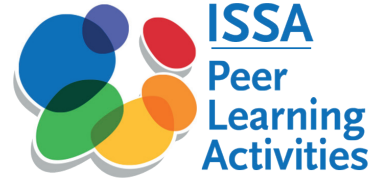




INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION



ISSA
Peer
Learning
Activities



2018 PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

ISSA is a growing network and professional learning community encompassing nearly 90 organizations from 41 countries.

Together we are dedicated to exploring and improving quality, equity, and access in early childhood education and care 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.

- **Do you share ISSA's this vision?**
- **Do you work in the field of Early Childhood Development?**
- **Can your organization benefit from being part of our community?**

To be part of our learning community – *Join ISSA!*

ISSA International

Step by Step Association

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 www.issa.nl

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BELGIUM

Member organizations
involved in 2018



Member organization	Country
1 Center for Innovations in Education	Azerbaijan
2 Belarusian League of Parents and Teachers	Belarus
3 Childcare Unit – City of Ghent	Belgium
4 Center for Innovation in the Early Years (VBJK)	Belgium
5 DUGA – Association Society of United Civic Initiatives	Bosnia and Herzegovina
6 Open Academy Step by Step	Croatia
7 Step by Step Czech Republic	Czech Republic
8 Hea Albus	Estonia
9 Partners Hungary Foundation	Hungary
10 Association 21st July	Italy
11 Foundation of Educational Initiatives	Kyrgyzstan
12 Center for Educational Initiatives	Latvia
13 Bureau MUTANT	the Netherlands
14 SARDES	the Netherlands
15 Comenius Foundation	Poland
16 Neohumanist Education Association	Romania
17 CIP – Center for Interactive Pedagogy	Serbia
18 Romanipen	Serbia
19 Wide Open School	Slovakia
20 Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education	Slovenia
21 Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation	Ukraine

21
member organizations
from
18
countries

attended
9
PLAs

Member-driven learning within the network is at the core of ISSA's engagement. Therefore, we are happy to foster the exchange of knowledge and skills powered by the Peer Learning Activities (PLAs).

The idea is simple. We know that sharing promising practices and lessons learned, especially with international peers, is among the benefits that ISSA member organizations value the most.

So every year ISSA supports new PLAs. By doing that, ISSA encourages its members to organize practical activities from which two

or more organizations can learn. This builds their capacity and helps knowledge travel fast within the network. By combining their respective expertise and experience, members also often create new knowledge and resources.

In 2018, representatives of 21 member organizations from 18 countries attended 9 PLAs. We are happy to share with you this overview that will give you a concise description of the activities carried out.

From theater as therapy in Belarus, to teaching permaculture

in the Netherlands, from training on inclusion in Kyrgyzstan, to advocacy campaigning in Ukraine, all the activities contributed to strengthening professionals who strive to nurture early childhood development.

All the Peer Learning Activities are financially supported by ISSA with financial or in-kind contributions from the 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.





"I've always been impressed with ISSA as a network. Trends and topics inside early childhood development are continuously spotted and addressed. ISSA's Peer Learning Activities help organizations of many countries to connect with the latest learning which can contribute to a systemic change as a whole.

The Peer Learning Activities are so very tangible and ready to use. Having the project-oriented Peer Learning Activities really elevates the connection between countries, East and West, West and East. You get the work done, and you have actual relationships forged between the members.

I hope we can expand this tangible knowledge exchange further, across European borders. This knowledge is very much sought after."

Leslie Falconer,
ISSA Board Member

Theater as therapy with “Krok za Krokam”

Theater as a means of inclusion for families and children with special needs. Within this PLA educators from Belarus and Poland learned how theater can support education in school and preschool.

This activity involved children, including children with special needs, parents, educators and theater artists. As part of the project, participants created theater performances which were presented at an inclusive theater festival.



The **Belarusian League of Parents and Teachers “Krok za Krokam”** organized a one-day master class titled, “Hope Theatre for Special Children”. There, 10 Step by Step teachers and four Polish educators, who carry out activities based on theatre pedagogics, received training on how to use theater to support children with special needs.

