



Psychedelic Emergency – Full Spectrum Integrated Harm Reduction and High-Risk Situations

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Abstract

Harm Reduction services offered at Boom Festival include a range of full-spectrum interventions such as peer-to-peer information, state-of-the-art drug checking services and psychedelic emergency. Following the tragic events of 2016, when two drug-related deaths took place at the festival, we will discuss the implications these events have had to the recent Boom Festival edition and present the new strategies implemented at the festival. Also parting from the 2018 edition of Boom Festival we will present the challenges that the service was faced upon and give context concerning the approach used to deal with them. We will finally discuss a range of factors that are likely to influence the ability to deal with high-risk situations (for health and for mental health) from the perspective of what is possible and what is not possible to control at these types of settings.

Boom Festival

Since 1997

Over 33 000/152 countries (2016); around 37 000/140 countries

Biannual large-scale electronic dance music festival

Independent culture and multidisciplinary artistic expression

Strong values (humanism, sustainability, equality)

“No logo” policy

High investment in care of partygoers

Several international awards in the field of sustainability

Kosmicare at Boom but also Utopia (2014), Be-In (2015)
– up to present only Good Mood, Lda Events.





2002

Liminal Village hosted an information stand about drugs and harm reduction for the first time at Boom



2004

Kosmikiva (promoted by MAPS). First time offered “psychedelic emergency services” at Boom



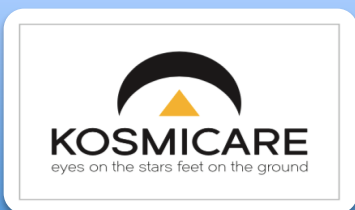
2006-2008

Kosmicare (promoted by MAPS); Drug-Checking services offered at Boom (Energy Control/Spain and Check-In APDES)



2010

Kosmicare Project Partnership (Good Mood,lda, Catholic University of Portugal, SICAD/Portuguese Government). Kosmicare Research Project. Drug checking services (Check-In/APDES and EU funded projects)



2016 - 2018

Kosmicare Association (Psychedelic Emergency + Drug Checking & Info Hub)

Harm Reduction Regulation

2001 Decree-Law that regulates risk prevention and damage minimization policies

Drug-checking services included:

Contact and information services can offer information regarding an illegal PAS composition, especially in the case of synthetic substances, at environments known for its use.

Information stands equipped with testing devices for chemical analysis can be offered to compensate for the lack of knowledge and information about a PAS by its user.

Portuguese Government/SICAD issues a permit for the conduction of Drug Checking activities every edition.



Kosmicare's presence at the festival evolved



A NEW PROJECT: THE KOSMICARE ASSOCIATION

The welfare and safety of Boomers is top priority and harm reduction project. Kosmicare has been instrumental to this since 2002, just a year after implementation of Portuguese drug decriminalisation laws. This year, following its 18-year evolution, the project developed by Boom became the Kosmicare Association.

Kosmicare offers drug testing of substances to prevent hazardous situations and professional counselling to those having an episode triggered by psychoactive. But figures around these two main pillars of the service speak for themselves.

In 2010, 80 percent of Boomers looked after by Kosmicare counselling staff said they found the service 'helpful'.

Kosmicare's psychedelic emergency manager Iaria Camo Carvalho, PhD, told the OD: 'People who visit Kosmicare often express gratitude not just for the practical help they received, but also for the opportunity to solve serious life-challenging situations such as toxic relationships and integrating past issues. More recently in 2018, 95 percent of us who had drugs checked by Kosmicare soon said they received a result they had expected - thus preventing countless health hazards. It is said that Portugal is an example for other countries to follow in terms of the way it deals with substance use. It's one of few countries where harm reduction services have a legal framework to be developed, allowing us to offer a wide range of services to Boomers.'

Kosmicare can help manage Iaria's future. Iaria told us research has suggested public health drug checking and crisis intervention can reduce mortality rates associated with music festivals.

However, she underlined the risks people face across in various forms, including dehydration, sunstroke and exhaustion. But the said drugs purchased on the black market also pose an additional challenge.

'Their unregulated status means these illegal substances are prone to high levels of toxic adulteration, so not knowing what's in them has been associated to several deaths and countless emergency situations. So for these reasons, there is a very clear need to offer this type of service. The Boom Festival organisation clearly understands this need and is willing to make a large investment in this area. Kosmicare Association has a pragmatic and humanistic way of looking at people who use drugs, respecting their choices and helping them manage possible risks drug use might imply - and it is this posture that explains a large part of the success behind our work.'

