

2022



ANNUAL REPORT



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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. Elisabeth 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

- ✦ **Asst. Prof. Dr. Ingrid Mulà** Member representative
Assistant Professor at University of Girona, Spain
- ✦ **Dr. Estibaliz Saez de Camara Oleaga** Member representative
Director of Sustainability at University of the Basque Country, Spain
- ✦ **Dr. Anne Zimmermann** Extended Advisory Board Role
Associate Senior Research Scientist, Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern, 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



Goals 1, 2, 3, 5



23-25 November 2023



online



~110 participants

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



Goal 5



1 initiative supported



5 member institutions involved



2,000.00 €

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



Goals 2, 3, 4



2 publications

The CA seeks to contribute to the scientific discourse by sharing experiences and knowledge from its network. Following our strategic goals, we publish in selected channels, also involving members as co-authors.

Unlearning for a Thrivable Future
A draft compendium for educators



"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

...and 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 (MPOD), which is based on involvement of seven faculties: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography and Regional Studies, Geology, Economic 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.

AZ: I 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 experience was...

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



2 interviews

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](#)

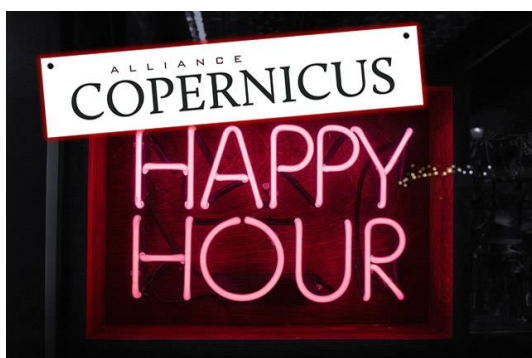


Dominik Allenspach (PH Zurich, Switzerland), Sustainability Officer at Zurich University of Teacher Education:

"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



Goal 1, 3, 5

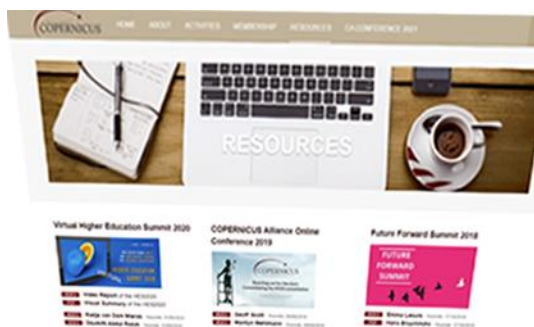


8 sessions

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



Goal 5



31 website news entries



5 newsletters



414 newsletter recipients (+43)

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



Goals 2, 5



2 projects

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



Goals 4, 5



Participation in 6 national or international events and committees

Together with [DG HochN \(German Society for Sustainability at HEIs\)](#) 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** 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** (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”.





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			
Institutional Members	Trial Members	HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies	Observers & Individual Members
 	 	 	 
21 +1	1 -1	3 ±0	4 +1

Members in 2023			
			
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
Flemish Ministry of Environment, Nature and Energy	Belgium	Governmental Agency	2014
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
Kaunas University of Technology	Lithuania	Institutional Member	2019

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra (AQUA)	Andorra	Governmental Agency	2019
Hasselt University	Belgium	Institutional Member	2020
PH Zurich (Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich)	Switzerland	Institutional Member	2021
Université Bordeaux Montaigne	France	Institutional Member	2021
Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde	Germany	Institutional Member	2021
University of West Attica	Greece	Institutional Member	2022
Vrije Universiteit Brussel	Belgium	Institutional Member	2022
University of Padua	Italy	Institutional Member	2022
Ala-Too International University	Kyrgyz Republic	Institutional Observer	2022
UC Leuven-Limburg	Belgium	Institutional Trial Member	2023
Bern University of Applied Sciences	Switzerland	Institutional Member	2023
Individual Researchers	2 Belgium 1 Ireland	Individual Members	

Location of Institutional Members in 2023



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.

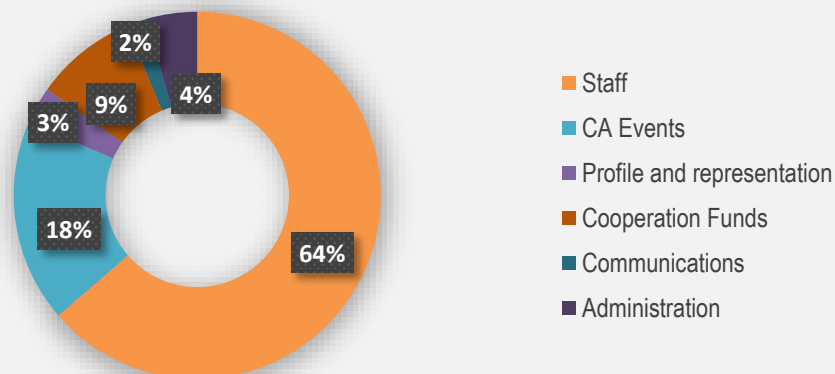
In addition to the described expenditures an important part of the CA workload was covered by in-kind contributions of the whole CA Leadership Team.

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 €)

	Membership fees 21 Institutional Members 21,000.00 1 Institutional Trial Member 600.00 3 HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies 1,800.00 4 Individual Members and Observers 400.00 23,800.00	 14,210.96 Staff 4,000.00 CA Events Higher Education Summit 2023 720.00 Profile and representation 2,000.00 Cooperation Funds 386.20 Communications 1,010.33 Administration 22,327.49
	1,472.51	Balance 2023
	25,034.00	Carried forward from 2022
	26,506.51	TOTAL BALANCE

Allocation of expenditures in 2023



COPERNICUS ALLIANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Published by:

COPERNICUS Alliance – European Network on Higher Education for Sustainable Development
E-mail: office@copernicus-alliance.org | Web: www.copernicus-alliance.org

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