

L.E.A.D.E.R. LEARNING PROGRAMME

European Public Administration Leadership Programme (EU PALP)

June 2026 - June 2027

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



Funded by
the European Union



Why public leadership matters now

European public administrations are operating in a context of **rapid change**, **increasing complexity**, and **growing instability** and **insecurity**. They must simultaneously manage the digital and green transitions, demographic shifts, and increasingly demanding citizen expectations regarding quality, transparency, and responsiveness of public services, while facing heightened geopolitical uncertainty, economic volatility, and more frequent and complex crises.

At the same time, Europe is experiencing a period of **reduced geopolitical stability**; external destabilising actions beyond the EU, give rise to internal security challenges and sustained crisis pressure for public administrations. These dynamics, encompassing both traditional and hybrid threats, further increase complexity and risk, requiring public leaders to operate with resilience, sound judgement, and system-wide awareness beyond day-to-day administrative contexts. Public administrations are therefore required to adapt faster, to act more strategically agile, and strengthen collaborative forms of governance in order to remain effective, resilient, and legitimate.

Strengthening leadership capacity is, therefore, essential for enabling administrations to navigate uncertainty, drive innovation, and sustain trust in public institutions. Recognising the need to re-shape leadership for modern public service, the **Florence School of Transnational Governance** (STG), of the [European University Institute](#) (EUI) led the design of a forward-looking leadership development initiative - the **L.E.A.D.E.R. Learning Programme** - to help equip current and future leaders with the competencies, skills, and mindsets required to navigate this complex environment.

The programme, taking place within the **European Public Administration Leadership Programme** (EU PALP), is funded through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) of the European Commission and developed in cooperation with the Secretarial-General Reform and Investment Task Force (SG REFORM) and the national Schools and Institutes of Public Administration of Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Poland, and Romania.



About the Programme

The L.E.A.D.E.R. learning programme is a **unique leadership development journey** designed for senior European public officials who want to lead change in an increasingly complex governance environment. Bringing together high-level public officials from across Europe, the programme offers a dynamic space to reflect on leadership practice, exchange experiences with peers from other administrations, and develop the strategic capabilities required to navigate today's policy challenges.

Through a series of interactive peer-learning labs, collaborative discussions, and expert-led sessions, participants will explore the competencies needed for modern public leadership - from strategic thinking and innovation to cross-government collaboration, and citizen-centred policymaking. The programme is built around a shared **European Leadership Competency Framework** and emphasises practical learning, reflection, and peer exchange rather than traditional classroom training.

The **L.E.A.D.E.R. Competency Framework** is intended to support public officials in strengthening the skills and competencies necessary to lead effectively in such an environment. It conceptualises leadership as an evolving and interconnected journey across multiple competency clusters, spanning personal, organisational, and system level leadership, with the overarching objective of strengthening public value and impact. As such, the framework is designed to support leaders who operate both within their domestic systems and across the wider European governance ecosystem, enabling them to work effectively vertically (across ministries and levels of administration) and horizontally (with European and transnational partners).



L.E.A.D.E.R.

- LEARNER**
Evolving through Continuous Learning & Self-Development
- EMPOWERING**
Empowering, Inspiring & Leading with Humanity
- AUTHENTIC**
Leading Authentically for Collaborative Public Impact
- DRIVER**
Innovating and Driving Digital & Sustainable Transformation
- ETHICAL**
Championing Ethical & Accountable Public Leadership
- RESULTS-ORIENTED**
Re-Shaping Vision & Leading Strategically

Crucially, the L.E.A.D.E.R. Programme is designed to ensure that **learning translates into action**, empowering participants to become **agents of change** within their administrations. Beyond strengthening individual leadership skills, the programme also focuses on enabling participants to actively shape and improve how their organisations operate. Through a highly practical and collaborative learning journey, participants engage with real challenges from their own administrative contexts, while “comparing notes” and exchanging effective strategies with peers across Europe. To this end, participants gain not only innovative tools but also exposure to how others are addressing similar challenges in practice, identifying concrete approaches and tools they can bring back to their own institutions.

