



# Akadémeia Session 2026 Programme\*

February 6 - March 21, 2026  
Palazzo Borghese, Via Ghibellina 110, Florence



\*Please, note that all times are in local time (CET)

23/01/2026

14:00 - 15:00

General introduction

Overview of the training plan for the 2026 session

Student introductions

### 1. Artificial Intelligence and local governance

*In person session - Florence*

This session will explore how artificial intelligence can be used to streamline bureaucracy and improve the efficiency of local government operations. It will also examine the impact of AI on citizens' daily lives, in terms of access to services, participation, and trust in institutions. Particular attention will be given to European policies and to the strategies adopted by European cities—such as smart city models and smart specialisation approaches—as frameworks for integrating AI in a way that promotes innovation, inclusiveness, and sustainability at the local level.

**Friday 6 February 2026**

14:00 - 15:00  
Opening session



Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémiea's Team



EU Engagement Introduction - Curated By EUROCITIES

15:00 - 16:30  
Geopolitical overview



Elisabetta Belloni - *Ambassador and Former Special Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen*

17:00 - 19:00



Constitution of Innovation (CoI) Launch event -  
EUI, Florence School of Transnational Governance,  
Palazzo Buontalenti - Via Cavour, 65 Florence

*Link to:*

<https://www.eui.eu/events?id=584312>

19:00 - 20:30

Dinner

**Saturday 7 February 2026**

**9:00 - 10:45**

**Peer-to-Peer work  
European Technological  
and Digital Sovereignty**



**EU Engagement Best Practices - Curated By  
EUROCITIES and Akadémia's team - Visit to the  
Control Room (City of Florence - Piazza Donatello)**

**11:00 - 12:00**

**The challenges of  
Artificial Intelligence  
in the EU policies**



**Ania Helseth - EU Public Policy Manager - META**



**Marta Cantero Gamito - Research Fellow at the School of  
Transnational Governance (EUI). Associate Professor of Information  
Technology Law at the University of Tartu**

**12:00 - 13:30**

**Smart cities and Smart  
specialisations - Case  
studies**



**EU Engagement - Curated By EUROCITIES**



**Ricardo Rio - Former Mayor of Braga - Portugal  
Led by Guillem Ramirez Chico - Coordinator Eurocities  
Academy**

**13:30 - 15:00**

**Lunch**

**15:00 - 16:30**

**AI & Public Health**



**Sandra Gallina - Director General DG - SANTE (Live streaming)**



**Federico Gelli - Director of ARS (Regional Agency of Public  
Health-Tuscany)**



**Alessandro Aresu - LIMES review, geopolitical analyst and  
expert in public strategies and policies. Author of the book  
“Geopolitics of AI”**

**16:30 - 18:00**

**European  
Technological and  
Digital Sovereignty**

**18:00 - 18:30**  
**Closing Remarks**



**Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémiea Team**

## 2. Economy in urban and internal areas

*Online session*

This session will explore how to achieve balanced and inclusive development across city centres, suburban areas, and inner or remote territories, with a particular focus on the European context. It will examine the role of EU policies and funding instruments, including cohesion policy and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in supporting territorial equity, strengthening social and economic ties, and fostering sustainable urban-rural integration. The discussion will highlight best practices from European cities and regions working to bridge gaps and promote cohesion.

**Friday 20 February 2026**

**15:30 - 15:45**  
**Introduction  
and opening**



**Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémiea's Team**

**16:00 - 17:30**  
**Keynote speech**



**Enrico Letta** - *Former Prime Minister of Italy (2013–2014), currently serving as President of the Jacques Delors Institute and Dean of the IE School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs at IE University (invited)*

**17:30 - 19:00**  
**Geopolitical overview**



**Luigi Di Maio** - *EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region & Middle East Peace Process. Formerly, Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs*

