RAAD VOOR ACCREDITATIE

PUBLIC REPORT 2015

Working on confidence

DUTCH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL RVA

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RAAD VOOR ACCREDITATIE

Vision, mission and core values

Vision

The RvA services:

- are provided in a professional, transparent and independent way with integrity;
- by deploying competent, motivated employees and external networks of experts;
- and according to national and international set requirements.

In addition, the interests of the Dutch market, the authorities and the people are taken into account.

Mission

The core activity of the RvA is to provide accreditation services. As a national accreditation body the RvA ensures that the confidence all the interested parties have in the certificates of conformity and assessment reports issued under its supervision is justified.

Core values

The RvA adheres to the following core values:

- competency
- impartiality and independence
- market orientation
- people orientation
- integrity
- transparency

In Dutch the first letters of these words read as the acronym ‘commit’. This is an abbreviation which means commitment, or involvement. It is precisely this involvement based on the core values that offers our clients actual guaranteed trust.

What is accreditation?

Creating trust

Accrediting really means: creating trust. Nationally and internationally buyers want to be able to trust blindly the quality and safety of products and services provided. If these are guaranteed, it not only benefits the buyer but also the supplier. This strengthens his position in the market. In order to be able to give an objective guarantee, the supplier can have his product or service assessed by an accredited organisation. This also applies to every area imaginable: health, environment, construction, energy, food, transport, finance etc.

Chain of trust

If a supplier meets the requirements he will receive a certificate of conformity in the form of a certificate or report. Assessing bodies are therefore called conformity assessment bodies. This statement has most value if the assessment body is professional, impartial and independent. The RvA has been appointed by the government as the national accreditation body with the aim of checking the expertise, impartiality and independence of conformity assessment bodies. If the result is positive an accreditation mark will be issued. Thereby the RvA forms the final link in the chain of trust.

Foreword of the Board of Supervisors

This is the public report of the RvA for 2015. It is a report in which the RvA gives insight into its work in an accessible way and renders account for it: checking the expertise, impartiality and independence of organisations which inspect, certify and test in order to support the confidence of society in the quality of products and services. This important work has been performed well for twenty years.

Obviously it cannot be prevented that now and then things do go wrong. After all, we are only human. Accredited organisations are responsible for their own management. They cannot shift this to the RvA or to the official inspection bodies. However, they are not responsible for the standards and laws that determine how they have to do their work. Sometimes these are determined by politics, sometimes by 'the market'. Standards which were appropriate at the moment they were drawn up, don't always appear later on to accord with the perception of society. This does not mean that accredited organisations don't do their work properly, as is sometimes suggested, but that the respective standards and the suppliers of products and services did not develop sufficiently along with the needs of society.

The Board of Supervisors find it striking that discussions about abuses are often not held on the basis of an inventory of causes in a broader context and that the extent of the problem is seldom quantified. In the exceptional cases where this does happen, we see few ambitious objectives for improvement, and little management of the government departments to achieve improvements in the broader system in collaboration with the players in the field. Whether we are talking about food safety, the so-called 'defeat devices' (*sjoemelsoftware*), asbestos or high-speed trains, the solution always appears to be sought in individual players and the total system of quality assurance, supervision and enforcement is hardly taken into consideration. In fact this in particular is what should give society confidence that all is well with the products and services they enjoy.

As the Board of Supervisors we keep our finger on the pulse of how the RvA deals with all those interests, optimises its management, responds to signals from society and looks for the dialogue, without losing sight of its special role.

It only remains to be said that in 2015 we performed our duties with pleasure.

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors,

Drs. E.H.T.M. Nijpels
Chairman

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Introduction

Every year in our public report we shed light on the subject of confidence. This is not so strange if you think that this is what accreditation etymologically vouches for. On the basis of European harmonised standards the RvA assesses whether certification bodies carry out their work competently, impartially and independently. This is how we support the confidence that society has in the outcomes of that work. These standards are not formulated by ourselves but by all interested parties.

In our assessments we don't look directly at matters such as integrity or organisational culture. Neither are the standards we apply meant to determine whether organisations observe legislation and regulations; there are other bodies to keep an eye on this. However, we note that users of the outcomes of the work of accredited organisations often have the perception that all those subjects are covered by accreditation and certification. This presents a fine task for developers of standards, and for players in the area of accreditation and certification. Because in a fast changing world it is crucial that the limitations of our work are clear to everybody.

Looking back on 2015

Our primary task consists of conducting assessments in order to be able to take decisions about accreditation and maintaining accreditation of 629 RvA registrations and, in a transitional phase, another 215 CCKL registrations. You will find the facts of this in the Annexes to this report. 2015 was the first year of the transition from CCKL registrations to RvA registrations. To this end 60 laboratories were assessed of which, by year-end 2015, 26 laboratories were actually accredited against the international ISO 15189 standard. It is a transition that will be ongoing until sometime in 2019; then the possibility of a CCKL registration will end.

However, more is required in order to be able to carry out the primary work in a way that justifies the changing needs of society. For instance in 2015 we paid a lot of attention to the following subjects.

Changes in private standards

Many of the private standards which form the basis of our work, have been reviewed in recent years. This requires extra attention and training, which is something that applies to the accredited organisations but also to our own organisation. The transitions of the standards for those conformity assessment bodies active in the areas of product certification, certification of persons, inspection, and medical laboratories were completed in 2015. Those for the institutions for management system certification have been put in motion. On top of this there were changes to the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 standards, which are much used for the certification of management systems. Involuntarily such changes cause much inwardly directed work. This may make the antennae for the outside world temporarily less sensitive, especially because increasingly fewer standards being used for accreditation require the input of direct stakeholders.
The initial accreditations for the CO_2 Performance Ladder, a new sphere of work for the RvA, were granted in 2015 to certification bodies.

Renovation in the public sector

On the public side, or rather from the side of the government, we have also seen several important developments. As a result of the requirement imposed on accreditation by European Regulation 765/2008, namely that accreditation must be based on European harmonised standards, the RvA can no longer conduct other types of assessments. That is why the assessments for the quality marks indicator (*Keurmerkenwijzer*) of the Dutch Consumer & Market Authority and for the Joint Accreditation Committee ISCT & EBMT have been phased out. A transitional period of four years has been agreed for the assessments which the RvA conducts for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Within this period

many of the current arrangements will be converted into regular accreditation and for a limited number of arrangements it will be considered whether a different way can be found to guarantee their expertise, impartiality and independence. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has entered into a renewed tripartite agreement with Stichting Bouwkwaliteit (foundation for building quality) and the RvA for the recognition of declarations of conformity in the building sector. This renewal was necessary due to the introduction of the Construction Products Regulation, by which the market authorisation requirements of many construction products are now provided for at European level. In the Netherlands this has consequences for the declarations of conformity which are issued under the KOMO hallmark. The RvA has informed the Ministry of Safety and Justice together with the Dutch Youth Care Inspectorate about the possible certification of organisations in the area of youth protection and juvenile rehabilitation. A new accreditation programme for sampling in connection with the manure legislation has been drawn up with the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Internal developments

Renewal not only comes from outside but also from the inside. For instance in 2015 work was carried out on the so-called shadow assessment, an assessment in which the RvA together with the auditor of a certification body goes back to the place of the audit and looks at how the auditor reached his opinion. Because this is surveillance that takes place afterwards, we have more freedom in the choice of the audit we want to verify. Moreover, it is very effective that every auditor of the certification body can in principle be a subject of such verification. We expect this to be a good addition to our palette of tools.

Another development is that we are going to change the way we are currently accepting schemes and schemes owners in the near future. This activity is not based on European harmonised standards and therefore it does no longer fit in well with our activities. In addition, we would be out of sync with what our European colleagues are doing. Conformity assessment bodies are themselves responsible for the validity of the schemes applied by them, and thereby comply with the harmonised standards which the RvA uses for accreditation. Because in the Netherlands the use of schemes managed by independent scheme owners is a well developed system of achieving harmonisation in the market, the RvA together with these scheme owners is working out how the RvA can nevertheless facilitate them with respect for every party's role.

Moreover, in 2015 we launched a completely redesigned website which is accessible from computers, smartphones and tablets. At the same time we introduced a digital RvA newsletter for which those interested can register via our website. And last but not least we used the opportunities created by the move to a larger, more transparent office premises, and introduced a new, flexible work concept.

Outlook for 2016

It remains a challenge to find good assessors for our organisation. In 2016 we will pay extra attention to this so that we can expand our pool of qualified assessors. For instance we are going to use the opportunities offered by LinkedIn more, and a separate website will be set up for the component of working at the RvA. Moreover, in 2016 we are concentrating on an efficiently operating primary process that is continuously improving.

The topic of World Accreditation Day (9 June) in 2016 is accreditation as support for government policy. On this day, along with the Advisory Panel of interested parties we are organising a conference devoted to this topic. This is a subject which is very topical. In 2016 the Ministries are going to renotify many conformity assessment bodies within the European Union on the basis of accreditation as so called Notified Bodies, for the revamped European directives in connection with the New Legal Framework. Accreditation will also become the basis of most of the recognition decrees for certification and inspection bodies in connection with the Dutch Commodities Act (*Warenwet*) by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Special attention will be given to asbestos. For the activities of asbestos final inspections the RvA itself is going to test a system of unan-

nounced witnessing sessions. The Dutch Construction Quality Assurance Act (*Wet kwaliteitsborging in de bouw*) will no doubt cast its shadow on our work area. The first accreditation assessments will take place for providers of certification for Business Continuity Management Systems according to ISO 22301.

The RvA has been an autonomous administrative authority (*zelfstandig bestuursorgaan*) since 2010. On the instructions of the Ministry of Economic Affairs a survey commenced at the end of 2015 concerning the effective and efficient operation of the RvA, in which the past five years were evaluated. In addition, we took the initiative to have an image survey conducted. The outcomes of both surveys will no doubt generate points of departure for further actions and initiatives.

The RvA remains aware of the international nature of its work. Therefore we put ourselves forward for the new European multilateral agreement to be formed for providers of proficiency testing on the basis of the ISO/IEC 17043 standard.

Structure of this public report

This public report consists of two parts. In the first part you can read how in 2015 the RvA contributed to the justified confidence of people, authorities, companies and organisations, by continuously considering how the internal organisation and the external service to clients could be further improved. You will find the formal facts in the second part.

Apart from these core subjects you will find four interviews in this public report. The following people have their say:

- Henk Kamp, Minister of Economic Affairs, Ed Nijpels, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the RvA, and Jan van der Poel, Director/Chief Executive of the RvA – concerning a new vision of certification and accreditation;
- Anne-Marie Rakhorst, owner of Duurzaamheid.nl and founder of Search, and Piet-Hein Daverveldt, General Director of NEN – concerning the transition to a circular economy;
- Ida Haisma, Director of The Hague Security Delta, and Corné Cox, lead assessor at the RvA – concerning developments in the area of cyber security;
- Philip Kluin, Professor of Pathology, and Ine Greven, manager of the Health Care unit at the RvA – concerning the accreditation of pathology laboratories.

They share their thoughts on the question of how the quality level in their work area can be further increased in order to strengthen social trust. I hope you enjoy reading it!

Jan van der Poel
Director/Chief Executive

1 The difference between perception and the facts

In these times of super fast communication via social media and the worldwide web, a perception of the role and behaviour of accredited or certified organisations is rather quickly presented as the truth, or sometimes as 'framed'. In this connection the role of the conformity assessment bodies, such as laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies, whose role is properly described in the private standards, are regularly ignored. The meaning given to their activities is then out of step with the content of those activities. The result: false expectations. What is to be done about it then?

Accredited conformity assessment

It all begins with requirements. Without requirements there is no conformity assessment, because one cannot measure without a measuring rod. For the vast majority of the accredited organisations this involves requirements laid down in the private domain in standards (ISO, NEN etcetera). Sometimes these are taken over by the authorities in legislation and regulations. The standards for measuring air emissions are an example of this.

