

# SICI NEWSLETTER

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This newsletter is edited by the Secretariat of SICI. Members are invited to send copy (announcements, articles etc) to:

SICI Secretariat  
Inspection Services Branch  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Bangor  
Co Down  
BT19 7PR  
Northern Ireland

Tel: +44 (028) 9127 9239  
Fax: +44 (028) 9127 9721  
E-mail: [sici@deni.gov.uk](mailto:sici@deni.gov.uk)

General reactions, comments and suggestions are also welcome.

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

## Editorial

This edition of the SICI Newsletter, edition number 29, is being prepared following the meeting of the Executive Committee of SICI which took place in Amsterdam on 30 June 2004. The Executive Committee was hosted on this occasion by our colleagues in the Dutch Inspectorate. The main purpose of this meeting was to finalise arrangements for the next General Assembly that is to take place in Lisbon in October 2004.

The Executive Committee was commissioned by the membership of SICI, at the General Assembly in Vienna, to prepare discussion papers for consideration by the next General Assembly in Lisbon in October 2004. That work is nearing completion and a summary of the key issues that the General Assembly will be asked to address will be sent to each member by post. This should give members time to consider the implications of these before the General Assembly. A background paper about the context for change is included in this newsletter.

While these deliberations will be important in helping shape the future of SICI, the work of the membership goes on. In this edition of the newsletter there are reports from the Czech Republic on pupil behaviour, from Austria on

e-learning and, from New Brunswick in Canada, a report on the introduction of performance indicators. In addition, Tim Key of Ofsted has provided us with an update and overview of the changes that are pending in the inspection regime in England. In the past SICI has conducted workshops on Citizenship in Denmark and in Belgium. Next year, 2005 has been designated the Year of the Young Citizens by the Council of Europe and a formal notification of this is included in the newsletter. As always we would ask you to respond to the items published here and to send us other news items that will keep all of the SICI members informed about the activities of your inspectorate and your education system. Please send them by e-mail, fax or post to one of the contact points given on the first page of this newsletter.

Many thanks for your continued support and we look forward to meeting many of you at the next SICI workshop in Belfast in September 2004 and all of you at the General Assembly in Lisbon in October 2004

James Cuthbert, Jenny McIlwain,  
Margaret Ming, Michelle Dorrian

SICI Secretariat



Above: Pavla Polechová, Carmo Climaco and Margaret Ming at work during the Executive Committee meeting in Amsterdam

# The future of Inspection in England

As SICI members will know, over the past 10 years, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has been providing information to schools, parents, government and the public about schools and colleges in England. Inspection has been a crucial component in the drive to raise standards and improve the opportunities of children and young people up and down the country.

The system of full inspections of every school in England, leading to a published report, has become very much a part of the way we do things. After 10 years of inspection, however, David Bell, our Chief Inspector, decided it was time to take stock of what we had achieved and consider how we should proceed in the future. This has led to radical proposals as to how we should inspect schools. This article describes some of the changes proposed, and focuses on the single question: "how best can inspection support higher standards for all children and young people?"

We have listened carefully to the concerns of teachers and head teachers about the stresses and workload that inspection seems to place on them. We believe we can eliminate much of the unnecessary preparation by giving a very short period of notice before a school is inspected. Therefore we are proposing that we give schools between 2 to 5 days notice, with a minimum of bureaucracy. Parents, in particular, have supported this idea, and we believe it will help us to see schools "as they really are".

But we have also recognised that the six year cycle between inspections is too long, especially for parents, who need more regular updates on how their children's schools are performing. We are therefore proposing that the expected maximum period between inspections of schools should be 3 years rather than 6.

So our priorities are to ensure that inspection delivers the things that parents, schools, government and other stakeholders expect: higher standards, continual improvement, and greater opportunities for all children. With these priorities in mind, the key objectives of the new approach would be to:

- Introduce shorter, less onerous, more frequent inspections
- Reduce significantly the notice of inspection given to schools
- Ensure closer contact between HMI and independent inspectors
- Incorporate the inspection of all aspects of children's services provided by the school, in the light of additional legislation going through parliament.

