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Call for Applications: ENGAGE. EU Think Tank (12 - 15 January, 2026) Tilburg University Sustainable Collaborations for Sustainability

Sustainable Collaborations for Sustainability: Advancing research into how to tackle complex social and environmental problems in an interconnected world through inter-organizational collaboration, and achieve transformational change?

About the ENGAGE.EU Think Tank

ENGAGE.EU is an alliance of leading European universities in business, economics and social sciences, aiming to provide European citizens with the set of skills and competencies they need to face the current and future societal challenges.

The ENGAGE.EU Think Tanks provides a forum for intensive academic exchange. Researchers will exchange their ideas with colleagues from ENGAGE.EU partners and inform and learn from leading academic, industry and policy experts. Participants can build new research collaborations and launch new projects, papers, or funding applications.

Call for Applications -ENGAGE. EU Think Tank 2026

The Think Tank 2026 will bring together researchers from the ENGAGE.EU partner universities who share an interest in research on inter-organizational collaboration and networks from a broad range of disciplines such as political science, public management, sociology, economics, social psychology, business and management, organization studies, accounting, law and finance.

The Think Tank is focused on the question, how we can tackle complex social and environmental problems in an interconnected world and achieve transformational change through inter-organizational collaborations and networks that address joint problems that none of the organizations could achieve individually. Whether it is about eradicating sickness through a sustained mass vaccination strategy (the GAVI vaccine alliance), making supply chains free of slave labor and improve workers' working conditions, or making agricultural production more regenerative, tackling these social and environmental sustainability issues requires collaboration between a multitude of organizations often from different sectors. As a consequence, the use of inter-organizational collaborations to tackle Wicked Problems or Grand Challenges has greatly increased in the last three decades as also illustrated by the SDG 17 "partnership for the goals". Yet, such collaborations often add another layer of complexity and the majority of them fail which raises the essential question how sustainable and effective collaboration can be achieved.

The literature on sustainability in combination with organizational networks, collaborations, purpose-oriented networks, meta-organizations, value chains, cross-sector or multi-stakeholder partnerships as organizational forms has greatly increased in the last three decades. Yet, the literature is very diverse and distributed over many disciplines and the mutual recognition and

interlinkages can certainly be improved. In the Think Tank we will focus on inter-organizational collaborations as groups of three or more organizations and discuss a broad range of issues from empirical -analytical and prescriptive perspectives from the global to the local level.

The Think Tank is aimed at exploring research opportunities related to the following core themes and questions:

1. Conditions and consequences

- o Why do such collaborations exist and how do they come into being?
- o How do different foundational conditions affect collaboration performance?
- o Under which conditions should they be used and under which rather not?
- o Why and under what circumstances do organizations join and exit them?

2. Governance and roles

- o How are/should they be governed and managed?
- o What are the consequences for the participating organizations for example in terms of accounting, staffing and internal management?
- o How can organizations be "good partners" in such collaborations?
- o What are the contradictions and synergies between partner and network results?

3. Legal contexts and forms

- o How are/can they be designed contingent on their administrative and legal context.
- o How do they manifest themselves in different legal and contractual forms?
- o What are/can be the consequences of different legal forms and designs?

4. Sustaining the collaboration

- o What makes organizational collaborations sustainable? What is the definition of collaboration sustainability?
- o How are/can they be financed and resourced?
- o How can collaboration be economically sustained throughout the different stages of the lifecycle?

5. Accountability: external and internal

- o How are/should they be evaluated?
- o What levels (individual, organizational, network, societal) are relevant for evaluation purposes?
- o How is accountability and supervision in and of organizational collaborations organized?

6. Stakeholder participation

- o How do/can citizens and ultimate beneficiaries have a voice in these collaborations?
- o How is participation in and access to organizational collaborations organized?

Next to the theoretical and conceptual questions, we are especially interested in empirical questions of organizational collaborations in the context of: SDG 3 Good Health and Well Being – partnering for the digital transformation, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production - transitioning to the Circular Economy and SDG 13 Climate action - Climate and the Energy Transition, and SDG 15 on protecting, restoring and promoting Biodiversity and Ecosystems. In addition to conceptual and theoretical discussions, we will also engage with societal partners within ENGAGE.EU in these areas.

Think Tank Academic host(s)

Department of Organization Studies, Network Governance Hub in the Academic Collaborative Center "Governing Broad Prosperity", Tilburg University

Academic Leads:

Prof. Dr. Jörg Raab (Tilburg University)
Prof. Angel Saz Carranza (ESADE/Ramon Llul University)
PD Dr. Stephan Leixnering (WU, Vienna)
Dr. Kaisa Penttilä (Hanken School of Economics)

Opportunities for participating researchers.