By the end of the programme, participants are expected to:

- Diagnose and structure complex leadership and organisational challenges within interconnected governance systems;
- Develop strategically coherent reform pathways under institutional constraints and exercise sound judgement in complex and uncertain environments;
- Build and sustain coordination capacity across organisation, sectoral, and governance boundaries to secure alignment behind shared strategic objectives;
- Lead organisational reform under capacity constraints and translate strategic intent into effective implementation and sustained performance;
- Exercise strategic, organisation, and coordination leadership to steer digital transformation as an integrated governance reform process;
- Exercise leadership under crisis conditions while sustaining institutional trust, legitimacy, and organisation coherence.

The Programme will be open to a cohort of a maximum of **48 participants: eight (8) per each participating Member State.**

Successful completion of the programme curriculum will lead to the attribution of a **Certificate of Completion.**



Why attend?



Step back from day-to-day pressures and think strategically

Senior roles rarely leave time to reflect. The programme provides a rare opportunity to step away from operational demands and focus on the bigger picture: how public administrations must evolve to address complex societal, political, and technological challenges.



Learn directly from peers facing the same leadership challenges

Rather than traditional training, the programme is built around peer learning among senior officials from different European administrations. Participants exchange practical experiences, discuss real leadership dilemmas, and learn what has worked, or failed, in other countries.



Strengthen the leadership skills needed for a changing public sector

The programme focuses on the competencies increasingly required of modern public leaders: navigating complexity, leading organisational change, fostering collaboration across institutions, and maintaining citizen trust in public institutions.



Join a cross-European network of public administration leaders

Participants become part of a select group of senior officials across Europe, building relationships that extend beyond the programme. These connections can support future cooperation, policy exchange, and joint solutions to shared administrative challenges.



Bring concrete ideas back to your administration

Each session is designed to generate practical insights that participants can adapt and bring back to their organisations, from new leadership approaches to strategies for managing teams, reforms, and cross-government initiatives.



Contribute to shaping the future of European public administration leadership

Participants are not just learners but contributors. Through their experience and insights, they help shape a shared European understanding of effective public leadership, influencing how future generations of civil servants are trained and supported.

Programme structure



12 months
(June 2026 -
June 2027)



7 Modules
(6 Peer Labs & 1
Leadership Summit)



High-level
Instructors &
Practitioners



On-site (in 7
different EU MS)
& online

The Programme will run from **June 2026 to June 2027** and will include several different components. The main body of the L.E.A.D.E.R. Programme is structured around 7 residential events:

- the **6 residential Peer Labs** (2 days), each taking place in one of the 6 participating Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Poland, Latvia, and Romania); and
- an **Opening Session** (1 day before Peer Lab 1) and a Closing **EU Leadership Summit** (2 days), concluding the programme in Florence, Italy.

Additional online activities, such as online talks, peer-to-peer exchange, work on case studies, and self-study will be taking place before and after the residential events, adding up to approximately **1-2 hours of individual study time per week** (excluding holiday periods).

Main programme elements:

6 Thematic Peer Labs (2 days each)

- Keynotes and inspirational speeches from high-level speakers and practitioners;
- Short theory inputs;
- Practical and interactive elements with peers.

EU Leadership Summit (Florence)

- Presentation of participants' Leadership in Action Cases;
- Participants engage on final simulation on a EU-wide crisis response;
- Programme closing session.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

- Structured exchanges on shared leadership challenges;
- Comparing leadership styles, hierarchy dynamics, and decision-making culture across countries.

