



EQALM annual report for 2019

The European Organisation for External Quality Assurance Providers in Laboratory Medicine (EQALM) is an umbrella organization for European EQA organizers in laboratory medicine. It provides 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 2019 are shown in 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 / 2019-2021
Christoph Buchta, member (Austria)	2018-2020 /

The board for 2020 was elected at the General Assembly 2019: Christoph Buchta was elected as Chairman, Rachel Marrington (UK) as Secretary, Stéphanie Albarède was reelected for a second term (2020-2022) and elected as the treasurer, Gitte Henriksen (Denmark) was elected as board member.

Members of EQALM

EQALM has different types of membership. EQA organisations can apply to be a full European member 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 64 members in 2019, three less than in 2018. The number and fees of the different types of memberships are shown in table 2.

Table 2.

Membership	Number	Annual fee
Full European member	42	175 €
Non-European member	5	175 €
Associate member	8	700 €
Individual member	5	80 €
Honorary member	4	-
Total	64	

Main activities of the Executive Board

The main activities of the Executive Board in 2019 are listed below.

- Monthly teleconferences + 2 face meetings + 1 extraordinary telecon meeting.
- Preparation of EQALM Handbook (procedure manual).
- Services of the EQALM Office (optimizing internal routines).
- Establishing a common EQALM file sharing platform.
- Processing activities in compliance with the GDPR.
- Interaction with the Scientific Committee (Structure and functioning of the WGs, Set-up annual symposiums).
- Establishment of 1 new Working Group and 2 new Task&Finish Groups.
- Preparation of the annual EQALM Symposium and General Assembly 2019.
- Symposium at EuroMedLab 2019 in Barcelona with the title: External Quality Assurance in the Digital era. Chair: Piet Meijer (Netherlands). Speakers: Annette Thomas (UK), Anne Stavelin (Norway), Isvan Juhos (Hungary) and Linda Thienpont (Belgium).
- Cooperation with other organizations (meetings, working groups):

EFLM (European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine):
Working Group on Pre- and Post-analytical phase (WG-PRE and WG-POST)

EEE (Eurachem, EuroLab, European accreditation): Working Group on PT in
Accreditation (EEE WG PT)

Stakeholder member of JCTLM (Joint Committee for Traceability in Laboratory Medicine). Investigation of a possible joint project between JCTLM and EQALM.

Stakeholder member of ICHCLR (International Consortium for Harmonization of Clinical Laboratory Results). Joint harmonization/traceability project.

Investigation of possible liaison with ISO-CASCO.

Annual EQALM Symposium

The 24th annual EQALM Symposium and General Assembly was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 17-18th October 2019. The main sessions were: 1) Working group meetings (parallel sessions), 2) ISO 17043, including stability/homogeneity and commutability, 3) Adam Uldall Award lecture, 4) Molecular Genetics, 5) EQALM collaboration projects, and 6) selected presentations from submitted abstracts. The full program is given in Appendix 1.

The Adam Uldall Award lecture was given by Annette Thomas (UK) with the title: *EQA– future challenges and opportunities*.

120 persons from 26 different countries attended the EQALM symposium which was organized by the Executive Board, the Secretariat, the Scientific Program Committee, and a local organizer:

Scientific Program Committee

Piet Meijer, chair (ECAT, Netherlands)
Anne Stavelin (Noklus, Norway)
Christoph Buchta (ÖQUASTA, Austria)
Wim Coucke (Sciensano, Belgium)
Ann Helen Kristoffersen (Noklus, Norway)

Local organiser (SNEQAS, UKCL-KIKKB, Slovenia)

Milan Skitek
Saša Bratož
Elizabeta Božnar Alič
Alenka France Štiglic
Mateja Šter

SNEQAS = Slovenian National External Quality Assessment Scheme

UKCL-KIKKB = University Medical Centre Ljubljana – Clinical Institut of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry

Scientific Committee

The aim of the Scientific Committee (SC) is to improve the interaction between the Working Group (WG) chairs and the board, to stimulate the WGs to be more active throughout the year, and to produce more scientific papers. The SC advises the board on scientific matters.

