



77th OMEP World Assembly and International Conference

“Arts and Culture in Early Childhood Education:

Play, Expression, Participation”

Bologna, Italy: 14-18 July 2025

And then there was also a nice little puppet theatre, the kind you animate by putting your hand inside [...] and both the teacher could use them to tell a story, and the child to free himself of his ghosts [...] making them act even for a few moments, and projecting onto them everything that torments or conditions them. It is enough to observe them, carefully, in this game of liberation, to understand many things.

Maria Luisa Brasile, Italian delegate in 1948 and founder of the OMEP Italian Committee

CONCEPT NOTE OF THE CONFERENCE

1- PRESENTATION

Early childhood education and care (ECCE) recognizes the holistic nature of child development, which includes cognitive, affective-relational and social development along with cultural acquisition through play, discovery, expression and free participation.

Early childhood is a crucial period for human beings and integral development from the very beginning is a universal human right, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is achieved through inclusive, quality, lifelong education and care.

Such an education begins in early childhood and provides basic learning, experiences and opportunities to ensure children's full potential for lifelong growth, development and well-being. Human development is about the advancement of capabilities that are achieved through interaction with the cultural environment and meaningful human connections that define values and references.

At a time of unprecedented and converging challenges related to climate change, peacekeeping and the future of our societies, it is crucial to join forces in culture and education. In a world that is becoming increasingly fragmented, interconnected and dynamic, the concept of quality education has transformed to embrace a wide range of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and abilities. This is essential if we are to respond, adapt and thrive in the face of changing social, economic and technological demands, harnessing the full potential of progress and building a more just, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable future for all.

In a context of growing inequalities, armed conflicts, disinformation, incitement to hatred, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, it is crucial to ensure cultural and artistic education as a common good of humanity that must be accessible to all. It is essential to strengthen its role in promoting respect for diversity and intergenerational collaboration within policies, education systems and societies at large, as well as strengthen collective commitment and sustained public investment.



By experiencing the cultural and artistic life of their families, communities and societies, as enshrined in Art. 31 of the UNCRC, children in their early years discover and forge their own sense of identity and, by participating in the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional expressions of their culture and traditional arts, contribute to the development of cultural heritage and the transformation of the society to which they belong.

In General Comment No. 17 (2017), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that participation in the cultural life of the community is fundamental to the construction of subjectivity and citizenship. Children not only inherit and experience the cultural and artistic life of their families, communities and societies, but also discover and forge their own sense of identity and contribute to the development and sustainability of cultural life and the arts by reproducing, transforming, and transmitting culture through play, singing, dancing, storytelling, figure animation, drawing and other activities. The playful activity, expression, participation and creativity of children generate a 'culture of childhood' that must be promoted and protected in families, communities and educational and school services.

In the 2023 draft revision of the United Nations Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and on Education for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, it was reaffirmed that fundamental attitudes are formed in the early years of life. Therefore, quality early childhood education and care, through play and storytelling, enables children to become aware of their rights, to express and assert themselves freely and to learn early on about the duties and responsibilities of global citizenship and sustainable development.

The UNESCO's 2024 Framework for Education in Culture and the Arts advocates for this education to be holistic, transformative and impactful, based on a humanistic vision grounded in human rights and a pedagogy of childhood that enables, expands and sustains participatory spaces and learning communities, including through culture and the arts used as an educational tool.

The year 2025 marks the twenty years of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, adopted by UNESCO in 2005. It states that the diversity of cultural expression, including traditional cultural expressions, is an important factor that allows individuals and people to express and to share with others their ideas and values to interact in mutually beneficial manner. If creativity is preserved and promoted, from the beginning, it permits to bring about interculturality as generative meet of shared cultural expressions based on dialogue and mutual respect.

Since its foundation in 1948, OMEP, as an international non-governmental and non-profit organization, has been dedicated to supporting and promoting the right to early childhood education and care for over seventy-six years. Today, the OMEP has eighty national committees in five continents of the world.

OMEP considers early childhood education a right and a tool to achieve the full development, citizenship, well-being and dignity of all children. It has played an important role in advocacy, research and pedagogical development that is reflected in the definition of major international, regional and national initiatives in the field of early childhood education.



We therefore reaffirm our commitment to protect children's rights and to pursue the goal of inclusive, equitable, quality and sustainable early childhood education and care, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 and the Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action of the 2022 UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Education.

2- THE OMEP WORLD ASSEMBLY AND CONFERENCE 2025

The OMEP Annual World Assembly and Conference has become a key communication and advocacy mechanism to promote cooperation among members, partners and stakeholders working in the field of early childhood education with similar goals, to promote children's rights in education, to disseminate new knowledge from research, and to discuss and share relevant ideas and issues in this field.

The Italian National Committee of OMEP will have the honor of hosting an important event: the 77th OMEP World Assembly and Conference, which symbolizes the Organization continued dedication to its cause. Italy offers a pedagogical richness based on the thought of outstanding personalities such as Montessori, the Agazzi sisters, Rodari, Malaguzzi and Lodi, among many others, as well as a cultural and artistic life that has nurtured and enriched the world and early childhood pedagogy.

The event, with the theme 'Arts and Culture in Early Childhood Education: Play, Expression, Participation', will be held from 14 to 18 July 2025 in Bologna, organized by OMEP Italia with the support of national and local institutions and national and international organizations working in the social, educational and cultural fields.

3. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the World Assembly and the OMEP Conference are:

To make visible the centrality of culture, play and participation as human rights and as building blocks of comprehensive early childhood education, fundamental learning and early childhood education and care pedagogy.

