

CALL FOR INTEREST

ASEFInnoLab7 White Paper Lab

Background

Established in 2021, the [ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory](#) (ASEFInnoLab) creates opportunities for higher education stakeholders from Asia and Europe to expand their professional network, exchange knowledge, and collaboratively build their capacity to address common global challenges. Guided by its overarching theme of “**Universities’ Role in Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation Ecosystems,**” ASEFInnoLab stands as a unique platform for higher education stakeholders to exchange good practices and co-create new ideas at the intersection of education, research, and innovation.

In its seventh edition, the project will bring together outstanding experts, scholars, and changemakers to explore universities’ role in advancing AI for humanity’s benefit.

Programme Objectives

[ASEFInnoLab7](#) is a design thinking laboratory for leaders, managers, and administrators of tertiary higher education institutions with the mission to:



Improve

universities’ role in multistakeholder AI innovation partnerships



Foster

an Asia-Europe network of university leaders, academics, and thought leaders on AI governance and innovation



Inform & Influence

education policymaking and strategies across 50 ASEM partner countries

Thematic Focus

AI is increasingly permeating every aspect of human life and has emerged as a transformative force shaping societies, economies, and institutions worldwide. As its capabilities and applications continue to expand, AI has begun to significantly shape progress across many sectors, including those critical to sustainable development.

AI is found to be a potential enabler for achieving many of the social, economic, and environmental targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, significant trade-offs and gaps remain. Persistent concerns also remain around inequalities in access and benefits, bias and discrimination, erosion of social cohesion and societal resilience, and the ethical frameworks needed to govern AI’s growing influence.¹

It is within this complex and evolving landscape that **universities assume a critical, impactful role**. As centres of learning, engines of innovation and knowledge creation, and ethical anchors, higher education institutions (HEIs) occupy a central role in **shaping how AI is researched, governed, and applied in service of the common good**.²

ASEFInnoLab7 complements ongoing international efforts by diving deep into how universities can catalyse AI in pursuit of broader societal goals. Carrying the theme “**The Role of Universities in Advancing AI for Good**”, it will focus on areas where universities can take the lead towards inclusive, ethical, and socially beneficial outcomes:



AI4GlobalGood

Universities harnessing AI to contribute to global social, environmental, or economic sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



AI4PublicInterest

Universities strengthening public understanding, inclusion, trust, and engagement through policymakers, legislators and the broader public



AI4Institutional Excellence

Universities seeking proper AI governance, policies, and infrastructure for enhanced excellence of the institution and its contribution to public good

¹ Vinuesa, R., Azizpour, H., Leite, I. et al. (2020). The role of artificial intelligence in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Communications*, 11, Article 233. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-14108-y>

² Etchemendy, J., Landay, J., Li, F.-F., & Manning, C. (2025, October 30). *Universities must reclaim AI research for the public good*. Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, Stanford University. <https://hai.stanford.edu/news/universities-must-reclaim-ai-research-for-the-public-good>

Programme Design

ASEFInnoLab7 aims to strengthen cross-regional networks and dialogue on the role of universities in AI innovation ecosystems by building institutional capacity, promoting ethical and inclusive AI practices, and generating actionable outputs to inform strategic policy and leadership in higher education. This edition, we will deliver two main components: a policy lab and a public webinar series. **This call is only for the policy lab component.**



Policy Lab: Strategic White Papers on Advancing AI for Good

A white paper co-creation programme for invited participants

This component will convene **invited academics, researchers, and experts through this Call for Interest** to develop forward-looking white papers through a collaborative process. Anchored in ASEFInnoLab7's thematic areas, the programme positions universities as active policy actors shaping diverse the dimensions of AI.

Who will be developing the white papers?

We will bring together **about 60 higher education experts, professionals, academics, and researchers** from Asia and Europe who meet the following **eligibility criteria**:

- Spearheads/works with AI-related teaching, learning, research, management initiatives
- Holds citizenship and residency in eligible [ASEF partner countries](#)³
- Has excellent command of English (written and verbal)

ASEFInnoLab participants are **not required to have technical or coding skills**. There will also be **no technological exchanges in this programme** as it primarily leans towards topics associated with the social sciences given its focus on the theoretical, managerial, and organisational aspects of AI in higher education.

What topics and audience will the white papers address?

White papers produced through this process will articulate strategic pathways through which higher education institutions can align AI development and deployment with societal needs, ethical principles, and long-term public value. The white papers will **address an issue within the following areas**:

- **#AI4GlobalGood:** Universities **harnessing AI** to contribute to **global social, environmental, or economic sustainability** and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- **#AI4PublicInterest:** Universities **strengthening public understanding, inclusion, trust, and engagement** through policymakers, legislators and the broader public
- **#AI4InstitutionalExcellence:** Universities seeking proper **AI governance, policies, and infrastructure** for enhanced excellence of the institution and its contribution to public good

The target group of the papers will be **two-fold**: providing insights and advice to **higher education leaders** and **education policymakers** at the same time.