If there are standards, conformity assessment is possible against those standards. Organisations doing this often voluntarily submit to a standard for their activity - on the basis of which they can have themselves accredited. Accreditation is not a conformity assessment but a way of assessing competence, impartiality and independence and guaranteeing the continuity of all this. In several cases the government appoints or recognizes conformity assessment bodies to allow them to work in a particular work area. The condition for this market authorisation is increasingly accreditation. These work areas are in health, safety and the environment.

Accreditation is always granted for a specific work area. This is logical because expertise plays a big role. In connection with accreditation this is called 'scope'. This defines what is and what is not covered by accreditation. This information is always accessible via the website of the RvA. In other words, the fact that an organisation is accredited really says something in combination with the work area for which it is accredited. Just compare it for convenience sake with a driving license: you cannot drive a bus if your driving license is only valid for driving motorcycles.

Common misconceptions

Below you will find several examples of misconceptions about accredited activities which can easily arise.

Accredited testing laboratories

Accredited testing laboratories determine the properties of a sample. They do this by using the methods and standards indicated by the scope. But this does not mean that they all do this in the same way. This is because the methods applied can differ whereas they all can be covered by accreditation. The representativeness of the sample provided can differ as well. For instance the sample can have been taken by someone from an accredited organisation, covered in some way by accreditation. But it can also be a sample of unknown representativeness the value of which must be determined. The former occurs for instance at laboratories checking the water quality of drinking water, the latter in connection with vehicles offered for an emission test. Furthermore, values can often be determined via various methods. The hardness of metal can for instance be determined via Rockwell or via Brinell. This can lead to different outcomes, which in themselves are both right for that method.

In short, if you want to avoid variation in or misconceptions about test results, you have to be very precise in what you ask about the material and the determination methods. Authorities are also doing this more and more, for instance in the regulations for investigations in the area of soil quality.

Accredited certification bodies

At certification bodies there is a distinction between the certification of products, processes or services and the certification of management systems. Misconceptions also arise here because there is insufficient insight into the difference between both forms - and thereby what can be expected from them.

The former is the original form of certification, which for convenience sake is called 'product certification'. This form of certification involves determining the conformity of the products and services provided with the specifications arranged in advance. It is a form of certification which has really taken off in the private domain. In the public domain too this form is increasingly used in legislation and regulations. In order to determine conformity a mixture of inspections, audits, and, depending on the product or the service, laboratory tests are being used. This is determined in a scheme. So the content of the scheme determines the extent of supervision observed by the certification body, and which is apparently sufficient for the user. It is obviously important to become aware of the contents of the scheme if you want to make a statement about its value. The certificate will generally state that the object of certification meets the requirements as laid down in a scheme and in specifications. In addition, a mark of the certification body or a quality mark of the scheme owner can be placed on the product.

The second form, certification of management systems, is in the meantime gaining a major position globally. The object of certification here is not the product or service itself, but the delivering organisation. The certificate will declare that the organisation meets the requirements as laid down in a standard, sometimes with a scheme added in which several standard requirements have been further specified. The granting of a certificate takes place on the basis of audits. The competencies of the auditors and the minimum time spent are strictly defined internationally. What for instance can we expect from an organisation which is certified for ISO 9001 or another management system? In this regard the standard says (freely translated): 'The organisation is continuously able to provide products and services matching the customer's needs and complying with legislation and regulations.' With regard to standards such as ISO 14001, with the environment as a subject, and ISO 22003, with food safety as a subject, there is the addition that the organisation is able to observe environmental or food safety regulations. Therefore a management system certificate makes no statement about the performance, product or service provided. That is why the product cannot be provided with a mark of the certification body either. So in this case the buyer himself must specify properly what he wants to have provided, and critically monitor the quality of what is provided.

For convenience sake this can also be compared with a driving license, albeit that a management system certificate is valid for a maximum of three years, and that in the meantime there are annual audits to assess whether the criteria are met. Someone receives a driving license after he has demonstrated that he is able to drive a vehicle in a safe way and according to the legislation and regulations. However, this does not say that he will always abide by the rules.

From our point of view we cannot emphasise enough how important it is that buyers and regulators are thoroughly aware of the possibilities and limitations of the system of accredited conformity assessment. In this respect we also see a social responsibility for us as the RvA, for standardisation institutes, but certainly also for conformity assessment bodies to make clear the content as well as the limits of the results of conformity assessments.

A new vision of certification and accreditation

Early in 2015 the Minister of Economic Affairs Henk Kamp, announced in a letter to the House of Representatives that the Cabinet position with regard to certification and accreditation will be updated in 2016. The sign given earlier by the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (*Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit*), the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (*Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport*) and the Social Affairs and Employment Inspectorate (*Inspectie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid*) with regard to the relationship between supervision and certification, will be included in this. What follows is a talk between Ed Nijpels, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the RvA, and Jan van der Poel, Director/Chief Executive of the RvA, in response to the Minister.

What does trust mean?

HK: In connection with an everyday product such as fresh milk, you assume that it is actually fresh. If the milk is certified as organic, you can also assume that it is milk derived from cows kept according to the requirements of the certificate. This has for instance requirements with regard to treatment and their feed. There is automatic confidence in the supervision and certification of fresh milk. In the Netherlands it is practically unthinkable that a carton of fresh milk is not really fresh.

This obviously does not mean that nothing can ever go wrong with a product or service. As a citizen nowadays you can at the same time also obtain information about products and services, for instance by viewing the experiences of other consumers on the internet.

EN: For instance a quality mark such as KEMA-KEUR has for many people become a true concept, without knowing exactly what it all means. The fact that this hallmark is placed on a product, gives citizens a form of trust: it's good! And this is also the core duty of the RvA: we accredit certifying organisations so that people can trust that a product has been made and will operate as promised. In this respect accreditation and certification goes much further than its technical meaning. It is also about the feeling that people have. Is it safe? Should I not worry? That is why sometimes we have to be strict. That is obviously not an objective in itself for us but we should ensure that the trust of society is really justified.

JP: The point is that as the RvA we do not cover all the soft conditions of that trust. We look particularly at the substantive side, the promised properties of products and services and whether they are justified. And that is straight away the dilemma we face: the tendency to co-determine the ***height*** of the measuring rod. Is the promise good enough? Does society rely on this completely whereas we don't really look at it? It is ultimately the market or the government that determines the height of the measuring rod. How safe should a product be? What is the allowed emission quantity? How is good care met? We as the RvA don't determine all this!

EN: Added to this is that the entire social ***Umwelt*** covering accreditation and certification, has fundamentally changed. The world around us has become much more discerning. The faults made are straight away enlarged a hundred thousand times. It is not so much our work that has changed - because that work remains the same - but that the world in which we operate has become rather unsettled. If an incident occurs, people jump on top of it. People will quite soon say: 'I bought something that is certified, could it ever go wrong?' No! Accreditation is not a warranty system. An organisation we accredited works according to certain procedures and that is why you can put a lot of trust in what it does. But we do not issue absolute warranties. At the same time society has developed in such a way that people no longer want to run any risks.

JP: In connection with that public sentiment it is not only about the standard and about how we do our work. The public sentiment has for instance become that the emission of cars should not only be low on the test bench, but also in daily traffic. But this is not included in the standard. Likewise the integrity of a certified organisation ultimately determines to a high extent the result and whether the trust of the consumer is justified. But this cultural aspect is not covered by our work.

Supervision and certification

HK: Early 2015 a letter was sent to the House of Representatives in connection with an alert signal from three inspection authorities. The purport was: the connection between government supervision and certification can be improved. The most important thing is that the respective public as well as private parties are together investigating what the possibilities are. This is currently already taking place in various areas. For instance the SZW Inspectorate visits less frequently, or even not at all, organisations with a H&S management system certified on the basis of the international standard.

There are also warnings that the consultations between the inspectorates and interested parties sometimes do not go well because there are ambiguities with regard to the different roles and respon-

sibilities. The fact that a company has a certified quality system is obviously not a guarantee that nothing can ever go wrong. In a way this can be compared with a driving license. You can expect someone with a driving license to know the traffic rules but it is no guarantee that he does not break the law. Supervision by the authorities remains necessary and cannot be replaced by certification.

In short, regulators and parties involved in certification have different roles and responsibilities. By cooperating with each other they can more efficiently and effectively reach a better result for society.

EN: What is striking to me in the first place, is that there is something paradoxical in the alert signal of the three inspection authorities. On the one hand they say that they want to do less and that in that connection certification can contribute highly to risk-based supervision. At the same time they might attract extra surveillance duties, replacing the RvA with regard to checking the certification. The danger is also that you start to create the impression that you supervise the way in which the RvA does its accreditations. And that is exactly what should ***not*** be done. Because if inspectorates are going to give an opinion on the certification, we will soon get A, B and C certificates. That is to say certificates which are or are not approved by the authorities, or certificates which are less valued by the authorities.

JP: You will in actual fact then have the situation that the one public sector duty, accreditation, is approved by the other public sector, the inspectorates. This is odd. It has been laid down in law that we have the role of assessing the expertise, impartiality and independence of certification bodies and other conformity assessment bodies. The inspectorates can obviously ascertain whether the results are in the end good, but they should do that with the users of those results. Not with us. And not with the certification bodies either, because that task is entrusted to the RvA.

EN: The RvA obtained a monopoly on this from the government on behalf of all the Ministries. The impression must be avoided that we are competing with each other. The inspectorates don't have to check our work; we are already monitored at international level. And in our turn we monitor the organisations we accredit. As far as I am concerned opportunities for improvement are bringing about clear arrangements, not accumulation of supervision.

JP: And this should be in measurable objectives. Where do you want to go? What do you want to achieve? Do you think that 50% compliance is enough, or should it be 80%? In traffic this has been happening for quite some time. Every year they have neat statistics indicating how many accidents took place and how many fatalities were involved. In this way the effect of the measures taken previously can be seen.

Risk-based supervision policy

HK: In their warning letter the three inspectorates indicated that criteria are required in order to assess whether certification systems offer sufficient guarantee in order to rely on this in performing their supervisory role. Regulators must be able to render account for why they detail their supervision more lightly and differently by trusting certain certificates. Criteria can help to make an assessment. In the beginning it will cost some time and deployment to detail the supervision differently using certificates. But in the end this should lead to a more efficient and effective supervision policy.

For companies it is logical that supervision is concentrated on those situations where there is a greater risk of non-compliance with the law. With this in mind companies like to see that the certificates they have obtained are taken into account. Because this shows that a company is observing the rules. Avoiding unnecessary inspections contributes to the Cabinet's aim of less regulatory pressure on companies.

The RvA could also play a role in this, especially by properly explaining to the parties involved what the added value of accreditation is and what can and cannot be expected from accreditation. This again will help regulators in their assessment of the extent to which certificates can or cannot play a role in the design of their supervision.

JP: We already see it happening in practice that the drive for certification and accreditation is getting stronger. But as the RvA we are obviously not the market regulator of the Netherlands. What is good for the market is determined by the market itself. The essence of certification, inspection and testing is that interested parties can achieve standards with each other. We then see whether the certifying organisations have the expertise to be able to assess against those standards and whether they act impartially and independently.

EN: Where the relationship between inspectorates and certification is concerned, it is important to achieve good arrangements with each other so that one way or another nothing is doubled up. For that matter you won't hear me say that the inspectorates don't do any good work. They are sorely needed. But I am afraid that the inspectorates- which have already merged or have downsized - are increasingly spurred on by all that political pressure to do all the work and therefore also become active with the wrong things. Inspectorates should not deal with the system of certification. To this end the RvA has been created as a monopolist. The inspectorates exist to supervise compliance with legislation and regulations. To give an example: in connection with the asbestos policy, where certification is as clear as it can be, a survey was recently conducted by the inspectorate. From this it emerged that a large majority do not observe the existing rules. This has nothing to do with certification. They just don't observe the law!

