



IEEP Strategy

2023-2027

BACKGROUND

Over several decades, IEEP has achieved a reputation as a well-established, trustworthy think tank that produces evidence-based reports and recommendations to policymakers covering a wide range of topics on environmental protection and sustainable development.

During this time, IEEP has widened the scope of its activities to many areas of public concern, including agriculture and food, biodiversity, circular economy, land use and climate or global issues such as trade policies and SDGs. In addition, it has secured a stable basis for its activities by strengthening its capacities in operations management and administration, as well as communications.

IEEP prides itself in forging collaborations between its researchers and stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, practitioners, communities) to promote the use of its research findings and evidence in decision-making and policy formulation.

Considering the magnitude of current global challenges, it has become evident that IEEP should widen the scope of its activities by reaching out also to the industry, NGOs and consumer organisations, bringing them together and aligning them around the latest available evidence to have an impact on policymaking.

In order to make sure that this information is used as efficiently as possible, IEEP will shift from a pure think tank to the direction of a think and do tank, whereby its research results and policy recommendations will be communicated in a more proactive way to the EU and beyond.

Our societies are currently being challenged by a multitude of driving forces, such as the war in Ukraine, energy crisis and increases in our costs of living, that divert our attention away from existential threats represented by global warming, biodiversity loss, unsustainable food production and economic activities exceeding the ecological limits of our planet.

As the world is now entering the decisive phase for tackling many of these critical problems, IEEP will concentrate on certain policy areas to maximise its impact in national, European and global policymaking. These topics will be actively promoted in view of the next EU elections and the future work programme of the European Commission.

IEEP'S FOCUS AREAS 2023-2027

Embed new economic thinking based on planetary boundaries

The world is currently facing a multitude of serious environmental and social challenges that are all interlinked with the excessive use of our natural capital without sufficient consideration to the planetary boundaries of our economic activities. Therefore, IEEP will concentrate on the root causes of all these problems by focusing on emerging new topics, such as wellbeing

economy and doughnut economy, and by addressing the internal and external impacts of EU policies by promoting a just transition.

In practice, this will require research and cooperation with key stakeholders on the most suitable economic models and fiscal measures that could be implemented in a wider context, as well as due consideration of the external impacts of EU policies to avoid offsetting our internal progress on the decarbonization of our economy through international spillovers.

Promote a sustainable green transition

The decarbonization of our societies and the critical raw materials required for these new technologies are causing growing concern among policymakers and civil society. This is an issue that has gained momentum as the world aims to replace combustion engines with electric motors, which in turn will have major economic, social and environmental implications to our societies.

Similarly, our energy infrastructure needs to be upgraded so that it can be used also for the distribution and sales of electricity produced by European households. None of these goals can be achieved without substantial improvements in recycling, energy and material efficiency, infrastructure and planning developments and the absolute reduction of material consumption.

Ensure food systems are sustainable and resilient

Due to the increasing pressures caused by global warming, biodiversity loss and soil and water degradation on agricultural production, IEEP will study and promote concrete measures to enhance the resilience and climate adaptation of our food systems, while taking into consideration the sustainability and just transition of the agricultural sector.

In order to achieve these goals, IEEP will provide the necessary information to reduce the food systems' footprint in and outside the EU, search for measures aiming at improved biodiversity, soil health and carbon farming, and promote new policies to ensure sustainable consumption including via innovations, such as alternative proteins, in order to minimize environmental impacts and to produce a smaller carbon footprint.

At the same time, agriculture is both a huge pressure on biodiversity and ecosystems and essential for the maintenance of some of Europe's landscapes and biodiversity. IEEP will work on how the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem health is crucial to sustainable and resilient food systems.

Leverage and ensure the interlinkages of EU climate and nature restoration goals

Ecosystem and nature restoration has huge potential to contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation, and is essential to achieving the EU's climate goals. These objectives will eventually define whether we will succeed in restricting the increase of the global mean temperature to well-below 2 degrees, as defined in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Climate change, global mean temperature increase, and weather variations are exerting additional pressures on biodiversity and the state of ecosystems, affecting our resilience to

increasing climate changes. Climate and biodiversity action are intrinsically interlinked and should be pursued together as they are equally important.

