2026 European Quality Assurance Forum

Quality assurance for skills, entrepreneurship and innovation: Partnering with the world of work

National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Yerevan
18-20 November 2026

Final programme

This year's European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), entitled **'Quality assurance for skills, entrepreneurship and innovation: Partnering with the world of work',** will combine sessions about European policies and trends, research, and practical case examples related to the Forum theme and more generally about current developments in quality assurance.

EQAF provides a platform for discussion, professional development and exchange of experiences among the main stakeholders in quality assurance (QA). As such, it will be of interest to rectors and vice-rectors responsible for QA, QA managers and officers in higher education institutions, students, QA agency staff, and researchers working in higher education or the QA field.

Forum objectives

Quality assurance plays a crucial role in supporting higher education institutions in responding to evolving labour markets and strengthening their contribution to innovation and societal development. In a context marked by technological transformation, demographic change and the green and digital transitions, employment patterns are shifting rapidly.

QA systems can enhance institutional adaptability, foster meaningful stakeholder engagement and act as catalysts for innovation. By shaping frameworks and processes that promote employability, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning and research-based innovation, quality assurance helps institutions to integrate these priorities into their core missions.

EQAF 2026 will explore the dynamic relationship between quality assurance, employment and innovation. It will examine how QA frameworks and processes can support graduates in developing the knowledge, skills and competences needed to navigate rapidly evolving labour markets, while also fostering innovation and entrepreneurial mindsets across higher education.

The Forum will discuss how quality assurance can strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions and employers and ensure quality in work-based, lifelong and doctoral education linked to research and innovation ecosystems. At the same time, it will reflect on how QA can remain responsive to labour market needs without compromising academic integrity and the long-term societal mission of higher education.

Wednesday 18 November

Pre-forum meetings

12.00-14.30	Meeting for student experts in quality assurance *This is a stand-alone session organised by ESU. There is a separate registration process. You can register for this session **here***
15.30-16.30	**Introduction to the European quality assurance framework** *Assembly Hall, Fourth floor* *A pre-forum session providing an introduction to the quality assurance framework of the European Higher Education Area. Attendance is free for EQAF participants.*

Forum

15.00-17.00 **Registration**
First floor

17.00-18.30 **Opening plenary**
Anticipating Skills Needs: How Quality Assurance Can Drive Future-Ready Education
Assembly Hall, Fourth floor

This session introduces EQAF 2026's focus on quality assurance, employability and innovation in partnership with the world of work, and explore how QA can drive curricular innovation by aligning higher education with evolving labour market needs and emerging skills demands.

- Introduction to the Forum, Eva Fernandez de Labastida Amurrio, Chair, EQAF Programme Committee
- Welcome from the host
  - Gor Vardanyan, Rector, National Polytechnic University of Armenia
  - Zhanna Andreasyan, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia
- Speaker(s)
  - Bjørn Stensaker, EQAR President
  - Chaired by Maria Kelo, EQAF Programme Committee
- Discussion with the chair and the audience

18.30 **Networking drinks**
Fourth floor

Thursday 19 November

09.00-17.30 **Registration**
First floor

09.30-10.30 **Parallel sessions I: Perspectives on QA**

Participants will have a choice of attending one of three parallel sessions which will present various projects or initiatives in QA.

- **Introducing the ESG 2027**
  POLY-QA 221 — Quality Nexus, Second floor

  This session explores the future of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), highlighting the key developments emerging from their revision and their implications for quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area.

  - Anna Gover, Director, ENQA
  - Daciana Pop, President, ESU
  - John Edwards, Director, EURASHE
  - Maria Kelo, Director, Institutional Development, EUA

- **Designing and evaluating study programmes for a changing skills landscape**
  POLY-QA 223 — Innovation Engine, Second floor

This session explores how institutional quality assurance can support the design and evaluation of study programmes that foster skills development and lifelong learning, bringing together student and institutional perspectives on aligning curricula with evolving labour market needs and supporting learners throughout their lives.