The project participants met the award-winning director of the children’s theater, “Litsedei” Viacheslav Makut, and learned the potential of art-therapy and

theatre. In addition, about 50 adults (educators, parents got acquainted with items like dramaturgy, selection of repertoire, planning of rehearsals, making scenery etc.

The participants presented their performances to the **Festival of Inclusive Theatres “We Are Different, We Are Equal, We Are Together”**. There, eight inclusion theatre projects created with 130 children, presented their shows and exchanged their practical experience.



This PLA involved

130
children

50
educators and adults

8
theatrical pieces presented



Advocacy campaigning for Roma inclusion with the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation

A “School of Advocacy”, a field visit trip and a round table. The Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation has organized a series of events to build the capacity of Roma civil society in the country.

As the coordinator of the **Romani Early Years Network (REYN)** in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF) launched a pop-up “School of Advocacy” for local REYN advocates. Participants learned to promote equal and non-discriminative education for Roma children and youth. It was attended by young Roma advocates, local REYN members and early childhood development (ECD) professionals.



The REYN National Networks from the Republic of Slovakia, Serbia and Italy joined to share their advocacy experience. By meeting their international colleagues, REYN Ukraine members learned new campaigning techniques that could improve the living conditions of Roma communities at local and at national level.

On the occasion, participants also visited the Roma settlements in the village of Nerubayskoe and

Korsuntsi. There, large Roma communities live marginalized, lacking access to quality medical, educational and social services.

Following the visits, at the round table “Advocacy for Equity”, they shared successes and challenges of advocacy campaigns aimed at furthering Romani children’s development in Ukraine.

International guests from REYN Italy, coordinated by **Associazione 21 Luglio**, REYN Slovakia,

coordinated by **Wide Open School**, and REYN Serbia’s coordinator the **Educational Cultural Union Romanipen**, gave some practical examples of their own campaigns. Other participants, including civil society organizations, national and regional government representatives, policy makers and advocacy experts also shared and learned.

The **Romani Early Years Network** is a Europe-wide advocacy network that promotes access to quality early childhood development for Romani and Traveller children, professionalism in early years services and a better representation of Romani and Travellers in the workforce.

NO MORE LOST ROMANI AND TRAVELLER CHILDREN!

For more information about REYN visit www.reyn.eu.



The “Peace in Your Hands” method works for children too!

Children are born with a desire for peace. “Peace in Your Hands” aims to encourage children, parents and teachers to realize that people can always find peace within themselves.

ISSA members, the **Neohumanist Education Association** (Romania) and **Mutant** (the Netherlands) have created a two-day Peer Learning Activity (PLA) to teach the skills necessary for inner and outer peace and happiness from the early years, in age-appropriate ways!

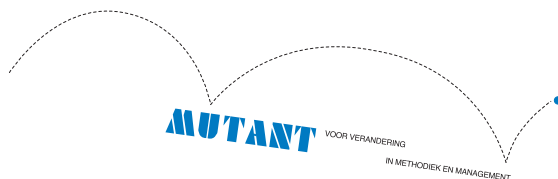
For this PLA the “Peace in your Hands”, the international training with its materials has been adapted to suit early childhood education and care settings. It incorporates

practices from the Neohumanist Education, such as Quiet Time, Yoga for Children, Wisdom Stories and the inner development of the teacher.

“Peace in Your Hands” was created in response to teachers’ need for learning materials that encourage classroom discussion about peace; including how to create peace at school and in the community. The tools provide lesson plans and working methods to meet the peacemakers in the

world around the child, to create peace in the classroom and experience peace within oneself. Many schools in many countries have used and shared these tools with each other.

The tools will be translated for children in Romania. The Romanian teachers will have the chance to visit the Peace Flame organization, which has developed the method “Peace in your Hands” in the Netherlands.



How well does WANDA abroad?

WANDA is a tool to support professionals who are part of Professional Learning Communities and work with groups of children. With the help of a facilitator, members of these communities are able to reflect on their professional practice and enhance it.

