

EUT<sup>+</sup>

## EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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WP 8

Description: Annual report summarizing the consortium activities and progress

Comments: The current document is provided in its English version to be succinct. The versions in the other languages of the alliance are available on request.

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## Foreword to deliverable 106

In this deliverable is reported on the journey of the EUT+ Think Tank, a vital entity at the heart of the EUT+ initiative. The Think Tank is not only a platform for reflection but a forum for dialogue between academia and society. It bridges the gap, disseminating insightful research to a wider audience and advocating for policy recommendations in alignment with EUT+' human-centered and ecological European vision of technology.

Throughout the reporting period from November of 2022 till end of October 2023 the Think Tank actively engaged with critical themes, such as responsible innovation, societal impacts of technology, and sustainability, ecology and technology. It has started to evolve into an essential tool for informing policymakers and stakeholders at various levels about responsible technological innovation that is ethical and sustainable.

Looking ahead, the focus remains sharp on promoting European values, also in alignment with the parallel EUT+ EXTRAS project. Thereby, it is aimed to bolster citizen engagement in research and innovation while continually evolving the Think Tank's structure and operations.

This journey embodies our dedication to fostering innovation that positively impacts society.

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## Introduction and Background

The EUT+ Think Tank embodies five core missions and goals central to its significance. Firstly, it aims to advance self-directed, lifelong learning in technology education, nurturing personal development, creativity, and cultural awareness. Secondly, it seeks to reform higher education by evolving teaching practices and promoting technology's societal role. Thirdly, it focuses on educating students about technology's ethical aspects and broadening participation in technology education. Fourthly, it champions responsible innovation, covering ethical, social, and economic dimensions, ensuring technology serves the common good. Lastly, the Ideas Institute plays a pivotal role in disseminating research results and advocating for policy recommendations, effectively bridging the gap between academia and society, and influencing both external and internal policies to align with a human-centered and ecological European vision of technology. Through various formats like expert panels, seminars, roundtables, and case studies, it facilitates dialogue between academia and society while influencing both external and internal policies, focusing on innovation, responsible inventions, future research areas, and the broader societal impact of technology.

The masterplan for the additionally created Think Tank Back-Office is a strategic framework designed to facilitate the Idea Institute's operations and effectiveness. Organised into four key components, it begins by specifying the organisation and development of the EUT+ Ideas Institute. The Back-Office's central responsibility is to gather insights and research from EUT+ and third parties, ensuring cutting-edge themes and relevance. It also focuses on promoting evidence-based policy making and crafting a comprehensive roadmap for communication and dissemination to influence political decisions. Key participants here work collaboratively to support

these tasks, ensuring the Ideas Institute's role as a vital bridge between academia and policymakers in shaping technology's future.

## 1 EUt+ Think Tank Activities

### 1.1 Back Office Responsibilities

The EUt+ Think Tank is a platform for research, event organisation, dissemination and communication of EUt+ research, multi-stakeholder dialogue and exchange, and ultimately was established to foster an evidence-based approach to policy-making. Organised across the eight EUt+ member institutions, it convenes thematic gatherings to discuss and develop a European Model for Technological Research, Innovation, and Education. The Idea Institute's mission extends to becoming a central hub for EUt+ activities throughout the years. It operates as a critical forum for shaping discussions on the role of technology in society, aligning research with European values, and advocating for policy recommendations. With a focus on fluidity and insight-gathering, the Ideas Institute plays a pivotal role in EUt+'s aim to inform political decisions with neutral and objective argumentation. Its back office has been established as a support for the institute's activities.

### 1.2 Gathering Insights and Research

The EUt+ Think Tank back office plays a vital role in gathering cutting-edge research insights from within the EUt+ European Research Institutes and beyond. Responsible for horizon scanning and staying updated on state-of-the-art research in technology and society, the back office ensures that the thematic focus of the Ideas Institute remains relevant and at the forefront of intellectual and technological advancements. By collating insights from EUt+ and third-party

sources, it contributes to shaping impactful discussions and policy recommendations, empowering the Ideas Institute to fulfil its mission of promoting an evidence-based approach to policy-making at regional, national, and European levels.

### 1.3 Promoting Evidence-Based Policy Making

The EUT+ Think Tank takes on a critical role in promoting evidence-based policy making by fostering discussions grounded in rigorous research and insights. Through its efforts, it seeks to bridge the gap between technological advancements and policy decisions, ensuring that the development and deployment of technology align with European values and societal needs. By encouraging critical dialogue and facilitating research that emphasizes the role of technology in society, the Ideas Institute aims to contribute to informed decision-making at various levels, ultimately shaping policies that prioritize ethical, responsible, and sustainable technological innovations.

