EUt⁺ ACCELERATE

European University of Technology (EUt+): Accelerate phase

Deliverable D3

Mid-term audit of the establishment and implementation of ESG frameworks

Del. Rel. No D2.1

WPA2

Dissemination level: **PU**-Public

https://www.univ-tech.eu/phase-2-results

Foreword to deliverable 2.1

Work Package 2 – Transitions and Society (WPA2) – **drives the development of EUt+ as an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable university model**, embedding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles across all levels of the alliance. It delivers concrete results that form part of an overarching ESG framework and directly address the twin green and digital transitions, ensuring these transformations are meaningfully integrated within the evolving EUt+ model.

Four pillars structure the work package and collectively support this objective as the EUt+ alliance develops into a new European University of Technology. A "think human first" approach positions **equality, diversity and inclusion** (Task TA2.1) as a transversal priority across all tasks and activities and links this commitment directly to **responsible and ethical digital transformation** (Task TA2.2) and **green transformation** (Task TA2.3), aligned with UN Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDG). The European context of EUt+ and its commitment to European Values also embraces **multilingualism and intercultural learning** (Task TA2.4), which are fundamental to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion across the alliance.

The deliverable presents the **substantial achievements of WPA2 over the past two years**. It reflects on progress and implementation to date, including the development of ESG frameworks, metrics, and analyses for equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); UN SDGs integration, digital and green transformations; and technology impact assessments at Month 24. Our approach ensures that our framing of Transitions and Society remains informed by state of the art through collecting global good practice cases and research studies. It builds on work established in phase 1 of EUt+, drawing on skills, competencies, and good practices present within each member university. It also recognises the deeply transversal and integrated nature of WPA2's contribution across the wider EUt+ architecture.

This **comprehensive approach successfully engages people and departments with diverse roles and experiences across all member universities** – spanning professional and technical services, teaching, learning, and research. Such diversity has proven essential to enabling meaningful institutional level transformation, as demonstrated by the achievements to date.

These achievements include:

+ Development and operationalisation of the EUt+ FIT framework for an inclusive transformation of EUt+.
+ Support and capacity building engaging our wider communities and stakeholders in diversity, inclusion, and responsible and ethical digital transformation.
+ Tools to address European Values criteria for the European Degree.
+ Multi-dimensional approaches to target multilingualism.

Abbreviations

AASHE-STARS	Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education-Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BIP	Blended Intensive Programme
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CUT	Cyprus University of Technology
DoA	Description of Action
DT WG	Digital Transformation Working Group – a working group of ECT Lab+
EC	European Commission
ECT Lab+	European Culture and Technology Lab – a European Research Institute of EUt+
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EDIO	EUt+ Office for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EFRAG	European Financial Reporting Advisory Group
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
ESN	European Student Network
ESRS	European Sustainability Reporting Standards
ESS Lab	European Sustainability Lab – a European Research Group of EUt+
EU	European Union
EUt+	European University of Technology
EUt+ FIT	EUt+ Framework for Inclusive Transition
FOREU2	Informal coordination group of European University Alliances funded under the second pilot call
FOREU4ALL	Collaborative thematic groups of European University Alliances funded by Erasmus+
GEP	Gender Equity Plans
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
h_da	Hochschule Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences
HEI	Higher Education Institution

KPI	Key performance indicator
LSP	Languages for Specific Purposes
MIO	EUt+ Multilingualism and Intercultural Learning Office
MS2	Milestone 2 of the Description of Action
R&I	Research and Innovation
RTU	Riga Technical University
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SO	EUt+ Sustainability Office
TA2.1	Task 2.1 of EUt+ Accelerate – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
TA2.2	Task 2.2 of EUt+ Accelerate – Digital Transformation
TA2.3	Task 2.3 of EUt+ Accelerate – Green Transition
TA2.4	Task 2.4 of EUt+ Accelerate – Multilingualism and Intercultural learning
TIAF	(Integrated) Technological Impact Assessment Framework
TU Dublin	Technological University Dublin
TUS	Technical University of Sofia
UN SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
UNICAS	University of Cassino and Southern Lazio
UPCT	Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena
UTCN	Technical University of Cluj-Napoca
UUT	Université de Technologie de Troyes
WG	Working Group
WPA2	Work Package 2 of EUt+ Accelerate – Transitions and Society

Introduction

Scope

This deliverable **presents an overview of how we have created a framework for WPA2** – Transitions and Societies – within EUt+ **and highlights key achievements to date**. The overarching objective of the work package is *"the integration of effective tools for the seamless implementation of EDI, digital and green transitions, and intercultural competencies frameworks"* (DoA, p116). This includes **specific objectives for each task**:

+ **TA2.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,** driven by the EUt+ Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Office (EDIO): 1) developing a solid methodology for institutional transformation on EDI at members level; 2) embedding and implementing this methodology; and 3) periodically reporting, analysing, and monitoring EDI data from member institutions and across EUt+.
+ **TA2.2 Digital transformation,** led by the European Culture and Technology Lab (ECT Lab+) and the EUt+ Sustainability Lab (ESS Lab): 1) developing methodologies for strategic digital innovation that support the green transition and ensure ethical and responsible use; 2) supporting their uptake across relevant EUt+ groups (e.g. clusters, institutes, offices, working groups, to name a few), and 3) collecting data and reviewing digital technologies' impact on green transition and ethical use.
+ **TA2.3 Green transformation,** led by the EUt+ Sustainability Office (SO) in cooperation with the ESS Lab: 1) linking the local Green Offices of the member institutions into an EUt+ Sustainability Office; 2) developing methodology for measuring UN SDGs impact across curricula and research, and across EUt+ as a whole, and 3) conducting data collection, analysis, and monitoring of such impact data.
+ **TA2.4 Multilingualism and intercultural learning,** driven by the EUt+ Multilingualism and Languages Teaching Office and the Interculturality Team (MIO): 1) fostering shared European Values through intercultural training; 2) promoting foreign language proficiency for students and staff with parity of esteem among all member languages; and 3) supporting the embedding of these approaches into course design and practice.

Context

Phase 1 of EUt+ emphasised capacity building, knowledge sharing, and competence exploration in diversity and inclusion. **Several successful initiatives emerged during the first phase and now shape the context for EUt+ Accelerate**. The ECT Lab+, for example, promotes trans-disciplinarity and integrates arts, humanities, and social sciences research within EUt+. EUt+ Accelerate now operationalises and applies the tools and outputs developed during Phase 1 through TA2.2, jointly led by the ECT Lab+ and the ESS Lab. Similarly, TA2.3 builds on Phase 1 foundations, drawing on the ESS Lab to advance green transformation, leveraging new knowledge and innovation towards our transformation. TA2.4 evolved from EUt+ Language Pool, which embraced multilingualism from a range of angles, including mapping language provision, supporting informal language learning during mobilities and "survival language learning", validating proficiency, and motivating

staff language development. TA2.1 also builds on Phase 1's EDI Coordinating Group and the establishment of local EDI teams and Gender Equity Plans (GEP) across all partners in the first phase.

Building on this solid foundation, the work package goes a step further and addresses European Union's (EU) twin pursuit of sustainability and digitalisation goals. As the EU advances towards climate neutrality by 2050, **our combined tasks support a just green and digital transformation grounded in human-centred, multilingual, and intercultural approaches**.

At the mid-point of the EUt+ Accelerate, we demonstrate our strategic approach to Transitions and Society and its operationalisation, **positioning EUt+ for high impact implementation over the next two years**. Our work aligns with key developments in the European education landscape, including European Degree – a central effort in EUt+ ambition of convergence – the twin green and digital transition, the UN SDGs, Erasmus Programme priorities, and broader EU ambitions for sustainability, inclusiveness, competitiveness, and security. This deliverable therefore **presents four main achievements for the period M1-M24**:

+ **Achievement 1**: EUt+ FIT – an ESG Framework redesigned for academia. We develop a framework to position EUt+ for a just twin green and digital transition, embedding transparency, accurate reporting, accountability, avoidance of greenwashing, and data interoperability.
+ **Achievement 2**: Meeting societal needs through equality, diversity and inclusion. We show progress through gender data collection, digital transformation seminars, and other targeted support for local EDI teams.
+ **Achievement 3**: Tools for embedding European Values criteria into the European Degree in Engineering. We present a self-reflection diagnostic approach for integrating responsible technology use, inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, and multilingualism, alongside UN SDGs and European Values mapping in both new and existing curricula.
+ **Achievement 4**: Two foreign languages for all – advancing true multilingualism as a condition of inclusiveness. We document our multidimensional approach to multilingual and intercultural competence for students.

1. Achievement 1: EUt+ FIT – An Environmental and Societal Governance Framework Redesigned for Academia

This chapter presents the progress made under Achievement 1: the **EUt+ FIT**. It turns ESG principles into action, creating a measurable, inclusive, and resilient framework that drives **real-world transformation** across teaching, research, and campus life within EUt+ This chapter outlines what is EUt+ FIT, how the EUt+ FIT framework has been developed, tested, and operationalised across the alliance. It discusses the core principles guiding the work, summarises the methods used to structure experimentation and data collection, and highlights the early outputs that demonstrate how the framework supports a more coherent and inclusive approach to transformation within EUt+.

1.1. Objective

The objective of this achievement is to **establish EUt+ FIT as a framework that translates ESG principles into actionable practices within the EUt+ alliance and across member institutions**. "FIT" stands for Framework for Inclusive Transition. The acronym also reflects both ecosystem fitness – sustaining diversity, resilience, and essential services through co-evolutionary dynamics, and operational readiness, i.e. being "Fit for purpose". The framework operationalises the European Commission's (EC) emphasis on responsibility, integrity, transparency, reliability, and credibility through structured, semi-annual cycles of implementation, review, and evaluation within WPA2. Building on foundational work – including materiality assessments, member good practice reviews, internal needs analyses, and methodological synthesis – EUt+ FIT provides an operational tool governed by clear principles of transparency, accountability, avoidance of greenwashing, and data interoperability. It coherently aligns task activities with identified transformational areas, applies common templates and reporting tools linked to key performance indicators (KPIs), and develops governance artefacts, including terms of reference, data management plans, reporting templates, audit protocols, and a digitalisation plan. In doing so, EUt+ FIT offers a **disciplined, interoperable approach** to **planning and performance oversight**, supports stakeholder confidence, and enables value creation across the interlinked pillars of EDI, digital transformation, green transition, and multilingualism and intercultural learning.

1.2. State of the Art

To understand the rationale behind EUt+ FIT and its alignment with global and European ESG standards, it is essential to situate the framework within current regulatory guidance, research, and sustainability practices in higher education.

Recent developments at European level emphasise responsibility, integrity, transparency, reliability, and credibility in institutional reporting – principles that increasingly shape expectations for universities navigating the twin green and digital transitions. WPA2 situates EUt+ within this evolving landscape by promoting an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable university model that embeds ESG considerations across all levels of the alliance. In this way, WPA2 aligns EUt+ with the European Commission's shift towards values-based

governance, while contributing to broader sectoral efforts to integrate ESG approaches within higher education.

Various documents, including Regulation (EU) 2024/3005 on ESG rating transparency and integrity, the 2023 European Sustainability Reporting Standards (EU, 2023/2772), the EU Taxonomy simplification measures (EC, 2025), the EC 2021 Climate Law (EU, 2021/1119), and other connected documents, establish ESG as a framework for sustainable economic activity through transparent ratings and regulated reporting. European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) (EU, 2023/2772) underpin ESG regulations through cross-cutting requirements addressing environmental themes (climate, resource use, circular economy), social themes (affected communities, workforce), and governance (business conduct). This framework enables comparison across organisations and enhances transparency. While these regulations primarily target listed companies and small and medium sized-enterprises (SME) to support investor decisions and advance the EU Green Deal and UN SDGs, their principles remain highly relevant to higher education institutions (HEI) seeking a just green and digital transition.

Recent research confirms ESG's growing importance in higher education globally. ESG principles of transparency, reliability, and credibility are increasingly recognised as essential for HEIs committed to delivering a just green and digital transition. Advance HE's (2024) discussion paper examines how ESG can be adapted for higher education, drawing on insights from multi-agency steering group that explores how boards and senior leaders measure performance and evidence strategic achievement. Although the forum acknowledges that the diversity and distinctiveness of HEIs present challenges for uniform ESG adoption, senior leaders nonetheless recognise the value of internationally recognised frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and integrated reporting. A systematic review by dos Santos, Kieling et al. (2022) analysed 111 articles and highlighted strong activity in England, the USA, Spain, and Brazil. Their findings point to regional differences in sustainability perspectives while underscoring the central role of HEIs as knowledge creators who must engage with environmental and social performance alongside governance. Governance itself is a critical enabler of ESG implementation in HEIs (Leal Filho et al. 2021b), particularly as competitive pressures across the sector increasingly demand efficiency and accountability. Reflecting these trends, the new QS Sustainability Indicator (QS, 2025) now incorporates ESG dimensions, signalling rising expectations for institutional performance in this area.

Building on these regulatory frameworks and research insights from the sustainability literature, we have developed EUt+ FIT. EUt+ FIT provides **a framework tailored to the needs of a multi-institutional European university, recognising the complexity of HEIs and the unique challenges of pan European alliances**. It operationalises ESG principles – such as transparency, accountability, reliable reporting, and avoidance of greenwashing – through governance, monitoring, and data-interoperability processes suited to complex higher education settings. EUt+ FIT also **supports coordinated progress across EDI, digital transformation, the green transition, and multilingualism and intercultural learning – the tasks of WPA2 –** ensuring that the alliance advances a just and integrated approach to the twin transitions.

1.3. Foundation Building and Methodological Approach

With this context established, we anchor our methodological approach in the EUt+ ESG framework – **EUt+ FIT**: **Framework for Inclusive Transition**. EUt+ FIT combines multiple alliance ambitions. It draws on the underlying principles of ESG regulation and guidance to ensure that EUt+ acts with responsibility, integrity, transparency, reliability, and credibility. The framework positions EUt+ to contribute to achieving the 2050 twin transition targets of the EU through agile, transparent experimentation cycles. Multilingualism and intercultural learning, form foundational pillars of our framework, respecting Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity in our just transition approach.

Developing the framework required **extensive foundational work through interconnected phases (Figure 1) that formed Milestone 2 (MS2) of the Description of Action (DoA)** "Establish methodologies and frameworks for EDI, Digital and Green Transformations".
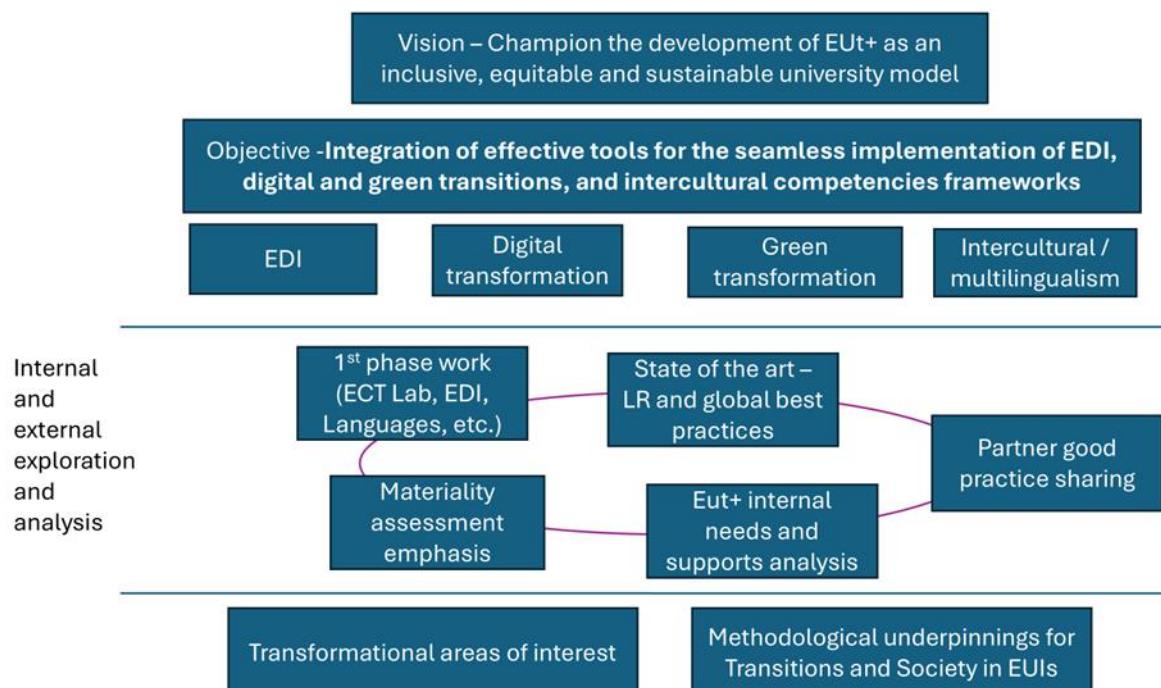
Figure 1: Foundation building for EUt+ FIT (MS2)

Foundation building activities were structured as key methodological steps to achieve this milestone:

Brainstorming and collective sensemaking about the Vision, Objective and the Tasks in the Work Package on Transitions and Society (MS2 Section 1): These activities occurred in January – February 2024 **workshops and meetings** between the task leaders and work package lead and explored the work package objectives, individual tasks in the overall context of EUt+, member universities' competencies, and European context alignment.

