



SHAPING FUTURES

African-European Network on
Development and Sustainability

SHAPING FUTURES ACADEMY 2025





Shaping Futures: why now?

One of the key ways we contribute to building a sustainable future is through initiatives like the Shaping Futures Academy. This professional development programme brings together peers from select African partner countries and Europe to exchange knowledge and interdisciplinary expertise on governance and sustainable development.

Each year, a cohort of 25 participants engages in both online and in-person dialogue, focusing on preselected topics related to global sustainability challenges. The Academy is rooted in the frameworks of the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasize sustainable socio-economic development.

We need a new generation of leaders capable of driving transformative change to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. Through investing in the empowerment of future leaders, the Academy aims to develop and enhance their skills and insights necessary to navigate and lead in an era of profound uncertainty and complexity.



What is the Shaping Futures Academy?

The “Shaping Futures: African-European Network on Development and Sustainability Academy” (Shaping Futures Academy), formerly known as the “BMZ African-German Leadership Academy” (African Academy), is a dialogue and training programme targeted at early to mid-career professionals from participating African (Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Togo, and Zambia) and European EU+ countries. The Academy aims to empower future leaders on both continents by bringing together like-minded peers to reflect on their roles as change makers. This includes developing strategies to drive or support transformative processes centered around advancing sustainability goals in both present and future contexts.

With diversity at its core, the Shaping Futures Academy welcomes participants from various sectors (e.g., civil society, academia and think tanks, public administration, business, and media) to encourage transdisciplinarity and to promote networking and knowledge exchange. By creating a space where diverse perspectives and expertise converge, the Shaping Futures Academy presents a unique opportunity for participants to learn from each other, identify good practices and principles, jointly develop insights on global sustainability change, and share common but differing values and rich experiences. At the same time, they will enhance their leadership abilities through peer-driven learning to achieve development and sustainability principles.

Furthermore, the Shaping Futures Academy is a space for the collaborative creation of new knowledge, fosters mutual understanding, and establishes trustful cooperation. It thus lays the foundation for a thriving network characterised by long-term collaboration and partnership between institutions and champions of sustainability across sectors, countries, and continents.

The Shaping Futures Academy is hosted by the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme is conducted in English.



Three key pillars

The Academy is grounded in the following three pillars, which we deem essential in contributing to capacity development:

KNOWLEDGE

Under this pillar, participants share their existing and acquire new knowledge on a given topic of the Academy. Participants strengthen their analytical capabilities as part of the academic modules by engaging with concepts including systems thinking and multidimensional inequalities, as well as by interacting with diverse scientific and practice-oriented stakeholders.

ACTION

In the action pillar, which is integrated into the knowledge pillar, participants apply the new knowledge gained. In small group constellations, they work on challenges that combine and expand their skills using tools and methods learned in the respective modules.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership pillar focuses on developing individual and collective competence, including strengthening dialogue skills, problem-solving, exchanging perspectives, teamwork, reflecting on one's values, and building strong and trustful relationships. The new and enhanced competences support the participants' professional development journey, which is individually rewarding and directly beneficial to their home institutions.



Format, content and schedule

The 2025 edition is scheduled between May and November and organised into five connected learning blocks: three part-time online and two full-time in-person modules.

The first in-person phase will take place at IDOS in Bonn, Germany, from June to July 2025, with participants benefitting from study trips to Berlin and Brussels (Belgium).

The second in-person phase will be held in October 2025 in Accra, Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana).

The online phases (May, September, and November 2025) are planned as a part-time programme with an estimated workload of three (3) hours of synchronous learning per day, utilising a variety of learning formats, combining elements of plenary and group calls, as well as self-paced learning and offline discussions.

The programme, delivered in a block format, utilizes a range of training methods used to cultivate learning, including but not limited to facilitated sessions, workshops, open space and bar camp formats, presentations, discussions, excursions, expert interviews, and role-play. The Shaping Futures Academy works under the premise that knowledge acquisition is not passive but requires open and active engagement. Through collaborative peer learning, participants benefit from an exchange of different perspectives, hone their critical thinking skills, and develop shared values.



“The programme has challenged my perspective on leadership, and i’m excited to put my new skills to use.”

João Canossa Dias, Shaping Futures Academy 2024 participant



Schedule of the 2025 Academy

5 - 16 May	In-between	4 - 6 June	10 - 13 June
Online Opening and Introductory Module Welcome and introduction to the Academy as well as to the theme of sustainable development.	The in-between phases are designed to prompt participants to reflect on the previous module’s content, including identifying their individual key takeaways. In addition, participants receive individual coaching sessions and apply the new or enhanced competences to the unique contexts of their home countries.	Welcome to IDOS Participants will be welcomed by the institute and IDOS colleagues.	Leadership I Participants will discuss different leadership models and theories. They will explore their values, attitudes, goals and visions for the future and systematically reflect on how their actions are determined by certain thought patterns.
16 June - 8 July	In-between	1 - 19 September	In-between
Just Transition Management Sustainability should be a reality in every community. This module introduces „Just Sustainability Transitions,“ a governance approach for societal transformation. Participants will learn practical tools to create meaningful change. Study trips to Brussels and Berlin will offer firsthand experiences of how these principles are implemented in Europe and Germany.	Participants receive individual coaching sessions and apply the new or enhanced knowledge, methods, and skills they’ve gained to the unique contexts of their home countries. This includes preparing for the online module.	Tackling Multidimensional Inequalities Inequality impacts all areas of life and is at the heart of today’s challenges. As part of the module, we will explore the complexity, multidimensionality, and intersectional nature of inequalities. It offers room to discuss key drivers, new pathways, and potential policy solutions. This module takes place online.	Participants receive individual coaching sessions and apply the new or enhanced knowledge, methods, and skills they’ve gained to the unique contexts of their home countries. This includes preparing for the next in-person module in Accra, Ghana.
13 - 17 October	20 - 31 October	In-between	17 - 21 November
Leadership II Participants will reflect on their personal leadership journey and discuss what kind of leadership is needed to address today’s complex challenges.	Citizenship and Democracy The public is increasingly frustrated with governments and democracies. This may lead people to consider anti-democratic governance. But democracy is about the people’s power. This module explores ways citizens can reclaim their sovereign role and improve democracy for everyone.	Participants receive individual coaching sessions and apply the new or enhanced knowledge, methods, and skills they’ve gained to the unique contexts of their home countries. This includes preparing for the conclusion of the Academy and joining the network.	Harvesting and Programme Closing As the Academy journey nears the end, the third and final online module invites participants to further reflect on their learning journey during the past months. After completing the Academy, participants become new members of the Shaping Futures Network and join the existing alumni pool.

