

# Fostering a Culture of Entrepreneurship within the EUTOPIA Alliance

White Paper from the [Connected Community on Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#)

## eUTOPIA



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## EUTOPIA's Context

EUTOPIA is evolving towards a confederated model, functioning as an overarching entity that informs and advises partner institutions without binding authority. The recommendations in this whitepaper aim to assist EUTOPIA in enhancing collaboration around entrepreneurship within this flexible and non-binding framework.

This White Paper provides recommendations on entrepreneurship for the EUTOPIA alliance, incorporating input from the Connected Community on Entrepreneurship and Innovation consisting of four partner universities (UPF, VUB, NOVA, UNIVE) that have shared their expertise to guide how EUTOPIA can strengthen collaboration in this area. The paper serves as a strategic advisory document for EUTOPIA, which can integrate these recommendations into its current structure and then advise all alliance members. In this way, the alliance members can improve future collaboration around entrepreneurship.

### Disclaimer

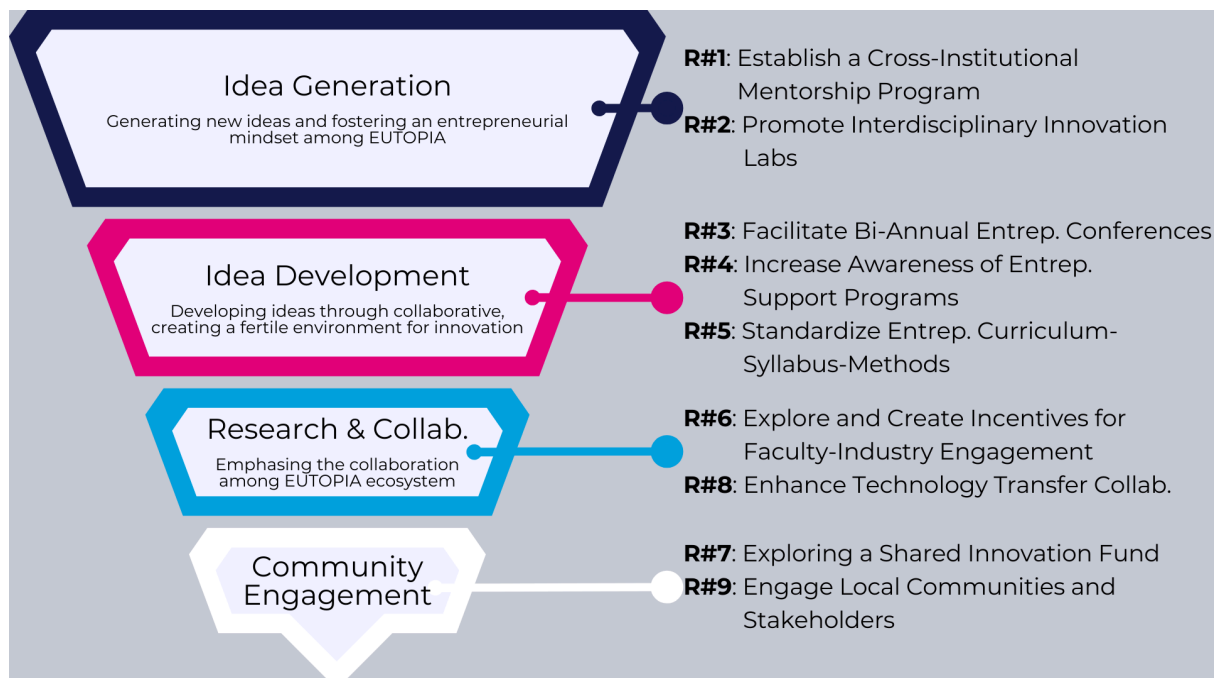
The views and thoughts presented in this white paper reflect the perspectives of the authors in their capacities as professors, researchers, managers, and staff from their respective institutions. This paper does not imply any executive responsibility or binding authority within the universities of the EUTOPIA Alliance, and the implementation of these recommendations is, of course, subject to institutional approval and collaboration.

## Executive summary

The EUTOPIA Alliance, a confederation of ten European universities, is committed to fostering a culture of entrepreneurship that can drive innovation and economic growth by and through its member institutions. This white paper presents strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing collaboration and developing cohesive frameworks to support entrepreneurial initiatives in the EUTOPIA ecosystem.

Recognizing the vital role that higher education institutions play in nurturing innovators, the paper highlights both current achievements and existing barriers within the alliance's entrepreneurial landscape. Key challenges include varying levels of institutional support for entrepreneurship, limited interactions between academia and industry, and fragmented access to funding resources.

