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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Working visit to England to find viable future for**

**the historic stage machinery of the Bourla Theatre**

**Antwerp / The Hague, 25 February 2015 – The Flemish Government, the City of Antwerp, Toneelhuis, Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute will jointly investigate what adjustments will be required and may be realised, and on what conditions, so as in due course to achieve the compatibility and potential synergies between the protected historic stage-machinery of the Bourla Theater in Antwerp, dating from 1834, and the current day needs of the resident stage company Toneelhuis.**

After obtaining the results of the feasibility study, made on instruction of the Antwerp Municipality last year in order to investigate under which conditions the requirements of Toneelhuis could be met in the Bourla building, PERSPECTIV – the Association of Historic Theatres in Europe, took the initiative to submit the Bourla as a candidate for Europa Nostra’s ‘The 7 Most Endangered’ programme. It had become evident that apart from some radical changes to the theatre itself, the complete dismantling of the – largely intact – original 1834 stage-machinery, had been championed.

‘The 7 Most Endangered’ programme foresees that for each dossier a review group and multidisciplinary team with experts knowledgeable in the specific problems of the dossier is composed by Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute. These groups are to visit the sites and develop realistically achievable solutions in close cooperation with those concerned and the appropriate authorities. The starting point of the underlying dossier purposes to try and protect as diligently as possible the historic and unique stage-equipment of the Bourla, and simultaneously to evaluate and accommodate as well as possible the needs of Toneelhuis for a conforming, efficient and safe functioning theater staging.

During the past weeks two clarifying discussions could take place with Toneelhuis, as the directly involved artistically and technically responsible partner, and the Antwerp Municipality, as the owner.

All partners have accepted that, in order to reach a responsible policy choice, it will be necessary to assess what may be possible within the confines of a combination of the present infrastructure, the desired modern equipment and the contemporary programming. All were convinced that it will be essential to engage relevant external expertise, and analyse and calculate together with them the various possibilities.

All partners have accepted the invitation of the review group to pay a working visit – together with David Wilmore, expert in the usage of historic and modern theatre infrastructure and how to manage it – to a number of theatres where diverse combinations of historic infrastructure and contemporary theatre are effective in England on 12-13 March 2015.

**Background information**

**‘**[**The 7 Most Endangered**](http://www.europanostra.org/7-most-endangered)**’** programme was launched in January 2013 by Europa Nostra with the European Investment Bank Institute as founding partner and the Council of Europe Development Bank as associated partner. It identifies endangered monuments and sites in Europe and mobilises public and private partners on a local, national and European level to find a viable future for those sites. ‘The 7 Most Endangered’ has the support of the [**Creative Europe**](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm)programme of the European Union, as part of Europa Nostra’s networking project ‘Mainstreaming Heritage’.

[**Europa Nostra**](http://www.europanostra.org/)is the European federation of heritage organisations. Covering 47 countries in Europe and beyond, the organisation is the voice of civil society committed to the safeguard and promotion of Europe’s cultural and natural heritage. Founded in 1963 in Paris, Europa Nostra has its headquarters in The Hague and an office in Brussels. Its pan-European network comprises: 250 heritage NGOs with a total membership of several million people; 150 public bodies or private companies; and 1200 individual members. Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes; it celebrates excellence through its Awards Scheme run in partnership with the European Commission; and it seeks to influence European and national policies related to heritage. **Plácido Domingo**, the world-renowned opera singer, is the President of Europa Nostra.

The [**European Investment Bank Institute**](http://institute.eib.org/)promotes European initiatives for the common good. It was created as part of the European Investment Bank Group in January 2012 to act as a catalyst for social, cultural, educational and research activities directed towards economic and social development in Europe. Detailed information on the activities of the Institute can be obtained from its website.

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