The new inspection model, therefore, would be based on a short inspection report on all schools undertaken by a small team of inspectors over probably no more than a couple of days. Another important feature would be the increased importance of school self-evaluation in the process, and colleagues who worked on the SICI ESSE project will be interested to know that my colleague Chris Constantine who represented Ofsted on that exercise is taking the lead in developing the school self-evaluation component of the new inspection system.

The deadlines for a school inspection would be very tight indeed. I can picture a model in which the lead inspector – probably an HMI in a secondary school inspection – might phone the school on Thursday to say that the inspection would start on the following Monday. On that Monday, the inspector might visit the school, collect timetables, and plan lesson observations and interviews. On Tuesday and Wednesday the inspectors visit the school, giving oral feedback on Wednesday late afternoon to the head teacher. On Thursday the inspection report is written, perhaps to be published by the following Friday.

*An article by Tim Key  
of Ofsted*

Our hope is that by visiting schools more frequently and focussing on how schools improve we can have an even greater impact on “the system”. From my perspective, however, as someone involved in writing the Chief Inspector’s Annual Report, we shall have less detailed and less inspection data available. To “fill in the gap” we are looking to develop a programme of inspection of subjects and themes of current interest, enabling the Chief Inspector to fulfil his role in providing evidence – based advice.

At the moment we are at the stage of consultation, but the response so far has been very positive, and we are in the process of putting the proposals to ministers before taking this exciting project forward.

**Tim Key**  
**Ofsted**

# The Development of an Accountability Framework for Schools: An example from New Brunswick, Canada

*SICI is a European organisation, which may sometimes give us the false impression that external evaluation is a European phenomenon. In fact, globally there is a lively interest in external and internal evaluation of schools and the connections between those two.*

*During a visit to a number of Canadian provinces with the purpose of making ICT-school portraits, a Dutch inspectorate delegation was informed on recent developments in this respect in New Brunswick. We have asked the man responsible for this programme, Dwight Tranquilla, to write a contribution on the New Brunswick programme for the SICI Newsletter. For further information please contact him directly: Dwight.Tranquilla@gnb.ca*

The Canadian province of New Brunswick has developed the School Educational Review (SER) process as an accountability framework to measure school performance and guide school improvement planning. The process, currently in its second phase of implementation, goes far beyond the mandate of school accountability. It is a professional development tool for teachers and administrators; it helps to disseminate and monitor provincial program and policy initiatives; and it clearly articulates an ideal vision for New Brunswick schools.

The review instrument itself, and the foundation of the instrument, models an approach to learning by taking current educational research and applying it in the development of performance standards: standards based on both "leading indicators" and "trailing indicators". The foundation of the SER instrument is effective schools research (leading indicators), which is based on 35 years of studies revealing consistent strategies to improve

student performance. These are commonly referred to as the "effective schools correlates" and are extensively referred to by education ministries across Canada. The review instrument also relies on the New Brunswick document, *PRACTICES TO "LOOK FOR" IN OUR EDUCATION COMMUNITIES K-12*. This document describes the knowledge, dispositions and performances of educators that will lead to higher student achievement.

## NEW BRUNSWICK EDUCATIONAL REVIEW STANDARDS

- 1. School Climate**
  - Behaviour Management
  - High Expectations
  - Caring/Understanding
- 2. School Leadership**
  - Leadership Support
  - Shared Decision Making
  - Teacher Feedback
- 3. School Management**
  - Staff Interaction
  - Teacher Role
  - Effective Discipline
- 4. Management of Staff Performance**
  - Goal Agreement
  - School Morale
  - Professional Development
- 5. Partnerships with Parents**
  - Achievement Reporting
  - Communication with Parents
  - Parent/Community Participation
- 6. Growth and Improvement**
  - Collection and Analysis of Data
  - Planning
  - Policies and Guidelines
- 7. Teaching and Learning**
  - Curriculum
  - Instructional Practice
  - Student Services

*A report from Dwight  
Tranquilla.*

The review instrument requires that educators review relevant data on their schools from three diverse areas: provincial academic achievement assessments (trailing indicators); student, parent and teacher perception surveys; and socio-economic information.

