

PUBLIC REPORT 2020

DUTCH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL



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Foreword

We live in a turbulent world. A world in which we are dealing with Covid, the invasion of Ukraine, the increasing mistrust in our society... Nevertheless, it is important to remain optimistic, to maintain and radiate confidence.

Confidence does not happen by itself. Citizens and companies want to be able to have confidence in the quality of products and services. In 2021, the Executive Board, management and employees of the Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA) have once again put their all into the strength of the quality infrastructure. To contribute to free trade and the quality of products and services.



Last year was also the year in which the RvA underwent two important audits: the [ZBO evaluation](#) commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK) and the peer review by colleagues from the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA). The RvA proved its worth in both.

The great thing is that the recommendations from the ZBO evaluation are in line with the new strategy: further digitalising the client process and improving communication with clients where necessary. And, together with policy partners, continuing to look for ways to increase the societal value of accreditation. It is gratifying that the EZK is noticeably opening up to this.

The Board of Supervisors is closely involved in the RvA's work. So you can continue to trust in the power of accreditation.

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



Introduction

Welcome to the public report by the Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA). This document accounts for our activities and results in 2021. As an organisation that represents trust, we believe it is important for us to be transparent. This report is our way of informing our stakeholders about the execution of our core task: granting accreditation. As a national accreditation body, the RvA assesses the work of companies and institutions that test, inspect and certify, also known as the *TIC industry*. We do this on the basis of standards and schemes.

Moving forward with confidence: that is our motto. We continuously strive to further develop and improve our processes, services and collaborations. Improvement was emphatically the key theme in 2021. The RvA found itself sitting on the other side of the table, as it were, for two important assessment moments: the five-yearly **evaluation** by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate and the four-yearly peer review by the EA (European co-operation for Accreditation). Two wonderful opportunities to find out what we are already doing well and where we can optimise further. Hence the title of this report: *Improving with confidence*.

Roeland Nieuweboer and Joep de Haas
RvA Executive Board

MOVING
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1 Improving with confidence

Our ambition is to make sure that accreditation – as a part of the entire quality infrastructure – remains relevant and future-proof. This is why we are working hard to shape our organisation to be more and more robust and innovative. To be open to new ideas and collaborations. To open its windows and doors further, and actively go outside. We are doing this in line with the strategy which unfolded in 2020 and which developed further in 2021.

Our mission and vision

The RvA has a good reputation with its clients. We are committed to the ongoing development and improvement of our services. And there is still a world to be won. Earlier, it became apparent that our mission and vision needed updating. Therefore, we formulated a new mission and vision at the end of 2020 which support the task we are facing.

The value of accreditation

This new mission and vision distinguish our work, and establish the relationship with all those companies that test, inspect and certify. They are the ones who are the first to express confidence in the quality of products and services by means of a certificate or test report. They therefore have an important role in our society and in the economy. The RvA assesses their work. That is our mandate as a national accreditation body. We enhance confidence with our verdict and record this in an accreditation declaration.

The RvA also wishes to contribute to a sustainable and well-functioning international society. Testing, inspecting and certifying products and services under accreditation on the basis of standards and schemes reinforces this enormously. We place our work in a broader European and global context. The entire quality infrastructure, from standardisation to accreditation, promotes open trade. Because no national economy, whether prosperous or emerging, can export without meeting standards.

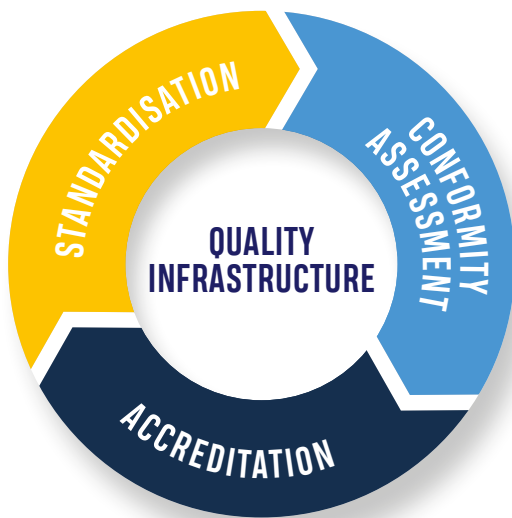
What is our new mission and vision?

Citizens and businesses want to be able to rely on the quality of products and services. We enrich that trust with accreditation.

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

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

Through our work, we also contribute to innovation. There can seem to be a contradiction between innovation and standardisation. That is not the case. Innovation is never an end in itself. Ultimately, it is about bringing new products or services to the market or society. Standardisation is a ‘ticket to trade’ in this regard. It helps companies demonstrate that they are a trustworthy partner. And that is precisely when there is a chance of actual implementation and affiliation!



The RvA as a private regulatory body

This mission and vision also help to clarify what we do or do not ‘belong to’. The RvA is not one of the public regulatory bodies. They have their own role. They supervise on the basis of national and European legislation; their supervision is to facilitate compliance therewith. That is different from the quality assessment that we undertake on the basis of standards and schemes. The RvA thus fulfils the role of a private regulatory body.

We do work with public regulatory bodies, though. For example, we conclude information protocols about the exchange of information. We strive for an accepted growth model that leads to good public and private supervision, in which a reduction of administrative burden and the preservation of confidentiality are paramount.

The strategy for 2021-2025

In 2021, the RvA’s Executive Board worked on substantiating the strategy that we formulated in 2020. An external strategy consultant provided us with guidance in the format and methodology. Previous discussions with clients and stakeholders formed an important foundation for this.

The Board of Supervisors actively participated in this strategy formation and has endorsed our strategy for 2021-2025. We will continue to work on this strategy in the coming years.

Our strategic goals

The main ambitions of our strategy:

- We want to be relevant and future-proof, by working in a more market-oriented and client-focused way, with new value propositions, by taking the idea of ‘helping clients learn’ as a starting point and by offering better services with shorter processing times.
- For this, we need competent people and powerful teams.
- Communication is extremely important. It opens doors to (new) networks and increases awareness of accreditation.
- We are aware of the importance of information security in the context of our reputation and the interests of our clients.
- We are working with public regulatory bodies and policy departments to strengthen the supervisory system and the quality infrastructure.

A flying start

During the development of this strategy, we already took the first few steps. A kind of ‘Le Mans’ start, if you will. It started with the formulation of our new mission and vision in 2020 and the request for colleagues in the Operations department to devise their ideal organisational setup. As the deeper conversation progressed, we also considered the



desired team development. In 2021, we started the transition to powerful teams. This year we also recruited a senior communications advisor and set up an approach for working on our information security.

Working on improving

Where do we see opportunities to improve our services, based on the feedback we receive? In 2021 we continued to consider this question and implemented a number of improvements.

Processing complaints

In response to feedback from clients, we took a closer look at the complaints handling process. How can we make this clearer and more accessible? So that notifiers of complaints have a better idea of where they stand? In the first quarter of 2022 we

will start with a modified process. A logical consequence of this is an increase in the number of reported complaints. This in turn gives us the opportunity to do our job better.

