



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION



ISSA Peer Learning Activities



ISSA Peer Learning Activities Overview 2022



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INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

The **International Step by Step Association (ISSA)**, is a growing network and professional learning community encompassing over 85 organizations from 41 countries. Together we are dedicated to exploring and improving quality, equity, and access in early childhood services through pioneering initiatives and partnership projects.

ISSA's vision is of a society where families, communities and professionals work together to empower each child to reach her or his unique potential and embrace values of social justice and equity.



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Peer Learning Activities in 2022

Every year ISSA Members benefit from Peer Learning Activities (PLAs), which aim to build Members' capacity and deepen their knowledge. They act as enabling spaces for Members to co-create new knowledge.

Since 2016, ISSA has facilitated and co-funded the exchange of knowledge through PLAs as a platform upon which both sharing and learning occur in a mutual and collaborative way.

In 2022, ISSA supported six PLAs involving 31 ISSA Members from 18 countries. Five of the PLAs were organized by Members and included topics varying from video coaching, the core capacities for living and learning in childhood and the high quality of workforce. In November 2022, ISSA launched the PLA on ISSA Connects on the Ukraine response.

The Peer Learning Activities are financially supported by ISSA with financial or in-kind contributions from its Members.

If you would like to participate, consider joining as a Member of ISSA.

If you would like to learn more about our PLAs, contact us at membership@issa.nl

Over the past 12 years,
62 PLAs
have taken place within
the ISSA network,
benefiting more than
13,000
professionals.

Every year, these events
involve an increasing
number of participants,
from professionals
working in ISSA
Member Organizations,
to practitioners.



Peer Learning Activities (2022) in figures

6

PLAs

31ISSA Members involved
from
18
countries**24,354 Eur**
Investment

Breakdown of funding for PLAs 2022



20%

ISSA Members

80%

ISSA Secretariat



Peer-to-peer online workshop on video coaching

MAY 2022–JANUARY 2023

Interactive training with hands-on tools

This training session provided hands-on inspiration and tools based on real experiences and with interactive methods. Video coaching method has been developed by Artevelde University of Applied Sciences (Ghent, Belgium) for professionals working with children up to the age of six.

Video coaching stimulates the observation of the total development and experiences of children, the imaging of the adult-child interaction from the children's perspective, and the coaching of professionals with attention to strengths and growth opportunities in the interaction. It can be used with caregivers of babies/toddlers, educators working with children in out of school care, and kindergarten teachers. Trainers shared educational materials on Zoom and reflected on videos. The training had an intervision component (learning from others and seeing them and their work from within), where participants reflected on their initial experiences and exercised with their own video materials.

The training was targeted at Open Academy Step by Step educators who already have some experience with the methods of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as well as other professionals from the region who have or do not have experience in facilitating the process of professional reflection (Bosnia and Serbia educators).

This PLA aligns with ISSA's aim to leverage the strengths of the growing network to contribute to the early childhood field with innovative approaches, noteworthy practices and cross-county learning.



Participants: 19 participants on education and 9 on supervision

Host: Open Academy Step by Step

Country: Croatia

Structure: 2 online sessions of 4 hours each

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Open Academy Step by Step educators who already use individual and group professional reflection in their work had an opportunity to enrich their knowledge about video coaching methods which can be used in the purpose of group reflection.
- Open Academy SBS has become the leading organization in the country with regards to providing video coaching reflective methods.
- Open Academy SBS educators will continue to cooperate and exchange practices and new insights with other countries' participants (Serbian teachers).
- New knowledge is and will be used in projects like REC: REFLECTION, EDUCATION AND CARE – Pučko otvoreno učilište – Korak po korak to enrich project results.

RESOURCES DEVELOPED

- Workshop handouts.
- Stories from people already having experience with video coaching.
- An inspirational guide which will be translated into Croatian and shared with all participants who took part in the training session. Also it will be used by the Open Academy Step by Step in further work with other institutions interested in trying video coaching methods, and will be available as part of ISSA's Knowledge Hub.

Core capacities for living and learning in childhood

SEPTEMBER 2022

Contributing to a sense of connectedness in children and adults

The first session was dedicated to presenting and discussing the “What Makes Me?” report on core capacities: Discerning Patterns, Embodying, Empathizing, Inquiring, Listening, Observing, Reflecting, Relaxing and Sensing. Several participants were intrigued by how the notions of “physical, emotional, mental and spiritual” development were encapsulated in a UN agreement such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They were keen to explore how core capacities could fulfil this promise of holistic development with regards to children.

