



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION



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Peer Learning Activities	Learning sessions and workshops	Romani Early Years Network
Primokiz	Technical assistance services	EU-level advocacy events
Joint Learning Labs	Prioritizing Early Childhood Development in Europe	Other Program Initiatives



Sharing knowledge



Connecting and learning



Mobilizing expertise

Social Media and Newsletter
212,628





Henriette Heimgaertner
ISSA Board President



Liana Ghent
ISSA Executive Director

The year 2021 brought new challenges and new opportunities for all of us. As the entire world continued to be affected by the pandemic, we at ISSA strived to offer support by tailoring our work to the needs of those who work on behalf of young children, and continued to learn a great deal in the process. We focused heavily on building connections in our Network, facilitating learning opportunities, generating and spreading knowledge, and influencing broader discussions and policy related to the early years.

We hosted numerous opportunities to connect, including learning exchange sessions, meetings with peer networks from other continents, and ISSA Connects. Through Member-driven Joint Learning Labs, ISSA encouraged Members to co-create knowledge

and nurture discussions around topics such as risky play, early childhood intervention, and leadership in early childhood education and care.

As a knowledge broker, we continued to generate knowledge and share it with the Network. We developed new case studies, mapping exercises, and guidebooks for those working on the frontlines. Together with Members, we also worked to strengthen our Knowledge Hub – sharing our Members' knowledge and expertise with the wider ECD field.

In these challenging times we feel strongly that we need to intensify our advocacy for young children, their families, and those working in early years services: we have done this through the *First Years First Priority* Campaign, the Early Childhood Workforce

Initiative, and the Romani Early Years Network Initiative. Through participation in the Working Group on ECEC at the European Commission, our work has been showcased in the report on the professionalization of staff, and in the toolkit on strengthening social inclusion, published by the European Commission.

In 2022, there will be a continued need to navigate challenging times. The war in Ukraine has brought an entirely new set of devastating trials for ISSA Members. However, the strength and power of our network is never more visible than during times of crisis. The ISSA Network will go on facilitating learning across countries, sharing promising ways to develop programs and policies for young children, and helping to keep young children and families at heart.

The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is an international learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia. We unite and support professionals and partners to deliver high-quality early years services equitably. We challenge existing knowledge and practice and co-construct new approaches and models. ISSA's vision is a society where all families, communities and professionals work together to empower each child to reach their unique full potential and embrace values of social justice and equity. Established in 1999, ISSA's office is located in Leiden, in the Netherlands.

STRATEGY 2019–2023

ISSA's Strategy 2019–2023 builds upon the previous strategic period, in which the organization made a shift towards being both a platform for Members' learning, cooperation and the co-creation of knowledge, and a valuable contributor to and a key player in the early childhood field. With the belief that working in one area reinforces the others, ISSA has continued to follow the same strategic direction, seeking a mutually beneficial balance between the two-fold positioning. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, while having a significant impact on ISSA's work during 2020, has also served to highlight the strengths of our Network, allowing us to continue to implement the strategy throughout 2021 with nimble and innovative approaches.

1. To elevate awareness of the importance of Early Childhood Development;
2. To promote a high-quality, diverse workforce in services for children from birth to 10 years of age;
3. To strengthen early childhood systems so that they can provide quality, equitable and integrated services for all young children and their families;
4. To leverage the strengths of our growing network to contribute to the early childhood field with innovative approaches, noteworthy practices, and cross-country learning.

ISSA's Strategic Goals for 2019–2023 are a continuation of the previous strategic period, but with a sharper set of focus points:



ISSA is an association that functions as a platform for professionals and organizations working in the field of early childhood development. Our membership includes a range of organizations representing the wide diversity of needs and services in the early childhood field: from NGOs, professional associations and academic institutions, to public bodies and international organizations. Our Member Organizations work in 41 countries, most of them in Europe and Central Asia. In 2021, ISSA

welcomed two new organizations to the Network, ending the year with 91 Member Organizations. Since the pandemic struck in 2020, ISSA has become more aware of the network advantage, especially in times of crisis. During the worst times of 2020 and throughout several lockdowns in different countries in 2021, ISSA has aimed to support its Members in every possible way, trying out new channels and mechanisms, and striving to tailor its services and content to the Members' needs.