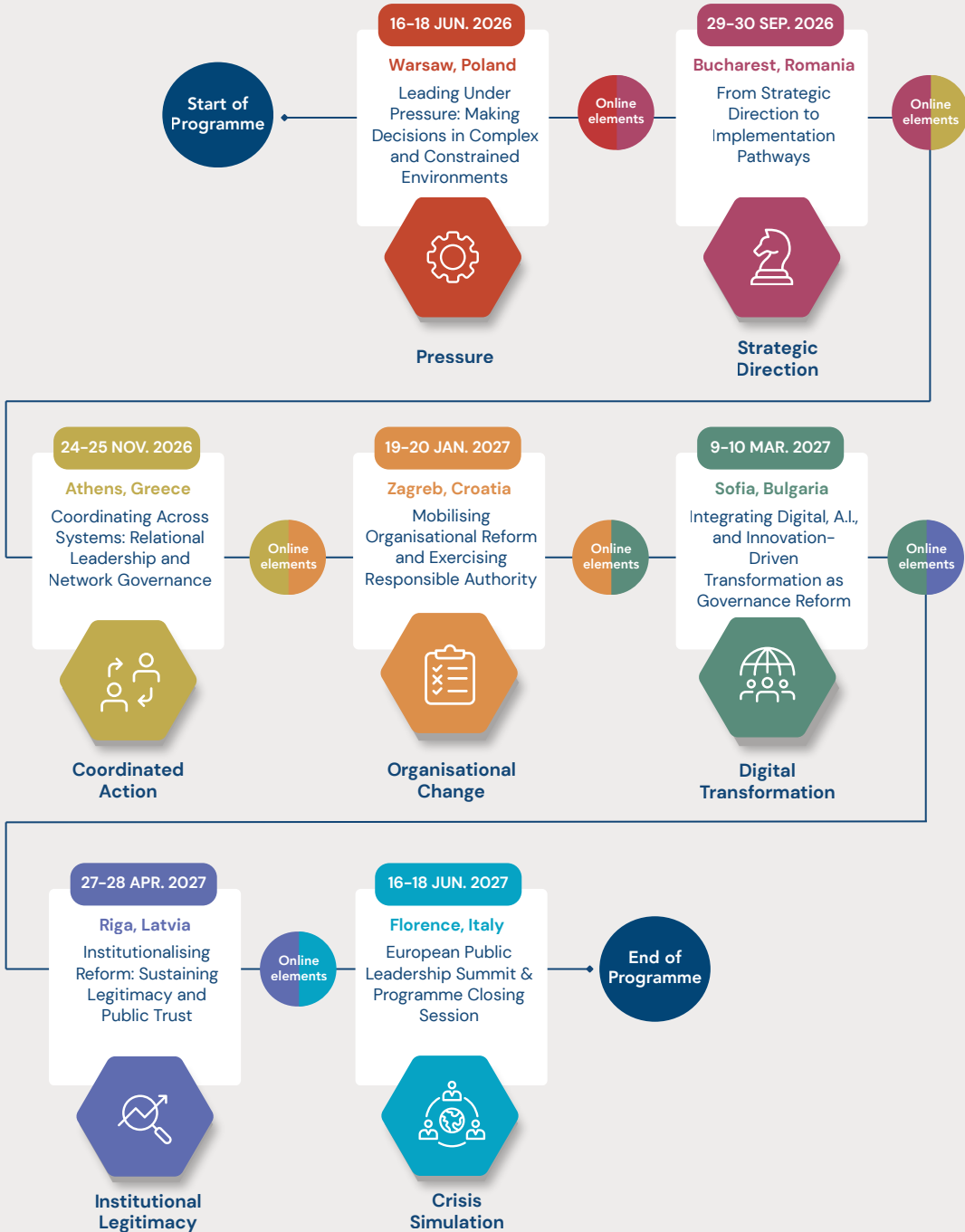
Leadership in Action Cases

- Self-defined leadership challenge from one's own organisational context;
- Continuous development of the case throughout the programme to integrate insights from each session.

Digital Learning Hub

- Curated collection of short leadership tools;
- Mainly asynchronous with interactive elements;
- Digital tool library and point of reference for programme materials.

