

Copernicus Alliance Newsletter No. 1



COPERNICUS Alliance

European Network on Higher Education for Sustainable Development

Promoting transformational learning and change for sustainable development in higher education

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[Prof Dr Daniella Tilbury](#)
Elected President (2012-14)

[Dr Clemens Mader](#)
Elected Vice-President (2012-14)

[Dr Ingrid Mulà](#)
COPERNICUS officer

COPERNICUS Alliance Newsletter

Welcome to the first of our monthly newsletters. The newsletters will provide information about the activities of the Copernicus Alliance Secretariat and Presidency Team, relevant news and resources of interest to members and updates from the Copernicus Alliance Working Groups. The newsletters will also introduce members' profiles to you and provide details of relevant activities and contact details each month.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and participate in the network activities, please remember to subscribe to the COPERNICUS Alliance. In this email we attach (i) a brief document outlining the value and benefits of membership; and, (ii) a membership form which we would kindly ask you to complete and send to us before 30 March 2012.

For further information about CA activities and membership, please contact Dr Ingrid Mulà (office@copernicus-alliance.org).

News

✦ COPERNICUS Alliance New Presidency Team Elected for 2012-14

The Copernicus Alliance (CA) elected a new President and Vice-President at their recent Annual General Meeting which took place at Kerkrade in November 2011. [Prof Daniella](#)

[Tilbury](#) (University of Gloucestershire, UK) was elected as President and [Dr Clemens Mader](#) (University of Graz, Austria) was elected as Vice-President. The new Team is committed to prioritising Education for Sustainability activities, strengthening Rio+20 outcomes for higher education and extending the network across Europe.

The Copernicus Alliance Secretariat moved to the University of Gloucestershire at the end of January. [Dr Ingrid Mulà](#) is the new contact point for Copernicus Alliance membership activities and inquiries. The new team will seek to engage the membership in various activities throughout the year and welcomes your ideas and feedback.

The Team would like to thank former President, Prof Friedrich M. Zimmermann, Vice-President, Prof Gerd Michelsen, and Copernicus Alliance Officer, Mario Diethart, for their invaluable and outstanding work during the period 2010-11. These colleagues have successfully re-energised the Copernicus partnership after a period of little activity.

✦ **On the Road to Rio+20, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012**

Rio+20 — the short name for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012 - is a historic opportunity for governments, international organisations and major groups to define pathways to sustainable development. The Conference will result in an Outcome Document which seeks to secure political commitment to a [green economy in the context of sustainable development](#) and poverty eradication. Rio+20 is a key priority for the COPERNICUS Alliance in 2012, as the outcomes of this event will influence higher education policy and priorities in the context of sustainable development.

The Alliance will form part of the international dialogue leading up to the event. It will seek quality outcomes through the negotiation process and partner with other HE associations and agencies to promote the sector. The team will consult with Copernicus Alliance members throughout the process and communicate a digest of the discussions and progress over the coming months. There will be a standing item in the monthly newsletter.

Many opportunities exist for members of the Alliance to contribute to Rio+20:

1) *CA Leading the People's Higher Education Treaty*

The COPERNICUS Alliance has agreed to lead the People's Higher Education Sustainability Treaty for Rio+20. The Peoples' Sustainability Treaties consist of a declaration and action plan, which demonstrate the collective visions of people worldwide and help to advance the global movement forging sustainable futures for all. Through joint civil society efforts, the Treaties call for the realisation of practical and sector-specific outcomes at Rio+20.

Several Sustainability Treaties are currently being framed by different civil society organisations and the COPERNICUS Alliance is negotiating ways forward to progress a Higher Education Treaty. We anticipate that this initiative will be a major contribution to advance ESD in higher education at the international level and therefore we welcome your participation. For more information about the People's Sustainability Treaties initiative, please visit the official [blog](#) for the Treaties and read the [article](#) by Uchita de Zoysa published by stakeholderforum.

