



# ASSITEJ NATIONAL CENTRE TOOLKIT 2022



THEATER +  
FORMING  
ARTS

# INTRODUCTION

## National Centres of ASSITEJ

Since the beginning of ASSITEJ in 1965, the National Centres have been the primary mechanism for membership of the global organisation.

Although membership has expanded to include options for Networks and Individuals, National Centres are still the most important form ASSITEJ membership takes.

They mark the coming together of artists, collectives and companies to work jointly in supporting Theatre and Performance for Young Audiences (TYA) in a particular country or region, and as a result, they are a vital component of the international network.

## Why do we need National Centres?

ASSITEJ understands that people working together, sharing their knowledge and their work within their local context, is how the broader goals of the organisation are met.

Having a National Centre is a strong action you can take to ensure your part in the global association. You will receive the benefit of connection in your own country, as well as connection to the international community. Once the sharing begins, people see the benefit and support that is possible, for the sake of a stronger TYA community, wherever you are.

These local networks are crucial to the goals of ASSITEJ. If more than two independent artists or organisations from a country wanted to join ASSITEJ, they would be asked to form a National Centre and work together in order to support the development of TYA in their country and region.

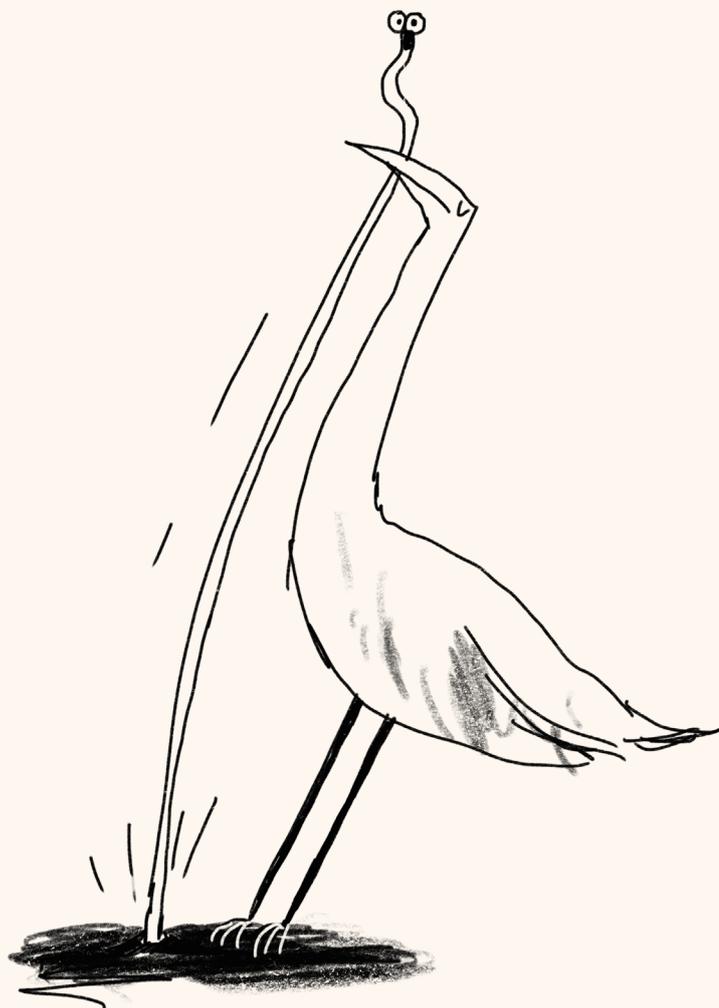


S U P P O R T

This document acts as a toolkit to support National Centres in their establishment, maintenance and renewal. It outlines the role that National Centres can and do play, the possible contexts and structures that may affect the way they work, and the kinds of programmes they may implement. It is designed to be a guide to new National Centres and a means for established National Centres to review their operations and refresh their ideas.

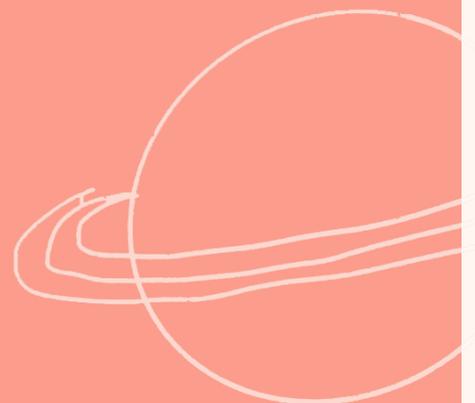
Members have provided case studies throughout, to illustrate the various approaches to becoming and running a National Centre. For this we thank you.

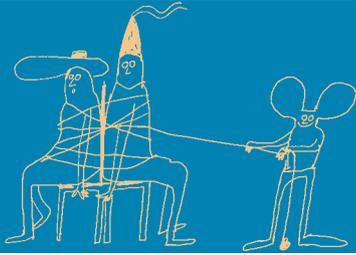
It contains seven chapters:



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# CHAPTER 1

## What is a National Centre?

National Centres are networks of the theatre companies, organisations and persons working in that country in the field of theatre for children and young people. All National Centres must use the acronym “ASSITEJ” either in the name of the centre or network, or in the description in the subtitle.

There are two types of ASSITEJ International membership for a National Centre and they have different fee scales:



**Full members** have the right to make proposals at constitutional meetings, to put forward someone for election to the Executive Committee, and to vote according to the rules in the Constitution. To be a full member, the National Centre must have at least 3 professional members, or 5 members with at least two 2 professional members and three 3 non-professional members.

**Corresponding members** have the right to make proposals at constitutional meetings and to vote according to the rules detailed in the Constitution. Corresponding members do not have the right to put forward someone for election to the Executive Committee. To be a corresponding member the National Centre must have a minimum of 3 theatre companies, organisations or persons working in the field.

The focus should be on creating a nationally representative network of all those who work in, are engaged with, support or are interested in theatre and the arts for children and young people.

## What is a National Centre?

National Centres are networks of performing arts companies, organisations and people working in the field of theatre and performance for children and young people (TYA) in a particular country.

The focus of a National Centre is on creating a nationally representative network of all those who work in, are engaged with, support or are interested in TYA.

## How is a National Centre composed?

The Constitution of ASSITEJ says that a National Centre is a network of members which comprises the following categories:

- **Professional theatre companies or artists performing for children and young people:**

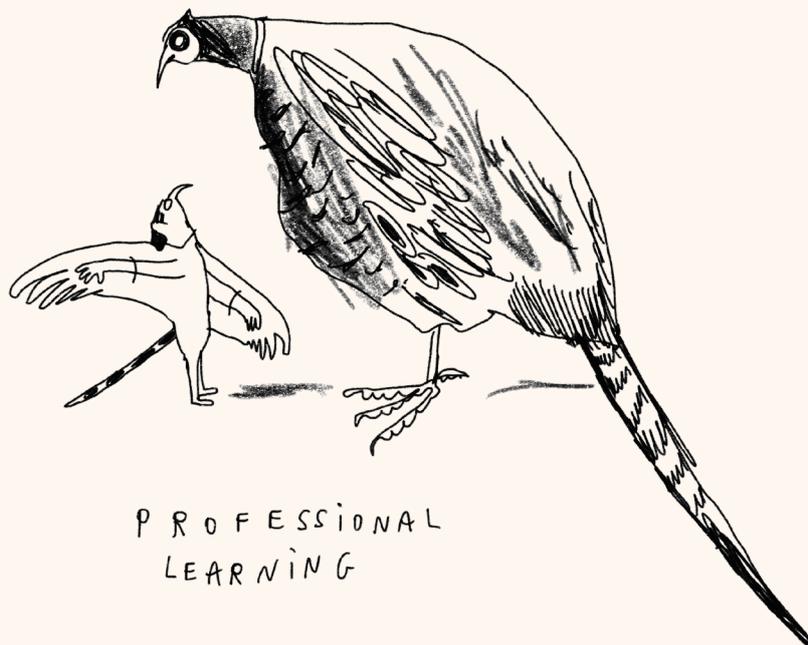
Individual artists or performing companies who work only or partially for theatre and performance for young audiences. 'Professional' should be defined within the context of the country where the Centre is based. It can mean 'trained either through study or work experience/internship', 'working within professional theatre spaces', 'employed permanently or semi-permanently', 'making a primary living from theatre', 'considered professional through the bestowing of awards or other acknowledgements', etc. Professional artists can work in state theatres, national theatres, provincial or city theatres, independent theatres, not-for-profit theatres or commercial theatres, or as freelancers working in other artistic contexts such as communities. There should be no exclusion based on where artists or companies practise their art.

- **Non-Professional theatre companies or artists performing for children and young people:**

"Non-professional" should be interpreted within the context of the country where the National Centre exists. It could refer to: those who have not studied, trained or been interned to more experienced artists, those who spend only part of their time making theatre for young audiences and hold another job (such as teacher) which is their primary source of income, those working within amateur spaces, those companies that are part of tertiary institutions, those working within schools with children/young people as the artists, etc. Again, there should be no exclusion based on where artists or companies practise their art.

- **Organisations, institutions, associations or persons actively engaged in the work of theatre for children and young people:**

for example, actor training institutions, specialist artistic networks in the country, theatre archivers, performing arts educators, university departments, independent researchers, cultural centres, theatre festivals or showcases, theatre producers, choreographers, etc.



- **Supporting organisations, institutions, associations, or persons interested in theatre for children and young people:**

for example, critics, patrons, honorary members, social welfare organisations, literacy organisations, educational institutions, funding organisations, early childhood development institutions, artist unions, teacher organisations, schools, community-based organisations etc. Their primary involvement is not in theatre for children and young people, but there is some connection or potential connection.

There are also additional possibilities for membership outside of the four categories mentioned above, for example:

- Student members
- Child/Youth members i.e. children and young people engaged with the arts within school, community-based or professional settings
- Artistic advisers; and
- Patrons, donors, sponsors of the association

These members may have different rights or membership fee levels within the national association, at the discretion of the National Centre and the laws of the country.

There are stated obligations in our Constitution about what a National Centre is expected to do as a member. <https://www.assitej-international.org/en/constitution/article-5.4>.

## Criteria for a National Centre

There is a minimum criteria for applying for membership as a National Centre to ASSITEJ (see the Membership protocols and policies document). <http://www.assitej-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ASSITEJ-Policies-Protocol-Handbook-Dec-2019-FINAL.pdf>

It is assumed that every National Centre will continue to add members as it grows and develops, to grow membership over time and to raise standards of TYA.

National Centres should include all those interested in developing the art form, and provide opportunities for growth, exchange and development.

Members should be able to participate in the running of the organisation. They should have an opportunity to give feedback to leadership and to vote for their Board, or to otherwise influence the structures of the organisation.

There are different structures that a National Centre can take (see Chapter 4 for examples of structures) However, a National Centre where there is no accountability to the members, or where the members cannot determine the leadership of their organisation or have access to mechanisms by which they can change this leadership over time, would be considered unrepresentative of the needs of the members, and therefore would be ineligible for ASSITEJ membership.

## Functions of the National Centre

National Centres are intended to cultivate the field of TYA in their own country, while simultaneously supporting international exchange, collaboration and learning.

They are therefore both looking inwards and looking outwards in their focus. The extent to which they are more one than the other will rely on their particular national context. For National Centre vision and context See Chapter 4.

### Looking inwards:

National Centres should create activities, projects or collaborations which reflect the vision, mission and aims of the association according to the Constitution of ASSITEJ, and which serve to build theatre and performance for young audiences in their own country.

They have a responsibility to serve the artists working in the field of TYA through good communication, projects and gathering and connections to the international community, and to find ways to stimulate the growth of audiences, access, artistic practices, and new directions within TYA and their own context.

However, we recognise that these cover a wide range of potential activities, which may be too much for a National Centre to tackle at any given time. National Centres should therefore prioritise their aims according to an analysis of their national needs.

It is highly recommended that a new National Centre do a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of TYA in their country and then create a strategic plan, before embarking on a series of projects or programmes. Each activity can then be aligned to the needs of the country's TYA community, from skills building to advocacy with decision makers.

### Some of the aims of looking inwards:

- To work for the rights of children and young people to artistic experiences especially designed and created for them in that country.

This may mean advocating for access to artistic experiences for children and young people to government structures, to corporates, to the education system, to parents and the community more broadly. See Chapter 3 for advocacy.

It may also mean devising projects which can broaden access in the country. Examples of projects which have been created to do this are the #Takeachildtothetheatre campaign and ASSITEJ SA's Theatre4Youth programme.

Your National Centre might devise projects which take theatre and performance into rural or remote areas or low socio-economic areas; you might start crowdfunding campaigns to subsidise theatre experiences for children and young people, or focus on awareness of access for children with disability.

- To work for the recognition and acknowledgement of theatre for children and young people in that country.

