

Reaction of Sietar Netherlands board
on Sietar Europe Vision 2025 – discussion document
March 12th, 2015

Dear strategic team members,

First of all we would like to thank you for taking an enthusiastic initiative to conceptualize and define a potential new strategy for Sietar Europe. Some members might disagree with all the facts sketched in the extensive SWOT analysis of this document, but others will also agree that because of all the elements summarized in this SWOT-analysis we must formulate a new strategy for Sietar Europe. Your team made a great effort to include valuable background information on several global trends that simultaneously affirm the need that many new generation of Sietar members share: to turn a great new strategy of Sietar EU into great performances.

Sietar Netherlands (SNL) made the document available for the members and stimulated a discussion on our LinkedIn group. We have received very few responses, but the feedbacks we have received were valuable ones. Few years ago we organised a meeting to define our SNL strategy, followed by a discussion in our general assembly. Unfortunately it did not result in a clear strategy for SNL yet. Those strategic sessions helped us though to narrow down the gap between where we stands now and the future we visualized as a team.

This time we discussed (online and in a board meeting) the content of the SEU strategy 2025 document and discern basically 2 views:

- Some members see Sietar as an umbrella, where members meet and exchange ideas/literature and experiences. Sietar is a society, formed by its members and we strongly feel ownership. All the work is done by us, members, voluntarily and free of charge. Everyone with interest in the topic is welcome to join; we support each other and respect each other opinions. SEU is a place where we meet members from other countries;
- Some members see Sietar as an organisation of professionals, where members meet in order to improve their professional skills, and network with colleagues. Also customers are welcome at meetings which might be interesting for them. Some members follow courses to be able to show there level of competence, while others work on branding of the profession, improve brand awareness, lobbying, participating in public debate, or fine tuning the code of conduct. SEU organises professionalization, branding and lobbying on EU-level.

Most members will position themselves somewhere in the middle of these two points of view. We as the board of SNL got the impression that the old Sietar culture is more on the 'umbrella' side and that the current tendency of SNL is to move towards the second point of view. Also we notice that in general most members of the older generation Sietar members prefer to stick to the umbrella concept and the new generation Sietar members are more in favour of a new professional organisation-style.

As SNL board we realise that both sides includes valuable elements that should be cherished. That is why we want to combine elements of both concepts in a potential new strategy of SNL and SEU. We furthermore will continue to motivate our members to meet each other half way, so that we can soon settle for a combined new strategy for SNL and SEU.

We should continue to organise professional and interesting meetings on topics related to intercultural communication, but should also remain open and responsive to all persons who are interested in the topics we tackle (you don't have to be certified before joining) during our events. Yet the plea for

stronger branding of the profession, for lobbying and participating in the public debate, and the introduction of a licence and/ or certification for the intercultural related professions should be also supported and shared among our members.

Another point of concern is finding a suitable financial structure for SEU in the near future. A great deal of the SNL members do not want Sietar NL or EU to become an enterprise, as it will at the end become a competitor for its own members. This opinion was formed due to the fact of extensive use of Business Economics words and concepts in the strategic document, and the phrase formulated in question 5 “how should SEU make money”. Yet applications of these concepts are very helpful for *not for the profit* organisations as well. So SEU should never develop itself into a competitor for its own members, but could maybe develop itself into the type of organisation that would be able to apply for EU-funds to cover the more professional appearance and actions of SEU. At this stage we see this discussion as the beginning of a long journey towards a mission and strategy that suits the majority of the members of Sietar EU.

In conclusion we would like to express our gratitude once more for this valuable document and would like to be informed of the next stage of this endeavour to formulate a new strategy for Sietar EU. We on our turn will keep you informed of the developments in the Netherlands and hope to join you soon in a (virtual) meeting to discuss the content of this document more in depth. Please refer to appendix 1 for detailed information of the strategic meeting we had on this matter, and keep in mind that the opinion which we described in this letter, is of the board of SNL and needs to be discussed and confirmed in our coming general assembly on April 15th.

