

SICI NEWSLETTER

THIS NEWSLETTER IS EDITED BY THE SECRETARIAT OF SICI. MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO SEND COPY (ANNOUNCEMENTS, ARTICLES ETC) TO:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editorial

2 SICI Secretariat
Inspection Services Branch
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road

*Report of the SICI Early Years
workshop in Belfast*

4 Bangor
Co. Down
BT19 7PR
Northern Ireland

*Keeping up to date in the field-HMI
geography specialists*

6

Tel: +44 (028) 9127 9239
Fax: +44 (028) 9127 9721

P2P Inspecting and evaluation ICT

7 E-mail: sici@deni.gov.uk

*Every child matters-Changes for
ofsted*

9

General reactions, comments and suggestions are also welcome.

N.B. The newsletter is easy to copy for distribution within inspectorates.

*SICI and the future-The Strategy
Document from the EGA*

12

*The challenges facing SICI-an external
perspective at the EGA*

24

*Calendar of forthcoming SICI
Events*

26

EDITORIAL:

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY (EGA) EDITION

This edition of the SICI Newsletter, edition number 30, is being used primarily to summarise the discussions that took place and the decisions that were taken by the members of SICI who attended the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) of SICI that was held in Sezimbra, Portugal, in October 2004.

The outcomes of this EGA will set the strategic direction for the organisation for the next few years. The full text of the draft minutes of the EGA will be made available on the SICI website during December 2004 and if you require any modifications to these please make contact with Margaret Ming at the SICI Secretariat. The telephone number and e-mail details are given on the first page of this newsletter.

As usual the minutes and papers that flow for such meetings will amply document the business of SICI. They cannot convey fully, however, the wide range of experiences that made the EGA so memorable. The venue for the EGA in the coastal town of Sezimbra was spectacular and the weather was quite kind, kind enough at any rate to tempt two members of the Executive Committee to take a swim in the sea. Neither reported any ill effects, but neither expressed any desire to repeat the experience when they got back to the Netherlands or Northern Ireland respectively.

Our hosts, the Portuguese inspectorate were gracious and generous as always; it was a particular pleasure to visit the local municipality and to hear about the educational issues facing this part of Portugal. A number of delegates took the opportunity on Saturday to tour round this beautiful area and several are likely to return at some time in the near future.

A key purpose of this EGA was to elect members to the new Executive Committee and to ask them to select the new President of the organisation. It was both touching and poignant that it was on this occasion, in

her own country, that Mrs Carmo Climaco officially retired as President of SICI. Her charm, efficiency and above all her commitment to the promotion of the international links that are at the heart of SICI, will be sorely missed. It has been a personal and professional pleasure to have worked with her.

In a similar vein the membership asked Kate Kervezee of the Netherlands to receive a specially designed SICI pin badge on behalf of Johann van Bruggen, who is now retired, to recognise and celebrate his enormous contribution to the work of SICI. SICI has strength in depth, however, and we welcome warmly Heinz Kipp as the new member of the Executive Committee and we congratulate Ferry de Rijcke on his unanimous election as President of SICI. We look forward to the next General Assembly which will take place in Frankfurt. The other members of the Executive Committee, namely Pavla Polechova, Gisèle Dessieux and Henrike Schwendt-Michel were re-elected by the membership.

The designation of this meeting as an EGA allowed the Executive Committee to run it quite differently to other General Assemblies. The number of formal presentations was kept to a minimum and instead all of the delegates were engaged in a series of workshop sessions that were designed to address the issues identified in the Strategy Document that had been produced by the Executive Committee in advance of the EGA.

The Secretariat and the Executive Committee would like to thank all of the delegates who participated so actively in the workshop sessions, in particular, those who 'volunteered' to act as chairpersons. The feedback from delegates about this particular format has been very positive. Another novel element in this EGA was the presence of a 'critical friend' to reflect back to us some of his perceptions of the issues facing us. We were delighted that a former Secretary-General of SICI, Richard Page-Jones, now a member of the Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair's Delivery Unit, was willing to carry out that challenging task. A summary of Richard's observations is included in this newsletter.

In addition to the important business of the EGA, however, this newsletter contains articles that illustrate that the day-to-day work of SICI and the day-to-day work of inspection go on. There is a report on the SICI workshop on the inspection of Early Years education, a paper from the Netherlands on work in ICT and, as a salutary reminder that the context in which we operate is rarely static, a paper from Ofsted informing us of some major changes in the way they will be working in the future.

The EGA in Sezimbra has set a full, c h a l l e n g i n g a n d forward-looking agenda for SICI. In the newsletters produced by the Secretariat we will do all that we can to record events and progress. Please respond to the items published here and send us other news items that will keep all of the SICI members informed about the a c t i v i t i e s o f y o u r inspectorate.

Many thanks for your support and in particular for your very active participation in the EGA in October.

Best wishes for the coming holiday season and we look forward to meeting you again at the workshops in the New Year.

James Cuthbert
Margaret Ming
Jacqui Patterson
Jenny McIlwain
Michelle Dorrian

SICI Secretariat

SICI WORKSHOP ON THE INSPECTION OF EARLY YEARS

An International Workshop on Early Years Education

On Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 September, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) hosted a workshop for the Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education (SICI). The theme was 'Evaluating Early Years Education' and inspectors from a range of European countries joined members of the pre-school and primary teams from ETI to share perspectives on the education of children from three to eight years-old. The venue for the workshop was the Malone Lodge Hotel in Belfast, and inspectors from Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Scotland, England and Wales gathered over the weekend. Some took



Above: Brian Currie, Kate Cherry and colleagues discussing the inspection of Early Years education at the SICI workshop organised by the ETI in Belfast in September 2004.

work was expected of everyone attending, there was an opportunity for relaxing and more informal networking over dinner on Monday evening.