The review process is a practical application of management systems theory, in that it helps to communicate the goals of the organisation to school leaders; it assists schools in reaching the long-term goals of the organisation; it provides an overview of the organisation's policies and programs; it analyses the results of the organisation's efforts in school improvement; and it moves the entire organisation towards continuous improvement.

As principals, teachers and school district staff use the review instrument, during internal and external reviews, they become familiar with the standards and expectations for student achievement and the actions that are most likely to result in increased student achievement. Therefore, data based decisions are more likely to be made in school improvement planning, and in district and departmental planning. In this way, the review instrument and the review process play a powerful role in professional development for teachers, school administrators, educational stakeholders and the general public.

The SER process ensures that all school leaders are exposed to the language of performance standards and to the foundation of those standards (effective schools research). Over time the language of performance standards will percolate to all educators, both in schools and in various levels of administration. This language and effective schools research will focus the efforts of the school system and ensure that recent accountability initiatives effectively encourage greater school performance. This process has already begun.

Currently, as the direct result of school reviews, ideas about school performance are being discussed and applied in "whole school" settings, on teaching teams, and in individual teacher practices. As the review process completes its third phase in 2004-2005, every school in the province will be exposed to the performance standards and to the language and ideas associated with greater student achievement. Once the language is in place the development of ideas, initiatives, and overall school growth will follow.

SER is building a foundation for leadership development and for teacher development. The process of internal and external reviews, involving the extensive use of performance descriptors, develops and enhances the educational dialogue between and among professionals. It ensures that educators are thinking in terms of the needs of individual students and of society at large; it asks educators to question the underlying assumptions in past practices; it ensures that educators are actively modeling learning, innovation, and risk taking for students. SER ensures that actions taken in schools are based on knowledge that develops effective beliefs.

The articulation of the composition of effective schools contained in the SER instrument is helping to align instructional practices with the provincial curriculum and with assessment at the school level. It is likely that the results of school reviews will inform and align future curriculum initiatives and instructional practices with standardised assessment practices.

By involving parents and community members in the internal review process, SER further extends the dialogue of educational practices beyond the walls of schools, and extends the language of educational research, educational standards, best practices, educational change, and effective schools to a larger social audience.

## A Report on the Focused Inspection on the 'Prevention of pupils' socially harmful behaviour' in the Czech Republic in 2003

A focused inspection was conducted in a sample of 132 schools and school facilities last school year in order to monitor incidences of pupils' socially harmful behaviour and effectiveness of schools' procedures to reduce such behaviours.

Some 130 of the schools that were inspected presented their Minimum Preventive Programmes (MPPs) and more than 90 per cent of these reflected the principles set out by the Ministry of Education. The contents of individual MPPs did not differ considerably but some secondary schools, however, concentrated on drug education and attendance levels and neglected the complexities of the problem.

Co-ordinators of prevention were appointed in all schools, sometimes carrying out their duties along with careers education and guidance. They were mostly well trained, though there were some without necessary qualifications; workload of their cumulated tasks deteriorated the quality of their performance, especially in big schools.

The programme of prevention was introduced in a range of subjects, e.g. civics, science, history and sports. Teachers made good use of pupils' experience, available information and suitable TV programmes. Schools tried to involve parents in prevention activities and education concerning healthy life-style and danger of socially harmful behaviour. Parents' interest was usually low and thus schools provided information at parent-teacher meetings and by means of letters. When discussing negative incidents, co-operation with parents did not often prove satisfactory. Parents sometimes denied that their children's behaviour might be disruptive and refused the sanctions, claimed schools. Other parents seemed helpless and asked staff for help.

