

EUA Funding Forum 2026

What does the future hold for university finances?

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The goal for the sessions and how to get there

Get an understanding how to use foresight to shape the future of your university finances:

- Explore external key drivers of change and their possible impact on university finances over the next 5-10 years
- Learn about forecasting
- Develop strategies to mitigate risks and amplify opportunities



Leave with concrete tools to use for your work

Overview of session 1

Timing	Activity
11.15-11.25	Introduction
11.25-11.35	Future 4 square game - Icebreaker
11.35-12.00	Environmental scanning exercise (STEEP analysis)
12.00-12.10	Forecasting
12.10-12.25	What if?! - Future wheel I

What is
futures
thinking and
strategic
foresight?

It is neither about looking into the crystal ball!



What is
futures
thinking and
strategic
foresight?

.... Nor about accurate predication!



What is
futures
thinking and
strategic
foresight?

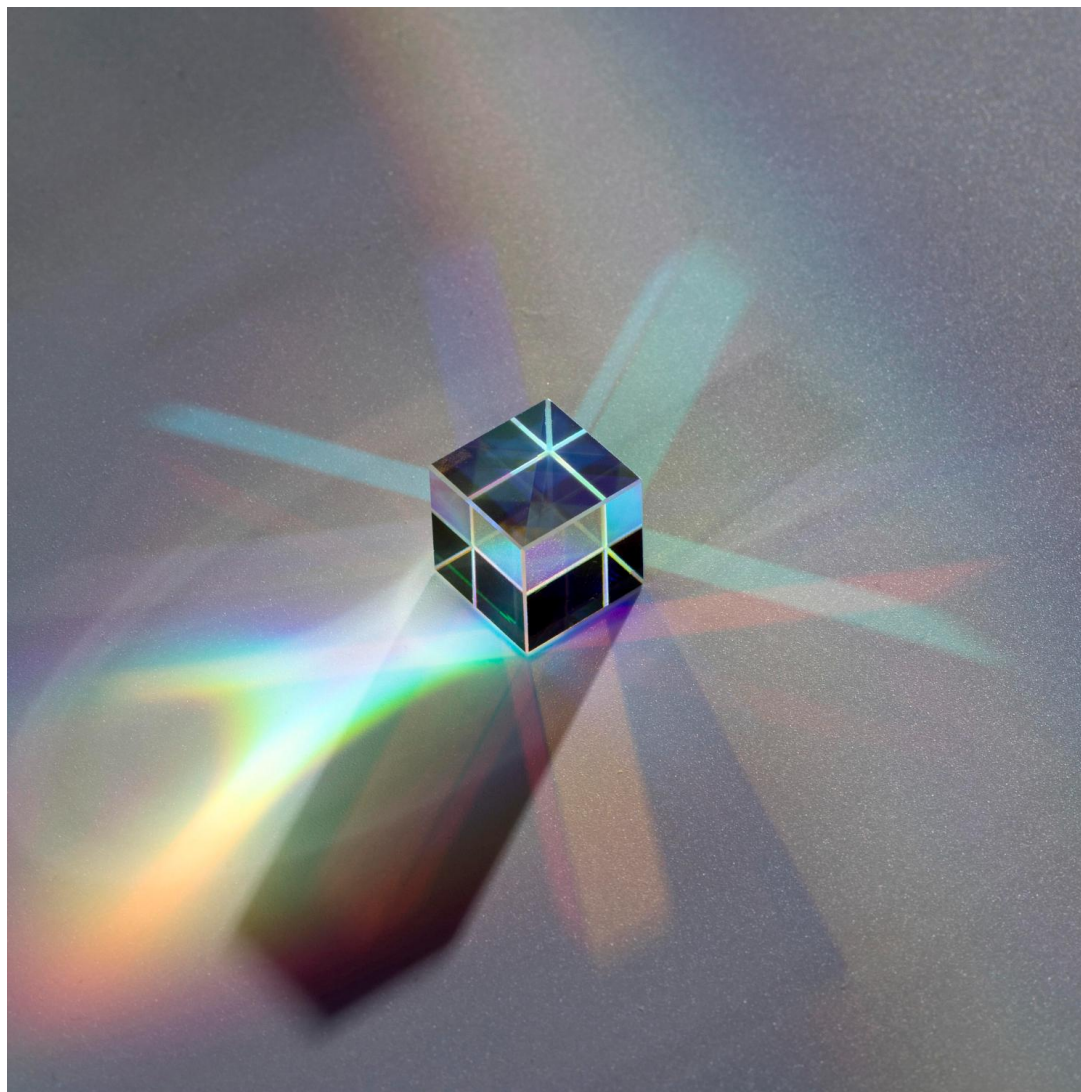
It is about...