Gerry McGinn and members of the ETI Management Group joined the workshop participants for dinner and used the occasion well to make the visitors feel welcome – and of course to further the Department's international links!



Above: Dorrian Bradley and colleagues at the SICI Early Years workshop in Belfast in September 2004.

the opportunity, before the workshop began, to spend a day or two viewing the local attractions in Belfast and beyond and a couple even managed to make their way as far as the Old Bushmills Distillery.

During the workshop, we aimed to explore common strands in the inspection of early years education, to consider some specific issues, such as the transition from pre-school to primary education, and to reflect on the possibilities for more joined-up approaches to inspecting young children's experiences. Although both days were well filled with presentations and group discussions, and a lot of hard



Above: Gerry McGinn, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and guests at the dinner organised for participants in the Early Years workshop in Belfast.

- A report from
Ffiona Crawford
on the workshop
held in Belfast in
September 2004

The Chief Inspector, Marion Matchett, opened the workshop and emphasised the importance of early years education. She also noted some of the ways in which ETI has been involved in SICI events over the years, including the current role of acting as Secretariat to the organisation.

Most of the workshop time was devoted to discussions in small groups, but no slacking was possible as there were clear tasks to be completed by each group. We were very pleased to have a number of guest presenters; Vine Haugh and Marilyn Warren from the Education and Library Boards' Curriculum, Advisory and Support Services (CASS), and Kathleen Bradley, the Principal of Steelstown Primary School. Their presentations gave insights into initiatives in Northern Ireland related to the development of young children's creativity, the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development through the Early Years Enriched Curriculum, and whole-school approaches to developing learning through play.

Through presentations by colleagues from HMIE in Scotland and from Ofsted, we learned about the work being undertaken in both jurisdictions to integrate inspections of education and childcare, and to develop integrated inspection of children's services within English local authorities.

A highlight of the workshop for many of the participants was the opportunity on Tuesday to visit early years settings in the Greater Belfast area. We are very grateful to the schools and pre-school centres that willingly hosted these visits and gave the participants a real sense of the good work being undertaken in early years education in Northern Ireland.

At the end of the workshop, many friendships had formed and plans were laid for continuing the links made between countries. The group had gelled so well together over the two days that those who stayed over in Belfast on the evening of 28th, decided to go out together for a meal in a local restaurant.

The evening was reported to be a great success in cementing international friendships. Emails have already been exchanged and the feedback is that

the workshop proved to be very worthwhile for all our visitors and for the 'local' inspectors involved.

Within ETI, we are now planning to build on what we learned from the formal and informal discussions.

We are very grateful to the CASS officers who helped us to plan elements of the workshop and also to Janet Preston from NIPPA - the Early Years Organisation, whose display of children's creative work provided a really stimulating environment for the workshop activities.

Keeping up to date in your field

The experience of HMI Specialist Inspectors of Geography



Above: Peter Smith (ex-HMI) and HMI specialist inspectors of geography carrying out fieldwork at Preston Montfort Field Study Centre near Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England

In the past SICI has run workshops to help members discuss and evaluate the ways in which SICI members train inspectors. In most instances the workshops have focused in particular on the generic need to train new inspectors to judge the quality of schools and institutions and the opportunities they provide for young people to experience quality teaching and learning. Most SICI members work in educational systems where the curriculum is organised very clearly into discrete subjects. A corollary of this is that, in these systems, inspectors are often appointed first and foremost as subject specialists.

There are various mechanisms available to subject inspectors in such systems to help keep their knowledge of their subject current. In England HMI subject specialists have a tradition of arranging specialist conferences at the start of each academic year. These bring together specialists who may have only limited contact with each other for months at a time. In addition to inviting subject specialist from England to such conferences, HMI invite and welcome subject specialists from the other countries of the United Kingdom

(Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)

The author, as a long-established inspector of geography working in both primary and post-primary schools, has been pleased to work with fellow specialist inspectors. In September 2004 the HMI subject specialist conference was organised in Preston Montfort Field Study Centre near Shrewsbury in Shropshire, England.

The picture included with this report shows HMI specialist inspectors and their colleagues working on the kind of fieldwork investigations that young people visiting this centre will be involved in. In this 'refreshment' work the HMI specialists were working with staff from the Centre and with Tony Thomas who is Director of the Field Studies Council in England. The use of the outdoors for educational purposes, including the facilities provided by field studies centres, has a long and distinguished history. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, Mr David Bell, in a recent widely reported statement, strongly championed the use of the 'outdoor classroom' as a stimulating environment in which to promote learning.

*A report by James
Cuthbert ETI
(Northern Ireland)*

Peer2Peer: Inspectorates sharing instruments and experience of the inspection of ICT

A Project being led by the Netherlands
Background:
need for a better understanding of assessing innovation in education

During the production of ICT school portraits and during many international contacts between European inspectorates, it has become clear that inspectorates face similar challenges when assessing the use of ICT in schools. There is a need for a common understanding of how to assess ICT in schools. This understanding would lead to a shared framework, the increased quality of individual and the possible construction of shared instruments. Output would not only be a better understanding of ICT in itself, but would ideally also lead to a more general understanding of innovation and a toolkit to be used when assessing innovations in education in general and how such a toolkit would relate to regular inspections.

