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## Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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### Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

## Consultation Questions

Has the first goal of SICI (*support the improvement of inspectorates and the professional competences of inspectors*) been achieved on the basis of the underlying actions? Which actions have been implemented, and which have not? Which actions can be improved and how?

Workshops and conferences are valued and help to support improvement of inspectorates. However, it would be helpful to strengthen the mechanism for evaluating the impact of each individual workshop, for example to consider how it has influenced the work of inspectorates further.

How well workshops support the improvement of individual inspectorates may vary considerably. Occasionally, the drive to try to appeal to all members means that the focus of workshops can become too generic. For example, at the last General Assembly, a suggestion to make the workshops more skills and tools focussed was rejected by those inspectorates who do not work in this way. However, it may be helpful if there were an equal balance between high-level policy discussion and professional learning focussed on spotlighting competences and approaches. The focus of that professional learning could be sharpened further by focusing on topical issues, such as inspecting provision for ALN or inspecting literacy or approaches to thematic research.

Has the second goal of SICI (*promote and support partnership and cooperation between inspectorates*) been achieved on the basis of the underlying actions? Which actions have been implemented, and which have not? Which actions can be improved and how?

There are many projects between groups of SICI members which allow for detailed discussions around defined topics, therefore this objective has been achieved. In particular, close working with SICI members in partnership, through projects such as the BIBESOIN project and in Offshore groups - predominantly through our ongoing UK and Ireland group - have been effective in allowing us to share practice around costs of inspections, approaches to complaints handling, addressing perceived teacher workload issues, the impact of inspection on schools' approaches to addressing disadvantage. They also help facilitate job shadowing for inspection and visits focussing on specific aspects of work, for example thematic working. These activities support innovation, thinking around new inspection arrangements, provide practical opportunities for cross-country co-operation. They also contribute effectively to the professional develop of inspectors concerned.

Has the third goal of SICI (*actively participate in the international debate about evaluation and quality improvement in education*) been achieved on the basis of the underlying actions? Which actions have been implemented, and which have not? Which actions can be improved and how?

Contributions from member states on evaluation have helped shaped thinking about the concept of evaluation and its impact on quality improvement and there have been some very useful and informative conferences/workshops on this topic.

Overall, it would be helpful to strengthen this aspect of SICI's work. For example, the BIBESOIN project envisages sharing of findings with other SICI inspectorates. However, it does not make clear how this work could influence (multi-)national policy. It would be helpful if SICI could consider doing more to become involved in policy debate at a multi-national level.

In general, do you think these actions should be completely changed? Or should they be preserved and adapted? Why so?

It would be useful if there were more focus on improving competencies of inspectorates – that considers the broad range of functions that they have – including inspection skills and thematic working.

In general, what is your opinion/idea about the current strategic plan?

It would benefit from having an additional clear document to provide more specific details. See further feedback under the question on the Bratislava Memorandum.

How did SICI measure the progress of its goals/aims? Do you think the method to measure the progress should be changed? Why and what would you change?

Workshop hosts do not often ask for immediate feedback on activities. A standard questionnaire for each workshop/ meeting possibly linked back to the strategic plan would allow tracking of progress in achieving objectives. Summaries of evaluations on the website (perhaps even in a members' only area) would also aid transparency.

What did SICI learn about itself and the environment/context along the way?

It is difficult for us to provide a response to this question.

What challenges made SICI fall short?

There are considerable differences between the way member inspectorates carry out their work. As a result, the relevance and helpfulness of themes selected and workshops varies. Sometimes there is a lot of high-level debate, but more limited concrete skill and competency development or sharing. A detailed strategic plan which has been agreed by members from which the workshops and themes should be identified and planned a long time in advance. Members' contribution to the shaping of the strategic plan could be strengthened. See further comments under the question on the Bratislava Memorandum.

It would be helpful if the SICI website provided more detail about events. At present, information can be limited and this may send the wrong message about SICI's work. For example, on the Events' List there is an entry "Strategies and obstacles for innovation"

which is stated to have taken place on 3 August 2019. This is in the middle of the summer holidays for all UK systems. When clicking on the link, it leads to a holding page with a picture but no documents. When seeking to play a greater role in the quality of education on a multi-national level, the information on the website needs to be more robust. The website is the window to SICI from the outside world and therefore gaps and incorrect information could potentially damage the organisation's image internationally.

