



SICI Workshop Report

Legal framework and Inspection Procedures

Tirana, 24-25 November 2016



Executive summary

The SICI workshop “*Legal framework and Inspection Procedures*” was held on 24-25 November 2016 in Tirana, Albania. The Albanian Inspectorate of Education welcomed 56 participants coming from 15 nationalities: France, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Portugal, Serbia, Estonia, Sweden, Scotland, Austria, Albania, Netherlands, Turkey, Cyprus, and Montenegro. The workshop took place in the conference rooms of Hotel Mondial in Tirana, where foreign participants were also accommodated.

The first day of the workshop was focused on plenary discussions, while the second day was field work. For the school visits all participants, according to respective preferences, were divided into three small groups and sent to school visits in kindergarten, pre-secondary and secondary schools.

The aim of the workshop was to share practices and evaluate whether participants can be of any support to each other experiences, as well as stimulate discussion among SICI members and other delegates, with a view to sharing expertise and developing further insights into inspection and its outcomes. The Albanian National Inspectorate of Education chose the workshop theme, believing that sharing within the legal subject of school inspection will help us build together a better education system for our children in the future.

Areas of particular focus within the workshop program included:

- *Legal framework supporting and restricting the effectiveness of inspectorates.*
- *Improving public schools through the accurate legal framework implementation.*
- *Legal framework and inspection procedures in Albania.*

Plenary discussions and School visits

Day 1

The workshop was officially opened by the Albanian Chief Inspector, Mr. Bashkim Muça. In his speech he emphasized the importance of having this workshop in Albania and also the importance of bringing together 15 nationalities to discuss upon topics of particular interest to all participants, in terms of experience exchanges, in the framework of inspection procedures of educational institutions, in different education systems and backgrounds. After greeting all members and delegates, Mr. Muça stated that even though we have different systems, what unites us is the mission of quality improvement of the educational service.

Mrs. Nora Malaj, Dep. Minister of Education in Albania, greeted the event and emphasized that it has been important for her to see the Albanian Education Inspectorate to integrate into the SICI structure, because this is another step in the long run of improving our education system in Albania. This conference opens the doors to future activities and it is also the responsibility of the hosting country to develop further the relations built during this time.

The SICI President, Mrs. Chantal Manes, welcomed all participants and said that she is honored to be leading a structure like SICI. She said that she has been part of this structure for a long time and has seen its development through different times and stages. With the hope that the workshop will be a support to all participating countries, she closed her

speech by admitting that she puts trust in all countries, that this workshop will be an added value to our work.

Plenary discussions were held the first day of the workshop. Key speakers focused on different topics within the legal framework of inspection procedures, bringing on respective experiences from their countries.

Mr. Shkëlqim Hajdari, General Inspector of Albania, focused on the general legal inspection rules and procedures within the country. Their vision is to increase coordination and cooperation between the Central Inspectorate and the Education Inspectorate of Albania, in order to ensure as a final positive result an effective "*e-inspection*" portal, aiming the abolition of unnecessary administrative burden and costs in order to achieve law enforcement on business activity, as well as a greater commitment to reduce the phenomenon of informal economy and fight against corruption.

Mr. Bashkim Muça focused his presentation on legal procedures of the Education Inspectorate in Albania. Based on laws such as: *Inspection in the Republic of Albania, Pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania, Organization and functioning of the State Inspectorate of Education, Normative provisions* and ongoing Orders and instructions released by the Minister of Education and Sports, the Inspectorate inspects public, private, religious and complementary educational institutions in the pre-university educational system, carrying evaluating, controlling, consultative and Informative-reporting functions. Mr. Muça gave a general overview of the standard formats of inspection, in strong collaboration with the Central Inspectorate, which are: the Inspection Authorization, the inspection record, the final decision and the decision of the appeal commission.

Mr. Gert Janaqi, Director of the Education Development Institute in Albania, held a presentation about the mission of the Institute as a large support in providing to the Ministry of Education and Sports and to the educational institutions of all levels of expertise and consultation a professional guide, based on research results of study and practice within the education system.

Mrs. Rezana Vrapı, Director of the National Agency of Examinations, informed about the evaluation reforms in the education system in Albania. She put focus on the development of evaluations and examinations, standardized in all pre-university education, with the aim of improving students' achievements and seeking constancy when it comes to results. Among national examination procedures, one of the main points of discussion was the PISA results, which help compare Albania to other countries in the region and beyond.

In his presentation, Mr. Petr Drábek, presented the experience of the Czech School Inspectorate, starting with a general overview and statistics, focusing further on Czech regions and Regional Inspectorates. He provided information regarding the structure of the Czech Education and Inspection systems, evaluation criteria and scale, outcomes of inspection activities, etc. Mr. Drábek gave an important insight with regards to professionalism tools, ethics and insurance of credibility and reliability.

