International Conference on Higher Education, Arts and Sustainable Development

"Sustainable Central Asia: Silk Roads of Education, Arts, and AI"

Almaty Museum of Arts
Almaty, Kazakhstan
Al-Farabi ave., 28
26–27 October 2026

Zoom: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/j/81837227916?pwd=amWtF3CRW9P8s53VQaAAgM5ZrS5cNK.1
Conference ID: 818 3722 7916
Password: 074110

Agenda

Background

The conference will bring together policymakers, higher education leaders, international organizations, researchers, and cultural institutions to explore emerging trends in the internationalization of higher education, quality assurance, artificial intelligence, sustainability, media and information literacy, and the role of arts and culture in fostering social transformation and regional cooperation. The event aims to strengthen dialogue among stakeholders and promote innovative approaches aligned with global sustainable development priorities.

Main expected outcomes:

- Strengthened regional and international cooperation in higher education.
- Exchange of good practices on internationalization, quality assurance and recognition.
- Enhanced dialogue on artificial intelligence, sustainability and digital transformation in higher education.
- Promotion of partnerships between higher education institutions, international organizations and cultural institutions.
- Recommendations for advancing arts, culture and media and information literacy as drivers of inclusive and sustainable development.

Monday 26 October 2026: Morning	
09:00 – 09:30	**Registration/Coffee**
09:30 – 10:20	**Museum Excursion** Short guided visit to the Almaty Museum of Arts Group photo at the stairs
10:20 – 11:00	Opening Session **Chair:** Prof. Dr. Luca Lantero, General Director, CIMEA **Opening remarks** • Mr Sayasat Nurbek, Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TBC) • Mr Amir Piric, Director, UNESCO Regional Office in Almaty • TBC, Almaty Museum of Arts
11:00 – 12:00	Session 1: Panel Discussion ***The Silk Roads of Knowledge and Internationalization of Higher Education*** Internationalization has become a key driver for improving the quality, relevance and global engagement of higher education. This session will explore how Central Asia can build on its historical role as a crossroads of knowledge while responding to contemporary challenges in academic mobility, recognition and cross-border cooperation. **Chair:** Mr Nurbek Teleshaliyev, Education Specialist, UNESCO Regional Office in Almaty **Presentations** • Revitalizing Central Asia as a Historical and Future Hub of Knowledge Exchange – **Dr Aitzhan Kulumzhanova**, Director, CIMEA Central Asia regional office • Higher Education Global Trends Report: Inclusion and Equity in an Internationally Mobile Landscape – **Ms Vanja Gutovic,** Head of Policy Analysis and International Cooperation, UNESCO IESALC (video-recording) • Academic Mobility, Recognition, Transnational Education and Cross-border Learning Processes – **Dr Chiara Finocchiett,** President of ENIC-NARIC, CIMEA, on-line **Panel discussion**
12:00 – 13:00	Session 2: Panel Discussion ***Quality Assurance in Higher Education*** Quality assurance plays a fundamental role in strengthening higher education systems and promoting international trust and recognition. The discussion will examine international standards, institutional quality culture and approaches to accreditation. **Chair:** Ms Nadia Trubova, Head of Education, British Council Kazakhstan **Panellists:** • International perspectives: **Piers Wall**, Head of TNE and International Quality Enhancement, QAA UK • Recognition and trust: **Meirgul Alpysbayeva**, National Professional Officer, UNESCO Regional Office in Almaty • Data and quality management**: Gulnaz Toguzbayeva**, Director of Strategic Development Department, SDU University • Managing multiple international partnerships: **Nurgul Nalgozhina**, Head of the International Office, Satbayev University
13:00 – 14:30	**Lunch**
Monday 26 October 2026: Afternoon	

