



ISSA 2009 NARRATIVE REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW

Founded upon ISSA's vision and mission, the Strategy Framework for 2009-2012 identifies four strategic goals, which were developed in a way to ensure continuity and building upon ISSA's previous successes, further reinforcing OSI's investments in ECD in the region. Annex I contains brief reflections on reaching ISSA's previous strategic goals in the 2006-2008 Strategy, as an illustration of what ISSA builds upon as it embarks on its new strategy. The goals in the new Strategy Framework are also closely aligned with priorities identified by OSI, as they continue to focus on promoting quality and equity in early childhood education in the region. Finally, ISSA's strategic goals are meant to assure that ISSA's members are strong NGOs able to work on pursuing the common mission. The Strategy Framework, which was voted by the Council during the Council Meeting in October 2008, envisaged 2009 to be a year of preparing the ground to fully launch the new Strategy in 2010. The Work Plan for 2009 outlined clear program/advocacy activities and also a plan for finalizing the strategic planning process. Although it is a year of laying the foundations, ISSA's work this year has already been guided by the four strategic goals of the new Strategy Framework:

1. Promote access and equity of care and education for young children in the region
2. Promote high quality and professionalism in providing care and education for young children
3. Promote civil society participation, community-based ECDE, and parental education
4. Enhance the capacity of the ISSA network to deliver its strategy

All of ISSA's activities in 2009 were developed and carried out with the aim to reach these goals and have combined program and advocacy efforts in order to maintain and increase ISSA's professional capacity in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE). Activities also aimed to strengthen professional and organizational capacity, as well as the sustainability of ISSA and its members through strategic planning, building partnerships, and looking for new sources of funding.

II. SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2009

Further strengthened the ISSA network's programmatic and advocacy capacity

- Significant progress in the process of revising the ISSA Pedagogical Standards and developing supporting materials
- Implemented Phase One of the study on the implementation of the ISSA Pedagogical Standards (2001 – 2008) and their impact on early childhood development and education policies and practices in the region of ISSA's network and beyond

- Major work undertaken to prepare the book *Moving Forward Together: Early Childhood Programs as the Doorway to Social Cohesion. An East-West Perspective* promoting application of Vygotsky's theories in different parts of the world
- Mapping Project *Early Childhood Services around the World: Community-based Approaches* on community-based ECDE provisions in different regions of the world
- Offered specialized program expertise, according to members' and partners' needs at national level
- Ongoing information exchange and professional development within the network
- Expertise from the ISSA network and the region presented in international events on Human Rights Education, Roma Education, Education for Diversity and other topics
- Successful organization of 2009 Conference and Roundtable as significant international events on the importance of ECDE, engaging different stakeholders: researchers, practitioners, policy makers, international agencies, the business sector, the media etc.
- Partnership with the Center for Education Initiatives Latvia, the Council for Exceptional Children, DISES, UNESCO, OSI, UNICEF, the Latvian Ministry of Education and other organizations in preparing an international conference on inclusive education in 2010

Increased regional and international visibility of ISSA and its members

- Further raised visibility and credibility for ISSA and its members as ECDE professionals; ISSA perceived more strongly as THE ECDE network for CEE/CIS by international organizations and governmental bodies in the region
- Increased cooperation and partnerships with relevant major international agencies, networks, organizations and donors from different parts of the world, with significant representation from the CEE/CIS region, thus increasingly strengthening ISSA's advocacy role in the region
- Several significant previous partnerships continued to be strengthened
- Established links and new partnerships with relevant European professional and advocacy networks, organizations and donors

Strategic Planning

- After consultations and high engagement of members, a Program and Advocacy Framework was developed to support implementation of the new Strategy Framework
- Through surveys and meetings, progress a Members' Charter was developed, and decisions made on key issues related to membership and governance.
- ISSA Developed a Funding Model to support implementation of the Strategy Framework
- Work Plan and Budget for 2010 developed

Council Member Involvement

- Revitalized communication, exchange of information and engagement in strategic planning, mapping project, standards revision, DECET partnership and several other projects.
- Participation in program/network events and in initiatives to develop new resources
- Members serving on the ISSA Board and several ISSA committees
- Development of joint funding proposals and implementation of partnership projects

Diversified Sources of Income

- Sources of income diversified as type, number and amount raised
- ISSA's online bookstore launched; royalties from book sales and commissions from www.amazon.com, www.amazon.co.uk, and www.amazon.de where Reading Corner books are being sold
- Successfully promoted the ISSA Conference to attract organizations to sponsor participants paying full registration fee; A couple of corporate sponsorships negotiated.
- Corporate partnership with IBM further strengthened – funding received for developing an online course and for support to kindergartens in Hungary and Slovakia
- Funding from UNICEF through a Partnership Agreement for Mapping of ECD Resources in the region and for the Roundtable
- Grant from Bernard van Leer Foundation to support the development of a framework for the ISSA/DECET cooperation.

III. MAIN ACTIVITIES FOR REACHING ISSA'S STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal I - Promote access and equity of care and education for young children in the region

"Minority Exclusion: Education for Social Justice in Central Asia"- EU/EIDHR funded project with co-funding from OSI in Central Asia in partnership with 4 member NGOs

During the first six months of 2009, ISSA and the NGOs from Central Asia were in final stages of implementing the project. Final mentoring visits, roundtables and other activities took place in all countries. Bilingual Reading Corner books were published and disseminated. With some delays, all data for the external evaluation were submitted, and the evaluator submitted the report. Results of the evaluation and the project's final report showed that there has been visible positive impact from project interventions. (See full project report to the EU.) Results of the project and possible follow-up activities were discussed during roundtable discussions in the countries. The project came to a close at the end of June, and as leading partner, ISSA then worked with all partners to produce the Final Narrative and Financial Report, which was submitted to the EU and OSI.

Member Involvement: Partner NGOs were actively involved in implementation of the project; Experts from the network served as consultants.

Partners: 4 ISSA Members from Central Asia

Funders: EU and OSI

Mapping of Best Practices in Early Childhood Services Outside of Formal Preschool "Early Childhood Services around the World: Community-Based Approaches"

Early in 2009, ISSA hired a consultant according to the announced Terms of Reference (ToR) to complete a Mapping of Best Practices in Early Childhood Services Outside of Formal Preschool. In May Gerda Sula, who was contracted to carry out this project, submitted a report with a collection of best practices - 21 entries about programs from around the world, including 6 countries from the ISSA network. Her report has been revised in 2009, and it will be further

revised in 2010, feeding into ISSA's efforts in general mapping of resources, and the *Smooth Transitions Project*.

There are two main reasons why both tasks: to develop and revise the mapping was rather challenging and took longer than expected. Previously ISSA and its NGOs had limited experience working with diverse forms of ECD in the community settings; so there was no clear agreement on what kind of information to collect and how to structure it in a meaningful way to be useful for potential implementers of similar programs in the future. Secondly, to go outside the ISSA network was too ambitious; most of the information was gathered from existing online resources which made it difficult to find needed details once the framework was established. The SbS NGOs were approached several times with the request to submit or revise/add to the information about community based initiatives in their countries. Several NGOs limited themselves to their experiences with the Getting Ready for School program and had difficulties to explain other activities in more comprehensive way to fit the framework.

Despite longer timeline for implementation and challenges, this activity was a useful learning experience that triggered further work in the area of diversified ECD provisions and work with families and communities. It helped to raise new questions and to look for the ways how NGOs can add to the portfolio of their services. The report provided the basis for an important discussion on what kind of information is meaningful for users and how it should be presented in the most user-friendly way. A more comprehensive mapping is planned for 2010 under the *Smooth Transitions* project.

Member Involvement: Expert from the network hired as consultant. Members contacted to provide information for the report.

Partner and Funder: OSI

Mapping Project to Develop Databases of Human, Technical, Institutional ECD Resources in the CEE/CIS Region

Building upon their close cooperation in the CEE/CIS region, both at the regional and at the national level, UNICEF and ISSA began a new partnership project to map ECD Resources in the region. This project also accomplishes a task which has been a priority for the ISSA network for a long time: to map resources available in the network. The resulting Databases will support and inform the future work of ISSA and of other stakeholders in the region. The Databases will include information on whether these resources are involved in/prepared for emergency response and disaster risk reduction, as well as a limited number (5) of country profiles on ECD/Education in Emergencies. This emergencies slant is in line with recent thinking on the prevention, mitigation, and response to the negative effects of emergencies on children, especially young children. The Databases are aimed at international agencies, multilateral organizations, donor agencies, international NGOs, national civil society organizations, academics and researchers, early childhood practitioners, and teacher training institutions, as well as government decision makers from the education, social protection, and finance sectors. A section was developed to present for each country the most important information on the legislative and policies framework, as relevant to ECD and Education. The findings will be shared widely with a range of relevant stakeholders and will also be made available on ISSA's website.

Terms of references and draft instruments for data collection were developed with input from ISSA members and discussed among the partners. An expert was hired to assess the general context and characteristics of the education and ECD sectors within the emergency context in the region and to develop five country profiles. Additional consultants were hired from the region to help prepare the five country profiles, which will be published in an online publication in English in early 2010. ISSA also contracted Member NGOs to collect data, conduct surveys with national and regional actors in ECD/Education regarding existing human, technical and institutional resources in the region. In three countries, for different reasons, the SbS NGOs preferred not to be hired for the task, and recommended other organizations to be hired as consultants. After reviewing different options, an online database program was selected and adapted. Preliminary feedback received from those using the online databases confirms that the program is user-friendly and has very good search options. As a non-profit organization, ISSA pays a very small fee to host the databases at www.dabble.com. The databases will be easy to update and expand by ISSA, and there is also the option to develop country-based databases in the national languages, or add other databases. The focus in 2009 was on collecting, sorting and cleaning up the data; in total more than 1,200 entries were collected by the end of the first quarter of 2010. The Databases may be accessed at: www.issadirectories.dabbledb.com login: issadirectories@issa.hu; password: user01.

Members Involvement: Members of the Program Committee helped develop the data collection sheets. ISSA Member NGOs (24 NGOs) were hired as national consultants.