Internal and external exploration and analysis: Building on evidence, state of the art knowledge, and member competencies, we conducted **five interconnected exercises**.

Firstly, drawing on successful work from the first phase (MS2 Section 2). We **collected extensive initiatives and experiences from previous phases**. For example, TA2.1 (equity, diversity and inclusion) developed a Women in Tech manifesto (including several sub-initiatives) and an Access and Widening Participation plan with shared principles for inclusion and good practices across partners. TA2.2 (digital transformation) leveraged the European Research Institute – ECT Lab+, with multiple highly relevant research projects and active researchers in responsible digital transformation, ethics and technological forecasting. The Green Transformation task and its supporting Sustainability Office (originally called the Green Office) were added to TA2.3 during the EUt+ Accelerate phase. TA2.4 (multilingualism and intercultural learning) emerged from a Language Pool addressing language provision mapping, research, buddy systems, informal language learning, validation, "survival language learning", language proficiency supports for staff, new programmes and common curricula.

Secondly, global best practices (MS2 Section 3): Member institutions **identified global best practices** to include in our own strategy and planning work, including FOREU2 examples on EDI approaches from the inter-alliance European University Initiative forum for diversity and inclusion (TA2.1), transdisciplinary approaches from UC Berkeley Media Department (TA2.2), AASHE-STARS Platinum Benchmarks for sustainability (TA2.3), and Norwegian University of Science and Technology for new language learning environments (TA2.4). Overall, 20 best practices were identified across our four tasks.

Thirdly, state of the art literature review (MS2 Section 3): An **extensive literature review (summarised in Table 1)** underpinned our methodological framework. The TA2.2 Digital Transformation Working Group (DT WG) leveraged expertise of researchers from the ECT Lab+, the ESS+ Lab, and the wider work package to articulate an approach to digital transformation tailored for EUt+. Our approach is informed by Bernard Stiegler and the Internation Collective (2021), whose work on bifurcation[1] highlights the need for alternative development pathways as existing models reach their limits. Complementing this, Richard Noorgard's (1994) coevolutionary perspective emphasises the interdependence of loosely interconnected social and ecological systems. The ESS+ Lab's expertise on the twin green and digital transition further contributes insights into the regenerative dynamics of market systems (Lenz, 2022; Kluh, 2022). Additionally, transition models such as donut economics and circular and contributory economics (Raworth, 20217; Cramer, 2023; Ellen MacArthur Foundation) guide the development of sustainable institutional practices across our member institutions.

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[1] The question of whether we transition is not straightforward. It demands a radical rethinking of our current trajectories. "Bifurcation" refers to a sudden and fundamental shift in direction. The term was first introduced by Henri Poincaré in the late 1880s in his mathematical work on planetary dynamics and the stability of the solar system (Poincaré, 1897; Poincaré & Magini, 1899). Achieving such a bifurcation in societal or institutional systems requires drawing on knowledge from diverse worldviews and disciplines (Fitzpatrick, Hayes et al., 2025).

	Bifurcation	Co-evolutionary process	Narrative ethics	Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity	Donut economics/Eco-digital spirit of capitalism	Circular/Contributory economy
Goal	Radically change system	Symbiosis of individuals and technologies	Responsible innovation	Solving wicked problems	Balance in the space in between that social foundation and ecological ceiling, market	Reduce pressure on natural resources
System	Creating new system	Emerging from a local context, milieu	Life World	Education, society in general	Living world, capitalist system	National, local or product lifecycle
Sphere of Influence	Individual, collective, planetary	Individual, social, technical	Individual, collective, political	Individual, collective, political	Global formed from groups, networks, institutions, market	National or local
Type	A specific set of action(s)	A continuous process	Individual and collective decision	A continuous process	A market system A regenerative process	Development, consumption and production patterns
Political scale	Global	Local, global	Local, national, international	Local, international, global	Global, EU context	Product lifecycles
Key academic influences	Bernard Stiegler and Internation Collective	Richard Norgaard; Jens Jetzkowitz; Don Idhe; Gilbert Simondon; Bruno Latour; Martin Heidegger.	Martha Nussbaum; Alasdair MacIntyre; Paul Ricoeur; Wessel Reijers	Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber	Susan Raworth; Ulrich Klüh; Sarah Lenz	Clement Morlat; Jacqueline Cramer; The Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Table 1: Social, philosophical, and economic underpinnings relevant to Transitions and Society

Fourthly, materiality assessment (MS2 Section 4): ESG Regulations position materiality assessment as the starting point for sustainability reporting under ESRS. The principle of double materiality necessitates reporting not only on how ESG issues affect the company but also on the company's impact on people and the environment (inside out and outside in). European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) standards define materiality through three criteria: information significance, stakeholder needs, and public interest transparency. In June 2024, h_da, led **development and circulation of a Materiality questionnaire across all member institutions** using the AASHE-STARS categories – a globally

recognised benchmarking tool[2] underpinning TU Dublin's sustainability rankings. Across partners, 12 *material categories* were agreed on: Curriculum and research; Campus engagement and public engagement; multiple Operations categories involving buildings and grounds, energy and climate, food and dining, procurement and waste, and transportation; Planning and Administration categories involving coordination and planning, investment, social equity, wellbeing and work; and Innovation and Leadership as a final category. The physical week in Darmstadt in June 2024 completed the double materiality analysis through collaborative planning.

Fifth and lastly, member good practice reviews (MS2 Section 5): In the first phase of EUt+ we developed a robust template for collecting good practices across partners under different themes. The template involves a three-step process for firstly identifying good practices through questions on a Likert Scale; secondly, recording good practices through a template developed from approaches in the EC and United Nations. A third step involves ranking the good practices according to results of the Likert Scale and priorities determined by the respective task representatives. Good practices collected across partners in the first phase according to this methodology involved Access and Widening Participation (Feb 2022), Tech transfer and Industry and Community engagement (Dec 2021), and Internationalisation and optimising mobility (Nov 2021). Our new member university in this phase – UNICAS – added their practices to these. We also identified two new areas where good practice reviews across partners were needed. These were Green campus and Gender and diversity practices, both collected and analysed in April 2025. In total, we have **collected and leveraged 84 member good practices** to support the methodological development.

EUt+ internal tasks needs and support analysis (MS2 Section 6): Alongside reviewing member competences and international best practice, we recognised that the Transitions and Society work package operates as a transversal element within EUt+ Accelerate – not in isolation. Its success depends on understanding how all other tasks both rely on and can contribute to EDI (TA2.1), Digital transformation (TA2.2), Green transformation (TA2.3), and Multilingualism and intercultural learning (TA2.4). To map these interconnections, we designed and circulated a questionnaire to all Task Leads and Task Participants, asking two questions: 1) What are the *needs* of other EUt+ tasks from WPA2 tasks? 2) What are the *supports* that EUt+ tasks can provide to the WPA2 tasks? In total, eight questions were issued in September 2024, and data was collected until March 2025. Participants were asked for up to three suggestions for each question. We received 68 responses across 31 tasks, yielding 1,050 suggestions – **521 suggestions of *needs* of other tasks from WPA2 and 499 suggestions of *supports* that other tasks can provide to the WPA2 – distributed evenly across the four tasks**.

From the extensive insights gained through the task *needs* and *supports* questions, workshops were designed in each of the WPA2 tasks to review the findings and to develop

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[2] The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. STARS Technical Manual V.3.01. is accessible from: https://stars.aashe.org/resources-support/technical-manual/.

tactical actions and initiatives that might address the identified needs and supports. We limited these to three per task with some replications across multiple tasks responding to a similar need or support suggestion. We then grouped these into *working groups* (WG), some of which already existed in the tasks and some that need to be developed in the future (e.g. WG#5 Inclusive staff and mobilities in TA2.1 that considers all tactics connected to this). We created **reports with** *network maps* **(see example in Figure 2) to visualise these interconnections between the tactics, the working groups, and the tasks across EUt+ Accelerate**. This serves as a tool for methodological oversight and links to the full reports and expandable network visual (included in Annex I).

TA2.1: Linkages between WG#2 (Data collection from underrepresented cohorts) proposed actions and other EUt+ Tasks

TA2.2: Linkages between Cat #8CO (Communication support) proposed actions and other EUt+ Tasks

TA2.3: Linkages between Cat #1LG (Green leadership and governance) proposed actions and other EUt+ Tasks
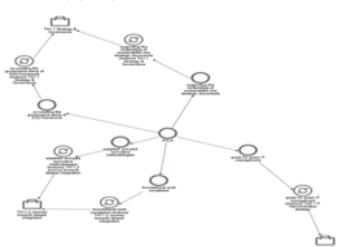
TA2.4: Linkages between Cat #6GD (Multilingualism and culture in twin green and digital transformation) proposed actions and other EUt+ Tasks
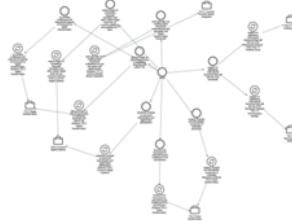
Figure 2: Examples of network visualisation on tactical responses to EUt+ internal task needs and supports

Identifying transformational areas of interest to focus on (MS2 Appendix D): Leveraging the foundation building work described above, each task identified *Transformational Areas of Interest*. A three-year perspective was adapted to reflect the funding timeline for this stage of EUt+. Table 2 summarises these **transformational areas for the four pillars**, forming the methodological basis for operationalisation and prioritisation across tasks over a three-year perspective.[3]

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[3] Note that the number of *transformational areas* for each task were reduced significantly in the first evaluation period (Oct 2025), recognising that in the context of capacity and resources, more focus is needed on a smaller number of areas to achieve high impact ambitions in this phase.

EDI	Digital Transformation	Green Transformation	Multilingualism and intercultural learning
EDI Data collection and management	Implementation of key theoretical positions on technology into practice	Data collection and management	On-going review of language provision, mapping and recognition of learning
European policy review and development	Development of European Perspective on Digital Technologies	European policy review and development	Pursue innovation and share best practices in language teaching and intercultural awareness
Exploring research funding opportunities	Develop methodologies and epistemologies for the strategic innovations in digital technologies which assist the green transition of society	Exploring research funding opportunities	Networking and collaboration
Supporting institutional GEPs / intersectionality	Supporting the spread/diffusion and use of those methodologies across EUt+	Supporting institutional sustainability plans	EUt+ joint research and collaboration on languages, linguistics, language education and intercultural competences
Collaborating for critical reflection	Collecting data and review of digital technologies as regards to impact on green, sustainable and ethical use		Facilitating/supporting language and intercultural learning on mobilities of students and staff
Linking with societies and transition / SDG linking	Development, Implementation of the Technological Foresight methodologies	Linking with societies and transition / SDG linking	Proposing language policy and acting as expert advisory
Developing EUt+ level guidelines / protocols / policies / codes of conduct	Development of Technological Impact Assessment	Developing EUt+ level guidelines / protocols / policies / codes of conduct	
Promoting underrepresented / minority / non-traditional groups in academic fields	Ethics and Ecology rollout	Supporting researcher and student sustainability projects	
Embedding EDI in European degree Curricula	Embedding digital transformation in the European degree curricula	Embedding environmental sustainability in the European degree curricula	Embedding multilingualism and intercultural learning in European degree curricula
	Framework for Transition/Bifurcation within a Higher Education Institution and its inter- and transdisciplinarity		

Table 2: Transformational areas of interest for the four pillars of EUt+ FIT (three-year perspective)

Methodological underpinnings of EUt+ FIT (MS2 Section 8): Our overarching methodological approach for EUt+ FIT builds on guidance from the literature (summarised in Table 1 above), where high complementariness and strong consensus exist on effective methods for navigating emerging institutions undergoing transition, transformation, and/or bifurcation. We also integrated methodological approaches derived from our foundational work (illustrated in Figure 1). These **overarching methodological principles for Transitions and Society in higher education can be summarised (though not exclusively) as follows**:

+ Emphasis on decentralisation for greater participation in the understanding of and management of human interaction with environmental systems and greater cultural diversity – e.g. ecofeminist approaches.
+ Experimentation approaches.
+ Recognition of a Maturity Model approaches across partners.
+ Ways of looking ahead – e.g. scenario planning, horizon scanning, expert elicitation, dynamic planning, technological foresight.
+ Recognition of importance of art, creativity, and outputs and methods for connecting culture(s).
+ Use and training on innovative pedagogies – e.g. case studies, whole of society approaches, inclusive transformational learning.
+ Provision of transparent and interoperable information for evaluation and indicators.

Other contributions to EUt+ FIT foundation building: Numerous additional background activities supported the achievement of MS2, providing essential input for our internal and external analyses, even though they are not depicted in Figure 1. A detailed list, including links to the relevant files and documents, is provided in Annex I.

1.4. EUt+ FIT ESG Framework and Its Practical Application

Our ESG framework that emerged from the foundation work described in the previous section underpins the development of **EUt+ FIT presented in Figure 3**. EUt+ FIT operates as a dynamic governance platform that enables short, iterative cycles of experimentation. It builds on EUt+'s collective competences and capabilities, current international practice, and a range of philosophical and socio-economic influences.
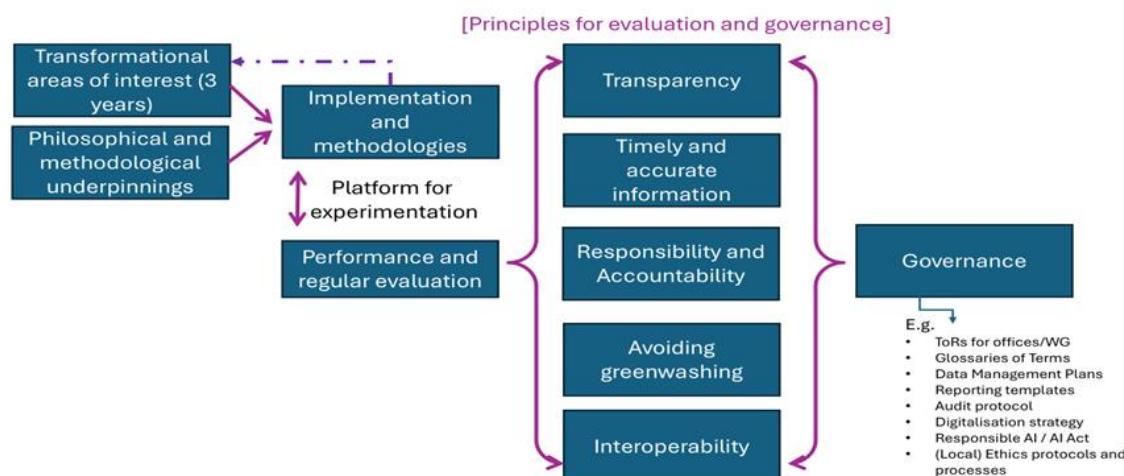
Figure 3: EUt+ FIT framework overview for a just green and digital transformation

1.4.1. A Platform for Experimentation

EUt+ FIT recognises the complexity of European University alliances. These are institutional forms still in development, without established legal structures, operating across diverse

cultural, technological and environmental contexts. They differ fundamentally from profit-driven organisations, yet they are still expected to demonstrate transparency, responsibility and accountability to funders, stakeholders and society.

To manage this complexity, **EUt+ FIT adopts short, cyclical phases of implementation, review and evaluation**. These cycles allow partners to test approaches, observe effects and adjust practice as needed. Experimentation is understood as part of an adaptive process within coevolving systems, where change arises through iteration rather than prediction. This approach emphasises maintaining organisational "fitness" over time and supporting a just green and digital transition informed by emerging evidence.

