MOVING FORWARD *TOGETHER* WITH CONFIDENCE

PUBLIC REPORT 2020

DUTCH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

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FOREWORD

The pandemic had an enormous impact on everyone during 2020. Fortunately, the RvA was able to adapt to the new situation quickly. I will provide three examples, which you can read more about in this report.

First and foremost, the RvA's core business: granting accreditations based on independent assessments. In dialogue with clients and other stakeholders, a rapid switch was made to digital working and remote assessment. With the right amount of creativity and flexibility, the accreditation process was able to continue regardless in many cases.

The second example concerns the national policy to reverse the pandemic. The cornerstone is testing, testing, testing. But how to ensure sufficient, reliable capacity? This falls precisely within the RvA's expertise. For this reason, the Executive Board offered its assistance to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment at an early stage. This meant that knowledge was contributed so that reliable testing capacity could be optimally deployed.

Thirdly, the RvA also closely examined its own position and its future. Good use was made of the time this year to have discussions with clients and other stakeholders regarding the RvA and the added value of accreditation in the long term. This process, in which the Board of Supervisors was also closely involved, has led to a new mission and vision, and corresponding strategic goals.

The RvA fulfils an important role in the quality infrastructure. In order to maintain this position and to support and stimulate quality development and innovation among clients, the RvA itself also needs to be an innovative organisation with the ability to learn and grow. The RvA has taken up this gauntlet. We wholeheartedly support this ambition and invite you to actively participate in the dialogue with the RvA.

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors,
Yvonne van Rooy, *Chair*

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INTRODUCTION

At the start of 2020, we at the RvA – like many others – had no idea how COVID-19 would dominate our lives. And when we, the Executive Board, landed at Malpensa Airport in Milan in the first week of February for a meeting with our sister organisation Accredia, we were taken aback when 'people in white suits' wanted to take our temperature, while the media was still only reporting on the situation in China. We certainly didn't realise then that this would be the start of online meetings, working from home, and remote assessments. That transition really took some doing.

Our role in the quality arena

We started 2020 with the intention to deepen our direct contact with our clients and other stakeholders. Despite all the restrictions, we believe we have been quite successful in doing so. At the same time, that statement is an open invitation to anyone who has an opinion about our policy or our services. And to have those conversations more widely and in greater depth.

Because it is important to us that we are in touch with all parties in what we call the *quality infrastructure*: the entire playing field of standardisation, conformity assessment via testing, inspection and certification, and accreditation.

The goal is to keep each other on track and to continuously improve that infrastructure.

Moving forward together with confidence

That connection to the quality infrastructure is therefore at the core of this public report. We will take a closer look at the links between standardisation, conformity assessment and accreditation. After all, none of these instruments stands alone. The strength lies in the synergy and in the cycle. This is also reflected in the interviews that give colour to this report. We spoke with Femke Aarts (NEN, Royal Netherlands Standardization Institute), with Dénelise l'Ecluse (BSI) and Roy Rottier (Micro-Analyse Zeeland) and with Arjan de Jong and Annelies Verhulst (both lead assessors at the RvA). Working in collaboration with all stakeholders, our ambition is to increasingly highlight the power of the quality infrastructure. We gladly do our best to bring parties together for this purpose.

Back to 2020. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our colleagues, clients and other stakeholders for their trust, commitment and responsibility. Last year was an exercise in learning to understand each other even better. In our view, we succeeded in that exercise, and we can take what has been learned here into a world and working environment that are changing ever more rapidly.

Joep de Haas and Roeland Nieuweboer
RvA Management Team

CONNECTING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

We are constantly looking for opportunities to strengthen our relationships with our stakeholders. For instance, in 2020 we signed two information protocols: one with the Dutch Data Protection Authority (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens) and one with the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport). Moreover, we strengthened ties with other parties, such as the governmental inspectorates. Together with NEN, we appeared in the RTL Z programme *Doe Maar Duurzaam* where we discussed the value of standardisation, conformity assessment and accreditation. We've also set up powerful administrative dialogues with the Dutch Association of Certification Bodies (NVCI).

1

Confidence, connected

Our ambition is to both maintain and enhance the added value of accreditation in a rapidly changing world. That is why we are working hard on future-proofing the RvA: how can we continue to contribute to a well-functioning international society? The relationships with our stakeholders are a crucial factor in this. For this reason, we want to be proactive in our connections and approachable for discussions about our policy and the services we provide. Together, we can raise the quality playing field to a higher level.

A new mission and vision

Ambitions start with a new mission and vision. A mission and vision that our colleagues, clients and other stakeholders can identify with, and to which they have contributed ideas. We worked with them to formulate that new mission and vision in 2020.

We began with a group of thirty colleagues. Our starting points were often the deeper meaning of words. For example, how can we avoid the tongue-twisting term 'conformity assessment body'? What does 'sustainable' mean to us? And how do we avoid the RvA coming across as moralistic? You have to take into account the impact of language use. The feedback from client meetings, which we have been organising since 2019, provided a lot of support in this process. In semantic discussions, we regularly referred back to what we had heard from clients during those sessions.

WHAT IS OUR NEW MISSION AND VISION?

Citizens and businesses want to be able to have confidence in the quality of products and services. Accreditation is how we underpin that confidence.

We assess the competent, consistent and impartial operations of companies and organisations on a daily basis. These companies and organisations test, inspect and certify. They play a crucial role in the quality of products and services.

We carry out our work in a professional, transparent and unbiased manner. We confirm our confidence via an accreditation declaration. This contributes to a sustainable and well-functioning international society. With open trade and room for innovation.

Making a contribution to better diagnostics with partners in healthcare is what energises me.

Angélique Platier, *Technical Coordinator of Accreditations*

In the end, we reformulated the original task-oriented mission and vision. Simon Sinek's model (why, how, what) provided plenty of tools for this. The core of the approach was to keep asking ourselves questions, and to give others the opportunity to do the same. This is how we arrived at a mission and vision that closely reflect what is important to us. This mission and vision help the RvA to position itself, both towards applicants and direct clients, and towards end users of accreditation: buyers, citizens, patients and consumers. And on the labour market as well, when we have vacancies. A mission and vision that we truly believe in.

Our strategic goals

How do we help clients to learn and improve?

In 2020 we also learned a great deal from our client meetings and client relationships. The opening question 'How is it going?' was often enough to make the connection to our work and to hear how clients view the RvA and accreditation. One of the criticisms was that people sometimes feel that above all, they are being judged. Here is how one client anecdotally described the arrival of an assessment team: 'It's like your mother-in-law is coming to visit. You've been cleaning for weeks, and on the day itself, you still see her frowning.'

What goes on in people's minds during an assessment? In our opinion, undergoing an assessment equates to a willingness to learn and improve. And there is plenty of opportunity for that. Clients are given sufficient space to resolve nonconformities (deviations from the standard) and know how to make good use of that space: there are few companies and institutions that fail to do this. But the motivation to learn and improve also has obstacles sometimes. These could include a feeling about the burden of extra work after an assessment, or the pressure to be held accountable internally for nonconformities.

We see that our lead assessors are becoming more and more aware of this psychological aspect. They often invest a lot of time and energy in creating a safe atmosphere. But perhaps that is not enough. At the RvA, we want to be justified (i.e. on the basis of demonstrability) in expressing our confidence. We also want clients to be able to resolve noncon-

formities effectively and efficiently. How do we strike that balance? We want to work on this theme in more depth next year. With our lead assessors and with our clients.

What is the value of accreditation?

We believe that we should better convey the narrative about the value of accreditation. We are adamant about that value. Our declaration of competent, consistent and impartial operations has value for more than six hundred clients. Sometimes because it is necessary, but also often because it offers them an advantage over other parties. However, the instrument could be more recognisable. For instance, last year we cautiously adopted a position on the issue of determining the quality of COVID-19 laboratories. Unfortunately, the route from institutions to the RvA was not self-evident in the beginning. We are now working with them to positively reassess the value of accreditation of medical laboratories, while respecting everyone's accountability.

What knowledge do we need?

Another question we are facing is how we can keep our knowledge up to date. The RvA is truly an organisation built on knowledge, in a world that is changing more and more quickly. The Covid pandemic is another multiplier in this rapid evolution. Our assessments cover all conceivable areas of work. We are aware that we cannot possess all of this knowledge in-house.

This is evident from the fact that we work with more than seven hundred freelance technical experts. But which knowledge do we need and to what extent? This is a question that preoccupies us.

We are happy to continue discussing these strategic goals. Can you see opportunities for us to sharpen up? Please get in touch with us. We want to stay sharp!

OUR STRATEGY IN FIVE SENTENCES

We want to work in a more market- and client-oriented way, so that we can offer clients a better service. We help them to learn from what we find in our assessments. In doing so, we set the bar high, for ourselves and for our clients.

Due to the acceleration in many new developments in the field of technology and sustainability, we are investing in an agile organisation with powerful teams.

We are striving – together with our stakeholders – to bring more attention to the value of accreditation and the entire quality infrastructure.

How do we see our role?

Closer ties with stakeholders

The RvA does not exist by itself; our work doesn't stand alone. That is why we have proverbially opened our windows and doors. We are in full dialogue with our stakeholders, across numerous sectors. Many questions have been answered, while some remain with us.