- Mick Scholtka, Steering Committee Member, ESU
- Ana Tecilazić, Vice Rector for Quality, Algebra Bernays University, Croatia
- Chaired by Urszula Lis, EQAF Programme Committee

- **Assuring quality in adult and lifelong learning**
  POLY-QA Exchange, Second floor

  This session explores how quality assurance can support accessible, relevant, and meaningful adult and lifelong learning across diverse educational contexts, including doctoral education, responding to evolving labour market needs and fostering innovation.

  - Irma Grdzelidze, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research, Alte University, Georgia
  - Bianca Pace, Executive Committee Member, ESU
  - Chaired by Jakub Brdulak, EQAF Programme Committee

10.30-11.00 **Coffee break**
Catering hall, Second floor

11.00-12.45 **Papers presentations and workshops – Contributions sessions I**

Participants will have a choice of attending a workshop lasting 90 minutes or two paper sessions lasting 45 minutes each, with a 15-minute break in between to allow the participants to move around.

12.45-14.15 **Lunch**
Catering hall, Second floor

14.15-15.00 **Papers and poster presentations – Contributions sessions II**

Participants will have a choice of attending a paper session or a poster session lasting 45 minutes.

15.00-15.15 Move to the next session

15.15-16.15 **Parallel sessions II: Perspectives on QA**

Participants will have a choice of attending one of three parallel sessions which will present various projects or initiatives in QA.

- **Bridging higher education and industry through quality assurance**
  POLY-QA 221 — Quality Nexus, Second floor

  This session explores how quality assurance can strengthen collaboration between higher education institutions and industry, bringing together stakeholder perspectives and labour-market insights to inform curriculum development, and ensure study programmes respond to evolving skills needs.

  - Denise Bärnfeind, Quality Assurance and Institutional Research, UAS Technikum Wien, Austria
  - Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir, Executive Director, Icelandic Agency for Quality Assurance, Iceland

- Chaired by John Edwards, EQAF Programme Committee

- **Quality assurance for transnational cooperation and innovation**
  POLY-QA 223 — Innovation Engine, Second floor

  This session explores how quality assurance can support transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, fostering innovation, responding to evolving labour market needs, and strengthening the societal impact of higher education.

  - Ronny Heintze, Deputy Director for International Development, AQAS, Germany
  - Solange Pisarz, Executive Director, Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur, France
  - Chaired by Sylvie Navarre, EQAF Programme Committee

- **Quality assurance for research-driven innovation and societal impact**
  POLY-QA 225 — Excellence Forum, Second floor

  This session explores how quality assurance can capture and strengthen the contribution of research-driven innovation to higher education and society, from doctoral education and transferable skills to entrepreneurship, external collaboration, and the impact of innovative learning environments.

  - Christophe Terrasse, Director International Projects, EFMD Global, Belgium
  - Anna Prades, Head of Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department, AQU Catalunya, Spain
  - Chaired by Michael Hofer, EQAF Programme Committee

16.15-16.45 Coffee break
Catering hall, Second floor

16.45-17.45 **Community of practice**
Rooms will be named when the topics have been decided

Free-format, participant-led topical sessions where participants can propose and explore topics of shared interest through informal discussion and exchange via the event app

19.00 **Optional Forum dinner (separate fee)**
Dvin Music Hall

Friday 20 November

09.00-13.00 **Registration**
First floor

09.30-11.15 **Papers presentations and workshops – Contributions sessions III**

Participants will have a choice of attending a workshop lasting 90 minutes or two paper sessions lasting 45 minutes each, with a 15-minute break in between to allow the participants to move around.

11.15-11.45 **Coffee break**
Catering hall, Second floor

11.45-13.00 **Closing plenary: Quality assurance for tomorrow's skills**
Assembly Hall, Fourth floor

The presidents of EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESU discuss how quality assurance can underpin skills development, innovation and closer engagement with the world of work.

- Josep M. Garrell, President, EUA
- Hannes Raffaseder, President, EURASHE
- Daciana Pop, President, ESU
- Patrick Van den Bosch, Vice-President, ENQA
- Chaired by Daniela Craciun, EQAF Programme Committee

Invitation to EQAF 2027
Wrap-up and thanks by Eva Fernandez de Labastida Amurrio, Chair, EQAF Programme Committee

13.00-14.30 **Lunch and departure**
Catering hall, Second floor