



ISSA

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION



ISSA is an early years learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia.

ISSA unites and supports organizations to deliver high-quality early years services to all children.

ISSA is a meeting point for all those working at the cutting-edge of Early Childhood Development (ECD) who are committed to the well-being, development and future life-chances of all young children.

Do you share **ISSA's vision** of a society where all families, communities and professionals work together to empower each child to reach their unique potential and embrace values of social justice and equity?

Join a learning community powered by its members
www.issa.nl

ISSA – International Step by Step Association
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2312HS Leiden | the Netherlands | www.issa.nl

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Introduction

During 2015, Early Childhood Development was brought sharply into focus on a global stage not least by the unprecedented acknowledgement of the sector in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, such as Target 4.2:

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

This is a satisfying acknowledgment of our work and offers us clear motivation to continue making a difference in the lives of all children, especially the most vulnerable.

The breadth of our vision is matched by the scale of our ambition: to be a leading early childhood network in Europe and Central Asia promoting quality and equity in integrated early-years services.

Our work supporting this vision is well established and this year we have co-created and developed many compelling initiatives, such as:

- Encouraging joint learning and knowledge creation among members through ISSA's Peer Learning Activities;
- Empowering ISSA members to continue working to improve quality while strengthening professionalism in early years services. This was realized through the co-creation of two important resources which mirror ISSA's approach to supporting services and a competent early childhood workforce: Roads to Quality and A Framework for Quality

Practices in Early Childhood Services for Children under Three. (The Quality Initiative);

- Building partnerships between eastern- and western-European organizations working with Romani and Traveller families and communities. Supporting and uniting Romani and Traveller practitioners, with practitioners from other backgrounds, to exchange knowledge and transfer quality practices in services while constructing support networks with the families and the communities they work with. (ISSA and Bernard van Leer Foundation, Roma Partnership Project: REYN-Romani Early Years Network);
- Inviting partners from Europe and Central Asia to advocate for quality and equitable services within early childhood competent systems by joining the Early Years Regional Alliance and endorsing its Manifesto. (EYRA - Early Years Regional Alliance);
- Enabling training providers to expand home visitors' knowledge and skills towards a holistic understanding of the child's learning and development, and to understand the best way to support the child's family (UNICEF-ISSA partnership promoting home visiting services);
- Promoting an integrated approach in early childhood systems through cross-sectoral capacity building and local governance empowerment, especially by reaching out to the most vulnerable children and families (INTESYS Project);
- Supporting and empowering the early childhood workforce with a global initiative which takes a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to those who work with families and children under 8 years old (ISSA and Results for Development Institute: the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative);

In the course of the year ISSA's membership expanded, we augmented partnerships with globally respected institutions and developed new relationships which will help us build a better future for young children, their families, and the people who work with them.

All of this work has all been underpinned by the development of ISSA's 2016-2018 strategic plan which will direct and inform our activities, and help us to fulfil our mission to be a learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Liana Ghent".

LIANA GHENT
Executive Director - ISSA



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nives Milinović".

NIVES MILINOVIĆ
President - ISSA



NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Throughout 2015 the Secretariat met with the Board and Program Committee to develop ISSA's new strategy. With the help of international experts and the advice and support of members, ISSA's new vision, mission and goals were articulated.

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

ISSA's mission: we are a learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia. We unite 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 GOALS 2016–18

Advocate for and support competent Early Childhood systems for all children, especially the most vulnerable

Increase awareness of the importance of ECD and of a qualified workforce

Be a leading EC network and learning community that promotes quality, equitable and integrated services for children, families & practitioners

Ensure that ISSA's services and operations are financially sustainable

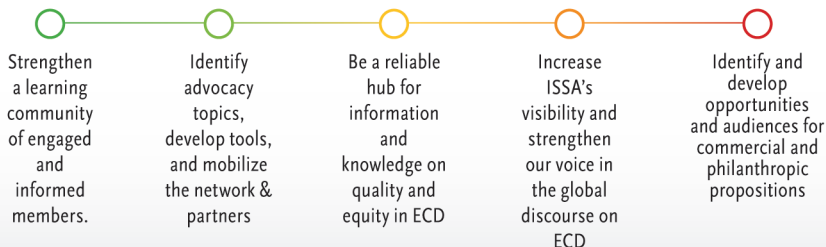
CREATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