LEGEND

	ONLINE
	GERMANY
	GHANA
	HOME COUNTRIES

**this schedule is tentative and is subject to change.*

Who is the programme for?

The Shaping Futures Academy targets early to mid-career professionals from participating African (Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Togo and Zambia) and European (EU, plus EEA and UK) countries.

POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS OF THE SHAPING FUTURES ACADEMY SHOULD:

- be a national or permanent resident of one of the participating countries
- be 25-40 years of age at time of application*
- work on issues relevant for sustainable development and governance
- have at least three years' work experience (non-remunerated experience is also recognised)
- have the support of their employer (written support required as part of the application)
- have a very good command of the English language (minimum: equivalent to B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
- be respectful of other cultures
- be open to teamwork, reflection and a wide variety of working methods
- be available and committed to attend and participate fully in both the online (May, September, November 2025) and in-person (June, July, October, 2025) modules of the Academy (refer to the Schedule 2025 for exact dates)
- adhere to the principles of timeliness and respectful conduct during interactions
- have a valid passport (at the time of travel and for the entire duration of the Academy)

**Older applicants, who have taken parental leave, may be considered*



„On the one hand I have learned a lot from the programme and on the other hand I have learned a lot from the participants and their enormous pool of expertises.“

Mamadou Djigo, African Academy 2023 participant

Financial assistance

In order to facilitate participation, successful applicants to the Shaping Futures Academy will be awarded a financial assistance, covering the following:

- Travel to and from Germany and Ghana
- Accommodation for the duration of the in-person phases
- A monthly living allowance to cover living costs in Germany and Ghana for the duration of the in-person phases
- Health, accident, and personal liability insurance for the duration of their stay in Germany and Ghana
- Subsidy to help meet the technical requirements of the online phases of the programme

**Exceptions may apply to participants from host countries (Europe and Ghana)*

**Please note that the scholarship awarded is not sufficient to provide financial support for participants' families.*



Benefits for...

... PARTICIPANTS

- Participation in an innovative academic and practice-oriented international dialogue format
- Build new or augment existing knowledge on the themes of governance and sustainable development.
- Strengthened leadership skills through collective peer learning, complemented by individual coaching
- Opportunity to become part of an international network of like-minded professionals
- Exchange and development of new ideas with peers from partner countries
- Engagement in different learning formats
- Enhanced cultural exchange in the form of trips to Germany and Ghana



"The IDOS academies foster a spirit of unity and shared purpose that's truly powerful."

Moritz Langer, Shaping Futures Academy 2024 participant

... SENDING INSTITUTION

The Shaping Futures Academy offers a broad range of benefits for sending institutions:

- Capacity development of staff in leadership, governance, and sustainability. The knowledge and skills acquired can be directly applied within the participants' home institutions
- Become part of a growing cross-sectoral network of institutions working towards sustainable development in the seven partner countries and Germany/Europe, opening up new and continued opportunities for cooperation in the future
- Opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the African Agenda 2063



Become part of a transnational network

Following the successful participation in the Academy, alumni, and their home institutions will become part of the Shaping Futures Network and jointly engage in knowledge cooperation. The network members themselves drive network activities to encourage ownership and shared responsibility. Network activities can include collaborative organisation and hosting of high-level policy dialogues, joint publications, conference participation, or any other engagements consistent with the programme of work of a research institute.



How to apply



[Link to application site](#)

1. Make sure you fulfil the application criteria (see page 9)
2. Read the [Conditions for Participation](#)
3. Complete & compile your application documents:
 - **Application Form Part I:** Applicant's statement – to be completed and signed by you.
 - **Application Form Part II:** Employer's statement of support – to be completed, signed and stamped by your employer.
 - **Diploma/Certificates and supporting documents** in English, French or German, or as a translation of the highest professional qualification and/or university degree.
4. Submit your application via the application portal (one application per applicant). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Deadline for applications: 10 November 2024

For more information about the Shaping Futures Academy, and information about previous editions, visit the [Academy website](#).

If you have any questions about the Shaping Futures Academy or the application process, contact the team at shapingfutures@idos-research.de



"Participating in the 2023 African-German Leadership Academy was transformative. I gained valuable leadership skills, learned from peers, and developed a team spirit. Key modules focused on design thinking, governance, and climate change. I'm inspired to be a changemaker, thinking globally and acting locally."

Mildred Neema Okwako: Shaping Futures 2023 participant



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