To address these challenges, the paper proposes nine actionable recommendations, as shown in the following figure, including establishing cross-institutional mentorship programs, promoting interdisciplinary innovation labs, standardizing entrepreneurial curricula, and creating a shared innovation fund. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of engaging faculty, industry partners, and investors to build a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.



The white paper concludes with a call to action, outlining essential next steps that include disseminating the recommendations among all ten universities, fostering participation in the Connected Community on Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and engaging university leadership to mobilise resources for implementation. By

collaborating and leveraging shared strengths, the EUTOPIA Alliance can cultivate an entrepreneurial culture that not only enhances academic excellence but also significantly contributes to societal advancement and economic resilience in Europe.

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## 2. Introduction

Entrepreneurship and innovation entered the international debate on higher education in the past 20 years. Their relevance in policy-making oriented at the development and strengthening of tertiary education and academic research went well beyond their assessment as legitimate and relevant subjects of study.

Entrepreneurship, for instance, went from being practically neglected as a subject until the last decade of the past century to becoming a pivotal subject both in business schools' and engineering schools' programmes as well as being a topic in a variety of "unusual" majors and degree, such as in humanities ([Mescon, Van Rest, 2021](#)).

Innovation, on the other hand, has a long established history as a subject in a variety of programmes, but similarly to entrepreneurship it entered in various forms the curricula of a variety of students in many different fields and specialisation.

One might say that, teaching-wise, entrepreneurship and innovation spilled over from the fields of economics, management and engineering and became a relevant topic across the board in higher education to equip human capital and young talents with skills, competencies and attitudes that enable them to act as agents of change in whatever career they will pursue and whatever endeavour—economic, social, cultural—they will embark on as citizens.

Entrepreneurship and innovation, though, became central in higher education institutions and created a strategic tension: the need to close the gap between basic research and its application has been a central theme in the evolution of universities. This tension generated a general movement of higher education institutions towards technology transfer and knowledge valorisation, a set of practices and organisational arrangements that went by different names in the past 30 years (e.g. technology transfer, triple or quadruple helix, entrepreneurial university). Based on a sound and consolidated tradition in research (e.g. [Acs et al., 2009](#); [Audretsch, 2014](#)), the consensus on making universities providers of "useful" knowledge grew to the point that national and international exercises in the evaluation of academic institutions inserted the "third mission" as a distinctive element. Universities accepted the challenge and took on the responsibility, as the manifold manifestations of entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer in the Eutopia alliance show.

The present white paper takes stock of the experiences and knowledge accumulated in years of academic research on innovation, entrepreneurship and higher education and on at least two decades of practical engagement, entrepreneurship and innovation by the universities represented in the connected community to propose an agenda for the alliance. In particular, the white paper pictures the potential benefits coming from the consolidation of initiatives on innovation and entrepreneurship in the universities composing the alliance, from the exchange of good practices, and from the federation of expertises and distinctive skills and contingencies.

In particular, the white paper rests on the following assumptions:

1. All the universities in the EUTOPIA alliance have been active in engaging with their (regional) ecosystems to transfer valuable knowledge, co-create innovative

knowledge, and valorise it in a variety of forms. Belonging to the Alliance, each university might share its own good practices and lessons learned from others' thus creating a European space within which capacity is built and disseminated;

2. Each university faces specific challenges and contingencies in terms of the sectors it dialogues with; the fact that universities are embedded in different economic fabrics in different European regions favours the emergence of distinctive capabilities and specialisations that might benefit all other universities in the network. In particular, we see the Alliance as a confederation of local hubs of innovation and entrepreneurship that serve their local constituencies and that act as anchors or conduits for the distinctive knowledge and abilities developed elsewhere. In the long run, the Alliance might become a European space where knowledge on entrepreneurship and innovation created in a region by a university, flows in the network and is efficiently anchored to other territories by allied universities, that in turn share their distinctive knowledge and competences. We see such a scenario as a way to create an effective and vibrant European ecosystem of entrepreneurship and innovation.

### 3. Current Landscape: overview and analysis of existing support environment for entrepreneurship

This section delves into the current landscape of entrepreneurship within the EUTOPIA Alliance, highlighting the entrepreneurial activities and support structures in place at each member institution.

