EUt+

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Deliverable D102

D8.1c Joint activities report

Del. Rel. No 8.3

WP 8

Description: Annual report on joint research and teaching projects in support of EUt+ sustainability

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

Dissemination level: **PU**-Public

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

FOREWORD TO DELIVERABLE D102

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education and collaborative research, the EUt+ consortium has embarked on a remarkable journey. This foreword serves as a gateway to Deliverable, providing an overarching perspective on the endeavors, achievements, and aspirations that underpin our collective efforts.

Within this document, you will find a comprehensive overview of EUt+ joint projects, embodying our steadfast commitment to sustainability and integration. These projects, meticulously aligned with designated Work Packages (WPs), offer invaluable insights into our shared objectives and the strides we have taken to realize them. We are delighted to share the approval of project KA220-HED-88A25614, which integrates epistemology into technical education, enriching the educational landscape and nurturing a holistic understanding of knowledge, art, science, and technology.

Yet, our journey has also encountered challenges, resulting in rejected projects. However, these experiences serve as invaluable stepping stones towards refining our project writing and evaluation processes. They embody our unwavering dedication to innovation and our commitment to pursuing impactful endeavors in the future.

As we move forward, EUt+ Accelerate emerges as a transformative chapter in our story. Commencing on November 1, 2023, this phase embodies our core values and ideals—reducing dependency on global powers, reindustrialization through technology, fostering human resources, and addressing global challenges. With an expanded consortium and improved internal structures, including the creation of the Technology Studies, Engineering, and Design School (TEDS), we aim to shape a brighter future for European education and research.
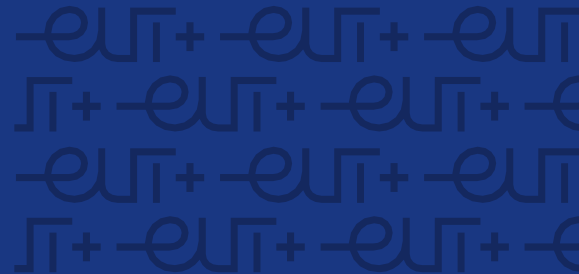
In closing, this foreword provides a glimpse into the collective efforts, achievements, and aspirations that define EUt+. As we embark on EUt+ Accelerate, our commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation remains unwavering. Together, we accelerate progress and pioneer positive change in European higher education and research.

Table of contents

Introduction

In this third "Joint Activities Report" comprehensive overview, we delve into the joint projects within the EUt+ consortium, exemplifying our unwavering dedication to sustainability and integration. These projects provide valuable insights into a diverse array of initiatives meticulously aligned with designated Work Packages (WPs), all crafted to expedite our collective progress towards the shared objectives that define EUt+.

In the current reporting period, we are pleased to announce the approval of a project under the auspices of Erasmus, bearing the reference number KA220-HED-88A25614. This project, officially approved on July 31st, 2023, represents a significant step towards integrating epistemology into technical education, enriching the educational landscape and fostering a holistic understanding of the interplay between knowledge, art, science, and technology.

In our ongoing pursuit of project development and collaboration, we also acknowledge the presence of rejected projects within our portfolio. While not approved during this reporting period, these initiatives contribute to our collective learning experience, prompting us to refine our strategies and strengthen our proposals.

In summary, this report provides a comprehensive view of our joint projects within the EUt+ consortium, showcasing our commitment to sustainability and integration. While successful projects have advanced our goals, some are still in various stages of development, making it challenging to present precise approval and rejection statistics. Nevertheless, our dedication to thorough evaluation remains unwavering, ensuring each project contributes to productive collaborations and future success.

Rejected projects offer valuable lessons for improved project writing and evaluation processes, guiding our growth within the EUt+ consortium.

As we embark on EUt+ Accelerate, a new phase of EUt+ operations commencing on November 1, 2023, we anticipate even greater achievements and impact. EUt+ Accelerate serves both as the foundation of the EUt+ Alliance and the largest supporting project to date, aimed at fostering innovation, sustainability, and holistic education. This phase continues to embody our core values and ideals, emphasizing the importance of technology, expertise, and engagement in addressing global challenges.

EUt+ has expanded its consortium, broadened its reach and cultural diversity while adapted its internal structures to support diverse activities effectively. Key changes include the supporting offices for coordination, the creation of clusters for joint European Degrees, and an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusiveness (EDI) Team to facilitate access and widening participation.

