

A project of:



In partnership with:

MOTOVILA



SUSTAINABILITY, ETHICS AND EQUITY IN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS



Slovenia, Ljubljana



23 - 27 November 2026

Open Call Guidelines and
Frequently Asked Questions



About ASEF LinkUp



Introduced in 2023, [ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab](#) brings together cultural practitioners, professionals, government and public sector representatives working in international cultural cooperation to exchange, reflect and reimagine Asia-Europe cultural relations for today's realities.

Moving beyond the conventional one-directional or transactional approach that cultural diplomacy is often associated with, ASEF LinkUp responds to a growing recognition of more reciprocal, equitable and long-term exchanges and dialogue.

In its 4th edition, ASEF LinkUp will gather an interdisciplinary cohort of approximately 20 arts and government sector participants from the [51 ASEM partner countries](#).¹ wishing to understand more about **Sustainability, Ethics and Equity in International Cultural Relations**. This year's edition is organised in partnership with Motovila Institute and in cooperation with Slovenian partners, including the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia, the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia and Center Rog.

Through this open call, we are looking for **up to 10 participants from the arts and cultural sector** to join us for this year's ASEF LinkUp.

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¹ Participants must be citizens of eligible ASEM partner countries. The list of ASEM partner countries can be found here: <https://aseminfoboard.org/partners/>.



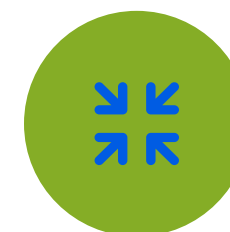
Objectives of ASEF LinkUp

ASEF LinkUp is conceived as a laboratory where established assumptions surrounding international cultural relations can be challenged and alternative approaches tested.

The objectives of the programme are to:



Bring the arts sector closer to public sector representatives responsible for developing cultural diplomacy projects



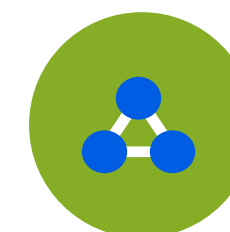
Foster alternative understandings of cultural diplomacy and advocate for new innovative ways of working by bringing all stakeholders involved in this process closer



Build and sustain a Fellowship of professionals **(Community of Practice)** involved in cultural diplomacy projects that will connect and grow with each edition



Strengthen capacity-building and networking opportunities for arts professionals and public sector representatives working in international cultural cooperation



Establish close connections with the local arts communities of the host country



What is the Focus of ASEF LinkUp 2026?

In 2026, the focus is on **Sustainability, Ethics and Equity in International Cultural Relations.**

This edition is situated within a broader policy shift that calls for more responsible and equitable international cultural relations. Who has access? Who sets the terms? How can sustainability – environmental, social and economic – be embedded into the very design of international cultural relations? How do small countries establish, operationalise and sustain cultural cooperation in their local contexts?



Programme Structure

ASEF LinkUp 2026 unfolds across 3 phases between **October 2026** to **February 2027**.

All selected participants will be expected to attend, commit and contribute to all components:

1. ONLINE PRE-SESSIONS

5 sessions taking place every Thursday from 15 October to 12 November 2026 at 4pm SGT

The online sessions comprise facilitated discussions and breakout sessions, where participants share their experiences, practices, challenges and lessons learned. The sessions will also include sharing by guest speakers, enabling participants to reflect on real-world case studies surrounding the overarching topic of Sustainability, Ethics and Equity in International Cultural Relations.

2. IN-PERSON LAB

Monday, 23 November to Friday, 27 November 2026, Ljubljana, Slovenia

5 days of workshops, group discussions, site visits and interactive sessions that offers a chance for deeper conversations on this year's topic. In particular, the in-person Lab will focus on the concrete ways forward for international cultural cooperation between Asia and Europe.

We will build on learnings from the online sessions, and explore alternative models, practical scenarios and identify actionable directions in



integrating fairness, sustainability and ethics in international cultural relations. The programme will include a final presentation connecting the learnings to the wider Ljubljana cultural ecosystem.

Throughout phase 1 and 2, participants will be asked to work together to co-create the ASEF LinkUp Fieldbook, a resource that collects insights, recommendations and actions, that can inform approaches to Asia-Europe cultural relations.

3. ASEF LINKUP FIELDBOOK, FUTURES AND CONNECTIONS PHASE

Up to 3 online sessions taking place between December 2026 to February 2027

Following the in-person phase, participants will work towards finalising the ASEF LinkUp Fieldbook.

Participants will also be requested to gather for a final online session, to reflect on their learnings and experience of ASEF LinkUp. We will also think about what comes next, and how the group can connect with former ASEF LinkUp fellows, sustaining the Community of Practice.



Who is this Call for?

ASEF is inviting applications from **up to 10 cultural professionals** working in the international cultural relations field. **This includes:**



Cultural practitioners, arts managers, academics, curators, and researchers



Representatives from cultural networks, museums and arts organisations

All participants will need to comply with the following eligibility criteria:

- Hold **citizenship** in [ASEM partner countries](#)
- Currently working in the cultural sectors of Asia and/or Europe
- Be comfortable communicating and writing in **English**

10 participants from the government sector will be selected by nomination and financially supported by their respective ministries, agencies and institutions.

