

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the South Eastern Europe Group of Experts in Quality Assurance in General Education

24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Belgrade, Serbia

## MINUTES

Day 1, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019

The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the South Eastern Europe Group of Experts in Quality Assurance in General Education was opened by the introductory remarks by Ms Tina Šarić, director of ERI SEE, and Mr Herman Franssen, Inspector of primary education and coordinator of international affairs of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education, on behalf of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). The meeting was organized in Belgrade, Serbia, and attended by the representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. (For full list of participants please see Annex 1).

Ms Šarić reminded the participants of the goals of the meeting. The first day is dedicated to the systems of external evaluation in the EU member state (the Netherlands) and SEE participating economies, and the second day on the organization of the work and models of external evaluators. The purpose is to exchange experiences and knowledge about various models that exist in the countries and learn from each other's best practices and challenges, as well as to plan further cooperation. Mr Franssen's input is valuable, having in mind his long-standing experience in various aspects of external evaluation and inspection.

Mr Franssen greeted the participants on behalf of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) and emphasized the importance of peer learning and events that enable meetings of experts.

Ad 1)

Mr Franssen presented the practices of the Netherlands in the organization of the system of external evaluation of institutions. (More information about the presentation can be found in the Annex 2 – Presentations – external evaluation). It was explained during the presentation that in the Netherlands inspection is the term used for regulatory aspects – legality of actions in terms of content-related aspects and organizational aspects; and that it also encompasses most of the elements that SEE countries imply under the term external evaluation, such as: measuring the institution's status and progress against the proscribed standards, evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, implementation of curricula, schools' achievements, involvement of community and students in the work of schools, etc.

The Dutch system of inspections/external evaluation is organized by evaluating the work of the School boards, (professionalized bodies governing one or more schools and in charge of the school's performance), as well as schools themselves. Among others, Mr Franssen emphasized the importance of

the independence of the inspectors' work and the use of the results from inspection at the state level (in the form of public reports, submitted to the Government), on the basis of which decision on various policy actions regarding quality of education can be made.

#### **Ad 2) Presentation of the systems of External Evaluation of Institutions per SEE economies**

Representatives of Albania, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were held in the first round, all describing different aspects of quality assurance. Albania focused on the external evaluation system which is currently being reformed, together with the system of self-assessment. Croatia focused on the external evaluation of knowledge through state matura, and on curricular reform which is currently being implemented at primary school and secondary school level with the goal of providing students with the learning outcomes relevant for real life. Bosnia and Herzegovina emphasized the development of the core curriculum, developed by the Agency for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, as a Quality Assurance tool setting the learning outcomes for students across the country. However the evaluation systems depend on internally-established entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **Ad 3) Presentation of the systems of External Evaluation of Institutions per SEE economies - continuation**

North Macedonia presented the system of external evaluation which is divided between two institutions, of which one is in charge of integral evaluation (State Educational Inspectorate), and the other (Bureau for Development of Education) in charge of aspect of external evaluation dealing with the teachers' work – teaching and learning. There is also a strong correlation between internal and external evaluation which follow similar methodologies.

Moldova presented its system of internal and external evaluation which is currently being set up and piloted. The external evaluation, among others, includes the national quality standards defined and the process for external evaluation committees being regulated. Montenegro is implementing external and internal evaluation according to the methodological framework set-up. The schools are obliged to produce and action plan after the external evaluation which is performed once every four years.

More about the systems can be seen in Annex 2, Presentations – external evaluation.

#### **Ad 4) Group work**

Participants were asked to work in groups (per 2 economies) and discuss potential regional activities and themes that can contribute to national developments; national practices they want to share with other colleagues and practices from other colleagues they want to learn more about.

#### **Ad 5) Wrap-up and conclusions:**

Participants showed great interest in continuing with regional exchanges and cooperation.

- There is a potential for the regional working group to continue working on a guide, or guidelines, handbooks, covering different topics and aspects of external evaluation, such as: terminology

used, risk management, correlation between internal and external evaluation; how to implement individual talks with teachers and how to give verbal feedback after the external evaluation process, what to share with the teachers and what to communicate to the principals after the external evaluation.

