



## EQALM annual report for 2017

*The objective of the European Organisation for External Quality Assurance Providers in Laboratory Medicine (EQALM) is to provide a forum for co-operation and exchange of knowledge on quality-related matters, especially with regard to EQA programs in Europe.*

### Members of the Executive Board

The members of the EQALM Executive Board in 2017 are shown in the table 1.

Table 1.

Executive Board members	First term / second term
Anne Stavelin, chairman (Norway)	2014-2016 / 2017-2019
Finlay MacKenzie, secretary (UK)	2014-2016 / 2017-2019
Stéphanie Albarède, treasurer (France)	2017-2019 /
Piet Meijer, member (Netherlands)	2016-2018 /
Erika Sárkány, member (Hungary)	2012-2014 / 2015-2017

Erika Sárkány ended her second term in 2017. The Board thank Erika for her work in the Board for 6 years.

### Members of EQALM

EQALM has different types of membership. EQA organisations can apply to be a full member (European) or non-European member if they are an impartial and non-profit EQA provider, which organizes national, regional or international EQA schemes in laboratory medicine. Individuals with an interest in EQA can become an individual member. Commercial providers of EQA in laboratory medicine or other commercial companies with an interest in this field can support EQALM as associate members.

EQALM had 58 members in 2017, three more than in 2016. The number and fees of the different types of memberships are shown in table 2.

Table 2.

Membership	Number	Annual fee
Full European member	41	175 €
Non-European member	4	175 €
Associate member	4	700 €
Individual member	5	80 €
Honorary member	4	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	

## Main activities of the Executive Board

- Monthly teleconferences and 1 face-to-face meeting during the EQALM annual Symposium in Dublin
- Preparation of Board election
  - Outgoing member: Erika Sárkány (Hungary), until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017
  - New board member: Christoph Buchta (Austria), from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018
- Services of the EQALM Office (optimizing internal routines)
- Closer interaction with the Working Group Chairs through the Scientific Committee
- Promotion of EQALM
  - Published article about EQALM, Biochemia Medica 2017;27(1):30–6.
  - EuroMedLab, June 2017, Athens. Symposium chaired by EQALM by Anne Stavelin, presentation held by Piet Meijer, and an EQALM booth in the exhibition area.
- Cooperation with other organizations (meetings, working groups)
  - Eurachem: Involved in the 9th Workshop Proficiency Testing in Analytical Chemistry, Microbiology and Laboratory Medicine, October 2017, Portorož, Slovenia
  - EEE (Eurachem, EuroLab, European accreditation): Working Group on PT in Accreditation
  - EFLM (European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine): Working Group on Pre- and Post-analytical phase (WG-PRE and WG-POST)
  - JCTLM (Joint Committee for Traceability in Laboratory Medicine). Presentation held by Piet Meijer at the JCTLM Members' and Stakeholders' meeting, December, Paris.
- Preparation of EQALM Symposium 2017

## Annual EQALM Symposium

The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual EQALM Symposium and General Assembly was held in Dublin, Ireland on 19-20<sup>th</sup> October 2017, with the title: *The role of EQA in protecting community health*.

The main sessions were: 1) Working group meetings (parallel sessions), 2) microbiology, 3) support and education, 4) Adam Uldall Award lecture, 5) statistics in EQA, and 6) selected presentations from submitted abstracts. The full program is given in Appendix 1.

The Adam Uldall Award lecture was given by Professor Mauro Panteghini (Italy) with the title: *The role of EQA in the verification of in-vitro medical diagnostics*.

82 persons from 28 different countries attended the EQALM symposium which was organized by the Executive Board, the Scientific Program Committee and a local organizer:

### **Scientific Program Committee**

Piet Meijer, chair (ECAT, The Netherlands)  
 Anne Stavelin (Noklus, Norway)  
 Stéphanie Albarède (CTBC, France)  
 Michael Noble (CMPT, Canada)  
 Istvan Juhos (QUALICONT, Hungary)  
 Joan-Lluis Vives Corrons (SEHH, Spain)

### **Local organiser**

Hazel Graham (IEQAS, Ireland)  
 Anne Kane (IEQAS, Ireland)  
 Patricia Howley (IEQAS, Ireland)

## Scientific Committee

In 2016, the Executive Board established a Scientific Committee (SC) with the aim to improve the interaction between the WG chairs and the board, to stimulate the WGs to be more active throughout the year, and to produce more scientific papers. The SC should advise the board on scientific matters.

