



Swiss Association for Quality

European Quality Leaders Explore the Future of Quality Management

Quality management is facing a period of profound transformation. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence, increasing digitalization, growing sustainability expectations, evolving customer needs and expectations, and a more complex risk landscape are reshaping the environment in which organizations operate. To better understand organizations' needs during this time of change, five European quality associations are exploring ways to collaborate and create opportunities for European Quality Leaders.

In April 2026, five national quality organizations piloted the first European Quality Leader Round Table. The quality organizations behind the pilot were the Swiss Association for Quality (SAQ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Qualität (DGQ), France Qualité, the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI, UK), and Excellence Finland. Together, these organizations represent thousands of quality professionals across Europe and share a common ambition to strengthen international collaboration within the quality community.

The purpose of the Round Table is to create a trusted forum where senior quality professionals can exchange experiences, benchmark approaches, discuss emerging challenges, and learn from one another and from experts in related fields. By bringing together perspectives from different countries and industries, the initiative aims to generate insights that support both the quality profession and the organizations it serves.

A Changing Landscape for Quality Leadership

The first Round Table brought together experienced quality leaders from a range of industries, including manufacturing, technology, logistics, telecommunications, engineering, and business services. While the participating organizations operate in different sectors and regulatory environments, they share a common objective: understanding how the management of quality is evolving and identifying the capabilities organizations need to succeed in the years ahead.

A central theme throughout the discussion was the recognition that quality leaders are operating in an increasingly volatile and interconnected environment. Participants highlighted the combined impact of technological disruption, geopolitical uncertainty, cybersecurity concerns, climate-related risks, and changing stakeholder expectations.

Against this backdrop, quality management is expanding beyond its traditional focus on compliance and assurance. Increasingly, quality leaders are being asked to contribute to organizational resilience, business transformation, customer experience, and the management of change across increasingly complex value chains.

What Trends Will Shape the Future of Quality?

A key focus of the discussion was a recent research study conducted by the Chartered Quality Institute. The survey gathered responses from more than 300 experienced quality professionals from across the globe, the majority of whom work in industry and multinational organizations. Participants were asked which emerging trends they believe will have the greatest influence on the future value of quality management.

The Round Table used these findings as a starting point for discussion. Quality leaders compared the survey results against their own experiences and perspectives, identifying areas of agreement, highlighting additional developments, and refining the themes that they believe deserve greater attention from the profession.



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The discussion reinforced many of the trends identified in the CQI research while also expanding the conversation to include topics such as quality culture, organizational capability, workforce development, and changing customer expectations. Following the discussion, participants identified two themes as the highest priorities for future exploration and knowledge sharing.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digitalization and Predictive Quality

The highest priority identified by participants was the growing influence of AI, digital technologies, predictive analytics, and data-driven approaches to quality management.

Participants highlighted a strong interest in understanding how organizations can move from inspection-based approaches towards more predictive and preventive quality models. The discussion identified opportunities to explore how AI, predictive analytics, and digital technologies can support quality management, product development, and operational decision-making.

Particular interest was expressed in practical examples of how organizations are embedding AI into processes, adopting more data-driven approaches to quality, and using predictive insights to anticipate issues before they occur. Participants also highlighted the importance of understanding how organizations address challenges related to data quality and trust in AI-supported decisions.

As organizations continue to adopt AI-enabled technologies, quality leaders see significant value in sharing practical experiences of how quality systems, processes, and professional roles are evolving to support these new ways of working.

Broadening Quality Management Competence Across the Business

The second highest priority focused on extending quality management competence beyond the boundaries of the quality function.

Participants agreed that one of the key challenges facing organizations is how to embed quality thinking more broadly across the business. This includes helping organizations move away from siloed ways of working and encouraging stronger collaboration across functions, processes, and value chains.

The discussion highlighted the increasingly important role of quality professionals as facilitators of change. Participants expressed interest in sharing practical examples of how quality leaders have influenced activities beyond the quality function, broadened the reach of quality management, and supported organizations in adopting new ways of working.

The ability to demonstrate the business value of quality management was also identified as an important area for further discussion. As expectations of quality functions continue to evolve, organizations are increasingly looking for ways to connect quality initiatives with broader business outcomes and strategic objectives.

Beyond the Top Priorities

While AI and organizational quality capability received the strongest support, participants identified several other themes that are expected to influence the future of quality management.

One area of particular interest was organizational resilience and risk agility. Participants highlighted the need to understand how quality management systems can better support organizations in responding to changing regulations, evolving stakeholder expectations, and increasingly complex operating environments. There was also interest in exploring how



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management systems can become more adaptive, innovative, and supportive of transformation rather than serving only compliance purposes.

The development of future quality professionals was another recurring theme. Participants discussed the growing importance of digital and analytical capabilities, including data analysis skills and readiness for increasingly digital and AI-enabled environments. At the same time, there was recognition that technical expertise alone will not be sufficient. Building influence, fostering collaboration, and strengthening organizational culture were all viewed as essential capabilities for future quality leaders.

Other themes identified for future exploration included integrating quality and sustainability objectives, strengthening customer satisfaction and customer experience, and demonstrating the relationship between quality culture and organizational performance.

Taken together, these themes reflect a profession that is adapting to a rapidly changing business environment while continuing to focus on creating value for customers, organizations, and society.

Strengthening European Collaboration

The European Quality Leaders Round Table pilot demonstrates the value of international collaboration within the quality community. Despite differences in industries, markets, and operating environments, participants identified many common challenges and opportunities.

A clear message emerging from the discussion was the importance of practical exchange. Participants emphasized the value of sharing concrete implementation examples, lessons learned, and real-world experiences.

The five participating quality associations share a common commitment to fostering this dialogue and supporting greater benchmarking and knowledge exchange among quality leaders across Europe. By learning from one another's experiences, the European quality community can continue to develop its understanding of emerging trends and the evolving role of quality management in a changing world.