In EUt+ Accelerate, we will introduce a Technology Studies, Engineering, and Design School (TEDS) that leverages innovative pedagogy to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs. This innovation aligns with the expectations of universities in the European Universities initiative.

EUt+ Accelerate represents our commitment to accelerating progress and making a lasting impact on European higher education. It emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of our consortium and the wider community. Together, we are determined to accelerate EUt+ and shape a brighter future for European education and research.

Overview of Joint Projects

In this section, we embark on a comprehensive examination of the joint projects within the EUt+ consortium. These projects epitomize our unwavering dedication to sustainability and the pursuit of a more tightly integrated framework. As we delve into the overview of these collaborative endeavors, we shall glean valuable insights into the diverse array of initiatives meticulously aligned with designated Work Packages (WPs). These initiatives are meticulously crafted to expedite our collective progress towards the shared objectives that underpin the very essence of EUt+.

Overview of EUt+ Joint Project Applications in the first two reporting periods

In the early years of the EUt+ initiative, we witnessed a flurry of projects aimed at advancing education and research.

During the initial year, several projects with partial EUt+ representation were approved, focusing on areas such as sustainable job markets, SDGs in higher education, and green entrepreneurship for rural women. These projects addressed specific higher education challenges, promoted sustainability, and fostered collaboration, aligning with EUt+'s broader goals.

In the second year, EUt+ vision included expert matchmaking, streamlined project administration, support for underserved work packages, synergy promotion, and global outreach.

Approved Projects In the second reporting period approved projects that bolstered pedagogical practices, enhanced institutional structures, improved engineering education, and promoted inclusive learning.

Joint Projects for Reporting Period

It is incumbent upon us to acknowledge that a significant portion of the projects under our purview remains entrenched in various stages of negotiation, pre-petition, and await approval. Regrettably, this complex landscape renders us unable to present precise statistical data concerning the projects that have earned approval or those that, regrettably, have encountered rejection. As we diligently navigate through these intricate processes, our unwavering commitment lies in ensuring that each project is accorded the requisite deliberation and scrutiny, with the overarching objective of nurturing productive collaborations and striving towards favorable outcomes in the imminent future.

During this reporting period, we are pleased to announce the approval of a project under the auspices of Erasmus, bearing the reference number KA220-HED-88A25614. The project was officially approved on July 31st, 2023, after its initial call on March 23rd, 2022, at 12:00:00. The project's scheduled commencement date is set for September 1st, 2022, and it boasts a commendable duration spanning 36 months, culminating on August 31st, 2025.

In essence, the project's primary objective is rooted in the conviction that the integration of epistemology into technical and technological education will equip students with a crucial tool for cultivating the skills and competencies necessary to design future technologies that encompass cultural, social, ecological, and sustainability dimensions. The project's overarching aim is to formulate a comprehensive framework, modular in nature, which educators can readily employ in diverse pedagogical contexts.

The project's implementation plan entails ten transnational Project Meetings hosted by different partners, two Intensive Study Programs (C1 Teacher Training Program and C2 Student Intensive Study Program), as well as two Multiplier events - an exhibition and an international conference. The project's outcomes are organized into four key Project Results:

+ PR1 - Epistemology Art, Science, and Technology: Mapping, which will establish a theoretical foundation, delineating the common ground between epistemology, art, science, and technology;

+ PR2 - Educational Methodology based on transdisciplinary principles, which will develop the practical aspects that build upon the findings of PR1;

+ PR3 - Teacher Training Module, focusing on the development of a teaching program and C1 ISP;

+ PR4 - Student Module, culminating in the creation of a modular toolkit, rigorously tested during C2 ISP.

This project represents a significant step toward the integration of epistemology into technical education, enriching the educational landscape and fostering a holistic understanding of the interplay between knowledge, art, science, and technology.

In our ongoing pursuit of project development and collaboration, it is with regret that we must acknowledge the presence of rejected projects within our portfolio. These projects, while conceived with great enthusiasm and potential, faced the formidable challenges of stringent evaluation and selection criteria. Despite their rejection, each of these initiatives has contributed to our collective learning experience, prompting us to refine our strategies and strengthen our proposals.

While these projects may not have received approval during this reporting period, they remain a testament to our commitment to innovation and our unwavering dedication to pursuing impactful endeavors in the future.

