

International
Institute of
Social Studies

HSC
The Hague
Humanitarian
Studies Centre
DISASTER | CONFLICT | REFUGEES | FRAGILITY

EXECUTIVE COURSE

ISS Leadership Programme

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Erasmus

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Scheveningen Beach



World Forum



ISS



ICC



Peace Palace



Mauritshuis



Westduinpark



Programme introduction

The **ISS Leadership Programme** offers the latest evidence and appropriate learning environment for senior professionals and managers working on issues as diverse as climate change, migration and humanitarian action.

How can you prepare your organization for this challenging future, and how can you integrate the latest (social) scientific advances into your policy and programming? Even though global challenges are more widespread than ever before, funding and support for international cooperation is under pressure.

At this critical moment, organizations need more than ambition. They need rigorous evidence, strategic reflection and the confidence to act. Above all, they need competent and creative leaders. That is where the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) comes in. We combine a long history of capacity building with engaged academic research, placing critical science at the service of just transitions.

Programme snapshot

- Duration: 1 September - 15 December 2026
- Cost: €2450, excluding VAT*
- Outcome: Certificate of Completion
- Location: The Hague or online
- Mode: Hybrid
- Language: English
- Learning method: Guided peer exchange
- Programme materials: Readings & video provided

*10% reduction for ISS alumni



'This programme is relevant for senior professionals working in peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, development & climate finance and migration – all international cooperation sectors are covered.'

Professor Ruard Ganzevoort, rector of ISS



About us

Founded in 1952, the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) is one of the world's leading centres of higher education and engaged academic research. Our vibrant, forward-looking mindset places critical social science at the service of just transitions. ISS brings together students, teachers and researchers from the Global South and North in a European environment. ISS is part of Erasmus University Rotterdam and is based in The Hague.

Building on this commitment to engaged research and global collaboration, The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre (HSC) was established at ISS in 2023 by Professor Thea Hilhorst following her Spinoza Prize award in 2022. HSC is an open organization dedicated to continued learning and the co-creation of knowledge in Humanitarian Studies, drawing on diverse perspectives and sources. It functions not only as a space for generating knowledge, but as a platform for disseminating and applying it.



Discover ISS

Learn more about our post-graduate programmes



Research at ISS

Learn more about HSC's research impact

Who can follow this programme?

Designed for a select cohort of 15–20 participants, this executive hybrid programme offers focused engagement, peer exchange and direct access to leading experts.

For whom:

- Senior policymakers
- Board members
- Senior strategists
- Senior monitoring and evaluation specialists
- Business developers of aid agencies
- Senior consultants
- Managers

Working at:

- Donor agencies
- National ministries
- International NGOs
- International think tanks
- Philanthropic foundations
- Consultancies
- International development banks

About participants of previous iterations of the programme



Participants come from across the world



Participants have at least 10 years of experience with increasing responsibilities





Learning objectives

ISS believes that engaged academic research should actively contribute to addressing global challenges. Building on this commitment, the ISS Leadership Programme equips senior professionals to translate critical insights into effective policy and programming.



Knowledge

You will learn to move from linear thinking to adaptive programming through complexity thinking, future risk profiles and societal resilience.



Personal development

You will build the courage and creativity needed to address institutional resistance and support more open learning approaches in policy and programming.



Skills

You will learn to identify organizational gaps, engage productively with donors and investors, and create safe multicultural working environments that encourage critical and creative thinking.

Programme set up

The ISS Leadership Programme consists of dynamic workshops in The Hague in combination with online sessions.

Programme period	1 September – 15 December 2026
Programme structure	Four hybrid workshops and four online sessions
Preparation time	Two hour preparation per session
Remote option	Full participation possible online
Programme materials	<i>Foreign Aid and its Unintended Consequences</i> by Professor Dirk-Jan Koch, published in 2024 by Routledge and tailor-made knowledge clips

Preparation and learning approach

Each session is supported by short preparatory readings from a tailor-made programme publication. Sessions are highly interactive, with small-group work centred on real leadership challenges brought in by participants. The learning experience combines conceptual frameworks with practical application.

Extra benefits for participants

- Gain a stronger, international network of likeminded leaders in the sector.
- Participants joining remotely gain an extra intervision session online, free of charge.



Programme overview

September 2026

Session 1: From linear to complexity thinking in international development	Tuesday, 1 September (15:00 – 17:30 CEST)	Hybrid
Session 2: Current affairs in global development: donors in a post-aid world	Tuesday, 15 September (16:00 – 17:30 CEST)	Online 

October 2026

Session 3: Understanding backlash against international development	Tuesday, 6 October (15:00 – 17:30 CEST)	Online 
Session 4: Reducing vulnerabilities to disaster and building resilience	Tuesday, 27 October (16:00 – 17:30 CET)	Hybrid

November 2026

Session 5: A humanitarian deep dive	Tuesday, 10 November (16:00 – 17:30 CET)	Online 
Session 6: Gearing up for the post 2030 agenda	Tuesday, 24 November (16:00 – 17:30 CET)	Online 

December 2026

Session 7: Boosting your organization's impact with catalytic spillover effect	Tuesday, 8 December (15:00 – 17:30 CET)	Hybrid
Session 8: Strategies for adaptive management in your organization	Thursday, 10 December (15:00 – 17:30 CET)	Hybrid

Programme experts

The ISS Leadership Programme draws on a wide pool of experts from ISS and The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre. Guest contributions are tailored to the composition and interests of the cohort.



Professor Dirk-Jan Koch

 [Visit Dirk-Jan's profile](#)

Professor Dirk-Jan Koch is Network Professor International Development Practices at the International Institute of Social Studies. Koch is currently the director of the Advisory Council of International Affairs of the Dutch government. He previously served as the Chief Science Officer of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has been a regional director for the NGO Search for Common Ground. He aims to bridge the gap between policy, academia and practice by balancing it himself.

Professor Thea Hilhorst

 [Visit Thea's profile](#)

Professor Thea Hilhorst is an expert on development in contexts affected by disaster, conflict and fragility, with a particular focus on relations between aid and society. She is a founding figure in humanitarian studies, and her work is highly relevant to global challenges such as international migration, climate change and pandemics. Hilhorst is a recipient of the prestigious Spinoza Prize for her research on the societal impact of humanitarian aid and the organization of aid relations, and is director of The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre (HSC) at ISS.



“The combination of interesting speakers, Dirk-Jan’s energetic realism, the variety of participants and the various chapters in the book as a common thread worked very well.”

Sinnika Arnoldus, Head of Financial Management at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Practical information

Dates

The ISS Leadership Programme takes place 1 September–15 December 2026.

Application deadline

Participants must apply by 1 June 2026.

Fee

The programme fee is €2450, excluding VAT. This fee includes: the programme material, *Foreign Aid and its Unintended Consequences* by Professor Dirk-Jan Koch, published in 2024 by Routledge.

Outcome

Participants receive a Certificate of Completion and gain applied knowledge they can directly use in their professional context.

Alumni network

Upon completion, participants gain access to ISS' global alumni network of 14,000+ professionals in development.

Interested in this programme?

For questions or more details on this programme, get in touch with us! Contact us via shortcourses@iss.nl or [visit our website](#).

Application details

[Register for this programme by filling out our online application form.](#)



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