The Kosmicare team is currently thinking about applying the knowledge gathered over the years at Boom to other settings which can benefit from large-scale harm reduction intervention.

Drug checking service:
Daily reports of analysed substances.
Alerts about detected toxic/dangerous substances.
Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency Hub is at the Camping, near the Boom Bus Station.
Counselling with professional psychotherapists.

OD TO KNOW

are Info Hub/Drug Checking is at the Dance and provides:

LEGALISE IT! WHY PORTUGAL NEEDS MORE THAN DECRIMINALISATION

Drug testing stand co-manager Daniel Martins sheds the light on drug decriminalisation laws in Portugal and why the move from decriminalisation to legalisation is imperative.

Why is there such a flexible attitude towards cannabis in Portugal?

Portugal lived under a dictatorship until 1974. While the UK, Germany, France and the US experimented with drugs and free love, our parents were engaged in fighting for freedom. By the time drugs arrived in Portugal, many felt the need to make up for lost time.

However, cannabis per se was never really a problem in Portugal because it was being transported by people returning from former African colonies and it was only really made illegal because Portugal had signed the UN Convention which had been pushed by the US. Despite decriminalisation, drug users from vulnerable backgrounds are still stigmatised and face the harshest consequences. So while decriminalisation may have resolved some issues, it's still not enough. Which is why we must push for legalisation.

Why has legalisation of cannabis failed in Portugal?

This year, the Bloco de Esquerda (left party) submitted a proposal to regulate medicinal cannabis in Portugal so it can be cultivated and sold in pharmacies. The proposal is still under debate, so we can't really say it's failed. Associations such as Cannabis are also doing an excellent job informing the public. And then last year for the first time, we had the Cannabis fair in Porto with two days of lectures. So we are paving the way forward and all going well, people with therapeutic needs will soon benefit from cannabis based treatments here in Portugal as well.

What are the main pros and cons of legalisation?

People will always be looking for ways to alter their consciousness. Therefore providing safe conditions to consume consciousness altering substances is, in my opinion, a duty of the state. We already know how effectively drug-related problems like heroin addiction can be eliminated when production and distribution is controlled by the state and consumers are educated. But there is a dark side and it comes in the form of capitalism. Corporations within the tobacco and alcohol industry are already starting to make their investments and this raises a lot of questions because it's about profit over people and this becomes dangerous.

31

Generalista

BRUNO E VIEIRA
Marta Soares recusa listas

E RENATO SANCHES
Médios são prioridade para a equipa

POR DEFESAS-CENTRAIS
Pressiona SAD para contratar

SERVIÇO PÚBLICO GARANTE QUALIDADE PARA CONSUMO

ESTADO AVALIA PUREZA DA DROGA EM FESTIVAL

NO 'BOOM', QUE SE REALIZA EM IDANHA-A-NOVA, CONSUMIDORES PODEM FAZER TESTE DAS SUBSTÂNCIAS

NOS ÚLTIMOS ANOS HOIVE QUATRO CASOS DE MORTE ASSOCIADOS AO EVENTO P.10

ESTÁDIO DE BRAGA P.26
ARQUITETO ENCAIXA

Capas

Notícias

Pesquisa

Definições

Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency

2018/N=355 cases



Team Structure (2018)

Psychedelic Emergency

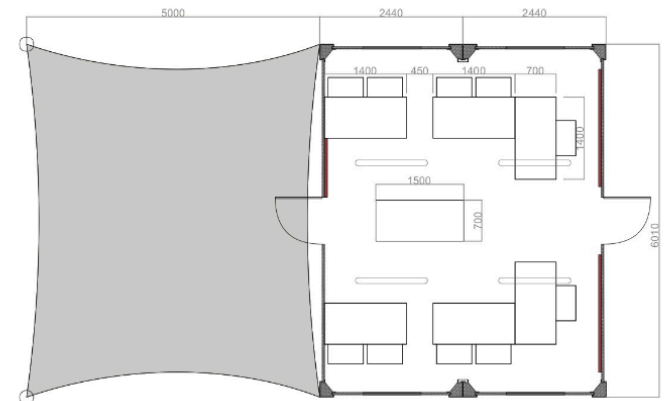
- Coordination Team (3)
- Builders (2)
- Medical Backup Team/psychiatrists (5)
- Medical Backup Team/Nurses (2)
- Team Leaders (5)
- Secretaries (10)
- Sitters (66)

What changed in 2018?

