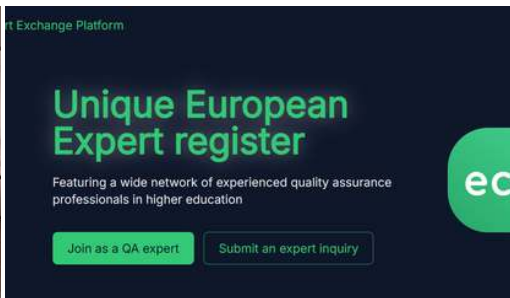




The European Consortium for
Accreditation in Higher Education

ECA NEWSLETTER



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ECA EDITORIAL

Dear members and observers,

As we approach the summer break, it is a good moment to reflect on an active and productive first half of 2026. A major milestone for ECA this year has been the official launch of the ECA Expert Exchange Platform, which creates new opportunities by connecting quality assurance agencies with highly qualified international experts.

One of the highlights was also the organisation of two successful ECA seminars. In February, members and observers gathered in Heidelberg, hosted by Evalag, for the Seminar on Diversity in Higher Education, accompanied by the training European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. This momentum continued in June in Stockholm, where UKÄ hosted the Seminar on Quality Assurance of Research and the General Assembly. Alongside the seminar, participants benefited from two specialised trainings on Higher Education in a European Context: An introduction to Quality Assurance on an International level training and the European Approach, creating further opportunities for capacity building and professional learning.

The General Assembly also marked an important moment for ECA's governance. We are pleased to congratulate our newly elected Board members, Corina Sutter (AHPGS) and Tinka Thede (NVAO). We are equally grateful to Klemen Subic (SQAA) and Luut Kroes (NVAO) for continuing their service on the Board, and to Ronny Heintze (AQAS), who is stepping down, for all the years of dedication. We also want to thank the members of the Financial Committee for their ongoing commitment, welcoming Elena Catana (ARACIS) as a new member of the Committee together with Giacomo Anese (MFHEA) who was re-elected for a new term.

We would like to thank all our members, observers, partners, experts, and hosts for their dedication, engagement, and contributions throughout the year so far. Your commitment continues to make ECA a vibrant platform for cooperation, innovation, and mutual trust in quality assurance.



Eva Fernández de Labastida
ECA Chair



Sebastian Steele
ECA Vice-Chair

NEWS FROM ECA

ECA Welcomes New Vice-Chair and Board Members

By ECA

At the General Meeting in Stockholm, ECA members elected a new Vice-Chair, welcomed new Board members, and confirmed several key leadership positions for the coming term. The appointments ensure a strong balance of continuity and renewal in ECA's governance as the organisation continues to advance its mission and strategic priorities.

We are pleased to announce the election of Sebastian Steele (UKÄ) as the new Vice-Chair of the organisation. Members also renewed the Board mandates of Klemen Subic (SQAA) and Luut Kroes (NVAO). Luut Kroes will continue serving on the Board until 31 December 2026.

The General Meeting also elected Corina Sutter (AHPGS) and Tinka Thede (NVAO) as new members of the ECA Board. Tinka Thede will formally begin her Board mandate on 1 January 2027, following the conclusion of Luut Kroes' term. Their expertise, experience, and commitment to quality assurance will contribute significantly to ECA's future development and strategic direction.

We are also pleased that Luut Kroes (NVAO) will continue to serve as Treasurer until 31 December 2026. Tinka Thede (NVAO) will assume the role of Treasurer from 1 January 2027, ensuring a smooth transition in ECA's financial leadership.

In addition, members renewed the mandate of Giacomo Annese (MFHEA) on the Financial Committee, recognising his valuable contribution to overseeing ECA's financial management. Elena Catana (ARACIS) was also elected as a new member of the Financial Committee.

With this combination of newly elected and re-elected representatives, ECA's leadership is well positioned to continue fostering mutual trust, supporting innovation in quality assurance, and promoting effective international cooperation across the European Higher Education Area and beyond.



Week in Stockholm Brought Together Members and Quality Assurance Professionals from Across Europe

By ECA

From 2 to 5 June 2026, ECA members and quality assurance professionals gathered in Stockholm for a week of exchange, learning, and collaboration, kindly hosted by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ).

The week began with the **ECA Members' Seminar**, which provided a valuable opportunity for quality assurance agencies to discuss emerging developments and shared challenges in the field.

Tobias Osvald and Caroline Olsson from UKÄ presented the agency's approaches to quality assurance in relation to research at both institutional and programme level, prompting reflections on the evolving relationship between research and external quality assurance.