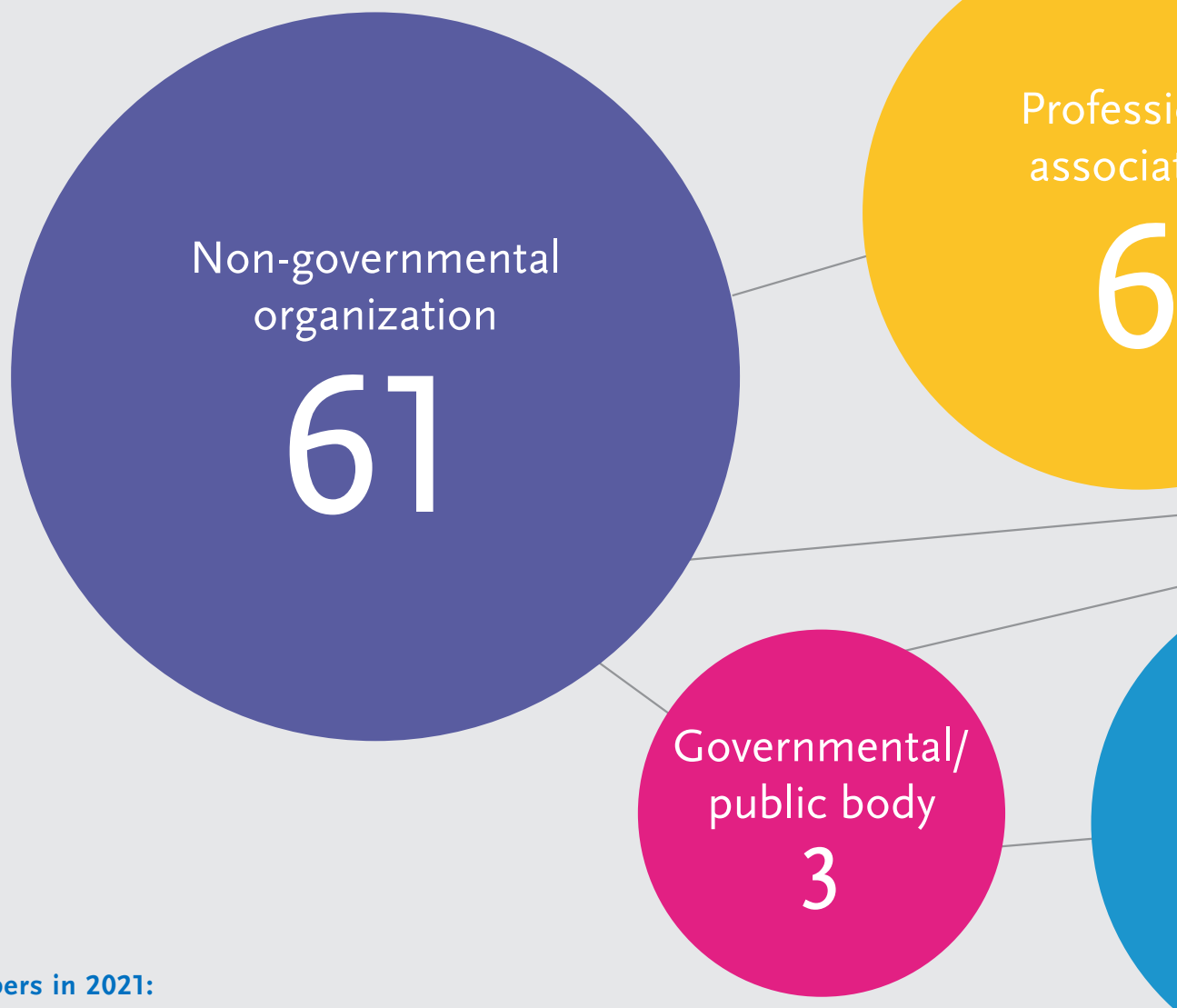
ISSA MEMBERSHIP BASE AT THE END OF 2021

	No of countries	Members
European Union	18	46
Rest of Europe and Central Asia	19	40
Other parts of the world	4	5
Total	41	91

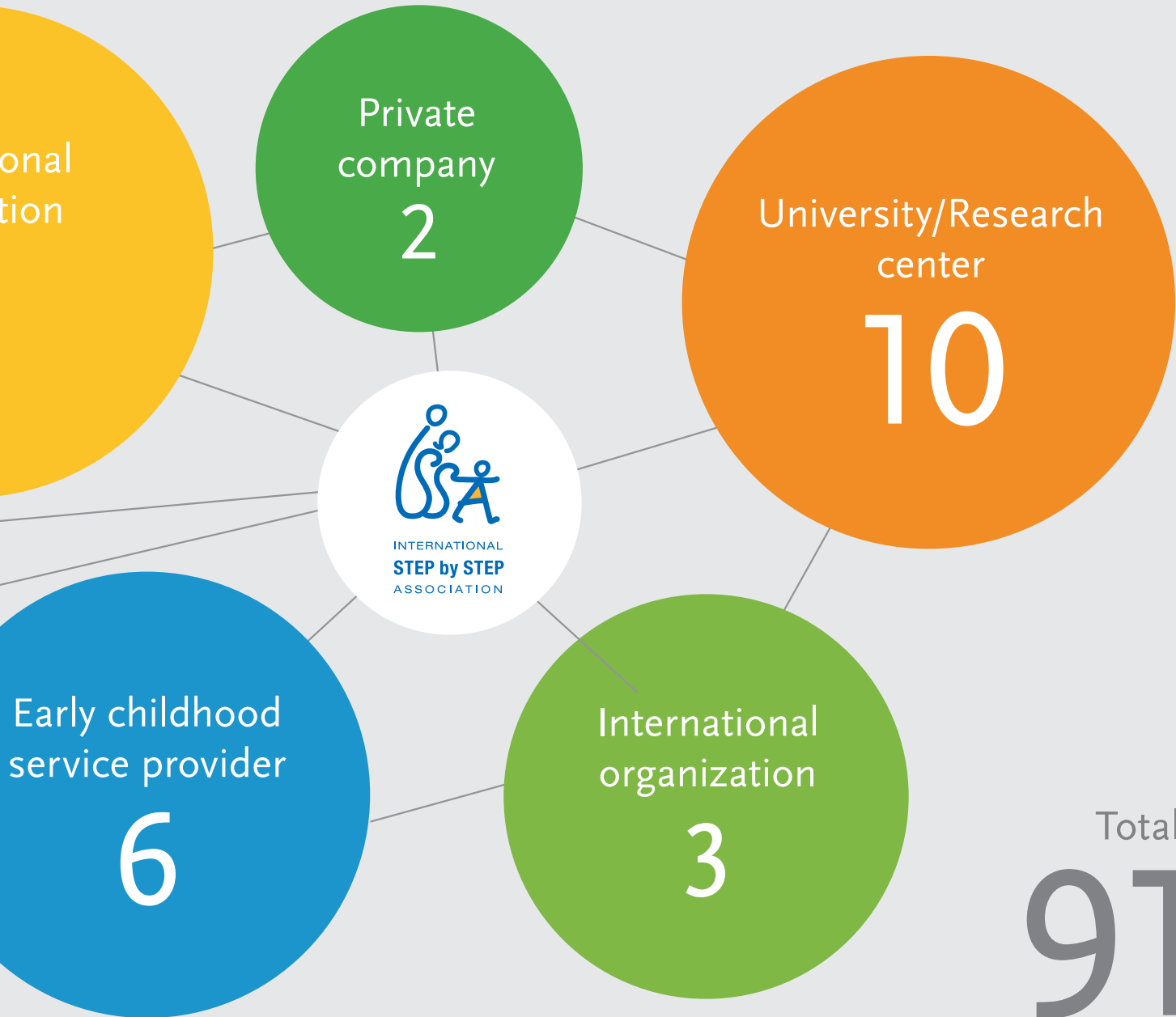
GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF ISSA MEMBERS IN 2021