L.E.A.D.E.R. learning journey



Overview of the 6 Peer Labs

Peer Lab 1: Leading Under Pressure: Making Difficult Decisions in Complex & Constrained Environments

The opening lab establishes the analytical foundation of the programme by integrating structured systems diagnosis with leadership under crisis, geopolitical instability, and systemic uncertainty. Participants examine how compressed timeframes, ambiguity, security pressures and institutional interdependence can generate cognitive overload and destabilise established patterns of authority and accountability. The lab develops disciplined sense-making and ethical clarity, recognising that conditions of sustained uncertainty test both individual leadership judgement and the resilience of institutions.

Peer Lab 2: From Strategic Direction to Implementation Pathways

Building on systemic diagnosis, this lab focuses on shaping strategically coherent reform pathways under institutional and political constraints. Participants examine how public value, legal frameworks, fiscal limitations, and political feasibility interact in defining reform direction. The emphasis lies on moving beyond reactive decision-making toward structured prioritisation, sequencing, and credible reform design.

Peer Lab 3: Coordinating Across Systems: Relational Leadership & Network Governance

Peer Lab 3 addresses the structural fragmentation characteristic of multi-level governance. Participants analyse how ministries, agencies, and Member States operate within overlapping mandates and interdependencies at national but also EU level. The lab treats coordination as an enacted leadership capability grounded in relational authority, trust building, and structured collaboration across institutional boundaries

Peer Lab 4: Mobilising Organisational Reform & Exercising Responsible Authority

This lab focuses on translating strategic intent into sustained organisational performance. Participants examine reform mobilisation under resistance, reform fatigue, and capacity constraints. Particular attention is given to authority at the political administrative interface and to embedding accountability, performance orientation, and ethical integrity within reform processes.

Peer Lab 5: Integrating Digital, A.I. & Innovation-Driven Transformation as Governance Reform

Peer Lab 5 addresses digital transformation and artificial intelligence as systemic governance reform. Participants examine how digital innovation reshapes administrative processes, capability requirements, accountability structures, and public value creation. The lab emphasises responsible innovation, ethical safeguards, and integration of digital initiatives within broader reform trajectories.

Peer Lab 6: Institutionalising Reform: Sustaining Legitimacy & Public Trust

The final lab consolidates reform trajectories by examining durability of change and long-term stabilisation of institutional legitimacy. Participants reassess reform pathways at system level, analyse trust dynamics, and evaluate how transparency, engagement, and consistent authority generate sustained credibility beyond initial implementation

Overview of EU Leadership Summit

The EU Leadership Summit marks the conclusion of the L.E.A.D.E.R. Learning Programme and will take place in Florence, Italy on 15-16 June 2027. The two-day summit brings the full cohort together for a final time and serves as the convergence point for the individual and collective learning journeys of the programme year.

Participants present their Leadership in Action Cases to peers, facilitators, and invited practitioners, sharing the strategic choices, institutional insights, and leadership development their cases represent. The summit also includes a collective crisis simulation exercise on a European-wide governance scenario, designed to draw on and demonstrate the full range of capabilities developed across the six peer labs.

Successful completion of the programme leads to the award of a Certificate of Completion from the European University Institute and Partner Institutions.

Overview of 'Leadership in Action Cases'

At the heart of the L.E.A.D.E.R. Programme is each participant's **Leadership in Action Case**, a real strategic challenge from their own administration that they will work on throughout the twelve months of the programme.

At the point of application, participants are asked to submit a brief nomination: a title and a short description (200-300 words) of the challenge they want to bring. The nomination should address the following questions:

1. What is the leadership challenge you are facing?
2. Why is it strategically significant for your organisation or administration?
3. What is your role in relation to this challenge, and why do you want to work on it throughout the L.E.A.D.E.R. Programme?

Typical cases involve a reform initiative requiring cross-institutional alignment, a coordination challenge across ministries or governance levels, a digital transformation process, or a crisis-related governance issue. What matters is that the challenge is real, consequential, and sits within the participant's sphere of authority and influence. Each case is formally framed during the Opening Day and Peer Lab 1, developed through peer consultation and expert input at each subsequent lab, and presented in its full form at the EU Leadership Summit in Florence.