IEEP's work already focuses on the restoration of our farmland, wetlands, peatlands, and nature areas, and to some extent our urban areas, coasts, and oceans. Policy attention is increasingly turning towards forests due to the conflicts between the growing demand for responsibly sourced renewable biomass, pressure to maintain existing carbon sinks, and the need to ensure healthy forests as a critical ecosystem.

Following the decisions taken at the COP15 summit on biodiversity in December 2022, the use and conservation of forests will have increasing importance for our ability to stabilise carbon sinks, protect ourselves from climate extremes and stop the mass extinction of species. As a result, IEEP will open a new chapter on forestry, complementing our current work across climate, energy, biodiversity, land use and trade.

Address the negative external impacts of the EU

The EU's achievement toward the SDGs within its own borders has been substantial, but this is undermined on a global scale as the EU generates significant negative external spillovers embedded notably in its trade policy. IEEP will leverage EU external policies as a mechanism to ensure transboundary sustainable development and to reduce our overall carbon footprint.

In practice, this will require contributing to EU trade policy development and implementation, monitoring EU trade negotiations and the implementation of existing trade agreements, and focusing on EU trade-related processes, such as CBAM, deforestation-free supply chains regulation, human-rights and environmental due diligence, among others. It also means monitoring and promoting financial flows that aim to support third countries achieving the SDGs through channels such as the EU cooperation policy or EU climate finance.

TO SUMMARISE

The thematic areas raised in this strategy can be structured by whether or not they are an objective in itself or a mechanism to reach a certain goal. Our narrative is that:

- IEEP must streamline its work as the sustainability debate and transition spans the whole economy and the social and environmental spectrum.
- The areas where we will prioritize include:
 - Contributing to the development of our food and renewable raw material systems so that they form a sustainable and resilient basis of our material economy.
 - Strengthening and aligning environment and climate objectives through coherent policy and delivery mechanisms, where the choice is not climate or biodiversity, but climate and biodiversity.
 - Ensuring that the external footprint of our social and policy decisions acts as an agent for global good, enhancing sustainability rather than undermining it.
- We will implement these priorities by:

- Pursuing new economic paradigms and mainstreaming their use in policy decision-making, invalidating commonly used narratives which link negative outcomes with environmental and climate policymaking, and leveraging sustainable finance as a mechanism for positive change.
- Promoting the integration of sustainability as a core objective of EU trade policies.

TIMELINE

Considering the predominance of existing economic policies and the challenges of defining new ones that would be based on planetary boundaries and that could be implemented also in practice, this topic will require additional preparatory work if we intend to make a difference among policymakers. The other focus areas (green transition, sustainable food systems, climate and nature restoration goals, and the negative spillovers of EU external trade) are already part of our expertise and will be tackled as soon as we have secured the appropriate funding.

CHANNELS AND AGENTS OF CHANGE

In the next five years, IEEP will continue its close collaboration with the EU institutions, by providing evidence at key meetings and through consultations.

Our network of sustainability think tanks, Think Sustainable Europe, will support IEEP's work by reaching out to national governments and stakeholders, organizing events with IEEP at Member State level and disseminating outcomes in the respective national media.

IEEP will work with Think2030 partners and the wider Think2030 community to write, review and test the conclusions of policy papers to be presented at the Think2030 biannual conferences and regular dialogue events organized under the EU Presidencies. They will also be asked to contribute to the dissemination of these policy recommendations to the Member States, and to share messages from the Member States to the EU institutions.

IEEP recognizes the role of civil society and pressure groups in promoting environmental objectives among policymakers. Based on existing contacts with a wide variety of NGOs, we will use these partnerships for consultation and dissemination, including at Member State level.

BUDGETARY EXPECTATIONS

IEEP aims for diversified income and sustained growth in the focus areas stated in this strategy. In practice, it means securing the necessary funding and personnel to cover these topics properly. In addition, IEEP will continue its work in its areas of strength and where we add value.