To provide a more polished introduction to the forthcoming chapter on "Cautionary Tales" in the EUt+ joint project, we will embark on an exploration of three project proposals that faced rejection. This section of the Deliverable has the primary objective of dissecting these proposals to identify their weaknesses and potential areas for improvement. We will meticulously outline the shortcomings and deficiencies highlighted by expert evaluators, which led to the denial of funding for these projects. Furthermore, we will proffer guidance on enhancing project writing proficiency, both within the consortium as a whole and in scenarios where only select EUt+ partners are involved in specific proposals. This in-depth analysis serves as a valuable learning opportunity aimed at bolstering our collective capacity for future project success.

In summary, this chapter provides a comprehensive view of our joint projects within the EUt+ consortium, showcasing our commitment to sustainability and integration. While successful projects have advanced our goals, some are still in various stages of development, making it challenging to present precise approval and rejection statistics. Nevertheless, our dedication to thorough evaluation remains unwavering, ensuring each project contributes to productive collaborations and future success. Rejected projects offer valuable lessons for improved project writing and evaluation processes, guiding our growth within the EUt+ consortium.

Cautionary Tales

Developing new projects to support the activities of EUt+ is crucial for the sustainability of the alliance and the first three years of the EUt+ operation have

proven that EUt+ partners are actively working on joint project proposals, involving two or more EUt+ consortium universities. Significant time and effort are invested in each project proposal; however, as the success rate indicates, not all projects are accepted for funding.To determine the main causes of why certain project proposals have failed to reach the necessary threshold for funding allocation and suggest possible mitigation mechanisms, Proposal Evaluation Forms received from the European Commission are carefully reviewed, paying special attention to the evaluations of rejected projects. We strongly believe that we can often learn more from the projects that were not approved than the ones who where, as the rejected proposals shed light on both our weaknesses and opportunities for the future.

To determine and illustrate some of the weaknesses and opportunities, this section of the Deliverable will review three rejected project proposals, list the drawbacks and flaws emphasized by the expert evaluators due to which the projects failed to receive funding, and suggest ways to improve and become more efficient in project writing in the future as a consortium, as well as in case when only a few of the EUt+ partners are involved in the specific proposal.

Project abbreviation as stated in the proposal: INTUZIAST

Number of EUt+ partners participating in the proposal: 2 (*Riga Technical University* and *Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena*)

Aim of the project: to increase the potential of partner universities from Uzbekistan by reducing the existing gap in the field of internationalization through the study, development and integration of the best practices of EU and non-EU partners into the structural and cultural components of the university management system.

The evaluators have highlighted the strengths of the proposal, for example, there is an overall good coherence between the proposed work plan, budget and timeline

and the foreseen quality control mechanisms are seen as appropriate for the needs of the specific project. Also, the suggested plan to start the dissemination activities early in the project is seen as a strength.

However, numerous reasons are listed for the project not being selected for funding. For instance, while the evaluators emphasize that most activities planned in the project suit the project objectives, not all activities have been described in enough detail. A similar note is made about the milestones and deliverables, some of which lack a detailed description too. In general, lack of information on different aspects can be defined as one of the main drawbacks throughout the project proposal. Among that, the evaluators have requested more detail on the involvement of both EUt+ partners. Furthermore, several negative comments are made about measuring different outcomes of the project, as well as how the relevant target groups will be reached and what benefit they will gain from the project in question.

Based on the commentary made by the expert evaluators, we can conclude that in projects that involve not only EUt+ universities, but also other partners, more emphasis has to be put on the non-EUt+ partners involved and the procedures in place in the respective countries, especially if the project in question aims to bring about changes in those countries. This is especially crucial for proposals like INTUZIAST, because here the EUt+ partners play a different role than in the day-to-day EUt+ operations. Additionally, in projects with EU and non-EU partners involved, there is a risk of ethnocentric tendencies becoming apparent, which is something that needs to be prevented for the project to reach its intended aims and benefit the countries it intends to benefit.

Project abbreviation as stated in the proposal: DeSC-MeCC

Number of EUt+ partners participating in the proposal: 3 (*Riga Technical University, Technical University of Sofia* and *Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena*)

Aim of the project: to develop strategies and competencies in HEIs to mitigate the effects of climate change and enhance the capabilities of faculty and students of the HEIs involved through creative and outlandish state of art, infrastructural practices and Project based learning primarily targeting the long-term Sustainability goals. The objectives of the project include nurturing and enhancing capacity building of the HEIs involved through modern Teaching-Learning practices and developing Centers of Excellence to enable research and training to work towards ensuring Sustainability and mitigating climate change.

