

EUT<sup>+</sup>

## EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Deliverable D105

D8.3b Think Tank Annual Report

Del. Rel. No D8.6

WP 8

Description: Annual report summarizing the consortium activities and progress

Comments: The versions in the other languages of the alliance are available on request.

Dissemination level: **PU**-Public

<https://www.univ-tech.eu/phase-1-results>

The content of this deliverable represents the views of the authors only and is their sole responsibility. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

This initiative has received funding from the European Union's Erasmus+ programme under grant agreement 101004088 — EUT — EPP-EUR-UNIV-2020.

## Foreword to deliverable 105

Deliverable 105 constitutes an annual report of the activities of the consortium regarding the EUT+ Think Tank and follows the first similar report from deliverable 104. The previous deliverable summarized the activities of the Think Tank during the first year of the EUT+ initiative implemented in close connection with the ELaRA, the ECT Lab+ and the Sustainability Lab, and it outlines the activities planned for the following year.

This is the second Think Tank Annual Report document, and it concludes the information about the Think Tank activities in the year 2022 under the Work Package 8.

## Content

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 EUT+ Think Tank activities in 2022 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1 European Culture and Technology Lab (ECT Lab+) and Pedagogical research and student-centered learning Lab (ELaRA).....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 ECT Lab+ Seminar series «Thinking Human First ».....</b>	<b>6</b>
Forecasting Social Change .....	6
Just digital futures .....	7
Aesthetics of Care and Circular Economy .....	7
"Think Human First" .....	7
Transdisciplinary Methods Workshop.....	8
EUT+ Riga Week 2022.....	8
Open Access Academic Press.....	9
<b>2 Planned activities for EUT+ Think Tank 2023 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 Initial plan for 2023 Think Tank .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2 Joint activities planned for the Think Tank .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## Introduction

The EUT+ Think Tank “Technology and Society” is positioned as a federative structure between the EUT+ foundation and the EUT+ innovative common laboratories, centered around “Pedagogical research and student-centered learning” (*ELaRA*), “European culture and technology” (*ECT Lab+*) and to a lesser extent the *Sustainability Lab*, the European University of Technology Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnologies (EUTINN) and the Data Science Lab. It is also developed in parallel with the Horizon 2020 SwafS project EUT+ EXTRAS Work Package 2 which is planning the back office of the ‘Think Tank’ in relation to the pan-European research institutes in the EUT+ initiative (cf. The Memorandum of Agreement for the creation of European Research Institutes, the Related EUT+ Graduate Research School and Supporting Research Office, signed in November 2021).

The Think Tank is the interface between EUT+ and a wider range of stakeholders, thus its task is to provide the means to disseminate research results to a wider audience. It is a key element of the initiative, as it leverages the insights of ECT Lab+ to advocate for key policy recommendations in line with the developed human-centered European vision of technology.

During the following years of its operation, the Think Tank will continue to be a platform of reflection and exchange between academia and society as it will communicate about international initiatives through a series of case studies and will propose roundtables, seminars, talks, think-ins and advise scholars elaborating projects that foster the EUT+ model for technological education. This will be extended to a networking activity going beyond the initiative’s members.

The Think Tank aims to influence external and internal policy through multi-format events focusing on different topics, including but not limited to different aspects of innovation (e.g. ethical, social, and economic aspects of innovation, etc.),

responsible inventions, future research areas and applications (e.g. social robotics, green AI, critical software studies, digital studies), future of work, and others.

The Think Tank will provide material that is suitable and helpful to each type of audience: industry or civil society, citizens, researchers and engineers, students, policy and decision-makers, and so on. For this, it will closely collaborate with the central communication team of EUT+ to identify content that is particularly suited for strategic dissemination. It will also issue recommendations to external and internal audiences including the EUT+ governance. Dissemination is planned to take place via the aforementioned multiformat events. Think Tank also plans to make the material produced more accessible to different target groups and make it more user-friendly.

## 1 EUT+ Think Tank activities in 2022

### 1.1 European Culture and Technology Lab (ECT Lab+) and Pedagogical research and student-centered learning Lab (ELaRA)

As planned in the EUT+ project description, the Think Tank has been established and is closely connected with the European Culture and Technology Lab (ECT Lab+) under WP4, Task 4.3. In the unfolding of the project, the interest in associating closely also ELaRA emerged strongly, given the link of this research with and for society.