As well as advocacy and projects, a National Centre activity could include, for example, starting national awards for TYA, encouraging TYA criticism and research, and the sharing of these on platforms such as conferences, seminars and other public avenues to achieve greater recognition and acknowledgement of the field. A National Centre should lobby those both within and outside of the performing arts industry to increase the visibility of the arts for children and young people, and raise the profile of artists working in the field.

- To work on improvement of the conditions of TYA in that country.

This may involve lobbying theatres to provide more programming for young audiences, or working to protect the rights of TYA artists by ensuring that they are given proper contracts of employment, support to better manage themselves and their activities, or basic acceptable conditions of service. In this instance, a National Centre may work with other bodies such as the unions for artists, or other arts-based associations or lobby groups.

- To improve the common knowledge of TYA, thus drawing the attention of international and national authorities to the importance of taking children and young people and the artistic work created for them seriously.

This may involve engagement with the research network ITYARN, linking local universities and places of higher learning to ASSITEJ International or finding platforms for the sharing of research. It may also involve the creation of online resources for sharing information through websites, Facebook pages, groups, or listservs, or the creation of national newsletters or magazines, which help make the work happening in TYA visible. ASSITEJ Spain has done wonderful work in this line.

## Looking outwards:

There are also aspects of being a National Centre which are about looking out to what is happening beyond the borders of the country for stimulation, exchange, development and growth. This includes the relationship with other National Centres, ASSITEJ International and the broader ASSITEJ networks.

Some of the aims of looking outwards.

- To give people working with TYA in that country the opportunity to learn about the work of colleagues from other countries and cultures, thus enabling them to enrich the performing arts for children and young people in their own country.

A simple way of doing this is for a National Centre to provide information to artists and organisations about opportunities within the international network of ASSITEJ. This might include opportunities for exchanges, skills development, touring, involvement in projects, collaborations, publications and more. Much of this information will be available through the ASSITEJ International newsletter and social media platforms.

The newsletter of ASSITEJ International should be circulated to all members of the national network, or members should be invited to sign up individually. National Centres should also actively seek to ensure participation from their country in every ASSITEJ project or event – for example, Next Generation calls, Artistic Gatherings, Directors Seminars, etc. This enables the country's work and expertise to be seen and recognised, and for artists to be given opportunities for ongoing professional development.

It's important that these opportunities should NOT be given to the same person or group of people over and over, but there should be democratic methods of selection and transparent criteria which allows for any eligible members within a National Centre to benefit.

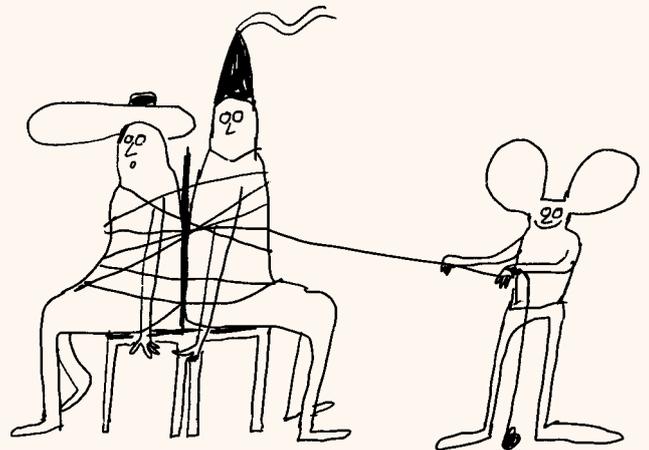
In addition, a National Centre may develop and announce their own projects for international exchange, in collaboration with others inside or outside of ASSITEJ. These projects can be announced by ASSITEJ international in order to gain a wider participation if desired, or simply reported on so that other National Centres may be inspired to try similar ideas.

- To participate in international artistic networks to explore different aspects of artistic work for children and young people, to increase the artistic competence of artists and to benefit them.

Members of a National Centre can also be members of ASSITEJ Networks. This is an advantage to the National Centre as the ASSITEJ International Networks focus in on a particular area of interest within the broader spectrum of theatre and performing arts for young audiences - currently playwriting, research, early years, inclusivity, dance theatre and opportunities for younger artists.

As an example, it is requested that a National Centre interact actively with IIAN (International Inclusive Arts Network) by having a Disability Champion who can advise on increased inclusivity within the association. In addition, it is encouraged that each National Centre appoints a contact person for each of the other ASSITEJ Networks i.e. a playwright who is a member of Write Local Play Global, to ensure that there is sharing of ideas and information between the Network and the National Centre.

It is hoped that all National Centres will support their members who have a particular interest to participate in the relevant networks. Dual membership of National Centre and Network is encouraged where possible. The different focus areas provided by the Networks may inspire National Centres to develop projects in response to these.



NATIONAL CENTER  
CAN CREATE CONNECTIONS  
BETWEEN MEMBERS !

# CHAPTER 2

## THE ASSITEJ VALUES

ASSITEJ International is led by a set of core values and a philosophical approach to advocacy, community and collaboration. It is these values and philosophies that we encourage National Centres to treat as guiding principles as they organise and practise in their country.

## GENEROSITY

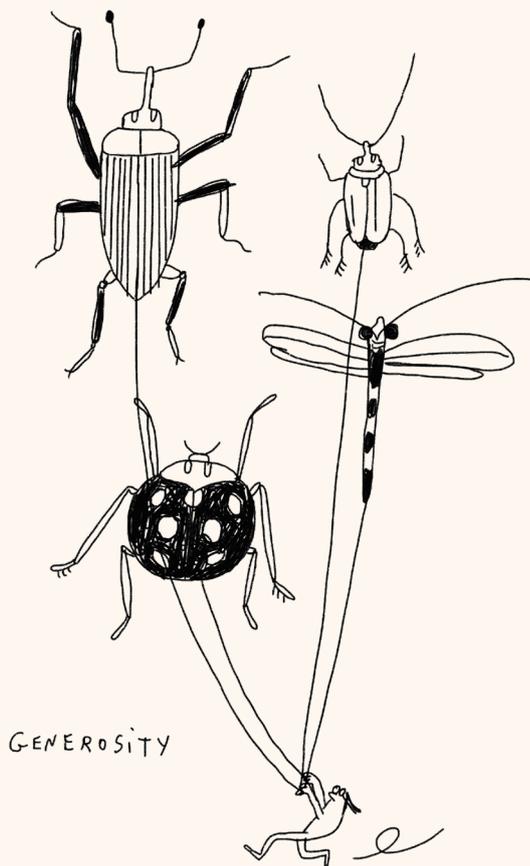
ASSITEJ is underpinned by a value of **generosity** – a belief that we are stronger together than apart, that sharing resources, time and expertise is more powerful than competition, that through a generous and curious approach to others – their artistic histories, traditions and approaches – we are more likely to grow and develop ourselves as artists, and to have genuine and creatively invigorating collaborations.

We encourage a frank exchange of views, expressed with respect and humility, and a desire to understand the other in their particular context.

We resist notions of imposing our own perceptions of artistic practice, process and product onto others, but rather look for a way to share these with openness and a desire to learn from one another.

It reflects an openness and willingness to share our 'gifts' (both emotional and material) freely and humbly with others. It is the understanding that we all benefit from a generous exchange, and that in being generous to others, we encourage their generosity and will be enriched through this process.

In this respect, we ensure that everyone within ASSITEJ feels that they have something to offer the rest of the association.



## REPRESENTIVITY:

**A National Centre** is intended to be representative of the field of theatre and performing arts for children and young people, as it exists in that country.

### What is Representivity?

Representivity is not the same as representation. Representation is when one person speaks or acts on behalf of an organisation, idea, or group of people.

Representivity is rather a measure of how well a deliberative decision-making process or body represents the various constituency groups. Thus, a National Centre may have a representative (a person who represents the Centre for purposes of communication or voting), but it may not be practising 'representivity'.

When a National Centre practises representivity, it means that:

- All the artists/organisations involved in theatre and performing arts for children and young people within the country feel that they have access to becoming members of the National Centre should they desire to do so.
- The National Centre is constituted in such a way that diverse members and interest groups have a voice within the whole. A diversity of approaches to making theatre and performance, becoming a member and to working together should be encouraged, and the Centre should actively seek out opportunities to include as diverse a range of artists and organisations in the work as possible.

- The National Centre should actively seek out partnerships and collaborations with others to extend its reach, wherever these are likely to contribute positively to the growth of the field. This will allow for representivity beyond the narrow confines of the TYA scene.
- No artist or organisation should feel excluded from the National Centre on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, disability or ability, sexual orientation, cultural identity, national origin, or political or religious conviction.
- Economic standing should not be used as a tactic to exclude people. All efforts should be made to include all those who are willing and able to make a contribution in the field. This can mean different models of membership – for example, some National Centres have included the capacity to volunteer hours of service to replace monetary payments for membership where members are not able to afford the fee

Representivity demonstrates the values of ASSITEJ, which are about inclusion, diversity, and the rights of all children and young people to the arts and to their own cultural traditions and expressions.

ASSITEJ National Centres should be seen to practice representivity in their membership and in the way they seek the participation and engagement of their members in decision-making processes.

A National Centre whose membership is entirely static is possibly guilty of gatekeeping (controlling access to the association), which is the opposite of the representivity and inclusivity that ASSITEJ wants National Centres to make possible. See Chapter 5 for more information.

## TRANSPARENCY

The transparency of a National Centre helps the development of a positive relationship between members and the National Centre's governing body.

An adequate level of transparency guarantees access to essential information relating to the life of the association in:

- How it functions
- The activities it carries out
- Current and ongoing projects
- The resources that are found and reports on their use; and
- The functions of the governing bodies.

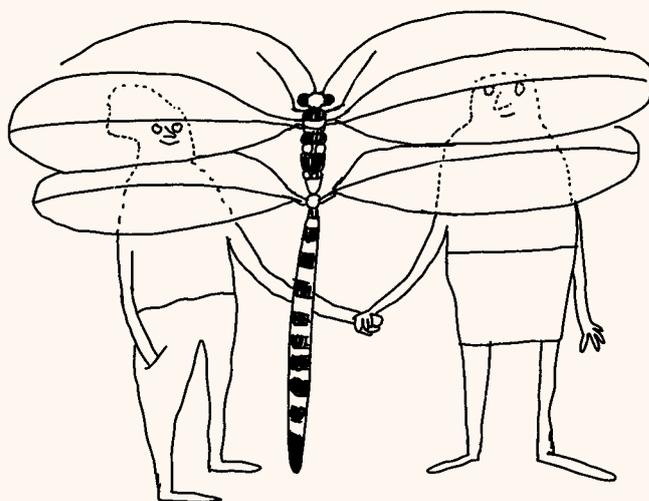
When there is an adequate level of transparency, the relationship can develop in a balanced way 'from and to' the members and 'from and to' those in charge of the management of a National Centre, as well as 'from and to' ASSITEJ International and a National Centre.

For these reasons it becomes important for every National Centre to equip itself with five essential tools:

- 1) A contract between members (statute, Constitution or simple agreement) that accepts the objects, aims, means and relevant points of the ASSITEJ Constitution and in compliance with the laws of the country, clearly defines and establishes relations between the members, specifies obligations, highlights the procedures for electing the leadership, describes the functioning of the association and the specific objectives of the National Centre.
- 2) Timely, comprehensive and effective communication concerning the management of the National Centre, its activities and projects, e.g. the release of Annual Financial and Narrative reports, monthly or quarterly newsletters, reports of projects, etc. These should be open to members and the general public (in accordance with the laws of a country) and to ASSITEJ International

- 3) Involvement of the members in the creation, development and realisation of projects, as well as with the overall planning and the creation of useful tools for shared planning.
- 4) Simple and clear regulations on everything that entails the granting of benefits, economic or otherwise, direct or indirect, to members or officers of the governing bodies, in order to avoid any improper conflicts of interest or any inequality of treatment.
- 5) Clear procedures governing the financial transactions of the National Centre to assist the work of the officers and the members, following simple and easy procedures to facilitate all the transactions (fees, income, expenditures and reimbursements).

*'People did not want to get receipts for the sums they paid, but we insisted, and recorded every cent. Almost certainly, the accounting books for the year 1894 are still intact in the archives of the Natal Indian Congress. For any kind of organisation, to accurately keep the accounting books is a sine qua non'* (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known as the Mahatma).



TRANSPARENCY!

## INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESS

Inclusion is about enabling the participation of marginalised people through acknowledgement, identification through consultation, development of strategies, and the removal and ongoing monitoring of barriers. It is important to simply ask the question: Who is not in the room and why?

### Disability focus

Through the ASSITEJ Network IIAN (International Inclusive Arts Network) there is a focus particularly on disability and access with the aim of enabling people with disability to be fully engaged in their local National Centre and part of ASSITEJ International. Each National Centre is asked to identify and establish a Disability Champion who can make sure that inclusivity and access for disabled people is always considered and in the conversation.

Inclusion means proactively making changes to the current modes of operation within organisations and events, and making attitudinal and physical changes in order to engage with the broadest reach of people.

