



## **SIA : THE SICI INSPECTION ACADEMY**

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## **What is SIA?**

The SICI Inspection Academy (SIA for short) is a context - both real and virtual - within and through which SICI members can share expertise, learn from each other and form authoritative views on inspection issues. It is part of SICI - the part through which support for SICI members can be channelled.

SICI has, in its 15 years of existence, already made good opportunities for members to share expertise - mostly in the contexts of our SICI

Workshops. With a now much increased membership, we need to develop ways of ensuring that we continue to share our expertise and learn from each other, despite our different needs and our much-extended membership.

At the 2009 SICI General Assembly, members agreed that now the time is right to co-ordinate activities. It was agreed that SICI would set up a virtual "Academy" or learning location, to be called SIA. Through SIA, SICI hopes to offer new

opportunities for joint working, learning and sharing of materials. Such activities will have the goal of serving both our joint and our individual needs for information and development.

SIA is therefore merely the name for an aspect of SICI's work. It will entail a database on the SICI website, SICI Workshops, seminars and other face-to-face contexts. These might include intensive support projects with external funding shaped to one member's very specific needs.

## **Who is SIA?**

**Introducing SIA personnel** **Gonnie van Amelsvoort and Isobel McGregor**

SIA is, of course, all the members of SICI! On your behalf, and so that the work of SIA can be made effective, two colleagues have been asked to take on the organisation and the promotion of arrangements for the Academy.

Gonnie von Amelsvoort is manager of international affairs with the Netherlands Inspectorate. She is a member of SICI's

Executive Committee (EC) and on the EC has been given the SIA "portfolio".

SICI's General Assembly at Dublin agreed to appoint Isobel McGregor, former inspector with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in Scotland, as SIA Co-ordinator. You will have met her if you were in Dublin. She will be working for a number of days over the next year with Gonnie. She will also liaise with SICI Secretary-General Yvan Verbauwheide, from the Flemish Inspectorate, his

colleague in the Secretariat, Kristine Hadermann, and the SICI webmaster.

Isobel will be co-ordinating SIA activities, finding relevant support and expertise, and helping members make connections - in other words, getting SIA "up and running". She will liaise on the one hand with Gonnie, Yvan and the SICI Executive Committee and on the other with members' nominated SIA and/or SICI contact.

## SIA and the SICI Website – an electronic database

You will be aware that the new, revised SICI website is now functioning. We hope that you are finding it useful.

On the left-hand side of the home page there is a button for SIA. At the moment, clicking on the button will take you to a page of information.

Work is now underway to create an interactive,

password-protected SIA page with links to the whole range of SIA activities. This will also be where the electronic database of information will be placed.

This will be the repository for the information which members provide on their practices, guidelines, available documentation, expertise, publications, development projects and support needs. We hope

to be able to build in a browser or keyword search engine which will allow members to question the database.

The data will mainly be members' responses to the SIA questionnaire which was sent out in September 2009.

It takes time to create such functionalities. Watch this space for the moment!

*The quality of the database will depend on the quality and completeness of information from members. Please help by making sure you contribute!*

## The SIA Questionnaire (September 2009)

Thank you to all members who sent in completed questionnaires! In all, we received 16 of them. Some were complete, while some were only partially completed, but promised more details to come.

Some of the longer-established inspectorates provided elaborated inventories of their materials, expertise and

developments. But SIA has also received interesting documents from various "younger" and smaller inspectorates.

It would be very useful - in fact probably necessary - for SIA to receive completed questionnaires from the members who have not yet responded. It would also be important for those

members who promised fuller details to send them in now.

How all the data is handled will depend both on the completeness of responses and on solutions to the technological issues of creating the database.

We will keep you informed about SIA's progress in this key aspect.

## What have Questionnaires revealed so far?

An initial analysis of the contents of the returned questionnaires shows that the kinds of **documents available** include annual reports / frames of reference / inspection manuals / guidelines for inspection / interview schedules / observation

documents / post-inspection questionnaires and many other types.

Documentation relating to **inspectorate training** includes programmes for improving consistency / training new inspectors / and training in skills such

as writing reports, engaging in teamwork, or interviewing personnel.

Respondents list various kinds of expertise and experts who could be of assistance to other members. Fields /

## Questionnaire returns (continued from page 2)

**Fields of expertise** declared include risk analysis / statistics / training skills / assessment skills / and databases.