- Creation of an event control room



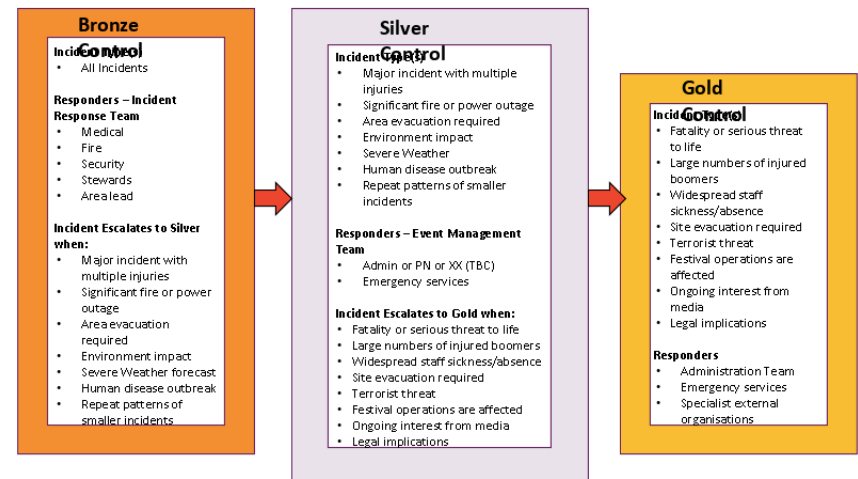
Layout



What changed in 2018?

- Communication of emergencies classified with a color protocol

Escalation



What changed in 2018?

- Creation of a new stewards team following the principles of situational awareness

Situational Awareness and
Information Management
in an Incident/Crisis

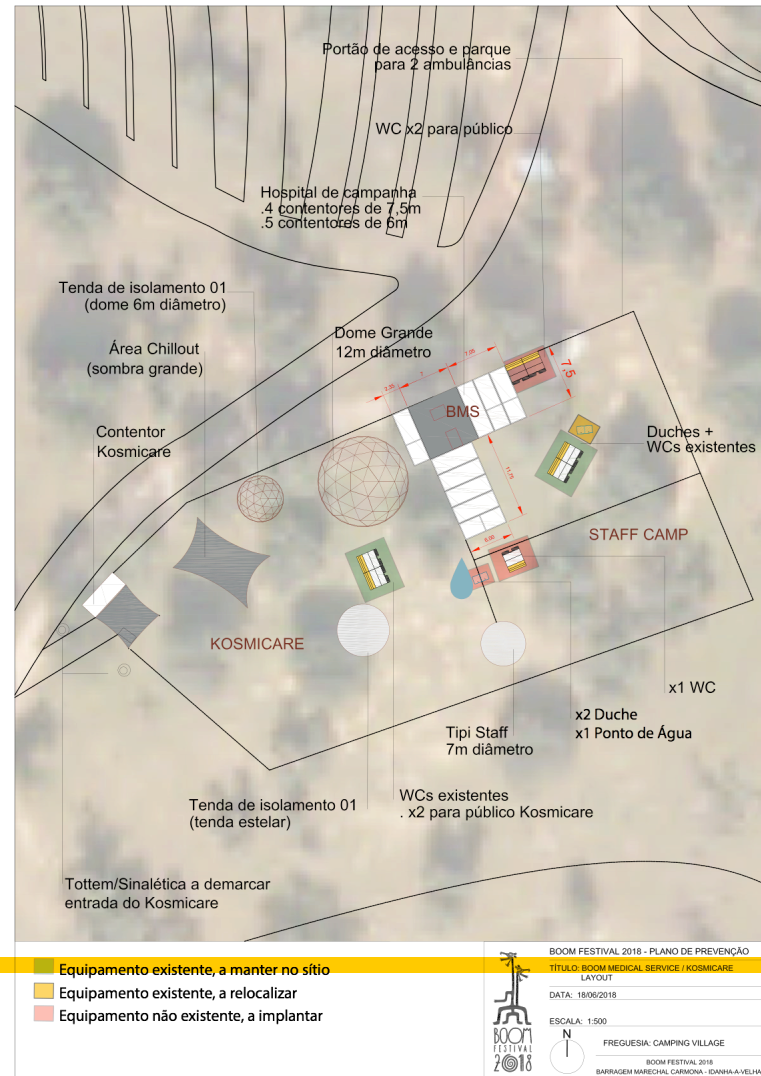
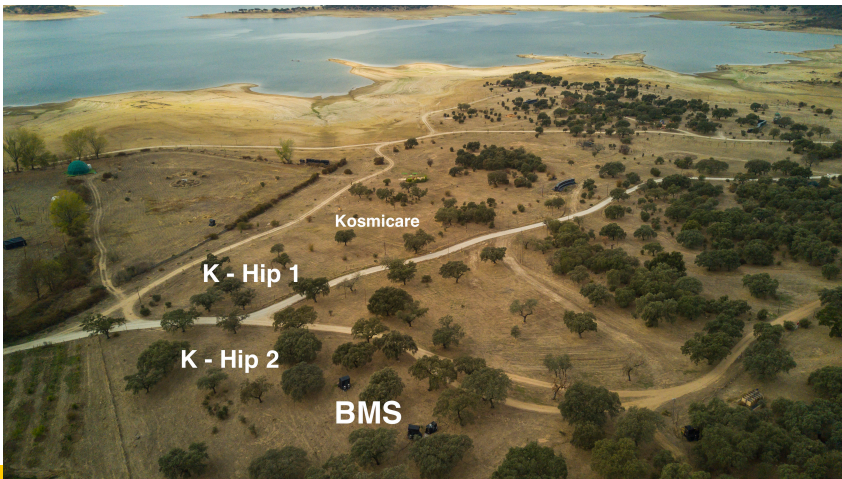
Bev Osborne