General aims are:

- in-depth understanding of the relationship between regular inspections and ad hoc and/or thematic reports;
- knowledge of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods;
- better understanding of how and when to use which communication channels;
- all of the above specifically in the area of ICT in education.

This peer evaluation is part of the larger Peer2Peer project, an initiative of European Schoolnet (EUN). 27 European ministries are member of and support European Schoolnet. Peer2Peer is co-financed by the European Commission. Other strands concern peer evaluation of policy and of practice.

Input: selected reports and practices

Input will consist of several recent studies and reports by the partner inspectorates, among which the results of Dutch review of ICT reports. The Dutch Inspectorate is currently working on a review of ICT reports from various countries. This will be the starting point for work on evaluating such reviews. This review involves inspectorate's reports from three countries: England, Scotland and France. Each inspectorate provided recent (up to three years old) reports on ICT in education. This review concerns two main questions:

- What can we learn about ICT in education from these reports?
- Infrastructure
- Curriculum
- Learning and teaching
- Management and organisation
- Context
- How do inspectorates evaluate the use of ICT and how do they assess this use?
- Organisation and instrumentation
- Norms and use of norms
- Use of external sources
- What can we learn from the examples in other countries for our own situation?

Relevant input can also be found in OFSTED's report Impact of Government initiatives: five years on and other recent reports by SICI members.

For the Peer2Peer project, each of the partner inspectorates selects the most recent reports (no older than three years unless there is no more recent material available) that are used for reporting about ICT, both internal and external reports (e.g. scientific research). Each partner also provides a selection of recent school reports (no older than one year) as example of how ICT is reported on in regular school reports.

Evaluation Process: workshops and shadow visits

1. Initial meeting, December 2004.

In preparation, each country writes a summary of their activities in the coming year.

Each country presents the following:

- recent reports
- methodology, scope, school level, outcomes
- planning for 2005:
- activities: output, methodology, scope, school level, organization

A selection will be made from the presented activities that will be subject of research. The selection could be made on the basis of similarity (eg peer reviewing regular inspections in each of the partner countries) or on contrasting methodology (e.g. selecting a unique instrument in each of the partner countries). A model that could be considered is that we at least compare the way that ICT is embedded in the instrumentation for regular inspections *and* select a unique instrument for each country, as this would most likely lead to answers to the main questions as mentioned in the first paragraph.

Evaluation researchers and others will provide input before or during this meeting.

During the meeting, decisions will be made about the selection of instruments. Also, a selection of most relevant criteria will need to be made, as a start for a review methodology.

Provisional decisions will be made about dissemination. What other target groups can be considered than just the partner inspectorates and through which channels can they best be reached?

Finally, the planning of the project in 2005 will be discussed: when do activities take place, who writes reports etc?

The initial meeting results in an approved instrument, which will be reviewed by researchers and by others within the partner inspectorates.

2. Shadow visits, January-May 2005.

Depending on the outcomes of the initial meeting, shadow/peer review visits will take place in two strands period January-May 2005, using the criteria as

formulated in the initial meeting and the period August-October 2005, using the outcomes of the evaluation meeting. Each shadow visit results in a short account, containing a list of strong points that need to be considered as part of a shared framework and feedback to the home-inspectorate. Ideally these reports will be uploaded to an online workspace.

3. Evaluation meeting, June/July 2005.

The outcomes of the first visits form the basis of this meeting. Depending on these outcomes, the programme will be aimed at writing the first outlines of a final report and at the design of a toolkit.

4. Second strand of peer review visits, August-October 2005.

5. Concluding meeting, end of 2005.

This meeting would have a broader scope than just the persons directly involved in Peer2Peer. Subject of the meeting would be the main questions. This meeting could also be part of a larger seminar if planned. The deliverables will be ready and presented at this occasion.

School portraits to be continued

As a follow-up to ERNIST, additional school portraits will be made by those partners that indicate that they wish to do so. In itself such a visit could also be subject of the peer evaluation. The portraits will be easily uploadable by means of the interface developed within ERNIST and presented under the Practice section of Insight.

Cost

All travel costs for participation in workshops and shadow visits will be covered from the project budget for up to five partners. More partners can join the projects at their own expense. Personnel costs will be payable by the partners themselves.

Partners

The Netherlands Inspectorate of Education will be responsible for the project co-ordination of this strand of the Peer2Peer project. Some of the partners that took part in the ERNIST project, already indicated that they would like to take part in Peer2Peer and progress to this second phase. We invite all other SICI members to consider their participation. Please contact the project leader Bert Jaap van Oel from The Netherlands Inspectorate of Education at b.vanoel@owinsp.nl or at +31 6 27 110 242 for more information and to discuss the conditions of participation.

Every Child Matters – Recent developments involving the work of Ofsted

In a recent newsletter I described the changes being made to the English school inspection system. These changes form only part of the story of the programme of change being taken forward in Ofsted. In 2003 the Government published proposals for the improvement of children's services, in a paper called, "Every Child Matters". Essentially, this was a response to the tragic story of a young child who died, despite the involvement of social services, the police and the health services. The proposals are designed to protect children at risk of harm or neglect; in other words, our most vulnerable children and young people. Too often these children are seen to experience difficulties at home or at school, but to receive too little help, too late, once problems have reached a crisis point.

