

ISSA ANNUAL REPORT 2017

ISSA is a growing network and professional learning community encompassing 80 organizations from 41 countries.

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
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- ISSA on YouTube







'I have come across ISSA from 2009 onwards, while developing a strategy on early childhood education and care for the EU. I found the particular connection of policy with research and practice and its simultaneous bottom-up approach to those in the network's activities excellent. But what I particularly found unique, was that it seemed to be the first international network working with children that has its main focus on Central and Eastern Europe as well as Central Asia that successfully brought its practice to Western Europe. The general trajectory of knowledge dissemination in this policy field in the EU is West to East which is also partly due to the use of English as a lingua franca. With this move, East to West, ISSA has not only managed to disseminate new knowledge but also good practices, that is particularly important in a field that it so much determined by its cultural and socio-economic context. This was also possible due to the extensive experience on early years in some CEE countries.'

Nora Milotay,

Policy Analyst at European Parliament (education, social and employment policy)

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A well-known proverb states that if you want to go quickly, you should go alone, but if you want to go far, then go together.

ISSA, as a network, strives to go far. We strengthen the connections among our members so that they can learn from each other, create new resources together and support innovations—all for the benefit of young children and their families. This past year has provided many examples where our member organizations, in 41 countries across Europe and Central Asia, were able to improve on their work because of the strength of the network.

As a learning community, we stand for the empowerment of those who work with and for the youngest members of society. Several initiatives addressed the need for strengthening professionalism among those who work in services for young children. This is done best by placing equity, quality and cross-sectoral cooperation at the core of their preparation and

professional development. As awareness increases about the importance of the early years, we continue to bring attention to the important role adults play in the development of children, and the need to properly support and appreciate them within a competent early childhood system.

A network can be a powerful way to link the local with the global.

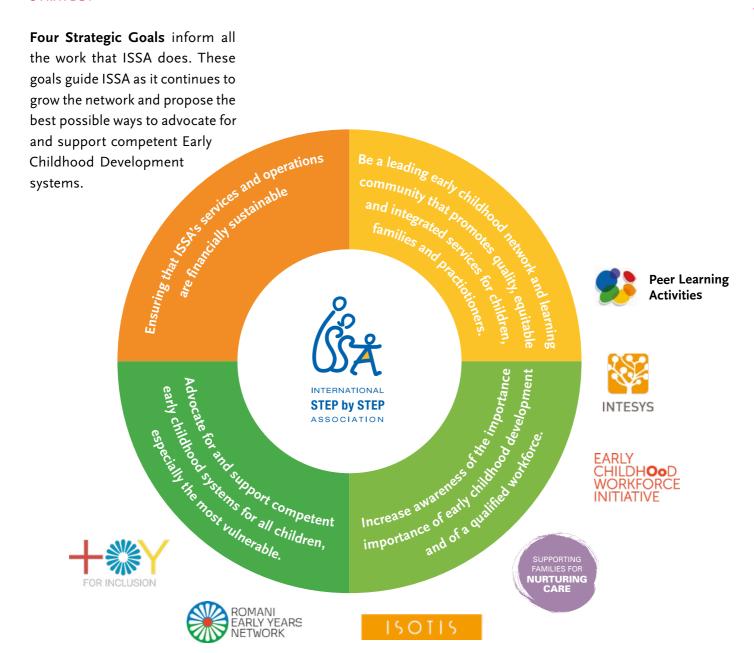
It can serve as a bridge across various corners of our continent. In 2017, we made further steps in being such a bridge. We remain deeply committed to harnessing the power of our network so that, with each year, we turn the wheel of change more toward early childhood systems that are more strongly devoted to children's wellbeing.



Liana GhentISSA Executive Director



Elena Misik
ISSA Board President



'We value ISSA as a very influential ECD organization that bridges East with West and provides many opportunities for different countries to share knowledge, experiences and best practices in the ECD field, learn from each other, and thus promote enhancement of the quality of ECD services.

