

# Community learning festival planning handbook



Raising the skills of adults

ELEVATION

on the margins of lifelong learning



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## Introduction and aims

The community learning festival planning handbook is the third output of the 'Elevation - Raising the skills of adults on the margins of lifelong learning' project. The main objective of the Elevation project is to provide access to lifelong learning for the most vulnerable groups of adult learners and also to enable the most marginalised groups to learn in order to support their integration into society and the economy. This project is targeted specifically at people who lack basic skills as well as those with low or no qualifications. In order to provide this possibilities, the project implemented actions include minimum of 30 disadvantaged adults attending the Elevation community learning festival event in each partner country. The learning festivals will promote new format of embedded learning and the development of key competences through the developed resources of the Elevation project. Each festival has an initial target of 100 hours of learning which includes 100 marginalised adults who will complete 1 hour of learning, each directly resulting from the festival activities.

The aim of this Handbook is to ensure that community education organisations have the necessary skills and resources to plan and implement a successful event. Specifically, this Handbook can serve as a guide for the target group in planning and organisation of learning festivals in the educational contexts by placing emphasis on the teaching methodology and the instructional considerations during their planning.

Specifically, after studying this Handbook professionals will expand their knowledge on the following topics:

- Purpose and objectives of learning festivals
- The do's and don'ts of festival management
- Planning the event
- Organisation in legal terms
- Developing a marketing plan
- Engaging staff and volunteers
- Catering for festival visitors
- Health and safety management
- Evaluating your festival

Harnessing the potential of learning festivals can have a major impact on the accessibility and viability of adult education provision. In this regard, through this Handbook we aspire to provide a useful tool for developing selected key competences to ensure that community education organisations have the necessary skills and resources to plan and implement a successful event.



## Purpose and objectives of learning festivals

Education is regarded as a determinant of human knowledge and achievements, with the real consequence of technological progress. It arouses curiosity, a desire to have knowledge about everything that is connected with our existence, dreams and needs. An important role is played here by the popularization of science, which consists in the constant and tailored to the receiver information based on the achievements of science. Along with changing expectations, social development, the emergence of new needs - the popularization of science requires the development of appropriate tools for its implementation. One of the recognised tools for popularising science are science festivals, which are successfully developing on many continents. The whole process of science and awareness-raising is aimed at arousing the desire to continue learning - generating questions, creating needs, and these become the reason for their fulfilment. These activities take the form of organised lectures, exhibitions, workshops, laboratories and experiments demonstrated during the festival, as well as cognitive expeditions, discussion panels and conferences.

Here are some of the best-known learning festivals in Europe that are worth getting acquainted with before organizing your own event:

- **The Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival** - An annual learning festival in Ireland that has been organised for the past 10 years. The organisers of the event focus on lifelong learning through various interesting and creative events. Participation in these events gives the possibility to reflect on learning in its broad context, as well as to discover new opportunities of learning.

<http://learninglimerick.ie/festival>

- **Festival of learning** – Known as the biggest celebration of lifelong learning in England. Festival organised since 1992. Formerly known as "Adult learner's week". The organisers of the festival appreciate scientific achievements by awarding prizes in such categories as e.g.: "Outstanding individual learner award", "Learning for work award", "Social impact award" or "Learning for health award".

<https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/>

- **Global festival of learning** – Organised by Bournemouth University, the festival has been held for 4 years. Each of the festivals consisted of free workshops, networking sessions, public lecturers, panel sessions, alongside with various programmes of cultural and social activities by which they managed to involve and reach over 5000 people.

<https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/study/global-bu/global-festival-learning>

- **ELF festival** - Festival organised in Harja, Romania and organised by 4 groups of volunteers. It focuses on promoting EU values, experiential learning and non-formal education. This event, organised by volunteers from different countries and



backgrounds, plays an important role in contributing different inputs, educational, youth, growth, cultural heritage and employability perspectives.

[https://youtu.be/OFvn9Tkm1No?list=PL\\_AFTeD5vM0ir\\_Pm9uv7Ujso9FFuuZMfw](https://youtu.be/OFvn9Tkm1No?list=PL_AFTeD5vM0ir_Pm9uv7Ujso9FFuuZMfw)

- **Fifteen seconds festival**- Learning festival organised in Graz, Austria. Organised annually since 2014, it brings together around 6000 attendees per year. The main aim of the festival is to develop business knowledge, innovation, creativity exchanging ideas and shaping the future.