It would be particularly useful to publish summaries of workshop evaluations alongside the materials, to support transparency.

Not all country groups are represented on the Executive Committee (EC) – some groupings are too broad. Lines of communication between the EC members and their country groupings could be strengthened to strengthen joint-working and further clarity on the role of EC members in representing individual inspectorates' views would be welcomed.

This review of SICI's objectives and strategic plan provides a good opportunity to review the current EC membership to ensure that its main members are current staff of inspectorates that they represent the interests of all relevant groups.

Which communication strategy has been used throughout these years? What were the advantages and disadvantages of this communication strategy?

SICI newsletters are good and a welcome introduction. At times deadlines are too short and this could be a barrier to some inspectorates providing contributions. A forward plan with dates for submissions would be welcomed and may encourage more inspectorates to contribute.. SICI newsletters could be tied linked closely to the strategic plan.

The communication around attendance at workshops is very good and works well. However, how well workshop hosts communicate with and coordinate with the people/inspectorates that they have invited to speak varies. Close communication ensures that the theme is explored fully. Sometimes workshop hosts request that participants bring information to help others understand their own approaches. This is useful and supports the sharing of practice.

A Yammer page has been set up for national coordinators, but very few use it. Given that many countries are beginning to use Teams more often, using this platform might support closer networking better.

What communication strategy do you think should be used in the coming years? What will be improved with this new strategy compared to the previous one? *(Please be specific here)*

It would be beneficial if future communication strategy included:

- Clearer linking of SICI communications to current themes
- Up-to-date website with papers and summaries
- Timely reminders to evaluate workshops (perhaps on site whilst in attendance)
- Publications of evaluations alongside conference materials and how they feed into the strategic plan

- A repository on the SICI website of SICI members' approaches to the theme for that year (to be taken down when the theme changes)
- Although this has improved greatly recently, publishing concrete dates rather than broad time frames for future workshops may aid inspectorates in ensuring the most appropriate inspectors with expertise in the relevant area are available to attend.

Should the strategic plan be updated taking into account the Bratislava Memorandum? If yes, why? If no, why?

The Bratislava Memorandum (BM) could provide a basis for the structure of the SICI strategic plan. It requires considerable thought, but it covers many relevant themes for inspectorates which are still current today. Working through this document to set out a detailed strategic plan that sits under the main objectives would provide a concrete roadmap for SICI's activities. For example, the BM provides for *learning and the need for teaching of the highest quality* as a proposition – however too little attention is paid to the *learning* part of SICI's activities. This approach would ensure that themes are coherent with the strategic direction and our work is comprehensive. The risk of this approach is that it could ignore all the other strands to inspectorates' work, such as thematic research and these aspects will need to be considered in any revised strategic plan.

SICI has a certain budget available for collaborations between her members. Cooperation should also be encouraged between the members themselves, and without the impulsion of the Executive Committee. How can this be realized?

Providing regular examples of joint projects that have been funded under this heading might help organisations understand whether their idea for a project can be covered by that scope.

A project page on the website with a description of the project, participants and outcomes of the project might also generate greater interest.

SICI certainly needs to strengthen her capacity to have more open conferences, and to attract people which are interested in what SICI has to say (non-participants included)... How can this be realized?

Conferences could be varied, some could maintain the current structure, while others could provide a deep-dive into the hosting inspectorate's tools and methods of working. SICI could make contacts with key education research organisations or policy organisations in each country and those that work on a multi-national level, e.g. OECD. And invite them to observe and indeed speak at specific projects/workshops

## How can SICI become more visible on the international scene?

SICI could make contacts with key education research organisations or policy organisations in each country and invite them to observe specific projects/workshops

Last question: please give me a brief outline of what you think the new strategic plan should look like:

- There could be a greater focus on accountability and quality evaluation mechanisms that stimulate actions to improve learning outcomes for disadvantaged learners. Even though this is part of the BIBESOIN projects, more could be done to share approaches.
- There should be a greater emphasis on skills, tools and approaches to professional development of inspectors.
- Conferences could be varied to sometimes provide a deep-dive into inspectorate's approaches.
- There should be a greater emphasis on professional learning, striking the right balance between debate and competence development.
- The strategic plan should be more detailed to provide a more concrete scope for SICI's activities. For example, the Bratislava Memorandum could provide a starting point for a concrete and comprehensive plan for SICI's activities
- The focus on innovation has been very interesting and this could be embedded into the strategic plan.