

Open Air Event Organization Guide

This memo may be used as a working framework when preparing an open-air event application in the City of Brussels (1000 Brussels). It is not exhaustive and does not replace the formal authorization procedure required for organizing an event on public space.

All public events require prior authorization from the Mayor of the City of Brussels. Certain regulatory matters, particularly noise, environmental standards and regional park usage, fall under the competence of the Brussels-Capital Region. Security staffing levels are governed by federal legislation (SPV07 – Private Guarding at Events and Festivals), fire safety requirements are assessed by SIAMU. Noise and environmental compliance are overseen by Bruxelles Environnement. Public cleanliness obligations may involve Bruxelles-Propreté.

The final binding conditions are defined by an official authorization decree issued by the Mayor.

This memo focuses on practical organisation. It assumes that permits, legal constraints, and safety regulations are already covered separately. For all questions regarding standards and regulations, please refer to the other memo on the same topic. The goal here is to outline key operational processes, team organization, and logistical checklists to help ensure that an open-air event runs smoothly.

1. Core Organizational Structure

Every open-air event should have a **clear chain of responsibility**. Even small events benefit from assigning defined roles.

Key roles

- **Event Director / Producer** (Overall responsibility, main point of contact for authorities and partners, oversees budget and production)
- **Production Manager** (Coordinates infrastructure and suppliers, manages setup and teardown, Handles technical logistics)
- **Operations Manager** (Responsible for event-day operations, coordinates teams (bar, volunteers, security))
- **Technical Manager** (Sound system, power distribution, stage setup, lighting...)
- **Bar Manager** (Drink logistics, staff coordination, stock management, cash handling systems...)
- **Volunteer Coordinator** (Recruitment and scheduling, briefing and supervision, team welfare)

- **Security Lead** (Works with external security provider, crowd management, entry control...)
- **Harm Reduction person of reference**

2. Timeline for organizing an Open Air

A typical open-air event should follow a structured timeline.

3–6 months before, you'll have to confirm location, define concept and capacity, build production budget, contact suppliers (sound, stage, generators), secure bar partners

2–3 months before, you'll have to launch event branding and communication, confirm technical setup, finalize bar logistics, secure security provider, confirm artist bookings (if not locals), plan site layout.

1 month before, you'll have to recruit volunteers, finalize production schedule, confirm equipment deliveries, prepare staff planning, order bar stock, prepare signage and site information.

And finally, **the week before the event**, you'll have to do the final production meetings, build up a weather plan, distribute staff and supplier logistics schedules.

3. Site planning and layout

The **site layout** determines the success of an open-air event.

Key zones to plan are stage area, audience space, bar areas, technical zone/stock/staff zone/backstages, entrance and access (+emergency access), sanitation area / toilets, bins, foodtrucks, stands...

The main advice we can highlight about flow management are:

- **Avoid bottlenecks:** bars should be distributed across the site, entrances must handle peak arrival
- **Separate dense flows:** Entry, exit and bar queues
- **Protect technical areas:** stage and technical equipment must be restricted access.

4. Technical infrastructure

Unlike indoor venues, open-air events require **temporary infrastructure**, like:

- **a sound system:** Main PA system, DJ booth / stage equipment, monitors, backup equipment
- **power supply:** generator(s), power distribution, fuel reserve or electric backup storage
- **lighting:** stage lighting, ambient lighting, pathway lighting, bar lighting
- **cable management:** cable bridges, waterproof connections, clear cable routing
- **stage:** platform, weather protection (roof) artist access, scenography

5. Bar operations

For many open-air events, **bar revenue is the main source of income**.

Good bar organization is therefore critical. You'll have to consider the number of bars (depending on capacity), their layout and workflow, the queue management, the storage areas and the staff circulation. Bar equipment checklist (full document to be downloaded soon by BBN) can include:

- Bar counters
- Fridges
- Ice storage
- Beer taps
- Drink dispensers
- POS systems or token systems
- Cash boxes or terminals
- Reusable cups
- Bins
- Tools
- Accessible water

If you need more tailored advice for your events, don't hesitate to reach out to us.

6. Volunteer management

Common volunteer tasks include entrance control, ticket scanning, bar support (but you'll always be more comfortable with paid team at the bar), artist hospitality, site information, care teams (trained and paid).

The main advice we can highlight about having volunteers for your event are:

- **Recruit more than needed**
- **Provide clear shifts**
- **Give incentives**
- **Take care of them**
- **Give them any information that could be relevant** (site map, shift schedule, emergency contacts, incident protocols/roadmaps, role description, etc.)

7. Security planning elements

- **Entrance flow:** avoid long queues
- **Capacity monitoring:** track attendance during peak hours.
- **Stage protection:** prevent stage invasion.
- **Night visibility:** ensure security teams are visible and approachable.
- **Communication:** they must be connected with the production manager, the op manager, the medical team and the care team.

8. Waste Management

Open-air events generate significant waste. You will have to plan enough bins, separate recycling streams, schedule cleaning shifts.

9. Weather Planning

Weather is one of the biggest risks for open-air events in Brussels. Weather mitigation strategies can include covered stage, rain protection for equipment, drainage planning, covered bar areas, but also the possibility of cancelling, both with your suppliers, artists, and paid team.

10. Communication on site

Operational communication is essential. You'll need walkie-talkies, WhatsApp group, a production command point + separated communication channels between production, security, bar teams and technical team.