The SC is chaired by a board member and the Chairman of EQALM (Anne Stavelin) has participated at the meetings as an observer.

The members of the Scientific Committee for 2017 are shown in table 3.

Table 3.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Function</b>
Piet Meijer	Chair Scientific Committee
Wim Coucke	Frequency WG Chair
Joan-Lluis Vives Corrons	Hematology WG Chair
Ann Helen Kristoffersen	Hemostasis WG Chair
Gunnar Nordin	Nomenclature WG Chair
Michael Noble	Microbiology WG Chair
Istvan Juhos	Virtual Microscopy WG Chair

In 2017, the SC had three teleconferences and one face-to-face meeting prior to the annual symposium in Dublin. The major focus in this first year of the SC was to discuss about the structure of the WGs. For more details see Appendix 2. In addition, the future structure of the annual WG meetings was discussed.

The Executive Board asked the SC for advice whether EQALM should maintain the WG on Nomenclature. The SC advised to terminate this WG because of the lack of progress in the work to harmonize terminology for methods and equipment used by EQA providers.

Other topics that have been discussed are the requirement for new working groups, financial support for projects and communication within working groups. Furthermore, ongoing projects within the working groups were discussed. Several members of the SC were involved in the Scientific Program Committee of the annual symposium in Dublin.

A list of scientific publications from EQALM is shown in Appendix 3.

## Working Groups

EQALM had 6 working groups in 2017:

- 1) Frequency
- 2) Hematology
- 3) Hemostasis
- 4) Nomenclature
- 5) Microbiology
- 6) Virtual Microscopy

Short reports from each group are given in Appendix 4.

## Accounts for 2016

The revenues and expenses for 2016 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

<b>Accounts 2016</b>	
Revenues	€ 46 761
Expenses	€ 47 470
Balance	€ -709

The loss of 709 Euro is due to a change of procedure. The Board decided at the previous General Assembly (Barcelona 2016) to clarify the accounts by transferring the unpaid invoices from uncollected invoices to profits and loss. As there were 2,990 Euro in 2015 on the line uncollected invoices, the apparent loss stated for 2016 was therefore an accountancy anomaly and for this reason there was actually a net profit of 2,281 Euro.

## Cooperation with other organizations

EQALM is active in different networks and work together with other organizations. In the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM), EQALM has representatives in the working group on pre-analytical phase (WG-PRE) and in the post-analytical phase (WG-POST). EQALM is an associate member of Eurachem and has representatives in the Eurachem, EuroLab and the European Accreditation (EEE) Working Group on Proficiency Testing in Accreditation (WG PT).

EQALM also co-operates with the Joint Committee for Traceability in Laboratory Medicine (JCTLM) which has one working group on traceability and one on reference materials, procedures and measurement laboratories (the JCTLM Database working group).

The list of people who has been the EQALM representatives in the different groups in 2017 are shown in table 5. Short reports from each group are given in Appendix 5.

Table 5.

Working Group	EQALM representative	Number of meetings this year
EFLM WG-PRE	Gunn Kristensen (Norway), Barbara De la Salle (UK)	2
EFLM WG-POST	Piet Meijer (Netherlands), Ana Paula Faria (Portugal)	1
EEE WG PT	Erika Sarkany (Hungary), Xavier Albe (Switzerland)	2

## EQALM Office / Secretariat

The registered office is in Geneva with the following addresses:

EQALM  
c/o CSCQ  
Chemin du Petit-Bel-Air 2  
CH-1225 Chêne-Bourg  
Switzerland

Web page: [www.eqalm.org](http://www.eqalm.org)  
e-mail: [office@eqalm.org](mailto:office@eqalm.org)

In 2017, Xavier Albe has been the EQALM Office liaison.