Partner/Funder: UNICEF

Book “Moving Forward Together: Early Childhood Programs as the Doorway to Social Cohesion. An East-West Perspective”

In late 2008, ISSA was delighted to receive both a book contract from Cambridge Scholars Publishing, as well as a grant from the Bernard van Leer Foundation to cover the costs to develop a book with the working title of: *Moving Forward Together: Early Childhood Programs as the Doorway to Social Cohesion. An East-West Perspective*. The book will consist of previously unpublished papers from the EECERA Conference *Exploring Vygotsky's Ideas: Crossing Borders*, Prague, September 2007, hosted by ISSA. The main focus of the book is to illuminate how the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky has influenced early childhood education in both Western and Eastern contexts, and how his work has represented a seminal approach to the globalisation of ideas - long before that concept became part of the public discourse. In early 2009 a call for papers was sent to pre-selected presenters from the 2007 EECERA Conference. After receiving submissions of interest, a second round of selection took place. By the beginning of June, 17 papers had been selected to make sure that experiences from different regions are present in the book. As the editing process took place over the summer, it was clear that some of the papers were not appropriate for the book, while others needed significant work, in order to maintain the balance of East/West authors, and to provide the broadest, most appropriate coverage of different topical areas. Several of the papers went through additional tiers of peer review in late 2009, to ensure the highest level of academic rigor. In early 2010 will go through a final copyedit and layout and be submitted to Cambridge Scholars for final publishing. ISSA plans to launch this book in the summer of 2010.

The book is edited by Aija Tuna, ISSA Program Director and Jacqueline Hayden, Professor of Early Childhood and Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, Australia, with significant work in editing and organization by ISSA's Consultant, Taryn Paladiy. The book is intended to be useful for two main audiences. The content of each chapter will inform students of early childhood education and related disciplines, practitioners, teachers and teacher trainers, and professionals from early childhood organizations, under various section headings. The book will also present how Vygotsky's influence has been used to enhance developments in two very different regions, and in very different ways. The book argues (and demonstrates) that cross-regional sharing, dialogue, and debate between early childhood professionals from diverse contexts enhances perspectives, practices, and effective policy making – and represents a positive outcome of globalisation. Thus, a second audience for the book includes policy makers and those from multinational organizations with responsibility for the development of quality early childhood programs and who are in a position to support increased cross regional engagement.

Member Involvement: experts from the ISSA network contributed as authors along with external experts

Funder: Bernard van Leer Foundation

ISSA Annual Conference 2009

The most recent ISSA conference, [*Seeds of Change: Effective Investments in Early Childhood for Enduring Social Progress*](#), was held in Bucharest, Romania 14-17 October 2009. More than 260 participants from 53 countries gathered together to explore effective investments in early years programs along with integrated approaches to early childhood development as the strongest foundation for well-being and success throughout life. The event was co-hosted by the Center for Education and Professional Development, Romania, under the patronage of the **President of Romania, H. E. Traian Basescu**. The conference was organized in partnership with and with support from the Open Society Institute, and also with the technical support and participation of UNICEF CEE/CIS and the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation. The program featured 6 keynote addresses from prominent speakers, including one via video from Nobel Laureate James Heckman, and an additional 4 plenary presentations during the ‘Showcasing Initiatives Supporting Early Childhood Development and Education’ session. There were 85 presentations during 24 panel sessions, organized in 5 concurrent sessions. Of the 260 participants, approximately 65% came from the CEE/CIS region.

The conference also marked the celebration of ISSA's 10th Anniversary. Special attention was devoted to ISSA's growing network of members and partners from the region and from around the globe, especially noting 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. ISSA welcomed to the conference a diverse roster of distinguished keynote speakers whose inspirational speeches addressed the issue of early years education from many different angles: **James J. Heckman**, (via video), 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);

Peter Moss, Professor of Early Childhood Provision, Institute of Education, University of London (UK); **Nathan A. Fox**, Distinguished Professor, Department of Human Development, University of Maryland (USA); **John Bennett**, Visiting Research Fellow, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education; Former UNESCO and OECD early childhood policy analyst (France); **Stuart Shanker**, D Phil (Oxon), Director, the Milton & Ethel Harris Research Initiative, Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy, Psychology, & Education; Director, The Canada-Mexico-Cuba Research Initiative; Co-Director, The Council of Human Development; Past President, The Council of Early Childhood Development (USA); **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); and **Emily Vargas-Baron**, Director, The Rise Institute (USA). ISSA also welcomed the following Plenary Speakers: **Tunde Kovac Cerovic**, State Secretary, Ministry of Education of the Government of the Republic of Serbia; **Aleksandra Jovic**, ECD Specialist, UNICEF (Serbia); **Mihaela Ionescu**, Consultant, Early Learning and Development Standards Program, UNICEF (Romania); **Aurora Ailincai**, Project Manager, Directorate of Education and Languages, Council of Europe (France).

The feedback received from participants was highly positive, as confirmed by testimonials:

http://www.issa.nl/docs_pdfs/Testimonials_ISSA_Conference_2008.pdf

The following links provide additional information:

[ISSA 10th Anniversary Slideshow](#);

[Photo Slide Show 2009 ISSA Conference](#);

[Powerpoint presentations of keynote and plenary speakers on the conference website](#);

[Video recording of Prof. Heckman's speeches at the ISSA Conference and Roundtable](#);

Message from the President of Romania, Traian Basescu, to the 2009 ISSA Conference: [English](#)

With the financial contribution from OSI and the income from registrations, other donors and sponsorship, the event brought in a net result of 20,000 EUR. At the same time, ISSA offered significant discounts to members and other participants from CEE/CIS, as well as waived fees for board members and members of the Strategic Planning Committees and the Program Committees, in recognition for their in-kind contributions to ISSA. The discounts and waived fees came up to approximately 23,000 EUR. OSI funding was used to make all this possible, and also to cover costs for the October Council Meeting and the events marking the 10th anniversary of ISSA. OSI also covered travel costs for members, via the grants offered directly to SbS NGOs for travel to ISSA events.

Annex II presents a financial report for the events organized by ISSA in October 2009: the Roundtable and the Anniversary Conference.

While financially the conference brought only a small amount of excess revenue, there are other tremendous benefits resulting from the event, some of them non-financial, some concerning monetary gains in the long term. Here are some of the gains:

- successful professional development opportunity for members and more widely for others
- increased visibility and credibility for the ISSA network
- opportunity for ISSA and members to strengthen their cooperation with education authorities in countries of the CEE/CIS

- a valuable opportunity to cultivate relationships with potential donors and strengthen cooperation with partners – a very important step in the fundraising cycle.

Member Involvement: ISSA's members served on the Conference Organizing Committee, including as proposal reviewers. Members presented during panel sessions and served as chairs for different sessions. Focus groups around the Revised ISSA Standards were organized as satellite event. Members reported that the event has been an important professional development opportunity and that several valuable contacts with potential partners were established.

Partners and Funders (including in-kind): OSI, UNICEF, the Consultative Group, the SbS Center for Professional Development, the Romanian Ministry of Education, Innovation and Research, the Office of the Romanian President, Knowledge Universe, Procter and Gamble etc.

Celebration of ISSA's Tenth Anniversary at the 2009 Conference

ISSA was delighted to celebrate its tenth anniversary at the 2009 Annual Conference. The anniversary was highlighted during the conference in a session devoted to ISSA's first ten years, as well as a special celebratory reception on 16 October, to which all conference participants were invited. ISSA also marked this milestone with a high level ECD advocacy roundtable prior to the Conference, the launch of the Revised ISSA Pedagogical Standards [Competent Teachers of the 21st Century: ISSA's Definition of Quality Pedagogy](#), and the launch of a [Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and Lessons from CEE/CIS](#).

During the special celebratory session, ISSA was pleased to receive a letter from Mr. George Soros, founder of the Open Society Institute, congratulating the organization on its achievements over the past ten years. This letter was presented by Sarah Klaus, Director of the Open Society Institute's Early Childhood Program and member of the ISSA Board. Ms. Klaus, who has been intrinsically involved in the Step by Step Program and the creation and growth of ISSA since its inception, spoke about the history of ISSA, explaining how the Step by Step Program came to exist, and sharing her recollections of the past ten years of ISSA's development.

ISSA member organizations received certificates of appreciation from ISSA at the special session to honor their contribution to ISSA's mission during the past 10 years. In addition, key partners of member organizations and individuals with outstanding performance from across the network of countries in CEE/CIS, were also acknowledged and thanked via certificates of appreciation.

Ten years after its establishment ISSA, its national NGO members, and OSI continue to collaborate to strengthen early childhood education and development. At the same time, ISSA has strengthened existing relationships and developed new partnerships with an array of international early childhood organizations and networks. Over the years since its inception, ISSA is rapidly transforming into a robust, independent association with broad international links and partnerships, management of a significant roster of EU-funded early education projects, and a strong reputation as a leading professional network for early education and care in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union. ISSA works towards a future in which every child receives inclusive, quality care and education, laying the foundation for each child to become active participant in democratic knowledge societies.

ISSA wishes to express its sincere gratitude for the Open Society Institute's continued support to the organization and the impact this investment has made in the region. As spin-off organizations, both ISSA and its members have received generous support, both monetary and advisory, from OSI and over the years have developed close cooperation with OSI in a number of programmatic areas. Ten years after it was established, ISSA continues building 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 to improve the lives of children and their chances for success in life. ISSA would like to extend warm thanks to Mr. George Soros for his continued support towards the CEE/CIS region and to early childhood development. ISSA also thanks Arieh Neier, President of OSI, and Liz Lorant, former Director of OSI's Children and Youth Network Programs, for their support towards the establishment of ISSA. ISSA would like to extend a special thank you to Sarah Klaus, Director of Open Society Foundation's Network Early Childhood Program, for helping to establish ISSA, and for providing leadership to the association in its first years of existence, as well as for her continued support and input into the development of the network.

Over the past 10 years, in addition to its ongoing partnership with OSI, ISSA would like to acknowledge other organizations which have played a significant role in working with ISSA to improve the early lives of children throughout the region. ISSA would like to acknowledge its other partners: UNICEF, Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET), 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 (EECERA), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Children in Europe, Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries (COSPE), Sardes Educational Services, and the Comenius Foundation.

There are many individuals who have contributed expertise, time, and resources towards ISSA's first 10 years – if we included it here, the list would be very long, indeed. Special thanks go to those who have served as board members, consultants, advisory board members, friends, and partners. Their contribution has been invaluable in helping the ISSA network find its voice in advocating for and implementing programs to achieve quality early education and care throughout the region.

Most of all, ISSA would like to acknowledge its members who are the agents of change in their countries. They have worked tirelessly for years, every day, to ensure that every child has access to quality early education and care, both in their own countries and in the region.

Member Involvement: Members were actively involved in activities marking the 10th Anniversary: presentations during plenary sessions, launch of revised Standards, Roundtable etc. Several members served on the Conference Organizing Committee, and in the group which planned the Roundtable.

Funder: Costs related to the 10th Anniversary activities were covered from the OSI general support grant.

ECD Policy Roundtable and Handbook of ECD Innovations

An ECD Policy Roundtable was organized as a curtain raiser for the 2009 ISSA Conference, co-hosted by ISSA and the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation. The objectives of the Roundtable were to:

- Inform, influence and support decision makers, by examining the rationale 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.
- Discuss possible funding mechanisms and how to mitigate negative effects of the current global financial downturn on children's services.
- Formulate Observations and Recommendations which may be widely used as an advocacy tool in the region for increased investments in access to high quality and equitable early childhood care and education.