'We value ISSA's role as an umbrella organization which serves as a source of new innovative ideas and programs, and rich know-how repository for networking countries. Being a member of ISSA increases our image in Armenia and enhances our credibility as a highly professional ECD organization.'

Ruzanna Tsarukyan, Executive Director, "Step by Step" Benevolent Foundation, Armenia As of the end of 2017, both Eastern and Western Europe were equally represented in ISSA initiatives and membership. ISSA welcomed **9 new organizations** to the network in 2017, ending the year with **80 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 2017

- Association Mala Ulica, Center for children and families in Ljubljana, Slovenia
- The society for the Development and Creative Occupation of Children, Youth and Their Families (EADAP), Greece
- Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), Belgium
- Association «IRODA»
 Parents of children
 with autism initiatives,
 Tajikistan
- Cultiva, Norway
- ATiYE Education Institutions, Turkey
- "Impreuna" Agency for Community Development Foundation, Romania
- Center for Preschool and Inclusive Education, Georgia
- Zonnelicht, the Netherlands

ISSA MEMBERSHIP BASE

41 members in European Union countries

+ members in other parts of Europe and Central Asia

members in other parts of the world

+

80 ISSA members

GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF ISSA MEMBERS







PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

THIS IS HOW WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER



Peer Learning Activities

Every year ISSA member organizations benefit from Peer Learning Activities (PLAs), which build their capacity and deepen their knowledge of noteworthy practices on quality and equity in services for young children, and the professionalism of those who work in these services.

ISSA members attended professional development events and activities in large numbers in 2017. The ISSA Conference, attended by 456 professionals from the field, included 189 participants from 61 member organizations.

In 2017, 10 Peer Learning Activities were attended by 38 members from 20 countries.

Two webinars were also organized specifically for member organizations, benefiting more than 50 individuals. These webinars focused on Communications (the use of social media for building support) and Monitoring and Evaluation. A Resource Package for Monitoring and Evaluation was also created based on member organizations' needs and shared with all ISSA members.

'It was a powerful experience to define key elements of success in our network. It reminded us where our roots are.'

PLA participant, **Mateja Rezek**of Step by Step Centre for Quality
Education, Slovenia



SSA CONFERENCE 2017

ISSA CONFERENCE 2017 – A NETWORKING PLATFORM FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

ISSA's 2017 international conference "Local Responses, Global Advances: Towards Competent Early Childhood Systems", drew researchers, practitioners, policy makers, donors and NGOs from around the world to explore how the speed of change in today's world affects early childhood development.

Inspiring and insightful keynote addresses from Jan Peeters and Nora Milotay described competent systems that motivate practitioners to provide high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care and how disruptive innovation can create positive change in early years systems.

The Conference also hosted a panel discussion titled "Local Responses to Global Challenges: the Role of Local Policies in Early Childhood Development", moderated by Michel Vandenbroeck. You can find several videos from ISSA Conference 2017 on our YouTube channel.



HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED FROM EACH REGION?



'Sometimes, to outsiders, it can sound like early childhood is not a very important issue, or it is a common issue. In fact, this is the most important issue. This is our future. That is why the ISSA Conference is so important.'

Eva Strmljan Kreslin, Director of Mala Ulica, Slovenia

WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THE ISSA CONFERENCE 2017?



456 people participated from **60** countries



200 presenters took part in 101 stimulating presentations



111 participants attended **11** inspiring field visits

Pre-Conference Workshops 155

total participants including:

Intervention packages to support nurturing care

Integrated services in the early years – towards an international platform of exchange

Developing sustainability through fundraising

ISSA CONFERENCE 2017

ISSA CONFERENCE 2017 – A NETWORKING PLATFORM FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

'Every year I attend the ISSA
Conference, and I am always
happy to meet all of the others
from other countries. It anchors
me and helps me move on. It is
important to see the research and
practice from around the world.
This is how I keep up with my
profession.'





The ISSA Conference 2017 was co-hosted with:







In Partnership with:







QUALITY

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.

