

WorldSkills Shanghai 2026
UNESCO Session
**Skills for the Future of Work: Scaling Impact through
Partnerships in AI-Driven Economies with UNESCO Global Skills Academy (GSA)**
23 September 2026 | 15:30–17:00
National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC)
Shanghai, China

Session background

Artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation and the green transition are reshaping economies, occupations and the skills people need to enter, navigate and progress through the world of work. While technological capabilities are increasingly important, preparing people for this transformation requires a broader combination of **digital and AI skills, technical and green skills, entrepreneurial capabilities and transversal human skills**, including adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and leadership.

The scale and pace of these transformations also require new approaches to skills development. Governments, education and training institutions, industry and international organizations each hold part of the solution, but no actor can respond effectively alone. **Partnerships are therefore becoming an essential mechanism for connecting innovation and industry expertise with national priorities, strengthening the capacity of institutions and educators, and expanding access to relevant learning opportunities.** This is the approach of [UNESCO Global Skills Academy \(GSA\)](#).

Launched in 2020 as a flagship mission of the Global Education Coalition, the GSA provides a global platform for this collaboration. Through partnerships with governments, private-sector organizations, UNESCO Field Offices, the UNESCO-UNEVOC Network and TVET institutions, the GSA expands access to opportunities for skilling, upskilling and reskilling and supports countries and institutions in strengthening future-ready skills development. Since its launch, the GSA has reached more than **2,5 million learners**, with a collective ambition to reach **10 million learners by 2030**. Its diverse portfolio includes digital and AI skills, industry certifications, green and entrepreneurial skills, teacher and trainer capacity development, mentorship and leadership programmes, institutional transformation, and international mobility and scholarship opportunities.

Building on the GSA Spotlight Session at WorldSkills Lyon 2024, this session will move beyond showcasing individual programmes to examine a central question: **How can partnerships translate the opportunities created by AI and technological transformation into inclusive skills development and socio-economic opportunity at scale?**

Aligned with the WorldSkills Conference 2026 theme, “**Shaping a Skills-Driven Future,**” the session will bring together UNESCO, industry and implementation partners to explore what future-ready skills mean in AI-driven economies, what makes partnership models effective and scalable, and how global expertise can strengthen national skills systems and pathways to employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning.

Objectives

The session aims to:

- examine how AI, digitalization and the green transition are reshaping skills requirements and the future of work;
- demonstrate how multi-stakeholder partnerships can expand access to relevant, inclusive and future-ready skills;
- showcase the GSA's distinctive ecosystem connecting governments, industry, TVET institutions, educators and learners at global, national and institutional levels;
- highlight the importance of combining digital and AI capabilities with technical, green, entrepreneurial and transversal human skills; and
- identify opportunities to expand collaboration and impact through UNESCO Global Skills Academy.

Expected outcomes

The session is expected to:

- strengthen understanding of how multi-stakeholder partnerships can contribute to skills-system transformation and complement national priorities;
- Gain a deeper understanding of UNESCO Global Skills Academy and its role in advancing global skills development.
- provide practical examples of how industry expertise and global learning opportunities can be connected with national and institutional delivery;
- highlight approaches to strengthening the capacities of TVET institutions, teachers and trainers alongside opportunities for individual learners;
- promote exchange on inclusive pathways connecting skills acquisition with certification, employability, entrepreneurship, mobility and lifelong learning; and
- generate new opportunities for collaboration among governments, TVET institutions, industry and development partners through the UNESCO Global Skills Academy.

Session approach

The session will combine concise evidence-based inputs, partnership experiences and an interactive exchange with participants. It will illustrate the diversity of the GSA partnership ecosystem through practical examples of how different actors contribute complementary expertise and resources to address skills-development challenges. Examples will include partnerships supporting:

- national and institutional implementation through the **UNESCO-UNEVOC Network** and UNESCO Field Offices.
- **digital and AI skills and TVET transformation;**
- **AI readiness and capacity development for educators and institutions;**
- **industry-linked digital learning and certification pathways;**
- **mentorship, leadership and inclusion; and**
- **international mobility and technical learning opportunities;**

Particular attention will be given to how these different models can strengthen existing national and institutional systems rather than create parallel approaches, and how partnerships can support equitable access to opportunities in the context of rapid technological transformation.

Agenda

UNESCO Global Skills Academy Session Wednesday, 23 September 2026 15:30–17:00	
15:30–15:40	Opening and Setting the Scene: Skills for the Future of Work (10 minutes) UNESCO / UNESCO-UNEVOC Opening reflections on the changing world of work and the implications of AI, digitalization and the green transition for skills, TVET systems and young people's pathways to opportunity.
15:40–15:53	UNESCO Global Skills Academy (13 minutes) A concise and visual presentation of the GSA as UNESCO's flagship mission for skills development and its multi-stakeholder model connecting governments, industry, TVET institutions, teachers, trainers and learners.
15:53–15:55	Video Presentation (2 minutes)
15:55–16:25	Partnerships in Action: Different Models, Shared Ambition (30 minutes) Selected GSA partners will share concrete experiences of how partnerships are expanding access to future-ready skills. Each contribution will address three common questions: - What skills challenge are we addressing? - What is distinctive about our partnership model? - What have we learned about achieving impact and scale? <i>Partner interventions will be concise to allow time for dialogue.</i>
16:25–16:55	From partnership to scale: Dialogue for AI-Driven Economies (20 minutes) <i>Moderated discussion</i> A common dialogue bringing together partners, learners and participants to examine lessons across different partnership models and their potential for scale. Guiding questions: • What skills will people need to thrive in AI-driven economies — and which human capabilities become even more important? • What can partnerships achieve that governments, industry or education institutions cannot achieve alone? • What enables successful initiatives to move towards sustainable impact at scale? • How can global expertise respond to national and institutional priorities? • How can skills development translate into greater socio-economic opportunity for young people and workers? Youth voices: Participating GSA students will share a brief perspective on the opportunities that skills and international mobility programmes can open for young people. Audience questions and perspectives from other GSA partners will be integrated into the discussion.
16:55–17:00	From Shanghai to Action: Key Takeaways and closing remarks (5 minutes) UNESCO / UNESCO-UNEVOC Key takeaways from the discussion and an invitation to governments, industry, TVET institutions and development partners to collaborate through the UNESCO Global Skills Academy and contribute expertise, learning opportunities, certification, institutional capacity development, mentorship, mobility and other resources towards expanding access to future-ready skills.