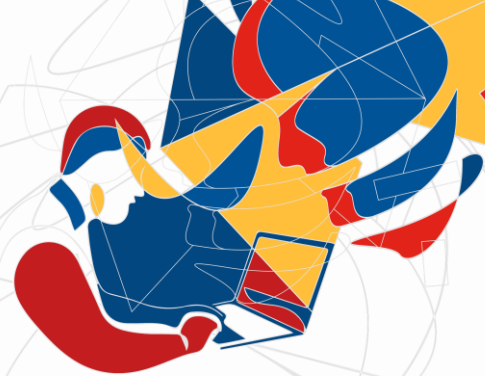




#ASEMHRS23

23rd Informal Seminar on Human Rights: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

29-31 October 2025 | Copenhagen, Denmark

ABOUT THE 23rd INFORMAL ASEM SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The 23rd Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights was convened in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 29 to 31 October 2025 under the theme *Human Rights and Artificial Intelligence*. The Seminar provided a platform for dialogue between government representatives, civil society, academia, national human rights institutions, and international organisations from Asia and Europe. It examined how emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies interact with human rights frameworks and how both regions can cooperate to ensure that technological progress strengthens, rather than undermines, human dignity.

The Seminar was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Switzerland, and China, with financial support from the European Union. It gathered around one hundred participants, representing a broad range of perspectives and expertise. All discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule.

The 23rd edition built upon more than two decades of collaboration through the Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights series, which has become a cornerstone of Asia-Europe engagement on contemporary human rights issues. Previous editions have addressed the rights of children, persons with disabilities, the prevention of violent extremism, and the human rights implications of climate change. The 2025 Seminar marked the first dedicated ASEM platform addressing AI and human rights, reflecting the growing urgency of understanding the governance of emerging technologies.

BACKGROUN AND CONCEPT

AI technologies increasingly shape how individuals access services, information, and opportunities. They influence employment, education, healthcare, law enforcement, and democratic participation. The [background paper](#) prepared by Professor Virginia Dignum,

Dr Rachele Carli, and Dr Tang Yingxia provided the analytical foundation for the Seminar, identifying privacy and data protection, equality and non-discrimination, and access to remedies as the three key dimensions through which AI impacts human rights. It underlined that AI is not a neutral tool, but a socio-technical system reflecting the values, intentions, and priorities of those who design and deploy it.

The paper stressed that rapid digitalisation and the integration of AI across all sectors of society offer significant potential for innovation and development, yet they simultaneously risk entrenching inequalities and creating new forms of exclusion. The authors emphasised the need to embed human rights safeguards at every stage of the AI lifecycle, from design to deployment and oversight. Responsible AI governance must ensure transparency, fairness, and accountability, supported by both ethical principles and enforceable legal frameworks.

The [concept note](#) elaborated that the Seminar's objective was to foster mutual learning between Asia and Europe, recognising the complementary nature of their approaches. Europe's legal frameworks, such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the AI Act, offer enforceability and rights anchoring. Asian partners, meanwhile, have mostly adopted principle-based, adaptive models that integrate human-centric values into technology governance. Together, these regional experiences provide an opportunity to establish coherent, rights-based pathways for AI governance that are globally relevant.

The discussions in Copenhagen demonstrated the value of interregional dialogue in addressing emerging challenges and highlighted the complementary strengths of Asia and Europe

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The [three-day Seminar](#) combined plenary sessions and thematic working groups. The opening plenary introduced the key objectives and conceptual frameworks. The keynote session and background paper presentation set the tone for subsequent discussions. A panel examined AI applications in public administration, exploring the tension between efficiency and rights protection. The second day was devoted to three simultaneous working groups on privacy and data protection, equality and non-discrimination, and remedies and access to justice. On the third day, a closing plenary panel consolidated the working group outcomes and identified cross-cutting recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Seminar produced a range of recommendations aimed at strengthening cooperation between Asia and Europe and reinforcing human-rights-based AI governance.

Participants proposed the creation of an ASEM Observatory on AI and Human Rights to serve as a platform for research, data exchange, and policy dialogue. The Observatory could map legislative and policy developments, compile good practices, and support coordination between national and regional institutions.

Institutional capacity-building was identified as a priority. Joint training programmes for regulators, judges, public administrators, and national human rights institutions should be developed to enhance understanding of AI systems, data protection, and algorithmic accountability. In this context, participants also stressed the importance of dedicating resources to capability building and mutual collaboration. They noted that human rights and AI often operate within distinct conceptual frameworks, and that bridging these domains requires interdisciplinary approaches and shared learning experiences.