New training for clients

Accredited companies and institutions want to go through the accreditation process as smoothly and successfully as possible. Under the category of *client focus*, a group of colleagues therefore developed the training *Finding your way in accreditation as an accredited party*. With this training, we help clients who want to optimally prepare themselves for a (re)assessment or an extension assessment. The training is intended for quality officers or quality employees. Or for those involved in maintaining accreditation.

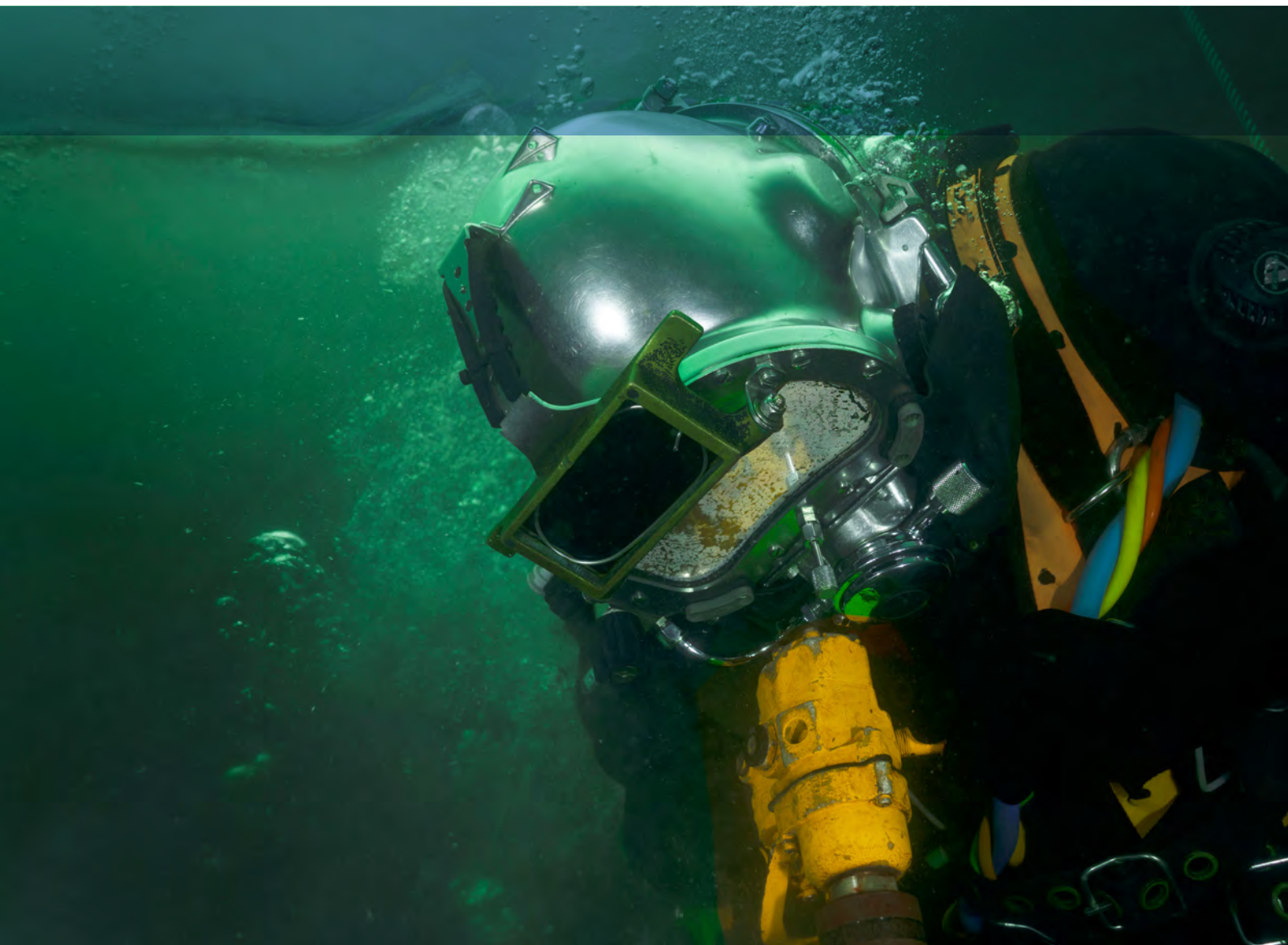
In October 2021 we drew our clients' attention to the first training in February 2022. The number of responses was overwhelming. Within two days, the training was fully booked. This demonstrates that we are foreseeing the needs of our clients. We will therefore organise more of these training courses for 2022. For more information, please refer to our website: www.rva.nl/trainingwegwijs/ (in Dutch). We also want to offer separate training for (potential) new RvA clients.

The transition to ISO/IEC 17025:2017

In 2017, the standard ISO/IEC 17025:2017 (*General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*) was published. This standard replaces the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard of the same name. The laboratories accredited for this standard had until 1 June 2021 to demonstrate their

compliance with the new version of the standard. On 1 January 2021, it became apparent that nineteen of the slightly more than three hundred accredited laboratories had not yet done this. In the remaining five months, we succeeded in converting these accreditations to the new version.

The evaluation shows that, among other things, the close involvement in the development of the new version of this standard, the correct information about the amendments, and good monitoring and management resulted in a smooth and successful transition for these accredited laboratories and for the RvA organisation. Various points for improvement also emerged from the evaluation. We will incorporate these lessons into future transition processes.



In dialogue with our stakeholders

In 2021, we continued to have regular discussions with our most important stakeholders. What is the value of accreditation for them? What developments are they dealing with? How do they view our policy and our services? And so on. A brief outline of the steps we have taken in this regard.

VvS

In 2020, we evaluated our position and way of working with regard to schemes and scheme owners. The recommendations and viewpoints provide an opportunity to establish a new kind of cooperative relationship. In 2021, the RvA has intensive contact with the Association of Scheme Owners (VvS) and was even invited to attend the general meeting. This gave both parties a better picture of each other's wishes and perspectives. As a result of

these meetings, we seem to be getting closer and closer to a mutual solution for a new way of working.

NVCi and Fenelab

We have been working with the executive boards of the Dutch Association of Certification Bodies (NVCi) and the Federation of Dutch Laboratories (Fenelab) to explore how we can arrive at more managerially oriented consultations. One of the items on the agenda is that we could act in a more unified way on major social issues, for instance in the domains of climate and energy. In that light, the move actively supported by the RvA to engage non-medical laboratories affiliated with Fenelab to increase the national testing capacity during the Covid pandemic can be called a success.

'New style' of Advisory Panel of Stakeholders

In 2021, we reviewed the functioning of the Advisory Panel of Stakeholders. The variability in participation and a lingering dissatisfaction among members gave rise to a discussion about this.

It has been decided that the advisory panel will be reorganised in 2022. The panel will have a theme-oriented structure, and the composition of participants will partially change depending on the theme on the agenda. With this innovation, we want to:

- stimulate a broader representation of stakeholders in new developments that affect the quality infrastructure and accreditation;
- utilise the knowledge and skills of participants in an agile, effective and future-oriented way, so that we can work with stakeholders to contribute to the confidence of citizens and companies in the quality of products and services;
- increase the interest and involvement of (potential) participants by putting topics that are current and relevant for them on the agenda.