During the second session, participants reflected on their own practices in early childhood that might promote or protect core capacities. Looking at what conditions might support the development of core capacities, the group highlighted accepting everyone’s uniqueness in learning, contextualising practices to different profiles of children, and discerning “good enough” practices from those that might do harm. Some participants also pointed out the need for promoting core capacities in digital environments, as a critical space of our post-pandemic world.

The PLA concluded with a discussion on the definition and role of spirituality in child development, and imagining how core capacities might contribute to a sense of connectedness in children and adults.

2022 PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

Participants: 8

Host: Learning for Well-being Foundation

Country: The Netherlands

Structure: 2 online sessions of 2 hours of each

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Getting familiar with the “What Makes Me?” report and the nine core capacities.
- Participants “discovered” and had the chance to reflect on some of their own innate capacities . They were surprised at the extent to which they did not pay attention to these capacities even if using them every day. This exercise allowed participants to recognize those capacities in others and in the children they work with.

RESOURCES

- Power Point presentations delivered by Luis Manuel Pinto on the Learning for Well-being approach and Dominic Richardson on the “What Makes Me?” research results.
- Presentation on the Spiritual dimension.

Peer-support to country-based online professional events and advocacy

MARCH–SEPTEMBER 2022

Creating professional learning communities

Educational reform started in Ukraine in 2017 when the New Ukrainian School Concept and the new Law “On Education” was approved. The main components of the reform were: new content of education based on competences and values; partnership at all levels; inclusion; autonomy of schools and teachers; new ways of professional development.

Another step forward in terms of professional development was the approval of professional standards for teachers in 2020. These can be compared with ISSA’s Principles of Quality Pedagogy and include a number of professional and general competencies described according to four levels of their development. Both professional standards – for school teachers and for pre-school teachers – are good bases for professional development.

One of the innovations in the new reform was introducing the concept of Professional Learning Communities into the legislation. This PLA provided an opportunity to exchange experiences with other countries where Professional Learning Communities are active. From among ISSA Members, best practices from Moldova, Croatia and Slovenia were presented. Other partner organizations involved included the project “Finnish Support to the Reform of Ukrainian School” and the Schools for Democracy Programme carried out by the European Wergeland Centre, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through their partner organizations, they shared experiences from Georgia, Finland and Norway.

Participants: 423
Host: Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation
Country: Ukraine
Structure: 5 webinars of 1.5 hours each

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Sharing the experience of the national models/ approaches to creating Professional Learning Communities between six countries during five online webinars.
- Development of an online manual, which includes countries’ specific cases of Professional Learning Communities, which will be downloadable from the websites of ISSA and other organizations (carried out by participants of this PLA).
- Further development of Professional Learning Communities in the countries (carried out by participants of this PLA and beyond through training sessions and other professional development activities).

RESOURCES

- Specific cases from six countries are being developed and collected as part of an online manual. In addition to the described cases, the manual includes other existing resources about Professional Learning Communities.



Knowledge sharing for a high-quality workforce in early childhood intervention

SEPTEMBER 2022–APRIL 2023

Capacity building for service providers for children with disabilities

Contemporary European studies confirm that the quality of education and care in early childhood depends on the presence of a professional and competent workforce that works within a “competent system”. This includes each individual professional, teams of professionals in each separate organization or service, and competent management at local and national levels. This PLA aims to provide an opportunity for improving the professional knowledge and skills of the participants from Bulgaria, Moldova and the Netherlands. Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a multidisciplinary coordinated service that supports the development of young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The quality intervention provided during the period of the most rapid brain development is crucial for insuring that children reach their full potential with the loving and caring support of their families.

This PLA draws on the extensive expertise of the SOFT Tulip Foundation in capacity building for service providers for children with disabilities. The providers working with SOFT Tulip and the hosting organisation itself learn how the guest organisations have dealt with their responses to the crisis in Ukraine.

