

Rotterdam Festivals



Annual Report 2023

Annual Report Rotterdam Festivals

Rotterdam Festivals supports and promotes festivals and cultural events that are in line with the city's DNA: raw, international and enterprising. In close cooperation with creative culture makers and festival organisers, we make sure that Rotterdam continues to be a fascinating metropolis.

We look back on a very successful cultural and festival year in 2023 with a rich variety of events. We put together a wonderfully varied festival calendar. We supported various organisers to implement their events. We focused on themes such as Diversity & Inclusion as well as sustainability. There were two major projects with great impact on the city: King's Day and *Zomer op Zuid* (Summer on the south bank).

King's Day

Party time in Rotterdam! The city organised a magnificent party for the Dutch King Willem Alexander and his family to celebrate not only his birthday but also his 10th anniversary as King of the Netherlands. King's Day on 27 April was an unforgettable day in Rotterdam, improving the sense of solidarity in every part of the city.

Rotterdam Festivals was responsible for the content of the programme. We were part of the core team, in close cooperation with the municipality of Rotterdam. On the day itself and during the run up to King's Day there was a 10-day city programme to celebrate this event with all the inhabitants of Rotterdam. The average audience appreciation score was 8.2 out of 10. King's Day in Rotterdam had sustainable and circular characteristics. For example, materials that were 100% circular were used to decorate the city.

Zomer op Zuid (Summer on the south bank)

There were 75 events in the south of Rotterdam during the major cultural programme *Zomer op Zuid* (Summer on the south bank). Rotterdam Festivals used a new approach to put together this calendar of events. We went into the depths of the city looking for everyone with a good idea for this cultural programme, inviting them to submit a proposal. This is how the cultural

programme was created by, for and with the citizens of the south of Rotterdam. We used this strategy so Rotterdam Zuid will remain in the spotlights for the longer term.

After *Zomer op Zuid* we studied the outcomes. Research shows that more than half of all the visitors started to appreciate Rotterdam Zuid more after visiting *Zomer op Zuid*. The majority of all visitors belongs to cultural target groups who are generally more difficult to reach when it comes to cultural events and by art & culture institutions in Rotterdam. What's more, as many as 80% of the programme makers state that *Zomer op Zuid* has strengthened the cultural network in the south of Rotterdam.

Keti Koti

In 2023, it was 150 years ago that the enslaved broke their chains. Literally: Keti Koti. The city of Rotterdam organised many events to mark this occasion, commemorating slavery and celebrating the abolition of slavery on 30 June and 1 July. Rotterdam Festivals organised a welcoming, on-stage programme aimed at various target groups: The Black Vibes stage on Schouwburgplein.

The hiphop festival Rolling Loud took place during the same weekend. To commemorate slavery and to celebrate 150 years of the abolition of slavery during this music event, Rotterdam Festivals made a financial contribution available. This has resulted in a short film about Keti Koti that was shown during Rolling Loud on 30 June. There was a moment of respectful silence before the film was shown on this day of commemoration. On 1 July there was a fireworks display at the end of the evening.

All events relating to 150 years of abolishing slavery were shared on Uitagenda Rotterdam. This page of the website was in the top 5 most visited pages of Rotterdam Festivals.

Festivals

In addition to these spectacular events, Rotterdam had a successful festival season with good crowds and popular

editions. This is good news, because festival organisers were confronted again with steep price increases in 2023, which put them under pressure.

As many as 10 new festivals were added to the festival calendar of Rotterdam Festivals in 2023. A number of existing festivals developed in 2023. For example, the *Rotterdam Bluegrass Festival* moved to the larger Noordplein. The *Circusstad Festival* (Circus City Festival) celebrated one of its anniversary years. *Left of the Dial* managed to attract attention from the international press. A special breakthrough was the continuation of *Pleinbioscoop* (outdoor cinema). Fortunately, the national fireworks show on 31 December was able to go ahead again.