The **Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)** has demonstrated a continuous commitment to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. This commitment is evidenced by its numerous spin-offs, successful participation in European research projects, and targeted initiatives such as the **INNOvalora program**, which supports researchers with prototyping, market research, and IP strategy to bridge the gap between university research and private sector involvement. The university also operates a co-creation workshop called **HackLab**, providing students with access to co-working spaces, technical equipment, and other materials to aid collaboration. The **Flama Startup acceleration program** supports bachelor's students in creating interdisciplinary final projects that connect with the business world.

**UPF** is strategically organized around a comprehensive set of applied research activities primarily concentrated in three key areas: [health and life sciences](#), [information and communication technologies](#), and [social sciences and humanities](#). This diverse portfolio of research and development assets serves as vital fuel for accelerating entrepreneurial initiatives and fostering innovation.

**Ca' Foscari University of Venice (UNIVE)** is dedicated to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship through its dedicated unit, **Plnk - Promoting Innovation and Knowledge**. Plnk bridges the gap between university research and the production system by fostering mutual innovation and development, and supporting the exploitation of research results. The university offers a range of services to support companies, including technology transfer, consultancy, and networking, as well as specific initiatives such as access to university scientific instruments, patenting and licensing support, spin-off development assistance, and matchmaking events to facilitate collaboration between researchers and businesses. Research at Ca' Foscari focuses on a variety of topics: from digital transformation of organizations to circular economy, from new materials and nanotechnologies to the interaction of cultures in a globalised world, from the sustainable transitions of regional and national economies to the development of tourism and cultural industries. In general, there are six main thematic interdisciplinary attractors around which research is organised: complexity sciences, digital and cultural heritage, social innovation, international studies, green and blue growth, innovation management.



The **Vrije Universiteit Brussel** (VUB) has established itself as a leading innovator with a strong track record in technology transfer. This is reflected in its high ranking in international innovation indices, its diverse range of research groups, and its focus on creating spin-offs and leveraging partnerships with industry. VUB's **TechTransfer** acts as the central point for innovation and technology transfer activities, offering a range of services including legal advice, EU support, fundraising, and industry-university networking. VUB's research efforts are further supported by the **Groups of Excellence in Applied Research** (GEARS), which are research groups focused on specific themes, supported by the Industrial Research Fund (IOF), which incentivizes research with high valorization potential. The Green Energy Park and ICAB provide space and support for early-stage enterprises focused on high-tech products or services. The university also boasts numerous initiatives that support the entrepreneurial ecosystem such as **Fablab Brussels**, **StartLab.Brussels** - the university's pre-incubator program - and **FARI's Accelerator Program for AI Start-ups**. These initiatives are backed by VUB faculty in the domain of E&I, in particular by members of the **Brussels Entrepreneurship and Innovation Lab** (BREL), which conducts high-level research and bachelor and master education in the domain.

The **Universidade Nova de Lisboa** (NOVA) is actively promoting innovation and entrepreneurship through its focus on research commercialization, support for student ventures, and collaborations with industry partners. The **Technology Transfer Office** (NOVA-TTO) identifies, protects, and transfers knowledge created in the university to businesses, supporting early-career researchers, doctoral students, and other members of the university. The university also operates the **NOVA Incubator**, which provides a space for spin-offs and start-ups with support services such as mentorship and funding, and the NOVA Entrepreneurship Centre, which offers programs and support for student entrepreneurship, fostering a culture of innovation within the university. The **NOVA Open Labs**, a series of themed innovation platforms that provide access to networks, equipment, and expertise, support companies in applying for research tax credit and other initiatives.

This analysis lays the groundwork for understanding the current state of entrepreneurship within the EUTOPIA Alliance. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each institution's existing structures, the white paper can then move towards formulating specific recommendations for enhancing technology transfer, promoting entrepreneurial activities, and creating a more collaborative and dynamic environment for entrepreneurship.

## 4. Barriers and Challenges

Although the EUTOPIA institutions act in their own environment, we identified a number of barriers and challenges that hamper the development of an entrepreneurial culture across the universities. We have grouped them at a number of levels: (1) individual; (2) institutional and (3) ecosystem.