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

The members of the Scientific Committee for 2019 are shown in table 3.

Table 3.

Name	Function
Piet Meijer	Chair Scientific Committee
Wim Coucke	Frequency WG Chair
Joan-Lluis Vives Corrons	Hematology WG Chair
Ann Helen Kristoffersen	Hemostasis WG Chair
Michael Noble	Microbiology WG Chair
Istvan Juhos	Virtual Microscopy WG Chair
Christoph Buchta	Immunohematology TFG Chair

In 2019, the Executive board established three new groups:

New WG: Performance Specifications
Chair: Dalius Vitkus

New TFG: Immunology
Chair: Dina Patel

New TFG: ISO17043
Chair: Stephanie Albarede
Co-chair: Michael Noble

The Executive board has decided that from 2020 only chairs of WGs are member of the SC. The chairs of TFGs report in written to the SC or take part on invitation.

The SC conducted 2 teleconferences and 1 face to face meeting during the last year. In addition, some communication by e-mail. The main topics for the SC have been:

- 1) Ongoing projects / output
- 2) New WG's / TFG's
- 3) Communication with members
- 4) Harmonisation and Traceability
- 5) The role of commercial companies in WG / TFG activities
- 6) Set-up of annual meeting
- 7) Data and IP protection of members in EQALM surveys

SC participated in the Scientific Programme Committee of the annual symposium 2019 in Ljubljana.

A list of scientific publications from EQALM is shown in Appendix 2.

Working Groups / Task- and Finish Groups

EQALM had 6 WGs and 3 TFGs in 2019:

- 1) WG Frequency
- 2) WG Hematology
- 3) WG Hemostasis
- 4) WG Microbiology
- 5) WG Virtual Microscopy
- 6) WG Performance Specifications

- 7) TFG Immunohaematology
- 8) TFG Immunology
- 9) TFG ISO 17043

Short reports from each group are given in Appendix 3.

Accounts for 2018

The revenues and expenses for 2018 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

Accounts 2018	
Revenues	€ 53 415
Expenses	€ 41 495
Balance	€ 11 920

The total revenues were higher than 2017 (€ 36 883) because of an increase of attendees at the annual meeting 2018 in Zagreb, and of sponsorship revenues. The total expenses were about the same as in 2017 (€ 40 750), leaving a net income of € 12 000.

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 is a Stakeholder member of the Joint Committee for Traceability in Laboratory Medicine (JCTLM) and a Stakeholder member of the International Consortium for Harmonization of Clinical Laboratory Results (ICHCLR).

The list of people who has been the EQALM representatives in the different groups in 2019 are shown in table 5. Short reports from each group are given in Appendix 4.

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)	3
EEE WG PT	Erika Sarkany (Hungary) Stephanie Albarede (France) Anne Stavelin (Norway)	2

In addition, EQALM organized a Symposium at EuroMedLab 2019 in Barcelona with the title: External Quality Assurance in the Digital era. The Symposium was chaired by Piet Meijer (Netherlands) and the speakers were from different EQALM members: Annette Thomas (WEQAS), Anne Stavelin (Noklus), Isvan Juhos (QualiCont) and Linda Thienpont.

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
e-mail: office@eqalm.org

During 2019, Xavier Albe and Cornelia Heschel has been the EQALM Office liaisons.