JP: Yes, that's a point. I think that the Ministries should address this more clearly. How can we improve this? How could we for instance raise 50% compliance to 80%? For that matter the ideas should not only come from the inspectorates and the regulators, but also from the angle of the certification and standardisation. This is so that together we can ensure that compliance increases. You can compare it in this case with the asbestos example but it applies in essence to any system of certification and accreditation.

EN: Looking back on the just over fifteen years that I have been involved in the RvA, I am very happy with the existence of the accreditation phenomena itself and the way in which it has been quietly achieved by the RvA. All things considered, the confidence everybody has in it has never been put up for discussion. And that is really something to be proud of.

In 2012 **Henk Kamp** was appointed Minister of Economic Affairs in the Rutte-Asscher Cabinet. Previous posts had included Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Management, Minister of Defence, Minister Of Social Affairs and Employment, a Commissioner for Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba and a member of Parliament.

In 2014 **Ed Nijpels** was appointed Chairman of the Committee for securing an energy agreement for sustainable growth (***Commissie Borging Energieakkoord voor duurzame groei***: 'BEA') and Crown-appointed member of the Dutch Social and Economic Council. Previous posts included Royal Commissioner in Friesland, the mayor of Breda and Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Management.

Since 2002 **Jan van der Poel** has been the Director/Chief Executive of the RvA. In 2010 the Dutch government appointed the RvA as the national accreditation body on the basis of European Regulation 765/2008. Since that time the RvA has been an autonomous administrative authority, rendering account to the Minister of Economic Affairs.

2 Supervision and advice: transparency creates trust

The RvA is allowed to operate with a high degree of independence but the forms of supervising the work and advice in the accreditation decision-making process are of major importance in this connection. They guarantee the expertise, impartiality and independence of the RvA and provide a critical evaluation of our activities and our management.

Supervision and advice also contribute to a major extent to the trust of the public sector, society and our customers in performing our activities. Various bodies and committees are active in the RvA to this end. In the organisational chart in Annex 1 you can see their relation to each other and their composition. In this chapter we will outline the role and activities of the different bodies and committees.

Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors of the RvA is comparable to the supervisory board of a commercial organisation. The Board of Supervisors ensures that the Board of Directors realises the objectives of the RvA. Selection of Members takes place on the basis of expertise and competencies. It is preferable for the following competence areas to be represented on the Board of Supervisors:

- business sector
- public sector
- research/technology
- healthcare/medical
- food and goods
- quality assurance

It is important that the Members of the Board of Supervisors:

- have wide knowledge and experience of professional organisations;
- are properly able to advise and encourage;
- apply an objective, detached approach;
- have integrity and a sense of responsibility;
- have an independent and critical attitude;
- can formulate a balanced assessment.

The Members of the Board of Supervisors are appointed for a period of three years and can be reappointed twice. The Board of Supervisors will subsequently appoint the members of the Accreditation Committee and the Chairmen Committee for Objection according to the Articles. These two committees operate independently of the Board of Directors.

Accreditation Committee

This Committee consists of four members appointed on the basis of their expertise in accreditation, their integrity, and independence. The Committee meets once a month. Its duty is to advise the Board of Directors on granting accreditations. In addition the Committee has the power to advise on the suspension or withdrawal of accreditations. It receives information from the Board of Directors and the Executive Board about measures and sanctions against organisations.

The Accreditation Committee does not take decisions. The decision-making is entrusted to the Board of Directors. If the Board of Directors holds a different view from the advice of this Committee, the Board of Supervisors will be heard. The Committee reports annually on its activities to the Board of Supervisors.

In 2015 Mr. M.N.D. de Vries resigned after having chaired the Committee for almost ten years. We would like to express our thanks for the meaningful work he carried out in this role and in other positions which he held since the origin of accreditation of conformity assessment at the RvA and his legal predecessors.

Chairmen Committee for Objection
In the event of objections to a decision by the RvA a Member of this Committee will be engaged. The Committee consists of at least one and not more than five legally trained Members. With regard to each notice of objection received, the Board of Directors will appoint a Member of the Committee to form an advisory committee for that objection. The Members of this Committee are strictly independent. They will never be Members of the Board of the RvA and do not carry out any activities under the responsibility of the Board. This guarantees impartial treatment of objections.

Ministry of Economic Affairs

The RvA must comply with the relevant provisions of the Dutch Independent Executive Agencies Framework Act (*Kaderwet zelfstandige bestuursorganen*) and European Regulation 765/2008. The Ministry of Economic Affairs supervises this. With regard to the policy aspect this runs via the approval of the rates, budgets and annual accounts and the communication protocol. With regard to the substantive aspect, according to the Regulation attendance at peer evaluations by the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) is generally considered sufficient. In connection with the financial management and supervision standards framework determined by the Cabinet for bodies serving a public interest, in 2015 a so-called BFI (Business management, Finance and ICT) Consultation has been introduced for the first time.

EA Multilateral Agreement Committee

In order to remain a signatory of the Multilateral Agreement ('MLA') of EA the RvA must satisfy the requirements of the European Regulation 765/2008 and the international ISO/IEC 17011 standard. Every four years the RvA is assessed by a team of about eight 'peers' in the form of a peer evaluation.

Board of Directors and Executive Board

The Director/Chief Executive is responsible for the realisation of the RvA's objectives, its strategy and policy, and the developments resulting from these. He accounts for this to the Board of Supervisors. In this connection he is assisted in his management by the Operational Director.

The Board of Directors and the Executive Board are furthermore served by two advisory panels: the Advisory Panel of Interested Parties and the User Council.

Advisory Panel of Interested Parties
The stakeholders in the work of the RvA in the broadest sense are represented on this Panel: the public sector, direct clients of the RvA, direct clients of the conformity assessment bodies and scientific institutes. The Panel operates at a strategic and tactical level. The aim of the Panel is twofold:

- to advise the Board and the Executive Board about general policy matters whether or not requested;
- to guarantee the impartiality of the RvA in policy matters.

The Panel meets twice a year to discuss (for instance) relevant developments, the added value of the RvA and the long-term vision. In 2015 for instance the following matters came up for discussion: a new approach to assessment of schemes, the desirability of accreditation of examination boards, the setup of the image survey of the RvA, the warning from three inspectorates about certification and supervision and the report of the 'Fyra' Parliamentary Enquiry Committee. Once every two years the Panel initiates a conference for its supporters. The Board of Supervisors receives the minutes of the meetings and the decisions of the Panel are published on our website.

User Council
The User Council consists of representatives of direct clients of the RvA and meets twice a year to advise the RvA about the budget and rates and about the service level of the RvA. The Board of Supervisors receives the minutes of the meetings, so that it can include the opinions of users in its deliberations.

The forms of supervision and advice outlined in this chapter make a big contribution to our clients, the society and the public sector being able to continue to have confidence in our work. Therefore this is the place to thank all those active in the bodies and committees referred to above for their input in 2015.

A circular economy: designing with a task

It is a global challenge that we cannot avoid: the move from a linear to a circular way of thinking, from raw materials consumption to complete recycling. We are only at the beginning of this fundamental U-turn, but we are already talking about a market of many billions in which numerous parties participate. What role can standards and certificates play in a circular economy? And what does this mean for the work of the RvA? We asked Anne-Marie Rakhorst, owner of Duurzaamheid.nl and founder of Search Ingenieursbureau, and Piet-Hein Daverveldt, General Director of NEN.

What does confidence mean?

PD: Confidence means very simply that you get what is promised. The system of accreditation, certification and standardisation forms a proper framework for this. It gives us confidence that organisations indeed deliver the promised quality and, what is also important, that they continue to learn. At the same time we must realise that this system does not offer guarantees: it is not meant to detect entrepreneurs who purposely flout legislation and regulations. You see that this is often not properly understood in our society. When there are incidents there is still more or less immediately a call for new rules. But a completely no risk situation does not exist. I believe that this realisation is very important.

AR: This short-winded response to incidents leads to a type of false security. It is impossible to tighten everything up. The system is not meant for this; it is an aid to organising processes properly - whereby obviously the society remains responsible for being discerning, so that there is no complete dependency on legislation, regulations and standards. In the area of Cradle to Cradle at the moment a lot of individual products are marketed, for instance for the building sector: ceiling panels, partitions etc. Every organisation follows its own development process. Standardisation helps with scaling up and accelerating. It not only leads to standards but also to networks and joint ventures, to the organisation of support and to a further distribution of knowledge. I believe that the biggest added value is in those areas.

PD: I think so too. The challenge in this type of innovation is in the end not so much the eureka moment in the form of a good idea, but the impact you manage to realise. That impact is always something to do with economy of scale, and that economy of scale will increasingly be based on cooperation. This means that you must make good arrangements: what are the state of the art technologies and how are we recoding them in a standard?

From linear to circular

AR: We've only just started the transition. At the same time a market of millions is already involved - and if you consider it internationally, even a market of billions. This also means that there are many inspiring examples. Just look at Umicore, a Belgian business active in taking apart all kinds of equipment: cameras, computers etc. That business is one of the leaders in the circular economy and is highly successful. We are talking about an enormous knowledge development. But you often hear that separating materials and raw materials is extremely difficult. That is obviously true, but let's make a parallel with gold ore. It is mined at a depth of 5 kilometres. We all know the circumstances under which this happens and how much ore you need to extract any gold at all. This is then very easily dismissed. The truth is that it is obviously uniquely difficult.

PD: If you look at how many initiatives there are, it is indeed very hopeful. These initiatives should not be nipped in the bud. That is why it is a good thing that the public sector gives the market more regulatory space and takes a facilitating role so that creative solutions can emerge from the sector itself. In this connection we conducted for instance a quick scan with NEN: to what extent does existing legislation and regulations and in particular the existing standards which originated in the period that linear thinking was still at the forefront throw up barriers to really becoming circular? For this quick scan we examined over two hundred Green Deals.[1] Subsequently we researched additionally on the basis of ten case studies. What was the conclusion? There is work to be done! In several cases standards are unsuitable for new circular products. But it is striking that in many cases there appears to be a need for arrangements, for instance about the quality of residual flows, measuring methods and sustainability. This is to ensure that they can be deployed responsibly. At the same time you see that the network of standardisation offers good opportunities to bring the right parties to each other.

1 Green Deals are arrangements between the national government and other parties (companies, social organisations and other authorities), intended to remove problems in connection with sustainable plans.

AR: Years ago we could not have dreamt that the government would have this open attitude. I also think a good example is the Cabinet's policy in the area of green growth in which the facilitating and encouraging role of the government forms one of the four pillars. This role as network partner now and then also leads to dilemmas. For instance the upswing of crowd funding in the food area comes to mind. Anybody in the Netherlands can start a kitchen where you can pick up food and a lot of new initiatives can be seen in this area. Should you then start to regulate this, or on the contrary do you opt not to put restrictions on this? These are challenging questions.

Cooperation in the chain

PD: Together we will have to put a lot of time into this. This not only plays at a national level: if you want to realise more impact, you should in any event think in a European context and preferably even think globally. The European Commission set up a circular economy action plan and this deals for instance with the importance of the entire chain. What is required at the beginning so as to be able to separate materials and raw materials again at the end so that they can be reused? And how can you organise the production process in such a way that you increase efficiency?

AR: I think that this is where the added value of the Cradle to Cradle philosophy is: that there is a strong focus on the creative process. Because at the core it is a design issue. It is all about putting things together easily, but particularly taking them easily apart again. Designing with a task. And as you already indicated the entire chain plays a crucial role in this. You see that chains are changing enormously but that nevertheless thinking is often still in vertical columns. From an economic point of view here is the biggest opportunity: that we are going to consider issues in chains and not in cut up processes. This is also important for standardisation. Because only in this way can acceptance, support and also actual change in particular be achieved.

