

### **ISSA ANNUAL REPORT 2018**

**ISSA** is a growing network and professional learning community encompassing 88 organizations from 40 countries by the end of 2018.

Together we are dedicated to exploring and improving quality, equity, and access in early child-hood 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

Child Rights Home Hooglandse Kerkgracht 17-R 2312HS Leiden, the Netherlands

- www.issa.nl
- f ISSA on Facebook
- ISSA on Twitter
- in ISSA on LinkedIn
- ISSA on YouTube



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JOIN ISSA

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**MESSAGE PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR** 

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The year 2018 was filled with hard work, deep commitment and evident results for the children, families and professionals we serve and inspire. Much was accomplished, all thanks to a strong network of organizations working for the same goal.

ISSA continued to operate, inspired by *our members'* impressive expertise and the high standards of the work they have been demonstrating since the establishment of ISSA, 20 years ago.

The ISSA network grew to unite close to 90 member organizations from more than 40 countries primarily in Europe and Central Asia over the year. The strength of ISSA as an association lies in its member organizations, and in the community we build together, where new resources are cocreated, different approaches are tested, and shared learning can take place. The diversity of these organizations from more than 40 countries enable the network to

collectively tackle complex challenges and improve the lives and chances of young children and their families.

We continued our work on several key initiatives and contributed to the early childhood field both in our region and globally. Our programs cover diverse aspects of early childhood development, across sectors, and across age groups of children between birth and 10 years. During 2018, which was the last year of this strategic cycle, the Secretariat, the Board and ISSA's Program and



**Liana Ghent**ISSA Executive Director

Membership Committees worked on developing the new Strategy for the association.

There is much to look forward to also in 2019: new inspiring Peer Learning Activities, the work of clusters of members in Joint Learning Labs around common areas of interest, several opportunities to learn and develop professionally, and, of course, the ISSA Conference in June 2019, which will also mark ISSA's 20th Anniversary and the 25th Anniversary of the Step by Step Program.



**Elena Misik**ISSA Board President

Four Strategic Goals inform all the work that ISSA does. These goals guide ISSA as it continues to grow the network and pursue the best possible ways to advocate for and support competent Early Childhood systems.



STRENGTHENING THE ISSA COMMUNITY

"The network gives you such a great opportunity to learn and exchange, and to overcome challenges by learning from and with others."

Lieve De Bosscher, Child Care Unit, City of Ghent, Belgium As of the end of 2018, both Eastern and Western Europe were equally represented in ISSA initiatives and membership. ISSA welcomed 11 new organizations to the network in 2018, ending the year with 88 member organizations. As ISSA's membership grows, we continue to strengthen the connections among our members. Through professional development opportunities, Peer Learning Activities and the facilitation of partnerships among members on joint projects, ISSA was able to support member organizations in their efforts to contribute to better early childhood systems around the globe. This past year has provided many examples where our member organizations were able to improve on their work by tapping into the benefits of being part of the network.

### **New Members in 2018**

- Dreamland Primary School, Romania
- Know How Centre, Serbia
- VVOB, Belgium
- · Le Furet, France
- University College Dublin, Ireland
- Center for Child Health and Development, Italy
- ECD Coalition, Malawi
- Hestia Early Learning
   Center, the Netherlands
- Bottega di Geppetto, Italy
- Inventare Insieme, Italy
- Opportunity International, UK

47
members in

European Union

countries

+

38

members in other parts of Europe and Central Asia

Albania

Malawi

+

Romania

members in other parts of the world

88

Mongolia

Pakistan

Tajikistan

Turkey

ISSA members

### **GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF ISSA MEMBERS**



Austria Russia Serbia Belarus Belgium Slovakia Bosnia and Slovenia Herzegovina Bulgaria UK Croatia Ukraine Czech Republic Estonia France Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Kosovo Latvia Lithuania Macedonia Moldova Montenegro Norway Poland Africa



Armenia

Georgia

Azerbaijan

Kazakhstan



### THIS IS HOW WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER



### Peer Learning Activities

At the core of what ISSA does is member-driven learning. Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) foster the exchange of knowledge and skills among ISSA members. Every year, PLAs encourage members to organize practical activities from which two or more organizations can learn.

In 2018, representatives from 18 countries attended 9 PLAs. From theatre-therapy in Belarus, to teaching permaculture in the Netherlands, from training on inclusion in Kyrgyzstan, to advocacy campaigning in Ukraine, all activities contributed to strengthening the professionals striving to nurture early childhood development. You can read about them in the PLA Overview 2018.