Accommodation and facilities in most schools provided a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment, supervision during breaks, lunchtime and out-of-door activities was effective. There were frequent opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Younger pupils got more involved in them than the older (80 to 20 per cent). In most schools there were more or less effective helplines, sometimes questionnaires were used to monitor the climate. In several secondary schools there were sophisticated systems of anonymous contacts between pupils and school management by means of school intranets. In two schools "school ombudsmen" were established. School magazines and regular students' boards meetings were frequently considered practical and useful means of communication.. In two schools "school ombudsmen" were established. School magazines and regular students' boards meetings were frequently considered practical and useful means of communication.

School codes included rules concerning drugs and half of them had regulations for race relations; yet clear systems of sanctions were seldom established. The most frequent cases of misbehaviour in primary and lower secondary schools were smoking, bullying and truancy. Occasional thefts, alcohol and drug abuse, racial harassment and incidents of vandalism were also reported both in primary and secondary schools. About two thirds of incidents were handled by schools themselves, the remaining, more serious cases schools co-operated with the police and social workers. The proportion of schools in which socially harmful behaviour occurred last year was the same as in the previous year.

*A report  
by  
Pavla Polechova*

## AUSTRIAN PILOT PROJECT on e-LEARNING and e-TEACHING USING STUDENTS' NOTEBOOKS

The Austrian pilot project „notebook-classes“ was started in 2000. In 2002/03 almost 4000 students from 170 classes in 101 schools participated. At the beginning of 2002 the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture commissioned an evaluation of the pilot project. Two questions should be investigated:

What skills and competences are being promoted by e-learning via notebooks?

What are the special features of successful notebook classes?

The evaluation itself consists of three parts:

### Part One

Because the notebook project had developed in a somewhat autodidactic fashion, neither standardised goals nor clear criteria for success had been formulated. Therefore, in this part of the evaluation, a workshop with selected school teachers (experts for the notebook project) was organised to identify project goals independently from the school subjects. These experts defined the promotion of soft skill, with information management and team competencies being the main goals. In addition, these teachers identified potential risks of the notebook project, e.g. decrease in concentration, addition to the notebook, and dropping of school grades.

### Part Two

Based on the results of the workshop, a new test inventory with high ecologic validity was developed. In particular, the inventory tries to capture information management (search, selection, process, and reproduction of information). To collect data on e.g. learning motivation, a questionnaire was used. Data collection was done in 25 especially selected notebook classes and control classes in secondary academic and vocational schools. 490 students participated in the evaluation.

Results mainly supported the expectations. Notebook students showed higher scores than non-notebook students in the following tasks: self-regulatory outlining solution strategies, solving organisation tasks and knowledge of relevant criteria for team work. In addition, notebook students have higher scores in self-efficacy.

No differences between both students groups could be observed in learning motivation and self organisation.

But in contrast to the formulated goals, notebook students do not like better to go to school than non-notebook students. However, suspicions concerning risks were not supported by the data.

In addition, results clearly showed that some special features in notebook implementation and in teaching must be observed in order to ensure the success of the project (e.g. information of staff, parents and students half a year - one year before implementation; teacher training; technical equipment and classroom; content development; enumeration of teaching aims and cross-curricular activities... )

### Part Three

It was the intention of the third part of the evaluation to identify these features relevant for success. Therefore, telephone interviews were conducted with teachers from the best and the poorest classes in the test scores. The interviews focused on implementation of the notebook project in the school, the organization of the project, and on teaching in notebook classes. Students in these classes were presented with questionnaires asking for the use of the notebook both in different school subjects and at home. In addition, students were asked for possible changes in teaching and learning during the project.

Results showed similarities between teachers' and students' attitudes toward teaching in notebook classes.

*A report  
by  
Henrike  
Kschwendt-Michel*



In successful classes both subject groups are much more critical than in less successful classes. In particular, teachers in successful classes reported that teachers are responsible for a lot of problems and claimed for teacher training.