- caring and preparing for the future
- engaging with the future in a creative way
- starting with the present!
- developing evidence-informed pictures of possible futures
- “*bold assumptions lightly held!*” (Institute for the Future)
- What if?

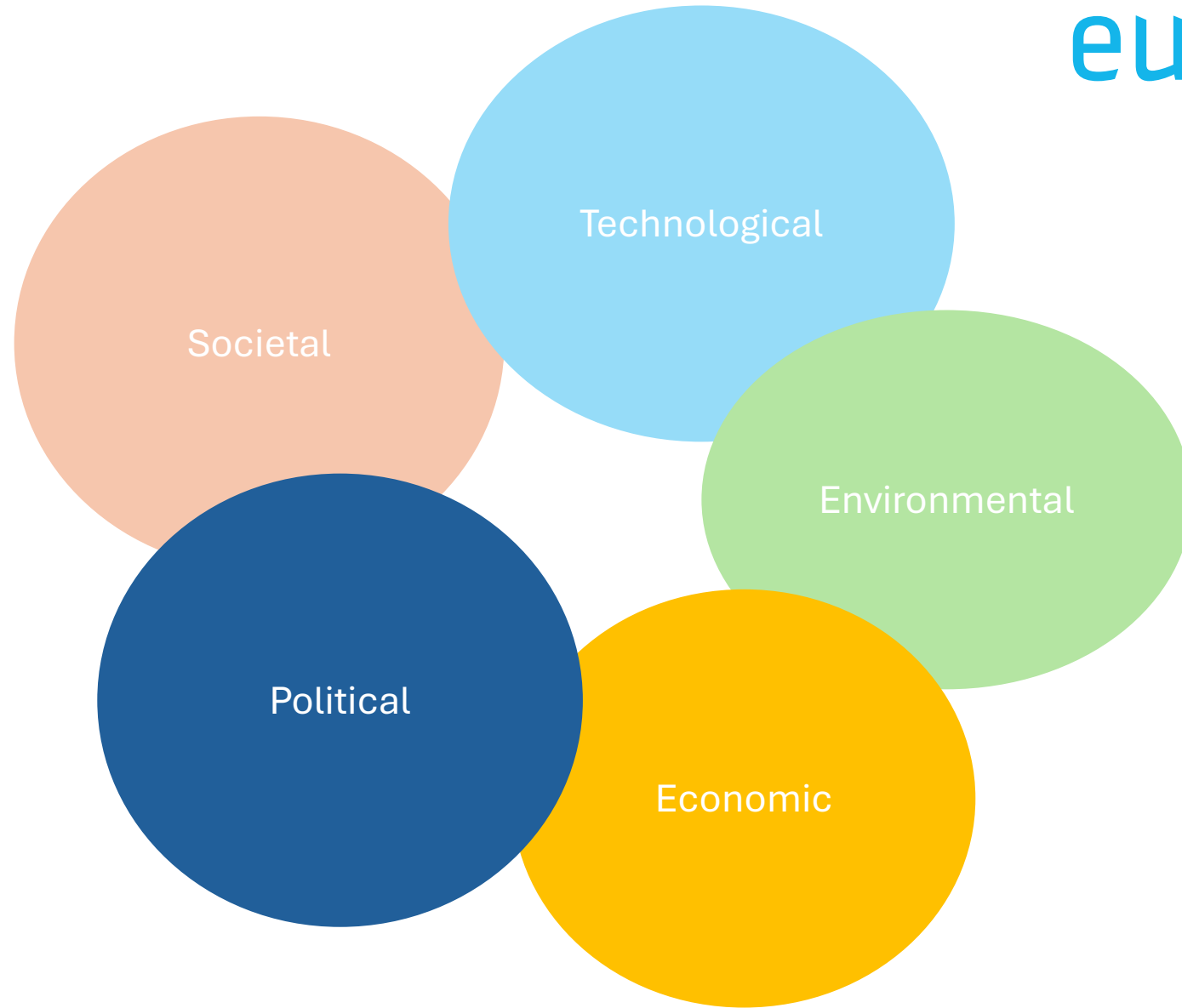
Purpose: see what are possible and plausible future developments to take action in the present to shape the future according to your vision

