



COPERNICUS – Origins, vision and activities of a European initiative

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Call for Action

“Encourage and enhance scientific excellence, research and new knowledge development for ESD through the involvement of higher education institutions and research networks in ESD.

Mobilise the core functions of universities (teaching, research and community engagement) to strengthen global and local knowledge of ESD, (...).

Establish institutional and organisational structures (...) that can respond to the complexity and urgency of ESD.

Reward structures should be developed and implemented to support ESD initiatives and research in higher education.”

Bonn Declaration for Education for Sustainable Development, 2009

Genesis of the guiding principle „sustainability“

1992 World Summit in Rio de Janeiro / Agenda 21

Manifestation of global relevance of sustainable development



1993 COPERNICUS-Charta

Implementation of sustainability as guiding principle for institutional and organisational development of higher education

2002 World Summit in Johannesburg / Rio+10

Emphasising the importance of Education for Sustainable Development in the discourse on sustainability

2002 Proclamation of an intern. Decade for “Education for Sustainable Development” (UN DESD)

Commissioning of the UNESCO for the Decade’s coordination by the 57th United Nations’ General Assembly

2005 Graz Declaration

International start of the World Decade DESD (2005-2014) for higher education

2005 Bergen-Kommuniqué

In the European higher education area education shall be based on the principle of sustainable development

2005 Halifax Consultation

Research agenda for higher education for sustainable development

2006 UNESCO Action plan for UN Decade ESD

In the European higher education area education shall be based on the principle of sustainable development

2009 Bonn Conference

Mid-Term Conference of the UN Decade ESD with call for action particularly for higher education institutions



Universities bear responsibility

As the **location of academic education**,

- bearing responsibility for the students and their professional and moral quality as future leaders in society and economy.

As **major contributors to research**,

- tackling questions arising with the transition of societies around the world towards more sustainable development.

As **significant societal actors**,

- shaping their local, regional and national environs and important partner of other stakeholders, and society at large, for a sustainable future.

Graz Declaration, April 2005

Copernicus*-Charta

Implementation at the university level

- Adoption of the COPERNICUS-Charta by the European Rectors' Conference in 1993
- By signing the Charta universities oblige themselves to meet the 10-point action plan including four main objectives:
 - To integrate sustainable development into the entire university system;
 - To stimulate and conduct interdisciplinary research projects;
 - To communicate research results to decision makers in economic management and politics;
 - To bring together universities and other societal actors in local, national and European settings.

** COPERNICUS is the abbreviation for "Cooperation Programme in Europe for Research on Nature and Industry through Coordinated University Studies")*

Background

- 326 signatories of the COPERNICUS Charta before 2005
- Unfortunately, the coordination team activities had been declining over time and, eventually, were ceased completely.
- Revival and re-launch of the inactive network by partner universities of the EU project „Virtual Campus for a Sustainable Europe“ (VCSE)



The reasons are obvious

Constantly growing importance of higher education activities in the area of sustainable development, these include:

- Reorientation of academic activities (competence-oriented teaching, sustainability research, etc.)
- National initiatives and strategies
- Arrangement of the 2nd half of the UN Decade ESD (requirements of the “Bonn Declaration“ within the Mid-Term Conference
- Constantly growing number of RCEs worldwide (innovation networks of universities and other regional actors)

Other networks tell us how to do it

Active continental networks:

- In North America (AASHE)



Association for the
Advancement of
Sustainability in Higher
Education

- In the Asia-Pacific Region (ProSPER.Net)



- Global alliance → International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN)

The bottom line is ...

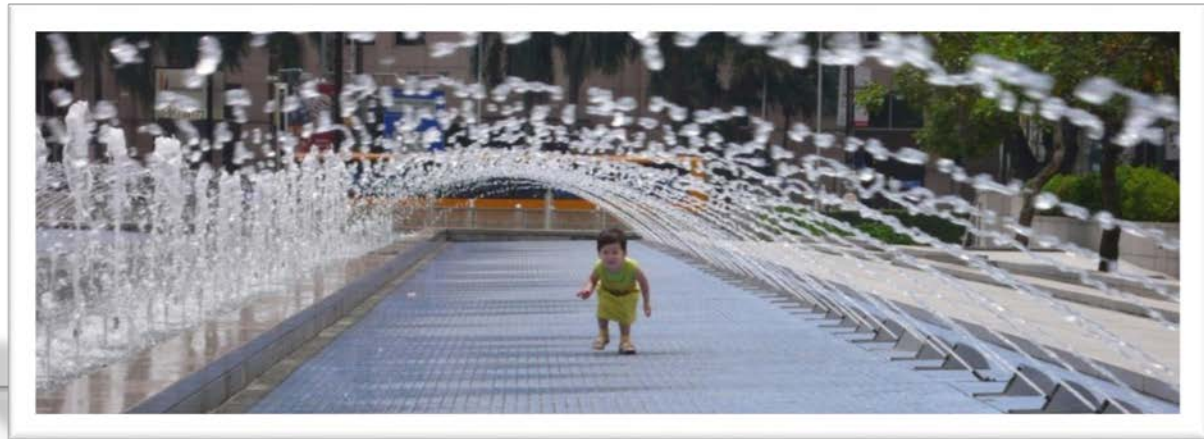
“Knowing what others are doing in the world is a significant source of learning and innovation, and frequently an encouragement and motivational force to persevere in the long term.”