On behalf of the Executive Board,

Bergen, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Anne Stavelin  
EQALM Chairman

- Appendix 1: Program annual EQALM Symposium 2017
- Appendix 2: The structure of the Working Groups
- Appendix 3: EQALM scientific publications list
- Appendix 4: Reports from EQALM Working Groups
- Appendix 5: Reports from Working Groups in other organizations

## Appendix 1: Program annual EQALM Symposium 2017

EQALM		EQALM symposium 2017	
		October 19 – 20, Dublin, Ireland	
<h3>Program</h3>			
<b>Thursday 19 October 2017</b>			
<b>Registration</b>			8.00 – 14.00
<b>Working Group Meeting (parallel sessions)</b>			8.30 – 13.00
	<b>The Executive Board room</b>	<b>Room 18</b>	
8.30 – 9.55	Frequency	Virtual Microscopy	
10.00 – 11.25	Haematology	---	
11.30 – 12.55	Haemostasis	Microbiology	
<b>Lunch</b>			13.00 – 14.00
<b>Symposium: The role of EQA in protecting community health</b>			
14.00 – 14.10	<b>Opening</b>		<b>Anne Stavelin</b>
<b>Microbiology</b>	<b>Moderator: Michael Noble</b>		14.10 – 15.30
14.10 – 14.40	Validation of alternative microbiological methods for food, feed and environmental samples		Hilde S. Norli
14.40 – 15.00	EQA and Chlamydia; protecting the community from the spread of STIs		Rosanna Peeling
15.00 – 15.20	Pre and post examination of microbiology by EQA		Michael Noble
15.20 – 15.30	Questions and discussion		
<b>Round Table</b>	<b>Moderator: Finlay Mackenzie</b>		15.30 – 16.00
15.30 – 16.00	Support and education		
<b>Break with refreshments</b>			16.00 – 16.30
<b>Adam Uldall Lecture</b>	<b>Moderator: Anne Stavelin</b>		16.30 – 17.30
16.30 – 17.30	The role of EQA in the verification of in-vitro medical diagnostics		Mauro Panteghini
<b>Social Event</b>	Congress dinner in city center		18.30 – 23.00
Version 11 (06.10.2017)		Under the auspices of	



# EQALM symposium 2017

October 19 – 20, Dublin, Ireland

## Program

### Friday 20 October 2017

<b>Plenary lecture</b>	<b>Moderator: Piet Meijer</b>	<b>9.00 – 9.30</b>
9.00 – 9.30	EQA for developing countries, the role of WHO	Willy Urassa
<b>Statistics in EQA</b>	<b>Moderator: Piet Meijer</b>	<b>9.30 – 10.15</b>
9.30 – 9.55	A critical view on ISO standard 13528	Wim Coucke
9.55 – 10.15	Statistical approach for optimization of EQA studies of molecular and serological viral diagnostics	Matthias Niedrig
<b>Break with refreshments</b>		<b>10.15 – 10.45</b>
<b>Members' session</b>	<b>Moderator: Stephanie Albarède</b>	<b>10.45 – 11.30</b>
10.45 – 11.05	Definition of EQAS allowable limits for HbA1c: a candidate method.	Anne Vassault
11.05 – 11.25	Quality Monitoring of pre-analytical sample labelling	Ann Leonard
<b>Abstract presentations</b>	<b>Moderator: Erika Sarkany</b>	<b>11.30 – 12.30</b>
11.30 – 11.45	Biochemical assays of human seminal plasma: the experience of a French EQA program	Safouane Hamdi
11.45 – 12.00	Assessment of Laboratory Performance in the Molecular Detection of Influenza A, Influenza B and RSV methods through International EQA Scheme for Multiplex Assays	Niina Kivi
12.00 – 12.15	IHC Breast Audit	Tony Badrick
<b>Lunch</b>		<b>12.30 – 13.30</b>
<b>EQALM General Assembly</b>		<b>13.30 – 15.30</b>
<b>End of the meeting</b>		<b>15.30</b>