In 2010, ISSA published a Quality Framework called Competent Educators of the 21st Century: Principles of Quality Pedagogy which proposed a definition of process quality in

preschools and primary schools. Subsequently, ISSA developed and disseminated an entire resource pack to assist its members in their efforts to promote inclusive, high-quality practices in early childhood education programs in their respective countries, acknowledging that competent early childhood practitioners have to be supported by competent early childhood systems.

The ISSA Quality Resource Pack (QRP) is a collection of resources and tools that build the foundation for discussions at multiple levels around what quality practices entail. The resources were designed and developed through the collaboration and participation of members, and their use has been reinforced through capacity-building meetings and peer-support activities.



In 2017, ISSA's Program Staff worked on a study that documents the work carried out in the ISSA network on improving the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and on contributing to building up competent ECEC systems through a bottom-up approach — starting from the interventions and activities of ISSA's members (all of them

non-governmental organizations) in their respective countries.

The study also aims to illustrate how the usage of the QRP contributed to the acquisition of different competences at the individual/team, institution, inter-institutional, and policy and governance levels in different political and economic country contexts, and to inspire future strategies in various countries

for contributing to the development of competent ECEC systems.

The documentation study, to be published in 2018, will help ISSA better understand where our role as a network is most needed and has the most relevance. Equipped with this knowledge, ISSA will continue building the tools necessary to create pathways for sustainable change.



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

Coming up in Autumn 2018



INTESYS TOGETHER – SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES



In the course of the INTESYS project, ISSA's role is to ensure the quality of the products and reports created, as well as the quality of the coordination meetings in the consortium.

ISSA led the process of finalizing the 2017 draft of the INTESYS toolkit that is currently being tested within the pilot phase of the project. This toolkit is adapted by partners, to the specific contexts of the pilots in Belgium, Italy, Slovenia and Portugal.

The toolkit, built on the findings of the literature review carried out in the project, proposes a conceptual framework and quality practices for moving towards better integration in early childhood systems. It provides a common ground for the four countries in

the project and it is meant to be an inspiring and versatile resource in supporting the activities in the pilots, while being responsive to specific country and local contexts.

Quality integrated Early Childhood Education and Care services are key to improving children's learning outcomes in absolute terms and relative to other groups. For the most disadvantaged groups, 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 is a Forward Looking Cooperation Project co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme – Key Action 3.

'It is important to establish a culture of cooperation among different experts from different institutions: to provide an opportunity to sit together at the same table; to get to know each other; to exchange information about the work of each institution, their principles, successes and challenges; to align the principles that lead their work...'

Petra Bozoviar, Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education, Slovenia

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 2017, ISSA continued to solidify a commitment to empowering those who work with young children and their families. This was further evidenced by the work of the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, which released the first of several country studies – intended to formulate actionable policy recommendations for strengthening and scaling up a quality early childhood workforce.

Supporting the early childhood workforce at scale: The Cuna Más home visiting program in Peru, a a case study focused on a large-scale home visiting program in Peru, is available on the Initiative's Knowledge Hub where it has already been downloaded over 200 times.

3 webinars hosted with 153 attendees

from
45
countries

Early childhood practitioners as advocates and activists

Scaling up the early childhood workforce to support children birth to age 3: Lessons from Peru and Mozambique

Challenges and opportunities in integrating early years services: a spotlight on the workforce

The Knowledge Hub grew significantly in 2017. Resources on our online library cover a wide range of issues, from workforce policies to workforce preparation, from competences and standards in different sectors to examples of good practices in scaling up the workforce, as well as analysis of working conditions and financing policies. By the year's end, the Knowledge Hub featured more than 100 resources filtered by the type of

resource, the sector the resource refers to, as well as the region or country of focus in the resource.

Three webinars focused on the Initiative's key focus areas including; Training and Professional Development, Competences and Standards, Monitoring & Mentoring and Recognition of the Profession. You can read more about the Intiative webinars, and find the recordings of this year's webinars, here.





