

## Focus Group IO1 ACT – Ghent – 03/06/2016

### NTGent (Nederlands Theater Gent – Dutch Theatre Ghent), 3 June 2016

#### Report

1. **Participants:**

- All participants were full time employees in NTGent. The organizer of the Focus group was NTGent PLUS (i.e. the mediation and educational department, represented by Dirk Crommelinck.
- The participants agreed upon not mentioning the names of the participants, but rather the role they play in the artistic process. This due to the perception of the topics discussed, from different points angles in the normal working process.
- The artistic NTGent team participating in the FOCUS GROUP contained 1 director, 2 dramaturgs, 1 production manager, 1 sound designer, 1 light designer, 1 overall artistic technical co-ordinator, 1 actor.

2. **Interview:** June 3, 2016 – 9 am till 11.30 am – NTGent – conference room – moderated by Dirk Crommelinck. The questionnaire put together for IO1 in the ACT project was used as a basis for the interview.

3. **First start:**

Upon confronting the group members with the questionnaire, it became very obvious that it was necessary for all to give some more explanation about the European project ACT. Secondly, all of the members were very interested to get an update on the accessibility of out theatre productions and our venues and the facilities we offer to our audience. Quite soon, the interview became chaotic and unstructured, the principal reason being the understanding in full of all the terminology involved in the accessibility facilities. Therefore the moderating interviewer decided to give a profound insight in all of facilities, the terminology and technology involved, the accessibility policy and the planning an organizing of this policy. In fact, this kind of information momentum proved very useful to give all of these people insight in the fact that, although they claim to be acquainted with the facilities we offer, they do not know in full what accessibility really means and how it is taken care of.

4. **Restart:**

While all the people involved in this Focus Group were informed extensively we then restarted to talk about the questionnaire constructed for the venues. The group used it as a structured framework to: 1. inform everybody around the table about the different existing accessibility facilities, 2. to inform them about the facilities used by our own theatre company NTGent in our venues (we have four Ghent venues in which we produce plays), 3. to talk about the accessibility facilities used when on tour with our productions (visiting other venues in our own country and abroad).

5. **Questionnaire:**

We discussed all of the questions of the survey, meanwhile talking about the experiences they had with accessibility facilities. We filled out the whole questionnaire.

## **6. Round-up:**

While discussing questions and answers (cf. point 5) the following overall comments from the artistic team were noted:

- All participants are convinced of the fact that all of these facilities should be available in our own NTGent theatre venue.
- They know that in fact only in our biggest venue (NTGent Schouwburg) we can organize all of these facilities. In the other venues we have to make choices in what we can offer, due to architectural and logistic problems. (e.g. we cannot organize audiodescription in our venues NTGent Minnemeers and NTGent Minarschouwburg at the moment, due to technical issues)
- They all became aware of the fact that providing facilities of this kind costs a lot of money. In fact, we don't have the funding for providing all of the facilities for all of our productions.
- The director sometimes uttered some artistic reluctance to involve facilities such as surtitles or sign language interpretation. (due to artistic involvement in set decoration and design)
- They all said that, when on tour (i.e. in other venues), they were hardly confronted with any of the accessibility facilities, except (of course?) with facilities for wheelchairs. Lots of work to do there...!
- They appreciate the work the NTGent educational department puts into accessibility, but find that, when playing a series of performances, they themselves are not aware of what is happening concerning all this, until they are confronted with it. This is not the case for the production manager and the overall artistic technical co-ordinator, since they are involved from the beginning in the organization of most of the accessibility facilities, because of the impact some of them have on the performance or the set, sound and lighting design.
- The actor definitely appreciated the fact that e.g. audiodescription gives the actors of a production the chance to meet people before the performance, during the special introductions that are offered to e.g. blind people or deaf and hard of hearing people.
- The dramaturgs in fact (without crucifying them) were the people who were the least aware of all of the accessibility facilities we offer. They were a bit ashamed about that, but at the same time asked for more internal communication about this. The education department agreed upon this as being a thing to be improved.

**Report made by Dirk Crommelinck, June 7 2016. Ghent, Belgium.**