We trust to have informed you sufficiently herewith.

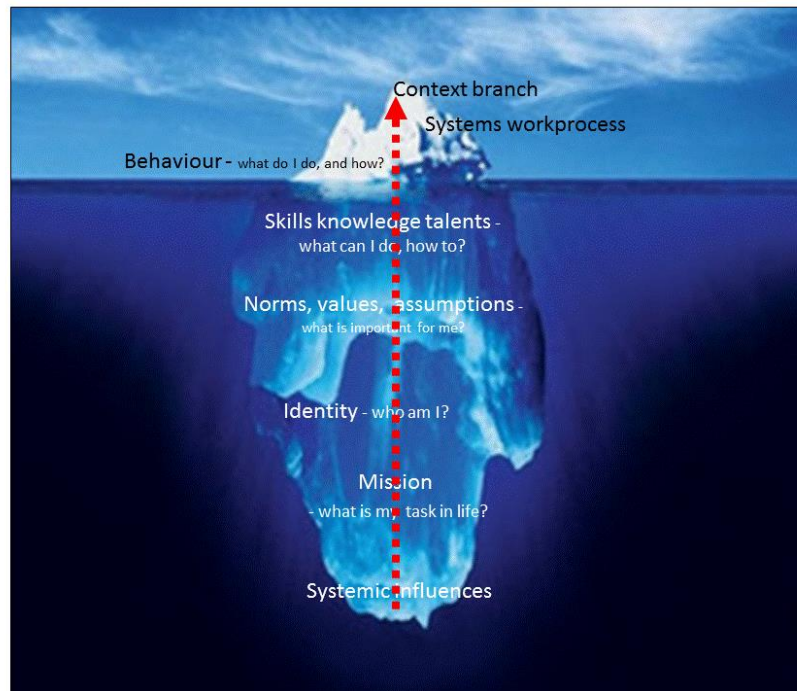
With kind regards on behalf of the board of Sietar Netherlands,

Jacqueline Franssens, chair

Appendix # 1:

In our discussion we used a model to structure our thinking, to quickly discern discussion elements and put them in place. This model combines two theories:

- the Iceberg of McClelland discerning visible behaviour (above water level) as resulting from elements which are under the surface (invisible elements yet they play a significant role, like the Titanic crew who noticed the iceberg but was unaware of the situation under water)
- the model of Bateson/Dilts logical levels of learning, but turned upside down: in this model each level influences the next level. If learning stops, the motivation to stop learning is to be found in the next level.



Without the aim to be complete, the following elements formed part of our discussion:

Systemic influences	<i>(we didn't discuss but these form the energy / motivation and constellation of the persons who founded Sietar in the US in the late seventies; the reason why, the circumstances they had to deal with; without being aware of this, this origin has influenced Sietar till today)</i>
Mission	<i>A mission will not change over decades: what is my task in life?</i> As Sietar we are THE organisation of professionals in intercultural communication, competences and diversity
Identity	<i>Who am I?</i> Members of Sietar come from a wide spread of professional disciplines and have diverse cultural backgrounds, we share our interest in interculturality, we facilitate in i.c. related issues We discuss i.c.(versus) we are committed to act in case of i.c. complications (<i>opinions differ on this matter</i>)
Assumptions	A persons intercultural competence can be improved by learning and training It is to be avoided that Intercultural differences form the reason of conflict All people need T-competences including intercultural skills to avoid and solve miscommunication (...)

	<p>The very basis of being human is showing respect for others, take the needs seriously from people who differ from me, postponement of judgement, use dialogue, try to understand the point of view of others, and be prepared to switch opinion</p> <p>(..... and many more assumptions)</p>
Competence	<p>Sietar works to upskill its members</p> <p>What attitude, knowledge and skills do all Sietar members have in common</p>