



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

A network in action for young children



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Resources for the Ukraine Response	Health Systems for Early Childhood Development	ISSA Events Calendar	Mailings
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Romani Early Years Network	Primokiz	Joint Learning Labs	Prioritizing Early Childhood Development in Europe
EU-level advocacy events	Ukraine response	Technical assistance services	Other Program Initiatives



Sharing knowledge Connecting and learning Mobilizing expertise



Henriette Heimgaertner
Board President



Liana Ghent
Executive Director

The year 2022 brought new opportunities and challenges for the ISSA Network, being marked above all, by the war in Ukraine. Despite the painful situation, the ISSA Network responded immediately, with agility and resilience, to the needs of young children and families in Ukraine, and in countries receiving refugees. ISSA raised and channeled funds, mobilized resources and expertise within our network; created and shared resources to support the parents and caregivers of displaced children and to help Ukrainian children continue learning; and trained over 100 Master Trainers from eight countries, who in turn are training hundreds of other trainers in basic psychological first aid to support professionals working with Ukrainian children and families. ISSA's Ukraine Response has demonstrated the power of the network advantage, especially in times of crisis.

Throughout 2022, ISSA continued to connect Members with resources, build cross-sectoral cooperation and expand our network of

Members and stakeholders. We also enjoyed meeting in person once again, with the resumption of in-person trainings and meetings for the first time since 2020. In our capacity as a knowledge broker, ISSA facilitated learning and exchanges through multilingual webinars, workshops, trainings, and concluded the year with the ISSA Connects week.

In 2023, we are continuing the crucial work of our "Ukraine Response" — training additional cohorts of master trainers to provide psychological first aid for Ukrainian children and families and supporting the rollout of expertise in-country through a cascade model. We persist in advocating for the needs of young children, and their caregivers to remain high on the agenda — especially those in the most vulnerable situations. As ever, we remain committed to prioritizing the interests of ISSA Members. At the same time, contributing to the wider Early Childhood Development (ECD) field by fostering new partnerships and increased collabora-

tion with the other ECD Regional Networks. With in-person trainings and meetings having resumed in full swing, we are also beginning to lay the groundwork for an ISSA Conference in 2024.

The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is an international learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia.

Since 1999, ISSA has worked to unite and support professionals and partners to deliver high-quality early years services equitably. We challenge existing knowledge and practices and co-construct new approaches and models.

ISSA's vision is a society in which families, communities and professionals all work together to reach their unique potential and embrace the values of social justice and equity. The ISSA Secretariat office is located in Leiden, in the Netherlands.

STRATEGY 2019–2023

ISSA's Strategy 2019–2023 builds upon the previous strategic period, in which ISSA shifted towards having a double positioning: serving as a platform upon which learning and cooperation among Members can be supported, along

with the co-creation of knowledge, while also being a valuable contributor to and a key player in the early childhood field. Network mechanisms are leveraged so that work in one area reinforces the other.

The network advantage

ISSA's strategic goals have provided a framework to shape the response to the war in Ukraine, which significantly influenced ISSA's work in 2022. Once again, the advantage of being a network became increasingly apparent, both within ISSA itself and in collaboration with its partners in Europe and peer networks on other continents. ISSA has actively engaged in the initial efforts to support early learning and care as a response to the war in Ukraine. Strong linkages and adaptive, flexible processes have allowed the ISSA Network to support young children and their families, both in Ukraine and in the countries receiving refugees since the outbreak of war. Through its services for Members and several large programmatic initiatives in addition to the Ukraine Response, ISSA has aimed to organize its efforts for greater impact, by supporting links across borders and across sectors.

ISSA'S STRATEGIC GOALS (2019-2023)

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.



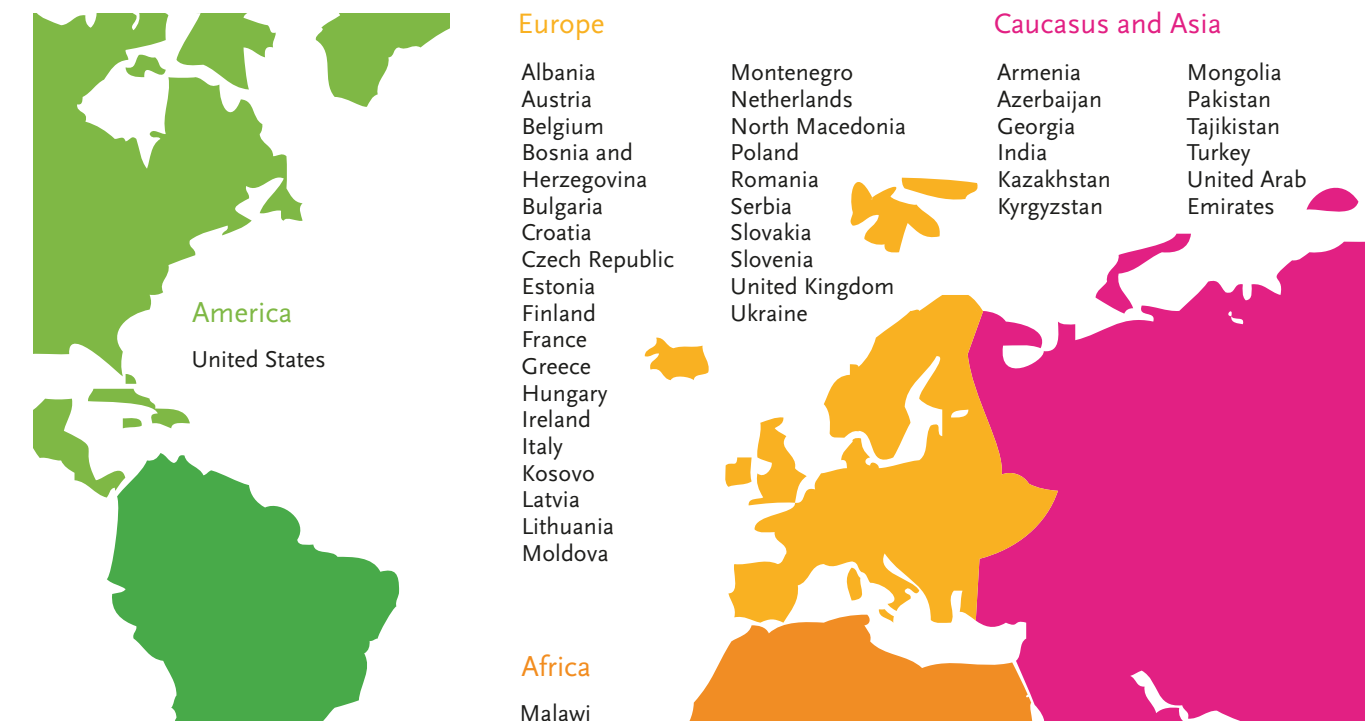
As a membership association, ISSA is powered by the leading Early Childhood Development (ECD) experts in Europe and Central Asia. Members from 42 countries, mostly in Europe and Central Asia, contribute to the ISSA community. These member organizations represent a wide variety of actors in the ECD field — NGOs, professional associations, academic institutions, public bodies and international organizations. In 2022, ISSA welcomed three new organizations from Finland, Hungary, and Ukraine to the Network, finishing the year with 88 member organizations.

