **Transparency** towards the audience, especially for subsidised venues

CHALLENGES LINKED TO TRUST

- **Money may disrupt trust**, as it implies secret. When a booker receives an offer, it is not explained how much goes to the artist. In the same way, promoters don't know what the budget envelope for programming is and audiences don't know what price on their ticket goes to artists. We should publish all the numbers, and **explain** what money goes for what. Publishing financial numbers is something some organization do and/or must do. Even though some of them are public, they may not be complete and not understandable to everyone.
- Live DMA can fuel intent but **cannot impose** it: are we able to change things? A code of conduct is only effective, relevant and able to provide a positive change in practices if a lot of people committ to it. As a network, Live DMA cannot impose its member's members to comply to a code of conduct, especially if it is not doable because of financial or political constraints. These would first need to be overcome in order to lay a beneficial ground for people to apply the code of conduct. Live DMA currently does not have the power to do so and does not wish to.

Then, participants further discussed the theme of **DIVERSITY**

ELEMENTS OF DIVERSITY (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)	
= new talents / supporting acts	= various music genres
= representation (of minorities on stage and in the audience, of local v. big acts...)	= freedom of speech v. racism/sexism/homophobia/etc in songs >> Responsibility of bookers >> opportunity to open a discussion
= inclusiveness (for audience, artists, staff...)	= a long-time process

CHALLENGES LINKED TO DIVERSITY

- Some venues **need to be profitable to survive** so it's a tricky ques tion on how to balance the programme
- Minorities in a smaller markets far from traditionnal touring routes: a booker can be **tempted to go for the mainstream** because its diffi cult to gather people to see a show. The support acts are important for that.

- The participants had **different opinions on the use of quotas** (on stage and for the staff) in order to enhance diversity
- Participants agreed that a **structural change was needed** in order to have diversity: ceiling glass for women, for instance, cannot be broken down if women are not empowered to access leading positions from the beginning.

The participants then further discussed the theme of **SUSTAINABILITY**. Unfortunately, time was limited and discussions had to stop at some point.

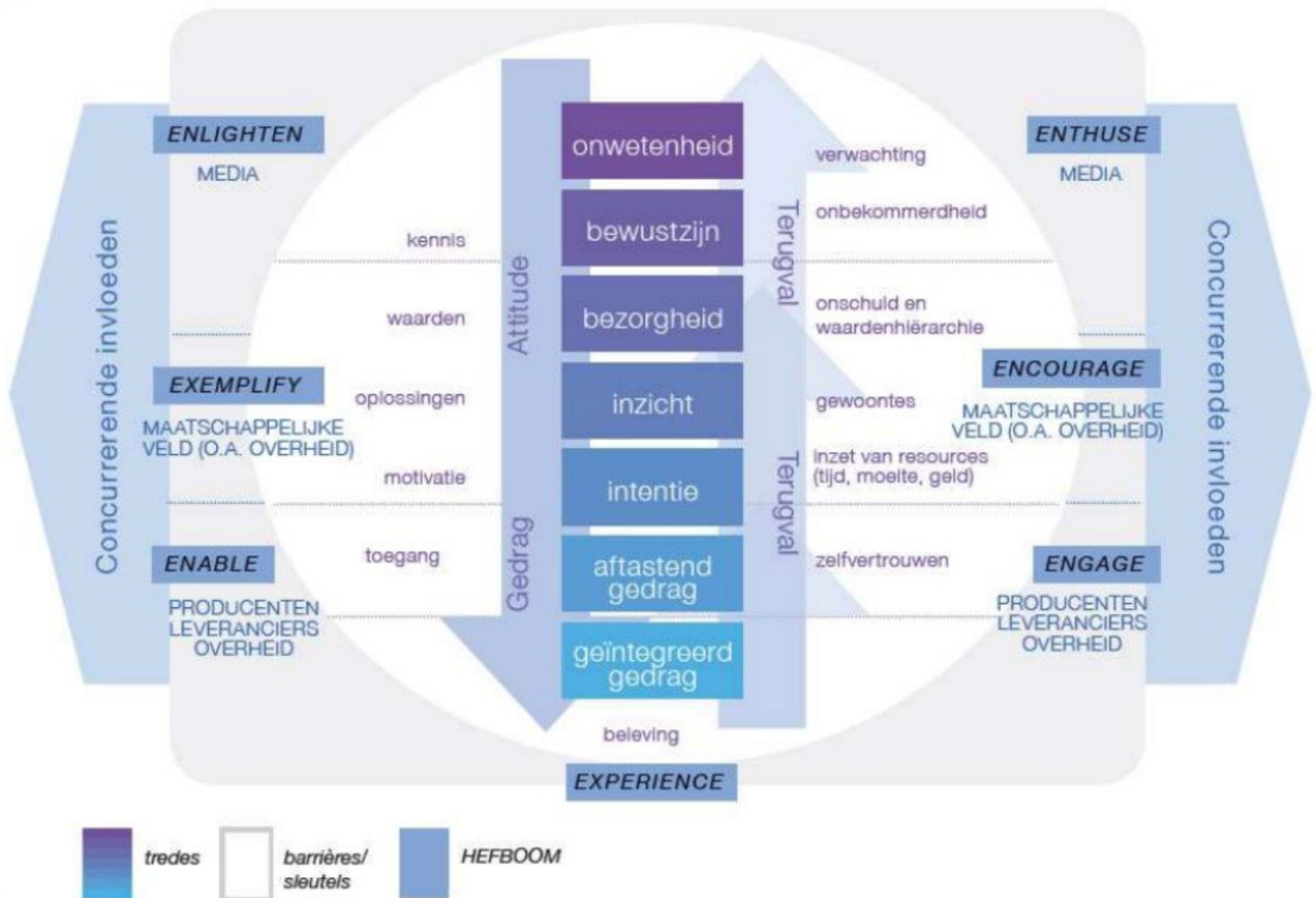
ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)	
= sustainability of the venues	= social sustainability
= ecological sustainability	= economical sustainability
= small things venues can already do which are costsless (encourage vegetarian catering, encourage staff to come by public transport or bike...)	= CO2 compensation?