In contrast, teachers from less successful classes primarily attributed problems to external influences.

Summing up, a large number of features concerning organisation and teaching relevant for the success of the notebook project could be identified.

Based on these results, a catalogue of recommendation was formulated. These recommendations should support both the implementation of notebook classes and the continuous improvement of teaching in notebook classes. So, both research questions could be successfully investigated and answered.

For further information please contact:

Dr. Christian Dorninger,  
Bundesministerium für Bildung,  
Wissenschaft und Kultur  
Minoritenplatz 5  
A-1010 Vienna,  
Austria

[christian.dorninger@bmbwk.gv.at](mailto:christian.dorninger@bmbwk.gv.at)

**Henrike Kschwendt**  
**May 2004**

# 2005 – THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF CITIZENSHIP THROUGH EDUCATION

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe intends to proclaim 2005 “European Year of Citizenship through Education”. In organising this year, the Council of Europe wishes to draw attention to how crucial education is to the development of citizenship and the quality of participation in a democratic society. Recent elections in most European countries show a worrying deficit of participation in political and public life, notably among the young generation. The Council of Europe can play an important role in making young people aware of the need to get involved in matters that concern everyday life. The Committee of Ministers has already shown its commitment to this issue by adopting its Recommendation (2002) 12 to member states on education for democratic citizenship.

## Why do we need a European Year?

### BACKGROUND

In 1997, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe held their Second Summit. One of the major outcomes of this Summit was the recognition of the need to “develop education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens”.

The first Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project was launched as a direct result of this. The main objectives were to define the concept of democratic citizenship education, identify the basic skills required, and seek ways of helping young people acquire such skills through teaching and of encouraging decision-makers to treat EDC as a priority in educational policies. It was summed up in 2000, at the Conference of European Education Ministers in Cracow.

The second phase of the project will come to an end in 2004. It has dealt mainly with EDC policy development, communication and the dissemination of results:

- several national dissemination seminars have been organised;
- a European study on EDC policies has been published;
- a network of EDC co-ordinators is functioning;
- teacher training is being carried out.

The wealth of knowledge built up during the project must be shared with those involved in EDC policies in member states, and the “Year” would be a unique opportunity for doing this. It is evident that this is a field of work where the Council of Europe has a lot to offer its member states.

### WHAT WILL WE GAIN ?

A “European Year” will legitimate and promote the organisation of activities regarding citizenship through education in the member states. This is crucial since the success of the “Year” will depend essentially on the level of commitment it is given at national and local level. It will provide an opportunity for member states to take over ownership of the project.

The “Year” will increase awareness amongst EDC professionals at different levels. It will assist decision-makers in developing policy instruments, e.g reform of national curricula and legislation. The interest and publicity surrounding a specific year should help to disseminate achievements in EDC-related areas, notably by making full use of the quality indicators developed within the current projects. This applies to both the formal and non-formal sectors of education.

For the Council of Europe, the main objective will be to increase its visibility and illustrate the organisation’s know-how and its capacity to be active in the education field, a domain which is indispensable to the safeguard and further development of democratic values. The Council of Europe’s education programmes have always

been close to its fundamental vocation, which is to protect and promote pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Furthermore, this will be a perfect opportunity to involve other sectors of the Council of Europe in planning and carrying out the "Year". The Parliamentary Assembly, the CLRAE, the Directorate of Youth and Sport, the North-South Centre and the Directorate General of Human Rights will all be invited to contribute to the "Year".

### WHY 2005 ?

2005 happens to be an ideal timing for the following reasons:

- the current project on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education will be completed towards the end of 2004;
- 2005 will be the closing year of the three-year priority programmes of the youth sector (2003-2005);
- the Integrated Projects of the Secretary General (Making democratic institutions work and Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society) will also be completed by the end of 2004 and their results could provide input for the "Year";
- 2004 has been declared "European Year of Education through Sports" and its results could be used during the Year of Citizenship;
- there is still time in 2004 for a careful and thorough preparation of the "Year's" activities, including the securing of funding for the activities to be carried out.

