EST ACADEMY 2026

Multipolar World Order: Policy, Power and Public Communication

ANNEX
Detailed Programme Structure and Session Outline

Module Descriptions

MODULE 1 — Understanding Multipolarity

This foundational module introduces participants to the changing architecture of the international system and the transition from unipolarity toward increasingly multipolar forms of global governance.

Participants will explore:

- competing definitions of multipolarity;
- how power is distributed between states, institutions, and non-state actors;
- the role of geopolitical competition in shaping governance systems;
- competing visions of international order and global cooperation.

The module combines expert inputs, guided discussions, debates, and interactive governance mapping exercises.

Indicative Session Outline

Session 1 — From Unipolarity to Multipolarity

Introduction to key concepts and competing definitions of multipolarity. Exploration of the evolution from the post-Cold War order toward contemporary multipolar dynamics.

Interactive component: Guided discussion and small-group reflection on "what defines power today".

Session 2 — Mapping Power in a Multipolar World

Analysis of how power is distributed across states, regional actors, international organisations, private actors, and civil society across different policy domains.

Interactive component: Collaborative governance mapping workshop comparing regional and institutional approaches.

Session 3 — Competing Visions of World Order

Examination of competing governance models, geopolitical narratives, and normative tensions shaping contemporary global governance.

Interactive component: Structured debate in which participants defend assigned governance perspectives followed by moderated debriefing.

MODULE 2 — Institutions in the Age of Multipolarity

This module focuses on how institutions operate under conditions of fragmentation, geopolitical pressure, and multilevel governance complexity.

Participants will examine:

- the functioning of the United Nations system;
- regional governance structures such as the European Union, the African Union, and others;
- tensions between national sovereignty and international cooperation;
- coordination challenges across global, regional, and national levels.

Sessions will include case studies, institutional simulations, and scenario-based exercises.

Indicative Session Outline

Session 1 — The UN System under Geopolitical Pressure

Exploration of how multipolarity affects United Nations decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and multilateral cooperation.

Interactive component: Case-based walkthrough of a UN process combined with group analysis of power dynamics, constraints, and institutional bottlenecks.

Session 2 — Regional Responses to Multipolarity

Comparative analysis of regional organisations and governance responses to fragmentation and geopolitical competition.

Interactive component: Comparative case-study exercise examining different regional governance approaches and institutional capacities.

Session 3 — Multilevel Governance in Practice

Examination of interactions between global, regional, national, and local governance structures across complex policy domains.

Interactive component: Scenario-based governance simulation involving coordination challenges and policy tensions.

MODULE 3 — Policymaking in the Age of Multipolarity

Participants specialise in one thematic policy track, engaging in applied policy analysis, communication exercises, policy labs, stakeholder mapping exercises, simulations, and case-based learning.

Public Health & Environment

Exploring how preventive policies and "non-events", such as avoided epidemics or mitigated climate risks, become difficult to communicate in fragmented media environments shaped by misinformation and political contestation.

Session Outline

1. Global Health & Climate Governance in a Multipolar World
2. Why Prevention Fails: Political Incentives, Crisis Politics, and Structural Short-Termism
3. Simulation Lab: Negotiating Prevention and Crisis Response in Fragmented Governance Systems
4. Public Attention and Invisible Crises: Media Narratives in Health & Climate Governance

Participants will engage in governance mapping labs, negotiation simulations, misinformation analyses, and communication strategy workshops focused on translating preventive policy into compelling public narratives.

Security & Defence

Examining nuclear deterrence, strategic stability, competing security narratives, and the communication challenges surrounding "invisible" prevention and risk reduction in a multipolar security environment.

Session Outline

1. The Architecture of Global Security
2. Humanitarian Impact & The Critical Turn
3. The Dual-Use Crisis Simulation
4. Evidence-Based Nuclear Citizenship

Interactive elements include strategic simulations, Oxford-style debates, crisis negotiations, and analytical peer-review exercises focused on multipolar deterrence and strategic communication.

Migration & Human Rights

Analysing migration beyond the "crisis" narrative, focusing on competing political framings, evidence-based policymaking, human rights protection, and the challenges of communicating migration complexity in polarized public debates.