Go from “foresight to insight to action” (→ increase agency!)

Time to play:
**Future four
square game**



What
developments in
the external
environment will
influence your
university's
finances in the
next 5-10 years?



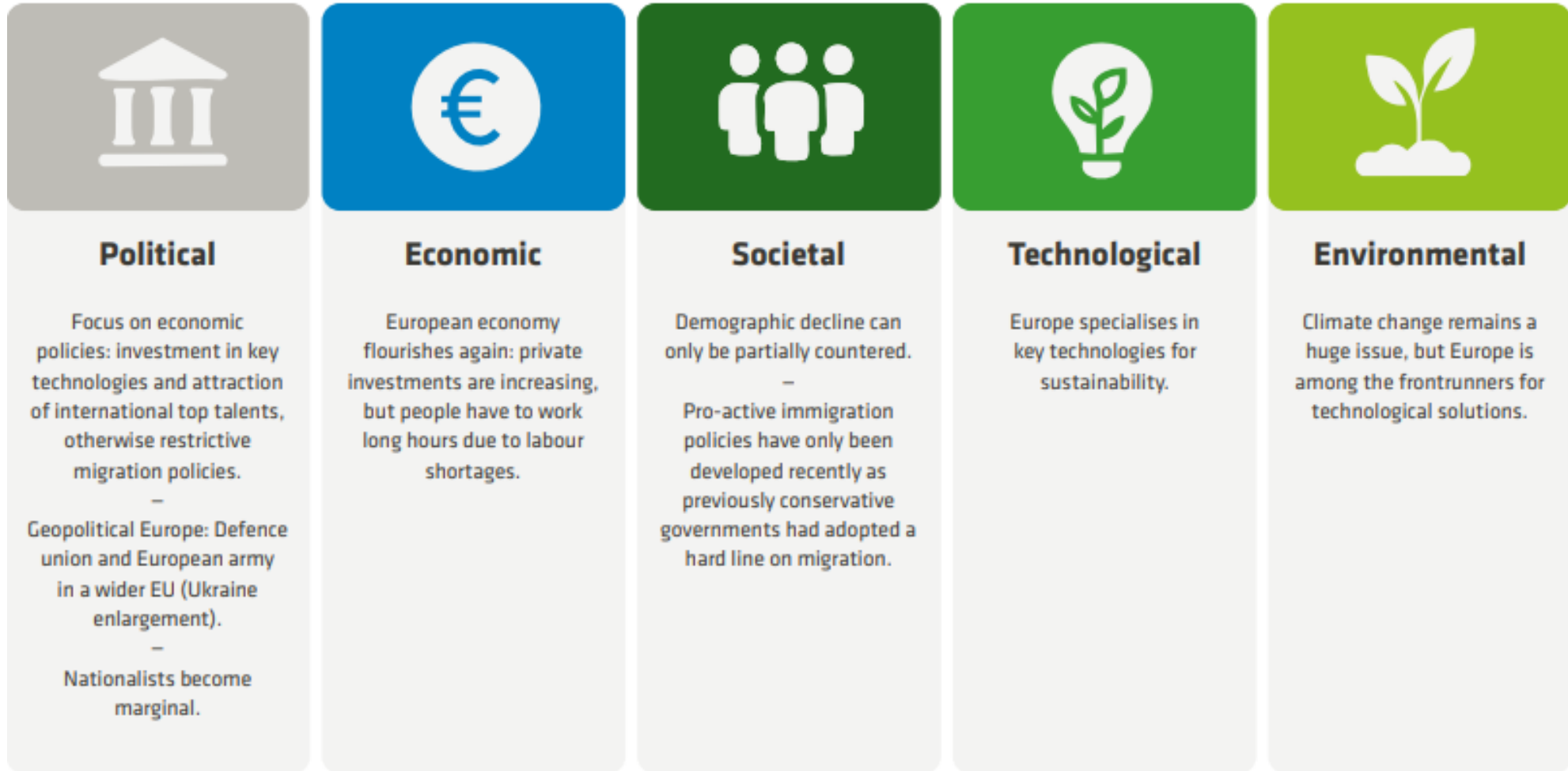
Forecast 1: Europe's resurrection



Generated using Adobe Firefly from the prompt: A man in a suit is walking through a busy city with a suitcase. There are EU flags on the buildings. Pop art style (Ben-Day dots), mostly in black and white. The general atmosphere of the picture: technocratic.

Source: EUA (2025): Universities and competitiveness

FORECAST: EUROPE'S RESURRECTION



Forecast 2: Tech oligarchy under US hegemony



Generated using Adobe Firefly from the prompt: A man in a dark suit making a speech. He is guarded by two soldiers. Modern setting. Pop art style (Ben-Day dots), mostly in black and white. The general atmosphere of the picture: autocracy.