As in the previous project proposal discussed in this section, the expert evaluators have listed a number of positive aspects of the project, for example, the strong links to the principles set within the EU Green Deal. A notable difference from the INTUZIAST proposal is the DeSC-MeCC proposal takes the needs of the targeted non-EU countries into account, which shows us that the evaluators pay special attention to this aspect across different types of project proposals. For the purpose of the DeSC-MeCC project, a needs analysis was done via a comprehensive review of the ongoing experience and extreme vulnerability to climate change of the Asian countries targeted by the proposal. A a result of this review, the proposal managed to emphasize the important role higher education institutions can play in tackling the climate crisis and demonstrated the gap between the supply and demand of trained professionals in the specific area. The evaluators have also noted the focus on relevant target groups and distribution of tasks among the project consortium as positive.

Despite the positive feedback, there are significant drawbacks that we can learn from for the future. For example, one of the main flaws that has been emphasized

numerous times not only in this project proposal evaluation, but also in others, is that we often fail to find suitable quantitative indicators to measure project progress. While the qualitative indicators we set are usually well received, the same does not apply to the quantitative indicators. This is an important note we need to make for the future to make our project proposals more concrete and justified. A general lack of detail is once again emphasized by evaluators, which is something that was encountered in the INTUZIAST project proposal evaluation too and indicates a negative tendency across our proposals.

The expert evaluators have also noted that the length of the project does not correspond to the number of activities planned, which affects the proposed project budget and causes the evaluators to view it as not cost efficient. Another important comment to consider for future reference is the way we plan which activities should commence as soon as the project starts, and which ones need more preparation to be kicked off properly. In relation to DeSC-MeCC, the evaluators have made a note that while the Sustainability Plan is intended to be developed within the project, implementing it only towards the end of the project is too late to start seeking commitments from the relevant stakeholders. Considering the importance of sustainability aspects across different areas of operation across the EU, this is something that we need to improve upon and the feedback we have gained from unapproved proposals is an abundant source of information for us to do better in the future.

Project abbreviation as stated in the proposal: EEE4RIM

Number of EUt+ partners participating in the proposal: 8, all EUt+ consortium universities, aside from the new partner that joined the alliance in summer of 2023

Aim of the project: to set up an overarching enabling strategy for Excellence, Expertise and Engagement for Research & Innovation Management. Excellence refers to the proven high-quality research actions, output, and impact of EUt+ members, Expertise highlights the importance of maximising research and innovation management expertise, and Engagement underlines our dedication towards increasing and deepening collaboration with our stakeholders in industry and civil society. The application project will finally reinforce the strategic research capacities and processes of the eight partners, alongside those of the ERIs (European Research Institutes) of EUt+.

The evaluators have acknowledged the objectives of the proposal, describing them as clear, credible and relevant to the Work Programme. They have also noted that it is easy to understand how these objectives will be measured and verified by using a set of key performance indicators. Additionally, consistency with the European Research Area policy objectives and the potential to contribute to the Work Programme have been highlighted by the expert evaluators as a strength of the proposal.

However, the positive comments have been significantly overshadowed by the negative feedback the EEE4RIM project proposal has received. Considering the scale of the proposal, which is expected for proposals under the HORIZON-CSA type of action, the time and resources allocated to preparing it far exceeded those of preparing DeSC-MeCC and INTUZIAST, making it especially important to determine what caused the EEE4RIM project to be rejected.

Firstly, the evaluators have stated that the methodology in place for carrying out the coordination activities is not presented in sufficient detail. A similar comment is made about descriptions of activities under certain work packages as well as the content of some Deliverables and their connection to different tasks. It is important

to note that a similar comment about lack of details has appeared in all the Proposal Evaluation Forms reviewed under this Deliverable, once again highlighting an alarming tendency across our project proposals. Another drawback that repeats from other project proposals is a lack of relevant metrics; in this case, metrics to quantify the significance of the contributions envisioned within the project. Furthermore, the evaluators have emphasized a discrepancy of the number of risks and the scope of the work packages, stating that some major risks (e.g. industry engagement, low capacity of staff to participate in the activities, etc.) have not been adequately considered, which is quite alarming for a project of such scale as EEE4RIM. It shows us that more resources must be allocated to developing a thorough SWOT analysis to make sure we have foreseen not only the strengths and opportunities of our proposal, but also the weaknesses and threats that might negatively affect our project. The more prepared we are at the project proposal stage, the more confidence the evaluators will have in our critical thinking skills and judgement, increasing our chances to be entrusted with the funding necessary to implement large scale projects to support EUt+.