Participants: 10

Host: For Our Children Foundation, Bulgaria

Co-hosts: SOFT Tulip Foundation, The Netherlands, Centre of Early Childhood Intervention Voinicel, Moldova

Country: Bulgaria

Structure: 2 study visits to the Netherlands (a group of professionals from Bulgaria and from Moldova)

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Gained expertise based on examples of best practice in management and the provision of integrated services for children aged up to seven years old and their families.
- Gained expertise and examples of best practice in management and provision of services for children with special needs aged up to ten years old.
- An established collaborative culture built on trust to serve as the basis for a future professional learning community among ISSA Members, focusing on Early Childhood Intervention.

Translating and disseminating the full issue of ECM 2021 to Kyrgyz and Russian

POSTPONED

Climate change addressed from the early years

The issue of climate change and its impact on the future of our children is probably one of the most important issues currently being discussed, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the pandemic itself can be seen through the prism of a deteriorating environment. Increasing pollution and deforestation, the greenhouse effect and the melting of glaciers – these and other climate change adverse effects have to be addressed from the early years, in order for our children to be more conscious of the global footprint humanity leaves on the planet. Because of the drastic importance of this topic in Central Asia, the whole ECM 2021 edition, The Climate Issue, is being translated into Russian and Kyrgyz.

This is followed by a large-scale online dissemination event on air pollution. The whole ECM 2021 edition will be presented, with invited representatives from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, ISSA, article authors, experts in ECD and climate change, policy-makers at different levels, as well as educators across the CAMI+ region. There will be an opportunity to address the issue on a bigger scale and set up a platform on which to discuss why is it important to teach children from early years how to protect the environment.

Participants: The dissemination event is still to take place.
Host: Foundation for Education Initiatives Support
Country: Kyrgyzstan
Structure: 1 online session of 1 hour

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- A large-scale online regional event to be organized in Autumn 2023.
- Focusing on a local context and analyzing what is done across the region and what strategies (proposed in articles and observed from the experience of other countries) can be applied locally by ECD specialists of the region.
- Sharing a finalized version of the translated ECM 2021 into Russian and Kyrgyz on the organization's website, spreading the information on the ECM 2021 through the Ministry of Education and local ECD networks. Sharing the translated version of the ECM 2021 with CAMI+ colleagues in case they wish to use it in Russian, or translate into their local languages.

RESOURCES

- The ECM 2021 issue translated to Russian and to Kyrgyz.



ФОНД ПОДДЕРЖКИ
ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ
ИНИЦИАТИВ
FOUNDATION EDUCATION
INITIATIVES SUPPORT

ISSA Connects for the Ukraine response

ONGOING SINCE NOVEMBER 2022

Interactive training with hands-on tools

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, many ISSA Members responded rapidly to the needs of young children and families affected by conflict in Ukraine and in countries hosting refugees. Building on the rich and sound expertise in our network, new initiatives have been developed by both Members and the ISSA Secretariat.

To ensure that expertise, innovative approaches, and strategic thinking grow into the ISSA community as a catalyst that enriches the response to children facing the consequences of war and strengthens ISSA learning community, the ISSA Secretariat and ISSA Members launched a PLA for Ukraine.

The PLA for Ukraine is a safe learning space for ISSA Members working to support children and families affected by the war and for those interested in sharing and learning more about the activities set up to respond to the crisis in Ukraine.

This PLA provides access to a platform to share what the participants wish to learn from each other. The activities and the timing of the meetings are discussed together. There are opportunities for knowledge sharing, exchanging good practices, making visible the work done on the ground in Ukraine and in the neighboring countries. This information sharing will further contribute to coordinating with other partners to ensure that efforts are channeled quickly, in the most meaningful way, and that links are created to strengthen activities.

Participants: 24

Host: International Step by Step Association

Country: The Netherlands

Structure: regular online sessions of 1.5 hours each

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Strengthening the capacity of early childhood practitioners to provide psychological first aid and trauma-informed practices to children and their caregivers.
- Exchanging information about engaging with the local governments and supporting a strategic response in the short, medium, and long term, building resilient, inclusive and quality early childhood systems.
- Exchanging information about establishing non-formal settings (e.g., play groups, play/family hubs, etc.) that play a crucial role in ensuring the psychological well-being of children and families and their integration in host countries.
- Exchanging information about addressing inclusion, respect for diversity, and equity and guarantying in any intervention.
- Getting to know the best mechanisms for leveraging country-level diverse expertise and resources in times of crisis.
- Learning how the ISSA community can advocate to keep ECD high on the agenda of a humanitarian response.





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