Draft International Implementation Scheme for the UN DESD, 11 August 2005

COPERNICUS Alliance's Vision

...to promote sustainability integration into the European higher education sector, by improving and developing

- ➔ education and research for sustainable development
- ➔ in partnership with societal actors.



Objectives

NETWORK

to exchange and enhance knowledge on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) between European higher education and student organisations that work for sustainable development.

POLICY

to promote Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) in European Policy.

SERVICE

to disseminate tools for sustainability integration in Higher Education.

OUTREACH

to promote sustainable development in European Higher Education.

REPRESENTATION

to represent European HESD in international committees of ESD.



Scientific Steering Committee

The Scientific Steering Committee is being elected every second year by the partner institutions.

- Chair (elected 2009/10): Prof. Dr. Hans van Ginkel, The Netherlands, Universiteit Utrecht
- Prof. Dr. Friedrich Zimmermann; University of Graz, Austria (President 2009/2010)
- Prof. Dr. Gerd Michelsen, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany (Vice-President 2009/2010)
- Prof. Dr. Uwe Schneidewind; University of Wuppertal, Germany
- Prof. Dr. Rietje van Dam-Mieras, Leiden University, The Netherlands
- Ass.-Prof. Eftichios Sartzetakis, University of Mazedonia, Greece
- Nina Hug, oikos International, Switzerland

Founding Management Team

Dr. Maik Adomssent, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany

Dr. Clemens Mader, University of Graz, Austria

Building an Innovation Network

- Annual Reporting by Universities: Universities report annually about their commitment to sustainable development and reflect the COPERNICUS Alliance Charta.
- COPERNICUS Alliance Website with news on EU project cooperations, conferences etc.
- COPERNICUS Alliance Working Groups
 - *Sustainability in European University Policies*
 - *Innovation for Sustainability in European Universities*
 - *Awarding Sustainable Universities*
 - *Arts, Culture & Sustainable Development*
 - *Research Quality*
 - Network
 - Policy
 - Outreach
 - Education
 - Research
 - Service
 - ...
- Participatory management structures!

e.g. Teaching

Cooperation of 19 European universities

➔ Current offer of sustainability-related online courses

- [Sustainable Spatial and Regional Development](#) (*University of Graz*)
- [Human Ecology](#) (*University of Geneva*)
- [Multiple Perspectives on Globalisation and Sustainable Development](#) (*Charles University in Prague*)
- [European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development](#) (*Open University of the Netherlands*)
- [Corporate Sustainability and Natural Resources](#) (*University of Macedonia*)
- [Critical Approaches to Globalisation: Developing Writing Competences](#) (*Charles University in Prague*)
- [Regi-On-Line / Sustainable Spatial and Regional Development](#) (*University of Graz*)
- [Syndromes of Global Change](#) (*Leuphana University of Lüneburg*)

e.g. Research

Joint application by international consortium (incl. India, Egypt, Brasil, Canada, Japan ...)

- ➔ Education for Sustainable Development – Community-Based Research on Local-International Production Systems (ESD CLIPS)

Within the 7th EU framework programme for research (FP7 Work Programme „Science in Society“)



e.g. Outreach & Management

- Exchange of experiences in working groups involving students, management boards of public (politics) and societal actors (NGOs, RCEs,...)
- Benchmarking and mutual support to improve the „Sustainability Performance“; e.g. sustainability reporting, efficient and effective appearance on conferences
- „Direct Line“ to international developments (UN Decade, Ubuntu Alliance, RCEs, UNECE,...)