14:30 – 15:30	Session 3 ***Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation in Higher Education*** Artificial intelligence is reshaping teaching, learning and research while raising important ethical and societal questions. This session will explore opportunities and challenges related to AI adoption in higher education. **Chair:** Dr Madina Tynybayeva, Vice Rector for International Cooperation, Qazaq AI Research University **Presentations** • From Performance to *Communio*: The Crisis of Meaning in Higher Education – Prof. Dr. **Luca Lantero, General Director, CIMEA** • Art Trinamics and the Possible in the Age of AI- **Prof. Francesco Monico,** Artistic and Cultural Adviser to Michelangelo Pistoletto • Ethics and Human-centred Approaches to AI in Education – **Dr Chiara Finocchietti**, President of ENIC-NARIC, CIMEA, on-line **Discussion**
15:30 – 16:45	Session 4 ***Transnational Education and Micro-credentials*** Flexible learning pathways and new forms of credentialing are transforming higher education worldwide. This session will discuss transnational education models, recognition of micro-credentials and strategic partnerships. **Chair:** Dr Sholpan Tazabek, Vice Rector for Global Partnerships, Almaty Management University **Presentations** • Transnational Education and Strategic Partnerships in Kazakhstan – **Mr Sayasat Nurbek, Minister of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan (TBC)** • Flexible Educational Models - **Dr Soon-Joo Gog, Senior Director, Centre for Skills-First Practices, Lifelong Learning Institute, Singapore (online)** • Recognition of Micro-credentials Across Borders – **Ms Elisa Petrucci, Head of International cooperation and policy development department, CIMEA** **Discussion**
16:45 – 17:15	Special Conversation Dialogue on the **Manifesto Progetto Arte** by **Prof. Francesco Monico,** Artistic and Cultural Adviser to Michelangelo Pistoletto Interview with **Michelangelo Pistoletto, Contemporary Italian Artist**
18:00 – 21:00	**Reception (Navat Restaurant, ЖК Esentai Apartments Проспект Аль-Фараби, 77/1,1 этаж)**
Tuesday 27 October 2026: Morning	
09:00 – 09:30	**Welcome coffee**
09:30- 10:30	Session 5 ***Climate Change and Greening Education*** Higher education institutions have a critical role in addressing climate change through education, research and institutional practices. This session will explore innovative approaches to Education for Sustainable Development and the greening of universities. **Moderator:** Dinara Tuyakova, Associate Programme Officer, UNESCO Regional office in Almaty **Presentations** • Climate Change Education and Education for Sustainable Development: The Role of Higher Education – **Dr Nurbek Teleshaliyev, Education Specialist,** UNESCO Almaty Regional office in Almaty • Integration of Climate Change into University Curricula – **Dr. Nurzhanat Shakirova**, Acting Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Ecology, Abay Kazakh National Pedagogical University

	• Youth Art Voices to Challenge the Status Quo – *Turn It Around Cards Central Asia;* and *the Climate Change Education Ambition report:* recommendations for higher education institutes – **Ms Saule Kalikova**, Education Policy Expert, CAPS Unlock *(confirmed)* **Discussion**
10:30-11:30	Presentation ***UR-RA – "Unity of Religions" Exhibition: Responsibility of Art*** Presented by **Prof.Francesco Monico**
11:30-12:00	**Coffee break**
12:00-13:00	Session 6 ***Art and Culture as Catalysts for Social Change and Regional Cooperation*** Arts and cultural institutions contribute to intercultural dialogue, innovation and regional cooperation. This session will explore the role of cultural diplomacy and museums in fostering inclusive societies. **Moderator:** Majer Massanov, National Programme Officer for Communication and Information, UNESCO Regional Office in Almaty **Panel discussion** • Cultural Diplomacy through Arts – Galina Koretskaya, British Council • Arts as means of building community– **Nicola Verlato**, Artist • Museums and Cultural Institutions as Spaces for Connection and Exchange –**Mr. Vladimir Opredelenov**, Development Director at Almaty Museum of Arts • Empowering Young People through Arts and Cultural Heritage: The Kazakhstan Clubs for UNESCO Experience - **Sabina Akzharova**, Vice President for Communications and International Cooperation, Adviser to the President of the World Federation of Clubs and Associations for UNESCO, Kazakhstan National Federation of Clubs for UNESCO **Discussion**
13:00-14:00	Session 7 ***Media and Information Literacy for Higher Education*** Media and Information Literacy (MIL) equips learners to critically engage with information ecosystems and digital technologies. This session will present emerging practices for integrating MIL into higher education. **Moderator:** Ms Tatiana Golubtsova, Member of the Information Literacy Working Group under UNESCO's Information for All Programme (IFAP) **Presentations** • MIL Materials for Higher Education – **Ms Murovana Tatyana**, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education - *(confirmed)* • MIL for History and Archaeology Education – **Ms Bedelbayeva Marina**, Karaganda Buketov University, on-line *(confirmed)* • Youth Perspectives on the Use of AI in Higher Education – **Mr Ruzanov Alexander,** BRIF Research Group *(confirmed)* • From Journalism Education to Societal Information Resilience: The Experience of the American University of Central Asia and the "Aikyn Sanarip" Coalition – **Ms Jyldyz Kuvatova** *(confirmed)* • The Role of University Libraries in Promoting Media and Information Literacy – **Mr Peter Lapo**, KyzPU *(confirmed)* **Discussion**
14:00-14:45	Closing Session **Summary of key outcomes** **Closing remarks by Luca Lantero,** General Director, CIMEA and **Nurbek Teleshaliyev,** Education Specialist, UNESCO Almaty Regional Office in Almaty