Invitations were sent to representatives of Ministries in the region and to relevant international organizations active in the region, and the Roundtable was well attended – approximately 60 participants, representing 14 countries in the region. Decision makers included representatives of different Ministries from the region and a Member of Parliament. Participants drafted a communiqué with recommendations to the nations of the CEE/CIS region for the full realization of children's right to a good start in life, as well as next steps for policy development.

Recommendations resulting from the roundtable included:

1. Adopt and implement ECD policies, strategic plans, legislation and agreements
2. Greatly expand and diversify investment in ECD
3. Promote parent involvement and reinforce inter-sectoral coordination at all levels
4. Support community-based ECD services and take effective ones to scale
5. Offer universal, comprehensive and continuous services, and focus especially on vulnerable and marginalized young children from birth to 3 years of age
6. Develop policies and guidelines for ECD training and quality assurance

The full document has been circulated within the ISSA network of members and partners and is available on the ISSA website. Follow up activities will be organized during 2010, depending on the interest from members and the opportunities available for partnerships around advocacy.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, ISSA also created a [Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations and Lessons from CEE/CIS](#) that showcased successful early child development investments and public/private partnerships of the countries invited to participate in the ECD Policy Roundtable. More than 22 countries submitted descriptions of interventions taking place in their countries, and the handbook was disseminated at the roundtable and is now available on the ISSA website.

The following links provide additional information:

[Roundtable Communiqué](#);

[List of Participants in the Roundtable;](#)
[Roundtable Proceedings Presented at the 2009 ISSA Conference;](#)
[Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and Lessons from CEE/CIS](#)

Member Involvement: Members were involved in designing the concept of the roundtable. Several members presented during the roundtable on the situation of ECD in their country. Approximately 10 members attended the roundtable.

Partners and Funders (including in-kind): OSI, UNICEF, the Consultative Group, the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, the Step by Step Center for Professional Development

ISSA Annual Conference 2010

Already at the beginning of 2009 ISSA started working on organizing the 2010 Conference, which will be co-hosted by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the Division for International Special Education Services (DISES), the Center for Education Initiatives (CEI) Latvia, and ISSA. Supporting organizations include: OSI, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Latvian Ministry of Education, The Riga City Council and the Latvian Soros Foundation. In 2009 the four organizing partners developed and circulated a pre-announcement. Next steps included setting up the Program Advisory Committee and launching the Call for Papers, available on the conference website. Considering the networks of the organizers and of other supporting organizations, ISSA expects between 400-500 participants at this conference, including NGOs, teachers, parents, policymakers, researchers, and international agencies and donors. Among the organizing partners, ISSA and DISES will split the financial risk, while the excess revenue (if any) will be split in three among ISSA, DISES and CEI.

The conference will focus on best practices in inclusive education, and has the overall goals of:

- Advocating for inclusive approaches
- Sharing innovations in creating inclusive schools
- Integrating research into practice and creating stronger links with stakeholders
- Show-casing evidence based practices with an emphasis on access, quality, equity
- Professional development and networking opportunity for members

The conference intends to provide an opportunity for decision makers, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of civil society and the business sector to engage in lively and informed discussions about policies, practice, and the current state of expertise in promoting and implementing inclusive education, as a means to meet the special educational needs of children and youth. Building on the experience and strength of all partners and the networks they represent, the conference will approach the topic of provision of support to the diverse educational needs of children and youth in a holistic manner, looking at different reasons why children from an early stage in their lives may find themselves in disadvantaged situations and what special support is needed for their development and learning.

Under the umbrella of the conference, ISSA will host ***the Early Years Strand***. Recognizing that some children may be more vulnerable to exclusionary practices than others, this strand will explore ways in which settings and services may become more responsive to the diversity of

children and young people in their communities. Participants will also discuss how to raise the awareness and ability of families to advocate for and protect the interests of their children, as well as to make intelligent choices regarding the best options for their children's education. To provide maximum support to young children for successful development and learning, ISSA joins voices with other international key players to advocate for early childhood programs that attend to health, nutrition, security, and learning of children, as well as providing holistic development. ISSA sees the Riga Conference as an opportunity for participants to make a strong, consolidated message about the importance of ECD policies and programs for promoting and implementing inclusive provisions for young children and families, with a special focus on situations where disadvantages may lead to multiple disabilities. This strand will explore special needs as an outcome of complex interactions between health conditions and the physical and social environment, and will stress the importance of early intervention and support to development, offering practical solutions to deal with complex issues which may prevent young children from learning and from developing to their full potential.

More information on the conference can be found on the conference website:

[Embracing Inclusive Approaches for Children and Youth with Special Education Needs](#)

Member Involvement: ISSA's member organization in Latvia, the Center for Education Initiatives, is one of the 4 organizing partners. ISSA members serving on the Program Advisory Committee have been active in reviewing proposals and developing the Early Years Strand. A number of members have submitted paper proposals; several members will attend as non-presenters.

Partners and Funders: in addition to the four organizing partners, the following supporting organizations are involved: OSI, the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, UNICEF, the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, Soros Foundation Latvia, Riga City Council etc.

Cooperation with DECET

In 2009 ISSA and DECET intensified their efforts to develop a framework for long-term cooperation focusing on the following main areas:

- *professionalism in education:* knowledge creation, sharing, dissemination
- *advocacy:* influencing and supporting decision-makers
- *organizational development:* shared learning on how to effectively run networks, joint fundraising

By developing a steady framework for collaboration between knowledge networks from Western and Eastern Europe, ISSA and DECET plan to work together effectively assembled on a common vision and commitment to sustainable development, aiming to actively and critically promote accessibility and quality in early childhood education services, which includes equity and respect for diversity. The process to develop and set up the framework of cooperation between the two networks is funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

A *Joint ISSA/DECET Work Pack* charged with developing the framework worked on the following in 2009:

- Began using *KARL* for three online communities: two joint ISSA/DECET communities (Work Pack on Framework of Cooperation and Work Pack on Professionalism) and one ISSA community (SIG on ISSA Standards) in order to test the use of a Knowledge Management System.
- Organized a meeting of the Work Pack after the EECERA Conference, where a first draft of the Framework for Cooperation was developed. Participants were representatives from the two networks' Secretariats and membership of the two respective networks.
- Applied jointly to an EU Knowledge Network call for applications in September. The application was unsuccessful.
- Researched about the use of Knowledge Management Systems and available IT tools. Learnt a great deal about how to use such systems for engaging the membership.

Member Involvement: ISSA members took part in discussions via email and in-person meetings to shape the framework of cooperation between ISSA and DECET. Members are actively piloting the communities on *KARL*.

Funder: Bernard van Leer Foundation

Participation in Activities of the EU Year of Creativity and Innovation

In early 2009 ISSA was honored for its past work on the EU-funded project: *Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children in Preschool*, co-funded with funds from OSI. The project was selected by the European Commission to be included in a brochure *Creativity and Innovation – Best Practice from EU Programmes*, which was produced for the conference of the same name that took place in Brussels in March 2009. The brochure will also be used for other events that will be organized during the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. From among 200 projects competing to be featured in this brochure, ISSA's project was chosen by a panel of 10 independent experts as an example of best practice in the field of creativity and innovation, helping to illustrate how the European Commission supports this important subject which is at the heart of European Union policies. ISSA's Program Director attended the Conference and had the opportunity to promote ISSA's work and develop new potential contacts. Click here for more information about the [conference](#).

Member Involvement: ISSA's members from Slovakia and Estonia were partners in the project *Effective Teaching and Learning for Minority-Language Children in Preschool*

Funder of Activities of the EU Year of Creativity and Innovation: EU

Participation in UNA - an international initiative focusing on children and ethnic diversity

In 2009 ISSA joined UNA, an international learning initiative on children and ethnic diversity, being a member of three working groups:

- *Learning Group on Program Development in Contexts of Ethnic Divisions;* Zorica Trikić, from the Center for Interactive Pedagogy, Serbia, is representing ISSA in this group. The group is developing a working paper and Zorica is working in the subgroup writing about *Features of Successful Programs*, together with Karina Davis and John Bennett.
- *Learning Group on Social Inclusion and Early Childhood Programs.* This group deals with broader issues, beyond programming: how to ensure sustainability once good

practice has been established, what will facilitate involvement of policy makers and civil society and what constitutes effective advocacy. The mission of this group is to identify strategies to engage governments and national/international organizations, to support the design and the delivery of ECD programs aimed at addressing ethnic and racial divisions and conflicts. ISSA was invited to join this group due to its expertise in partnership building and in social justice. ISSA will contribute towards the paper prepared by this group with two case studies. A case study from an ISSA member working on social inclusion, showing how programs on the ground can benefit from being a member of an umbrella organization. A second case study showing how ISSA itself as a network works towards social change, collective action and meaningful participation.

- *Learning Group on Peace Building with Young Children.* Yuliya Karimova (Center for Innovations in Education, Azerbaijan) and Zorica Trikić (Center for Interactive Pedagogy CIP, Serbia) were selected by the ISSA Board to be ISSA's representatives. Zorica withdrew from the group because she is already member of another UNA Learning Group. In early 2010 ISSA will appoint another member to serve as ISSA representative in this initiative. In 2009 ISSA's envoys contributed towards a paper with case studies, providing examples of programs in the ISSA network which are targeting peace building with young children.

Member Involvement: Members served as ISSA representatives in this initiative; all members were invited to contribute with examples of programs carried out by their NGO, to be included as case studies in papers prepared by the learning groups. Contributions came especially from NGOs active in ESJ (Bosnia/Herzegovina and Serbia) and those who have worked in post-conflict (NGOs in former Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus).

Partner and Funder: UNA International Learning Initiative

Participation in Eurochild's Early Years Thematic Working Group

In 2009 ISSA joined Eurochild's Early Years Thematic Working Group. The Group met in Brussels in June during the Eurochild General Assembly and Policy Forum. The group works towards achieving agreement on common principles and definitions. The group also emphasizes the contribution that the early years make to all aspects of children's mental, physical and emotional well-being and the development of their social identity

ISSA's partnership with Eurochild is important because it represents a close link to EU policies and activities in area of ECD. This cooperation has already helped ISSA to broaden and diversify a range of arguments on reasons why ECD is important and also has suggested different "pockets of opportunities" for funding, such as EU policies and activities on employability, mobility, diversity etc in addition to traditionally looking at ECD through the lense of education. Eurochild provided well-structured information on relevant events and reports, which the ISSA Secretariat shared in the ISSA network, and which members reported as being very useful. Eurochild is very active in policy campaigns and data collection at EU level, which help inform ISSA's work.

