

# Seeds of Change

**Effective Investments in Early Childhood for Enduring Social Progress**

14–17 October, 2009

Bucharest, Romania



ISSA, a leading network of early childhood education and development organizations from Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia, proudly invites you to participate in its 2009 Annual Conference and celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This event is co-hosted by the Center for Education and Professional Development, Romania, under the patronage of the **President of Romania, H. E. Traian Băsescu**. The conference is organized in partnership with and with support from the Open Society Institute, and also with the technical support and participation of UNICEF CEE/CIS, OSCE/ODIHR and the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation.

The conference will explore **integrated approaches to early childhood development and education (ECDE)**, as the strongest foundation for well-being and success throughout life. Research shows that the first years in a child's life are crucial in ensuring the child's later success, quality of life and ability to contribute as a responsible citizen. At the same time, children are citizens of today's society; therefore **effective investments in the early years** are important not only from the point of view of building future human and social capital, but also to ensure that the rights and needs of young children are met and that they have a happy childhood today.



While many countries in Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia have developed national strategies that emphasize the early years, **there are still many challenges in ensuring that every young child receives high quality care and education**. When resources are scarce, especially in times of a global financial downturn, these challenges are even greater. In this context, partnerships among civil society and the public and private sectors, as well as cooperation among health, social welfare, education, and other sectors, have proven to be effective and efficient ways to maximize the benefits of public sector investments in ECDE.

ISSA invites **practitioners, policy makers, and researchers** to take part in this event and engage in lively and informed discussions about the current situation and future tasks in ECDE for Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Special attention will be devoted to ISSA's growing network of members and partners from the region and from around the globe and their successes over the past ten years in creating and implementing child-centered pedagogy, respect for diversity, and access to quality education for every child. Panels will explore ways to increase participation and access to quality ECDE for Roma and Sinti, children of migrants and of families in remote areas. The conference aims to develop a set of **concrete recommendations** to inform and support the work of policy makers and practitioners throughout the region.

The field of early childhood development can learn from organizational psychology about how to influence change. That field of inquiry learned long ago that **change in everyday practices requires more than increasing knowledge and skills** (what ISSA and its members have excelled at in the last decade). It also involves examining the social and organizational context in which skilled/knowledgeable teachers and caregivers do their work. In many ways, this is consistent with the notion of *seeds and soils*. Great seeds are necessary for great harvests, but even great seeds fall far short of meeting their expectations if planted in poor soil. Likewise, good soil cannot make up for poor seeds. Both are necessary.

Over the course of its 10-year long history, ISSA has excelled at helping to produce *great seeds*: the dedicated and highly skilled professionals in Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia – trainers, care-givers and teachers who share ISSA’s mission of enabling every child to reach his or her full potential.

The goal of this conference is to emphasize the **role of those working in early childhood care and education**, as their professionalism, knowledge, skills and dispositions determine the quality of everyday life and experiences of young children. The conference will also explore the **social and organizational contexts** (the ingredients that make for *great soil*) that will support professionals to make an even greater impact. As importantly, participants will consider the **leadership needed to produce real outcomes and sustainable change** in early childhood education and development.

## STRANDS

### 1. “Seeds” – Effective Implementation of Quality Early Childhood Practice

*Quality teaching practices and early childhood experiences that positively affect child outcomes*

The goal of this strand is to share knowledge and engage participants in discussion around what defines quality practice including:

- Integrating research into practice
- Showcasing research-based best practices
- Innovations in provision of services for children from birth through primary school

### 2. “Soil” – Supporting Quality Early Childhood Practice

*Political, social, economic and community contexts that can promote quality early childhood practices*

The goal of this strand is to explore how to create and strengthen public and private sector interest and investment, as well as civil society participation in ECDE services. Some of the themes may include:

- links between ECDE and economics
- the social perspective on ECDE
- creating political will
- engaging local community support for ECDE