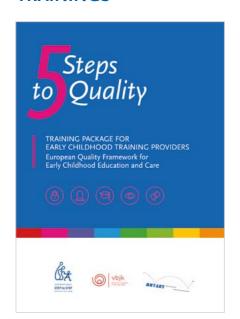
The Peer Learning Activities are so very tangible and ready to use. Having the project-oriented Peer Learning Activities really elevates the connection between countries, East and West, West and East. You get the work done, and you have actual relationships forged between the members.

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



### **TRAININGS**



### Take 5 Steps to Quality

For several years, ISSA has supported Peer Learning Activities (PLA) based on the European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. In 2018, for the first time, ISSA hosted a training on the subject. The international training presented the 5 Steps to Quality, a resource developed by ISSA members, Bureau MUTANT and VBJK during a PLA, and provided an opportunity for professionals across Europe to come together and discuss the main themes of the Framework.

For me the European Quality
Framework provides structure
and connection between all
themes, issues and projects. So,
complex challenges become more
manageable..

**Training Participant** 

TAKE 5 STEPS TO QUALITY

– 16 participants from
7 member organizations,
27 participants in total.

DIALOGUE, SHARING AND LEARNING ON QUALITY WORKSHOP – **77 participants** from **43 member** organizations FUNDRAISING FOR NON-PROFITS
- SUSTAINABLE NETWORKS &
ASSOCIATIONS

 11 participants from 6 member organizations. 16 participants in total

### Dialogue, Sharing and Learning on Quality Workshop

In October of 2018, 77 participants from 43 member organizations came together to discuss, share and learn from one another about Quality in early childhood systems, in a workshop which offered a platform for exchange and in-depth, member-driven learning across contexts and countries. A 'map' of the ISSA Network's Work on Quality was created and the results of ISSA's documentation

study, A Systemic Approach to Quality in Early Childhood Services for Children from 3 to 10 Years of Age were shared. This presented an opportunity to deepen members' knowledge of the work of other members and find opportunities for future collaboration.

### Fundraising for non-profits - Sustainable Networks & Associations

After a highly appreciated workshop on Fundraising for Non-Profits at the ISSA Conference 2017,

ISSA and The Management Centre offered an effective workshop on fundraising techniques tailored to the needs of participating organizations. The workshop focused, among other topics, on insights from behavioural economics and neuroscience, which are changing the way we think about how people make decisions.

### **WEBINARS**

### **Developing a Case for Support**

Most organizations are good at producing information and results, but find difficulties in communicating (about) that information or results. This webinar, organized for ISSA Member organizations, touched on how to build a better case for support for their work. The webinar was hosted with the support of Open Society Foundations and facilitated by INTRAC. It aimed to help Members learn how to draw supporters in and inspire their passion and commitment.



"Map" of the ISSA Network's Work on Quality

### Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development – A framework for inspiration and action

The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development (NCF) is a road map for action. It builds upon leading evidence of how child development unfolds and of the effective policies and interventions that can improve early childhood development.

Following the NCF's launch, this webinar organized with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, offered a timely look at what steps can be taken next in the field. It asked, what can we do to encourage partnerships between policymakers and the civil society to put ECD in the spotlight?

### Webinar on the Getting Ready for School Resource Package

This webinar provided an opportunity for interested ISSA Members to learn about the enhanced Getting Ready for School Resource Package.

### Competences and standards: why do we need them for the early childhood workforce?

Competences and standards affect the professionalization of the workforce, the relevance of their initial training and continuous professional development, of mentoring, of monitoring and evaluation, and their improvement efforts. They can have a significant impact on those who

work directly with young children and their families. Why are professional competences and standards needed and how do they support a well-prepared workforce from their first day of preparation throughout their career? Are they contributing to quality improvement? Do they contribute to recognizing the importance of the early childhood profession?

A webinar from the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative focused on these questions and shared insights from the Initiative's landscape analysis on competences and standards for the early childhood workforce, across sectors and professions.

