

62nd Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP) Curriculum



Curriculum | Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

62nd PGP 2026/27

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Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

International cooperation is under pressure – financially and with regards to questions on its effectiveness. According to preliminary OECD data, ODA by DAC members was reduced by nearly one quarter between 2024 and 2025 – the steepest annual drop on record, bringing ODA back to the level it stood at when the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015, with a further decline projected for 2026. Furthermore, populist pressure on international cooperation for development and sustainability has left marks already. Recent studies suggest that the slashing of USAID funding has contributed to increased violence and conflict in fragile regions that had previously received high levels of per capita aid from the United States.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, are being put into question, less than five years before the commonly agreed global framework is reaching its goalpost. It remains unclear whether a successor 2030 Agenda will follow and what it might look like. Much progress has been achieved over the last decade at country level and in a number of sectors. Yet, some goals are already clearly missed and we see backsliding on others, also given the rise in violent conflict (from the Sahel to the Middle East to Eastern Europe), the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, more frequent extreme weather events driven by the climate crisis, and growing political polarisation, among other factors.

Moreover, we are witnessing discursive shifts: debates on development cooperation have become increasingly detached from evidence – the controversy over bike lanes in Peru serving as a particularly telling low point in Germany. In the United States, social science categories such as gender, diversity, or racism now trigger additional scrutiny in federal grant review processes and are increasingly avoided by applicants. And while, in the summer of 2026, Germany experienced a heatwave and marked the fifth anniversary of the Ahr Valley flood, climate protection appears to not be at the top of the political agenda.

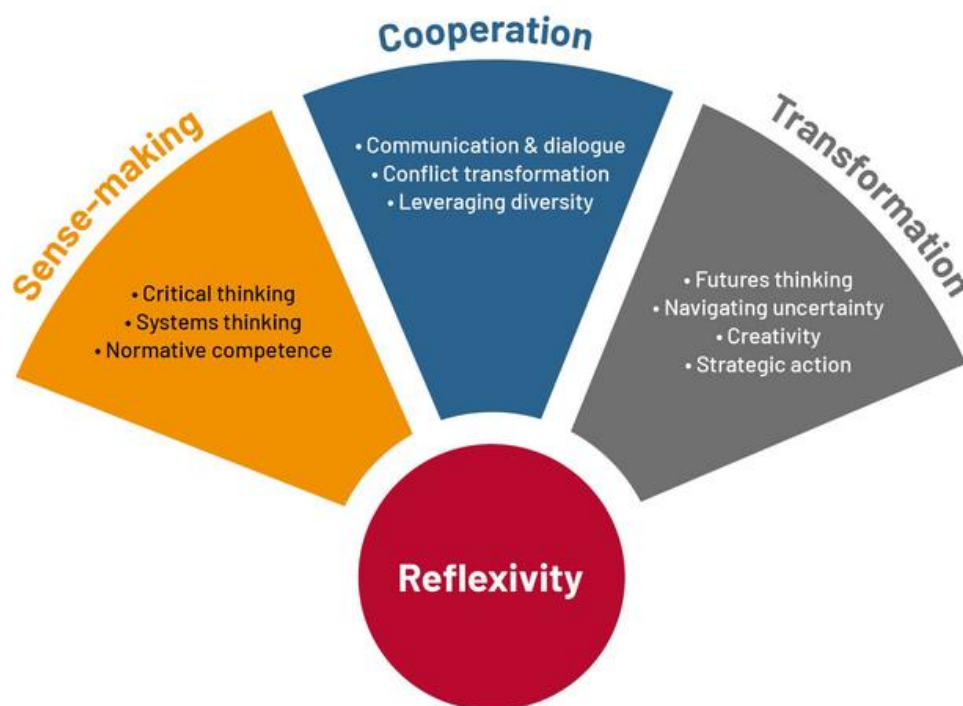
Despite these pressures, the fact remains that global problems cannot be solved nationally. Challenges such as the climate crisis, global social inequality, global health crises, or the loss of biodiversity do not stop at national borders, nor can they be addressed through nationalist or isolated national approaches. They require global cooperation – often discussed in terms of institutions and policies. At the same time, cooperation is built on social relationships between people, shared experiences, and spaces for dialogue. It is on this premise that the PGP and IDOS's two other academies are built: they serve as a convening space for learning and dialogue, preparing future generations to jointly work on the global challenges outlined above. New leadership and skilled management and communication is required in global cooperation.

Developing cooperation competencies is therefore crucial for future leaders in transnational and international cooperation. The Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation fosters these competencies to enable joint action for sustainable futures. It prepares participants for the professional landscape and shapens their skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are needed to drive meaningful change and create sustainable solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.



What competencies do professionals need in international cooperation?

International cooperation requires experts who can meet global challenges in a spirit of partnership to jointly work on pathways for systemic change. This professional field requires specific cooperation and transformation competencies, which we at IDOS specifically promote in all our training formats. Our academic training and dialogue formats focus on competence development, networking and exchange from a global perspective. In addition to acquiring and jointly developing specialist knowledge, participants deepen their competences in the areas of sense-making, cooperation and transformation.



Competence model IDOS training and dialogue formats (Reiber forthcoming)

- Sense-making: PGP participants learn to think systemically and to analyse and evaluate topics from different perspectives. Normative competencies refer to the competency to reflect on and question the norms that guide us. These competences

help understand complex global problems in a comprehensive way as a precondition for developing internationally viable solutions.

- Cooperation: Cooperation competence consists of communication and dialogue skills, the ability to deal with conflicts constructively and to leverage diversity. Especially in polarised contexts characterised by different perspectives and interests, appreciative dialogue is key for developing a common understanding of problems and the definition of joint objectives.
- Transformation: This refers to the ability to develop visions of the future and design scenarios of possible futures (futures thinking), the ability to develop, experiment, learn and adapt alternative solutions. The quality of navigating uncertainty allows people to see transformations as windows of opportunities for overcoming path dependencies and experimenting and testing new solutions. Creativity is important for the development of innovative solutions, while strategic action aims at learning how to design concrete interventions for the implementation of transformation processes.

The competencies model (source: Reiber forthcoming) provides orientation for desired learning outcomes in our programmes.

