

Overview:

The Association of Education Service Agencies (AESAs) Leadership Academy is pleased to announce an exclusive Executive Educators Learning Tour to Spain and Portugal in April 2026. This transformative journey will provide senior education leaders with an opportunity to engage in high-level discussions, foster professional exchange, and explore institutional collaborations in two dynamic European countries. Through immersive experiences with educational institutions, government agencies, and industries, participants will gain valuable insights into educational models, leadership strategies, and cross-sector partnerships that drive educational excellence in Spain and Portugal.

Educational and Professional Purpose

This learning tour is designed with the purpose to:

- Examine Spain and Portugal's educational policies, systems, and best practices in K-12 and higher education.
- Explore leadership models, technology integration, and workforce development strategies that prepare students for the global economy.
- Facilitate connections with educational institutions, education authorities, and international education organizations for potential collaborations.
- Foster cross-cultural dialogue on contemporary challenges in education, including digital transformation, equity and access, and teacher professional development.

Cultural and Culinary Highlights

Beyond the professional agenda, the tour will immerse participants in the vibrant cultural and culinary traditions of Spain and Portugal, enhancing their understanding of the region's heritage and contemporary life.

Key Destinations and Institutional Engagements

Spain (5 Days: The Regions of Madrid & Barcelona)

- **Madrid Region:** As Spain's capital and a hub of culture and education, Madrid offers a rich landscape for academic and professional exchange. Participants will visit the Spanish Offices of Education to discuss national policies and innovations in public education, as well as leading K-12 schools and universities. Additionally, meetings with private and international school networks will provide insights into bilingual and multilingual education models.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: Exclusive tour of the Prado Museum, historic walking tour through the city's plazas, and a traditional Spanish tapas and wine experience.

- **Barcelona Region:** Known for its progressive education and innovation ecosystem, Barcelona will provide opportunities to engage with research institutions and education technology startups. Participants will visit leading universities and exchange ideas with the Institute of Educational Sciences. Discussions will focus on STEM education, entrepreneurial learning, and vocational training models.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: A guided architectural tour of Gaudí's masterpieces, including Sagrada Família, and a Catalan culinary experience featuring seafood paella and cava.

Portugal (5 Days: Lisbon, Porto, Portalegre, and Coimbra)

- **Lisbon Region:** As a center of European education and economic growth, Lisbon presents a valuable learning environment for exploring the intersection of education and workforce development. Participants will meet with leaders from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and engage with international school networks. A visit to partnered universities will highlight innovation in higher education, while discussions at the Gulbenkian Foundation will explore philanthropic efforts in educational reform.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: An exploration of the historic Alfama district, a fado music performance, and a culinary journey through traditional Portuguese dishes such as bacalhau and pastéis de nata.

- **Porto:** Porto's reputation for academic excellence and industry collaboration makes it an ideal location for professional exchange. Visits to the University of Porto and the Science and Technology Park will showcase Portugal's efforts in STEM education and digital transformation. Sessions with business and education leaders will highlight the importance of partnerships in economic and workforce development.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: A scenic Douro River cruise, visits to historic port wine cellars for tastings, and an exploration of the city's UNESCO-listed Ribeira district.

- **Portalegre:** This historic and culturally rich region offers a unique opportunity to explore rural education initiatives and community-based learning models in local schools. A visit to the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre will provide insights into vocational training, sustainability education, and educational outreach programs in smaller communities.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: A cultural immersion into Portugal's countryside, including a visit to a traditional olive oil estate and a tasting of regional Alentejo cuisine.

- **Coimbra:** Home to one of Europe's oldest universities, the University of Coimbra, this city offers a deep dive into Portugal's higher education traditions and modern research advancements. Meetings with university administrators and educators will explore Portugal's evolving academic landscape and its connections to global education networks.

Cultural and Culinary Highlight: A tour of the historic University of Coimbra, a performance of traditional Portuguese student fado music, and a sampling of the city's famous pastries, such as pastéis de Santa Clara.

This AESA Leadership Academy to Spain and Portugal offers an unparalleled opportunity for professional enrichment, cross-cultural exchange, and institutional relations development. Through a carefully curated itinerary of academic, governmental, and industry engagements, along with rich cultural experiences, participants will leave with new insights, valuable connections, and a deeper appreciation for the global education landscape. AESA invites executive educators to join us on this extraordinary journey to advance educational leadership and innovation on an international scale.