MEMBERSHIP DIVERSITY

**New Members in 2021:**

Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority, United Arab Emirates
Childproof-CIPOF, Kosovo



KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Through a wide range of platforms, ISSA curates and shares resources, practices and expertise from the Network and beyond on recent advancements related to early childhood issues. The user-friendly online access to this valuable material becomes an essential tool to broaden the understanding on specific topics while allowing the Members to become aware of each other's expertise, building partnerships and promoting joint learning. ISSA runs different sharing environments and actively participates in the dissemination and translation into different languages of research publications such as the *Early Childhood Matters* articles from the Bernard van Leer Foundation journal's 2021 edition.

Hubs of knowledge

ISSA hosts a wealth of resources and practices developed by its team and its Members through its ISSA Knowledge Hub, as well as the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative Knowledge Hub and the REYN Knowledge Hub. In 2021, all three incorporated dozens of new entries into over 300 existing documents. These include the study from For Our Children on how to build professional competence in the Early Childhood workforce in Bulgaria or the NESET network report about the first lessons learnt on the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU, where ISSA Member VBJK has

been involved. In this online library, ISSA also publishes the latest resources developed by its own team: in 2021, a tailored brief (*Designing*

and implementing parenting support policies and programs) with recommendations for policy makers and service providers to



consider prior to designing and implementing parenting support policies and programs was added. Within its work of translating key documents to facilitate their dissemination, ISSA has collaborated on the [translated version](#)

into English, French and Spanish of two of the essential briefs of the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative. Lastly, the COVID-19 Resources page continues to provide additional material created, collected and curated by ISSA.

Members in focus

ISSA features its Members' first-hand experiences and best practices through a series of interviews and articles published in its newsletter and in different sections of its website, such as the homepage's Sharing Spot and the [Member in Focus](#). Organizations throughout the whole Network portray their work and dedication in exclusive interviews such as that published about the Wide Open School, an ISSA Member

in Slovakia, which focuses on community development and lifelong learning for socially disadvantaged groups. More news and information on the Members' achievements are shared daily on our different social media platforms, including the [YouTube channel](#) in which those interested can access webinar recordings as well as presentations of research and projects conducted by both ISSA and its Members.

300+ CURATED
RESOURCES AVAILABLE
AND DISSEMINATED
VIA SOCIAL MEDIA,
NEWSLETTERS

12 MEMBER IN FOCUS
ARTICLES IN 2021

8 WEBINAR RECORDINGS
FEATURING
ISSA MEMBERS

CONNECTING AND LEARNING

As a growing learning community, ISSA continues to strengthen the connections and collaboration among its Members and also facilitates or provides professional development opportunities within and beyond the Network, on the topics of early years and organizational development.

Online series: ISSA Connects

ISSA Connects for Learning

Organized in partnership with some of the ISSA Members, the [ISSA Connects for Learning](#) event took place in November, featuring three professional development sessions aimed at broadening the knowledge of current issues of great interest to all. ISSA Board President

Henriette Heimgaertner conducted the first session, which focused on how to support meaningful interactions in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), based on the findings of the OECD publication *Starting Strong VI*. In her words, “The session offered insights into

this timely report, the first to comprehensively span 26 countries and examine 56 curriculum frameworks. The report has become essential for understanding how a shift has taken place over the past decade from establishing norms to emphasizing the quality of interactions



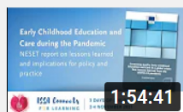
ISSA Connects: How can we support meaningful interactions in ECEC?

ISSA - International Step by Step Association



ISSA Connects: Building your Organization's Resilience

ISSA - International Step by Step Association



ISSA Connects: Early Childhood Education and Care during the Pandemic

ISSA - International Step by Step Association



ISSA Connects is bringing you another opportunity to come together with peers! Come learn with us, 2 - 4 November 2021.

The ISSA community will host three professional development sessions to stimulate learning and sharing within our Network.

Are you interested in learning more about the content? Facilitators are sharing insights into their sessions; check out the interviews below to learn more and register!

2 November 2021 | 10:30 - 12:30 CET

[How can we support meaningful interactions in early childhood education and care?](#)

Reflections on findings from the OECD publication *Starting Strong VI* and opportunities for advocacy

“ This report is timely as over the past decade, we see a shift from focusing on setting and designing norms (on safety, buildings, materials, staff-child ratio etc.) to emphasising the quality of daily interactions between adults and children, their environment as well as among children.