### 1.4 Building a Roadmap for Communication and Dissemination

The Ideas Institute is dedicated to building a comprehensive roadmap for communication and dissemination, a strategic process aimed at influencing policy and decision-making. This multifaceted approach begins with the gathering of cutting-edge research and insights from EUT+ and third-party sources. Subsequently, it involves distilling this information into succinct policy statements, position papers, white papers, and other policy documents that can effectively communicate research findings and recommendations. By navigating this roadmap, the Ideas Institute aims to make a lasting impact on the formulation of policies related to technology and society, ensuring that they reflect European values, responsible innovation, and the ethical dimensions of technological progress.

## 2 Connection with and further Specification under EUT+ EXTRAS

The EUT+ Think Tank maintains a significant connection with the Horizon 2020 SwafS project EUT+ EXTRAS (Experimentation to Transform Research Activities and Steering) Work Package 2 (WPX2), TX2.1. This link is pivotal in advancing the think tank's objectives and enhancing its impact. EUT+ EXTRAS, a strategic initiative within the broader EUT+ framework, is primarily concerned with fostering engagement between European universities and their surrounding regions while nurturing alignment with societal needs and skills development. WP2 of EUT+ EXTRAS focuses on establishing the Think Tank's back-office, which is instrumental in collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating research insights generated by the think tank, and more.

Furthermore, the EUT+ EXTRAS initiative has provided resources for further specification of the EUT+ Think Tank and its organisational structure through the establishment of its back office. The Ideas Institute Back Office is to be distinguished from the front, public facing activities of the Institute including external networking activities, communications activities and event execution. The Ideas Institute Back Office is the space in which organisation, management, core research processes, and inter/intra EUT+ networking and collaboration take place. The Back Office represents a notable development of the think tank from its initial inception that enables the further definition of an organisational structure and it has given impetus to the allocation of management roles including executive director, communications director, and event management team lead.

The Ideas Institute Back Office is the site of organisation and management activities of the think tank, wherein operational decisions are made, including updates to the research agenda, where the overall strategy is formulated or re-formulated, and

where core research activities and communications planning are undertaken in communication and collaboration with EUT+ European Research Institutes (ERIs). The Back Office is responsible for monitoring and evaluating impact of the think tank's activities, developing research and communication materials, organising public facing events, organising networking activities and mapping, building and preserving networks, deciding on policy proposals and advocacy positions, as well as ensuring the financial sustainability of the think tank going forward.

In order to augment the Ideas Institute's capacity to stay ahead of cutting-edge advances in science and technology, and in order to foster interdisciplinary and inter-EUT+ collaboration, as well as to ensure a clear and relevant overall strategic direction for the think tank, the Back Office will also soon see the establishment of an advisory board composed of representatives of the EUT+'s ERIs. Specifically, the advisory board can communicate developments in multi-disciplinary EUT+ research to the think tank, suggest research topics to explore further and promote, review think tank communications and research outputs, suggest collaborative topics and events, and generally provide input on the think tank's overarching research agenda

The synergy between the T8.3 and EUT+ EXTRAS WPX2 TX2.1 is integral to the effective functioning of the Ideas Institute. It enables a streamlined flow of information, enhances the Think Tank's ability to advocate for evidence-based policies, and strengthens its capacity to engage with a broader audience. The shared objectives of both initiatives, centered on addressing societal challenges through research and innovation, create a symbiotic relationship that benefits the entire EUT+ ecosystem. The Ideas Institute is poised to leverage the resources, networks, and expertise facilitated by EUT+ EXTRAS WPX2, further solidifying its position as a leading advocate for responsible, ecological, and human-centred technological advancement within Europe.



### 3 Achievements and Impact in reporting period

In this reporting period, the EUT+ project has achieved significant milestones and made a lasting impact on the fields of pedagogical research, sustainable education, technology, ecology, and democracy in the digital age. Each of these achievements has contributed to the project's overarching goal of advancing European values and technologies in education and society.

#### 3.1 EUT+ Think Tank Expert Panel on "Technology, Ecology, and Sustainability"

The EUT+ Think Tank held an expert panel on "Technology, Ecology, and Sustainability" on 30th August 2023, hosted by TU Sofia, Bulgaria. This event coincided with the multiplier event of the sister project EthiCo, focusing on ethics and ecology in technological education. The expert panel brought together a diverse group of academics and policymakers to discuss the challenges and opportunities posed by technology in the context of ecology and sustainability.

Panellists shared their perspectives on ecology, education, sustainable technology, and policy. This event showcased the project's commitment to addressing critical global issues and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. By exploring the intersection of technology, ecology, and sustainability, the panel contributed to shaping a European response to these pressing challenges. A recording of this EUT+ Think Tank Expert Panel on "Technology, Ecology, and Sustainability" is available as a video<sup>1</sup>.