[Read more about who we are looking for.](#)

Profile of Participants ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTOR

- You are a **mid-career cultural practitioner and/or professional** with at least 5 years of experience working internationally and collaborating across borders
- You are **passionate about facilitating international cultural exchanges** through your work/practice, to build understanding between people across cultures in an equal, open and inclusive manner
- You are **committed to deepening cultural exchanges** and collaborations among and across Asia and Europe

- You are **interested in sharing** your learnings from ASEF LinkUp with your community, organisations and networks
- You are keen on **establishing new connections** at the grassroots and institutional levels

As a participant in ASEF LinkUp, we ask you to be:

- Committed in being an active part of the group
- Ready to talk about your own experiences in working internationally
- Curious and open in learning from others and gaining new perspectives

COSTS

ASEF and the co-organisers will cover the following costs for selected participants from the arts and cultural sector:



- Return economy flight, train or bus expenses to Ljubljana from your country of residence (subjected to a cap determined by ASEF)
- 6-nights' accommodation in Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Per diem
- Visa fees (if applicable)

Refreshments and lunch will be provided for all participants during the in-person Lab. There is no registration or participation fee involved.



Ready to Apply?

1. Applicants should read the Open Call Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions before submitting an application
2. All applicants should complete an online application form which is accessible via https://asiaeuropefoundation.formstack.com/forms/aseflinkup2026_opencall.
3. Applicants can expect to be notified about their application outcome in mid-September 2026 via email



Frequently Asked Questions

APPLICANT PROFILE

1. Who is eligible to apply to ASEF LinkUp 2026?

Cultural practitioners working independently or as part of a cultural organisation or network who are citizens of any [ASEM partner country](#) are welcome to apply.

All applicants must submit the completed application form via [Formstack](#) by **Thursday, 27 August 2026**.

2. I am a citizen of one of the ASEM partner countries listed in but I am currently living in a non-ASEM country. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, you are eligible to apply even if you do not live in or are not based in an ASEM country.

The important pre-condition would be that you are a citizen of an ASEM partner country (i.e. a passport holder of one of the ASEM partner countries). The list of eligible ASEM partner countries can be found [here](#).

3. Is there a minimum age to apply?

Yes, applicants must be **at least 21 years old** at the time of application. There is no maximum age limit.

4. As a cultural practitioner/professional, are there specific artistic fields and disciplines that I need to be working in to be eligible?

We welcome applications from any artistic genre (such as visual arts, performing arts, heritage etc.). We are looking for a good mix of mid-career cultural professionals and practitioners from across the regions, with different kinds of skills, interests



and areas of practice, who are actively working across borders. Applicants should also display an aspiration to affect change, and strengthen Asia-Europe cultural relations beyond their respective field and sector.

Please refer to [‘Profile of Participants’](#) to find out more about who we are looking for.

5. I am a government sector representative currently working in the international cultural relations field, and I am keen on participating in this year’s ASEF LinkUp. Is the open call applicable to me?

The call is only open to individuals from the arts and cultural sector. Government sector participants will be selected via nomination by their respective ministries, agencies and institutions.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email to culture@asef.org, and we will send you more details.

PARTICIPATION IN ASEF LINKUP

6. What will I get from participating in ASEF LinkUp 2026?

- **Knowledge:** You will broaden your perspectives on international cultural relations beyond your discipline and geography
- **Ideas:** You will gain ideas on driving long-term transformation in how cultural relations are conceived and implemented
- **Connections:** You will join a community of peers working in the international cultural relations field from across Asia and Europe, whom you can continue to learn from and exchange ideas

7. Is there a cost to apply or participate in ASEF LinkUp?

There are no registration or participation fees involved.

If you are selected, your travel and accommodation expenses to join the on-site event in Ljubljana will be covered. Please refer to [‘Costs’](#) for a list of expenses covered by ASEF and the co-organisers.

8. Can I participate in only one part of the programme (e.g. participating in either the online or in-person component of ASEF LinkUp)?

All selected participants are required to participate in all phases of the programme. This includes:

- **Attending** the 5 online sessions (between October to November 2026)
- **Participating fully** in the in-person Lab in Ljubljana (23 to 27 November 2026)
- **Attending** up to 3 online sessions as part of the post-event follow-ups (December 2026 to February 2027); and
- **Contributing** to the ASEF LinkUp Fieldbook

Given the emphasis on peer-to-peer and collaborative learning in ASEF LinkUp, and to ensure you get the most out of the programme, we ask selected participants to commit to all phases of ASEF LinkUp.

SELECTION PROCESS

9. What is the selection timeline?

- Open Call period: Thursday, 30 July 2026 to Thursday, 27 August 2026
- Shortlisting notification: By mid-September 2026

After receiving your application, ASEF and its partners will review each submission thoroughly. All applicants will be notified via email by mid-September 2026.

However, due to the large number of applications we receive, we are unable to provide individual feedback to applicants who have not been selected.

10. How is an application assessed? Together with our partners, applications will be assessed based on:

- Quality and content of the applicant’s purpose and objective for participating in ASEF LinkUp
- Relevance of the applicant’s profile, interests and experience to the programme

OTHERS

11. I am having issues with loading the application form. What browsers are supported?

Our application form is hosted on Formstack and we recommend completing the application form on a Desktop rather than filling it in via your mobile phones.

We recommend using the following browsers, to ensure the application form loads smoothly:

- FireFox
- Google Chrome
- Safari

12. I have been trying to upload files to the form, however the files which I have uploaded keep getting wiped.

The application form saves the details which you have input on its own automatically. However, files uploaded to the form will not be saved until the form has been submitted.

As such, we would suggest uploading the files (e.g. CVs, supporting documents etc.) only when you are ready to submit your application form.

13. What is the maximum capacity for file uploads on the application form?

Currently, file uploads are limited to 25 MB per form submission. Do ensure that the documents which you have attached do not exceed the 25 MB limit.

Alternatively, you may include specific links to your website, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google Drive or Dropbox for large files.

14. I have additional questions or concerns regarding the open call. Who can I reach out to?

For queries, drop us an email at culture@asef.org.

ASEF's contribution is with the financial support of:



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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In cooperation with:



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE



Dissemination partner:



For queries, drop us an email at culture@asef.org