What makes the postgraduate programme at IDOS unique?

As one of the world's leading research institutions and think tank in the field of global sustainable development, IDOS is conducting empirical, theory-led and applied research on global challenges, providing advice to policy makers and engage in training and knowledge cooperation. This proximity to political decision-making processes and the opportunities for agenda setting set us apart from other research institutions such as universities. Science-based policy advice is closely integrated into the postgraduate programme.

In our training and knowledge cooperation programmes, we combine learning with the formation of networks. Since the postgraduate programme was initiated 60 years ago, we have prepared more than 1,000 persons for a future career in international and development cooperation. Today, our alumni work in a wide range of activities in the field of international cooperation. Our participants benefit from being part of this valuable and personal network. At the same time, the PGP offers the unique opportunity to establish contacts with the participants of our programmes for young international leaders - [Managing Global Governance \(MGG\)](#) and [Shaping Futures](#). Participants also benefit from the institutionalized networks of IDOS as an international institute. We consider mutual exchange in trust-based networks as the basis for international cooperation.



How is the PGP structured?

The postgraduate programme has a modular structure. Ten academic modules and several spotlights provide a comprehensive overview of fundamental topics and current trends in the field of development and sustainability. The policy module offers an insight into scientific policy advice and policy dialogue, while the practical module prepares the participants for their professional entry into international cooperation. The module on empirical research methods serves as methodological preparation for the research team module. The research team module is the core of the PGP. The module comprises the preparation and implementation of an empirical and applied research project providing policy-advice in cooperation with our partner institutions.

How do we learn?

The modules characterise a broad mix of methods and interactive formats with a high degree of participant involvement. Our aim is to strengthen the competences of our participants. They are conceptualised by IDOS researchers and benefit from the involvement of experts from ministries, implementing organisations, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as external trainers. We integrate our ongoing research and advisory into the modules.

In the research teams, participants work independently in policy-oriented research projects in small teams under the guidance of researchers from IDOS and the partner institution.

The programme offers the integration of participant's prior knowledge and their active involvement through peer-to-peer processes, such as the peer learning days. Participants are encouraged to learn from and with each other.



Academic Modules

In the academic modules, participants learn to understand global challenges in a systemic perspective, with an emphasis on interconnectedness and inherent tensions or conflicting goals. Participants' prior knowledge from diverse university master programmes is actively included and put in context, contributing to critical reflections on a sector that participants aspire to engage in and that they will, in the future, shape “from within” and via practiced global cooperation.

- Participants engage with fundamental issues of the fields of development and sustainability, looking into key questions from different perspectives.
- They engage with and reflect on global transformations to sustainability, needing to understand the interconnectedness of different dimensions of sustainability transformations and recognise underlying contradictions and tensions.
- Participants gain foundational knowledge and learn a systemic perspective by debating key questions on global sustainable development and the possibility of (co-)shaping sustainable futures within the planetary boundaries and a changing geopolitical environment.
- New trends in cooperation are covered – and looked into based on their “disruptive” or transformative potential. This, at times, is rather preliminary and explorative, as will often be the case in a world in transformation.

The cooperation system and its answers to challenges and trends is a continuous element in the academic modules. A gender perspective is integrated as a cross-cutting issue across all academic modules, as we consider gender a fundamental social structure. The simulation game takes place in collaboration with our training and dialogue format [MGG](#) and [Shaping Futures](#).



Onboarding and Introduction: Development for Sustainable Futures

1 – 4 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

The opening days of the PGP are designed to introduce participants to IDOS. Participants will get to know IDOS as a leading think tank for sustainable development, with its three pillars of research, policy advice, and training. They will gain initial insights into knowledge cooperation and research for the global common good at IDOS, as well as into IDOS's policy advisory activities within institutional networks.

Participants will be introduced to key terminology and overarching concepts. Sustainable development takes place within global power hierarchies shaped by (post)colonial legacies. What are the historical evolutions and prevailing paradigms of the concepts of development and sustainability? Participants will critically examine these concepts and explore alternative approaches to development.

In addition, gender as a cross-cutting theme across all modules will be introduced.

The introductory days will also provide orientation on the objectives and structure of the PGP, along with initial guidance on starting a career in international cooperation.

Gender affects all elements of international cooperation and is therefore a cross-cutting issue. During the onboarding phase, we will provide the basis for further discussions in the following modules by theoretically classifying the term "gender" and placing the various forms of its integration into (German and international) development cooperation in a historical context.

In the modules of the PGP, gender is either addressed on an analytical level, fed in through empirical examples and case studies or discussed in relation to the implications of the content discussed for gender-sensitive or gender-transformative policies (e.g. gendered perspectives on sanitation or the reference of gender to our positionality as researchers in the module "Empirical Research Methods").

Topic Responsibility: Dr. Elke Herrfahrdt-Pähle

Global Power Shifts

7 – 9 Sep

Convenors: Dr. Sven Grimm and Dr. Tim Vogel

The post-WWII order is in dissolution. While some countries of the Global South have argued for changes for a long time, core elements of a rules-based order have come under increasing pressure two decades after the end of the Cold War. Established categories and identities are shifting, yet seem to evolve towards new dichotomies — East and West, North and South — driven by geopolitical tensions, new alliances, and the rise of influential actors beyond the traditional powers. For developing countries, these shifts present both risks of marginalization and opportunities to claim a stronger voice in global governance.

This module examines the historical roots and current drivers of these meta-categories and identities, and asks what these power shifts mean for global governance. What alternatives to the current order could emerge? What role do groupings such as the BRICS+, the G7 and the G20 play in the current global setting? It will zoom in on global trade governance that has taken centre stage of world politics. Can institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) survive the current crisis? Does multilateralism have a future, or will power politics dominate global governance in the coming decades? How can developing countries navigate this increasingly complex and uncertain landscape?

Through interactive sessions, group work, and exchange with policy practitioners, participants will explore multiple dimensions of power shifts – economic, social, environmental, and political. They will critically reflect on how these shifts shape trade relations, global governance, and development prospects, while also envisioning possible futures of the world economy. By linking conceptual debates with concrete applications and practical exercises, the module equips participants with analytical tools and policy insights to navigate and interpret today's complex global transformations.