Boom Festival Steward Coordinator



What changed in 2018?

- Change in Kosmicare
Psychedelic Emergency
Location







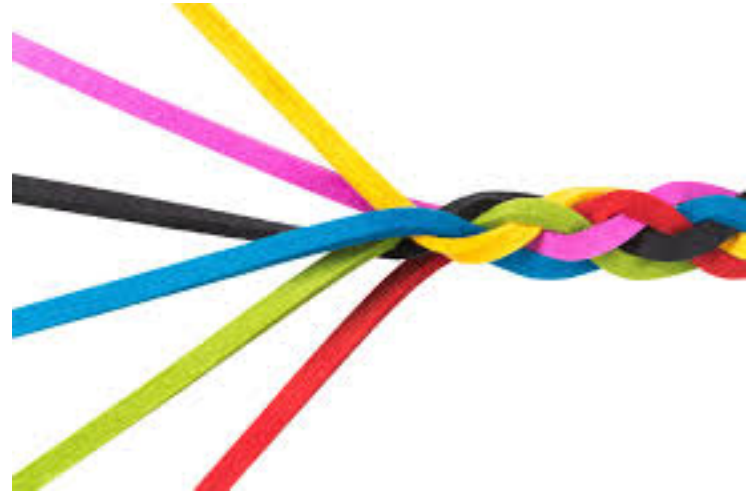


- Creation of 2 advanced posts



Additionally:

- Close cooperation with:
 - Boom medical Services
 - Firefighters
 - Peace Keepers



Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency 2018

Tipology for of high-risk cases	N (%)
Total cases	355 (100%)
Medical and psychiatric evaluation	53 (15%)
Administered pharmaceuticals	22 (6%)
Evacuation to an outside hospital unit	5 (1,4%)
Evacuated by family/significant others	3 (<1%)

What guidelines are available?

Psycho-spiritual
emergence

“The difficult LSD experience, **unless it results from a gross abuse of the individual**, represents an exteriorization of a potentially pathogenic matrix in the subjects’ unconscious” (Grof, 2008, p.309)