One of the questions that still remains is how to deal with the different interests of the nine medical professional associations that are involved in medical laboratories. It is understandable that they have often formulated those interests on the basis of their own disciplines. We think it is important to be aware of the perspectives of these professional associations, but also to make them practical, so that we can further improve our services. Especially because different disciplines often work under one roof, such as medical microbiological, clinical-chemical and molecular laboratories. In addition, we are seeing medical laboratories increasingly scale up their operations. This also raises questions. For example, how do we offer justified confidence to patients or internal recipients of results, such as medical specialists in hospitals? How do we do that effectively and efficiently? How do we assess the impact of temporary merger or up-scaling problems? We look forward to tackling those kinds of issues with the professional associations.

Improving the quality infrastructure

Together with our stakeholders, we are part of the quality infrastructure: the entire playing field of standardisation, conformity assessment via testing, inspection and certification, and accreditation. We see this infrastructure as a cycle, consisting of three parts: policy, implementation and supervision.

The cycle begins with the formulation of private standards. We can view ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and NEN (Royal Netherlands Standardization Institute) as the 'creators' of these standards. Legislators – both the Dutch and the European legislators – also increasingly refer to these standards. We are also familiar with the scheme owner 'phenomenon'.

Scheme owners create standards for a specific sector, a specific profession or a specific range. The Association of Scheme Owners (Vereniging van Schemabeheerders) represents a large number of scheme owners and is a significant stakeholder for the RvA.

Laboratories, inspection organisations and certification institutions, referred to as the TIC industry for short, act as executors of the application of these standards. They check whether companies

CONTRIBUTING TO THE COVID TEST CAPACITY

Last year, Fenelab made an offer to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to help increase testing capacity for COVID-19, because many non-medical laboratories that are affiliated with Fenelab actually have the techniques and materials needed to perform PCR tests. These resources are usually utilised for other purposes, under a different scope and standard of accreditation. We supported Fenelab in this offer.

and institutions are applying a standard correctly, thus playing a crucial role in the cycle. The RvA is pleased with the commitment of the executive boards of the Dutch Association of Certification Bodies (Nederlandse Vereniging Certificatie-instellingen or NVCi), the Federation of Dutch Laboratories (Fenelab) and medical-scientific associations. We regularly consult with these industry associations and scientific associations, in terms of administrative and technical policy. The NVCi represents 21 members, Fenelab 85 members.

Finally, the RvA fulfils the role of private supervisor in the cycle: we assess whether laboratories, inspection organisations and certification institutions are operating competently, consistently and impartially – again on the basis of private standards. This concerns more than six hundred companies and institutions that perform very important work day in, day out. Our activities therefore form the final part of the cycle, and potentially the start of a new cycle.

This cycle of policy, implementation and supervision can work in synergy and enhance the value of the quality infrastructure if all parties work together and make use of the feedback loop. Independence remains important, but should not be an obstacle to the exchange of ideas, for example. This is how the entirety of standardisation, conformity assessment via testing, inspection and certification, and accreditation form the quality infrastructure. An infrastructure that forms the solid foundation for the quality of products and services.

WE ARE STRIVING – TOGETHER WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS – TO BRING MORE ATTENTION TO THE VALUE OF ACCREDITATION AND THE ENTIRE QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

2

Developments in standardisation

We are adamant about the power of collaboration within the quality infrastructure. We see this infrastructure as a cycle, consisting of three parts: policy (standardisation), implementation (conformity assessment via testing, inspection and certification) and supervision (accreditation). That cycle offers added value. In the following interview, Femke Aarts, CFO and director at NEN (Royal Netherlands Standardization Institute), outlines how she sees the future role of standardisation and, by extension, conformity assessment and accreditation. While many may see this as mostly concerning technical instruments, she sees opportunities to create social impact.

How do you stay relevant in a world that's changing at lightning speed? Femke Aarts, CFO and director at NEN (Royal Netherlands Standardization Institute), makes no bones about it: 'We've been contributing to the development of private standards for over a hundred years. And we do it well. But we must also dare to look ahead: how do we see our role in the future? I can't imagine that in five years' time, creating a standard will still take three to five years. Because in that case we're hopelessly behind the times.'

We can add much more value across the entire quality chain

Take us behind the scenes of a standardisation institute. What are your core activities?

'Standards are voluntary agreements between market parties concerning the quality and safety of products, services and working methods. They are a central thread running through our daily lives. Food, bikes, air quality, medical devices, the protection of personal data: agreements have been made for all of these. NEN guides and encourages the development of standards. So we don't focus on the subject matter; we leave that to the experts from the various fields. As an independent foundation, we bring parties together in standards committees and we ensure that they can reach consensus on widely supported agreements. In addition, we support the application and use of standards, with training courses, webinars, white papers, etc. And we manage over 37,000 standards.'

How do you see the future of standardisation?

'That original task won't disappear. In ten years' time we will still want to know whether the plugs of household appliances are safe. But new opportunities are emerging as well, and we really need to seize them. That starts with thinking differently. People perceive standardisation – but also conformity assessment (via testing, inspection and certification) and accreditation – too much as a technical instrument: a means of evaluating whether something meets the requirements. But actually it is mainly a question of how we can create social impact. How can we guarantee confidence, promote international trade, stimulate innovation, contribute to sustainability...?'

Contributing to a better world?

'As a matter of fact, we do think that standardisation can be much more of a solution for tackling social issues.' She grins. 'I sometimes jokingly say: "There are no social problems in the Netherlands where the Trade Union FNV isn't sitting at the table too!" They are The Hague's eyes and ears. Participating in discussions at a strategic level, actively participating in networks, knowing who's doing what... We would also like to do a lot more with NEN. To join in and, at the right time, say: "We need an agreement framework. We can facilitate that process." That too is a form of standardisation: you're making agreements, but at a higher level of abstraction.'

So you want to move your added value to the front of the chain?

'Exactly! That was the vision behind our Standardisation Agenda 2021-2023. The agenda has themes that touch on the challenges facing the Netherlands, for example in the areas of digital transformation, mobility and key technologies. Through this agenda, we are entering into discussions with stakeholders who regularly participate in societal debates. What does our country need?

And how can we work together in this, so that we obtain a shared social mission? Furthermore, we want to take a critical look at our offering. The life cycles of products and services are getting shorter and shorter. We have to move at the same speed, otherwise standards will soon be no more than a kind of collateral afterthought. And that would be a real shame.'

Can you give an example?

'For immediate issues, we can deploy an NEN spec, which is like a mini standard, valid for a maximum of six months. By working together online and by compressing as many process steps as possible, we can draw up this kind of standard within three to six weeks. We ask experts from the field to create a 0.9 version. We then present this version to other experts. With their input, we arrive at a 1.0 version. By creating these temporary arrangements, we can very quickly provide society with a solution. In 2020, for example, we developed an NEN spec for reuse of medical devices, for single use during the Covid pandemic. This has also been actively used for breathing tubes.'

NEN is one of the players in the quality infrastructure. How could you collaborate with the TIC industry and the RvA to raise the quality bar even higher?

She leans back for a moment, then crouches forward again: 'It's extremely interesting, even greenfield-like, to work together to explore how we can extend that impact and speed throughout the entire quality chain. I truly believe that we can add a lot more value. But in that case we all have to be moving in the same direction. What I'm really missing is a good feedback loop. At the moment, our work is linear (from NEN to the TIC industry to the RvA), rather than circular. For example, the RvA assessors could be our "eyes and ears" in the field. Because they have access to valuable information, which can continuously renew and improve standards. I think it would be wonderful to tackle that together."

ABOUT FEMKE AARTS

Studies

Business Administration and Business Economics at Radboud University Nijmegen and Change Management and Organizational Design at Utah State University

Work

- Has formed the executive board of NEN with Rik van Terwisga since July 2019
- Before that, she was director of finance and operations and deputy general director at the Trade Union FNV
- Previously held similar positions at Stichting Pantar Amsterdam

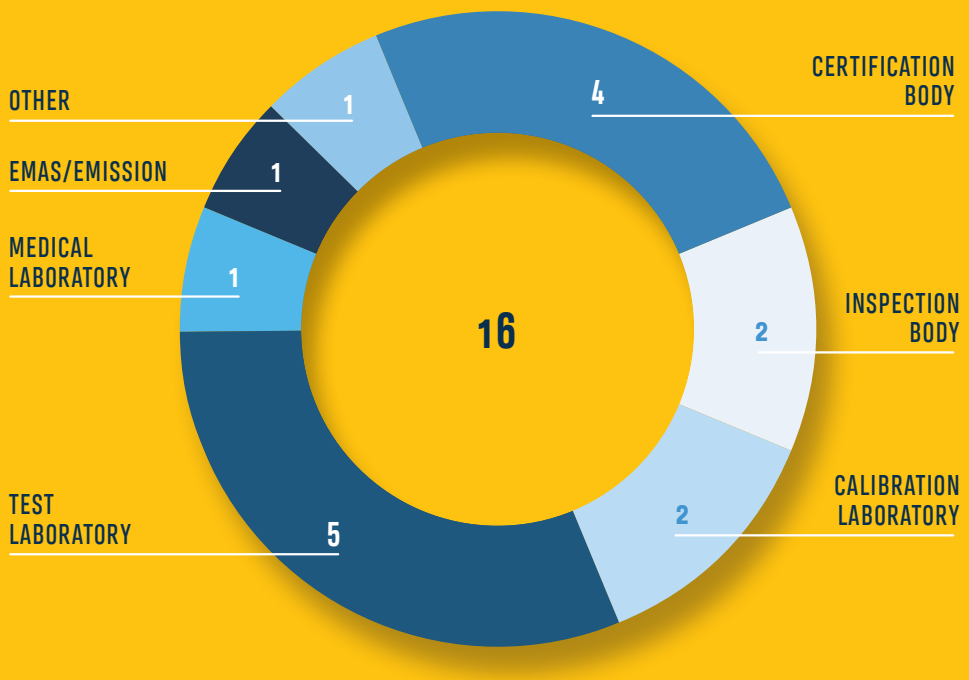
Trivia

Loves sharing good food and drinks with family and friends ('And no objections to cooking'), motorcycling in mountainous landscapes and travelling ('For history and nature, preferably with great weather')

834
accreditations granted

16
new accreditations

NEW ACCREDITATIONS BY TYPE



STAY IN THE LOOP!