International Cooperation for Sustainable Development: Actors, Challenges and Reform

10 – 14 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Tim Hailer-Röthel

In this module, we discuss key actors, challenges and reform debates in international cooperation for sustainable development. We ask how institutions, policy frameworks and cooperation modalities have evolved, how they are shaped by changing global conditions, and how they may need to adapt in response to contemporary and future political, economic and geopolitical conditions. Having emerged in specific historical contexts, many institutions and concepts in development cooperation continue to reflect earlier ideas of development, responsibility and international order. Yet today's global challenges, from climate change and inequality to geopolitical fragmentation and debates on global public goods, raise the question of whether established concepts, instruments and organizations remain fit for purpose.

The module examines international cooperation through three connected perspectives. On the first day, we introduce core concepts and actors by focusing on Official Development Assistance and current debates on its reform. We also consider the role of the United Nations as a central multilateral actor in sustainable development. On the second day, we turn to actors and the changing global landscape. We examine European Union and German bilateral development policy as two important examples of development cooperation. We also discuss how geopolitics is reshaping development cooperation, including the revival of interest-based approaches and the implications of global competition. On the third day, we focus on debates about the future of international cooperation. We discuss whether international cooperation can still be organized around universal principles or whether it is increasingly shaped by multiple competing orders. We also ask whether development cooperation will remain a self-standing policy domain or become more closely integrated into foreign policy. The module concludes by synthesizing the insights from the three days and reflecting on the future of international cooperation.

Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy?

15 Sep, 1-2 Oct

Convenor: Prof. Dr. Markus Loewe

Extreme poverty, vulnerability and inequality continue to be among the most pressing problems of mankind. Almost a tenth of all people world-wide still cannot afford to buy what would cost 2.15 USD in the United States; and this share has not continued to decrease after 2018. At the same time, the number of billionaires is rising in all parts of the world. The questions to be discussed are thus:

- What do we mean if we talk about poverty, vulnerability and inequality?
- What forms can poverty, vulnerability and inequality take?
- What are the reasons for the persistence of poverty, vulnerability and inequality? What are the factors on the household-level and what are the causes on the macro level?
- What strategies are effective in reducing poverty, vulnerability and inequality? How much can economic growth and achieve and under which conditions? How much social policy is needed in parallel?
- What social policies are particularly efficient in the reduction of poverty, vulnerability and inequality and which ones are also good in fostering economic growth and strengthening social cohesion and social contracts?

We will look into all three phenomena and then discuss the potential of structural transformation and economic growth, social protection, education and health policies.

From Growth to Green Economy

21 – 23 Sep

Convenors: Dr. Babette Never and Dr. Rita Strohmaier

Amidst trade wars and global power shifts, greening the economy has become a somewhat marginalized topic, increasingly subordinated to concerns about international competitiveness. Yet, the decarbonization of key sectors – such as energy, transport, and construction, - along with more sustainable consumer behavior, can offer sustainable growth and long-term comparative advantages for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This green transition must be fair and equitable for all, safeguarding workers' rights, providing access to new green jobs, and compensating those negatively affected. Moreover, a just transition also demands LMICs have their fair share in emerging green global value chains.

Industrial policy plays a key role in promoting the green economy and fostering sustainable economic development. It drives structural transformation, encourages innovation, and supports higher-value activities in global value chains. However, several challenges remain. First, the sharp breakaway of the US as an ally in the green transition has highlighted the need for new global partnerships and cooperation models to sustain momentum in the fight against climate change and ensure a multipolar and inclusive world order. Second, balancing environmental protection, resource use, and sustainable development has led to renewed interest in alternative growth models and greater pressure on green industrial policy to adapt.

The “Green Economy” module offers a comprehensive overview of these issues across nine sessions, setting the stage for deeper exploration of some of these topics in subsequent modules. The first three sessions introduce foundational concepts related to the green economy and green industrial policy, with a focus on socio-ecological structural change, sustainable global supply chains and trade, and the changing role of international cooperation.

Session 4 contrasts “Green Growth” with alternative models like “De-Growth” and “Post-Growth”, offering diverse perspectives on pathways to sustainable development. The following two sessions shift to the demand side of the green economy, exploring how consumer behaviour and attitudes shape sustainable consumption, and highlighting the co-benefits of green demand and the circular economy.

To ground these ideas in practical examples, the final day examines case studies: one on low-carbon housing and its potential for job creation and green growth; and another one on the decarbonization of hard-to-abate sectors like steel and fertilizer, exploring how this can promote local value creation and restructure global value chains. A brief wrap-up session synthesizes the module’s key learnings and connects them to the themes of the upcoming modules.

Environmental Justice

25 – 29 Sep

Convenors: Dr. Jonas Hein and Dr. Jean Carlo Rodriguez de Francisco

In recent years, the accelerating environmental crises led to increased concerns about rising environmental inequalities and higher numbers of environmental distribution conflicts. Scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that technical approaches based on ecological modernization are not able to tackle the root causes of environmental degradation nor the highly unequally distributed social impacts of environmental degradation. In recent years, the accelerating environmental crises led to increased concerns about rising environmental inequalities and higher numbers of environmental distribution conflicts. Scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that technical approaches based on ecological modernization are not able to tackle the root causes of environmental degradation nor the highly unequally distributed social impacts of environmental degradation and eco-modernist policies. Thus, questions of inequality and justice reemerged in scholarly as well as in practitioners debates on environmental governance and are considered as key challenge for any transformation towards a more sustainable future. Environmental justice scholars initially focused on questions of distribution (e.g. spatial distribution of pollution or the allocation of water for irrigation). Today most studies on environmental justice also include aspects of procedural justice (e.g. involvement in decision making processes) and recognition (e.g. acceptance of minorities as equal partners in social interactions).

Studies for example show that conservation initiatives considering environmental justice from the outset lead to better social, conservation outcomes and long-term sustainability. But studies also stress that marginalized urban and rural communities are disproportionately at risk of exposure to air, noise and water pollution, hazardous waste, and climate change impacts like drought, floods, and extreme heat. Therefore, this module approaches the field of environmental justice from different analytical angles and traditions. First, it introduces the concept of environmental justice and its roots in environmental and human rights activism around the world. Second, it will focus in particular on water justice, health, ocean justice and coastal protection and on protected areas. Besides this, it applies the concept of environmental justice in a conflict analysis scenario by playing a planning game, and gives insights into how environmental justice is innovatively accounted for in environmental planning and governance.

