



Partners

As a spin-off organization, ISSA receives generous financial support from the Open Society Institute (OSI), and over the years it has developed a close cooperation with OSI in several program areas. Ten years after it was established, ISSA continues to build upon the substantial investment and success of OSI's Step by Step Program, and upon the vibrant network and movement resulting from the program, with the aim of improving the lives of children and their chances for success in life. ISSA has grown to become the pre-eminent early childhood development network in Central Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Members of the ISSA network work closely with local and national educational authorities and other key stakeholders in their country. The network's professional development programs as well as its preschool and primary-school methodology have been recognized and included in the official list of services by several Ministries of Education in the region. ISSA's standards and Principles of Quality Pedagogy have influenced and supported the development of national policies, as well as other documents and initiatives in the field of ECD.

ISSA is proud to have developed successful partnerships with other major international

organizations, donors, and networks working in the area of ECD, including UNICEF, Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training, IBM, Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Education, the World Forum Foundation, the European Early Childhood Education Research Association, the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking International Consortium, the Council for Exceptional Children, Children in Europe, Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries, and Sardes Educational Services.

In partnership with its member organizations ISSA has successfully implemented several projects funded by the European Commission, focusing on integration, inclusion, multilingualism, second language learning and education for social justice. As an example, the project *Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority Language Children in Preschool*, implemented with members from Slovakia and Estonia, has been selected by the European Commission to be included in a brochure, *Creativity and Innovation – Best Practice from EU Programmes*.

ISSA is open to exploring new partnerships and is eager to engage in joint initiatives that aim to strengthen democracy, encourage active civic participation, promote quality teaching, and celebrate diversity and inclusion.



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INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

ISSA

Promoting quality education and equal opportunities from the start



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

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.

International Step by Step

Association (ISSA) is a membership organization that connects professionals and organizations working in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Established in the Netherlands in 1999, ISSA's network today stretches across the globe. While ISSA offers general membership and information-sharing to all interested individuals and organizations, ISSA's core members are non-governmental organizations, located in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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 a democratic knowledge society. ISSA accomplishes 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.

Vision

With support from the 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.



Mission

ISSA's mission is to support professional communities and to 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 (0-10 years old), with a focus on the poorest and most disadvantaged
- ensure greater family and community participation in children's development and learning
- ensure social inclusion and respect for diversity.

Strategic Goals for 2010–2012

1. Promote accessible and equitable care and education for young children in the region:

Contribute to the development of full potential and to assure equal access to quality care and education for all children, as an imperative of children's rights, with special emphasis on children from disadvantaged socioeconomic groups, from isolated rural areas, and from other vulnerable groups, such as ethnic/language minorities and children with disabilities.

2. Promote high quality and professionalism in providing care and education for young children:

Contribute significantly to promoting and implementing quality care and education for all children, with special emphasis on development and education in the early years, and for children of preschool and primary school age.

3. Promote civil society participation, community-based ECD and parental education:

Help ensure greater support for and inclusion of the family, as well as community participation in children's development and learning.

4. Enhance the capacity of the ISSA network to deliver its strategy:

Develop the skills of its membership, ensure good governance practices and management systems to achieve its program/advocacy goals and to build the association's sustainability in the medium to long term.

ISSA Provides Its Members With:

- Professional development and capacity-building
- Information-sharing and networking
- Technical support in design and implementation of ECD programs
- International advocacy
- Participation in joint projects
- Publications
- Annual conferences and other events

Services Include:

- Providing resources, technical assistance, and training in ECD, in a variety of areas including creating child-centered, interactive, and inclusive environments in preschool and primary classrooms; supporting education that values democracy, diversity, and social justice; promoting parent empowerment; and offering bilingual education, among others.
- Training, mentoring and providing support for reaching common understanding about quality pedagogy in ECD, based on *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy*.
- Training adults in education for social justice, advocacy, parenting skills, curriculum development, and project design and implementation.
- Developing training programs/modules, curricula and teaching materials for different audiences.
- Illustrated children's picture books that are available in different languages and include guidelines for educators and parents.



Promoting Quality, Supporting Professionals: ISSA Principles of Quality Pedagogy

In 2009, continuing its work on promoting high quality support to children's development and learning in the early years and celebrating its 10th anniversary, ISSA launched *Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy*, a revised version of its pedagogical standards. This document represents a framework of principles for quality pedagogy and provide guidelines for teacher preparation and continuous professional development, supporting early years professionals from the classroom to the policy level. ISSA believes that the focus areas outlined in the standards are important principles to be followed by professionals, administrators, and policymakers in order to provide maximum support to children and their families:

1. Interactions
2. Family and Community
3. Inclusion, Diversity, and Values of Democracy
4. Assessment and Planning
5. Teaching Strategies
6. Learning Environment
7. Professional Development