Inclusion encourages a deeper engagement with the diversity of our global communities. This will result in a richness of experience and expression that will enable ASSITEJ events to move toward true community representation.

Importantly, Inclusion means opening ourselves to new frontiers of theatre and performance making.

We acknowledge that each National Centre will have very different challenges in this regard, as situations differ widely around the world. Sharing experiences, barriers to inclusion and ways of creating access is a vital part of the ongoing work of the association and therefore the National Centres.

### Access

Access is not just about physical access but the removal of all barriers to participation. This also relates to people's access to technology, differing modes of communication, language, and economic barriers. ASSITEJ has an Access Committee drawn from members of the association across six countries. It includes people with lived experience of disability and refers to four targeted aspects of Access: Disability, economic, language and technical. The Access committee will create a toolkit for National Centres to examine their own practice and formulate goals towards this aim.

## ENSURING CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD SAFETY

Every National Centre is required to commit to the statutes of ASSITEJ that explicitly endorse:

- The 1989 United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child, including Article 31 and 13
- UNESCO's Cultural Policy calling for the rights of children and young people to cultural participation and activity; and
- the 2005 UNESCO Convention about Cultural Diversity, that children and young people must be allowed a cultural identity and to be visible everywhere in society.

This means that no policies or practices of an ASSITEJ association may be in opposition to the principles contained in these conventions. This also means that National Centres should try to hold their members accountable to the same standards and may reject membership, suspend or expel members who do not meet these obligations.

The ASSITEJ Manifesto offers suggestions for action at every level of society to support the rights of the child to Arts and Culture and to self-expression as outlined in Articles 31 and 13 of the declaration of the Rights of the Child. <https://www.assitej-international.org/en/2020/09/assitej-manifesto-2/>

In addition, ASSITEJ is committed to **Child Safety & Wellbeing**:

- **Promoting** the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We believe in the power of the arts to transform children's lives, fuelling imagination, ambition and creativity in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Creating** an organisational culture of child safety by ensuring robust practices and policies that support our elected officials, staff and volunteers in keeping children safe.
- **Ensuring** all safety concerns and allegations of suspected child abuse are treated seriously and are guided by our legal and moral obligations.
- **Welcoming** all children, their families and carers. We are committed to the cultural safety of children from diverse backgrounds, and for children with disabilities.

We encourage all National Centres to create a Code of Conduct that is tailored to work for and with their cultural and legislative frameworks.



RIGHT OF THE CHILD  
TO ACCESS THEATER



# CHAPTER 3

## ADVOCACY FOR THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

ASSITEJ is an advocate for the promotion of theatre and performance for young audiences (TYA) in principle and in practice. It recognises that the right of all children and young people to enrichment through the arts and their own cultural traditions is vital, and proposes to unite theatres, organisations and individuals throughout the world to champion this.

ASSITEJ believes that every young person deserves access to live theatre and performance from the earliest possible age, as it is a transformational force in the lives of young people, inspiring imaginations, shifting perceptions, teaching empathy and building our future.

Theatre and performance respects young audiences by presenting their hopes, dreams, and fears. It develops and deepens experience, intelligence, emotion, and imagination, inspires ethical choices, increases awareness of social relationships encourages self-esteem, tolerance, confidence, and the free expression of opinions. Above all, it helps future generations find their place and voice in society.

### Some specific reasons why theatre and performance is so important:

- It allows us to explore perceptions different from our own. It deepens our capacity for empathy, and enhances and develops emotional intelligence, providing a powerful platform for behavioural change.

- Performing arts enhances learning – it reaches a diversity of children and young people through multiple learning modalities (visual, auditory, tactile, musical and kinaesthetic). This supports learning and builds confidence in their own capacities.
- Performing arts can make abstract concepts or ideas more concrete and understandable. It communicates in memorable and entertaining ways, bringing complex ideas to life.
- Performing arts develops lifelong skills of communication, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, reflection, and perseverance.
- It develops appreciation of a child's own cultural heritage, while also building a sense of commonality and diversity across cultures which can result in deepening tolerance.
- It employs a range of aesthetic languages, which like all languages, provide a new way of seeing and experiencing the world. All young people should have access to understanding and employing these languages.
- Performing arts helps children and young people connect to themselves and to one another. It develops their ability to express a personal vision and communicate it, while appreciating, responding to and collaborating with the visions of others.

Once we say that theatre and performance for young audiences is worth fighting for, then we can make the kinds of arguments for access and inclusion of all young people. Advocacy is about making the value of theatre and performance for young audiences obvious to more people.

## What is your message?

It is good to create a central message for your National Centre in the form of a vision or mission statement that you can share and work towards. This will assist in any activities that further the aims of ASSITEJ – lobbying decision makers, communicating with the media, etc. Making your members aware of the issues you face in your country is a huge part of advocacy, and members can be asked to get involved. It should not just be up to the National Centre to do the work for the members. Strong advocacy means everyone can play their part.

To collaborate with your members to find your central message, we would suggest working together on your National Centre strategy. Chapter 4 – Vision and strategy

## Advocating for membership:

Growing your membership, and retaining membership, is vital to ensuring that your National Centre continues in its vibrancy and relevance. It is very important to identify the benefits of becoming a member, especially if there are membership fees involved.

Reach out to all those who are working in the field and encourage them to become members. The ASSITEJ Constitution invites inclusive membership, and makes it clear that perceptions of professionalism should not stand in the way of those wishing to join. There are many different ways that people in different stages of their practice can be involved.

The more people who know about what a National Centre can provide, the stronger your Centre will be and the more voices there will be for the message you wish to put out into the world.

All efforts should be made to include all artists working in the field of theatre for

young audiences in the given country, including those with least access. National Centres should include all those interested in developing the art form, and provide opportunities for growth, exchange and development.

Find ways to value each member's contribution and to celebrate your members' achievements. This will help build a supportive atmosphere within the organisation.

## “Why should I be a member of a National Centre of ASSITEJ”?

You may often be required to provide persuasive reasons to TYA practitioners as to why they should join your National Centre. What's in it for me?

If there are many who are working for the same goals, and are using the same message, you will have more power to make change. Value and recognition, respect and support, are more likely when you are great in numbers. Being a member of an ASSITEJ National Centre, therefore part of ASSITEJ International, gives you:

### Connection – Visibility – Support

You may often be required to provide persuasive reasons to TYA practitioners as to why they should join your National Centre. What's in it for me?

Member benefits should be clearly up front in your National Centre. Being a member of an ASSITEJ National Centre, therefore part of ASSITEJ International, gives you Connection, Visibility and Support.

If there are many who are working for the same goals, and are using the same message, you will have more power to make change. Value and recognition, respect and support are more likely when you are great in numbers.

Connection to others in the same field helps us understand our own context – our own funding challenges, the expectations and demands of those buying or presenting our work, our aesthetic and cultural position and the barriers to participation we and our audiences face.

Being part of a National Centre allows access to information to all; including those who are isolated, marginalised or who are new to the arts community. It allows knowledge of the work for young audiences to be spread and shared, to enable strong advocacy for the continued funding and support of work and exploration.

A National Centre has the possibility of drawing people together, of speaking with one voice, and of making the argument for support for the work we all create and for the young people for whom it is created.

If you are a member of a National Centre of ASSITEJ, you are automatically a member of the ASSITEJ International and can access all the information, opportunities and knowledge that ASSITEJ can offer.

There are over 100 different countries in the Association, all with activities of their own – festivals, workshops, internships, residencies, exchanges, shows and events. By being a member of a National Centre, you can access all this and share your own work far and wide.

## Case Studies:

### How do you attract membership?

Before establishment, try to reach out to as many as possible future members – individual artists, collectives, groups, companies – in your country and let them know about how important it is to be part of a global association as ASSITEJ. That is still a challenge in such a continental country as Brazil, though in the past few years we have advanced in connecting with a broader number of artists all over the country.

It is important for a Centre to attract new members with a few very interesting activities, like ASSITEJ Pakistan initiated its first Festival named Tamasha Festival in 2017. Due to Tamasha, ASSITEJ Pakistan got a marvellous response and people come to know about this Centre. In my view, for attraction and keeping members, regular activities of a Centre are essential. If you can, involve everybody to help out as much as possible, so they will keep *your members feeling useful and feeling that the organisation is doing a good job with the community.*

*Regular communication is very important along with scheduled events/opportunities to bring members together. Clear articulated reasons why membership is important and what it contributes towards is also paramount.*

# CHAPTER 4

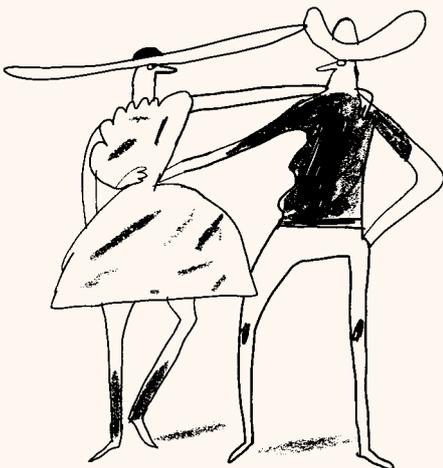
## National Vision, Context and Structure

As a new National Centre, it is important to define your identity and your context.

The first thing to do is to map the landscape of theatre for young audiences (TYA) in your country. What already exists? Who are your founding members? What work are they doing? Where is the most exciting TYA work happening and what does it look like? Who are potential allies or supporters in this work? What systems or programmes are in place that currently work?

Learning as much as possible about one another within the local context will be a good start to exploring what you hope your National Centre will be able to achieve.

Asset-based thinking is a useful way to begin the process of understanding your role as a National Centre. By decreasing your focus on what is wrong, and increasing your focus on what is right, positive, and working, you will start to harness enthusiasm and energy to be able to move people in a positive direction. Do a full exploration of your assets and how these might be utilised. In doing this exercise, you may discover something about your context and therefore also about your identity.



NATIONAL VISIONS  
CONTEXTS AND  
STRUCTURES

## Case Studies:

For example, in the case of South Africa, there was no organisation focusing on theatre for young audiences in the country prior to the inauguration of ASSITEJ South Africa. However, there were many individuals, companies and institutions doing the work and many existing festivals where work was being showcased. These were mostly competing with one another or replicating one another and not working very strategically to make strides for the sector as a whole. By working with these individuals, organisations and festivals as partners, ASSITEJ SA was able to establish an identity for itself, and provide a networking capacity for the members that had not been present before.

In the case of Denmark, where there was already an organisation called Teater Centrum which takes care of the national theatre for young audiences scene, ASSITEJ Denmark was asked to play the role of being the international connector and mediator for the sector. ASSITEJ Denmark and Teater Centrum have negotiated their relationship over the years to work closely together, and to ensure that together they are able to achieve their mutually complementary goals. For example, they work on the April festival which allows for an enormous national showcase of Danish work both for purposes of touring within the country and for finding an international market.

In the case of the UK, where there are four separate country entities, which all represent a different regional grouping of artists, ASSITEJ UK constructed itself as a Board made up of regional representatives, ensuring equal representation for each of the four entities: Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. This has allowed for the organisation to ensure local relevance and capacity, and to access funding locally from the country-specific bodies, e.g. British Council Wales.

## VISION & STRATEGY

It is very important that you set goals for your National Centre. Part of your identity is not just who you are right now, but where you would like to see yourselves in one year from now, three years from now, ten years from now...

Often a National Centre will create a Vision Statement which will capture their dream for TYA in their country and internationally, and will then work on a Mission which, if fully engaged with, will ensure that this Vision can eventually be realised.

Goals may be as varied and particular as:

- Every child will have access to theatre and performance at least once every year at school.
- Theatre and performance for young audiences will have the same status as theatre for adults.
- Theatre and performance for the early years will be an accepted form of practice.
- TYA will be researched and documented in our major universities.
- More quality plays for xxx age group will be written/devised, etc.
- Theatre artists will collaborate more across lines of difference, whether these are created by economics, culture, language, race, gender, etc.
- Parents will value theatre and performance as an important part of family life.
- More TYA artists will be touring internationally.
- More intercultural collaborations will take place so that we can develop new kinds of approaches to making work.

The ASSITEJ National Centre can then choose to work on projects which will help to make this goal a reality in the future.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Why use strategic planning? An effective strategy:

- translates your vision and values for your National Centre into a series of priorities for action that you implement together over a specific period of time
- allows you to measure your progress and identify where you have issues and challenges to overcome; and
- provides a dynamic and flexible process responding to changes in context, resources and the outcomes of actions taken earlier in the cycle.

### How to plan?

Think about who will be best placed to help you plan. This might be an outside facilitator, it might be the staff of your National Centre, or the Board, or a committee of members. You may wish to involve all your membership through surveys or similar.

Where in the planning cycle you can make best use of them. When are the key moments for your Centre? Before funding rounds, at the start of the year or the end of the year?