In the year 2022, the ISSA community faced new challenges due to the war in Ukraine. The invisible ties that hold the network together proved strong. With the close support of partners, ISSA was able to leverage network mechanisms to mobilize expertise in eight countries. Read more about the network response [here](#).

ISSA MEMBERSHIP BASE AT THE END OF 2022

	No of countries	Members
European Union	19	47
Rest of Europe and Central Asia	18	35
Other parts of the world	5	6
Total	42	88

GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF ISSA MEMBERS IN 2022



MEMBERSHIP DIVERSITY



New Members in 2022

- NestingPlay, Hungary
- Transcarpathian Regional Charitable Fund “Blaho”, Ukraine
- Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, School of Wellbeing, Social Services, Finland

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

ISSA leverages the strengths and expertise of member organizations, the Secretariat, and partners to create relevant resources and curate the latest materials to share in ISSA's regions and beyond. In 2022, a new dedicated resource library was created to host selected resources to support children affected by the war in Ukraine. A second knowledge hub was created on the website of the new initiative, Health Systems for Early Child Development. Through various channels, ISSA facilitated the dissemination and translation of resources to ensure local relevancy and uptake.

Hubs of Knowledge

ISSA's websites host 600+ resources and practices developed by the Secretariat, member organizations, and partners, curated and sorted on five online knowledge hubs.

ISSA hosts 5 Knowledge Hubs

- [ISSA Knowledge Hub](#)
- [Resources for the Ukraine Response](#)
- [Romani Early Years Network Knowledge Hub](#)
- [Health Systems for Early Child Development Knowledge Hub](#)
- [Early Childhood Workforce Initiative Knowledge Hub](#)

Featured Resources

- [Building Bridges – Bridging the Gap. Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece](#), ISSA, University of Patras, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, and Amna. Available in 10 languages.
- [“Let's Play” Activity Cards – Play-based activities for healing and learning](#), International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
- [REYN Early Childhood Research](#), Roma Studies Groups (CEG) at CREA – University of Barcelona

Members in Focus

ISSA features the first-hand experiences and best practices of member organizations through a series of interviews and articles published on the [Member in Focus](#) section of the ISSA website.

Leveraging ISSA's reputation in the European and Central Asia regions and beyond, this platform

provides international visibility to the member organization. This supports the mobilization of expertise across borders and builds connections for collaboration around common interests.

[This article](#) highlights the work of ISSA Member, the Comenius Foundation for Child Development in Poland, and their efforts to support young children affected by the

war in Ukraine, by setting up SPYNKA centers (non-formal services to support early learning and care) across the country.

More news and information on Members' achievements are shared via ISSA's social media channels, including [YouTube](#) as a resource for recordings of webinars, research presentations and projects from both ISSA and its Members.



From FRD archive

CONNECTING AND LEARNING

ISSA strengthens the connections and collaboration among its Members, facilitating and providing professional development opportunities and organizational development. As a Network, ISSA is continuously enriching the early childhood development field by nurturing a solid learning community among ISSA Members, and beyond. In 2022, [ISSA Connects for Ukraine](#) featured ISSA's Network's efforts to connect and support organizations in response to the war in Ukraine. See page 18 for more information.

ISSA Connects for Learning

Organized and led by the ISSA Members, [ISSA Connects for Learning](#) took place in December, featuring three professional development sessions aimed at broadening the knowledge of current issues in early childhood. The Member-led sessions brought 53 participants together to discuss topics of common interest. The focus areas chosen by Members included:

- innovative approaches in ECD programs – pre-and in-service training of staff;
- cross-sectoral work for early childhood development – non-formal services as a leverage for cross-sectoral cooperation;
- effective social inclusion policies and programs.

Innovative approaches in ECD programs – pre-and in-service training of staff

Czech Republic	Step by Step Czech Republic
Ireland	DCU – Early Childhood Research Centre

Cross-sectoral work for early childhood development – non-formal services as a leverage for cross-sectoral cooperation

Netherlands and Slovakia	International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and Skola Dokoran
--------------------------	--

Effective social inclusion policies and programs

Netherlands	Soft Tulip
North Macedonia	NGO-“KHAM” Delcevo

ISSA Connects for Sharing

The online session offered an opportunity to gather new knowledge from the field. In three parallel sessions, ISSA Members presented stimulating resources, approaches and tools from their programmatic work. Visit the YouTube playlists to view videos of the presentations.