To resource this growth in institute budget, the majority of our income should come from sources that allow us a stable and secure basis for our activities, whilst being fleet-of-foot to respond to opportunities where we can make the greatest impact.

The challenge in the coming period is to streamline our income to create a low-risk and financially stable funding framework, which would ensure balance in terms of dependency on particular funding partners and/or types of funding.

The timeframe of this strategy leaves sufficient space for consideration and implementation of novel funding, such as a donor acquisition programme, which would enable IEEP to absorb the level of non-restricted core funding to cover its flagship initiatives, such as the Green Deal Barometer, and to contribute to the work of IEEP's network Think Sustainable Europe.

For any of our funding initiatives, due diligence and prudence shall be exercised at all times in an attempt to minimise reputational and other risks.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IEEPs organizational outlook for the period until 2027 focuses on 3 main areas of improvement:

1. Improve productivity, efficiency & effectiveness across the organization
2. Create a culture that embraces change & innovation
3. Create a culture of workplace wellbeing

To achieve the above listed, a variety of structured processes shall be implemented such as:

Human process interventions – through individual coaching and implementation of a training calendar based on organizational needs and personal development goals.

Technostructural interventions – through work and workplace design. IEEP is upsizing its office space in 2023 and is committed to continue observing the highest standards of comfort for its employees until the end of this strategy period.

HRM interventions – through the introduction of an overall performance management system that would combine goal setting, performance appraisal and reward programme. Within HRM interventions, we understand a portfolio of employee wellness activities, which would allow a healthy work-life balance, among other, in the form of specialized stress management coaching and hands on internal employee assistance in challenging situations. Special attention shall be given to address diversity through activities uniquely formatted to increase inclusion for employees of different ages, gender, race, sexual orientation, disabilities, and cultures.

Strategic change interventions – through the transformational change from a traditional think tank towards acting as a Think and Do Thank, in such a way that it changes the core functioning of the organization compared to the previous period up to 2023 and gaining recognition and stronghold in the industry under the new definition by means of internal structural change.

VALUE OF HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Recognized as the most important resource in any economy or organization – human capital – that is, the collective knowledge, attributes, skills, experience, and health of our colleagues

will continue to be the key asset in delivering IEEP's unique proposition within the period of this strategy.

For many organizations, human capital is an important driver of performance. For IEEP, it goes above that, and it is identified as the crucial driver of performance and a key tool in achieving all that is set to be accomplished within the framework of this strategy paper.

Future human capital building blocks shall be based on:

1. Learning & development through continuous upskilling
2. Quality management through objective assessments on the various aspects of the working experience
3. Identifying the differences by assessing the individual needs within the collective

IEEP has yet to invest resources towards establishing an effective human capital management (HCM) system. HCM is the process of hiring the right people, managing workforce effectively and optimizing productivity. This transformation from human resources management (HRM) as mostly administrative function to HCM will prove to be the critical enabler of quality and value within the workforce in the future period.

As an emerging trend of the past years, digitalisation has advanced within HRM and HCM at an unprecedented scale. IEEP has been no exception to it. Standard recruiting practices and employee support changed almost from one day to another – moving most if not all support activities online.

The future of IEEP's human capital management will be based increasingly on digital tools, in order to keep with the changing landscape and remaining relevant. This means recognizing the digital potential, avoiding risks, understanding new technologies, and implementing them in a targeted way. There is an understanding of the essential costs that are associated with investing in new forms of infrastructure, technical problems, and data protection considerations.

ACADEMIA & YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

From its beginnings, IEEP held to its educational mandate through statutory mentions and ad hoc cooperation with university bodies and students who had the opportunity to contribute to IEEP's work through individual student placements.

Within the next five years, these ad hoc cooperation shall be better defined to produce an array of mutual benefits ranging from research capacity support, stakeholder engagement – all contributing to an exchange of knowledge and delivering a positive change for all parties involved.

Structural efforts in this direction are already in progress, with the expectations that by end of 2027:

1. IEEP engages on a continuous basis with leading universities in at least ten EU Member States and neighbouring countries.

