

SICI – The Newsletter

May 2026

We support the improvement of education

through improving inspection processes

From the President

This month has been an important one for SICI, as members came together for our Extraordinary General Assembly to take forward the next phase of our governance development. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all member organisations for your engagement, your thoughtful contributions, and the constructive spirit you brought to the discussions. Your participation reflects the shared commitment that underpins SICI's work and ensure that our governance arrangements remain robust, transparent, and ensure that SICI continues to evolve on a strong and collaborative foundation.

The formal minutes of the Extraordinary General Assembly will be circulated separately in the coming days.

Alongside this significant governance work, May has also been a month of rich professional activity across our network. In this edition, you will find reflections from the recent SICI Cymru workshop in Wales, which brought colleagues together to explore the practical use of AI in inspection work. You will also see updates from members, including new research from the Netherlands, a request from Ireland on parent participation in inspection, and insights from the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts.

Together, these contributions highlight the breadth of expertise within our network and the value of continued collaboration as we look ahead to our June workshop in Plovdiv.

With warmest wishes,

Janie

SICI Cymru 2026

The recent SICI Cymru workshop in Wales brought together over 60 members from inspectorates across Europe and beyond for a busy and engaging few days in the Techniquest building in Cardiff. The sessions focused on how inspectorates are starting to use AI in their work. A key takeaway was the importance of using these tools carefully, while also being open to trying simple approaches that can support everyday tasks such as summarising information and reviewing evidence.

Discussions showed that organisations are at different stages in their work with AI, but there was a strong shared interest in learning from one another. Delegates particularly valued the practical nature of the sessions and the chance to reflect on how new approaches might support their own work.

Alongside the workshops, members took part in a guided walking tour of Cardiff Bay and a boat trip, as well as a gala dinner featuring excellent entertainment from a talented young harpist and an impressive schoolboys' choir. These experiences created a relaxed and welcoming environment, strengthening our professional relationships as well as supporting professional learning.

Upcoming Workshop – Plovdiv, 10–12 June 2026

A brief reminder that our next SICI workshop will take place on **10–12 June 2026** in **Plovdiv, Bulgaria**, hosted by the National Inspectorate of Education in partnership with the SICI Executive Committee. The workshop will explore how **future-oriented inspection** can act as a driver for educational quality, with a programme including keynote presentations, panel discussions, plenary sessions, and small-group work.

How to Translate Skills Demand Evidence into Effective Policies?

The SICI Executive Committee was represented at the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts webinar, “How to Translate Skills Demand Evidence into Effective Policies?”, which explored how to better bridge the gap between research and policymaking. Discussions highlighted that, although data and analysis are increasingly available, turning evidence into effective policy requires not only technical capacity but also clear communication, alignment with policy priorities, and timely delivery within decision-making processes. The importance of strengthening competences on both sides was emphasised, with researchers needing a better understanding of policy contexts and policymakers enhancing their ability to assess and apply evidence, supported by institutional examples such as the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.

The webinar also underlined the dynamic and iterative nature of policymaking, where evidence can act as a catalyst for change, particularly when existing measures prove ineffective, and where continuous feedback between strategy and implementation is essential. A case study from Moldova illustrated how combining detailed labour market analysis with a deeper understanding of skills needs and barriers can lead to more targeted and effective interventions. Overall, the event reinforced that translating labour market evidence into skills policies is an ongoing, collaborative process that depends on adaptability, learning, and stronger links between evidence and action.

Member Request – Parent participation in inspection (Ireland)

The Irish Inspectorate is committed to the promotion of parent participation before, during and after inspection.

The Inspectorate continues to develop materials to enhance parents' awareness and understanding of the inspection process. To date, it has developed videos and information pamphlets for parents in early learning and care (ELC) settings, primary and post-primary schools and Youthreach provision in centres of education, to inform them what happens during inspection.

During inspection, the Inspectorate elicits the view of parents about the quality of provision in schools through its use of surveys and meetings. We are exploring ways to formally involve parents of children in early learning and care settings in the inspection process and to ensure more diverse and representative parent participation, reflecting changing demographics in Ireland.

After inspection, reports are published online and are, therefore, accessible to parents. Future improvements will focus on making reports more accessible and increasing parent awareness of their publication.

Our colleagues in Ireland would now like to connect with other inspectorates that have developed mechanisms for enhancing parent participation during and following an inspection. This may include oral feedback, written summaries, or other approaches.

If your Inspectorate has introduced such mechanisms, please contact Ursula Cotter at ursula_cotter@education.gov.ie

Dutch papers on unannounced inspection and policy theory published online

The Netherlands' Inspectorate of Education conducts research to improve their work. Recently, two of these studies have been published online. This way, they hope to inform the public and help other inspectorates make well-informed decisions about their inspection practices.

The first study explores whether unannounced inspections lead to different judgements of educational quality compared to announced inspections. Based on a systematic literature review and a pilot study (where both announced and unannounced inspections were conducted at the same schools and complemented with interviews) it finds no evidence that unannounced inspections result in very different assessments. The advantages and disadvantages of unannounced inspections are complex and sometimes contradictory. Overall, this study does not indicate that unannounced inspections are inherently more effective, but they may offer added value in specific contexts.

The second study reconstructs the Inspectorate's policy theory, outlining how supervision is expected to influence educational quality across three levels: schools, school boards, and the system as a whole. It identifies five "effect chains" through which supervision is assumed to have impact. A systematic review shows that only part of these assumptions is supported by evidence. Strong evidence exists for the effect chains related to providing substantiated judgements and conducting additional (un)announced inspections. Limited evidence is found for mechanisms such as addressing societal challenges and holding school boards accountable, while no research has yet examined consultation on the inspection framework.

You can download the papers here:

[To Announce or Not to Announce? A Study on the Impact of Unannounced School Inspections Through a Systematic Review and a Pilot Study in the Netherlands by Mariëlle Klerks, Merel Spanier :: SSRN](#)

[Policy Theory of Educational Supervision: The Case of the Netherlands' Inspectorate of Education by Mariëlle Klerks, Kroeze Nikki, Nienke Moolenaar :: SSRN](#)

National Coordinators Open Forum – Update

The April meeting of the National Coordinators Open Forum focused on the theme of research security, including how academic, scientific, and technological research can be protected from risks such as undue influence, improper access, and the misuse of sensitive information, while still supporting open international collaboration. Members discussed the challenge of balancing the protection of intellectual property, research integrity, and national security with the need to maintain the openness that underpins global innovation.

One member described a distributed approach to research security, where responsibilities are shared across several organisations rather than held by a single authority. Other members noted that “research security” is not formally defined or supervised in the same way in their jurisdictions, and that no single organisation currently has responsibility for this area. The discussion highlighted the value of continued exchange as inspectorates consider whether, and how, research security relates to their own work.

The next NCOF will take place on Thursday 25 June 2026 and will explore the link between school self-evaluation and external evaluation in practice, with a particular focus on how self-evaluation can remain a continuous process of improvement rather than a final, standalone exercise. National Coordinators shall also discuss key features of different inspection systems.

Call for Member Articles – Share Your Work With the Network

A brief reminder that we welcome short articles, updates, or reflections from across the network for future editions of the newsletter. Contributions of around 250–300 words are ideal, and photographs from events or activities are very welcome. To support the monthly publication cycle, submissions are best received by the 15th of each month at contact@sici.international.

Contact & Secretariat

SICI Secretariat

Koning Albert II-laan 15
1210 Brussels – BELGIUM
contact@sici.international

www.sici-inspectorates.org