FORECAST: TECH OLIGARCHY UNDER US HEGEMONY



Forecast 3: Fragmented society

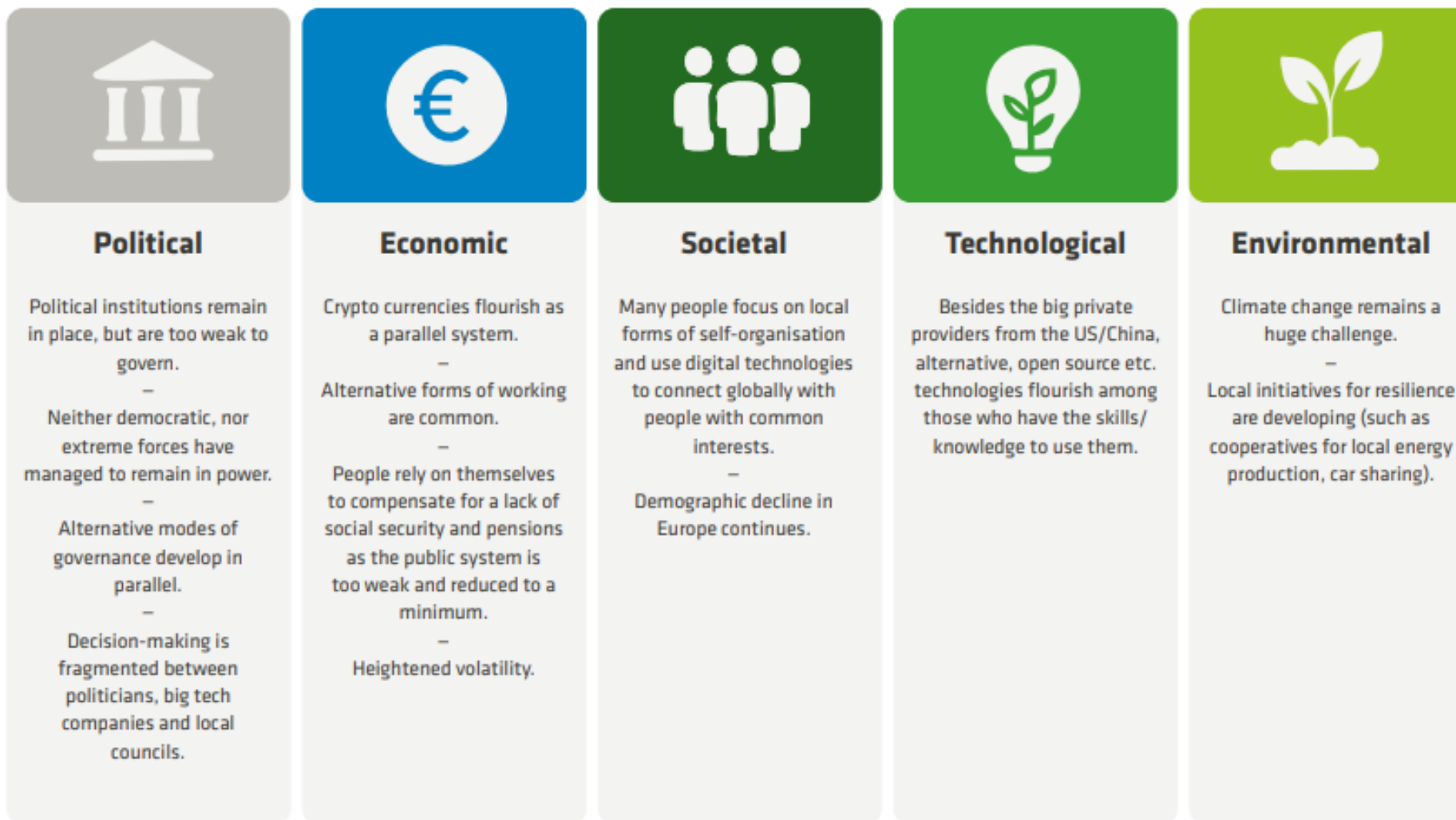


Generated using Adobe Firefly from the prompt: A child is looking at a street with potholes. There is a storm cloud in the sky. Pop art style (Ben-Day dots), mostly in black and white. The general atmosphere of the picture: unstoppable climate change.



Generated using Adobe Firefly from the prompt: A group of people casually dressed is sitting in front of a house in the suburbs - they are talking. There is a computer in the background. Pop art style (Ben-Day dots), mostly in black and white. The general atmosphere of the picture: community.

FORECAST: FRAGMENTED SOCIETY



Overview of session 2

Timing	Activity
