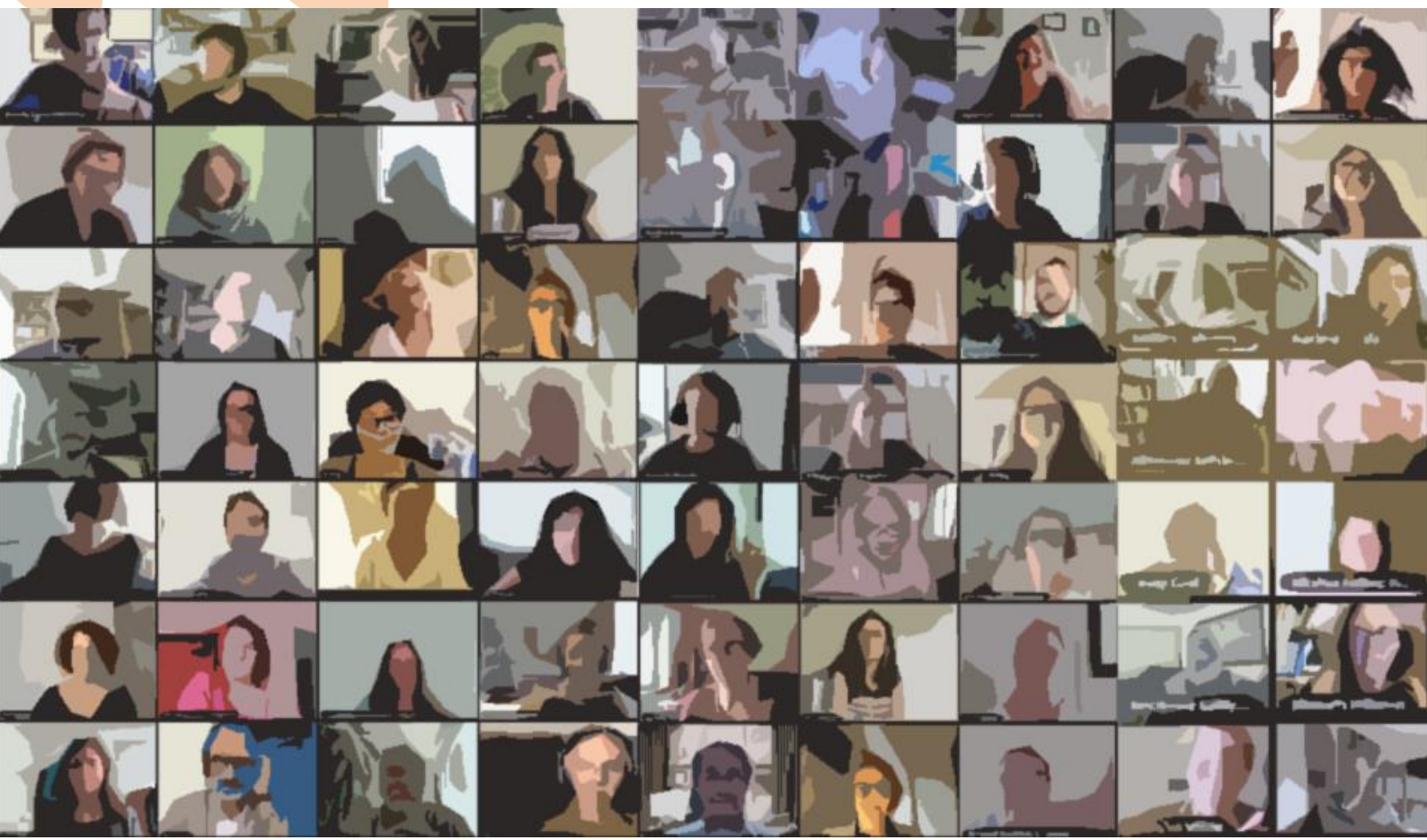


2020



## ANNUAL REPORT



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# FOREWORD

The year 2020 was an exceptionally challenging year for higher education because of COVID-19. Nevertheless, for the COPERNICUS Alliance it was a very successful year: In association with representatives of two reputed Swiss academic networks and two Swiss universities, the CA organized a highly successful virtual Higher Education Summit (#HES2020). We started the year believing that all HES2020 participants would meet in Bern from 1 August to 2 September 2020 and launched a Call for Papers for a number of creative formats; at the end of February, just after receiving the first proposals, we had to decide to make the conference an entirely online one. Thanks to authors and reviewers, the co-organizers succeeded in maintaining all formats foreseen for the face-to-face conference and in finding solutions to make them attractive, lively and productive in an online environment. Even the excursions and the poster plaza were maintained, offering a taste of place and a space for encounters.