Democracy, Fragility, and Peace

5 – 7 Oct

Convenors: Dr. Karina Mross and Dr. Daniel Nowack

The module “Democracy, fragility and peace” deals with the role political processes and institutions play for sustainable and peaceful development. Sustainable Development Goal 16 in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as a goal in itself and for its importance to reach other SDGs. Yet, how exactly do political institutions impact on societies and development goals? Do democratic institutions and democratization processes fuel or mitigate violent conflict? What are the consequences of the current autocratization trend? How can international engagement for democracy and peace impact on these effects and deal with conflicting objectives? What is state fragility, and how can we (better) address its consequences?

The module engages with these questions by presenting and discussing research findings and practical insights on the importance of the political context for development policy. It provides an overview on instruments, approaches and actors in the respective fields and stipulates critical reflection on the practices, potentials and limitations of democracy promotion and peacebuilding efforts.

The module begins with an introductory overview of the subject area. For parts of the module we will offer parallel sessions so that participants can elect which topic they would like to engage more in depth with (Elective I: Promotion and protection of democracy - Elective II: Peacebuilding after civil war). The parallel sessions will speak to each other and be brought back in a joint plenary session. A separate session with Michael Roll (PhD) deals with the challenges of corruption, potential anti-corruption interventions and policy.

Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias

12 – 14 Oct

Convenors: Dr. Lena Gutheil, Dr. Nicholas Goedeking, and Michael Roll

More than half of the world's population lives in cities, and urbanisation is accelerating in Asia and Africa. Significant challenges arise, including the need for sustainable infrastructure and mobility solutions, or climate-resilient urban planning. Urban growth also comes at the risk of exacerbating the rural-urban divide. Dire living conditions and a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas drive migration towards cities. At the same time, cities need rural areas to produce food. The growing global population increases the demand for agricultural products, while approximately 800 million people, primarily in rural areas, suffer from hunger. Enhancing agricultural sector growth is essential for achieving food security, stimulating economic growth, and generating employment. Given this ongoing transformation, the module addresses strategies for sustainable urban and rural development and offers space for critical reflection on rural-urban linkages.

The focus is on cities as complex systems, on the importance and understanding of urban sustainability transformations (the transformation of cities from high CO₂ emitting to low- or zero CO₂ emitting systems), on the political economy of these transformations and, more generally, the role of urban politics and governance, and on urban utopias in the Global North as well as in the Global South. One session provides a deep dive into urban sustainability transformations in the transportation sector, using Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) systems as an example. Other sessions focus on rural-urban linkages, agricultural production and on food systems and how they are embedded in global food systems.

The module ends with a critical discussion to draw conclusions for what these insights mean for future approaches and new modes of development and sustainability cooperation.

Financing Sustainable Development – Who and how to finance the transformation?

5 – 9 Nov

Convenor: Dr. Christoph Sommer

This module addresses the question how to raise the financial resources to achieve the socio-economic transformation envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. It looks at the pivotal topic of development finance and thus focuses on the different sources of finance, including both domestic and international, public and private as well as traditional and innovative sources for sustainable development. The module will provide participants with a thorough understanding of these different sources of development finance, highlighting their respective importance today and in the future. Additionally, it will enable participants to critically examine the controversies and trade-offs associated with policy actions designed to enhance financial resources for development.

The module starts with an introduction to development finance providing an overview of the different financing sources and their scale. The first half of the module then dives deeper into public sources of development finance. This comprises the mobilisation of public domestic resources through taxes and related questions of good financial governance and international taxation. It further includes the topic of traditional aid, i.e. official development assistance (ODA), from a multilateral perspective by discussing development finance institutions (DFIs), international financial institutions (IFIs) and the international financial architecture along with its current reform processes as well as topics of debt burdens and debt relief. This first block concludes with an overview of global climate finance frameworks and mechanisms and explores synergies and trade-offs between climate and development finance, as well as the role of ODA in fostering climate action.

The second half of the module zooms in on private sources of development finance. It looks at (private) international capital flows and how countries attract international investments, most importantly foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investments. In addition, it examines the mobilization of private resources of nationals and how these are being transformed into (sustainable) investments. This encompasses both the remittances of nationals living abroad as non-traditional, but significant and stable source of development finance, as well as domestic savings that – through financial intermediaries and capital markets – are channelled into investments and thus economic development. In this context, financial system development is being discussed as it determines the capability and efficiency of making domestic resources available to finance development. This encompasses the topics of microfinance and digital finance. A particular focus is on measures and frameworks to better align financial markets with sustainability goals. The module concludes with an interactive review.

Development Effectiveness and Evaluation

25 – 27 Nov

Convenors: Dr. Heiner Janus and Dr. Armin von Schiller

The aim of this module is to convey a comprehensive understanding of effectiveness and evaluation as this is fundamental knowledge for aspiring junior professionals in development to be able to critically assess the potential and limitations of development interventions as well as the evidence basis for their decision making. Furthermore, these issues are fundamental to enable learning at an individual and institutional level as well as reflect about how the development system ensures (or not) effectiveness and the different incentives in place. Participants will therefore learn about different definitions of development effectiveness, understand the importance of political economy analyses for development cooperation reforms and study practical examples of monitoring and evaluation. Regarding evaluations, participants will study a variety of methodological approaches and engage with experts who are commissioning and conducting evaluations in different countries for varying types of organisations, including governmental and non-governmental organisations. Throughout the module, a focus lies on active engagement of participants by offering many opportunities to jointly learn and reflect. The module will feature three main parts:

1. **Effectiveness and political economy:** In the first part, the speakers will provide a theoretical introduction, present the basics of the international debate on development effectiveness and highlight the differences and similarities between various definitions of effectiveness. In addition, the political economy of the effectiveness discourse will be critically scrutinised. Importantly, participants will discuss key aspects of inputs and reform options for increasing development effectiveness in a short role play.
2. **Insights from theory and practice - Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** The second part will feature a mix of theory-based inputs and practical examples from actual monitoring and evaluation cases studies. A range of experts from IDOS, BMZ, DEval, GIZ and civil society will be involved. The aim is to learn about how the evaluation and monitoring systems are set up on the basis of case studies. It will also feature an element of how to approach evidence and question it in real scenarios.
3. **Insights from theory and practice – Using, sharing and aggregating evidence:** The third part will focus on evidence consumption and discuss how persons and organisation use evidence and ensure that evidence is used. A range of experts from IDOS, BMZ, DEval, GIZ and civil society will be involved. Crucially, the final day will allow room to jointly reflect on how development organisations and individuals can employ evidence. A final session will revisit the role play conducted on day 1 with a view to integrating examples and lessons learned from the previous days.

