

# IASIA 2026 CONFERENCE

12-16 October Athens, Greece



Rethinking Governance  
for a Changing World

<https://ias-iisa.org/iasia-2026-conference/>

## Rethinking Governance for a Changing World

**On behalf of the host, the National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA), and the Organizing Committee: From the birthplace of democracy to the laboratory of modern reform, Greece invites the world to rethink governance, not as a static structure, but as a living system evolving with humanity's challenges."**

### 1. Background and Rationale

Governance systems across the globe are undergoing profound transformation. Rapid digitalization, demographic shifts, environmental sustainability imperatives, fiscal pressures, and rising expectations for transparency and responsiveness are reshaping how public institutions operate. In this evolving context, the theme **"Rethinking Governance for a Changing World"** provides a timely forum to examine how governance structures and professional practices must adapt-and, crucially for schools and institutes of public administration, how education and training systems must evolve to prepare public servants for these emerging realities.

This theme encourages a fundamental re-examination of the assumptions, models, and institutional arrangements that shape contemporary public administration. Rather than concentrating on a single reform instrument or policy domain, it invites reflection on how different governance approaches - from hierarchical administration to managerial reforms and network-based models - operate under conditions of complexity, uncertainty and cross-sector interdependence.

Today's governance challenges are rarely confined to a single sector or jurisdiction. Issues such as managing digital transformation while ensuring social inclusion or responding to climate-related risks alongside maintaining economic resilience, require sustained coordination across levels of government and collaboration among public, private, and civil society actors. These realities demand institutional designs capable of integration, flexibility, and learning.

At the same time, governance reform cannot be sustained without parallel reform in education and professional development. Public administration schools do more than transfer skills; they establish norms, risk appetites, and mental frameworks that dictate how a state responds. Rethinking governance, therefore means interrogating the entire lifecycle of public service- how governance is produced, taught, and applied

Situated in Greece - historically associated with the foundations of democratic governance and actively engaged in contemporary administrative modernization - the IASIA 2026

Conference provides both symbolic resonance and practical relevance. It offers a forum for constructive dialogue on governance reform, institutional capacity, and professional development in a changing world.

## **2. Purpose and Objectives**

This conference seeks to provide a structured forum for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and educators to explore how governance systems can become more adaptive, inclusive, and future-ready. Its core objectives are to:

1. Reassess prevailing governance models in light of contemporary structural changes.
2. Identify institutional arrangements that enhance coordination, performance, and public value.
3. Strengthen capacity-building strategies for complex and multilevel governance systems.
4. Examine reforms in public administration education and professionalization.
5. Promote comparative research and international collaboration in governance learning and reform.

By focusing on institutional adaptability, competency development, and pedagogical innovation, the conference aligns with broader efforts to ensure that governance systems remain effective, legitimate, and responsive.

## **3. Conceptual Framework**

The conference theme rests on three interconnected pillars: institutional adaptation and governance reform, capacity-building and professionalization, and education, learning and digital transformation.

### **3.1 Institutional Adaptation and Governance Reform**

Governance systems must continuously evolve to remain effective in dynamic environments. Institutional rigidity can limit responsiveness, hinder coordination, and constrain innovation. This conference invites analysis of how institutional design can support adaptability while maintaining accountability and stability. Central to this discussion is the concept of public value. Governance reform should not only improve efficiency but also enhance legitimacy, inclusiveness, and long-term societal well-being.

### **3.2 Capacity-Building and Professionalization**

Effective governance depends on skilled, ethical, and motivated public servants. Capacity-building is therefore central to governance renewal. This includes strengthening competency

frameworks, career development systems, and leadership pipelines. Professionalization involves more than technical expertise. It encompasses ethical standards, commitment to public service values, and the ability to operate collaboratively across institutional boundaries. Organizational learning mechanisms and continuous professional development are essential for sustaining reform efforts. Investing in human capital strengthens institutional resilience and ensures that governance systems are equipped to respond proactively to emerging challenges.

### **3.3 Education, Learning, and Digital Transformation**

Public administration education plays a critical role in shaping the future of governance. Curricula must reflect contemporary realities, including digital transformation, data governance, sustainability, and collaborative policymaking. Educational institutions must therefore adopt innovative pedagogical approaches, including competency-based learning, experiential training, interdisciplinary integration, and the use of digital teaching tools. Strengthening accreditation standards and international benchmarking can further enhance quality and comparability in governance education.

"Rethinking Governance for a Changing World" calls for both critical reflection and practical action. Governance systems must remain dynamic and responsive to ensure effectiveness, legitimacy, and public trust. Institutional reform, professional development, and educational innovation are mutually reinforcing components of this transformation. Against the background of these thematic pillars, scholars, practitioners, educators, and policy-makers are invited to actively engage with the following recommended - though not limited to - areas of inquiry, including:

- Rethinking Public Administration Education and Curricula
- Capacity-Building for Complex and Multilevel Governance
- Professionalization of Public Service
- Digital Transformation and Governance Learning
- Leadership, Management, and Ethics in Changing Contexts
- Comparative and International Perspectives on Governance

## **4. Key Research Questions**

Guiding research questions frame the intellectual direction of the conference theme and identify the central challenges facing governance systems in a rapidly changing world. They call for rigorous analysis, comparative insight, and practical reflection. To structure scholarly contributions and facilitate focused dialogue, the conference invites engagement with the following research questions:

- How can governance systems adapt institutionally to remain effective, responsive, and legitimate in a rapidly changing environment?
- What competencies and skills should define the future public servant?
- How must public administration education and training evolve to support modern governance needs?
- How can digital transformation and emerging technologies strengthen governance capacity and public value?
- What leadership approaches best support ethical decision-making, innovation, and sustainable reform?

Hosted in Greece, this conference symbolically bridges historical democratic foundations with contemporary governance renewal. It provides a global platform for reassessing established models, strengthening professional competencies, and promoting innovative approaches to public administration education. In doing so, it reaffirms that governance is not static. It is a living system—one that must continuously evolve to meet the changing needs of societies worldwide.