The CA community was also very successful in writing common proposals and exploring key CA themes like transformative learning and quality assurance. In addition, members engaged in outreach activities and collaborated with like-minded organisations to launch exciting perspectives for the future, for example the cooperation with Legacy17 that led to the “Online Transformative Learning (OnTL)” project. In this ERASMUS+ project, a number of TL practitioners have started experiments with online TL and are discussing their insights into the differences between online and face-to-face TL. Such burgeoning of collaborative and innovative activities will surely continue in 2021 and we hope to see some interesting applications for Microfunds to support them.

The current Leadership Team is happy to commit to an additional year in the Leadership Team. Although the Action Plan is dated 2019-2020, its five Priorities – leadership and professional development, transformative quality assurance and assessment, experience-based support for ESD, advocacy work for HESD, and organisational resilience – will continue guiding us in 2021.

*Dr. Anne Zimmermann, President*

*and Dr. Ingrid Mulà, Executive Director*

# 1. OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

## Vision

*“The COPERNICUS Alliance will be the leading European network helping people and institutions in a higher education environment to creatively address the challenges of tomorrow in a collaborative way, to jointly build the knowledge and competences needed for global sustainable development, and to actively engage with policy-makers and community stakeholders.”*

## Mission

The COPERNICUS Alliance (CA) aims to enable European higher education institutions and their partners to jointly identify challenges in higher education for sustainable development (HESD) and spearhead development of processes, tools, and knowledge to address these challenges from a whole-institution perspective. The CA provides a platform and organizes events where its current and future members can share resources and co-develop innovative education for sustainable development initiatives. It provides Micro Funds for members’ networking efforts and supports joint HESD proposals through advice and alliances. The CA also promotes engagement with policy-makers and community stakeholders at the European and global levels and regularly celebrates members’ ambassador activities. The CA resolutely commits to reducing the ecological footprint of its activities.



## Values

Respect, commitment, and collaboration are deemed the highest values of the CA.

- **Respect** underpins members’ interactions and collaboration. Our members greatly appreciate the diversity of the CA community and the inspiration they get from exchanging.
- **CA members commit to walk the talk**, guided by a holistic perspective of HESD and the Agenda 2030. This commitment is supported by the possibility of exchanging with other people and institutions, and engaging in common activities.
- **Collaboration** is the mode of work of the CA community, who shares knowledge and resources, seeks to increase the impact of their work together, and find common solutions and funding for projects.

## 2. MANAGEMENT

### 2.1. Leadership Team

The CA has a rotating Secretariat and Leadership Team. Since 1 January 2019, Dr. Anne Zimmermann (University of Bern) and Dr. Ingrid Mulà (University of Girona) serve as President and Executive Director respectively. In addition, a Network Manager (Mario Diethart, University of Graz) is responsible for communication, administrative and financial issues.



### 2.2. Advisory Board

The Advisory Board members are elected for a period of four years by the CA members. They can be *member representatives*, *student representatives* or assume an *extended advisory board role*. The current members are:

- ✦ **Prof. Matthias Barth** Member representative  
Professor of Education for Sustainable Development, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany
- ✦ **Prof. Kim Ceulemans, PhD** Extended Advisory Board Role  
Assistant Professor, Department of Control, Accounting and Auditing at Toulouse Business School, France



- ✦ **Dr. Jana Dlouhá** Member representative  
Researcher at Charles University Environment Centre and former CA Vice-President, Czech Republic
- ✦ **Prof. Miren Onaindía** Member representative  
Professor of Ecology and Director of the UNESCO Chair for Sustainable Development and Environmental Education at University of the Basque Country, Spain
- ✦ **Prof. Doris Wastl-Walter** Member representative  
Emerita Professor of Human Geography and former Vice-Rector Quality, University of Bern, Switzerland



# 3. ACTIVITIES & INITIATIVES

In the CA Action Plan 2019-2020 five priorities were identified that characterise the CA's unique strengths and important areas of action. The first two are thematic priorities (Goals 1 and 2), the third epitomises the CA's mode of operation and commitment to sharing resources and learning (Goal 3), the fourth confirms the CA's involvement in European and global policy work (Goal 4), and the fifth characterises the CA's operational needs as a learning organisation (Goal 5):



For each of the **five strategic goals**, actions were defined along with indicators to measure them. We report below on the activities and initiatives organized in relation to the above-mentioned goals throughout the year 2020.