This 'new style' of advisory panel is less suitable for the annual advice with regard to guaranteeing our impartiality. For this reason, we will set up an annual impartiality consultation as a pilot in 2022, which focuses fully on this task.



Medical professional associations

The nine medical professional associations involved in medical laboratories are also important stakeholders for us. The RvA wishes to formulate a joint consultation with them. For now, that still seems like a bridge too far.

We believe there are many matters to discuss that concern all professional associations. Last year, we had frequent and constructive contact with these professional associations, partly in the context of the Covid pandemic and partly because of a new requirement from the EA (European co-operation for Accreditation) concerning the use of accreditation marks and logos, because these sparked some discussion.

Executive Board of the EA

The Chair of the RvA's Executive Board has been a member of the EA's Executive Board since 1 January 2021. 2021 was heavily dominated by the consequences of Brexit for the membership of the British national accreditation body UKAS and a number of policy issues in play at IAF (International Accreditation Forum), such as the construction of an international database and the merger of IAF with ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation).

Accreditation is a people business

The people at the RvA are what make the RvA what it is. They serve our clients, use our procedures and all contribute to that one product: granting or renewing an accreditation. We are a compact organisation. That means we need everyone we have. The development of our organisation draws upon the participation of all colleagues. This is based on the idea that they have a great deal of talent and potential, and that they want to utilise this more and more. And that can also be for their own development.

On the way to powerful teams

We think it is important that colleagues participate fully, use their talents and increase their autonomy. This is why we asked colleagues in the Operations department (the project coordinators for accreditation assessments) to devise their own ideal organisational setup. They gave their thoughts on this in 2020, and in 2021, they have been working on their team development under the category *powerful teams*. The accreditation technical coordinators and the lead assessors also took part in these group sessions.

In 2021, the RvA management team spent two days solely focused on its team collaboration and development. The staff department will follow in 2022.

Approach to the labour market

The labour market is highly dynamic. It seems to be increasingly difficult to fill vacancies of certain specialisms and of project coordinators for accreditation assessments in the Operations department in a timely manner. Finding a match between the job description and the candidate's profile is becoming increasingly difficult, and that is even after starting with a low response rate.

We realise that the RvA is not (yet) a well-known brand name. The prospect of an induction period at an organisation whose colleagues largely work from home due to the Covid pandemic does not help either. Fortunately, two IT specialists and a communication advisor, among others, found their way to the RvA in 2021. Taking the above into consideration, we are making our approach to the labour market a priority and seeking specific help in this regard.

Working during the Covid pandemic

The Covid pandemic also had a major impact on the RvA in 2021, both on the execution of the work and on job satisfaction. We performed most of the assessments remotely, via Microsoft Teams. This offered advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats. Thanks to our colleagues' endeavours and the clients' flexibility, the assessment work was able to proceed smoothly despite all the limitations.

Internally, we ensured that people remain well connected. For example, our 'Covid news bulletin' to inform colleagues about all measures has now been published forty times, and the livestream of the Executive Board team on Monday morning ('Coffee Time') is now a regular fixture.



Interview

Working in the time of coronavirus

What did the Covid pandemic mean for the RvA? Mylène Pijnenburg, Internal Operations manager, and Frank Bouwkamp, technical assessor, put it fairly bluntly: 'It was quite intense. Suddenly everyone was sat at home, and we could no longer visit clients. That forces you to switch gears pretty quickly.'

How do you make that switch, as an organisation?

Mylène: 'It started with the medical labs. When we were still thinking it would be okay to go, they were already indicating that they no longer wanted to receive visitors. Within two or three weeks, the whole of the Netherlands was locked down and we couldn't go anywhere. Then the switch has to be made: how are we going to facilitate our people so that they can still do their work in the digital workplace? We decided to switch to remote assessments. But that was easier said than done. It involved a lot of pioneering.'

Frank: 'I was certainly nervous in the beginning. For the office assessment, the transition wasn't so huge. Whether you're at home or out on site with a client: you're looking at the same documents. But for the witness audits, where we tag along with audits that companies and institutions carry out at their own clients, it was a lot more complicated. You do everything you can to make those assessments representative. By deploying cameras, for example, so that you have your eyes and ears on location. But it's still tricky. Because you're not sure whether you're seeing and hearing everything. You also miss the necessary context: the overall atmosphere, the non-verbal signals... And sometimes the connection suddenly drops. Then it's over and out.'

Mylène: 'Trial and error. But we had to. There was just no time to calmly think it through, test it and evaluate it.'



THE INITIAL
PANIC QUICKLY
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How was that for your clients?

Mylène: ‘One saw new opportunities and wanted to undergo an extension assessment at short notice; for testing medical face masks, for example. Another was too busy to receive us digitally and asked for a postponement. We always looked at what was reasonable for each situation: can we delay this assessment a little longer, will we deploy a smaller team this year...? And of course, our clients also had a threshold to cross with those remote assessments. You run into all kinds of challenges in terms of content and also digitally. But if you have a discussion about it, there are always solutions that can be devised.’

Frank: ‘We saw an enormous willingness among clients, but also among our clients’ customers, to support us as best as possible. Extra cameras, an interpreter who translated everything for us for the whole day: nothing was too much. I find that admirable. Because it all adds up, even though an assessment like that is often nerve-racking enough in itself.’

Can you still make improvements to your organisation in such a hectic time?

Mylène: ‘Yes, but it’s much harder. One of our priorities is the transition to powerful teams. During the Covid pandemic, we nevertheless continued this development, against the odds. Forming new teams remotely: definitely a challenge. Some do find their way. They proactively seek contact with colleagues, make walking appointments. There are others that you need to actively involve. Alongside this, we have of course also hired new people in the past two years. How do you ensure that they become part of the organisation if everyone is working from home?’

Frank: ‘Before you know it, you lose sight of each other. Especially if you aren’t direct colleagues. I like how all kinds of initiatives have been taken to stim-

ulate contact between people. Like the weekly “digital coffee break”.’

Mylène: ‘In these ways, you try to partly overcome it. But you’re only now realising how important it is to sit together physically on a regular basis. To have real contact. I hear from many colleagues how much they missed that.’

What do you see as the main gains?

Frank: ‘I live in Groningen and normally travel all over the country. Now I just closed my laptop and I was immediately with my family. Because of this, for example, I’ve experienced the development of my three-year-old daughter much more intensely over the past two years.’

Mylène: ‘Working from home certainly has its advantages. And we’ve experienced the convenience of online meetings: people no longer have to come to the office to attend an appointment.’

Frank: ‘But I think the most important plus is that we were able to express justified confidence in the work of our clients during this extremely difficult period.’