Henriette Heimgaertner, ISSA Board President and Co-founder of the Berlin Early Childhood Institute for Quality Development



between adults and children, and their environment”. Sessions 2 and 3 looked closely at the challenges that ECD practitioners and organizations are facing nowadays. While the Partners Hungary Foundation facilitated a tailored insight into resilience-based organization development, VBJK Belgium shared the lessons learned and implications for policy and practice of ECEC during the pandemic.

ISSA Connects for Community

Within this framework of Member-led online sharing and learning initiatives, ISSA hosted a second event “to bring Members together, reconnect and feel the energy of our Network”, as Liana Ghent, ISSA Executive Director, described it. These additional sessions gave participants the opportunity to share ideas and practices within small group discussions, as well as become familiarized with the latest data regarding ISSA Membership and the services that ISSA has to

offer to all of them. The topics selected for discussion ranged from approaches to advocacy at country level to new experiences organizing virtual site visits and online workshops.

“The session offered an insight into this timely report, the first comprehensive one spanning 26 countries and examining 56 curriculum frameworks, an essential resource to understand how, over the past decade, we see a shift from focusing on setting and designing norms to emphasizing the quality of daily interactions between adults and children, their environment as well as among children.”

*Henriette Heimgaertner,
ISSA Board President and presenter
of Session 1*

MOBILIZING EXPERTISE

ISSA fosters cross-border collaboration on areas of common interest around early childhood issues in Europe and Central Asia, as well as connecting with peer networks from other continents. Within the diverse partnership opportunities the organization offers, ISSA has implemented, for the second year, the Joint Learning Labs (JLLs). These have successfully allowed Members to connect around specific thematic areas, with the aim to nurture group learning, professional discussions and co-create knowledge. Four JLLs were launched in 2021, featuring such diverse topics as: Early Childhood Intervention at policy level; the Persona Doll Method; resources and best practices on Risky Play; and Leadership strategies in ECEC contexts.

JLL in focus: Building leadership in the ECD workforce

ISSA Members VBJK and the Child Care Unit of the City of Ghent initiated this Joint Learning Lab about Inspiring Practices for a High-Quality ECEC Workforce and the crucial role of leadership. The JLL looked at how to strengthen organizations which provide or support ECEC in their strategies

to design and foster a performant and competent ECEC workforce. From staff management to professional development for leadership, the Lab focused on all the aspects that influence leadership, to inspire participants with the best practices that are taking place around the European Union..

“ECEC staff in many countries face similar challenges: shortages, limited diversity and poor working conditions. We wanted to focus on the workforce, the second key principle of the European Quality Framework for ECEC, and on positive practices around supportive conditions and leadership, gaining insight from our participants’ work contexts.”

*Esther Hulpia
VBJK Belgium*



4 JLL IN 2021

ISSA MEMBERS

- 7 COORDINATORS
- 23 PARTICIPANTS

20 COUNTRIES

HARVARD CENTER ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD AND ECD REGIONAL NETWORKS

Harvard's world-renowned Center on the Developing Child (HCDC) and the four ECD regional networks of ISSA, ARNEC (the Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood), ANECD (the Arab Network for Early Childhood), and AfECN (the Africa Early Childhood Network) have come together to create a knowledge infrastructure at the cross-regional and country levels that could influence the science-based narrative on ECD. Each regional network has identified three to five country teams which, supported by the expertise of HCDC on communicating

science and engagement through network learning mechanisms, used their knowledge to elevate the understanding and investment in early years in their countries while searching for innovative solutions and approaches aligned with recent science. Throughout two cross-regional workshops, each partner was able to utilize their expertise and add value to the impact of their work in the ECD field. From the ISSA network, the initiative partnered with Members in Bulgaria, France and Romania to strengthen their capacity for advocacy.



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



LEGO PLAYFUL PARENTING

As a regional partner in the *Scaling Up Playful Parenting* Programme initiated by the Lego Foundation and UNICEF in 2019, ISSA has hosted several webinars and made resources available in its Knowledge Hubs to improve access and disseminate relevant information. In 2021, ISSA hosted two webinars: [Caring for Caregivers](#), [A Path Towards Playful Parenting](#); and [a virtual cross-country learning exchange](#) on the implementation of playful parenting programmes. The Lego Playful Parenting

programme aims at scaling up parenting interventions that build caregivers' and parents' capacity to provide early stimulation and responsive care to young children in Serbia and Zambia. It also focuses on increasing awareness and visibility among the general public on the value of learning through play in early childhood and relies on its partners to disseminate the scientific knowledge in this field through different actors: from academics to civil society and policy makers.



INFLUENCING SYSTEMS AND POLICY MAKING

As a Regional Network, ISSA joins alliances and contributes to regional and country initiatives aimed at increasing the awareness of the importance of ECD, as well as advocating for stronger political will and investment in services for young children.

The First Years, First Priority campaign

The Europe-wide campaign *First Years, First Priority*, launched in 2020 and co-led by Eurochild and ISSA, has made great steps in its mission to ensure that ECD stays high on the political agenda. Focused on prioritizing children from birth to six years, especially the most vulnerable, and rooted in the understanding that, from the

day they are born, all children have rights, regardless of their dependency status, the campaign has been raising awareness in European and national institutions of the need to provide concrete responses to the immediate effects that the escalation of poverty and social inequality has on ECD and, most importantly, on the most vulnerable children.

Through its initiatives, ISSA works on strengthening the awareness and knowledge of quality, equitable and integrated provisions, so that each young child and their family can enjoy the right to respectful and responsive environments and services.