Spotlights

Several half-day spotlights focus on key issues from different angles, emerging topics, and conceptual approaches that challenge common ways of looking into social phenomena.

For this year, spotlights are planned on the following topics:

- Migration and Displacement
- Digitalisation
- Post-development, Post-colonialism and Decoloniality



Policy Module – Policy Advice and Policy Dialogue

Convenor: Dr. Sven Grimm

The relationship between science and politics is under debate. On the one hand, sustainability strategies and the challenges of climate change require scientific input: expertise from social science, technical studies, and natural science is more in demand than ever. How extensive can or should this be, and repeatedly, how close or distant must the intertwining with political decisions be?

The German Council of Science and Humanities, for example, emphasizes that "[knowledge] transfer must not occur as a one-sided transmission of knowledge but as a feedback process between the scientific system and other functional systems." Science-based and professional policy advice therefore requires a range of competencies that go beyond methodological knowledge in research. These include reflections and fundamental as well as situational clarifications of roles, understandings of impact processes, the recognition and dealing with tensions, and 'technical knowledge' for target-oriented communication with decision-makers.

Scientific Policy Advice

7 Jan

Convenor: Dr. Sven Grimm

In their future professional position, PGP participants will be active in various areas of scientific advice: as decision-makers seeking advice or as advisors in implementing organizations as well as in think tanks or consultancies. In all roles, they need basic knowledge of policy advice.

Advice to decision-makers is based on different expectations of how policy advice works, implying expectations regarding methods, the speed of processing and the scope of recommendations. We discuss models on the effectiveness of advice, possible roles in and types and levels of advice. We are also interested in tensions in the exchange between science and political decision-makers, including how the "impact" of advice can be measured and where the legitimizing and ethical limits of impact expectations lie. We also look at the integration of gender in development cooperation at the policy level.

IDOS has science-based policy advice as a central element of its mandate and has many years of experience and own reflections, which are incorporated into the discussion. During the programme, participants will apply this knowledge themselves in various advisory situations and gain experience.

Simulation Game – Beyond Failure: A Global Citizens' Assembly on Sustainability

7 – 9 Oct

Convenors: Eva Gertz (planpolitik), Simon Raiser (planpolitik), Björn Warkalla (planpolitik), Vy Dang, Dr. Chris Büscher, Dr. Simone Christ, Dr. Sven Grimm, and Dr. Wulf Reiners

This simulation game brings together **participants from PGP and MGG as well as Shaping Futures alumni** to foster **meaningful exchanges and collaboration**. It addresses the growing challenges of polarization and bloc thinking that hinder global cooperation.

Going beyond the simulation of real-world negotiations, the game integrates creative and generative elements that encourage future-oriented thinking. Participants collaboratively develop, experiment with, and adapt alternative solutions and strategic actions to tackle global challenges and advance sustainable futures.

Beyond Failure: A Global Citizens' Assembly on Sustainability

The current state of the world, as measured by various dimensions of sustainability and protection of the global commons, is deplorable. International negotiations on issues related to the three dimensions of sustainability (such as climate change, biodiversity loss, development, poverty eradication, food security, global trade and others) are either stalled or failing to deliver the results needed to improve the lives of all, including the world's most vulnerable communities, and to protect nature.

While the reasons for this situation have been extensively analysed, we are missing forward-looking approaches, inspiring visions and strategic actions on how to work towards a truly sustainable future. A global civil society coalition has emerged in recent years to develop new approaches to a sustainable future. In this context, the coalition has invited 50 individuals with diverse backgrounds from around the world to form a 'Global Citizens' Council' in order to find answers to the challenges that lie ahead. Participants are challenged to develop visions and strategies to move 'Beyond Failure'.

Report Writing

16 and 19 Nov, 4 Dec

The course aims to prepare PGP participants to write policy-oriented reports and to formulate policy recommendations. Participants will learn to write from a reader-based perspective and to address a non-academic audience, as the research projects are transdisciplinary and policy oriented.

Participants get an understanding of different writing styles for academic and non-academic audiences, explore practices of effective writing in terms of text, structure and style, and practice collaborative writing. They will learn to look critically at their own writing style and receive individual feedback on their own texts.

The training prepares participants for writing their inception and final reports and at the same time provides a good basis for later work in international cooperation, where reader-based writing of non-academic reports and knowledge of policy advice are required.

Practical Module – International Cooperation as a Career

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

The PGP is a gateway for a professional career in international cooperation. For 60 years, IDOS has been offering the postgraduate programme as an entry-level programme in international cooperation. During these 60 years, the professional field has changed considerably: Previously, development policy focused mainly on knowledge transfer and financial aid. Today, international experts work professionally and collaboratively to tackle global challenges and support partners in designing and implementing problem-solving strategies. New challenges such as shifts in global power dynamics are continuously emerging.

Our alumni work in both bilateral and multilateral organizations of international cooperation. The professional field includes governmental organizations as well as private sector actors, non-governmental organizations and research institutions. Our participants benefit from our close with key players in the field. This module provides guidance on starting a career in international cooperation.

Presentation of Employers and Profile Booklet

Key employers (e.g. BMZ, KfW, GIZ, PTB, consulting) introduce themselves to PGP participants. The events offer participants the opportunity to gain an insight into the organisations, informal exchange, and to ask individual questions.

Moreover, participants compile a **profile booklet** in which they present their professional profile and which will be sent to prospective employers.