The Copernicus Alliance will be forming a Working Group to develop the HE Treaty. If you would like to engage in this initiative please email us at: office@copernicus-alliance.org

2) Rio+20 side event on HE and sustainable development

The COPERNICUS Alliance is joining forces with AASHE (USA/Canada), ACTS (Australasia), EAUC (UK), KAGCI (Korea), GUNI (International), Fondaterra (France), UNEP, MESA (Africa) and ProSPER.net (International) and seeking accreditation to hold a side event at Rio+20. The event will seek to raise awareness of the importance of HE and sustainability to delegates at the event and to promote collaboration across the HE associations and agencies.

Several regional teleconference calls have already taken place to negotiate the format and programme of the event. Formal plans will need to be submitted to Rio+20 organisers before 30 March 2012. We are aware that there are limited spaces for side events at the Conference and that the UN has already received many submissions from a wide range of organisations. We will know later in April as to whether our joint proposal has been accepted.

Plans and details of this side event will be revealed in the next COPERNICUS Alliance online newsletter.

3) Lobbying to enhance the role of education and learning in the Rio+20 Zero Draft

A [Rio+20 Zero Draft](#) of the Outcome Conference Document was released on 10 January 2012. This controversial document identifies the key issues to be discussed by at Rio+20 and was compiled on the basis of the input received from the UNCSD Secretariat, member states and other stakeholders. Paragraphs 98-101 highlight the critical role of education in sustainable development:

98. We recognize that access by all people to quality education is an essential condition for sustainable development and social inclusion. We commit to strengthening the contribution of our education systems to the pursuit of sustainable development, including through enhanced teacher training and curricula development.

99. We call upon universities to become models of best practice and transformation by setting an example of sustainability of facilities on their campuses and teaching sustainable development as a module across all disciplines. In this way sustainable practices will become embedded in learning and action.

100. We encourage international education exchange activities on education for sustainable development, including the creation of fellowships and scholarships for international study in disciplines and inter-disciplinary fields pertinent to the promotion of sustainable development.

101. We agree to promote education for sustainable development beyond the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2014, to educate a new generation of students in the values, key disciplines and holistic, cross-disciplinary approaches essential to promoting sustainable development.

The COPERNICUS Alliance has proposed additional changes to the Draft through the UN CSD Education Caucus and is lobbying Member States to support the proposed changes.

The Alliance proposes a change of language to be consistent with that of ESD. It also stresses that paragraph 99 goes against what the Alliance and professionals in this area have been working for and campaigning against in higher education. It is believed

that specialised modules in sustainability or ESD are always optional as HE programmes cannot afford to add another compulsory component in their curricula. This means that the large majority of learners graduate without sustainability competencies. The Alliance proposes that the alternative is that ESD capabilities are embedded across all provision as is promoted by the UN DESD and all authoritative documentation. The UNECE competences provide an internationally agreed tool for supporting the process of embedding ESD across the curriculum.

We are keen to hear from members regarding changes to the Zero Draft. If you wish to assist in the task of reviewing text changes in the lead up to Rio+20, please email us at: office@copernicus-alliance.org

✦ **A Warm Welcome to New Members!**

The Copernicus Alliance extends a warm welcome to the **Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt** (Austria) as a new institutional member. Prof Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Prof Günter Getzinger are the key contacts at this institution. We look forward to your participation in our planned activities for this year.

✦ **COPERNICUS Alliance New Website – More than a Website**

The new COPERNICUS Alliance website is more than a website - it is a flexible, dynamic communication platform based on the open source software elgg. The online platform offers both information about the network and tools to communicate effectively within the community. As a network, the COPERNICUS Alliance is dependent on the participation of its members. With this platform it is possible to communicate in a quick and transparent way and to collaborate smoothly within the working groups.

We encourage you to register and log in to discover the benefits of this platform at: <http://www.copernicus-alliance.org/>

✦ **COPERNICUS Alliance Annual Meeting (Kerkrade, 24-25 November 2011)**

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the COPERNICUS Alliance network took place on 24-25 November in Kerkrade (the Netherlands). The two-day-program included a workshop on “University Appraisal and Assessment for Sustainable Development” supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Research and jointly co-organised by the COPERNICUS Alliance and the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) on 24 November 2011.