Many documents are available online in members' websites. Some are in English, some in the native language, some in both.

We will have to consider how translation issues in the context of SIA might be handled.

Here is a list of the areas of training or information needs:

- Class observation
- Skills in processing inspection evidence / drawing conclusions
- HR management
- Impact analysis of audits and programmes
- Interview techniques
- Peer-review
- Planning
- Policy at a distance
- Proportional evaluation
- Risk-based analyses
- Risk indicators
- School evaluation
- Working with internal and external experts

**Comment :** there is a wide range of topics here, some specific, some very broad in nature. Some

will be of interest to all members, others to a few. Some already feature in the major SICI Workshops planned for 2010 or proposed for 2011 (see back page). Over the next months, we will complete the list to include headings from members who have not yet returned their questionnaire. Then we will try to analyse the training / information needs and set them alongside the offers of expertise.

The final stage is to communicate the connections to the members concerned.

## A spectrum of face-to-face opportunities for learning and sharing

SIA envisages a spectrum of different face-to-face learning and training options. These range from those which involve all members, to others relevant to a much smaller group of members with similar specific developmental needs and interests. So we hope to see opportunities for mutual exchange, development, support and consultancy. The database will play an important part in this, of course.

One end of the spectrum will have strong SICI

involvement, such as the SICI Conference to be held in conjunction with the General Assembly each year.

Then there are SICI Workshops to deal with important themes of interest to all, which a member country can propose to host, with SICI involvement. These events will continue to provide examples of good practice from a range of members who are dealing (perhaps in different ways) with the issues.

We hope that Workshops

will stimulate truly innovative thinking, as well as encourage sharing of existing good practice.

The aim is that one major outcome of our Workshops will be an authoritative paper on the theme under discussion. That paper can then be placed on the SIA section of the SICI website.

Through such high-level outcomes, SICI will be well placed to contribute with one voice, to wider educational debate.

*As an outcome of the SICI Workshops, we hope to be able to develop an authoritative SICI-view on the theme and make it available to all members through the website*

## The other end of the spectrum....

*We can support and learn from one another in many different ways. What's YOUR idea?*

Towards the other end of the spectrum, SIA hopes to encourage member countries to organise and hold seminars or workshops of interest to a smaller group, or even just one or two member countries / regions. Such events would be suggested by members themselves, of course.

The analysis of developmental needs which the database should allow will also probably raise issues which a number of members share. It will also show where expertise lies within the SICI membership on those

issues. SIA involvement would in these cases lie perhaps in supporting the events through some input, small or large as the host member(s) wishes. Individual members might also wish to invite input from a fellow member's experts.

If such requests and events could be stimulated through SIA, we may be able to support one another in systematic and efficient ways, to the benefit of all.

This is a systematisation of existing arrangements,

such as bi-lateral or tri-lateral co-operations which often occur between and among long-established inspectorates. They may be a newer concept to more recently created inspectorates, or to those who have not traditionally had a means of linking with colleagues in other countries.

It would be good if member countries, of course, were to suggest and hold other types of event. Information about your links and creative suggestions for types of co-operation would be very welcome!

## Examples of joint ventures and sharing expertise

**Here are 2 examples of small-scale joint ventures of different types.**

### Netherlands and England

Recently there was a bi-lateral conference involving these two well-established inspectorates.

Over two days in the Netherlands, personnel from both inspectorates met to discuss matters of mutual interest, compare notes and learn from one another.

Topics covered included handling budget reductions

/ hearing the user's voice / risk-based inspection / evaluating leadership / and inspection outcomes.

### France, Scotland and the Czech Republic

Over the past two years, there has been an exchange among these member countries particularly on issues relating to whole-school evaluation / inspection.

In this case, most emphasis was given to the French request for information on this, for

her inspectorates, new field of activity.

Arrangements included short-term exchanges of 2 or 3 inspectors. In some cases, visitors could join an inspection for a short time. Where that was not possible, the inspectors from the visiting country were invited to schools which had recently been inspected so that they could hear opinions from the "other side of the fence".

Participants held various discussions and made reports for senior inspectorate personnel.

*Would you like your joint venture to be mentioned in the next SIA Newsletter? Let the SIA Co-ordinator know!*

## Externally-funded projects – a new venture

Some SICI member countries or future member countries want to develop or change their inspection systems in a particular and perhaps far-reaching way. They might want to benefit from and pay for a tailor-made offer from SIA for schooling or support.