### 3. Leadership – Bringing it all together

*Leadership is needed in order to “plant” the best ECDE practices and investments in environments that influence the development of social capital and societal cohesion.*

The goal of this strand is to explore what kinds of partnerships need to be facilitated to ensure that the priorities for education identified as vital for the 21<sup>st</sup> century are implemented. Panels will include presentations on best practices in *seeds and soils*, including examples of:

- effective investments
- initiatives that have been scaled-up
- successful partnerships

# CONFERENCE GOALS AND HIGHLIGHTS

The conference aims to develop a set of concrete recommendations to inform and support the work of policy makers and practitioners throughout the region. These recommendations will derive from keynote addresses, panel presentations and roundtable discussions, which will:

- Integrate research into practice, learning from important findings in neuroscience, developmental psychology, economics and education
- Emphasize links between ECDE and economics in the short- and long-term perspective, analyzing current investments and their impact on young children and their families
- Highlight examples of successful partnerships among different sectors, including best practices in corporate social responsibility
- Share innovations in providing diverse forms of child-centered, comprehensive and integrated approaches to ECDE at the community, regional or national levels
- Showcase research-based best practices in early childhood care and education, with an emphasis on those which ensure access, quality and equity
- Create a new research agenda aimed at the intersection of *seeds and soils* as applied to early childhood education and development
- Develop a leadership agenda on how to create a global village where all children can reach their potential
- Explore the implications of living in the global village of knowledge societies and priorities for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### **John Bennett**

Senior Consultant with UNICEF, OSI and Roma Education Fund (France)

### **Nathan A. Fox**

Distinguished University Professor, Department of Human Development, University of Maryland (USA)

### **James Heckman**

Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences, Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor in Economics; Director of the Economics Research Center, Department of Economics; and Director of the Center for Social Program Evaluation, Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies and The College at University of Chicago (USA)

(to be confirmed)

### **Joan Lombardi**

Director, The Children's Project; Founder, Global Leaders for Young Children; Founding Chair, Birth to Five Policy Alliance (USA)

### **Peter Moss**

Professor of Early Childhood Provision, Institute of Education University of London (UK)

### **Ene Tomberg**

Deputy Head of Tallinn City Government Social Welfare and Health Board; Board Member of the Estonian Union for Child Welfare; Board Member, Eurochild (Estonia)

## CONFERENCE CHAIRS

### **Siobhan Fitzpatrick**

President Elect, ISSA Board of Directors  
Chief Executive Officer, Early Years (UK)

### **Carmen Lica**

President, ISSA Board of Directors  
Executive Director, Center for Education and Professional Development (Romania)

## CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

**Emil Buzov**, Executive Director, Step by Step Program Foundation (Bulgaria)

**Liana Ghent**, Executive Director, ISSA (The Netherlands/Hungary)

**Deepa Grover**, Regional Adviser, Early Childhood Development, UNICEF (Switzerland)

**Eva Izsak**, Manager, Network Division, ISSA (The Netherlands/Hungary)

**Divya Lata**, Senior Program Manager, Early Childhood Program, Open Society Foundation (United Kingdom)

**Gerda Sula**, Executive Director, Qendra Hap pas Hapi (Albania)

**Dawn Tankersley**, Program Consultant, ISSA (The Netherlands/Hungary)

**Aija Tuna**, Program Director, ISSA (The Netherlands/Hungary)

# NATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

## Eugen Crai

Director of Educational Programs, UNICEF (Romania)

## Gabriel Petrescu

Executive Director, Soros Foundation (Romania)

## Oana Petrescu

Manager, Global Work/Life Program, IBM (Romania)

## Doina Olga Stefanescu

Deputy Dean, Faculty of Political Sciences, National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Vice President, Center for Education and Professional Development Board (Romania)