<https://fifteenseconds.co/en/>

- In addition, it is worthwhile to get acquainted with the **European Science Engagement Association** established under international agreement - an association of 100 learning festivals organised in 36 countries. EUSEA focuses on supporting and initiating learning festivals across all Europe.

<https://eusea.info/>

## The do's and don'ts of festival management

Arranging an event, such as a learning festival in particular, combines many different steps and responsibilities to be taken. Here are some suggestions that are worth considering when preparing such a festival:

### Creating an event brief

That is, writing down all the most important information about the event. It will be most convenient to create it in the form of a table - so that everything is clear and legible. Also place one or two more columns in the table for a possible plan B (which we will mention) and for comments. Let these be your assumptions at the beginning. Your initial aims and objectives may change over time, so it is good to be aware of this and to immediately anticipate a place for further improvement. Let these be your assumptions at the beginning. As time goes by, they will change into concrete, contractually verified and calculated.

In the event brief, include information such as:

- Location /venue
- Date & duration
- Persons responsible for organisations
- Budget
- Deadline

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- Sponsors
  - Promotion
  - Targeted audience
  - Objectives

### **Writing down a scenario.**

An important element is to make a scenario for the whole event. No matter how big the team preparing the event is, it will never be possible to predict everything. To minimise the risks, plan very carefully and ask a few people to check it, to have a second opinion. When writing down the general scenario, it is good to indicate and specify who is responsible for what. This will allow to prevent any shortcomings and mistakes.

### **Having a plan B**

The organisation of festivals involves many elements which need to be put together in one harmonious whole. With so many responsibilities and elements needed, it may happen that something does not go according to plan. It is therefore important to take this into account at the outset and create a plan B. At that point, even if several elements do not go according to plan, by implementing Plan B we will avoid failure or crisis.

### **Create an event website.**

You can also create an event on Facebook or create a separate festival account on twitter. At this time, promotion on the Internet is very important and when applied properly it can attract a lot of people. Remember also to include relevant information on the website - such as date, location, sponsors, partners, festival schedule and goals. In case of any changes, e.g. in the date or schedule, keep the audience informed. Focus on explaining the potential mission of your event. Describe the essence of learning and the diverse activities that will allow participants to develop their knowledge, skills and creativity. Describe the role of science in the modern world, the usefulness of scientific research as well as its practical effects on economic, social and personal development.

### **Materials for participants**

Before the start of the event each participant should receive a set of the most important information about the event. This should include: the programme of the event, basic information explaining why we are dealing with the topic, the purpose of the activities concerned and the essence of life-long learning in general, short information about the speakers and contacting people who can provide more information.

When organising a festival, it is also important to remember the mistakes that should be avoided which include:



### **Inappropriate location**

The location is also important when organising the event. Assuming that the festival will be visited by many guests from different cities or from abroad, it should be taken into account that the facility is located close to hotels and restaurants, which can be visited by participants after the event. As the organisers of such an event, you can try to get along with different places and offer participants additional discounts.

### **Inappropriate catering during the festival**

Not paying more attention to the type and quality of catering is a huge mistake. Catering has a significant impact on the overall impression of guests. In order to avoid any misunderstandings in this regard, the menu must be planned carefully. It is important to make sure that the dishes are prepared from fresh and high-quality products and the number of portions is adjusted to the number of participants.

### **Lack of adequate promotion of the event**

Proper promotion is a key element in the organisation of this type of initiative. If nobody hears about our event, there is no point at all in preparing it. Therefore, once all the elements of the event mentioned above have been established, it is necessary to think how to reach as many recipients as possible with information about it.

## **Planning the event**

Work on any type of event, including a science festival, always starts with a concept that needs to be transformed into concrete decisions and actions. The starting point is who we prepare the event for and what will we need to implement it. All procedures, actions, time frames and people must be put together as a detailed plan which is called an event scenario. A well-planned scenario for a learning festival and sticking to it is crucial for achieving success.

Think about the activities that will enable you to achieve your goals. When organizing a science festival, analyse and answer the following questions:

- What is the target group for your event? (Children/young people/adult/teachers/family/ or maybe everyone?)
- With what activities do you want to achieve your objectives? (interactive workshops/ groups activities/conferences/panels?)
- Will your event be organised annually? If so, will it have a different theme each year? (Experiential learning/integrity/digital literacy/non-formal learning etc.)