The ENGAGE.EU Think Tank 2026 aims to attract researchers (post-doctoral) from various fields, expertise and disciplines who share an interest in research on inter-organizational collaboration. During the two online sessions and the research stay in Tilburg, participants will explore shared interests and build research projects with an international and interdisciplinary team of researchers specialized in similar research topics. In part, the Think Tank will be the start of the process of developing a distinct study area. Participants will gain new insights into current research developments, through keynotes, roundtables, and workshops.

To ensure that the program corresponds to your needs and expectations, details of the program will depend on the final group composition and specific research interests.

The goal of the Think Tank is to establish an active network of scholars within ENGAGE.EU to develop a clear research agenda around Sustainable Collaboration, leading to an active and collaborative community of scholars, dedicated to the development of the field.

The research stay will include an extensive academic program and access to the facilities at Tilburg University. Accommodation will be covered by the sending university. Travel expenses will be covered by the sending university.

Call for Applications -ENGAGE. EU Think Tank 2026

Your Profile

The ENGAGE.EU Think Tank is open to senior and post-doctoral researchers affiliated with the universities of the ENGAGE EU alliance and who:

- explore topics related to inter-organizational collaboration
- aim to share and develop their expertise in their field of research,
- are interested in collaborative and interdisciplinary dialogue,
- want to engage in a scholarly network which is developing the organizational collaboration field.

Our expectations

As part of the ENGAGE.EU research stay, researchers are expected to:

- register on the online [ENGAGE.EU research collaboration platform](#) and participate in two online preparation meetings, one in October 2025 and one in November 2025,
- stay at Tilburg University for the duration of the Think Tank and take active part in all activities,
- exchange ideas and interact with Think Tank participants and other relevant stakeholders about their research and research related projects,
- have the intention to continue with the collaboration after the Think Tank, in the form of workshops, publication projects or funding applications.

Application

The application process for the Think Tank is as follows:

1. Complete the online application form (via: [ENGAGE.EU Think Tank Tilburg University](#))

2. Submit a brief CV, including list of publications to the Think Tank contact point at your university by **Thursday, May 15, 2025 (the final date for applications)**.

In addition, an online information session with the organizers will take place on **Thursday, April 17, at 13.00** (Amsterdam time) for all interested applicants. If you want to participate in the information session, please register by **Friday, April 11, 2025** via: [ENGAGE.EU Think Tank Tilburg University Information Session registration](#)

Selection

Submitted applications will first be evaluated by each of the ENGAGE.EU partners and by the academic leads. A committee with representation from all partners, make the final selection.

Applications are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- demonstrated high—quality research (potential)
- demonstrated interest in collaborative research projects,
- established relevance for research in the theme of the Think Tank,
- clear motivation to contribute to future research/output with ENGAGE.EU colleagues,
- potential for contributing to ENGAGE.EU's mission.

Final decisions also consider criteria for cohort composition, including but not limited to complementarity of research interests, disciplinary balance, institutional diversity and demographic diversity.

Successful candidates will be informed by **Tuesday, July 1, 2025**.



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Privacy Statement ENGAGE.EU Think Tank 2026 applications

The goal of the call for research projects is, to select participants for the ENGAGE.EU Think Tank in 2026.

You are being asked to submit your personal details, resume, and research proposal. By submitting your information you consent to your information being processed as described.

The information you provide will be collected through the application form on the ENGAGE Research Community Platform and is securely stored on Tilburg University approved locations for which Tilburg University has entered into data processing agreements if applicable. Your information will be shared with the members of the ENGAGE.EU selection committee involved in this project. All parties process the personal data in line with the applicable rules and legislation, amongst others the GDPR. Parties will take all necessary and reasonable measures to protect these personal data.

Tilburg University will delete the personal information of unsuccessful applicants no later than four months after the application process is completed.

For successful applicants, the data is being stored and used to organize the program, communicate with participants and fulfill internal reporting requirements. Your resume and research proposal will be deleted four months after completion of the program. Your contact details will be retained for reporting (until November 2027 after completion of the program) and future communications regarding Think Tank related program initiatives for which you can unsubscribe.

If you have any questions about this project or the use of your data, do not hesitate to contact the TiU organizer of the ENGAGE.EU Think Tank: James Small: j.s.small@tilburguniversity.edu

You have a number of rights with regard to your personal data: the right to access, rectification, restriction, erasure, data portability to a third party, object to the processing operations, and lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Officer and/or the Dutch Data Protection Agency.

More information about for what purposes and how Tilburg University processes personal data, and your rights can be found on the following webpage [Tilburg University Privacy Statement](#)