Mylène: ‘I completely agree. The initial panic quickly turned into “we’re going to figure this out together”; a kind of crisis management. I’m proud of that. Here we are now, almost two years later. The world is opening up again. How do we take the lessons of recent times forward with us? We will look into this in 2022. We recently conducted research into the experiences with remote assessment. One of the conclusions is that this tool can never completely replace on-site assessments, but that it’s very suitable for some situations. So it will certainly find its place in our assessment toolbox.’



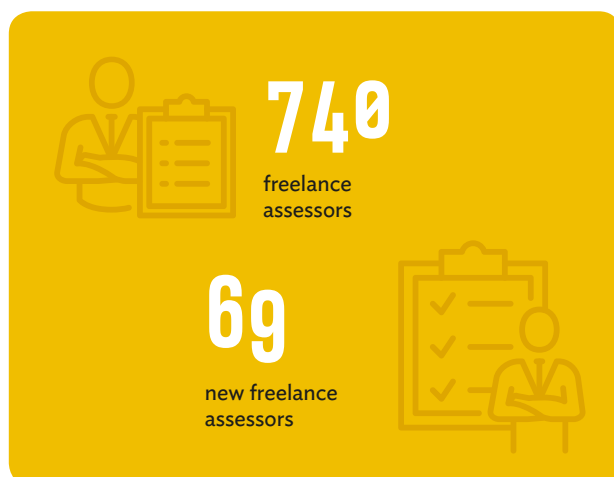
Our freelance assessors

In order to properly conduct our assessment work with clients, we need highly competent people in our assessment teams. Finding, binding and captivating freelance assessors (technical assessors, technical experts and lead assessors) is therefore vital.

Attracting and training assessors

Finding this is not always easy, given the scarcity in the labour market. Nevertheless, 69 new assessors started working for the RvA in 2021. They are experts from diverse backgrounds: medical pathology, organic farming, cybersecurity, car seats, electric car charging points and gas combustion appliances. This also demonstrates that there is a demand for accreditation in more and more areas.

We train newcomers to become independent assessors. In 2021, we started expanding the training days for a number of standards. This will make assessors even better equipped to perform assessments. The first 'new style' of training sessions will start at the beginning of 2022. These training courses focus on not only the professional or technical side, but also the assessors' soft skills. A feeling of comfort and safety is essential in dialogues around any nonconformities that are found. Only in this way are clients able to learn.



More demand for medical specialists

High workload and reduced availability also had an impact on the availability of healthcare assessors in 2021. Scheduling assessments was sometimes a challenge. For this reason, we have paid extra attention to the active recruitment of medical specialists. Medical professional associations helped us with this.

At the end of 2021, the RvA sent a survey to all assessors of medical laboratories to find out what their main motivations for working for us are and what the potential reasons for stopping are. We will take their feedback on board to further develop our ways of 'finding, binding and captivating' assessors in 2022.

How does the RvA function as an autonomous administrative authority?

Since 2010, the RvA has been an autonomous administrative authority (ZBO) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate. As a ZBO, we carry out a government task, but at a distance from the government. We have powers and can make decisions, but we also have to comply with the relevant provisions of the Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act (Kaderwet Zelfstandige Bestuursorganen). The Ministry oversees this. An official evaluation takes place every five years. We underwent such an evaluation again in 2021.

Effective and efficient

Commissioned by the Ministry, two research firms evaluated the 2016-2020 period, examining four main topics: our governance structure, effectiveness, efficiency and social contribution. They conducted this investigation via desk research, interviews with stakeholders, a survey among clients (with a response of 61%) and five focus groups, consisting of representatives of the user council,



clients, advisory panel of stakeholders, assessors and the works council.

The overall conclusion is that the RvA performed its task in an effective and efficient manner during the evaluation period. The RvA is supported in this process by an effective internal and external governance structure. The RvA also shows awareness of social developments. During this period, the RvA has made considerable efforts towards professionalisation, with the introduction of the two-member Executive Board, the digitalisation of the organisation, and the development towards risk-oriented assessment.

Recommendations for the coming years

The evaluation also identified several points of focus, which are included in the report in the form of four recommendations:

- 1 Continue to invest in digitalisation and risk-oriented working, while also keeping an eye on other aspects of change management.
- 2 Invest in communication towards users and assessors.
- 3 Together with policy partners, continue to look for ways to increase the societal value of accreditation.
- 4 Explore (with users) ways to shorten processing times and minimise administrative burdens.

The RvA's Executive Board welcomes this. In fact, it fits in nicely with the aspirations and objectives of our organisation, expressed in our strategic plan for 2021-2025. And we are already actively working on it.

You can view the full evaluation report via this [link](#).

Peer review of the RvA by the EA

A second important evaluation of the RvA was on the schedule for 2021. Once every four years, like all recognised national accreditation bodies, we undergo a peer review from the EA. The task of this umbrella institution is to encourage harmonisation between its members. In order to remain a signatory of the EA's Multilateral Agreement (MLA), we must prove that we satisfy the requirements of European Regulation 765/2008 and the international ISO/IEC 17011 standard. This occurs via an impartial peer review process.

Assessment by European cooperation partners

At the end of 2021, an eleven-person assessment team, from nine fellow European accreditation bodies, conducted an intensive (remote) evaluation of our work for a week. We prepared for this week extensively, through consultations with and briefings to colleagues. An internal audit was carried out prior

to the assessment. The annual management review was also conducted and discussed in detail with the management team. Because this peer review mainly consisted of examining files, many RvA colleagues were involved. There was a good atmosphere as the work took place. And although the evaluation required a huge amount of effort from us, it was a relief to be together in the office again.

Where are the opportunities for improvement?

On the final day, the assessment team shared its conclusions. The team members stated that they appreciated the quality of our work and that they were impressed by the professionalism, expertise and knowledge of RvA colleagues. They said that they would report thirteen nonconformities and twelve comments to the EA's Multilateral Agreement Council as a result of the review. For a non-conformity, an analysis of size and impact must be



drawn up, as well as an action plan. A comment requires a less in-depth response. The number of nonconformities and comments is roughly the same as four years ago, with the observation that many more files were examined this time. This was linked to the remote execution of this peer review, as a result of which hardly any witnessing took place.

The RvA's Executive Board and management team are pleased with the results of this peer review and are definitely working on improvements where necessary. We have submitted our action plan to the assessment team for evaluation and approval. Upon acceptance, the Multilateral Agreement Council will make a decision with regard to extending our MLA status.

We will make the (anonymised) evaluation report available via our website after publication (www.rva.nl/en/).

Digitalisation and information security

The question of how we can continue to improve the accreditation process and our organisation also has a lot to do with digitalisation and information security. These topics received the necessary attention again in 2021.

Our digital transformation

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

We achieved a large amount again in 2021:

- With our **redesigned website**, we have created a future-proof platform that meets the necessary **accessibility and security requirements** and that forms a good basis for the RvA's (future) digital services.
- We have further developed and improved our **reporting tool**, based on feedback from clients and colleagues. They are increasingly satisfied with the functioning and performance of this tool.
- We have developed **new scheduling software** for scheduling assessments, which we will start using from January 2022.
- All source scopes and client scopes are in the **newly developed database** and are accessible for our business processes. A source scope is a 'product catalogue' that you can choose from, as a step towards (the development of) a valid accreditation.
- We have taken an important step in the **processing of complaints, notifications, alerts, and interpretation disputes**: the internal quality processes are better supported by a new software package (BizzMine).
- In order to facilitate and support remote and hybrid working from the office, we have invested in **audiovisual equipment**.