- Mektebim Program – Providing sustainable community-based preschool services. United Aid for Azerbaijan (UAFA), Azerbaijan
- A Learning Network involving fathers in the education of young children. De SLOEP, Belgium
- School of critical thinking and values: a methodological tool. CEI Step by Step, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Accompagnez-Moi (Support Me), a tool and a new approach in developing social-emotional skills from early years. Ensemble pour l'Éducation de la Petite Enfance, France
- P.I.C.C.O.L.O, a tool for promoting responsive caregiving in formal and non-formal settings for young children and their families. Centro per la Salute del Bambino (Center for Child Health and Development), Italy
- Planned Activities for Cohesive Education (PACE), a curriculum for children aged 6–10. Balkan Sunflowers Kosovo
- Lessons learned from Moldova's Early Childhood Intervention system. CEI VOINICEL, Moldova
- Forest Trail for Children: involvement of parents through non-formal services. Mala Ulica, Slovenia
- Smooth transitions between preschool and school, results from the project TIM – Transition Is our Mission. Educational Research Institute/Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education, Slovenia, and Open Academy Step by Step, Croatia

MOBILIZING EXPERTISE

ISSA fosters cross-border collaboration on areas of common interest among ISSA Members by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience through Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) and Joint Learning Labs (JLLs).

Peer Learning Activities

Since 2016, ISSA has facilitated and co-funded the exchange of knowledge and experience through Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) – a platform upon which both sharing and learning can occur in a mutual and

collaborative way. In 2022, ISSA supported six Peer Learning Activities involving 31 ISSA Members from 18 countries. Five of the PLAs were hosted by Members and included topics that ranged from video coaching, the “What Makes Me?” report: core capacities for living and

learning in childhood, improving the quality of the workforce, to the dissemination of the 2021 issue of the *Early Childhood Matters* magazine in Central Asia. A sixth PLA was hosted by the ISSA Secretariat to support exchanges among members engaged in the Ukraine response.

PLA in focus: Professional Learning Communities

The ISSA Member, Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF), organized a PLA on Professional Learning Communities: Learning from International Practices, during which best practices from ISSA Members in Moldova, Croatia and Slovenia were presented. Other partner organizations involved were the “Finnish Support to the Reform of Ukrainian School” project and the Schools for Democracy Programme carried out by the European Wergeland Centre, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Via their partner organizations, they also shared experiences from Georgia, Finland, and Norway. As a result of the five webinars, specific cases from six countries will be developed and collected as part of an online manual. The manual will be uploaded to the webpage of USSF, and ISSA will disseminate it via the other partner organizations.

6 PLAS IN 2022

15 ISSA MEMBER
ORGANIZATIONS

31 PARTICIPANTS

18 COUNTRIES

Joint Learning Labs

Since JLLs started three years ago, their format, content and lifespan has been a process shaped by the needs of Members. In 2022, ISSA Members continued to connect around specific thematic areas, with the aim of nurturing group learning,

professional discussions and co-creating knowledge. Four JLLs took part in 2022, featuring diverse topics such as: supporting young children’s risky play; services and policies on early childhood interventions;

the Persona Doll methodology; and leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care services.

JLL in focus: Supporting Young Children’s Risky Play

In 2021, the Artevelde University of Applied Sciences and the Family Team from the agency Opgroeien (Growing Up), both of which are ISSA Members in Belgium, initiated the Joint Learning Lab on Supporting Young Children’s Risky Play.

With 12 other ISSA Members from nine countries participating, the JLL aimed to enrich each other’s knowledge of the importance of risky play, and expertise with which to support children, their families and the professionals working with them. In 2022 sessions, Members of the JLL discussed and learned about ways in which risky play is perceived in other countries, and how policy and practice either encourages or hinders risky play opportunities.

“The JLL sessions have helped to expand my awareness of the importance of risky play for children’s development. In my opinion, the understanding of the role of risk and the ability to anticipate and manage it, which long ago was part of children’s free play, need to be sensibly integrated into current teacher-training programs.”

*Monika Rosciszewska Wozniak
(Comenius Foundation for Child
Development, Poland)*

4 JLLS IN 2022

21 ISSA MEMBER
ORGANIZATIONS

30 PARTICIPANTS

13 COUNTRIES

ISSA NETWORK: MOBILIZING TO RESPOND TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Since the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, the ISSA network has initiated a wide range of collective actions to mobilize in response to the needs of young children and their families in Ukraine and in countries receiving refugees.

By taking on a network approach, ISSA:

- Provides targeted support to organizations in Ukraine and neighboring countries serving internally displaced and refugee families with young children
- Enhances the capacity of ISSA Members and partners to tackle challenges associated with refugee influx in various countries
- Facilitates collaboration among regional stakeholders to prioritize early childhood development (ECD) in humanitarian responses

Partners

- Amna
- Bernard van Leer Foundation
- COFRA
- UNICEF
- Utopa Stichting
- War Child Holland