Member Involvement: Depending on the focus of the meetings, members are invited to serve as ISSA's representatives; for example ISSA negotiated participation of two ISSA NGOs involved

in the *Smooth Transitions Project* in the next Eurochild EY TWG meeting, which will focus on community-based ECD.

Partner and Funder: Eurochild

Participation in the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism

In 2009 ISSA became a member of the *EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism*. ISSA submitted an application, which was approved, and ISSA was invited to participate in the launch of the Platform in Brussels in October 2009. The Platform was created by Multilingualism Policy Unit at the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, which hosted the launch and first meeting. The platform consists of non-governmental civil society organisations and media representatives. ISSA's Program Director represented ISSA at the first meeting. The aim of the platform is to create a forum for the exchange of best practices for civil society stakeholders, gathering relevant information from culture, non-formal and informal education and learning sectors, and the media to contribute to bringing multilingualism closer to citizens. After in-depth discussion three working groups were established:

1. education (including language learning, minority languages, lesser used languages, early language learning, motivation, and promotion)
2. linguistic diversity and social inclusion (minorities, host country language learning, intercultural dialogue)
3. translation and terminology (literary translation, subtitling, culture, terminology);

ISSA applied to contribute to the work of the 1st and 2nd groups, offering the network's resources and experience in promoting early literacy, second language learning, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. The participation of ISSA in such a platform is crucial, as it promotes the importance of language policies from the point of view of early years and vulnerable groups, as well as bringing in expertise from new member countries. From ISSA members' point of view, this is another wonderful opportunity to promote ISSA's goals and expertise, as well as to learn about other approaches and resources, experience in campaigning, information on trends and developments, and building bases for new potential partnerships at the national and European levels and beyond. It is planned that members of the Platform will meet twice in 2010 with representatives from the Commission and will work in the groups using a virtual platform in order to share information and prepare recommendations for the Commission.

Member Involvement: Depending on the focus of future meetings, ISSA members will be invited to attend and serve as ISSA representatives.

Partner and Funder: EU and other members of the Platform

Partnerships and efforts to promote inclusion of Roma children in education

In order to successfully implement objectives of the Strategic Goal on Access/Equity, and to take advantage of the momentum in the EU and in the region, in 2009 ISSA intensified its advocacy efforts to support inclusion of Roma children:

- After being invited to contribute to the meeting *Promoting Access to Roma and Sinti Children to Early Education* organized by OSCE/ODIHR, ISSA developed cooperation with this department. Ongoing cooperation included exchange of information among the

two networks, support in data gathering, dissemination of information and coordination of advocacy efforts to promote access to quality education for Roma children. This cooperation was considered as an important way to link ISSA's/NGOs activities with Decisions of Ministerial Council and to make known the ISSA network's expertise to other organizations. Taking into account that the Roma Sinti Contact Point works with many Roma NGOs and community representatives, it is a great opportunity for ISSA to promote its NGOs and emphasize the role of quality when talking about ECD/education and Roma inclusion.

- Another outcome of the meeting mentioned above was an invitation to participate in the OSCE/ODIHR Regional Forum, *Human Rights Education: Achievements, Lessons Learned and Perspectives* in April in Vilnius; Aija Tuna represented ISSA and met with the organizations who developed the *Compendium of Good Practices on Human Rights Education*, where ISSA's resources are featured: www.hrea.org/compendium.
- ISSA continued to strengthen cooperation with the Roma Education Fund. REF actively included ISSA in regional meetings focusing on Roma inclusion in early childhood education. Preliminary plans for joint fundraising were developed. REF is an increasingly strong player in the region and in the EU regarding Roma issues, as well as being a key player in the OSI network. Because its approach so far seemed to have focused primarily on desegregation, at the advice of ISSA's members, it was considered important to engage in discussion and cooperation, to stress the importance of quality, to offer ISSA's/NGOs experience and expertise and try to develop synergy instead of competing or spreading conflicting messages. Developing cooperation and partnership with REF allows ISSA member NGOs to add their expertise to efforts of the other NGOs in their countries and to engage in more integrated, holistic approach to Roma issues. Engaging in partnership projects will provide an opportunity to ISSA and REF to more closely explore common areas of interest, take advantage of each other's strengths and work towards aligning key messages.
- In June ISSA was invited by UNICEF Serbia to attend the Roma Decade International Conference *The Right to Education for Every Child: Removing Barriers and Fostering Inclusion for Roma Children* in Belgrade, organized under the Serbian Presidency of the Decade. After the conference further cooperation was explored with the organizers, and as a result, the proceedings of the Roma Decade Conference were presented at the 2009 ISSA Conference by representatives of the Serbian Ministry and Education and UNICEF.
- In November ISSA was invited by REF to present during the Roma Decade International Conference *Creativity and Innovation in the Education of Children from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds* in Poprad, organized under the Slovakian Presidency of the Decade. Among other things, ISSA advocated against placement of Roma children in special schools, and for inclusion in quality pre-school provisions and mainstream schools. As follow up to the conference ISSA prepared an article for inclusion in the conference proceedings, containing ISSA's main advocacy message
- ISSA was invited to submit an article in Bernard van Leer's Early Childhood Matters special issue focusing on children's rights. The article submitted by ISSA focused on Roma children's inclusion in pre-school provision, from the child rights perspective.
- Several representatives of the ISSA network presented in Slovenia in September at the Life Long Learning Program INTERnetwork conference *Diversity, Inclusion and the Values of Democracy: Building Teachers' Competences for Intercultural Education*

Member Involvement: A number of ISSA members were invited to attend the conference in Slovenia and the Roma Decade Conference in Belgrade. Because the meeting in Slovakia had primarily a national focus, international representation was limited, however ISSA's member organization in Slovakia, Nadacia Skola Dokoran was an active participant in the meeting, strongly backed up by ISSA. ISSA's submissions to the Poprad Conference Proceedings and to the BvL's ECM were reviewed by members.

Funders: UNICEF, REF, Roma Decade, OSCE/ODIHR, INTERnetwork etc.

New project proposals to promote access and equity in ECD

- ISSA was invited to join the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation in Romania as an international partner in a project proposal funded by European Structural Funds and European Social Funds on *Supporting Key Competences*, with special focus on minority children, especially Roma children and other ethnic minorities. Representatives of the RWCT International Consortium are also among partners. The proposal was approved and the project is expected to start in 2010.
- A concept paper on *Strengthening the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in supporting the peaceful conciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation* was submitted by Kosovo Education Center to EIDHR, with ISSA and other network member NGOs as partners. The proposal went successfully through the first round, but was rejected in the final stage.
- ISSA applied successfully with CIP Serbia as a lead partner for an OSI Innovative Grant.
- ISSA and DECET applied jointly to an EU Knowledge Network call for applications in September, to create a *European Network of Knowledge on Best Practices in Diversity and Inclusion in ECEC*, aiming to provide evidence for developing effective policies, teacher training programs, and practice in schools. The application was unsuccessful.
- Together with ISSA members in Romania and Bulgaria, ISSA joined as international partners in a number of applications submitted by members for European Structural Funds. All projects focused on *Roma inclusion and capacity building*. By early 2010 ISSA learnt that at least one project was approved in Romania and is expected to begin in 2010.

Member Involvement: In some cases members invited ISSA to join as partner, in other cases ISSA applied as lead applicant and invited members to join. In all proposals members were involved in designing the project proposal.

Reflections on Accomplishments under Goal I

- ISSA has a stronger voice in the region and in the EU advocating for access and is recognized as an important player
- Key messages on importance of investing in the early years and importance of access to quality services for marginalized groups are more clearly articulated by the network
- Ground prepared for ISSA and its members to be involved in a number of projects directly benefitting Roma children

Goal II - Promote high quality and professionalism in providing care and education for young children

Study on the Implementation of the ISSA Pedagogical Standards (2001 – 2008) and their impact on early childhood development and education (ECDE) policies and practices in the region of ISSA’s network and beyond

In order to inform the development of the Strategy for Using the Revised ISSA Pedagogical Standards, with financial and advisory support from OSI, ISSA is working on a study on how the former Standards were used in the network. The purpose of this project is to compile a comprehensive overview of how the ISSA Pedagogical Standards have been used by different NGOs implementing Step by Step program across the ISSA network of 28 member organizations since the Standards were introduced in 2001. As ISSA is launching a revised set of standards this study will provide information and insight on what has been learned over the past 8 years that could help inform the work going forward and ensure maximum impact. This study examines the role of the standards as they were implemented through certification, mentoring, training for staff development, and as part of the broader Quality Early Education Initiative (QEEI). The objectives of the Study are:

- To document and analyze the variety of approaches and effectiveness of using the old standards.
- To identify barriers and enabling factors that help teachers improve practice.
- To explore the impact of standards on policy development and implementation.
- To inform the development of the ISSA’s strategy for using the revised standards.
- To reflect on the impact and recognition of the ISSA standards in the wider international arena.

Outcomes will be documented in terms of how standards influenced 3 levels of implementation: individual teacher practice, school and community culture and national policy. A Call for Proposals with ToR was launched for an Expert to lead the study, and Mimi Howard was selected as lead researcher. In addition, a call was sent out to ISSA Member NGOs for recommendations for co-researchers from the region. An analysis and documentation of how the ISSA Pedagogical Standards were used has been developed by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from each NGO and synthesizing findings into a report that describes the impact of the standards on ECDE practice and policy across the ISSA network.

The study began with data collection and a preliminary report. Information has been collected through a document review process and compiled into country-by-country profiles and a summative overview of both quantitative and qualitative findings across all NGO programs. Information collected in Phase 1 of the Study is intended to provide “baseline” data onto which each NGO can add more information and detail. NGO Directors were given draft copies of their profiles and asked to make any corrections or additions to the profile and to answer a number of additional questions designed to gather the most current quantitative and qualitative information on their standards-based activities. The first preliminary results of the Study were presented to Members at the June Program Meeting. A presentation was delivered also at the 2009 ISSA Conference, where several focus group discussions will be also held to inform researchers on deeper insights on opportunities and challenges in promoting quality pedagogy in the region.

A draft report of this Study is presented in Annex III. From the results of the Study, ISSA has solid evidence that in many countries NGOs have been doing very interesting, creative and productive work with the Standards that is similar in some ways but uniquely distinct in others. Thus the ISSA Pedagogical Standards were found to effectively influence:

- Individual teachers and their daily classroom practices
- Existing education systems designed to prepare, improve and monitor teachers
- The development and institutionalization of new national education priorities, policies and practices.

The following are the main Research Questions used for the Study:

- How were standards used for certification, mentoring and training for professional development?
- How were the standards used for policy development and advocacy?
- What were the barriers and opportunities?
- What were the lessons learned and how can they inform strategy for using the revised standards?
- What role could the standards play in the current international quality improvement environment?

