



WEDNESDAY 19TH OF NOVEMBER: CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Before the cultural programme started the organising team came together to prepare. We are ready!

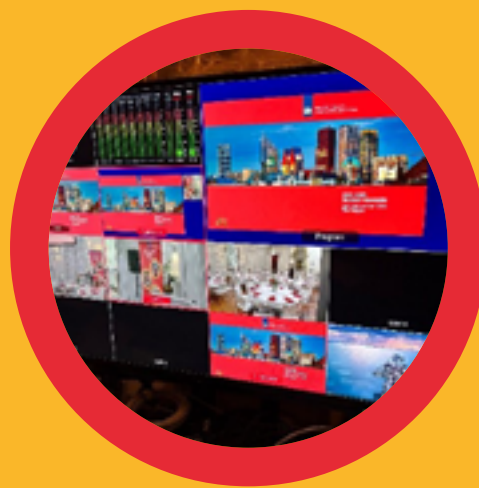
We gathered at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, also known as the Hoftoren, for the kick-off presentation at the 14th floor with a beautiful view of The Hague.



Strategic Advisor Simon Fritschij gave a presentation about the history and culture of The Hague. He told us how The Hague started as residence to the count of Holland in the 13th century and became the home to the government of the Dutch Republic in 1584. Remarkably, the Binnenhof in The Hague is the oldest parliamentary complex in the world still in use. Today, The Hague is the international city of justice and peace, housing many international organisations and courts.

Next, we walked in small groups along some of the highlights of The Hague, from the Hoftoren to the Mauritshuis. We encountered the Malieveld, the Escher Museum, Kneuterdijk Palace, the Kloosterkerk, the statue of Johan de Witt, the Prison Gate, the Binnenhof and the Hofvijver. In the Mauritshuis we had a chance to admire beautiful paintings from Vermeer, Rembrandt and others with a guide who enriched our knowledge with some historical facts. We concluded the day with a lovely 3 course diner at Luden. We talked, laughed and had some wine.





THURSDAY 20TH OF NOVEMBER: DAY 1 OF THE CONFERENCE

Before everyone arrived, the project team prepared the last things. The tables and livestream are ready! After registering and getting some coffee, the conference day begins.

We started off with multiple welcoming speeches. Deputy Chief Inspector Ria Westendorp and SICI President Janie McManus welcomed us and reminded us of the importance of coming together. Ria spoke about the vital role of inspectorates in a changing world with complex challenges such as climate change, migration and polarization. As these challenges enter our classrooms, Ria emphasized the importance of civic education, to teach pupils to think critically, engage respectfully, and stand up for shared values. These issues are shared across Europe, as well as teacher shortages and declining basic skills. Therefore, SICI's continued collaboration is as important as ever. By learning, improving, and connecting together, we strengthen education for all our students and help shape the democratic, peaceful, and resilient Europe that they deserve.

Looking back at the 2025 theme year (Inspecting in a rapidly changing world)

Together, we looked back on the SICI workshops of 2025. Suzana Gjergji told us about the workshop in April in **Prishtinë**, Kosovo, where we delved into the topic of inspection skills. We first learned about the education system of Kosovo and the challenges it faces. After, we received great insights into the skills of inspectors through presentations from the Inspectorates of Kosovo, Flanders, England and the Netherlands. During the presentations we learned about the great variety of skills inspectors need, about how inspectors are selected, trained and supported and how to do this in a transparent way. The next day participants collaborated in groups to answer questions about the use of ICT and educational assessments. The cultural programme was a beautiful trip to Peja, where participants could enjoy the mountains and a waterfall.

After that, Mari Mgeladze spoke about the workshop in **Tbilisi**, Georgia. This workshop was about inspecting international schools. We learned about the Georgian school system, and also about the European School System and Luxembourg's evaluation system, which promotes a pluralistic and multilingual education model. The topic was also discussed in a panel by Bavaria, Belgium, Wales and Georgia. One of the main challenges lies in aligning international programmes with national standards while maintaining their global outlook. Before the workshop, we enjoyed a wonderful cultural programme including a guided walking tour in the old city of Tbilisi, a visit to the cathedral of Mtscheta and dinner at a winery.