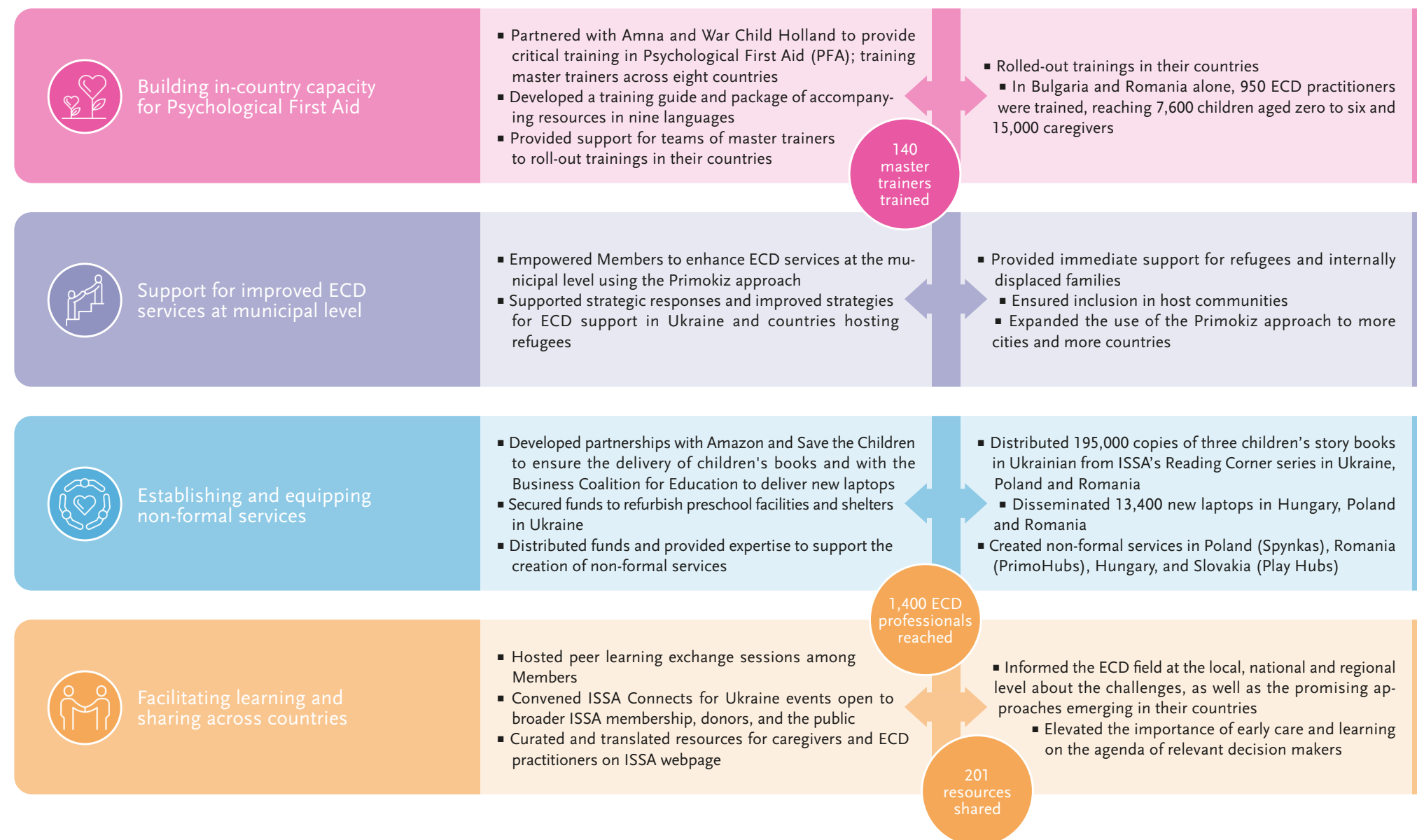
**BULGARIA | CZECH REPUBLIC | HUNGARY | MOLDOVA
POLAND | ROMANIA | SLOVAKIA | UKRAINE**

Streams of action

What did we do?

Secretariat Support

Member Achievements



LEVERAGING NETWORK MECHANISMS: A NETWORK IN ACTION

The network's representation at the European Commission's Working Group on ECEC

The [Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\)](#) was established by the European Commission to function as a forum for mutual learning, bringing together representatives from national authorities, stakeholders and international organizations. As an early childhood-focused regional network, ISSA has been selected for the third time as a member of the Working Group. ECEC has been high on the European agenda for several years, with the quality of ECEC increasingly becoming a policy priority. In 2019, the Council of the European Union adopted a [Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems](#) and since then has worked towards supporting countries in implementing it.

In 2022, the Working Group published two important reports focusing on the main themes during its 2019–2021 mandate: inclusion and staff professionalization. The reports reflect the discussions, consultations and contributions coming from, and which are endorsed by, the members of the group. The [Toolkit for inclusive early childhood education and care](#) provides data, resources and guidance for the development and implementation of policies and programs that can strengthen the

inclusiveness of ECEC systems. The second report, [How to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff: final report](#), brings together an aligned discourse about the status and professionalization in Europe of ECEC staff, elevating critical issues that many countries encounter and possible solutions for overcoming them, such as increasing the attractiveness of the profession.

As a member of the Working Group, ISSA has contributed its expertise, knowledge, and resources to the development of both reports, providing examples of programs implemented or resources created within its network.

Network supporters: Early Childhood Regional Network Fund

In 2021, the [Network Advantage Report](#) was published, revealing the catalytic role and potential of the ISSA network and other early childhood Regional Networks: the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), the Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD), and the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC). The report emphasized the ability of Regional Networks to connect and empower organizations working in the early childhood field on their respective continents.

With this in mind, and as long-term supporters of networks in the early childhood sector, several foundations came together to recognize the greater efficiency and potential impact achieved by bringing together their resources through a donor collaborative fund. In 2022, the Oak Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and Porticus established the [Early Childhood Regional Networks Fund](#), which is hosted by the Swiss Philanthropy

Foundation. Two more funders joined: Generali's The Human Safety Net and the Two Lilies Fund. The Regional Networks will em-

bark on their first collaboration supported by the Fund in 2023. This work will take place under the [Early Childhood Workforce Initiative](#).