How you can best use them. Will it be a day's planning, or a few hours? Will it result in a document, or a workshop?

### What goes into a plan?

The elements of a good plan can come from the answers to the following key questions.

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know when we have arrived?

The answers to these should be documented in a written plan that is shared with all relevant stakeholders and reviewed regularly. It is a working document that guides both the broad direction of travel, and the everyday decision-making and activities.

Below are some of the ways in which you might think about how you can answer these questions.

#### ***Where are we now?***

Here, you can think about two elements:

- a) What are the goals, values and aims of your National Centre? You'll already have articulated these in applying for recognition of your Centre. Are those still the same now?
- b) What is the context in which you are working? This means having a clear sense of both your own internal resources and challenges and the wider landscape (local, national and international) that your Centre covers. The context is often best defined through the creation of a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

## ***Where are we going?***

In this section, you can think about what you want to achieve to fulfil the goals and values of the Centre. It will be important to prioritise these over the next three to five years at most. These outcomes should be thought of in broad terms and be relatively few in number.

## ***How will we get there?***

Now that you have identified what you want to achieve, break each aim down into specific things that you will do, steps that you will take, or what are called objectives.

Objectives should be SMART, that is

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable,  
**A**chievable,  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime limited

It will also be important to identify who will do the work to meet each of your objectives, and when the work will be started and completed. Make sure you have built in deadlines and milestones to help you fulfil your objectives.

Goal	Objectives - steps towards the goal	Who will do the work?	When will this work happen?

## ***How will we know when we have arrived?***

It will be important for you to have a clear idea at the outset of how you will measure the success of your plan and National Centre in the future. What will success look like for your staff (if you have any), for your Board and for your members?

If your objectives are measurable, then you will have some key information about how you are doing as a National Centre along the way and at the end of the period of the plan. Think for example about:

- how many members you can recruit in your first 3-5 years
- how many activities you would like to run in each year; and
- how much funding you can access to support the work of the Centre each year.

You can also undertake reviews of the work of your National Centre along the way, gathering oral and written feedback from your members at events and activities.

## **Challenges**

### *Not having an accurate understanding of the context*

It will be critical to the success of your National Centre that you have as accurate as possible understanding of your context. For example, there's little point in deciding you will communicate with your members through an image-rich email if this means that it can't be downloaded due to poor quality internet connections where they live.

### *Unrealistic goals*

If the things that you want to achieve for your National Centre are unrealistic, then planning for them is pointless. This doesn't mean that your goals can't be big, just that you have to be able to achieve them in your context. So, don't be setting a fundraising target in the millions unless you can be pretty certain as to where you might go to meet it. Is it likely that philanthropic giving and membership fees will raise that kind of money?

### *Getting people to engage with the strategic plan*

There can be lots of enthusiasm and support when you are putting your plan together and it gets published in a smart folder. However, making sure that the plan doesn't just sit on a shelf is critical. Your Board should review the plan at each

meeting to see what progress is being made and how past and prospective activities fit with what you want to achieve.

### *Not changing when the situation changes*

A plan is always subject to review as the context in which it was written changes in ways over which your National Centre may have little or no control. It's important to review the plan routinely and, if necessary, learn from experience to adjust elements. Some objectives may be reached earlier than you anticipated, others later. Some new challenges will inevitably arise, just as some new opportunities may present themselves. For your National Centre, you will have to weigh these up and make a judgment of the cost of both challenges and opportunities against what you wanted to achieve in the plan.

## **External Resources**

Community Partnership for Arts, Strategic Planning for the Arts <https://cultureforward.org/Reference-Desk/Tools/Strategic-Planning>

Byrnes, B. Planning as an art and craft. <http://managementandthearts.com/pdf/StrategicPlanningintheArts.pdf>

Volunteer Now What is Strategic Planning? <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/what-strategic-planning>

Wikipedia How to write a strategic plan for an organisation. <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Strategic-Plan-for-an-Organization>

## **STRUCTURAL OPTIONS**

When creating a National Centre and deciding on the structure, there are certain key issues which should be considered:

- Will this form be manageable given our current resources in terms of people, volunteer hours, funding or other constraints?

- Will this form of National Centre be effective in addressing the needs of TYA in our country, and facilitating engagement with the global community?
- Will this form exclude anyone who should not be excluded?
- Will this form allow for growth and development over time?
- Is this form in accordance with the mission, Constitution and policies of the association?
- Does it serve to unite all theatres, organisations, and persons interested in theatre for children and young people in our country?

Since there are different regulations in different countries around company and fiscal laws, it is not realistic to direct the choice towards any one particular structure for every National Centre.

It is worth recalling what has been said about Transparency in Chapter 2 – how useful it is to give the National Centre a statute or other contractual form that clearly defines the association for all concerned, and how the relationship will play out between members and Board.

Your National Centre can benefit from legal incorporation or the creation of a legal identity that allows you to work as a not-for-profit, to access charitable funds in your country, or to seek funding from Government bodies.

Please check the legislation in your country to see what is relevant. For some this will not be an option and there are other less formal structures that will suit them better.

Here are some structures of National Centres and Networks, including ASSITEJ International:

- ASSITEJ International, ASSITEJ Italy and Small Size Network are all Associations with Legal Identity, without being a Legal Person. They are registered in Italy as an Association

Body, pursuant to Law n°2 of 28 January 2009. When budgets and operations are very limited, the simple 'legal identity' is functional for a cultural association with a light profile and a low level of risk. It is easier to manage, while allowing access to important calls for tenders such as those of the European Union in support of culture.

- ASSITEJ South Africa is a Non-profit organisation constituted in SA as a Voluntary Association with tax benefits for donors and funders.
- ASSITEJ Australia is a branch of a larger, funded, not-for-profit advocacy organisation Theatre Network Australia, receiving the benefit of staff without cost to the National Centre. The ASSITEJ Advisory Group are the Board of ASSITEJ Australia.

## Case Studies:

In our 2017 survey, 83.3% of National Centres were formally registered in their countries, and 83% were registered as not-for-profit organisations/associations.

Our form of Registration is Membership based and enables us to apply for public funding. ASSITEJ Germany is not only a registered charity, but also a registered youth Institution (Traeger der Jugendhilfe). Because we are a charity, we do not need to pay taxes, unless we generate a high income through activities that can be considered business i.e. selling books or advertisements.

In Pakistan, it is really tough to get registered as not-for-profit organisation due to government laws. A big disadvantage is that we cannot get funding from those organisations which only fund for NPOs.

As a non-profit organisation, ASSITEJ Korea is exempt from tax. Also, we have received the governmental funds to organise our festival, programs, and so on.

We need to go through a vicious bureaucracy and as a non-profit organisation need to have an actual address and a furnished office only for the use of the NGO; we have to afford having this office. Therefore, sometimes we have financial problems.

Non-profit public organisation RF Theatre Union is the umbrella organisation for Russian centres ASSITEJ, AITA/IATA, OISTAT, UNIMA.

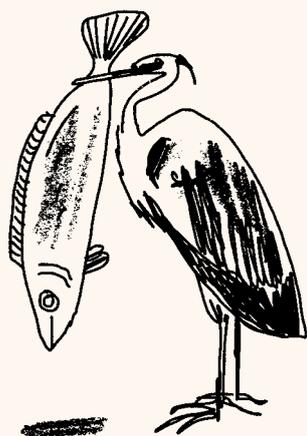
Advantages of being an NPO: Can fundraise, can be a legal entity, recognised by government and corporates, easier to be 'national' than if we were simply a volunteer organisation; Disadvantages: onerous in terms of keeping up to date with reporting and other requirements, definitely need to be able to have paid staff to run.

## MEMBERSHIP FEES

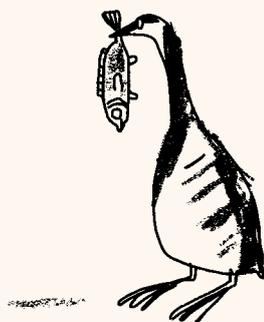
It's the hope of ASSITEJ International that National Centres will strive for active involvement, maintaining a strong presence through working groups, commissions, presenting candidates for the Executive Committee, being participants in projects, and other such involvements.

A two-way relationship between members and officers guarantees greater awareness of the association and its vision and aims. The fees paid by the National Centre, Network and Individual members to ASSITEJ International is not only a source of income for the work of the association, but a dedicated gesture of commitment to the involvement of the members.

Each National Centre will have a different approach to membership fees.



MEMBERSHIP FEES



### How do Fees make a difference?

The contribution of members is an important resource that ensures that the National Centre begins its life. This contribution can be through active involvement and/or through the paying of membership fees.

When the National Centre or Network opts for membership fees, it considers the economic contribution of the members to be an essential element for its own life as the fees may constitute all, or a significant part of the revenue necessary to plan the activities and to guarantee the management of the National Centre.

If the National Centre is supported by the financial contribution of its members, not only does it become important for members to pay the approved fees, but also for them to pay them within the timeframe the Centre requires. This enables the National Centre to plan actions for the benefit of all members. It should be remembered that the Officers have the mandate to manage the budget with transparency and prudence, avoiding any improper debt.

The payment of a membership fee is an arrangement generally made clear to members when they join the association and freely accept the statutes and regulations, thus sharing the aims and the purposes of artistic and cultural promotion.

Each National Centre, in defining the amount of the fees requested, can identify different levels of contribution, possibly linking them to the different sorts of members (for example, theatres or organisations, researchers or academics, students, the individual artist) or to the different possibilities of contribution (as happens with ASSITEJ), where members can choose their own scale of contribution, depending on what they can afford.

In the latter case, it is hoped that each member will define their own fee, choosing to increase it when possible, to support the spirit of solidarity in the association.

In the structural agreement/statute of your National Centre you can define exceptions to paying membership fees in case of economic difficulties of some members.

Some Centres have entrance fees, as well as ongoing annual fees. The entrance fees are used to create a common fund for the cash flow of an organisation. The annual fees are then used to support the ongoing activities.

The common structure of a National Centre is as a non-profit organisation, therefore an operating surplus makes sense only when it is useful to ensure a good level of cash flow.

In the Small Size Network, when a member pays entrance fees, their annual fees are suspended for the first two years of their membership.

There are also National Centres that replace a financial contribution with a contribution in kind (generally a donation of time, or volunteering). This can be a proactive way to engage members who have very limited financial circumstances, but who want to be active in the association.

Currently 85.7% of the National Centres have membership fees. These range widely in size from 1USD to 2,500USD per year.

A National Centre also has the responsibility to pay its membership fees to ASSITEJ International. Historically and to the present day, some National Centres have difficulty in paying fees to the international association, despite the sliding scale of options for payment of full membership. Currently, the membership fees range on scale from the minimum fee of 150USD per year to 750USD.

Here are some suggestions of different mechanisms by which National Centres can manage the payment of the ASSITEJ International membership fees:

A: Through your own membership fee collection.

B: If you collect no membership fees:

- Make a specific campaign for collection of fee monies through your members who can best afford it e.g. funded companies.
- Seek donation support through Board member connections.
- Ask all members to contribute a small amount that will enable their access to the International Association e.g. many members contributing a small sum or what they can afford.
- Seek support through the Solidarity Fund.

## THE SOLIDARITY FUND

The Solidarity Fund is for those who find themselves unable to pay membership fees for specific and short-term reasons. It is supported by other members' voluntary contributions, on top of their own fees. Policies and Protocols Handbook Page 9 <http://www.assitej-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ASSITEJ-Policies-Protocol-Handbook-Dec-2019-FINAL.pdf>.

Advocacy is vital in the communication around membership fees – members need reminding of the importance of the National Centre and its work, and also the importance of belonging to an international association that connects and works for us all.

## Case Studies:

Since the National Centre had to close due to loss of funding, the projects of the Centre had lapsed. Once we re-started with our host advocacy body, we removed the ASSITEJ Australia membership fee in favour of a free and automatic membership to encourage people's ease of access and involvement. Our members are encouraged to pay a fee of membership to our hosting network. It has resulted in much broader membership and more active participation.

A fee scale seems the most appropriate, so larger organisations can contribute more compared to unwaged individual artists (for example). We use a sliding scale membership, taking into account the financial challenges of being a student, an artist, or a small theatre company.

[Membership fees] are important in order to maintain an office and to create complementary funding, which makes it easier to make successful fundraising. One problem regarding fees is that it can create the question from the members 'What do I get out of this?'

We suggest making the membership as accessible as possible, especially for artists. We apply the following rule: organisations who receive subventions/funding pay more, freelance artists and organisations without subventions/funding pay nothing.

Membership fees ensure buy-in from the members, and hold you accountable to them. You have to make sure that you have something to deliver. However, this then means that there is far greater engagement. We always try to keep a balance between staying open to people (if they can't afford the fees, they can volunteer time instead) and ensuring that they do invest in the organisation, even if only in a small way.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE NATIONAL CENTRE

### Role of the board

All ASSITEJ National Centres should have a Board of some sort since this body is a part of the application to become a member. It is important that the roles on the Board are defined. Not all Boards have hierarchical structures, some have flat structures, where every role is considered equal and where the Chairperson role is rotated from meeting to meeting, or year to year. Some National Centres prefer to have every person on the Board having a defined role within the association.

