



Vlaamse Regering (Government of Flanders)

**Jan Jambon**

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders

Martelaarsplein 19

1000 Brussel

19 November 2019

Dear Mr. Jambon,

We, the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ – the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People – protest against your recent decisions to cut budgets for arts institutions and especially in terms of project based funding. A history of budget cuts over the past years, cuts of 6 % in strained institutional budgets and a cut of 60 % in project based funding, are an expression of disrespect for everyone who works in the arts as well as for audiences of all generations.

All over Europe and across the globe, Flanders has the reputation of being the place known for artistic innovation, participation of young and old people, individual genius and teamwork, of innovation and creative overflow in institutions and with artists that can serve as examples for others, where younger emerging artists are nurtured. The government of Flanders has self-confidently presented itself as representatives of “Flanders – State of the Art”, at ASSITEJ events like the 19<sup>th</sup> ASSITEJ World Congress in Cape Town /South Africa in 2017, creating an image of a government that supports and cherishes the arts and the people who create and present them.

Artists from Flanders have been performing everywhere in the world in the past decades and they are widely admired for their great artistic work, their artistic courage, and their contribution to making the vital relevance of the arts in society visible. They are our inspiration.

This is how we all across the globe know and value Flanders and its arts scene.

Why do you want to risk all of this? Why do you not see that these budget cuts will not hurt or damage an arts scene, but potentially destroy it, from its very foundations? What is your idea of the arts and their contribution to society if you do not allow it to flourish?

While we are waiting for your answers to these questions, we would like to strongly voice our protest against these budget cuts. We do so on behalf of our colleagues in Flanders whose field of work is at risk and who cannot continue to exist under these circumstances.

We do so on behalf of the children and young people of Flanders whose possibilities to create, participate, see and experience the arts is diminished.

We do so on behalf of our colleagues' families, whose family budget and income is significantly reduced by a momentary governmental decision.



We do so on behalf of the international partners that companies and artists from Belgium co-operate with and who will now need to change their plans.

We do so on behalf of the international community of artists working for young audiences who have lost an example of how things should be done and gained yet another example of how the arts are disrespected.

We ask you to talk to the artists in Flanders in order to find solutions for a creative future that gives freedom to artistic expression and guarantees appropriate funding for the arts.

Yours Sincerely

Yvette Hardie  
President

On behalf of the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ, and its members:

Yvette Hardie, President, South Africa  
Louis Valente, Secretary-General, Denmark  
Roberto Frabetti, Treasurer, Italy  
Daniel H. Fernandez, Vice President, Argentina  
Sue Giles, Vice President, Australia  
François Fogel, Vice President, France  
Tatiana Bobrova, Russia  
Bebe de Soares, Chile  
Stefan Fischer-Fels, Germany  
Pamela Udoka, Nigeria  
Cecilie Lundsholt, Norway  
Ernie Nolan, USA  
Manon van de Water, ITYARN  
Seok-hong KIM, South Korea  
Kenjiro Otani, Japan