



# ISSA ANNUAL REPORT 2014



INTERNATIONAL  
STEP by STEP  
ASSOCIATION





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# VISION, MISSION AND GOALS



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

ISSA's mission is to support professional communities and develop a strong civil society that influences and assists decision makers to:

- provide high quality care and educational services for all children from birth through primary school (birth through 10 years old), with a focus on the poorest and most disadvantaged
- ensure greater inclusion of family and community participation in children's development and learning
- ensure social inclusion and respect for diversity.

ISSA's overarching goal is to promote inclusive, quality care and education experiences that create the conditions for every child to be happy and reach his or her full potential. ISSA does this through: raising awareness of the importance of quality care and education; developing resources; piloting and evaluating programs; influencing policies; building capacity of organizations in the network; disseminating information; advocating and strengthening alliances.



# INTRODUCTION



The year 2014 was a significant and celebratory year for ISSA, bringing positive developments, which we are happy to share with you, along with an overview of our work. Early in the year our offices moved from Budapest to a new location in the inspiring Child Rights Home in Leiden, which we share with several local, national and international organizations working on children's rights.

As ISSA we celebrated our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Open Society Foundations' Step by Step Program, upon whose values and successes we continue to build. We celebrated these anniversaries together with all those who joined us for our international conference, held in Budapest in October 2014. Our membership continued to grow, now counting 68 members from 38 countries. Being based in the Netherlands enabled us to explore new partnerships with several organizations, many of which joined as members, from more and more European countries. This is one of the things which our members value the most: being part of an expanding learning community where they can exchange with peers from various corners of Europe and Central Asia.

At the same time we also engaged on the global early childhood development arena. We co-organized an international consultation on Measuring and Improving Quality in Early Childhood Environments. ISSA also hosted two meetings of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and is now serving as the temporary host of this global group.

We deepened our work around promoting quality in early years services by developing a guidebook to accompany ISSA's Quality Resource Pack and a new Quality Framework for services for children aged birth to three, which we are currently piloting.

The Romani Early Years Network (REYN), which is hosted and managed by ISSA in partnership with the Early Childhood Program of the Open Society Foundations continued to expand and now has more than 400 members. We launched the REYN Manifesto and offered several professional development opportunities to REYN members. With the support of practitioners from the Bernard van Leer Foundation several organizations in Western Europe were able to join REYN and benefit from ISSA's technical assistance.

In a partnership project with UNICEF, working with experts from around the world, we developed a training package for home visitors, which will be piloted in 2015. UNICEF and the Open Society Foundations are also ISSA's partners in launching the Early Years Regional Alliance, an advocacy platform for advancing the early childhood agenda in Europe and Central Asia.

All these achievements are testimony of the power of associations to serve as catalysts for knowledge creation, peer learning and joint advocacy on behalf of young children.

**NIVES MILINOVIC**  
President of the ISSA Board  
Executive Director,  
Open Academy Step by Step, Croatia



**LIANA GHENT**  
Executive Director,  
ISSA



# ISSA'S MAJOR INITIATIVES IN 2014

## ACCESS AND EQUITY

EYRA

REYN

Promoting Equity and Embracing Diversity

## QUALITY

Quality Framework services for children from 3 to 10 years old

Quality Framework services for children from birth to 3 years old

## EMPOWERMENT

Family and community empowerment

## NETWORK

Community and capacity building

Growing membership and Planned partnerships



# ACCESS AND EQUITY

*Access and Equity of care in education are the tools ISSA uses to leverage change for young children.*

*ISSA works to prevent children missing out on the chances which will change their future.*



## Early Years Regional Alliance – EYRA

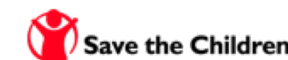
Establishing **EYRA** (Early Years Regional Alliance) is among ISSA's achievements of 2014.

The alliance will advocate for the advancement of the early childhood agenda at both regional and national levels in Europe and Central Asia (ECA).

**EYRA** will be expanding in the coming year and you can follow its development at [www.earlyyearsregionalalliance.nl](http://www.earlyyearsregionalalliance.nl). More than 25 organizations have expressed their wish to join this alliance.

During 2014 partners began drafting the EYRA Manifesto, which will be sent for review to all members of EYRA and finalized during 2015.

*Founders: ISSA, Open Society Foundations, Save the Children and UNICEF.*





## Romani Early Years Network – REYN

**REYN** connects practitioners from Romani, Traveller and other backgrounds working with Romani and Traveller young children, families and communities.

**REYN** develops skills and good practice, facilitates partnerships and supports the professional development of emerging and established Romani early childhood development professionals, and other professionals working in the field of ECD with Roma communities.

- REYN delivered professional development activities to **118 members** during 2014.
- REYN members joined a study visit to Slovakia to learn about “*Working with the most disadvantaged and marginalized Romani communities – empowering parents and enhancing their parental skills and knowledge*”.
- 26 members met in Belgrade and engaged in the *Embracing Diversity- Creating Equitable Societies Through Personal Transformation Training*.