1. Individual
  - a. Role identity of researchers: Taste for Science vs Taste for Commercialization preferences with individuals and their leadership.
  - b. Evaluation, promotion and career mechanics in academia
  - c. Resource and knowledge/capabilities constraints
  - d. Time constraints
  - e. Fear of failure
2. Institutional
  - a. Subscale and non-standardized operations of Technology Transfer in broad institutions
  - b. Developing and harnessing an entrepreneurial culture
  - c. Create room and institutional support for entrepreneurship in rules and regulations.
  - d. Manage expectations on the role of a university in the ecosystem
  - e. Resource and knowledge/capability constraints.
3. Ecosystem
  - a. Organizing University-Industry Interactions in a structured and sustainable way
  - b. Balance needs of the industry and investors with education and research mission of the university.
4. International
  - a. Complex national/regional regulations for commercialization of university research
  - b. Splintered and regional-focused funding landscape for early-stage endeavours (sub-scale)
  - c. IP-system

Over the past year, our efforts as Connected Community on Entrepreneurship & Innovation focused on investigating potential activities that could have been undertaken. Although the challenges listed above are broadly applicable and experienced by all partner institutions, we encountered significant obstacles that hindered from establishing a unified framework for fostering a shared approach on entrepreneurship.

The obstacles revolved around the identification of a shared element that would not pose the risk of redundancy with other initiatives, as well as the difficulties of implementation stemming from organisational constraints within the respective universities.

Also considering the diverse areas of expertise present among individuals and departments/offices within each university, our working group came to a consensus to promote initiatives that ought not to be pursued in isolation by individual partners, but rather should be cultivated through collaborative efforts within the EUTOPIA network. We believe

that a better coordination between EUTOPIA partners can help to address some of the most important barriers and challenges listed. Most notably, we will focus on the following interventions:

1. Identify Tech Transfer Knowledge Experts across EUTOPIA and build network
2. Build a EUTOPIA Accelerator Program for late-stage spin-off projects
3. Organise a bi-annual conference for entrepreneurial researchers of EUTOPIA to instil a sense of community.
4. Gather data and document spin-off stories across the alliance to facilitate policy making on the topic.

## 5 Opportunities for the Connected Community Collaboration

The initial actions outlined in this section highlight promising opportunities for collaboration within the Connected Community. Over the next two years, these initiatives will be developed and refined, laying a strong foundation for fostering entrepreneurship and innovation across the EUTOPIA Alliance.

### 5.1 Entrepreneurship in Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

While entrepreneurship is often associated with technology and business fields, the humanities, including arts, hold immense potential for innovation, particularly in areas such as cultural industries, education, media, publishing, and social enterprises.

To promote entrepreneurship in the social sciences within EUTOPIA, the Alliance could consider several strategies that are both practical and effective, aimed at implementation in the coming years. Here are some proposals:

- 1. Interdisciplinary Incubation Programs**

Create incubation programs specifically focused on the social sciences, where students and researchers from these disciplines are paired with teams from other fields. This allows ideas and solutions from a social perspective to be more effectively transformed into entrepreneurial projects.

- 2. Develop Entrepreneurship Education in the Social Sciences**

Introduce a curriculum specifically targeting social sciences and entrepreneurship, with modules explaining how social and cultural innovations can lead to societal impact and commercial applications. This could be developed in collaboration with experts from Tech Transfer offices to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

- 3. Community of Practice for Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship**

Establish a platform within the Eutopia alliance where social science researchers and students can share experiences on entrepreneurship, discuss their ideas, and access mentors and investors. This could be a virtual community with regularly organised events, workshops, and networking opportunities.

- 4. Promote Cross-Sectoral Partner Projects**

Encourage collaborations between academic social science departments and the private sector, NGOs, and governments. Work with Tech Transfer offices to explore how entrepreneurship models from the hard sciences can be adapted for the social sciences, with tangible outputs such as social innovations or policy proposals with entrepreneurial potential.

- 5. Network with Civil Society Organizations and Policymakers**

Ensure that social science departments within the alliance build strong networks with civil society organisations and policymakers. This can help link entrepreneurship initiatives in the social sciences to real societal needs, enhancing their relevance and success.

## 5.2 Tech Transfer: entrepreneurship alignment and standardisation

In an increasingly globalised and competitive research environment, cross-border collaboration is essential. This is also one of the key objectives of the EUTOPIA Connected Community for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. However, international partnerships, particularly in Tech Transfer, require careful alignment of expectations and roles to succeed.

A recurring issue in such collaborations is that identical job titles or definitions, such as "business developer" or "project manager," are interpreted differently depending on the organisation or country. This leads to misunderstandings and inefficiencies, as expected tasks or outcomes may not align with reality.