Partnerships for increased impact: the Harvard Center on the Developing Child and the Early Childhood Regional Networks

In 2021, Harvard's world-renowned Center on the Developing Child (HCDC) came together with 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). They created a knowledge infrastructure at the cross-regional and country

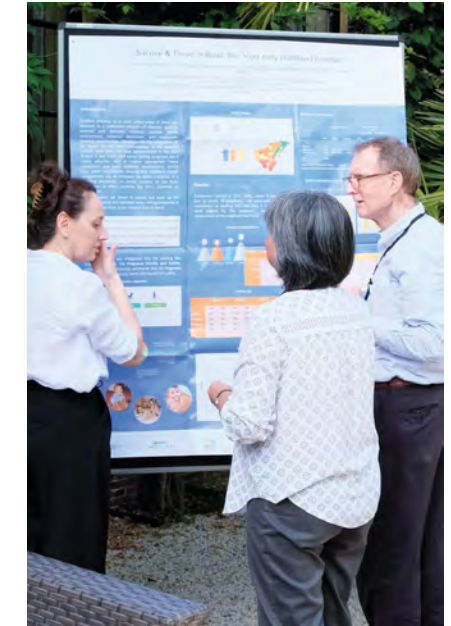
levels that could influence the science-based narrative on ECD.

With this goal in mind, in November 2022, the partnership organised an online session, "Leveraging Science to Foster Resilience in Families and Communities". The webinar focused on insights from the science of adversity and resilience that can help families, communities, and public systems

support the healthy development of young children. The Regional Networks shared their experiences of using the science of child development to advance key ECD policy and program initiatives at the country level.



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



ECD Week in Leiden

In mid-June, ISSA co-hosted a series of international meetings convened by Porticus, transforming Leiden into an "ECD capital" for a whole week, with close to 100 attendees. The meetings brought together peers from ECD Regional Networks from other continents, funders from around the world interested in early years, Saving Brains, ECDAN, the Harvard Center

on the Developing Child, the Moving Minds Alliance and other international groups. Members of the ISSA Board were also included.

Among the various meetings that took place, was the first annual meeting of the [Early Childhood Regional Networks Fund](#). Other highlights included the Learning Sessions, which focused on how networks are positioned to respond

to crises. ISSA presented the network's work in relation to responding to the needs of young children and families impacted by the war in Ukraine, premiering a [video clip](#) with examples from the Secretariat and ISSA member organizations.

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

INFLUENCING POLICYMAKING

The First Years, First Priority Campaign

As co-leads of the First Years, First Priority campaign, ISSA and Eurochild have strengthened their strategic partnership, working more closely to redefine the goals of the campaign. They have run advocacy actions at the European level, built evidence, and supported the National Coordinators of the campaign to ensure that ECD stays high

on the national agendas in their respective countries.

An analysis of the European policy agenda focusing on children, the country priorities and the key findings from a [cross-country data analysis](#) was carried out in 2021. Based on this, in 2022, three advocacy priority areas emerged: centering the European Child Guarantee



tee on young children; the professionalization of the early education and care staff; and maternal healthcare inequalities. These priorities informed the revision of the campaign's advocacy strategy and influenced the evidence-building work in 2022.

ISSA led the coordination, editing and design of three thematic papers produced by the Campaign partners on these new priority areas. ISSA developed a paper titled "[Prioritising the professional develop-](#)

[ment of early childhood education and care staff](#)". Eurochild developed "[Putting early childhood at the heart of the European Child Guarantee](#)", and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and Make Mothers Matter developed the paper, "[Ensure universal access to maternal healthcare in the European Union – First Years, First Priority](#)". The papers were presented in November at a [high-level meeting at the European Parliament](#) in Brussels, alongside the Campaign's



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first in-person meeting with its partners and National Coordinators.

Through this and other advocacy actions such as [policy reaction papers](#) issued on behalf of the First Years, First Priority, the Campaign achieved better positioning and recognition at both the EU and national levels and brought more visibility to policy priorities related specifically to young children. Many recommendations put forward by Campaign partners were considered by the EU Commission in the policy documents released in 2022, such as the [European Care Strategy](#) and the [EU Council's Recommendations on the Barcelona targets](#).

PROMOTING INTEGRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

Working with local governments – the Primokiz Approach

Primokiz is an evidence-based program developed by the Jacobs Foundation in order to increase access to quality early childhood services, rooted in the needs of communities. Guided by this seven-phased methodology, comprehensive early childhood local strategies are developed based on data collected through a situation analysis. The process is highly participatory and conditioned by the constant involvement of political actors and multi-sector mobilization and coordination under local leadership.

The Jacobs Foundation has awarded ISSA the Primokiz license, which ISSA sub-licensed to Members (the Centrul Step by Step in Romania, and the Step by Step Center for Quality in Education at the Education Research Institute in Slovenia), following the successful completion of piloting processes in those countries.

Between 2018 and 2022, 22 municipalities in Romania piloted the Primokiz approach. In Slovenia, the piloting started in 2020 and involved eight municipalities. Successes from the Romanian pilot, and learnings from the Slovenian pilot were concluded in June 2023, and can be found on the [ISSA website](#).

In both countries, ISSA Members witnessed multi-layered achievements at the level of the municipality team, at the level of early childhood services, and at the level of communities. The main goal of the approach was reached in most of the municipalities where Primokiz was used: namely, to build

Primokiz

**Better, responsive
and coordinated
early childhood
services**



Enabling responsive early childhood strategies

The Primokiz Approach for local government

and support the capacity of local governments to assess the local situation of early childhood services and the needs of children, families and professionals working in early childhood services. Based on these goals, it was possible to plan and implement responsive, cross-sectoral early childhood strategies so that better, attuned and more effective services are provided to all young children and their families.

In October, the ISSA Secretariat held a webinar with colleagues from

Romania and Slovenia, in which they unpacked the fundamentals of the methodology and shared their experiences and learnings after implementing the Primokiz approach. The recording is available on the [ISSA YouTube channel](#).