PD: It remains a big challenge for us to get all the parties around the table with each other. In the standardisation process we are working on the basis of several principles. One of these is that parties who have an interest in the formulation should be given access. So we are working towards this. But the invitation is sometimes insufficient. You cannot force people to participate, but obviously you want to achieve a well-considered standard which has wide support. In the area of the circular economy there are for instance many SMEs which have found a niche. But there is too much time and cost involved for the really small enterprises to take part. That is why it is important that sector organisations participate so that the sector is nevertheless represented.

AR: This touches on the central-decentral issue. If we take for instance energy, I think the real task is not that we go from fossil fuel to clean energy sources but that we go from a centrally organised energy system to a decentralised system. And this applies really to all sustainability issues. There is a lot of local entrepreneurship: smaller companies and self-employed entrepreneurs who have the courage to develop things and who therefore run a personal risk. In recent years it has therefore become more and more important that as an organisation you are able to make contact with individuals. How do you organise that process? Duurzaamheid.nl is a platform meant to exchange knowledge and thereby to be able to scale up and accelerate. I think it is very interesting - for NEN but also for many other more centrally organised organisations - to see how you can be an inspiring partner oriented towards a decentralised system. I believe that by doing this, great added value will be unlocked.

PD: On the one hand you must certainly have an eye for the great quantity of initiatives at decentralised level, but on the other hand there are also matters which you can only arrange at a European level. The challenge is to lay a connection between them, so that it enhances each other.

AR: This was actually the biggest lesson for me at the moment that Search Ingenieursbureau became part of SGS. It is a global organisation nurturing local initiatives but then it also does everything to scale up those initiatives internationally. It is a great power if you can do that.

Major opportunities for improvement

PD: If we take the work of the RvA, in actual fact we see a similar task. As an accreditation body you must make sure in the first place that certification bodies meet the set requirements, but it is also important that you keep in touch with the greater aim you are serving - and that in this respect you might now and then have a slightly more flexible attitude. To give an example: one component of standardisation is management systems. At a certain moment we noticed that many organisations only choose these systems because their customers required it. This obviously has hardly any added value. You then have to revert to the greater objective. In the old management system standards the emphasis was very much on documentation and checklists. The new standards are much more concentrated on the context in which an organisation works.

AR: I think this is a valuable shift. Because an assessment on the basis of operational checklists soon creates the feeling that someone with a red pen is coming to place pluses and minuses. This could lead to resistance, certainly if it involves such uncharted territory as the circular economy. But if you are visited by someone who really understands what it happening at tactical/strategic level, this is very inspiring for an organisation. With such an intelligent, cooperative attitude you can create a lot of support and willingness to change. This obviously demands something from the employees who are active in the field for the RvA. Therefore the big challenge is to keep the right people involved, also in the longer term. This can be done by the RvA being an inspiring partner and by creating a network that people like to be part of. This also attracts new people.

PD: In addition, I think that we have to consider how the accreditation system and the supervision system can be better synchronised with each other. A certification body has a relationship of trust with its clients and cannot just provide its findings to any third party. But it might be possible to disclose these findings rendered anonymously or to provide them to a regulator, so that it is possible to show where the problems are. And it is the same the other way around: a regulator can also indicate that certain issues require more attention, because it often goes wrong there.

AR: This willingness to change is crucial. It requires a societal debate and leadership. When I observe how rich our country is and how well our working population is trained, I see a wonderful leading role in store for the Netherlands.

Anne-Marie Rakhorst is an entrepreneur, investor and writer in the area of sustainability. In 1994 she established Search which within twenty years grew into a successful engineering and consultancy agency, laboratory and training institute. In 2014 Search Ingenieursbureau became a member of the global market leader SGS. Since that time she has continued her mission of increasing the sustainability of the business community, for instance as an entrepreneur and as a founder of the independent knowledge institute Duurzaamheid.nl.

Since 2012 **Piet-Hein Daverveldt** has been the General Director of NEN, the leading knowledge centre in the area of standards development and standards application in the Netherlands. Previously he held various management positions at Shell. He is VP Finance at the European standardisation organisation 'CEN' and VP Technical (Elect) at ISO. Besides this he holds various additional positions for instance as a member of the Advisory Panel of Interested Parties of the RvA.

3 International cooperation

The confidence in accreditation is legally extended to all countries of the European Union and the Member States of the European Free Trade Association via European Regulation 765/2008. This confidence applies to the public as well as the private domain. Every Member State is obliged to appoint a national accreditation body or to outsource this activity to accreditation bodies of other Member States.

The RvA was appointed by the authorities to fulfil this role in the Netherlands. The Regulation stipulates further that every national accreditation body must be a member of the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) umbrella organisation, which organises the peer evaluations on the basis of which accreditation bodies are mutually recognised. Apart from this, EA's objective is to harmonise the work of national accreditation bodies.

European co-operation for Accreditation

EA, a private association according to Dutch law, is increasingly becoming the voice of accreditation for the European Commission and for European stakeholders. In order to be able to fulfil the content of this role properly, EA must be able to rely on the technical expertise held by the various national accreditation bodies. The employees of the RvA also contribute to this. The RvA is active in the EA committees in which all accreditation bodies are deemed to participate. In addition, the employees of the RvA are regularly active in specific taskforces and workgroups. At the moment employees of the RvA chair the Environment working group and serve on the executive committee (board) of EA. Finding a good balance between the time spent in connection with this international, important work and our primary work forms a continuous challenge.

Peer evaluations of EA

By mutual recognition all test reports and declarations of conformity issued under European accreditation have the same status. Therefore, any accreditation issued in our country will also be accepted in the other European countries. This encourages free trade, for instance because providers of products and services don't have to apply for a test or certificate in every country.

During a peer evaluation a team composed of colleagues from other European accreditation bodies reviews whether the accreditation body to be assessed meets the set criteria. Those criteria are incorporated in the international ISO/IEC 17011 standard and European Regulation 765/2008. The peer evaluations serve as a guarantee of the competence, impartiality and independence of national accreditation bodies. In addition, they form the basis for acceptance in the global multilateral agreements.

In 2016 the RvA will undergo a peer evaluation for the expansion of its recognition with the accreditation of proficiency testing providers according to ISO/IEC 17043. The multilateral agreement for this sphere of work might become effective in 2017. In 2017 the RvA itself will again undergo a full peer evaluation. In addition, in 2015 we contributed to assessments in Switzerland and Kosovo and to the preparation of the assessment in Hungary.

International standardisation

Assessments are carried out by the RvA on the basis of standards. In order to harmonise these assessments internationally, a standards framework is required which has international force. In the meantime globally recognised ISO standards exist for all our accreditation activities. The most recent one appeared in 2012: the accreditation standard for cer-

tification bodies of products, services or processes. The standards are updated once every five or ten years on average and can be considered as private 'laws' for self-regulation. As the substantive experts in 2015 and thereafter, the staff members of the RvA are involved in the review of the ISO/IEC 17011, the standard which accreditation bodies must meet, and the ISO/IEC 17025, the standard which test and calibration laboratories must meet in order to become accredited.

We consider the legitimacy of these standards to be a point of concern. The intention is obviously that on balance all interested parties have a say in the criteria, or in other words: the height of the bar. But in the time-consuming process of normalisation it appears that it is increasingly the bigger parties that call the shots. This applies in any event to accreditation standards, where representatives for instance of certification bodies have more resources to move the standards in a direction they prefer than most of the other stakeholders, while the users, such as the business sector and also increasingly the public sector, appear to be less willing to spend more on this. Certainly if there is ever more reliance on self-regulation it is important to keep a sharp eye on the height of the bar. After all, that height determines how the justification of trust is given substance. Accreditation and conformity assessments have no geographical boundaries. That is why harmonisation is of major importance to an open economy such as the Dutch one, but then at a level that is in line with the expectations of the interested parties in our work.

Global harmonisation and recognition

At international level there are two umbrella organisations promoting harmonisation between countries and regions.

- International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) for laboratories and inspection bodies;
- International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for certification and verification bodies.

A national accreditation body can be a member of both umbrella organisations. The RvA is a co-signatory of the ILAC-MRA and IAF-MLA multilateral agreements.

ILAC and IAF cooperate intensively in several areas. This applies to the organisation and the completion of the peer reviews, for communication and support to countries just starting accreditation.

The participation status in mutual recognition as of February 2016 is:

- EA: 35 signatories in 35 countries (including several non-European countries who have a bilateral agreement with EA);
- ILAC: 89 signatories in 86 economies;
- IAF: 73 signatories in 66 economies.

Of organisations accredited by the RvA, 36 laboratories and 32 certification bodies have taken out a license to be able to carry the ILAC-MRA mark or the IAF-MLA mark respectively on their reports or statements covered by the multilateral agreement.

Foreign policy and cooperation

In accordance with European Regulation 765/2008, the RvA is not allowed to issue or maintain declaration of accreditation in European countries other than the Netherlands, except with the consent of the respective country. This is meant to make competition between national accreditation bodies impossible. The logical consequence of this is that Dutch branches of organisations accredited abroad are assessed by the RvA at the request of the foreign accreditation body, and the other way around. This is beneficial for both national and European harmonisation.

On the basis of these starting points the RvA also organised its policy with regard to granting accreditation in countries outside Europe. In 2015 this resulted in cooperation in connection with the assessment of the 52 secondary locations with core activities abroad of the organisations accredited by the RvA. With regard to 12 locations the assessment could be outsourced to the local accreditation body, both inside as well as outside Europe. We ourselves assessed 16 locations. The remaining 24 locations were assessed via a so-called remote assessment from the head office of the respective organisation. This involves the use of audiovisual resources and access to the business network of the accredited organisation. We expect to outsource even more assessments to local accreditation bodies in the coming years. The other way around at the request of European colleagues we assessed a Dutch location operating under their accreditation 7 times in 2015. It is a good result for this new policy because such a thing requires mutual planning and familiarization.

Cyber security: focus on awareness

We are living in a digital society in which the opportunities are continuously expanding and in which we become more and more dependent on IT. This also makes us more vulnerable. Symantec's annual threat report indicates that of all the European countries the Netherlands is most faced with internet criminality and that our country is globally the fourth with regard to processing malware. An interview follows with Ida Haisma, director of The Hague Security Delta (HSD), and Corné Cox, lead assessor at the RvA, on a subject involving everybody: cyber security.

What does confidence mean?

IH: Within the HSD national safety cluster we are working on innovative solutions for security problems, cyber security being the biggest topic. We do this on the basis of the triple helix: joint ventures between the private sector, public sector organisations and knowledge institutions. Often it is the case that the demand originates from the public sector, that private parties provide the supply and that research and educational institutions validate the required knowledge. This triple helix looks at the technology, but that's only part of the story. Because you cannot blindly trust technology; it is also important whether professionals are competent. If you want to achieve top-quality solutions, you have to include this human factor.

CC: I also see this in our assessments. We not only look at technology but also at behaviour in organisations. How are processes and procedures dealt with? Does the management show leadership in this respect? To give a simple example: I sometimes noticed that employees of a data centre stuck their passwords on the terminals when they left on holiday, so that the persons who would replace them in that period could nevertheless enter the system. If you don't do anything about this as an organisation, you will run a big risk. For that matter I myself am reasonably suspicious where digital security is concerned. For instance I will not put sensitive information in the cloud. Somehow I find that a shame: that such a supplier apparently cannot give me the confidence that this information will be handled with integrity and, in the unlikely event that things go wrong, that I will be informed about it in a proper way.

IH: I am not so suspicious by nature. I think it has to do with the fact that due to my occupation I have an above-average focus on security and that I know what I should and should not do. For instance I change my passwords very often. But we are talking about an urgent problem: this digital security really must be greatly improved.

Rendering account

CC: I agree with you. First and foremost the confidence in the security of digital products and services must be justified. We assess whether certification bodies are competent to issue certificates. In doing this we not only focus on technical skills but also on the question of whether they are able to conduct assessments in an objective, independent and impartial way. We often see that particularly on that latter point great improvements can still be made.

