Current experience on EPA shows:

- Improvement starts with measuring (indicators).
- EPA is an easy to use tool.
- General Practitioners (GP) in the beginning are somewhat sceptical against practice visitations. Practice staff is less sceptical. Once they have done it, they both like it.
- Assessment and practice visitation motivate for change and substantial improvement.
- EPA presents the current organizational qualities by GP practices and helps them improve in the areas they are lacking.

Countries that work with VISOTOOL®

- Austria: Mag. Alois Alkin
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- Germany: Björn Broge, MBA
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- Belgium: Prof. Dr. Dominique Pestaux
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- Greece: Dr. Antonios Karotis
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- Romania: Dr. Marius Marginean
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- Slovenia: Prof. Dr. Janko Kersnik
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- Switzerland: Sigrid Hess-Scheurer
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Furthermore, the EPA-indicators are used in the Dutch Accreditation Scheme of the NHG.

Contact addresses:

For questions concerning support and information on EPA and VISOTOOL®

AQUA—Institute for Applied Quality Improvement and Research in Health Care
Stötting, Germany
Björn Broge, MBA
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For general questions concerning TOPAS-Europe

Head of the TOPAS board
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Nijmegen, Netherlands
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Quality management in Primary Care aims to establish organisational systems that improve health outcomes, patient experiences, accessibility and efficiency of service delivery as well as job satisfaction of physicians and nurses in practices. Based on the internationally developed and validated indicators of the European Practice Assessment (EPA), several countries implement an innovative quality management system with the following main characteristics:

- self-explanatory to doctors,
- usable without specific training on quality management,
- high impact on change of performance,
- use of sound scientific methods and instruments and
- usable for international research projects.

In this flyer we give some short background information about how the EPA-indicators may be used for quality management. Further information is available through the noted contact addresses.

Sincerely

Joachim Szecsenyi,
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University of Heidelberg,
AQUA—Institute, Göttingen
**What is EPA?**

The EPA-indicators have been developed in an international study (2001-2004) founded by the Bertelsmann Foundation, Germany, and coordinated by the Centre for Quality of Care Research (WOK) – Nijmegen, Netherlands (Prof. R. Grol). The following countries and organisations participated in this project:

- Austrian Medical Association, Wien (A)
- Wetenschappelijke Vereniging van Vlaamse Huisartsen, Brussel (BE)
- SwissPEP-Institute, Gutenberg (CH)
- AQUA-Institute, Göttingen and departments of Allgemeinmedizin Heidelberg and Frankfurt (D)
- Société Française de Thérapeutique du Généraliste, Paris (F)
- National Primary Care R&D Centre, Manchester/University of Wales (GB)
- Family Medicine Department, Haifa (IL)
- University of Ljubljana (SLO)

The results of the pilot study are available through several scientific publications. The publications include the indicator set used during the pilot study. This implies that all information on the structure, indicators and associated figures upon EPA are in the public domain.

**Implementing change efficiently and effectively!**

Our aims are:

- exchange experience on the implementation of the EPA-instruments,
- coordinate international data collection on EPA data and scientific publications based upon these data,
- help new countries wanting to implement EPA,
- coordinate the revision and development of the EPA-indicators.

**How does EPA work?**

To make the quality indicators usable for a practice, a five steps process is started:

1. **Information for the practice team** To inform and prepare the practice team, there are two available methods. The first is a preparatory workshop and the second a slide show explaining EPA, usable for practice team meetings.

2. **Evaluation of performance** Before starting quality improvement projects, a multi-perspective evaluation covering all EPA-indicators is done. This consists of:
   - Self-Assessment
   - Questionnaires for work satisfaction of medical and non-medical staff
   - Patient Questionnaire (EUROPEP-instrument)
   - Practice inspection by a specially trained visitor with a checklist
   - Structured interview with the practice manager and/or GP done by the visitor

3. **Practice team meeting** Practice team meetings are the essence of a good working internal quality management. The team meeting within EPA is guided by the visitor. It serves as a model on how to structure team meetings in the future and how to use the results of EPA for improvement.

4. **Feedback and benchmarking** During the team meeting, feedback of the results on EPA-indicators plays an important role. Technically this is organized in different ways among the countries using the EPA-indicators. The following chart is an example taken from the software VISOTOOL®, developed by the AQUA-Institute.

**Quality improvement projects** If a practice decides to work on a specific indicator, this may be documented in a To-Do-List. Further support and advice on how improvement projects on this indicator may look like can be given by an indicator-description and detailed materials linked to the indicator.

If you are interested in further information on quality improvement you may find this online: www.epa-qm.de and on www.equip.ch

**EUROPEP-Survey included**

Currently VISOTOOL® is also used in the following countries: Belgium, Romania, Slovenia, Greece and Switzerland.