Participants recommended that ASEM partners collaborate to develop shared methodologies for AI audits, human rights impact assessments, and equality evaluations. These tools should be applicable across jurisdictions and compatible with existing frameworks, promoting coherence and mutual recognition of standards. At the same time, the Seminar acknowledged that governance models and regulatory frameworks developed in one region often cannot be directly transplanted into other contexts. Effective implementation requires geographical contextualisation, which is possible through careful adaptation to local legal, cultural, and institutional realities.

The Seminar underlined the importance of public awareness and AI literacy. Governments and educational institutions should implement strategies to strengthen digital literacy, including understanding of rights and obligations in digital environments. Empowering individuals with knowledge is essential to accountability and informed participation.

Participants proposed that ASEM partners explore the possibility of establishing principles for public procurement of AI systems that require suppliers to demonstrate compliance with human rights standards. This approach could leverage public purchasing power to promote responsible innovation.

Cross-regional cooperation in AI for public interest applications was also encouraged. Areas such as health, education, environmental management, and disaster response offer opportunities to demonstrate how technology can advance human development when guided by ethical and rights-based principles.

In addition, participants emphasised the relevance of guaranteeing cross-border cooperation between regulators and supervisors to prevent cross-border algorithmic harms from being unaddressed or underaddressed due to regional differences. To this end, integrating access to justice and remedies as a crucial element in AI governance at an international level may be essential to be able to effectively respond to collective and societal harms perpetrated by and through AI systems.

Finally, participants recommended that national AI strategies explicitly reference international human rights treaties and commitments, ensuring that domestic policies are aligned with global standards. They further called for independent and adequately resourced oversight bodies at national, regional, and global levels to ensure effective monitoring, enforcement, and accountability in AI governance.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants proposed a range of recommendations to guide Asia–Europe cooperation.

1. Strengthen institutional capacity for human-rights-based AI governance through training programmes for regulators, judges, and human rights institutions.
2. Dedicate resources to capability building and mutual exchange, recognising that human rights and technology often operate in distinct vocabularies and require interdisciplinary understanding.
3. Establish an ASEM Observatory on AI and Human Rights to monitor trends, share data, and facilitate policy dialogue.
4. Promote the exchange of best practices through regional and global fora, for example by establishing an ASEM coordination group or periodic review mechanism to monitor implementation and progress.
5. Encourage joint research and exchange of good practices between Asia and Europe, focusing on algorithmic transparency and accountability mechanisms.
6. Develop interoperable frameworks for AI audits, certification, and risk assessments, that respect regional diversity and legal pluralism.
7. Acknowledge that frameworks developed in one region (e.g., EU) cannot be exported wholesale, and that adaptation to local contexts is essential for meaningful impact.
8. Promote AI literacy and awareness among the public, with emphasis on empowering vulnerable and marginalised groups.
9. Support cross-regional collaboration on AI for public interest projects, including health, education, and climate resilience, guided by human-rights-based approaches.
10. Align national AI strategies with international human rights obligations, ensuring consistency between ethical guidelines and enforceable legal standards.
11. Integrate access to justice and remedy as a central pillar in emerging AI regulation and policy at national, regional, and global level. In particular, beyond individual claims, ensure the development of mechanisms to address collective and societal harms.
12. Ensure independent and adequately resourced oversight at national, regional and global level.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The 23rd Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights reaffirmed that technological progress must be guided by a clear commitment to human dignity, equality, and accountability. Participants recognised that the governance of AI is not a purely technical endeavour but a central question of democratic governance and social justice.

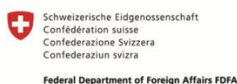
The discussions in Copenhagen demonstrated the value of interregional dialogue in addressing emerging challenges and highlighted the complementary strengths of Asia and Europe. The European experience in legal and institutional regulation and the Asian experience in adaptive and principle-based governance provide a strong foundation for joint leadership in global AI governance.

Participants concluded that human rights must not be treated as an afterthought to innovation but as its necessary starting point. Responsible governance is not a constraint but a condition for sustainable technological development. The Seminar provided an opportunity for reflection and collective vision, reaffirming that Asia and Europe share both the responsibility and the capacity to shape a digital future grounded in human rights.

The discussions in Copenhagen marked a further step in advancing the long-term partnership between the two regions. They established a shared understanding that ethical reflection, legal enforceability, and public accountability must evolve together if AI is to serve the public good. The discussions will inform subsequent ASEM initiatives and contribute to the continuing effort to align technological transformation with the universal principles of human dignity and justice.



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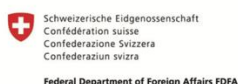
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