## SATELLITE EVENT: ROUNDTABLE ON INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

As a curtain raiser for the Conference, on 14 October ISSA and the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation will host a Roundtable, *Investing in Early Childhood: the most effective use of a nation's resources*. The event will be organized in partnership with UNICEF, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and OSI. Leading policy makers from EU Member Countries, including Romania, and other countries in Eastern Europe and the CIS will participate in the Roundtable. The objectives of the Roundtable will be to:

- consider reasons for investing in quality Early Childhood Development and Education services for all young children;
- identify compelling examples of successful investments in integrated early childhood services and public/private partnerships that helped countries expand and improve their services;
- explore what made these investments in early childhood services more effective than others; and
- discuss possible funding mechanisms and how to mitigate negative effects of the current global financial downturn on children's services.

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Conference participants are invited to submit proposals that correspond to any of the conference themes.

Proposals will be considered in the following categories:

- **Individual paper:** A 10-minute presentation, followed by concluding discussion at the end of the session. Individual papers will be grouped into larger sessions by theme. All presenters are invited to circulate handouts during the session and submit an extended paper of up to 5 pages to be published in the online Conference Book of Abstracts.
- **Self-organized symposium:** Groups of presenters may propose to organize a symposium on a topic relevant to any of the conference strands. Abstracts of four or more papers and the name of the moderator should be submitted for a full 90-minute session.
- **Poster:** Selected posters will be displayed, and session will be set up for conference participants to interact with poster presenters.

All papers, posters, and proposals for discussion groups on relevant subjects will be considered.

## SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS AND ABSTRACTS

Required:

- Title of the presentation/paper
- Type of presentation
- A 200-word abstract addressing the theme and identifying relevant conference strands
- Name(s) and institution(s) of the author(s)
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Audiovisual requirements

Presenters of individual papers interested in publishing a longer paper will be required to submit it by **31 August 2009**, after receiving confirmation of abstract acceptance from the Conference Committee and according to the technical guidelines they will receive.

# CO-ORGANIZERS

Ten years after it was established in 1999, **ISSA** continues building upon the substantial investment and success of OSI's Step by Step Program in CEE/CIS and upon the vibrant network and movement resulting from this program, with the aim to improve the lives of children and their chances for success in life. ISSA is a membership organization that connects professionals and organizations working in the field of early childhood development and education. ISSA promotes equal access to quality education and care for all children, especially in the early years of their lives. Established in the Netherlands in 1999, ISSA's network today stretches across the globe from Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia, Asia, and the Americas.

Within its network, ISSA supports a wide array of programs that collectively provide a comprehensive set of educational services and advocacy tools intended to influence policy reform for families and children, with a special focus on the years from birth through primary school.

ISSA's **mission** is to support professional communities and develop a strong civil society that influences and assists decision makers to:

- provide high quality care and educational services for all children from birth through primary school
- ensure greater inclusion of family and community participation in children's development and learning
- ensure social inclusion and respect for diversity.

ISSA's overarching **goal** is to promote inclusive, quality care and education experiences that create the conditions for all children to become active members of democratic knowledge societies. ISSA does this through: raising awareness of the importance of quality care and education; developing resources; disseminating information; advocating; strengthening alliances and building capacity to create conditions where all children thrive.

ISSA's **vision** is that with support from family and community, every child reaches his or her full potential and develops the skills necessary for being a successful and active member of a democratic knowledge society.

[www.issa.nl](http://www.issa.nl)



The **Center for Education and Professional Development** (CEDP) is a non-governmental organization, member of ISSA since 1999, which promotes democratic principles in early childhood education and care, education and child protection. CEDP Step by Step develops programs in the educational field dedicated to: children, parents and professionals. The Step by Step Program, the first program of the organization, was officially recognized as an alternative education program by the Ministry of Education in 1995 and it has been implemented nationwide since then. The Step by Step educational alternative complies with the national curriculum and national standards and at the same time integrates international standards and best practices in the educational field.