Finally, Margit Schmidbauer from Germany described the workshop in **Nuremberg**. The topic was the essential role of inspection and measuring impact. As the external evaluation of Bavaria will be suspended and further developed in the next school year, it has become very important to be able to demonstrate the value of inspection. This was attempted through presentations of multiple countries, in which shared goals, using data, measuring impact, increasing efficiency, principles of regulation and policy theory were discussed. A presentation from the OECD explained how effective regulatory delivery, through outcome-oriented, risk-based, human-centred and data-driven approaches, can transform inspections and compliance into meaningful real-world impact and improved public trust. The cultural programme included a visit to the Albrecht Dürer's House, the residence of one of the most famous Renaissance painters.

Three new members present themselves

Sevda Ibrahimova presented **Azerbaijan's** Institute of Education and its role as the nation's key research and policy body, responsible for curriculum development, large-scale assessments, innovation, and extensive school inspection processes. These have expanded from pilot phases to full national monitoring. Its motivation for joining SICI centers on accessing global best practices, staying aligned with emerging educational trends, strengthening evidence-based quality assurance, and enhancing professional development through peer learning.

The presentation by Althea Edwards-Boothe outlines the role and impact of the **Cayman Islands'** Office of Education Standards (OES), highlighting its development of rigorous inspection frameworks, its three completed inspection cycles, and its contribution to raising educational quality across the islands. It also explains the OES's motivation to join SICI, emphasizing benefits such as professional development, access to research, benchmarking, and improved quality assurance.

The presentation by Vagharshak Matikyan outlines how **Armenia's** Education Inspection Body oversees quality across preschool, general, and vocational education nationwide. This is supported by a multidisciplinary team and a growing program of inspections, advisory work, and professional development. It highlights the country's goals for SICI membership—gaining expert validation, international methodologies, and training—while offering to share Armenia's risk-based tools and collaborative research expertise.

The **Business meeting** consisted out of reviewing policies and strategy, reporting on activities and cooperation, discussing the strategic plan for 2026–2030, elections for the Executive Committee, and the financial report including budgets for 2025–2026. We look back on the Strategic Plan for 2021–2025, which focused on improving inspectorates and professional competencies of inspectors, strengthening cooperation between inspectorates and active participation in international debates on education quality and evaluation. The activities of last year included job shadowing, study visits, participation in European networks and projects involving skills, AI, and quality improvement. Other activities were branding efforts including a new website and updated inspection profiles and the National coordinator forums and workshop guidelines. Then, the calendar of activities for 2025–2026 was introduced with the new theme: “Future-Ready Evaluation – Innovation, Improvement & System Leadership”. Finally, the Chief inspectors voted for the Inspectorates of Azerbaijan, Cayman Islands and Armenia to become members of SICI.

The Strategic Plan for 2026–2030 was presented which strives to continue advancing governance, cooperation, and professional inspection standards. Updates on the statutes, financial structure, liaison roles and guidelines followed. The Chief inspectors voted on the re-election of some EC-members. Then, the Financial report of 2024 and the budget for 2025 were discussed. The auditors (Malta, Norway, Germany-Bavaria) have approved financial statements and support the proposed 2026 budget. The Chief inspectors voted to confirm the auditors for 2026.



After this, 14-year-old Esther Wieldraaijer recites a beautiful poem from her published book called *Deep from the heart: teenage poetry*. A young person expressing herself so wonderfully reminds us what the world is like for a teenager.

We had some typically Dutch sandwiches for lunch and then we took a group photo with our SICI 30 Years hats.



After lunch we had the **National Coordinators meeting**. During the meeting, new National Coordinators introduced themselves. We also discussed how we can improve the workshops and monthly meetings. Most of us would like more structure in the open forums and the possibility to discuss questions that are prepared beforehand. We also talked about how the SICI workshops are organised and whether we want more or less of them or more online possibilities.