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REYN – ROMANI EARLY YEARS NETWORK



The Romani Early Years Network (REYN) began the implementation of its 2017-2020 strategy, becoming ISSA's main advocacy-focused initiative, advocating for increase-daccess to quality early childhood services and for more diversity in ECD workforce and practice. Efforts continue to build professional capacities of practitioners working with young Romani and Traveller children.

Status Quo

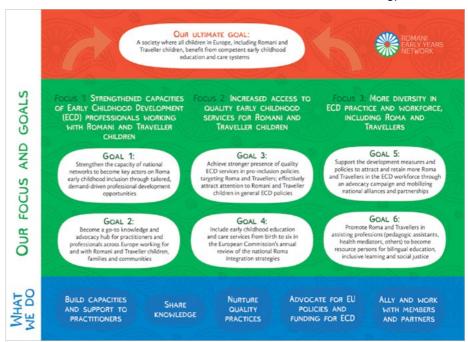
In 2017, REYN was able to bring more attention to the issues of young Romani and Traveller children in EU Member States and neighboring countries. REYN marked International Roma Day with a roundtable entitled Romani Early Years: Status Quo 2017. The event was organized in partnership with the European Public

Health Alliance and the European Foundation Centre's Forum for Roma Inclusion.

The meeting brought together representatives of national REYN networks, the European Commission, civil society, international organizations and other stakeholders to discuss the latest information from reports (EU Fundamental Rights Agency

report on Roma, National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) Shadow Report produced by REYN) with a focus on early childhood development, including health, and the role of various stakeholders, including private foundations.

REYN Strategy 2017-2020



REYN – ROMANI EARLY YEARS NETWORK

The roundtable was an opportunity to strengthen partnerships among the European Commission and international non-governmental organizations such as, the European Public Health Association, the European Foundation Centre, Roma Education Fund, Eurochild,

and many others, working on behalf of young children, including those working specifically with Roma.

As a result of increased recognition of REYN, ISSA was invited and participated at other events focusing on Roma, including the high-level EU Platform for Roma

Inclusion. REYN also initiated the creation of a coalition of international NGOs and networks to promote explicit, yet non-exclusive, measures supporting the inclusion of young Romani and Traveller children. This advocacy work will continue into 2018.



TOY FOR INCLUSION



TOY for Inclusion aims to support the integration of Romani children, families and the older generations in their communities. The project 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.

Throughout 2017, the project trained 117 professionals in 6 EU countries: Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The training was based on

the TOY Toolkit, developed by ISSA and International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI). The toolkit, which will be available online in early 2018, is structured around four main pillars: community-based early childhood education and care (ECEC); integrated services for children and their families; the Together Old and Young – TOY Program; diversity, equity and inclusion in ECEC.

The training sessions were attended by Roma and non-Roma who are involved in early childhood education or work with children on a daily basis. They include: school and preschool teachers, social workers and local authorities.

Those trained have organized Local Action Teams and will be responsible for the set-up and operation of TOY for Inclusion play hubs for children and families in 2018.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

117
professionals
trained

in **6** EU countries

Training participants learned how to:

- organize inclusive activities involving young children of all backgrounds, their families and older adults
- address the needs of Romani children who enter formal education
- support parents' competences in the first years of their child's life
- challenge discrimination against the very young and older adults as well as against children and families from ethnic minorities, migrant backgrounds or living in difficult circumstances.

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

150115

In 2017, ISSA became part of a consortium of 17 partners implementing the project ISOTIS (meaning 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 socio-economic status. 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. Within the scope of the project, ISSA organized an expert meeting on inclusive education in June 2017. Benefiting from the expertise from both inside the ISSA network and outside, experts discussed various aspects of early childhood inclusion and the topics discussed helped to shape the project in its next phases of implementation.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES FOR NURTURING CARE

'I would like to thank you for the great atmosphere, time which was swept away, for the sessions and activities which were perfectly designed, for the new experiences and making us face our own feelings and the feelings of the people we are working with.'