On behalf of the Executive Board,



Bergen, February 17th 2020



Anne Stavelin
EQALM Chairman 2019

- Appendix 1: Program annual EQALM Symposium 2019
- Appendix 2: EQALM scientific publications list
- Appendix 3: Reports from EQALM Working Groups
- Appendix 4: Reports from Working Groups in other organizations

Appendix 1: Program annual EQALM Symposium 2019

		EQALM Symposium 2019 October 17 – 18, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Program		
Thursday 17 October 2019		
REGISTRATION		08.00 – 14.00
Working Group Meetings (parallel sessions)		08.30 – 13.00
08.30 – 09.45	Haemostasis	TFG Immunohaematology
10.00 – 11.15	Haematology	Microbiology
11.30 – 12.45	Frequency	Virtual Microscopy
LUNCH		13.00 – 14.00
SYMPOSIUM		
14.00 – 14.10	Opening	Anne Stavelin (Norway)
ISO 17043	Moderator: Stephanie Albarede	14.10 – 16.00
14.10 – 14.40	Homogeneity and stability testing	Wim Coucke (Belgium)
14.40 – 15.10	Commutability of EQA samples, how to assess	Vincent Delatour (France)
15.10 – 15.30	The perspective of the accreditation body	Martin Stearn (United Kingdom)
15.30 – 16.00	The ISO 17043 from the perspective of Laboratory Medicine: <i>Do we need a revision?</i> (results of a questionnaire + discussion)	Piet Meijer (Netherlands)
Adam Uldall Lecture	Moderator: Anne Stavelin	17.00 – 18.00
17.00 – 18.00	EQA- future challenges and opportunities	Annette Thomas (United Kingdom)
CONGRESS DINNER		18.30 – 23.00
4	Under the auspices of	 EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF CLINICAL CHEMISTS AND LABORATORY MEDICINE



EQALM Symposium 2019

October 17 – 18, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Program

Friday 18 October 2019

Molecular Genetics Moderator: Finlay MacKenzie 08.45 – 09.45

08.45 – 09.15	The effect of global migration on the European population genotype	Dorret Boomsma (Netherlands)
09.15 – 09.45	EQA in genetic testing	Fiona Morgan (United Kingdom)

EQALM collaborations Moderator: Piet Meijer 09.45 – 11.00

09.45 – 10.20	Harmonisation and traceability: a global effort (introduction + discussion)	Introduction by Sverre Sandberg (Norway) and Eline van der Hagen (Netherlands)
10.20 – 10.45	Quality of interpretative comments	Eva Ajzner (Hungary)
10.45 – 11.00	Introduction on the Task and Finishing group on Immunology	Dina Patel (United Kingdom)

BREAK WITH REFRESHMENTS IN THE EXHIBITION AND POSTER AREA 11.00 – 11.45

Oral poster presentations Moderator: Christoph Buchta 11.45 – 13.00

11.45 – 12.00	Contribution from local organizer, SNEQAS	Saša Bratož (Slovenia)
12.00 – 12.15	Implementation of patient medians – a powerful tool when evaluating performance in EQA	Anna Norling (Sweden)
12.15 – 12.30	Development of Belgian guidelines for the minimal frequency of participation to method and disease-based genetic proficiency testing in the context of hereditary rare diseases	Joséphine Lantoine (Belgium)
12.30 – 12.45	Weqas INR Programme – An Example of Post Market Vigilance	Samantha Jones (United Kingdom)
12.45 – 13.00	ProMeQuaLab - Project of Laboratory Quality Improvement for Portuguese Speaking Countries. Tasks during 2015-2019	Ana Faria (Portugal)