The method has been developed by two ISSA members in Belgium: the Center for Innovation in the Early Years (VBJK) and Artevelde University College, together with ISSA.

WANDA is being used successfully in Belgium and in other countries where ISSA members have introduced it recently; so the question was: how successful is WANDA in other countries?

The efficiency of the method in different settings is of paramount importance. This PLA gave to the member organizations involved the opportunity to research and evaluate their results nationally and locally. After running interviews with facilitators/organizations/services, they analyzed the results and prepared an overview that is accessible to the other ISSA members.

Each organization involved did an evaluation of the method in their own country. Following the evaluations, ideas of how to develop the method further were discussed.

The structure of pedagogical coaching, country to country differences and the needs of more early childhood professionals came out as some of the main points to discuss further.



WANDA stands for
Appreciate, ANalyze and
Deeds. Learn more about
this innovative method on
<http://wanda.community>



A school exchange for municipalities and educators, organized by Wide Open School

“It is really shocking to see that children previously in special schools in Slovakia, are successfully progressing in regular schools in Belgium. There must be something we are not doing right in our education system,”

Peter Strazik
– Elementary School
Director, Spissky Hrhov,
Slovakia

Nearly
50
participants attended the
REYN conference in Slovakia.

15
professionals attended the
country visits.



There about 2000 Roma in the city of Ghent, Belgium, and most of them come from one Roma neighborhood called “**LUNIK IX**”. It is situated in the city of Kosice, Slovakia.

The city of Ghent is **an example of inclusion**. Ms. Franciska Caset – Social worker and Coordinator of the Public Center for Social Welfare in Ghent, who also manages the project “Children’ first”, was consulted during the activity. The center helps everyone in need, regardless of age, ethnicity, culture and religious beliefs. The office declared that everyone is entitled to good housing, health care and sufficient financial resources.

Ghent is also a great example of **interagency work**. Municipalities, health institutions and educational institutions work together and deliver quality services.

For this reason, two ISSA members **Wide Open School** (Slovakia) and the **Educational Cultural Union Romanipen** (Serbia) visited Ghent’s education and care settings together with educators and municipal representatives of their own countries. One of the local ISSA members, the **Center for Innovation in the Early Years (VBJK)**, coordinated the visit.

The representatives involved also visited Roma communities in Serbia and Slovakia. At the final

conference of the **Romani Early Years Network (REYN)** in Slovakia, representatives of each respective country and sector discussed the lessons learned and the way forward. The conference was also attended by the government, including the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovakia, the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family of Slovakia and by Roma representatives.

This PLA has laid the ground for future interagency collaboration among representatives of different sectors in different countries.

škola
dokorán



vbjk

Centre for Innovation
in the Early Years
Centre d'Innovation de
la Petite Enfance



Open Academy Step by Step endorses “Circle of Friends”

“Circle of Friends” is one of several person-centered planning tools, initially developed to promote inclusion of pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools.

Trainers Vesna and Olga of the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (Serbia) proved the success of this approach in past years by sharing their experience in moderating and facilitating the methodology with pupils in their country. The Peer Learning Activity (PLA) can be attended by psychologists, trainers and mentors and (pre) school teachers.



“Circle of Friends” is an approach aimed at enhancing inclusion of any child or young person who is experiencing difficulties in school. Inclusion may need promotion because of disability, a personal crisis or because of challenging behavior towards others. The “Circle of Friends” approach works by mobilizing the child’s peers to provide support and engage in problem solving with the child in difficulty. For proper inclusion, children and young people need social and cultural activities with their peers: during school trips, during lunch time and in similar situations.

According to the two trainer’s experience, a major advantage of

the approach is that it does not involve major commitment of the teaching staff. This is because the real work is done by peers themselves, and not by adults. The adults’ role is to facilitate children’s social learning, altruistic behavior, and to help them in creating a supportive peer community. This is, at the same time, the most important and most challenging aspect of the presented methodology. Educators and teachers have to trust children, provide them with confidence and power while creating an opportunity for their participation and not forcing social contacts or friendships.