The results reflect that ISSA's members used the following key mechanisms to introduce and use the ISSA Standards:

1. Professional development
 - Training based on or connected with ISSA's definition of quality/Standards
 - Mentoring as innovative part of ongoing professional development in the region
2. Certification - systems for certification of individual teachers
3. Advocacy efforts to influence decision makers at all levels
4. Public information campaigns to build common understanding about quality pedagogy

The results of the Study also showed that there are differences in implementation across the countries, due to different cultural and pedagogical traditions, different social, political and economic background, as well as different political climate for NGO development and culture of civil society participation. These differences resulted in important features and challenging aspects for implementation in terms of:

- understanding of inclusion in a wider meaning
- recognizing diversity and using it as a resource
- understanding of social justice principles in connection with everyday practice
- practicing active participation
- being open to accommodate needs of diverse groups of parents and families

The Study lists several lessons learned, including the following:

- Need to connect teacher training with ongoing monitoring and maintaining quality
- Need to create innovative strategies to support teachers in everyday practice
- Need to include reliability/observation in mentor training
- Importance of establishing partnerships
- Need to monitor and conduct research to assess and demonstrate outcomes

- Need to engage school administration and educational authorities in the process
- Family and community partnerships matters

Phase Two of the study involves development of case studies, to be focused on three countries: Moldova, Slovenia and Tajikistan. The format of the Case Studies and the selection of countries was done after consultation with members of the Program Committee. The Case Studies will be finalized in early 2010, when the final Report of the Study will also be finalized.

Member Involvement: Three ISSA members were hired as researchers. All members were interviewed and asked to revise the country profile which resulted from the Study. Members of the Program Committee advised on the format of the Case Studies and the selection of countries. Several members presented on preliminary results of the Study during the 2009 ISSA Conference, the EECERA Conference and other events.

Partner and Funder: OSI

Meeting of quality experts to discuss the strategy for implementing revised standards

ISSA organized a meeting in August before the EECERA conference in Strasbourg, where many internal and external experts were going to be present. A preliminary report of the Study was presented and discussions organized to inform ISSA's future strategy for using the Standards. In total 13 participants attended: experts from the ISSA region and outside it, as well as ISSA staff members. The intention of the Strasbourg meeting was to bring together top experts from different countries/regions (EU, ISSA region outside EU, US) with different backgrounds to test ISSA's experience and future plans for promoting and improving quality in ECD. It was crucial to have representatives from the ISSA region (Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Moldova, Armenia, Serbia), from Higher Education (Slovakia, Slovenia, Belgium, USA) and from research institutions (Russia, France, USA). Many participants had extensive international experience from different regions of the world which was offered for discussion on how it may work in the ISSA region and in the framework of ISSA and its NGOs vision, mission and activities.

The overall conclusion of the meeting was that a new strategy for using the ISSA Standards must be multi-level, addressing both how to support individual teacher and classroom practices, and how to use the principles of the standards to inform the development and reform of broader education systems and policies.

Some specific conclusions from this meeting included:

- The ISSA Pedagogical Standards have proven to be an important and useful tool for promoting, assessing and maintaining quality in ECD: both in Step by Step sites and more broadly outside these centers
- Building common understanding about quality and maintaining reliability has been a crucial part of the initiative and has to be preserved and expanded in the future
- Mentoring has been among the most successful innovations introduced within the quality initiative
- It is important to be clear what is the difference between a tool for measurement and one for guidance

- ISSA also needs to determine what is the appropriate role for such document contributing to the ECD field and at the same time what role makes sense for a professional organization like ISSA
- ISSA needs to analyze the costs and benefits of Certification
- It is important to explore how to combine national level of implementation with international level of quality/reliability and reputation
- It is important to show links with other types of standards, such as early learning and development standards, standards for programs, systemic conditions etc.

With regards to Certification

- this issue will be further discussed in 2010.
- ISSA intends to continue to offer support to those NGOs which use the old Standards for certification, until the end of 2010
- in 2010 support will be offered to establish reliability and new tools will be offered for using the new Principles for Certification, to those NGOs which were certifying with the old standards, in case they wish to continue to certify with the new resources beginning with 2011.
- ISSA still needs to explore the issue of how those NGOs which did not have rights to certify with the old standards may be brought to the level of certifying in case there is interest.

Specific recommendations for increasing teacher and classroom quality included:

- Balance teacher training and capacity to monitor quality
- Teachers need help applying principles of good pedagogy to daily practice
- Engage school leaders in the process
- Monitor and assess teacher and child outcomes
- Provide explicit guidelines for teachers working with children at different age levels
- Align requirements for teachers' performance (standards) to child outcomes

Specific recommendations for sustaining and broadening use of standards in education systems and policy included:

- Consider carefully the role of an NGO as a certifying body
- Conduct research to demonstrate outcomes – partnerships, projects, capacity building
- Consider the impact of program quality on teacher quality – systemic view
- Establish partnerships with higher education and teacher training institutions
- Align standards to other national and international initiatives and standards
- Develop for stakeholders customized tools based on the Standards

Member Involvement: A number of ISSA members, who serve in the Core Group of Quality Experts, attended and contributed to the meeting as internal experts.

Partner and funder: OSI

Revised Standards and accompanying materials for professional development and advocacy

Throughout 2009, ISSA continued to work on promoting high quality and professionalism in providing care and education for young children through continued work on the revision of the

ISSA Pedagogical Standards and on developing materials for their use by different stakeholders and target audiences. Main activities included the following:

- Finalized revision of standards and indicators
- Piloted application of revised standards for different age groups
- Gathered video materials for training, photos and other testimonials from members
- Methodology book and collection of examples under development
- Developed design for the publication and poster

Through consultations with members of the Program Committee, the Core Group of Quality Experts and other ISSA members, in 2009 decisions were reached to develop the following **ISSA Resource Pack on Quality ECD** to support implementation of the revised Standards:

1. *Competent Teachers of the 21st Century: ISSA's definition of quality pedagogy*. ISSA Pedagogical Standards and indicators describing quality pedagogy (2009). This publication can be downloaded from: http://www.issa.nl/news_issa_launch.html
2. *Posters and leaflets* outlining ISSA's principles of quality pedagogy, available in different languages (template of poster developed in 2009, template of leaflet to be developed in 2010)
3. *Putting Knowledge into Practice – A Guidebook for Teachers* focusing on:
 - Why each principle is important, including the philosophy, background, and research findings that support it
 - Examples of what constitutes good pedagogy under each of the principles, and indicators of quality
 - How educators can move forward to become agents of change in their schools, their communities, and their profession
 - The importance of quality experiences for children's development and learning in the early years.The guidebook will be developed by the end of the first quarter in 2010.
4. *Continuum of Examples for Improving Quality Practice in ECD*, describing:
 - how teachers can make a good start in improving their performance
 - what is evidence for further engaging in quality practice
 - how to move forward to sustainable and systemic change in the teaching paradigm and practice.

The continuum can be used as tool for:

- teachers' self evaluation, self-improvement, mentoring and training,
- assessment and monitoring purposes by different stakeholders.

The continuum will be developed by the end of the first quarter in 2010.

5. *Video Library on Good Practices in ECD*. Collection of video clips from different ISSA countries, supported by methodological support for self-study as well as for trainings or mentoring activities. The library will be available to members. Work began in 2009, by building capacity in the network to develop and work with such resources, and by preparing the first approximately 30 video clips. The library will be finalized in 2010, and will contain examples from different countries in the network.
6. *On-line Training course for Professional development*. Modular course, based on principles of quality pedagogy outlined in the ISSA Standards (to be developed in 2010 through a partnership project with IBM)

7. *What is Good for My Child?* (Working title). Brochure for parents on principles of quality pedagogy linked with the focus areas of the ISSA Standards; template will be made available to members for adaptation and translation. (to be developed in 2010)

A Meeting of the Group of Quality Experts took place in Croatia in April with participants from 7 member NGOs. The goals of the meeting were: to establish reliability among an ISSA core group of quality experts on using the revised Standards with different age groups from toddlers to primary school; to discuss development of the scale of examples of performance for professional development purposes; and to discuss level of performance and requirements for certification. Each participant used the revised standards for observations of at least 6 teachers working with children of different age groups. Reliability was established among the group at the YES/NO level of the Standards; additional suggestions regarding the text were made as well as general observations and suggestions collected.

Development of supporting documents included significant work on writing examples for each of the 85 indicators on a continuum to reflect transition from the teacher centered to quality child-centered practice. Examples were used and discussed during the meeting of the Standards Experts Group in Croatia, and for the rest of the year work continued on their development.

The guidebook for teachers follows the structure of the seven focus areas and discusses:

- Why each principle is important, including the philosophy, background, and research findings that support it;
- Examples of what constitutes good pedagogy under each of the principles, and indicators of quality;
- How educators can move forward to become agents of change in their schools, their communities, and their profession; and
- The importance of quality experiences for children's development and learning in the early years.

The continuum describes how teachers can make a good start in improving their performance, what is evidence for further engaging in quality practice and how to move forward to sustainable and systemic change in the teaching paradigm and practice. When finalized, the continuum can be used to develop a tool for teachers' self-evaluation, self-improvement, mentoring and training, as well for assessment and monitoring purposes by different stakeholders.

The English version of ISSA's Revised Standards *Competent Teachers of the 21st Century: ISSA's definition of quality pedagogy* was launched in October at the 2009 Annual Conference. Layouts of the booklet, two posters, and a promotional notebook were also made available to all NGOs for publication in national languages.

By the end of 2009 already 5 NGOs have contacted the ISSA Secretariat and have started work on translation and publication of these resources. Several Members have already started to incorporate the principles in their activities as well as to disseminate the revised standards among different stakeholders at national level. For example, Kosovo Education Center (KEC), ISSA's member organization in Kosovo, has already translated the document and developed tools for mentoring and monitoring of teachers' performance, closely linked with the ISSA principles.

KEC has trained more than 300 school principals and local educational authorities, who will support teachers in improving their work. During the Roundtable *Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Education in Kosovo*, organized by KEC on December 11, 2009, it was stressed that such an instrument is useful for engaging in discussion and developing common understanding on what quality pedagogy means. In Moldova, the Step by Step Educational Program translated and launched the revised ISSA standards during events linked with the NGO's 15th Anniversary Celebration at the end of 2009.

ISSA's work on Quality/Standards was presented during 2009 EECERA Conference and ISSA Annual Conference; several new contacts were established after these presentations. Sample chapters of guidebook and continuum were presented at the Council Meetings in June and in October. In early 2010, ISSA will finalize the Guidebook and the Continuum of Examples, and by the end of the year the other resources in the *ISSA Resource Pack on Quality ECD* will also be finalized.

