ANNUAL REPORT
# CONTENTS

1. OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES ................................................................................................. 4
2. MANAGEMENT .................................................................................................................................... 5
   2.1. Leadership Team ......................................................................................................................... 5
   2.2. Advisory Board .......................................................................................................................... 5
3. ACTIVITIES & INITIATIVES ............................................................................................................. 6
   3.1. HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT 2023 ...................................................................................... 7
   3.2. CA Cooperation Funds ............................................................................................................... 7
   3.3. CA Publications ........................................................................................................................ 8
   3.4. CA Conversations ....................................................................................................................... 9
   3.5. CA Happy Hour .......................................................................................................................... 9
   3.6. CA Website and Newsletter .................................................................................................... 10
   3.7. Building opportunities for members ....................................................................................... 10
   3.8. Outreach activities ..................................................................................................................... 11
4. MEMBERSHIP ................................................................................................................................... 13
5. FINANCES ......................................................................................................................................... 15
FOREWORD

In 2023, the WHO finally declared an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. World leaders have drawn up plans to tackle climate change, and the impact of artificial intelligence has been felt almost everywhere. However, the war between Russia and Ukraine intensified, the conflict in the Middle East escalated again, and many regions were devastated by forest fires, breaking summer temperature records. It has to be acknowledged that in such a tense and complex geopolitical situation, Agenda 2030 is receding from the top of the agendas of world leaders. In the face of lasting and unprecedented global challenges, as COPERNICUS Alliance, we persist in our efforts as ambassadors of transformative learning in higher education for sustainable development. We are delighted that two new institutional members join us in this endeavor and warmly welcome UC Leuven-Limburg and Bern University of Applied Sciences to the network!

The event highlight of the year, the Higher Education Summit – Student Takeover from 23-25 November 2023, was the great result of a collaboration with students from oikos International. It was an opportunity for CA members and peers to rethink how the education system can become an effective driving force for a more sustainable future.

We initiated and continued many activities: We fostered exchange between our members in the CA Happy Hours and supported joint initiatives through Cooperation Funds. In collaboration with DG HochN (German Society for Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions), we facilitated an exchange among European higher education networks for sustainability to share best practices and learn from each other. The CA became a signatory and 'Active Partner' of The Jena Declaration, a platform for coordinating local common actions globally for deep transformation, bringing together NGOs, schools, and others to inspire communities and governments to actively change in favor of sustainability.

Looking ahead, to continue the experience of working on an equitable basis with students, as of 2024, we have student representatives in the Advisory Board and offer a new membership category for student organizations.

We would like to conclude by congratulating Prof. Matthias Barth, Prof. Kim Ceulemans, and Dr. Jana Dlouhá to their re-election as members of our Advisory Board and, above all, express our sincere gratitude to all our members for re-electing us for another 2-year term and by extending our wishes for a more peaceful year to come for all of us.

Asst. Prof. Élisabeth Hofmann
Co-President

Asst. Prof. Tom Kuppens
Co-President

Prof. Eglė Staniškienė
Co-President
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 “Cooperation 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 is coordinated by an elected Leadership Team. Since 1 January 2022, it is composed by three Co-Presidents: Asst. Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Hofmann (Université Bordeaux Montaigne), Asst. Prof. Dr. Tom Kuppens (Hasselt University & Vrije Universiteit Brussel), and Prof. Dr. Eglė Staniškienė (Kaunas University of Technology). They are supported by the Network Manager Mario Diethart and an Advisory Board. The Leadership Team and Advisory Board members are volunteering positions. The Leadership Team is elected by the CA members for a period of two years.

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]  
  President, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, 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

- **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rebeka Kovačič Lukman** [Member representative]  
  Professor of Environmental Sciences at University of Maribor, Slovenia

- **Dr. Clemens Mader** [Extended Advisory Board Role]  
  Co-Director at RCE Zurich and Scientist at Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland
3. ACTIVITIES & INITIATIVES

Goals for CA activities have always been the result of a bottom-up process, with members contributing in a substantial way on different occasions. Five priorities have been identified which characterize the CA’s unique strengths and important areas of action. The first two are thematic priorities (Goals 1 and 2), the third epitomizes 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 characterizes the CA’s operational needs as a learning organization (Goal 5):

For each of the five strategic goals, activities and initiatives were organized in relation to the above-mentioned goals throughout the year 2023. We report on them below.
3.1. HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT 2023

The 2023 Higher Education Summit was special: The online conference from 23-25 November was the great result of a fruitful collaboration between the COPERNICUS Alliance and the students from oikos International, with support of SOS – Students Organizing for Sustainability International, the Green Office Movement, and the Club of Rome.