- Joint recommendation on the greater involvement of parents can also be developed
- Joint tools would be a framework guide for all the countries to use as recommendations or useful ideas and practices that can be implemented at national levels
- Since some economies already have guidelines, the existing ones can be modified and improved so as to be useful not only for one national context, but for multiple contexts
- Study visits are also seen as useful for exchange of experiences
- Job shadowing (participating in the external evaluation performed by teams from another country) are seen as beneficial and most useful
- Participants were also interested in the practices of having teachers trained to be evaluators and would want to learn more about it
- Participants also suggested creating template documents that can be used: annual planning, preparing reports, procedures and rules to be followed when organizing external evaluation
- Sharing the material on selection of external evaluators; trainings, recommendations
- On-line systems assisting in the organization of external evaluation process are also seen as a theme of joint interest

Apart from all the above, as potential further regional activities, the areas of further particular interest were identified: correlation between internal and external evaluation, and how to improve the quality of internal evaluation. The participants emphasized the importance of curricular reforms – what is a good way to implement the new curricula so as to ensure the greater quality of education.

Another important topic to further explore is the impact of external evaluation.

Day 2, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019

#### **Ad 1) Practices of the Netherlands in organizing the systems of external evaluators' work**

Mr Franssen explained the system of inspectors/external evaluators as it is set up in the Netherlands. There is a job profile defined as well as the knowledge and competences needed (knowledge about the education sector, research skills, data analysis skills, project management skills, writing skills, ability to judge, persuasiveness etc.), all needed for a person to be a good inspector. Inspectors inspect the quality of education processes, acquisition of learning outcomes, compliance with legislation and regulations, and other aspects. He also described the process of initial training, lasting for 5 months, and further professional development of inspectors. For more information, please see Annex 3 – Presentations on external evaluators.

#### **Ad 2). Presentation of the system of external evaluators per economies**

Serbia presented its system of external evaluators. In Serbia, teams of external evaluators are defined by the ministry, and involve licensed evaluators that can come from the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, Ministry, local school authority, external expert, or even a school. All evaluators are licenced after passing through an initial training.

Montenegro described its system in which evaluators are the employees of the Bureau for development of education and are trained for this profession. There are some general criteria defined and the evaluators are selected by the state body for public administration. The trainings for evaluators are based on the use of mentors – more experienced colleagues; however the criteria for evaluating the evaluators are established only for internal evaluators.

Montenegro raised the issue of evaluating and reporting on the individual teachers' performance, or on group quality of teaching. Most of the countries focus on group quality of the teaching process and do not mention individual teachers in the external evaluation reports.

In North Macedonia standards are defined for external evaluators at state level, and at the level of bodies in charge of external evaluation. The reports can also give feedback on individual performance of teachers. Evaluators have opportunity for continuous professional development and they are not monitored in their work during the process of external evaluation at schools.

In Croatia, the system of internal evaluation is being piloted, with the use of critical friends who are outsourced. There are initial trainings on the culture of quality. The function of external evaluator does not exist as such, however there are supervisors which focus on individual performance of individual teachers and are focusing on the content and methodological approach of teachers.

In Moldova, there are standards and profiles defined on who can be a member of the external evaluation committee; however processes are yet to be implemented.

### Ad 3) Group work

The participants were asked to discuss on potential regional cooperation in the area of external evaluators that would support their national needs and processes.

### Ad 4) Conclusions

Participants concluded the following:

- The cooperation at regional level should be intensified and expanded and should take a form of a project
- The themes to be covered by this project should include: job shadowing during the external evaluation process; cooperation agreements
- Training of trainers for external evaluation (training of master trainers at regional level that can further train the external evaluators at national level)
- Process of initial training of external evaluators
- Monitoring of the work of evaluators and receiving feedback on their work

- IT system on planning the external evaluation, reporting, use of results and data, analysis of data, data management etc.
- Trainings on giving feedback to teachers, reports and evaluators
- Study visits
- Supporting documents on practices regarding the external evaluators (questionnaires, standards, job descriptions, selecting the external evaluators etc.)
- Development of the quality culture, with the focus on internal evaluation and quality teams at school levels
- Motivation of external evaluators
- Motivation of teacher to participate in building the quality culture

#### Ad 5) Conclusions

Ms Šarić thanked the participants for their active participation and dedication, and Mr Franssen for his support, great inputs, contributions, and participation in discussions.

Ms Šarić also announced that the further steps for regional cooperation would be exploring potentials for a joint project that would encompass the ideas resulting from this workshop.

Mr Franssen also expressed his satisfaction with the workshop, ideas, exchanges that took place, and many useful ideas for further cooperation. He also expressed his interest to be involved in the further activities of this group.

The meeting started at 8.30 and ended at 13.00.