The Russian translation of the materials was in the process of final revision/editing at the end of 2009. Russian speaking experts from the network will be involved to fine-tune the language and clarify concepts. Further steps will be taken in 2010 to support the launch of the new resources in Russian, supported by member engagement in special interest groups.

Important steps in further implementing this strategic goal and key priorities for 2010 will be to:

- build an enlarged core group of quality experts to lead and support this work
- establish reliability
- ensure common understanding in the network around principles in the revised standards
- develop strategies prepared for working with revised standards at national level
- finalize translation of materials around the standards and plan dissemination in Russian
- reach agreement on what support from the network is needed to meet members' needs to effectively work with the revised standards
- set up support mechanism and peer-mentoring systems to meet these needs.

In order to accomplish these objectives, three sub-regional meetings will be organized in 2010 under the leadership of the Regional Anchors and the Core Group of Quality Experts. Apart from work on quality issues, these meetings will also include one day for sharing on organizational issues and challenges.

Member Involvement: ISSA members who serve on the Core Group of Quality Experts, on the Program Committee or as Regional Anchors – approximately 12 experts - were actively involved in developing materials and providing input in developing directions for ISSA's work on Quality in ECD. Members piloted the revised Standards in their work for different age groups. During Program and Council Meetings all members provided feedback on draft resources and general direction for ISSA's work on Quality. By the end of 2009 at least two NGOs (in Moldova and Kosovo) finalized translation and publication of the revised Standards.

Partner and funder: OSI provides advisory support and funds for the largest part of ISSA's work around Quality. IBM provides funding for the development of the online course.

Sharing ISSA experience and engaging in the DECET/ISSA Work Pack on Professionalism

ISSA was invited to share its experience in promoting quality and using its standards by joining DECET's *Work Pack on Professionalism*, which thus became a joint DECET/ISSA initiative, piloting KARL as a Knowledge Management System to support the work. Dawn Tankersley and Zorica Trikić represent ISSA in this Work Pack, which works on collecting and disseminating the voices of practitioners on the topic. In search for competencies and qualities to work in a context of diversity, the results will be disseminated via the DECET and ISSA networks. A joint presentation on preliminary results was delivered at the EECERA Conference 2009.

This Work Pack is inspired by the importance of democratic professionalism: a bottom up approach in the construction of a broader form of professionalism in early childhood care and education. The objectives are:

- To make an action oriented competence profile for an early childhood professional based on the ideas and experiences of practitioners who, as 'actors of change', have developed interesting practices in a context of diversity and social inclusion of users and staff (bottom up approach, co-construction)
- To create a virtual community of practice where now trainers, and later practitioners, educators, policymakers and researchers can discuss the action oriented competence profile, share experiences about the profile, collect examples, co-construct the competence profile etc. (the competence profile must have the possibility to evolve in time and context)
- To disseminate results on 4 different levels: the practitioners, the training and research institutions and the policy makers and researchers

Member Involvement: One of ISSA's members serves as representative of ISSA, bringing in the experience not only of her NGO, but more widely from the network.

Funder: Bernard van Leer Foundation

Kindergartens That Make a Difference

In 2009, ISSA received funding from the IBM Global Work/Life Fund to complete the project *Kindergartens That Make a Difference*, that was implemented in Slovakia and Hungary in 2008. The purpose of the project was to improve the level of quality of preschool education by implementing a long term professional development program for preschool educators in locations where IBM has a substantial work force, including families with children. ISSA Member NGOs, Nadacia Skola Dokoran, worked with ten kindergartens in Bratislava, Slovakia and EcPec Foundation worked with seven kindergartens in Budapest, Hungary. The professional development course provided within the project piloted the ISSA revised standards through in-service training and mentoring for the professionals working in the chosen sites. This course was a combination of in-person trainings and mentoring with a small on-line mentoring component, and a good opportunity for ISSA to pilot its revised resources and new approaches to mentoring.

ISSA, as well as IBM representatives in the respective countries, received excellent feedback from teachers and parents about the course and were disappointed that the remaining trainings did not happen after December 2008 due to the economic downturn and cessation of funding for the project. However in the Fall of 2009, a new proposal was approved by the IBM Global

Work/Life Fund which permitted the ISSA NGOs in Slovakia and Hungary to bring closure to the previous project. An additional three days of training (however without the previous mentoring component) was approved to be carried out before year-end 2009 so that the NGOs could fulfill their obligations to the kindergartens, as well as finalize piloting of the course. Hungary also added one more kindergarten site to these trainings that was an additional extension site of one of the previous kindergartens. The number of kindergartens enrolled in the project was 10 in Slovakia (reaching a total of 798 children) and 8 kindergartens in Hungary (985 children). The kindergartens enroll a small number of children of IBM employees, but also other children from the community, including children from socially-disadvantaged families.

IBM also provided funding for an online course using principles of the ISSA Standards, however implementation needed to be postponed to 2010, due to lack of time and human resources.

Member Involvement: Nadacia Skola Dokoran, Slovakia and Ec Pec Foundation Hungary were close partners in implementation by developing the links with the kindergartens and providing trainings. ISSA quality experts were hired to provide guidance on developing the mentoring system and in general on the implementation of the project.

Funder: IBM

Reflections on Accomplishments under Goal II

- Insights gained from the use of the old standards, which will be very useful to guide ISSA's work on Quality in the future
- New resources being developed to support the revised Definition of Quality, and to offer members a competitive edge in their national contexts.
- ISSA and its members are in a stronger position to advocate that access without quality is of little meaning
- The network is innovating with the use of technology for supporting professional development of teachers
- Contributions being made towards professionalization of the ECD profession.

Goal III - Promote civil society participation, community-based ECD and parental education

Civil Society Partnership for Rural Children – TACIS Project in Kazakhstan

This project is managed by ISSA as lead partner, with funding from EU/TACIS and co-funding from OSI, in partnership with Community Foundation Step by Step Kazakhstan and Comenius Foundation Poland. The goal of the project is to support every child's right to education by developing models of child-centered, cost-effective early education services for rural areas. In 2009 the second training was provided in close cooperation with the Comenius Foundation, Poland and local experts from Kazakhstan. Mentoring of future trainers took place, to increase sustainability of the project and increase capacity of the Community Foundation Step by Step in Kazakhstan. A survey was developed and circulated among several categories of stakeholders in order to prepare the training for the Board under another component of the project. A comprehensive interim report was prepared in 2009 and submitted to the funders of this project: EU/TACIS and OSI.

Member Involvement: Community Foundation Step by Step, ISSA's member in Kazakhstan, is a partner on this project, along with the Comenius Foundation Poland

Funders: EU and OSI

Promoting ISSA Reading Corner books and Activity Kits with methodologies to promote early literacy and family support to child's development

Early in 2009 ISSA went live with a new online bookstore on www.issa.nl/rc_bs.html, which allows customers to purchase the Reading Corner books from www.amazon.com, www.amazon.co.uk, and www.amazon.de, directly through the ISSA website. Customers can click on any book in the language of their choice, choosing the country from which they would like the books to be shipped (US, Great Britain, or Germany). ISSA receives a 4% commission for each purchase which goes through its website. Albeit at a slow pace, sales in the US continue, due to the efforts of Martin Greenwald of OSI New York, whose work for ISSA is an in-kind contribution from OSI.

Other efforts to promote the books and the kits as tools to support the home learning environment and community-based ECD, included:

- preliminary discussions with UNICEF in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania to potentially make activity *Opening Magic Doors* kits available as resources.
- As evidence of the growing interest in ISSA's kits and books, an article appeared in a newsletter on diversity *EMEA Diversity News*, going to a large number of subscribers (businesses and NGOs) in Europe.
- Early Years and ACEI have requested ISSA to prepare articles on the activity kits, and these articles appeared in their newsletters.
- During the meeting of the Critical Thinking International Community of Practitioners organized by OSI/ESP, in April in Antalya, Turkey, Aija Tuna and representatives of ISSA Member NGOs involved in the Critical Thinking project shared experiences on promoting literacy in the early years with wide range of representatives from different regions.

New project proposal to further strengthen the capacity of the network to work on implementation of this goal

In ISSA's new Strategy Framework the network has strong capacity to work primarily on the first two strategic goals, focusing on access/equity and quality. Thus it is crucial for the network to develop stronger capacity to work with equal focus on this third strategic goal. In 2009 ISSA submitted an application to OSI under the 2009 Call for Proposals: Promoting Innovation within the Step by Step Network for Equity and Access to Early Education and Development. The application was successful. The overall goal of the project, entitled *Smooth Transitions*, is to increase information on quality ECD experiences for young children in places where formal preschools are not available or do not cover all children. Specific objectives are:

- To develop a core group of experts within the ISSA network around the issue of community-based approaches to ECD.

- To define the scope of community based approaches of ECD within a framework that includes quality of experiences for children
- To provide information for professionals of ECD programs on how to advocate for quality community-based programs.
- To conduct research on providing smooth transitions for children as they leave different provisions and transition into increasingly more formal and structured programs.

Member Involvement: ISSA applied as lead applicant with a consortium of 5 NGOs as partners. NGOs were consulted in developing the project proposal. More NGOs will be involved in implementation, including partners from Turkey and Poland.

Reflections on Accomplishments under Goal III

- Ground prepared for further strengthening capacity in the network to work with community based solution – compared to the areas of the other two strategic goals, this area is less developed.
- increased interest of members to work in community based ECD

Goal IV- Enhance the capacity of the ISSA network to deliver its strategy

Services Offered by ISSA to its Members

Feedback collected from members during the strategic planning process in 2009 showed that the services members appreciate most are:

1. means to deliver new high quality early childhood content, which gives them a competitive edge in their national context
2. a structure to develop ECD projects and partnerships, both within the ISSA network and with other organizations and potential donors
3. international representation, credibility and visibility.

All activities carried out in 2009 under the four strategic goals provided such services, whether linked with the program advocacy goals (I-III) or with this goal focusing on enhancing the capacity of the network.

The vast majority of ISSA’s programmatic and networking work (approximately 80% of the staff time spent and budget) has been to provide services and direct support to its members via the mechanism described above 1-3. The only activities where ISSA acted as an agent were the Conference and Roundtable, where ISSA itself took on a direct role in advocating for investment in ECD (approximately 20% of the time and budget spent).

Engagement of Members

All ISSA members have been engaged in 2009 in one way or another, depending on their involvement in specific initiatives:

- all members are using in their programmatic work all or some of the Technical Resource provided by ISSA: Standards, ESJ, Reading Corner books and kits etc.
- all members took part in surveys and discussions during the strategic planning process, attended ISSA events, presented at the conference, hosted ISSA meetings etc.
- members regularly reported that they make use of the program and advocacy information shared by the ISSA Secretariat in regular communication
- members who were partners in EU funded projects or funded by other donors (IBM) worked actively with ISSA in this projects (NGOs in Central Asia, Slovakia, Hungary).
- 4 NGOs served as Regional Anchors in 2009
- approximately 17 members served on the ISSA Board or different committees: Program Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Nominations Committee, Membership/Governance Committee, Audit Committee and the Conference Organizing Committee.
- a number of members regularly provided consultancy on Quality, ESJ or Community-based ECD – in particular members from Slovenia, Lithuania, Moldova, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Albania and Armenia.