Budget allocation

- 25 % Research and working groups
- 10 % Annual Copernicus meeting
- 15 % Dissemination, Lobbying, PR

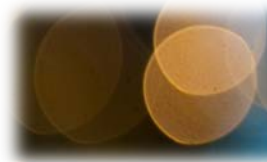
- 40 % Staff costs
- 10 % Overhead

Webpage

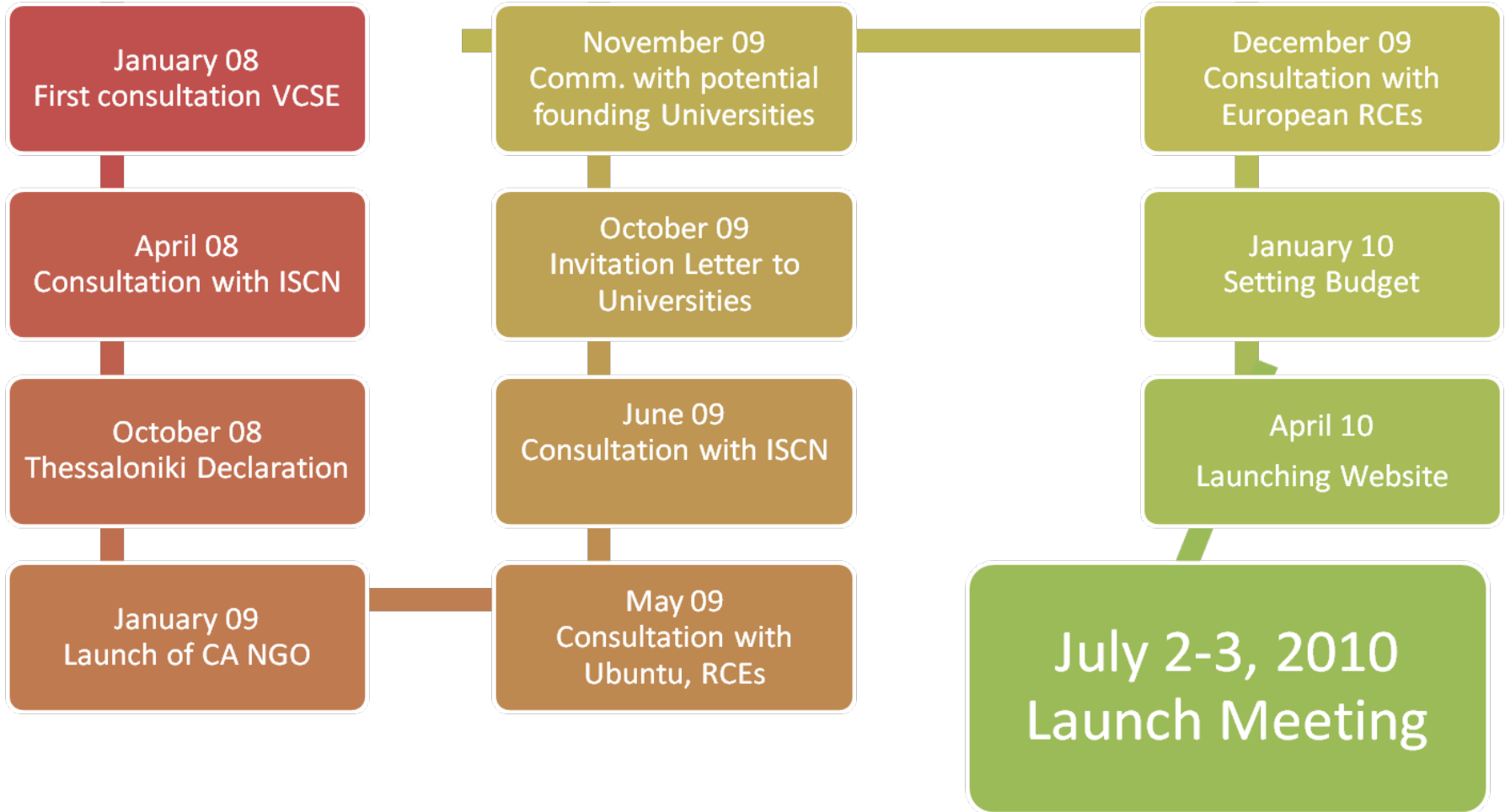
Webpage showing current and future projects in the area of higher education and sustainable development

- Publically available information
- Interactive area where members of COPERNICUS can directly contact each other and easily work together

 www.copernicus-alliance.net



Milestones



Thanks for your attention & looking forward to meeting you at:



Contact

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