

# REPORT

## LIVE STYLE EUROPE WORKING GROUP

### MUSIC IS NOT NOISE

February 20 & 21, 2019  
Trix, Antwerp

---

#### TECHNICAL, SOCIETAL & CULTURAL CHALLENGES OF SOUND REGULATIONS

As part of its capacity building project co-funded by the Creative Europe programme **Live Style Europe**, Live DMA organises each year a working group that aims to empower its members and the live music venues, clubs, and festivals to adapt and to react to the challenges related to the live music sector. For 2019, Live DMA's members decided to work on the topic of **sound regulations**.

In fact, the venues and clubs of our network confront **issues on several levels** that are linked to existing sound regulations: in certain countries, sound policies that intent to regulate the sound levels inside a venue are **extremely strict and hard (sometimes even impossible) to implement day to day**. Venues and clubs have literally their hands tied, as they cannot do their work within the existing legal framework. In addition, venues and clubs are often confronted with **managing the external sound emissions that can be perceived as nuisance by the neighbourhood**, a phenomenon that is directly linked to urban densification and gentrification processes.



In October, a third factor entered the set of challenges for venues and clubs in regards to sound regulations. The World Health Organisation (WHO) released **noise guidelines for the European region**, as they have identified **noise as one of the top environmental hazards to both physical and mental health and well-being**. In their guidelines, WHO defines sound coming from live music performances as **"noise pollution"** and equates the sound from music with noise produced by motorized vehicles. WHO gives very strict, and unrealistic guideline levels for what they define as **"leisure noise"**. Leisure noise includes attending nightclubs, pubs, concerts, music venues.

In respect of these motifs, we decided to draft the working group in a way that allows addressing the topic from a **technical perspective**, but also from a **political standpoint**, that includes **urban development, societal and cultural aspects** related to the topic of sound regulations.

## MUSIC IS NOT NOISE – WORKING GROUP

For the purpose of this working group, Live DMA reunited **16 experts from within our network**, who all have developed an expertise on the questions linked to sound regulations. We intended to **mix profiles** in order to cover a large spectrum of the different challenges identified: **venue managers** and **sound engineers** familiar with the **technical aspects** of sound regulations and the **management of the music venues activities and neighbourhood conflicts**, as well as **project managers** from national organisations already **engaged in campaigns** related to sound regulations.

We also invited **three external experts** from the **MONICA-project**, a large-scale **European research project** funded by the Horizon 2020 programme focusing on **solutions of sound control** in cultural open-air events through the use of new and already existing Internet of Things (IoT) applications.

**Malik Dine** (City of Bonn) – his inputs from a **local authority perspective** constructively complemented our perspective on the different challenges related to sound regulations.

**Patricio Munoz** (Acoucité) - his **expertise in sound modelling and sound research** helped the working group to clarify technical concerns and questions.

**Steffen Ring** (Ring Advocacy) – his **significant advocacy experience** opened perspectives to better address relevant policy makers and authorities.

---

## A STATUS QUO ON SOUND REGULATIONS IN EUROPE

The groundwork for this first session consisted in **gathering and understanding the different regulations and legislations regarding sound emission in the different European countries**. The participants presented the framework in their countries or regions by detailing how it affects the venues and clubs' activities, and by evaluating its positive and negative impacts on the venues and clubs. Participants also shared information on how the sound regulations are supervised by the authorities in charge and on the procedures of negotiations and implementation of such regulations.





**Sound regulations vary a lot from one country to another**, not so much in regards of the sound levels inside the venues, but in regards of **implementation, controlling, and penalties** linked to the nuisance perception from neighbours. In a context where urban spaces are growing fast and cities are becoming more and more dense, the question of the **perception of sound emissions outside a venue** is **increasingly challenging**.

To summarize the conclusions of this introduction session, we can say there are positive and negative aspects to the different sound regulations in all countries. It seems particularly difficult to find the right balance between strict and very detailed regulations, adapted implementation methods and the lack of any guidelines at all. **Participants are not in favour of a harmonization of sound regulations on a European level**. This topic should remain a competence of the national, or even regional and local institutions.

The information gathered will be **edited into a detailed overview** on the different situations regarding sound regulations in Europe. This resource will be made available on the **Live DMA resource platform** by mid-April.



---

## DRAFTING A GOOD SOUND POLICY

The status quo on the diverse spectrum of sound regulations in Europe led to **the need to discuss the question of sound regulations in relation to our cultural values** as music venues and clubs. It is also necessary to emphasize that live music professionals are by definition **aware of the importance of prevention work** (this includes campaigns for the prevention of hearing health) and that we **need to highlight the positive impacts of live music on health on a much broader level** (e.g. benefits on mental health and social well-being). On this base, participants exchanged on the necessary aspects and on their technical and structural recommendations for sound regulations appropriate especially to the activities of live music venues and clubs. For the matter of an in-depth exchange, participants split into groups before sharing their conclusions in a plenary session.

Crossing the outcomes of the individual group discussions allowed the working group to **elaborate the first drafts of tools that will enable Live DMA and its member to act and react to the challenges identified**. The tools will be shaped for the benefit of all the venues, clubs, and festivals represented by Live DMA and its members.

A **second session** in April hosted by sala zero, a venue based in Madrid, will enable us to **finalise these first impulses, to complete our action plan, and to make our tools public**.

**Participated at this first session:** Thore Debor (ClubKombinat Hamburg, Germany); Marc Wohlrable (Clubcommission Berlin, Germany); Sylvain Pecker (Le Grand Mix, Tourcoing, France); Angélique Duchemin (Agi-son, France); Nick Stewart (Sneaky Petes, Edinburgh, Scotland); Ville Koi-visto (PROVINSSI, Seinajoki, Finland); Aitor Bengoetxea (Kultur AZ, San Augustin, Spain); Arkaitz Vil-lar (Kultura Live, San Sebastian, Spain); Sébastien Dubugnon (PETZI, Lausanne, Switzerland); Anya della Croce (PETZI, Fribourg, Switzerland); Lluís Torrens (Razzmatazz, Barcelona, Spain); Morten Hjorth Mosness (Tou Scene, Stavanger, Norway); Marcos Vazquez (Vigo, Spain); Elda Gomez (ACCES, Madrid, Spain); Ken Veerman (Trix, Antwerp, Belgium);



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

#LiveStyleEurope

[www.live-dma.eu](http://www.live-dma.eu)



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union