We love to keep our contacts up to date about new accreditations, (international) developments and freelance contracts.
We do this online via various channels:

Our monthly newsletter *(in Dutch)*
You can sign up for this via our website (www.rva.nl).

Our LinkedIn page
We provide regular (news) updates (in Dutch) via www.linkedin.com/company/raad-voor-accreditatie

The news page on our website
We publish news reports and new (versions of) documents on www.rva.nl/nieuws.

Our separate recruitment site for freelance contracts *(in Dutch)*
We regularly post new contracts for freelance technical experts on www.werkenvoorderva.nl.

You can find more information about the RvA on **www.rva.nl**.

WE ARE ADAMANT ABOUT THE POWER OF COLLABORATION WITHIN THE QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

3

A crucial role for the TIC industry

Citizens and businesses want to be able to have confidence in the quality of products and services. Whether that concerns food, lifts or semi-finished products. Private standards have been established to verify this quality. Parties that test, inspect and certify, referred to as the TIC industry for short, act as executors of the application of these standards.
Day in, day out, they assess whether companies and institutions satisfy the requirements that have been set. They therefore play a crucial role in the quality infrastructure. In the following interviews, Dénelise l'Ecluse, Managing Director at BSI, and Roy Rottier, director/owner of Micro-Analyse Zeeland, take you into the world of certification and testing. How do they view their role and the cooperation with the RvA?

Dénelise l'Ecluse has travelled all over the world for her work, but the Netherlands remained her base of operations. She is now Managing Director Continental Europe at BSI (British Standards Institution), one of the largest certification bodies in the world. 'For us, it's really not about hanging a certificate on the wall. We're working on standards to see how we can improve companies; how we can make the world a safer place. So that people can sleep peacefully in their beds at night.'

Here in the Netherlands, we've become so used to everything being safe.

BSI has been around for over 120 years. What are your main activities?

'As the UK's national standardisation body, we are responsible for the development and publication of standards. We are also involved in the certification of management systems and products. And we have a consultancy branch that focuses on supply chain management and cybersecurity & information resilience, among other things. Continuous innovation is the common thread that runs through all these activities. We show companies how to improve their performance, reduce risk and grow more sustainably, so that they can deal with unexpected situations more resiliently. Organisational resilience is becoming more and more important. Just look at the Covid pandemic. It doesn't get much more unexpected than that...'

Why was BSI a logical step for you?

'I've worked for various international technology companies, from the American scale-up Blackboard to the listed Autodesk. Friends asked me: "You come from the fast-paced tech world, and now you're in standards. Isn't that a bit... boring?" But at BSI, we're right at the cutting edge of countless new developments. In all kinds of domains: from medical devices and self-driving cars to information security and long, complex supply chains. And we provide a safety net, so that the public can have confidence in these areas. Which is anything but boring!'

How do you deal with this in relation to standards, which sometimes 'lag behind' a little?

'The development of ISO standards often takes a little longer. And that's a good thing, because extensive testing has to be done. But we also want to respond quickly to innovations. A great example is a European project that we worked on in 2020, for self-driving cars. Companies want to be able to test these cars in traffic, but of course this has to be done safely. So we have worked with the industry to develop a "PAS" (Publicly Available Specification): a standard that provides guidance on how these cars can be used on the road. A PAS like this is actually a broad standard that can be established really quickly. Eventually, a PAS standard can become an ISO standard, but we don't have to wait around for that. We also carry out audits based on this PAS. We assess whether companies are testing these cars in a safe manner once they're on the road, and intervening in time if something goes wrong.'

By implementing a PAS like this, you're creating space for experimentation and innovations. By that, you're actually saying: 'You can be confident that it's safe?'

'Exactly. Ultimately, everything we do revolves around confidence. People sometimes wonder how important these standards are. Here in the Netherlands, we've become so used to everything being safe. Standardisation, certification, accreditation: it's all around us, but we often don't even think about it. Take a simple fire detector: consumers may not notice the quality mark on there, but if that kind of product isn't tested and certified, accidents could happen. This applies even more to technological developments. They are moving so fast that 98% of the public no longer understands what's going on. Boundaries get blurry. This makes the cooperation between parties that have made agreements with each other, and the supervision of such agreements, even more important.'

In that context, how do you see the relationship with the RvA?

'I think we can do more in the way of PR in that area; we need to better promote the story about the value of our work. In a way that people really understand. Moreover, new technologies can speed up our work enormously. This applies to BSI, but also to the RvA. For instance, we're developing new sensors for drones, to monitor noise, temperature, humidity and gas emissions. In addition, we're using smart glasses: a safe technique for capturing information in a hazardous location, such as an offshore platform. I think it would be very interesting to talk about that. And I also envision a future where formal supervision and involvement coexist, precisely because technological developments are happening so fast. What do we need to look at together quickly? And how do we guarantee that safety, without it becoming a question of supervision? There are plenty of options. As long as you keep asking yourself: "What's next?""

ABOUT DÉNELISE L'ECLUSE

Studies

Commercial Economics at Inholland University of Applied Sciences and Venture Finance at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Work

- Worked at several international technology companies, such as Blackboard (Regional Vice President) and Autodesk (North Europe Sales Manager)
- Was Executive Director at OCLC, an international publishing house that provides cloud solutions for public authorities and national libraries
- Has been Managing Director Continental Europe at BSI since 2020

Trivia

Is Board Advisor for Women in AI (Netherlands) and mentor/advisor for various start-ups in the tech industry


49
P R N D
MPH
49
MAX
AUTO
AIRBAG

He was introduced to the world of entrepreneurship at an early age: as a child, he saw how his parents transformed the garage next to the house into a microbiology laboratory. He still remembers it well. ‘When my brother and I came home from school, we were often allowed to help: sticking stickers, describing Petri dishes… There was always something to do.’ He is now at the helm of this 18-person family business. And he is proud of that. An interview with Roy Rottier, director/owner of Micro-Analyse Zeeland.

From mussels to pancakes: everything you can find in the supermarket passes through our hands

How did the idea of starting your own microbiology lab come about?

'In 1995, companies in the food sector were faced with HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), a food safety system. They suddenly had to measure everything against hygiene standards. Measuring temperatures, keeping track of how long something has been in the refrigerator... At the time, my father was working as a chief analyst in a clinical microbiology lab of a hospital, and my mother was involved in veterinary microbiology. They had been dreaming of owning their own lab for a little while and noticed that a lot of companies were looking for support in the implementation of these new laws and regulations. That got them thinking. In 1998, they decided to take the plunge.'

They soon wanted to conduct their analysis under accreditation. Why did they think that was so important?

'They saw the demand skyrocket. That's why they bought a former bank building in the village in 2002 and converted it into a fully-fledged lab. They spent the following years working on a quality management system and obtaining their ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation. Which was a logical step, because many of our clients are obligated to do business with an accredited lab. There are also a lot of companies who aren't subject to this obligation, but request accredited analysis regardless, because they believe that an accreditation label is indicative of higher quality. For us, therefore, accreditation is a ticket to trade.'

And the scope of that accreditation continues to expand. What kind of products are you assessing?

'We mainly focus on the food industry. Pancakes, tomatoes, carpaccio: everything you can find in the supermarket passes through our hands. And of course, we're close to the fish processing industry. Mussels, oysters, cockles: we assess just about everything the sea has to offer. We also analyse samples of water, manure and compost. And we assess things like packaging materials for foodstuffs, or trucks that transport food.'

You clearly want to be 'more than just a lab' in this regard. What are the defining features of your client relationships?

'For many people, a lab is somewhat elusive: you send off whatever it is you want them to assess, and after a while you receive a certificate of analysis with a bunch of numbers. Then you're just left to deal with them.' He contin-

ues in a passionate tone: 'We don't just want to churn out some numbers – we also want to be a partner for our clients. If companies ask for an analysis where the added value isn't immediately clear, we could of course think: great, we'll just carry out that assessment. But we could also start a conversation: why exactly do you want to have this investigated? And how will the results help you make certain decisions? So we're going one step further. We want to be an extension of our clients' quality department.'