NURTURING CARE FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT A framework for inspiration and action – 38 participants

INTRAC WEBINAR – 30 participants

WEBINAR ON THE
GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL
RESOURCE PACKAGE
– 6 participants

### **OVERVIEW OF ALL THE PUBLICATIONS RELEASED BY ISSA IN 2018**

Comparative global study of urban spaces to support parents

Comprehensive review of the literature on inter-agency working with young children, incorporating findings from case studies of good practice in inter-agency working with young children and their families within Europe

INTESYS Toolkit

What Works Guide

ECEC Play Hubs - a first step towards integration

TOY for Inclusion Toolkit

Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Competences and Standards

Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Training and Professional Development

Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce at Scale: Preschool Education in Ukraine

The Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce at Scale: Community Health Workers and the Expansion of First 1000 Days Services in South Africa

Embracing Diversity: Program for adults working with and for children Toolkit

A Systemic Approach to Quality in Early Childhood Services for Children from 3 to 10 Years of Age



### **QUALITY IN THE EARLY YEARS**



ISSA remains committed to being a leading early childhood network and learning community that promotes quality, equitable and integrated services for children, families and practitioners.

Between 2017 and 2018 the documentation study, A Systemic Approach to Quality in Early Childhood Services for Children from 3 to 10 Years of Age, was commissioned to learn to what extent the resources and support provided

to ISSA member organizations and their work (expanding across 25 countries) led to significant changes on various levels in the early childhood education systems. This study sought to find to what extent the resources and support provided led also to new policies, new approaches and new practices for strengthening professionalism, for ensuring quality services for young children and their families.

This documentation study also gives insights into the power of ISSA's reflexive network in the early childhood field. Therefore, its release represents a clear



A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO QUALITY
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES FOR CHILDREN
FROM 3 TO 10 YEARS OF AGE

Documentation Study on ISSA's Work on Quality Improvement



### INTESYS – TOGETHER SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES



In the course of the INTESYS project, ISSA's role was to ensure the quality of the resources and reports created, as well as the quality of the coordination meetings in the consortium. ISSA led the process of developing and finalizing the INTESYS Toolkit, which after being tested within the pilot phase of the project, was released in early 2019.

This toolkit was adapted by partners, to the specific contexts of the pilots in Belgium, Italy, Slovenia and Portugal. This resource, built on the findings of the literature review carried out in the project, proposes a Reference Framework and a toolbox for moving towards better integration in early childhood systems, across children age groups, across services, sectors, levels of governance.

It provided a common ground to all four countries involved in the project, and was meant to be a versatile resource in supporting the activities in the pilots and beyond, while being responsive to local contexts. Quality integrated early childhood services are key to improving children's outcomes in absolute terms and relative to other groups. For the most disadvantaged one, high-quality early childhood services can make a tremendous difference in reducing the disparities in the learning outcomes. Currently, inequality in the ECEC systems in Europe has a strong impact on the most vulnerable groups: migrant children, Roma children, children with special needs and children living in poverty.

INTESYS was a Forward Looking Cooperation Project co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme – Key Action 3.

"INTESYS allows to find points of convergence between different professional languages, to consolidate or to initiate relationships of trust. It allows to share expectations and to imagine the possibility of getting concrete "good practices" to share, formalize and extend. And all this takes place in a guided and methodologically solid and "guaranteed" framework. In this context, the joint reflection on concrete situations, with the possibility of drawing on more general guidelines, also leads to a different way of examining early childhood services, which is more effective because it is more responsive to reality."

INTESYS pilot representative, Italy



### **EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE INITIATIVE**

EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

The Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, co-hosted by ISSA and R4D, is a global, multi-sectoral effort to produce new knowledge and equip decision makers with tools and resources to support the development of a quality workforce at scale.

In 2018, the Initiative continued to solidify its role as a Hub for the

most relevant resources on the early childhood workforce, which consists of the volunteers, paraprofessionals, and professionals who promote the healthy growth, development, and learning of young children.

In addition to providing a Knowledge Hub comprised of more than 200 resources, the Initiative conducts rigorous research that provides a better understanding of the workforce, as well as their

challenges and opportunities. Resources, such as Landscape Analyses and Country Studies and Country Briefs offer actionable policy recommendations for supporting a quality workforce at scale. These resources, along with the initiative's webinars, have added to a growing body of work surrounding the early childhood workforce. See what ISSA and R4D have produced in 2018:



WEBINAR - Competences and standards: why do we need them for the early childhood workforce?