IH: I would like to add an element to this. Consumers nowadays do not have a single perspective for action. They know they are running a risk but the moment they actually suffer losses due to disruption, failure or abuse of IT, they really can't do anything. It is high time that this changes. It would be nice if the RvA could contribute in a certain way to more awareness in this area of certification bodies and thereby indirectly also of organisations using certificates. Because if you include in a certification scheme that consumers have certain rights when things go wrong, or that an organisation is obliged to publish in such a case, you give something real to the consumer. This will have a great corrective effect.

CC: A good example is the international standard for environmental management systems, ISO 14001. This standard describes very clearly when certified organisations must communicate and even about what they should communicate. It would be useful if this form of rendering account is also included in the international standard for information security (ISO 27001). And this obviously applies to many other standards. But the fact is that ISO formulates the standards and that market parties make the certification schemes. So our influence as the RvA is very limited.

IH: But nevertheless: it would have great added value if something could be done with this. The developments in this field follow each other in double-quick time; in that sense an IT year consists of three months. That is exactly why you have to act quickly, if you want to be able to affect the confidence in the market. We now have the chairmanship of the European Union and standardisation and certification are one of the priorities in the cyber file of the Ministry of Security and

Justice. In other words the Netherlands wants to lead the way in this area. It is a good opportunity to boost awareness!

How do you create a watertight system?

CC: Elaborating on this: by definition the system of standardisation, certification and accreditation lags behind the practice; and certainly if the speed of development is high, as in IT. It can for instance take four or five years before a standard is determined at international level. The question is then: does the gap not become too large? Is there still sufficient connection with current events so that the confidence of society in the security of digital products and services is also really justified?

IH: I think honestly that as far as IT certification is concerned we should move to a completely different system. First you should not certify randomly but continuously. That requires a completely different organisation; we really cannot afford to continue in this way. You obviously cannot keep up with everything, so you would have to make a proper selection. In addition, it is important that certification bodies should not look so much at the technology but at the maturity of the organisation - that awareness I talked about before. If you include this in a certification scheme, then you are instantly a good deal further because you also incorporate the end user. I know this is very ambitious, but I do want to break a lance for it. Because only in this way will you obtain a watertight system.

CC: That is indeed quite a u-turn because this means a completely different way of certification. I do agree with you that there are opportunities here. At the same time I wonder how you could organise this, also in an international context.

IH: You could for instance start with a small number of certification schemes as a pilot. How would we address it? Where are the bottlenecks? What does it yield? In addition, you could formulate a leading group of countries at European level who will start to experiment with this. This would automatically create a kind of role model.

The balance between convenience and security

CC: With a view to those fast developments, I also see another dilemma. In order to reduce risks, IT systems must meet increasingly higher security requirements. At the same time it is obviously important that these systems remain properly accessible to consumers. For instance electronic banking comes to mind: I have to perform all kinds of acts on my PC before I can make a transaction, whereas on my smartphone I only have to enter a four-digit code. It is a totally different approach which I think is particularly the result of the fact that providers try to find a balance between convenience and security. But it is also a dangerous approach. How do you see this?

IH: The first step is security by design and I am greatly in favour of this. If you develop an app for electronic banking, you must already think about security in the design phase. This should be a requirement for being allowed to market products. Nowadays it is often the case that designers only investigate whether something is easy to hack into in the end phase. That is much too late. You can make the nicest products but if they are not secure it means mopping up with the tap open. Moreover, it is important that this security becomes smart the moment you are already in business. Authasas, one of the businesses here at HSD Campus has for instance developed a system that can recognise different means of authentication within one business. In this way as the information becomes more sensitive you can chose a higher security level and deploy a more complex means of authentication. It's a good way to create smart security. And finally it obviously also involves the behaviour of the end users themselves.

Major opportunities for improvement

CC: If we look at the coming years we can say with certainty that cyber terrorism is going to increase. The question is not so much ***whether*** as a business you are going to be hacked but ***when*** you will be hacked. You cannot avoid everything, but it is crucial that the continuity of your business operations is not endangered. At the RvA we are currently investigating how we can

expand our sphere of work to the Business Continuity Management Systems. What measures did you take as a business to reduce the damage as much as possible after an attack and get back in business as soon as possible? I think there is an interesting challenge in such sturdiness of infrastructures in organisations.

IH: This touches on the testing environment for critical infrastructures, one of the projects we are working on at HSD. This involves infrastructures which would have a big impact on society if there is a breakdown. Just think about water, energy, banks etc. Those critical infrastructures all use comparable industrial IT systems which they test independently. We now want to ascertain whether it is possible to collect the independent investigations of the parties into one single national test centre. In this way it will not be necessary to re-invent the wheel all the time and a lot of money can be freed up to further improve these critical infrastructures. We are looking for this same complementarity in our own work. HSD is the biggest security cluster in Europe and we would like to pool our forces with clusters from other countries so that we can strengthen Europe's position in the area of security. This is an approach in which the European Commission is very interested. Moreover, we obviously want to create a world in which guaranteed security and privacy is a fact, not something out of the ordinary. In this way people can experience innovative solutions without having to wonder whether any risks are associated with them. This is also a good challenge for the future!

Since 2014 **Ida Haisma** has been the Director of The Hague Security Delta, the biggest security cluster in Europe, where the private sector, the public sector and knowledge institutions cooperate on innovations and knowledge development in the area of cyber security, national and urban security, protection of critical infrastructures and the forensic sphere of work. Previous posts included the Innovation Director for Safety and Security Research at TNO and Director of the Dutch Centre for Crime Prevention and Safety.

Since 2014 **Corné Cox** has been working for the RvA, where as a lead assessor he is involved in the accreditation of organisations which certify Information Security Management Systems. Previously he worked for Philips and Logica, in various positions. He has for instance also been responsible as Director of Quality Assurance, Risk Management & Compliance at Logica for the quality and information security in the Benelux.

4 The internal organisation: continuous improvement

In 2015 the RvA celebrated its twentieth anniversary. For two decades we have been ensuring that the confidence in all declarations of conformity issued under the supervision of the RvA is justified. In 2015 too with a view to the changing market and the evolving requirements imposed on accreditation bodies by national and European legislation and by multilateral agreements, we again worked on continuously improving our performances.

Performing from well to excellent means that we describe, evaluate and improve internal processes, that we attract and develop employees and that we deploy means and methods in the right way. That is why in 2015 apart from our regular assessments we carried out various other activities and projects. Please find below several examples of this.

A3 annual plan

For some years the RvA has been using the A3 method for the annual plan which is based on the INK model.[2] The activities for 2015 are determined on the basis of our vision, mission and strategic targets for the coming years. The annual plan on A3 format makes it understandable how success factors are translated into concrete activities. The annual plan was often discussed in the management consultations and served as a guideline for the various departments of our organisation.

At the beginning of 2015 we determined four major strategic themes, which will determine the policy of the RvA from 2015 until 2020.

1. human resources: have sufficient people on time with the right skills;
2. excellent operational performance;
3. internal, European and international harmonisation;
4. accreditation as a tool in taking care of public interests.

Moreover, in 2015 we worked on improving our process control: we made more use of concrete Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the departments in order to make our performances even more visible and measurable. In our annual plan for 2016 we are continuing this focus on KPIs.

Employees of the RvA

The RvA has a large number of permanent and flexible employees who jointly ensure that all RvA clients are facilitated in the best possible way. On 31 December 2015 97 employees were in permanent employment (83.2 FTE) and eight were working on a temping basis (5.7 FTE). The average age was 49 years, the average number of service years was 8.7. Seven employees entered employment and four employees left employment. Four employees moved on internally. In 2015 the RvA welcomed two new project managers, three project assistants, a lead assessor and a lawyer. And apart from our 20th RvA anniversary we celebrated the 12.5 years service anniversary of four employees.

In 2015 too a lot of attention was paid to recruitment. Due to the increasing demand for our services there is a growing need for external specialists. And because several experienced lead assessors retired in 2015 (and will retire in the coming years) and the objective is to increase the number of lead assessors in permanent employment, the recruitment of internal lead assessors also requires continuous efforts. Therefore the RvA extended its set of recruitment instruments

2 The INK is an independent foundation which was established in 1991 on the initiative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs under the name of 'Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit'. The INK supports organisations towards excellent performances.

in 2015. In this way the own network of RvA employees will be better used and LinkedIn has become an important recruitment instrument. In 2015 we recruited multiple specialists and office workers via LinkedIn. With our redesigned website and our newsletter we proactively draw more attention to the work opportunities at the RvA. The first results of this new approach are encouraging and will be followed up in 2016.

Education and training

The RvA pays a lot of attention to education and training, individually as well as collectively. Our service provision is human work and the quality of it stands or falls with good and continuous opportunities for self-improvement. In 2015 we started up a quality dialogue in order to involve all the employees in the developments with regard to quality and process management. In addition, training in the continuously developing accreditation standards and in assessment and reporting skills have had a lot of attention. In addition, we have been working hard on improving the internal and external communication by giving a business-wide training on giving and receiving feedback. This training had a tailored follow-up in the various departments of the RvA, which is still ongoing in 2016. Individual and peer-to-peer coaching were also deployed as a training tool.

Apart from the coordination of education and training, the HR department spent much time and energy in cooperation with the Works Council in adjusting the pension scheme and the personnel manual.

Moving from permanent to flexible work

At the end of 2014 we decided to exchange the premises at Mariaplaats for a new office location at Daalseplein in Utrecht. Under the guidance of our accommodation advisors many RvA employees were very proactive in 2015 in fitting out this office according to the most modern insights.

One of the major starting points was the improvement of knowledge sharing at the RvA. As a knowledge organisation we want to be easily able to consult

each other and be able to exchange knowledge and experience. That is why we chose an office with all the workplaces on one single floor and an internal link to the meeting floor. In addition, a flexible work concept has been detailed, whereby employees from various types of workplaces can choose a place that best suits the work of that moment. All this was organised according to the latest occupational health and safety insights, such as tables that can be raised to standing height.

Moreover, a 'square' was created where we can have our lunch, snacks and drinks and which encourages internal meetings; according to many this is a great improvement in comparison with the old location. This also contributes to more information exchange between employees. In order to support the health of RvA employees, since 2015 fresh fruit is supplied every week and four RvA pool bikes were bought to bridge the distance to the centre and to stakeholders in a sporty way.

Accreditation of pathology labs

The work of pathology labs forms a crucial factor in discovering the causes of illnesses and their development. Many Dutch people have come across these but it is still a discipline of which only few people know what it exactly entails. After all, the general practitioner or medical specialist is the first point of contact for the patient as well as the pathologist. A talk follows with Philip Kluin, Professor of Pathology, and Ine Greven, manager of the Health Care unit at the RvA – about the accreditation of pathology labs.

The major areas of application

IG: Although I myself am not a pathologist, due to my background in (tumour) genetics over the years I have obtained a better picture of the discipline. Pathology is focussed on diagnosing diseases on the basis of body material: tissue sections or loose cells obtained via an operation or dissection. In that respect there are many different sub-areas. In connection with pathological examination most people will think of tumours, but it also covers for instance cardiovascular diseases, brain disorders, stomach, liver and intestinal disorders, and muscle and tissue diseases.

PK: That's right. As a pathologist you are dealing with all kinds of body materials, from very small to very large things. At one time you look through a microscope and you can make the diagnosis immediately, another time it is much more complex: then there will be multiple possibilities and further examination is required. What strikes me is that our work is often associated with autopsies: what did the patient exactly die of? Well, at the time this started it all, but nowadays it is only a small part of our work. To make the comparison: In the Groningen University Medical Centre we carry out approx. 200 to 250 autopsies annually, while we conduct tens of thousands of other examinations.

What does confidence mean?

