



ASSITEJ Executive Committee Meeting: Online, 23 January 2026

Present members of the Executive Committee:

Susan Jessica Giles, *President*, Australia (Sue)
Louis Valente Sørensen, *Secretary General*, Denmark (Louis)
Paulo Ricardo Merisio, *Vice President*, Brazil (Paulo)
Selloane Mokuku, *Vice President*, South Africa (Lalu)
Seok-hong Kim, *Vice President*, South Korea (Seok-hong)
Gonzalo Moreno, Spain (Gonzalo)
Jonathan Dafydd-Kidd, UK (Jon)
Julia Dina Heße, Germany (Julia)
Maria Luisa Labuhn, Young Dance Network (Bebê de Soares)
Shoaib Iqbal, Pakistan & New Zealand (Shoaib)
Stavros Stavrou, Cyprus (Stavros)
Theis Håvard Fincekhagen Campbell Irgens, Norway (Theis)
Yannick Louis Marie Boudeau, Belgium (Yannick)

Absent members of the Executive Committee:

Carole Umuliga Karemera, Rwanda (Carole)
Émilie Robert, *Treasurer*, France (Émilie)

Present staff members:

Christopher John Blois-Brooke, *Staff Member*, UK (Chris)

Absent staff members:

Beatriz Aguilar, *Staff Member*, Spain (Beatriz)
Marissa Garay, *Staff Member*, Mexico (Marissa)



Agenda

- 1. Welcome from President**
- 2. Regularity of the Meeting**
- 3. Present, Apologies, Number of Voters**
- 4. Proposal and Approval of Agenda**
- 5. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting**
- 6. Conflicts of Interest**
- 7. Decision on Call for Bids**
- 8. Any Other Business**



1. Welcome from President

Sue Giles welcomed the EC.

2. Regularity of the Meeting

Sue, in her capacity as President, confirmed the regularity of the meeting, complying with the provisions of Article 10.2 of the Constitution, to discuss and deliberate on the presented agenda.

3. Present, Apologies, Number of Voters

Apologies from Carole Karemera, Émilie Robert, Beatriz Aguilar, and Marissa Garay, who were unable to attend.

13 voters present.

4. Proposal and Approval of Agenda

Sue went over the official agenda for the meeting, which the EC approved unanimously by a show of hands.

5. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

Sue asked the EC to approve the minutes through an online vote after this meeting.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Conflict of interest declared by Paulo Merisio, as Brazil has put forward an Expression of Interest for an Artistic Gathering. Sue confirmed that Theis Irgens is involved in Norway, and Yannick Boudeau is involved in Belgium's expression of interests.

7. Decision on Call for Bids

Sue outlined the need to reach timely decisions ahead of the May 2026 General Assembly, particularly to allow sufficient preparation time for potential 2028 hosts.

Sue shared the briefing document (Appendix) and clarified that, since the document was written, she and Louis Valente Sørensen have now met with Brazil. She asked members for questions and comments.

Yannick asked if there were any reports from Regional Cooperation Projects yet, but acknowledged it might be too soon. Sue and Stavros Stavrou have met with the Wanderlust project and reported that it was a very positive meeting.

Louis said it was too early to assess Regional Cooperation Projects, but expressed that they would have a very different kind of impact from *ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings*.