Envisaging a Copernican Revolution for a sustainable future, the summit raised the question: "How can we foster collective transformative learning and structurally integrate it into higher education to make it future-proof?" More than 100 participants joined the discussions on learner-driven education and participated in multiple formats including keynotes, podium discussions, a case fair and other interactive sessions. Recordings and other materials are available on the conference website. Read more

3.2. CA Cooperation Funds

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 2,000 EUR. In 2023, one initiative was supported through a CA Cooperation Fund (a second application to be carried out in 2024 has been approved):
Climate actions at CA member universities
January - June 2023
Participating CA members: University of Maribor, University of Graz, Charles University Environment Centre, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Kaunas University of Technology

University of Maribor conducted a survey to examine the status of CA member universities on their journey towards achieving sustainability goals on campus, with a focus on climate actions. The survey covered topics such as sustainability management, energy, waste, IT, mobility, food, education, administration, and barriers to progress. A survey report including detailed results is available for download. Read more

3.3. CA Publications

"Unlearning for a Thrivable Future – A draft compendium for educators"
As a result of the Erasmus+ project TRACCskills – Transformative, Cross Cutting skills for the SDGs, the partners from the COPERNICUS Alliance, Legacy17 and Visionautik Akademie published a compendium for adult educators within the formal and non-formal sector who dedicate their work to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and are open to rethinking and renewing their teaching practice. Read more

"The Role of the Human Dimension in Promoting Education for Sustainable Development at the Regional Level"
This special collection of the Frontiers in Sustainability Journal features ten articles by 32 authors. Members of the CA Team and CA Advisory Board (Jana Dlouhá, Clemens Mader, Rodrigo Lozano, Mario Diethart) have been involved as editors and reviewers. The aim of the research topic is to reflect on sustainability transitions on a regional level. The articles draw on experiences from the international network of Regional Centres of Expertise. The special collection has been rewarded with an Honourable Recognition Award from the United Nations University, mentioning the contribution to the shared pool of knowledge and experience that Regional Centres of Expertise around the world can use to engage with local communities and initiate sustainability transitions in higher education institutions. Read more
3.4. CA Conversations

In our series "A conversation with..." we put CA members and their activities in the spotlight. In 2023, we published two interviews.

University of Padua (Italy), Monica Fedeli (Vice Rector of the Third Mission and Regional Relations), Gioia Grigolin (Head of Communication and Marketing):
"The educational function that a university performs today does not end with ensuring that the new generations receive the most complete, up-to-date and quality education possible, but has many implications and is constantly evolving."

Read more

Dominik Allenspach (PH Zurich, Switzerland), Sustainability Officer at Zurich University of Teacher Education:
“Due to increasing internationalization, scarce public funding, the war for talent, etc., universities find themselves in an increasingly competitive environment. Sustainability-oriented universities are better prepared for this competition than non-sustainability-oriented universities”

Read more

3.5. CA Happy Hour

Eight "Happy Hours" in 2023 provided the opportunity for informal exchange and networking. In monthly online gatherings, CA Members could share ideas, ask questions, receive feedback, find partners for new projects, promote activities, or simply have a chat. In addition, we addressed certain topics and invited guests to give short inputs.
3.6. CA Website and Newsletter

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 400 subscribers about CA initiatives, members’ activities, as well as ongoing developments in the field of HESD.

In the “Resources” section on the CA website we provide open access to materials from past conferences, webinars, as well as a selection of publications. In the “Partners” section we highlight organizations that we collaborate with.

3.7. Building opportunities for members

The CA has developed a profile that has made our non-profit network an attractive partner for European projects: In 2023, the CA was actively involved in two Erasmus+ projects. 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’s goals.

TRACCskills – Transformational, cross-cutting people skills for the SDGs
EU Erasmus+ project, 01/2022-03/2023, 3 partners from 2 countries

TRACCskills is an Erasmus+ project implemented by Legacy17 (lead), the CA, and Visionautik Akademie. During 14 months, the project partners developed a practice-oriented draft compendium ("Unlearning for a Thrivable Future – A draft compendium for educators") for use in designing and delivering high-quality, future-fit adult education. The intended users of the compendium are adult educators within the formal and non-formal sector who dedicate their work to ESD and the SDGs, and are open to rethinking and renewing their
teaching practices. As part of this project, a pilot course on “Transformative Decision-Making” took place at Leuphana University Lüneburg from 6-8 December 2022 followed by a 6-week online course on "Transformational People Skills for the SDGs" focusing on basic skills to lead and facilitate transformation processes. Read more

**SDG-iLevel – Leveraging Individual SDG Contributions by University Staff**

**EU Erasmus+ project, 01/2022-01/2025, 6 partners from 4 countries**

*SDG-iLevel* is an Erasmus+ project led by the University of Girona. It aims to drive innovation and achieve sustainable impact in three topical areas of higher education: (1) sustainable development, (2) digital innovation, and (3) mental well-being of higher education staff. The project creates approaches, methods, and tools aimed at uncovering, harnessing, and strengthening the individual contributions of higher education employees to the SDGs in order to improve their mental well-being, job satisfaction, productivity, and teamwork and to promote further SDG contributions. Among other results the project will produce an Online Visibility Booster, a Self-Nudging Online Toolkit, and Policy and Implementation Guidelines. Read more

### 3.8. Outreach activities

Together with [DG HochN (German Society for Sustainability at HEIs)](https://www.hochn.de) the CA initiated an exchange between higher education networks in Europe. Three online meetings took place with representatives from numerous networks. The goal was to share good practices and learn from each other, e.g. on issues such as communication or students involvement.