Session Outline

1. Migration Beyond the "Crisis" Narrative
2. Media, Political Incentives, and the Construction of Migration
3. Why Research Struggles to Shape Migration Policy / EU Migration Externalisation in Practice
4. Rebuilding Evidence-Based and Rights-Respecting Migration Debates

Participants will engage in media analysis workshops, stakeholder mapping exercises, policy communication reflections, and applied discussions on migration governance and rights-based policymaking.

Digital Policy & AI

Investigating algorithm-driven information ecosystems, AI-generated content, platform governance, and the growing fragmentation of regulatory approaches to misinformation and synthetic media.

Session Outline

1. Understanding the Digital Information Crisis: Algorithms, AI, and Misinformation
2. Platform Power, Regulation, and Global Governance Responses
3. Designing Policy Solutions for the AI Era
4. Narratives, Media, and Public Perception in the Age of AI

Participants will analyse AI governance frameworks, platform regulation, misinformation ecosystems, and communication challenges surrounding synthetic media through policy labs and media autopsy exercises.

Gender Equality

Exploring the growing disconnect between evidence-based understandings of structural gender inequality and public narratives portraying equality as already achieved, within fragmented and polarized media ecosystems.

Session Outline

1. Gender Equality in a Multipolar Policy Landscape
2. The Core Problem: The Myth of Achieved Equality
3. Policymaking Lab: Navigating Complexity Across Regions
4. Media Breakdown: Why the Narrative Wins Over Evidence

Participants will engage in myth-busting exercises, policy simulations, stakeholder role-play activities, media analysis workshops, and communication reframing exercises.

MODULE 4 — Communicating Policy in Competing Truths

This module equips participants with practical communication skills necessary for translating complex policy issues into accessible and compelling public narratives.

Participants will develop:

- public speaking skills;
- policy storytelling techniques;
- audience-oriented communication strategies;
- approaches to communicating evidence in polarized environments;
- tools for addressing misinformation and competing narratives.

Participants will also begin preparing their final Science Slam presentations through mentoring and peer feedback.

Indicative Session Outline

Session 1 — Foundations of Public Speaking and Science Communication

Participants are introduced to the fundamentals of effective public communication, including audience engagement, narrative-building, delivery techniques, rhetorical structure, and communicating policy complexity accessibly.

This session will be delivered in collaboration with a professional public speaking and communication coach.

Session 2 — Practice Labs by Thematic Track

Participants work within their selected thematic tracks to apply public speaking and communication techniques directly to their policy areas.

Activities include:

- peer feedback exercises;
- narrative reframing;
- communication drills;
- audience adaptation exercises;
- Science Slam preparation workshops.

Session 3 — Advanced Communication and Storytelling

A second intensive session with the public speaking coach focusing on persuasive storytelling, stage presence, emotional framing, handling complexity, and communicating evidence under conditions of misinformation and polarization.

Session 4 — Thematic Practice Sessions and Final Rehearsals

Participants continue working within thematic tracks, refining their final Science Slam presentations through structured practice sessions, mentoring, peer-review, and feedback loops.

MODULE 5 — Science Slams

The Academy culminates in a series of in-person Science Slams hosted in partnership with universities across Europe.

Selected participants will deliver TED-style talks designed to communicate complex policy issues to non-specialist audiences in an engaging, accessible, and evidence-informed way.

The Science Slams represent the final stage of the Academy's pedagogical model: transforming policy expertise into societal impact through effective public communication.

What is a Science Slam?

A Science Slam is a public-facing communication format in which participants present complex research or policy issues in an accessible, engaging, and creative way before a non-specialist audience.

Unlike traditional academic presentations, Science Slams prioritise:

- clarity and accessibility;

- audience engagement;
- narrative-driven communication;
- creativity and storytelling;
- evidence-informed public communication.

Participants are encouraged to use metaphors, humour, visuals, examples, and audience-oriented storytelling techniques while maintaining analytical rigour and factual accuracy.

The objective is not simply to present information, but to bridge the gap between expertise and public understanding in an increasingly fragmented information environment.

Science Slam Locations (Pending definitive confirmation):

Security & Defence - Vienna

Migration & Human Rights - Utrecht

Public Health & Environment - Milan / Rome

Gender Equality - Barcelona / Madrid

Digital Policy & AI - Dublin