## VIRTUAL HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT 2020



Goals 1, 2, 3, 5



31 August – 2 September 2020



online



237 persons



35 countries from 5 continents



1,021 € (in addition: in-kind contributions from University of Bern; saguf; td-net of swiss academies; University of Lausanne; and sponsoring)

The Higher Education Summit 2020 (HES2020) addressed the question “How can we assure quality and transformative learning for sustainable development?” and was co-organised by the CA, saguf, td-net, the University of Bern, and the University of Lausanne. Originally planned as a face-to-face event to be hosted at the University of Bern, the HES2020 was held fully online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building on the experience from the CA Online Conference 2019 a variety of formats were offered: keynotes, a COVID-19 roundtable, “solution rooms”, “co-creative labs”, “book an expert” sessions, virtual excursions and a poster plaza. The event attracted over 230 participants from a number of different stakeholder and expert groups interested in meeting beyond their “natural borders” to discuss transformation towards sustainable development in higher education, addressing research, teaching, and quality assurance-related issues from a whole-institution perspective.

The feedback from participants was unanimously positive and will be considered for an updated version of the “Guidelines for Virtual Conferencing” first published in early 2020 ([Download](#)).

The feedback from participants was unanimously positive and will be considered for an updated version of the “Guidelines for Virtual Conferencing” first published in early 2020 ([Download](#)).

The Leadership Team would like to thank all contributors whole-heartedly for their creative, engaged, and innovative contributions. Particular thanks go to the speakers Rietje van Dam-Mieras, Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, Christoph Grolimund, Elizabeth Lange, Mandy Singer-Brodowski, Arjen Wals, Hilligje van’t Land, Giorgio Zanetti and Marie-Claire Graf. Various materials are available to registered participants on the conference website ([higher-education-summit-2020.com](https://higher-education-summit-2020.com)).



Graphical recording of the HES2020 (by Yves Erne/zense.ch)

## MICRO FUNDS



Goal 5



2 initiatives supported



4 member institutions involved



1,590.45 €

The CA aims to invest in members' activities by putting part of its annual budget aside to fund members' initiatives. Activities that contribute to the overall CA ambition to build capacity in higher education for sustainable development through collaboration can be supported with up to 1,000 EUR. In 2020, two activities were supported with CA Micro Funds:



### Workshop on Quality and Sustainability in higher education

9 March 2020

Participating CA members: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra (AQUA), University of the Basque Country, CRUE (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities)

The aim of this workshop featuring Prof. Daniella Tilbury was to incorporate sustainability throughout the quality assurance system and promote mutual trust between higher education agencies and institutions



### IRDO Conference – Proceedings

4-5 June 2020

Participating CA members: University of Maribor and others

The 15<sup>th</sup> IRDO International Science and Business Conference entitled "Personal and Social Responsibility for a Sustainable Future" aimed to connect theory and practice by bringing together scientists, consultants, operative experts and many others. The proceedings enable the readers to transfer the accumulated knowledge to their business and everyday practice.

[Read more](#)

## CA CONVERSATIONS

... what helped you convince your colleagues at eight different faculties to participate in designing a new Sustainable Development study programme? Do colleagues from the eight faculties also teach in the programme?

**AB:** We gained experience for the past 30 years by running the inter-disciplinary programme in Environmental Protection (MOSOS), which is based on involvement of seven faculties: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography and Regional Studies, Geology, Economic Sciences, Law and Administration. For Sustainable Development we also invited the Faculty of Management to participate. So the cooperation was among faculties and all the management aspects were well established. Still to develop the curriculum, it took us almost two years. Some of the subjects were developed with involvement of three different faculties. And yes, colleagues from all eight faculties teach in our programme. You can imagine what a challenge this implies for managing the programme.

**AE:** Find it fascinating to hear that interdisciplinary collaboration existed already 30 years ago at the University of Warsaw! This is remarkable... So it seems that the university's rectorate was able to maintain its dedication to interdisciplinary?