### WHO IS IT FOR ?

The "Year" will first and foremost be aimed at reaching education policy deciders, multipliers and professionals having a specific interest in the subject. Some countries have already indicated that they will also target the general

public in awareness-raising activities.

### WHAT IS IT FOR ?

The overall aim is to promote implementation of Recommendation (2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship.

In the Council of Europe, a wide range of initiatives have been proposed. These will be further developed by a Steering Group set up especially for the "Year". Here are a few examples of what the Council of Europe could do:

- provide legislative assistance in the field of EDC to those member states that wish it through consultations with experts;
- assist member states and relevant NGOs with the organisation of teacher/multiplier training seminars;
- develop instruments that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, generally known as "core competencies", that reflect the Council of Europe's fundamental values notably human rights and fundamental freedoms, pluralism and the rule of law; in particular by:
  - publishing codes of good practice with examples of successful initiatives in EDC;
  - making widely available teaching aids and instruments on EDC that have been developed both at national and international levels;
  - developing a database on EDC-related legislation and policy documents for policy makers, advisory groups, NGOs and the scientific community;
  - preparing educational dossiers on EDC-related themes for various target groups.

A website will be set up by the Council of Europe, providing links to national websites and giving information about activities at European and National levels. It will be updated on a regular basis.

At National level there will be considerable flexibility to adapt to

The programme will possibly include the organisation of seminars and training activities for teachers and multipliers, exhibitions and the preparation of legislative reforms to support formal and non-formal education. Each country will decide its own programme.

### ***How will the “Year” be organised ?***

A European Steering Group will be set up to plan, co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the “Year’s” activities. It will report directly to the Ministers’ Deputies.

The Steering Committee for Education has welcomed the idea of forming a small group of high-profile personalities well-known for their work for or support of education, education for democratic citizenship or human rights education, possibly with the title “Council of Europe Ambassadors for Citizenship” This group could be set up at European level, but it was also considered useful to have one Ambassador in each country.

### ***Additional resources***

The ordinary budget of the EDC programme for 2004 will partly be used for preparatory work on the “Year”. The Bulgarian authorities will provide a voluntary contribution to cover the launch of the “Year”. The EDC programme budget for 2005 will be given over to the organisation and activities of the “Year”. A few member states have already indicated their willingness to contribute towards the activities at national level.

In order to get maximum benefits from the “Year”, voluntary financial contributions from member states would be highly appreciated. It is extremely important that information about voluntary contributions should reach the Secretariat as soon as possible so that the “Year” can be properly organised in good time.

### ***The European Year of Citizenship through Education will be launched at the end of 2004 in Sofia, Bulgaria.***

#### ***Contact:***

Agneta Derrien  
Division for Education for Democratic  
Citizenship and Human Rights  
Education  
Directorate of School,  
Out-of-School and Higher Education  
Directorate General IV, Education,  
Culture and Heritage,  
Youth and Sport  
Council of Europe  
F – 67075 Strasbourg

Tel: + 33 (0) 3 88 41 22 92 -

Fax: + 33 (0) 3 88 41 27 06

E-mail: [agneta.derrien@coe.int](mailto:agneta.derrien@coe.int)

## "Communication Strategies of Education Inspectorates".

A background note about the workshop to be held in the Netherlands in February 2005

Clear and effective communication strategies are becoming crucial for education inspectorates to operate successfully. There are three reasons for this:

1. Public interest in the work and effectiveness of inspection has risen strongly. Inspectorates are accountable for what they do and achieve. Inspectorates must communicate about their work with all who critically view public services.
2. In order to be effective, the results of inspections and the judgments of inspectors must be communicated to key stakeholders in the education process, particularly parents, students, teachers, and principals.
3. In most countries school boards and school leaders now have a larger responsibility for policy decisions at the school level. They are confident professional partners who have to be convinced by arguments.