## Appendix 2: The structure of the Working Groups

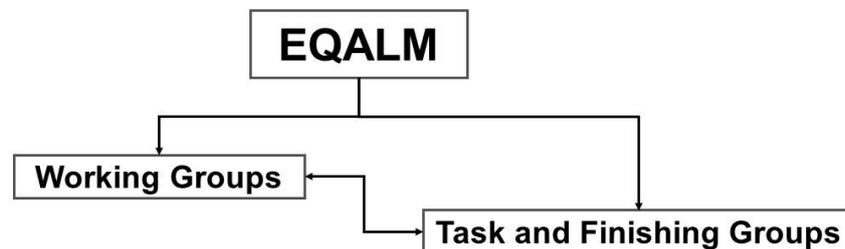
The concept of EQALM Working Groups is appropriate for an international organization because they create the opportunity for groups with common interest to work together without intruding on the time of others with different interests.

Two different types of WG's can be distinguished:

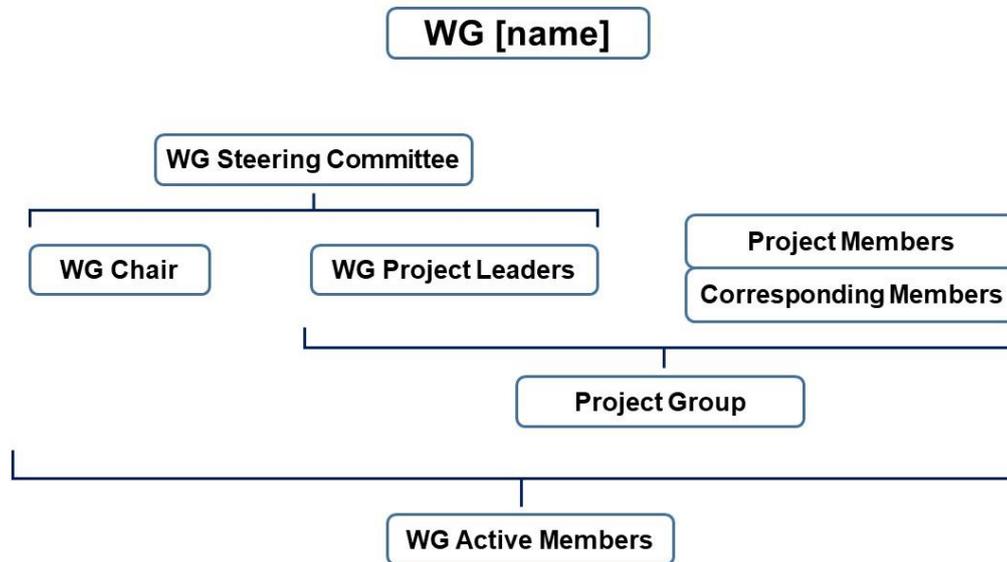
- WG's covering a common topic: e.g. Frequency, Nomenclature, Virtual Microscopy.
- WG's covering a specific topic: e.g. Haematology, Microbiology, Haemostasis.

Generic topics are in principle discussed within a common WG. However, when such a topic needs a more specific discussion by specialists it can also be discussed within a specific WG. In addition, WG's with a short-term goal can be considered. These are WG's with a specific goal which can be achieved in a relative short period of time (max 2 years). These WG's are called Task-and-Finishing Groups (TFG). Within a WG also a TFG can be created for a specific task.

The following structure of the Working Groups will be implemented:



The following functional structure of a WG will be implemented:



The number of members of the Steering Committee may be flexible depending on the number of ongoing projects.

The working plans are discussed within the Scientific Committee prior the annual meeting of the WG.