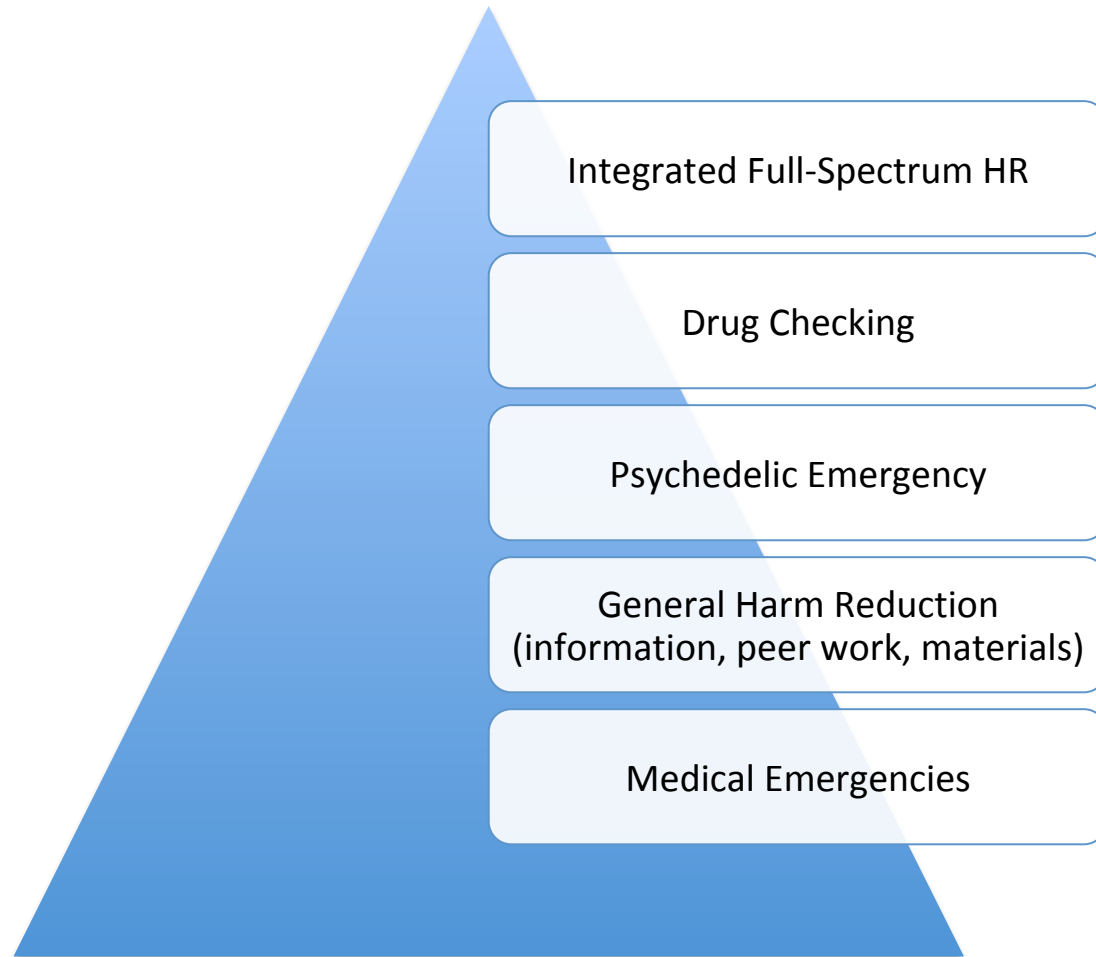
Psycho-spiritual
emergency

Psychedelic emergency/
challenging psychedelic
experience

“Episodes of non-ordinary states of consciousness cover a very wide spectrum, from purely spiritual states without any pathological features to conditions that are clearly biological in nature and require medical treatment”; **“there is danger to spiritualizing psychotic states and glorifying pathology or, even worse, overlooking an organic problem”** (Grof & Grof, 1989, p. 13).

High-risk psychedelic
emergencies

What might be the key to manage high-risk situations in psychedelic emergency...



High-Risk situations – serious lack of support/ protocols for informed safety decisions

- Guidance is coming from psychedelic psychotherapy – not from uncontrolled settings of psychactive/psychedelic use.
- Almost no case description. It could be most challenging situations described in literature are our most common ones
- The benefits transpersonal psychology believes may be encountered by not interfering with the experience are to be met if safety and setting are controlled. Not the case in our case... Does this mean there's no benefits?...
- How to recognize and handle high-risk? What criteria to define psychosis? Those are missing. But there's mental health risk and plain health risk! (heat, mad cocktails, overdosing...)
- Pharmaceuticals are demonized..."Never interrupt the psychedelic emergency" - What if you risk life in the process?... Or if you let psychosis left untreated for too long?
- Transpersonal psychology suggests, If interference is required, use psychostimulants and psychedelics; in alternative, ketamine, methylphenidate... No protocols here, though... And in an uncontrolled environment, no knowledge of previous substances used, no background info...

Acknowledgements





Thank you for your attention!



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