You perform this analysis according to internationally accepted standard methods. What do you think about those?

'The standard methods have been proven effective and validated. They form the basis of all the assessments we conduct here. These methods are highly valuable to our clients because they are internationally accepted. This allows them to demonstrate that they are a reliable partner. At the same time, we think it's important to be where the action is, to exert influence. For example, we've had a seat on the NEN committee for microbiology of the food chain since 2018. We're the first to hear about developments that are headed our way, we can ask critical questions, and we can be part of discussions about matters that are important to us.'

And finally... You've just completed another RvA assessment. How is that experience for you?

With a grin: 'It's always a tense time, especially when doing a remote assessment. It still feels like you have to take the exam again, even if it's something you asked for! And of course, it's possible that nonconformities will be found, even if you're totally on top of things in terms of internal audits and monitoring, for instance. We see it mainly as a learning opportunity, a way to keep our company's quality level high. But we're happy every time we have a positive assessment. It's a nice confirmation that we're on the right track.'

ABOUT ROY ROTTIER

Studies

IVA Business School in Driebergen (The Netherlands)

Work

- Held various commercial positions in the automotive industry from 2006, but soon noticed that his heart wasn't in it
- Entered the family business Micro-Analyse Zeeland in 2011, as commercial manager
- Took over from Johnny and Gonda Rottier in 2020

Trivia

Famous chef and TV presenter Rob Geus awarded the ISO/IEC 17025 certificate to Johnny and Gonda Rottier in 2005

INTERESTED PARTIES

There are various interested parties in the field of standardisation:

- direct clients of the RvA (conformity assessment bodies);
- direct clients of conformity assessment bodies;
- the market;
- the public sector;
- scientific and educational institutes;
- (international) organisations in the field of standardisation and harmonisation;
- scheme owners;
- representatives of employers and employees;
- end users.

Good interactions with these stakeholders are important for further increasing confidence. This applies to the confidence in the organisations accredited by the RvA, but also to confidence in the quality of products and services within our society.

OUR AMBITION IS TO BE CONSTANTLY CONNECTED WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US.

Engagement and personal contact are key in our client relationships.

Tinka Kars, *Project Coordinator of Accreditation Assessments*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4

Working on confidence

The RvA underpins confidence in the quality of products and services. On a daily basis, we assess whether companies and institutions that test, inspect and certify are operating in a competent, consistent and impartial manner. We do this on the basis of private standards. Our lead assessors lead these assessments. They play a central role in our work. But what does their work actually entail? Arjan de Jong and Annelies Verhulst, both lead assessors at the RvA, are happy to tell us more about it. In the following interviews you can read how they view their work and the value of accreditation, and what we at the RvA can do even more or better in our collaboration with our clients and within the quality infrastructure.

Ask Arjan de Jong about his background, and his eyes start to sparkle. ‘There’s so much to tell!’ He is only too happy to take you into the world of medical microbiology. And he is equally enthusiastic when speaking about his work as a lead assessor at the RvA. ‘Patients trust that a laboratory does its job well. The fact that there is a standard that provides guidelines for this, and that the RvA evaluates based on these guidelines, is something they don’t even consider. But it all starts with the laboratory results: they are very decisive for diagnosis and treatment.’

The standard isn't 'gospel'; its intention is to provide safe and trustworthy patient care

As an assessment team, you take a look behind the scenes of medical labs. What does that kind of day look like?

'Normally it starts as soon as you cross the threshold. You often get an immediate impression of the atmosphere: how are you received, what does the space look like, how are people walking around...? Those are things we're missing out on at the moment because we're doing remote assessments as a result of COVID-19. That was quite a switch. It's a lot more difficult to connect with clients from behind your laptop. Especially because those informal moments disappear, like the chats at the coffee machine or during the short walk along the corridor. And you run into other things: if you try to start a round of introductions via Microsoft Teams, it turns out there are suddenly forty people in the room!' He laughs. 'Unfortunately, we now launch into the formal part almost immediately.

And what do you look for during one of these assessments?

'We assess whether labs are doing their job properly. This doesn't mean we come along to "score" as many nonconformities (deviations from the norm) as possible. We are checking whether something meets the standard. If that is not the case, we write a nonconformity. While the technical experts mainly focus on the practical implementation and associated standards, as a lead assessor I'm looking at the quality policy: the system surrounding the operations. We meet three times during the day to share our findings. This means that something that was found in the morning can be evaluated again in the afternoon to get a better picture.'

As a lead assessor, how do you view a particular standard, or in this case ISO 15189? Is it a fixed thing?

'Hmm, interesting...' On the edge of his seat: 'You see, a standard specifies *what* you have to regulate, but not *how* you have to do it. If a lab doesn't do something that the standard requires, then you don't have to discuss it further: it simply isn't there. In that sense, the standard is an instrument that you can use to navigate. But much more often, it's a matter of interpretation. You might have other ideas about it. This applies to ISO 15189, but also to the field standards drawn up by the trade unions themselves, which specify how they view a certain part of that ISO 15189. We don't want to assess by the letter, but by the spirit. Because this kind of standard isn't intended to be 'gospel'; its intention is to provide safe and trustworthy patient care. That's also one of the reasons why I started doing this work: to make a contribution here."

The purpose of assessments is to contribute to a learning process. As a lead assessor, what could you do to support clients even more?

'We notice that new clients and employees in particular find it quite tense going through one of these assessments for the first time. It can be helpful to give them a better idea in advance of what they can expect on the day, in the form of onboarding training. Furthermore, we can share our ideas about new or difficult standard elements: how do we at the RvA interpret them? Of course, we can't say how labs should implement them, but we can indicate how we read something: what, in our opinion, should be covered?'

And what about the setting, during these assessment days?

'It's vital to have a good match between the client and the assessment team. If that match isn't there, for instance because there are commercial interests that can't be reconciled or because people have a history with each other, you usually know that in advance. Team members can then be challenged on that basis. But it's also something that you need to stay focused on during the assessment, and you have to make clear arrangements about it with your team. Communicating nonconformities to the client immediately instead of overwhelming him with them at the end of the day, taking the time to discuss them, and clarifying why something doesn't meet the standard: very obvious stuff, but so important in order to come up with solutions.'

What leaves you feeling good at the end of an assessment day?

'If there's been a pleasant atmosphere. If the assessment went substantively well, and we as a team have made the right assessments. If we've had a good final conversation with the client and we've understood each other. And if we were also able to provide some valuable insights.'

ABOUT ARJAN DE JONG

Studies

HLO (higher laboratory technician training) at HAN University of Applied Sciences, with Biochemistry as a specialisation

Work

- Obtained a doctorate on the functioning of a small virus protein from Radboud University Medical Center in 2003, followed by a postdoc in cell biology at University Medical Center Utrecht
- Returned to Radboud University Medical Center, where he completed his training as a medical molecular microbiologist in 2011 and, in addition to his work in molecular diagnostics, became a quality assurance staff member
- Started as medical laboratories lead assessor at the RvA in 2020

Trivia

Is trainer/coach of the girls' football team of one of his daughters ('I've never played football myself, so I just do the best I can'), has walked the Four Days Marches Nijmegen twice and enjoys reading historical novels in his spare time

Until recently, she was manager of an accredited road construction laboratory. Now she is on the other side of the table: as a lead assessor at the RvA, she visits dozens of testing laboratories every year to assess whether they meet the standard. Anyone who speaks to Annelies Verhulst will immediately understand why this was a logical step. ‘This job fits me like a glove. Of course, I have a formal role. But the communication with clients – laboratory technicians, quality managers, board members – is just as important. I think you can make a difference with that.’

Mutual equality and respect, based on knowledge: that's what it all comes down to.

As a lead assessor, you hit the road with technical experts to assess testing labs. What kind of labs should we be picturing?

'The field of work is very broad. You can actually test anything that is measurable. And that's what makes it so fun. One day you'll be talking to a civil lab about asphalt, and the next you'll be speaking with a food lab about baby food, or a DNA lab about research into humans, animals and plants. You really do see it all. For example, did you know that the game industry also has labs? Slot machines, roulette tables, online games: they all have to satisfy requirements.' With a wink: 'I've seen and learned a huge amount in the past year.'

What do you look for during assessments?

'We assess whether labs are operating competently, consistently and impartially. We do this through the "window" of ISO/IEC 17025, the international standard for testing laboratories. This standard is about how a lab operates. You also have the scope which describes the lab's activities; that is, which test methods they work with. These methods, in turn, have to meet other standards. For example, RAW standards (Rationalization and Automation of Soil, Water and Road Construction), or NEN-EN standards. As a lead assessor, I mainly focus on the quality policy, while my colleagues focus on the technical matters. They assess whether labs are doing what is in their scope, or operating in accordance with the standard.'

And are there also moments when you think: we're going to have a hard time with this interpretation of the standard?