2. IEEP creates a fully functional Student Placement Programme which would enable students from all backgrounds to contribute to the work of the organization as part of their regular study programme.

Adding to the above, in support and recognition of the unpaid internship issue raised by a number of relevant youth groups – IEEP expresses its’ commitment to provide a living stipend to all students participating in its’ Student Placement Programme as well as to hire any graduate level intern solely under the payment conditions of the Belgian Convention d’immersion professionnelle (CIP).

Beyond better definition of its’s cooperation with Academia, the initial steps in engaging further with national and international youth organizations shall be taken as an investment in broadening IEEPs network and achieving an even wider impact of its’ work.

ENGAGEMENT FOR IMPACT

As IEEP moves from a pure research institute to deliver on its think and do tank ambitions, it is crucial to focus also on scaling up its stakeholder engagement and strategic relations and activities.

In the period 2023-2027, IEEP’s engagement activities will focus on broader, cross-cutting partnerships that will continue to build the bridge between its research outputs and policy impact. In order to achieve this, IEEP envisages the following subset of objectives to be achieved:

1. Establish itself as a thought leader and go-to reference for relevant, quality policy research on EU Environment Policy
2. Convene key stakeholders from all sectors to produce, deliver and disseminate its research, to achieve more impactful multi-stakeholder engagement
3. Increase the visibility of IEEP research across sectors and policy areas as we move towards becoming a “think-and-do tank”
4. Bring together a critical mass of academic institutions, foundations, as well as private sector and civil society organisations in order to provide environmentally sustainable and socially just policy alternatives to decisionmakers.

IEEP’s Strategic Relations and Activities unit will ensure the horizontal coordination of IEEP’s external activities, flagship products such as the EGD Barometer, as well as manage IEEP’s cross-thematic membership networks. In addition, the Unit will contribute to IEEP research focus areas’ external activities and work together with research teams to create opportunities to bring IEEP evidence and knowledge to scale and that it is impactful among EU policy and decision makers, and linking to IEEP partners in EU Member States.

In order to maximize its impact among its stakeholders, IEEP will continue to engage with its key partners through the fostering of strategic relations and activities:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Research uptake
- Events & activities

a) Stakeholder engagement

IEEP's stakeholder engagement strategy aims to actively involve individuals and organizations that have a stake or interest in its research results and outcomes. This includes but is not limited to government agencies, NGOs, industry, academic institutions, and municipalities. The goal is to ensure that IEEP's research is relevant to their needs, concerns and priorities, and that its results can be effectively used to inform and shape policy decisions. This can be achieved through various methods such as consultations, workshops, roundtable discussions, and stakeholder feedback mechanisms.

Strategic Partnerships

IEEP seeks to establish partnerships with organizations that share its commitment to environmental protection, sustainability, and resource efficiency. By working together in a collaborative and supportive manner to achieve common goals and objectives, IEEP and its strategic partners can develop and implement joint initiatives and projects aimed at addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development and promote and share these views to key policymakers at the EU and national level.

Similarly, in its role as a convenor for thought leaders, champions and trailblazers in the fields of environmental sustainability, IEEP will continue to engage in those multi-stakeholder initiatives that bring together businesses, governments, and civil society organizations to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable development.

Think2030

Launched by IEEP and its partners in 2018, Think2030 is an evidence-based, non-partisan platform of leading policy experts from European think tanks, civil society, the private sector and local authorities. IEEP will work with Think2030 partners and the wider Think2030 community (100 policy experts from across Europe), for fundraising and dissemination.

Similarly, IEEP will further expand the membership of Think2030 to include a wider range of representatives from a broader spectrum of sectors and focus areas. This will further enhance its credibility as a generator of evidence to inform policies, supported and endorsed by its members.

Think Sustainable Europe (TSE)

Think Sustainable Europe (TSE) is IEEP's pan-European network of sustainability think tanks. As IEEP's membership body, this network of think tanks supports evidence-based decision-making on sustainability in Europe and at European country level. As the first and only established European network of think tanks on sustainability, IEEP and TSE will continue to inform debates and engage key European environmental policy- and decision-makers with a view to increase the ambition towards achieving the EGD's targets by 2050.