ISSA led the development of [nine country reports](#), in which the ECD situation at the national level was analyzed through case studies and fact sheets. National Coordinators from the following countries have contributed to developing a snapshot of their countries, divided into six policy areas which impact ECD: Serbia, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Bulgaria (ISSA Member, Trust for Social Achievement), Romania (ISSA Member, Step by Step Center for Education and Professional Development and France (ISSA Member, EduEnsemble).

These country profiles have been added to the [cross-country analysis report](#), which summarizes the data collected in the nine countries and serves to draw attention towards four key findings across policy areas impacting Early Childhood Development: the scarcity of data on children's early years, especially on children younger than three; the limited or non-existent disaggregated data on the lives of young children

under six who are living in poverty and social exclusion; and the need to both guarantee universal access to ECEC services and to integrate a multi-sectoral approach to early childhood, with leadership and coordination that addresses children's and families' needs in a comprehensive way.

Along with national reports, the *First Years, First Priority* campaign has advocated joint policy proposals, and put forward statements and position papers at the EU level, in order to influence policies such as the Child Guarantee, the European Care Strategy, and the Barcelona targets. Together with its associate partners (the European Public Health Alliance and the Roma Education Fund) and national collaborators, ISSA and Eurochild have illustrated the work of the campaign through social media channels and its [website](#), where all resources are kept up to date, and made freely available.



Primokiz: Assisting local governments to improve services offered for young children

Since 2019, ISSA has been piloting the development of the [Primokiz approach](#) in Romania and Slovenia, in partnership with ISSA Members Step by Step Center for Education and Professional Development (CEPD) and the Education Research Institute – Step by Step Center for Quality in Education, respectively. Under the Romania Grows with You initiative, this phased-based methodology developed by the Jacobs Foundation has been implemented in 21 localities, supporting local governments in their efforts to improve the services they offer

for young children. This has been done in a strategic and participatory way so that better access to high-quality early childhood services can be provided to young children in their communities.

The Primokiz Handbook and a structured seven-phased process to build local leadership, together with the expert and technical assistance provided by CEPD have ensured that the objectives for early childhood set in the situation analyses have been included in local development strategies and have supported their implementation

in the municipalities. One successful example can be found in Brasov municipality, where the local authorities have decided to develop a stand-alone strategy for early childhood grounded in the priorities resulting from the situation analysis developed by using the Primokiz approach. According to a survey conducted in Romania in December 2021, all 21 communities found the process of developing the situation analysis report very useful. Out of these, 17 considered the process extremely positive since it facilitated enriching cross-sectoral cooperation and made possible a common reflection on the real needs expressed by practitioners, parents, and members of the communities. The process also enabled joint discussions around the priorities to be set for developing high-quality early childhood services.

Similar to Romania, eight municipalities in Slovenia started the Primokiz process in 2021 and have reached the point of having



developed situation analysis reports. When endorsed by local authorities, the reports will serve as a grounding document for the development of responsive local strategic plans.

Both Slovenian and Romanian teams have learned a lot from each other during the exchange sessions organized and facilitated by the

ISSA Secretariat. The peer-learning process has been mutually rewarding; while the Romanian team has felt the validation and recognition of their work, offering counselling on possible challenges and barriers when implementing the Primokiz process, the Slovenian team has benefitted from their colleagues' experience in approaching local

municipalities, setting up local teams and conducting the situation analysis on early childhood services in each municipality.

The Primokiz approach proves to be especially helpful in challenging situations or emergencies, for instance responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the high number of refugee families.

"It is so impressive to see how much has been achieved in almost four years of implementation in Romania. At the beginning, the local teams were not quite clear on what Primokiz would actually bring to their work and communities. Now, in all communities, we have local teams committed to prioritizing early childhood beyond the end of the project, with a more strategic style of thinking, grounded in the actual needs of their communities. New early childhood services have been created; new staff have been hired where shortages were critical; playgrounds have been built; existing services have been improved; and concern for the youngest children has remained on local political agendas. The results are there to stay, and have been constantly supported and financed by local authorities."

*Mihaela Ionescu,
ISSA Program Director*

ENABLING INCLUSIVE ECEC SERVICES

Through its work, ISSA promotes the progressive universalism principle, which encourages universal provision with additional services for those in need of a specific approach and support. By ensuring universal provision, all children benefit. By offering additional services, the most disadvantaged, most vulnerable, or those most at risk receive the support they need.

REYN: Responding to emerging needs and priorities

The unprecedented crisis derived from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation many Roma children, families and communities live in. The Romani Early Years Network (REYN) Initiative, through consultation with different national REYN's, has learnt about the need to respond to emerging needs and priorities at the country level. Therefore, a small amount of financial support has been deployed to national REYNs so that each national network can implement diverse actions, tailored to country-specific contexts.

The so-called mini-grants were launched at the beginning of 2021 and will be finalized in October 2022. National REYNs actively

responded to the call through different and meaningful intervention proposals covering advocacy, professional development and the empowerment of Roma parents.

In a small suburb of Beveren (Belgium), mothers with children up to three years old gathered to play and meet in a calm and safe environment. Networking and peer-learning opportunities took place from the national (Ukraine) to the international levels (Slovakia and Czech Republic) in order to identify common challenges and move towards efficient solutions that prioritize the current situation of Roma children. Special attention was paid to the recognition and promotion of Roma educators within the ECD workforce in

countries like Kosovo, Bulgaria and Hungary, through initiatives such as the REYN Hungary Award and new professional development opportunities. Facilitated by access to the mini-grant, REYN Bulgaria introduced the mechanism of REYN internship giving [opportunities to young Roma ECD professionals](#) to gain their first work experience in the field of early childhood.