The CA was a promotional partner for the [Sustainability Education Forum](https://www.aashe.org) hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). The virtual event took place from 8-9 June 2023 across multiple time zones and countries.

The organizers of the international workshop to build the [EU-India Roadmap for Cooperation on Biofuels from Biomass for Aviation and Maritime Transport](https://www.eunis.net/research/21-22-august-2023) (21-22 August 2023) invited the CA to participate in the session on Social transformation in large scale systems and the role of skills and human capital. Co-President Elisabeth Hofmann attended this hybrid event online and gave a presentation on “Transformative learning and change for sustainable development – the role of education institutions”.

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**Goals 4, 5**

**Participation in 6 national or international events and committees**
The CA has become signatory and “Active Partner” of The Jena Declaration, which was launched in 2021 and currently counts almost 1,000 individual and institutional signatories. The Jena Declaration commits to the UN SDGs and follows six principles. It is a platform to coordinate local common actions globally for a deep transformation, which involves NGOs, schools, and others to encourage communities and governments to actively change in favor of sustainability.

The CA is represented in the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) by Jana Dlouhá, CA Advisory Board member. The global network of RCEs is coordinated by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS Tokyo). UNU-IAS has contributed to the effective implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development by mobilizing actors, experiences, and expertise worldwide. Over 170 RCEs in the global network contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On behalf of the CA, Jana Dlouhá participated in the RCE Global Conference from 31 October - 2 November 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as well as in the Ubuntu meeting. Among other topics, the future of the RCE movement and the role of UNU, international institutions and regional advisors were discussed.

Through CA Advisory Board member Anne Zimmermann, the CA is represented on the Advisory Board of Legacy17, an 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.
4. MEMBERSHIP

Members in 2023 according to membership type and change to 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Members</th>
<th>Trial Members</th>
<th>HE NGOs, Associations &amp; Agencies</th>
<th>Observers &amp; Individual Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members in 2023

- Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria institutional member since 2010
- University of Graz, Austria institutional member since 2010
- Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany institutional member since 2010
- Open University in the Netherlands, Netherlands institutional member since 2010
- University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Austria institutional member since 2012
- Charles University Environment Centre, Czech Republic institutional member since 2012
- CRUE (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities), Spain, NGO 2012
- University of Basque Country, Spain institutional member since 2013
- Flemish Ministry of Environment, Nature and Energy, Belgium governmental agency since 2014
- University of Zurich, Switzerland institutional member since 2015
- University of Maribor, Slovenia institutional member since 2016
- University of Bern, Switzerland institutional member since 2016
- University of Girona, Spain institutional member since 2017
- University of Gävle, Sweden institutional member since 2017
- Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania institutional member since 2019
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra (AQUA)</td>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td>Governmental Agency</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasselt University</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH Zurich (Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich)</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Université Bordeaux Montaigne</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of West Attica</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrije Universiteit Brussel</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Padua</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala-Too International University</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
<td>Institutional Observer</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Leuven-Limburg</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Institutional Trial Member</td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bern University of Applied Sciences</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Institutional Member</td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Researchers</td>
<td>2 Belgium, 1 Ireland</td>
<td>Individual Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Location of Institutional Members in 2023

![Map of Europe with markers indicating institutional members](image)
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 Organization serving society with a research and science purpose.

Income
The figure below provides an overview of the CA’s finances. The CA’s income consists exclusively of membership fees. In 2023, the membership fees contributed €23,800.00 (from 29 member institutions/members) to the annual budget. Funding from EU projects is not included in this report.

Expenditures
Expenditures relate to staff (Network Manager), events, Cooperation Funds, communications, administration, and profile and representation (includes memberships (e.g. IAU), travel, subsistence and fees to participate in important events where the CA profiles its work and activities).

The 2023 Higher Education Summit was co-organized with oikos International. The CA covered €4,000.00 of the costs for the conference. One Cooperation Fund was granted to foster collaboration between members.

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

The year 2023 closed with a positive balance of €1,472.51, resulting in a total account balance of €26,506.51 at the end of 2023.
## Finances in 2023 (in €)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership fees</th>
<th>23,800.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Institutional Members</td>
<td>21,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Institutional Trial Member</td>
<td>600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 HE NGOs, Associations &amp; Agencies</td>
<td>1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Individual Members and Observers</td>
<td>400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Membership fees</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,800.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>14,210.96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA Events</td>
<td>4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Summit 2023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile and representation</td>
<td>720.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation Funds</td>
<td>2,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>386.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>1,010.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenditures</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,327.49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Balance 2023
- **Balance 2023**: 1,472.51
- **Carried forward from 2022**: 25,034.00
- **Total Balance**: 26,506.51

## Allocation of expenditures in 2023

- **Staff**: 64%
- **CA Events**: 9%
- **Profile and representation**: 4%
- **Cooperation Funds**: 18%
- **Communications**: 2%
- **Administration**: 3%
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