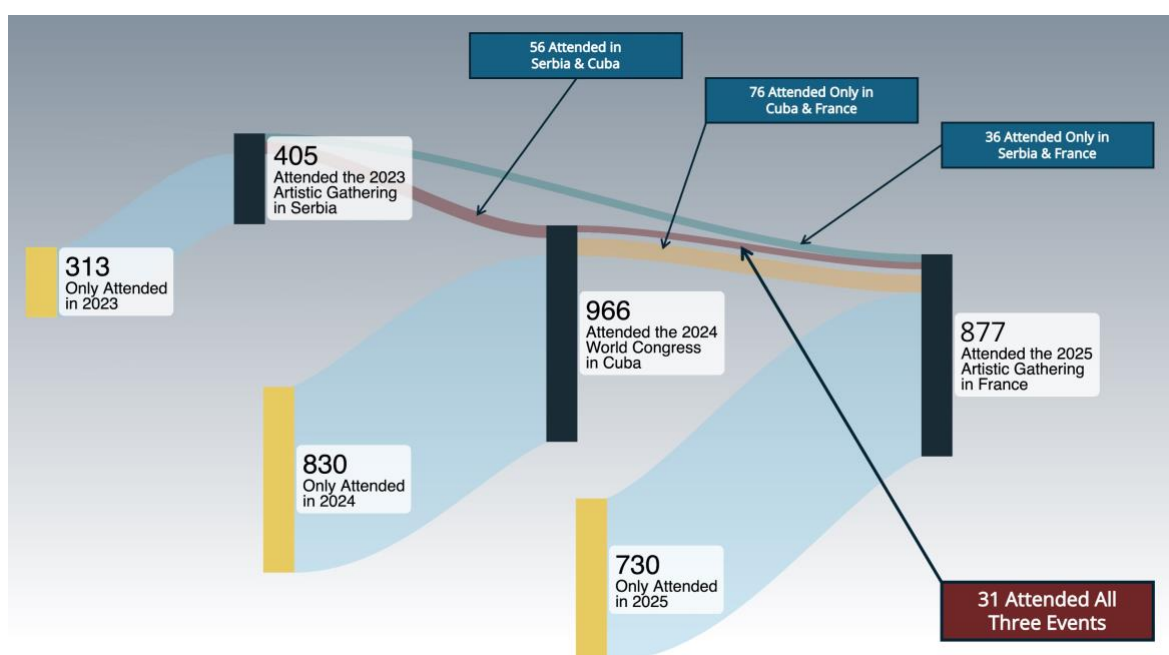
Bebê de Soares stated that *ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings* should focus more on the Professional Exchange Programme, adopt different formats, and promote geographical diversity.

Julia Dina Heße stated that Regional Cooperation Project partners feel more attached to *ASSITEJ International* and, upon completion of their projects, would be much better placed to host Artistic Gatherings. She shared that, though previously sceptical about annual gatherings, it now feels the new parameters of the events make an annual event feasible, but stressed that it needed to be manageable for staff.

Stavros praised the Expression of Interest process and the level of interest received; suggested keeping engaged even with unsuccessful bids, and asked whether centres could apply for more than one year. He suggested one World Congress, one Artistic Gathering, and one Professional Gathering per three-year period. Sue suggested applying for multiple years might be a problem, but that they could apply again after an unsuccessful bid.

Shoaib Iqbal stressed the importance of the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings* to the association and expressed that New Zealand found the current timelines too short. A multi-year application would have really helped with funding and partner identification.

Louis was in favour of annual events - and referenced the data, member feedback, and this diagram:





Louis suggested the role of Event Manager / Producer, which could be included in future funding applications, and also proposed keeping the expression of interest process alongside formal bidding procedures. He shared some concerns around having an event with a performance programme one year, and without a performance programme the next as a condition from ASSITEJ rather than option the bidders can choose from.

Theis Irgens praised not having an *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering* in 2026, not only for a break but also because its absence has demonstrated the membership's desire for it. He would find it valuable to hold an *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering* without a performance programme, to test the concept and gauge membership's response. Theis also expressed a desire to change the rolling period from 3 to 4 years, with a big event every other year.

Gonzalo Moreno agreed with Theis, praised the Regional Cooperation Programme, and proposed a thematic focus for smaller *ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings* (e.g., Theatre & Education).

Bebê shared that the Professional Exchange has moved from a peripheral focus to being the main focus and proposed mixing it with a regional showcase.

Chris Blois-Brooke shared that the proposal for a 3-year rolling application period would also allow unsuccessful bids to reapply.

Paulo reminded that in recent years, *ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings* have grown in size to mirror World Congresses, and that the Regional Cooperation Programme would fill in the year where there is no *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering*. However, the Regional Cooperation Programme has grown into being its own thing.

Jon Dafydd-Kidd stated that ASSITEJ's mission statement doesn't mandate a focus on performance-sharing. Raising the issue of future funding for events may be the responsibility of the next, not the current, EC. He asked to refocus on why we are meeting and also taking pressure off the staff. He asked whether we can use the annual online General Assembly to choose the event location three years from now (to avoid selecting multiple locations at once). Jon added that removing the performance programme might render the events irrelevant to programmers.

Sue asked whether there were different ways to share productions outside the performance paradigm.

Julia asked how we decide whether one *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering* in the three-year cycle has a performance programme, and whether another does not, and what issues this may raise. Sue confirmed it is still a question of whether we prescribe the format or are much more flexible.