The European Laboratory For Pedagogical Action - Research And Student-Centered Learning (ELaRA) will be organized around a number of research themes:

- + innovative student-centred pedagogies to promote self-directed, lifelong learning in technology education that develop the learner as a person by promoting intellectual development, creativity, problem solving and cultural awareness;
- + change in higher education, changing epistemologies and teaching practice, teacher development and methods to facilitate change;
- + educating students about the role of technology in society including ethics and professional development and;
- + broadening participation in technology education by increasing female participation and recruiting from a broader spectrum of society including refugees.

The Think Tank aims to act as a tool for informing politicians on all political levels and stakeholders about technological developments and how to intentionally positively shape technologies and technological practices - respecting the SDGs and the socio-technical issues surrounding technological development for society.

## 1.2 ECT Lab+ Seminar series «Thinking Human First »

During the first year of EUT+ operation, five seminars within the seminar series “Thinking Human First” were organized. The next seminar series “Thinking Human First” was opened by the University of Technology of Troyes series. The first seminar took place on the 30th of June 2022. The main discussion was centered on the change of the motto of the EUT+ from ‘From 'Thinking Human First' to 'Empowering Technology'.

### Forecasting Social Change

The seminar took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 and focused discussion groups for identifying fields of action for further research in order to grasp consequences and trends in society at large.

### Just digital futures

The seminar took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2022. It was hosted by the University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt. One insight from the seminar is that digitalization is of great importance today to any data processing, storage and transmission, but it has its downsides. Digital applications, artefacts and especially the internet of today are often exclusionary. There are problems with unwarranted surveillance of vulnerable groups, with harassment of women and minorities. And the sophisticated algorithms with which humans interact every day can have a bias in their very code. Furthermore, the internet of the future looks even more unfavourable, giving even lesser privacy, lesser agency, and control.

### Aesthetics of Care and Circular Economy

The first seminar took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 in Cartagena at UPCT. It was the first of a series of transdisciplinary public seminars that aim to expand understanding of Aesthetics of Care (AoC) in circular and contributory economies from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including engineering, design, philosophy, sociology, economics and critical making, among others. A recording of the seminar for further reference is available at <https://youtu.be/MDCDsGOoJK4>.

### "Think Human First"

The seminar took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 hosted by the Riga Technical University. As both the European University of Technology (EUT+) itself and its study

programmes are considered to be innovations, the panel were organised for discussions on ethical aspects of innovation from legal, economic, as well as institutional aspects of the state. The main topics of the seminar have been concentrating on adapting public space to age-inclusive pattern using the Smart City Framework and Digital Social Innovation in Public Open Space Revitalisation.

### Transdisciplinary Methods Workshop

The workshop took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 and offered a variety of tracks on questions of methodologies suitable or adaptable for fostering transdisciplinary research.

### EUT+ Riga Week 2022

In the week of the 160th anniversary of Riga Technical University (RTU), the partners of the European University of Technology (EUT+) meet for the first time in Riga. During the meeting, the partner universities discussed issues related to student mobility, curriculum development, university cooperation with industry, as well as a panel discussion on ethics in innovation creation. One leading thought expressed was that as the global competition between higher education institutions intensifies, European universities are forming alliances and forming common higher education institutions to offer competitive content and participate in the global education market.

At one of the working meetings in Riga, the content of the new joint study programmes and the development of a single European degree was discussed and brought forward. Such new degrees are developed in five thematic clusters civil engineering, telecommunications, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering and architecture. This is not just the creation of joint study programmes, but a



completely new concept of the next generation of study programmes with new content elements included and based on transversal competencies, collaboration with industry, the creation of student mobility maps, ethics, inclusive principles, the social dimension, and sustainability considerations.

A further aspect discussed are the ethical aspects of innovation. In the panel discussion “Ethical and Responsible Innovation” invited guests representing EUT+ and the Latvian innovation and startup ecosystem discussed issues related to innovations from legal, economic and political standpoints. A recording of the discussion is available at <https://www.facebook.com/RTUinternational/videos/3205521796442555>.