IG: There will only be a few patients who know what the work of a pathologist entails. I don't think it is relevant to them how the result of a medical examination has been reached. What does concern them is that the diagnosis is reliable and that it will be followed by an adequate treatment. Patients want to be able to trust blindly that the pathologist who makes the diagnosis, is competent and that the process in the laboratory has been followed with due care. As the RvA by looking at these aspects in our assessments we ensure that this trust is justified.

PK: As a pathologist you seldom really have direct contact with the patient. You make a report describing the diagnosis, but it is the general practitioner or medical specialist who tells the result to the patient and who starts the course of treatment. Whether you do your work well as a pathologist is determined by the quality of your final product, the report, and the communication with the general practitioner or attending specialist. For that matter, this is obviously still preceded by a phase: the phase in which the body material is prepared by analysts in the laboratory. These interim products must also be reliable. Because only then will it be possible to achieve a good end product. In this way we make an offstage contribution to the confidence that patients have in medical care.

Focus on risk-oriented thinking

PK: Providing optimum patient care: that's what it's all about. But nevertheless, mistakes are sometimes made. You then read for instance in the newspaper that body materials have been exchanged. We also experienced this once in our own hospital, and that is hard to defend. A quality system such as ISO 15189 forms a good stick behind the door. That is why as the Board of the Dutch Society of Pathology (***Nederlandse Vereniging voor Pathologie***: 'NVVP') we took the position several years ago that all pathology labs should in the end be accredited according to that standard. Initially this created quite some resistance amongst the members who seriously wondered whether all that extra work would actually lead to the intended quality improvement. But we persevered, and with a result, because patient care really has improved in recent years.

IG: I think that the added value of an ISO 15189 accreditation can be seen particularly in the assurance measures for mapped risks. The standard obliges pathology labs to organise a system of risk management whereby risk analyses are often a major part. There are various processes in a laboratory which contribute in a certain way to the reliability of a diagnosis. Every process has several critical steps. It is important that as a laboratory you check what can go wrong during these steps and how you can avoid this. Subsequently you are going to classify them: how great a chance is there of things going wrong and what then would be the consequences? On that basis you can make a sound consideration: are you going to do something about it or do you take the risk anyway that

occasionally it could go wrong? In this way, you work on a continuous improvement cycle.

PK: You often think that things are properly organised, but such a risk analysis gives insight into whether that really is the case. And this guarantees quality much better. When ten years ago we discovered that body material had been exchanged, we carried out a large-scale risk analysis in our laboratory. This showed that there were certainly some 'holes' in the process. For instance with regard to skin autopsies we received two bags every day: one bag with pots of body material and one bag with associated documents. We ourselves then had to find the matching samples and documents on the basis of surnames and this involved literally dozens of patients a day! Nowadays we work with an order management system, whereby every patient is given a unique number from the very first moment. This makes the likelihood of confusion very small.

A different mind set

IG: You can also see a change of mentality in this respect. When five years ago we started our talks with the NVVP in connection with the transition from CCKL towards ISO 15189 accreditations, most of the pathologists had grave doubts - as you indicated earlier - about the added value of this ISO 15189 accreditation. It's quite different now.

PK: That's right. Many pathologists reasoned as follows: the RvA can think what it wants about the interim product but the assessment of the end product is something we have to organise amongst each other, via national quality visits by fellow professionals. This is obviously partly correct because the way in which a diagnosis is formed is very difficult to assess. But the RvA can indeed look at other aspects. For instance the reports to general practitioners and medical specialists can be examined in order to check whether pathologists communicate properly with their clients and whether they observe the protocols which have been agreed nationally. In the meantime that vision has wide support and pathologists have no problem with the RvA looking into those matters in that way.

IG: It indeed created a big problem that initially we were not allowed to consider the competencies of pathologists. Because ISO standard 15189 explicitly requires that the competence of every employee in the laboratory is demonstrable. So you ***must*** check whether this is really guaranteed. This was gradually accepted. I think this is due to the fact that these assessments are carried out by colleague pathologists. In 2015 we accredited approx. ten pathology labs according to ISO 15189. It is good to see that those laboratories understand very well the principle behind this standard: a risk-oriented, client-oriented and process-oriented thinking so that a continuous improvement cycle is created. If you know how to recognise that in the standard and subsequently manage to implement it into your organisation, then it will be fun. Pathology laboratories which are not yet accredited can certainly benefit from this. A lot of knowledge can be gained!

Major opportunities for improvement

IG: Obviously opportunities for improvement can always be pointed out. I recently mapped for a symposium of the NVVP those parts of the standard in which most non-conformities were established and whether that differed from medical laboratories in other disciplines which were assessed by the RvA in 2015. From this it emerged that remarkably amongst pathology labs we saw more non-conformities from several standard requirements. In the area of safety this for instance often involved the pathologists themselves: tables in autopsy rooms which were non-compliant with the health and safety requirements and the like. Another example is the identification of improvement measures. Pathology labs should hold a mirror up to themselves even more: where does this continuous improvement cycle come to a halt and what can we do about it? This requires an assailable attitude. It is good to see that increasingly more laboratories are open to this, because this forms a good basis for making great strides ahead.

PK: That is indeed a very important point, this tilting attitude, and you can see that this assailable attitude also goes deeper. For instance in the meantime as the NVVP we are having talks several times a year with stakeholders such as the Dutch Inspection for Health

Care, the Dutch National Healthcare Institute and the Dutch Federation of Medical Specialists, to examine together where further improvement measures are required. There are all kinds of initiatives to increase further the quality of end products and the reports to general practitioners and medical specialists. If those reports are recorded in a national database - for that matter something that only takes place in Scandinavia - you can easily compare them with each other. The big difference from several years ago is that this database is now really used for the aim of improving quality. So you can check exactly how you are performing in comparison with your colleagues elsewhere in the country. Years ago this transparency was unimaginable! Moreover, you see that expertise is increasingly pooled. In pathology there are so many sub-areas, that you cannot always have all the knowledge in-house. Networks of pathologists mean you can overcome this. These are all good developments, contributing to a higher quality level in the Health Care sector. At the same time I have noted that if I compare our country for instance with Belgium, Germany or France, we are really ahead in this field.

IG: I can only confirm this. We notice that other European countries active in ISO 15189 accreditation often speak with admiration about the way we have organised it in the Netherlands. The trick is to continue to look critically at the content and where possible to inspire and motivate each other so that we can continue this line in the Netherlands, but also in Europe.

Philip Kluin is a professor of Pathology, specialising in hematopathology. Apart from his activities for the University of Groningen and the Groningen University Medical Centre, he has various additional positions. For instance he is active in the Dutch Association for Pathology, as Chairman of the Quality and Professional Practice Committee and as a Board Member he has a managing role in the Dutch Institute for Clinical Auditing (DICA) foundation and he is a member of the RvA ISO 15189 Advisory Committee .

Ine Greven started in 2011 as a lead assessor at the RvA and for several years she has been the manager of the Health Care unit. Due to her position she is closely involved with the transition from CCKL to ISO 15189 accreditations, which over 250 medical laboratories are undergoing in the Netherlands. Previously she was a laboratory manager in the Medical Genetics department, cytogenetics section, in the Utrecht University Medical Centre that in 2014 was the first laboratory in the Netherlands accredited according to ISO 15189.

5 Quality leads to confidence

The RvA has its own management system in order to guarantee the carrying out of its mission and objectives. To monitor and optimise the proper operation of this system we for instance use observations during internal audits, complaints received and feedback provided by users of accredited services.

Every year a management review will determine whether the management system is ensuring that we continuously meet our own requirements, the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011, the European Regulation 765/2008, the Dutch National Accreditation Body Appointment Act and the Dutch Independent Executive Agencies Framework Act (*Kaderwet zelfstandige bestuursorganen*).

Internal quality care

The year 2015 at the RvA was characterised by several activities in the area of quality and process management. The improvement measures which emerged from previous audits and peer reviews were completed and new initiatives were started. For instance we introduced a quality dialogue cycle in which all employees participate and in which the values of the RvA and the performance of quality and process management aspects are discussed. In this way all employees remain informed of the internal instruments for quality and process management and the involvement in and the awareness of quality care is maintained in our organisation.

The management review was discussed with the Board of Supervisors. The processing of complaints, objections and appeals is a permanent agenda item in the meetings of the Board of Supervisors and in the Executives meetings.

Peer evaluations

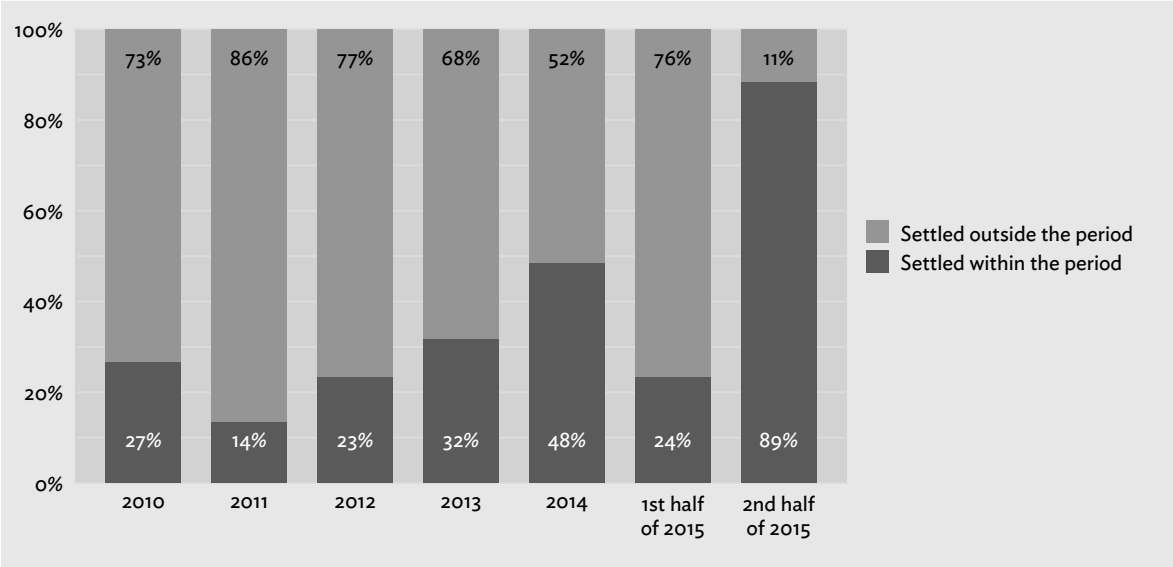
No peer evaluation was carried out in 2015. In 2016 a limited peer evaluation will take place for the expansion of our recognition with the accreditation of providers of proficiency testing. A full peer evaluation is again planned for 2017.

Processing complaints

In accordance with the Dutch General Administrative Law Act (*Algemene wet bestuursrecht*) the RvA has a complaints scheme in place for any complaints about the RvA as an administrative body. This scheme has been published as Policy Rule BR008 and is directly accessible via our website.

In previous years the statutory and/or agreed periods for processing complaints were exceeded too often. That is why in the middle of 2015 a measure was taken with the result that, except for one, all complaints received thereafter were processed within the set periods. Before this measure was implemented only 24% of the complaints were dealt with on time; thereafter this was 89%.[3]

3 With regard to one of the eleven complaints dealt with the set period was only exceeded by a few days.



Processing period of complaints about the RvA

29 complaints were submitted in 2015 which were all declared admissible.[4] Most of the complaints originated from certification bodies:

Accreditation category	Complaints
Certification bodies	11
Inspection bodies	2
Laboratories	6
General & other	10

In 2015 25 complaints were processed. Of these 7 were considered justified, 11 as partly justified and 7 as unjustified. The remaining complaints are still being processed within the set periods.

The 18 (partly) justified complaints related in particular to:

- the performances or the conduct of the lead assessors;
- the planning or the project management of the assessment;
- the communication with the RvA.

Interpretation of standard texts particularly at certification bodies sometimes leads to an almost legal discussion. In some cases the assessor is blamed for this and a complaint then results. In order not to obfuscate the complaints scheme unnecessarily, a so-called dispute settlement scheme has been set up. Should there be an important specific difference of opinion about the interpretation of the standard, the assessed establishments can submit this to the RvA by reporting an interpretation dispute.