Mr. Joa Baum presented the Luxembourg case, calling his country a small one, but with huge challenges. Following an overview of the education system, he focused on the legal framework, the structure of the Inspectorate, as well as the work in progress with two new developments within the reform: the Regional Directorate and the National Observatory.

Mrs. Ana Pejić discussed about school improvement through inspection and legal framework in Serbia. Among several topics, her point of focus was the external evaluation, arguing regarding support, concerns, challenges and conclusions of annual reports (including support and restrictions).

According to MM. Patrice Blemont, inspectors are leaders of change. In his presentation he gave a general overview of the French experience, with two general inspectorates operating. He argued about procedures, goals and had clear focus on what could and should change in the future.

It was interesting to hear from Assoc. Prof. Rossitsa Simeonova and Dr. Vanya Kastreva on the project *“Polycentric inspections to evaluate and solve local and context-specific problems”*, which is an EU-funded study on “polycentric inspections”, concerning the test of new inspection methods in Bulgaria. Prof. Simeonova stated that there are four countries having examples of schools working in partnership and Inspectorates of Education that face the challenge of adapting their inspection methods to a networked education system. 10 schools in Bulgaria are developing peer review models and the Inspectorate of Education aims to adapt their inspections to the topics and outcomes of these peer review models. They have suggested ways in which inspections can change their working methods to fit a more polycentric education system.

Following plenary sessions participants had the opportunity to be part of a one hour City Tour by bus and as a final event of day one, a Gala Dinner was held at “Sofra e Ariut” Restaurant.

Day 2

The first half of the second day participants were divided in three small groups in order to visit a kindergarten, a pre-secondary school and a secondary school. They had the chance to get a picture of how schools are organized in Albania and compare situations to respective countries.

School visits Participants in each group		
Kindergarten	Primary Pre-secondary school	Secondary school
Sigre Kuiv Jacqueline de Veth Kaidi Maask Eniana Veli Majlinda Lika	Joa Baum Ana Costa Pinto Ana Pejić Mare Tereping Stina Sterner Radovan Popovic Vesna Bulatovic Anton Gojcaj Joke Van Putten Panayiotis Kyrou Hille Voolaid Dena Grillo Eva Hoxha Rudina Spahiu Shemi Muça	Chantal Manes Petr Drábek Rossitsa Simeonova Vanya Kastreva Kata Simic Mistic Brown Alistar Axel Zafoschnig Mariana Lozanova Banu Çelik Mehmet Birdal Ömer Lütfi Gençoglu Teuta Çobaj Majlinda Ucaj Miranda Kurti Albana Çelaj Anastas Kacori Uzri Alku

Meetings in schools lasted from 09:00 to 11:00. Back at the conference venue, participants went into group discussions.

Kindergarten 42

Participants in the kindergarten group discussed about Albanian kindergarten practices of inspection compared to Netherlands and Estonia. While some of the inspection procedures are nearly the same regarding pedagogical and educational quality, care and support for children, cooperation with parents and process evaluation, they found differences when it comes to reporting (Albania 10 days, Netherlands 3 weeks and Estonia 2 months).

Regarding the frequency of inspection, both Estonia and Albania have a standard of 10% of schools and kindergartens every year, while the Netherlands only when concerns are raised. Infrastructure is a matter of inspection in Albania, while it is not in Estonia and Netherlands. In Albania re-inspection is carried out.

Numbers of teachers in kindergartens differs from country to country.

- *Albania: 2 teachers for 25-40 children.*
- *Estonia: 2 teachers for 20 children and*
- *Netherlands: 2 teachers for 16 children.*

Pre-Secondary School “Edith Durham”

This is one of the oldest schools in Tirana, opened in 1945, and also one of the 26 schools in Albania piloting the new curricula based on competences. 1525 students (grades preschool – 9 grade for the academic year 2016 - 2017) are divided in two groups, one in the morning 08:00 - 13.05 and one in the afternoon 12.30 - 16.30. The school is inspected for the last time during February 2016 and evaluated “Very good”.

During our meeting, the school director held a general presentation of the school, including strengths and weaknesses. Several questions were asked in regards and participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas. Some of the main topics discussed following the presentation were related to rules, which are worked out together as a community, final exams after primary level, annual development plan of the school, external evaluation (once in four years in Albania), weaknesses and strengths.

Some of the differences highlighted are related to number of pupils per class, classroom space, timing (from 45 to 55 minutes in different countries), teaching weeks (25 – 28 – 31), human resources, monitoring and evaluation, children with special needs, medical service.

Regarding external evaluation, this differs from country to country. While there are countries which do not give recommendations following the inspection, others do so and moreover, some countries inspect teachers individually, others by fields.

While in Albania headmasters have teaching hours by law, this is not present in many other countries. The group visited the school, several classrooms and had the opportunity to great some of the teachers.