LUNCH 13.00 – 14.00

EQALM General Assembly 14.00 – 16.00

End of the meeting 16.00

Appendix 2: EQALM scientific publications list

Table 6. Scientific publications from the EQALM Working Groups

Working Group	Publication	Year
Hemostasis	Kristoffersen AH, Stavelin A, Ajzner E, Kristensen G, Sandberg S, Van Blerk M, Kitchen S, Kessler D, Woods TAL, Meijer P. Pre-analytical practices for routine coagulation tests in European laboratories. A collaborative study from the European Organisation for External Quality Assurance Providers in Laboratory Medicine (EQALM). Clin Chem Lab Med 2019; 57(10): 1511–1521.	2019
Preanalytical EFLM WG-PRE	Cadamuro J. et al. European survey on preanalytical sample handling – Part 1: How do European laboratories monitor the preanalytical phase? On behalf of the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) Working Group for the Preanalytical Phase (WG-PRE). Biochem Med (Zagreb) 2019;29(2): aop.	2019
Preanalytical EFLM WG-PRE	Cadamuro J. et al. European survey on preanalytical sample handling – Part 2: Practice of European laboratories on monitoring and processing haemolytic, icteric and lipemic samples. On behalf of the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) Working Group for the Preanalytical Phase (WG-PRE). Biochem Med (Zagreb) 2019;29(2): aop.	2019
Microbiology	Noble MA, Rennie R. Combined international external quality assessment results of medical laboratory performance and reporting of samples with known antimicrobial resistance. Diagnosis (Berl) 2018 Sep 25;5(3):161-166.	2018
Hemostasis	Meijer P, Kynde K, van den Besselaar, Van Blerk M, Woods TAL. International normalized ratio (INR) testing in Europe: between-laboratory comparability of test results obtained by Quick and Owren reagents. Clin Chem Lab Med 2018; 56(10): 1698–1703.	2018
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. Clin Chem Lab Med 2017; 55(12):1936-1942.	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). Biochem Med (Zagreb) 2017;27:30-6.	2017
Hemostasis EFLM WG-POST	Kristoffersen AH, Ajzner E, Bauca JM, Carraro P, Faria AP, Hillarp A, Rogic D, Sozmen EY, Watine J, Meijer P, Sandberg S. Pre- and post-test probabilities of venous thromboembolism and	2017

	diagnostic accuracy of D-dimer, estimated by European clinicians working in emergency departments. <i>Thromb Res</i> 2017;159:19-23.	
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
Frequency	Thomas A. External Quality Assessment in laboratory medicine: is there a rationale to determine frequency of surveys? <i>Accred Qual Assur</i> 2009;14:439-444.	2009
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 3: Reports from EQALM Working Groups

WG Frequency

Chair: Wim Coucke (Belgium), since 2017

The main objective of the WG Frequency is to review existing data from EQA providers to provide guidance on the frequency of EQA surveys. There is little published evidence of an optimal model for determining frequency of EQA surveys both in terms of distributions per year and number of samples per distribution, or on the relationship between frequency and outcomes.

Consolidation of a study comparing laboratory performance between various EQA organisers. An article is being written, with focus on haematological parameters.

Various ideas are being explored, that will be subject to investigation in 2020:

- The effect of correlation on the interpretation of EQA data. The idea is that optimal EQA frequency implies data that are not correlated between samples or EQA rounds.
- Find the optimal frequency to reduce the risk to the patient and is cost-effective.

WG Hematology

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

Works in progress

1. European Survey for Pilot Pyruvate kinase deficiency (PKD) EQAS

Results up to date:

- 2 distributions have been made
- Results show a small variation in the reference intervals used by the participating laboratories, and no outliers were identified within the Pyruvate kinase (PK) activity received for evaluation.
- May relate to methodology - Survey of laboratory results and clinical importance planned within the ERN-EuroBloodNet

2. Publication in progress

Analytical performance specifications for blood smear interpretation in haematology: a need for standardization

- Last draft revision

New activities proposed at the meeting in Ljubljana for 2020

1. Accepted project: Survey on Reference Ranges used in Haematology

- web based questionnaire
- Start in November
- A Special Interest Group of 8 members has been created by the Steering Committee to coordinate and follow-up the activity of the group.

2. Postponed project: Post-analytical EQA

- More meeting participants input is required
- Proposed start-up: January of 2021

Cooperation

Members of the Steering Committee participated with the WG Virtual Microscopy to facilitate the sharing of data (i.e.; to define the nomenclature of morphological characteristics of blood cells).