Notifications and alerts

In the event of dissatisfaction or doubts about the work of an accredited organisation a notification or an alert can be submitted to the RvA. The RvA will investigate the notification or the alert. The respective submitter will receive feedback from a notification. No feedback will be given on an alert.

In 2015 the RvA received 48 notifications and 34 alerts. Of these 28 and 31 respectively were declared admissible; the others are still pending. The notifications and alerts related in particular to the following aspects:

- the complaint settlement by the accredited organisation;
- an unjustified accreditation claim;
- the performances of the assessors.

4 There were 25 in 2014.

The notifications and alerts related particularly to bodies accredited for certification or for inspection.

In connection with a notification or alert the Executive Board of the RvA can decide to carry out an extra assessment if the content of what has been detected is such that doubts are raised about the reliability of the work of the accredited organisation. An extra assessment was decided three times in 2015. In all three cases the doubts appeared justified and the respective organisation had to take measures to avoid a future recurrence.

Processing objections, appeals and Wob applications

In 2015 eight Wob applications (application pursuant to the Dutch Government Information (Public Access) Act) were submitted.[5] Three applications concerned activities and acts of the RvA itself, five applications concerned organisations accredited by the RvA.

In 2015 four objections were lodged against a decision of the RvA.[6] The decisions objected to involved:
- an accreditation assessment (once);
- a limitation of the scope of the accreditation (once);
- an application pursuant to the Dutch Government Information (Public Access) Act (*Wet openbaarheid van bestuur: 'Wob'*) (twice).

One notice of objection was withdrawn after consultation with the submitter. One notice of objection was declared inadmissible by the RvA, because the party lodging the objection did not submit any grounds for objection after a period to do so had been granted.

Two notices of objection were still being dealt with in January 2016. The one notice of objection is being dealt with in writing without the intervention of a Committee for Objection in consultation with the party lodging the objection. The other notice of objection will be dealt with at the beginning of 2016 by a Committee for Objection, headed by an independent chairman from the Chairmen Committee for Objection.

In 2014 an appeal was lodged with the District Court of Limburg with regard to a decision by the RvA about a Wob application. This appeal was to be dealt with in a hearing by the District Court in December 2015, but it was withdrawn several days before the hearing. In 2015 no new appeals were submitted.

5 There were nine in 2014.

6 In 2014 objections were lodged eleven times.

Annex 1

Governance bodies and advisory committees

This overview contains the composition of the administrative bodies and advisory committees as of 14 March 2016.

Board of Supervisors

Drs. E.H.T.M. Nijpels *(Chairman)*
3rd term until 22 June 2016
Dr. A.G.M. Buiting
3rd term until 1 January 2017
Dr. ir. I. Mastenbroek
1st term until 14 March 2019
Ing. J. Visser
3rd term until 27 March 2017
Ir. L. Visser
2nd term until 26 October 2017

For the report of the Board of Supervisors for 2015 we refer to the annual accounts for 2015, which you can download via our website. You can find more information there about the members of the Board of Supervisors and their additional functions.

Board of Directors and Executive Board

Ir. J.C. van der Poel *(Director/Chief Executive)*
mr. J.A.W.M. de Haas *(Operational Director)*

Accreditation Committee

Dr. W. Huisman *(Chairman)*
K.J. van Schalm
Prof. dr. ir. O.A.M. Fisscher
Ir. C.K. Pasmooij

Chairmen Committee for Objection

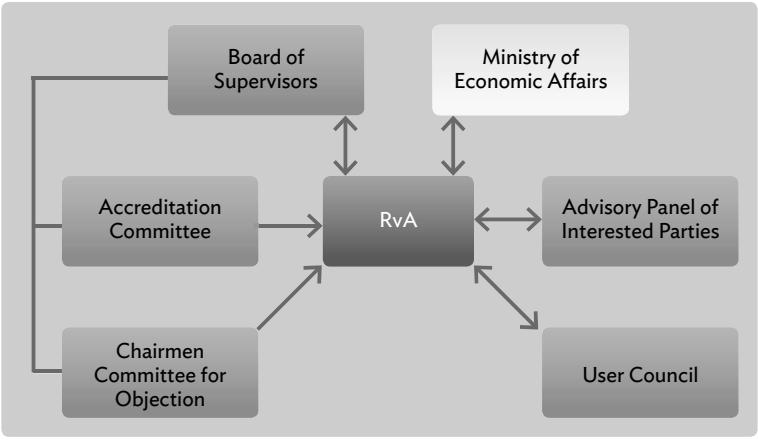
mr. L.A.F.M. Kerklaan
mr. M.N. van Zijl
mr. A. Pahladsingh

Advisory Panel of Interested Parties

Prof. dr. Ph. Eijlander *(scientific institutes, Chairman)*
Dr. P.H.W.M. Daverveldt *(NEN)*
Ir. A.J. Dalhuijsen *(VSL)*
mr. A.P. de Groene *(Ministries)*
mr. J.A. van den Bos *(inspectorates)*
Ir. N.F.J. Hendriks *(certification and inspection bodies)*
Ir. G.H. Tolman *(laboratories and inspection bodies)*
Dr. A. van 't Veen *(medical laboratories)*
Ir. M.P. Cuijpers *(primary sector)*
Ir. F.W. Stuyt *(scheme managers)*
Ir. J.J.N.M. Hogeling *(industry)*
Prof. dr. J. Klein *(healthcare)*
Dr. J. de Ridder *(public sector regulators)*

User Council

Ir. J.C. van der Poel *(RvA, Chairman)*
S. ter Horst *(NVCi)*
Ing. B. Meekma *(NVCi)*
Vacancy *(Fenelab)*
Ir. L. Aafjes *(Fenelab)*
B. van Doorsselaere *(VEROCOG)*
Vacancy *(medical labs)*
Prof. dr. H. Hooijkaas *(medical labs)*
mr. J.A.W.M. de Haas *(RvA)*



Annex 2
Brief financial overview

The RvA is a non-profit organisation on the basis of its Articles as well as 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 the Board of Supervisors, the Accreditation Committee and the Advisory Panel of Interested Parties. We also guarantee our independence by a healthy but limited amount of equity capital. This makes us resilient against financial risks which might occur when conformity assessment bodies decide to discontinue accreditation because the RvA has taken a decision which is disagreeable to them.

The amount of equity capital was evaluated in 2014. Partly considering the changed status of the RvA into an autonomous administrative authority, it has been decided to maximise the equity capital to be pursued at 4 million euros.

The figures in this Annex have been taken as a summary from the adopted annual accounts for 2015. No rights can be derived from them. You can download from our website the full annual accounts as prepared and adopted after approval by the Board of Supervisors and the Minister of Economic Affairs and provided with an unqualified report. You can obviously also approach us to request that a copy be sent. We can be contacted on telephone number +31 30 239 45 00.

Balance sheet as at 31 December (x €1,000)

Assets	2015	2014
Fixed assets	689	76
Receivables and transitory assets	3,630	3,429
Liquid resources	3,283	3,223
Total	**7,602**	**6,728**

Liabilities	2015	2014
Equity capital	3,719	3,622
Short-term debts and transitory liabilities	3,883	3,106
Total	**7,602**	**6,728**

The income of the RvA is generated particularly from activities carried out on the basis of rates. We determine these rates on the basis of a discussion of the budget with the User Council and after approval by the Board of Supervisors and the Minister of Economic Affairs.

The turnover level in 2015 was 1.5% less than budgeted. This was particularly the result of a reduced turnover from public sector projects and a lower than budgeted turnover from the transition of medical laboratories. It gradually appeared that we had budgeted on the generous side. This is an experiential learning effect.

Long-term absence due to sickness in our permanent workforce meant we had to hire extra external assessors. Because the costs were less than budgeted, we still managed to close with an positive result. The result is added to the reserves.

Profit and loss account (x €1,000)

Results	2015	2014
Net turnover	13,586	13,065
Costs of turnover	4,626	4,306
Gross margin	**8,960**	**8,759**
Direct personnel costs	6,426	6,400
Other costs	2,479	2,273
Sum total of costs	**8,905**	**8,673**
Operational result	55	86
Interest income	42	45
Result	**97**	**131**

Rates

The starting point – subject to special circumstances – is that the rates increase by not more than the index of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) for business services. In 2015 we reduced the annual contribution for the initial registration. In this way the difference from a subsequent registration will be reduced. Eventually the rates should be level, regardless of the number of registrations. In 2015 the rates were adjusted as follows:

Rates	2015	2014
Index	1.2%	0.7%
Rate (lead) assessor	+1.2%	+0.7%
Rate specialists	+1.2%	+0.7%
Annual contribution to initial registration	-3.5%	+0.7%
Other rates	+1.2%	+0.7%

In 2014 the RvA appointed KPMG as the auditor for the financial years of 2014 up to and including 2016. This was based on a comprehensive selection process involving four accountancy firms.

Annex 3
Our work in figures

Trust also requires the possibility of verification. In this Annex you will find a summary in figures of our activities in 2015. As a comparison we also added previous figures in several cases.

Accreditations granted as at 31 December 2015

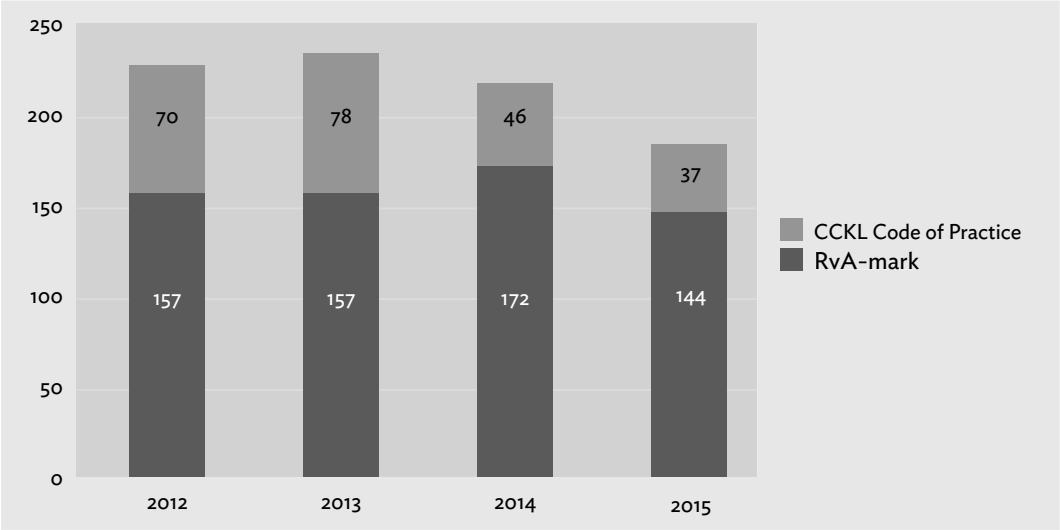
Standard	Explanation	The Netherlands 2015	Abroad 2015	Total 2015	The Netherlands 2014	Abroad 2014	Total 2014
Certification							
ISO/IEC 17065	Products and services	41	3	44	10	1	11
EN 45011	Products and services	0	0	0	31	2	33
ISO/IEC 17021	Management systems	47	26	73	43	28	71
ISO/IEC 17024	Persons	6	0	6	5	1	6
Subtotal certification		**94**	**29**	**123**	**89**	**32**	**121**
Inspection							
ISO/IEC 17020	Inspection	125	2	127	122	2	124
Subtotal inspection		**125**	**2**	**127**	**122**	**2**	**124**
Laboratories RvA mark							
ISO/IEC 17025	Calibration	55	1	56	53	1	54
ISO/IEC 17025	Tests	242	10	252	231	10	241
ISO/IEC 17043	Proficiency trials	14	2	16	13	2	15
ISO 15189	Medical laboratories in Multilateral Agreement	44	3	47	15	3	18
ISO Guide 34	Reference materials	2	0	2	2	0	2
Subtotal laboratories		**357**	**16**	**373**	**314**	**16**	**330**
ISO 14065	Emission	5	0	5	6	0	6
Regulation (EC) no. 1221/2009 (EMAS)	EMAS verification	1	0	1	1	0	1
Total RvA mark		**582**	**47**	**629**	**532**	**50**	**582**
Laboratories CCKL mark							
CCKL Code of Practice*	Medical laboratories	215	0	215	242	0	242
Total number of accreditations granted		**797**	**47**	**844**	**774**	**50**	**824**

* These accreditations fall beyond the scope of the autonomous administrative authority (ZBO).