This is an extension and development of some existing arrangements, through which one (often, but not exclusively, new) inspectorate seeks intensive developmental training and support from one or more established members or one or more

who have a proven track-record of successful outcomes in that aspect of inspection.

However, a difficulty which sometimes existed was that much pressure was placed on the supporting inspectorate, which might have been finding it difficult to sustain the level of support required and still complete its own inspection and other duties.

For such large-scale, intensive programmes, a solution can be to seek financing from some external body.

International and EU budgets are available for professionalisation within the education and inspection field - in capacity-building, consultancy and support and professional exchange and partnership.

An outline procedure has been drawn up to approach such budgets under a SICI/SIA umbrella. Arrangements are currently being piloted.

Look at the article below for some early examples of this kind of working.

*External funding arrangements could help engage expertise of SICI members under the SIA umbrella.*

*Interested in finding out more? Contact Gonnie van Amelsvoort, who is heading up this aspect of the Academy's work.*

## Examples of externally-funded projects

### The Netherlands and Serbia project using SIA expertise

The project *Monitoring School Quality* in Serbia can be regarded as the first real initiative to have SIA involved in an externally-funded bilateral project. It is an example of low-scale SIA involvement. The project aims to support Serbia in building a system of external evaluation of schools.

Under the management of the Netherlands, SIA is involved through the use of a number of experts

from SICI member states who are providing first-hand consultancy support to Serbia.

SIA hopes to report in due course on some of the outcomes of this project.

### Scotland and The FYR of Macedonia

In 2008/09, HMIE in Scotland supported the Macedonian State Education Inspectorate.

After an initial Macedonian fact-finding mission to Scotland, a consultancy project was

drawn up and funded through an international source managed by World Learning. A former HMI (now the SIA Co-ordinator) offered on-site support in developing evaluation instruments and inspector training materials.

While this project did not directly link to SIA (which was not yet in existence), it is the type of project which might in the future be channelled through SIA, with consequent opportunities to access other relevant expertise across SICI.

*Through SIA, SICI members and future members can access expert support from across the SICI membership.*

## Personnel

SIA Co-ordinator  
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## SICI Workshops 2011

The following suggestions for themes for SICI workshops in 2011 arise from a number of sources. These include: the Conference and General Assembly in Dublin in October 2009; discussions in the Executive Committee and among SICI members; and requests made in the SIA

questionnaire responses to date. Some themes will be the subject of the Workshops this year in 2010. However, it may be appropriate to hold a follow-up Workshop, or indeed series of Workshops, so that issues can be thoroughly explored and authoritative outcomes

achieved. Any repetition is therefore deliberate. Note that this is a long list - it is not necessarily the case that all themes will be taken up. Three Workshops may be the maximum. All depends on your responses.

## Proposed themes for SICI Workshops in 2011

- Observation of learning and teaching (follow-up to Cardiff 2010?)
- Inspecting / Evaluating leadership
- Key inspection processes: evidence / analysis / reporting (perhaps a series?)
- Inspection and self-evaluation: relationship and influences
- Inspection outcomes and national policies on education: links and challenges

Would you be interested in hosting a Workshop in 2011 on any of these themes? Please respond, indicating your general interest (no obligation at this stage) and a rough date, if possible, to Isobel McGregor the SIA Co-ordinator and copied to Yvan Verbauwhede, SICI Secretary-General.

## SICI CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOPS 2010

Theme	Location	Date
Citizenship: What it is / how to inspect it	Copenhagen, Denmark	March 22 - 24
How to define and measure the output of schools	Netherlands	May 18, 19
Inspecting teaching and learning	Cardiff, Wales	September 9,10
Innovative approaches in school inspection	Bratislava, Slovak Republic	November 25,26

### 2010 SICI CONFERENCE :

The Conference will be held in Düsseldorf, North-Rhine Westphalia, on October 26 - 29. The Conference theme will be *Quality Assurance in the work of Inspectors*

### WHAT SIA NEEDS FROM YOU!

- Questionnaire responses from those members who have not already responded
- Completion of questionnaires / attachments from some members who have already sent in partial responses
- Expressions of interest in hosting a SICI Workshop in 2011

MANY THANKS!