

Technology Meets Ethics

How a new EU project, TechEthos, will take on emerging technologies to develop them according to societal values

For Immediate Release

Date: 03/01/2021

TechEthos is a new EU-funded project, setting out to shine a spotlight on ethics within the sphere of technology innovation, in particular, new, emerging technologies. Emerging technologies are technologies that are only now taking shape, are ones that will be available within the next five to ten years, and are ones which are expected to have a large impact on society. After scanning the horizon for these technologies, TechEthos will investigate the ethical challenges and societal consequences that are likely to come along with them. Such challenges and consequences for society should not be an afterthought in the research and innovation process, as otherwise we run the risk in creating technologies that negatively affect the lives of certain population groups, much like the problems seen in the [late facial recognition technology](#).

On January 28th, 2021, TechEthos kicked off online with the scientific partners and six science engagement organisations from across Europe, and four representatives from the European Commission to meet and discuss the project's three-year trajectory and how it will **reinforce and extend the European Union's role as an ethics trailblazer** in new, emerging technologies. As Lisa Diependaele, Policy Officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and one of TechEthos' policy officers shared with the project:

“Ethics and integrity in research are prerequisite for achieving excellence in research and innovation. For new, emerging technologies with high socio-economic impact especially, the EU aims to reconcile their development and use with reducing social and economic inequalities as well as eliminating gender inequality.”

Technological progress can help transform society for the better, but we must ensure its development is tied to ethical and societal values. TechEthos will be creating strong connections with different stakeholders – researchers, civil society organisations, research ethics committees, policy makers and the public – to **capture and develop deep societal awareness on four emerging technologies spanning six countries**.



TechEthos fully **embraces the challenge of making ethics operational**, by ensuring that ethical and societal values can be translated into actionable guidelines that work for concrete research projects, research organisations, and research ethics committees from both the public and the private sector. In the words of the project coordinator Eva Buchinger from the Austrian Institute of Technology, this means that:

“Integrating ethical & social values at the earliest stages of technological development (ethics-by-design) will be a guiding principle throughout the project. Thus, TECEHTOS ethics guidelines aim to become a support (and not a further administrative burden) for all stakeholders.”

In the end, TechEthos will:

- Shine a spotlight on ethics within technological innovation, and co-create with end-users a future that is desirable and aligns with ethical and societies values.
- Ensure a change in procedure and perspective in the research community by producing actionable operational guidelines to support research and innovation.
- Lead to behavioral change and awareness in the scientific and technological innovation communities, and society more generally, by co-creating and cooperating with them.

The project is just getting started, and a website will be coming soon. In the meantime, TechEthos can be found on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and has a new newsletter launching soon – [subscribe here](#). By joining our online community, you will be first in line to discover the four emerging technologies the project selects as the focus of its work and will become a contributor yourself in shaping their future.

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About TechEthos: TechEthos is funded by the Europeans Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101006249. The project is coordinated by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology and will run for three years, ending in December, 2023.

Project partners include:

- [AIT Austrian Institute of Technology](#) - Austria
- [Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca Industriale](#) - Italy
- [All European Academies](#) - Germany
- [The Commission for Atomic Energy and Alternative Energies](#) - France
- [De Monfort University](#) – United Kingdom
- [Ecsite – The European Network of Science Organisations](#) – Belgium
- [European Network of Research Ethics Committee](#) – Germany
- [Trilateral Research LTD](#) – United Kingdom
- [Delft University of Technology](#) – Netherlands



- [University of Twente](#) – Netherlands

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- [Bucharest Science Festival](#) – Romania
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