Information security and privacy

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

We started developing this policy at the end of 2019, and in 2020 we moved on to implementation. We again took the necessary steps in 2021:

- We strengthened relations with the **information security organisation** of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate. Where necessary, the RvA can thus make use of the Ministry's knowledge and organisation.
- In 2020, we appointed a **Quality, Privacy and Information Security Advisor**. The purpose of this role is to ensure a coherent package of measures that guarantee privacy and information security within our organisation. In 2021, we conducted a self-assessment based on the Dutch Government Information Security Baseline to determine where we stand as an organisation. The results of this assessment form the basis for follow-up action.
- We regularly draw attention to **information security and privacy** in our consultations and meetings with colleagues, in order to make people more aware of the risks in this area.

Moving forward with confidence

Last year was a year of adaptation and progress. This was only possible due to the hard work of our colleagues and freelance assessors. And due to good collaboration with our clients, stakeholders and international partners. We are therefore looking ahead to the coming year with confidence – a year in which we will further shape our strategic ambitions. For example, via the further digitalisation of our client processes. And via the roll-out of our communication strategy, through which we will propagate the value of accreditation and the entire quality infrastructure and increase the recognition of this tool among our audience. But also via our commitment to risk-based accreditation and the broadening of the services we provide.

In short, we will keep improving. The action plan based on the valuable recommendations and points for improvement from the ZBO evaluation and peer review provides a lot of momentum for that process. We are therefore confident that the RvA will continue to play a central role in strengthening confidence in the quality of products and services.

WE ARE LOOKING
AHEAD TO THE
COMING YEARS
WITH CONFIDENCE.



2 Supervision and advice

The RvA may and must operate with a high degree of independence. Supervision of our work and advice in the decision-making process concerning accreditation are of major importance in this regard. This guarantees the expertise, impartiality and independence of the RvA and provides a critical evaluation of our activities and our business operations.

1 Board of Supervisors

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

2 Accreditation Committee

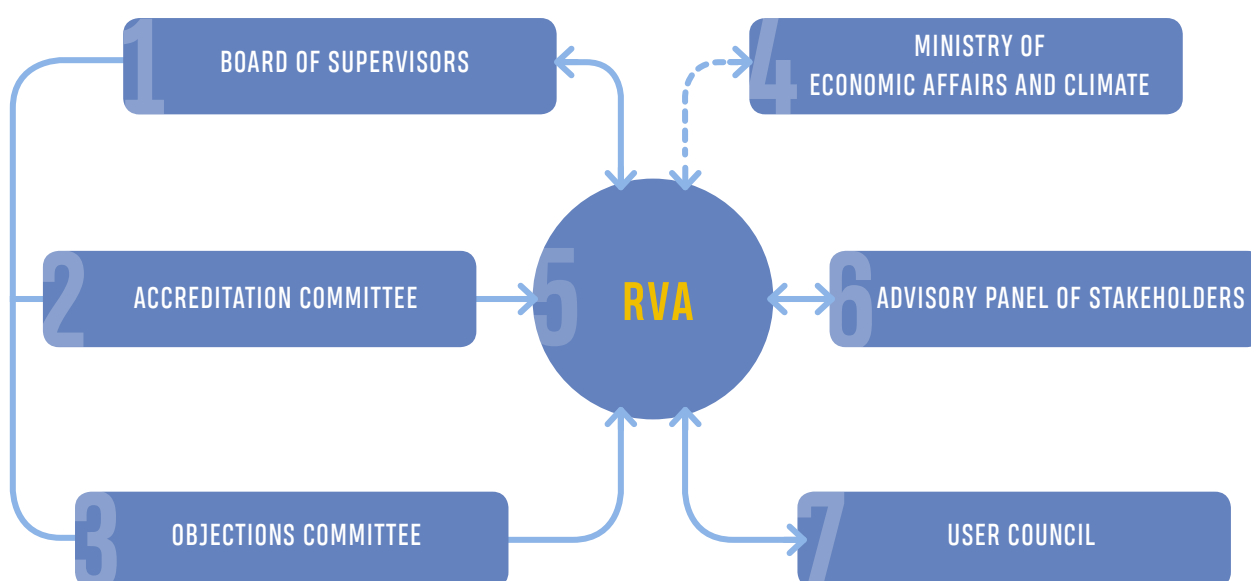
The Accreditation Committee currently consists of five members, appointed on the basis of their expertise in accreditation, their integrity, and their independence. The Committee's duty is to

advise the Executive Board with regard to granting accreditations. In addition, it has the authority to advise the Executive Board regarding suspensions and withdrawals of accreditations.

In 2021, after nine years, we said goodbye to Prof. em. dr. ir. Olaf Fisscher. The RvA is hugely appreciative of his active involvement and valuable advice, as a member and as Chair of this Committee. Ir. Kees Pasmooij took over the role as Chair as of 1 July 2021. The Committee also welcomed two new members in 2021: Prof. dr. Mariëlle Stoelinga and Prof. dr. ir. Petra de Weerd-Nederhof. Both appointments contribute to the desired quality and diversity. We are delighted with their arrival.

3 Objections Committee

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



4 Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate

The RvA must comply with the relevant provisions of the Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act (Kaderwet zelfstandige bestuursorganen) and European Regulation 765/2008. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate supervises this.

An evaluation of the RvA as an autonomous administrative authority takes place every five years. We had another [official evaluation](#) in 2021.

Insofar as the substantive side of the RvA's work is concerned, the Ministry can rely on the peer reviews by the EA (European co-operation for Accreditation), which the RvA undergoes every four years. In 2021 we had another peer review.

5 Executive Board

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

6 Advisory Panel of Stakeholders

This panel consists of representatives of the public sector, direct clients of the RvA, direct customers of our clients, scheme owners and scientific institutes. In 2021, we asked the members for their views on setting up a more agile advisory panel that better meets the needs of stakeholders. Partly on the basis of their feedback, in 2022 we will get started with a dynamic, theme-oriented advisory panel: the strategic advice forum. In addition to the permanent members, other stakeholders can also join meetings if they have an affinity with the selected theme.





This ‘new style’ of advisory panel is less suitable for the annual advice with regard to guaranteeing our impartiality. For this reason, a pilot will take place in 2022 to set up an impartiality consultation which focuses fully on this task.

7 User Council

The User Council consists of representatives of the RvA’s direct clients and it advises the RvA on rates, standard of service, and the quality of the service provision. In 2021, the impact of the Covid pandemic on our work has been a recurring item on the agenda. Furthermore, we informed the User Council about the plans surrounding and the content of the digitalisation projects that are under (ongoing)

development. Topics relating to the scarcity in the labour market and information security were also discussed. The User Council was also involved in the **evaluation** of the RvA as an autonomous administrative authority.

