



## SICI WORKSHOP

### *Innovating inspections to value innovative schools*

It gives us great pleasure to attend this initiative promoted by the Portuguese Inspectorate of Education and SICI, whereby hosted by Chief Inspector Dr. Luís Capela and Dr. Helder Guerreiro, Member of Executive Committee.

We are committed to sharing experiences and viewpoints with our colleagues from Madeira, the Portuguese main land and other countries and regions, because we are aware of these matters' European dimension, particularly during the actual moment of the Portuguese economy, with considerable challenges since the global crisis that exposed our country's weak fiscal and financial position (with public debt at around 90 percent of GDP at end-2010 and private sector debt about 260 percent of GDP).

To address these challenges, among others of course, we have been embarked a few years ago on a balanced and focused education reform, to tackle low education attainment and early school leaving and to improve the quality of secondary education and vocational education and training, with a view to increase efficiency in the sector, raise the quality of human capital and facilitate labour market matching despite the specific realities from each of the Azorean islands.

The title of this workshop - *Innovating inspections to value innovative schools* – illustrates our current concern - Set up an analysis, monitoring, assessment and reporting system in order to accurately evaluate the results and impacts of education and training regional policies.

It is our purpose to make a few remarks regarding the Azorean situation and the perspective of tomorrow's activities in the Autonomic Region of Azores, constituted by a group of 9 volcanic islands.

Firstly, the geographic dispersion and the framework of (38) public, professional and private schools will always be defined in line with the political and social expectations as well as the inspection mission.

Therefore, considering the need to improve the quality of secondary education services including via the generalization of trust agreements between the Regional Government and public schools, establishing wide autonomy, the creation of a simple formula-based funding framework comprising performance evolution criteria and accountability; a reinforced supervisory role of the Regional Inspectorate is in today's agenda.

Where, in the Azores, we have to deal with a diversity of demands:

- We are asked to observe the application of political measures in the education system;
- We also must ensure the quality of the educational services that are provided;
- We hold the disciplinary charge that plays a heavy role in our range of activities;
- We have recently undertaken administrative/financial monitoring of schools;
- We intend in the near future to participate in the external evaluation of schools, by ourselves or with the participation of non-inspectors evaluators (considering the range of establishments and the number of inspectors existing) .

Secondly, this range of attributions imposes many challenges to the Azorean Inspectorate and the diversity of demands requires from us different competences and a distinct approach to schools, their teachers and other professionals.

Therefore, we asked what advantages (and disadvantages) are there in having our institution play several roles and have those same roles played by the same inspectors? Will these demands stop us to think in innovation or, otherwise, they impel us to demand for a new and innovator inspectorate with firsthand knowledge of innovated schools and/or teaching?

Thirdly, considering that we have to ensure the technical quality and the value of the inspector's intervention for the improvement of Education, we'll also be pleased to discuss here what sort of skills we look for induce, improve and achieve innovation, as well our work methods on an everyday basis since we continuing being able to guarantee independence and exemption in the inspectors performance and ethics.

Finally, I'm certain that this workshop will allow us the opportunity to benefit from the comments, debates and conclusions of the working sessions and I wish you all to come back next year to Portugal and have a pleasant stay in the..... AZORES.

We are a paradise in the middle of the north Atlantic and Europe's westernmost point, with exhilarating views (highest point in Portugal, Pico mountain at 2,351 metres), a flora with almost 60 endemic plant species making the islands a natural botanic garden of interest and a very friendly and accommodating people. The Azores also boasts several *Unesco* world heritage sites (AH, landscape of vineyards on Pico) and has a reputation as one of the top whale (and dolphin) watching destinations in the world.

Kind regards.

J. Freitas de Lima