## Appendix 3: EQALM scientific publications list

Table 6. Scientific publications from the EQALM Working Groups

Working Group	Publication	Year
Hematology	Soumali MR, Van Blerk M, Akharif A, Albarède S, Kessler D, Gutierrez G, de la Salle B, Plum I, Guyard A, Favia AP, Coucke W. A new approach to define acceptance limits for hematology in external quality assessment schemes. <i>Clin Chem Lab Med</i> 2017; in press.	2017
Executive Board	Stavelin A, Albe X, Meijer P, Sarkany E, MacKenzie F. An overview of the European Organization for External Quality Assurance Providers in Laboratory Medicine (EQALM). <i>Biochem Med (Zagreb)</i> 2017;27:30-6.	2017
Hemostasis EFLM WG-POST	Kristoffersen AH, Ajzner E, Rogic D, Sozmen EY, Carraro P, Faria AP, Watine J, Meijer P, Sandberg S. Is D-dimer used according to clinical algorithms in the diagnostic work-up of patients with suspicion of venous thromboembolism? A study in six European countries. <i>Thromb Res</i> 2016;142:1-7.	2016
Hemostasis EFLM WG-POST	Ajzner E, Rogic D, Meijer P, Kristoffersen AH, Carraro P, Sozmen E, Faria AP, Sandberg S. An international study of how laboratories handle and evaluate patient samples after detecting an unexpected APTT prolongation. <i>Clin Chem Lab Med</i> 2015;53:1593-603.	2015
Hemostasis	Stavelin A, Meijer P, Kitchen D, Sandberg S. External quality assessment of point-of-care International Normalized Ratio (INR) testing in Europe. <i>Clin Chem Lab Med</i> 2012;50:81-8.	2012
Hematology	Van Blerk M, Albarède S, Deom A, Gutiérrez G, Heller S. Comparison of evaluation procedures used by European external quality assessment scheme organizers for haemoglobin concentration and leukocyte concentration. <i>Accred Qual Assur</i> 2008;13:145-8.	2008
Microbiology	Vernelen K, Noble MA, Libeer JC. External quality assessment in microbiology: comparison of results from Belgian and Canadian laboratories with regard to their ability to identify <i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i> . <i>Accred Qual Assur</i> 2008;13:501-4.	2008
Hematology	Vives Corrons JL, Van Blerk M, Albarede S, Gutierrez G, Heller S, Nordin G, Skitek M, Deom A, Horvath K, de la Salle B, Libeer JC. Guidelines for setting up an external quality assessment scheme for blood smear interpretation. Part II: survey preparation, statistical evaluation and reporting. <i>Clin Chem Lab Med</i> 2006;44:1039-43.	2006
Hematology	Vives Corrons JL, Albarede S, Flandrin G, Heller S, Horvath K, Houwen B, Nordin G, Sarkani E, Skitek M, Van Blerk M, Libeer JC. Guidelines for blood smear preparation and staining procedure for setting up an external quality assessment scheme for blood smear interpretation. Part I: Control material. <i>Clin Chem Lab Med</i> 2004;42:922-6.	2004

## Appendix 4: Reports from EQALM Working Groups

### WG Frequency

**Chair: Wim Coucke (Belgium), from 2017**

The work of the frequency working group can be summarised briefly as follows:

- A study comparing laboratory performance between various EQA organisers for a selected set, taking into account other possibly interfering parameters, like grade of accreditation and punitive or educational character of the EQA scheme.

On the shelf of 2018 is:

- Continuing and extending the study performed in 2017;
- setting up a prospective study to compare a group of laboratories that participates in a low frequency scheme and a group of laboratories that participates in a high frequency scheme.
- Processing data from a survey about different characteristics of European EQA organisers that may interfere with laboratory performance.

The frequency working group did not publish any article yet so far.