Multilateral Agreement Committee of the EA

In order to remain a signatory of the EA’s Multilateral Agreement (MLA), the RvA must satisfy the requirements of European Regulation 765/2008 and the international ISO/IEC 17011 standard. Every four years, the RvA is assessed by the EA in the format of a peer review. We had another evaluation in 2021.

Members of governing bodies and advisory committees

Here is an overview of the composition of the governing bodies and advisory committees as of 1 March 2022.

Board of Supervisors

- Ms Yvonne van Rooy LLM (*Chair*)
2nd term until 1 December 2024
- Dr. ir. Ineke Mastenbroek (*Vice Chair*)
2nd term until 13 March 2022
- Prof. dr. Jaap van den Heuvel
2nd term until 1 August 2023
- Ron de Mos
1st term until 15 October 2023
- Ir. Peter van Rhede van der Kloot
2nd term until 31 August 2023

For the Board of Supervisors' report for 2021, please refer to our financial report for 2021, which you can download via our website (www.rva.nl/en/annual-reports). You can also find more information there about the members of the Board of Supervisors and their additional functions.

Executive Board

- Mr Roeland Nieuweboer LLM (*Chair of Executive Board*)
- Mr Joep de Haas LLM (*Executive Board member*)



Accreditation Committee

- Ir. Kees Pasmooij (*Chair*)
- Prof. dr. Bert Bakker
- Dr. Guillaume Counotte
- Prof. dr. Mariëlle Stoelinga
- Prof. dr. ir. Petra de Weerd-Nederhof

Objections Committee

- Mr. Aniel Pahladsingh LLM
- Drs. Arend Koenes
- Mr. Mark van Zijl LLM

Advisory Panel of Stakeholders

The persons below were members of the Advisory Panel of Stakeholders in 2021. The composition of the ‘**new style**’ of advisory panel varies.

The members in 2021:

- Prof. dr. Philip Eijlander (*scientific institutes, Chair*)
- Dr. Ruben Baumgarten (*medical laboratories*)
- Mr Jan van den Bos LLM (*Inspection Board, state inspectorate*)
- Ir. Nic Hendriks (*Dutch Association of Certification Bodies [NVCi], certification and inspection bodies*)
- Drs. Hans van den Heuvel (*Netherlands Agricultural and Horticultural Association, primary sector*)
- Ir. Jaap Hogeling (*Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers, industry*)
- Ing. Ties Joosten (*laboratories and inspection bodies*)
- Dr. Peter van der Knaap (*Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, public sector supervisors*)
- Drs. Alieke Koopman (*Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, ministries*)
- Dr. Hans Ossebaard (*Dutch National Healthcare Institute, standardisation*)
- Dr. Marc Pieksma (*Dutch Metrology Institute [VSL], metrology*)
- Ir. Frans Stuyt (*Dutch Association of Scheme Owners [VvS], scheme owners*)
- Ir. Rik van Terwisga (*NEN, standardisation*)
- Dutch Association of Insurers

User Council

- Dr. Sylvia Bruisten (*medical laboratories*)
- Dr. Bouke Hepkema (*medical laboratories*)
- Ing. Ties Joosten (*Fenelab*)
- Ir. Olaf van Panhuys (*NVCi*)
- Pieter Vos (*Fenelab*)
- Wim van Vreeswijk (*NVCi*)

We are deeply thankful to all members for their input and valuable advice in 2021.

THESE FORMS OF
SUPERVISION AND
ADVICE CONTRIBUTE
TO A JUSTIFIED
SENSE OF CONFIDENCE
IN OUR WORK.



3 Our work in figures

Confidence also requires the opportunity for scrutiny. In this chapter you will find an overview in figures of our activities in 2021. We have also added previous figures for comparison in several cases.

Accreditations granted as of 31 December 2021

Standard	Explanation	Netherlands 2021	Abroad 2021	Total 2021	Netherlands 2020	Abroad 2020	Total 2020
CERTIFICATION BODIES							
ISO/IEC 17065	Products and services	61	2	63	62	2	64
ISO/IEC 17021	Management systems	44	15	59	46	15	61
ISO/IEC 17024	Persons	6	0	6	6	0	6
Subtotal certification bodies		111	17	128	114	17	131
INSPECTION BODIES							
ISO/IEC 17020	Inspection	131	1	132	133	1	134
Subtotal inspection bodies		131	1	132	133	1	134
RVA MARK LABORATORIES							
ISO/IEC 17025	Calibration	63	0	63	59	0	59
ISO/IEC 17025	Testing	248	5	253	245	5	250
ISO/IEC 17043	Proficiency testing	14	1	15	14	1	15
ISO 15189	Medical laboratories in MLA	227	7	234	230	7	237
EN/ISO 17034	Reference materials	3	0	3	2	0	2
Subtotal laboratories		555	13	568	550	13	563
ISO 14065	EMAS/Emissions	3	2	5	4	2	6
Regulation (EC) No. 1221/2009 (EMAS)	EMAS verification	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of accreditations granted		800	33	833	801	33	834

The total number of accreditations granted in 2021 was not significantly different than in 2020. We again granted new accreditations in 2021, but due to mergers, acquisitions and withdrawals, the total

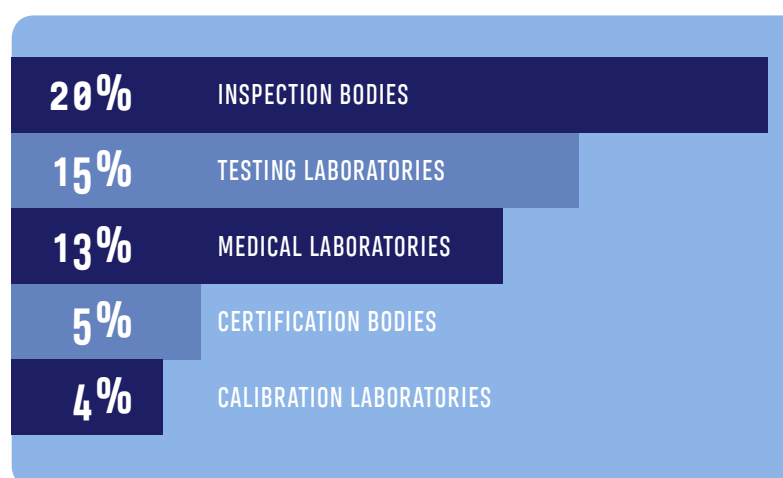
number of accreditations granted has remained constant in recent years. A complete overview of all new accreditations can be found on our website: www.rva.nl/en/new-accreditations.



GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ACCREDITATIONS GRANTED BY THE RvA

Streamlined regime per accreditation standard

The RvA mobilises its assessment capacity in the most risk-oriented way possible. For instance, by granting a streamlined assessment regime based on the performance in the previous accreditation cycle. In that case, we perform not three but two surveillance assessments within the cycle. At the end of 2021, 13% of our clients were subject to a streamlined assessment regime. The distribution across the various accreditation standards was as follows.