10.00-10.15	What if?! – Future wheel
10.15-10.35	Shape the future into your direction
10.35-11.00	Group work presentations
11.00-11.10	Wrap-up and closing

Working with the “future wheel”

What would it mean for your university's finances if the respective event/development becomes reality?

Example: demographic decline

First-order impacts:

- Less young people, declining student numbers
- Aging faculty; staff leaving for pension; staff shortage

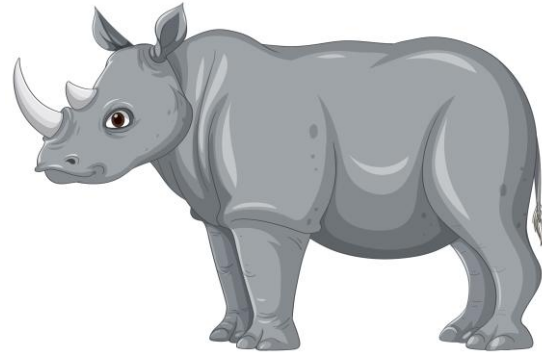
Second order impacts:

- Less funding for L&T
- If those leaving for pension are not replaced, decrease in staff costs
-



Working with uncertainty:

Every future event
has a different level of
(un)certainty: some
are critical
uncertainties that
should not be ignored