## WG Hematology

### Chair: Joan-Lluis Vives Corrons (Spain), from 1998

- Production of a poster for Euromedlab (Athens)
- Publication of an article: Soumali MR, Van Blerk M, Akharif A, Albarède S, Kessler D, Gutierrez G, de la Salle B, Plum I, Guyard A, Favia AP, Coucke W. A new approach to define acceptance limits for hematology in external quality assessment schemes. Clin Chem Lab Med 2017; in press.
- Decision to publish an article on the results of the surveys carried out the previous years that showed a huge variation in the way of marking blood cells differentiation on smear. The redaction will be done in 2018.
- Creation of a steering committee (JL Vives, S Albarede, B De la Salle, E Sarkani) for the establishment of a joint EQALM-EUROBLOODNET working group to define a way of scoring blood cells differentiation on smear taking in account clinical impact.
- Promote quality for rare hematological tests (rare anemia):
  - Haemoglobin A2 (HbA2) surveys in Europe:
    - 2017: Review UK NEQAS data for Hb A2 to design the European Scheme = this raised issues that will be discussed with the working group in the following months (2017→ 2018),
    - 2018: to carry out a survey on the analytical performance specifications for Hb A2
  - Pyruvate kinase deficiency survey in Europe:
    - 2017: a clinician was found for providing patients' material
    - 2018: A pilot survey will start with 6 pilot sites in the UK, Italy, Holland and perhaps Spain. After validation of the pilot survey, other interested sites will be invited to join the work.
- New topic proposed in Dublin: post analytical survey (Interpretation of a biological analysis report: what additional examinations? what conclusion according to the results of the complementary examinations?)

## WG Hemostasis

**Chair: Ann Helen Kristoffersen (Norway), from 2017**

Short overview of projects and responsible person:

- INR project: Manuscript submitted to Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (CCLM) in 2017, expected to be published in 2018. Responsible person: Piet Meijer.
- EQA Survey result evaluation project/Data trial: Manuscript in preparation during 2017. Responsible person: Piet Meijer.
- Pre-analytical variables in haemostasis: Questionnaire sent to European laboratories about current pre-analytical practices in routine haemostasis tests. The feedback report was sent to the participating laboratories in 2016. The manuscript for publication has been in preparation during 2017. Responsible person: Ann Helen Kristoffersen.
- APTT post-analytical project: Joint project with EFLM WG post-analytical. Samples with prolonged APTT results are going to be sent to laboratories performing APTT mixing. The project was planned in 2017 and also invited laboratories to participate in 2017. The samples are going to be sent to the laboratories in 2018. Responsible person: Piet Meijer.
- Inventory of the current EQA POCT practice in haemostasis: Questionnaire sent in 2017 to EQA organisations to ask for the type of POCT programmes in haemostasis. Data evaluation performed in 2017 and preliminary results presented in EQALM meeting Dublin 2017. Responsible person: Piet Meijer.
- WG Haemostasis meeting Dublin 2017: New projects discussed, but decided to wait until a few of the earlier projects are finished. The group asked for persons willing to take the lead in new projects. New projects will be discussed again in the EQALM meeting 2018.

## WG Microbiology

### **Chair: Michael Noble (Canada), from 2016**

The Microbiology Working Group (MWG) has had a busy period since the EQALM meeting Barcelona Spain (October 2016). Since that time we have organized two surveys to highlight organization interest, and one survey to compile information on monitoring and identifying antibiotic susceptibility testing errors that can contribute to increasing problems with antimicrobial resistance.

Much of this work built up to activities and reports at the EQALM meeting in Dublin Ireland (October 2017). The work on antibiotic susceptibility proficiency was reported at the meeting. A manuscript is in preparation. We anticipate its submission in February 2018 with publication prior to the meeting in October 2018.

In addition, at the Dublin meeting, the MWG participated in the development of a general meeting symposium under the theme of PT/EQA protecting community and public health. I wish to thank the speakers of the symposium, Hilde S. Norli and Rosanna Peeling, as well as the third speaker.

We are now in preparation mode for the 2018 meeting.

A new compilation survey has been developed to look at the ability of laboratories to correctly identify known enteric bacterial pathogens in fecal and blood samples. We anticipated its circulation in January 2018, with the information collected and analyzed for the October 2018 meeting. This will be followed by a compilation survey for viral pathogens for 2019.

An interest survey will be sent out to find 2 speakers for the MWG meeting.

With respect to the proposal made previously that the working groups should work towards the structure of an inner core of individuals or EQA providers interested in being more active participants, it is my experience that participants are only interested on a “project by project” basis.