Typically, the following roles are essential for good governance, and are necessary if the organisation is to be formally constituted as a Legal entity:

- Chairperson or President
- Vice Chairperson or Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Other roles that are possible, even regular, include:

- Membership recruitment
- Fundraising and sustainability
- Project leaders
- Communications/marketing
- Award panels
- Disability Champion
- Liaison for Networks
- Sector development
- Provincial/State/Regional Representatives

## Roles of staff

Many ASSITEJ National Centres do not have any staff at all, while others have one paid staff member, and some have many. The major advantage of having a staff is the increased capacity of the organisation.

Typically organisations with staff can also fundraise more successfully for projects, and can work on larger projects over longer periods of time.

The relationship between staff and Board needs to be clearly articulated in the Constitution of the organisation. Generally, the staff will run all executive functions of the organisation with the Board providing guidance, vision and oversight. Of course, once a National Centre employs staff, then it needs to be guided by best labour practices in that country, and adhere to the laws regarding appointment, contracts, dismissals, working hours, leave and all other aspects of conditions of employment.

Staff members may include:

- Executive Director
- Marketing and Communications
- Fundraiser
- Finance
- Project heads
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Logistics
- Research

Centres with no staff (59.5% of Centres)

e.g. TYA UK, ASSITEJ Argentina

Centres with 1 staff member (23.8%):

e.g. ASSITEJ Australia, ASSITEJ Germany, TYA USA, ASSITEJ Norway, ASSITEJ Denmark

Centres with several staff members (16.7%):

e.g. Scenes d'Enfance - ASSITEJ France, ASSITEJ South Africa, ASSITEJ Korea

## Sharing responsibility:

National Centres have the responsibility to reach as widely as possible within their countries. This is sometimes difficult because management can be under-resourced, and people are stretched.

In many countries, National Centres have developed the positions of Regional Representatives of ASSITEJ so that they can assist in the communications and local activities of the country. In this way, all members are more able to be part of the National Centre and communicate where there are challenges of distance or time.

For example: in Brazil there are regional representatives who assist with the communication and activities within their regions. In Australia, there is an ASSITEJ Advisory Group that represents all states and territories, as well as diversity of art form.

Some Boards are made up of a certain number of delegates that represent each of the regions of a country in order to ensure that everyone is represented. However, equally, there may be a decision that different language groupings within a country require representation, or there may be other models, which reflect the particular diversity and make-up of the country. As far as possible, a National Centre should represent the diversity of the residents of the country in question.

## Roles of volunteers

Attracting and retaining volunteers can be a source of great strength to an organisation. Generally, all projects have scope for volunteers and often Board members volunteer their services to run National Centre projects. However, there are also opportunities to enlarge the capacity of organisations by attracting volunteers or interns from local and international universities or recruitment programmes, through the Next Generation placement programme, or through a National Centre’s own processes of advertisement and recruiting.

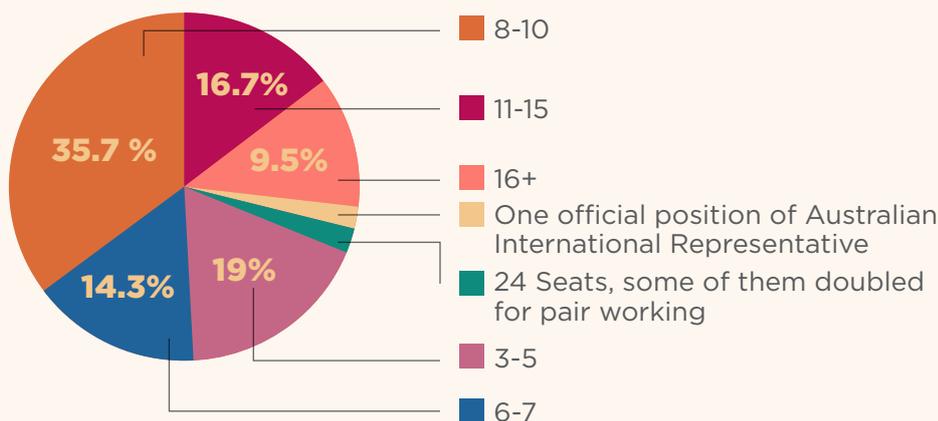
Volunteers may help with all manner of activities, such as:

- Following up on membership fees
- Doing front of house or backstage work for events, festivals, etc.
- Handing out brochures or talking about the organisation at events where the National Centre is trying to raise its profile
- Doing administrative work for the association; and
- Providing services, such as workshops for children, free of charge

## Responses from National Centres (42 responses):

### What is the size of your board

42 responses



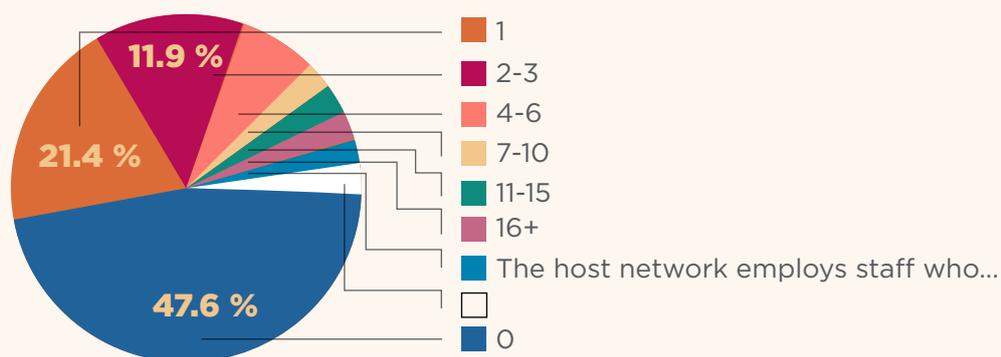
### How many paid, full-time staff/project managers does the centre employ?

42 responses



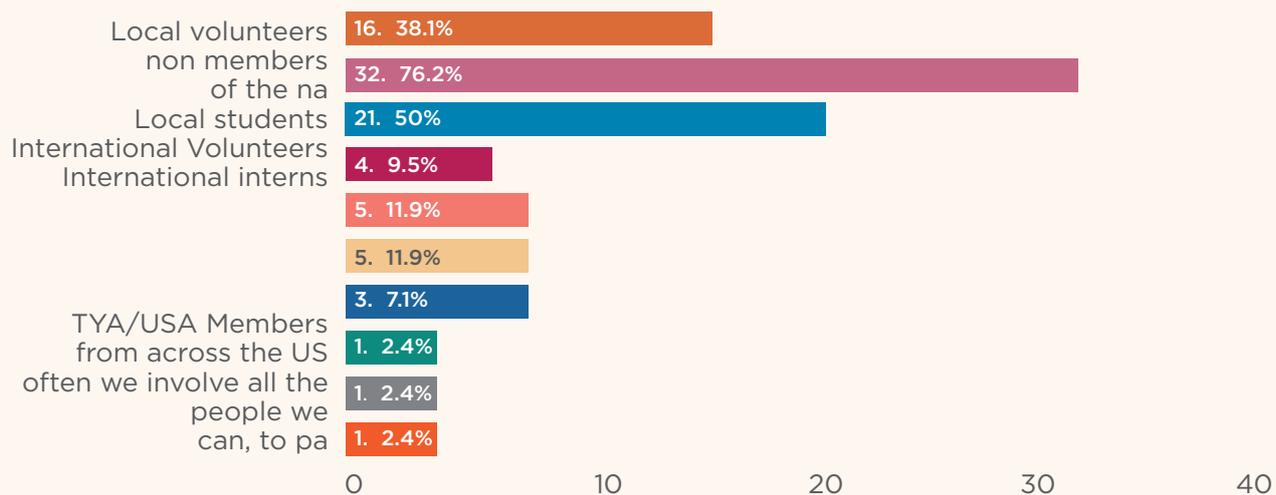
## How many paid, part-time staff/project managers does the centre employ?

42 responses



## Do you work with volunteers from the following categories?

42 responses



## Case Studies:

### What advice do you have to offer a National Centre about structure?

Having only one full-time staff member is challenging. Consider additional part-time or contracted employees for various duties; be sure the working Board is indeed a working Board.

Mixture of voluntary and paid staff seems most effective. Sub-groups (regional) are a good way of developing and supporting activity.

To make sure that all its members are really interested in children's theatre. To be an umbrella organisation for all of them.

Structure of National Centre should be very clear. Every Board member should be clear about the objectives of the Centre and also his/her responsibility. All the major decisions in a Centre should be taken with a consensus of all the Board members and Centre should be open for everyone interested in TYA.

When we created our Centre two years ago, it was very important to us that it would be flexible and dynamic. We did not want it to become a vehicle for its own sake, with people holding on to their power positions. Therefore, we created some rules, for example: a president can be re-elected only once. And every 2 years, the Board is renewed. The Board (which is also the 'staff' for now) works in a horizontal, non-hierarchical way, I would say as a collective. Maybe a bit chaotic sometimes, but that is how we like it in Belgium ...!

Our organisation benefits from a balance between a paid staff member managing the organisation alongside a devoted Board of field leaders from across the country. The Board members use their experience to steer the organisation and ensure its connection with the membership base. With limited resources, this model helps make growth and robust programming possible.

To have as many volunteers as they can to support the work of the Board, the more people truly involved the more work that actually we can accomplish with a good distribution of tasks for all... We are aiming to become an incorporated society (not-for-profit organisation) with an elected Board offering broad representation (puppetry, young dance, geographical spread, funded companies, independents, etc) - a grassroots network rather than a hierarchical structure.

I firmly believe that having paid staff is a major advantage to being able to function successfully and to run exciting projects. It is not impossible to do without this, but it requires intense dedication and sacrifice. We started as a volunteer committee running projects but 10 years on, it feels that having all the advantages of being a registered NPO and being able to claim tax benefits for donors and refunds on VAT, means that we can achieve a lot more. We would not have been able to host an enormous event like Cradle of Creativity without having a formal constitution and paid staff.

We strongly recommend getting the commitment of theatre schools and universities, so as to have a broader reach for possible staff - either part-time or full-time, paid or not. Students and young professionals are a great source of the necessary enthusiasm and energy we need for our projects.

Volunteers and interns are definitely worth cultivating, and if you work with them in a way which makes them feel valued and engaged, and give them meaningful things to do, you can achieve a tremendous amount.

## Roles of members

Members should always be expected to play an active role in the organisation. It is generally a good idea for all members to feel a sense of ownership and engagement with their National Centre.

You could ask members to contribute in several ways:

- host events
- publicise ASSITEJ activities
- include a paragraph about ASSITEJ in their programmes
- collect monies for ASSITEJ at their events/performances
- speak about ASSITEJ at public forums, conferences or other events
- provide their news and information about their activities to other members
- share any opportunities of which they may be aware
- provide professional development to younger or emerging artists within the organisation
- host the office of ASSITEJ; or
- provide Next Generation opportunities to international members of ASSITEJ.

## Case Studies:

We address the needs of each campaign or event as it comes up and ask for membership support and interest to help with the organising or contribution towards these. It always requires the effort of a central person to energise the staffing and organisation.

Core members of ASSITEJ Pakistan are four cultural organisations, so major staff also participate from these core members organisations. ASSITEJ Pakistan mainly works with volunteer students, so it is always open for fresh blood with experience.

Get all the community to be involved and participating as much as you can in the organisation; festivals, talks, workshops and round tables should reflect the needs that the National Centre can try to cover also with new projects.

To work with local members AND local and international students is important. Reinforcing the function of the association not only internationally but also nationally is helpful. Secondly, giving priority to the members on ASSITEJ events or projects is found to be attractive.

## Expectations of members

Expectations of members should also be managed. It is a good idea to say what members will be 'getting' for being part of a National Centre; however, it is also important to ensure that whatever you promise, you are able to deliver on. People should be encouraged to understand the intrinsic value of being a member of ASSITEJ, as well as the specific benefits of membership that they may have access to.

## Case Studies:

### What advice do you have about attracting and keeping members?

Face-to-face conversation and personal approach to members to enlist them in the ideas of the association and their place in advocacy and the big picture.

Interest in children's theatre; the seriousness of the Board for the artistic and pedagogical problems; educational offers proposed to the members

Regular communication is very important along with scheduled events/ opportunities to bring members together. Clear, articulated reasons why membership is important and what it contributes towards is also paramount.

Developing and keeping on offering activities for the benefit of the members. Open doors for young artists, new ideas and challenging projects.

Lower membership fees and sharing information translated into Japanese

Organising of training programs, performance opportunities, international exposure, publications in India where members are given priority over non-members in most of the cases. There are some programs which are specifically reserved for members, or there's a reserved quota for members. When we have paid training programs, members are given discounted rates.