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

	New accreditations	Average processing time in calendar days	New accreditations	Average processing time in calendar days
Decision in	2021	2021	2020	2020
Certification bodies	3	251	4	253
Inspection bodies	2	325	2	374
Calibration laboratories	4	369	2	358
Testing laboratories	6	424	5	331
Medical laboratories	1	280	1	450
EMAS/Emissions	0	0	1	352
Other	1	357	1	443
Total	17	356*	16	336*

* This is a weighted average.

The average processing time for initial assessments in 2021 for all types of accreditations collectively was 356 calendar days. This represents an increase from 2020 (336 calendar days). The restrictions imposed by

the Covid pandemic meant that we had to postpone assessments in some cases, thus increasing the average processing time.





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

	Extensions	Average processing time in calendar days	Extensions	Average processing time in calendar days
Decision in	2021	2021	2020	2020
Certification bodies	32	181	47	195
Inspection bodies	6	199	16	168
Calibration laboratories	9	175	5	114
Testing laboratories	109	144	110	143
Medical laboratories	50	172	35	189
EMAS/Emissions	0	0	2	36
Other	0	0	1	50
Total	206	167*	216	174*

* This is a weighted average.

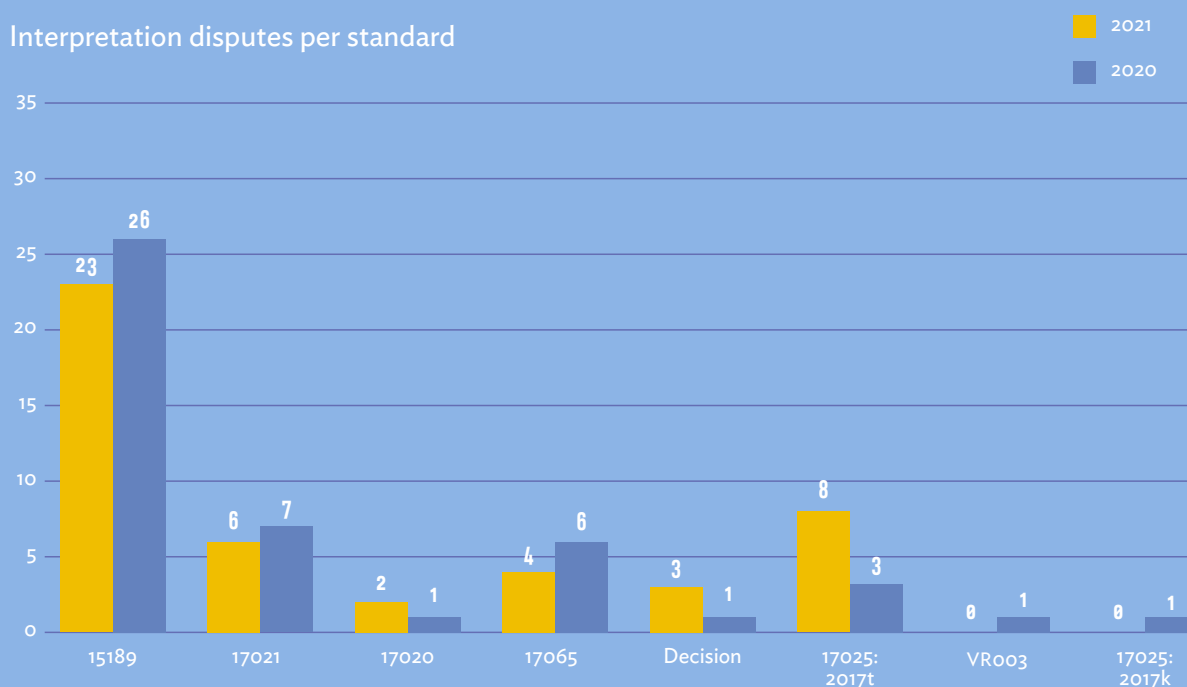
The average processing time of extension assessments in 2021 was lower than in 2020. This is in line with the trend that started in 2019. In general, the restrictions as a result of the Covid pandemic did not negatively affect the

average processing time here. This is because it is usually easier for us to perform extension assessments remotely than initial assessments.

Disputes, suspensions and withdrawals

Our clients have the option of filing an interpretation dispute against a nonconformity issued by the RvA assessment team. The handling of such a dispute may lead to the nonconformity being upheld, reformulated or withdrawn.

Interpretation disputes per standard



In 2021, as in 2020, most interpretation disputes were submitted by medical laboratories (ISO 15189). Nine interpretation disputes from medical laboratories were declared inadmissible because they did not concern an interpretation of the standard. The total number of disputes is virtually the same as in previous years. However, we do see a significant decrease in the percentage of nonconformities that are upheld without any amendment. The percentage of nonconformities that were partially withdrawn also fell: from 18% in 2020 to 5% in 2021. The attention that assessors have paid to meticulously formulating the nonconformities over the past two years is reflected in the figures.

The outcomes of interpretation disputes

At year-end	2021	2020
Nonconformity maintained	19	12
Nonconformity withdrawn	10	15
Nonconformity (partially) reformulated	9	12
Pending	7	6
Inadmissible	14	12
Total number of disputes	59	57



Suspended accreditations *(for the entire scope)*

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2021	Imposed 2021	Total 2021	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020
Certification bodies	0	1	1	0	0	0
Inspection bodies	0	1*	1	0	1	1
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	0	0	0
Testing laboratories	0	0	0	3	0	3
Medical laboratories	0	0	0	1	1	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	0	2	2	4	2	6

* Suspension was lifted on 14 April 2021.

Suspended accreditations *(for part of the areas of activity)*

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2021	Imposed 2021	Total 2021	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020
Certification bodies	0	0	0	0	1	1
Inspection bodies	0	0	0	0	1	1
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	2	0	2
Testing laboratories	1	1*	2	2	0	2
Medical laboratories	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	1	1	2	4	2	6

* Suspension was lifted on 20 July 2021.

Withdrawn accreditations *(for the entire scope)*

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2021	Imposed 2021	Total 2021	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020
Certification bodies	4*	0	4	2	0	2
Inspection bodies	4*	0	4	2	0	2
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	1	0	1
Testing laboratories	8*	0	8	8	0	8
Medical laboratories	4*	0	4	3	0	3
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	20	0	20	16	0	16

* Various withdrawals have since been lifted (2x certification bodies, 3x inspection bodies, 3x testing laboratories, 4x medical laboratories).

Withdrawn accreditations *(for part of the areas of activity)*

Accreditation category	Voluntary 2021	Imposed 2021	Total 2021	Voluntary 2020	Imposed 2020	Total 2020
Certification bodies	4*	0	4	18	0	18
Inspection bodies	1	0	1	0	0	0
Calibration laboratories	0	0	0	0	0	0
Testing laboratories	2	0	2	0	0	0
Medical laboratories	30*	0	30	32	0	32
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
RvA mark total	37	0	37	50	0	50

* Various withdrawals have since been lifted (2x certification bodies, 12x medical laboratories).