These three 'facts of life' for inspectors have led the Dutch Inspectorate to offer to organise a SICI workshop on "Communication Strategies of Education Inspectorates".

The workshop will take place in The Netherlands on 24 and 25 February 2005. (If these dates prove unsuitable for too many possible participants, we could change to 3 and 4 March 2005)

An invitation will be sent out to all SICI members in August.

Those interested in participating are invited to respond directly to this message. The person responsible for the workshop will be:

Mrs Vic Van den Broek d'Obrenan  
c/o Workshop "Communication Strategies"  
Inspectie van het Onderwijs  
Postbus 2730  
3500 GS Utrecht  
Park Voorn 4  
3500 GS Utrecht  
THE NETHERLANDS

V.vandenBroek-d'Obrenan@owinsp.nl

## THE FUTURE STRATEGY OF THE STANDING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL AND GENERAL INSPECTORATES OF EDUCATION (SICI). – The context for change.

### *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.
- 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 School net 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 the past year 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.

### *Changing contexts: Developments in and around education.*

The contexts in which national inspectorates operate are changing in a number of important ways. Some of these relate to the recent changes in the composition of the EU but others seem to be symptomatic of more universal changes in education. The consequences of these for SICI as an international organisation of inspectorates cannot be ignored. The most important changes can be summarised as follows:

### *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.

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 application of fixed national standards, is under challenge. Schools and their clients will demand evaluation that takes 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 quality of schools as judged against agreed standards.

- Inspectorates have a tradition of inspecting, 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 by children should be the 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 actions, processes effects, and products of learning 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 include consider 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.
- At the last General Assembly of SICI, held in Vienna in October 2003, our 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.

These changes obviously imply challenges for education inspectorates. 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.

## **What do we want to achieve and for whom?**

**An updated inventory of our mission and aims would probably produce the following statements of intent and associated clients or beneficiaries. SICI aims to:**

- Contribute to the professional development of inspectors (Inspectorates).
- Initiate collaborative inspections and projects (Inspectorates; everybody interested in European and national education; European and national education decision-makers).
- Produce information and analyses (everybody interested in European and national education; European and national education decision-makers).
- Contribute to the international European education debate (European and national education decision-makers).

**These updated aims will have important implications for SICI as an organisation?**

- How do we organise the work for those purposes?
- What does that mean for our formal organisation?
- How are we going to fund these activities?



## Recent News Items: June 2004

### 1. **The 'Blue Book'.**

Following discussions with Roger Standaert and his colleagues in the DVO in Belgium, a provisional agreement has been reached that will lead to the production of an electronic version of the 'Blue Book'. All members will be asked to help in this process by providing information on the current status and work of their organisation. Full details will be provided in the near future.

### 2. **Co-operation between Austria and New York City.**

Recently the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Austria celebrated the "10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Educational Cooperation between Austria and New York City". This event was marked by the publication of a book of the same title which includes a chapter by Anton Dobart on the importance of international inspector conferences. The work of SICI is given particular mention in this chapter.

*Publisher: Studien Verlag (2004)*

*ISBN 3-7065-1874-0*

*[www.studienverlag.at](http://www.studienverlag.at)*

## CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING SICI EVENTS

### WORKSHOPS:

*The following programme of workshops was agreed by the General Assembly in Vienna*

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Host country or region:</u>
27-28 September 2004	Early Years (pre-school to age 8 years)	Belfast, Northern Ireland
20-21 January 2005	ESSE follow-up External and Internal Evaluation	Copenhagen, Denmark
24-25 February 2005	Communication Strategies	The Netherlands
21-22 April 2005	Social Inclusion	Poitiers, France
2-4 November 2005	How good is our inspectorate? (Internal Quality Assurance)	Belguim– Flemish Speaking

### Other meetings:

7 October 2004	Executive Committee Meeting	Sezimbra, Lisbon, Portugal
8-9 October 2004	Extraordinary General Assembly of SICI	Sezimbra, Lisbon, Portugal