As the Mayor of Onești Municipality, I am involved with any initiative that supports children and their parents. With Primokiz, I made it possible for these people's voices to be heard in the City Council through the Situation Analysis carried out by the project team, in order to prioritize necessary future actions.

*Victor Laurențiu Neghină, Mayor
of Onesti Municipality, Bacău
County – Romania*

Health Systems for Early Childhood Development

In 2021, UNICEF's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) and ISSA joined forces to launch the Health Systems for Early Child Development initiative. The overarching goal of the initiative is to enhance the wellbeing of children during early childhood by accelerating efforts in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) to build more “developmentally oriented” and family-centred health systems and services which empower caregivers to provide children with *nurturing care*. This means a safe and enabling environment that ensures and encourages good health and nutrition, protection from threats, opportunities for early learning and responsive and emotionally supportive interactions with parents and caregivers.

UNICEF ECARO, WHO/Europe and ISSA have a long history of collaboration and technical expertise in health and early child development. Over the years, this part-

nership has resulted in positive changes throughout the ECA region, especially for the most vulnerable children. In December 2022, the initiative was *launched through an online event*, which showcased a brand-new platform.

The *Health Systems for Early Child Development platform* is a one-stop shop for policy makers, service providers, and service plan-

ners, providing access to the latest evidence-based guidance and resources on policies and programmes, which health-care systems can incorporate and build on. It is also a learning community that enables discussions and knowledge exchange about building a responsive system that addresses the needs of young children and their families.

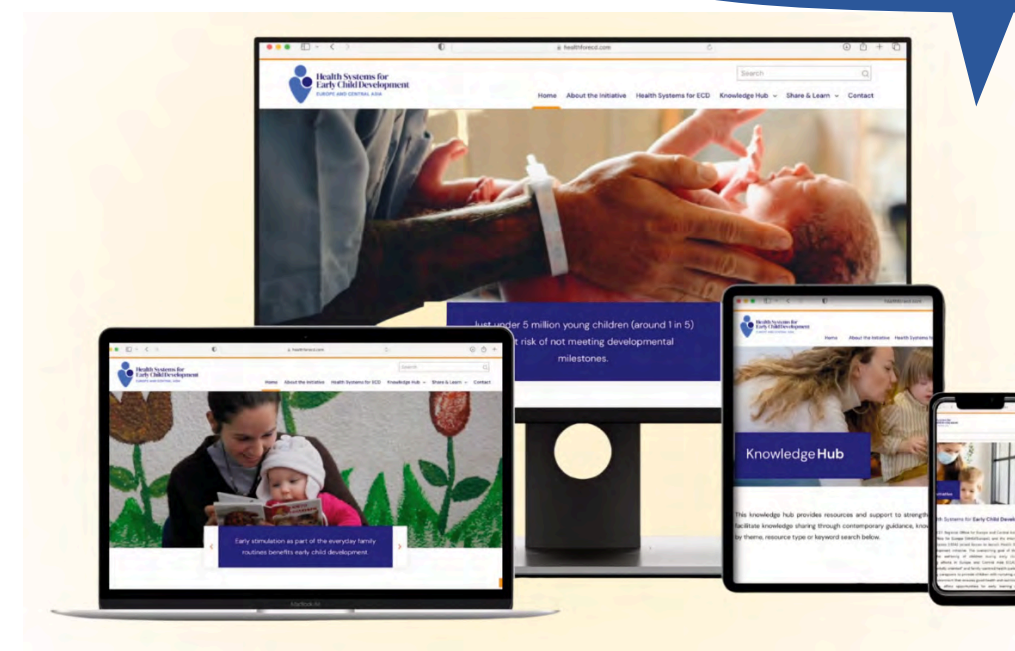


The initiative:

- advocates for change by supporting key stakeholders at regional and national levels to expand their advocacy efforts;
- curates core knowledge and disseminates contemporary, evidence-based guidance, resources, and expertise on ECD in health care to inspire, inform and guide policies and practices;
- fosters a learning community among stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

“We are delighted to be part of this important initiative, which aspires to change the perspective on the role and capacity of the health system to support Early Child Development (ECD). This is something that ISSA has invested in heavily over the years, by supporting professionals bringing ECD into health systems in Europe and Central Asia. Through the Health Systems for Early Child Development initiative, we believe we can make a definite and long-lasting impact.”

ISSA's Executive Director, Liana Ghent.



InTrans – Warm and inclusive transitions for children and families

Since 2020, the InTrans project has championed the creation of warm and inclusive transition practices of children across the home, ECEC, and school environments via policy advocacy as well as the pre- and in-service training of professionals.

In May 2022, the [Copenhagen exchange week](#) gathered together 32 participants, including 18 policy makers, from Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Italy, and Slovenia. Hosted by the project partner, the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (BUPL), and facilitated by the ISSA Member, VBJK, and ISSA, this three-day meeting successfully provided a platform for policy makers to support smooth transitions and begin planning future steps for putting transitions higher on the policy agenda in their respective countries.

The two webinar sessions, which were hosted and moderated by ISSA, focused on challenging the split system in early childhood care

and education, with examples from Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Both acquired over 950 registrants ranging from ECD experts and policy advisors to ECEC practitioners from 60 countries across the world.

The project concluded in early 2023 with the launch of the ISSA-hosted [InTrans Resource Package](#) for in-service training for ECEC and school professionals. This was cou-

pled with the publication of the [cross-country recommendations](#), in which local analyses of initial training systems were critically examined and compared.

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



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ENABLING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND SERVICES

REYN – Shedding light on the situation of young Roma children in Europe

2022 marked 10 years of ISSA's initiative, the Romani Early Years Network (REYN). In December, an [anniversary event](#) celebrated and featured REYN's unique contribution to creating quality environments for young Roma children to develop, learn and thrive.

