



Interview with AcvZ: The importance of an independent assessment in healthcare

Wim Meijer is deputy chairman at AcvZ. In this role, he is primarily involved with providing general information about building for healthcare. Meijer also advises on concrete projects. In the past years, it was found that a number of healthcare building projects had gone wrong or that they had eventually become too expensive. To avoid a repetition in the future, Meijer argues for more project management by the client and an independent assessment. 'Our experience is that for some clients, building for healthcare is a one-off event. They have no expertise when they start, and once the building has been taken into use, they are no longer there. There is consequently not much knowledge development.'

'In the period of price drops before 2000, it was not such a problem if a manager paid less attention for a project. Everything was resolved in the long run. Often there was still room in the budget for the requirements of medical specialists and for the most recent equipment. In the period from 2000 to 2005, there were significant price increases in the building industry. This meant that contractors' prices for large projects suddenly became some 25% to 30% more than previously budgeted. The threat is there again somewhat, as a lot of capacity has disappeared from the building industry. So when taking decisions in the current growing market, there should be more attention for price developments.'

'The knowledge about projects is now often with building management consultants. However, a manager also has to be in the know. You have to introduce the required knowledge one way or another,

'I notice that in the preparation of projects, calculations are often optimistic and price increases are underestimated.'



The AcvZ Foundation (Consultancy Centre for Healthcare Housing) disseminates knowledge on building for healthcare. The foundation also supports healthcare institutes with concrete projects, for instance with a second opinion or a feasibility study.

because otherwise a client will be no party against the other building parties. Since 2014, we at AcvZ have therefore published the annual Construction Costs Note for healthcare properties. This book is full of information about finance, management and social developments in the health care property sector. It also contains the BDB index, which can be used to correct the original building prices for the current price level. It would have been a lot of work to do it ourselves, so we asked BDB: this was the only party that could do the job.'

'Daily building practice is really a permanent negotiation process about pluses and minuses. Approval and rejection, adding and deleting, it all goes on throughout the whole process. It is essential to use the current price level, and therefore an index. During project preparation, I notice that calculations are often optimistic and price increases are underestimated. I always advise having the specifications checked by an external party before sending them to the contractor. You cannot simply say: "I will notice it on delivery. If it is not in order, I will refuse it." You cannot return a building like that to the factory.'

'My advice for large building projects above 25 million is to reintroduce supervision. If such a project disappoints, then a lot of damage has been done. An option is a 'building commissioning': a team that takes care of the administrative supervision of the building work and has daily supervision on the building site. It has the benefit that you can avoid conflicts in good time and that you have an independent umpire when there is a conflict in interests. In the design phase for instance, an architect sometimes leaves too little room for an installer. In practice, this has terminated projects: the project turned out to be infeasible and the parties could not reach a mutual solution. Building commissioning is relatively rare now, but I for one support the idea. Sometimes it is simply very necessary to check whether the building work delivers the agreed performance. It may cost 1% more, but it does give you an extra pair of eyes.' •