And during the preparation stage, we were also able to benefit from consultations with both academics (including the ESD team of the University of Bern, thanks to our connection through the COPERNICUS Alliance) and experts who had practical experience of the academic world. Networking has led to another advantage of the programme: an excellent team of lecturers and experts.



Goals 1, 3, 5



4 interviews

In our series "A conversation with..." we put CA members and their activities in the spotlight. In 2020 we published five interviews in our newsletters and on the CA website.





**Peter Glavič (University of Maribor, Slovenia)**, young-minded and lively emeritus who actively defends the values of sustainable development in sports and higher education:

*"Quality education and social indicators should be included in evaluations of higher education."*

[Read more](#)



**Anna Batorczak (University of Warsaw, Poland)**, enthusiastic educator for sustainable development and believer in the power of women to lead change:

*"One cannot overestimate the importance of observing reactions and listening to direct feedback. I am deeply convinced that I cannot be an educator only by studying theory and science."*

[Read more](#)



**Ingrid Mulà (University of Girona), Michael Stauffacher (saguf), Theres Paulsen (td-net), Nelly Niwa (University of Lausanne), Mario Diethart (CA), Camilla Steinböck and Anne Zimmermann (University of Bern)**, the organizers of the Virtual Higher Education Summit 2020:

*"The focus of the HES2020 is on networking as well as transformative learning, assessment, quality assurance, and sustainable development, where we want to achieve both scientific and practical progress."*

[Read more](#)



**Jurgis Kazimieras Staniškis (Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania)**, transdisciplinary scientist globally recognized for his innovative and transformative systems:

*"Research institutions such as universities, academic and scientific associations and policymakers should expand their evaluation systems to recognize and prioritize interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary skills, and reward research that strives for societal relevance and impacts."*

[Read more](#)

## CA WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTER



Goal 5



32 website news entries



12,929 website views by 5,009 users



6 newsletters



332 newsletter recipients (+28)

Through the CA website and the CA newsletter we provide and distribute general information about the network and its activities and promote members' activities. The CA newsletter informs over 300 subscribers about CA initiatives, members' activities, as well as ongoing developments in the field of HESD

## BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS



Goals 2, 5



2 projects



3 proposals submitted

The CA has developed a profile that has made our non-profit network an attractive partner for European projects: the CA is now a Partner Organisation for an Erasmus+ project and a Network Partner for an Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance project (see below). The CA has also been asked to contribute to another Erasmus+ proposal as Associated Partner and has worked on a proposal for a large network project. The idea is to generate funding and other opportunities thanks to which CA members can engage in tangible projects that help to advance the CA goals. The two projects where activities started in 2020 are the following:



### OnTL “Pushing the boundaries of online transformative learning”

EU Erasmus+ project, 09/2020-12/2021, 4 partners from 4 countries

The CA is one of four partners in the Erasmus+ project OnTL focusing on exploring the possibilities and limitations of transformative and online learning. One of the key roles of the CA in the project is to convene a group of experimenters within higher education who are willing to try out and reflect on approaches and methods of transformative learning in a virtual environment. All CA members and interested participants of the HES2020 were invited to be involved in the project activities. [Read more](#)



### SDGs Labs

EU Erasmus+ project, 01/2019-12/2021, 8 partners from 4 countries

The CA was invited by one of its members, Vienna University of Economics and Business, to join the SDGs Labs project as a network partner. SDGs Labs aims to build a culture of collaboration and knowledge exchange between different stakeholders involved in agribusiness and food production with the goal of holistic incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into modern business practices of the sector. [Read more](#)

## OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Goals 4, 5



Participation in 5 national or international events

CA Executive Director Ingrid Mulà presented the work of the CA in a roundtable discussion during the **Summer School “University and Sustainability: travel companions in a great mission”** organised by the University of the Basque Country (Spain) on 29-30 June 2020. The roundtable focused on the key role of networks in advancing the sustainability agenda. GUNi, REDS (SDSN-Spain) and Euskampus were also invited to the debate. As a result of her participation, Ingrid Mulà was interviewed by Radio Euskadi. [Read more](#)

The CA leadership participated in the online **European Forum on Science and Education for Sustainability (EFSES 2020)** organised by the General Federal Ministry of Education and Research. This conference sought to influence European policy and research funding schemes to include ESD and was attended by over 2,000 participants from 64 countries. More specifically, Anne Zimmermann and Ingrid Mulà contributed to the EFSES workshop “Moving Education towards Sustainability”, offering insights and suggestions to advance ESD institutionally and strengthen the capacities of educators. The conference report and recommendations will be published here: <https://www.efses2020.eu/en/>

In light of the deep transformations taking place globally, the **Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi)** is elaborating and editing a World Report that will be presented in the framework of the 3<sup>rd</sup> UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education to be held in October 2021 in Barcelona. The CA was invited to be [part of an expert board](#) to provide advice on the structure and contents of the report.

