

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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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.