**Saturday 21 February 2026**

**9:30 - 11:00**

**Towards Inclusive and  
Balanced Urban  
Development: EU  
Policies and Social  
Economy Perspectives**



**Raffaele Fitto** - *Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Cohesion and Reforms*

**11:30 - 12:30**

**EU Cohesion Policy  
and Funding Tools for  
Balanced Urban and  
Regional Development**



**Elisa Ferreira** - *Former EU Commission Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms*

**12:30 - 13:30**

**EU Engagement.  
Curated by  
EUROCITIES**

**Case studies**



**Anna Konig Jerlmyr** - *Former Mayor of Stockholm*



**Jaume Collboni** - *Mayor of Barcellona, VicePresident of Eurocities (invited)*

**14:30 - 16:00**

**Closing remarks on  
Sharing Economy**



**Donato Iacovone** - *Executive President of BIP (invited)*



**Dario Nardella & Akadémia's Team**

### 3. Democracy and participation in local government

*Online session*

The session addresses the mechanisms, challenges, and opportunities related to democracy at the local level. It explores how to encourage active citizen involvement in decision-making processes within municipal and local authorities. The session covers participatory governance models, tools to enhance social inclusion, the role of new technologies in civic engagement, and European policies supporting a more open and transparent local democracy.

**Friday 6 March 2026**

**15:30 - 15:45**

**Introduction  
and opening**



**Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémia's Team**

**16:00 - 17:30**

**Keynote speech**



**Francesco Billari - Rector of Bocconi University**

**17:30 - 19:00**

**Geopolitical overview**



**Georgios Papakonstantinou - Chair of International Political Economy at the Florence School of Transnational Governance and Academic Director of the EUI Global Executive Master**

**Saturday 7 March 2026**

**09:30 - 11:00**

**Challenges to Democracy  
and the Protection of the  
Rule of Law in Europe**



**Gergely Karácsony - Mayor of Budapest**

**11:30 - 12:30**

**Democracy,  
participation,  
and the rule of law**



**Kata Tüttő - Pres. European Committee of Regions**



**Anne Hidalgo - Mayor of Paris (invited)**

**12:30 - 13:30**

**Democracy practices  
and the role of mayors  
in Turkey**



**Ambassador Mustafa Osman Turan - Diplomatic Advisor  
of Mayor Imamoglu - Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality**

**13:30 - 15:00**

**Closing remarks**



**Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémia's Team**

This session explores the complex and interconnected issues of security, immigration, and integration as experienced within European cities and across the continent. It will examine policy responses at both local and European levels, highlighting best practices and challenges in fostering inclusive communities, ensuring public safety, and promoting social cohesion amid ongoing demographic and political changes.

**Friday 20 March 2026**

**14:45 - 15:00**  
Opening session



**Dario Nardella MEP & Akadémiea's Team**

**15:00 - 16:30**  
Public Event

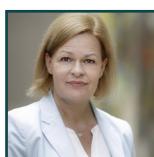


**Romano Prodi** - *Former President of the EU Commission, former Prime Minister of Italy*

**17:30 - 19:00**  
Geopolitical overview



**Luciana Lamorgese** - *Former Minister of Home Affairs of Italy*



**Nancy Faeser** - *Former Federal Minister of Home Affairs of Germany (invited)*

**19:00 - 20:30**

**Dinner**

**Saturday 21 March 2026**

**09:30 - 11:00**

**Challenges on Security  
Migration and integration  
in Europe**



**Prof. Erik Jones** - *Director of the Robert Schuman Centre of Advanced Studies at EUI*

**11:30 - 12:30**



**Vitali Klitchko** - *Mayor of Kiev (invited)*

**12:30 - 13:30**

**Security and cities -  
case studies**



**Conversation with  
Gaetano Manfredi** - *Mayor of Naples (invited)*

**13:30 - 15:00**

**Lunch**

**15:00 - 15:45**

**EU Engagement**



**EU Engagement Introduction - Curated By EUROCITIES**

**15:45 - 16:30**

**EU Engagement**



**EU Engagement Consolidation - Curated By EUROCITIES**

**16:30 - 17:30**

**Closing remarks**



**Dario Nardella MEP**

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