Make sure that they know how they can benefit and how they can contribute, make sure that their topics and questions are discussed in accessible ways and in a variety of places and formats - it's not easy when membership is so diverse.

You must have something to give back to the members, mainly financially I'm afraid. Like travel grants or international co-production funding.

Focusing on membership engagement in every aspect of your work helps attract and keep members. Members should be involved in the direction of the organisation, and can participate as volunteers on committees or project teams to contribute to the overall work of the organisation. This allows them to feel invested and continue to support the work of the National Centre.

Make your National Centre visible, especially on the web. Publicising projects and spreading news from ASSITEJ International is a great way to arouse and keep interest in the association.

To make trainings for members (with aim to share practices from international ASSITEJ partners); To create conditions to go to big international events (as Congress, Artistic Gatherings) at least 1-2 members every year (in rotation)

Regular activity through the year, involving maximum members. Residencies and opportunities for training are also much sought. Opportunities and platforms for performances would also improve member engagement.

Making sure that we communicate about what we are doing as widely as possible so that people become excited and want to participate. Engaging with members as volunteers or as paid part-time staff on projects so that we get to know them and work with them and understand their contexts. Partnering with our members on projects in their communities or spaces, helping them by adding value to what they are doing.



# CHAPTER 5

## Common Challenges in Being a National Centre

Apart from attracting and maintaining membership, there are a number of challenges that you might find when you start a National Centre. These can be very particular to your own context, but are also often the same challenges that we face all over the world. These issues can be solved in various ways, and in this section, members of ASSITEJ International provide examples of excellent and inventive solutions to both specific and universal challenges.

**We recommend that when you are struggling with a particular issue, you let the ASSITEJ EC know so that we can advise or connect you with other members who may be able to provide assistance.**

**Mobility:** This is a challenge for almost all National Centres. As an international association, to participate fully requires the capacity to travel, and for many artists and countries, this can be difficult if not impossible, especially since the impact of the global pandemic on the livelihood of artists. Some nations do not have travel funds, although these should be explored wherever possible. There are international mobility funds available through resources like [www.onthemove.org](http://www.onthemove.org) and the Prince Claus Fund, which can be applied for. Each National Centre should explore all possibilities for mobility and share these with their members. National Centres can also support their members' applications to these funds by writing letters of support or otherwise providing guidance.

Online platforms are central to our increased connection, offering a more convenient alternative to in-person meetings while also providing a heightened degree of equality and access that we haven't experienced before, especially for disabled people and those who have economic difficulty. We have absorbed livestreaming, virtual communication and digital platforms for remote connection, especially through regular coffee sessions and networking gatherings since 2020, and the development of [assitejonline.com](http://assitejonline.com) for the World Congress in Tokyo 2021. This has proven to be a sure way of increasing access for our members to information, training and community. However, inequity in access to technology, internet data and computers creates a real barrier for many to full involvement in ASSITEJ.

**Communication:** Connecting with people and keeping them informed is a challenge in any circumstance because communication relies on a two-way relationship. You may send out as much information as you can but if no one reads it or hears it, communication has not occurred. You may have geographical distance to combat, or time differences, slow internet or none at all. You may also have members who live remotely and can't get to events. Keeping up the flow of information is vital to collective strength, and will often have to be reviewed and refreshed to respond to the needs of the community.

See Chapter 6 for more on communication.

**Work:** Who ends up doing all the work in your National Centre, or for the TYA community? How do we coordinate sharing of effort, or be able to call on people and certain skillsets when needed? Who thinks the work is necessary and who doesn't really want to be involved? Are our members equal in the way they engage? In order to deal with the challenges of this particular area, we suggest you look at roles and responsibilities in Chapter 4.

## Gatekeepers

One of the issues that ASSITEJ International often encounters is receiving complaints of so-called 'gatekeepers' within their National Centre. If you are leading a National Centre, are you a gatekeeper (controlling access) or a gate opener (inviting people in)?

How welcoming and inclusive is your National Centre? Who makes the decisions and how? Who is not in the room and why? Who has the final say? How do you define your members and what are your criteria for admitting them?

Gatekeepers may be people who have a wonderful track-record of work in the field, and may have been very productive at some stage. They may be the founder of their Centre, and have many great qualities, but for whatever reason, they have been at the head of their organisation for a long time, and they have become resistant to change or to hearing what artists in their country actually need or want. This can result in them only allowing some people in, while keeping others out.

In some instances, where National Centres are state-funded, gatekeeping is supported by the State which wants only certain people with certain views, backgrounds, or politics to be engaged with the National Centre. This – it must be stated clearly – is in direct opposition to the Constitution of ASSITEJ.

**Gatekeeping** can take a number of different forms. Some common examples include:

- The same people or person or company gets all of the opportunities within a National Centre, again and again.
- The Centre is viewed by some as a closed club.
- New ideas are not pursued, and the same programme is followed year in and year out.
- New members not being admitted on some pretext. They are not 'professional' enough (despite the ASSITEJ Constitution allowing for non-professional members), they do not speak the same language as the majority in the Centre, they are too far away geographically, etc.
- The Centre never grows – the number of members remains static.
- Members complain about not knowing about ASSITEJ International projects or programmes, and communication of available opportunities is poor.

## What can National Centres do to avoid gatekeeping?

- Create a process of rotational leadership in your Constitution by limiting the number of terms that the Chairperson can hold, or by rotating leadership on a regular basis.
- Hold democratic elections, where the members can vote for the leadership.
- Allow for greater autonomy of regions or provinces within a National Centre. Some large or very populous countries may want to design into their structure a regional, provincial or local leadership layer, which allows for greater freedom for those operating in spaces well away from the 'Centre'. These structures may have representation within the national leadership as a way of ensuring the involvement of all.
- Encourage and be open to dialogue between individual members and the National Centre. The ASSITEJ Executive Committee can act as a mediator where this is practical or useful, or Centres can

look for an objective mediator within their own country who can help to ensure that individuals are heard and that the Centre is seen to be inclusive.

- Every National Centre should present a report at each Congress (these can be posted or shared in such a way as to make the activity of the Centres more visible). ASSITEJ International will endeavour to find appropriate spaces for this either on the website and/or at Congress.
- National Centres are encouraged to use the regional networks that exist (for example, Nordic-Baltic, Ibero-American, Asian, ACYTA, etc) as a good place to discuss gatekeeping problems: issues may be better discussed at this level.
- Where there is a conflict between the Constitution of a National Centre and the Constitution of ASSITEJ (perhaps for legitimate reasons), this needs to be declared and the situation debated in order to resolve the conflict. Every National Centre needs to be transparent about their strategic reasons for a lack of inclusivity, where these exist.
- Inclusion of members can seem like a challenge to those organising. There is no doubt that having an active membership means many voices and potential conflict. It also means an increase of collegiate activity and connection. A strong focus on unity and on the strategic actions for TYA in each of our countries allows Boards to involve members without fear.

### **What can ASSITEJ International do to avoid gatekeeping at the National Centre level?**

One of the ways this issue is currently being addressed is through the process of Individual Memberships where it is possible for artists or companies to apply directly to ASSITEJ for membership if they feel excluded from their National Centre.

The process is not perfect and can be difficult, but it is a way for misunderstandings to be brought to light, for the National Centre to become aware

of unhappiness that may be present in their country, and for these issues to be aired and discussed. This is not to say that every time someone applies for individual membership in a country where there is already a National Centre, the reason is gatekeeping. However, we have found that this is a recurring theme, and we try as the Executive Committee to encourage open dialogue and inclusivity.

If a Centre persists in being a gatekeeper and there is no response from the National Centre to the concerns raised by the ASSITEJ EC, membership of the international association can be revoked, after due processes have been followed.

### **Funding and sustainability**

Fundraising is easy to say, but much more difficult to do.

The different constitutions of each of the National Centres makes it difficult to generalise about the complex issue of the economic sustainability and fundraising useful for the life of each Centre. Each Centre will have its own landscape of funding or resourcing cultural activity within which it must survive.

In the absence of funding for organisations, self-financing through membership fees becomes a key factor to support a low-profile maintenance of the association. This can then be used as a basis for research around how to attract the necessary resources.

We believe that a practical approach to fundraising should start from an analysis of the different problems related to the characteristics of a National Centre, such as:

- the difficulty of supporting fundraising, in particular finding adequate resources to pay a professional fundraiser and accepting the economic risks of failure, or supporting voluntary fundraising within the Board and the demands of such a role

- the difficulty of participating in public tenders due to a lack of human and economic resources
- the difficulty of defining research objectives, creating realistic and operational fundraising plans; and
- lack of public funds focused on arts support.

The National Centre should undertake an analysis of who among the members might be able to provide the Centre with real professional skills in fundraising in its various aspects, for example:

- direct collection of funding
- crowdfunding projects
- income-generating projects
- institutional financing
- participation in national public and private grant processes; and
- participation in international public tender.

If the National Centre decides to engage someone with professional fundraising skills, this generally cannot be at zero cost. The National Centre will need to understand fully the costs of fundraising, and will need to define these in advance:

- 1) Compensation for whoever activates the fundraising, regardless of its outcome, successful or otherwise.
- 2) Percentage costs for the fundraiser, in the case of success.

Like everything else, fundraising needs to be approached creatively. Again, your SWOT analysis will be very important to understanding where possibilities for funding may lie. Depending on the nature of your organisation, the possibilities will be different; however, it should always be possible to raise some funding if you spend time doing the analysis.

### **Consider:**

- Identifying partnerships for raising funds – who shares a vision with you? With whom can you partner?
- Identifying priority areas in your country which are currently being funded and seeing whether your National Centre might align a project with these. For example, there may be funding available for education, rather than the arts – can you create a project which could connect with this? What about early childhood development? If there are funds available in this area, could a project be created to support several ASSITEJ members working in this area, and benefit your National Centre as well?
- Identifying activities which may be income-generating and can be used as ways for members to get to know one another and to work together on a concrete project. These could include performances, corporate functions targeting families, activities such as workshops or training, creating and selling merchandise, or advertising, running a small business on the side, etc.
- Identifying champions and ambassadors who can support you, write reference letters and who understand the importance of what you are doing.
- Identifying international funding opportunities and partnering with other members of ASSITEJ to achieve a project together.

When you receive funds, ensure that you report properly to the funder, doing the necessary monitoring and evaluation, as well as financial oversight, and that you communicate with the funder as a respected partner in the project.

## Case Studies:

### What advice do you have about securing funds?

Establish a track record of funding smaller projects through government agencies in order to build a case for continuing support.

Our host network has funding from government and membership fees. We have run specific campaigns among our membership to raise money for ASSITEJ International membership. This can be done again for specific outcomes. We have successfully approached government bodies for specific funding around projects including delegations and hosting gatherings.

A contracted grant writer is helpful; require your Board to contribute and fundraise.

Align the funding ask with the priorities of the funder. Articulate unique characteristics of ASSITEJ and the National Centre as a body with specific aims and outcomes.

To do all you can to be recognized as a high standard organisation and do all you can get support from government and/or Cultural agencies.

In our case where government doesn't invest a lot of money in art and theatre programs is not a great attraction for private funders, the help of International cultural organisations like Goethe, French institute, Korean Cultural centre are great support and we try and keep those relationships going.

It depends on each country's economy, but we recommend keeping up-to-date reports on every activity. They may be the best 'proof' sponsors need to maintain sponsorship. In Brazil, governmental bureaucracy may make this an endless task, but that is how things work here.

Centres may also open up businesses to realise some extra income for the Centre. Some examples: a photostat/computer centre; writing press releases for companies for a fee, providing services to corporate clients such as workshops in public speaking or presentation skills.

Building a relationship with a funder over several years is great when possible. Remembering that funders are people too (!) and being as understanding of their constraints and pressures is helpful. Always try to over-deliver if you can. Give a funder something more than what they expected to receive. This helps impress and keeps you on their radar. Publicise your funder and thank them publicly - this is also very helpful to keeping them engaged and reminded of you and your work. Keep good records and M&E so that your reporting can be useful to them in plotting how to give funds in the future. If you don't get funding, keep the relationship going wherever possible, keep them informed and hopefully they will come around eventually.

## **What innovative strategies have you used to secure funds?**

Personal requests to donors with long relationships with individuals. Personal approaches to individuals within arts funding bodies to share information about the sector, about specific opportunities to inspire interest.

We sell ads for our magazine and look for unique sponsors for One Theatre World

Organising programs and events which serve the needs of our members and TYA in India as a whole, plus it will connect us with an InterNational Centre. Like focussing our annual festival to a country like France, Korea etc

We sell advertising and sponsorship opportunities for our publications and events, as we reach a wide network of the theatre community. We look forward to finding more ways to expand this area of funding.

Along with hard work and efforts of ASSITEJ Korea staff members, inviting outstanding international performances to our annual festival for Korean young audiences has improved the status of ASSITEJ Korea and the festival. Enhanced ASSITEJ Korea's prestige was helpful.