Bebê said there is no doubt about the importance of the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering* and the need for the hosts to exhibit regional performance work and host an event of scale. And reiterated that an Event Producer position would be helpful.



Louis called for a clear vote for future planning purposes. He suggested that a programme with a variety of entry points is ideal, organised around different thematically focused days. He expressed that voting ahead for four years in Seoul has the benefit of many more in-person delegates than the rolling three-year application period proposal.

Yannick expressed surprise at the number of Expressions of Interest, but noted and asked why there's an absence from Africa or Southeast Asia. Gonzalo reiterated that the scale issue is not only about workload but also about enabling hosts from other geographical contexts. Bebê reminded that as recently as 2018, it was seen as impossible for a gathering to be held in Latin America. Louis said that future funding applications may involve shifting some financial responsibilities away from the hosts (e.g., accommodation costs, costs for the new voices programme, workshop leader fees, etc.). Paulo shared that, in the context of the potential bid from Brazil, the process was very positive, particularly regarding the possibility of a flexible format and different regional perspectives.

Stavros mentioned that regional representation should build on the Regional Cooperation Programme, and that current project partners should be encouraged to apply for events in future years. It is important to continue to make it clear that the format is flexible (e.g., with or without a performance programme), giving applicants the option of a big or small event. Another format or a smaller scale should not be a disadvantage.

Lalu Mokuku reflected on the lack of African representation and shared difficulties - calling for a frank conversation with members of ACYTA, for example, and shared concerns about members who don't pay membership fees. Louis proposed to meet in person with ACYTA members in Senegal this June, or to call for an online conversation. Sue agreed that the ASSITEJ Regional Networks can significantly impact global representation.

Seok-hong Kim echoed the importance of encouraging centres that have not previously hosted or considered hosting *ASSITEJ International* events and emphasised that the expectation of an overwhelming project scale and budget put off many countries. He agreed that the Regional Cooperation Programme is a stepping stone to potential future bidders.

VOTE:

Is the EC in favour of a yearly ASSITEJ International event?

Unanimous vote in favour (13 votes)

VOTE:

Is the EC in favour of requesting bids for the 2028 event to be presented to the General Assembly in May 2026?

Unanimous vote in favour (13 votes)



Julia and Sue discussed whether *ASSITEJ International* should set a format or scale, or remain open to applicants. Bebê believes there should be no prescribed format.

Stavros shared that communication-wise it is important to emphasise to members that, despite the difficulties, the decision was taken having taken into consideration the survey results.

Louis proposed that the Expression of Interest procedure for 2031 be included in the 2027 World Congress, and also called for repeating the procedure for 2029 and 2030 to allow other National Centres to participate who haven't already responded.

VOTE:

Is the EC in favour of presenting the bids for 2029 and 2030 at the World Congress in 2027?

Unanimous vote in favour (13 votes)

VOTE:

Does the EC agree to leave the 2031 bidding to the new EC elected in 2027?

Unanimous vote in favour (13 votes)

Louis reminded that constitutional changes might be needed regarding the 4th year of bidding, and said it would be useful to stipulate the process for the 2031 event in advance. He reminded the meeting that we are no longer legally required to hold an annual online General Assembly.

Sue and Louis agreed to conduct a temperature check in May 2026 to see whether members wanted an annual online General Assembly.

Sue summarised that this is an opportunity to change and reimagine the events to make them more feasible for a broader range of hosts. Confirmed it's about making sure potential bidders know they won't be disadvantaged by proposing smaller-scale events.

Stavros asked if bidders could be given a longer time period to present their bid - perhaps as part of Umbrella Sessions, some weeks before the General Assembly. Louis proposed that this could be a less formal Q&A session rather than a formal bid presentation.

Sue called for volunteers to draft these ideas, process, and Expression of Interest procedures more clearly for members - perhaps on the website. Stavros and Jon volunteered to work on this.



8. Appendix: Briefing Document Shared Via Email Ahead of Meeting

Discussion report on the next steps for deciding on ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings

Background

We have been talking formally and informally about the ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings and whether they should be included in our calendar every year. Within the EC there are several opinions but all recognise the value of these gatherings and wish them to continue. However the size of them, and the expectations for the hosts, have grown across the years and we are all interested in making sure that National Centres have the capacity to host without breaking their finances or their people.