Job Coaching

The head of the PGP offers individual coaching sessions to participants. The coaching sessions provide orientation on individual competences of participants. How can participants strengthen and enhance their competencies? How can individual career paths look like?

Job Application Training

For an optimal preparation to the upcoming application process, we offer a job application training with a specific focus on the field of international cooperation. The practical-oriented training includes the creation of compelling application documents and preparation for job interviews.

Presentation and Moderation Training

A training course on moderation and presentation offers the opportunity to further develop personal presentation skills. What makes a good presentation? What roles and tasks do moderators have?

Mentoring and Alumni Network

The IDOS alumni network now consists of around 1,000 members. Our alumni work in various institutions in the field of international cooperation. Many alumni are also actively engaged in our programme, for example by serving as mentors or presenting their organisation to participants.

In our mentoring programme, PGP participants are mentored by one person from IDOS and one person from the PGP alumni network. This allows for professional exchange as well as personal insights into career prospects within the mentor's institutions.

Reflection Session: Sociology of the Professional Field

In this session, participants will engage with the changes of the professional field of international cooperation. The aim is to enable participants to critically reflect on their future roles as experts in international cooperation.



Empirical Research Methods Module

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

Empirical Research Methods

The PGP offers courses on empirical research methods. In the research teams, participants work on a policy-oriented and transdisciplinary research project. The teams conceptualise the research design for their project under the guidance of the team leads and define methodological approaches depending on their research questions. Trainings in research methods respond to the specific needs of the research projects and the participants' prior knowledge and methodological skills.

Trainings can include courses on data collection (e.g. creating surveys, conducting qualitative interviews, focus group interviews), data analysis (e.g. network analysis, qualitative content analysis) or certain tools (e.g. software for qualitative data analysis such as Atlas.ti) and is specifically adapted to the needs of the research teams.

Research Ethics and Research Data Management

Research and development cooperation have in common that both can never be viewed separately from ethical concerns: research interests and development interventions are inextricably related to their responsibility towards individuals, society and our environment.

We therefore have a special responsibility to shape our research and advisory activities in a way that takes into account global power inequalities and associated risks. Participants will learn to reflect on ethical dos and don'ts to gain an awareness of their own positionality within power asymmetries – for their research team projects as well as for their future work as development practitioners.

Different issues and topics raise ethical questions and answers need to be found within each specific context. At the same time, certain questions are relevant for every research project:

- Who will benefit from the research?
- What risks are associated with it and for whom?
- How can these risks be minimized?
- What are the local power relations that might impact our research? What is our own positionality as researchers?
- How can we formulate ethically sound policy recommendations?

Among manifold ethical considerations, an ethical reflection of our cooperation with partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the power relations within these often asymmetric partnerships is of central importance. Equitable research partnerships are relevant within the PGP as well as for later engagement in the field of international cooperation.

In the specific research context, issues such as informed consent and voluntary participation in the research project, as well as the careful handling of research data must be ensured. Depending on the research topic and case study, particular vulnerabilities of research

participants, research in ecologically sensitive areas or politically repressive contexts will require particular attention and mitigation strategies.

Research data management (RDM) deals with issues related to the handling of personal data, the documentation and storage of research data and quality criteria of empirical data. The participants will write a RDM plan for their specific research project.

In addition, questions of personal security for researchers, their partners, and their research participants are part of ethical considerations. A **security training** prepares participants to avoid and deal with potential risks.

Sessions on **positionality** and **micro-politics** or **critical whiteness** raise awareness that we as researchers are embedded in global power hierarchies and shaped by our positionality and privileges.

At IDOS, we have an institutional body, the **Research Ethics Committee (REC)**, which reviews all planned research projects from an ethical perspective in a formalized procedure. The projects within the research teams are also assessed by the REC. Participants receive an introduction to research ethics and research data management and submit their reflections on ethical issues for their specific research project in writing to the REC. A continuous exchange also takes place in the further research process within the teams, especially during the data collection phase.

At the same time, some sessions in other modules also touch on ethical questions. For example, a reflection session on the sociology of the professional field as part of the practical module reflects the role of international experts as advisors in development cooperation.



Research Team Module

Research Teams

The Research Team Module is the core of the PGP and spans nearly the entire duration of the programme. The module comprises the preparation and implementation of an empirical research project providing policy-advice. The research topics in the projects reflect current trends in international cooperation, and all teams work in close cooperation with partner institutions. Team leads are IDOS researchers, with some of the teams working together with a **co-lead and postgraduates from our partner institutions**. This allows us to bring together expertise and different perspectives, offers the opportunity to work together on a topic relevant to both institutions and creates space for peer-level collaboration between early-career researchers of the partner institutions and our participants.

The module combines academic research with the formulation of policy recommendations for political decision-making (science–policy interface). Participants develop the ability to assess research findings through their own research team projects, enabling them to make empirically informed decisions in their future careers. At the same time, they reflect on the limitations of partnership-based cooperation and the influence of global power hierarchies and inequalities.

In a world increasingly shaped by disintegration, fragmentation, and transactional approaches, fostering cooperation skills and building trust from an early stage is essential for shaping a collaborative multipolar world. The research team module provides the ideal learning environment for fostering cooperation competencies.

While the team leaders define the overall framework, the participants themselves further develop the project concept under their guidance. Teams work closely with partner institutions at every stage. Preparation for field research includes **medical examinations**, **security training** for potentially risky situations, and **team-building seminars**. Participants also gain project management skills by preparing budgets and planning the logistics of their research stay. At the end of the preparation phase, they present and discuss their **inception report** internally at the institute.

During the three-month empirical research between February and April, research data is collected and analyzed. Methodological approaches vary between the research teams. The partner institutions are closely involved in all of these processes throughout the process: for example by conducting interviews, co-organizing workshops, analysing data, and co-authoring the report.

At the end of the research stay, the results are discussed in stakeholder workshops. The aim is to develop policy recommendations and advise relevant stakeholders. The research results will feed in a written report (**final report**), which is **presented to a public audience** and published afterwards.

