

A warm welcome to you all,

Gold. This year, we're celebrating the 50th edition of the Vierdaagsefeesten. It is our Golden anniversary.

However, it is not the 50th edition of the fireworks. The fireworks' kick off was in 1971 and it immediately was a major attraction and crowd puller. The number of visitors increased by 60,000 people in that year. In other years for example in 2012 and 2013 there were no fireworks due to recovery works on the Waalkade. So we will invite you for the 50th fireworks in the coming years.

But for now this is **the 50th edition of the Vierdaagsefeesten**. The major event had already 800,000 visitors in 1992, 1.2 million in the early 2000s and now 1.6 million visitors. The number of stages and event plazas rose from 1 in 1970, from 6 to 13 in the early 1980s and soon to 30 in the 90s and 2000 to more than 40 now. With over a 1000 program details and 4000 artists.

The spending effect has also grown. On average, visitors spent 30 and 38 guilders per visitor in the 90s and '00s, in 2007 it was 26 euros a day and now it's more than 30, which leads to a total estimate of 45 million spent in a week in the city. These are rough numbers, based on studies of 2016.

The growth and the development of the Vierdaagsefeesten has a secret. The secret of this success is that this party belongs to all of us, it's not mine, -in my capacity of chair of the board- It's not owned by our organization, it's not owned by the entrepreneurs in the city, nor by City Hall.

It is ours, yours and mine, from the entrepreneurs and from the people on the other side of the quay, from people who live in the region of Nijmegen. The value is that it is a public event, that it is free and accessible for all.

This secret of connecting people is the value of our Vierdaagsefeesten. It is our responsibility, as the organization of Vierdaagsefeesten to guarantee this value for the future.

Another element which adds to the success of the festivities. We are convinced that the city of Nijmegen is a city of hospitality. We took in 3000 fugitives in Heumensoord, and "re-build" this same Heumensoord 'very quick' for hosting 45,000 walkers and open the city to host 1.5 million party visitors. Our city can do that.

Our organization with Leo Weterings as our new director, continues to grow. We are innovation driven, innovative in programming, in sustainability, in crowd management systems and in this way we want to provide service to the visitors. We are proud to receive the very first Vierdaagsefeesten innovation Reward from Mayor Bruls, yesterday, at the opening of the 50th in de Stevenskerk. What a wonderful gift and great tool to promote and spur innovations in our branch.

Connecting people, innovation and hospitality are the ingredients for a successful party. We as the board of the Vierdaagsefeesten organization are the guardian of these values.

Yet, We do not need , nor wish to grow bigger or have more visitors. We want to be better, improve every year and provide value to the citizens.

And thus the Vierdaagsefeesten will grow alongside with the ambitions and the development of our city. The limitations lay in what the city can handle, in what we can handle. The limit also lies in the extent to which we can continue to shape these values. And most of all important in the way we can handover this to the new generation so that they also can enjoy this wonderful party in the next 50 years.

Thank you for your attention and we wish you a wonderful 50th edition of our Vierdaagsefeesten.