Participants also explored topic related to language and quality assurance through a presentation by **Lotten Glans and Erik Falk**, who addressed the conditions higher education institutions face when offering programmes in small subjects, particularly small languages, and examined how language practices are connected to quality assurance processes within Swedish higher education institutions. The discussions highlighted the importance of exchanging experiences and learning from different national approaches.



Two trainings organised in one week

Alongside the ECA Members' seminar, in Stockholm participants had the opportunity to take part in two ECA training programmes.

The training **Higher Education in a European Context: An Introduction to Quality Assurance on an International Level**, led by **Yvonne Overdeest (NVAO)** and **Sebastian Steele (UKA)**, introduced participants to the European higher education landscape and the key actors shaping quality assurance across Europe. Through interactive discussions and practical examples, participants gained a broader understanding of quality assurance in higher education and the growing importance of international cooperation in higher education.

The second training, **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**, was delivered by **Ronny Heintze (AQAS)** and **Eva Fernández de Labastida (Unibasq)**. The training focused on the assessment of joint programmes offered by consortia of higher education institutions across borders. Participants explored the principles and criteria of the European Approach, discussed practical examples, and reflected on common challenges related to consortium governance, learning outcomes, student assessment, and the implementation of quality assurance across multiple jurisdictions.

Throughout the week, participants benefited not only from expert-led sessions but also from the opportunity to engage with colleagues from different countries and quality assurance systems. The exchange of perspectives once again demonstrated the value of international cooperation and peer learning in strengthening trust and promoting a shared understanding of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area.



ECA Expert Exchange Platform with 170 Experts already Registered

By ECA

Following its **official launch in February 2026**, the **ECA Expert Exchange Platform** has already attracted 170 international experts, demonstrating strong engagement from the quality assurance community and confirming the need for a dedicated space that facilitates international expert cooperation.

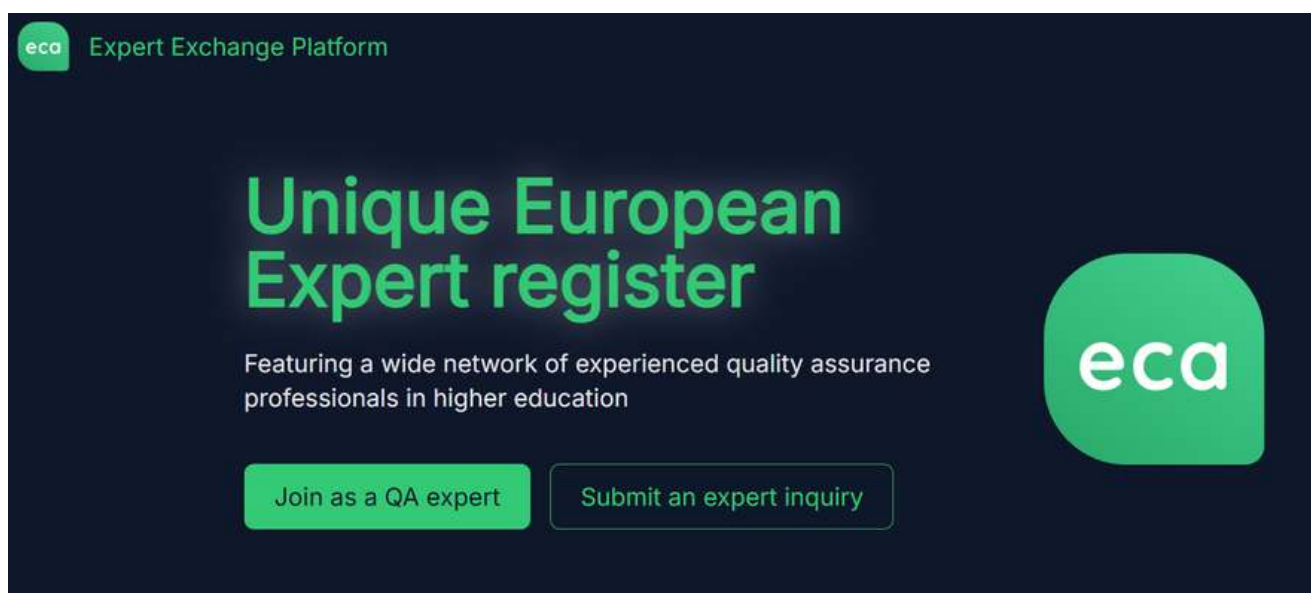
Developed through close collaboration between ECA member agencies, the platform was created to support the increasing demand for qualified international experts in external quality assurance procedures. It provides a secure and exclusive environment for ECA member agencies, which can identify and connect with professionals whose expertise matches their specific needs.