In response to these concerns, the Chief Inspector was given the responsibility of coordinating the inspection of children's services – all those services that contribute to the lives of children and young people. Five key outcomes which really matter to children and young people have been identified:

- being healthy;
- staying safe;
- enjoying and achieving;
- making a positive contribution;
- economic well-being.

This is quite a challenge, and moves us way beyond the usual remit of Ofsted. Of the five outcomes listed above, only "enjoying and achieving" feels to be comfortably within Ofsted's traditional experience of inspection, and even here, our attention has been more on the "achieving" than the "enjoying". To cover the wide range of issues, we are working closely with other inspectorates to develop an approach that enables us to shine a light on all of the five key outcomes.

This in itself is a tall order, as other inspectorates, understandably, have

different approaches to inspection or regulation, and have developed different relationships with those who contribute to services for children. But it means we are working closely with:

- the Adult Learning Inspectorate;
- the Audit Commission;
- the Commission for Health Improvement;
- the Commission for Social Care and Inspection;
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary;
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation;
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons;
- the Magistrates' Courts Services Inspectorate;
- the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;
- our own inspectors, HMI.

The task is daunting. It has to be manageable, focus on what really matters to children, and be understood and accepted by the full range of providers in a particular area. We are developing a broadly based inspection framework with shared criteria, and sets of performance indicators against which to measure the services provided. The danger is that we all contribute the data and indicators we feel to be most useful, and end up with more data and information than we can handle; it is very easy to produce a list of over 200 indicators relating to the care of children. Inevitably, the data varies in quality and reliability, and a good deal of work has to be done to ensure that the data we use are fit for purpose.

Although this is complicated, all inspectorates are bringing a strong commitment to the work; we believe it is a prize worth fighting for, and that inspection across the services can really make a difference. The focus will be on outcomes for children – what is it like being a young person in a particular area of England?

- A report by Tim Key

(HMI England)

And how well do all the services that provide for children and young people work together? By and large, early discussions show a good deal of enthusiasm for this approach, although there are some questions about how manageable the new arrangements will be and whether the inspectorates can work together effectively.

The development of the framework for the inspection of children's services in a local area is progressing well. We are close to being able to pilot a "Joint Area Review" which will test our inspection methodology to the full. We will gather a wide range of evidence on how far local services contribute to the outcomes for children and young people, and we will take account of the views of children and young people and their experience of local services. We are calling this strand of the work "children's voices". As with our new school inspection system, self-assessment will be important, provided by local services, and supported by an analysis of performance data, documentation and meetings with local managers and elected representatives.

- the tracking of children's experience within the system and asking them for their views;
- the bringing together of inspectors with the necessary expertise into single teams to inspect a local authority area, with evidence provided by other inspectorates where it is not practical to involve them directly;
- a published report which will assess the provision and the joint working overall.

We live in interesting times!

Tim Key

In summary then, the objective of the legislation is the integration of education, health and social care services around the needs of children. This is likely to require a restructuring of local government services so that these services are better integrated than has been the case in the past. We may see the services led by a "Director of Children's Services" rather than separate directors for all the different services. Ofsted's responsibility will be to see how well this works.

The main features of a Joint Area Review will be:

- an integrated inspection framework which covers the quality of provision, the outcomes achieved, the quality of the management and the value for money of services;
- The assessment of how well each service contributes to outcomes for children;

Strategy Document based on decisions by the General Assembly of SICI, October 2004

Contents:

Executive summary

Two scenarios for SICI's future

Scenario 1: SICI will improve its performance a service organisation for its members

Scenario 2: SICI will be a European education organisation specialising in the evaluation of education practices

Considerations on Scenario 1: Developing existing SICI services

Considerations on Scenario 2: SICI as a respected international network on quality of education.

Actions for the period to the General Assembly, October 2005.

Annex 1. A comparison of Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 against key headings and activities.

Annex 2: Background note on SICI and its achievements.



Above: Delegates at work at the Extraordinary General Assembly of SICI in Sezimbra

Executive summary

The place, role and status of inspectorates can no longer be taken for granted. Education is changing and so are the demands and expectations concerning the assessment of its quality.

The products and services of inspectorates on a national level and in international co-operation are more and more likely to be compared to those available from other sources, and other evaluators could well challenge inspectorates' findings.

In a paper commissioned by the General Assembly of SICI in Vienna 2003 the Executive Committee of SICI has undertaken to anticipate some of the possible challenges that will face us in the future, and suggested possible scenarios for consideration by all SICI members, during a General Assembly in October 2004.

In Scenario 1 SICI will improve its performance as a service organisation for its members. In Scenario 2 SICI will develop to become a European education organisation specialising in the evaluation of education practices, as well as being a service organisation for its members.

The General Assembly has added a number of considerations and discussed the scenarios and their consequences in detail.

There was agreement on the scenarios. Scenario 1 was considered absolutely necessary. Actually, a lot still has to be done to get this scenario right.



Above: Richard Page-Jones, former Secretary-General of SICI and now part of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in London, presents his views on the challenges facing SICI in the future

On scenario 2 it was noted that steps towards this have already been set, in particular in the ESSE-project.

The full development of scenario 1 will be undertaken in the perspective of realising scenario 2. The first scenario is to be SICI's objective for the coming year. For the more ambitious strategy no fixed timescale was set. SICI will proceed taking up on opportunities as they present themselves.

This document pictures the two scenarios, presents the considerations that have been brought into the discussion and formulates the General Assembly conclusions. It thereby consolidates the discussions and decisions on the future of SICI. It concludes outlining actions for the coming period.