### Global Landscape Analyses Series

Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Competences and Standards

Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Training and Professional Development

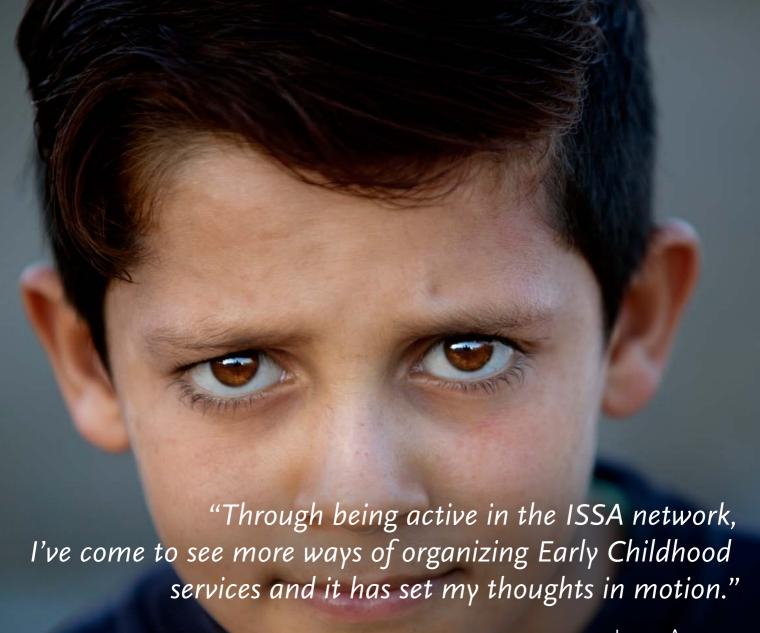


Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce at Scale: Preschool Education in Ukraine



The Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce at Scale: Community Health Workers and the Expansion of First 1000 Days Services in South Africa





Jeroen Aarssen
ISSA Board Secretary, and Early Childhood Education
and Care advisor at Sardes in the Netherlands

### **REYN – ROMANI EARLY YEARS NETWORK**



The Romani Early Years Network (REYN) is a Europe-wide advocacy network that promotes access to quality early childhood development (ECD) for Romani and Traveller children, professionalism in early years services and a better representation of Romani and Travellers in the workforce. REYN is made up of 11 National Networks, in Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia,

and Ukraine. The REYN National Networks run ECD advocacy at the national level contributing to the advocacy efforts of REYN towards EU institutions.

One of the highlights of 2018 was the advocacy training for the National Networks. Advocates from all the REYN countries participated in the two-day event (May 17 - 18), learning new campaign strategies and exchanging their experiences and lessons learned.

Later in the year, REYN issued a shadow report reviewing the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (within the EU Framework up to 2020). The activity produced an overview of the National Roma Integration Strategies in Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Also, the REYN website was revamped. The platform offers now more resources and new filtering for the Knowledge Hub. New sections have been created too: the page Empowered Roma shares stories of professionals who have dedicated their work to early childhood development.



Advocacy training in Sofia, Bulgaria, 2018.

## PROMOTING QUALITY & EQUITY

### **TOY FOR INCLUSION**

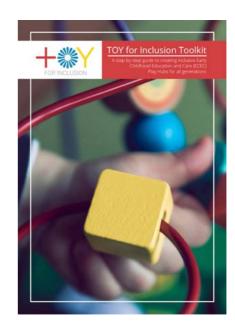


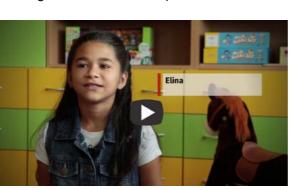
ISSA is a partner in the project TOY for Inclusion, which aims to support the integration of Romani children, families and the older generations in their communities. The project is coordinated by ISSA member International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and works with local communities to prepare community-based facilities called play hubs. Play hubs are safe spaces where people of different generations and cultures can meet, play and learn. In 2018, TOY for Inclusion opened eight

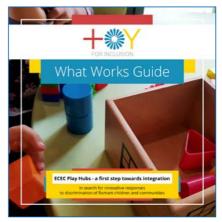
Play Hubs in seven European countries: one in Belgium, Croatia, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and two in Italy. The TOY for Inclusion Toolkit and "What Works Guide" were also released in 2018.

Project results show that it has been successful in fostering social inclusion for Romani young children and families, enhancing social cohesion and easing out the transition to primary school.

The success of TOY for Inclusion has led to another ICDI coordinated project entitled Toy to Share, Play to Care which began in early in 2019, also with funding from the European Commission.