1.4.2. Operational Tool: Semi-Annual Planning Process

At the core of the framework is a **semi-annual implementation plan completed by each WPA2 task**. The template (presented in Figure 4) captures planned activities for every *Transformational Area of Interest*, links them to relevant KPIs, and records the people involved, methods, milestones, resource needs, training requirements, and communication opportunities.[4]

The process has been in place since 2024 and is now fully embedded across all four tasks (2025). It is supported by the suite of supporting instruments developed during the foundational phase, including good practice reviews and the internal *needs and supports analysis* (Figure 1).

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[4] For example, EDI (TA2.1) has 9 areas listed, so it would complete this template nine times, once for each area every six months.

Goal #1 – area of interest	[specific 'area of interest' from your three-year plan for your task]
Tasks	- [list tasks to be completed during the half year that help you work towards the Goal above]
People	[list people or groups involved in the tasks listed] – apply RASCI model
Methodology(ies)	[list consecutively the steps you will take to implement the task(s) planned • Is there a recognised research or pedagogical approach that you are using? • How will you prepare for the task (collecting data / analysing data / reviewing literature / training seminar / etc..] • Does the task involve any designing of research instruments (e.g. Questions, focus group, etc..)
Milestones	[set periodic milestones to support your semi annual plan (e.g. one or two milestones overall]
Resources	[list key resources that might be needed to implement the tasks]
Training and Awareness needed	• [list T&A needed across your task, other WPA2 tasks and the work package overall if relevant to support implementation] • [list across other tasks and work packages in EUt+ Accelerate if relevant] • [list across partners including staff and students and other stakeholders if relevant]
Communication and dissemination opportunities	- [list opportunities for communication – news pieces, social media,.etc] - [list opportunities / needs for dissemination – trainings, conference papers, seminars, etc.. see dissemination protocol for more info: https://agora.univ-tech.eu/sphere/2rel4q/box/1030370 - note that communication and dissemination / training need to be recorded for EC reporting – use tool: https://agora.univ-tech.eu/sphere/2rel4q/box/1030371
Measurement (from EUt+ bid)	• [select from the KPIs under WPA2 in the EUt+ Accelerate bid document – all goals and tasks must link to at least one of the stated KPIs and ideally more than one] • [add any new KPI metrics that are not listed in the EUt+ Accelerate bid document that that will be good indicators of successful completion of goal] **Full list of documented KPIs [delete all not relevant to specific implementation activities in this Goal]** *WP2.1 Existence of a harmonised approach to EDI;* *WP2.2 Promote policies to support community engagement in EDI initiatives;* *WP2.3 Ratio of staff and students from under-represented cohorts. We target an equal representation of the society in the EUt+ community, and an equal representation of the EUt+ community in the top management of the EUt+ supercampus;* *WP2.4 ....WP2.26 each one listed in form*

Figure 4: EUt+ FIT half-yearly implementation plan template with instructions

1.4.3. Principles for Evaluation and Governance

The **governance structure of EUt+ FIT** draws on established sustainability literature, which emphasises clear vision, transparent leadership and systematic processes for planning,

monitoring and reporting (Abubakar et al., 2020; Mader et al., 2013; Filho et al., 2023). EUt+ presents a distinctive context: an emerging, distributed, institutional arrangement coordinated through work packages, virtual offices, and a shared Secretariat General, rather than through a single legal entity. Two elements underpin its governance approach:

+ **Principles for review and evaluation**: transparency, timely and accurate information, responsibility and accountability, avoidance of greenwashing, and interoperability of data.
+ **Governance artefacts**: organisational structures, documents, and operating practices that support the ESG platform evolving as the alliance matures (including steps towards more centralised compliance functions).

1.4.4. Governance of Review and Evaluation

Implementation plans are subject to both informal and formal review processes.

Informal processes include:

+ Discussion during regular task and office meetings of EDIO, DT WG, SO, and MIO, with minutes recorded
+ Verbal reporting by task leads at fortnightly WPA2 liaison meetings
+ Bi-monthly WPA2 meetings using a Start/Stop/Change/Continue reflective tool
+ Contributions to the semi-annual KPI reporting cycle coordinated by the Secretariat General.

Formal review and planning workshops take place every six months between WPA2 leadership and task leads. These sessions follow four stages:

1. Evaluating the previous plan using the ESG-aligned review template based on the *five principles* – transparency, timely and accurate information, responsibility and accountability, avoiding greenwashing and interoperability (as illustrated in Figure 5).
2. Reviewing the suite of strategising instruments developed from the *internal and external exploration and analysis* (as detailed in Figure 1) and including good practice reviews, *internal task needs and analysis report*, policy documents, and work from first phase.
3. Adjusting *transformation areas of interest* where required, based on scenario planning, reflecting on maturity of various partners, consideration to local needs, visualising.
4. Completing the next *semi-annual implementation plan* (as illustrated in Figure 4).

Six-Month Strategy Implementation Review & Corrective Action Template

Pillar: (Select one: TA2.1 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion | TA2.2 Digital Transformation | TA2.3 Green Transformation | TA2.4 Multilingualism & Intercultural Learning | WPA2 overall work package review)

Goal # / Area of Transformation: (Copy exactly from implementation plan)

Review Period: (e.g., Mar–Sept 2025)

1. Progress & Evaluation (Scorecard)

Criterion	Assessment	Score (0-2)	Evidence / Notes
Progress against plan (Are milestones on schedule?)			
Accuracy & transparency (Is reporting timely, verifiable, accessible?)			
Stakeholder engagement / inclusivity (Are staff, students, and partners involved?)			
Ethics & responsibility check (Aligned with values, avoiding greenwashing/bias?)			
Corrective actions applied from last cycle (Were previous issues addressed?)			
Subtotal Score:		__ / 10	

2. Corrective Action Log

Issue Identified	Root Cause	Corrective Action	Responsible Party	Deadline (Before Next Review)	Status (🔴 / 🟠 / 🟢)

3. Summary & Next Steps

Overall Status: 🔴 At risk / 🟠 Needs improvement / 🟢 On track

Key Achievements this period:
- ...

Priority Actions for Next 6 Months:
- ...

Figure 5: EUt+ FIT six-month strategy implementation review template

1.4.5. Governance Artefacts of EUt+ FIT

As EUt+ continues to take shape, its **governance mechanisms** evolve alongside it. The alliance is developing a coherent set of artefacts that translate ESG principles into operational practice, guided by the key elements of good governance for HEI sustainability (Abubaker et al., 2020; Leal Filho et al., 2021b/2023; Lima et al., 2023; Mader et al., 2013), summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Word cloud summarising "good governance" for sustainability

To date, the work package has established the following governance components:

- **Terms of Reference** for EDIO, SO, MIO, and the DT WG, defining how the offices operate and are governed. (MS2 Appendix A)
- **Glossaries of Terms** to ensure shared definitions and common understanding across partners in areas related to EDI, digital transformation, green transformation, multilingualism and intercultural learning. (MS2 Appendix B)
- **Data management plans** covering handling of private and confidential information relevant to EUt+ FIT. The plan developed in the first phase has been updated to include additional data sources emerging in this phase. (MS2 Appendix C)
- **Reporting templates** used across internal and external review processes, including reporting to the European Commission, EUt+ internal periodic reporting, and the six-monthly evaluation cycle. (MS2 Appendix I)
- **Audit protocol** designed to align with European Commission's requirements and incorporating external experts, as well as a future interoperability working group[5], to strengthen transparency and consistency across reporting processes from 2026 onward. Methods and guidelines are in development. (MS2 Appendix J)
- **Digitalisation planning**, which foresees the development of a dashboard to support monitoring and evaluation. This would enable the integration of case studies, planning tools, and review instruments into a shared digital platform, subject to the availability of technical and financial resources in 2026. (MS2 Appendix K)
- **Additional governance artifacts** include (local) ethics protocols that shape the conditions under which data can be collected and used, as well as relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks – most notably the EU AI Act (EU, 2024/1689) – which increasingly inform expectations around transparency, accountability and responsible data practices.

1.4.6. Example of EUt+ FIT in Operation

In October 2025 each task – i.e. each pillar of the framework (see Figure 1) – enters its second six-monthly review and evaluation cycle (see Annex II for results). This stage has confirmed that the initial planning phase generated an overly broad set of areas of transformation within each task, exceeding what is feasible and impactful within current resources. For this cycle, task leads have therefore been asked to consolidate their focus to 3–5 core goals, ensuring that the work remains manageable and meaningful (see Annex III for revised plans). As a result, the original 34 areas of transformation (listed in Table 1) will be refined

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[5] The interoperability working group brings together experts from within and outside member universities, providing specialised knowledge in methodologies and reporting relevant to EUt+ FIT. This may include UN SDGs mapping, GRI, AASHE-STARS criteria, circular economy, technological forecasting, and systems approaches. The group reviews outputs and reports from EUt+ experimentation cycles to ensure data interoperability aligned with their expertise. The goal is to enable EUt+ FIT outputs to be interpreted and reported meaningfully through multiple perspectives, enhancing transparency and accuracy for different stakeholders. Data interoperability is a key feature of ESG framework.

to approximately 12–16 areas for future cycles of experimentation across the framework's pillars.

The example presented in Annex V illustrates one goal from the EDI Office (March 2025–September 2025 plan). It **demonstrates how a single goal progresses through the EUt+ FIT cycle of review, planning, and adjustment**. The process involves four stages:

1. **Reviewing the goal's implementation plan**. In this case instance, Goal #1 Data collection and management included: 1) collecting and publishing gender data from partners for 2022–23 and 2023–24; 2) developing a protocol for collecting data on underrepresented cohorts; and 3) updating the data management plan to incorporate new data types foreseen in EUt+ Accelerate.
2. **Completing the six-monthly review and corrective action template**, responding to ESG-aligned questions such as progress against plan, accuracy and transparency of reporting, and other indicators (refer to Figure 5).
3. **Consulting the internal and external support instruments** (identified in Figure 1) – e.g. mapping of EUt+ task needs and supports – to inform decisions about the next implementation phase.
4. **Preparing the new half-yearly implementation plan** for the upcoming period (October 2025 - March 2026) (see Annex III).

During the next two years, the data will be gathered across tasks, reflecting the pillars of EUt+ FIT. This will enable a structured process of cyclical experimentation spanning five cycles. At the work package level, methodologies will be developed to explore mutualisms, synergies, and interoperability across different reporting structures (e.g. UN SDGs mapping, circular economy-related indicators).

1.5. Outputs and Outcomes

The EUt+ FIT framework has produced a **series of concrete outputs** that form the foundation for systematic ESG integration across our alliance. Key outputs include:

+ **Governance tools and artefacts**: Terms of Reference for offices (EDIO, SO, MIO, and DT WG), glossaries of terms, data management plans, reporting templates, an audit protocol, and initial digitalisation plans. These tools provide a shared operational language, standardised procedures, and mechanisms for transparency and accountability.
+ **Implementation instruments**: Templates for six-monthly planning and review of transformational areas, network maps visualising inter-task support and dependencies, and half-yearly review templates aligned with ESG principles.
+ **Foundational analyses**: Materiality assessments, state of the art literature reviews, good practice reviews across member institutions, and internal needs and supports analyses.
+ **Identification of transformational areas**: Tasks within WPA2 have distilled their focus into 12–16 priority transformational areas for the immediate planning horizon, based on iterative cycles of reflection and feasibility assessment.

These outputs collectively establish a structured, interoperable operational framework that enables coordinated planning, monitoring, and evaluation across multiple institutional contexts.

The adoption of EUt+ FIT and the associated outputs have generated the following **early-stage outcomes**:

+ **Enhanced coordination and alignment**: Task leads now have a clear and shared understanding of their responsibilities, interdependencies, and priority transformational areas, facilitating more efficient collaboration across the alliance.
+ **Evidence-based decision making**: Data collection protocols and review processes ensure that activities and initiatives are guided by accurate, timely, and comparable information, enabling informed adjustments to strategies and interventions.
+ **Institutional learning and adaptation**: The cyclical, short-term experimentation approach allows EUt+ to test initiatives, assess what works in practice, and refine actions. This iterative learning supports responsiveness to local contexts, emerging challenges, and evolving priorities.
+ **Methodological consolidation**: EUt+ FIT synthesises multiple conceptual influences (co-evolutionary thinking, bifurcation, donut economics, narrative ethics) into a coherent framework for operationalising ESG principles in higher education, providing a scalable approach for other tasks or university alliances.

These outcomes demonstrate the framework's ability to translate foundational analyses and governance mechanisms into tangible operational improvements and coordinated action.

1.6. Impact and Dissemination

Through EUt+ FIT, the alliance is embedding shared practices and fostering collaboration, creating actionable insights and tools that drive impact within the EUt+ community and beyond.

1.6.1. Impact: Pragmatic Perspective

While EUt+ FIT is in an early phase of implementation, the framework positions the alliance to aim for several **medium- to long-term impacts**:

+ **Strategic oversight and transparency**: The governance structures and evaluation cycles will foster a culture of responsibility, accountability, and evidence-based reporting across the alliance, enhancing stakeholder confidence in EUt+ as a responsible and credible actor.
+ **Integration of ESG in higher education**: By embedding ESG principles across teaching, research, operations, and intercultural learning, EUt+ will contribute to the broader recognition of ESG frameworks as relevant for complex, multi-institutional HEIs.
+ **Support for just twin transitions**: The platform's emphasis on the green and digital transitions, along with multilingualism and intercultural learning, will strengthen

EUt+'s capacity to drive sustainable, equitable, and innovative transformations across its member institutions.

+ **Scalable and transferable methodology**: EUt+ FIT's operationalisation of ESG, with its combination of governance artefacts, cyclical planning, and experimentation, may create a blueprint for other European University alliances to adapt ESG principles in ways compatible with complex, public-good higher education contexts.

The impact of the framework will depend on its ongoing use, adaptation, and alignment with the priorities of the alliance, the capacities of member institutions, and wider European policy objectives.

1.6.2. Impact: Policy Perspective

Although EUt+ FIT has not yet directly shaped policy, its ongoing development and digitalisation give it the potential to guide EU-wide university initiatives and support ESG-aligned governance and transformative practices in higher education.

1.6.3. Dissemination of Results and Informing Policy

The **dissemination strategy** over the next two years encompasses four key avenues:

+ **Academic channels**: Training sessions, conference papers, and publications will describe the framework's methodology and evidence of results and impacts.
+ **Policy channels**: Findings will inform tools to support European University alliances in implementing just twin green and digital transitions.
+ **Digitalisation**: The framework will be transformed into an interactive dashboard or software, enabling broader access and usability.
+ **Practical guides**: Resources for educators and other stakeholders will outline methods to apply ESG principles in complex, multinational higher education environments, ensuring alignment with transparent processes and performance indicators.

By aligning with the European Green Deal and the UN SDGs, EUt+ FIT not only guides practice within the alliance but also provides a clear basis for dissemination and informing policy across European higher education ecosystem. By embedding ESG principles across the alliance, the framework supports ethical, transparent, and accountable practices, while emphasising evidence collection, deviation rectification, and adaptive learning. Its pillars address social, cultural, and environmental dimensions in parallel with UN SDGs, and interoperability of data supports alignment with other benchmarking systems, positioning EUt+ as a model for a just twin green and digital transition in higher education.

1.7. Conclusion and Next Steps for EUt+ FIT

The development of **EUt+ FIT represents a novel approach to ESG criteria within the European Universities Initiative**. Although ESG regulation is not specifically designed for higher education institutions, its relevance is increasingly recognised by quality assurance and accreditation bodies, sustainability scholars, and the wider academic community. The

complexity of pan European universities, combined with diverse institutional, social, and environmental demands, generates significant uncertainty and need for adaptability.

EUt+ FIT addresses this through a cyclical platform for experimentation that balances flexibility and guidance: it is open enough to identify challenges and emerging problems, yet structured enough to provide consistent, high-quality data and clear roles and responsibilities. Tools such as needs and supports mapping, good practice reviews, and the semi-annual implementation templates support task-level direction, coordination, and evidence-based decision-making. The framework facilitates operational progress while creating a foundation for ongoing learning, reflection, and coevolution across the four pillars of ESG transformation.

Over the next two years, the data collected through cycles of experimentation will allow **systematic analysis of interactions and mutual influences between the framework's pillars**. In parallel, the **framework is expected to evolve into a digital platform**, such as an interactive dashboard, to support emerging European University alliances in pursuing a just and sustainable twin green and digital transition.