In Annex 1 the possible consequences of the two scenarios are tabulated.

In Annex 2 there is a brief comment on the history of SICI and its achievements.



Above: Franz Kappelmueller from Austria preparing to report back the findings of his working group to the delegates at the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) of SICI held in Sezimbra, Portugal in October 2004.

TWO SCENARIOS FOR SICI'S FUTURE

In order to put a clear proposal on the future strategy of SICI to the General Assembly, the Executive Committee has identified two possible scenarios for the future. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive; they overlap with one another and it should be understood that Scenario 2 represents an additional ambition and includes

Scenario 1.

The two scenarios are as follows.

Scenario 1: SICI will improve its performance a service organization for its members

The main characteristic of SICI in this scenario is that the organisation concentrates its efforts on providing services for its members who are education inspectorates from European countries. All decisions to be made on investments in staff, money, communication, products and services are focussed on the possible benefits for the SICI members.

SICI in this scenario is a network of inspectorates in Europe. It provides added value from a European perspective for the national organisations that constitute its membership.

Its main objectives are:

- To promote professional development of inspectors and inspectorates
- To facilitate information exchanges between inspectors and inspectorates
- To provide access to information sources relevant to inspectors and inspectorates
- To facilitate co-operation between its members.

Examples of services and products in this scenario are:

- Publications that serve members, e.g. the Blue Book, proceedings of workshops
- An Informative website and newsletter
- An advanced digital platform for information, communication and co-operation.
- Contact and partnership services
- Workshops for members' professional development, etc.

Scenario 2: SICI will be a European education organization specializing in the evaluation of education practices

The main characteristic of SICI in this scenario is that, as well as offering services to its members; it contributes actively and visibly to the issues arising from, and debates taking place about, education in Europe. It does so on the basis of the unique and shared expertise of its members on the practice of learning and teaching in schools. Decisions on investments in staff, money, communication, products and services are guided not only by the possible benefits for SICI members, but also by possible contributions to information, analyses and judgements relevant for education decision-makers at the national and the European level.

SICI in this scenario is an expert organisation recognised as such by agencies outside the immediate membership. It provides added value by offering expertise on the evaluation of education practices and comparative data and analyses of key aspects of education in Europe.



Above: Carmo Climaco, retiring president of SICI, presents Mrs Kate Kervezee of the Netherlands with a specially designed pin badge that will be given to Johan van Bruggen in recognition of his unique and extended contribution to the promotion of the work of SICI.

Its main objectives are:

- To give international access to the expertise of national inspectorates
- To raise the quality of the education debate in Europe
- To enhance the status of national inspectorates
- To strengthen the position and expertise of national inspectorates by international co-operation.

Examples of services and products in this scenario are:

- Instruments to evaluate education developments
- Contributing to European projects that assess education developments
- Reports on trends in European schools based on national data and analyses
- Participation in European education debates
- Workshops and seminars on education topics, not just for Inspectors but also for European education decision-makers: the European Commission, national governments, education organisations, etc.

Considerations on Scenario

1: Developing existing SICI services

The General Assembly fully endorses the importance of SICI as a service organisation for its members: Scenario 1. This scenario does not mean business as usual. SICI must continuously seek to improve its performance on all counts through professional development, facilitating access to and exchange of information, and co-operation between its members.

The contexts in which national inspectorates operate are changing in a number of important ways. The consequences of these changes, and the opportunities they offer for SICI as an international organisation of inspectorates, cannot be ignored. The challenges facing national Inspectorates can best be resolved by seeking to profit from sharing each other's expertise, intellect and resources through joint experiences.

Developments in education systems.



Above: Carmo Climaco, retiring president of SICI, receiving a gift presented by James Cuthbert (Secretary-General) on behalf of all SICI members, in appreciation of her distinguished work as president of SICI.

Developments in education systems.

- In all countries and regions there appears to be a trend towards giving greater authority and autonomy to the schools themselves and to let them decide on their own *modus operandi*. The extent and strength of this trend is not uniform; it varies from country to country. Nonetheless there is little doubt that the prevailing mode of external evaluation by inspectorates with the application of fixed national standards, is under challenge. Schools and their clients will demand evaluations that take into account the individual characteristics and ambitions of schools. At the same time, schools will continue to appreciate clarity on the standards by which they are judged. Equally, schools' customers, politicians and the general public will continue to demand guarantees concerning the quality of schools as judged against agreed standards.
- Most inspectorates have a strong tradition of inspecting schools, i.e. they usually evaluate institutions and the quality of the teaching that takes place within them. Increasingly there is an expectation that not only the educational efforts of schools but also the learning of the children should be a focus of inspection work.
- Technology is rapidly changing the world, including the ways in which people learn, communicate and share information. In schools and colleges, as in other spheres of life, it is likely that objectives, processes of learning and teaching, and results are occurring that cannot readily be observed, let alone assessed by traditional inspection tools.
- Schools and colleges are confronted; some might say blessed, with pupils and students who have unprecedented opportunities to learn outside, as well as inside school. The school as a place of learning can no longer ignore what students learn outside of their own planned

curricula. Assessing the value of schools will be less relevant if it does not take into consideration the learning that takes place outside the formal curriculum.