The municipality of Rotterdam made an additional financial contribution available to make sure that the free festivals in the city could indeed stay free and easy to visit. Unfortunately, the shooting incident during the Summer Carnaval was a deeply tragic moment during the festival season. This incident will have an effect on the programme for 2024. There is also some good news to report about the Summer Carnaval in Rotterdam: this festival is now on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In 2023 Rotterdam Festivals worked hard to make the events in the city more sustainable. There were pilots for recycling plastic. A successful pilot took place during King's Day. Experiments with renewable energy were also carried out, for example with electricity and batteries on various festival grounds. Rotterdam Festivals took part in three projects in 2023 to make the events more accessible for disabled visitors.

Culture participation

Rotterdam Festivals shares its knowledge, data and research to help festival organisers and cultural institutions reach a more widely varied audience and to increase their number of visitors. In addition to reports about the target audiences for every Culture Plan institution, we also made an audience analysis for cultural organisations outside the Culture Plan and for local cultural initiatives.

These data have also been used for the two-yearly audience research report '*Bereik cultuursector Rotterdam*' (The audience reached by the cultural sector of Rotterdam – in Dutch only). The Cultural Segmentation Model has been updated and improved.

We conducted research throughout the Netherlands about thresholds, motivation and the need for information when visiting a cultural event. The results have been included in the digital brochures of the Cultural Segmentation Model. We have also added generations to the Model. What's more, brand power and repeat visits, use of modes of transport and spending patterns have been added to the Model. In more and more cities and regions, this Model is now embraced and used. We also took steps in 2023 regarding impact-driven research of art & culture and art & culture visits.

To share knowledge within the sector, Rotterdam Festivals regularly organises knowledge sessions and webinars about subjects that are relevant for cultural entrepreneurs. Nearly 400 professionals joined one of our knowledge-sharing meetings in 2023.

Marketing and communication

It was a successful year for our brand with a new corporate identity for Uitagenda Rotterdam and many more online visitors (www.uitagendarotterdam.nl). Compared to 2022 when we managed to attract about 40,000 online visitors per month, the monthly average increased to 70,000 last year. Thanks to our campaign, the number of subscribers to our newsletter also increased. To convince visitors to do something new, Rotterdam Festivals launched the campaign *Pop uit je bubble* (Popping out of your bubble) in the autumn of 2023.

Business operations and finance

The turnover of Rotterdam Festivals increased to EUR 14,317,974 in 2023. This was mainly due to the additional funding from the municipality of Rotterdam for King's Day and due to the additional financial contribution from the municipality of Rotterdam for *Zomer op Zuid* (Summer on the south bank). An additional subsidy was also made available to Rotterdam Festivals for the events in Rotterdam that are free of charge for visitors. All-in all, this meant 4 million euros additional turnover. In December 2023 the latest temporary employee was replaced by a permanent employee. This allows us to keep all knowledge and experience within the organisation and to save on expenses. Our highly motivated employees worked very hard on achieving the cultural goals of the city of Rotterdam in a completely new office in the new corporate identity.

Credits

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Partners, thank you so much!

Where would we be without you? We were able to organise all these events thanks to the municipality of Rotterdam, our most important partner. For 30 years now they have trusted and supported us, so we can look ahead and achieve results. We are also grateful to the close collaboration with all our partners who initiate events, with organisers, cultural institutions both in and outside of Rotterdam, entrepreneurs, educational institutions, enterprising services and advisors. All of us together are making the city of Rotterdam more beautiful, both for the citizens of Rotterdam and for visitors.

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Rotterdam Festivals brings the city to life

Rotterdam Festivals supports and promotes festivals and cultural events that are in line with the city's DNA: raw, international and enterprising. In close cooperation with creative festival organisers and culture makers, we make sure that Rotterdam continues to be a fascinating metropolis. There is always something special to enjoy for everyone. We are at the heart of the cultural landscape; we know what is happening and we are the first to spot new trends. This is our expertise and we advise the local government of Rotterdam about cultural events in the public domain. We also study our festival audience, their expectations and needs, to obtain valuable knowledge.

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