In Dublin we found that while many organizations and countries were represented at the meeting, less than a third had attended one of the last 3 meetings. This can be seen as both a negative and a positive. If EQALM can not get individuals to commit to attend and participate regularly in EQALM meetings, it potentially could result in reducing interest and attendance. On the other hand, since the number of new people attending seems to balance out those who do not. This suggests that EQA providers are regularly finding new employees that are interested in attending. This is a good sign because it means there is a ongoing pool of people from many countries who are interest in attending EQALM at least over the short term.

## WG Nomenclature

No activity in 2017. At the General Assembly in Dublin 2017, the Executive Board decided to close this Working Group.

## WG Virtual Microscopy

**Chair: Istvan Juhos (Hungary), from 2016**

### Survey

This WG has created a survey in order to analyse the current usage of virtual microscopy (VM) by the WG members. Furthermore, we wanted to confirm that, if the current objective of the WG is appropriate, that is there is a need for creating an EQALM VM Sharing Platform in order to support each other and to use it for standardisation besides its other practical benefits. The survey was successful, 19 members gave answers confirming the appropriateness of the current objective of the WG and providing details about member's practice using VM technology.

### Talks

6 members (Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland) had presentation in 2016 and we continued this successful practice in 2017 as well, 5 members (Brazil, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, UK) gave valuable talks.

### Active members

8 members (Brazil, Hungary, India, Sweden, Switzerland, UK) have applied for WG project steering committee, proposed by the EQALM Board and Scientific Committee. The first meeting of the active members have been held during the EQALM Symposium.

## Appendix 5: Reports from WGs in other organizations

### EFLM Working Group on Preanalytical phase

This Working Group was officially established in 2013, with the aim of improving harmonization in the preanalytical phase across European member societies. Barbara Delasalle and Gunn BB Kristensen are EQALM's representatives in this group with the aim to develop a means of improving the coordination and collaboration between the EFLM and EQALM on mutually important issues to improve the quality of laboratory medicine in Europe.

So far there has been one joint project:

#### **EFLM – European Preanalytical Survey**

The objective of this survey was to assess the way laboratories in Europe handle preanalytical issues such as detecting and managing hemolysed/lipemic/icteric samples. The survey consists of an electronic questionnaire distributed via EQALM's network to medical laboratories in Europe during October 2017. Forty-six European countries responded to the questionnaire with a total of 1416 responses. However, only 26 countries had more than 10 responses. The ultimate goal with the project is to produce EFLM recommendation on how to detect and manage hemolytic/lipemic/icteric samples to facilitate standardization and harmonization of this important preanalytical issue.

**A future joint project** is aiming to develop a pilot European Type 2 EQA scheme based on preanalytical case scenarios (i.e. circulation of samples simulating errors).

**In addition, the EFLM WG-PRE has had several finalized and ongoing projects:**

#### Finalized projects

- Harmonization of fasting status
- Harmonization of patient and blood tubes identification
- Harmonization of color-coding of blood collection tubes
- Harmonization of the sequence of blood tubes to be followed during blood drawing
- Harmonization of preanalytical quality indicators
- Guidance on local validation of blood collection tubes
- Performance and publication of two European surveys on blood sampling procedures
- Organization of four international meetings

#### Ongoing projects

- Development and validation of an EQA scheme on preanalytical variables
- Release of EFLM phlebotomy guidelines
- Organization of webinars for harmonizing preanalytical activities

## EFLM Working Group on Postanalytical phase

The Working Group for the Postanalytical Phase (WG-POST) is a joint working group of the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) and EQALM.

### Background

Clinical knowledge and skills combined with laboratory expertise are needed for optimal interpretation of laboratory results in the setting of the individual patient. Increasing number of studies emphasise the need for improving the clinical utilisation of laboratory tests and that laboratory professionals should play a more prominent in this optimization process. A spectrum of activities has been identified that assist clinicians in translating a certain laboratory result to diagnostic information but all too little is known about how these activities are practiced in laboratories.

### Terms of reference

1. To promote the importance of those activities that can improve clinical utilisation of laboratory tests in the postanalytical and post-postanalytical phases including assisted test requesting.
2. To support laboratories in taking an active, prominent role in the above activities when they assist clinicians in finding the appropriate laboratory tests to meet their clinical needs and in translating the laboratory results to diagnostic information.
3. To develop and organise surveys and external quality assurance (EQA) programmes focusing on laboratory and/or clinical aspects of the above activities in European laboratories.
4. To provide a scientific paper and a feedback report summarising the main findings of each survey and updating the recent literature of the investigated practice on each project.