- Students challenge schools to live up to the expectations they have, drawing from their experiences in other spheres of their lives and looking at the challenges they will face in further learning and in life. The quality of schools is also to be determined by judging their performance in answering to the demands and needs of their clients.
- Societies are increasingly aware of the importance of good education and effective learning both for the young and the adult population, for the competitive strength of their economies and for the quality of life in general. These concerns are articulated strongly (and repeatedly) by politicians and the media. This implies a broad and urgent demand for independent and reliable analysis and evaluation of the performance of education systems.
- There is a general trend towards emphasising self-evaluation by schools, matched by external evaluation in proportion to the quality of school-based self-assessment. The precise forms of proportional inspection differ considerably between countries.

Responding to the challenge.

These changes obviously imply challenges for education inspectorates. What matters is to take uncertainties and turbulence as so many opportunities for improvement. They make international co-operation more essential; sharing analyses and finding answers require a continuous effort from all inspectorates joined in SICI, notwithstanding the differences in national contexts and possibilities.

In answering to these changes a number of points must be kept in view.

- The similarities between the challenges to inspectorates must not lead to neglect of differences between countries. They in particular concern the balance between inspection (compliance-oriented) and external evaluation (improvement-oriented), and to considerable differences in political contexts. Given these differences, it is equally important to recognise the increasing influence of international developments on national education systems and on the demands made on their evaluation.
 - There is a general agreement between inspectorates on the desirability of separation of roles: inspectorates must evaluate and can demonstrate possibilities for improvement they should take no responsibility for actual processes of change. This may not coincide with expectations on the political level which may express a desire of speeding up improvements.
 - It is important inspectorates explore possible co-operation with others to improve quality and effectiveness of their work. However, the specific role of inspectorates to provide independent evaluation, based on intensive observations on the school level, must not be blended with those of policy analysis or scientific research.
 - One specific responsibility of inspectorates can be defined as safeguarding and defending the interests and rights of pupils and students. In the final instant what matters is the quality of learning and working that is enabled for them by the institutions they depend upon.
- alternative to Scenario 1, but represents an additional ambition: SICI is to be a relevant organisation not just for its members, but also for all those organisations and institutions that can profit from its expertise.
- The General Assembly considers this scenario desirable for the following reasons:
- Developments in education systems in which the members of SICI work (See above)
 - Developments in the European arena
 - The unique 'selling points' of inspectorates and the competition from other evaluators and analysts.
- Developments in the European arena.
- The members of the European have recently stated ambitious goals for their economies, societies and education systems. At the summit of the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, the EU started a process that set a strategic goal for Europe in 2010 "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". It stressed that this would require not only a "radical transformation of the European economy", but also a "challenging programme for modernising social welfare and education systems".

Considerations on Scenario 2: SICI as a respected international network on quality of education.

The General Assembly noted it to be absolutely clear that Scenario 2 is not an

- This major goal for 2010 is to be achieved by means of a complex strategy that includes a fundamental transformation of education and training throughout Europe. The whole process of change will be carried out in each country according to national contexts and traditions and will be driven forward by co-operation between Member States at European level. It is a co-operation of diverse systems with shared goals by means of the establishment of guidelines and indicators, periodic monitoring and evaluation, and the sharing of experiences and the exchange of best practice.
 - On the basis of a proposal from the Commission and contributions from the Member States, the Council (in February 2001) adopted the "Report on the concrete future objectives of education and training systems". This document outlines a comprehensive and consistent approach for national policies on education in the context of the European Union. The approach is based on three objectives:
 - Improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union;
 - Facilitate the access of all to "lifelong" education and training;
 - Open up education and training systems to the wider world.
 - Education is an area that does not yield immediate results. The conclusions from the last meeting of European Council, held in Brussels on 25/26 March 2004, state that four years later, the picture of the whole Lisbon process is a mixed one. Considerable progress has been made and the European Council reaffirms that the process and goals remain valid. However, the pace of reform needs to be significantly stepped up if the 2010 targets are to be achieved.
 - This is expressed in the joint interim report of the Council of the European Union and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe ("Education & training 2010: the success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms" - Brussels, 3 March 2004.) The report states in its first paragraph, that "...human resources are the European Union's main asset (....) and a determining factor in each society's potential for innovation. Investment in education and training is a key factor in the success of the goals set in Lisbon for the European Union." The expressed need for enhanced monitoring of national performance, including information exchange and the sharing of best practice, is valid in the area of education as well.
- In the European Education debate a number of topics are prominent; these include, didactical differentiation, social inclusion, citizenship, foreign languages, science, and the transition from school to work. In the end, progress in these fields depends to a large extent on the daily practice in schools. There is an urgent need for improved understanding of:
- What to assess, why and how;
 - Critical factors that enable or block development;
 - Warning signals;
 - Validated instruments and indicators for self-evaluation and external evaluation.
- Inspectorates can deliver tailored contributions to meet these demands. Examples of the ability of SICI members to deliver have been given convincingly in the ESSE project and in projects on Mathematics and the didactical behaviour of teachers. They can be realised in many ways, through international projects such as ICALT, but also in concerted efforts in the training of evaluators, in cross-national aggregation of evaluation data, and in providing consultancy for national or European decision-makers.

- SICI should not fail these challenges, for the sake of their member inspectorates and the education systems in their own countries, and for the sake of the educational, socio-economic and personal opportunities of individuals and societies in Europe.