We are improving several Erasmus+ projects to make use of EU funds

Making big festivals for school children so we can sponsor some of the tickets for the public schools, and have a higher price for private schools. This way people pay what they actually can and we can help everybody to be able to come to the theater even if they cannot afford it

We have tried hosting activities in collaboration with educational and cultural institutions

We are speaking with different kinds of cultural agents to obtain funds to support our association and to increase projects and visibility.

We are running a business centre with a full-time employee.

We have done crowdfunding drives for particular things like bussing children to the theatre, or community-based festivals. We have partnered with members and worked with them to secure funding - and then helped them administer the funding so that they are able to do so independently in the future. We have written countless funding proposals, and been dogged about pursuing whatever leads we get.

## **Managing Conflict**

### **The inevitability of conflict**

Disagreement and arguments are inevitable within any group of people who care passionately about the work that they do together. The opposite of conflict, after all, is not harmony, but apathy.

Managing processes to channel antagonism to make it productive will be critical to the sustainability and health of your National Centre. The following section provides some guidance on how to use the potential for conflict to be productive and to respond to the challenges it raises.

### **The benefits of conflict**

Conflict is beneficial where it avoids 'group-think'; that is, where the desire for consensus leads the group to make poor decisions.

Conflict indicates an investment in, and engagement with, the success of a National Centre, distributing responsibility between the members.

Conflict is productive when it allows the group to identify gaps in the information needed to make decisions, spot potential or actual pitfalls, and tease out alternative approaches and actions.

It requires an agreed-upon process for making and respecting decisions between different courses of action. This may be set out as a Code of Conduct for the members of your Centre and/or your Board.

While being in agreement with how you intend to govern your working practices at the outset is necessary, on its own it is not enough. You will need to train your Board members in effective practice and refer regularly to the agreement during your work together.

### How to make disagreement productive

- Identify together as many different dimensions of any proposed action or activity.
  - A **SWOT** analysis may be useful in this.
  - Edward DeBono has also proposed a **Six Hat Method**. (See for example, [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED\\_07.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm)). This allows a whole group to take different perspectives on any proposed decision through a sequence of taking specific roles.
- Develop multiple channels and regular opportunities for gathering and listening to feedback.
- Respond to this feedback when you review decisions and activities in as transparent a way as possible. For some activities, using an **external evaluator** can be valuable.
- Have a reporting cycle that lets everyone know what you did with the feedback in reviewing decisions and actions, and any changes that came about or will be introduced as a result.

### How to manage destructive conflict

Conflict is destructive when it:

- is focused on personal differences or prejudices
- arises from individuals or groups acting in their own interests, or the interests of a section of the members, rather than the mission, aims and values of the Centre
- concentrates on past behaviours and actions, rather than on what can be done now; and
- does not lead to actions to progress the work of the Centre.

To manage this destructive potential, it is important to:

- demonstrate transparency in decision-making and the operation of the Centre and its activities
- have a procedure for dealing with conflicts of interest
- agree with your membership how you will allow members to raise concerns and/or make complaints and how these will be investigated and resolved; and
- have a process for mediating between individuals and groups. This might be something you can do within your National Centre or be provided by an external organisation.

### What happens if the conflict is because of bullying or harassment?

Where your National Centre includes paid staff, there may be specific legal requirements that you must meet when there is an allegation of bullying or harassment.

Even where your National Centre involves only volunteer members, it may be useful to create a policy and procedure to handle any such allegations.

What happens when the conflict is because of personal relationships?

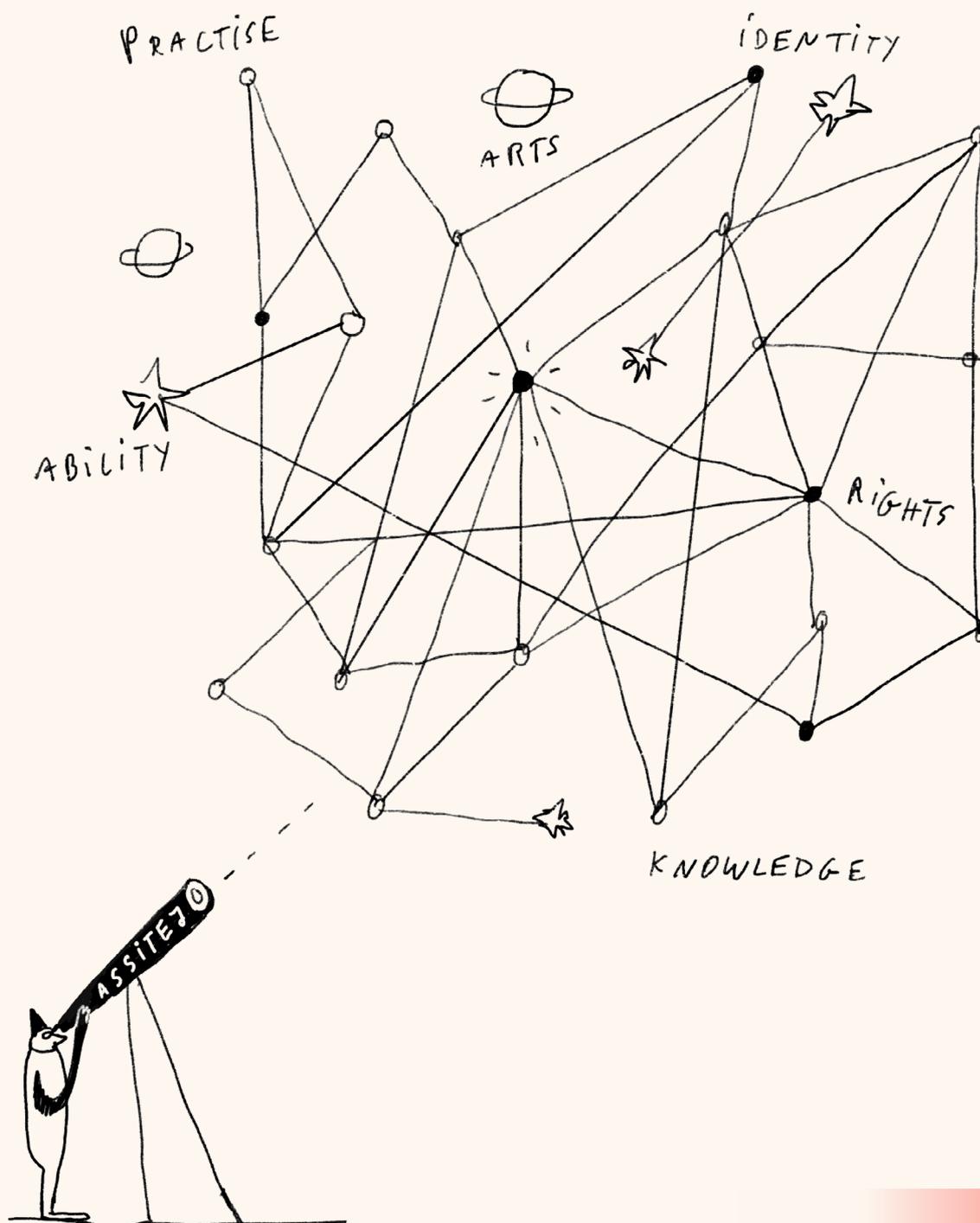
It isn't always possible to separate out personal issues from professional relationships, particularly where the two are intertwined with individual identity.

It may be possible to separate out the different factors that have given rise to the issues and address these separately. These might be because the people involved have very different goals or approaches or different styles of working or communication.

### External resources

See the material at Workplaces that Work [online] at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9780448553922#summary> "Let's talk: a guide to resolving workplace conflicts"

ACAS Managing Conflict at Work [online]. Available at: [http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/h/5/Managing\\_Conflict\\_at\\_Work\\_December\\_2009.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/h/5/Managing_Conflict_at_Work_December_2009.pdf)



# CHAPTER 6

## What does a National Centre do?

### Importance of Communication

Communication is perhaps the most important purpose of a National Centre, both within its own membership, and to the International Association.

It is required in the constitution that every National Centre communicate with the ASSITEJ International secretariat regularly (minimum once a year) about their activities. This is so the Executive Committee can work properly for the membership, understanding the health and needs of every National Centre.

Regular updates on what is happening nationally should be sent to the international office of ASSITEJ, and news should be provided wherever possible and relevant for the international newsletter.

It's vital for a National Centre is to spread and share information, so finding effective ways to communicate with its members and ASSITEJ International is essential to serving the community. Some of the communication strategies that are used by the National Centres include:

- Regular email or newsletters
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, etc.
- Website
- Phone calls or messaging services such as text message and WhatsApp, etc.
- Online 'face-to-face' formats such as Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- Postal mail outs

- In-person meetings such as formal meetings, functions, events, festivals, etc.
- Livestreaming of events, video archiving and other forms of video documentation.

### Activities - the importance of inspiration.

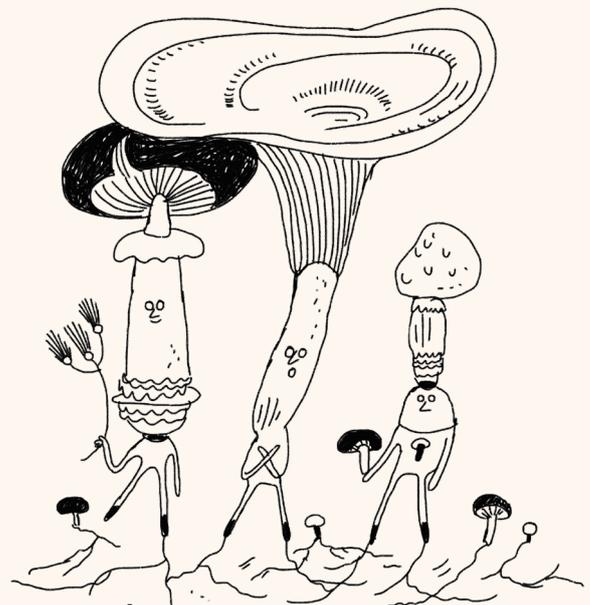
Where is our opportunity to change paradigms, find topics to discuss further and connect with new and deeper points of view?

Two levels of action:

**Ideological;** the exchange of ideas, providing inspiration.

Seminars, webinars, or meetings with government or arts bodies. This can inform and influence the gatekeepers and raise the perception of our sector.

**Concrete;** Encounters, workshops, showcases.



Share inspiring best practices. Translate articles that inspire. Spread the word about innovative contemporary work done for young audiences around the world. Publish papers online. Gather people together to share work face-to-face.

Activities that inspire and gather people together also attract talent to our sector. This can be done by:

- Advocating on a university level – professionalise the artists that are already there. Create links between TYA and young artists and teachers in training.
- Creating permanent structures that guarantee the sustainability of the companies e.g.. MAE – month of performing arts in Chile where every child in the public school system has access to a theatre performance, and Norway’s Cultural Backpack program where every child sees a theatre performance in their school each year.
- Looking for information about possible partners to pass on to the sector in your region, create a list and publish online.
- Finding cooperation partners – identify Arts Councils, have a presence in festivals, create missions with professionals from the country on international forums.
- Creating forums to explain the role of the cultural institutes, Art Councils, Foreign Policies, Export Agencies.
- Creating platforms to promote the artists and their work to one another and to possible funders or presenters.
- Sharing resources – particularly policies and templates from companies and organisations.
- Creating and share advocacy tools for your context.
- Building and maintaining a member database and contacts for each member.

## Case Studies:

### **What advice do you have about communicating with your members and the broader community?**

It works. People like to be in touch and to know there is energy around the work they do and connection with others. It's hard in Australia to be in touch sometimes - huge distances and differing circumstances and time-zones make it difficult. We have regular communication every month through our advocacy body and the promise of action down the track, emails to people and conversations wherever they are. The aim with our sector is to emphasise that sharing information is something everyone can do and needs to do.

Frequent social media communications and newsletters would benefit members.

To secure more staff who can be in charge of communication

We are much decentralized, a lot of the direct communication (meeting with professionals) is handled through regional platforms

Open the meetings of the Board regularly for the members to join. Create a part-time job for the communication with the members, to guarantee a regular and reliable basis.

We think it's fundamental to have a smooth communication with our members and develop other areas of cooperation. Our members are especially interested in opportunities and international calls

Internet is always easy but some of our people do not have internet so we phone call them or use WhatsApp for those connected.

Information flow is critical in any organisation to operate effectively and smoothly. Therefore, the Centre must be active in disseminating information to and from members. The members must always know the status of things all the time.

Putting word out about what you are doing into the general community - through the press or online media - is really helpful for building a profile of theatre for young audiences and making your members feel valued.

Communication through Facebook is very useful for keeping people engaged and keeping things relatively personal. Make sure that you communicate the story as well as the project - the personal touches, responses etc make a difference. Try to keep records of who, how, when you engaged with and keep some consistency in this communication. People don't like to feel that you have forgotten about them.

