

EUA Leadership Development Programme

Supporting transformational leadership for Europe's universities



Sharpen your leadership skills



Forge meaningful connections



Drive impactful change





Europe's universities are transforming, their leadership must transform too

Today, European universities are navigating complex challenges and transitions: climate and environmental sustainability, digital transformation, funding volatility, geopolitical uncertainty and shifting public expectations. While these pressures are shared across Europe, they unfold within diverse governance frameworks, levels of autonomy and institutional cultures.

Leadership must therefore adapt to these different realities. Yet what unites the multiple demands on today's higher education leaders is the need for strategic vision, cultural sensitivity, confidence under pressure and the ability to guide institutions through uncertainty while strengthening their core missions.

EUA's Leadership Development Programme (LDP) supports university leaders in developing these capacities, grounded in the shared challenges and rich diversity of European higher education.



A truly European programme – for the sector, by the sector

The EUA LDP is the only pan-European leadership programme developed by the university sector for the university sector. Based on a concept of shared leadership bringing together academic and professional leadership roles, it builds on EUA's longstanding work on leadership, large network and expertise.

This foundation allows the programme to offer something unique: an approach that understands both the common challenges facing Europe's universities and the diversity of national and institutional contexts in which they operate. Participants engage directly with the latest trends in higher education in Europe, while benefiting from EUA's extensive networks of university leaders, policy makers and experts.

Each year, the cohort of participants is intentionally diverse. It brings together academic leaders and professional support leaders, creating a space where shared leadership becomes a lived practice.

Is this programme right for you and your university?

EUA's Leadership Development Programme is designed for senior academic and professional support leaders who guide – or are preparing to guide – institutional strategy and transformation. This includes members of institutional leadership teams such as rectors, vice-rectors, directors of administration, as well as leaders responsible for areas such as strategy, organisational change, research, learning and teaching, internationalisation, digital transformation, or sustainability.

The programme prepares those who want to progress towards broader leadership responsibilities, preparing for top-level roles, or leading major institutional change processes. What unites them is the desire to strengthen their leadership in a European context and to contribute to the wider transformation of their institutions.

What you will gain from the programme

- **Advanced leadership tools for complex environments**
Including foresight methods, scenario planning techniques, communication strategies for governance settings, and models for shared leadership across academic and professional domains.
- **Confidence to lead through uncertainty and transformation**
Strengthening your ability to navigate dilemmas, take decisions under pressure and guide institutional change.
- **Ability to navigate European and international developments**
Strengthening your capacity to respond to emerging trends, contribute to strategic discussions and influence institutional direction
- **Enhanced readiness for senior leadership roles**
Supporting your progression towards new leadership responsibilities and expanding your leadership scope.
- **A strong European network of peers**
Building lasting connections with leaders across Europe, enabling continued exchange, collaboration and mutual support.



Why this programme matters

The EUA Leadership Development Programme offers leaders a safe space to engage with the realities of European higher education today – its diversity, its complexity and its shared ambitions. It prepares leaders to guide their institutions through transformation with clarity, confidence and a strong sense of purpose.

Above all, it strengthens leadership not in isolation, but as part of a European community. It equips participants with the mindset, networks and tools needed to shape the future of their institutions and, collectively, the future of Europe's universities.

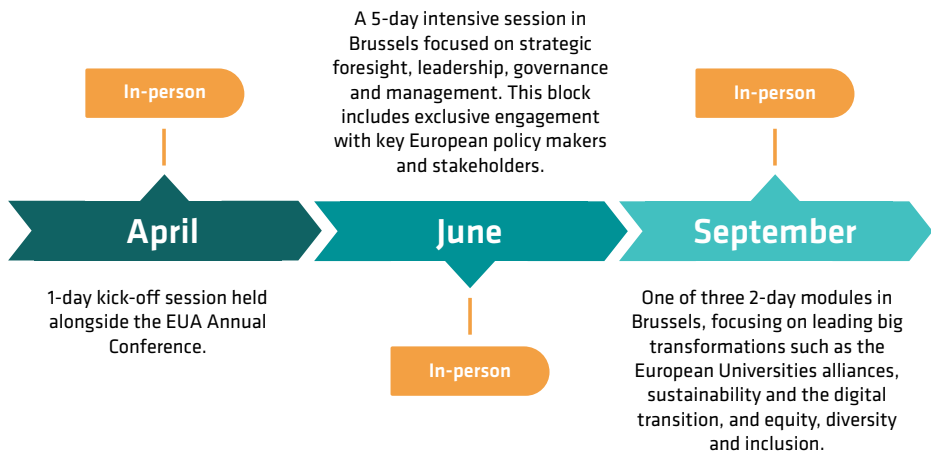




How will you learn?

Over 10 working days during an eight-month period, the programme is delivered through three in-person modules and several online sessions.

Participants learn through real cases drawn from current institutional transformation agendas, and through a thoughtful mix of expert input, peer exchange and guided reflection.



Combining theory and practice

Expert contributors introduce themes ranging from leadership, foresight, communication, governance, strategic funding to sustainability, multicultural collaboration and institutional strategy – equipping participants with frameworks they can apply immediately.

Emphasising shared learning

Participants work in different group configurations throughout the year, ensuring a rich exchange of perspectives across institutional roles, national systems and leadership cultures. These interactions deepen understanding of the diversity of European higher education and strengthen participants' confidence in leading across boundaries.

Reflection is woven throughout the programme, enabling participants to connect insights with their own institutional challenges and leadership identity.



A core feature: leadership simulation

At the heart of the LDP is an immersive simulation that spans the duration of the programme. Participants form the leadership team of a fictional university positioned within a system that mirrors the common pressures facing real institutions.

The simulation requires each team to develop a long-term institutional strategy while responding to sudden and highly realistic challenges. These can include campus occupations, cyberattacks, abrupt funding cuts, or tensions around autonomy and governance. Intercultural dilemmas – such as navigating international partnerships or advancing a European Universities alliance – are built into each scenario.

Teams present decisions to a simulated university board composed of experienced leaders, who provide constructive feedback drawing on real board dynamics.



What participants say about the impact of the programme

Following extensive piloting, feedback from leaders who have completed the programme helps EUA to further refine its activities for future editions, ensuring that it stays relevant to the evolving needs of European universities and their leaders. So, what have they told us about their experience of the LDP?

Above all, past participants highlight the transformative power of the programme and how they have translated what they learned into concrete institutional progress and accelerated personal career advancement.

"I would rate the programme as exceptionally valuable, both for me personally and for my institution. The insights and connections I gained will continue to bring lasting benefits to my leadership practice and to my university."



"The diversity of formats – ranging from simulations to group exercises and expert-led discussions – allowed for active peer learning and meaningful reflection."

"An intense and enriching learning experience, blending strategic insights with highly practical tools."



"The programme has strengthened my confidence to face leadership challenges with a solid foundation of evidence-based knowledge that I can apply widely in my daily work. I know I will return to the rich materials and insights provided as a lasting resource to guide my decisions."

"Simulations, group discussions and case-based exercises fostered active engagement and created a safe space for honest reflection and knowledge exchange."

"The European dimension of the programme added significant value by highlighting shared challenges, diverse governance models, and opportunities for collaboration across contexts."

"Most importantly, I now feel part of a strong network of peers – a community I can turn to for inspiration, cooperation and support. Looking ahead, I aspire to use this learning and network to help shape a more collaborative, innovative and forward-thinking leadership culture within my institution."