Geographical spread of the accreditations granted as at 31 December 2015 (RvA mark)

Country	2015	2014	2013
The Netherlands (autonomous administrative authority (ZBO))	582	532	540
Rest of Europe	5	4	5
Rest of the world	42	46	55
Total	**629**	**582**	**600**

Number of reports submitted to the Accreditations Committee



Recommendations given by Accreditations Committee per report

	RvA mark 2015	Care 2015	Total 2015	RvA mark 2014	Care 2014	Total 2014
Initial assessment positive recommendation	42%*	22%	38%	13%	20%	14%
Re-assessment of positive recommendation	58%	78%	62%	86%	80%	85%
Postponed reports	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Negative recommendation	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

*Including the transitions from the CCKL Code of Practice to ISO 15189

In 2015 all recommendations given by the Accreditations Committee were adopted by the Director.

Total number of complete applications received for new accreditations per annum

	2015	2014
Initial RvA mark	90*	54*
Extended RvA mark	256	221
Total	**346**	**275**

*Including the ISO 15189 transition applications

New accreditations by type (number and lead time)

	New accreditations	Average lead time in calendar days	New accreditations	Average lead time in calendar days
Decision in	**2015**	**2015**	**2014**	**2014**
Certification	7	332	0	0
Inspection	7	257	10	268
Calibration laboratory	2	409	0	0
Test laboratory	15	312	13	269
Medical laboratory	28	325	7	259
EMAS/Emission	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	2	343	0	0
Total	**61**		**30**	

Of the 61 new accreditations 10 had a lead time of over 12 months. This was caused by the fact that:

- The client needed more time to remedy non-compliances (6 times).
- The RvA had insufficient assessors or experts available or had them too late (twice).
- There was planning friction between the possibilities at the client and the possibilities at the RvA (twice).

Extended accreditations by type (number and lead time)

	Extensions	Average lead time in calendar days	Extensions	Average lead time in calendar days
Decision in	**2015**	**2015**	**2014**	**2014**
Certification	65	211	68	256
Inspection	34	199	17	251
Calibration laboratory	13	185	6	125
Test laboratory	125	146	117	136
Medical laboratory	4	214	7	135
EMAS/Emission	2	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	4	380	3	380
Total	**247**		**218**	

Of the completed extensions 19 had a lead time of over 12 months. This was caused by the fact that:

- There was late or insufficient internal communication and awareness at the RvA (10 times).
- It involved a government instruction in a new sphere of work where witness audits are difficult to plan (4 times).
- The RvA had limited capacity for a new private sphere of work (3 times).
- It was at the client's request, for instance due to the combination with a regular assessment (twice).

Distribution of the billed time over the type of investigation (RvA mark)

Assessment type	2015 (total number of days 7,218 = 100%)	2014 (total number of days 6,747 = 100%)	2013 (total number of days 6,296 = 100%)
Initial assessment	6%	4%	6%
Extension	10%	15%	11%
Re-assessment	14%	21%	32%
Audit assessment	58%	57%	51%
Transition to ISO 15189	12%	3%	0%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Distribution of the billed time, broken down into the role in the assessment team (RvA mark)

Role	2015 (total number of days 7,218 = 100%)	2014 (total number of days 6,747 = 100%)	2013 (total number of days 6,296 = 100%)
Lead assessor	47%	48%	48%
Assessor	7%	8%	10%
Technical expert	46%	44%	42%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Distribution of the billed assessment time, including the assessment of corrective measures and witness audits

Deployment	2015 (total number of days 7,218 = 100%)	2014 (total number of days 6,747 = 100%)	2013 (total number of days 6,296 = 100%)
At client location	49%	49%	49%
Preparation/report	48%	48%	47%
Travelling outside the Netherlands	3%	3%	4%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Number of assessments according to the CCKL Code of Practice

Assessment type	2015	2014	2013
Initial assessment	0	13	14
Audit assessment	69	89	100
Document audit	7	4	0
Re-assessment	5	44	43
Total	**81**	**150**	**157**

Disputes, suspensions and withdrawals

A *dispute* is a difference of opinion between the assessed party and the RvA assessment team about the interpretation of the standard requirements.

Organisations can temporarily lose their accreditation if it turns out that they no longer meet the set standards. This entails a *suspension*. In that case they are given six months to implement the required improvements and to have them assessed. It can also be the case that organisations lose their accreditation permanently. This entails a *withdrawal*: the accreditation agreement will be dissolved. Suspensions and withdrawals are voluntary or imposed. In both cases an organisation can no longer use the accreditation mark for the respective activities.

Disputes

At year-end	2015	2014	2013
Total number of disputes	**52**	**26**	**32**
Non-compliance is maintained unchanged	37%	35%	44%
Non-compliance is maintained but reformulated	23%	11%	16%
Non-compliance withdrawn	24%	23%	24%
Other outcome of dispute	2%	19%	16%
Pending	12%	0%	0%
Inadmissible	2%	12%	0%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Suspended accreditations

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2015	Imposed 2015	Total 2015	Voluntary 2014	Imposed 2014	Total 2014
Certification	1	4**	5	7***	4*	11
Inspection	1*	0	1	1	2**	3
Calibration laboratories	0	1	1	1	0	1
Test laboratories	1	0	1	3**	3	6
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total RvA mark	**3**	**5**	**8**	**12**	**9**	**21**

* Of which one partial suspension

** Of which two partial suspensions

*** Of which six partial suspensions

Withdrawn accreditations

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2015	Imposed 2015	Total 2015	Voluntary 2014	Imposed 2014	Total 2014
Certification	10***	0	10	17****	1	18
Inspection	9*	0	9	18**	1	19
Calibration laboratories	2*	0	2	5**	0	5
Test laboratories	9**	1	10	14*	0	14
Medical laboratories	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous	2	0	2	2*	0	2
Total RvA mark	**32**	**1**	**33**	**57**	**2**	**59**

* Of which one partial withdrawal

** Of which two partial withdrawals

*** Of which three partial withdrawals

**** Of which nine partial withdrawals

A number of the inspection bodies' withdrawals are the result of a change in BAG inspections (*Basisregistraties Adressen en Gebouwen* = basic record of addresses and buildings). As of 1 January 2015 these no longer have to be carried out under accreditation.

Annex 4
Scheme managers

For many years the RvA has had good relationships with scheme managers: parties outside the conformity assessment bodies (CBIs) issuing and managing private schemes for conformity assessment. Such schemes are usually intended to meet the needs of Dutch society – and sometimes also beyond – in a harmonious way with regard to the confidence in certification, inspections or tests. A major theme is that the relevant interested parties are involved in formulating and maintaining a scheme. The criteria determined in such schemes usually cover matters such as the methods, competencies and ways of working of CBIs.

With a view to the developments in Europe and EA-01/22 coming into force, the RvA will change its policy with regard to accepting scheme managers. Please find below an overview of the scheme managers who are managing schemes for which at least two CBIs have been accredited by the RvA. In this case harmonisation is important, hence we are explicitly mentioning them here. Schemes for which the scheme manager has not been assessed by the RvA, but being used by multiple CBIs, are not included in this overview. This applies for instance to the international schemes.

Scheme manager subject	Management	Standard(s)	Number of accredited conformity assessment bodies	Website
Soil, water	Foundation for Infrastructure of Quality Assurance in Soil Management (SIKB)	ISO/IEC 17020 ISO/IEC 17025 ISO/IEC 17065	39	www.sikb.nl
SHE Checklist Contractors (VCA checklist aannemers)	Foundation for Cooperation for Safety (SSVV)	ISO/IEC 17021	23	www.vca.nl
Working conditions and safety management (Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series: OHSAS) Environmental Management (ISO 14001)	Foundation for Coordination of Certification of Environmental Management Systems (SCCM)	ISO/IEC 17021	14	www.sccm.nl
Milieukeur agro/food and non-food, Barometers, Groen Label Kas, Maatlat Duurzame Veehouderij en Aquacultuur (agricultural/food, non-food environmental quality mark, barometers, green label for greenhouses, sustainable cattle farming measuring rule and aquaculture)	Foundation for eco-labels (*Stichting Milieukeur*: 'SMK')	ISO/IEC 17065	11	www.smk.nl
Climate-friendly enterprising (CO_2 Performance Ladder)	Foundation for climate-friendly procurement and business (SKAO)	ISO/IEC 17021	10	www.skao.nl
Temporary employment sector and (sub) contracting for work	Dutch Labour Standards Foundation (Stichting Normering Arbeid: 'SNA')	ISO/IEC 17020	10	www.normeringarbeid.nl
Criminality prevention and fire safety	Centre for Criminality Prevention and Safety (CCV)	ISO/IEC 17020 ISO/IEC 17021 ISO/IEC 17065	9	www.hetccv.nl
HACCP systems Food safety (management) systems	Foundation for Certification of Food Safety (SCV)	ISO/IEC 17021	9	www.foodsafety-management.info www.fssc22000.com
Healthcare, welfare and social services	NEN-HKZ sector organisation	ISO/IEC 17021	7	www.hkz.nl
Green areas	*Groenkeur* foundation	ISO/IEC 17021	5	www.groenkeur.nl

Scheme manager subject	Management	Standard(s)	Number of accredited conformity assessment bodies	Website
Vertical transport	Foundation for Supervisory Certification of Vertical Transport (TCVT)	ISO/IEC 17020	5	www.tcvt.nl
Demolition work	Foundation for Safe and Ecological Demolition (SVMS)	ISO/IEC 17021	4	www.veiligslopen.nl
BRL 2506	Stichting Beheer BRL 2506	ISO/IEC 17065	4	www.brl2506.nl
Taxi industry	Taxi quality mark (TX-Keur)	ISO/IEC 17020	4	www.tx-keur.nl
Technical installation sector	Foundation for the quality of installations Netherlands (KvINL)	ISO/IEC 17065	4	www.kvinl.nl
Contract catering	Foundation for Contract Catering Certification (Cercat)	ISO/IEC 17021	3	www.cercat.nl
Wooden packaging	Foundation for Wooden Packaging Marking (SMHV)	ISO/IEC 17065	3	www.smhv.nl
Inspection and maintenance of technical installations	Foundation for Certification Inspection and Maintenance of Heating Installations (SCIOS)	ISO/IEC 17021	3	www.scios.nl
Working safely in electrical engineering	Stipel Dutch Foundation for Personnel Certification in Electro technique	ISO/IEC 17024	3	www.stipel.nl
Car damage	Foundation for Quality Management in the Motor Repair Sector (KZS)	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.focwa.nl
Biomass	Netherlands Standardisation Institute (NEN)	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.nen.nl
Distribution of pesticides	Foundation for the Certification for the distribution of crop protection agents (CDG)	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.stichtingcdg.nl
Egg sector	OVONED foundation	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.avined.nl
Poultry sector	PLUIMNED sector organisation	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.avined.nl
Potting soil and substrate	Foundation for potting soil and substrate (RHP)	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.rhp.nl
Pig sector	CoMore B.V.	ISO/IEC 17065	2	www.ikbvarken.nl
Vehicle dismantling	Foundation for Quality Management in Vehicle Dismantling (KZD)	ISO/IEC 17021	2	www.kzd.info

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