#### 3.2 EUT+ Think Tank Expert Panel on "Bridging European Values and Technologies"

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Riga at the RTU Ķīpsala student town, the event titled "Democracy in the Digital Age" took place. This event addressed crucial questions

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<sup>1</sup> Video available: <https://www.youtube.com/@EUTpoweredbyTU-Sofia>

related to preserving democratic principles in the context of technological advancements. It brought together experts from various fields to discuss the role of citizens, civil-society organisations, and governments in promoting personal rights and protecting democratic values in the digital era. Topics such as international collaboration, the impact of emerging technologies, and the role of educational institutions in fostering digital literacy were explored. The event's focus on bridging the digital divide and its potential consequences on various aspects of society underscored the project's commitment to addressing contemporary challenges. With a distinguished panel of speakers, this event furthered the project's mission of advancing European values and technologies.

A recording of this EUT+ Think Tank Expert Panel on “Bridging European Values and Technologies” is available as a video<sup>2</sup>.

In summary, the achievements in this reporting period demonstrate the EUT+ project's dedication to innovation, sustainability, and the promotion of European values in education and society. These accomplishments have had a profound impact on participants and the broader academic community, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the pursuit of excellence in European higher education.

#### 4 Future for EUT+ Think Tank

Over the coming months' time, the organisational structure of the think tank and its strategic vision will be further defined and refined based on internal discussions about its ongoing performance, and based on ongoing feedback collected from evaluation surveys which have been distributed to attendees of each think tank event after it has taken place.

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<sup>2</sup> Video available: <https://www.facebook.com/EuropUnivTech/videos/479445767725470/>

As mentioned previously, the advisory board to the EUT+ Think Tank is in the process of being established, drawing from members of the EUT+ ERIs. This board will be operational soon and it is expected that it will provide guidance and further direction to the think tank's activities as well as further shape its identity as a home of inter-disciplinary expertise at the forefront of research on technology and society that strives to make policy impact. The think tank will continue to focus on building effective mechanisms for inter-disciplinary collaboration and using the momentum of such collaboration for policy impact and public education.

Regular meetings (monthly) are scheduled which will facilitate discussion on the themes and topics of the think tank's activities, as well as on refinement of our approach to event management and communication. It is expected that as the participants will also devise and release dissemination and communications materials including social media posts, media engagements, as well as policy papers that align with the topics of think tank events.

Three further think tank events are scheduled for the coming year. They are being organised to coincide with EUT+ partner weeks, and will be hosted in:

- + 22th to 26th January 2024 at UTT in Troyes,
- + 8th to 12th April 2024 at Tu Dublin in Dublin,
- + 20th to 24th May 2024 at h\_da in Darmstadt.

In these events, a plurality of stakeholders (academic, enterprise, policy) will be engaged in dialogic formats to reflect on matters of importance in the domain of technology and society, particularly with a view to reflection on managing advances in science technological change responsibly.

Going forward, the think tank's communication strategy will be refined but will be anchored on pre-existing work of EUT+ EXTRAS TX2.2, which recently delivered the "Methodology and demonstrator (videos, social media posts, community

management, etc.) of a communicational approach for the promotion of European science and technology”.

Furthermore, plans will be made in order to ensure the continuity of the Ideas Institute’s activities up to and including pursuing funding opportunities to resource the think tank beyond EUT+’s first phase.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the EUT+ Think Tank, now known as the EUT+ Ideas Institute, has outlined a comprehensive and ambitious mission to shape the future of technology education, innovation, and policy in Europe. With five core goals, it aspires to foster lifelong learning, reform higher education, emphasize ethics in technology, promote responsible innovation, and bridge the gap between academia and policy.

The document highlights the diverse activities of the Ideas Institute, from fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues to promoting an evidence-based approach to policy-making. Gathering insights and research plays a crucial role in keeping the Institute at the forefront of technological advancements, while promoting evidence-based policy-making aims to align technology development with European values and societal needs. The roadmap for communication and dissemination ensures that research findings and recommendations reach policymakers and the public effectively.

The importance of the Ideas Institute's connection with EUT+ EXTRAS is emphasized, which enhances its impact and ability to advocate for evidence-based policies, strengthening the EUT+ ecosystem by addressing societal challenges through research and innovation. Tangible achievements of the EUT+ project are highlighted, particularly through expert panels on topics such as technology, ecology, sustainability, and democracy in the digital age, which have facilitated interdisciplinary dialogues and contributed to addressing critical global issues, showcasing the Institute's commitment to advancing European values and technologies.

The text also outlines the future for the EUT+ Ideas Institute, including the establishment of an advisory board, ongoing discussions on organizational performance, and the refinement of the institute's strategic vision. Regular meetings

and additional think tank events are planned to engage stakeholders and address evolving challenges. The commitment to effective communication and the pursuit of funding opportunities beyond underscore the Institute's dedication to long-term impact and influence in the field of technology and society in Europe.

In conclusion, the EUT+ Think Tank stands as a pivotal institution committed to shaping the future of technology in Europe, promoting responsible innovation, and fostering collaboration between academia, policymakers, and society. Its achievements and strategic plans reflect its dedication to advancing European values and technologies for the betterment of society as a whole.