WG Hemostasis

Chair: Ann Helen Kristoffersen (Norway), since 2017

Short overview of projects and responsible person:

- EQA Survey result evaluation project/Data trial: Data evaluation performed. The manuscript is still in preparation – aim is to finalize this project in 2020. Responsible: 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. This study is published in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (CCLM) in 2019 (see table 6). Responsible: Ann Helen Kristoffersen
- Questionnaire regarding HIL indices (hemolysis, icterus, lipemia) and interference in coagulation tests is in preparation. Plan to prepare one for EQA organizers to ask for programs on HIL indices in the field of coagulation and one for the laboratories to ask for their practice. Plan to send questionnaire to laboratories in 2020. Responsible: Ann Helen Kristoffersen
- APTT post-analytical project: Joint project with EFLM WG post-analytical. Samples with prolonged APTT results were sent to laboratories performing APTT mixing in 2018. Data evaluation, including the interpretative comments has been finalized. Feedback report is almost finalized. Two publications are in preparation. Plan to submit manuscripts in 2020. Eva Ajzner presented results and interpretive comments at the EQALM meeting in Ljubljana 2019. Responsible: Piet Meijer/Eva Ajzner/Josep Bauca/Ann Helen Kristoffersen

- A new project is in preparation: APTT/PT performance evaluation. A questionnaire about practices in APTT/PT performance evaluation will be distributed to EQA organisers in 2020. Responsible: Piet Meijer

WG Microbiology

Chair: Michael Noble (Canada), since 2016

The EQALM Microbiology Working Group had a successful year in 2019. Coming off the year previous we completed our survey and study of clinical laboratory performance on the identification of enteric bacterial pathogens as measured by external quality assessment (EQA). A manuscript of the findings of the study is being completed.

For the year 2019, the WG Microbiology supported performing a similar study looking at performance of clinical laboratories with clinical virology targets (Influenza A, Norovirus, HIV-1) however with regret the study was not as successful as previous studies. With the exception of information on HIV, participation rate in the study was very low and the results were difficult to interpret. It was appreciated that the number of EQALM member organizations that provide clinical virology EQA would be smaller than the number looking at other microbial targets. While the information as presented was interesting as an internal exercise (Acceptable performance between 85-99%) on all parameters surveyed, the small number of participating organizations and some weaknesses in the data, led to the conclusion that submitting the results as a manuscript would be inappropriate. At the annual meeting in Ljubljana it was decided to postpone manuscript preparation until perhaps the study be recirculated.

The annual WG meeting in Ljubljana was well attended with 22 attendees. In addition to the presentation on the virology study there were two additional presentations; one by Brigitte Lamy (ESGBIES) on *An Advanced EQA Approach Based on Key Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Pre-Analytical Quality of Clinical Microbiology Test Methods* and one by Daniel Taylor (Oneworld Accuracy) on *EQASP EQA Sample Production Program for Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMIC)*.

This was Dr. Noble's sixth meeting as chair of the EQALM Microbiology Working Group. At the end of the year, he indicated his plan to step down as chair to make room for another person. He said: "I very much enjoyed my role and look forward to continuing to have a positive relationship with EQALM". The EQALM Executive Board thank Michael Noble for his good work as a WG chair for many years.

WG Virtual Microscopy

Chair: Istvan Juhos (Hungary), since 2016

Surveys

- Online survey about members' participation in the pilot of the EQALM VM Sharing Platform in the year 2020
- Preparation of online survey about standardisation of Blood Smear VM Scheme.

Talks during the annual WG session

At the EQALM WG VM meeting in Ljubljana 2019, 6 members from Brazil (PNQC), France (CTCB), Germany (Referenzinstitut für Bioanalytik) Hungary (QualiCont), Switzerland (CSCQ) and UK (NEQAS) gave valuable presentations.

WG Steering Committee

6 members (Brazil, France, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, UK) participated in VM WG Steering committee meetings before and during the annual symposium 2019, discussing ongoing WG projects and preparing WG session.

Projects

- WG steering committee has started standardizing the Blood Smear VM Scheme and initiated a cooperation with the Haematology WG.
- University of Szeged has developed the initial version of an opensource EQALM VM WG Platform according to a continuous communication about the design and requirement with the WG steering committee.
- Philips GmbH Market DACH and One World Accuracy approached the WG to initiate cooperations. As a result, EQALM Scientific Committee identified cooperation possibilities with commercial entities. They can attend and support the symposium in a usual way, but no commercial activities are allowed in WG sessions.