Another drawback that is unique to the EEE4RIM proposal demonstrates the importance of making a distinction between equality and equity. Identical personnel rates were used for all beneficiaries, without reflecting the different salary rates in different EU countries participating in the project. While the common operations EUt+ partners are used to often cause us to view things and processes in a way that prioritizes equality, it is clear that equity should have been chosen within the EEE4RIM proposal to adhere to the funding rules of the EU projects. Such a mistake could have been avoided relatively easily by paying more attention to the rules of the specific action.

Finally, some mistakes highlighted by the expert evaluators can only be explained with insufficient attention to detail when preparing the project proposals. In DeSC-

MeCC and INTUZIAST the main negative feedback was about the lack of detail when describing the project specific contents and while that is relevant to the EEE4RIM proposal as well, a new flaw has been detected, namely, inadvertent errors made while writing the proposal. For example, the experts have noted that some milestones refer to timings which are not properly aligned with the Gantt chart: for example, the WP2 milestones MS2.1 and MS2.2 are due in M4 and M6, respectively, while WP2 only starts in M7. Making such mistakes within a project proposal of a scale equal to that of EEE4RIM will undoubtedly make the expert evaluators question our ability to plan our work and the lifespan of the project. This shows how important it is to prepare the project proposals in advance of the deadline, making sure we have time to go through them, scanning for inadvertent errors that are unacceptable in small- as well as large-scale project proposals.

Conclusions and suggestions

While the evaluation of each project proposal is unique and specific to the proposal in question, there are some common features that we have observed across project proposals of different scales that could serve as a lesson for us to improve in the years to come. Firstly, more attention to detail must be paid both when describing the activities and milestones of the project, as well as when reviewing the proposal submission form to make sure that no inadvertent errors have occurred. Losing potential project funding due to an error also means losing all the time and resources that were dedicated to developing the project idea, making it an inefficient way to operate and organize our joint activities. Secondly, more work has to be dedicated to choosing and designing the appropriate metrics, especially quantitative indicators, to measure project progress. We have received positive feedback on the qualitative measures we use, but it is the quantitative ones that need to be improved to increase our chances of getting more projects funded.

Furthermore, we need to be more critical when planning the project lifespan, in terms of what activities need to start along with the project kick-off, what activities should commence towards the middle of the project and what activities only need to be implemented towards the end of the project implementation period. The activities implemented are directly linked to the milestones reached; hence, improving our project planning will contribute to more successful projects in the future. Finally, we need to rely on the strengths that we have at our disposal. Our common operation for the past three years has given us an advantage and an understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses. The expert evaluators have also emphasized the balanced composition of the consortium, with a good balance of established and widening countries and partners that complement and support each other. This is especially crucial now as we have reached a new stage of EUt+ operation and have also welcomed a new partner institution.

Management of EUt+ Joint project list

One of the challenges encountered by EUt+ Joint activities was the substantial requirement for administrative support in the provision of a comprehensive project list with detailed information accessible to all partners. Task 8.1 has indeed maintained a Joint project list; however, it has not permitted self-managed editing of information. This list has consistently been stored within the confines of the task, and it has also included significantly less information than what various partners across different task implementations have required.

A comprehensive project list with detailed information accessible to all partners is imperative for fostering effective collaboration and project management within our consortium. Such a resource serves as a centralized repository of essential project-

related data, providing clarity on project objectives, timelines, and responsibilities. It enhances transparency and accountability, enabling all partners to stay well-informed and aligned with the consortium's goals and activities. Moreover, a detailed project list streamlines communication, reduces misunderstandings, and facilitates swift decision-making. In essence, it acts as a cornerstone for efficient coordination, ensuring that each partner can contribute effectively and that the consortium operates cohesively towards achieving its collective objectives.