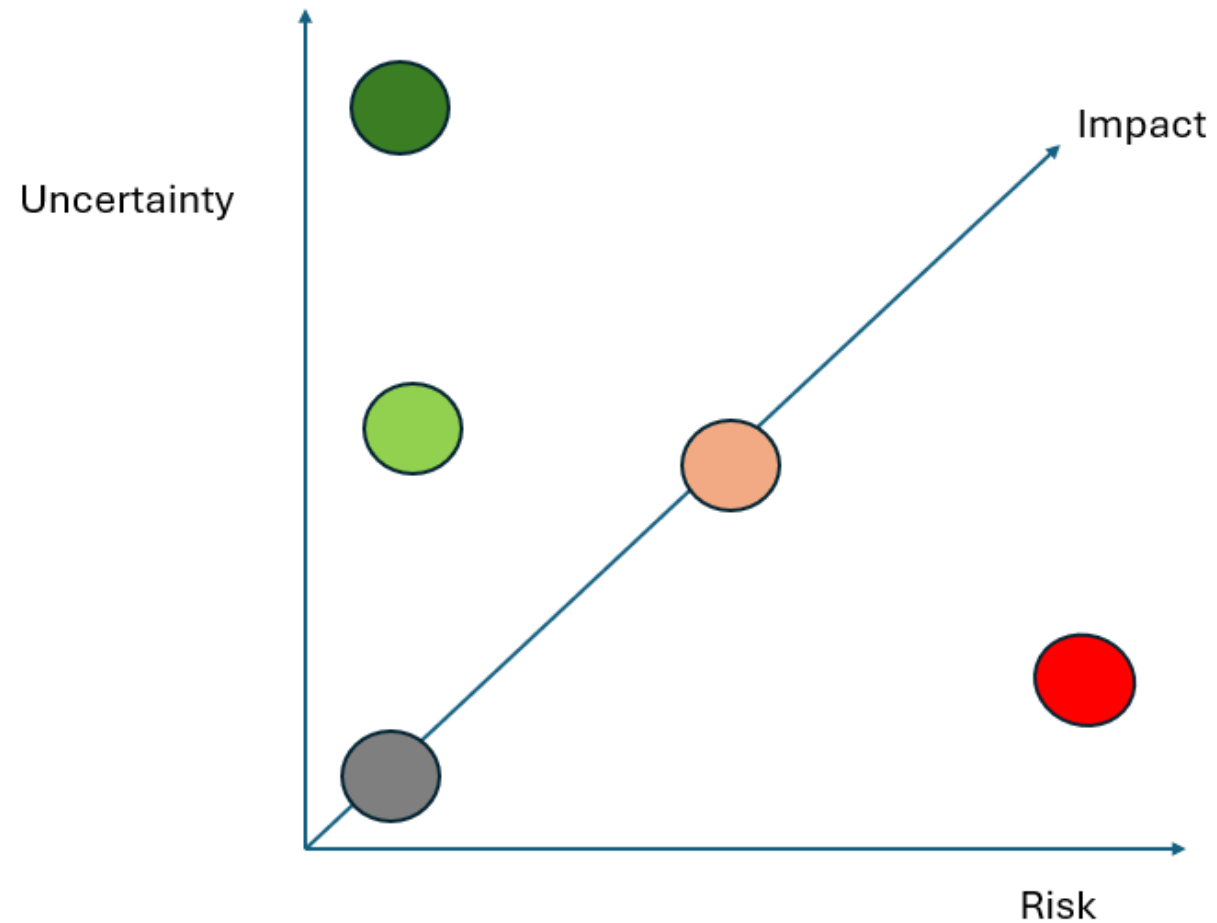


Grey rhinos: An obvious, highly probable, and high-impact threat that is widely ignored despite staring us in the face. (e.g. climate change, demographic decline, or systemic cybersecurity vulnerabilities).