Participant in the training Supporting Families for Nurturing Care: the Role of Gender, organized in November 2017

In line with ISSA's Strategic Goal to "Increase the awareness of the importance of early childhood development and of a qualified workforce", ISSA has continued a partnership with UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) on a Resource Package to strengthen Home Visiting practices: Supporting Families for Nurturing Care.

The modules were created through a consultative process involving international and regional

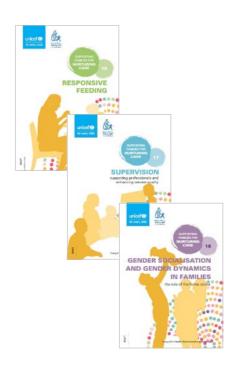
experts, national trainers and home visiting professionals. The resource package has been used to train master trainers in 14 countries and can be adapted to country contexts to train service providers.

In 2017, ISSA's Senior Program Manager conducted one training on topics of the core modules and one training on module 18, *Gender Socialisation and Gender Dynamics in Families*.

Through an assessment of gender equality in the modules, recommendations for gender issues in future trainings and modules have been developed and will continue to be addressed. Additionally, 3 new modules were developed during 2017:

The modules are free to download from ISSA's website.

An additional module entitled The Role of a Home Visitor in Building Bridges Between Home and Early Learning Programmes is expected to be released in 2018.



'Overall, assessment found the Supporting Families for Young Child Wellbeing: Resource Modules for Home Visitors to be quite gender transformative.'

Elizabeth Doggart,

Gender Expert and author of the module Gender Socialisation and Gender Dynamics in Families

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

Infants and young children represent a high proportion of refugees and migrants who had to leave their homes and countries in the last years. Because young children are the most vulnerable group, a response cannot be delayed without placing their lifelong development and achievement at risk.

ISSA develops tailor-made early childhood interventions that ensure that early learning and play activities or programs are provided for young children (birth to 6 years of age) in safe, although sometimes transitional, environments. ISSA's efforts are towards enabling local organizations, professionals or para-professionals to work with children and families by creating programs and hands-on resources to be easily used in settings such as refugee camps, non-formal settings or formal settings.

Germany

ISSA supported the UNICEF One Response Office in Germany to



The activity cards created by ISSA, UNICEF and Kinder Kunste Zentrum are used in 100 reception centers across Germany and help to create a child-friendly atmosphere in the midst of difficult circumstances

provide effective Early Childhood Education and Care for migrant and refugee families. This included the development of a curriculum on Early Learning and Play Groups, a training package on Supporting Parents and Respect for Diversity, and a guidebook for staff working in reception centers.

In addition to the curriculum, ISSA developed two types of activity cards to directly support early learning and play groups in reception centers. One hundred reception centers across Germany use these activity cards to create child-friendly spaces for refugee and migrant children in their care.

PROMOTING QUALITY & EQUITY

Greece

After intensive research in the country, ISSA and EADAP (The Society for the Development and Creative Occupation of Children, ISSA's member in Greece) put together the backbone of a project for young refugee children in Greece 2017. Lessons were collected from mapping activities, which were dedicated to understanding the local contexts. This intensive research enabled ISSA

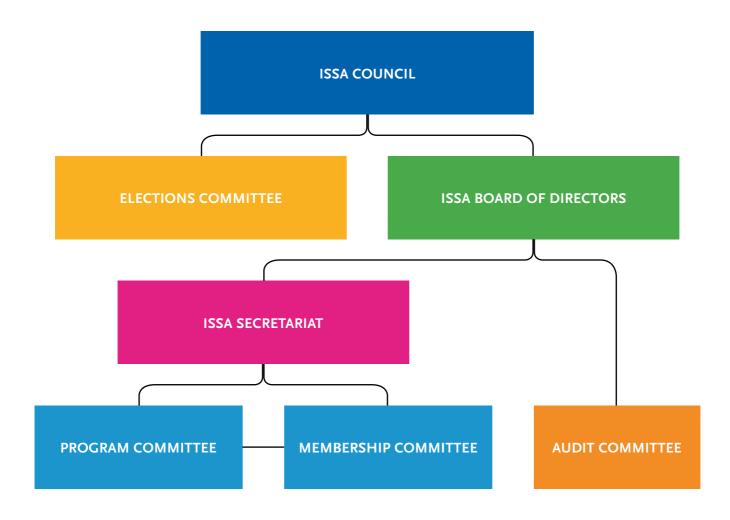
and partners to create a tailored response to the current situation in Greece, which will be piloted in 2018.