Enabling Knowledge Creation – Supporting the work of SIGs and Knowledge Management System within the ISSA network and across the ISSA/DECET networks

As mentioned above, the framework for the ISSA/DECET cooperation will include developing mechanisms for joint knowledge creation and advocacy, joint fundraising, and building online learning communities to support the work of Special Interest Groups (SIG), with participants from both networks. This long-term partnership envisages closer cooperation at the level of the Secretariats and at the level of individual network members; it aims not only at reaching common program/advocacy goals, but also at supporting sustainability, capacity and enhanced reach of both networks. A joint Intranet will be launched in 2010 as a knowledge management system for:

- supporting collaborative communities to jointly create new knowledge
- sharing information within and across the two networks
- organizing and storing information
- communicating within the network and across networks
- planning events

One ISSA SIG started functioning in 2009: the core group of experts who are working on developing materials to support the revised Standards. They meet in person from time to time, but they primarily work online, and are piloting a Community of Practice on KARL, where they store working documents, share latest revisions, use blogs, wikis etc. ISSA expects future SIGs which will be launched in 2010 around other areas linked with the strategic goals to learn from their experience. As described above a joint DECET/ISSA SIG began working in 2009 on issues linked with Professionalism: ideal competence profile for an early childhood professional working in a context of diversity and social inclusion.

In 2010 ISSA plans to further develop the capacity of the network to work with ICT for the purpose of supporting professional development in ECD (online courses and mentoring) and of promoting peer-mentoring and joint creation of knowledge (the work of SIGs).

Membership/NGO Development

Capacity building among its core members is at the core of ISSA's work. ISSA and its members remain committed to self-improvement, acknowledging that development never stops. Throughout 2009, ISSA provided links and information on resources available online to support organizational development. A publication was purchased for interested members with guidelines on how to apply for EU funding.

Strategic Planning

In the process of ISSA's strategic planning a Strategy Framework for 2009-2012 was approved by the Council at its meeting in October 2008. See an executive summary of this framework in Annex IV. During the first half 2009, under the leadership of the Board, with high engagement from members and with input from a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), the Program Committee (PC), the Membership/Governance Committee and the Regional Anchors (RAs), ISSA developed further documents to guide implementation of this strategy, providing the framework for three main aspects of ISSA's work:

1. *Strategic Direction: A Program/Advocacy Framework*, including ISSA's main functions – this document was developed primarily by the Strategic Planning Committee using information resulting from survey with members and the Program Meetings.
2. *Structure: A Members' Charter*, providing frameworks for Governance and Membership – this document was developed primarily by the Membership/Governance Committee.
3. *Funding: A Funding Model* with plans for sources of income to support ISSA's activities – this document was developed primarily by members of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Secretariat

See Annex V for the composition of the Committees which worked with the ISSA Board and Secretariat in the process of strategic planning: Regional Anchors, Program Committee and Membership/Governance Committee. Annex VI, VII and VIII provide the strategy documents resulting from the work in 2009.

Here is a description of the process which led to the development of the Strategy documents:

A first round of RAs consultations with members was carried out in February: survey and interviews on Strategic Direction. Feedback from members was presented and discussed at the Strategy Meeting in March, where members of the Board, of the SPC and PC worked on a first draft of the Program and Advocacy Framework. In May, in a second round of consultations, RAs consulted with members on this draft, and also on the matters in 2 and 3 above: Structure and Funding. Feedback from Members and input from the Board and the SPC were discussed during another Strategy Meeting and the Program/Council Meeting in June. A letter of guidance from OSI, outlining recommendations and priorities, was presented and discussed at the meeting. Council and Board Members, as well as OSI colleagues present at the meeting endorsed the *Program and Advocacy Framework*. This framework was formally approved by the ISSA Board after the June Meeting. Council Members also discussed general directions for the *Structure and Funding Frameworks*. A first draft of the *Work Plan for 2010* was prepared during small group

work, and after the meeting it was circulated to the SPC, PC and RAs, who worked further on it, including details about planned activities, expected outcomes, members' involvement in activities, partnerships etc.

During the June Meeting agreement was reached on a Set of Principles to be used for guiding ISSA in the process of strategic planning:

- Ensure respect for the diversity represented in ISSA
- Work towards increased member participation and pursue member-driven priorities
- Keep a cosy, friendly learning environment in the network
- Build awareness about and prioritize what members (could) do better, because they are part of a network
- Work towards professional development which leads to impact on children/families
- Protect and build upon the investment of OSI and of other stakeholders in the network
- Continue to build partnerships that enable ISSA to reach its strategic goals
- Move towards action

During the June Meeting, the Council also established a Membership and Governance Committee (MGC) to work on:

- Define rights and responsibilities of current members: develop draft of membership agreement
- Draft process for accepting new members: define their rights and responsibilities
- Suggest governance structure for ISSA

The committee worked between June and October to develop a draft Members' Charter including proposals on membership and governance, to be discussed and voted on during the October Council Meeting. In developing proposals for membership and governance, the committee took into account the reports from Regional Anchors, summarizing feedback collected from members, and the discussions from the Strategy Meeting in June. Members of the Membership/Governance Committee collected samples of Members' Charters, Statutes and other similar documents from other associations, and conducted a review of practices and policies of other associations, in order to inform the process.

ISSA's Committees worked closely with the ISSA Secretariat in preparation of frameworks for Governance, Membership, and Funding for 2010-2012, as well as the Work Plan for 2010, attached in Annex IX. This included communication of the MGC, SPC and PC via email and skype and a meeting of three of the Regional Anchors in August in Strasbourg (during meetings arranged around the EECERA Conference, including the ISSA Meeting on Standards and the ISSA/DECET meeting). ISSA Members expected to be involved in specific program activities in 2010 were contacted for input during September. The ISSA Board and the Strategic Planning Committee then finalized the draft of the Work Plan and developed a Budget before the October Council Meeting.

During the October 2009 Council Meeting the Council met and approved the Members' Charter, the Work Plan and Budget for 2010. See the Minutes of this meeting in Annex X. There was significant discussion around the frameworks for Governance and Membership; it was agreed

that the language of the Members' Charter will be fine-tuned to reflect discussions from the Council Meeting. During the meeting in October the following decisions were taken:

- ISSA Members agree to pilot this Charter for 6 months at the beginning of 2010.
- In the process of piloting, members will explore whether the members' expectations from the Secretariat need to be further clarified.
- A vote was organized during the October Council Meeting on key issues that require changes in Statutes: membership and governance
- Specific changes to the Statutes on these issues will be prepared and voted on during July 2010 Council Meeting.
- A revised Members' Charter will be circulated by email for input from members and voted on electronically or at the July 2010 Council Meeting.

An important decision by the Council was taken with regards to membership: beginning with 2010 ISSA will accept new full/voting members from new countries, and new affiliate/non-voting members from current countries, as outlined in the Members' Charter. Two organizations are being considered: ACEV from Turkey and Comenius Foundation from Poland – both have expressed interest in joining ISSA and have started to engage with ISSA members in partnership projects.

Another important decision was taken with regards to governance: the Council voted on a new Composition for the ISSA Board, beginning with October 2010:

- 4 beneficiary members/representatives of ISSA Full Members (elected)
- 4 independent members (elected)
- 1 OSI representative (appointed)

In order to ensure consistency among ISSA's Statutes and governing documents, the Council voted to revise article 4.2.1 of Statutes (majority of independent members no longer needed), and article III.1.c of Internal Regulations. The Council also decided to dissolve the current International Advisory Board and prepare changes in the Statutes not requiring ISSA to have one. Board elections were carried out at the Council Meeting in October and a new Board elected, as well as a new Nominations Committee to carry out the elections in 2010.

Member Involvement: Members served on the ISSA Board, the Nominations Committee, the Membership/Governance Committee, the Program Committee and as Regional Anchors. All members contributed to the strategic planning via survey and interviews carried out by Regional Anchors, and during discussions at the two Council Meetings. A large number of informal discussions with members took place via skype, as well as during meetings organized by ISSA or during other international meetings.

Funder: ISSA's strategic planning process was fully funded by the OSI general support grant

Governance: Council and Board Meetings

A Council Meeting was organized in June and another one in October, after the ISSA Conference in Bucharest. Consensus reached in strategy discussions is summarized above in the section on strategic planning. The council business agenda in June included planning the 2009 and 2010 Conference, including ISSA's 10th Anniversary in 2009, the board elections to be

organized in October 2009 and the 2008 Audit Report. The meeting in October was devoted primarily to issues related to strategic planning and Board Elections.

A Board Meeting was organized in March to coincide with the Strategy Meeting in Budapest. A second Board Meeting was organized in June at the same time with the Strategy Meeting and the Program/Council Meeting. Several Board members attended the Strategy Meeting on both occasions and actively contributed and provided leadership to the process. A third Board meeting was organized in October after the ISSA Conference. During all Board Meetings significant time was devoted to issues related to strategic planning.

It was agreed that, in line with ISSA’s Internal Regulations, the President Elect’s term would start earlier, due to Carmen Lica’s resignation in June. Despite her resignation from the Board, Carmen remained active in conference preparations and served as Co-Chair of the 2009 ISSA Conference. Before she became President of the ISSA Board, Siobhan Fitzpatrick held two Officer positions: President Elect and Secretary. In June the Board appointed Radmila Rangelov-Jusovic to serve as Secretary until the end of her term on the Board. After Carmen’s resignation, her seat as Council Member representative on the Board was vacant. The Board decided to appoint Milena Mihajlovic, as Interim Board Member on this seat till the following elections in October. During the June Council Meeting, the Council endorsed this proposal.