Members will find the minutes and powerpoint presentations at: <http://www.copernicus-alliance.org/>

✦ **COPERNICUS Alliance membership**

Copernicus Alliance membership is due for renewal at the end of February. In 2012 the COPERNICUS Alliance will provide opportunities to: inform global dialogues and international events on higher education for sustainability; engage in networking and joint bidding with European higher education institutions; participate in training and leadership development programmes for sustainability in higher education; and contribute to international publications.

The CA Secretariat will keep you informed of news and developments in the area as these arise. If you wish to receive further information about the benefits of membership, please email us at: office@copernicus-alliance.org

Partner of the Month: Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt-Vienna-Graz (AAU)

The concept of Sustainable Development originated in the context of worldwide discussions about the complex interrelations between environmental change and the living conditions of people. The Alpen-Adria-University faces these challenges through interdisciplinary research and teaching as well as through innovative internal processes and approaches across all faculties. One of its faculties – the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, IFF –, has already received an Austrian Government award for the implementation of specific communication and decision processes indispensable for sustainable solutions, and for some of its research (Sustainability Awards 2008 and 2010). The University’s most recent Development Plan refers to organisational, cultural and economic sustainability as well as Education for Sustainable Development as central cross-cutting research and teaching areas. Milestones in the process of introducing sustainability in the AAU are:

2005: Implementation of a Master programme in social and human ecology that seeks to span the social and the natural science background of sustainability in a coherent way.

2007: Implementation of a professorship for environmental history.

2007: Implementation of an Institute of Intervention Research and Cultural Sustainability.

2008: Winner of the Sustainability Award of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

2009-2010: Review of the status quo of sustainability in research, teaching, and administration at the University of Klagenfurt. According to this investigation, important approaches and several internationally acknowledged contributions exist, but a focused and unifying strategy for these actions is missing.

2011: AAU gets the national award for its health management system.

As a result of a university-wide strategy process sustainability has been chosen as one of eight cross-faculty research areas.

In research, there is a broad participation in national and international projects and high publication record of a number of institutes at AAU. In a next step, there will be efforts to enhance visibility at university level and to create platforms of exchange. In addition, many AAU researchers are taking a leading role in important studies for international organizations and politics in general, including lead authorship for a 2011 UNEP (UN Environment Programme) [report](#).

In teaching, the faculty for management and economics has designed a new comprehensive curriculum on "Energy and Environment" for its master studies programme. The IFF offers, beyond the master programme in social and human ecology, a new doctoral school for social ecology. To foster cross-university cooperation, an interfaculty elective course on Sustainable Development is being prepared with a focus on the cultural dimension of sustainability.

For more information about this University, please click [here](#)

COPERNICUS Working Groups

This is your spot to showcase the work that you are doing in each COPERNICUS Working Group and engage other members to join you.

The next newsletter will include short summaries and recent activities of each working group. If you wish to create a new group, we would also be keen to include your proposal in the Newsletter.

Please email us your updates before the last Monday of March

at: office@copernicus-alliance.org

Events

✦ **International Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development "Horizon 2015" (Bonn, 27-28 February 2012)**

Fifty international ESD Experts will debate on the future of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development during a two-day workshop. The International Workshop (IWS) on Education for Sustainable Development, "Horizon 2015", is to be held in Bonn from 27-28 February 2012. It will be organised by the German Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the City of Bonn and the German Savings Bank Association.

For more information about the Bonn International workshop, please click [here](#)

✦ **Leuphana Sustainability Summit (Leuphana University, Lüneburg, 29 February-2 March 2012)**

Celebrating 20 years of Agenda 21, the Sustainability Summit at Leuphana University will gather leading researchers and high-level decision-makers in a transdisciplinary setting with a goal of creating new insights to help move sustainability forward. The Summit will focus on the following three guiding questions:

- What insights about the role of transdisciplinarity for sustainability transitions have we gained over the last 10 years?
- What gaps in research still remain?
- How can we fill these gaps?

For more information about the Conference, please click [here](#)

✦ **Sixth meeting of the UNECE Expert Group for Competences for ESD (Utrecht, 26-28 March 2012)**

The Sixth meeting of the UNECE Expert Group for Competences for ESD will take place from 26 to 28 March 2012 in Utrecht (The Netherlands). The detailed provisional agenda will be developed after 1 and 2 March in order to take into account the relevant outcomes of the 7th Steering Committee on ESD meeting.