'Honestly? We're constantly encountering "defects". For instance, labs will have to take one measurement, while later in the document it says that they have to take the average of two measurements – just to give a simple example. This means that they *have to* deviate from the standard. The question is: how do we deal with that? In fact, labs should notify the publisher of such a standard either directly or via their industry association. We could then assess them on the basis of that document. Because it could be five years before a European standard gets edited. But I also think that we at the RvA can play a bigger role in this. Because we assess all of those labs, we know exactly where the obstacles are in a particular standard, and how labs deal with them. We currently make inadequate use of that information, and that is a missed opportunity. We could organise that feedback loop much better.'

You regularly ask clients for feedback on the cooperation with and services provided by the RvA. What do you think is important in client relationships?

'Mutual equality and respect, based on knowledge,' she states decisively. 'I thought about it on the train this morning. This is what it all comes down to, for me. As a manager of a lab, I had a different experience for many years. A week before the assessment, we would run around like headless chickens trying to get everything in order, and on the day itself we'd be walking around with our fingers crossed! The atmosphere was formal and standoffish. We were given the "instruction" beforehand to say as little as possible if asked anything. So you don't have a conversation, but an interview: just question-answer. And giving the RvA a call sometime in between assessments? We never actually did that. Surely that can't be the intention. For a good assessment, you need dialogue. That starts with human contact. That's a bit more difficult with remote assessments, especially with new clients, but there are in fact always talking points to be found. For example, start by chatting about a background screen in Microsoft Teams. Or about someone's cat suddenly walking across the screen.'

A business assessment with human contact?

'Exactly! That's how we can really collaborate with a lab. I see the first year of a new assessment cycle mainly as an investment in the company: what kind of lab is it? Who are the people who work there? What value does accreditation have for them? You can then build something together to improve the quality. Good communication is an essential factor in this. With the right intentions, you can say and ask anything. And a bit of healthy curiosity also makes it easier: asking the "why" question usually goes a long way. I often notice that an assessment day starts off a bit tentatively, but people get more and more relaxed if you open up and if you take the time to explain things. Then the questions start coming. Then you're in dialogue with each other. And then, you enter into the mode of learning and improving.'

ABOUT ANNELIES VERHULST

Studies

Architecture at Eindhoven University of Technology, with a specialisation in Construction & Technology

Work

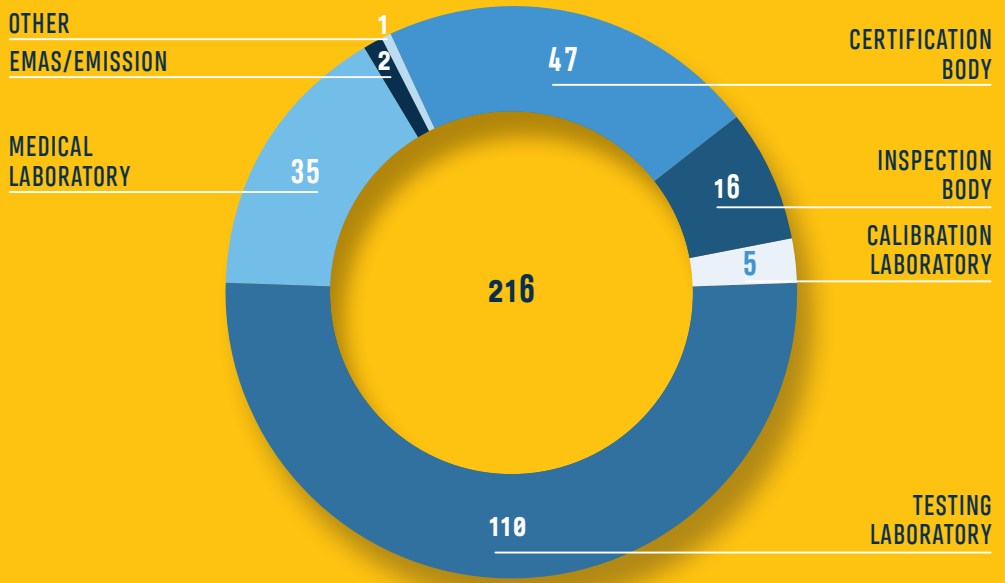
- Began as a project leader in a materials science laboratory that was researching new applications for fillers in concrete
- In the years that followed, she was first head of Quality Control at a company in the concrete and steel industry and then manager of a road construction laboratory
- Has been working as a lead assessor for testing laboratories at the RvA since 2020

Trivia

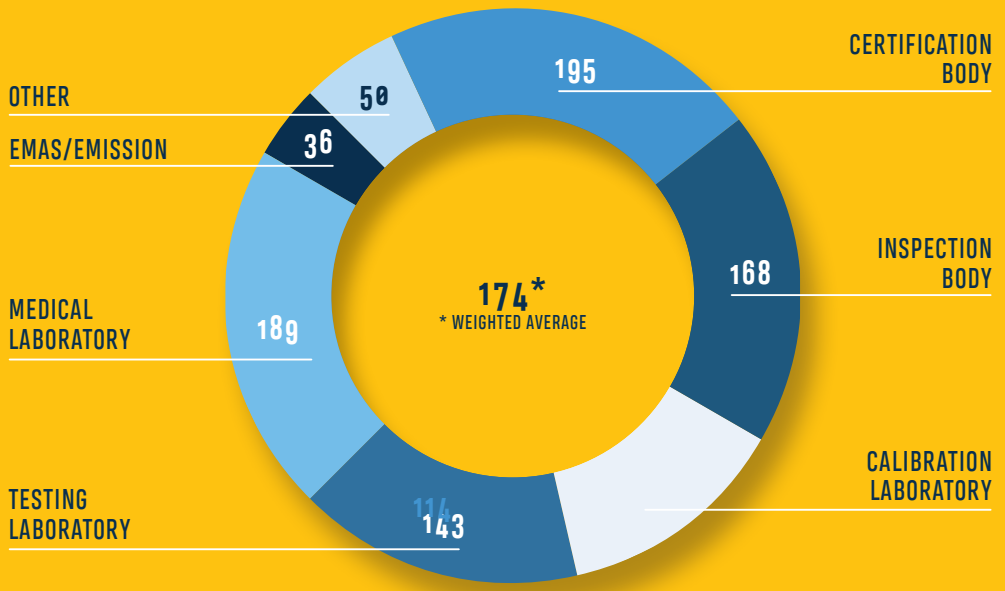
Ran aground at art school: 'We had to design a dream house. I made a beautiful villa that was completely architecturally sound and got a six. My neighbour got a nine for his tulip, which you couldn't even put a cupboard in. That's when I knew: this isn't for me.'

EXTENSIONS OF THE SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION PER TYPE

NUMBER OF EXTENSIONS



AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME IN CALENDAR DAYS



GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ACCREDITATIONS GRANTED BY THE RVA

Working with clients to improve quality begins with good dialogue.

Alko Afman, *Lead Assessor*

5

How do we create value for our clients?

A step outwards is a step inwards. In the provision of our services, we strive for operational excellence: how can we continue to improve the accreditation process and our organisation? This was a challenging task, especially in 2020, because all the Covid measures limited our options for implementation. In this chapter we will briefly outline topics that have received the necessary attention this year.

Teamwork in a flexible organisation

The world is changing at breakneck speed. This requires a flexible organisation that can respond adequately to new developments. Very talented people are working at the RvA. We want to give them the opportunity to share their ideas on how we can further improve our services. Following the motto *You might go faster alone, but you get further together*, we believe in strong teams and a culture based on confidence, responsibility, commitment, and safe, sharp dialogue.

In 2020, we continued the transition to a flexible organisation with strong teams. This transition demands a lot from our people, but it is vital for creating an RvA that does justice to its new mission and vision, so that accreditation, as part of the quality infrastructure, remains relevant and is future-proof.

This year we asked our colleagues in the office unit to think about a new way of dividing their teams which would uphold the aforementioned principles. We are confident that the teams can handle a lot more in terms of scheduling, substantive consultation and reflection among colleagues, and process improvement. We will make further headway with this in 2021. The RvA's management team has also been busy working on its own team development in 2020. This has resulted in a great deepening of its capacities.

Remote assessments and working from home

The Covid pandemic and the associated measures had major consequences for our organisation during 2020. Mandatory working from home wasn't just a significant change for our colleagues' working methods, but it also required a different style of management and leadership.

We also had to structure our services differently. In March 2020, we switched from on-site assessments to remote assessments. That was quite a switch, for our clients and for us. There are advantages and disadvantages to assessing remotely. We put a great deal of thought into the quality of these assessments.

Medical laboratories in particular requested a postponement of assessments in 2020 as a result of the crisis. In addition, we had to deal with a reduced deployment of medical experts.

Further digitalisation via Digishift Rv@

We want to move towards a much more IT-driven service. The Digishift Rv@ programme, which we launched at the end of 2018, is a first step in this transformation. Projects within this programme comply with the latest laws and regulations in the domain of information security, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). They also contribute to better service provision to clients, better communication with clients during assessment processes and more efficient organisation of our work processes.

In 2019, we started four new projects within this programme:

- modernisation of our IT infrastructure and workplace environment;
- complete digitalisation of the declaration process and purchase invoicing process;
- creation of an IT application that allows a large part of the accreditation process (the reporting about assessments) to be handled digitally via a portal;
- digital setup and processing of the entire scheduling process of RvA assessments.