The following steps will guide the continuation and consolidation of EUt+ FIT:

+ **Continue cycles of experimentation**: Conduct four additional six-month cycles between October 2025 and September 2027. These will ensure KPIs are actively monitored, impactful activities are implemented at the task level, and associated communication, training, and dissemination activities are maintained.
+ **Map coevolution and mutualisms**: Develop methodologies to better understand interdependencies and synergies across WPA2 tasks. This will deepen insight into how a just twin green and digital transition can be achieved in a European multilingual and intercultural context.
+ **Analyse and refine methodologies**: Advance work package-level methods to evaluate data from the experimentation cycles, assessing progress, challenges, successes, impact and data interoperability. Standardised templates and networked data provide a consistent basis for evaluation across tasks.
+ **Socialise and disseminate the framework**: Promote EUt+ FIT through academic publications, policy engagement, practical guides, and where resources allow also digitalisation. This ensures broader usability, scalability, and alignment with European sustainability and UN SDGs objectives.

2. Achievement 2: Meeting Societal Needs with Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

In WPA2, both EDIO and DT WG have made significant progress in advancing EUt+'s commitment to meeting societal needs through inclusive, ethical, and human-centred practices. This chapter introduces these achievements by situating them within the broader EUt+ approach to transformation, outlining the state of the art and the approach guiding our work. It then presents accomplishments across two complementary strands: EDIO's role in strengthening inclusive organisational practices and building capacity across the alliance, and DT WG's contributions to embedding a "think human first" approach to digital transformation. The chapter concludes by considering the future impact of this work, planned dissemination activities, and next steps for continued development.

2.1. Objective

The overarching objective of this work is to **ensure a comprehensive and strategic integration of equality, diversity, and inclusion across the alliance**. This approach seeks to establish a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment while reinforcing the capacity of member universities to implement EDI principles consistently. It further aims to support complementary EUt+ tasks, strengthen engagement with diverse stakeholders across the alliance – e.g. support inclusive student mobility, inclusive curricula capacity building for academics – and promote ethical and responsible digital transformation through targeted actions in education, foresight, and impact assessment. By embedding EDI systematically into institutional processes and digital initiatives, this objective underpins EUt+'s commitment to fostering inclusive, equitable, and socially responsible practices across all operational and strategic activities.

What truly sets EUt+ apart is its commitment to **inclusion by design**. Rather than relying on temporary or symbolic measures such as virtual exchanges or compensatory programs, we aim to build European pathways that are **genuinely accessible to all students**, creating opportunities that are **meaningful**, **equitable**, and **impactful**. This approach is not theoretical, it has measurable consequences: the introduction of five new joint bachelor programs could directly benefit 250 students each year, while Europeanising half of our existing bachelor degrees could reach 10,000 students annually.

For EUt+, **inclusivity** is not a box to tick; it is a **strategic imperative for society**, the economy, and the long-term stability of democracy. Unlike initiatives that present inclusivity as a symbolic goal without measurable outcomes, EUt+ designs its programs to produce tangible, large-scale impact. By embedding inclusion at the core of our educational and research convergence, we create the potential for **real-world change,** preparing a generation of students to thrive across Europe and contribute to a more open, equitable, and sustainable society.

2.2. State of the Art

To achieve the objectives outlined for WPA2, we first **situate our work within current research, policy, and practices on EDI in higher education**.

In Europe, the 2015 Bologna Process Ministerial Meeting committed to making higher education systems more inclusive, a goal reiterated by the European Commission in its renewed agenda for higher education (2017). Horizon Europe further reinforces this commitment by requiring public entities applying for funding to have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and to adopt a Gender+ strategy. While gender remains the primary focus, GEPs are designed and implemented with attention to **intersecting inequalities** and relevant indicators. This requirement encourages institutions to adopt a **broader EDI perspective**, going beyond gender-specific actions.

Societies are changing, and so are Europe's demographics. Technological development, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping work, education, and daily life, driving demand for new skills. In this context, social diversity and inequality are widely debated, and access to education and lifelong learning, including higher education, has become a high priority to ensure no one is left behind.

The EUA's INVITED project (Claeys-Kulik, Jorgenson and Stober, 2019) reports on an extensive European survey highlighting the need to "connect all the dots": linking actions within institutions and across institutions and systems. It also identifies a strong need for awareness-raising, training, exchange of experience, and peer learning among European universities. Similarly, the LERU Report (2019) on EDI at universities emphasises the impediments to sustainable change when EDI initiatives are not coordinated. EDI must therefore be addressed at multiple levels and from multiple perspectives.

In the context of global competition, the development of human capital is vital for economic performance (Krstić et al 2020, Chulanova 2017), and collecting and analysing relevant data is critical to guide this development (Lima et al 2018).

As the EUt+ WPA2 Lead co-chairs the Diversity and Inclusion thematic group in FOREU4ALL[6], we maintain a high-level view of how EDI is embedded across other alliances. We also manage a knowledge-exchange repository with shared good practices and partners presentations. Work for equality, diversity, and inclusion in European universities occurs at multiple levels: centrally – through the means and infrastructure for developing and implementing policies – and within teaching, research, and outreach activities – through content, methods, and theoretical approaches. Several scholarly studies have emerged on EDI within European University Alliances – for example, Siri, Leone and Bensivenga (2022) on micro-actions in the Ulysses alliance, and Galligan, Velichkova and McQuillan (2022) on challenges in gender data collection across alliances based on EUt+ experiences.

Globally, EDI work in higher education has reached a pivotal moment. Attacks on EDI in many parts of the world, most notably in the US, have raised questions about how best to advance the fundamental aim of equality of opportunity, in ways that unite communities. Practices designed to dismantle barriers and disadvantages affecting certain groups have generated misunderstanding and debate regarding fairness and perceived advantage. Many in global higher education argue that it is more important than ever to uphold the values of education for all and to pursue collaborative, practical approaches (Duckett, 2025). In

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[6] Please see https://www.foreu4all.eu/community-of-practice-and-topical-group.

Europe, these debates have prompted renewed commitment to EDI and discussions on coordinated approaches to protect EDI values within policies and practices.

2.3. Approaches for Transformation

To support both society and EUt+ communities, **EDIO and associated structured operate transversally across tasks**, identifying priority needs and mobilising resources through dedicated implementation working groups. These groups pool expertise from across the alliance, enabling coordinated action while respecting the diversity and autonomy of member universities.

Within member universities, we **adopt a supportive and enabling, rather than prescriptive, approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion**. We provide guidance, training, seminars, and frameworks that encourage inclusive practices, while allowing local teams to adapt interventions to their context. European frameworks such as the Caliper Charter and Newcomer Gender Equality Champion awards inform our approach, and systematic data collection guides decision-making and priority-setting across the alliance.

On digital transformation, we **develop conceptual frameworks** that explicitly connect technological innovation to ethics, sustainability, and societal responsibility. Our approach **emphasises human-centred thinking and critical engagement with emerging technologies**, embedding responsible digital practices into teaching, research, and institutional governance. Early outputs include scholarly communications such as Policy Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions to Begin Advancing from Digital Transformation to Bifurcation (Fitzpatrick, Hayes et al., 2025) and an upcoming chapter in a UNICAS collection exploring how universities can meaningfully shape digital bifurcation for societal impact.

By linking transversal coordination, capacity building, ethical frameworks, and methodological guidance, we foster a cohesive approach to transformation across the alliance. This ensures that diversity, inclusion, and responsible digital and green practices are not isolated initiatives but integral to the EUt+ model, creating a foundation for sustainable and socially responsive development across the alliance.

2.4. Ensuring a Sense of Belonging for All Members of the EUt+ Community and Its Partners

EUt+ EDIO works to foster a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment for all members of the EUt+ community. Its aim is to **ensure that every member of the university community feels a sense of belonging and can thrive**. EDIO approaches this work on two complementary levels.

Firstly, it continues to support the development and enhancement of EDI within member institutions. During the first phase of EUt+, actions and activities were primarily focused on knowledge sharing and capacity building at institutional level. Key achievements included guiding colleagues in the development of local gender and intersectional equity plans through tailored guidance, leadership support, experience sharing, and interactive workshops. As a result, five out of our eight EUt+ partners created and adopted such plans

for the first time, guided and supported by more experienced member institutions. Some partners also established EDI teams and offices for the first time, allocating specific human resources to advance these initiatives. Concerning students, principles for access, widening participation, and approaches such as universal design for learning were introduced, with training rolled out across member institutions. These efforts proved highly impactful and require sustained support. In this phase, EDIO has remained focused on supporting capacity building in our different EUt+ campuses.

Secondly, as EUt+ continues to emerge, EDIO has emphasized its role at the alliance level, supporting the development of EUt+ FIT and addressing transversal EDI needs across operational tasks and strategic ambitions. In our early vision building of the EUt+ FIT framework, we recognised that the EDIO would play a central role in this framework by championing the ongoing transitions to a just, sustainable, and equitable society, contributing to the 2050 targets of the twin transition. In this vision, EDIO's primary emphasis is on fostering inclusiveness and positioning EUt+ as a beacon of gender and broader equity.

In this phase of EUt+ Accelerate, **EDIO's dual focus – capacity building within member institutions and promoting inclusiveness at the alliance level –**demonstrates how societal needs are being addressed. EDIO's success to date is illustrated through four key initiatives, discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections:

+ Collecting gender data across our partners annually, enabling comparison, analysis, and publication to inform ongoing EDI strategies
+ Supporting all partners to endorse the Caliper Charter and implement the associated actions, fostering more inclusive research and innovation ecosystems
+ Opening up local capacity-building and knowledge-sharing events for students and staff, making these opportunities accessible to other EUt+ partners, where appropriate
+ Creating implementation working groups within the EUt+ EDI Office to respond to transversal tasks and emerging needs of the alliance, ensuring coordinated support for the development of the EUt+ alliance

2.4.1. Collecting Gender Data Across Our Partners Annually

Gathering and assessing human capital data at a general level exposes the data-gathering and analysis to inadequate interrogation, as broad measures often mask differences in performance and outcomes among different groups (Galligan, Velichkova and McQuillan, 2022). Several pressures within EUt+ demand the collection of quantitative gender data. Beyond human capital considerations, there is a justice imperative: we need evidence to substantiate our commitment to *"making equity, diversity and inclusion a core pillar of our activities as well as of our steering strategy"*. Within EDIO, we have a programme of work to support this transformation.

At the same time, efforts to address gendered patterns and practices are more persuasive in the societal context when grounded in evidence-based outcomes, including our shared ambition to deliver on the UN SDGs. **Quantitative data collection complements a rich array of qualitative material – such as case studies, feedback, and testimonials – that we gather**

continuously for deeper insight. Statistical data helps us to identify where and how we can strengthen our work, demonstrate our progress, and ensure that EUt+ evolves into a university where everyone feels supported and welcome.

There are several **principles that underpin our data collection**:

+ **The data minimisation principal**. We prioritise collecting as little data as possible, but as much as necessary to fulfil our obligations for evidence generation, strategic planning, and policies supporting people with fewer opportunities.
+ **Raising awareness of discrimination and promoting inclusion**. High-quality data enables evidence-based advocacy and policy, helping all tasks and partners recognise and address inequality as a shared responsibility.
+ **Careful judgement throughout the evidence-generation process**. We align with national legal requirements and sensitivities while also using the evidence strategically as a catalyst for continuous improvement.

Building on the foundations established in the first phase of EUt+, **gender data collection has become an ongoing and integral activity across all member institutions**. The initial exercise, undertaken for the 2020–21 academic year, used the SHE (Segregation, Hierarchy, and Equal Opportunities) categories in a baseline template to gather, compare, and publish results (Galligan, Velichkova and McQuillan, 2022). This work created the first shared dataset on gender representation within EUt+ and helped partners establish institutional mechanisms for systematic data collection and reporting.

Currently, the **main output of this initiative is the annual collection, comparison, and publication of gender-disaggregated data across member universities**, covering the period from 2020–21 to 2023–24 and continuing thereafter. This output ensures consistent, transparent monitoring of gender equality indicators across the alliance. Our EUt+ EDI data management plan details the criteria and processes for collecting this data at EUt+ level.

The **outcome of gender data collection and comparison is enhanced institutional capacity and alignment**: partners now have the tools, processes, and shared frameworks (many of which did not exist in the past) to collect, analyse, and act upon gender data. Collaborative learning through roundtables and peer exchange further supports the development of evidence-based EDI planning and monitoring.

The **impact is starting to become visible in the gradual narrowing of gender gaps and in institutional action informed by data**. Preliminary analysis on 2022-23 data highlights the persistent "leaky pipeline"[7] reflecting challenges that women face in academic advancement (see Figure 7), although encouraging trends are emerging – such as improvements over time at CUT and RTU, and a substantive increase at TU Dublin, partly linked to a major organisational restructuring. Comparing these figures with women's participation in undergraduate programmes (see Figure 8) offers additional insights: some

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[7] Women advance along the academic career ladder at lower rates than men. This phenomenon, dubbed the "leaky pipeline" is pervasive across academic disciplines and leads to lower levels of female representation in academic leadership positions. Statistics suggest that women academics in EUt+ partners have similar career progression challenges.

partners, including CUT and UNICAS, now record higher female than male enrolment, even in STEM-dominated fields. Year-on-year improvements, even modest ones, are observed at UCPT and UCTN, representing meaningful benchmarks of progress towards gender equality in higher education.
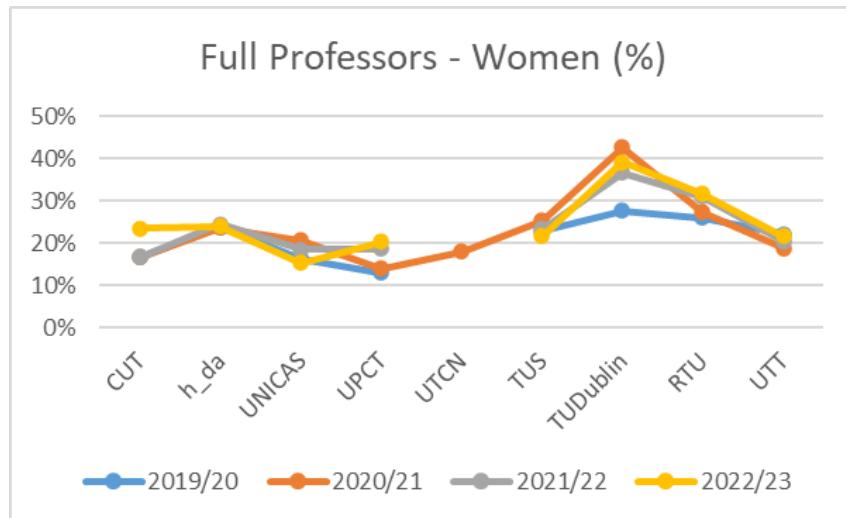
Figure 7: Percentage of women appointed as full professors across EUt+ member universities over four academic years
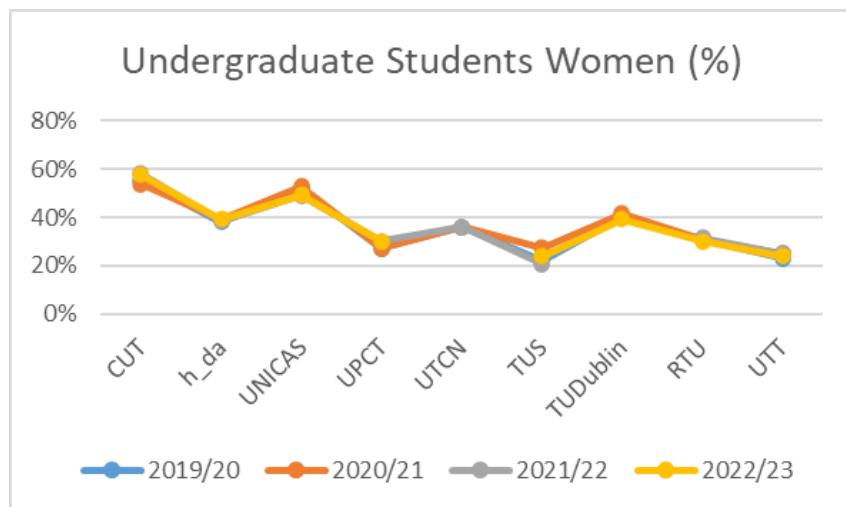
Figure 8: Percentage of women undergraduate students across EUt+ member universities over four academic years

2.4.2. Supporting All Partners to Endorse the Caliper Charter

Early in the EUt+ Accelerate phase, EDIO identified the **Caliper Charter as a key European initiative supporting gender equality and inclusiveness** in research and innovation (R&I). The Charter promotes intersectional and intersectoral approaches to equality, aligning closely with the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2025 and forthcoming Horizon

Europe Work Programmes. Recognising its strategic relevance, **all EUt+ member institutions have now endorsed the Caliper Charter – making EUt+ the first European University Alliance to do so**.[8] This collective endorsement represents a **significant output**, reflecting shared commitment to advancing gender equality within the alliance and beyond.

