

Rotterdam Festivals



Annual report 2024

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Rotterdam Festivals supports and promotes the wide range of culture and festivals offered in Rotterdam. We make sure that the events are in line with the city's DNA: raw, enterprising and international. In this annual report we look back on the year 2024.

Rotterdam Festivals looks back on a beautiful and successful year of events with excellent numbers of visitors, wonderful festival titles and very promising new events. In August 2024 the world's greatest cycling race for women came to Rotterdam: the Grand Départ of the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift. To accompany this sports event, we organised a cultural programme in the city of Rotterdam in close collaboration with our culture partners.

Our organisation has been affected by the absence of our director Renske Satijn due to a long-term illness. We sincerely hope for her full recovery in 2025.

Festivals

Despite the increase in costs and the poor weather conditions at the beginning of the summer of 2024, many festivals still had excellent numbers of visitors. There were many unique collaborations last year, such as the O. Festival with the Dakendagen (Rotterdam Rooftop Days), the Maritime Museum with the Circusstad Festival (Circus City Festival), as well as the popular DIVA exhibition in museum Kunsthal. We also saw that new festival venues offered room for cultural innovation, for example in the Merwe-Vierhavens area.

Festivals in Rotterdam enjoyed media coverage both in the Netherlands and abroad. For example, the National Firework Show on 31 December was watched by 3 million viewers. Festivals such as MOMO Festival and Left of the Dial received praise from the press. The contract with the NN North Sea Jazz Festival was extended by another 7 years. It is a true milestone for Rotterdam to continue to host this international music event.

Free festivals such as Keti Koti and Bevrijdingsfestival (Liberation Day) attracted large crowds in 2024. We also witnessed a few successful spin-offs last year from Zomer op Zuid held in the previous year (2023). New festivals such as The Couch and Network Festival are welcome additions to the range of culture already offered in the city of Rotterdam. What's more, Rotterdam Festivals invested in accessible and sustainable events and support for young makers.

The Grand Départ of the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift

In August 2024, the Grand Départ of the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift took place in Rotterdam. This sports event was accompanied by a cultural programme in the city which attracted 12,000 visitors. In close collaboration with Rotterdam Topsport, Rotterdam Festivals created a range of events combining culture and sports. The programme consisted of music, art, workshops and cycling-related events with themes such as 'Powerful Women' and 'Broaden your Horizon'. Partners such as MOMO Festival, North Sea Round Town and Circusstad Festival (Circus City Festival) contributed to this success. City dressing with 200 yellow banners and information material increased the visibility. The event was given an 8.9 out of 10 – the highest score for a sports event in Rotterdam ever.

Culture participation, research & expertise

In 2024 we continued to take major steps to strengthen the cultural sector by means of research, sharing knowledge, tools and consultancy. In 2024 our focus was on developing tools in more detail and closely collaborating with the cultural sector in how to reach the audience and make an impact. One of our most important goals is achieving a strong, data-informed sector with a widely varied audience and impact. The tools we use include the Cultural Segmentation Model (*Culturele Doelgroepenmodel*) and the Audience & Impact Dashboard (*Publiek & Impact Dashboard*).

The Cultural Segmentation Model helps cultural institutions to maximise and optimise their audience. The Model is increasingly being used throughout the Netherlands. In addition to making step-by-step plans and using various communications materials, we investigated how this Model aligns with other market segmentation models, such as the Lifestyle Finder (*Leefstijlvinder*). We also worked closely with organisations in the Netherlands such as DIP (Digital Information Platform) and the Dutch Museum Association (*Museumvereniging*).

We did a pilot project with the Audience & Impact Dashboard, allowing cultural institutions in Rotterdam to carry out surveys relatively quickly and easily. There are tailor-made surveys and the results are shown immediately providing new insights. This project will continue in 2025 due to the positive evaluation.

An important part of our mission is to increase the audience we reach and to involve a more widely varied audience. This is why we improved the standard reports in 2024, to provide organisations with insights into their audience and we updated the dashboards.

Sharing knowledge continued to be an important part of our work in 2024 in order to build a strong sector for culture and festivals. We organised knowledge meetings for professionals in our field sharing insights and exchanging best practices. We also developed tailor-made workshops to support cultural institutions in Rotterdam to strengthen their knowledge of data analysis and audience-focused approaches. We advised several cultural organisations so they could make the best possible use of the tools and data available from Rotterdam Festivals to continue to improve their strategies.

Insights based on research

In 2024 we also conducted our own research to better understand the trends and developments in the cultural sector. The studies we carried out include:

- *Onderzoek Reuring* (a study into liveliness and noise) providing us with insights into the right balance between inconvenience of events and livability in the city of Rotterdam. Nearly 80% of all citizens of Rotterdam visit one or more events every year. These events score an average of 7.6 out of 10. As many as 73% of the respondents (both visitors and non-visitors of festivals) find it important that festivals and events are organised in Rotterdam. They believe that festivals and events make the city more attractive and create a sense of community and solidarity. The majority agrees that enough measures are taken to reduce and/or prevent any inconvenience caused by events and festivals for the residents of Rotterdam.
- Festival surveys to study whether a specific event contributes to strengthening the cultural infrastructure and manages to involve a wide range of target audience groups. We ask visitors what they appreciate about the event and whether they will visit the festival again in the future. Safety and security, ticket pricing, quality of the event and city dressing also count. A total of 16 surveys were carried out, receiving an average score of 8.2 out of 10.

- A study of the Summer Carnaval (*Zomercarnaval*) to find out how this event can contribute to the visibility of culture and to the inclusiveness of cultural events.

Marketing & communication

Thanks to effective marketing & communication, Rotterdam Festivals makes its role as knowledge and expertise partner more visible in our field. We organise meetings, knowledge sessions and our website provides a great deal of information. We also work proactively with young makers via key figures in various cultural scenes.

Every year, Rotterdam Festivals organises two major networking events: the Meet-Up in the spring and the Culture & Festival Network Event in the autumn. Both events offer new inspiration and networking opportunities for culture professionals.

The corporate website of Rotterdam Festivals was updated and now offers a better structure and is more easily accessible for festival organisers. The website www.cultureledoelgroepenmodel.nl has also been improved and updated featuring an independent website and new animations.

Uitagenda Rotterdam attracted a record number of visitors and introduced new categories such as 'the night' and 'free events' as well as an English edition. Social media coverage increased significantly, with TikTok as a new channel. Offline visibility increased because of advertising on a tram, digital screens at various underground stations and additional digital screens throughout the city of Rotterdam, for example in Koopgoot shopping area and Markthal. The Uitagenda Magazine tried new formats and was distributed more strategically.

We also invested in media advertising and the campaign "Popping out of your Bubble" to encourage the citizens of Rotterdam to step outside of their cultural comfort zone.

Business operations and finance

Rotterdam Festivals invested in free festivals, including the Grand Départ of the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift. The figures at the end of the year 2024 showed a small loss of €10.052. The total turnover was €11.887,442 in 2024. The number of locations for advertising in the city increased to 1.500 due to an increase in demand. The renovations of our office were completed and the rental agreement with Groothandelsgebouw was extended by another five years. Frans Vreeke was appointed as interim director because Renske Satijn is currently unable to work due to illness. The total number of employees of Rotterdam Festivals increased: a coordinator for city events was appointed as well as researchers for impact surveys in the culture sector.