We completed the first three projects in 2020. In particular, the digital setup and processing of the scheduling process has been delayed as a result of the Covid pandemic. We will finalise this project in the course of 2021. In 2021 we will also launch our completely technically revamped website and explore the possibility of digitalising the accreditation application process.

Emphasis on information security and privacy

Information security and privacy are major themes everywhere, including at the RvA. Every day we deal with a multitude of information that we must handle with care. Our policy is based on the Information Security Standards of the Dutch Government.

We started developing this policy at the end of 2019, and in 2020 we moved on to implementation:

- We appointed a Quality, Privacy and Information Security Advisor and an external Data Protection Officer.
- We outsourced our digital infrastructure and the majority of our business applications to certified external administrators. Naturally, these parties meet the highest information security and privacy requirements.
- Our authorisation processes have been tightened up: information is only accessible to those who are entitled to access it. Furthermore, we have performed fallback tests to assess whether we have effective fallback options if critical servers or applications unexpectedly fail, and configuration management has been improved.
- We regularly draw attention to information security and privacy in consultations and meetings with colleagues, in order to make people more aware of the risks in this area.

OUR CLIENTS AS A SOUNDING BOARD

We have been regularly organising client meetings since 2019. The purpose of these meetings is to enter into discussions about the cooperation with and services provided by the RvA. These are valuable sessions that generate many concrete points of feedback and advice.

In 2020, the turnaround time for RvA assessments was discussed. Over the course of three lively sessions, we came up with good options for improvement. For example, we at the RvA will more efficiently organise the explanation requirement in the application procedure. And several customers will consider whether a gap analysis could help to answer extension requests more efficiently.

In 2020, we also worked on points for improvement that resulted from previous client meetings. Good examples of this are paying more attention to the possibilities of a diminished assessment regime (a lower assessment frequency or a smaller assessment team) and building in more space during assessments to provide the required explanations (helping clients to learn). We periodically discuss the progress of these points for improvement with our User Council.

What do our clients say?

Since 2016, our clients have had an accessible opportunity to share their opinions about three parts of the accreditation process: the application process, the assessment process and the decision-making process. If we look at the trend from the five client satisfaction surveys carried out so far, the average score has risen slightly to a 7.6 (7.4 in 2019). A score that we at the RvA are moderately positive about, because it still leaves plenty of room for improvement. We explored that room for improvement with our clients in 2020, with the intention of substantiating it in 2021.

How satisfied are our colleagues?

We think it's important for our people to be satisfied, motivated and committed. That is why we have an employee satisfaction survey conducted every two years. This survey indicates that overall satisfaction among colleagues has increased slightly: from 7.5 in 2018 to 7.9 in 2020, based on the same level of response (86%). We are of course pleased with this positive development and are using the main areas of focus that have emerged from the survey (mutual cooperation and communication) to continue this upward trend.

Processing complaints

In accordance with the Dutch General Administrative Law Act (Algemene wet bestuursrecht), the RvA has a complaints procedure in place for any complaints about the RvA as an administrative authority. This procedure, QA008, can be accessed directly via our website (www.rva.nl).

At the end of 2019, 90% of complaints were handled in a timely manner. Unfortunately, 2020 shows an increase in processing time. We expect a clear improvement again for 2021, in particular because we have made the complaints process more efficient, improved the digital support of the process and delegated the coordination of complaints processing to one person.

In 2020, we handled sixteen complaints. Most complaints were related to invoicing, our communication with clients and the supervision of accredited organisations.

Notifications and signals

In the event of dissatisfaction or doubts about the work of an accredited organisation, a notification


SUPER GIANT
KASSA
KASSA

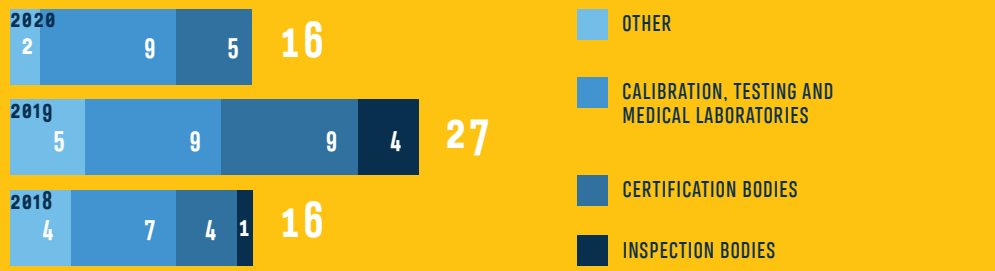
THE RESULTS OF OUR CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY IN 2020

7.6 Clients rated the RvA at an average of 7.6

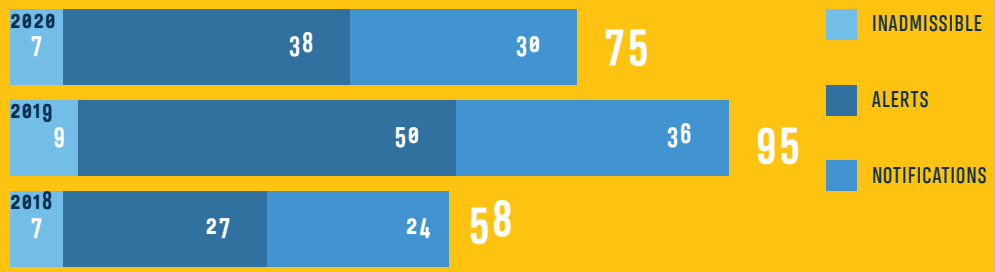
8 Interaction with RvA employees was given an 8

8 Reporting of assessments scored an 8

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS PROCESSED ABOUT THE RVA (WITH BREAKDOWN BY WORKING DOMAIN OF NOTIFIER)



NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS AND SIGNALS RECEIVED ABOUT ACCREDITED ORGANISATIONS



105 salaried employees

15 new salaried employees

43 men

62 women

723 freelance technical experts

57 new freelance technical experts

or signal can be submitted to the RvA. In the first case, the RvA investigates the notification with the accredited party and feedback is provided to the notifier. In the event of a signal, the RvA will, at its own discretion, incorporate the information into the supervision of the accredited organisation. The notifier will not receive any feedback in this case.

The admissible notifications and signals received in 2020 mostly related to inspection or certification bodies (82%). They primarily concerned the working method and the processing of complaints by accredited organisations.

In principle, we assess notifications and signals during the next regular assessment. The RvA's Executive Board can decide on an additional assessment if the content of what has been signalled appears to be so serious that it raises doubt in the trustworthiness of the work of the accredited organisation.

In 2020, the Board decided to carry out nine additional assessments. Two assessments are still ongoing. In five cases, the doubt turned out to be (partially) justified and the organisations in question had to take measures to prevent a recurrence in the future. In two cases, the doubt turned out to be unfounded.

Processing of objections, appeals and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

In 2020, four objections were submitted:

- one objection against an aggravated audit assessment (objection declared unfounded);
- one objection with regard to the end date of the scope of accreditation in a decision (objection declared well-founded);
- one objection against not processing an accreditation application because the application concerned an activity that fell outside the scope of the RvA (objection withdrawn);
- one objection against the failure to resolve a nonconformity and the exchange of information between two assessments (objection declared inadmissible).

We have had constructive discussions with our clients about this. In one case, this led to a modification of our procedures.

We received two Freedom of Information requests in 2020; one of these was rejected and the other was (partially) granted. In addition, there was one appeal case concerning the processing time of our response to an FOI request. The court declared the appeal 'manifestly inadmissible'.

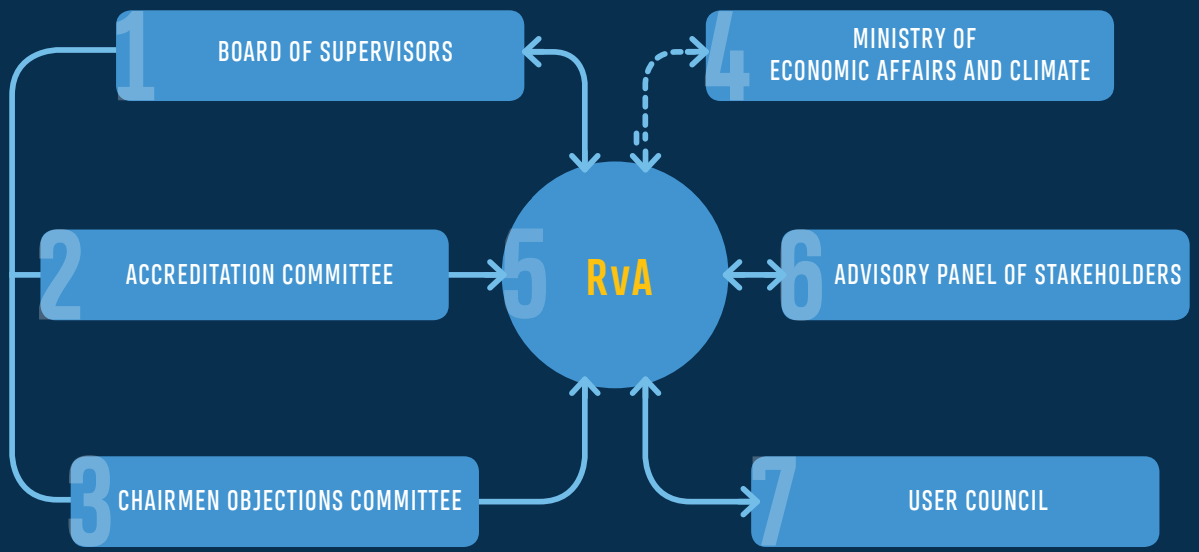
Seeing what knowledge we need in-house: that's what excites me!