CEDP Step by Step is involved in creating model centers of ECDE, contributes to ECDE strategy development and system reform in Romania, and engages in advocacy for children's rights. To achieve these aims, CEDP maintains a team of 60 professionals and over 70 co-workers, permanently involved in identifying new opportunities and means to innovate and support the education system in Romania. CEDP's **mission** is to support the values of an open global society. As such, CEDP's core values are:

- Innovation and creativity
- Cherish the child and childhood
- Respect for human diversity

By means of its different programs and current actions and partnerships, CEDP Step by Step has the following **goals**:

- To promote child centered teaching/learning practices
- To contribute to the redesign of ECDE in Romania
- To involve parents and communities in children's education
- To offer equal chances and opportunities to all children
- To be an active participant in education and child care reform in Romania
- To contribute to public policy development in Romania, mainly in ECDE

CEDP's **vision** is "Born to succeed."

[www.stepbystep.ro](http://www.stepbystep.ro)



# PROGRAM

**Day 1: Wednesday, 14 October**  
9:00-16:00 Roundtable: Investing in Early Childhood: the most effective use of a nation's resources (by invitation only)  
8:00-17:30 Registration  
9:00-15:00 Site visits  
19:30: Opening Reception

**Day 2: Thursday, 15 October**  
8:00-9:00 Registration  
9:00-17:30 Conference Program  
**Day 3: Friday, 16 October**  
9:00-17:30 Conference Program  
**Day 4: Saturday, 17 October**  
9:00-13:00 Conference Program  
14:30-18:00 Sightseeing (optional)

## CONFERENCE ENQUIRIES

**Questions about the conference program, registration and accommodation can be addressed to:**

Cristian Pitulice, Edelweiss Travel  
Tel: +40 31 103 2165, +40 31 10 20 733; Fax: +40 31 103 21 65  
E-mail: helpdesk@issa2009.ro

**Questions about sponsorship and exhibition opportunities can be addressed to:**

Eva Izsak, Network Manager, ISSA  
Tel: +36 1 354 3924; Fax: +36 1 354 3925  
E-mail: eizsak@issa.hu

**Questions about proposals and participation in the pre-conference roundtable can be addressed to:**

Aija Tuna, Program Director, ISSA  
Tel: +36 1 354 3921; Fax: +36 1 354 3925  
E-mail: atuna@issa.hu

## CONFERENCE FEE

**€ 395 for bookings up to 15 August 2009**  
**€ 470 for bookings after 15 August 2009**

ISSA Member Discounts (discounts apply to each paying guest): **5% OFF**

- Staff members of ISSA national member organizations
- General ISSA members
- New members who join ISSA along with conference registration

## VENUE

Rin Grand Hotel, Bucharest, Romania  
[www.rinhotels.ro/rin-grand-hotel/index-en.html](http://www.rinhotels.ro/rin-grand-hotel/index-en.html)

Further information about the conference and registration is available on the 2009 Conference website: [www.issa2009.ro](http://www.issa2009.ro). Please be sure to register in advance for the conference and for the social programs, as well as to book your hotel room.

## IMPORTANT DATES

<b>30 June</b> .....	Final date for submission of abstracts
<b>30 July</b> .....	Formal confirmation of acceptance of abstracts
<b>15 August</b> .....	Final date to pay reduced registration fee
<b>20 August</b> .....	Final date for cancellation with full refund
<b>20 August-10 September</b> .....	Cancellation with 50% refund
<b>31 August</b> .....	Deadline for submission of extended papers
<b>10 September</b> .....	No refund for cancellation after this date
<b>14 October</b> .....	Pre-Conference Roundtable
<b>14 October</b> .....	Opening Reception
<b>14-17 October</b> .....	Conference



ISSA is an innovative network of early childhood development professionals and organizations primarily in Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia, working to make quality early childhood education accessible to all children.

## MEDIA PARTNERS

Realitatea - Catavencu  
Finante si Afaceri Magazine