STAKE-HOLDERS



NURTURE AND GROW OUR CAPACITY

CAPACITIES



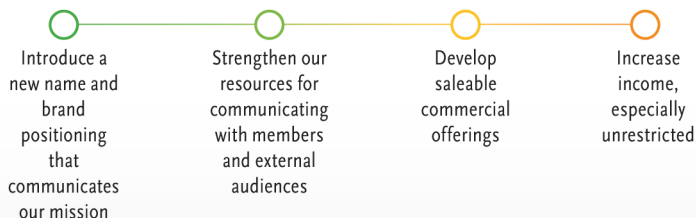
ENSURE THE RESOURCES TO DELIVER

LEARNING & GROWTH



CONVENE, SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE

RESOURCES

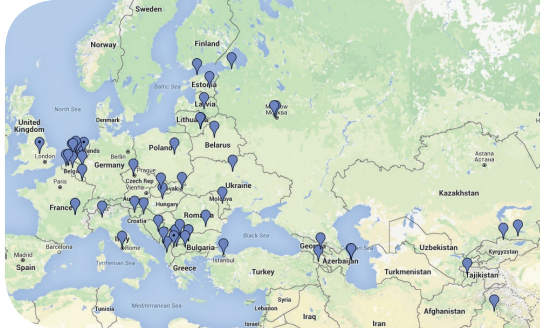




**ISSA's GROWING
LEARNING COMMUNITY**

ISSA unites and supports organizations to deliver high-quality early years services to all children. We are a meeting point for all those working at the cutting-edge of Early Childhood Development. ISSA members are committed to the well-being, development and future life chances of all young children.

During 2015 ISSA welcomed 14 new members bringing the Association's membership to a total of 65. ISSA's membership spans across Europe, Central Asia and beyond.



ISSA Membership 2015 • 65 members • 34 countries

Supporting members

ISSA provides a variety of services to its members. These include:

Collaboration and Joint Fundraising

- Discovering new project partners
- Increasing member's impact and visibility across the network
- Collaborating and sharing best practices
- Uniting to explore funding opportunities





Information Sharing

- Access to ISSA publications
- Access to an extensive library of resources at ISSA's Online Community
- Electronic Newsletters and Member Updates covering members news, global ECD events, and funding opportunities

Collaboration and Joint Learning

Among the many services ISSA provides to members, Peer Learning Activities are consistently the most popular. In 2015 ISSA's support for Peer Learning Activities surpassed all previous years. From knowledge transfer on Positive Parenting between Belarus and Poland, to Belgian and Dutch members developing the European Quality Framework into an accessible and inspiring document on quality - the 2015 Peer Learning Activities once again provided fertile ground for learning, sharing and uniting ISSA members.

Peer Learning Activities 2015 • 25 members • 11 activities • 18 countries

The full report from the 2015 Peer Learning Activities can be accessed on our website:

www.issa.nl/content/peer-learning-issa

WHAT MEMBERS SAY

"It is one of the best ways to learn from experiences of other countries and receive advice on very specific topics."

WHAT MEMBERS SAY

"ISSA's Peer Learning Activities cannot be summed up as one thing. They are all so diverse, creative, imaginative and powerful."

Changes in the membership structure

As part of our 2015 strategic review and the creation of the new strategy for 2016-2018, the Board and Council have endorsed changes to ISSA's membership structure.

To allow ISSA to recruit, retain and engage more members, while supporting a diverse and proactive membership, we have extended the opportunity for Full Membership to include all non-profit organizations, academic and educational entities, foundations and associations with an interest in Early Childhood Development.

Affiliate Membership (non-voting) is reserved for governmental bodies only.

All the details of how to **join ISSA** can be found on our website.

www.issa.nl





PROMOTING QUALITY AND EQUITY IN INTEGRATED SERVICES

To promote quality and equity in integrated services we rely on the expertise and knowledge of our members, the strength of our Program Department and the support of our partners.

In 2015, ISSA made a significant contribution to the field by producing two important resources.

Quality Framework for Early Childhood Practices in Services for Birth to Three

By acknowledging the crucial importance of this age group and the role that significant adults play for children in this period, we embarked on an ambitious process of developing a framework for quality practices addressing all professionals working with the youngest children.