- 30 REYN members participated in *Persona Doll* training in Budapest.
- With support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation 11 REYN members visited Serbia for a study visit to help improve the status of Romani children and their families.



## 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- REYN membership grew by 107 people and finished the year with **387 members**.
- Redesigned REYN Blog and Facebook page prepared for launch.
- REYN Manifesto was finalized and launched on 8 April, International Romani Day.
- REYN expanded with new national networks in Croatia and Slovakia.
- REYN Kosovo, Hungary and Slovenia developed online communities.

*REYN is hosted and managed by ISSA in partnership with the Early Childhood Program of the Open Society Foundations.*



## Promoting Equity – Embracing Diversity

Embracing Diversity is more than just a training – it leads to personal transformation and provides the resources needed to implement changes as we strive together to create equitable societies.

During 2014 ISSA scaled-up the project to reach a greater target audience and developed online courses which promote diversity. The courses focus on building the skills of professionals and assisting them to work towards inclusive services, community empowerment, bias-free and anti-discrimination environments for children, families and communities.

### 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- A module was included in the Training Package for Home Visitors developed in partnership with UNICEF. This online module offers the *Embracing Diversity* resources to health practitioners. The training package can be used online, in-person, or as a combination of both.
- *Embracing Diversity* online course: based on feedback from participants the course is being updated and will be offered to REYN and ISSA members.
- Using the resources provided by ISSA, individual ISSA members are logging-in and using the materials for training activities.

# PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON QUALITY

*Supporting and promoting quality is at the core of ISSA's work. ISSA's reputation as an advocate for quality and a guardian of professionalism has been recognized across the world during 2014.*



ENJOY

## PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON QUALITY

In September 2014, ISSA hosted a global consultation on *Measuring and Improving Quality in Early Childhood Environments*, in partnership with UNICEF, UNESCO and the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BVLf), with the support of the World Bank and Brookings Institution.



The success of the meeting, and the enthusiasm of the participants, has led to an opportunity to consider a global initiative on quality in early years. This initiative, could function as a hub for the world of early years and serve as a source of technical assistance, a repository of relevant resources and as a platform for shared learning. A full report of the meeting is available [here](#).





In November 2014 ISSA members from Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia deepened their knowledge of the **Tuscan Approach to Early Childhood Services (TALE)** by visiting Florence and observing innovative practices they can apply in their own work in the service of children from birth to 3 years old.

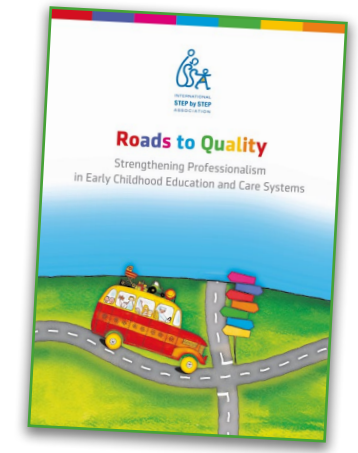
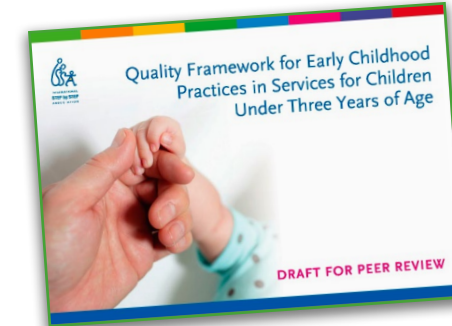
When 'WANDA Meets ISSA' strengthens members' capacity to work with the Quality Resource Pack. Developed by Artevelde College and VBJK from Belgium, the WANDA method trains professionals in reflective practices and has been rolled out to four ISSA members from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia.



## New Resources on Quality

During 2014 ISSA developed a guidebook for strengthening the use of the Quality Resource Park in preschools and primary schools. This resource aims to promote ISSA's approach towards professional development by putting an emphasis on individual and group mentoring and ways to engage practitioners in sustainable and meaningful professional activities.

An advisory group which included representatives of 5 member organizations with experience in Birth to Three services, joined by 11 experts from around the world, produced the Quality Framework for Early Childhood Practices and Services for Children under three years of age. The draft was sent to a wider pool of experts for peer review and is being piloted in three countries.





# EMPOWERMENT

*ISSA works to empower parents and communities focused on families with children under 3. We concentrate on the most vulnerable and those most in need.*

## 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- In partnership with UNICEF ISSA developed a **Training Package for Home Visitors**
  - The package contains with 17 modules and supporting materials.
  - Mapping of parenting resources in the CEE/CIS region began in 2014 to prepare them for 2015.
- Developed gold standards home visiting **“Recommendations for Home Visiting Content and Home Visitor Performance for the CEE/CIS Region”**
- Uniting experts and home visitors from Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Belgrade, Serbia to work together to transfer know-how and experiences.