Board Elections took place in October, and the following candidates were elected to the board:

- Beneficiary Board Member (Term: Oct. 2009-Dec. 2010) - Emil Buzov
- Beneficiary Board Member (Term: Jan. 2010-Dec. 2012) - Milena Mihajlovic
- Independent Board Member (Term: Jan. 2010-Dec. 2012) - Mark Ginsberg

Below is the new composition of the ISSA Board as a result of the elections in October 2009:

Terms	Beneficiary Board Members	Independent Board Members	OSI Representative
To December 2010	Emil Buzov Board Member <i>(Executive Director, Step by Step Program Foundation, Bulgaria)</i>	Lucy Marcus Treasurer <i>(CEO, Marcus Venture Consulting)</i> Phyllis Magrab Board Member <i>(Director, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, USA)</i>	
To December 2011	Regina Sabaliauskiene Board Member <i>(Executive Director, Center for Innovative Education</i>	Siobhan Fitzpatrick President <i>(CEO, Early Years Northern</i>	

	<i>Lithuania)</i>	<i>Ireland)</i>	
To December 2012	Milena Mihajlovic Board Member (Executive Director, Center for Interactive Pedagogy, Serbia)	Mark Ginsberg Past President, President Elect (Executive Director, National Association for the Education of Young Children, USA)	
Undetermined period			Sarah Klaus (Director, Early Childhood Education Program, Open Society Foundation, London)

Member Involvement: In 2009 Council Meetings were well-attended by members: during the June Meeting only 4 members were absent; 8 members were absent in October but 6 of them sent proxies. Members served on the ISSA Board, the Nominations Committee, the Membership/Governance Committee, the Program Committee and as Regional Anchors.

Funder: ISSA's Board and Council Meetings were fully funded by the OSI general support grant

Communication, Marketing and PR

- The ISSA Secretariat continued to send out *regular updates* to the Board and Council. They summarize the latest developments, as well as provide information about upcoming events, resources, etc. The updates are also available on the internal site. The ISSA Secretariat has received positive feedback from members, who mentioned that they feel well-informed and appreciate receiving the updates.
- In addition to what is included in the updates, the Secretariat regularly sends out *information on relevant events and program/advocacy/organizational development resources*. The feedback from members has been very positive, including members who have gone on to apply for grants based upon the information they received from ISSA, or who have successfully used resources in their program/advocacy work.
- ISSA continues to update the *Latest News* section on the *external website*. This includes a permanent section, *News from ISSA's Core Members*.
- ISSA distributed its *Newsletter* in April and November. The newsletter is sent to ISSA members and partners, and is available on the ISSA website. The latest issue may be seen at: <http://www.issa.nl/newsletter/09/autumnwinter/main.html>
- A new section was developed on the ISSA website: the ISSA News Room, which may be accessed from the main page, with articles published by or about the ISSA network: http://www.issa.nl/news_room.html.
- In 2009 ISSA successfully moved the server which hosts www.issa.nl from New York to Hungary, and moved design and management to Budapest, which lowers costs considerably and allows more timely webpage updates.

- ISSA has further developed its *internal website* as a comprehensive information resource for members. Through ISSA's password protected members' site, members and other stakeholders (including OSI representatives, board members and advisory board members) are able to access all materials related to ISSA's strategic planning process, archived documents, meeting planning information, and many other materials. Positive feedback on this was received from members.
- ISSA has begun piloting OSI's KARL (online knowledge management too). Launching KARL in 2010 will streamline communication, support collaboration and knowledge creation.

International representation on behalf of members

In addition to partnerships at the network level described under specific program/advocacy activities related to the strategic goals, the ISSA Secretariat facilitated on behalf of members the following contacts with potential new sources for funding or partnerships:

- Children in Europe (Open Academy SbS Croatia translates and publishes the magazine)
- Aflatoun (several more NGOs put in touch in addition to those initially involved)
- Global Fund for Children (Central Asian NGOs, Hungary, Russia)
- IBM Global Work/Life Fund (Hungary, Slovakia)
- IBM Philanthropic Division/European Office for Corporate Social Responsibility (all countries in CEE/CIS where IBM is present)
- CEC/DISES - International Conference on Inclusive Education 2010 (Latvia)
- Open University/Sage – Book on Policy in Early Years (Albania, Azerbaijan)
- Alliance for Childhood - Conference of European Council For Steiner Waldorf Education and Conference on Children of Migrants organized by Romanian MEPs (Romania)

As a result of the efforts of the ISSA Secretariat in 2009 in establishing partnerships and in making sure that ISSA is recognized as an important player in ECD in the international arena, invitations were secured and funds (or in-kind support) raised for the participation of ISSA members in different international initiatives/events. Below are a few examples of members' participation in such initiatives, resulting directly from partnerships negotiated by ISSA in 2009:

- Zorica Trikić (Serbia) at the UNA Learning Group on Program Development in Contexts of Ethnic Divisions – Merida, Mexico, January
- Milena Mihajlović, Stevan Nikolić (Serbia) Biljana Maslovarić (Montenegro), Nives Milinović (Croatia), Carmen Anghelescu (Romania) at the Bernard van Leer Foundation's ECD Workshop on Roma Inclusion - The Hague, The Netherlands, March
- Helena Burić (Croatia) at the National ECD Congress in Italy – via the Children in Europe connection – Torino, Italy, March
- Zorica Trikić (Serbia) at the DECET/ISSA Work Pack on Professionalism – Utrecht, The Netherlands, March
- Radmila Rangelov Jusović (Bosnia Herzegovina) and Milena Mihajlović (Serbia) at the Eurochild's Thematic Working Group Meeting on community based services in the early years – Tallinn, Estonia, April
- Regina Sabaliauskiene (Lithuania) at the International Conference *Beyond Child Indicators: A Framework to Assess and Evaluate the Quality of Early Childhood Services*

and Programs in Global Contexts, organized by Yale and Harvard Universities and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc - Abu Dhabi, April

- Nives Milinovic (Croatia) and Tatjana Vonta (Slovenia) in the European CORE project on competence requirements of staff in ECEC – Brussels, April
- Helena Buric (Croatia), Dragana Koruga (Serbia) and an additional ISSA representative (Ukraine) at the Study Tour hosted by Children in Scotland, Comenius Foundation and Eurochild - Poland, May
- One ISSA network representative (to be determined) to present at a Conference on Discrimination in Schools, organized by the People2People Programme of DG Enlargement of the European Commission – Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina, May
- Yulia Karimova (Azerbaijan) and one more ISSA representative (to be determined) at the UNA Learning Group on Peace Building with Young Children – Indonesia, May
- Two keynote speakers from the ISSA network (to be determined) at the Alliance for Childhood Conference – Budapest, October

When members represent ISSA in international initiatives, they are asked to contribute:

- brief articles to the newsletter or the ISSA website
- information for the program resources messages sent regularly by the Secretariat
- specific knowledge to activities linked with ISSA's strategic goals

In addition to its long-term partnership with OSI, in 2009 ISSA continued to strengthen other partnerships, closely connected with the 4 strategic goals. Closer cooperation with the following partners benefitted the entire ISSA network or clusters of members: DECET, UNICEF, Eurochild, Roma Education Fund, the Consultative Group, UNA Learning Initiative and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In 2009 ISSA was very successful in raising funds and in-kind contributions to support participation of ISSA members and Secretariat in international events.

Resource Mobilization: Fundraising/Income Generation

Like other NGOs in the current climate, ISSA started 2009 facing financial challenges. The situation looked grim when IBM cancelled further involvement in their existing partnership projects and the funding which was previously committed, due to internal financial difficulties at IBM. In spite of this, and the difficult climate, ISSA has core support from OSI and has had great success in raising funds from other various sources (UNICEF, Bernard van Leer Foundation, EU, the Consultative Group, book sales, conference registration fees, sponsorship etc.) and significant in-kind support (costs covered for ISSA representatives to attend international events, estimated at approximately 30,000 Euros for 2009). To all these sources ISSA sent funding requests with a good rate of success – ISSA begins 2010 with the entire budget being secured. Work continues on securing funds for longer term commitments. A full list of all proposals submitted in 2009 is presented in Annex XI. Annex XII contains a financial report for the Reading Corner sales in North America.

In 2009, in addition to the proposal requesting general support grant from OSI, ISSA submitted:

- 14 grant proposals – 6 rejected and 8 accepted
- 4 proposals for sponsorships or service contracts: 1 rejected and 3 approved

- letters sent to approximately 100 companies inviting them to exhibit or sponsor the conference (3 responded)

Overview of results of fundraising efforts:

- ISSA was successful in continuing to diversify its sources of funding both in terms of type of source (sources include all of the following: government, corporate or foundation funding) and in terms of number of sources/amount (less dependence on one single donor – the OSI contribution towards the ISSA budget was brought down to approximately 50-55%).
- Altogether successful proposals sent in 2009 raised approximately 700,000 EURO towards the 2010 budget, not counting the OSI General Support Grant. The amount which ISSA will manage to actually spend in 2010 will depend on how the multi-year projects will be planned and the human resources and time which ISSA will have to deliver on all the projects.

In 2009, given the global economic climate, ISSA decided to invest less in trying to increase sales of kits/books, and focused instead on grant proposals/partnership projects. The position of Finance Manager, which had been created to boost ISSA's income-generating capacity, was discontinued. A large number of project proposals were sent either with ISSA as lead applicant (in partnership with members) or with ISSA joining as a partner at the invitation of members.

Efforts to support members in their own fundraising included:

- Contact info for SbS NGOs included in the *Welcome Europe* database, so those interested in looking for partners for EU proposals may be able to reach them. Some NGOs in the ISSA network have already been contacted with requests for partnership.
- Joint fundraising proposals with members
- Technical assistance (support in developing project proposals) offered to members also in cases when ISSA was not a partner in the project
- Information on funding opportunities regularly sent to the network
- A manual was purchased for those NGOs interested in how to get EU funding

Financial Management

The 2008 Audit Report was finalized in the first half of 2009, and was submitted to the ISSA Board, Council and OSI.

In his Management Letter, the auditor praised ISSA for how internal regulations are observed and for the mechanisms which in place to regulate ISSA's operations, which are well-established for a "relatively small entity".

Annex XIII contains the Financial Management Report for 2009. The chart below presents the percentage of different sources of funding for 2009, compared to previous years and to estimations for 2010 and beyond:

Year	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Actual	2009 Actual	2010 Forecast	2011 Forecast	2012 Forecast
OSI	81%	66%	54%	63%	55%	45%	40%
EU	15%	11%	10%	14%	24%	20%	20%
Other sources	0%	0%	2%	7%	4%	16%	20%
Sales	1%	22%	33%	14%	16%	15%	15%
Membership	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	4%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In 2009, ISSA continued to work on reducing its administrative costs, as well as the amount used from the OSI General Support Grant towards these costs (144,500 EUR was spent on administrative costs from the OSI General Support Grant as opposed to 200,000 EUR which was initially approved in the grant).

The chart below presents a breakdown of the main budget categories for 2009 and 2010:

Budget Category	2009 Actual	2010 Estimation
Administration Costs	17%	14%
Strengthening Network Capacity	22%	15%
Advocacy/Programmatic Strategic Goals	55%	64%
Fundraising/Income Generation (including direct costs of sales)	6%	7%
Total	100%	100%

Reflections on Accomplishments under Goal IV

- Finalized Strategic Planning
- ISSA's Governance strengthened
- Members actively engaged in processes
- Significant steps towards ISSA's financial and programmatic sustainability
- Strong visibility ensured for members internationally and in the region