Since endorsement, member universities have begun to translate the Charter into practice, producing **tangible outputs such as updated policies, new support structures, strengthened procedures, and targeted training initiatives**. Examples include CUT's updated OTM-R Policy for researchers (approved by CUT Senate in March 2025[9]), the revision of its Code of Practice on harassment and sexual harassment, and its Guide of Practices and Tools for Inclusive and Accessible Teaching (approved by CUT Senate in July 2025); UNICAS's establishment of an Anti-Violence Center[10]; TU Dublin's design and delivery of Inclusive Research Training; and TUS's development of positive practices in awareness-raising, data gathering, exhibitions, and knowledge sharing. These efforts show **early outcomes: institutions are building capacity, embedding gender equality more systematically, and aligning internal practices with the Charter's principles in ways that benefit research environments, staff, and students**. To support implementation, EDIO has shared concise guidance materials and visual tools that translate the Charter's ambitions into practical steps for promotion and action across member institutions (see Figure 9).
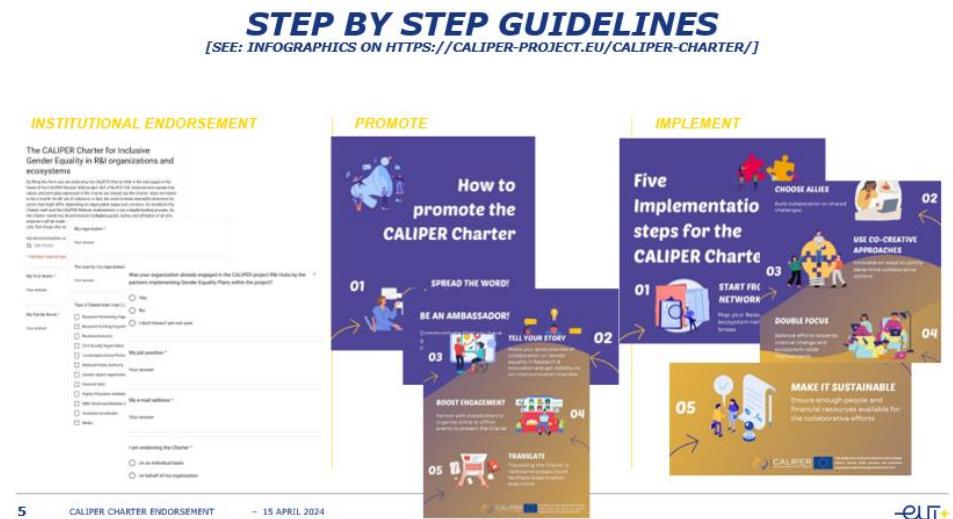
Figure 9: Step-by-step guidelines for endorsing, promoting and implementing the Caliper Charter

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[8] The importance of European University Alliances joining was recognised by the Caliper Charter team: https://caliper-project.eu/eut-alliance-endorses-the-caliper-charter-to-drive-gender-equality-in-research/.

[9] For more information, refer to https://www.cut.ac.cy/strategy_for_researchers/otmr_policy/.

[10] For more information refer to https://laziodisco.it/anti-violence-centers/anti-violence-center-university-of-cassino-and-southern-lazio-folcara-campus/?lang=en.

2.4.3. Opening up Local Capacity-Building and Knowledge-Sharing Events

EUt+ members remain highly active in developing initiatives that strengthen institutional capacity and awareness around equality, diversity, and inclusion. Many of these activities are designed in response to local contexts and regulatory frameworks, making them uniquely suited to individual institutions. However, a **growing number of initiatives have demonstrated strong potential for cross-institutions participation and mutual learning**, contributing directly to EUt+'s shared EDI objectives.

A **notable output in this area is the opening up of selected local initiatives –** such as TU Dublin's Read, Reflect, Resist: Antiracist Dialogues reading group – **to students across EUt+ member universities** (see Figure 10). Now in its third year, this initiative has expanded from a local programme into an international learning space. The 2025 iteration includes 24 students across five EUt+ institutions – creating a dynamic, intercultural environment for reflection and discussion.

Figure 10: Flyer for Read, Resist, Reflect Antiracist Dialogues reading group

The reading group exemplifies how **outcomes** of EUt+ collaboration can enrich both academic and civic learning. It **enables participants to engage critically with the historical, structural, institutional, and personal dimensions of racism**, fostering empathy, cultural competence, and social responsibility. Importantly, many participants self-identify as belonging to minority groups, bringing lived experience to shared learning. The approach

moves beyond viewing racism as an individual moral issue, instead situating it within systemic contexts that demand both personal and institutional transformation.

While the **emerging impact lies in increased awareness and intercultural dialogue among participating students,** it also helps students to develop an understanding that a commitment to anti-racist education entails questioning our own thoughts and habits and practising different ways of listening to and working with people.

2.4.4. Creating Implementation Working Groups within the EUt+ EDI Office

Since January 2025, **EDIO has evolved to include a series of implementation working groups designed to address transversal needs** and provide targeted support across EUt+ tasks. This development directly responds to findings from the *supports and needs questionnaire* for TA2.1 (see Chapter 1 on Achievement 1 and Annex I), which identified up to nine potential working groups to enhance collaboration and alignment with wider EUt+ objectives on EDI. Based on priority and feasibility, **five working groups were formally established in early 2025**:

+ **WG#1**: Promoting policies that strengthen community engagement in EDI
+ **WG#2**: Enhancing data collection on underrepresented cohorts
+ **WG#3**: Embedding EDI principles in curricula
+ **WG#4**: Developing EUT+-level guidelines, protocols, and policies
+ **WG#5**: Fostering inclusive student and staff mobility

The key outputs from these working groups to date include:

+ WG#1: Preparation for the launch of an **EDI Student Ambassador Initiative –** a student led initiative aimed at designing and implementing innovative projects and activities that foster social equity, a sense of belonging and meaningful representation. This is awaiting validation by EDIO with plans to launch it early 2026.
+ WG#2: A shared **protocol for collection of KPI reporting data and evidence base for gender equality and groups with fewer opportunities** in EUt+ Accelerate **and gender data collection**. The protocol includes an anonymous questionnaire that will collect data on groups with fewer opportunities across EUt+ that will be reported in our mid-term review to the EC.
+ WG#3: A **self-reflection questionnaire supporting the integration of EDI principles** into the European Degree framework (working draft included in Annex IV).
+ WG#4: A jointly developed **EUt+ Meeting Etiquette and Inclusive Media & Communications Guidelines.** The latter is attached to the Protocol document approved by EDIO in November 2025
+ WG#5: An **Inclusive Mobility Guide** to inform future student and staff exchanges. This is still a work in progress with the aim to complete it by end of year 2025.

The **outcomes** of this coordinated structure are already evident in **enhanced collaboration, shared standards, and a more systematic approach to embedding inclusiveness across EUt+ activities**. By working transversally, these groups are fostering stronger coherence between institutional practices and EUt+ operational frameworks, ensuring EDI considerations are integrated rather than isolated. For example, the inclusive mobility guide links to Task 3.2 (Semester abroad mobility) and Task 7.1 (Staff mobility) in EUt+. The

data collection protocol supports inclusion reporting across all work packages through the project management office (Task 1.2 of EUt+ Accelerate).

2.5. A "Think Human First" Approach to Digital Transformation

Since the creation of the EUt+ alliance, the **ECT Lab+ has been central in embedding human values and critical reflection into EUt+ teaching and research**. Through its work in epistemology, responsible innovation, ethics of technology, and artistic research, it provides culturally grounded perspectives that shape ethical and responsible technological education. Modules developed in engineering ethics, technological foresight, and impact assessment support a shared, interdisciplinary framework that equips graduates and researchers to address societal and global challenges.

The ECT Lab+ also enhances EUt+'s capacity for inclusive societal impact by **developing methodologies that guide a responsible digital transition**. This work informs internal frameworks and contributes to wider policy conversations. DT WG builds on these foundations through frameworks, seminars, workshops, and other open activities that foster a shared understanding of ethical and responsible technology use across EUt+.

2.5.1. Digital Transformation Working Group

Within Task Area 2.2, the **DT WG –** embedded in the ECT Lab+ – **provides a structure for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and the application of research outputs to support the twin transition**. It promotes and co-develops training activities open to both staff and students across EUt+ to foster critical engagement with ethics, sustainability, and technology.

Recent outputs include the *Sustainability: A Story of Durability and Care* workshop series, held in Troyes (February 2025, 22 people) and in Dublin (April 2025, 10 people). These workshops involved a low-tech game approach combining an Emotional Durable Design Framework with circular economy principles and aesthetics of care to explore sustainability solutions for everyday problems. Supported by the ECT Lab+, DT WG co-creates multimodal training activities for staff and students that draw on earlier ECT Lab+ projects and use interdisciplinary, artistic methods to strengthen critical engagement with ethics and sustainability. The **outcome** of such initiatives is the cultivation of a shared EUt+ ethos around responsible innovation, one that encourages engineers, researchers, and students to approach digital transformation through a "think human first" lens.

2.5.2. Integrated Technological Impact Assessment Framework

In 2025, the ECT Lab+ began developing an **(Integrated) Technological Impact Assessment Framework (TIAF) for Responsible Innovation and Digital Transition**. The framework aims to provide a unified approach for assessing the multifaceted – ethical, social, and environmental – impacts of emerging technologies. Drawing on established methodologies such as Ethical Impact Assessment and Value Sensitive Design, the TIAF promotes inter- and trans-disciplinary analysis of implications of novel and emerging technologies, supports

early identification of societal impacts, and fosters dialogue that informs both policy and design decisions, to maximise their contributions to the public good.

As a **key output**, the TIAF extends the ECT Lab+'s established technological foresight methodologies, creating new tools for responsible governance of innovation. Its primary aim is to identify and mitigate potential harms arising from misuse of technology. The framework builds on the work of Reijers et al. (2016) and Wright (2011), and others, as well as on the recent AI Act and ethical AI guidance published by the European Commission and UNESCO. It is scheduled for launch for application in 2026.

2.5.3. Awareness Building through Lunchtime Webinars

Since 2024, the ECT Lab+ has hosted a **series of Lunchtime Webinars on digital transformation** (see Table 3), representing a **key output of the Lab's activities**. These webinars provide structured, accessible opportunities for knowledge dissemination and engagement across EUt+. Notable speakers in 2024 included Ibo van de Poel – a leading thinker on the Value Sensitive Design methodology for ethical technology. In 2025, prominent contributors included René von Schomberg, and Professor Virginia Dignum – a highly influential figure in global AI policy. Plans for 2026 have already confirmed interest from high-impact early-stage researchers, including Emily Kubin (Oxford), and Benjamin Noys (University of Chichester) – a major theorist who coined the term "accelerationism". Attendance has ranged from 15 to 44 participants per session, with systematic data collection beginning in 2025, highlighting engagement across staff, students, and partner networks such as the ADAPT Research Centre (Ireland).

The **outcome of these webinars** lies in their capacity to **raise awareness and foster critical reflection among participants**. They help staff and students understand the ethical, social, and societal implications of digital transformation, encourage responsible practices in research and teaching, and cultivate a shared understanding of the "think human first" approach across the alliance. We have begun tracking participants' learning knowledge and learning over time. In the Dan McQuillan seminar on AI Accelerationism versus Decomputing, 46% of participants reported little or no prior knowledge at the start, dropping to 15% by the end. Participant feedback underscores the seminars' value:

> *"That small movement of the needle not at all meant as a criticism! The ideas are huge and complex – I certainly want to spend more time with Dan's ideas and some of the sources he pointed to. I found the talk incredibly heartening."*

> *"Fascinating perspective. Really useful to my background in Computing/AI and my passion for climate action and sustainability. Lots to follow up on."*

Over time, these reflective and educational experiences are expected to contribute to a more ethically informed culture within EUt+, supporting the responsible design, deployment, and use of digital technologies.

EUt+ Lunchtime Webinar Series Talks and Attendance				
Speaker	Role	Webinar Title	Date	Attendance
Renee von Schomberg	Senior Research Fellow RWTH Aachen University (Germany)	Towards a more politically engaged model of technology governance: on technology sovereignty and innovation sovereignty	18/02/2025	18
John Danaher	Senior Lecturer University of Galway (Ireland)	Digital Duplicates and the Scarcity Problem	28/03/2025	15
Virginia Dignum	Professor Umea University (Sweden)	Responsible AI: Governance, Ethics, and Sustainable Innovation	07/04/2025	44
Miguel Domenech	Senior Lecturer Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona (Spain)	Caring for Older People with Robots: Ethics, Imaginaries, and Stereotypes	13/05/2025	28
Lucie Chateau	Assistant Professor Utrecht University (the Netherlands)	Cross Cultural Approaches to Creative Media Content in the Age of AI	17/06/2025	43
Nolen Gertz	Assistant Professor University of Twente (the Netherlands)	Techsploitation Cinema: How Movies Shaped our Technological World	03/07/2025	28
Sabine Roeser	Professor TU Delft (the Netherlands)	Moral Emotions, Art, and the Risks of Digital Transformation	22/09/2025	35
Dan McQuillan	Senior Lecturer Goldsmiths University of London (the United Kingdom)	Not the Digital Transformation You Planned For: AI Accelerationism versus Decomputing	11/11/2025	86

Table 3: EUt+ Lunchtime Webinar series talks on digital transformation

2.6. Impact and Dissemination

EUt+ is embedding collaborative, evidence-based approaches to equality, diversity, and inclusion, creating the foundation for measurable impact and effective dissemination across the alliance. By designing inclusion into programs and curricula "by default," EUt+ ensures that interventions are not symbolic but generate tangible, large-scale outcomes for students and staff.

2.6.1. Impact: Pragmatic Perspective

The work of EDIO and ECT Lab+ is **beginning to generate visible change across the alliance**. Joint gender data collection, adoption of European charters, and cross-member capacity-building activities have **strengthened institutions' ability to monitor inequalities and act on EDI priorities**. Initiatives such as antiracism reading groups, DT WG workshops, and Lunchtime Webinars on responsible digital transformation have deepened engagement

with systemic inequalities and ethical responsibilities, **while fostering critical reflection among staff and students**.

Early institutional outcomes are also emerging. Preliminary analysis of 2022–23 gender data shows **encouraging trends in narrowing the "leaky pipeline" in academic progression**, with notable improvements at CUT, RTU, and TU Dublin. Undergraduate enrolment data indicate that CUT and UNICAS now record **higher female than male participation**, even in STEM-dominated fields, while UCPT and UCTN show steady year-on-year improvements. Local policies and practices are evolving in response to EUt+ guidance: CUT updated its Code of Practice on harassment, launched a women's personality award, and implemented student campaigns addressing EDI-related taboos; UNICAS established an Anti-Violence Center; TU Dublin delivered Inclusive Research Training; and TUS strengthened awareness, data collection, and knowledge-sharing on gender equality.

The coordinated adoption of the Caliper Charter across all EUt+ member universities provides **a shared framework for evidence, monitoring, and good practice**, offering the **potential to inform future ERA policy discussions**. Cross-member capacity-building initiatives are **fostering a culture of inclusive education**, equipping students and staff to question biases, engage with difference, and embed EDI principles in teaching, research, and governance.

Looking ahead, these interventions contribute to the **development of a sustainable, alliance-wide model for collaborative governance on equality, diversity, and inclusion**. The working groups provide a **living framework to adapt to emerging needs, support evidence-based decision-making, and position EUt+ as a leading example of integrated EDI implementation within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**.

2.6.2. Impact: Policy Perspective

At this stage, EUt+'s initiatives have not yet produced formal policy impact. However, the practical outputs described above – such as systematic gender-disaggregated data collection, the Caliper Charter implementation, and ethical frameworks for digital transformation – provide a robust foundation for broader influence. By embedding inclusion by design and measurable, scalable approaches in curricula and governance, EUt+ establishes concrete models that could guide policy across European Universities.