WG Performance Specifications

Chair: Dalius Vitkus (Lithuania), since 2019

The working group was established during the EQALM Symposium in Ljubljana 2019. Activities will start in 2020.

TFG Immunohaematology

Chair: Christoph Buchta (Austria), since 2018

The Immunohaematology Task and Finish Group proceeded with collection of data and relevant information for our study. The aim of this study is to evaluate differences in error rates in immunohaematology EQA in relation to presence or absence of several factors of interest, which are national regulatory and economic conditions in countries of participant laboratories and specific features of EQA schemes and providers.

This study includes 26 participating EQA organizations, which have provided results obtained by about 10.000 laboratories in more than 70 countries worldwide between 2004 and 2019.

Data base closure and evaluation of data is planned for end of January 2020.

TFG Immunology

Chair: Dina Patel (United Kingdom), since 2019

This TFG was initiated during the EQALM Symposium in Ljubljana 2019. Currently 3-4 EQA organisations has expressed their interest to participate.

Aim

Collaborate with other EQALM members to try to understand how immunology practices/tests are utilised within member countries in the following areas:

- ANA ICAP harmonisation and nomenclature initiative
- ANCA-best practice following the release of updated guidelines
- Phospholipid antibodies- challenges with standardisation of assays

As an initial starting point, it is planned circulate a survey to EQALM members to determine the impact of the ANA ICAP harmonisation initiative and whether changes in technology are reducing or improving skills within the workforce of immunofluorescence testing. This is a very exciting area as we are seeing movements in technology to utilise machine learning and artificial intelligence. However, many laboratories are unsure of the current changes. A

dedicated group within EQALM would provide a balanced and evidence-based output with potential for collaborative publications and poster presentations.

TFG ISO 17043

Chair: Stephanie Albarede (France), since 2019

In 2018 at the EQALM Symposium in Zagreb, the EQALM Executive Board decided to start a mirror group for the revision of the new ISO standard 17043 "Conformity assessment - General requirements for proficiency testing". This mirror group acts within EQALM as a Task and Finish Group.

In order to optimize the discussions of this TFG, EQALM sought the opinion of interested EQA providers about this standard by organizing a survey. This survey focussed on organization's opinions and experiences with this standard.

A summary of the responses to this survey has been discussed at the EQALM Symposium 2019 in Ljubljana. A full analysis will be returned to the TFG in early 2020. It will be used as a basis for the discussions in order to define which modifications to the standard look necessary.

Appendix 4: 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. Two articles from the project have been published in 2019 (see list of publications).

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).

During 2019 the EFLM WG-PRE has had several publications and finalized and ongoing projects:

Publications:

- Lippi G, von Meyer A, Cadamuro J, Simundic AM. PREDICT: a checklist for preventing preanalytical diagnostic errors in clinical trials. Clin Chem Lab Med 2019 doi.org/10.1515/cclm-2019-1089.
- Lippi G, Betsou F, Cadamuro J, Cornes M, Fleischhacker M, Fruekilde P, Neumaier M, Nybo M, Padoan A, Plebani M, Sciacovelli L, Vermeersch P, von Meyer A, Simunic AM. Preanalytical challenges – time for solutions. Clin Chem Lab Med 2019;57:974-81.
- Cadamuro J. et al. European survey on preanalytical sample handling – Part 1: How do European laboratories monitor the preanalytical phase? On behalf of the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) Working Group for the Preanalytical Phase (WG-PRE). Biochem Med (Zagreb) 2019;29(2):**020704**. <https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2019.020704>
- Cadamuro J. et al. European survey on preanalytical sample handling – Part 2: Practice of European laboratories on monitoring and processing haemolytic, icteric and lipemic samples. On behalf of the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) Working Group for the Preanalytical Phase (WG-PRE). Biochem Med (Zagreb) 2019;29(2):**020705**. <https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2019.020705>

