UNIVERSITIES’ ROLE IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

OVERVIEW

Organised By

In Partnership with
BACKGROUND ON THE #ASEFInnoLab SERIES

In line with the Asia-Europe Foundation’s mission, we create opportunities for higher education managers from Asia and Europe to meet, learn from each other, and build capacity to address common global challenges together. We believe managers of higher education are in a unique position to transform and modernise their higher education institutions by introducing tech savvy, inclusive and sustainable policies. Therefore, we provide platforms where they can exchange good practices and co-create new ideas to move away from business as usual and develop something progressive.

What are the key objectives of the series?
The ASEF Innovation Laboratory series aims to

**EXPAND KNOWLEDGE**
Enhanced understanding of data and artificial innovation ecosystems, and universities role is advancing them.

**STIMULATE INNOVATIVE IDEAS**
Through learning from experts and peers, higher education managers should be able to think about innovative ideas and how to improve innovation strategies and practices in their institutions.

**BUILD PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS**
Create an Asia-Europe platform of practitioners to exchange good practices and promote collaboration in innovation for sustainable development in Asia and Europe.

TOPIC OF THE UPCOMING #ASEFInnoLab

What will be discussed?
Strategies for university managers to enhance the role of their institutions in innovation ecosystems in Asia and Europe.

Tertiary education institutions are at the intersection of education, research and innovation. Their performance is crucial in contributing to well-performing economies and sustainable societies. With the impact of demographic changes, socio-economic developments and technological disruptions of the 4th Industrial Revolution on the labour market, tertiary education providers have to adapt quickly to new skills and technology transfer demands.¹

The world is increasingly reliant on Artificial Intelligence (AI) across all societal sectors, harnessing its potential in industry, economics, healthcare, information security, communication and education, amongst others. Growing investments in research and development of AI technologies confirm this trend: over the past 3 years, EU funding for AI research has increased with 70% compared to the previous period.² However, the digital- and AI-based portion of Europe’s ICT sector accounts for around 1.7% of GDP only, a rather low share compared to leading tech nations like China (2.2 %) or the United States (3.3 %).³ Two-thirds of global investment in artificial intelligence is pouring in to China, which helped the AI industry grow by 67% in 2018 alone.⁴

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are instrumental in the development of national and regional innovation ecosystems. They are in the perfect position to orchestrate the dialogue among stakeholders, engaging students, company managers & policy makers likewise, and co-create knowledge and driving strategic development.⁵ HEIs are the seedbed for AI ecosystems. In France and the UK, many AI start-ups originated at universities. In India and South Korea, large companies sponsor AI research projects and fellowships at universities and research

KEY FACTS

**WHEN**
25 March – 13 May 2021

**WHERE**
Online

**PARTICIPANTS**
25 higher education managers, administrators and academics selected from 51 ASEM countries by an Open Call for Applications

**METHODOLOGY**
ASEFInnoLab is an experiential design laboratory, where interactive sessions ensure peer learning and actionable outcomes

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**
- Enhanced understanding of Data and AI Innovation ecosystems
- Increased insights and knowledge to advance innovation ecosystems at participants’ universities
- Capacity to prepare an action plan to get ahead of change
institutions. In China, government spending on university scientific research has grown by double digits annually for the past decade, spurring AI progress.6

ASEFInnoLabs will explore university strategies in their national and regional ecosystems, how they create multi-stakeholder partnerships with businesses, policy makers and international partners to boost AI innovation ecosystems.

ASEFInnoLabs will engage participants in further enhancing the innovation strategies and practices at their universities in the following two areas:

1 | Teaching and Entrepreneurship for AI Innovation Ecosystems
2 | Research and Technology Transfer in AI Innovation Ecosystems

TARGET GROUP

Who should apply?
This Innovation Laboratory is designed for university managers, administators and academics who spearhead AI related initiatives in their institutions.

We envision about 25 participants from among the 51 ASEM countries to join the ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory, who meet the following criteria:

♦ Managers, administrators or academics in tertiary higher education institutions in charge of initiatives related to the ASEFInnoLab topics
♦ Citizens of any of the 51 ASEM partner countries
♦ Excellent command of English (written and verbal)

Participants will be selected by an Open Call for Application. The screening process will ensure a non-discriminative approach assuring a balanced geographic representation, gender balance and fair access to the opportunity for all. When assessing the applications, ASEF will look for applicants who meet the eligibility criteria, express strong motivation, and are committed to transform the knowledge and skills gained during the laboratory into action.