Collaborate in the creation of transformative, participatory, intercultural, democratic, inclusive and diverse pre-school education that ensures quality and humanity, promotes gender equity, justice, solidarity, critical thinking, citizenship, peace and global sustainability.

Share, discuss and analyze the current situation of education and care of children from birth to eight years of age in different regions of the world.

Share and exchange knowledge on the main features of best practices, innovations and research findings to change stakeholders' attitudes and policies to improve the quality of education of the early years.

Strengthening commitment to the right of all children to quality early education and care, which forms the basis for lifelong learning and is linked to other human rights.

Achieve mutual understanding and agreement on state strategies to overcome obstacles and challenges in early childhood education and uphold the right of all children to quality early care and education.

Increase determination to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.2.



4. SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE

The main themes and sub-themes are as follows:

4.1 Play

Curriculum; educational tools and techniques; frameworks and research on pre-school learning; methodologies of working with children; learning environments; play-based pedagogy; professionalization of educational personnel; good practices; ECCE research.

4.2 Expression

Heritage education; children's cultures; arts in education: storytelling, theatre and performing arts, singing and music, visual arts and graphic and pictorial activities; children's literature; social and emotional learning; language learning, bilingualism and multilingualism; creativity and innovation; cultural heritage and tangible and intangible assets.

4.3 Participation

Children as agents; children's rights; ECCE for a sustainable future; community education; inclusive teaching and learning; differentiated pedagogy; special pedagogy; identity development, diversity and strength; multicultural education; democracy and global citizenship; parental support; integrated early childhood intervention services; social studies, evaluation and assessment; adult centrism and patriarchy in question.

5. CONFERENCE FORMAT, PARTICIPANTS AND WORKING LANGUAGES (on-site only)

Assembly: special presentation, plenary sessions, parallel sessions. Around two hundred participants are expected at the World Assembly, including the OMEP Executive Committee, chairpersons and representatives of National Committees, invited speakers (from UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.) and observers.

Conference: lectures, symposia, plenary sessions, parallel sessions, poster sessions, workshops, school visits, special events (OMEP award ceremony, international evening). Around eight hundred participants are expected at the Conference, including delegations from OMEP members, governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in early childhood education and care, national and international civil society organizations, practitioners, academics, pre-school education professionals, parents, etc.

Working languages: the three official languages, English, French and Spanish, will be used for all sessions of the Assembly, including the opening and closing speeches, and for the plenary and closing sessions of the Conference. English will be used for parallel sessions, visits to educational and teaching facilities and cultural institutions, and special events.



6. BRIEF PROGRAMME AND VENUES*

6.1. WORLD ASSEMBLY

Participants attending the World Assembly: OMEP Executive Committee, presidents and representatives of national committees, invited speakers (from UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.), and observers with prior registration.

14-15 July 2025

Venue: Savoia Hotel Regency

World Assembly: Monday, 14 July 2025	
08:00-09:00	World Assembly Registration
09:00-09:30	Opening session, roll call and appointment of scrutineers, and adoption agenda
09:30-10:00	Annual report 2024
10:00-10:30	Minutes 2024 Virtual World Assembly, Treasurer's report, World OMEP Budget
10:30-11:00	Membership: New Preparatory Committees
11:00-11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:30-12:30	Report on the strategic plan by areas/projects
12:30-13:30	Elections
13:30-15:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
15:00-17:00	OMEP regional meetings
17:00-18:00	World Declaration
World Assembly: Tuesday, 15 July 2025	
09:00-09:15	Opening World President
09:15-10:00	Special presentation speaker
10:00-11:00	Discussion in parallel sessions: upscaling the strategic plan
11:00-11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:30-12:15	Special presentation speaker
12:15-13:30	World declaration: presentation and voting process for approval
13:30-15:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
15:00-16:30	Plenary: OMEP strategic plan: reports of parallel sessions and discussion
16:30-17:00	Future meetings
17:00-17:20	Closure of World Assembly



6.2. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The International Conference is open to the public with prior registration.

16 July 2025 | Venue: Arena del Sole Theatre

International Conference: Wednesday, 16 July 2025	
07:30-12:30	School Visits
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
12:00-15:00	Conference Registration
15:00-16:30	Conference Opening Ceremony
16:30-18:30	Keynote Speeches
18:30	Welcome Reception

17-18 July 2025 | Venue: Savoia Hotel Regency

International Conference: Thursday, 17 July 2025	
08:00-9:00	Conference Registration
09:00-9:45	Keynote Speech
9:45-11:15	Symposium/ Individual presentations/Workshops
11:15-11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:30-13:00	Symposium/ Individual presentations/Workshops
11:30-13:00	Poster Presentation
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00-15:30	Symposium/Individual presentations/Workshops
15:30-15:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15:45-17:15	Symposium/Individual presentations/Workshops
17:15-18:00	OMEP ESD Project – Global and Student Award Winners OMEP Young Scholar Award
19:30	International Night/Gala Dinner
International Conference: Friday, 18 July 2025	
08:00-09:00	Conference Registration
09:00-9:45	Keynote Speech
09:45-11:15	Symposium/Individual Presentations/Workshops
11:15-11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:30-13:00	Symposium/Individual Presentations/Workshops
11:30-13:00	Poster Presentation
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00-15:30	Symposium/Individual Presentations/Workshops
15:30-15:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15:45-16:15	Presentation of the World Declaration
16:15 -17:00	Conference Closure

* *The program of activities may be modified by the organizers.*