In Scenario 2 the organization will commit itself to planning more strategically for the long-term and to equipping itself to deal with a wider range of demanding, conceptually challenging work. This will necessitate maintaining a strong and sensitive awareness of European priorities in education. The organization and its members would need to ensure that mechanisms for communication and dissemination both within and across countries are well-established and effective. In Annex 2 there is a table that lists the consequences (including the advantages) of pursuing this path. SICI considers that one way to help to realise the second scenario could be provided by using SICI as a network from which different countries could group together for specific projects. The workshops would still remain as the backbone of SICI but they may also become important components of larger plans (for example, provide the start of a project, or as a final dissemination event like the final ESSE workshop). Self-financing of workshops would stay in place as a general rule, but participants from the project partnerships could also finance their costs from project work.

The roles of other evaluators: distinctions and co-operation

At the General Assembly of SICI in Vienna in October 2003, guest speaker Frans Leeuw commented that inspectorates are today only one among many institutions and organisations that produce evaluative material on schools, teaching and learning. The place, role and status of inspectorates can no longer be taken for granted. The quality of their products and services will increasingly be compared with other sources and could be challenged by other evaluators. The proven work-methods and products that inspectorates traditionally deliver are an excellent basis for meeting new demands. They also can easily lead

inspectorates to believe that they can carry on as before. Like all public services, external evaluation of schools will increasingly be challenged to show its value for education and for society at large. Failing this challenge will endanger the future of inspectorates, as they will be failing to deliver the information and analyses that our societies need.

At the same time, these players in the field of education, quality and evaluation can be partners for inspectorates. This does not alter the fact that inspectorates apply different methods and instruments for evaluation than do researchers and that the purposes of their work do not without exception coincide with those of, say, policy makers or journalists. Partnerships can and must be built, in respect of these differences.

Actions for the period to the General Assembly, October 2005.

- 1 A review of the secretariat of SICI. This will at least involve the following topics:
 - o An evaluation of the effectiveness of the current arrangements
 - o A calculation of the real costs of the secretariat as it is operated at this moment and has been functioning since SICI started.
 - o An exploration of possible other ways of organizing the secretarial functions for SIC, taking into view options of a professional, permanent secretariat.
 - o An exploration of the ways in which costs for the secretariat can be shared by all SICI members as opposed to by the hosting jurisdiction alone, as is the case at present.
 - o An exploration of expertise to be included in the secretariat, notably the competence to acquire additional funding for projects and other activities.

2 A revision of the SICI Statutes, in order to achieve a number of improvements concerning:	4	Design and production of the first phase of an online repository of European inspectorates: the digital Blue Book.
• Decision making procedures		
• Clarification and re-definition of roles of the Executive Committee and regular members	5	Extension of SICI membership, notably in EU and EFTA countries.
• A more active leadership role for the President and Executive Committee		
• Provision of secretarial support functions	6	Building and strengthening relationships with other organizations:
• Frequency and functions of meetings		
• Options of raising income from membership fees		The European Commission The OECD
• Active exploration and use of additional funding from external sources Functions of SICI liaisons in all member inspectorates		Inspectorate-like organizations in other continents o
• Options of extending the Executive Committee for a stronger involvement of SICI members	7	Exploration of and proposals for international clusters for the development, sharing and disseminations of inspection competences.
3 Design and implementation of an advanced ICT-platform, ensuring the availability of:		
• Project services	8	Active communication on SICI objectives, activities and achievements.
• News bulletins		
• Signaling functions		
• Consultation of SICI members		
• Mailing lists		
• On line communities		
• Shared files' services		

Annex 1. A comparison of Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 against key headings and activities.

Scenario 1

Clients

Key clients are national inspectorates and individual inspectors within them. Others can benefit from participation in workshops.

Scenario 2

As for Scenario 1. but expectation that educational administrators, school managers, head teachers, initial and in-service teacher educators, researchers, politicians and international organisations would also be interested in the work.

Products, Services

Workshops, seminars, newsletters, reports and publications (including website) serving mainly members of SICI.

Support through consultancy of existing SICI projects As for Scenario 2 but increasingly looking to support the objectives of particular international projects.

Project objectives would match both inspectorates' needs and priorities set by programmers of the European Commission.

Frameworks for comparative national and international reports, shared instruments, professional development activities with a focus on improvement.

Co-operation and participation in training programmes.

- Strategies for within-country dissemination with identified target groups must be built into any project plan.
- Enhancement of the status of national inspectorates.
- Strengthening the position and expertise of national inspectorates by international co-operation.

Benefits for others

- Access to SICI information on inspection strategies. (May be limited unless the products and services were not already part of a project (e.g.: ESSE: head teachers, school staffs)
- Benefit from specific expertise of inspectors and inspectorates.
- Exchange of and reflection on different concepts of quality.
- Shared frameworks.
- Presence, participation and learning during dissemination events.
- Increasing SICI capacity for intervention in relevant decision-making.

Benefits for national inspectorates

- Many beneficial contacts with individual inspectors, but mainly on a personal basis and not so beneficial for the inspectorate at large.

Partners

- Mainly inspectorates of member countries.
- Occasional links with other organisations.
- In principle, all eligible partners including organisations (local or International) outside school systems such as international agencies, European decision-makers, parents' associations, NGOs, local authorities, the business sector, social partners, etc. as identified in the project.

Activities

- Mainly interesting workshops on special topics but not all are necessarily of cross-European interest.
- Joint projects.
- EC and GA meetings.
- Production of Blue Book.
- As for Scenario 1. plus partner meetings, workshops, conferences, training events, seminars as identified in joint international project work plans.
- Joint Bench-marking activities.