With financial support from the Open Society Foundations, and in partnership with CREA – University of Barcelona, the findings of the [REYN Early Childhood Research](#)

catalyze solid evidence for urgent and effective policies, and programs enabling each young Roma to reach their full potential. The research showcases the situation of young Roma children and their parents in the 11 countries where REYN operates. [Infographics](#) including country data were launched during the in-person [REYN Annual Meeting](#) in Barcelona.

During the three-day meeting in October organized in Barcelona,

representatives of Member organizations leading the national REYN reflected on the Initiative's achievements and challenges during 2019–2022 in order to shape a renewed new strategic framework for the Initiative.

REYN's multi-year research endeavor will be finalized in 2023 with the release of a cross-country analysis.



Gender Transformative Parenting

In cooperation with UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) and UNICEF New York, the ISSA Secretariat team conducted a global mapping of gender-responsive and transformative parenting programs. The results were used to develop a report which was shared with all UNICEF Regional Offices.

In 2022, ISSA Secretariat created the package, *Supporting Families for Gender Transformative Parenting*, a global resource that consists of four resource modules, slide decks, and a user guide. It has been made available to Members and partners interested in including gender aspects in their parenting programs.

The user guide includes the following main messages: values; an explanation of the content of the resource package; structure of the modules; tips for facilitators for delivering training sessions and adapting the modules; an optional training agenda; and suggestions for monitoring and evaluating the training and its effects.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTING:

Challenging the gender norms and gender inequalities - creating a more equitable environment for all children to thrive

July 2022 User Guide



As an association working 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 continue to provide technical assistance, tailored in-house and consultation services through different areas of expertise that range from quality in early childhood services to inclusive policies and services for the most disadvantaged children, from workforce empowerment and support to working with local governments. During 2022, the ISSA Program team, partnered with ISSA 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.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA – Mapping of Gender-Responsive Parenting Programmes, Development and Piloting of Training Modules

With the purpose of introducing and promoting a gender-transformative approach to parenting programs in eight UNICEF Country Offices, and as part of UNICEF's work on parenting programs, ISSA has conducted a global mapping of current parenting programmes and developed a resource package on gender-transformative parenting. In addition, it has organized an in-person Training of Trainers, and provided support to eight UNICEF country offices in the roll-out of the modules. The learnings from the pilots were consolidated in a report with recommendations for scaling up.

Partner: UNICEF Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)

SLOVAKIA – Training of Trainers for Play and Learning Hubs

The ISSA Secretariat supported its Member organization Skola Dokoran by providing a Training of Trainers for staff members from the six Play Hubs opened in 2022 with financial support from the UNICEF Country Office in Slovakia. The non-formal centers aim to support young refugee children and families who have fled the war in Ukraine.

Partner: Skola Dokoran

GEORGIA – Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education

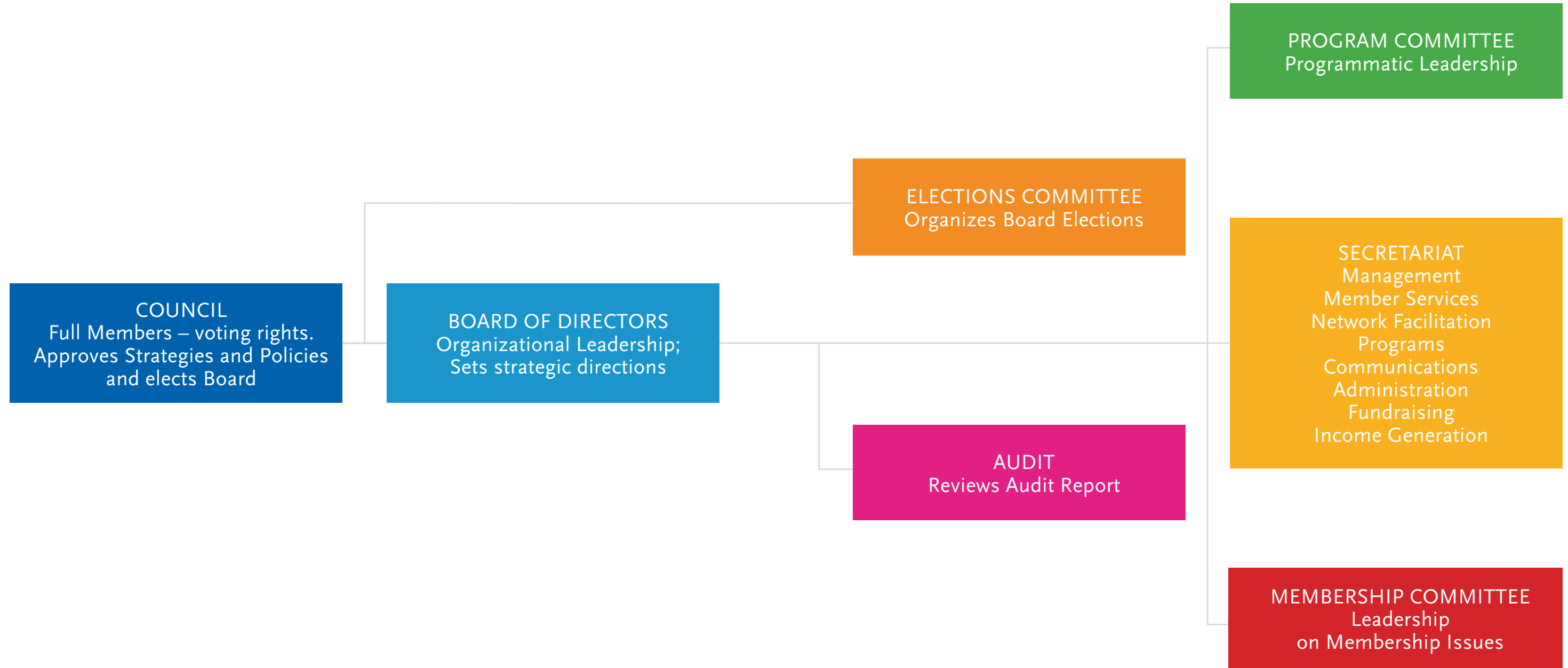
ISSA Secretariat joined the ISSA member in Georgia, the Center for Preschool and Inclusive Education at the Child Development Institute in Tbilisi in a consortium alongside PPMI (Lithuania) and Leuven University (Belgium) to provide consultancy services to the Ministry of Education in Georgia. This has been done with the aim of developing a diagnostic study on the preschool education system in Georgia. The study was part of a larger project funded by the World Bank and aimed at improving the access, quality and inclusiveness of the Georgian preschool system, as well as the horizontal and vertical governance system. As part of this, ISSA trained national researchers to conduct classroom observations with the ISSA Instrument for Assessing Quality Practices in ECEC Services.

