

COPERNICUS CHARTA 2.0/2011

European Commitment to Higher Education for Sustainable Development

Preamble

The challenges of sustainable development are more and more visible, everyday, everywhere. Universities have the unique combination of teaching, research and service to society to address these challenges in different ways depending on their different orientations, capabilities and quality. To be more effective they need to enhance their individual capabilities by effective cooperation: between disciplines and generations, between theory and practice and between devoted institutions. Together they should contribute to the 'learning society' we need to measure up to all the challenges; today, tomorrow and thereafter. Since 1988 this has been on the agenda of the European universities when they drafted and signed first the Magna Charta in Bologna and then the CRE COPERNICUS Program and Charter in Geneva.

Many activities have, since, been developed and sometimes successfully implemented; many of these in the framework of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. In the 2010 conference of GUNI, the Global University Network on Innovation, in Barcelona many reports were given on such activities. The European Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development, formally acknowledged by the United Nations University and the Ubuntu Alliance, provide stimulating examples.

The COPERNICUS Alliance believes that it is time to scale up our efforts based on the experience gained. Humankind must learn to care for the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations anywhere in this world, to meet their own needs. In this COPERNICUS Charta 2.0¹ we pledge that the signatories, all universities and other higher education institutions, are firmly committed to play the central role they 'noblesse oblige' are obligated to in contributing to our successful transition towards a sustainable society, which is free, just, equal, solidary and tolerant. A society which is characterized by respect for nature and our fellow humans and by shared responsibility.

¹ The COPERNICUS Charta 2.0 stands in the tradition of the 'COPERNICUS University Charta for Sustainable Development' which was proclaimed in 1993 by the European Rectors' Conference (now: European University Association, EUA).

Principles of action

The COPERNICUS Alliance aims to promote sustainable development in European Higher Education by addressing concerted action on the following target levels:

- Inside higher education institutions,
 - sustainable development is given fundamental status in their strategy and all their activities, i.e. institutional commitment, sustainability ethics, and dissemination of knowledge;
 - the creative development and implementation of comprehensive and integrated sustainability actions is promoted in relation to their functions in learning and teaching, research, internal and external social responsibility.
- In relation to the whole of education,
 - institutions of higher education pay particular attention to their role(s) in realising processes of lifelong learning for sustainable development by involving formal, non-formal and informal learning in this direction;
 - Higher Education for Sustainable Development is promoted in European policy making.
- In relation to society,
 - universities, against the backdrop of sustainable development, have to envision that, beyond being scientific institutions, they have to act as partners in regional networks;
 - closer cooperation with other stakeholders in local communities is aspired to better respond to their needs and requirements as well as to learn lessons from personal and corporate experiences.
- In networks of universities,
 - knowledge on Education for Sustainable Development between European Higher Education and student organisations that work for sustainability is exchanged and enhanced;
 - European Higher Education for Sustainable Development is represented in international committees on Education for Sustainable Development.

The COPERNICUS Alliance aims to achieve above mentioned goals through a growing network of European higher education institutions and develop a platform to strengthen integration of sustainable development in higher education management, education, research and universities' contribution to society.