The CA was represented at the **14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs)** by Jana Dlouhá, CA Advisory Board member. This meeting was held in December 2019 in the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS Tokyo), the coordinating body for the Global Network of the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs). UNU-IAS has contributed to the effective implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development by mobilising actors, experiences and expertise worldwide. This has been achieved through a variety of activities with the global network of currently 175 RCEs. The network now contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Regional RCE clusters organize annual meetings; for more information about the meeting of European RCEs check: <http://www.rcenetwork.org/portal/european-rces-gather-greece-discuss-climate-change-sustainable-agriculture-and-government-engagement>









The Programme Committee of the Higher Education Summit (HES2020) was asked by the **Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ)** to provide insights about the summit in a [short video](#). This video was made available to participants at the “[AAQ Institutional Accreditation Day](#)”, which took place on 26 November 2020. This is a very nice result of the new contact established with Dr. Christoph





Grolimund, Director of the AAQ and President of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), who held a keynote at the HES2020.

CA President Anne Zimmermann was invited to join the **Advisory Board** of **Legacy17.org**. Legacy17, based in Sweden, is a small international cooperative of leading-edge practitioners of the 'people skills' needed to work effectively with transformative, regenerative processes in education, leadership, and community development, in the spirit of the SDGs. Its leader, Marilyn Mehlmann, was one of the keynote speakers at the 2019 online CA conference. Since then, the CA and Legacy17 have been joining forces to progress in the field of online transformative learning, leading to very lively collaboration between partners in higher education and adult education.

The organizers of the [2021 International Transdisciplinarity Conference \(ITD\)](#) – the Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab), ETH Zurich in Switzerland, and the Network for Transdisciplinary Research (td-net) of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences – invited CA President Anne Zimmermann to join the **Strategic Board** of the ITD Conference 2021. The online conference will take place online on 13-17 September 2021 and will focus on “Creating spaces and cultivating mindsets for learning and experimentation”. The main function of the strategic board is to link the conference to important organizations engaged and interested in collaborative modes of research and education.

## 4. MEMBERSHIP

Members in 2020 according to membership type and change to 2019							
Institutional Members		Trial Members		HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies		Observers & Individual Members	
							
19	+4	0	-2	3	±0	3	-2

Members in 2020			
			
Vienna University of Economics and Business	Austria	Institutional Member	2010
University of Graz	Austria	Institutional Member	2010
Leuphana University of Lüneburg	Germany	Institutional Member	2010
Open University in the Netherlands	Netherlands	Institutional Member	2010
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna	Austria	Institutional Member	2012
Charles University Environment Centre	Czech Republic	Institutional Member	2012
CRUE (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities)	Spain	NGO	2012
University of Basque Country	Spain	Institutional Member	2013
The University of Warsaw	Poland	Institutional Member	2014
Flemish Ministry of Environment, Nature and Energy	Belgium	Governmental Agency	2014
University of Hamburg	Germany	Institutional Member	2015
University of Zurich	Switzerland	Institutional Member	2015
University of Maribor	Slovenia	Institutional Member	2016
University of Bern	Switzerland	Institutional Member	2016
University of Girona	Spain	Institutional Member	2017



University of Gävle	Sweden	Institutional Member	2017
Autonomous University of Madrid	Spain	Institutional Member	2019
KU Leuven	Belgium	Institutional Member	2019
Kaunas University of Technology	Lithuania	Institutional Member	2019
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra (AQUA)	Andorra	Governmental Agency	2019
Daugavpils University	Latvia	Institutional Member	2020
Hasselt University	Belgium	Institutional Member	2020
Individual Researchers	1 Belgium 1 France 1 Ireland	Individual Members	

### Location of the Institutional Members in 2020



# 5. FINANCES



The CA is officially acknowledged as an NGO under German law. Its finances and accounting are assessed on a regular basis by the tax authority of Lüneburg, Germany. They approve the status of CA as a Non-Profit Organisation serving society with a research and science purpose.