Research Team I

Blended Finance for Climate-Resilient Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from the AfricaGrow Fund of Funds

Team Lead: Dr. Bao-We-Wal Bambe

Research Topic

This project investigates how blended finance mobilizes private investment to support green SMEs and SMEs operating in climate-vulnerable sectors in Ghana. The study explores whether and under what conditions blended finance instruments can overcome financing barriers in high-risk environments and contribute to climate-resilient development. It focuses on how different blended finance structures shape investment decisions, risk-sharing mechanisms, and capital mobilisation. Particular attention is given to variations in fund design, financial instruments, sectoral focus, and risk profiles, and how these differences influence SME financing outcomes. The project is embedded in broader debates on private sector engagement in sustainable development and climate finance, and is theoretically grounded in blended finance and resource mobilization perspectives, which highlight how concessional public resources can catalyse private investment by improving risk-return conditions and addressing market failures.

Country and Research Sites

Field research will be conducted in Ghana, a country characterized by significant SME financing constraints, growing blended finance activity, and high exposure to climate-related risks. The research will primarily take place in urban areas, where the selected investment funds, development finance institutions (DFIs), and beneficiary SMEs are concentrated. The study will compare selected blended finance funds operating in climate-relevant sectors, including agriculture, renewable energy, and financial services, which differ in their financial instruments, risk-sharing mechanisms, and investment strategies. The final case selection will be made in consultation with local partners.

Research Partners

The field research will be conducted in collaboration with local partners in Ghana, who will support stakeholder access, research coordination, and contextual understanding of the blended finance ecosystem. A junior researcher will contribute to the research team by supporting data collection and field activities. In parallel, interviews with fund managers, DFIs, and other relevant stakeholders will provide complementary insights into investment decisions, risk perceptions, and the role of blended finance in addressing SME financing challenges.

Methodology

The study adopts a comparative case study and mixed-method approach. The research team will combine semi-structured expert interviews with fund managers, DFIs, and other key stakeholders with quantitative analysis of fund- and portfolio-level data. The analysis will examine investment volumes, financial instruments, sectoral allocation, and risk profiles to assess how different blended finance structures influence private capital mobilisation and SME financing outcomes. Where feasible, firm-level evidence from supported SMEs will complement the analysis by providing insights into financing constraints and investment performance.

Research Team II

Implications of critical raw mineral mining on frontier communities in Zambia: exploring ethical, societal and ecological dimensions

Team Lead: Dr. Aparajita Banerjee

Research Objective

The objective of this research group is to explore how Germany can develop long-standing, trust-based partnerships with a select country in Sub-Saharan Africa to help secure a steady supply of CRMs. For this, the research group will focus on exploring the ethical, societal, and ecological implications of mining at micro (local, community level) and meso scales (governance, regional government, national government) in the case country, Zambia, selecting two metal mining streams: copper and nickel. Using the lens of just transition, this research will explore what a just transition would mean for people in mining communities, especially when they themselves struggle with energy poverty and limited electrification.

Country and Research Sites

Field research will be conducted in Zambia, a country with a long tradition in mining. The study will compare two mining cases and their impacts on society, the economy, and the region's ecology. In the first site, the study of this case will explore the implications of a just transition for communities displaced by new mines and what can be learnt to inform future policies addressing the displacement and resettlement of people from land with mineral reserves. The second study site will be a town near a closed mining district, where the study will explore how restoration justice can be ensured during mine closure, how environmental laws can be implemented, and how post-closure restoration can be incorporated into the planning and design of new mines.

Research Partners

The field research will be carried out in close collaboration with researchers at Mulungushi University in Zambia, who will support research design, stakeholder access, and logistical coordination. Two junior researchers from the University will join the PGP team as core team members. In parallel, one PhD student from the University of Zambia will conduct data collection for the project along with the team for her doctoral dissertation and act as a local interlocutor.

Methodology

The research will use a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Document analysis, semi-structured interviews, photo-voice, and focus group interviews will be used to gather qualitative data. Door-to-door surveys will be used as a quantitative data collection tool.

Research Team III

Displacement, Localization and Regionalization in Kenya

Team Lead: Dr. Rose Jaji

Research Topic

The research focuses on localization and regionalization in displacement contexts in Kenya. It is framed within the broader contexts of the limitations of conventional top-down approaches in development cooperation and the steady decline in funding. In addition, it offers the opportunity to understand in a formal context how states, through regional bodies such as the East Africa Community (EAC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) cooperate to find solutions to displacement. Local activities also take place through informal channels that are transborder and involve non-state micro and meso level actors such as refugee-led organizations, NGOs, business associations, religious organizations, and women's trade networks and support groups. Their activities offer the possibility to bridge the gap between national policies and regional displacement dynamics. The research takes a decolonial approach to development cooperation by addressing power asymmetries that impede local leadership and overlook local dynamics that do not fit into dominant paradigms.

The key main issue that the research will address are:

existing and emerging key local actors and collaborations among them

- perspective of different local actors on localization and regionalization
- gender and youth dynamics in localization and regionalization
- challenges and successes of localization and regionalization in facilitating the integration of displaced people
- how to bridge the gap between national contexts and social realities in displacement contexts in development cooperation

The research seeks to understand

- the existing local processes of responding to displacement in partner countries
- how development cooperation can support localization and regionalization as processes that builds on existing local practices and capacities in response to displacement

Research Partners

The research in Nairobi, Kenya will be carried out in collaboration with partners at Maseno University. Two partners will join us for two weeks each. In their absence as they attend to their teaching duties at the university, one of their junior colleagues/master's students will join us for the whole duration of the research. The junior partner will arrange interview appointments before the the research commences.

Methodology

Qualitative Research Methodology that focus on issues that transcend methodological nationalism

- semi-structured interviews
- key informant interviews
- focus group discussion



Schedule

Times may vary and are subject to change. Detailed module descriptions and binding schedules can be found in the module reader of each module.