Jolien Jansen, *HR Advisor*

6

Supervision and advice

The RvA may and must operate with a high degree of independence. Forms of supervision over our work and advice in the decision-making process for accreditations are of major importance in this regard. They guarantee our expertise, impartiality and independence and provide a critical evaluation of our activities and our business operations.



EA-Multilateral Agreement Committee

In order to remain a signatory of the EA's Multilateral Agreement (MLA), the RvA must satisfy the requirements of European Regulation 765/2008 and the international ISO/IEC 17011 standard. Every four years, the RvA is assessed by a team of approximately ten peers in the format of a peer review. The next peer review will take place in autumn 2021.

1 Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors ensures that the Executive Board realises the objectives of the RvA. The members are selected based on expertise and competences.

2 Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee consists of four members appointed on the basis of their expertise in accreditation, their integrity and their independence. Its duty is to advise the Executive Board with regard to the granting of accreditations. It also has the authority to advise the Executive Board on suspensions and withdrawals of accreditations.

3 Chairmen Objections Committee

In the event of objections against a decision made by the RvA's Executive Board, a member of this Committee will be engaged. The members of this Committee are strictly independent.

4 Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate

The RvA must comply with the relevant provisions of the Dutch Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act (Kaderwet zelfstandige bestuursorganen) and European Regulation 765/2008. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate supervises this. An evaluation of the RvA as an autonomous administrative authority takes place every five years. The next evaluation is planned for 2021. Insofar as this relates to the substantive side of the RvA's work, the Ministry can rely on the peer reviews by the EA (European co-operation for Accreditation), which the RvA undergoes every four years. The next peer review is scheduled for autumn 2021.

5 Executive Board

The responsibilities of the Executive Board include the realisation of the goals and the business operations of the RvA. The two-person management team is assisted by two advisory panels: the Advisory Panel of Stakeholders and the User Council.

6 Advisory Panel of Stakeholders

This panel consists of representatives of the public sector, direct clients of the RvA, direct customers of our clients, scheme owners and scientific institutes. The aim of the panel is twofold:

- to provide solicited and unsolicited advice on general policy matters;
- to guarantee the impartiality of the RvA in the further development of the substantive policy.

Due to the situation surrounding COVID-19, the meeting for spring 2020 was cancelled. In the autumn meeting, the panel reconfirmed the impartiality of the RvA. A steering committee also provided advice on the investigation into the manner in which the RvA deals with schemes and scheme owners. This investigation was carried out by research bureau KWINK. In addition, some members of the panel were involved in the study by Utrecht University School of Governance (Department of Public Administration and Organisational Science), led by Prof. Judith van Erp, into risk-based accreditation.

7 User Council

The User Council consists of representatives of the RvA's direct clients and it advises the RvA on rates, service levels and the quality of the services provided. In 2020, the impact that COVID-19 has had on the RvA's assessment policy has been a recurring item on the agenda. Furthermore, we informed the User Council about the plans surrounding and content of the digitalisation projects that are in the pipeline.

Members of administrative bodies and advisory committees

Here is an overview of the composition of the management bodies and advisory committees as of 1 March 2021.

Board of Supervisors

- Ms Yvonne van Rooy LLM (*Chair*)
  1st term until 1 December 2021
- Dr. ir. Ineke Mastenbroek (*Vice Chair*)
  2nd term until 13 March 2022
- Prof. Jaap van den Heuvel
  2nd term until 1 August 2023
- Ron de Mos (from 15 October 2020)
  1st term until 15 October 2023
- Ir. Peter van Rhede van der Kloot
  2nd term until 31 August 2023

For the Board of Supervisors' report, please refer to the annual report for 2020, which you can download via our website (www.rva.nl). You can also find more information there about the members of the Board of Supervisors and their additional functions.

Executive Board

- Roeland Nieuweboer LLM (*Chairman of the Executive Board*)
- Joep de Haas LLM (*Member of the Executive Board*)

Accreditation Committee

- Prof. Olaf Fisscher (*Chair*)
- Prof. Bert Bakker
- Dr Guillaume Counotte
- Ir. Kees Pasmooij

Chairmen Objections Committee

- Mr Aniel Pahladsingh LLM
- Mr Mark van Zijl LLM

Advisory Panel of Stakeholders

- Prof. Philip Eijlander (*scientific institutes, Chair*)
- Dr Ruben Baumgarten (*medical laboratories*)
- Mr Jan van den Bos LLM (*Inspection Council, Governmental Inspectorates*)
- Ir. Nic Hendriks (*NVCi, certification and inspection institutions*)
- Drs. Hans van den Heuvel (*LTO, primary sector*)
- Ir. Jaap Hogeling (*VNO-NCW, industry*)
- Ronald Karel (*Fenelab, laboratories and inspection agencies*)
- Dr Peter van der Knaap (*Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, government regulators*)
- Drs. Alieke Koopman (*Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, ministries*)
- Dr Hans Ossebaard (*Care Institute Netherlands, standardisation*)
- Dr Marc Pieksma (*National Metrology Institute, metrology*)
- Ir. Frans Stuyt (*Association of Scheme Owners, scheme owners*)
- Ir. Rik van Terwisga (*NEN, standardisation*)
- Representation of Dutch Association of Insurers (*non-life insurers*)

User Council

- Dr Sylvia Bruisten (*medical laboratories*)
- Bob van Doorsselaere (*VEROCOG*)
- Dr Bouke Hepkema (*medical laboratories*)
- Ronald Karel (*Fenelab*)
- Ir. Olaf van Panhuys (*NVCi*)
- Pieter Vos (*Fenelab*)
- Wim van Vreeswijk (*NVCi*)

The death of Gerard Kerkman in the summer of 2020 affected us profoundly. He was actively involved in our organisation from 2017 as a member of the Advisory Panel on behalf of the Dutch Association of Insurers. In our public report for 2019, he made a valuable contribution to an interview, in which he gave his clear view on accreditation and the RvA.

We would like to thank all members for their efforts and valuable advice in 2020.

7

Our work in figures

Confidence requires the possibility of monitoring. In this chapter you will find an overview in figures of our activities in 2020. We have also added figures from 2019 for comparison.

Accreditations granted as at 31 December 2020

Standard	Explanation	Netherlands 2020	Abroad 2020	Total 2020	Netherlands 2019	Abroad 2019	Total 2019
CERTIFICATION BODIES							
ISO/IEC 17065	Products and services	62	2	64	58	3	61
ISO/IEC 17021	Management systems	46	15	61	47	16	63
ISO/IEC 17024	Persons	6	0	6	5	0	5
Subtotal certification bodies		114	17	131	110	19	129
INSPECTION BODIES							
ISO/IEC 17020	Inspection	133	1	134	133	1	134
Subtotal inspection bodies		133	1	134	133	1	134
RVA MARK LABORATORIES							
ISO/IEC 17025	Calibration	59	0	59	59	0	59
ISO/IEC 17025	Testing	245	5	250	248	7	255
ISO/IEC 17043	Proficiency testing	14	1	15	13	1	14
ISO 15189	Medical laboratories in MLA	230	7	237	234	6	240
EN/ISO 17034	Reference materials	2	0	2	2	0	2
Subtotal laboratories		550	13	563	556	14	570
ISO 14065	EMAS/Emission	4	2	6	4	1	5
Regulation (EC) No. 1221/2009 (EMAS)	EMAS verification	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of accreditations granted		801	33	834	803	35	838

The total number of accreditations granted in 2020 is almost the same as the total number of accreditations granted in 2019. In previous years, we granted a relatively large number of new accreditations as a result of the transition of medical laboratories from the CCKL Code of Practice to ISO 15189. This transition was completed in 2019. We regularly grant new accreditations for the various standards, but there are also mergers and acquisitions taking place in all segments, resulting in the withdrawal of accreditations.

New accreditations per type (number and processing time from application until decision)

	New accreditations	Average processing time in calendar days	New accreditations	Average processing time in calendar days
Decision in	2020	2020	2019	2019
Certification bodies	4	253	8	246
Inspection bodies	2	374	3	351
Calibration laboratories	2	358	3	341
Testing laboratories	5	331	9	333
Medical laboratories	1	450	30	335
EMAS/Emission	1	352	0	0
Other	1	443	1	213
Total	16	336*	54	319*

* This is a weighted average

In 2020, the average processing time of initial assessments for all types of accreditations was 336 calendar days. This is worse compared to 2019, when the average processing time was 319 calendar days. The restrictions due to COVID-19 meant that we had to postpone many assessments, especially in the first months of the pandemic.