Research on the status of young Roma children in Europe

In 2021, in partnership with the well-established Roma Studies Groups (CEG) at the Community of Research on Excellence for All (CREA) of the University of Barcelona, the REYN initiative conducted research to develop an overview of the status of young Roma children in Europe, focusing on those under six years old and their families.

Covering key areas that impact a child's development, such as health, hygiene and nutrition, safety and security as well as early learning and the living environment, the study analyzes the structural and emerging issues that might have widened during the COVID-19 crisis, leading to an increase of inequality and social exclusion.

The final report, to be launched in summer 2022, seeks to give visibility to children's needs and to raise the key stakeholders' awareness to respond with effective policies and programs enabling each child to reach their full potential – to grow and thrive!

“Participants in the studies witnessed advantages in the children when attending preschool: acquiring a new language, understanding the daily routine, learning about tolerance and good manners. Additionally, children are able to make new friends there. All of these skills help children have a smoother transition into school.”

REYN Slovenia research team



Diversity+: There is no quality without equity in early childhood services

Following its launch in 2020, ISSA has continued to provide technical support for the Diversity+ project, a European Union Erasmus-funded program that aims at strengthening ECEC services in their work towards the full, high-quality inclusion of all young children. In addition, ISSA is overseeing the communications and dissemination activities of the project.

In a context of complex multi-diverse societies, the European project provides ECEC professionals, managers and practitioners with governance, benchmarking, recognition and professionalization tools to help them transform their practice and open up to the diversity that exists among children and families.

During 2021, ISSA worked closely with the following partners to develop resources and tools, starting with the [Diversity+ eBook](#): CIAPE (Italy), Link Campus University (Italy), Fondatsiya na Biznesa za Obrazovani (Bulgaria),

Schola Empirika (Czech Republic) and ISSA Member Open Wide School (Slovakia).

Under ISSA's lead, the consortium has launched the [Diversity+ Charter](#) (a set of minimum requirements that ECEC services and institutions have to meet to accommodate different types of diversity and be classified as inclusive and diversity positive) and the [Footprint Assessment Tool](#) (an interactive digital tool to support ECEC to assess current services and gain understanding

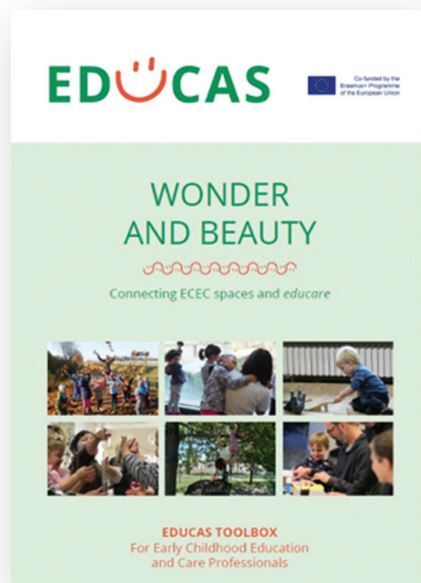
of the steps needed to improve their provision).

Both resources have been translated into the four languages of the project partners, as well as English. Additionally, ISSA has provided a Dutch version.

More concrete resources will be included in the [toolkit](#) of this three-year project, such as an interactive digital assessment tool and a set of thirty games to help ECEC practitioners work with children on recognizing and addressing biases, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion.



EDUCAS: Creating child and family friendly learning spaces in ECEC centers



Together with four research centers and eight early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers distributed in Lithuania, Belgium and Italy, ISSA has worked on the EDUCAS project on how to create child and family friendly learning spaces in ECEC centers. The project has earned the Epos Quality Label for Good Practice in 2021.

Throughout the three years of its duration, partners in Belgium (FL), ISSA Member VBJK, the University

of Parma in Italy and the Center for Innovative Education, ISSA Member in Lithuania have undertaken a thorough examination of existing visions and methods related to organizing ECEC environments in their contexts.

With the support of two ECEC centers in each country, the consortium has developed action research paths that are tailored to the contexts in which the six ECEC centers are working. These joint reflections of experts and practitioners on their pedagogical vision and its connection to learning spaces have established the grounds for the development of a [toolbox](#) with approaches, methods and tools to support professionals working on ECEC spaces with an *educare* approach.

The resources, available on the [EDUCAS webpage](#), bring together research, policy and practice on such inspiring aspects of ECEC as the use of space, and how to make learning, caring and playing possible in an inclusive way. As one of the practitioners pointed out, “I am

surprised at how much you can do with simpler and fewer materials in the classroom. We can see that children are calmer.” The project ended with an [online event](#) in June 2021 hosted by ISSA, in which the toolbox was introduced and partners of the three countries involved in the project shared their experiences and findings in several workshops.

ISSA's role in the project included providing technical assistance and leading the communication and dissemination activities, including the design, production and translation of EDUCAS resources.

“The main purpose of the EDUCAS Toolbox is to provide professionals with supportive and inspirational guidelines so that each one can implement it in their own way. The material has been created thanks to the participation of children, families, professionals and external experts.”