# NETWORK BUILDING

*Through network building ISSA is strengthening community learning, capacity building and knowledge on the issues of early childhood education.*



**Peer Learning Activities (PLA)** are one of ISSA most popular services. In 2014 the following members teamed up for Peer Learning Activities.

- **Centre for Innovations in Education (CIE), Azerbaijan** united with members from Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia to deliver a three-day training for 17 preschool education trainers and mentors on mentoring and professional learning communities.
- The **Community Foundation Step by Step, Kazakhstan** held a reliability meeting with 12 local experts who will continue working on Quality in their own areas. The tools were translated into the local language.
- Five member from the Balkans got together to strengthen the culture of all five organizations around ISSA's values and practices.
- ISSA worked with **L'Ecole Sante Social Sud-Est (ESSSE)** to develop photo language. This visual montage will be the basis of a training tool which to be used in countries advocating against the use of violence in children's education. The tool will be available soon across the ISSA network.





## ISSA – an expanding learning community

- During 2014 ISSA membership doubled
- ISSA's new look [website](#) proved popular with visitors and by the end of 2014 the Online Community had over 1,100 registered Friends of ISSA.
- Worldwide connections were made with and among members.
- Professional learning opportunities were provided to all members.
- Partnership projects were developed among members.



## ISSA Conference 2014

*'Creating a society for all: reconsidering early childhood services'*, was the title of the 2014 conference which saw us return to Budapest, Hungary. Held between 10-12 October, 2014 it was organized in partnership with the Open Society Foundations, Partners Hungary, UNICEF and DECET. The conference attracted more than **400 participants** from **53 countries** from all around the world and focused on the transformations that early childhood services have undergone over the past 25 years.

The response from the participants and members was overwhelmingly positive. Many new friendship were made, old ones consolidated and new partnerships fashioned.





# WHAT THE MEMBERS SAY

Throughout the year ISSA regularly conducts surveys of the membership here are some of their opinions of our work during 2014

ISSA's  
2014 International  
Conference in Hungary was useful for  
network building and making new  
connections.

Updates  
from the Secretariat on  
early years resources provide useful  
insights to the latest trends from  
around the world.

The  
expertise in ISSA's  
international network supports  
the work of local projects.

Attending  
the event in Istanbul  
in July 2014 on Organizational  
Development and Sustainability was a  
valuable professional development  
opportunity.

ISSA's  
Peer Learning  
Activities are highly valuable and  
demonstrate the network in  
action!

One  
benefit of ISSA  
membership is having access and  
opportunities to establish partnerships  
that can lead to joint fundraising  
ventures.



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## STANDALONE BALANCE AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

*(after allocation of net result)*

	2014 €	2013 €
<b>TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS</b>	25.869	20.641
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
<b>Receivables</b>		
Loan	8.851	0
Grants receivable	1.534.955	1.096.558
Other receivables	4.650	8.907
Debtors	<u>30.587</u>	<u>7.286</u>
	1.579.043	1.112.751
<b>Liquid funds</b>	370.855	318.779
	<u>1.975.767</u>	<u>1.452.171</u>

## BALANCE AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

*(after allocation of net result)*

	2014 €	2013 €
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Association capital	130.812	110.622
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Deferred revenue	1.795.955	1.272.346
Taxes payable	15.191	5.650
Accrued expenses	<u>33.809</u>	<u>63.553</u>
	1.844.955	1.341.549
	1.975.767	1.452.171

## STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2014

INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

	2014 €	2013 €
Grants	1.025.515	749.622
Membership fees	23.076	23.605
Sales and other income	<u>120.604</u>	<u>46.911</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	1.169.195	820.138
Administration	184.189	308.889
Programs	827.259	533.929
Fundraising and partnership building	6.566	1.805
Income generation	137.153	26.445
Consultative Group	<u>26.380</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>1.181.547</u>	<u>871.068</u>
<b>Net operating income</b>	-12.352	-50.930
Interest income	178	704
Exchange differences	<u>32.363</u>	<u>104</u>
<b>Result</b>	20.189	-50.122



# ISSA SECRETARIAT



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**Vesna Bajsanski-Agić**  
Board Member  
Director  
Mozaik Foundation  
Bosnia and  
Herzegovina



**Sarah Klaus**  
OSF Representative  
Director  
Early Childhood Program  
Open Society Foundation  
UK



ISSA's offices are located in a historic building that once functioned as an orphanage. Founded in 1593, it closed its doors as an orphanage only during the 1960s. As of May 2010 the renovated orphanage re-opened as het Kinderrechtenhuis Nederland (Child Rights Home, the Netherlands). These developments were made possible by financial and moral support from [Stichting Utopa](#) (the Utopa Foundation). Besides ISSA, several other organizations working with and for children and young people have their offices in the building. Two of these organizations, ICDI and JES Rijnland, have recently become ISSA members.



## ISSA

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