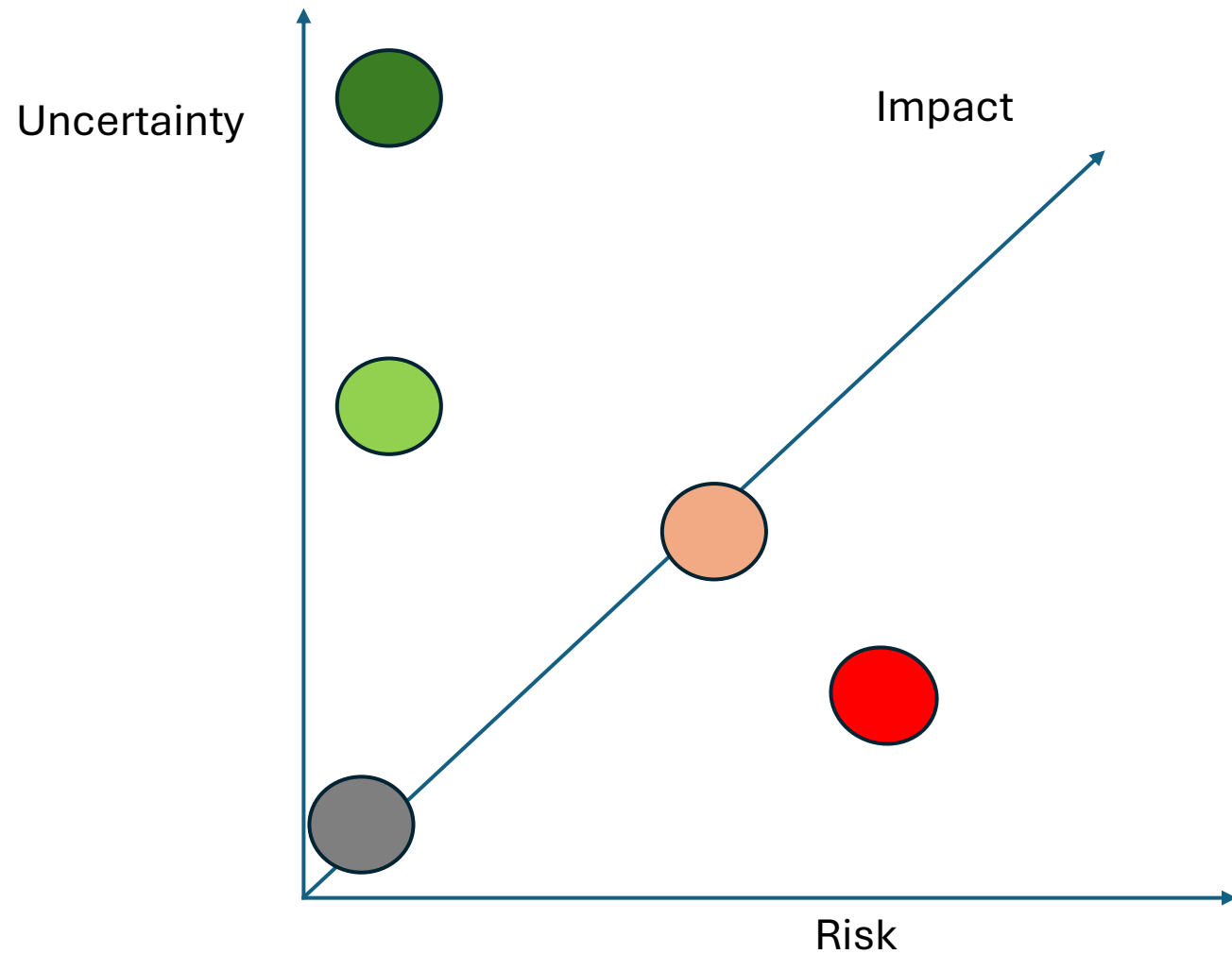
Black Swan: A highly unpredictable, rare, and unforeseen event that has a massive impact, often rationalised in hindsight. (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic; 09/11 terrorist attacks)

Take account of the different levels of uncertainty, impact and risk of external developments for the university and its finances



What can you do to **mitigate the negative effects** of the external development on university finances?

What are possible **opportunities** you can use to **amplify positive effects** on university finances?



Main outcomes of the work in small groups

2-3 minutes per group



Picture: magnific.com (free)

Your main takeaway

- What is one important insight for you from the two sessions?
- What roles does this call you to take at your institution?
- What is one concrete action you can take in the coming days/weeks to use this insight for your own work at your university?

Thank you for your attention and contributions!

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