How does the process look like?

White paper leads will meet at the **ASEFInnoLab7 Coordinators' Meeting hosted by Fudan University in April 2026**, where they will lay the groundwork for the drafting process. The coordinators will each build their team of 5 experts from our pool of responses from this Call for Interest and work on developing their white paper in the following months.

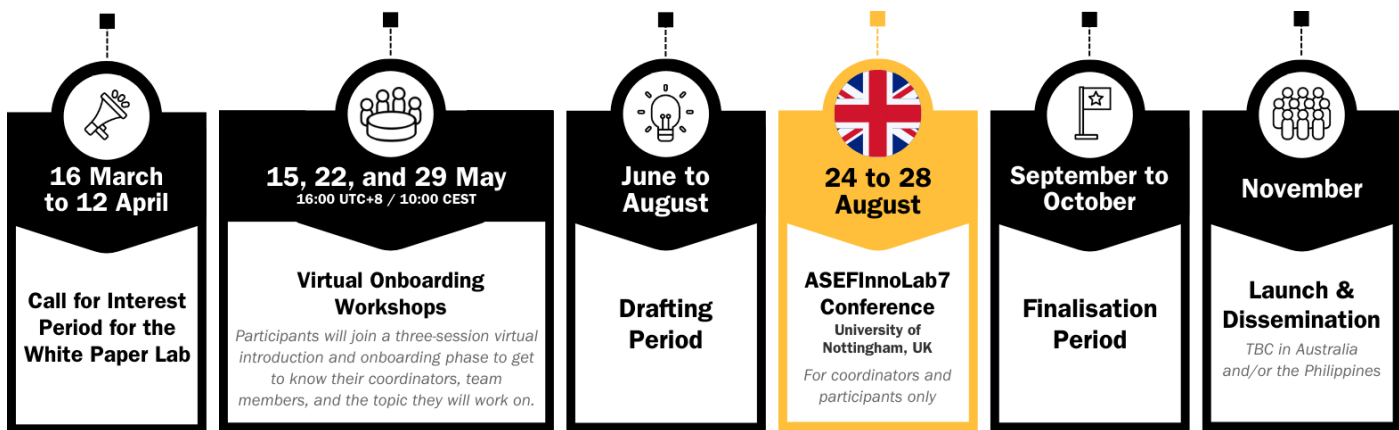
The teams will be invited to present their draft at the **ASEFInnoLab7 Conference to be hosted by University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom in August 2026**. As an experiential, collaborative programme, the conference will have an array of interactive sessions that will facilitate peer-to-peer learning to aid the finalisation of the white papers.

The full lineup of white papers will be officially launched in November 2026, potentially onsite at the International Association of Universities (IAU) General Conference in Australia. The compendium will also be shared at the ASEM Education 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) back-to-back with the 10th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10) happening in the Philippines.



³ All ASEF projects are implemented in line with the decisions of the ASEF Board of Governors.

Here's a visualisation of the journey that awaits you:



Participation in any of ASEFInnoLab7's components is free. For those invited to join the conference in the United Kingdom, ASEF will also cover all expenses.

What's in it for me?

Here at ASEFInnoLab7, we offer knowledge, ideas, connections, and a path for impact.

UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITIES' ROLE IN ADVANCING AI FOR GOOD

Participants will acquire new knowledge and ideas on how universities can shape AI research, governance, and application in service of the common good through expert inputs, peer exchange, and critical reflection.

INCREASED PROFESSIONAL NETWORK ACROSS ASIA AND EUROPE

Participants will deepen professional networks and connect with like-minded academics, researchers, and experts working at the forefront of AI and higher education. Therefore, we fully expect new bilateral and multilateral partnerships to emerge.

CO-CREATED, IMPACTFUL OUTPUTS DEVELOPED IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

Those working on white papers will team up under the guidance of an expert coordinator to co-develop outputs that position universities as influential actors in shaping responsible and inclusive AI ecosystems in a collaborative, intercultural environment.

How do I express my intent to join?

Eligibility Criteria

Through this Call, we will select 50 participating academics, researchers, and experts from Asia and Europe based on the following eligibility criteria:

- Spearheads/works with AI-related teaching, learning, research, management initiatives
- Holds citizenship and residency in eligible [ASEF partner countries](#)⁴
- Has excellent command of English (written and verbal)

Participants are **not required to have technical or coding skills**.

There will be **no technological exchanges** in this programme as it primarily leans towards topics associated with the social sciences given its focus on the theoretical, managerial, and organisational aspects of AI in higher education.

FAQs

Q1: Are there any costs involved?

Participation is free. If invited to join the in-person conference, ASEF will cover all expenses.

Q2: My nationality is not one of the ASEM Partner Countries. Am I eligible to apply?

Participation is only open applicants who hold citizenship and residency in [ASEM Partner Countries](#).

Q3: If I am invited to join, do I automatically get the chance to join the in-person conference?

Yes, your commitment as an invited participant will encompass the entire programme.

