

## **SUMMARY**

### **Sustainable Quality within European Forensic Science (SQWEFS)**

Project Reference No.	HOME/2009/ISEC/MO/4000000798
Project dates	16/12/2010 - 15/12/2013
Fund	ISEC
Topic	Forensics
Project Coordinator	European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI)
Project Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC-Brussels) BE</li><li>• National Centre of Forensic Services (FSD- Vanloese) DK</li><li>• Estonian Forensic Science Institute (EFSI- Tallinn) EE</li><li>• National Bureau of Investigation Forensic Laboratory (RTL- Vantaa) FI</li><li>• Institut National de Police Scientifique (INPS- Ecully) FR</li><li>• Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL-Dublin) IE</li><li>• Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI-The Hague) NL</li><li>• Central Forensic Laboratory of the Polish Police (CFLP-Warsaw) PL</li><li>• Institute of Forensic Science Slovak Police (KEUPZ- Bratislava) SK</li><li>• Swedish National Laboratory of Forensic Science (SKL-Linkoping) SE</li><li>• Forensic Science Service (FSS-London) GB</li><li>• LGC Forensics (LGCF-Oxfordshire) GB</li><li>• Eurachem</li><li>• University of Strathclyde (Glasgow) GB</li></ul>
Associate Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forensic Science Division Zurich Canton Police (KTA-Zurich)CH</li><li>• Scientific Forensic Service Zurich City Police (WD-Zurich) CH</li></ul>

#### **Project Description and Context**

The SQWEFS project was designed to promote the exchange and dissemination of best practice in the critical area of quality standards within European forensic science. It has made a significant contribution to sustainable forensic quality standards in Europe in various ways: the uniform application of ISO standards, support to national accreditation bodies, guidelines for method validation and proficiency testing and a review of forensic education & training needs for relevant stakeholders.

Forensic science is playing an ever increasing role in the investigation and prosecution of crime. Furthermore, with the rising tide of global crime (terrorism, organised crime, people trafficking etc) it is essential that effective measures are in place to support and encourage forensic cooperation across international borders. Cooperation and information sharing among forensic science laboratories and between law enforcement stakeholders who use forensic science (the police and the judiciary) can only be effective when common quality standards are used in all countries. Only with such common quality standards can a police operation in one country make use of forensic information generated in a different country with any degree of confidence. The same principle applies with the use of forensic information to support courtroom prosecutions.

There is an important need for the Europe-wide adoption of high quality standards in forensic science based on international ISO standards. Such standards provide an essential foundation for the way ahead and the basis for accredited laboratories. Nevertheless, the ISO standards need to be supported by many other documents and initiatives to ensure that accreditation has a common application in all countries. Further, the staff within the organisations that accredit forensic laboratories need an awareness of different forensic fields, and also need support from suitably trained technical experts when conducting accreditation work. Another significant area is the need for effective E&T in forensic matters for forensic experts, police investigators and the judiciary to ensure that they make effective use of forensic results. A sustainable future of high quality forensic services across Europe will depend upon many different areas of activity for defining, implementing and maintaining quality standards whilst supporting the people involved in delivering the whole forensic process and those involved with accrediting forensic activities.

There are a large number of target groups and beneficiaries interested in the elevation of quality standards in forensic science across Europe.

### **Activities and Achievements**

The SQWEFS project has delivered results across six specific activities:

1. ENFSI has worked closely with the ILAC organisation (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation) to produce a new guideline for the implementation of ISO-standards (17020 and 17025) throughout the forensic process. This ILAC document (G19) will be published in 2014. It will be used by national accreditation bodies when assessing the work of forensic laboratories and by the laboratories themselves when preparing for accreditation. Thus, it will be an effective tool for the uniform application of the ISO standards across Europe.
2. In cooperation with EA (European Cooperation for Accreditation), ENFSI has delivered two training sessions for representatives of national accreditation bodies across Europe to raise awareness of different forensic fields (31 representatives received training). For many national accreditation bodies, forensic science is a relatively new area and hence raising awareness will help to achieve Europe-wide consistency in the process of forensic accreditation.
3. Further cooperation with EA, through one of their members UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service), has delivered four events to train senior forensic practitioners as 'technical experts' to work alongside national accreditation bodies when assessing forensic laboratories. A total of 44 individuals were trained across different forensic disciplines (digital evidence, pattern recognition, fingerprints, and scene of crime & fire scene investigation). Prior to the SQWEFS project that has been a shortage of such trained people across Europe.
4. A new guideline document has been produced: "Guidelines for the Single Laboratory Validation of Instrumental and Human Based Methods in Forensic Science". The validation of all methods used in forensic laboratories for the examination of casework exhibits is a very important element for achieving high quality results. The new guideline will provide the basis for a common approach to method validation in forensic science.
5. A new guideline document has been produced: "Guidance on the Conduct of Proficiency Tests and Collaborative Exercises within ENFSI". It is well established that regular engagement in inter-laboratory trials of forensic analysis and interpretation are critical for forensic institutes to confirm that internal quality management systems are delivering the expected outcomes. The new guideline will provide a common approach for all such work in the coming years.
6. A report has been produced providing a broad overview of forensic education and training (E&T) across Europe and contact points have been established for E&T matters. The picture painted in the report is based on two conference events for two different stakeholder groups (crime scene examiners and managers of forensic laboratories). The report emphasises the complexity of the forensic E&T stakeholder groups and will provide a platform for further work in the future.

All the results from the SQWEFS project will contribute to the overall project aim of raising and sustaining the quality of forensic science across Europe. It is anticipated that the impact of the work will be realised in the coming months and years as the tools are used and the training makes its mark across the forensic community.