

EUA Leadership Development Programme 2027

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Deadline: 3 July 2026

Leading transformation in European higher education

The European University Association (EUA) invites applications for the 2027 edition of the EUA Leadership Development Programme (LDP). The programme is designed for senior leaders of [EUA member universities](#), with responsibility for strategic decision making, who seek to strengthen their capacity to lead strategic transformation in increasingly complex institutional and societal environments.

Across Europe, universities are being called upon to play an expanded role in supporting economic and social development, strengthening democratic resilience and addressing major global challenges. At the same time, they face growing pressures linked to funding constraints, rapid technological change, evolving regulatory frameworks and intensified public scrutiny. These developments require leadership that can work across institutional boundaries, build collective ownership of change and deliver long-term transformation that is both strategic and values based.

The EUA Leadership Development Programme provides a structured opportunity for institutional leaders to reflect on these challenges, engage with peers and strengthen their capacity to lead change within and beyond their universities.

Overview

The EUA LDP combines online and in-person learning activities, expert input, facilitated peer exchange and applied leadership practice. Each year, the programme supports a cohort of up to 28 leaders in developing insights and approaches that can be applied directly within their institutional context.

The programme leverages EUA's extensive experience in fostering collaboration among senior university leaders and staff from over 50 higher education systems, navigating diverse cultures, systems and contexts. It is custom-made to meet the needs of EUA members and aims to provide networking opportunities in a multicultural setting, nurturing effective leadership in universities across Europe.

It has been conceived with a distinctive European perspective, offering a unique blend of international insights and tailored support. Moreover, it foregrounds the diversity of approaches to leadership in higher education across Europe, as well as diversity in institutions' governance and management models and cultures.

The programme addresses different levels of leadership from conceptual, strategic and operational perspectives. Strong emphasis is placed on the leadership challenges associated with transversal priorities that cut across the whole institution. This includes the need to align strategy to create the conditions for meaningful and sustainable transformation. The programme also recognises that universities operate within wider systems and networks, and that institutional leadership increasingly involves collaboration and partnership-building at European and global level.

Objectives

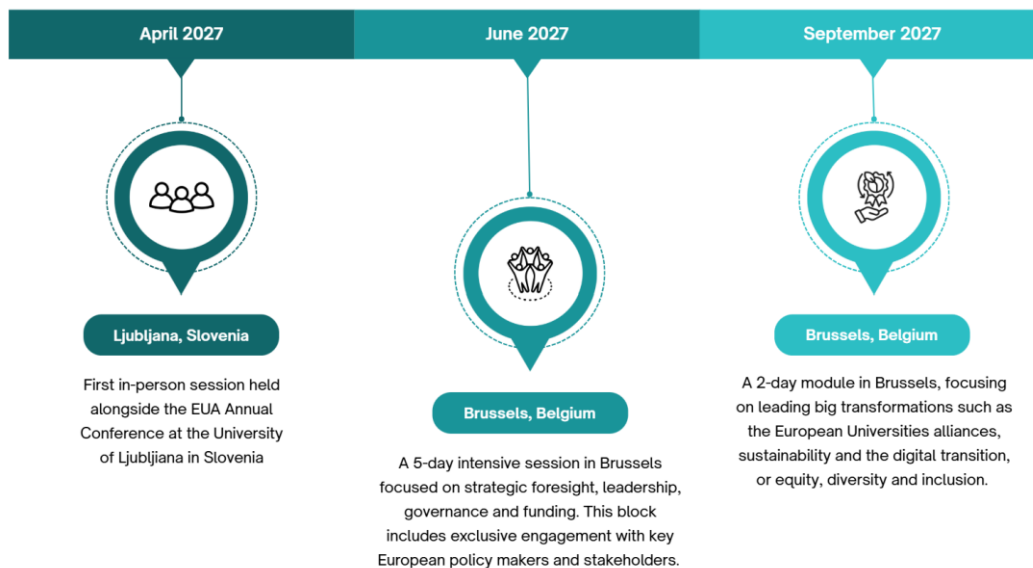
The overall objective of the EUA LDP is to strengthen the capacity of senior university leaders to lead institutional transformation in a coherent, strategic and inclusive way. By bringing together leaders with diverse responsibilities and contexts, creating opportunities for participants to learn from different institutional perspectives and leadership journeys, each edition of the programme aims to support participants in developing their ability to:

- understand and interpret the European policy environment influencing higher education;
- lead transversal institutional strategies that require coordination across structures and communities;
- strengthen shared leadership practices and collective ownership of change;
- advance transformation while remaining anchored in academic values and institutional missions;
- communicate institutional priorities effectively, including during challenging and contested change processes; and
- build networks and partnerships that support institutional resilience and long-term impact.

Throughout the programme, participants will benefit from a learning environment that values reflection, openness and exchange. As such, they will have the opportunity to grow individually and collectively, developing a clear understanding of leadership concepts and enhancing their leadership capabilities.

Structure and timeline

The programme will start in February 2027 with an online introductory session. The core programme will be delivered in three in-person sessions in April, June and September 2027 through a mix of expert input, real world cases, dilemma-based exercises and interactive group work. Complementary online sessions in April and May will complete the offer and cover transversal topics such as values-based leadership, integrity and academic freedom, shared leadership and crisis management. The programme will have a total duration of 10 days.



On Wednesday 14 April 2027, a 1-day in person session will take place before the EUA Annual Conference at the University of Ljubljana, in Slovenia.