Looking ahead, these **initiatives have the potential to inform policy, institutional norms, and governance practices across the EHEA**. By embedding human-centred ethics and inclusiveness across operations, teaching, and research, EUt+ positions itself as a policy-relevant exemplar for other European University Alliances, national authorities, and the ERA. Tools such as the TIAF and policy communications on digital bifurcation offer concrete, scalable approaches that can shape evidence-based governance, cross-institutional benchmarking, and responsible innovation practices. Over time, these efforts may contribute to the establishment of norms for inclusive governance and guide universities in addressing societal challenges through ethical, human-centred digital transformation.

2.6.3. Dissemination of Results and Informing Policy

EUt+ is developing a comprehensive strategy to share insights, good practices, and evidence from its work on equality, diversity, inclusion, and digital transformation. Dissemination and policy engagement are closely linked, ensuring that outputs are not only shared widely but also translated into actionable guidance for institutions and policymakers.

Dissemination Activities:

+ **Publication on gender-disaggregated data**: A publicly accessible report or paper (ready for submission by the end of 2025) comparing gender data across all member institutions, highlighting trends, improvements, and year-on-year progress. This output will support transparency, benchmarking, and evidence-based planning across the alliance. By presenting comparative data across multiple years (2020–2023), the report will enable tangible measurement of progress and provide a model for scalability beyond EUt+.

+ **Impact case studies on R&I practices**: A collection of case studies capturing changes in research and innovation practices across partners, aligned with the principles of the Caliper Charter. These case studies will demonstrate practical implementation of EDI principles and provide scalable examples for other institutions. We have listed examples of impactful change above and will begin to collect more comprehensive case studies going forward. They will illustrate measurable outcomes for students and staff, including participation rates and changes in institutional practices, reinforcing "inclusion by design."

+ **Ongoing capacity-building programme**: Continuation of seminars, workshops, and training activities on digital transformation and EDI. These events will actively engage participants in co-creation, discussion, and knowledge exchange, extending the reach of dissemination beyond passive outputs.

EUt+ aims to translate these outputs into policy-relevant insights. Comparative gender data analyses inform targets for improvement and decision-making across member institutions, demonstrating how evidence-based approaches can drive measurable change in higher education. Similarly, ECT Lab+ leverages research on ethical and socially responsible pathways for digital transformation to communicate recommendations for sustainable, ethical, and human-centred digital transformation.

Through this integrated, participatory, and measurable approach, EUt+ ensures that outputs – from gender data reports and case studies to seminars and ethical frameworks – not only reach a wide audience but also inform institutional and European higher education policy. This strengthens governance, embeds inclusive and responsible practices, and provides a replicable model for evidence-based, human-centred transformation across the European University landscape.

2.7. Conclusion and Next Steps for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Digital Transformation

This chapter has outlined EUt+'s systematic approach to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion alongside responsible digital transformation across the alliance. Achievements to

date – including transversal working groups, annual gender data collection, cross-member capacity-building events, Caliper Charter endorsement, and ECT Lab+ research output applications – have strengthened member institutions, enhanced collaboration, and positioned EUt+ as an early model for ethically grounded and socially responsive university transformation.

Looking ahead, **EUt+ will prioritise initiatives with the greatest societal impact, consolidating lessons learned and focusing on actions that advance a just, green and digital transition**. Within the context of the EUt+ FIT framework, the alliance's next steps build on established mechanisms while leveraging the unique value of being a European University Alliance.

On the EDI front, the EDIO will concentrate on four main goals:

+ Supporting inclusive mobilities across all partners.
+ Enhancing gender/intersectional and persons with fewer opportunities data collection and analysis for evidence guiding transformation strategy and policy.
+ Strengthening member capacity through training, knowledge sharing, and cross-institutional learning.
+ Embedding EDI principles within European curricula to equip graduates with skills, awareness, and mindset to thrive in diverse and inclusive environments.

For digital transformation, DT WG within ECT Lab+ will focus on:

+ Developing the TIAF to guide responsible and human-centred digital innovation.
+ Clarifying and operationalising the concept of responsible and human-centred digital transformation, exploring its implications for higher education institutions.
+ Analysing emerging technologies of digital transformation to identify societal, ethical, and environmental impacts, ensuring EUt+ students and staff are prepared to navigate and shape these developments responsibly.

These next steps are designed to maintain momentum, consolidate best practices, and ensure that EUt+ continues to lead in inclusive, ethical, and impactful higher education practices. By combining practical interventions, capacity building, research, and policy engagement, the alliance is positioned to translate its achievements into sustained, scalable, and measurable transformative impact for its communities and the wider European higher education ecosystem.

3. Achievement 3: Integrating European Values of Inclusiveness, Environmental Sustainability, and Multilingualism in Curricula – Towards a Self-Reflection and Supporting Tool

3.1. Objective

The objective of this work has been to develop, validate, and deploy a programme-level self-reflection and support tool that enables Engineering and STEM programme leads and developers to embed key European Degree criteria into their curricula and quality assurance processes. These criteria – inclusiveness (including ethical and responsible digital transformation), environmental sustainability, and multilingualism – represent foundational values of the EUt+ approach to higher education and correspond directly to the criteria set out in the new European Degree Blueprint[11].

The tool is conceived **in preparation for the emerging European Degree**. At the same time, it provides a structured mechanism for self-reflection and a practical guide for continuous improvement for existing programmes across EUt+. It supports alignment with EUt+ Certificate requirements and evolving European Degree policy guidance by offering a shared framework that promotes coherence while allowing for local adaptation. In doing so, it enables member universities to engage with transformation in a way that reflects their specific contexts and strengths.

3.2. State of the Art

Across Europe and beyond, numerous frameworks and tools exist to support higher education institutions in embedding inclusiveness, digital competence, sustainability, and multilingualism into teaching and learning. However, most of these initiatives remain highly generic, nationally anchored, or focused on individual pedagogical practices rather than adaptable to the transnational, multi-institutional ecosystem of a European University Alliance. A notable gap persists for integrative tools that can operate meaningfully at the level of specific discipline – such as mechanical engineering – while remaining sufficiently agile to respond to diverse academic contexts and align with the emerging policy architecture of the new European Degree. The EUt+ self-reflection tool addresses this gap.

In the area of **inclusiveness**, existing frameworks such as *SELFIE for Teachers, Proud to Teach All, the CAST Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework*, national initiatives like *Kingston's Inclusive Curriculum Framework* and *Ireland's Technological University EDI Toolkit* provide strong foundations for inclusive teaching practices. However, these tools are typically developed in a very generic high-level way within national systems. They lack a mechanism for cross-institutional comparability and mutual learning at the European level including ambitions for the European Degree criteria. The EUt+ approach builds on

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these strengths while introducing a collaborative, reflective structure that can be applied in our European context.

For **digital transformation**, ECT Lab+ and ESS Lab have been at the forefront of exploring ethical frameworks and foresight methodologies bringing democratic principles to transformation. Complementary global initiatives – from *UNESCO's Digital Education agenda* to *the AREA Student Competency Framework* and recent systematic reviews on digital transformation in engineering education – underscore the growing policy attention to this domain. Yet, these efforts seldom integrate ethical foresight, sustainability, and inclusion into a unified learning framework. EUt+ seeks to address this by linking digital transformation explicitly to responsibility and human-centred design, reflecting a holistic European value-driven approach that responds to democratic values of the EU.

In the domain of **environmental sustainability**, frameworks such as the *STARS Rating System, the PRME Blueprint for SDG Integration*, and *resources from UNESCO and Times Higher Education* provide robust reference points for sustainability reporting and curriculum design. The EUt+ ELaRA Lab and other partner-led initiatives have further advanced pedagogical models for sustainability education. The EUt+ tool will integrate these resources within a modular self-reflection framework, helping degree teams to translate environmental sustainability commitments into tangible curriculum practices and measurable outcomes aligning with European Degree Blueprint criteria.

Finally, in **multilingualism**, work led by UNESCO, OECD, the Council of Europe (through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)), and European research projects such as *LISTIAC* and *MultiMind* has demonstrated the societal and cognitive benefits of multilingual education. Recent analyses, such as Angouri and Delmas (2025), have critically examined how European University Alliances are operationalising multilingualism. Building on these insights, the EUt+ approach aims to embed linguistic diversity as a structural and pedagogical asset, ensuring that multilingualism is treated not as an add-on but as a core enabler of inclusion and intercultural competence within the European Degree framework.

In sum, while the current landscape offers an impressive array of specialised tools and frameworks, **the EUt+ self-reflection diagnostic approach represents a novel synthesis – an agile, transdisciplinary, and transnational mechanism designed to foster a shared European culture of transformation across engineering and STEM education**. It will allow EUt+ and other alliances to embed inclusiveness, environmental sustainability and multilingualism criteria in their design phase, while also offering a pathway for programme managers to embed the criteria into existing programmes.

3.3. Methodological approach

Building on the state of the art review, EUt+ has developed a **structured and participatory methodology to design the Self-Reflection and Support Tool**. This work translates existing frameworks and good practices into an integrated approach tailored to the emerging requirements of the European Degree in Engineering. The process draws on the HEInnovate

methodology[12], adapting its principles to address the challenge of embedding European Degree criteria – inclusiveness including democratic and responsible digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and multilingualism – into curricula and quality assurance systems. In doing so, it positions the tool not only as a **pedagogical innovation** but also as a **practical policy instrument** to support programme teams in aligning with European Degree ambitions.

To ensure the tool's relevance and co-creation across the alliance, the development process has involved a sequence of collaborative activities:

1. **Four workshops (June 2025)** were organised for each of the tasks within WPA2 to explore the European Degree and the specific European Dimension criteria relevant to their domains. These sessions focused on identifying the pedagogical and institutional mechanisms needed to embed these dimensions into degree structures.
2. **Four seminars (July 2025)** gathered and reviewed existing frameworks, models, and international good practices corresponding to each of the four European Dimensions, building a shared knowledge base across partners. These helped form the basis of the self-reflection questionnaires by recognising what existed already and what might be useful to draw on in addition to our own knowledge and expertise.
3. **Four roundtable meetings (September–November 2025)** convened the working groups associated with each dimension – inclusiveness, digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and multilingualism. These sessions synthesised existing frameworks adopting a critical view of the existing tools and frameworks in terms of what might be useful for our needs. They were also structured to draw out important knowledge and expertise from task members' years of experience in the respective domains, both in their own institutions and in EUt+. These roundtable discussions were the basis of the first drafting of the diagnostic questionnaires.

Together, these activities form the **backbone of a collaborative, evidence-based design process, ensuring that the resulting tool is context-sensitive, adaptable across disciplines, and aligned with both institutional practice and European value policy priorities**.

3.4. Considerations for Self-Reflection Tool Design

Discussion on how the expertise developed in WPA2 could support the embedding of European Values within the emerging European Degree for Engineering began in May 2025.

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[12] The HEInnovate methodology is a self-assessment and development tool developed by the European Commission and the OECD to help HEIs assess and strengthen their entrepreneurial and innovative orientation. It guides institutions through a structured process of identification, prioritisation, and action planning across eight key thematic areas: Leadership and Governance, Organisational Capacity, Digital Transformation and Capability, Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning, Preparing and Supporting Entrepreneurs, Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration, The Internationalised Institution, and Measuring Impact. For more information refer to: heinnovate.eu.

Since the beginning of EUt+, we have recognised the importance of languages, inclusion, and sustainable environmental practices as essential to our degrees. These criteria have been reflected in the learning outcomes for the educational clusters of EUt+ since early in the work package 3 in the first phase. We have held various workshops and discussions on how, for example, our office responsible for multilingualism can support cluster leads in embedding languages into their degrees. However, these discussions had limited success because of structural rigidities, differing national accreditation contexts, professional norms, and a general lack of time and training to initiate changes to existing programmes. These experiences prompted us to re-imagine our approach.

Spurred by progress in the new European Degree Blueprint, we are now **developing a diagnostic self-reflection tool for programme leads and developers**. Grounded in the HEInnovate framework, the tool consists of short self-reflective questionnaires designed for users with limited experience embedding European Values. It helps programme teams assess how effectively they **integrate key dimensions of the European Values aligned with the provisional European Degree criteria**: [13]

+ Inclusiveness (TA2.1 lead)
+ Responsible digital transformation (TA2.2 lead)
+ Environmental sustainability (TA2.3 lead)
+ Multilingualism (TA2.4 lead)

These **dimensions align with both the EUt+ Certificate requirements and the provisional guidance for the new European Degree**. We are working closely with the EUt+ tasks for common curricula (TA3.1) and quality assurance (TA7.2 and TA7.3) to ensure the approach is coherent, usable, and fit for purpose.

As this work progresses, **the tool will include links to case studies, training materials, handbooks, and guides housed within a resource repository**. Specific resources will connect to areas for improvement identified through the self-reflection questionnaire. For example, if a programme manager scores poorly (i.e. 1 = no start made) on the question *"The programme ensures that technical and learning materials are accessible across languages, formats, and learning needs"*, the tool will suggest supporting resources such as good practice case studies and accessibility guidelines. More advanced resources might include a MOOC on Universal Design for Learning. Many examples and resources are already available in repositories developed by the individual tasks and can be adapted or expanded by partners and other institutions (see Good Practice Reviews with links included in Annex I). Users can also be directed to a wide range of open-source materials depending on their

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[13] We acknowledge that the Blueprint for the European Degree lists democracy as one of the core European Values alongside inclusiveness, sustainability, and ethical conduct. In the current phase of tool development, we focus on ethical and responsible digital transformation, which is embedded within the inclusiveness dimension, while the explicit democracy dimension will be addressed in subsequent iterations. This staged approach allows us to pilot the self-reflection methodology with a manageable scope, ensure practical usability, and gather evidence for iterative refinement before integrating all European Values comprehensively.

specific needs. Additional work is needed to re-design these resources and develop new ones in formats that are easily accessible and usable by programme developers.

To date, approximately 30% of this achievement has been completed. Draft question sets for Inclusiveness, Environmental Sustainability, and Multilingualism are currently under consultation with members of TA3.1, TA7.2, and TA7.3, and have been reported in Annex IV. The questionnaire for Responsible Digital transformation will be developed in January 2026.

At this point, the **early outputs** of our work include:

+ A conceptual framework and initial design for the self-reflection tool.
+ Four working groups aligned with the thematic areas (TA2.1–TA2.4).
+ Repositories of existing frameworks, case studies, and open resources, some of which may be re-designed as resources for the diagnostic in 2026.
+ Draft diagnostic question sets for three out of four dimensions (Annex IV).

While the initiative is progressing well, no measurable outcomes can yet be reported. The expected outcomes – such as increased capacity to embed European Values into curricula and improved alignment of programmes with the new European Degree dimensions – will only emerge once the tool is tested, deployed, and integrated into programme development cycles.

3.4.1. Insights Gained

Building on the early outputs and design considerations outlined above, we have begun to identify **key insights from early development of the tool**. This idea emerged as a mechanism to facilitate change by packaging the needs of the tasks (in terms of embedding European Values in curricula) into a format that supports deep reflection and self-diagnoses by programme managers. Its **asynchronous nature** means that cluster leads, participants, and others can use the tool in their own time and consider the features of their degrees locally, in line with the new European Degree.

The tool invites **further interaction as necessary through online resources**. It also encourages **more focused dialogue** between the work package on curricula development (WPA3), the work package on quality assurance (WPA7), and WPA2 on concrete issues identified through the tool, rather than broad, exploratory discussions that can feel time-consuming for academics.

Apart from its relevance to the European Degree, the tool also represents a **potential capacity-building mechanism** in individual member universities. For example, programme managers can improve their understanding of how to embed inclusiveness into curricula through guided reflection and linked resources. This can contribute to levelling up across European Values dimensions. The **digitalisation of the tool** will also support accessibility and translation, enabling wider inclusion of academic staff across languages and contexts.

3.4.2. Reflexive Lessons Learnt

The tool emerged as a response to the challenges WPA2 members faced in supporting change within clusters and curricula on embedding inclusion, multilingualism, intercultural

learning, and digital ethics. While the need for such integration was widely recognised, structural and procedural barriers – such as differing national contexts, workload pressures, and limited familiarity with the concepts – often limited progress.