Working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, ISSA aims to support refugee children living in camps by opening kindergartens and training educators. ISSA will also support the city of Athens to create Open Nurseries, which

also act as community hubs for families, to foster social cohesion in neighborhoods. In partnership with the University of Patras, ISSA plans to create an Open Nurseries model of intervention that could be implemented across Greece and adapted to other countries. The Refugee Trauma Initiative is also a partner in this project.



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



MEET THE SECRETARIAT AND BOARD

ISSA Secretariat Staff in 2017



Liana Ghent **Executive Director**



Dr. Mihaela Ionescu Program Director



Zorica Trikic Senior Program Manager



Stanislav Daniel Program Manager, **REYN** Coordinator



Eva Izsak Membership Officer



Octavia Mihalcea Finance Manager





Hester van Meurs Communications Manager



Emily Henry Communications Officer



Federico Lanzo Communications and Campaigns Officer

MEET THE SECRETARIAT AND BOARD

ISSA Board in 2017



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



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



Jeroen Aarssen 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



Batjargal Batkhuyag Board Member Executive Director, Mongolian Education Alliance, Mongolia



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



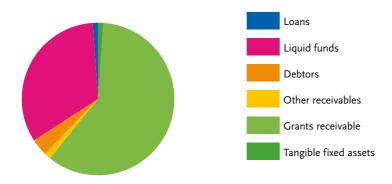
Sarah Klaus
Board Member
Director of the Early
Childhood Program
at the Open Society
Foundations (OSF),
UK



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

FINANCE

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2017 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

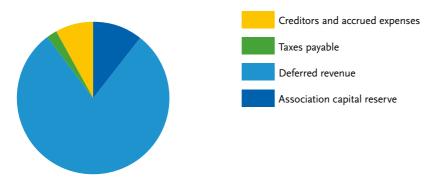


		12/31/2017 €		12/31/2016 €
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS		16,620		23,105
CURRENT ASSETS				
Receivables				
Loan	15,000		-	
Grants receivable	887,777		1,350,284	
Other receivables	33,836		23,720	
Debtors	52,203		6,723	
		98 8,816		1,380,727
Liquid funds		490,068		532,498
		1,495,504		1,936,330

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

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2017 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

(After allocation of net result)



		12/31/2017 €		12/31/2016 €
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Association capital reserve		158,645		170,998
Current liabilities				
Deferred revenue	1,185,530		1,616,652	
Taxes payable	33,232		15,567	
Creditors and accrued expenses	118,097		133,113	
		1,336,859		1,765,332
		1,495,504		1,936,330

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 2017 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

		Actuals 2017		Budget 2017
		€		€
1 Grants	956,651		1,295,941	
2 Membership fees	22,151		23,000	
3 Sales and other income	176,658		154,434	
Total income		1,155,460		1,473,375
4 Administration	199,958		197,991	
5 Programs	722,442		1,105,472	
6 Fundraising and partnership				
building	39,338		33,510	
7 Income generation	155,680		162,497	
8 Consultative Group	-		-	
Total expenses		1,117,418		1,499,470
Net operating income		38,042		-26,095
9 Interest income		461		1,100
10 Exchange differences		-50,856		-
Result		-12,353		-24,995
Funds reserved for Association				
capital reverse		-12,353		-24,995

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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