Sessions during the academic modules take place in the following time slot:

Time Slots	Session
9 am – 10:30 am	Academic module
11 am – 12:30 am	Academic module
2 pm – 3:30 pm	Academic module
From 4 pm	Self-organized learning (e.g. reflection, reading, preparation and follow-up of sessions and modules), self-organisation (e.g. PGP plenary, PGP working groups), coaching sessions, other sessions (e.g. introduction to library)



Weekly Overview

September 2026

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
31	1 Module 1: Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures (Christ)	2 Module 1: Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures (Christ)	3 Module 1: Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures (Christ)	4 Module 1: Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures (Christ)
7 Module 2: Global Power Shifts (Grimm/Vogel)	8 Module 2: Global Power Shifts (Grimm/Vogel)	9 Module 2: Global Power Shifts (Grimm/Vogel)	10 Module 3: International Cooperation for Sustainable Development (Hailer- Röthel)	11 Module 3: International Cooperation for Sustainable Development (Hailer- Röthel)
14 Module 3: International Cooperation for Sustainable Development (Hailer- Röthel)	15 Module 4: Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy? (Loewe)	16 Preventing Discrimination and Harassment (Stefanutti/Christ) Communications (Thönniges) IDOS Meets MGG & PGP	17 IDOS Institute's Outing	18 Peer Learning Day
21 Module 5: From Growth to Green Economy (Never/Strohmaier)	22 Module 5: From Growth to Green Economy (Never/Strohmaier)	23 Module 5: From Growth to Green Economy (Never/Strohmaier)	24 Research Teams - Team Building (teamfactor)	25 Module 6: Environmental Justice (Hein/Rodriguez de Francisco)
28 Module 6: Environmental Justice (Hein/Rodriguez de Francisco)	29 Module 6: Environmental Justice (Hein/Rodriguez de Francisco)	30 Spotlight: KfW Deep Dive (Hornidge/Klingebiel/ KfW)	1	2

Academic Modules
 Practical Module
 Policy Module
 Research Team Module & Empirical Research Methods Module

October 2026

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
28	29	30	1	2
			Module 4: Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy? (Loewe)	Module 4: Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy? (Loewe)
5	6	7	8	9
Module 7: Democracy, Fragility and Peace (Mross/Nowack)	Module 7: Democracy, Fragility and Peace (Mross/Nowack)	Module 7: Democracy, Fragility and Peace (Mross/Nowack) Networking Event – MGG, SF & PGP	Simulation Game – Beyond Failure: A Global Citizens' Assembly on Sustainability (with MGG and SF) (planpolitik/Dang/Büscher/Christ/Grimm/Reiners)	Simulation Game – Beyond Failure: A Global Citizens' Assembly on Sustainability (with MGG and SF) (planpolitik/Dang/Büscher/Christ/Grimm/Reiners)
12	13	14	15	16
Module 8: Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias (Gutheil/Goedeking/Roll)	Module 8: Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias (Gutheil/Goedeking/Roll)	Module 8: Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias (Gutheil/Goedeking/Roll)	Research Ethics and Research Data Management (Rogmann/Zintl) Introduction to the Research Teams (Christ/Grimm)	Spotlight Migration and Displacement (Martin-Shields)
19	20	21	22	23
Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams
26	27	28	29	30
Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams	Spotlight: Digitalisation (Breuer/Steward)	Peer Learning Day

 Academic Modules	 Practical Module	 Policy Module
 Research Team Module & Empirical Research Methods Module		

November 2026

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
2	3	4	5	6
Spotlight: New Approaches to Political and Adaptive Development Cooperation (Roll) Sociology of the Professional Field (Roll)	Presentation and Moderation (teamfactor)	Presentation and Moderation (teamfactor)	Module 9: Financing Sustainable Development - Who and how to finance the transformation? (Sommer)	Module 9: Financing Sustainable Development - Who and how to finance the transformation? (Sommer)
9	10	11	12	13
Module 9: Financing Sustainable Development - Who and how to finance the transformation? (Sommer)	A Gender Lense on the RT (Herrfahrdt-Pähle) Positionality and Micro-Politics (Christ)	Research Teams	Critical Whiteness (Horstmann)	Research Teams
16	17	18	19	20
Report Writing (Di Desidero)	Research Teams	Research Teams Team Building RT II (teamfactor)	Report Writing (Di Desidero)	Research Teams
23	24	25	26	27
Research Teams Team Building RT III (teamfactor)	Research Teams Team Building RT I (teamfactor)	Module 10: Development Effectiveness and Evaluation (Janus/von Schiller)	Module 10: Development Effectiveness and Evaluation (Janus/von Schiller)	Module 10: Development Effectiveness and Evaluation (Janus/von Schiller)

 Academic Modules	 Practical Module	 Policy Module
 Research Team Module & Empirical Research Methods Module		

December 2026

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
30 Research Teams	1 Research Teams	2 Research Teams	3 Research Teams	4 Report Writing (Di Desidero)
7 Spotlight: Rio Conventions in the Triple COP Year 2026	8 Research Teams Team Building (teamfactor)	9 Research Teams	10 Research Teams	11 Research Teams
14 Interview Training (Binder)	15 Research Teams	16 Spotlight "Postcolonialism, Power, Partnership" (Schwachula)	17 Research Teams	18 Pear Learning Day
21 Research Teams	22 Research Teams	23 Winter Break	24 Winter Break	25 Winter Break
28 Winter Break	29 Winter Break	30 Winter Break	31 Winter Break	1

Academic Modules
 Practical Module
 Policy Module

Research Team Module & Empirical Research Methods Module

January 2027

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
28	29	30	31	1
			Winter Break	Winter Break
4	5	6	7	8
Winter Break	Winter Break	Research Teams	Policy Module – Scientific Policy Advice (Grimm)	Research Teams
11	12	13	14	15
Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams	Research Teams
18	19	20	21	22
Research Teams	Research Teams	Presentation Inception Report RT I	Presentation Inception Report RT II & RT III	Research Teams
25	26	27	28	29
Research Teams	Research Teams	Security Training RT I	Security Training RT II	Security Training RT III

- Academic Modules
- Practical Module
- Policy Module
- Research Team Module & Empirical Research Methods Module

February – May 2027

Research Stay | Reflection | Final Presentations



Dr Simone Christ, Head of the Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

Laura Jeske, Coordination of the Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

Sophia Machavariani, Office Administration of the Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

E-mail: postgradprogramme@idos-research.de

 postgradprogramme@idos-research.de

 www.idos-research.de/en/training/postgraduate-programme-for-sustainability-cooperation-pgp/

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