A **key lesson** has been that **sustainable change requires accessible, flexible mechanisms that integrate reflection with concrete guidance**. The development process highlighted the importance of linking self-reflection with practical resources, such as case studies and training materials, to support programme managers in making actionable changes.

Another insight is that **structured interaction with other work packages –** particularly curricula development (WPA3) and quality assurance (WPA7) – **enhances the relevance and applicability of the tool**. Focused follow-up based on identified gaps encourages dialogue that is targeted and time-efficient, avoiding broad discussions that are difficult to operationalise.

Finally, this phase reinforced the value of scalable and adaptable tools. Early testing shows that designing for gradual engagement and alignment with recognised frameworks, like the European Degree Blueprint, **helps bridge the gap between policy ambitions and practical curriculum implementation**, creating conditions for meaningful change across EUt+ member universities.

3.5. Impact and Dissemination

This section highlights the emerging impact of the self-reflection tool from both practical and policy perspectives and summarises planned dissemination. While still in development, early pilots already demonstrate its practical value for programme design, capacity building, and alignment with European policy priorities.

3.5.1. Impact: Pragmatic Perspective

At this stage, the initiative remains in developmental phase, and the full scope of its impact is yet to be realised. Nevertheless, early outputs already illustrate its practical value, particularly through the **pilot activities undertaken within the Environmental Engineering cluster led by UTCN**. This cluster is serving as a testbed for the emerging self-reflection framework, with specific attention to the environmental sustainability dimension and its integration into curriculum design and evaluation.

This case demonstrates the **tool's potential to contribute to capacity building and curriculum development, strengthening the integration of environmental sustainability across programmes**. The self-reflective approach allows degree teams to identify and embed relevant criteria early in the design process, supported by a repository of adaptable resources. Over time, this could lead to more coherent sustainability practices, enhanced internationalisation through multilingual and intercultural engagement, and the cultivation of a more values-informed educational culture across EUt+. In the longer term, EUt+ intends to make the tool and its supporting resources openly available to other alliances and higher education networks, amplifying its reach and contributing to shared capacity building across the EHEA.

3.5.2. Impact: Policy Perspective

From a policy perspective, this work represents a contribution to operationalising the new European Degree framework. It provides a structured means of translating abstract policy priorities into actionable mechanisms at programme level, aligning with both the EUt+ Certificate requirements and emerging European Degree criteria. Although the tool remains under development, its methodology and pilot results already demonstrate **potential scalability to other alliances and disciplinary contexts**, positioning EUt+ as an early contributor to shaping Europe's educational transformation agenda.

3.5.3. Dissemination of Results and Informing policy

The self-reflection tool and its supporting resources **will be developed digitally and shared widely to support programme teams** in the design, diagnosis, and ongoing improvement of curricula. Dissemination will be reinforced through **webinars and workshops for programme leads and QA officers**, as well as through **case studies drawn from pilot clusters**, illustrating practical applications and lessons learnt. The tool will initially be launched in English, with **staged translations** planned for French, German, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Latvian to ensure accessibility across the EUt+ alliance. Distribution will occur via the EUt+ website, partner networks, and relevant conferences to maximise visibility and uptake. We expect the piloting of the self-reflective questionnaires to be completed by Spring 2026. Building the toolbox and resources to support the results for programme managers will be an incremental process that demands multi-level supports throughout 2026.

Monitoring its use and tracking impacts on new programmes will provide valuable evidence for policy makers, offering insights into how European Values criteria can be effectively embedded in emerging European Degree in Engineering, and to what extent such changes are realised in practice.

3.6. Conclusion and Next Steps for Self-Reflection Tool

EUt+ member universities bring substantial expertise and outputs from previous initiatives and ECT Lab+. However, no existing tool provides a programme-level, STEM-specific diagnostic aligned with European Degree criteria. The proposed self-reflection tool addresses this gap by structuring improvement actions, supporting capacity building across partners, and enabling programme managers to embed European Values into the emerging European Degree in Engineering.

Moving forward, we will **refine and pilot the tool across EUt+ curricula clusters jointly within WPA3, ensuring alignment with quality assurance principles (TA7.2 and TA7.3) and flexibility for diverse disciplinary contexts**. This process will inform resource development, enhance usability, and ensure the tool's adaptability across disciplines, providing a practical foundation for embedding European Values and supporting collaborative learning across the alliance.

Building on the refinement and piloting of the self-reflection tool across curricula clusters, the next phase will focus on further developing, testing, and resourcing its implementation:

+ **Feedback and refinement**: Allow time for feedback on the diagnostic questions from the working groups. This will include a process of refining, comparing, contrasting, and possibly combining the questions that emerged separately across the four tasks. This process is expected to be finalised through a dedicated workshop in November 2025.
+ **Pilot testing**: Test the questions with three EUt+ clusters representing different disciplines in Engineering or other fields to gather user feedback and ensure the tool is agile and meaningful across diverse disciplinary contexts.
+ **Supporting resource development**: Begin curating and developing the linked resources that will underpin the diagnostic tool, including guidelines, training materials, and case studies. The scope of this work will depend on available technical and design resources for digitalisation

4. Achievement 4: Two Foreign Languages for All – True Multilingualism as a Condition of Inclusiveness

The European Union increasingly relies on graduates who can work and communicate confidently across borders. Multilingual ability strengthens not only employability and mobility, but also inclusion and cooperation within Europe. In this context, EUt+ is developing its commitment to "Two Foreign Languages for All," supporting students and staff to engage more fully in a multilingual European Higher Education Area.

4.1. Objectives

EUt+ aims to make interculturality and multilingualism core competencies for all students and staff. This involves systematic training in foreign languages, cultural understanding, and intercultural skills, with proficiency assessed according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). **Within the EUt+ Certificate**, students without prior proficiency are required to validate a minimum of **15 ECTS in foreign European language(s) during their bachelor curriculum** and **10 ECTS during their master curriculum**. In addition, they are required to obtain **5 ECTS in the national language of the host institution** if they are not already proficient.

Staff capacity is strengthened through the **Languages for Staff initiative**, supporting multilingual teaching and intercultural exchange. Short-term mobilities, including Erasmus Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), integrate language and intercultural elements to widen participation and **prepare students for longer mobility experiences**. Together, these measures contribute directly to the emerging European Degree in Engineering, helping embed multilingualism and intercultural competence as explicit European Values across EUt+ curricula.

4.2. From Gothenburg Social Summit to Curricula

The Gothenburg Social Summit (2017) brought together European leaders to discuss the role of education and culture in strengthening the sense of a European identity and unity across Member States. In its contribution, the European Commission's communication *Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture* (EC, 2017) set out a vision for 2025 in which *"learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders,"* and spending time in another Member state *"to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard"*. In this vision, speaking two additional languages alongside one's mother tongue would be the norm.

In a diverse Europe, **learning other languages opens opportunities to understand different cultures and contexts more deeply**. Language is closely tied to identity, and acquiring new languages facilitates meaningful human connection. Communicating with someone in their native language fosters empathy, openness, and mutual respect, creating a foundation for genuine change. Following the EU motto, *"united in diversity,"* multilingualism strengthens European identity and reinforces a shared sense of belonging.

Universities play a key role in empowering citizens to be mobile, confident, and socially engaged. On a political level, the ability to communicate across cultures reduces isolation and enables broader participation in democratic processes. For the workforce, multilingualism supports upward mobility and access to career opportunities. Yet access to foreign language training is uneven across the EU. Embedding language learning in higher education improves access for underrepresented and socially vulnerable groups, helping to level the playing field.

As the Commission notes, *"Today, the internal market is a reality for goods but not for education and culture"* (EC, 2017), limiting the free *"flow of ideas,"* and the creation of a *"a truly integrated European labour market"*. Multilingualism remains both a major asset and a significant challenge. Nearly half of EU citizens only speak their mother tongue (EC, 2017). Developing competence in multiple languages enhances understanding of diverse cultures, supports economic growth and resilience, and enables graduates to enter the labour market flexibly. **In engineering and other STEM fields, international graduates must be prepared to work in new cultural and linguistic environments**.

While **English** remains the dominant foreign language, it **alone is insufficient for fully preparing engineering graduates for European careers**. Many countries require two languages in general schooling, and universities that fail to continue multilingual instruction risk privileging only those students from socially advantaged backgrounds.

EUt+ has committed to being a truly multilingual university, giving parity of esteem to all languages, including smaller languages such as Latvian and Bulgarian, alongside more widely spoken ones like English and German. The principle is embedded in the EUt+ Certificate and informs the alliance's approach to language learning and mobility across member universities. This approach ensures equitable access to mobility, strengthens intercultural skills, and builds capacity for the multilingual and culturally aware professionals that Europe needs.

4.3. State of the Art

Current thinking on **"true multilingualism" in higher education emphasises a shift from parallel language offerings to institution-wide plurilingual practices**. *UNESCO's Languages Matter – Global Guidance on Multilingual Education* (UN, 2025) positions multilingualism as fundamental to equity and knowledge diversity, while the Council of Europe's model of plurilingual and intercultural education – anchored in the CEFR – encourages universities to design curricula, assessment, and mobility pathways that recognise learners' full linguistic repertoires rather than enforcing monolingual norms. International models illustrate the feasibility of this approach: the University of Ottawa embeds bilingualism in governance, staffing, and programme delivery through a dedicated institutional structure; the University of the Basque Country maintains a coordinated trilingual ecosystem (Basque–Spanish–English); and the University of the Free State shows how African languages can be strengthened as academic languages through translanguaging-based pedagogies and materials development.

The FOREU4ALL thematic group on multilingualism and multiculturalism gathers approaches from across the European University Alliances, with several alliances advancing

noteworthy models. For example, the EPICUR alliance advances a multilingual learning architecture that links language awareness, micro-credentials, and mobility across campuses, positioning multilingualism as a transversal skill. Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) pilots integrated language policies, language-support ecosystems, and recognition systems for plurilingual competence across member institutions.

Taken together, these global exemplars and alliances innovations outline the state of the art for building genuinely multilingual university cultures. For EUt+, the core challenge is to develop a **multilingual approach that is flexible enough to be applied across diverse institutional structures, national regulations, and disciplinary contexts, while still maintaining coherence with European Degree requirements**. Our review highlights the need for a diagnostic, programme-level approach: one that maps language and intercultural components to mobility opportunities, integrates CEFR-based proficiency metrics, and provides guidance on embedding multilingualism into curricula and assessment. This sets the stage for a systematic, alliance-wide strategy that supports inclusiveness, mobility, and the development of intercultural competencies as core learning outcomes.

4.4. Methodological Approach

Creating a genuinely multilingual European University – where mobility is standard and foreign language learning is embedded across programmes – is a complex, multifaceted task. EUt+ institutions differ significantly in their readiness and capacity to implement the EUt+ Certificate criteria, shaped by institutional structures, operational path dependencies, and strategic priorities. Addressing these differences **requires a coordinated combination of system-level support, pedagogical innovation, and targeted interventions**.

Several **key areas are identified as essential for embedding multilingualism** and intercultural learning into curricula:

+ Tackling institutional barriers to multilingualism
+ Mapping current language provision and analysing gaps
+ Staying relevant and state of the art in pedagogy and teaching approaches
+ Fostering buddy systems and tandems to support language learning
+ Embedding multilingualism and intercultural learning in long- and short-term mobility initiatives
+ Validating language proficiency
+ Promoting local culture and language learning for living and working
+ Motivating foreign language proficiency among staff
+ Supporting new curricula development and European curricula initiatives
+ Implementing reporting and performance evaluation mechanisms

Since November 2023, we have implemented targeted activities to address these areas. This includes raising awareness within clusters of multilingualism and intercultural learning as core European Values, emphasising the **importance of embedding language training and cultural learning into course credits**. The Languages for Staff initiative **strengthens institutional capacity** across partners.

At the system level we are **integrating language options into the Mobility Tool –** a strategic digital platform developed under WPA3 – to facilitate semester-abroad planning and

support mobility aligned with multilingual learning objectives.[14] **Networks of practitioners within MIO and across EUt+ partners** have been strengthened, including active engagement in the FOREU4ALL multilingualism and multiculturalism inter-alliance network.

To support programme level implementation, we are developing a **diagnostic self-reflection tool** for clusters to evaluate multilingualism as a criterion for the new European Degree (see Chapter 3 on Achievement 3). In parallel, we are **advancing a common interculturalism module,** providing a shared framework for teaching and learning across the alliance. Together, these approaches provide structured methods for embedding multilingualism and intercultural competencies, while maintaining flexibility for diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts.

4.5. Embedding Multilingualism and Intercultural Learning Across EUt+

This section brings together the alliance's key initiatives that strengthen multilingualism and intercultural learning across EUt+. It outlines how shared tools, training opportunities, and mobility-embedded learning experiences are being developed and implemented to support both students and staff. Taken together, these efforts create more coherent pathways for language acquisition, cultural understanding, and mobility preparedness, forming an important foundation for an inclusive and interconnected EUt+ experience.

4.5.1. EUt+ Certificate: Student Language Proficiency and Intercultural Competency Development

In anticipation of the Joint European Degree Label and the European Degree, EUt+ developed the EUt+ Certificate to align with forthcoming European criteria and enhance the seamlessness of the EUt+ student experience. **The EUt+ Certificate is designed to foster mobility, promote multilingualism, and support automatic credit recognition across member institutions**.

To fulfil the requirements of the EUt+ Certificate, students must complete ECTS in languages including the national language of the host institution as mentioned above. As of 2025, **five EUt+ members –** UPCT, UTT, TUS, UTCN, and soon UNICAS – **are implementing the Certificate**. So far, **49 students** completed their degree studies under its criteria.

The EUt+ Certificate has resulted in several **tangible outputs** across the alliance. It has created a **shared certification framework** that recognises linguistic and intercultural learning while embedding local language and culture courses within mobility experiences. Through mobility maps, **language options have become more visible and accessible to students**, supported by a **coordinated system for automatic credit recognition** and transparent documentation of linguistic progress. Together, these developments have strengthened the institutional foundations for a multilingual and inclusive student experience.

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[14] For more information refer to https://www.univ-tech.eu/mobility-tool.

Students earning the EUt+ Certificate gain exposure to new languages and cultures and **achieve basic proficiency in one of the alliance's European languages** (Spanish, French, Bulgarian, Romanian, or Italian). These courses **integrate intercultural learning components**, fostering empathy, adaptability, and a sense of belonging within a shared European context.

MIO plays a central role in enabling student access to language courses during mobility. Member institutions that have adopted the EUt+ Certificate actively bridge MIO activities with university leadership, providing a mandate to embed language learning as a core aspect of mobility. MIO members **promote student participation in language and culture courses**, demonstrating that second language proficiency can be achieved through structured and meaningful academic experiences.

All EUt+ partners now feature language options in the mobility tool and have developed corresponding local language and culture courses. MIO team members continue to improve visibility, remove procedural barriers, and ensure equitable and easy access for all students.

Building on the earlier Mobility-Friendly Plan from the first phase, campuses implement a **structured "before-during-after" model to integrate language learning** throughout the mobility experience.

Before mobility, sending institutions prepare students through **local language courses and tandem learning opportunities** to minimise linguistic barriers before travel. During mobility, host institutions ensure access to local language and culture courses (listed in the mobility tool) and **facilitate access to buddy programmes to support students**. For example, the European Student Network (ESN) in Sofia organises multicultural and multilingual events, inviting students hosted by TUS to engage with others and feel welcome when abroad. Also, student led Societies as well as the Sports and Counselling offices at TU Dublin support students with peer engagement and pastoral care. After mobility, MIO coordinates documentation and **data collection on students' linguistic achievements**, strengthening reporting and quality assurance.

As an **outcome**, the EUt+ Certificate has created a **shared quality standard** for language learning and intercultural competence within the alliance, **improving student preparedness, mobility outcomes, and institutional cooperation**. It represents a concrete step towards embedding multilingualism and inclusiveness in European higher education. Although the EUt+ Certificate provides a solid foundation for harmonising mobility and language criteria, some partners still face structural constraints that limit full alignment. The new European Degree Blueprint will extend the approach further by embedding multilingualism and European values directly into programme design and assessment (see Chapter 3 on Achievement 3).

4.5.2. Interculturality Module

A key challenge identified across EUt+ has been the lack of harmonisation among existing local language and culture modules, which vary in structure, credit value, and learning outcomes. To address this, the MIO is in the process of **developing a common Interculturality Module –** a shared course designed to provide all students with a consistent

foundation in intercultural awareness and competence while respective institutional and cultural diversity.