To avoid these obstacles, it is crucial to move beyond job titles and begin by mapping out the processes and tasks within each Tech Transfer Office (TTO). Only with a shared understanding of responsibilities can we create standardised definitions, ensuring smoother collaboration between international partners. This proposal aims to launch a study focused on identifying key processes and tasks within Tech Transfer, forming the foundation for a harmonised set of definitions to better facilitate successful international collaborations. Doing this exercise will also allow to map specific expertise present in each EUTOPIA TTO, further ensuring better collaboration.

In order to move forward with this proposal/project within Eutopia we would need the engagement from all Tech Transfer Directors and entrepreneurship managers in the Eutopia alliance.

## 5.3 Entrepreneurial Finance and the investor ecosystem

The successful growth of entrepreneurship within the EUTOPIA Alliance hinges significantly on the financial resources available to support entrepreneurs and the mechanisms through which ideas are transformed into viable business ventures. To develop a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, it is crucial to enhance access to funding and refine the strategies that facilitate engagement with potential investors.

Many entrepreneurial initiatives within universities face financial constraints that limit their scalability. Early-stage ventures often struggle to secure the necessary capital for prototyping, market testing, and commercialization. Additionally, the fragmented funding landscape across Europe can hinder effective resource allocation, making it challenging for entrepreneurs to identify and access appropriate funding opportunities. Furthermore, a lack of structured engagement with investors can result in missed opportunities for collaboration and support. Eutopia can act as a convening body to coordinate access to funding sources, facilitate introductions with investors, and support best practices sharing among alliance members.

Opportunities for Enhanced Financing:

## Create a Unified Funding Platform:

1. Develop a centralized platform that aggregates funding opportunities, including grants, venture capital, and angel investors for EUTOPIA members. This platform should not only list resources but also provide matchmaking tools to align funding with project needs and facilitate joint applications for multi-institutional grants. Additionally, establish a network targeting seed funding for early-stage projects by partnering with public and private funding agencies to launch competitions and funding calls. By connecting entrepreneurs to cross-border funding and investor networks, this initiative will simplify access to capital and foster a collaborative, Europe-wide entrepreneurial ecosystem within the EUTOPIA Alliance.

## Leverage Partnerships with Investors:

2. Foster strategic partnerships with venture capital firms, angel investor networks, and corporate investors who are interested in supporting innovative projects emanating from academic research. Hosting pitch events and networking sessions at a European level can facilitate these connections, helping startups gain visibility and access to potential funding. Additionally, by showcasing a portfolio of entrepreneurial projects from diverse regions within the alliance, Eutopia could attract international investors interested in cross-border opportunities, fostering a European-scale ecosystem of academic entrepreneurship.

## Develop Collaborative Funding Models:

3. Encourage EUTOPIA members to explore joint investment funds or co-funding initiatives to support high-potential ventures across the alliance. By pooling resources and sharing risks, these collaborative models could provide stronger, more resilient funding for early-stage projects. This approach enhances EUTOPIA's capacity to act as an incubator or attract cross-border investors, and reinforces its role as a hub for academic-driven innovation.

## Engage Alumni and Industry Stakeholders:

4. Mobilise EUTOPIA alumni and industry partners to invest in promising ventures emerging from the alliance. Creating specialised alumni networks that focus on entrepreneurship can foster a culture of giving back, where successful graduates can provide both financial support and mentorship.