### ISOTIS – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETY

### 150115

In 2018, ISSA continued work in a consortium of 17 partners implementing the project ISOTIS (this word means equality, evenness, fairness, parity in Greek). ISOTIS aims to generate evidence-based knowledge, contextualized and concrete recommendations and tools to support early years inclusion of children from vulnerable backgrounds. In the 11 countries of implementation, the project

targets Romani children, children from immigrant background (from Turkey and North Africa) as well as indigenous families with low socioeconomic status.

Several case studies and reports were released by the consortium in 2018. This includes Comprehensive review of the literature on interagency working with young children, incorporating findings from case studies of good practice in interagency working with young children and their families within Europe, to which ISSA contributed.

You can hear more about ISOTIS from Professor Edward Melhuish on the ISSA YouTube Channel.

ISSA lends its expertise in working with vulnerable populations to this project, which will lead to the creation of more equal and inclusive education systems starting from early years through secondary school.

Implementation of the ISOTIS project started in 2017 and will conclude in December 2019. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program.



Professor Edward Melhuish is an expert in the ECED field. The Oxford professor is one of the leading contributors to ISOTIS, a research consortium focusing on equality and inclusive education.

### **CHILDREN ON THE MARGINS**

Infants and young children represent a high proportion of refugees and migrants forced to leave their homes and countries in recent years. Because young children are the most vulnerable group, a response cannot be delayed without

placing their lifelong development and wellbeing at risk. Through intensive research, mapping the situation of young refugee children and meetings with relevant stakeholders, ISSA and partners, University of Patras, The Society for the Development and Creative Occupation of Children (EADAP) and Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI) have created a twofold response – one targeting nurseries and one targeting kindergartens in reception and refugee centers in Greece.





Teachers in action - participants use art as a tool for transforming lives of young refugee children

In 2018, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, ISSA provided equipment for kindergartens in refugee camps and reception centers in Aegean islands, Kos and Leros. ISSA works with kindergartens in reception centers as temporary solutions before children transit to regular schools and kindergartens in local communities – making kindergartens places where children, often living in difficult or inhumane conditions,

can feel protected, supported, relaxed, inspired and accepted. Together with partners, ISSA developed a toolkit for kindergartens and provided a training to kindergarten teachers from camps in Aegan islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos and from Athens's camps Eleonas, Skaramagas and Malakasa, with support from the Institute for Education/Hellenic Ministry of Education and the Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood

Programme. All materials from this training will be shared by the Ministry and the Institute through their channels and used as an official training program.

In cooperation with ISSA member EADAP, ISSA selected two municipalities where the training for nurseries will be implemented in 2019. The training will be organized in a participatory way and result in materials and ideas for activities supporting teachers in their work with refugee children and families.

### LEVERAGING THE STRENGTHS OF ISSA AS A REGIONAL NETWORK

In 2018, ISSA started a new partnership with the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) aimed to strengthen ISSA's operations for knowledge sharing and learning. Within this partnership, ISSA strengthened its online Knowledge Hub with resources centered on Quality and Equity in Early Childhood Development (ECD). The new Knowledge Hub features resources developed by ISSA members and by ISSA Secretariat in collaboration with experts from and outside the network, which are all open source.

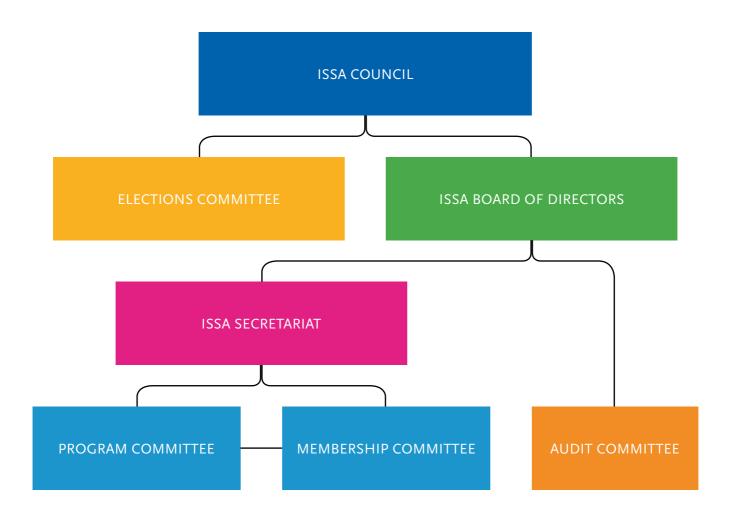
In addition to developing a more complete knowledge base, ISSA worked to disseminate ECD knowledge and resources via a webinar hosted in 2018. This webinar focused on the Nurturing Care Framework. Listen in via the webinar recording linked here.





# ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



### MEET THE SECRETARIAT AND BOARD

### ISSA Secretariat Staff in 2018



**Liana Ghent Executive Director** 



**Dr. Mihaela Ionescu** Program Director



**Zorica Trikic** Senior Program Manager



Winnifred Sanders Finance Manager



**Stanislav Daniel** Program Manager, REYN Coordinator



Anna Joostensz
Finance Officer &
Office Manager



**Eva Izsak** Membership Officer



Jolanda Clement
Senior Marketing and
Communications Officer



Federico Lanzo Communications and Campaigns Officer



**Emily Henry**Communications Officer

### MEET THE SECRETARIAT AND BOARD

### ISSA Board in 2018



Elena Misik, MA
President
Program Manager at Step
By Step Foundation for
Education and Cultural
Initiatives, Macedonia



Henriette Heimgaertner, MA
Board Treasurer
Co-founder & Managing
Director of the Berlin
Early Childhood
Institute for Quality
Development, Germany



Jeroen Aarssen, Phd. Board Secretary Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) advisor at Sardes, the Netherlands



Vesna Bajsanski-Agic Board Member Executive Director of the Mozaik Foundation, Bosnia and Herzegovina



**Dr. Cornelia Cincilei, Phd.**Board Member
Director, Step by Step
Educational Program
Moldova



Leslie Falconer, MS
Board Member
President and CEO of
the Experience Early
Learning Co., and the
co-founder and trustee of
the Alabaster Fund. USA



Jan van Ravens, M.Phil Board Member Policy Consultant in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) field for low and middle income countries, the Netherlands

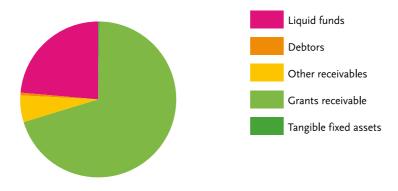


Dr. Sarah Klaus Board Member Director of the Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations (OSF), UK



**Liana Ghent**Non-voiting Board
Member
Executive Director, ISSA

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2018 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION



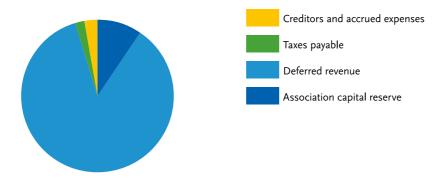
		12/31/2018 €		12/31/2017 €
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	9,053			16,620
CURRENT ASSETS				
Receivables				
Loan	-		15,000	
Grants receivable	1,292,122		887,777	
Other receivables	106,217		33,836	
Debtors	11,021		52,203	
		1,409,359		988,816
Liquid funds		432,519		490,068
	_	1,850,931	_	1,495,504

The balance sheet and the income statement are derived from the annual report audited by Kreston Syncount Audit.

### FINANCE

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2018 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

(After allocation of net result)



		12/31/2018		12/31/2017	
		€		€	
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES					
Equity					
Association capital reserve		179,878		158,645	
Current liabilities					
Deferred revenue	1,587,948		1,185,530		
Taxes payable	35,709		33,232		
Creditors and accrued expenses	47,397		118,097		
		1,671,053		1,336,859	
		1,850,931	_	1,495,504	

The balance sheet and the income statement are derived from the annual report audited by Kreston Syncount Audit.

### FINANCE

### STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2018 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

		Actuals 2018		Budget 2018
		€	€	
1 Grants	952,422		1,217,028	
2 Membership fees	26,088		26,000	
3 Sales and other income	79,684		55,000	
Total income		1,058,193		1,298,028
4 Administration	202,636		190,000	
5 Programs	752,463		1,021,923	
6 Fundraising and partnership				
building	15,257		25,210	
7 Income generation	94,812		50,000	
8 Consultative Group	-		-	
Total expenses		1,065,167		1,287,133
Net operating income		-6,974		10,895
9 Interest income		1,145		1,500
10 Exchange differences		27,061		-
Result		21,232	_	12,395
Funds reserved for Association				
capital reverse		21,232		12,395

The balance sheet and the income statement are derived from the annual report audited by Kreston Syncount Audit.

### **SUPPORTERS**

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















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