Then, an on-site 5-day block will be organised in Brussels, indicatively on 14-18 June 2027. Throughout this intensive week, participants will learn about the latest trends and tensions in European higher education and engage in interactive sessions around the pillars of strategic foresight, leadership, governance and management. This block will also provide exclusive engagement opportunities with key European policy makers and stakeholders.

In September, participants will further explore transversal challenges in university leadership during a 2-day on-site module in Brussels. The focus will be on leading current challenging transformations within institutions such as the European Universities alliances, sustainability, the digital transition and equity, diversity and inclusion.

Format and methodology

The programme combines a series of online sessions with in-person modules and applied group-based work. It is designed to support learning and reflection across the full duration of the programme, rather than concentrating all activity into a single event.

A core element of the programme is a structured simulation-based learning journey. This exercise provides participants with a shared scenario that reflects real leadership dilemmas faced by universities. It creates space to explore how strategic decisions are made under pressure, how competing priorities are balanced and how leadership choices shape institutional outcomes. The simulation supports reflection not only on strategy and governance, but also on leadership behaviours, communication approaches and the role of institutional culture in enabling or constraining change.

The programme is built around facilitated exchange. It offers participants opportunities to test ideas, share experiences and develop new perspectives through dialogue with peers and engagement with senior leaders and experts.

Participants

The 2027 EUA Leadership Development Programme cohort will bring together up to 28 senior leaders from different EUA member universities across the European Higher Education Area.

The programme is open to both academic and professional support leaders who are members of the university senior management team and hold responsibility for shaping institutional strategy and leading transformation in universities. Therefore, it may be of interest to incoming or new rectors, vice-rectors, deans, or senior directors. It is designed for leaders who work on cross-cutting priorities and major change processes across different portfolios (e.g. research and innovation, learning and teaching, student affairs, strategic planning, sustainability, digitalisation, internationalisation).

Participants should be in a position to engage actively with the programme, contribute to shared learning as part of the 2027 cohort and draw on their institutional context in discussions and activities. They should be eager to engage in a multicultural European setting, fostering open exchange and collaboration. The programme assumes a high level of experience, and it is designed for those who are seeking a reflective space to strengthen their leadership practice.

Calendar

The indicative calendar for the 2027 edition of programme is as follows.

5 May 2026	Launch of the call for participation.
3 July 2026	Call for participation submission deadline.
October 2026	Notification of acceptance or rejection by e-mail.
25 February 2027	Online introductory session for participants and preparatory materials.
25 March 2027	Second online session introducing the group simulation exercise
14 April 2027	First in-person session in Ljubljana, Slovenia
29 April 2027	Thematic online session 1
13 May 2027	Thematic online session 2
27 May 2027	Thematic online session 3
14-18 June 2027	5-day core block in Brussels.
9-10 September 2027	2-day final module in Brussels.
10 September 2027	Final event and launch of the alumni network in Brussels.

Application

To submit your application, please complete [the online form](#) before **3 July 2026 at 23.59 (CEST)**, together with the required supporting documents.

Applications must be supported by the senior leadership of the applicant's institution, which must be an EUA member university. Therefore, applicants are required to submit a supporting letter through the application form. Applicants applying in the capacity of rector or president are invited to include a short reflection on how their participation in the programme would contribute to their university's transformation efforts within their broader institutional ecosystem.

Selection process

Following the submission deadline, EUA will assess all eligible applications. The selection process is overseen by the EUA Leadership Development Advisory Board and confirmed by the EUA Board. Selection is guided by criteria that help identify applicants whose experience and leadership outlook align with the programme's mission to foster transformative leadership in European higher education.

In particular, applications will be assessed with reference to:

- **Leadership and strategic vision**, including a demonstrated understanding of key transformation needs and challenges within the applicant's institution, with a particular focus on complex and transversal priorities and the implementation of change.
- **Commitment to institutional transformation**, including evidence of engagement with transformational agendas such as sustainability, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI),

digitalisation, innovation in learning and teaching and the research mission, or other strategic development priorities in higher education.

- **Alignment with programme goals**, including a clear motivation to strengthen leadership practice and contribute to institutional transformation in ways consistent with the objectives and thematic focus of the programme.

EUA will aim to ensure a strong and diverse cohort, considering a balance of leadership profiles from institutions across the Association's membership, including geographical and gender balance and a mix of academic and professional support leadership roles.

Depending on the level of interest, this call may also serve to identify potential participants for future editions of the programme. In case of particularly high demand, EUA may also establish waiting lists for participation in future cohorts of the programme.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the selection process by October 2026.

Commitment and costs

The EUA Leadership Development Programme requires a substantial commitment from participants. Applicants should commit to attending all in-person sessions in the programme as described in this call for participation. Additionally, participants should commit to attending the additional online sessions provided as a complement to the programme.

As well as attendance and active participation in the sessions, participants are expected to commit to individual preparation before the sessions, to ensure participation and interaction in the discussions. Additional groupwork time should be dedicated to the development of the group project and case study from March until September 2027.

Participation in the 2027 EUA Leadership Development Programme will have a cost of **€7,450**. Participation costs cover the coffee breaks and lunches, and some group dinners organised within the programme. Participants will self-fund their travel and accommodation costs for the three on-site sessions in Ljubljana and Brussels.

Certification

Upon completion of the EUA Leadership Development Programme, participants will receive a certificate of participation.

Enquiries

Detailed information on the EUA Leadership Development Programme is available on the [EUA website](#).

For any enquiries or further questions regarding the programme or the call for applications, please contact eualead@eua.eu