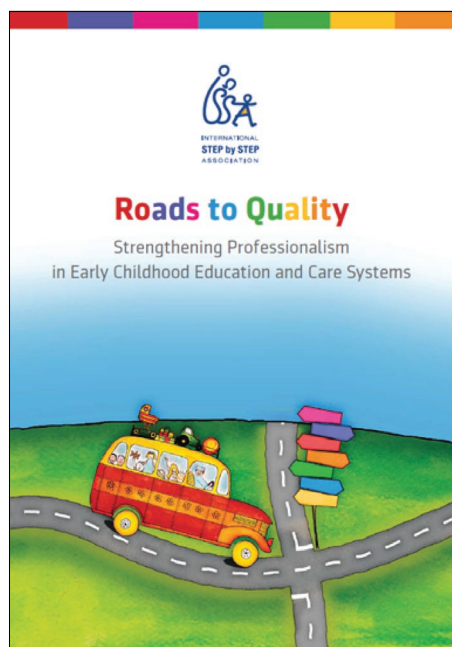
Through involving various experts, policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners in a reflexive dialogue around quality practices in early



childhood services, the *Framework* is underpinned by the most current research into how children under three learn and develop through quality experiences.

Grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the child, the *Framework* promotes the ‘pedagogy of care’ in services for the youngest children, and stands for the centrality of the child and family by conceptualizing, designing and implementing programs dedicated to this age group, notwithstanding the type of service, program, or sector.

Three **ISSA** member organizations piloted the use of the *Framework* in their countries: Step by Step Program Foundation, Bulgaria; Centre for Innovative Education, Slovenia; Educational Research Institute/Centre for Pedagogical Initiatives Step by Step, Lithuania. They provided valuable input on the catalyzing influence that the *Framework* had among agencies, sectors, and early years professionals



Roads to Quality – Strengthening Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems

Over 10 years ago, ISSA embarked on a journey to define quality in early childhood education and care services.

Roads to Quality is the latest step on that path.

More than just a guidebook, the *Roads to Quality* is the result of the ongoing involvement of ISSA members in strengthening the professionalism of those working in early childhood services for children from 3 to 10 years of age through meaningful, continuous, professional development.

A blend of theory and practice, the book inspires readers with concrete ideas on empowering educators as learners, facilitators of learning, advocates for quality services and for their own profession.

Through multiple uses of the resources in ISSA's *Quality Resource Pack*, the guidebook illustrates various 'roads' for building sustainable mechanisms to support educators' reflexive skills and motivate them to develop their skills.

**CO-AUTHOR SANJA BRAJKOVIC,
Open Academy Step by Step – Zagreb, Croatia.**

"Most teachers like putting theory into practice. By using this methodology they say 'Now I know not just what to do, but why to do it."

**CO-AUTHOR RADMILA RANGELOV JUSOVIC,
Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step
– Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

I wanted to remove the myths around advocacy. I wanted teachers to know that they can be advocates, that they can influence policy.... sometimes they don't see the power they have in relation to parents and the community"



INTESYS Together – supporting vulnerable children through integrated early childhood services

ISSA's commitment to integrated services is evident by our involvement in the **INTESYS** Project. One of the nine partners in the consortium that is implementing the **INTESYS** Project, funded by the European Commission through the ERASMUS+ Forward Looking Cooperation Projects.

INTESYS aims to ensure that children and families in vulnerable situations have access to integrated, high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services provided across different sectors (education, health, welfare, etc.), professions, age groups and governance levels.

INTESYS will respond to the European Quality Framework on ECEC (2014) by promoting integration:

- of different services: care, education, health, family/social services, employment, cultural, integration of migrants;
- between age-related services: transition between services for unborn children/pregnant mothers, crèche, kindergarten/infant schools, and primary schools;
- of systems at different levels of public governance (local, regional and national).

Four pilot projects will take place in Belgium, Portugal, Slovenia and Italy.

Follow the work of the **INTESYS** project at
www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/intesys

EYRA – Early Years Regional Alliance










EYRA is a joint initiative between ISSA, Open Society Foundations, UNICEF and Save the Children.

Created to tackle inequality, and promote equity and integrated services EYRA now has 28 member-organizations committed to advancing the early childhood agenda at regional and national levels.

In 2015 the EYRA Manifesto was finalized and it sets out the Alliance's goals as a movement for high-quality and equitable services which promotes the development and well-being of all young children (0-8 years) and their families.



EYRA Manifesto

-  Every child has the right to a positive early childhood: realising this right is in the public interest and is the responsibility of all members of society.
-  The full realisation of young children's rights must be made an explicit public policy priority.
-  Young children thrive in nurturing, responsive, stimulating and safe family environments.
-  Children learn and develop through play and meaningful interactions.
-  All young children benefit from early childhood development services when they are inclusive and of high quality.
-  Building a just society for all children and their families requires proactive ways of addressing exclusion, inequality, poverty and violence.
-  Individualised and family-centered services support children with developmental challenges and/or disabilities to reach their full potential.
-  Integrated and professionalised early childhood systems support positive developmental outcomes for all young children.
-  Quality early childhood development services must be a priority for the allocation of public resources.