Partner: PPMI Group

PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND CROATIA – Mapping of a gender transformative program in preschool and primary school

Support was given to the European Commission-funded project “Kinder” by mapping a gender transformative program in preschool and primary school. A chapter has been developed for a manual on gender transformative educational programs and approaches. This is ongoing.

Partner: Center for Social Studies, Portugal





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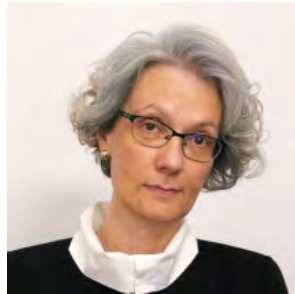
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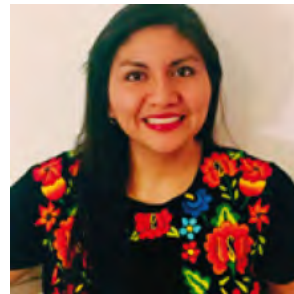
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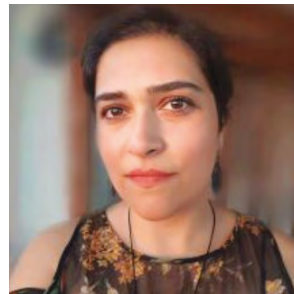
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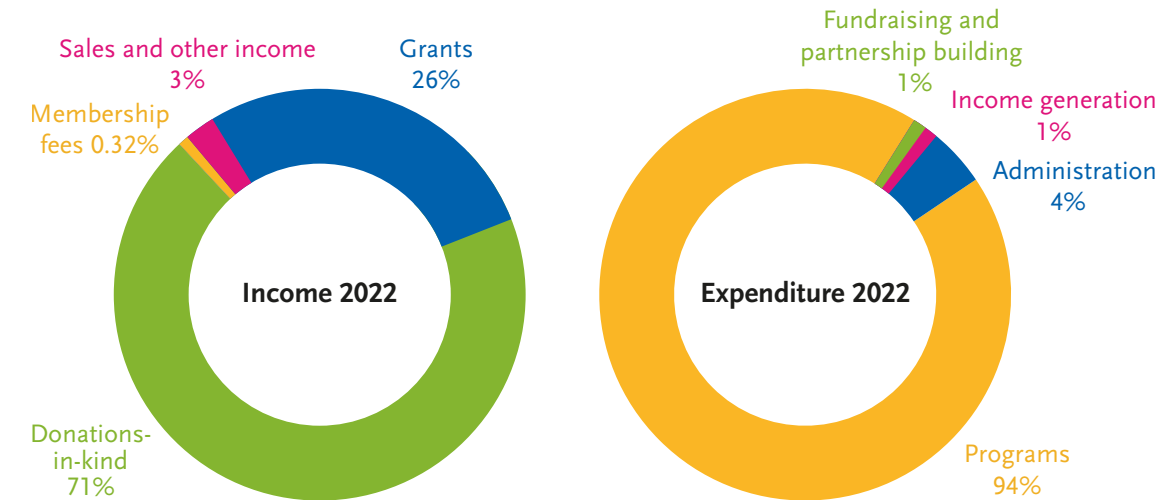
Evelyn Herrera
Administration Office
Assistant

2022 FINANCIAL STATEMENT (EUR)

The balance sheet and the income statement are derived from the audited annual financial statements, which are drawn up in accordance with Dutch Accounting Standards (C1) applicable to small legal persons ('Not-for-profit organizations').

ASSETS	2022	2021
Tangible fixed assets	19 318	6 973
Grants receivable	1 208 295	1 135 333
Other receivables	2 539 971	68 783
Debtors	24 894	50 208
Liquid funds	1 691 282	1 157 805
Total	5 483 760	2 419 102

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	2022	2021
Association capital reserve	255 589	208 840
Deferred revenue	4 899 282	2 076 308
Taxes payable	75 923	26 175
Creditors and accrued expenses	252 966	107 779
Total	5 483 760	2 419 102



INCOME AND EXPENSES	2022	2021
Grants	1 777 098	1 060 991
Membership fees	21 666	27 157
Sales and other income	173 034	136 361
Donations-in-kind	4 867 983	-
Total income	6 839 781	1 224 509
Administration	288 416	238 664
Programs	6 463 845	918 846
Fundraising and partnership building	52 290	46 144
Income generation	60 525	68 241
Total expenditure	6 865 076	1 271 894
Net operating income	-25 295	-47 385
Interest Income	1 179	-
Exchange differences	70 864	45 538
Net Result	46 748	-1 848

SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank our supporters, central to making our work possible throughout 2022.



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