The role of adults is to meet with the circle for around 20–30 minutes weekly to facilitate their problem solving in the early stages. The last part of this PLA will take place in June. The trainers will discuss possible ways of adjusting the approach and necessary adaptations for working with pre-school children or migrant and Roma children. They also made plans for future implementation of this methodology in schools and kindergartens in Croatia and emphasized the role of the Step by Step team in supporting and supervising this process.



Working together to foster inclusion in Central Asia, FEIS and CIE

Two ISSA members from central Asia, the Foundation Education Initiatives Support (FEIS) from Kyrgyzstan and the Center for Innovations in Education (CIE) from Azerbaijan, created a training to promote inclusive education.

Within this particular project, CIE created a training focusing on inclusive education. The program is for the professional development of those who work in early childhood education, and was attended by organizations that are under the mentoring and supervision of FEIS.



FEIS reached out to a group of 25 professionals from 9 organizations who work in Kyrgyzstan and were committed to learn the new methodology. Some received an introductory training on the inclusive education methodology (3 days) and others a training of trainers (2 days).

FEIS consists of a team of passionate professionals. They all fiercely support the values of diversity, equality and inclusion,

as all the members of ISSA do, in their networking and personal communication.

The participants were highly satisfied and both training sessions received very good evaluations.

After seeing such proficiency and excellent work done, their philosophy won't be a surprise. It says: "the improvement of every individual life and society in general, is only possible through the improvement of education". So there we have it:

they view education as a comprehensive and enduring process, which proceeds throughout the whole life and broadens people's horizons.

Their motto is: "let's work together!"

This PLA has trained

25
professionals from
9
organizations



ФОНД ПОДДЕРЖКИ
ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ
ИНИЦИАТИВ
FOUNDATION EDUCATION
INITIATIVES SUPPORT



Center for Innovations
in Education

“Green playing and learning” by SARDES

Nature and natural materials are a rich source for playing, learning and exploring. Early childhood is also an optimal time to develop life-long ecological values and habits, as well as facilitate a loving connection with nature.

Young children love nature. In this PLA, trainers will be trained to teach preschool and early years teachers how they can enrich their program with the ethics of “earth care, people care and fair share” from permaculture, and use the natural curiosity of young children to explore and discover nature.

The activities have been developed by **SARDES** (the Netherlands) and by the **Neohumanist Education Association** (Romania). In the training “Green playing & learning,” early childhood development (ECD)

teachers learn how to use young children’s curiosity for nature and how to embed the permaculture principles.

Green playing and learning is not a fixed activity program but it can be used to complement an existing ECD activity program. This PLA is a two-day training for trainers who work with preschool and early years teachers who wish to give nature and nature play a more important and substantial place in their daily program with the young children. The trainers will receive a

fully designed training program, a set of inspirational “seeds” from the “children in permaculture” curriculum and an elaborated example of an activity cycle with activities around the theme “the snail”.

The PLA is designed for those ISSA members with experience in training and coaching professionals who work with young children (especially those at risk) who would like to expand their repertoire. The activities will be completed in May 2019.



Methods for a Competent Early Childhood System, City of Ghent

The **City of Ghent Childcare Unit** (Belgium) and the **Center for Educational Initiatives** (Latvia) will share expertise on inclusion in an early childhood environment.

This PLA will be finalized over the course of 2019. Professionals with a vocational degree and working with diversity (social inclusion) will be involved. The two organizations will exchange good practices with particular focus on

the transition from childcare to education.

Both organizations will visit centers of care and schools in the other country. Representatives from local municipalities will also be involved.

The local Flemish context of vocational secondary education for daycare professionals, a raised retirement age and a growing diversity of children and families

brings challenges and leads to lifelong learning for daycare staff.

The City of Ghent seeks to cope with those challenges by re-inventing themselves on a daily basis and looks for new innovative ideas in order to permanently enhance the quality of services for children.

Therefore, innovation and exchanging experiences on working with these themes will be at the center of this PLA.



Our Supporters

We would like to thank our supporters who were central in making this work possible:

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