Organisation

- Executive Committee and Secretary-General and Secretary are sufficient for handling the day-to-day business (part-time provision)
- If we expand more permanent provision needed.
- In addition, inspectorates work in clusters (around projects).
- All partner inspectorates (and especially the co-ordinating inspectorate) working on a specific project must allocate time for the international co-operation.
- To a large extent, the burden of the concrete project is that of the co-ordinator(s).
- GA needed each year for over view of running projects progress and new project proposals.

Funding

- Membership fee.
- This might be increased or total funding might be increased by enlarging the membership
- Membership fee. (See Scenario 1.)
- Additional funding will be required to match the increased needs of the Secretariat (Needs such as collecting proposals for initiating the projects, preparing yearly GAs with relevant agendas et al)
- The most likely source for such funding are the programmes of the European Commission.

Annex 2: Background note on SICI and its achievements.

The origins and aims of SICI.

- SICI was founded by a small group of inspectorates in 1995 with the intention to promote co-operation between inspectorates of education. The SICI aims (which are listed in the SICI promotional leaflet and in the last edition of the Strategic Plan which is included in the minutes of the General Assembly in Austria) have been defined as follows:
- To provide an exchange of information on the education and inspection systems of the member countries.
- To provide professional development for inspectors.
- To carry out collaborative inspection and evaluation projects.

The achievements of SICI

In the years since its foundation, SICI has achieved a number of things.

- Most European Inspectorates have now become members.
- Many workshops have been organised and run by the members; these have focused on key aspects of inspection.
- A number of projects involving joint inspections have been carried out and reported upon.
- Through working together on joint projects and in workshops members have recognised and shared some key common elements in their work. In addition some distinctive differences in the nature and context of inspection activity in the various countries and regions have been identified.

- Informative newsletters have been produced and distributed up to four times each year, both in print and electronically.

- An informative website has been launched.
- A survey of member-inspectorates has been published (the so-called 'Blue Book').
- SICI has proven to be a useful organisation to help promote further informal networking and opportunities for exchange visits on a bilateral or multilateral basis.

The present status of SICI

SICI is now an established and respected international organisation. It has acquired a good name within the participating inspectorates and with other organisations which have an interest in establishing and reporting on the quality of education in the countries and regions of Europe. This reputation was enhanced by the publication and dissemination of the report on the Effective School Self-Evaluation (ESSE) project, which involved 14 SICI members in March 2003. The standing of SICI with the staff of the European Commission and the OECD is good. More recently, co-operation with European Schoolnet has started to pay off through a number of projects, co-financed by the EC (ERNIST, P2P). Members and officers of SICI are often invited to contribute to the meetings of other organisations and project working groups where SICI expertise is welcomed. In recent years these have included the Council of Europe, the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project and the South-East Europe (SEE) Stability Initiative. These activities have ensured that the work of SICI is known to a wider audience.

IN THE FINAL FULL SESSION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN SEZIMBRA, RICHARD PAGE-JONES, A FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF SICI, WAS ASKED TO IDENTIFY AND TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGES THAT HE SAW FACING SICI AND HOW THE ROLE OF SICI MIGHT BE DEVELOPED IN THE FUTURE. THE KEY HEADINGS FROM HIS PRESENTATION ARE INCLUDED HERE.

CHALLENGE + SUPPORT

A Compelling case for change

How does SICI provide a better service to members in its core mission of supporting improvement in and through inspection?

Inspectors have a unique set of skill and knowledge:

- Rigour
- Independence—the children's champion
- Link outcomes to process

Does SICI broaden its objectives and work on educational themes?

They are highly valued by policy makers:

- Vital to raising standards
- Provide leverage and advice
- Establish minimum standards

But the environment is shifting:

- Greater autonomy—strong accountability
- Customer focus—information for parents and students
- Tougher demands on cost effectiveness
- Ambition and urgency

Therefore Inspectors need to up their game...

The big question for SICI

How can SICI have a greater impact?

HOW DOES SICI PROVIDE A BETTER SERVICE IN THE CORE MISSION?

Are objectives clear and right?

- Right focus on networking
- Emphasise deliverables rather than activity
- Focus on members ' needs and priorities
- Inspectors and others in SICI can do this

Are tools and process effective?

- And evaluative culture-confront the facts
- Strip away the clutter
- What are the benefits?
- Clear benefits for commissioners and SICI members
- Not about chasing funding streams or doing good for others
- What have we learned from ESSE?

Are the roles and structures right?

- Get real about the job that needs doing
- A president and secretariat that provides strategic leadership as well as administrative structure
- A responsive enabling executive
- Encourage ambition-give space
- People....work with researchers
- Tools
- Skills
- Leadership

How should SICI build capacity to deliver?

Should SICI broaden its objectives?

Ask the tough questions but encourage ambition!!

What is the demand?

- From EC, OECD and National Policy Makers
- Beyond PISA and country reports-why are things like they are?
- How do we implement change? What works?

CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING SICI EVENTS

WORKSHOPS:

The following programme of workshops was agreed by the General Assembly in Vienna and confirmed by the EGA in Sezimbra.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Host country or region</u>
20/21 Jan 2005	ESSE Follow up External/ Internal Evaluation	Copenhagen, Denmark
24/25 Feb 2005	Communication Strategies	Netherlands
21/22 April 2005	Social Inclusion	France
2/4 Nov 2005	How good is our inspectorate? (Internal Quality Assurance)	Belgium (Flemish community)

OTHER MEETINGS:

24/25 February 2005	Executive Committee meeting	Vienna
6 October 2005	Executive Committee meeting	Frankfurt:
7/8 October 2005	General Assembly of SICI	Frankfurt