The festival scenario contains much more detailed and written information than the brief. It contains matters such as a detailed work schedule, operational activities, the time schedule of the festival, risk determination, and other necessary documents such as regulations, approvals, instructions.

The work schedule should include the title page and the table of contents. All those involved in the preparation of the learning festival should be included in the schedule, with their responsibilities written down. It is important that all these people have a copy of this timetable and that it includes contact details for everyone. Of course, there must be a time schedule from the preparation stage to the end of the festival.

The description of operational activities is a collection of all information and procedures from the perspective of production. It contains information about what special guests will be at the event. It also lists all contracts and approvals necessary during the event as well as a list of subcontractors and service providers dealing with services such as catering, lighting, sound system, transport of people and objects or safety of participants and staff. Random situations must also be taken into account here: weather, noise and lost/found items. In addition, there is also information at the end about all actions to be taken after the festival.

The scenario should also include all documents related to the festival - permissions (e.g. to conduct a mass event), facility regulations and instructions for using the equipment, contracts and with the subcontractors.

## Organization in legal terms

When organising a learning festival, it is important to be aware of what it looks like in legal terms. The festival is very often treated as a mass event. However, for an event to be considered a mass event, certain criteria must be met. Outdoor events are considered to be mass events if they are attended by at least 1000 people. On the other hand, when they take place in buildings, they gain in size when there are at least 500 participants. The festival may take the form of either a paid or free of charge. If the festival we have planned meets the criteria for the place and number of participants, the next step is to obtain permission to carry out the event. The application must be submitted no later than 30 days before the planned start date of the festival. The authority issuing the permission to conduct a mass event is the mayor or the president of the city, who is competent for the venue of the festival.

In addition, it is important to be aware that each organised event involves the creation of four main types of business relations:

- The relationship between the organiser and the partner/sponsor/or of the event
- The relationship between the organiser and "technical" subcontractors, including: security guards, stage/scenography editors, ticket distributors, special effects technicians, insurer, cleaning crew

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- The relationship between the organiser and subcontractors contributing to the event - authors of the script, scenery or posters, professors
  - The relationship between the organiser and participants in the event

Each of these relationships is of a different nature and often different legal provisions also apply to them. There are, however, a few general principles which are beneficial to apply to all these types of agreements, which include:

- **Written form** - One of the most important principles is the use of the written form. Although many people find it easier to agree on the terms and conditions of cooperation orally, written agreements should be made the most important rule.
- **Precise definition of the subject matter of the agreement and the obligations of both parties** - although the truth is that sometimes describing them precisely and listing them may require more thought, it is worth leaving no doubt as to the scope of the work covered by the agreement.
- **Provisions concerning the scope of liability of the parties to the agreement** - in the agreement with the principal, precise provisions will allow to avoid any possible dispute and will enable a better assessment of possible risks related to the implementation of the project. As far as contracts with a subcontractor are concerned, they may significantly speed up the enforcement of proper performance of its obligations.
- All agreements should include **clauses on the circumstances and consequences in case of cancellation of the festival**. These provisions should relate to matters such as: indication of the reasons why the event may be cancelled, rules for settling the costs and expenses incurred and an alternative date for the festival.
- **Insurance** is also a very important element to bear in mind. If the organiser's insurance policy provides for specific requirements or situations which exclude the insurer's liability because of circumstances attributable to the organiser, the persons whose actions may be subject to such exclusion should be informed of those circumstances in the relevant contracts and appropriate sanctions should be introduced in this respect.

## Developing a marketing plan

The marketing plan is made up of formalised processes. It includes research and analysis of needs, the development of objectives, strategies and marketing plans, as well as the implementation, assessment and control of activities aimed at achieving the objectives. Before starting to write a marketing plan, it is worthwhile to conduct a SWOT analysis.



SWOT analysis is a simple tool that will assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which relate to the organisation of the event.

- **The strengths** are the internal features of the learning festival which will help to achieve the goals of the whole undertaking. These can be, for example, well-developed workshops, excellent communication between the organisational team, extensive promotion of the festival.
- **The weaknesses** are the internal factors that can make it more difficult to achieve the objectives of the festival. These may be, for example, inexperienced management team, inadequate location, poor promotion
- **The opportunities** are external factors which, if applied properly, can help to achieve the objectives. These may be, for example, a great deal of interest in the subject, support from local communities, low competition.
- **Threats** are external features are factors that may be a potential barrier to the effective achievement of project objectives. These could be, for example, bad weather conditions, high competition, problems in obtaining permission to organise a mass event.