## Enhance Financial Education and Support:

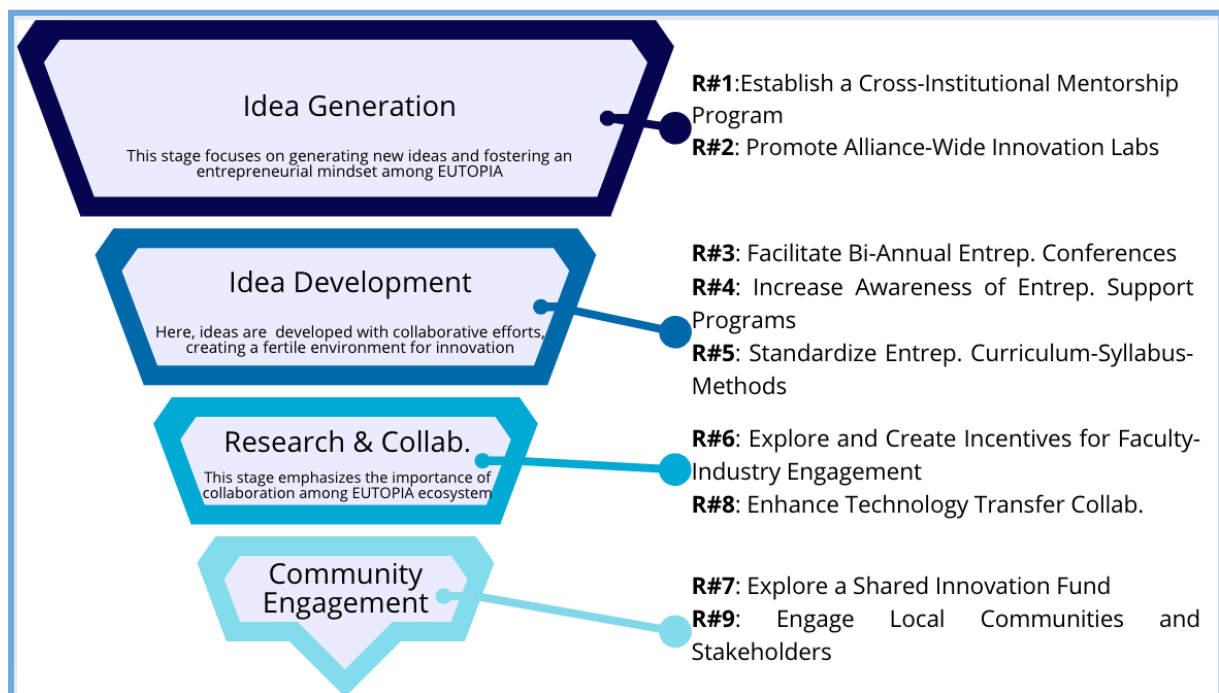
5. Provide training and resources for entrepreneurs on navigating the funding landscape, including grant writing workshops, investment readiness programs, and access to financial advisory services. Educating potential founders on best practices in securing funding will empower them to better present their ventures to investors.

By addressing financial challenges and leveraging the collective resources of the EUTOPIA Alliance, we can create a unique startup ecosystem that sustains a diverse range of innovative ventures and positions higher education as a key driver in Europe's innovation landscape. This collaborative financial strategy will not only enhance/upscale the pipeline of entrepreneurial ideas but also attract a broader array of investors, ultimately driving economic growth. Through these targeted initiatives, EUTOPIA aligns with its broader mission to enhance collaboration and create lasting impact across the alliance, reinforcing the essential role of higher education institutions in fostering innovation.

## 6. Recommendations for the EUTOPIA alliance

We present nine actionable recommendations designed to cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship across the entire EUTOPIA Alliance, extending beyond just the Connected Community. Initially, we highlight recommendations that are particularly feasible in the short term, within the EUTOPIA More timeframe, followed by those that require more time to take root and develop effectively.

The figure below illustrates the structure of the recommendations, progressing from foundational idea generation to enhanced community engagement. Each level includes two to three specific recommendations, which are elaborated below in this section.



**Short-term** recommendations:

### **R#1: Establish a Cross-Institutional Mentorship Program**

Create a network of mentors comprising successful entrepreneurs, industry experts, and alumni who can provide guidance and support to students and researchers across the alliance, preferably with an initial focus on social sciences, humanities and arts. This program should facilitate knowledge transfer and encourage entrepreneurial thinking all across the alliance.

**Expected Impact in R#1:** To foster a vibrant network that connects startups across diverse cultural and expertise fields, enhancing collaboration and innovation. This



initiative will build capacities within the alliance, empowering students and researchers with the guidance and insights necessary to transform their entrepreneurial ideas into successful ventures.

### **R#2: Promote Interdisciplinary Innovation Labs**

Establish "alliance-wide" innovation labs that serve as collaborative spaces for students and researchers from all EUTOPIA member institutions. These labs will be launched during designated periods throughout the academic year, creating inter-university initiatives that federate the unique capacities and competencies of each institution. By addressing specific challenges or problems identified at the alliance level, diverse teams can leverage their distinct strengths and perspectives to develop innovative solutions. Additionally, the innovation labs will facilitate local activities and moments of exchange, such as online workshops or intensive mobility weeks, allowing participants to share knowledge and collaborate effectively. This initiative aims to foster a thriving culture of entrepreneurship that not only enhances interdisciplinary cooperation within the alliance but also empowers participants to tackle complex issues through a multifaceted approach, particularly in underrepresented fields such as the social sciences. The result will be a dynamic environment where innovative ideas can flourish, and equitable access to resources and expertise is promoted across the alliance.

**Expected Impact in R#2:** The establishment of alliance-wide innovation labs is expected to foster a greater number of startups and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset within the social sciences, enhancing engagement with external partners. This initiative will lead to increased patents and intellectual property assets while aligning with the [ENTRECOMP Europe](#) framework to develop essential entrepreneurial competencies among participants.