Join EYRA
www.earlyyearsregionalalliance.nl



SUPPORTING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE IN EARLY YEAR SERVICES



REYN – Romani Early Years Network

Practitioners working with young children and families often lack training, skills, preparation, and proper employment conditions. This devaluation of their expertise is demoralizing and has a direct impact on the development of the young children and their families.

ISSA is committed to championing the early childhood workforce as a critical step to improving the quality of early childhood experiences especially for the most vulnerable.

REYN unites early years practitioners from across Europe and Central Asia who are working with Roma children and their families.

REYN has had an impactful year, growing in size, capacity and ambition. With a new **REYN** Coordinator, 450 individual members and nine national networks, **REYN** continues to be an influential actor in the lives of people working with young Romani children and their families.



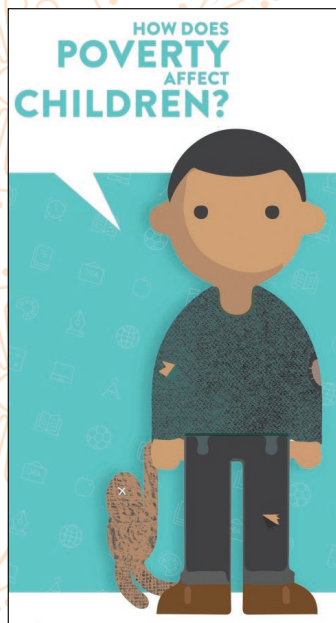
450 members across the world
9 national networks

In 2015 **REYN** offered 3 professional development training opportunities to members.

62 people participated
from 19 countries

Sandi Horvat, Slovenian Roma Activist and Journalist reflected on REYN Training

“By participating in the training I made new friends from across Europe who work with Romani children every day, and gained a lot of new knowledge and approaches of how to work with Romani children.”



Two guidebooks from REYN Croatia.

The **REYN** national network in Croatia - **REYN-C** - developed and published two beautiful and practical guides to support anyone working with Roma children and their families. Translated into English, they are available to download from the REYN blog.

In 2015 **REYN** members got together to make a short film to describe what **REYN** means for them and the children and families they work alongside. Watch, 'We are **REYN**' on ISSA's YouTube channel.

All **REYN** resources are available at the **REYN** blog
www.reyn.blog.issa.nl



Early Childhood Workforce Initiative

In September 2015, [ISSA](#) and the Results for Development Institute (R4D), with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF), commenced discussions into what has now emerged as the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative.

This global effort will support and strengthen the early childhood workforce in a holistic, multi-sectoral manner. With a focus on those who work with families and children from pre-birth to 8 years of age, such as: home visitors, teachers, paraprofessionals, trainers, coaches and program managers, this new initiative will give voice and strength to the early years workforce.

By engaging existing and emerging regional early childhood networks, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the initiative will support joint-learning activities, knowledge creation, sharing and advocacy across countries and at the country level.

www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org



THESE ACTIVITIES WILL RELATE TO FOUR THEMATIC AREAS:

- *Competences and standards*
- *Training and professional development*
- *Monitoring and mentoring*
- *Recognition of the profession*

Supporting Home Visitors in the CEE/CIS region

In 2015 ISSA and the UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS developed a package of 15 *Resource Modules for Home Visitors: Supporting Families for Young Child Wellbeing* based on most recent scientific evidence, as well as good practices from various countries. The modules are designed to advance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of home visitors in CEE/CIS and to improve their engagement with the families of young children. They refer to key aspects of young child development and well-being that, in most countries, are not covered in the basic pre-and in-service training of the home visiting personnel.

The modules are generic and can be adapted to the local context. This allows different users to incorporate specific cultural features and values, as well as the ability to enhance them with local tools and examples. These resources can be used as a whole package, in thematic clusters or individually. They can easily be adapted to diverse target groups (for instance the health mediators or any other professionals entering the family home) and are developed in a way which makes them usable both for in-service and for pre-service training; for in-person and for online training, or as a blended approach. The Modules are a rich mix of resources such as videos, self-assessment tools and case studies, and are accompanied by a Facilitator's Guide to support interactive methods in trainings.

The package is made available to UNICEF Country Offices, who are translating and adapting them. To support this process, in the autumn of 2015, ISSA coordinated the training of a first group of 40 Master Trainers from 14 countries from CEE/CIS.

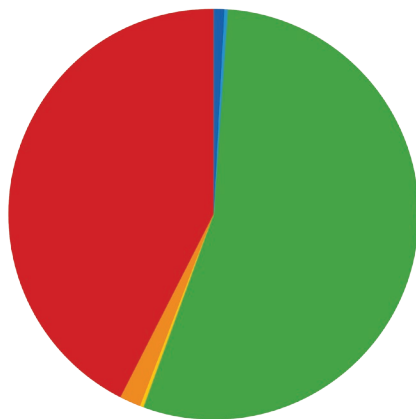
For more information visit: <http://www.issa.nl/content/issa-and-unicef-together-training-home-visitors>.



ISSA FINANCES







BALANCE SHEET AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2015

INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION



2015

2014

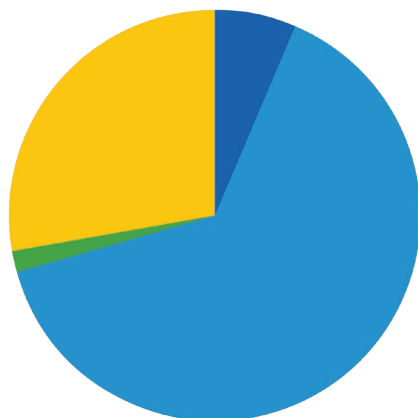
	Liquid funds	1.174.276	370.855
	Debtors	40.604	30.587
	Other receivables	8.565	4.650
	Grants receivable	1.505.116	1.047.226
	Loan	8.851	8.851
	Tangible Fixed Assets	28.724	25.869
		2.766.136	1.488.038





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

BALANCE SHEET AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2015

INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION

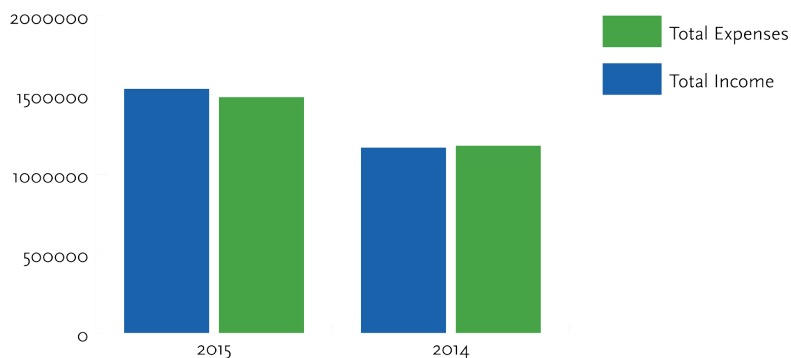
(after allocation of net result)



	2015	2014
 Accrued expenses	765.124	33.809
 Taxes payable Creditors and	41.899	15.191
 Deferred revenue	1.777.527	1.308.226
 Association capital reserve	181.586	130.812
	2.766.136	1.488.038

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

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2015 INTERNATIONAL STEP BY STEP ASSOCIATION



	2015	2014
Grants	1.499.367	1.025.515
Membership fees	17.809	23.076
Sales and other income	22.294	120.604
Total Income	1.539.470	1.169.195
Administration	170.759	184.189
Programs	1.125.577	827.259
Fundraising and partnership building	8.383	6.566
Income generation	5.506	137.153
Consultative Group	176.785	26.380
Total expenses	1.487.010	1.181.547
Net operating income	52.460	-12.352
Interest income	805	178
Exchange differences	-2.491	32.363
Result	50.774	20.189
Funds reserved for Association capital reserve	50.774	20.189

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



MEET THE STAFF AND BOARD



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Education Alliance
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Benevolent Foundation
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University of Ghent
Belgium



Vesna Bajsanski-Agic
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Mozaik Foundation
Bosnia and
Herzegovina



Sarah Klaus
Open Society
Foundations
Representative
United Kingdom



ISSA MEMBERS

Joining ISSA

ISSA unites and supports organizations to deliver high-quality early years services to all children. We are a meeting point for all those working at the cutting-edge of Early Childhood Development (ECD) who are committed to the well-being, development and future life chances of all young children.

Do you share ISSA's vision of a society where all families, communities and professionals work together to empower each child to reach their unique potential and embrace values of social justice and equity?

Individuals are welcome to become a Friend of ISSA. Membership is free of charge by signing up for our Newsletter.

Read more about joining our learning community at www.issa.nl





ISSA's supporters



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