# SWOT ANALYSIS



Source: <https://www.business2community.com/strategy/swot-analysis-how-to-conduct-a-proper-one-02286580>

Afterwards, follow these steps below that will help you in developing a marketing plan:

- Design the event website
- Develop a serial event content strategy
- Plan nurture email campaign for your event
- Articulate your event's value proposition
- Devise specific event messaging for decision-makers
- Launch targeted event social media campaigns



## Engaging staff and volunteers

Creativity and uniqueness are very important in the promotion of events such as a learning festival. When planning such a project, we want it to be unique, extraordinary and original. We make every effort to achieve the "wow" effect. It requires a lot of effort and work. There is no denying that appreciation, praise and positive feedback from the organisers is something every employee or volunteer would like to hear after a hard and creative working day. Personal successes are motivating, but the appreciation by a team of colleagues, employer or client makes the level of motivation very high and can last much longer.

A successful event depends on many factors. An interesting programme, proper promotion, interesting and engaging schedule of the event - these are the elements on which the organisers have a direct influence and which often decide on the success of the project. Nevertheless, to implement each event, regardless of the subject matter, size and programme, it is essential to have people involved. Both staff and volunteers need to feel mobilised and willing to achieve the goals of the festival, which are ultimately common.

Here are strategies aimed at engaging both employees and volunteers in organising an event:

- **Encourage teamwork among the staff and volunteers.** - It is important to realise that everyone pursues one goal. This will help to avoid someone feeling unequal. Pulling them together to work towards a big goal will lead to not only a great feeling of satisfaction, but will also allow them to bounce ideas off each other to ultimately meet the needs of the whole undertaking.
- **Present to them the plan and the objectives of the project** - it would be best if it could be presented to everyone at once. So that everyone involved in the organisations feels that this is a common goal that everyone will be equally involved in achieving.
- **Provide the right materials and tools to do a great job** - You need guidance, instructions, a plan, a scenario or the right tools to do your job properly. Providing them to staff and volunteers is essential for them to do their job effectively.
- **Provide ongoing feedback on their work** - Feedback on work and assignments is very important so that employees and volunteers can know whether their work and commitment brings the whole project closer to the desired goal. Be honest, if you have any suggestions for improving their work, make sure you tell them that you appreciate what they have done.

In order for both festival staff and volunteers to feel motivated and engaged in their work, it is necessary to present to everyone equally the purpose of the event we are aiming for and its desired results. It is important that everyone equally understands what they are trying to achieve by being a part of the organisation of an event and how they can help in achieving the objectives. Also, do not forget to communicate well. When organizing a festival, the number of people involved can be really high, so good communication and knowledge of your tasks is essential.



## Catering for festival visitors

There are several factors on which the reception of the whole event depends directly. Catering is certainly one of them. Many people associate catering only with preparing meals and delivering them to the specified address. The truth is, however, that this is a much broader service, as it covers the full range of catering and logistical activities. The scope and nature of services may vary depending on the type of event, its programme, location, size, etc. Studies show, that the provided meals have a great influence on how the event will be received and remembered by the arriving participants.

Here are a few suggestions that are worth paying attention to when planning catering for an event:

- Both the **taste and appearance** of the served dishes and snacks have a great influence on the perception of the company and the well-being of guests. Therefore, it is worth keeping in mind that the selected dishes both taste good and look good.
- A **universal menu** is particularly important, considering that more and more people are aware of the right diet for them and refuse to eat meat, gluten or other products. That is why it is worth making sure that every participant of the event finds something for themselves. The menu should include dishes both with meat and vegetarian, as well as those prepared especially for people with allergies.
- Similarly, it would be a very good idea to include **information about allergens**. Many people suffer from allergies, so we should include small lists of ingredients that are the most allergic, such as nuts, lactose or gluten, for example, when preparing meals or appetizers.
- **Make sure you find the right catering early on**. It is worth remembering that during the summer season catering companies are usually quite busy due to the large number of different types of corporate events held during this period.
- **Adjust the amount of food to the number of participants**. Never allow a situation in which only some part of the participants are able to enjoy the catering service. In this case it is worth providing a little more to make sure that nobody is missing - but at the same time, you have to keep sustainability in mind and also not let the food go to waste later on.