### Open Access Academic Press

As a significant step forward for EUT+, its academic press was launched, providing for, publishing and disseminating high-quality scholarly works using a free to read and publish open-access platform. The press publishes scholarship written by EUT+ colleagues, making it accessible to the widest possible audience without paywalls. Moreover, it provides a sustainable method of capturing and disseminating "really useful knowledge" presented in seminars, conference papers and working papers, which usually often disappears after the event.

The online access of the publications will support a host of new metrics, all demonstrating the impact of EUT+ academia and research. Furthermore, using technology, it will be possible to publish in innovative ways: the material can be interactive, hyperlinked, and multi-formatted, and the online format allows for the publication of varying lengths and structures, with excellence in scholarship being the decisive factor. More on the open access academic press is available at <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/eutpress/>.

## 2 Planned activities for EUT+ Think Tank 2023

### 2.1 Initial plan for 2023 Think Tank

In 2023 the EUT+ Think Tank will engage in a range of activities, such as conducting research and analysis on various topics related to the EUT+ mission and goals, publishing reports, organizing workshops and events, and engaging the public to promote ideas and recommendations.

More specifically for the 2023, the EUT+ Think Tank will lean on the promotion and protection of European values in combination with the Extras project.

The European values are a set of fundamental principles and beliefs that are central to the European identity and culture. These values are based on a shared history, cultural heritage, and political traditions, and include democracy, rule of law, human rights, freedom, equality, solidarity, and cultural diversity. The Extras project is working on new ways of steering research management. Thereby it also aims to support activities that promote the engagement of citizens and stakeholders in research and innovation, as well as the alignment of research and innovation with the values, needs, and expectations of society. The idea is to research on how to align research and innovation with European values, analyze the role of citizen engagement in promoting and upholding these values and organize workshops that bring together stakeholders from different sectors to discuss these topics and explore potential solutions.

### 2.2 Joint activities planned for the Think Tank

**2nd European Culture and Technology Lab+ Annual Conference (ECT Lab+):** The conference will take place on the 18th -20th January 2023. This 2nd annual

conference hosted by EUT+ and organised by the ECT Lab+ aims to bring together experts from the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Technology and other fields proposing ways of moving beyond the Anthropocene by negating the tendency which has led to its development. The proposals which include artistic interventions for the conference should address selected areas that focus on the relation between technology, care, and the (Neg) Anthropocene. The challenge today is to propose ways of living together that account for the paradoxes and hierarchies of care; ways of invention and innovation that take into consideration the questions and needs of care - care for the self, care for the other than self, and care for the planet.

- + Publication Techné Logos and the (Neg) Anthropocene: The First Annual Conference of the European Culture and Technology Laboratory
- + The conference proceedings report on the first conference of the ECTLab+ and are to be published to appear in 2023. The abstract quoted below describes the content:

*The European Culture and Technology Lab (ECT Lab+) is part of the European University of Technology (EUT+) which commenced in 2020 and is funded by the European Universities Initiative. The ECT Lab+ poses questions about the relation between culture and technology, the emerging environments (or milieu) of technology which are cultural, cosmological, technical, social, economic, and political. The emerging environment could be considered as a study of evolution, a history of technical organs, this we can term a general organology. The ECT Lab+ brings together researchers who are interested in the impacts of technology on society, these impacts can be both positive and negative; this we can term a pharmacology. Following on from the recent material turn in philosophy of technology, the ECT Lab+ conceives of technology as part and parcel of the process and practices of becoming human in the world. Hence the title of the ECT Lab+ reflects the positioning of technology within a culture, acknowledging that technology is not built in a vacuum but in and*

*for society. The second aspect of the cultural environment of technology stems from the philosophical positioning of technics and technology within their cultural locality or milieu. The ECT Lab+, therefore, encourages research which recognises the localised and situated knowledge contexts of technological innovation. The ECT Lab+ acts as a metastable structure, which is akin to supersaturation, a crystallising that can occur in relation around certain thematic, for example Technological Foresight and responsibility or epistemology, ethics and artificial intelligence. The ECT Lab+ considers the instability of the milieu (locality) and allows for the undecidability, contingency or indeterminacy of the cultural environment of technology or technological tendencies.*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, once can observe that in the course of its existence the EUT+ Think Tank has developed organically alongside with EUT+'s wider activity and research endeavours. In the coming year 2023, a series of activities is already planned for the Think Tank and will be nourished from the development of especially ECT Lab+ and subsequent projects allowing for the further advancements of its activity and dissemination.