Finalized projects

- Completion of the 5th EFLM Conference on Preanalytical Phase 2019 in Zagreb, Croatia
- EFLM – European Preanalytical Survey

Ongoing projects

- Translations of joint EFLM-COLABIOCLI recommendations
- Project on Preanalytical ISO 15189 requirements – shall be published as an „expert opinion”
- Survey on Catheter Collection
- Project on sample stability
- Survey on time between blood collection and samples receiving
- Demand management survey
- Haemolysed specimen management recommendations
- Planning and organization of the 6th EFLM Conference on Preanalytical Phase 2021 in Zagreb, Croatia

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.

Member on behalf of EQALM

Piet Meijer (ECAT Foundation, Voorschoten, The Netherlands)

The board of EQALM appointed Rachel Marrington as the second representative from 2020.

Working Group activities

In 2019, there was one face-to-face meeting of the working group in Budapest, Hungary (October 2019) and one teleconference (November 2019). In April 2019 the project group APTT Mixing Studies met in Voorschoten, The Netherlands.

The major focus in 2019 was to finalise the analysis and report on the analytical part of the APTT Mixing Studies project. This part has been finished by the end of 2019. The feedback report will be distributed early 2020. A lot of attention was paid on the evaluation of the interpretative comments. All comments were evaluated independently by 2 reviewers. The results of this evaluation were presented at the EQALM symposium in Ljubljana by Eva Ajzner. From both parts of the study a publication is in preparation.

Other projects that are currently under investigation:

- European extra-analytical questionnaire: This questionnaire was distributed in 2017. A feedback report is in preparation.
- European study on Critical risk results: A publication is in preparation.

New projects that are initiated:

- Lab-Report 2.0:
Scope: How should we present our data to clinicians to make the main findings clearer and easily understandable / comprehensible?
- Knowledge of clinicians and lab specialists on the significance of certain lab tests and their ability in test selection and interpretation:
Scope: Are clinicians capable of comprehending the true relevance of lab tests? Are clinicians capable of test result interpretation and test selection? How good is their knowledge compared to lab specialists?

EEE Working Group Proficiency Testing in Accreditation

EQALM representatives: Erika Sárkány, Stéphanie Albarede, Anne Stavelin
Number of meetings in 2019: 2

Membership of EEE WG-PT

Altogether 21 members from European Accreditation (6), Eurachem (5), Eurolab (5), EQALM (3), chair and secretariat from LGC. International Guests: ILAC, APLAC PTC.

Main activities

Preparation of EEE-PT Documents

- Guidelines for the application of ISO/IEC 17043 for the organisation of proficiency testing for sampling
- Revision of EA-4/18 (Guidance on the level and frequency of proficiency testing participation)
- Revision of Eurachem PT guide (Selection, Use and Interpretation of PT Schemes)

Discussion of Subjects and Documents

- Review of EPTIS
- ILAC G18-PT scopes

Report on international PT activities and meetings:

- Eurolab
- Eurachem
- EA/LC
- EQALM
- APAC
- ILAC/AIC 17043 WG

Main Results

- Guidelines for the assessment of the appropriateness of small interlaboratory comparisons within the process of laboratory accreditation - submitted by the chair of EEE PT WG to EA July 2019
- Comments of Eurachem Leaflet on Proficiency testing schemes for sampling
- A Task group for revision of EA-4/18 (Guidance on the level and frequency of proficiency testing participation) was established included in EQALM representative and a revised version produced by the WG
- Selection, Use and Interpretation of Proficiency Testing (PT) Schemes - Third edition – editors: Brian Brookman, Ian Mann, the revision was undertaken by EEE PT WG and EQALM
- Accepted EEE -PT work program for 2019-2020

The work and discussions on the other topics (and new ones) are going in the year of 2020 from which has importance of provide a forum for discussion between the accreditation bodies and the PT stakeholders with regards to the accreditation of PT providers to give a guidance for the harmonisation during the implementation of ISO/IEC 17043 standard.