The Interculturality Module is being designed as a **flexible, online, asynchronous course that can be adapted to different pedagogical contexts**. It may be taken as a standalone course or embedded within existing curricula, and used before, during, or after mobility. This adaptability ensures that all EUt+ students and staff can access and benefit from the course according to their individual academic pathways and mobility timelines. The course content **integrates theoretical frameworks for intercultural awareness** and competence, **practical local case studies** drawn from EUt+ member institutions, and **optional training and resources** tailored to specific cultures of each EUt+ country. These elements not only promote intercultural awareness but also help prepare students and staff for mobility by familiarising them with the social and academic norms of their destination. The model thus complements the Mobility-Friendly Plan developed in the first phase of the EUt+, deepening its impact by embedding intercultural preparation mode systematically across alliance.

The development of the module has already generated **tangible outputs**: **shared content, a digital platform** for delivery supported by h_da, and **initial design materials**. The final phase will focus on refining the course content, translating materials, and producing engaging digital learning resources for piloting and launch in the coming academic year.

In the longer term, the Interculturality Module is **expected to strengthen intercultural competence** as a measurable learning **outcome** across EUt+ and **support staff and student preparedness** for studying, teaching, or working in different European cultural contexts.

4.5.3. Staff Language Courses

Now in its third year, the **EUt+ Languages for Staff initiative** continues to strengthen multilingualism and cultural awareness among academic, professional, and technical staff across the alliance. Originally designed to foster multilingualism and an appreciation of different cultures among EUt+ staff, the programme has become an important mechanism for **promoting inclusiveness among staff** in terms of confidence of communication, intercultural understanding, and mobility readiness within EUt+.

Early assessments within EUt+ revealed that many staff, while having some prior language knowledge, lacked confidence or opportunities to use in processional context, and needed training support. The Languages for Staff courses were therefore developed to provide **structured, supportive learning environments delivered locally**, integrating both language acquisition and cultural learning. **All 10 languages of EUt+ have courses** (including Irish and English language courses from TU Dublin). The initiative has since inspired several EUt+ partners – such as UTT and UTCN – to expand their own internal language training offers, particularly in English and other EUt+ languages.

To date, **over 600 staff members** have participated in the programme over the past three years. Participants frequently report benefits that extend beyond language improvement: the **courses foster networking, intercultural exchange, and a sense of European belonging**. Feedback highlights the value of learning and the motivation this creates to engage in mobility opportunities. Indeed, **more than 60% of course participants express interest in undertaking staff mobility following their language training**, demonstrating a direct link

between the initiative and greater mobility engagement. Testimonials from participants completing the Languages for Staff course in 2025 included:

"I am happy that I participated in this course even though the language is very difficult. Such programs are the right direction for European integration and friendship."

"I recommend the course to the academic and research staff at the university, because it is enriching in terms of communication, collaboration and exchange between the EUt+ universities."

"The opportunity to learn from a native speaker is great. The knowledge of other culture is an excellent motivation. I would be interested in a mobility experience to enhance language skills."

This momentum is encouraging further innovation in course design and delivery. The initiative is now closely aligned with Task 7.1, supporting pre-mobility language preparation for staff exchanges and secondments. Looking ahead, MIO plans to expand the initiative in its upcoming fourth wave (2026) to explore opportunities for **joint participation by staff and students in the smaller language courses** where overall demand is lower. This expansion aims to enhance intercultural awareness across the alliance and promote appreciation of Europe's linguistic diversity, including less widely spoken languages such as Latvian, Bulgarian, and Irish.

The **outputs achieved** so far include a **sustained and growing multilingual training offer across partners**, an **active network of language instructors**, and **documented data on participation and motivation trends**. The **emerging outcomes** point to increased staff mobility intentions, stronger intercultural connections, and the gradual normalisation of multilingualism as a professional and cultural competency within EUt+.

4.5.4. Language and Culture Learning Embedded into Short-Term Mobilities

Data collected from students participating in a **short-term international summer camp** in Cluj-Napoca in 2024 (22 students in total with 17 questionnaires returned) indicates that **even short-term mobility experiences can foster meaningful multicultural learning**. Students reported gaining new insights into different cultures, practising cross-cultural communication, and reflecting on their own assumptions. Students generally expressed optimism and confidence in engaging with unfamiliar cultural environments, suggesting that even short-term experiences can have a tangible impact on attitudes and beliefs.

Erasmus Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) have further exploited the potential of short-term mobilities to embed language and intercultural learning. MIO members have invested significant effort co-designing these programmes to **ensure culture and language experiences are embedded**. Student feedback underscores the importance of intercultural learning experience. For example, feedback from a BIP hosted in Dublin (involving 40 students) indicated a preference for a greater balance of culture-focused content alongside technical content. In response, subsequent BIPs hosted by TUS incorporated increased cultural components, which were positively received by students in their feedback. Activities deliberately highlight not only the host country's language and culture but also

the linguistic diversity of participants, **demonstrating that multiple languages are valued and actively used beyond English**.

BIPs **also contribute to students' sense of belonging within EUt+**. They allow MIO team members to promote foundational EUt+ concepts, such as the alliance's multilingual identity and the practical relevance of language skills for personal, academic, and professional growth. By bringing together students from diverse partners, cultures, and languages, BIPs create a microcosm of European identity and provide **first-hand experience of inclusive multilingual environments**.

Supporting evidence from students reinforces these impacts: participants reported developing intercultural adaptability, appreciating the importance of soft skills such as collaboration and communication, and cultivating open-mindedness, patience, and curiosity in cross-cultural interactions. These experiences not only **enhance students' immediate engagement with new cultures** but also **equip them with skills and perspectives valuable for future studies, mobility, and professional contexts**. Some evidence collected from students participating in BIPs includes:

> *"The skill I developed the most during my Erasmus stay was intercultural adaptability. Living in a different country challenged me to be patient, tolerant, and understanding of cultural differences. This was the very reason I chose to participate in the program, and it truly proved to be worthwhile, giving me confidence and tools for future studies abroad."*

> *"The most valuable lesson I learned during the course was the importance of soft skills. I realised that academic knowledge alone is not enough. Being able to collaborate effectively, express ideas clearly, and adjust to different situations is essential for both personal and professional growth."*

> *"This experience has taught me to be more open-minded and patient when communicating with people from different cultures and countries. I have learned the importance of listening carefully, respecting different perspectives, and being adaptable. In the future, I will approach intercultural communication with more understanding and curiosity, which I believe will help me build better relationships and work more effectively with others."*

Emerging outputs from these activities include **co-designed BIP programmes that incorporate multilingual and intercultural components**, **student participation and feedback data,** and **refined programme design guidelines** that integrate cultural learning alongside technical content. At this stage, while early indicators suggest positive attitudinal shifts and enhanced intercultural competencies, formal **outcomes –** such as measurable changes in student language proficiency or long-term mobility uptake – are yet to be systematically documented.

4.6. Staying Relevant and State of the Art in Language Teaching and Learning

Building on the initiatives that promote language and culture learning within EUt+, it is equally important to **ensure that teaching practices themselves remain innovative, evidence-based, and aligned with current trends in language education**. To maintain this

quality and consistency, MIO plays a central role in fostering professional development and collaboration among educators across member universities.

Each year MIO hosts a **language conference** dedicated to sharing best practices and organising workshops that expose staff to state of the art approaches in language teaching and learning. The 2nd EUt+ International Conference on Languages, held in Cartagena in June 2024, was themed *"Merging New Trends and Consolidating Good Practices in Languages for Specific Purposes"*. The conference featured practical sessions on integrating case studies into the Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) classroom and on assessing LSP course materials. **Skill-building workshops** are a key feature of this annual event. In 2024, workshops included:

+ Creation and development of a multidisciplinary glossary of academic and university terms in all EUt+ languages
+ *"Multilingualism and Interculturality through Dramatization,"* designed to enhance educators' intercultural competence and support the integration of international students
+ *"Teaching Languages in Virtual Environments,"* which focused on intercultural education, global competence development through virtual exchanges, and technology-assisted language learning.

The next international language conference along the theme of *"Exploring multilingualism: language, technology and cross-cultural connections"* will be hosted by TU Dublin on 16 January 2026.

Beyond fostering best practice exchange within the alliance, we are also an active member of the FOREU4ALL thematic group on multilingualism and multiculturalism. This forum ensures that **participation in wider European dialogues on multilingual and multicultural education**, supporting policy alignment and knowledge sharing across European University Alliances.

These ongoing professional and collaborative activities ensure that EUt+ remains at the forefront of language and intercultural education, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. They also strengthen the alliance's broader impact and potential to contribute to policy by connecting its academic community to European-level networks and influencing emerging practices across higher education.

4.7. Impact and Dissemination

Through such sustained efforts in teaching innovation and international collaboration, EUt+ strengthens the quality of its programmes while advancing multilingualism and intercultural learning across the EHEA. This section presents the emerging impact of these initiatives both practical and policy perspectives, as well as planned dissemination activities.

4.7.1. Impact: Pragmatic Perspective

The work of EUt+ in promoting multilingualism and intercultural learning is beginning to show **early-stage impacts** across several interconnected dimensions. While many results

represent intermediate outcomes, they collectively lay the foundations for more systemic and long-term transformation within member universities and beyond.

Knowledge and practice exchange: Through MIO, EUt+ has established a sustained community of practice that shares expertise and pedagogical innovations across partners. The annual EUt+ International Language Conferences, workshops, and collaborative publications are generating new knowledge and spreading effective models of language and culture learning. These outputs represent the **groundwork for future institutional impact** through shared standards and mutual learning.

Human capacity and professional development: The Languages for Staff initiative and collaborative BIP design processes have strengthened staff confidence, linguistic competence, and intercultural awareness. These outcomes are already influencing teaching and mobility practices across institutions, with **evidence of increased motivation for staff and student mobility**. They constitute a clear form of emerging human capital impact, improving the alliance's readiness for a multilingual European University.

Cultural inclusion and student experience: Student feedback from short-term mobilities and BIPs demonstrates growing intercultural adaptability and appreciation for local culture. Adjustments made to programme design, such as integrating more culture-focused content, reflect an evolving institutional responsiveness to student needs. These **behavioural and curricular shifts represent early cultural impact**, improving inclusiveness and the lived experience of European identity within EUt+.

Partnerships and structural development: Closer collaboration with networks such as the Bulgarian branch of the ESN has supported the establishment of sustainable buddy and peer-support systems, fostering intercultural exchange at the grassroots level. Early indications suggest emerging impact, with students reporting greater confidence in cross-cultural communication, appreciation of Bulgarian language and culture, and a sense of belonging within a multilingual learning community. These **partnerships are means to impact, enabling structural changes** that will underpin long-term multilingual and intercultural engagement across the alliance.

4.7.2. Impact: Policy Perspective

At this stage, direct policy influence is limited, but the work of MIO provides a **foundation for potential future impact**. By participating in the FOREU4ALL Thematic Group and sharing insights on multilingualism and intercultural learning, EUt+ helps shape the discourse on language education and mobility across alliances. These activities may inform future recommendations, whitepapers, and policy guidance, contributing to the development of more inclusive and multilingual practices in higher education at a European level.

4.7.3. Dissemination of Results and Informing Policy

MIO organises **practice-sharing and training forums** approximately once per year, with the third practice conference scheduled for January 2026 in TU Dublin (following h_da in January 2023 and UPCT in June 2024). These events feature workshops on state of the art language teaching and intercultural learning practices shared across EUt+ member universities.

Keynote speakers highlight global best practices, while case studies – such as the Languages for Staff initiative – illustrate lessons learned and emerging outputs. High-quality feedback from student and staff initiatives is systematically collected, supporting continuous improvement and providing material for further dissemination.

Through these activities, EUt+ actively disseminates its experience, resources, and good practices in multilingualism and intercultural learning to a wider European audience. Lessons learnt from the Languages for Staff initiative, pilot programmes, and feedback from students and staff are documented and shared in conferences, workshops, and international for a (including in the FOREU4ALL Thematic Group). This approach ensures that insights from EUt+ are accessible to other universities and networks, supporting adoption of inclusive, multilingual practices across the EHEA.

4.8. Conclusion and Next Steps for Multilingualism and Intercultural Learning

The work of MIO to date demonstrates the added value of establishing a dedicated virtual office and governance structure that facilitates regular meetings and collaboration across EUt+ partners. Through this structure, the alliance has gained deeper understanding of quality assurance, new learning approaches, and opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration. Importantly, **MIO supports a shared vision of the European University as a truly multilingual and intercultural environment, fostering strategic multiculturalism across the alliance**. Top-down commitment has provided an exemplar for bottom-up initiatives, while inter-alliance engagement through FOREU4ALL positions EUt+ to contribute to broader European policy discussions on multilingualism.

Moving forward, the focus will be on:

+ **Consolidating and extending these achievements** through targeted actions including the streamlining of access to and participation in language courses for students before and during mobilities, while building on lessons learnt from the EUt+ Certificate to support member universities.
+ **Enhancing data collection processes** for performance indicators related to TA2.4, including tracking graduation and certification data relevant to multilingualism to monitor success.
+ **Completing the design, content, and delivery of the common Interculturality module** to provide a coherent framework for student learning across partners.
+ **Addressing high interest in language learning**, while considering resource and capacity constraints, to foster multilingual competence among academic and professional staff.
+ **Collecting and disseminating good practices and data** on initiatives developed through MIO activities, highlighting state-of-the-art approaches in language teaching and intercultural learning.
+ **Supporting intercultural learning and multilingual experiences** in short-term mobilities, including BIPs and internships.

Conclusion

The EUt+ Accelerate initiative demonstrates a comprehensive and integrated approach to supporting a just twin green and digital transition within the European University landscape. Across our **four achievements**, we have developed tools, frameworks, and methodologies that advance environmental, social, and governance principles (EUt+ FIT), strengthen equality, diversity, and inclusion, embed European Values and sustainability criteria into curricula, and foster multilingual and intercultural competence. Together, these achievements provide strategic guidance and practical operational mechanisms enabling EUt+ to respond effectively to the complex, multi-level demands of higher education in Europe.

Our work on EUt+ FIT has established a **structured, evidence-based platform for governance, experimentation, and coevolution** across social, environmental, and technological dimensions. In parallel, TA2.1 has supported local EDI teams through **data collection, reporting, and training initiatives** that enhance human capacity and provide actionable insights for institutional transformation. TA2.2 and TA2.3 have developed **tools for embedding responsible digital and green practices into curricula and institutional operations**, enabling measurable progress towards the UN SDGs. TA2.4 has **operationalised multilingualism and intercultural learning** as core conditions for inclusive education, equipping students with skills and competencies needed for collaboration across languages and cultures.

Early **outcomes** are already evident across the alliance: programme teams are **piloting the self-reflection tool** to integrate European Values into curricula; **staff and students have increased awareness and capacity** through workshops, webinars, and training initiatives; and **institutional practices are beginning to reflect evidence-based approaches** to EDI, sustainability, and multilingualism. These outcomes provide tangible indications of progress and form the foundation for longer-term impacts.

Together, these outputs and emerging outcomes have generated multiple **impacts**: the **creation and dissemination of new knowledge**, the **stimulation of debate and environmental awareness**, **capacity building through training and methodological development**, and the **establishment of partnerships for societal and policy change**. These contributions reinforce EUt+'s role as a leader in higher education convergence and institutional transformation, providing evidence-based methods for governance, sustainability, and inclusion that are scalable across European Universities Alliances and Higher Education Institutions more generally.

Looking forward, continued implementation, iterative refinement, and alignment with institutional priorities and European policy frameworks will be critical to consolidating these achievements. In the **next two years,** we will focus on further cycles of experimentation, analysis of mutualisms across tasks, digitalisation of frameworks and tools, and dissemination of findings through academic, policy, and practical channels. Collectively, these steps position EUt+ to not only achieve measurable institutional transformation but also to inform broader European higher education policy, advancing inclusivity, sustainability, and digital and green excellence.

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Annexes

List of annexes:

- Annex I: Links to Milestone 2 (MS2) foundational documents
- Annex II: Semi-annual implementation plans September 2025 to March 2026 for each task
- Annex III: Semi-annual review and evaluations for each task
- Annex IV: Draft diagnostic questions European Degree criteria (inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, multilingualism)
- Annex V: EUt+ FIT in operation