Prof Daniella Tilbury, as the President of the COPERNICUS Alliance, will attend this meeting and will report back to the members in the next newsletter.

For more information about the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD, please click [here](#)

✦ **3rd International Sustainability Transitions (IST) Conference (Technical University of Denmark, Copenhagen, 29-31 August 2012)**

CALL FOR PAPERS DEADLINE: 8 February 2012

This third IST conference hosted by the “SusTrans” research alliance in Denmark aims to offer a space for the exchange of experiences with a broad range of empirical investigations and interventions in the field of transition studies. These include studies of the contributions from firms, industries, organisations, social practices, consumption, civil society and social movements. It should also include studies of the territorial and spatial distribution of transition processes and the implications of transitions in the context of developing countries.

For more information about the Conference and important dates, please click [here](#)

✦ **Austrian Sustainability Award for Higher Education - Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and Ministry for the Environment**

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: 15 February 2012

The third round of the Austrian Sustainability Award for Higher Education is open to all universities and colleges in Austria. The award recognises outstanding work in the areas of participatory and reflective learning and creative processes for sustainability.

For more information on the Awards, please click [here](#)

Publications and resources

✦ **New UN Global Report on Higher Education for Sustainability**

A new UN-commissioned Sustainability report has been recently released: 'Higher Education's Commitment to Sustainability: From Understanding to Action' is the fourth volume in a series published by GUNI in collaboration with UNU. The report is focused on the transformation of higher education towards sustainability and the role of the sector in building sustainable communities. This volume includes papers by 85 authors from 38 countries and provides a map of how the regions are advancing this agenda. The regional picture is complemented with national and local case studies of experiences on thematic areas. Many COPERNICUS Alliance members contributed to this important publication.

Please visit the [GUNI website](#) for more information about this report

✦ **UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability Report**

The UN High-level Panel on Global Sustainability has presented its final report, [Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing](#), presenting a vision for a sustainable planet, just society and growing economy. The report makes 56 recommendations to put sustainable development into practice and to mainstream it into economic policy as quickly as possible

Other

✦ **Job opportunity: Professor in Nottingham Business School (UK)**

CLOSING DATE: 5 pm on 28 February 2012

College/Department: College of Business, Law and Social Sciences

Job title: Professor in Nottingham Business School

Salary: Competitive

Location: City site

Special conditions: Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience and record of achievement.

For more information about the post and applications, please click [here](#)

✦ **PhD Funding Available at Essex (UK)**

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: 13 February 2012

Topic: The impact of relocalised food systems on wellbeing

Food produced with a light ecological footprint, as a collective community effort, and distributed through short food chains could contribute to achieving sustainability, resilience and improved wellbeing. This research will further our understanding of the outcomes of such relocalisation initiatives in the East of England on the wellbeing of individuals, households and communities. It will also contribute to an understanding of the wider implications of relocalisation - i.e. its implications for regional and national policy and economy. The research will be part of a wider initiative to actively work together with members of local groups in the East of England to achieve positive and measurable outcomes in terms of betterment of local food production and consumption.

Full details of this PhD project, starting in October 2012, are available [here](#)

✦ **PhD studentship at the University of Hull (UK)**

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: 2 March 2012

To celebrate the University's research successes, the University of Hull is offering the following PhD Studentship in the Faculty of Education: "The impact of CPD on school leaders' understandings and practice in an Education for Sustainable Development"

Primary supervisor: Prof Mike Bottery, m.p.bottery@hull.ac.uk

Successful applicants will be informed of the award by 8th May 2012.

For more information about the studentship, please click [here](#)

✦ **Vacancy Announcement, 4 Postdoctoral Research Fellows in 2012**

CLOSING DATES FOR APPLICATION: 31 MARCH 2012

International Ecosystem Management Partnership

For more information, please click [here](#)

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The Copernicus Alliance brings together higher education institutions from across Europe which are committed to re-orienting universities so that they can make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development. These institutions have signed the [Copernicus Charta](#) which identifies ten change pathways for sustainable development in higher education.

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