The figure below provides an overview of the CA's finances. The CA's **income** consists exclusively of membership fees. In 2020, the membership fees contributed € 21,100.00 (from 25 member institutions/members) to the annual budget.

**Expenditures** relate to staff (Network Manager), events, Micro Funds, communications, profile and representation (includes memberships, travel, subsistence and fees to participate in important events where the CA profiles its work and activities). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic expenditures for travels in 2020 were reduced to zero. The pandemic was probably also the reason why only two Micro Funds were applied for. The virtually held Higher Education Summit 2020 (HES2020) was co-organized by the CA, saguf, td-net, the University of Bern, and the University of Lausanne. The CDE/University of Bern, as the hosting institution, covered the main part of the conference budget. Next to in-kind contributions by all partners, event sponsors donated money dedicated to specific expenses.

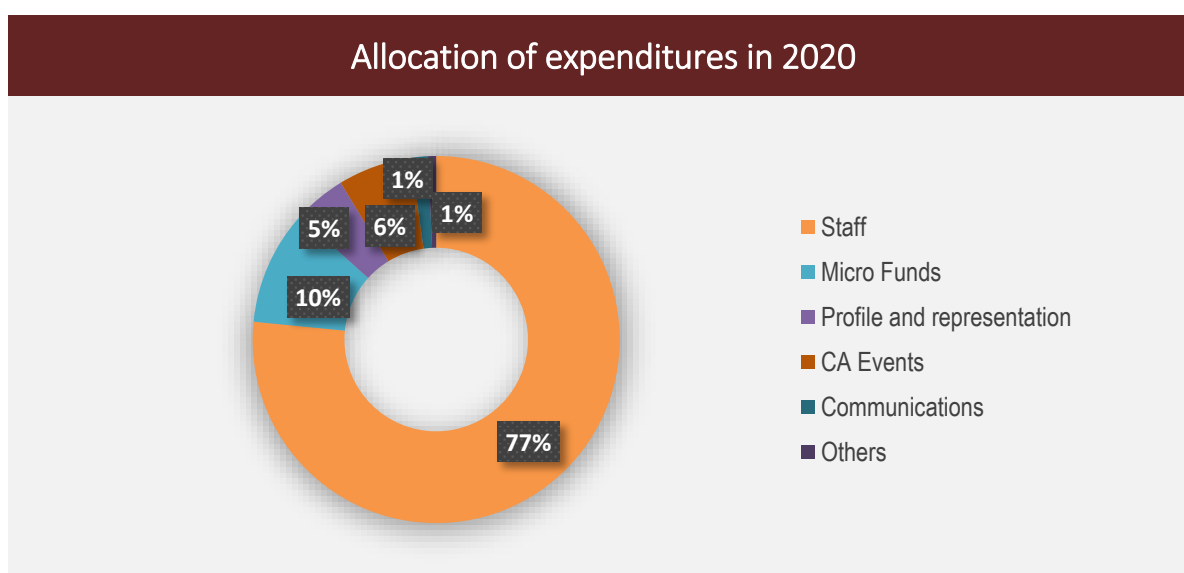
In addition to the described expenditures an important part of the CA workload is covered by in-kind contributions of the whole CA Leadership Team.

The year 2020 closed with a positive balance of € 5,423.49 resulting in a total account balance of € 20,260.04 at the end of 2020.

Finances in 2020 (in €)			
			
<b>Membership fees</b>			
19 Institutional Members	19,000.00	12,000.00	<b>Staff</b>
3 HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies	1,800.00	1,021.01	<b>CA Events</b>
3 Individual Members	300.00		HES2020
		720.00	<b>Profile and representation</b>
			incl. membership in IAU
		1,590.45	<b>Micro Funds</b>
		233.45	<b>Communications</b>
		111.60	<b>Others</b>
	<b>21,100.00</b>	<b>15,676.51</b>	

	5,423.49	Balance 2020
	14,836.55	Carried forward from 2019
	20,260.04	TOTAL BALANCE

As the figure below shows, staff costs represented the biggest share in 2020. Due to the reasons described above, expenses for Micro Funds and events remained comparatively low and together sum up to about a quarter of total expenditures.



## COPERNICUS ALLIANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

The present document was prepared by:

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