Technology Meets Ethics

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

For immediate release

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TechEthos is a new EU-funded project that sets out to shine a spotlight on ethics within the sphere of technology innovation. In particular, it targets **new and emerging technologies** which raise complex ethical issues and are expected to have significant impacts on the economy and society within a five-to-ten-year horizon. Some examples include smart materials, virtual reality, autonomous systems, geo-engineering, and synthetic-technologies.

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 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 and 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.*"
>
> *Lisa Diependaele, European Commission*

Technological progress can help transform society for the better, but we must ensure its development is tied to ethical and societal values. After scanning the horizon and selecting three to four such technologies as its focus, TechEthos will investigate the ethical challenges and societal consequences that are likely to associated 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 of creating technologies that negatively affect the lives of certain population groups, much like the problems seen in the late facial recognition technology.

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 each of its selected technologies.

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 and social values at the earliest stages of technological development (ethics-by-design) will be a guiding principle throughout the project. Thus, TechEthos' ethics guidelines aim to become a support (and not a further administrative burden) for all stakeholders.*"
>
> *Eva Buchinger, AIT Austrian Institute of Technology*

In the end, TechEthos will:

o 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.

o Ensure a change in procedure and perspective in the research community by producing actionable operational guidelines to support research and innovation.

o Lead to behavioural 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 our website www.techethos.eu will be launched soon. In the meantime, TechEthos can be found on Twitter and LinkedIn and via our newsletter. 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.

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:

o AIT Austrian Institute of Technology - Austria

o Italian Association for Industrial Research - Italy

o All European Academies - Germany

o Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission- France

o De Montfort University – United Kingdom

o Ecsite – The European Network of Science Engagement Organisations – Belgium

- o [European Network of Research Ethics Committee Office](#) – Germany

- o [Trilateral Research](#) – United Kingdom

- o [Delft University of Technology](#) – Netherlands

- o [University of Twente](#) – Netherlands

Linked Third Parties:

- o [Trilateral Research](#) - Ireland

- o [Science Centre Network](#) – Austria

- o [iQLANDIA](#) – Czech Republic

- o [Bucharest Science Festival](#) – Romania

- o [The Centre for the Promotion of Science](#) – Serbia

- o [Parque de las Ciencias](#) – Spain

- o [Vetenskap & Allmänhet](#) - Sweden

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