### **R#3: Facilitate Bi-Annual Entrepreneurship Conferences**

Organise bi-annual entrepreneurship conferences within the EUTOPIA Alliance to create a dynamic platform for researchers, students, industry leaders, and policymakers. These conferences will serve as a forum to share best practices, highlight innovative initiatives, and showcase successful entrepreneurial ventures across the alliance. By fostering networking opportunities and collaborative dialogue, participants will be able to explore synergies, identify potential partnerships, and gain insights into emerging trends and challenges in the entrepreneurial landscape.

The conferences could also include workshops, panel discussions, and pitch sessions to ensure active engagement among attendees. By integrating this initiative into existing Erasmus+ programs, the event can leverage funding and resources designed to support transnational collaboration in higher education. Ultimately, these conferences will enhance the visibility of the EUTOPIA Alliance as a leader in



entrepreneurship education and provide a significant impetus for developing a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem within the member institutions.

**Expected Impact in R#3:** The bi-annual entrepreneurship conferences are expected to significantly enhance collaboration within and beyond the EUTOPIA Alliance, leading to increased partnerships between academia and industry. By sharing best practices and fostering networking opportunities, these events will cultivate a stronger entrepreneurial culture, resulting in a higher number of innovative projects, enhanced visibility for participant initiatives, and a greater alignment with market needs and societal challenges.

#### **R#4: Increase Awareness of Entrepreneurship Support Programs**

Develop and implement comprehensive awareness campaigns aimed at highlighting the entrepreneurship resources and support services available at each EUTOPIA member institution. These campaigns should utilise various communication channels, including social media, newsletters, and university websites, to ensure that the information reaches a broad audience consisting of students, researchers, and faculty. The campaigns will encompass details about workshops, incubation programs, funding opportunities, mentorship initiatives, and access to innovation labs, all designed to nurture entrepreneurial talent.

By actively promoting the existing support mechanisms, the alliance can create a more informed and engaged community around entrepreneurship. Additionally, targeted outreach efforts—such as informational sessions, webinars, and success story showcases—will reinforce the message of available opportunities and encourage participation.

**Expected Impact in R#4:** To position EUTOPIA as a leading point of reference for potential entrepreneurs, significantly increasing entrepreneurial activity across the alliance. As more individuals engage with support programs, we anticipate heightened involvement from institutional leadership in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. This initiative will ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs receive the necessary guidance and resources to succeed, ultimately enhancing the innovation landscape within the EUTOPIA Alliance.

#### **Long-term recommendations:**

#### **R#5: Standardise Entrepreneurial Curriculum/Syllabus/Methodology**

Collaborate to develop a standardised entrepreneurial curriculum that can be adopted across all EUTOPIA member institutions. This curriculum should encompass a comprehensive range of modules focused on entrepreneurship fundamentals, technology transfer mechanisms, and practical skills for startup

creation. Incorporating microcredentials into this framework will allow students to gain recognized qualifications that demonstrate their competencies. By aligning the curriculum with industry needs and best practices, we can ensure that students are equipped with the essential knowledge and skills to thrive in entrepreneurial environments.

**Expected Impact in R#5:** To significantly enhance the competencies of both students and staff in entrepreneurial activities, fostering a more innovation-oriented academic culture. As a result, graduates will be better prepared to engage in entrepreneurship, leading to overall increased entrepreneurial engagement within the alliance.

### **R#6: Explore and create Incentives for Faculty-Industry Engagement**

Establish an incentive framework that rewards faculty members for actively engaging in industry collaborations, technology transfer activities, and entrepreneurship initiatives. This could involve creating recognition programs, providing funding opportunities, and considering such engagement in promotion decisions. By making industry collaboration a valued aspect of academic careers, EUTOPIA will send a strong signal to researchers and professors about the importance of these connections. Such incentives would not only motivate faculty to engage with the industry but also increase the visibility of EUTOPIA as a collaborative and innovation-driven academic network.

**Expected Impact in R#6:** Implementing this framework will lead to more balanced professional careers for faculty, promoting their development and motivation for entrepreneurship. Enhanced engagement between academia and industry is likely to enrich the entrepreneurial landscape across the alliance.