Experiences with remote assessment

We have not conducted a regular client satisfaction survey since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic because the questions posed in that survey did not line up with the remote assessments we conducted during this period. In late 2021 and early 2022, however, we did investigate the experiences with this new form of assessment. The aim of this investigation is to determine whether, and if so, how, the RvA can make greater use of remote assessments in the future. Various parties were surveyed for this research: RvA employees, assessors, accredited institutions, and the Accreditation Committee. We expect the results from this study during the course of 2022.

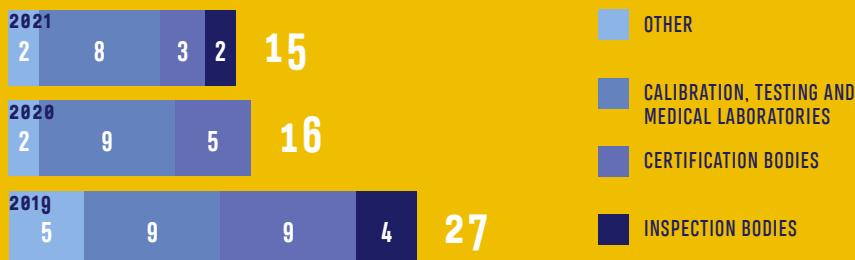
Processing complaints

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

www.rva.nl/en/rules-and-decisions.

We processed fifteen complaints in 2021. Most of the complaints were about our procedures, whereby communication often played a role. The intention of this complaints procedure is, among other things, to implement structural improvements in our processes where possible. In one case, this led to the start of a pilot to improve the processing time for extension applications. We are also currently working on various improvement processes that can prevent future recurrences of some complaints from 2021.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS PROCESSED REGARDING THE RvA (WITH BREAKDOWN BY WORKING DOMAIN OF NOTIFIER)



Notifications and alerts

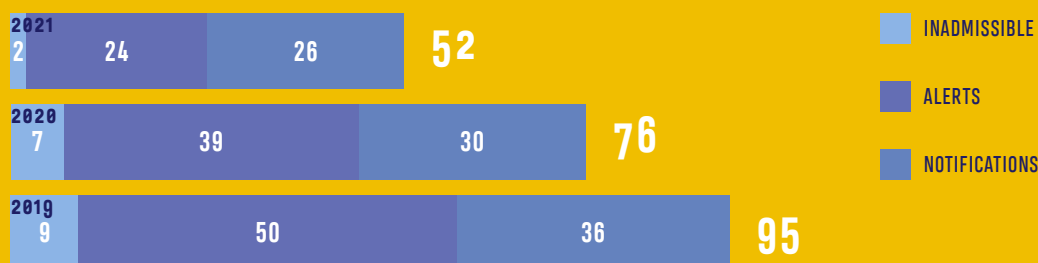
In the event of dissatisfaction or doubts about the work of an accredited organisation, a notification or an alert can be submitted to the RvA. In the first case, the RvA investigates the notification with the accredited party and feedback is provided to the notifier. In the event of an alert, the RvA will, as it sees fit, incorporate the information into the supervision of the accredited organisation. The notifier will not receive any feedback in this case.

The valid notifications and alerts received in 2021 again mainly related to inspection and certification bodies (63%), although to a lesser degree than in 2020 (82%). As was the case the previous year, the notifications and alerts primarily concerned the working method and handling of complaints by accredited organisations.

Generally speaking, notifications or alerts are investigated during the next regular assessment. In response to a notification or alert, the RvA's Executive Board may decide to carry out an extra assessment if the content of what has been alerted is such that doubts are raised about the reliability of the work of the accredited organisation.

In 2021, the decision to perform an extra assessment was made five times (compared to nine times in 2020). Two assessments are still ongoing. In two cases, the doubt turned out to be (partially) justified and the organisation in question had to take measures to prevent a recurrence in the future. In one case, the doubt turned out to be unfounded.

NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS AND ALERTS RECEIVED ABOUT ACCREDITED ORGANISATIONS



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

Two objections were submitted in 2021. In both cases, this concerned a situation in which the RvA did not grant a streamlined assessment regime for a reassessment after good assessment results. One objection was declared inadmissible and one objection was declared well-founded.

We did not receive any FOI requests in 2021.





4 Brief financial overview

The RvA is a private foundation. We have no profit objective on the basis of our Articles of Association and pursuant to the European Regulation 765/2008. Our independence is guaranteed via the Dutch National Accreditation Body Appointment Act (Wet aanwijzing nationale accreditatie-instantie) and by a sound governance structure with a Board of Supervisors, an Accreditation Committee, an Advisory Panel of Stakeholders and a User Council.

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

Annual accounts

The figures below have been taken as a summary from the adopted annual accounts for 2021. You can download the full annual accounts via our website (www.rva.nl/en/annual-reports/) or request them from us via communicatie@rva.nl.

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

Profit and loss account (x €1000)

Results	Budgeted 2021	2021	2020
Net turnover	14,425	14,087	13,231
Expenses			
Personnel	8,590	8,375	8,343
Costs of outsourced work	3,425	3,718	3,214
Travel and accommodation costs	520	191	260
Depreciation of fixed assets	200	204	116
Other costs	2,057	1,658	1,711
Total expenses	14,792	14,146	13,644
Sum of income and expenses	-367	-59	-413
Interest expenses	-	-15	-
Result	-367	-74	-413

Designated fund result

Costs charged to designated fund	167	164	211
Addition to designated fund	-	-	-
Changes to equalisation and other reserve	-200	90	-202

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

Assets	2021	2020
Fixed assets	1,274	754
Receivables and transitory assets	3,327	3,188
Liquid assets	1,752	2,402
Total	6,353	6,344

Liabilities	2021	2020
Equity capital	3,723	3,797
Long-term liabilities	179	244
Short-term debts and transitory liabilities	2,451	2,303
Total	6,353	6,344

As at 31 December 2021, the buffer capital (equity capital +/- designated fund) is 3,660,370 euros. On balance, the buffer capital has increased by 89,873 euros. At year-end 2020, the buffer capital was 3,570,497 euros.

The impact of the Covid pandemic on the financial results has remained manageable, partly thanks to cost-saving measures.



Distribution of invoiced time

For the assessment type:

Assessment type	2021 (total number of days 7,649 = 100%)	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)
Initial assessment	4%	5%	7%
Extension	8%	9%	8%
Reassessment	31%	23%	18%
Surveillance assessment	48%	55%	57%
Witness audit	9%	8%	9%
Transition to ISO 15189	0%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Broken down by role in the assessment team:

Role	2021 (total number of days 7,649 = 100%)	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)
Lead assessor	43%	46%	43%
Assessor	11%	10%	11%
Technical expert	46%	44%	46%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Including the assessment of corrective measures and witness audits:

Deployment	2021 (total number of days 7,649 = 100%)	2020 (total number of days 7,897 = 100%)	2019 (total number of days 8,724 = 100%)
At client's site/remote*	49%	47%	48%
Preparation/reporting	51%	52%	49%
Travel outside the Netherlands	0%	1%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

*For 2021, as in 2020, remote assessments are included as being 'on location'.



Colophon

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MOVING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