⁴ All ASEF projects are implemented in line with the decisions of the ASEF Board of Governors.

Selection Criteria

Interested applicants must exhibit the following main criteria for selection:

- Strong interest in innovation, sustainable development, higher education, and using AI for the common good
- Related experience and demonstrated expertise in the above topics

To demonstrate the foregoing, applicants must fill out this [Application Form](#) and submit through the form the following supporting requirements:

- Professional bio / profile
- A brief explanation of the applicant's motivation
- Details of relevant AI initiatives that the applicant has been involved in
- A vision statement on how their participation could positively impact their work, partnerships, and/or community

The selection and invitation process will ensure a non-discriminative approach and will be based on factors such as motivation, relevant expertise, geographic distribution and gender balance. All ASEF projects are implemented in line with the decisions of the ASEF Board of Governors and as such, ASEF reserves the right to withdraw the invitation to our projects should any criteria for selection be violated.

Expected Commitment

Invited participants are required to **commit to and attend the virtual onboarding phase and the in-person conference** at University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. Specifically, invited participants are expected to:

- **Attend the virtual intro and onboarding sessions** on 15, 22, and 29 May 2026 (Fridays) at 16:00 UTC+8 / 10:00 CEST
- **Work closely with their assigned team** in developing the white paper during the **drafting period from June to August 2026**
- **Attend the ASEFInnoLab7 Conference** in the United Kingdom on 24-29 August 2026 (inclusive of arrival and departure dates)
- **Work closely with their assigned team** in developing the white paper during the finalisation period from September to October 2026
- **Support your coordinator, team, and ASEF** in disseminating the final white papers

Be part of a strong network of professionals working on the exciting, fast-evolving field of AI and higher education!

This Call for Interest will run **until 12 April 2026 (Sunday), 23:59 SGT / 17:59 CEST!**
Visit the [ASEFInnoLab7 Page](#) and the [Call for Interest Announcement Page](#) for more information.

FAQs

(cont.)

Q4: I'm not working at a university. Can I apply?

ASEFInnoLab prides itself as a collaborative, intercultural peer-to-peer learning experience. We primarily target academics, researchers, and experts working at higher education institutions, but if you have a profile that matches the programme, we welcome your application.

Q5: What is the duration of the programme?

For invited participants, the full duration of engagement will be from May to October 2026. Activities requiring committed, synchronous presence (either virtually or in-person) are the virtual onboarding webinars in May and the week-long conference in August at University of Nottingham, UK.

Q6: Will I receive a certificate?

For those who fully complete the requirements of the programme, a Certificate of Completion will be issued by the organising partners.

Q7: Will I be notified on my application status?

Yes, all the applications will have to go through the screening process and participants will be shortlisted from the pool of applications.

All the applicants will receive an email on their application status.

Q8: Is the programme inclusive?

We aim to make our projects as inclusive and accessible as possible. We do not discriminate any applicant or participant based on race, national origin (ancestry), colour, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, religion (creed), marital status, or age. Do let us know of any special requirements you may have.

APPLY HERE

Implementing Partners



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEF promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, public health and media. For more information, please visit <https://asef.org/>.



Fudan University (FDU)

Fudan University is a major public research university in Shanghai, People's Republic of China. Founded in 1905, today it is widely considered as one of the most prestigious and selective universities in the country. The QS University Rankings 2021 ranked Fudan as the 7th most reputable university in Asia, while it is classified as a Double First Class University by the Ministry of Education in China. Fudan also actively incubates high-tech industries and encourages them to convert knowledge to power. In return, the multi-pattern development of the high-tech industries helps the University to industrialize the research outcomes. For more information, please visit <https://www.fudan.edu.cn/en>.



University of Nottingham (UoN)

University of Nottingham is a leading public research university renowned for world-class research, innovation, and interdisciplinary education. The university's mission emphasises excellence in education, research, and civic engagement, with a strong international outlook and commitment to improving lives worldwide. It serves a large and diverse student body, with tens of thousands of students from more than 150 countries enrolled across undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programmes spanning humanities, sciences, engineering, business, and health disciplines. They have several campuses hosting a comprehensive range of academic pathways in the United Kingdom, China, and Malaysia. For more information, please visit <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/>.

Supporting Partners



The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

The AES was created by the ASEM Ministers of Education (ASEMME) in 2009 with the purpose of ensuring effective coordination of ASEM Education Process initiatives and activities. The Secretariat is hosted on a rotating basis, in which countries in Asia and Europe take turns to host on a voluntary basis. The current secretariat is hosted by Italy until end 2026. For more information, please visit <https://asem-education.org/>.



Asia-Europe for Artificial Intelligence (AE4AI) Network

The AE4AI Network was established by 20 academics and university managers from Asia and Europe in 2023 with the intent to enhance universities' role in AI innovation ecosystems and together pursue collaboration and actions on AI Governance, AI in Education, and AI for Sustainable Development. For more information, please visit <https://asiaeurope4ai.org/>.