In the coming years, IEEP will continue to strengthen TSE's capacity and gravitas in the monitoring and implementation of comprehensive and efficient EU environmental policies,

and to monitor the implementation of EGD legislation in EU Member States and beyond: providing science advice and policy recommendations on sustainability issues.

Other Networks

Besides TSE and Think2030, IEEP additionally coordinates and is a member of numerous other networks active at the European level. IEEP will continue to play a key role as a thought leader and convenor within these networks, providing evidence and knowledge to these networks' discussions and events.

b) Research uptake

Partnerships are established to facilitate the flow of information and knowledge between research and practice, and to ensure that research results are relevant, accessible and usable by its stakeholders.

Effective research uptake partnerships are characterized by *mutual respect, open communication, shared ownership and a commitment to achieving common goals*. They can lead to improved decision-making and policy formulation, increased trust and collaboration between stakeholders, and enhanced impact of research.

By building strong relationships and networks, providing evidence-based policy recommendations, and being responsive to the needs of partners, IEEP can effectively advocate for environmental issues and contribute to the development of effective environmental policies in the EU.

c) Events & activities

IEEP will strive to consistently pitch a positive or solutions-oriented vision for the future that aligns with shared goals of participating organizations. Cultivating the enabling political environment in which IEEP and its partners can operate also requires creating and participating in visibility and outreach opportunities that will help IEEP move beyond analyses to action. IEEP will offer and create opportunities for itself and its partners to showcase its research outputs and knowledge products at key times in the policy and decision-making continuum.

Ultimately, IEEP's external engagement, through direct and indirect outreach and stakeholder engagement, will present the following value proposition to the organisation and its partners:

- Together with its partners within its network, IEEP will ensure that policy makers have access to the latest research findings and evidence, which can inform and shape environmental policy decisions in the EU
- Collaborative partnerships between researchers and stakeholders will increase opportunities for effective policy dissemination and implementation.
- By striving to drive donor and policy agendas, IEEP aims to play an important role in driving policy and donor agendas, by identifying and proposing innovative research interventions, thereby increasing the implementation of evidence-based and needs-driven policy implementation;

- Ensuring IEEP's evidence lies at the foundation of its outreach and impact work, and that they are accessible and usable by its networks, partners, and by extension policy makers at the EU level as well as in Member States;
- Create opportunities for IEEP and its partners to engage directly and indirectly with key EU policy and decision makers, including in Member States.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

In the past four decades, IEEP went through a series of transformations, increasing the workforce, modernising its presentation to the world, moving from research institute to think tank and now towards the new concept of "think and do tank". All these transformations happened in a very changing environment, very different from 45, 20, 10 but even 5 years ago. Many new players and organisations are now in the Brussels-sphere, social media have transformed the way policy and science is communicated and therefore the space to keep our independent voice heard is becoming more and more busy.

In the next five years, our communications efforts will look at a more strategic approach in the way we present and promote our work, by continuing exploring new ways and tools of communicating, training our team members so that they can keep up with a vastly changing environment and keeping at its core the good reputation IEEP is widely recognised for.

The process has already started with a modernisation of the main and most visible channels, the IEEP and Think2030 websites which reflect more the work and focus of the organisation and its platform. Over the past year, IEEP's social media presence has grown enormously and connections with media and journalists are also increasing, new relations with communications professionals of other organisations have been created and will be extended.

IEEP's communications can make a difference on policymakers, media and the wider public by publishing timely research results and promoting policy recommendations at national, EU and global level. This will take place through regular news and blog articles, by organising podcast interviews and press conferences, and by reacting at a short notice to journalist demands on the different focus areas that IEEP is working on.

The communications strategy for the next five years will look at each of the objectives established in the overall organisation strategy and its renewed mission, and identify for each goal and thematic areas key targets audiences to contact and influencing in a more proactive way as well as the most appropriate channels to do so. Dedicated mini strategies might be developed in collaboration with the different thematic teams.