To resolve this matter, a specialized working group was assembled. This working group consisted of a representative from Task 8.1, members from the ERO team, the Secretary General, and project management. Throughout a series of meetings, extensive deliberation took place regarding the requisite information to be included in a project list to ensure optimal efficiency and the most effective management approaches. During these deliberations, it became evident that the actual implementation of such a list could only be feasible in the forthcoming EUt+ Second Phase - EUt+ Accelerate, which had been submitted for approval at that time but had not yet received approval.

In conclusion of the meeting, a comprehensive project list was formulated, encompassing the following sections to be completed for each project:

+ Project Name;
+ Acronym;
+ Status;
+ Call Name;
+ Call Code;

- Call Link;

- Financing Entity (EU, National, Other);

- Program;

- Estimated Date of Response;

- Project Commencement Date;

- Grant Agreement Number

- Execution Period;

- Project Duration;

- Consortium Coordinator;

- Coordinator's Contact Information (Email);

- EUt+ Involved Entities;

- Contacts from Each Involved Entity;

- EU Funding;

- Consolidated Budget;

- Key Words (Knowledge Areas);

- Documents (Part A & B).

This structured framework for project documentation aims to enhance transparency, streamline information sharing, and facilitate efficient project management within our consortium.

During the Task 8.1 meetings held during the Riga week, the working group, consisting of task participants, engaged in discussions pertaining to the most effective strategies for ensuring the successful implementation of the project list. Various approaches and tactics were considered, considering both past failures and successes. The primary objective was to motivate joint project submitters, gather pertinent information, and provide the essential guidance required for achieving successful project outcomes.

The meetings produced a refined strategy for the project list's implementation, drawing from the collective wisdom and experience of task participants. This strategy includes increased support for joint project submitters, improved information gathering, and a robust advisory framework. It positions us well to manage the project list effectively, enhancing transparency, collaboration, and our consortium's goal achievement.

In summary, recognizing the need for a comprehensive and accessible project list, we formed a dedicated working group, including Task 8.1, the ERO team, the Secretary General, and project management. We've decided to fully implement an enhanced project list in the upcoming EUt+ Second Phase - EUt+ Accelerate to improve transparency, streamline information sharing, and strengthen project management within our consortium. This refined approach positions us to effectively manage the list, enhancing collaboration and our consortium's goals. The implementation of the project list will occur in the now approved EUt+ Second Phase – EUt+ Accelerate.

EUt+ Second Phase - EUt+ Accelerate

November 1 will mark the beginning of EUt+ Accelerate – a new phase of EUt+ operations that will take the alliance to a new level. We see EUt+ Accelerate serving

a dual function. It is, first and foremost, the foundation of the EUt+ Alliance, the bearing structure providing the necessary space and resources for the development and implementation of supporting projects, and it is also a supporting project itself – the largest supporting project the EUt+ Alliance has managed to obtain funding for so far, and it will continue to support the activities, foster the ideas and bring about the changes that were ignited by EUt+ Phase 1.

EUt+ Accelerate embodies the core values and ideas at the foundation of EUt+ - the need for Europe to reduce dependency on other global powers; the role of technology in achieving reindustrialization; the importance of the relevant human resources, engineers and scientists, in ensuring the innovation in strategic industries; the need for a holistic view of current global challenges, which requires a new model of a university and a new model of technological innovation. In the first three years of operation, EUt+ has made strides to be the frontrunner in this process and even though a lot of work has been done, it is only the very beginning. Our slogan "Think Human First" still remains at the core of the alliance; however, it has developed and changed to better reflect the ideas and values we stand for. We strongly believe that technology is far more than a set of techniques or applied sciences: it is our essential human ability to express, think and understand the world through artefacts.

The structure of EUt+ has experienced numerous important changes as well. The consortium has expanded by adding one more partner, upscaling its area of operation, cultures represented, and languages taught. This is an important structural change and will contribute to the audiences we can reach and the results we can deliver, contributing to the development of the European Higher Education Area. Aside from the changes in the formation of the consortium itself, many adjustments have taken place internally to ensure the managing structures fit the needs of the diverse activities happening within the different Work Packages and