Eligibility requirements

Participants must meet the requirements presented below and, if selected, **must commit to attend the entirety of the learning programme.**

Each candidate's eligibility will be assessed based on the following requirements:

Language Skills	Minimum Education / Qualification
Fluency in English (CEFR C1)	Master's Degree (any discipline)

Experience	Position / Role
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 years of professional experience in the public sector; At least 5 years in managerial or leadership roles; Demonstrated leadership responsibility. <p><u>Examples of leadership responsibility:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds strategic, managerial, or coordination responsibilities; Leads departments, units, agencies, or cross-government initiatives with decision-making competence; Oversees teams and large organisational resources; Shapes institutional cultures, reform, and public value creation; Operates at the interface of policy, management, and implementation in an executive capacity. 	<p>Depending on the administrative and cultural differentiation of such roles within EU Member States, these could include, <u>for example</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors-General; Deputy Directors-General; Directors; Secretaries-General; Secretaries; Directors of Directorates; Heads of Department; Heads or Chiefs of Unit; Heads of Sector; Senior Policy Directors, and Executives of Public Agencies.

General Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time commitment and availability to participate in the entirety of the programme; Applicants will be requested to submit a signed Letter of Commitment from their institutions' top hierarchy at the time of application.

Participant selection

The programme is designed for **senior public officials** who are currently exercising leadership responsibilities and are in a position to influence organisational change, policy implementation, or administrative reform within their institutions.

Successful applicants must fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined above, while showcasing strong motivation, relevant leadership experience, and the potential to both benefit from and contribute to the programme.

Among eligible candidates, the final selection will be based on a qualitative assessment of applications, with priority given to those who:

Demonstrate strong motivation and learning needs



Show potential to create impact beyond themselves



Hold roles with clear leadership responsibilities



Display readiness to actively engage in peer learning and experience-sharing



Submit a concrete and relevant leadership challenge



Application and selection timeline

31
March

Official invitation to apply to the L.E.A.D.E.R. Programme is sent out by the National Programme Partners.

If you are eligible and interested to participate in the programme, please discuss it with your institution's top management. If your top manager approves, then ask for them to sign the official **Letter of Commitment** and complete the application form for the appropriate country.

30
April

Applications close on the 30th of April 2026 (23.59 PM CEST).

All supporting documentation has to be submitted together with the official application form **to the national programme partners** within the indicated deadline. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline shall not be considered. **Please note that upon expressing interest, participants are already confirming their availability to attend the entire programme should they be selected.**

15
May

The suitability of applicants is assessed by National Programme Partners, who are responsible for concluding the national selection of participants based on the aforementioned criteria.

The final cohort should be as diverse as possible in terms of gender, institutions, and professional profiles. This will help ensure that the final cohort is composed by individuals with varied perspectives and skills sets, who will be able to bring unique contributions to the programme.

20
May

The STG/EUI communicates the final selection to successful candidates.

Participants will be given **5 days** their spot in the programme. In the event of withdrawals, additional candidates will be contacted from the reserve list. **Confirmed participants will be invited to proceed promptly with booking their travel arrangements.** Once the selection process is completed, participants will receive a more detailed logistical note with all the necessary information about the programme and reimbursement guidelines.

16
June

Official launch of the L.E.A.D.E.R. Training Programme in Warsaw, Poland on the 16th of June.

The first residential event of the programme will include an 1-day Opening Session and a 2-day Peer Lab, running between 16-18 June 2026. **All accepted participants are expected to attend the event in presence.**

Other important information:

Travel and accommodation bookings and costs

Participation in the programme is free of charge and costs are covered through the financial contribution of the European Union. However, selected participants will be required to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements in advance for each residential event.

In particular:

- participants are responsible for arranging and covering the upfront costs of their travel, accommodation, and subsistence for the duration of the trip;
- participants must retain all relevant receipts and, following each residential event, upload the supporting documentation to the EUI reimbursement platform in order to be reimbursed;

Important to note:

- Reimbursements will be made in line with the pre-communicated financial ceilings;
- Reimbursement is conditional upon attendance and submission of supporting documentation; no reimbursement will be provided in cases of non-attendance.

