Government savings severely affecting Amsab-ISH, Ghent, Belgium

Dear IALHI members,

With this mail we are informing you of a decision of the Flemish government of 1 October past. Due to government cuts, Amsab-Institute of Social History is facing the worst crisis in its history. From 1 January onwards, the Belgian government grant will be reduced by fifty percent. Since the Amsab-ISH depends for 95 percent on this grant, this means that half of the institute's budget will be taken away. This is due to austerity measures of the Flemish government. However, the cuts are completely unexpected and go against everything that has been done in Flemish cultural heritage policies in the past years. Devastating savings are hitting all archives and heritage libraries in Flanders, and a great number of local museums.

The social democratic minister of culture has argued that by putting the burden on the cultural heritage institutions, and not on the arts sector, she is "rescuing the REAL content makers in our society, so that we can better fight against Trump", and also that "surely we can rely on the political parties and movements to provide us with future funding".

Obviously, Amsab-ISH does not share these opinions. The Amsab-ISH is fighting for the status as an independent institution, preserving heritage that would otherwise be lost, and opening this to the public as a general service to society. During the past weeks the Amsab-ISH was engaged in numerous protest actions, ranging from demonstrations, social media campaigns and

Unfortunately, although some support will be provided to help the Amsab-ISH get through the transit year of 2027, the savings most likely will go through. For Amsab-ISH this means that in a year from now, it will probably lose half of its staff, and reduce the number of its projects, activities and engagements.

The Amsab-ISH appreciates any form of supporting the institute's protest actions. The Amsab-ISH can provide the IALHI member institutions with a standard letter that can be signed and sent to the minister to underline the damage that will be done by these measures, also on the level of international cooperation. The standard letter can be found here.

If you have any questions, please contact Donald Weber (donald.weber@amsab.de).

The IALHI thanks all of its member institutions in advance for supporting the Amsab-ISH.

With best wishes of solidarity,

The IALHI Board



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