Secondary School “Qemal Stafa”

The third group visited the first secondary school in Tirana, opened in 1925, which is also an elite school of the Albanian national education. There are currently 1300 students. The

school applies the curricula with competences for the 10th graders and the curricula with compulsory and free choice for 11th and 12th graders.

The headmaster led a presentation that gave a general overview of the school and focused on activities, events in collaboration with the community, strengths and weaknesses.

Some of the similarities highlighted are: proud of young people achievements, emphasis on attainment and improving, positive ethos, blend of teacher-led learning, curriculum and flexibility, support from inspectors, inspection based on the will to help improving and further development.

Some of the differences highlighted are related to pupils' intake, staff recruitment, different supply/demand, commitment to take responsibility for the community and demographics.

One of the issues discussed was related to pupils' intake – while in Albania it is defined by law who is going to which school, this is almost an unknown procedure in other countries, where there is flexible intake into schools.

One of the questions raised was the fact that students spoke fluent English. It was explained that this is also due to an investment of parents, who bring their children in private courses and English teaching since the age of 8-9.

The group visited the school, several classrooms and had the opportunity to greet some of the teachers.

Closing of workshop

Mr. Bashkim Muça thanked all participants for the fruitful workshop and emphasized again the importance of coming together in discussion with specific challenges as an effort of finding new ways of contributing to each other's solutions. He said that Albania might be a small country; its education system is still improving, but this is what happens with all education systems. *"It is a privilege to having heard many approaches from different colleagues and we should aim for reinforcing our common work, by exchanging ideas and experiences"*, said Mr. Muça. He stated that is a challenge to be part of SICI, but at the same time, it is our great honor that leads us to further commitment.

Mrs. Chantal Manes expressed her gratitude for a good workshop. Stating that she came to Albania thoughtful regarding the workshop theme, she said that now she has got a few important thoughts in regards. She stated that procedures might be different in different countries, but the most important thing is that these procedures have to be transparent and clear for all schools. *"The presentation from our Bulgarian colleagues was of important value,"* said the SICI President; it is *"food for thought"* which shows that procedures and framework need to be flexible everywhere. She concluded her speech by leaving a message to all SICI members: *"Our mission is to build knowledge wherever we work, for the same purpose"*.

According to Mrs. Manes the next step for SICI is appealing to nominate a national coordinator and each member can nominate. Following her speech Mrs. Manes announced that the next SICI workshop will be held in Prague, Czech Republic on 28-29 March 2017, and she encouraged participants to register for attendance.

Evaluation of the workshop

An evaluation form was sent out to all participants, in order to assess the workshop and see what can be improved in the future. 35 participants handed out their evaluation forms following the workshop. The table above shows answers in percentages.

EVALUATION FORMS - ANSWERS					
Workshop general comments	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, the days were well organized.	82.86%	17.14%			
The information gained met my expectations.	74.29%	11.43%	14.29%		
I am satisfied with the aim and objectives of the workshop.	62.86%	37.14%			
The workshop was well-structured and provided excellent information.	54.29%	45.71%			
The workshop provided an excellent opportunity to learn from and exchange experiences with other countries.	65.71%	34.29%			
Quality of plenary sessions, group sessions, activities and speakers	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Plenary discussions were relevant to me.	68.57%	31.43%			
Group discussions were relevant to me.	74.29%	14.29%	11.43%		
The assigned time for each session was appropriate.	38.57%	47.14%	14.29%		
Questions were handled to my satisfaction, giving concise and informative replies.	82.86%	11.43%	5.71%		
There was enough variety to maintain interest throughout all sessions.	57.14%	25.71%	11.43%		
School visits were inspiring and well organized.	100%				
Workshop logistics	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, the workshop was well organized.	80.00%	20.00%			
The material provided was informative.	51.43%	48.57%			
Hotel layout, accommodation and services met my expectations.	60.00%	28.57%	11.43%		
The food was good.	100%				
Time management during the workshop was optimal.	62.86%	34.29%	2.86%		
Leisure time was well organized (City tour, Gala dinner).	100%				
Workshop outcome	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I gained new insight about legal framework and inspection procedures in different countries.	65.71%	34.29%			
The information gained will be useful/applicable in my work.	57.14%	28.57%	14.29%		
Overall, the day was worthwhile.	94.29%	5.71%			
I identified opportunities for future collaborations with other colleagues.	65.71%	34.29%			
I would recommend participation.	57.14%	42.86%			

Conclusions

Nowadays, in the globalization era, both standard and accountability become prevalent in the practical establishment of the school external evaluation system, where our inspectors play a crucial role. This workshop was an added value, an effort to improve the inspection procedures in different countries. Through the correct implementation of legal procedures, the role of the inspection process can be understandable, within the quality improvement of educational services.

Annexes

- *Workshop agenda*
- *List of participants*
- *Key speakers' presentations (e-version)*

- *Workshop poster and banner*
- *Pictures*