The platform helps agencies access a diverse pool of experienced experts from across Europe. Member agencies can submit targeted requests based on defined criteria, while the platform's recommendation system assists in identifying suitable candidates for each assignment.

The growing number of registered experts reflects the platform's success in bringing together knowledge, experience, and international perspectives. As participation continues to expand, the platform is strengthening cooperation among ECA members, fostering new professional connections, and supporting the continuous enhancement of quality assurance practices throughout the European Higher Education Area.

The platform is accessible at:
www.ecaexperts.eu

For any questions or further information, please contact the **ECA Secretariat at:**
secretariat@ecahe.eu.



The image shows a dark-themed banner for the ECA Expert Exchange Platform. In the top left corner, there is a small 'eca' logo followed by the text 'Expert Exchange Platform'. The main headline in large, bold, light green font reads 'Unique European Expert register'. Below this, in a smaller white font, it says 'Featuring a wide network of experienced quality assurance professionals in higher education'. On the right side, there is a large, rounded green shape containing the white 'eca' logo. At the bottom, there are two light green buttons with white text: 'Join as a QA expert' and 'Submit an expert inquiry'.

ECA Members Gathered in Heidelberg to Discuss Diversity in Higher Education

By ECA

From 24 to 26 February 2026, ECA members and observers gathered in **Heidelberg, Germany**, for the ECA Members' Seminar and the accompanying training on the **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**, hosted by **Evalag**.

The seminar focused on the timely and important topic of **Diversity in Higher Education**, examining both the conceptual foundations of diversity and its practical implications for higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies.

Miriam Chebbah, Stefanie Kröner, and Florian Lamert provided insights into the meaning of diversity, unconscious bias, and the importance of continuous self-reflection. The speakers also addressed the role of diversity within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and highlighted the barriers and challenges institutions may encounter when seeking to increase participation and inclusion among students, staff, and other stakeholders.

Training on European Approach

Following the seminar, participants took part in the two-day **training on the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**.

The training examined the specific characteristics of joint programmes and the challenges associated with their external quality assurance, including governance within international consortia, coordination of teaching and learning, recognition and grading practices, and the alignment of quality assurance systems across countries.



NEWS FROM ECA MEMBERS

25 Years of AHPGS: Shaping Quality Assurance in Health and Social Sciences

By AHPGS

In February 2026, AHPGS celebrated its 25th anniversary during its annual members and committee conference in Freiburg. The event brought together representatives from higher education and quality assurance to reflect on current developments in higher education, including internationalisation and artificial intelligence, but also to reflect on the agency's development over the past 25 years.

AHPGS has evolved from a specialised German accreditation agency for health and social sciences into an internationally recognised quality assurance organisation, while maintaining its specialization. Since its foundation in 2001, AHPGS has continuously adapted its portfolio to changing higher education landscapes, expanding from programme accreditation to system accreditation, institutional evaluations, continuing education, and, most recently, accreditation procedures for medical programmes under the consideration of WFME standards after the recognition in 2023.

International engagement has also become increasingly important. Through active participation in European and global quality assurance networks, AHPGS contributes to strengthening trust, transparency, and innovation in higher education across borders.



First ED.VITA Awards Celebrate Sustainability in Slovenian Higher Education

By NAKVIS

The first ED.VITA Awards, Slovenia's national recognition scheme for sustainability achievements in higher education, have honoured outstanding projects that promote sustainable development across teaching, research, institutional management, and student engagement. Organised by NAKVIS in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth the awards attracted an impressive 57 applications in their inaugural year.

The Grand ED.VITA Award was presented to the University of Ljubljana for its project ULTRA – University of Ljubljana for a Sustainable Society. The initiative was recognised for its comprehensive approach to embedding sustainability across the university through curriculum development, innovative teaching, and stronger links between education, research, and society.

Awards were also presented in five thematic categories, recognising projects focused on sustainable education, research and innovation, societal impact, student initiatives, and institutional management. In addition, eight special mentions were awarded to projects demonstrating exceptional innovation and impact.

The ED.VITA Awards highlight the vital role of higher education in addressing societal and environmental challenges. By showcasing innovative practices and encouraging institutional commitment to sustainability, the initiative contributes to building a more sustainable future for Slovenian higher education and serves as an inspiring example for the wider European higher education community.