CHALLENGES LINKED TO SUSTAINABILITY

- Eco-building needs investment, even though you save money on the long-term.
- Depends a lot on the geographic location of the venue: one problem for venues far from traditional touring routes is to actually attract artists there. Sustainable touring comes after this.
- There is currently no government funding for ecological transition in music venues
- Business sustainability >> Fair payment: what is fair for a support act? Their expenses covered? Coaching them? Treating them the same way as an international headliner?
- Does the DIY sector have more freedom than more institutionalised venues to act in a fair and sustainable way?

PART 3: SUMMARY & WHAT'S NEXT

To summarize the session, Tijs presented to us the theory of change: the 7 E's. This theory is aimed at helping people to move in a different direction.



Then, participants did a roundtable to express their feelings and feedback regarding this Working Group. Find below some quotes from participants.

“As managers of a venue, we have to give to credit to ourselves with the bands managers so the code of conduct can give credit and allow us to give feedback in transparency, giving the numbers.”

“Support local bands and emerging artists at regional scale: ex Spain-Portugal-Italy.”

“It is not relevant to look at the numbers of one show, we should look at the big picture and its about the sustainability of the business”

“We face the same issues all over Europe”

“Our priorities right now were focused on COVID, but we need to think about the future”

Live DMA coordinator Audrey Guerre then explained what would be the next steps:

This Working Group is a good first step in finding contents for future work on fair practices in the European live music sector. As for now, **we will need other working steps before being able to elaborate a Fair Practice Code of conduct for Live DMA members.** But we will definitely continue to work on this topic, perhaps through other means. **As European network, it is our function to provide members more tools, trainings and opportunities to support fair booking practices.** For example, perhaps we can have a focus on our next Survey publication on youth practices, music consumption, freedom of expression and inclusion? We can also imagine a mentoring programme for bookers within our network to encourage minorities to participate in the booking of venues? Or how to implement working with guest curators, which would incite non-professionals to actively participate and forge the cultural life of their area? **The themes we discussed during the two sessions are definitely important for Live DMA and relevant to the current situation of live music in Europe and we will include them in our future project.**

A BIG THANK YOU TO PARTICIPANTS OF THIS WORKING GROUP AND TO TIJS FOR MODERATION!



European network for live music associations representing more than 3000 venues, clubs & festivals.

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www.live-dma.eu



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