Catering at a learning festival should be very well thought-out. Due to the large number of participants with different tastes, it has to offer a wide range of tastes as well as a diet such as vegan or vegetarian, so that everyone can find something for themselves. At the same time it is important to remember that the menu should remain uniform and the dishes should be rather simple.



## Health and safety management

When organising any mass event, each organiser should be able to identify potential legal problems, identify remedies for reducing risks and possible claims by victims and manage the risks associated with the event. The best way to do this is to carry out a risk assessment.

A risk assessment can be understood as a thorough examination and assessment of potential damage or harm of a hazard to determine its risk rating. By carrying out a risk assessment it is possible to verify whether sufficient measures have been taken to reduce or eliminate the risks and to determine what more needs to be done to achieve this.

The hazard identification is otherwise a process of recognising the risks associated with a specific event. It helps to identify threats by taking into account the people associated with a given event and their role in ensuring their safety at all times. These are the hazard categories that can be helpful in the identification process:

- Human – size of the expected crowd
- Natural – the venue and area conditions
- Technological – mechanical, gas and electricity
- Environmental – weather, ground impact

Performing a risk assessment and hazard identification is not enough. In addition, you must be aware that the organiser is responsible for securing the mass event at the venue and throughout its duration. This primarily concerns ensuring the safety of persons participating in the event, securing the event from the medical point of view and ensuring the appropriate technical condition of facilities, installations and technical devices.

Every mass event is associated with the establishment of a security and information service under the authority of the Security Manager, whose job is to ensure safety. These people are responsible for ensuring the safety of the participants in the event, have received appropriate training and are required to have the necessary identification. The task of the information services is, above all, to inform the participants of the event about the organisational solutions, in relation to the binding regulations of the mass event. They inform the participants of the festival about the facilities and safety requirements specified by the organiser or rescue services, the location of medical and sanitary points. They supervise the safe entry and exit of participants, counteract excessive crowds and respond to any incidents and threats. The organiser of the event is also obliged to ensure that the number of members of the information and security services is appropriate in relation to the number of participants and the venue of the event and in accordance with the possible threats to public order.



## Evaluating your festival

After every event, it is time to evaluate it. This is an important element, which will allow for a later analysis of what has succeeded and what has not, whether the participants' expectations have been met and whether they have managed to achieve the expected goal. This data can be used while organising the next, cyclical learning festival.

Here are some tips to follow when evaluating your festival:

1. Make a list with all the objectives you have set at the very beginning of the event - Which of them have been met? Or maybe you achieved something you didn't even expect? If so, write it down.
2. Prioritise these objectives.
3. Specify the reference point of measurement, which is what you compare a structured science festival to.
4. Specify the individual measures - in the case of a learning festival, these could be for example: percentage of changes in attitude, percentage of changes in awareness or percentage of changes in understanding.
5. Create an event evaluation survey - The best way to check the level of participants' satisfaction is to ask them for feedback. It's simple: to know if participants are satisfied with the event, just offer them a survey. People are very keen to share their opinions, especially if they are aware that they will matter.

Formulate the questions so that the answers to them are focused on whether the main objectives of the festival have been achieved. Examples of questions in the survey may be:

- Are you satisfied with the information and resources provided by this learning festival?
- Do you think that you have gained sufficient knowledge of the topics that interested you?
- Did the courses/seminars/workshops improve your skills?



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Also, you can ask open questions to allow participants to describe their point of view and impressions about a particular element of the learning festival which could include questions like:

- How satisfied are you with the amount of the offered activities and sessions?
- Which activity has most affected your range of knowledge and your desire to deepen it?
- What is your overall impression of the activities and resources at the learning festival?

Share your insights with the rest of the staff and volunteers as well as stakeholders on the impact of the organisation's work. Celebrate your achievements and use your reports and evidence on the festival's website or media.

## Conclusion

Organising an event such as a learning festival is a real challenge for everyone. It is connected with many steps and elements which need to be taken care of in order to achieve success. Sticking to the goals and brief set out in the beginning is the key to success, yet also people must not be forgotten in all this. Both those who help us to organise a given festival, be it staff or volunteers, and festival participants. People are learning all their lives, so going by this idea, you have to be aware that it will never be perfect and there will always be a place for improvement. The cyclical organisation of such festivals will deepen the knowledge not only of the local community, but also of those responsible for its organisation. Therefore, in addition to following the above suggestions, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the main idea and aim - learning.



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**ELEVENTION**  
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