In November and December 2025 we met with National Centres who had responded to a Call for expressions of interest (EOI) to host an ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering. To remind us, the content of this call can be seen here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-f41J6nzafLj0JwFuuzrnVY98b0PBQ-V/edit>

In summary, National Centres were asked to provide an EOI for an Artistic Gathering that expressed briefly their intention and need, their vision for the event including a brief idea of shape and size, and any questions they had. This was seen as a way of taking the temperature of the community - who is interested and why and how they might be thinking about the event.

The EOIs were from ASSITEJ Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway and Russia. We met with all except ASSITEJ Russia, who had not responded to an invitation to make a time; and ASSITEJ Brazil, with whom we had difficulties coordinating time zones. (Louis had a separate conversation with Paulo about the bid, learning from him that they were keen on a 2028 AAG.)

All the Expressions of Interest can be seen in the PDF report attached to the email.

An important part of the conversation with each National Centre was about the shape of the AAG they had in mind. The notion that perhaps productions might not be the focus, rather concentrating on professional exchange, was raised in the EC before we met with National Centres. We discovered in our conversations with each, that some were already thinking in this way. And we heard and brainstormed other proposals during these conversations.

2026 is an experiment with not having an AAG, concentrating on making the Regional Cooperation Programme a success and also, for our staff especially,



having a year where we were *not* delivering another enormous project. It was never intended to be an ongoing shape (one AAG per term and one WC) without EC and member agreement. So where are we up to?

There is strong evidence in our data and in our conversations with members, that the yearly international gathering space is highly valued. Currently we are looking at reverting to an Artistic Gathering in every year of the ASSITEJ term, but at the same time proactively and strongly encouraging the creation of different, more manageable shapes for this annual gathering.

Some of the questions raised by the EC that should be considered are:

How do we consider the effect of an annual AAG on our staff and how do we make it more possible if we revert to an AAG every year? (Chris fed into the discussion that *not* having an AAG in 2026 means that the work around the World Congress is much further ahead. However, Chris and Marissa have been consulted after the round of EOI and are happily on board if the EC decides to continue annual gatherings.)

How do we ensure a very broad attendance at AAGs and World Congress?

How do we make sure that more Members can afford to do an AAG?

If we didn't do a full AAG every year it might mean that World Congress has more support?

Can we make a different shape each year, not all the same size, and for different purposes?

Can we make more of our international gatherings - especially world congress – for attendance of decision makers nationally and regionally – make them more focused politically?

Can the AAGs be more regional, focus on regional strengthening and advocacy?

How can we build on the Regional Cooperation Programme to incorporate an AAG – a smaller version in places that are rarely visited?

How can we ensure that the AAG is in different regions each time and can we consult with members about whether it is annual or just one per term?

The size and content is the big question – can people hold an international event with a smaller offering? Eg: can we limit delegates? (Many festivals do)



We propose the following:

At Annual General Assembly in May 2026 we ask for bids to be made for the year 2028

Because of the timing of the World Congress in 2027, it is not possible to leave the bids for 2028 until the General Assembly in Seoul as the successful bid will not have enough time to prepare and deliver the event in 2028.

This makes it necessary to present bids for 2028 at the 2026 General Assembly in May.

The expression of interest process revealed that there are at least two National Centres who are keen to create an AAG for 2028: Israel and Brazil

At World Congress General Assembly we ask for bids to be made for 2029, 2030 and 2031

The bids for AAG in 2029, 2030 World Congress and AAG in 2031 would be presented to members at the World Congress in 2027. Currently we have a potential World Congress bid from ASSITEJ Belgium, and bids for 2029 from Norway and Canada.

There is nothing yet talked about for 2031 and this would be important to secure as it makes an incredible difference to the National Centre and to ASSITEJ International to know this in good time.

What the EC need to decide:

Do we have an AAG each year and do we turn our efforts to changing the size and shape of these so they are more possible for us and more of our members?

Do we present bids to members at our 2026 General Assembly for the year 2028?

Do we present bids for 2029, 2030 and 2031 at the World Congress General Assembly?

Further questions to consider but no decision needed as yet: Whether we continue the Regional Cooperation Programme for another three years. Also, whether holding our Artistic Gatherings and World Congresses should be the focus of our next application to the EU - that these become the projects around which we centre all the work.