### Members on behalf of EQALM

1. Ana Paula Faria (External Quality Assurance Unit, Dept. Epidemiology, National Health Inst. Doutor Ricardo Jorge, Lisbon, Portugal)
2. Piet Meijer (ECAT Foundation, Voorschoten, The Netherlands)

### Working Group activities

In 2017 there was one meeting of the working group in conjunction with the Euromedlab congress in Athens. In addition, members of the working group activity in specific projects have been frequently in contact by e-mails and telephone calls.

The following projects are ongoing:

1. A second publication was prepared on a previous project on the use of D-Dimer according to clinical algorithms in the diagnostic work-up of patients with a suspicion

of venous thromboembolism. This letter-to-the-editor is published in *Thrombosis Research* (1).

2. A new APTT study is in preparation to investigate whether methodological diversity has any impact on the APTT mixing test results and also upon the interpretation of the results in European laboratories. The study protocol was designed and via EQA organisation laboratories were invited to participate in this study. Currently 300 – 350 laboratories will participate. The study will be executed in 2018.
3. A electronic questionnaire has been distributed to laboratories throughout Europe on extraanalytical activities to support better clinical utilisation of laboratory tests in patient care. The results of this study are currently under evaluation.

### **Publications in 2017**

1. Kristoffersen AH, Ajzner E, Bauca JM, Carraro P, Faria AP, Hillarp A, Rogic D, Sozmen EY, Watine J, Meijer P, and Sandberg S. Pre- and post-test probabilities of venous thromboembolism and diagnostic accuracy of D-dimer, estimated by European clinicians working in emergency departments. *Thrombosis research*. 2017;159:19-23.

## EEE Working Group Proficiency Testing in Accreditation

### Membership of EEE WG-PT

Altogether 19 members from EA, Eurachem, Eurolab, EQALM.  
International Guests: ILAC, APLAC.

### Main activities

#### *Preparation of EEE-PT Documents*

- Guidelines for the assessment of the appropriateness of small interlaboratory comparisons within the process of laboratory accreditation including measurement audits organised by accreditation bodies
- Guidelines for the application of ISO/IEC 17043 for the organisation of proficiency testing for sampling
- Rapid performance evaluation schemes
- Revision of EA-4/18
- Revision of Eurachem PT guide

#### *Discussion of Subjects and Documents*

- Review of EA-3/04 (Use of proficiency testing as a tool for accreditation in testing)
- ISO/IEC 17043 - Subcontraction within same legal entity
- EA LC WG ILC/TESTING – future status
- Update on the revision of ISO/IEC 17025
- Review of EPTIS

#### *Report on International PT Activities and Meetings*

Eurolab, Eurachem, EA/LC, EA/LC WG on ILCs in Testing, EA/LC TFG on MLA for RMP/PTP, EQALM, ILAC PTWG, APLAC

### Main Results

- Guidelines for the assessment of the appropriateness of small interlaboratory comparisons within the process of laboratory accreditation including measurement audits organised by accreditation bodies – The Guide was accepted after a long work from 2011.
- ISO/IEC 17025 – the Guide was published in November 2017. This version is the 3rd edition. Technical Committee: ISO/CASCO
- Rapid performance evaluation schemes – Are they really proficiency testing? At the 44<sup>th</sup> EEE-WG meeting a paper 'Quick Response Events' was discussed to consider further, at the request of the EA LC, whether rapid performance evaluation schemes could be considered as PTs, whether they could substitute for traditional PTs in the accreditation process and whether they could they be accredited to ISO/IEC 17043. It was agreed we should finalise the paper before the end of the year so that this could send back to the EA LC to enable it to feed into discussions on the train the trainer sessions being set up for the revised ISO/IEC 17025.

**The work and discussions on the other topics (and new ones) are going in the year of 2018.**