*Zorica Trikić,
ISSA Senior Program Manager*

As an association focused in the early childhood field in Europe and Central Asia and with a solid expertise built through more than 20 years' work, ISSA holds a unique position as a service provider for its wide Membership community and beyond. Its international and highly skilled staff continues to provide technical assistance, tailored in-house and consulting services through different areas of expertise that range from Quality in EC services to workforce empowerment and support. During 2021, the ISSA Program team, partnered with around ten Members and other early childhood organizations, worked to improve ECEC services in several countries and in very diverse contexts, resulting in the development of the following services.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – Road map for implementing ECD workforce competencies

The ISSA Secretariat developed a roadmap to prepare the system-wide implementation of ECD Workforce Competencies across early childhood sectors in United Arab Emirates.

Partner: Early Childhood Authority of Abu Dhabi

BALKANS – Training for kindergarten teachers

Under the EU project to increase education opportunities for Roma youth in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the ISSA Secretariat in partnership with its Members provided assistance to the Roma Education Fund, for developing and conducting training for kindergarten practitioners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Turkey.

Partner: Roma Education Fund. In collaboration with: Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step in Bosnia; the Kosovo Educational Center; Step by Step Center in Albania; and the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step North Macedonia.

CZECH REPUBLIC AND SWITZERLAND – Support in scaling-up programs and boosting impact

To prepare plans for scaling up their existing ideas and programs and accelerate their impact, the ISSA Secretariat provided continuous support and guidance to the following organizations: Leontinka (Czech Republic) and the Marie Meierhofer Children's Institute (Switzerland) – grantees of the Human Safety Net.

Partner: Generali Foundation and The Human Safety Net, in close cooperation with the Soft Tulip (the Netherlands) and Step by Step Center for Education and Professional Development (Romania).

EUROPE – Technical support to help connect vulnerable families and EC services

Why do the most vulnerable families in Europe not use ECEC services? ISSA Secretariat is providing technical support to answer this research question, through the development of a literature review and evidence-based guiding principles for effective outreach and engagement.

Partner: King Baudouin Foundation

GEORGIA – Development of a Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

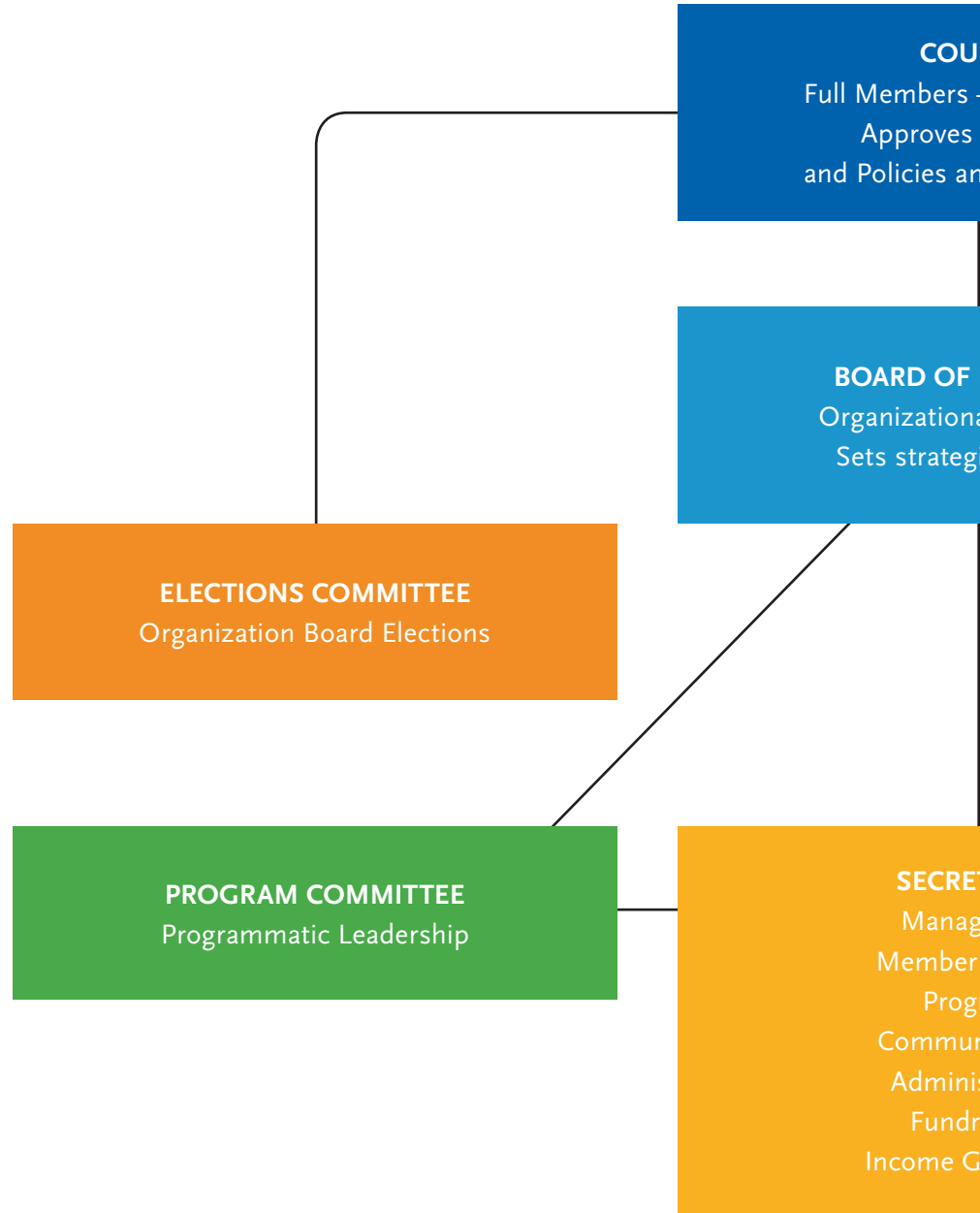
Within a consortium, and with its Member in Georgia, the Center for Preschool and Inclusive Education at Ilia University, the ISSA Secretariat has: contributed to the development of a diagnostic study, by elaborating the research instruments to collect data across the ECEC Georgian system; provided assistance in using the ISSA Instrument for Assessing Quality Practice during observations to assess process quality in kindergartens; and developed case studies on seven municipalities in Georgia across multiple dimensions of the ECEC systems.

