

Why have a Brussels Night Council?

The Brussels-Capital Region recognises the need for specific management of nightlife issues and the usefulness of a Night Council, following on from the example of more than 80 European and international cities.

The COVID crisis, the wave of reports of sexist and sexual violence in the nightlife sector and the threats to close down venues for reasons of neighbourhood noise, reiterated this need.

Why is Brussels setting up a Night Council?

Nightlife touches on a wider range of issues than just going out. Safety, tackling violence, risk reduction, infrastructure accessibility, mobility, urban planning, noise pollution, tourist appeal, public peace, cleanliness... and many other issues, are essential to take into account when dealing with the organisation and identity of Brussels.

- These are complex issues with short- or long-term implications.
 - They involve a range of stakeholders (public authorities, businesses, non-profit organisations, citizens, etc.).
 - The stakeholders have different resources (in terms of expertise, financial resources, visibility, legal skills, etc.).
- ⇒ **This creates a governance network**

The Night Council, which has been part of visit.brussels since 2022, manages a complex network which specialises in nightlife. This involves putting issues on the agenda, drawing up policy proposals and implementing nightlife policies in cooperation with other stakeholders.

The Council was set up after solid consultation with players in the sector, who themselves felt the need for it.

What other model(s) of governance exist elsewhere?

The emergence of Night Councils or Night Mayors is part of a new global phenomenon: there are more than 120 "night ambassadors" or "nightlife governance platforms" around the world.

The models that exist include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Night Councils, institutionalised or independent.
- Federations for bars and clubs.
- Night Mayors, institutionalised or independent.

- Organised lobby groups.
- Unorganised public/private partnerships.
- “Night Managers”, “Catering or Nightlife coaches” within local administrations.

While these models can be found in many countries, the organisation of each structure and their responsibilities vary from one city to another.

Why a Council and not a Night Mayor?

Each model has its own strengths and weaknesses. Here is a comparative analysis of the two models:

	Night Council	Night Mayor
Strengths	• Collaborative approach. • Transversal approach. • Diversity of perspectives, expertise and skills. • Stability and continuity. • Long-term vision. • Reduced risk of centralisation of power.	• Single point of contact. • Visibility and accountability. • Ability to negotiate. • Rapid decision-making.
Weaknesses	• Slower process. • Depends on the dynamics and willingness of the stakeholders.	• Risk of unilateral decisions. • Centralisation of power. • Potential for conflicts of interest. • Time and resources to mobilise on all the issues involved.
Cities	Public: <i>Paris, Bordeaux, Liège.</i> Private: <i>Montreal.</i>	Public: <i>London, New York.</i> Private: <i>Amsterdam, Berlin, Mannheim, Vienna.</i>

On the basis of this comparison, it is possible to envisage a hybrid model that combines the strengths of both approaches.

However, there are other important considerations to take into account:

- **The administrative structure of Brussels:** The political and administrative structure of Brussels is complex. Responsibilities are divided between the Brussels-Capital Region, the 19 communes and the community commissions (COCOF, VGC and COCOM).

- **Sources of funding (public or private):** how are these models funded? How will the night mayor be paid?
- **The cultural and social context:** existing network within the sector (Brussels By Night Federation - Fédération Horeca Bruxelles) and the associative network (24hbrussels, risk reduction associations, the fight against sexist and sexual violence, etc.).
- **Specific objectives and fields of action:** The specific objectives of nightlife management in Brussels (safety, economy, culture, etc.) guide the choice of model.

Conclusions and proposals of the Night Council:

- ⇒ Strengthen the Night Council Model by granting it the resources it needs to carry out its mission (studies, awareness-raising campaigns, specific projects).
- ⇒ Strengthen the ability of Council members to commit to long-term projects.
- ⇒ Identify a night referent within public administrations and regional public interest organisations and encourage their participation.
- ⇒ Identify a night manager in each commune (manager of public peace, hotels and restaurants, events, prevention), as is the case in the City of Brussels and Saint-Gilles and encourage these communal referents to participate in the Brussels Council for the exchange of good practice and cooperation on regional and even national issues.