### **R#7: Exploring a Shared Innovation Fund**

Initiate a shared funding mechanism within the EUTOPIA network to support high-potential entrepreneurial projects and spin-offs. This shared innovation fund would provide seed funding for innovative ideas with strong commercialization potential, allowing for interconnectedness between various ecosystems and external funding sources. By establishing a clear avenue for financial support, EUTOPIA can effectively nurture the early stages of entrepreneurial ventures, ultimately stimulating growth and innovation.

**Expected Impact in R#7:** The establishment of a shared innovation fund is expected to attract more resources and investors to the EUTOPIA network, enhancing its visibility and influence at the EU level. This funding will serve as a crucial catalyst for startup and entrepreneurship activities across member institutions.

### **R#8: Enhance Technology Transfer Collaboration**

Create a repository ,enabled by the central EUTOPIA website, of best practices, tools, and resources focused not only on technology transfer but also on broader entrepreneurial support initiatives. Encouraging member institutions to share their successes and challenges will facilitate streamlined processes across the alliance and improve valorization efforts. By aligning these efforts with previously mentioned opportunities, the collaboration will enhance overall effectiveness in supporting entrepreneurial endeavours.

**Expected Impact in R#8:** This initiative is expected to bolster the capacity of individual institutions to effectively support entrepreneurship among students and staff. Increased awareness of available resources and successful practices will empower academics and staff to make meaningful contributions in the entrepreneurial arena.

### **R#9: Engage Local Communities and Stakeholders**

Foster strategic partnerships with local businesses, civic organizations, and government entities to create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship within each member institution's community. These partnerships can offer valuable insights into real-world challenges, provide necessary resources, and identify potential funding opportunities for entrepreneurial projects. Engaging with local communities will also enhance the impact of prior recommendations, ensuring a collaborative approach toward entrepreneurship.

**Expected Impact in R#9:** By engaging local communities and stakeholders, EUTOPIA institutions will become more entrepreneurial and open at the local level, acting as champions and hubs for entrepreneurial activities. This initiative will strengthen the alliance's connection to societal challenges, enhancing its role as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship.

## 7. Conclusions and Next Steps

The EUTOPIA Alliance stands at a pivotal juncture, ready to embrace a culture of entrepreneurship that can significantly enhance innovation and economic impact within its member institutions. By recognizing the importance of collaborative efforts and shared best practices, the alliance can leverage its collective strengths to create a vibrant ecosystem that nurtures talent and drives transformational change.

The recommendations outlined in this white paper provide a strategic framework for fostering entrepreneurship across the EUTOPIA member universities. By enhancing mentorship programs, standardizing curricula, creating funding opportunities, and strengthening connections to industry, the alliance can build a robust infrastructure that supports aspiring entrepreneurs and researchers.

Now is the time for action. To effectively drive these initiatives forward, we propose the following next steps:

- a) Disseminate the White Paper recommendations: share this white paper with all ten member universities of the EUTOPIA Alliance, ensuring that the insights and recommendations reach key stakeholders across each institution.
- b) Engage Institutional Leadership: invite university presidents, rectors and senior management teams to join the ongoing dialogue about the promotion of entrepreneurship within their institutions. This engagement will be crucial in fostering commitment and mobilizing resources at the highest levels.
- c) Encourage Participation in the Connected Community (CC): create opportunities for faculty, staff, and students from each university to participate in the Connected Community on Entrepreneurship and Innovation. By fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration, the alliance can inspire active contributions to the entrepreneurial initiatives proposed in this document.
- d) Organize Initial Alignment Meetings: schedule introductory meetings and workshops for institutional representatives to align on the recommendations and discuss implementation strategies. These sessions will serve as a platform for sharing experiences, identifying common challenges, and fostering inter-institutional collaboration.
- e) Establish a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: develop a framework to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and evaluate their impact over time. This will involve gathering feedback from participants and tracking key performance indicators to ensure that the alliance is making meaningful progress towards its entrepreneurial goals.
- f) Communicate Progress and Success Stories: use EUTOPIA's communication channels to regularly share updates on the implementation of these initiatives, highlight success stories, and celebrate the achievements of entrepreneurial projects

within the alliance. This will help maintain momentum and encourage further participation from all stakeholders.

By taking these steps, the EUTOPIA Alliance can catalyze a transformative shift toward a culture of entrepreneurship that not only benefits individual universities but also contributes to the broader European knowledge economy. However, at a certain point, we will need to secure additional resources—both financial support and personnel—to effectively manage the expectations and sustain the impact of these initial steps. Together, we can create a sustainable, innovative future that empowers the next generation of entrepreneurs and changemakers.

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