Partner: Ministry of Education and Science

SINGAPORE – Professional development workshops for directors of early years centers

Facilitated by the ISSA Secretariat, ISSA Members have provided participants with hands-on examples and activities on how to link theory to practice, and how to interact and support early childhood practitioners. The training includes virtual site visits.

Partner: Association for Early Childhood Educators Singapore. In close collaboration with ISSA Members: Step by Step/Bambi Kindergarten (Romania), Hestia Early Learning Centers (the Netherlands), the Pobrezje, Hans Christian Andersen and Otona Župančiča kindergartens (Slovenia), and the Tierlantuin kindergarten (Belgium).



COUNCIL
– voting rights.
Strategies
and elects Board

DIRECTORS
al Leadership;
ic directions

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Reviews Audit Report

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Leadership
on Membership Issues



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Co-founder & Managing
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Institute for Quality
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Executive Director, ISSA



Liana Ghent
Executive Director



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Program Director



Winnifred Sanders
Finance and HR Manager



Zorica Trikić
Senior Program Manager



Dr. Konstantina Rentzou
Senior Program Manager



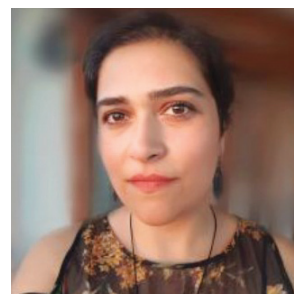
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Membership Manager



Francesca Colombo
Junior Program Manager



Aljosa Rudas
Senior Program Officer



Ayça Alaylı
Junior Program Manager



Emily Henry
Communications and
Campaigns Lead



Olesya Kravchuk
Communications Officer



Teresa Moreno
Communications Officer



Ning Alfrink
Finance Officer
& Office Manager



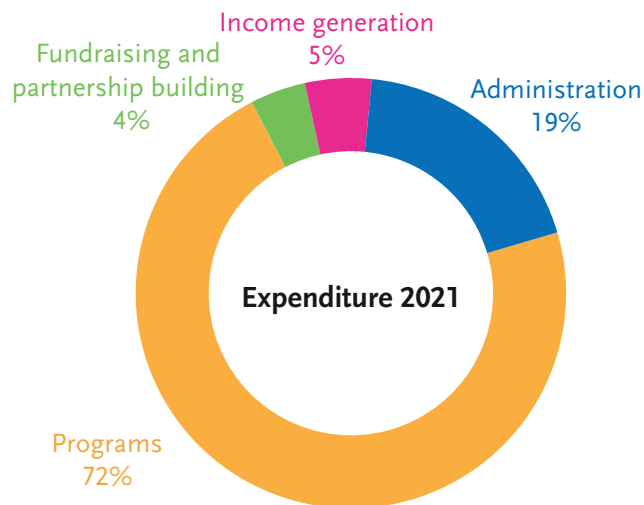
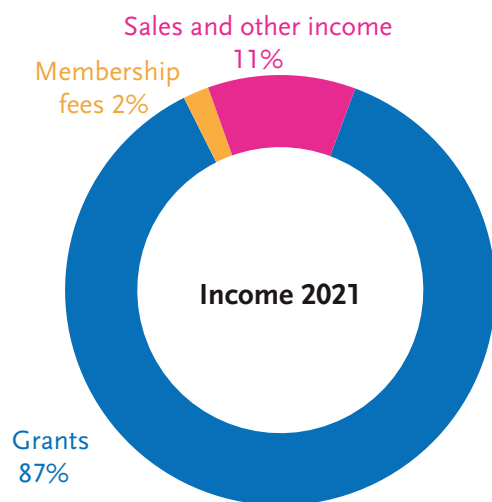
Anna Joostensz
Projects & Operations
Support Officer

2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT (EUR)

Our finances are kept by a certified accountant and audited by an independent external auditor. The balance sheet and the income statement are derived from the audited annual report.

ASSETS	2021	2020
Fixed assets	6 973	10 045
Grants receivable	1 135 332	1 553 576
Other receivables	68 783	86 036
Debtors	50 209	8 406
Liquid funds	1 157 805	774 543
Total	2 419 102	2 432 606

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	2021	2020
Association capital reserve	208 840	210 688
Deferred revenue	2 076 308	2 019 600
Taxes payable	26 175	63 480
Creditors and accrued expenses	107 779	138 838
Total	2 419 102	2 432 606



INCOME AND EXPENSES	2021	2020
Grants	1 060 991	1 443 936
Membership fees	27 157	15 370
Sales and other income	136 361	83 758
Total income	1 224 509	1 543 064
Administration	238 664	244 867
Programs and network functions	918 846	1 171 788
Fundraising and partnership building	46 144	38 936
Income generation	68 241	53 313
Total expenditure	1 271 895	1 508 904
Net operating income	-47 386	34 160
Interest Income	–	–
Exchange differences	45 538	-6 041
Net Result	-1 848	28 119

SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank our supporters, central to making our work possible throughout 2021.



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Step by Step Association**
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