New this year were the **Strategic Theme Tables for Chief Inspectors**. For the first time, they discussed the specific dilemmas and responsibilities associated with their roles in small groups. During the round tables they discussed the following themes:

1. Inclusion, Equity, and Interculturality in Education
2. Scientific Evidence and Proven Practice in Educational Inspection
3. Building Trust and Coordination Across the Education System
4. Flexibility and Innovation in a Changing Educational Landscape

The small groups allowed for thorough exchange on the topics.

In a panel discussion with six former SICI presidents, we reflected on 30 years of European inspection developments. They witnessed SICI grow not only in membership but also in content. Topics such as research frameworks, enforcement and stimulating inspections, (self-) evaluation, and the professionalisation of inspectors have been on the SICI agenda from the very beginning. By discussing these topics we have helped shape each other. Reference was also made to Adrian Gray's excellent book, "[European School Inspection and Evaluation: History and Principles](#)," which he wrote six years ago at the request of SICI.



In the evening a bus brought us to VET school ROC Mondriaan, where our gala dinner was held. This school has a restaurant run by students, as well as a hotel and bar. During our 3 course meal, students performed beautiful songs. They even sang opera. This was very impressive and the dinner created the perfect opportunity for conversation and exchange.

FRIDAY 21TH OF NOVEMBER: DAY 2 OF THE CONFERENCE

We started off our last day with the last multiplier event of the **STESSIE project**. This project helps schools to determine its inclusivity and provides tools to improve this. This is a large project in which many countries and researches participated, including the University of Ghent. It is explained how the project came to be, how defining inclusivity is complex and how they made sure it is accessible to all. The tool is already translated in 13 languages. We also get to take a look at the website and learn how we can use the tool ourselves.



After a break, Janie McManus introduced **the new theme: Future-Ready Evaluation – Innovation, Improvement & System Leadership**. This theme asks from us to think ahead, but also to reflect on ourselves. How do we stay relevant and responsive to new challenges? To be future-ready means to be able to listen, learn and adapt. Janie ends her speech talking about the balance between accountability and trust, which the next speaker, Pedro de Bruyckere, continues on.

The keynote speaker is **Pedro de Bruyckere**, a researcher, professor, writer and public speaker. He is known for busting myths about teaching and education. Pedro De Bruyckere's presentation focuses on the importance of academic and pedagogical freedom in education, which are both essential yet never absolute. These freedoms often come under pressure when crises increase demands for control and accountability.

Current international trends show teachers feel burdened by administrative workload, feel excluded from decision-making outside of their classrooms, and experience reform fatigue due to constant change without support. True pedagogical freedom means justified decision-making grounded in knowledge, ethics, accountability, learning goals, and learner needs. He emphasizes that while data is often treated as "the new gold," meaningful data use starts with asking the right questions and seeking only information that helps solve real problems. Safeguarding professional freedom requires shared responsibility, stronger professionalism, clear boundaries, and transparency across policy, institutions, and individuals, reinforcing the final message that freedom without shared agreements becomes arbitrariness, while agreements without freedom become bureaucracy.

Then the **workshops and General Assembly for 2026** were introduced.

The first workshop of the year will be in **Cardiff, Wales**. They introduced their workshop by showing a nice video about the ways in which AI can be used to make the inspection process more efficient.

The next workshop will be in **Plovdiv, Bulgaria**. During this workshop we will learn about and discuss school self-evaluation, digital reform and building trust and dialogue between schools and inspectors.

The last workshop of 2026 will be in **Glasgow, Scotland**. This workshop will focus on embedding the learner voice in policy, practice and education inspection.

The General Assembly of 2026 will be held in **Lisbon, Portugal**. Lisbon is an accessible city with lots of history, culture and art. It is an innovative place with wonderful food, where we will come together to look back on 2026 and look ahead to 2027.