EST ACADEMY 2026

Multipolar World Order: Policy, Power and Public Communication

Call for applications

Multipolar World Order: Policy, Power and Public Communication

The European Student Think Tank is pleased to launch the Call for Applications for the EST Academy 2026 - an international, interdisciplinary, and impact-oriented programme bringing together young researchers, students, and professionals from across Europe and beyond.

The Academy responds to one of the defining challenges of our time: understanding and communicating policy complexity in an increasingly multipolar and fragmented world. As global governance becomes challenged by competing centres of power, fragmented information ecosystems, geopolitical rivalry, and diverging narratives, the ability not only to analyse policy but also to communicate it effectively has become essential.

EST Academy 2026 combines policy analysis, institutional understanding, public communication, and applied learning through a coherent and highly interactive learning pathway. Rather than functioning as a traditional lecture-based programme, the Academy places participants at the centre of the learning experience through debates, policy simulations, policy labs, media analyses, stakeholder mapping exercises, collaborative group work, and hands-on communication activities.

Participants will engage directly with world-class experts coming from policymaking institutions, think tanks, academia, international organisations, journalism, and civil society. The programme is specifically designed to expose participants to a plurality of professional perspectives, governance traditions, and regional experiences.

As part of the **Building for the Future Initiative by On Think Tanks**, EST Academy 2026 will feature experts and practitioners from multiple regions of the world, going beyond a solely European perspective and enabling participants to engage with truly global policy debates.

Structure of the Academy

The Academy is designed as a five-module learning pathway in which each phase progressively builds upon the previous one.

Programme Sequence (See Annex for detailed description of each Module)

Module 1 - Understanding Multipolarity (Online)

Roll-out period: 3-13 July

Building the analytical foundations necessary to understand contemporary global governance, geopolitical fragmentation, and competing visions of world order.

Module 2 – Institutions in the Age of Multipolarity (Online)

Roll-out period: 15-25 July

Exploring how international, regional, and national institutions function under conditions of geopolitical competition and multilevel governance complexity.

Module 3 – Policymaking in the Age of Multipolarity (Online)

Roll-out period: 27 July - 8 August + 24 August - 5 September

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

Module 4 – Communicating Policy in Competing Truths (Online)

Roll-out period: 7 September - early October

Focused on public speaking, policy storytelling, narrative-building, and translating policy complexity into accessible and persuasive communication.

Module 5 – Science Slams (In person*)

Roll-out period: late October

The final stage of the Academy consists of in-person Science Slams organised in partnership with universities across Europe, where selected participants will deliver TED-style policy talks before public audiences.

****Participation in the Science Slam will be reserved for a maximum of 6-10 participants per thematic track. Should the number of eligible participants within a track exceed this limitation, participation as a speaker in the Science Slam will be determined by the organizing team based on participants' performance throughout Modules 1-4, including attendance and active participation during sessions, as well as the completion and quality of the practical tasks assigned between Academy sessions.***

Learning Format

During each module, participants may expect to attend approximately 3-4 online sessions, each lasting between 90 and 120 minutes, typically organised on a weekly basis (1-2 per week). Sessions will generally take place during evening CEST hours, approximately between 18:00 and 20:00.

Each session builds progressively upon the previous one, providing participants with increasingly in-depth analytical and practical expertise. Due to the cumulative structure of the Academy, attendance at all sessions is a mandatory prerequisite for the successful completion of the programme and participation in the final Science Slam presentations.

Sessions will be highly interactive and practice-oriented, and may include:

- policy simulations;
- negotiations and structured debates;
- policy labs and scenario-building exercises;
- stakeholder mapping workshops;
- media analysis and misinformation autopsies;
- collaborative group work;
- public speaking and communication exercises;
- peer feedback sessions;
- expert-led case study discussions.

Participants should therefore expect an intensive and participatory learning environment rather than passive attendance.

What Participants Can Expect

Selected participants will:

- Engage directly with internationally recognised experts from policymaking institutions, think tanks, academia, international organisations, journalism, and civil society;
- Gain exposure to a broad range of professional experiences, governance systems, and policy approaches from different world regions;
- Develop practical skills in policy analysis, institutional analysis, strategic communication, public speaking, and policy proposal development;
- Strengthen competencies in teamwork, leadership, collaborative problem-solving, and interdisciplinary cooperation;
- Explore how competing narratives, misinformation, and fragmented media ecosystems shape policymaking and public understanding;
- Participate in simulations, debates, policy labs, and hands-on applied exercises;
- Join a pan-European and international network of highly motivated students, researchers, and young professionals;
- Deliver a TED-style public presentation within the framework of the final Science Slams organised in partnership with universities across Europe.

Who Can Apply

Applications are open to:

- Bachelor's students
- Master's students
- PhD candidates
- Young professionals
- Early-career researchers

from across Europe and neighbouring regions with a strong interest in policymaking, governance, international affairs, communication, and public engagement.

How to Apply

To apply, candidates are required to complete the application form **by June 26, 2026, 23:59 CEST.**

Applicants must upload the following supplementary documents:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV);
- Motivation Letter* specifying:
  - their motivation for participating in the Academy;
  - their relevant experience and credentials.

***The link to the template for the Motivation Letter may be found inside the application form.**

For any questions regarding the application process, please contact: **estacademy2026@esthinktank.com**.

Results will be communicated by: **June 29, 2026.**

About the European Student Think Tank (EST)

The European Student Think Tank (EST) is a pan-European, youth-led non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing youth-driven, evidence-based public policy in Europe and beyond.

EST connects students, early-career researchers, and young professionals with policymakers, institutions, and civil society actors in order to co-produce policy-relevant research and innovative forms of civic engagement.

A core value of the organisation is the recognition of young people not as beneficiaries, but as policy actors with lived experience, analytical capacity, and leadership potential. EST is grounded in the belief that meaningful youth participation strengthens the relevance, quality, and legitimacy of public policy.

The organisation has extensive experience collaborating with major international institutions and stakeholders, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Youth Office, the European Parliament, and others.

EST is also the only youth-led founding member of the Europe Regional NGO Network supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), and serves as the grantee organisation of the 2026 edition of Building for the Future by On Think Tanks.

Final Remarks

EST Academy 2026 is not designed as a traditional lecture series. It is an applied, interactive, and interdisciplinary learning experience that aims to equip participants not only with analytical expertise, but also with the ability to communicate complexity responsibly in a fragmented and contested world.

We look forward to welcoming the next generation of policy thinkers, communicators, and changemakers.