Extensions of the scope of accreditation per type (number and processing time from application until decision)

	Extensions	Average processing time in calendar days	Extensions	Average processing time in calendar days
Decision in	2020	2020	2019	2019
Certification bodies	47	195	43	166
Inspection bodies	16	168	8	157
Calibration laboratories	5	114	10	215
Testing laboratories	110	143	125	158
Medical laboratories	35	189	42	241
EMAS/Emission	2	36	0	0
Other	1	50	1	205
Total	216	174*	229	177*

* This is a weighted average

Is there a relatively high number of extension projects for a specific accreditation standard? If so, this is due to the transfer to new versions of schemes, standards or regulations. These projects are handled as extension projects, but have a different dynamic than regular scope extensions, and therefore a shorter processing time. Projects of this nature were not on the agenda in 2020.

The situation surrounding COVID-19 has not negatively impacted the average processing time of the extension projects in 2020. This is because extension assessments are generally easier to perform remotely than initial assessments.

Disputes, suspensions and withdrawals

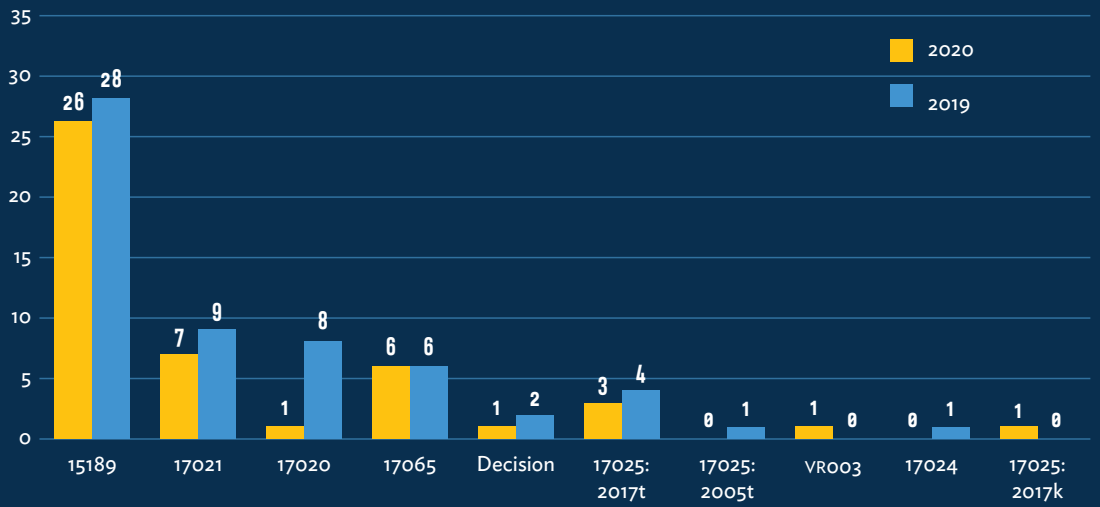
If an RvA assessment team believes that a client does not satisfy the requirements, the team will write a nonconformity (a deviation from the standard). It may be that the client does not agree with the team's interpretation of the requirements. In that case, the assessed party has the opportunity to issue a notification of an interpretation dispute.

The processing of such a dispute indicates how the standard should be interpreted.

Most disputes still come from the ISO 15189 standard, although the absolute number within this accreditation standard is decreasing. The number of reformulated nonconformities by lead assessors has increased significantly compared to last year.

The percentage of withdrawn nonconformities in 2020 is 18%, in comparison with 7% in 2019. The total number of disputes filed for 2020 is the lowest in four years. For this reason, in discussions with assessors during the past year we emphasised the importance of formulating nonconformities properly. That now seems to be paying off.

Interpretation disputes per standard



The outcomes of interpretation disputes

At year-end	2020	2019
Total number of disputes	57	89
Nonconformity reformulated by lead assessor after consultation	16%	4%
Nonconformity withdrawn by lead assessor after consultation	9%	17%
Nonconformity maintained unchanged	21%	28%
Nonconformity maintained, but reformulated	0%	1%
Nonconformity (partially) withdrawn	18%	7%
Other outcome of dispute	5%	3%
Pending	11%	3%
Inadmissible	21%	36%
Total	100%	100%

Suspended accreditations (for the entire scope)

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020	Voluntary 2019	Imposed 2019	Total 2019
Certification bodies	0	0	0	0	1	1
Inspection bodies	0	1	1	0	0	0
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	0	0	0
Testing laboratories	3	0	3	0	1	1
Medical laboratories	1	1	2	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	4	2	6	0	2	2

Withdrawn accreditations (for the entire scope)

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020	Voluntary 2019	Imposed 2019	Total 2019
Certification bodies	2	0	2	3	0	3
Inspection bodies	2	0	2	0	0	0
Calibration laboratories	1	0	1	3	0	3
Testing laboratories	8	0	8	5	1	6
Medical laboratories	3	0	3	5	0	5
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	16	0	16	16	1	17

Suspended accreditations (for part of the areas of activity)

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020	Voluntary 2019	Imposed 2019	Total 2019
Certification bodies	0	1	1	0	7	7
Inspection bodies	0	1	1	0	0	0
Calibration laboratories	2	0	2	0	0	0
Testing laboratories	2	0	2	7	0	7
Medical laboratories	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	4	2	6	7	7	14

Withdrawn accreditations (for part of the areas of activity)

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020	Voluntary 2019	Imposed 2019	Total 2019
Certification bodies	18	0	18	6	0	6
Inspection bodies	0	0	0	1	0	1
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	1	0	1
Testing laboratories	0	0	0	1	0	1
Medical laboratories	32	0	32	40	0	40
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	50	0	50	49	0	49

8

Brief financial overview

The RvA is a private foundation. We are a not-for-profit organisation both on the basis of our Articles of Association and pursuant to the European Regulation 765/2008. Our independence is guaranteed via the Dutch National Accreditation Body Appointment Act (Wet aanwijzing nationale accreditatie-instantie) and by a modern governance structure with a Board of Supervisors, an Accreditation Committee, a Chairmen Objections Committee, an Advisory Panel of Stakeholders and a User Council.

We also ensure our independence by means of a healthy capital position. This means that we are resilient against financial risks which might arise, (for instance if clients decide to terminate the accreditation) and we can accommodate unforeseen circumstances (such as the consequences of the Covid pandemic).

Annual accounts

The figures on the next page have been taken as a summary from the adopted annual accounts for 2020. You can download the full annual accounts via our website (www.rva.nl) or request them from us via communicatie@rva.nl.

The annual accounts have been compiled with due observance of the Dutch Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act (Kaderwet zelfstandige bestuursorganen). The Guideline for Annual Reporting 640 'Not-for-profit organisations' (Richtlijn voor de jaarverslaggeving 640) has been used since 2018.

Profit and loss account (x €1000)

Results	Budgeted 2020	2020	2019
Net turnover	14,599	13,231	14,470
Expenses			
Personnel	8,577	8,343	8,183
Costs of outsourced work	3,704	3,214	3,863
Travel and accommodation costs	700	260	779
Depreciation of fixed assets	110	116	95
Other costs	1,941	1,711	1,549
Total expenses	**15,032**	**13,644**	**14,469**
Sum of income and expenses	**-433**	**-413**	**1**
Interest income	–	–	1
Result	**-433**	**-413**	**2**
Costs charged to designated fund	443	211	131
Addition to designated fund	–	–	-170
Changes to equalisation and other reserve	10	-202	-37

Balance sheet as at 31 December (x €1000) after appropriation of result

Assets	2020	2019
Fixed assets	754	279
Receivables and transitory assets	3,188	3,818
Liquid assets	2,402	2,852
Total	**6,344**	**6,949**

Liabilities	2020	2019
Equity capital	3,797	4,210
Short-term debts and transitory liabilities	2,547	2,739
Total	**6,344**	**6,949**

As at 31 December 2020, the buffer capital (equity capital -/- designated fund) is 3,570,497 euros. On balance, the buffer capital decreases by 202,487 euros. At year-end 2019, the buffer capital was 3,772,984 euros.

The impact of the Covid pandemic on the financial results has remained manageable, partly thanks to the Temporary Emergency Bridging Measure for Employment (Noodmaatregel Overbrugging voor Werkgelegenheid 1.0) and cost-saving measures. The results – although budgeted negatively – will not hinder the continuity of our activities for 2021.

Distribution of invoiced time

For the type of investigation:

Assessment type	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)	2018 (total number of days 8,680 = 100%)
Initial assessment	5%	7%	5%
Extension	9%	8%	7%
Reassessment	23%	18%	17%
Conformity assessment	55%	57%	51%
Witness audit	8%	9%	10%
Transition to ISO 15189	-	1%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Broken down by role in the assessment team:

Role	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)	2018 (total number of days 8,680 = 100%)
Lead assessor	46%	43%	45%
Assessor	10%	11%	11%
Technical expert	44%	46%	44%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Including the assessment of corrective measures and witness audits:

Deployment	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)	2018 (total number of days 8,680 = 100%)
At client's site/remote	47%	48%	47%
Preparation/reporting	52%	49%	50%
Travel outside the Netherlands	1%	3%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Seeing the people behind the numbers is important to me in my work.

Mohammed El Betar, *Financial Controller*

COLOPHON

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Utrecht, June 2021

DUTCH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL