



Organisation Mondiale pour L'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

2020 Annual report from Regional VP for Europe Ingrid Engdahl

1) Activities of Regional VP in 2020

This year has been dominated in so many ways by the Covid-19 pandemic. Young children and their families have suffered tremendous changes in their daily lives. Preschools and schools have been closed for shorter or longer periods, and even for young children communications have partly been carried out with digital and social means. The OMEP National committees in Europe have changed from live to online communication, reaching out to members with webinars, online conferences, and through Facebook and other social media. Frankly, in many countries this change has led to more people becoming involved in OMEP initiated activities, and many committees plan to continue with online programmes to complement live events also in the future.

In 2020 I sent out six European OMEP newsletters, which are appreciated and makes OMEP representatives come together. A new form of meetings the OMEP Virtual Cafés was introduced by the World President, and we have arranged four cafés during 2020. This form of meetings has been appreciated and contributed to an increased sense of belonging and an awareness of OMEP. The Cafés also served as preparation for the OMEP European Regional Meeting, on September 30, which was successfully carried out as a virtual assembly, facilitated by Zoom.

The OMEP World Assembly and Conference 2020 was planned to be in Athens in July 2020. Together with the Greek president and committee, I have worked hard to realise the planning and to review the around 400 abstracts that were submitted. However, due to the pandemic, OMEP Executive Committee decided in March 2020 to postpone the WAC one year, to July 2021.

Before the pandemic stopped all traveling, in January, I had the pleasure to visit some countries by invitation. International conference in Warsaw arranged by OMEP Poland on the rights of the child, together with representatives from OMEP Ukraine, ESD seminar in Poznan, Meeting with OMEP representatives in Berlin to discuss OMEP Germany, Meeting with the Preparatory committee of OMEP Belgium in Antwerpen, ESD seminar with ECE students and a meeting with OMEP Denmark in Copenhagen to discuss the situation there. I have in 2020 also been present at OMEP Annual meetings in France, Sweden, and United Kingdom, having the possibility to talk about the OMEP Strategic plan and out OMEP projects. At the end of the year, I gave a keynote address at the 10th International Early Childhood Care and Education conference in Moscow on children's rights, play and teaching for sustainability, with examples from the revised Swedish ECE curriculum. OMEP Russia also arranged appreciated seminars on ESD and other projects during the conference.

2) National Committee Activity Highlights

The European committees have all had to change their program and activities due to **the Covid-19 pandemic**. Committees in Cyprus, Finland, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine report

strategic online actions targeting both OMEP members, teachers, and children and their families. OMEP France carried out a questionnaire around Covid, OMEP Bulgaria increased their activities for children living in remote areas, and OMEP Lithuania upgraded their activities and moved them online. Other committees have had to postpone their planned activities, e.g., linked to the ESD Rating Scale project. Additionally, there has been a decrease in memberships this year, with consequences for the budget.

The European committees actively celebrate **special international days**, where the days for play, peace, handwashing, and children's rights are the most common. OMEP Italy is using these significant dates to design the identity of the new Italian Committee and to make contacts on those issues with other institutions and civil society around a system of values that promote and characterize OMEP Italy. OMEP Russia has for years put special efforts around the Handwashing day, and in 2020 this grew into a celebration where 8 357 children celebrated the importance of handwashing. OMEP Bulgaria, Latvia and Slovakia celebrate all five days. To pay more attention to the important content embedded in the international days, OMEP Sweden plans a 2022 OMEP Calendar for preschools.

OMEP Norway, Portugal and UK have started with **OMEP Awards** in different areas (play and sustainability) which attracts interest way beyond the OMEP members.

3) Major strengths of the region

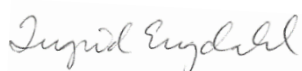
Even in 2020 when the pandemic dominates our lives, it is encouraging to see that so many OMEP National committees are involved in projects and arranges seminars and conferences. Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Russia, Sweden, Turkey and UK continue working with the **ESD Rating Scale** project, more committees, as France Poland and Slovakia work with ESD in other forms. OMEP in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden are actively participating in the **Colour your rights** project and this year activities within **Wash from the start** are highlighted and go well in line with all contra pandemic initiatives.

OMEP France continues doing valuable contributions as representatives at UNESCO in Paris. A couple of Erasmus projects engage and strengthens liaisons between committees, e.g., Poland and Ukraine, Croatia, Greece, Norway, Poland and UK, Croatia, Iceland, Ireland, and Sweden. Publications from these projects are made both in the OMEP journals and elsewhere. More publications during 2020 come from Greece, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

4) Main rooms for improvement

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced the National Committees of OMEP to change their means of communication and their meetings into digital and virtual forms. Noteworthy, these changes are much appreciated by members and collaborative partners in the region as they have enabled more people to participate and to a lower cost. Drawing on the experiences, OMEP could benefit by a planned series of webinars, virtual cafés, and online conferences. In the virtual world, we may meet without having to spend time and money on traveling. In this way, we could together address the important issue of recruiting more members to OMEP, and engage in more joint projects, possibly with sponsors, which also could facilitate the financial situation of OMEP.

Stockholm, May 15, 2021



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