Participation does not require technical or coding abilities. The laboratory will focus on the managerial and organisational aspects of AI innovation ecosystems.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

What elements does ASEFInnoLab consists of?
It is a virtual learning and networking project for ideas and action.

Learning Phase | 8-week Long Facilitated Programme

The Lab will be organised entirely virtual, with the use of online collaboration tools and platforms. It is an 8-week engagement with approximately 2 hours long sessions each week. This phase is dedicated to expanding knowledge, exchange good practices, and build networks among participants. This phase will include:

♦ Facilitated interactive sessions led by experts, featuring speakers from leading universities and companies in the field of innovation and AI on the subthemes of ASEFInnoLab:
  ▪ Teaching and Entrepreneurship for AI Innovation Ecosystems
  ▪ Research and Technology Transfer in AI Innovation Ecosystems
♦ Networking virtually among participants via difference interactive activities
♦ Learning materials and online resources to enable participants to develop knowledge in the area

Participants will be required to identify one of their local challenges to work on during this phase of the Lab. The Lab will assist participants to come up with a concrete Action Plan by the end of this phase to address the chosen challenge. Participants will be required to present their Action Plans at the end of the training.
Bonus Phase | Twin Projects with Fudan University

Two (2) participants of ASEFInnoLab1 will have the chance to create a joint action plan with Fudan University in one of the following areas:

- Actions that focus on intra-university collaboration to contribute to AI Innovation Ecosystems
- Actions that facilitate university collaboration across regions on AI Innovation Ecosystems
- Actions where universities contribute to the achievements of the SDGs through AI Innovation Ecosystems (SDGs)

Selected participants will receive financial support to conduct study visits at Fudan University and arrange face-to-face meetings to set the project forth and secure further funding from other donors.

OUTCOMES

What do participants get out of the ASEF Innovation Laboratory?

In short: knowledge, ideas and networks to kick-start their own project at home.

Participants will complete the programme with a key combination of knowledge, practical solutions and new networks which can advance their work in driving innovation. Participants will walk away with:

- Enhanced understanding of AI innovation ecosystem
  The lab will help participants to understand the role of higher education in leveraging AI in higher education; expand knowledge on different strategies related to the traditional missions of universities (education, research, partnership) and learn about good practices in ASEM countries.

- Action plans to get ahead of change
  Participants will develop their own action plans, which they can implement in their home institution to unlock the full potential of their organisations and to contribute to national and regional ecosystems.

- Personal network in Asia and Europe
  The Lab will provide diverse opportunities for interaction and cooperation for 25 participants from different countries across Asia and Europe. Therefore, we fully expect new bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships to emerge. Furthermore, ASEF will provide initial funding for 2 selected participants to kick-start their collaboration with the host, Fudan University.

IMPACT

In the long term, the impact of ASEFInnoLab is expected to realise in four levels.

- Individual level: Inspire ASEM higher education managers to take action and improve institutional strategies and practices in innovation
- University level: Strengthen ASEM universities’ role in innovation ecosystems
- Policy level: Inform the ASEM education policy makers on ASEM universities’ roles and strategies in innovation ecosystems
- International level: Create an Asia-Europe peer network to support exchange on innovation and find opportunities for collaboration

ECOSYSTEM & SYNERGIES

The outputs of the 1st ASEF Innovation Laboratory will contribute to the policy discussions at the following forums:

- ASEM Meeting of Senior Officials in Education (SOM) and the Digitalisation Taskorce
- European Higher Education Area Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum Meetings
ORGANISED BY

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 www.ASEF.org.

Fudan University

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

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU)

As a network of leading universities linking the Americas, Asia and Australasia, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) is the Voice of Knowledge and Innovation for the Asia-Pacific region. We bring together thought leaders, researchers, and policy makers to exchange ideas and collaborate on effective solutions to the challenges of the 21st century.

For more information, please visit https://apru.org

CONTRIBUTING TO

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an intergovernmental process established in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. Presently it comprises 53 partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEM addresses political, economic, social, cultural, and educational issues of common interest, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. In Berlin (Germany) in 2008, ASEM Ministers of Education met for the first time and since then have been meeting regularly (every second year) to develop the ASEM Education Process (AEP) and to create an ASEM Education Area.

For more information, please visit ASEM Info Board.

ENDNOTES