Catering and subsistence-related expenses

Catering (coffee breaks, water, and lunches) will be provided by the organisers. One group dinner will also be provided. All other meals and expenses will have to be covered directly by the participants, unless they are part of one of the social activities included in the programme.

- on days where no dinner is offered, participants will be offered a moderate per-diem to cover additional subsistence costs. If all meals are covered, there will be no per-diem.

Learning materials and technological/software requirements

- All learning materials (handouts, articles, reference material, etc.) will be made available to participants via the European Commission's Virtual Learning Environment the **EU Academy**. There will be no need to purchase any material;
- **Microsoft Teams** will be used for live online classes and virtual exchanges; participants will need a PC or laptop equipped with a microphone and a webcam;
- For the residential sessions, participants are encouraged to check the feasibility of accessing external Wi-Fi providers with the IT departments of their institution.

Time and commitment of the participants

To receive the **Certificate of Completion** participants must be prepared to:

- attend all residential sessions of the programme;
- be able to devote at least 1-2 hours per week for self-study and online exchanges;
- actively participate in the online elements, including completing exercises and participating in peer-to-peer exchanges (included in the 1-2 hours of self study);
- submit a completed Leadership in Action Case Study by the end of the programme.

In this respect, the participants' institutions must also be prepared to support the nominated participants in their learning endeavor by accommodating the study time and travel plans into their working schedule.

How to apply

LATVIA (VAS)

Contact point: Ms. Linda Puriņa
linda.purina@vas.gov.lv

[APPLY](#)

Application requirements:

1. Completed Application Form: Candidates should complete the application form **via the relevant national link above**. In addition to providing personal and professional information, candidates are expected to:

- clearly demonstrate their motivation to participate, including how the programme could support their leadership development and how they envisage contributing to the learning experience;
- outline a concrete leadership challenge they intend to work on during the programme, if selected.

2. Updated Curriculum Vitae (CV): Candidates must clearly present all relevant professional experience, including positions held, as well as associated leadership roles, tasks, and responsibilities. All educational degrees and qualifications, as well as relevant trainings, seminars, and other activities related to the programme, should also be clearly indicated;

3. Signed Letter of Commitment, both from the candidate as well as the Top Management of their institution, agency, or body.

Language requirements:

Interested candidates should keep in mind that this learning programme will take place entirely in English. Participants are therefore required to have a strong working proficiency in English (C1, both spoken and written) to fully engage in all learning activities and discussions. Interviews, prior to the final selection of candidates, may also be conducted to ensure that the language requirements are met.

About the programme providers:



The Florence School of Transnational Governance (STG)

The Florence School of Transnational Governance (STG), founded in 2017 at the European University Institute, is a global hub for teaching, training, and research in governance beyond national borders. In the cradle of the Renaissance, we provide a dynamic platform where leaders from policymaking, business, civil society, media, and academia connect. We welcome independent minds, thinkers, and doers, offering world-class expertise from leading scholars and policymakers. Committed to innovation and inclusivity, we equip future and current leaders with the tools to tackle today's most pressing global challenges. More information [here](#).

The European University Institute (EUI)

The European University Institute (EUI), located in Florence, Italy, is Europe's postgraduate and postdoctoral research university dedicated to the social sciences and humanities. Established in 1972 by the European Union's founding member states, the EUI opened its doors to researchers in 1976. The EUI is an intergovernmental organisation providing advanced academic training and cutting-edge research opportunities in the fields of economics, history, law, political, social sciences, and beyond. More information [here](#).

Programme partners:



Directorate General Reform and Investment Task Force
(SG REFORM) | European Commission



Institute of Public Administration (IPA) | Bulgaria



Latvian School of Public Administration (VAS) | Latvia



National School of Public Administration (NSPA) | Croatia



Lech Kaczyński National School of Public Administration (KSAP) Poland



National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government (EKDDA) | Greece



National Institute of Administration (INA) | Romania



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European Public Administration Leadership Programme (EU PALP)

More information:

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