Tasks. We have created a Secretariat General (SG) of EUt+, composed of people working full time for EUt+, in a transversal approach. It meets about twice to three times per week, supervises the execution of the work plan and provides the necessary administrative and training support to the project participants to secure its progress. The SG provides capacity building functions and provides the necessary strategic information to the project Boards and Committees to take corrective actions when deviations and risks appear. We have set up supporting offices for enabling coordination on a technical or administrative level, for example, EUt+ Research office, EUt+ Innovation and Technology Transfer Office, Erasmus+ Common Office and International Teams Coordination Office. We have created 12 clusters by harmonizing and merging existing curricula from at least three member institutions. The Clusters provide a tool to accelerate convergence to achieve, as soon as possible, a joint European Degree with a single academic regulation, where students can move freely across several EUt+ campuses, feeling at home at each and every one of them. We aim to have at least 20 different clusters at the end of Phase 2. We have also created an Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness (EDI) Team with representatives of all EUt+ partners to facilitate access and widening participation (AWP). These are just a few of the internal changes that have taken place, emerging from the operational needs of the consortium. We plan to install new structures during Phase 2 as well, for example, a Quality Assurance Board will make sure that the work is not simply done, but it is done well according to the best standards developed throughout the first three years of operation.

EUt+ has also established cooperation with some outstanding industry partners and research centers: Electrogroup S.A., Telefónica, Emerson SRL, the European Space Agency, GSI & FAIR, AED-Vantage and others. Industry partners are among our key stakeholders; therefore, this is an area we will expand upon in Phase 2 as well.

One of the most important innovations of EUt+ Accelerate will be the implementation of a Technology Studies, Engineering and Design School (TEDS) underpinned by innovative pedagogy (leveraging challenge-based, problem-based and interdisciplinary approaches, digital technologies, blended learning and work-based learning inspired by the STEAM approach) in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. We envision this as one of the most important changes brought about by Phase 2 of EUt+ and it was emphasized several times by expert evaluators as a good example of the type of innovation expected from universities belonging to the European Universities initiative.

Within the EUt+ Accelerate we will not just increase the number of Work Packages and consortium partners, we will also increase our scale of operation, making sure we can provide the best possible services and resources for our students and staff members alike. The first three years of operation have shown us that even though challenging and complex, it is not impossible for 8 universities to come together, if there is a shared vision and a strong common goal to go towards to. Hence, we believe that the dual nature of EUt+ Accelerate, serving both as an improved bearing structure and the most important supporting project yet, is the best way to view the new phase of EUt+. It is a reminder that we cannot stop striving for further success, making sure we Accelerate EUt+ and stay true to the word describing the future of our European University.

Conclusion

In closing, our journey within the EUt+ consortium has been marked by notable achievements and valuable insights into collaborative efforts. As we discuss our path forward and next steps, let's reflect on our accomplishments and chart a course for the future.

Our exploration of EUt+ joint projects underscores our unwavering dedication to sustainability and integration. Notably, project KA220-HED-88A25614's focus on integrating epistemology into technical education stands as a testament to our commitment to holistic knowledge.

The rejected projects we encountered have not deterred us but have served as catalysts for improvement. These experiences underscore our commitment to innovation and our drive to enhance project writing and evaluation processes.

Looking ahead, EUt+ Accelerate, commencing on November 1, 2023, represents a transformative phase. It embodies our core values, emphasizing reduced dependency on global powers, reindustrialization through technology, and addressing global challenges. With an expanded consortium and refined internal structures, including the innovative Technology Studies, Engineering, and Design School (TEDS), we are poised to reshape European education and research.

Our next steps involve harnessing the lessons learned from both our successes and rejections. We must continue to refine our project proposals, with a keen focus on detail and measurable progress indicators. Strengthening our planning and coordination will be essential to our continued success.

In the spirit of EUt+'s motto, "Think Human First," we remain committed to empowering human potential through education and research. EUt+ Accelerate is the next exciting chapter in our journey, and we are poised to accelerate progress, advancing European higher education and research to new heights.
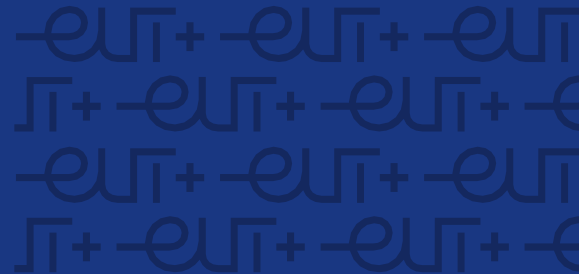
As we move forward, let us embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, united by our shared vision and determination to make a lasting impact on the European educational landscape. Together, we will continue to shape a brighter future for our consortium and for European education and research.