## Practical activities:

ASSITEJ National Centres can engage in creating and administering a range of ongoing activities linked to the needs of their particular TYA communities.

These may include any of the following on an international, regional, national or local level:

- Meetings
- Annual General Meeting
- Festivals
- Seminars/forums
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Collaborative projects
- Exchanges
- Artistic development opportunities
- Internships
- Publications - magazines, journals, books
- Exhibitions
- Promotional opportunities
- Competitions and awards especially in the area of TYA
- Showcases - inviting producers or promoters to see work



- Livestreaming of events
- Hosting an ASSITEJ Executive Committee meeting, ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering, ASSITEJ World Congress
- Hosting a Next Generation Opportunity at an existing or new event

Some of these events and activities may require very little effort to arrange, while others may be very ambitious and require years of planning and preparation. It is a good idea to look carefully at what already exists and can be harnessed in your country, before re-inventing the wheel.

Can your National Centre become the linking entity between those who are already doing what needs to be done? Can your National Centre provide a platform and more international connectedness for those who are already doing excellent work in the field? How can you partner with those who are already doing the work, and what value can the ASSITEJ brand add to what is already being done?

## Collaborations and projects (national and international)

ASSITEJ is all about collaboration. The organisation was created to unify people from all over the world who share the same belief in the value of the performing arts for children and young people.

We need to be sensitive to the fact that our National Centres come from vastly different social, cultural and economic paradigms, and to recognise and actively resist the power-play that may be present in collaborations as a result.

The purpose of a good collaboration is to empower all those involved and to ensure that there is equality in decision-making so that all parties reap benefits from working together.

The following examples are reflections and situations from the past from our members: since COVID 19

## Case Studies:

### What advice do you have about National Centre activities?

Activity for us has to be started by need and desire from members.

Don't stretch yourself too thin.

Working with partners who are already running events/ festivals which the National Centre could work within is a good way to supporting initiatives and increasing engagement

The National Centre is not organising many events by itself. Nationally, we are mainly handling the political aspects.

It is important to make sure your programs and activities are clearly communicated to both members, and in the community beyond the membership, to increase the impact of the programming. More awareness of the programming can lead to both increased participation and increased funding support.

It is important that a National Centre be viewed as one that brings members together, involves member groups in national activities and if necessary, to regional and international organisations like ASSITEJ International.

There is a need to increase both local and international collaborations. The Centre must engage its membership through creating a number of activities such as festivals, workshops and meetings.

National Centres need to offer concrete activity. In a large country, we try to move that activity around so that it benefits different people at different times. We also make sure that the festivals we engage with have a good geographical spread. We try as far as possible to make opportunities possible for a diverse range of artists – the amateurs, the emerging, the professionals – and across cultures... this is difficult at times, but the more activity we generate, the more engagement and involvement there is from the members.

## Case Studies:

Collaboration is the best way to enlarge the activities and to bring more people and promote the organisation.

Collaboration is the best for us because our Centre couldn't organise festivals and production by ourselves. We should work together.

When there is collaboration, members grow by interacting with different partners and creativity is enhanced.

Collaborations are important and must be encouraged as they help in understanding of what other people are doing be it national or international level.

It is really important to know who your partner is and to be able to trust them. Spending time dealing with expectations is very important, particularly in instances where there is a lack of balance of power. Collaborations are often the best way to get things done. We are more likely to attract funding where we demonstrate that we are working with others than when we keep the benefits to a few... Don't assume anything. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to seem stupid. You need to understand one another if the project is to work. Make sure that you have a clear idea of where you are going and what you hope to achieve.

We collaborate with other associations of professionals from art / culture in education fields and popular education.

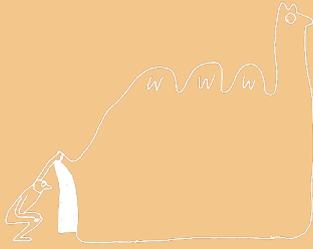
We collaborate nationally with Unima and Astra-Agita (other associations focused on theater for and with children)

We work with the American Alliance for Theatre & Education on our Young Playwrights for Change program.

We try to establish collaborations with other national organisations so as to make the output stronger.

ASSITEJ Pakistan normally collaborates with Government Cultural organisations like arts councils and other international cultural organisations for logistics of its events.

Especially in developing countries as Brazil, we suggest collaborations with social-educational associations and institutions, either governmental or private ones.



# CHAPTER 7

## Chapter 7: What now?

### Induction, Growth and Renewal

#### For new National Centres - induction process:

On completing your membership form and sending it to the Secretary-General, your application will undergo a review to determine if it meets the ASSITEJ criteria. Upon approval, you will receive a formal acceptance, an invitation to pay your membership fee, and then officially become a member of ASSITEJ. Following that, you will be added to the website and your contact details will be shared with other members.

#### Case Studies:

A lot of National Centres are not properly updated on the ASSITEJ website; there is no email address or they don't respond on any email. This should be addressed by all National Centres because this is what ASSITEJ is. If we will not talk with each other, then what ASSITEJ is offering us?

We know that the first year of membership can be hard, but there are many ways that we can work together to help you navigate your introduction to the ASSITEJ Network. Some of these steps include:

- Getting in touch with the Secretary-General to discuss your situation. If you wish, we can connect you with another National Centre for the first six months to a year. This is to help new members get to know the ASSITEJ Network, find

answers to questions, or find practical solutions to the problems they face.

- The Secretary-General can also connect you with an EC member who can advise and assist you in building a relationship with the association over the next year. If you can see a natural fit with one of the EC members, please suggest this to the Secretary-General. Otherwise, an EC member can be allocated to your Centre. In some instances, we may ask past-EC members to assist us in this mentoring process.
- Ensuring that an individual from your National Centre goes to the first possible ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering or Congress in order to learn more about the association first hand. This will be easier in many ways as online engagement continues around the world. Consider how you might assist this person to attend - whether it's for travel or for time spent at the gathering away from their work. Could they participate in an aspect of the programme which would ensure that certain costs are covered (e.g. Next Generation, or offering a workshop)?
- Determining what ASSITEJ activities or calls you could participate in. For instance, sharing the call for a Next Generation participant can increase excitement and interest in your Centre. Some opportunities include:
  - World Theatre Day - 20th March and 'take a child to the theatre today' campaign
  - ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering or Congress
  - Next Generation residencies
  - online Coffee Sessions
  - Umbrella Networking sessions online
  - calls for articles and advertisements

- for the ASSITEJ Magazine; and
- Festivals or projects of other ASSITEJ Centres, Networks or Individual members
- Embracing the strengths of your members and determining what activities would be best for you to embark on. Linking to things that are already happening is a great way to ensure that your Centre becomes active as soon as possible. An example might be to arrange a forum for an ideas exchange around a season of work, or a community event. This could happen online or in real life, to draw practitioners together and generate conversation and connection.
- Finding and utilising simple communication tools to ensure that all of those who have engaged with the Centre and become members can be aware of what is happening in the field of TYA in your country and in the activities of your Centre.
- Determining what regional networks are operating within ASSITEJ that may be useful to your National Centre either formally or informally e.g. ACYTA/ AYTA/ NORDIC / IBERIA AMERICAN, etc. These networks can be a good way to learn more about the region and to engage with others around opportunities.
- Find out what is happening in the ASSITEJ Network that may be of interest to your members. Small Size, ITYARN, IIAN, Next Generation, Write Local Play Global and Young Dance Network, all allow for different kinds of engagements and activities which may be of interest to different members. Linking your members to opportunities wherever possible is a way to remain a vital resource in your community.

## Growth and Development of a National Centre

The growth of a National Centre should combine the desire for development with an attitude of care that encourages small steps to be taken, allowing the Centre to start as a small seed that can grow over time.

### Case Studies:

We are a big work in progress, but each year, ASSITEJ Uruguay grows and learns to become more and more useful for members and community in general. We recommend to start little by little; all the good ideas will become projects one day, and then with lots of effort, a reality. So in general we listen to all good ideas and try to apply them little by little in our long term project...

Self-assessment formats can be made so that each National Centre can periodically review its work and overcome specific challenges to increase the impact of ASSITEJ and the spread of TYA.

To grow strongly, the new National Centre should consider feasibility, compatibility and sustainability.

- Feasibility because the number of individuals or organisations who wish to participate in the activities and mission of a National Centre and that of ASSITEJ is growing, thanks to the positive promotion of the work done and of the cultural aims of the Centre.
- Compatibility so that the expansion of the membership contributes to the vision described in the Constitution of ASSITEJ and the Agreement that regulates the life of the National Centre.
- Sustainability because there is solid management and planning which allow the real development of the Centre without demanding too much of its members.

The continuous reference to ASSITEJ is necessary to remember that the development of every National Centre, besides fulfilling the function of promoting and supporting the TYA in its own country, also aims to do so on a worldwide, trans-national scale, through the work of ASSITEJ International.

It is part of the strength of the whole community that National Centres have a fruitful and two-way relationship with the international association.

### **For returning members - renewal**

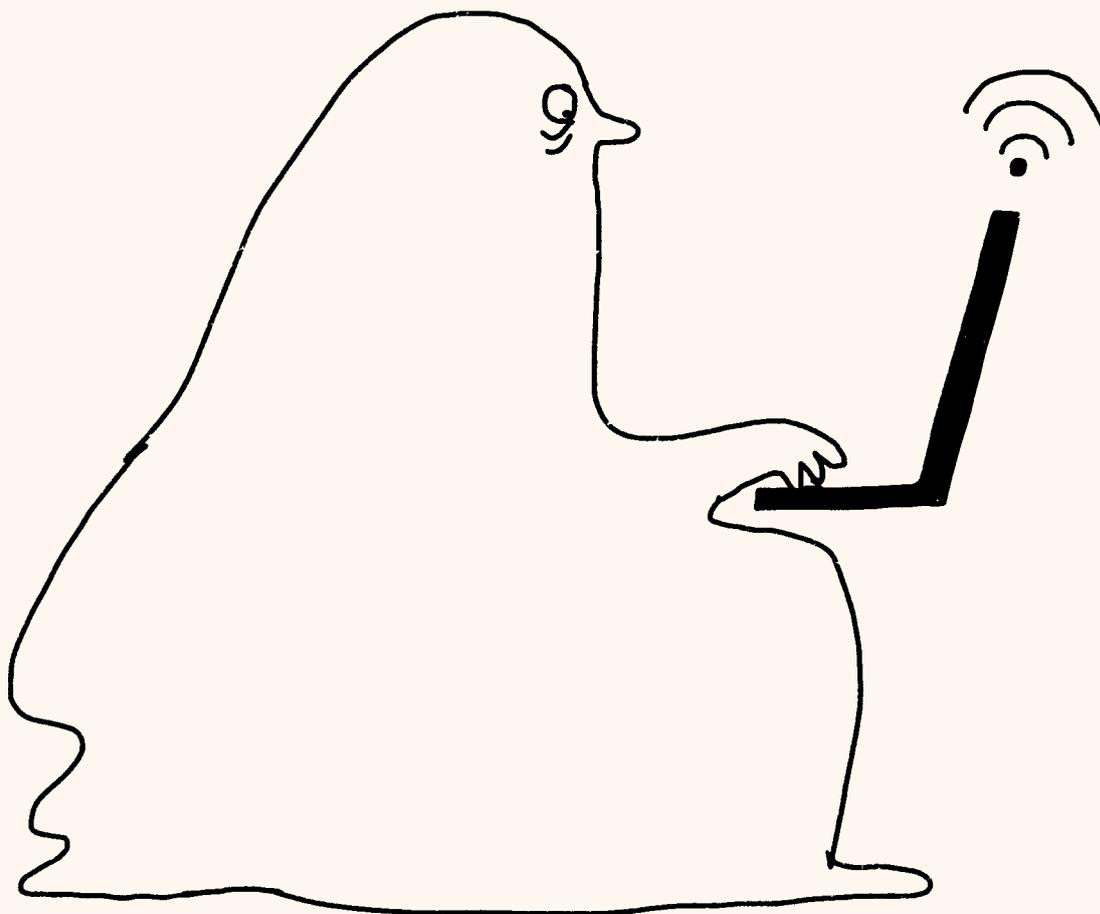
Reading this toolkit, we hope that there have been moments of illumination or challenge, where you have been asked

to look at your current practice and have thought 'perhaps we could be doing more', or 'differently', or 'perhaps there are aspects of our work which needs to be looked at again, and revised'.

We would encourage each National Centre to spend time working through this toolkit with all their members, and gauging what they have to say about how effectively your Centre is serving the interests of the community. All National Centre always have room for growth and development.

**Please be in touch with the Secretary-General or EC if there are specific things you would like to discuss.**

**We are here to support you.**



FOR MORE INFORMATION...

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*\* Thanks to the National Centres that contributed to the survey and the best case examples that are shared in the Toolkit.*

## **Illustrator**

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