



ANNUAL REPORT



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FOREWORD

2025 marks the end of an era for the COPERNICUS Alliance (CA). After four years of fruitful collaboration, a new Leadership Team will take over as of 1 January 2026. Therefore, we want to take the opportunity to reflect on our contribution during two terms of Co-Presidency.

First, we would like to express our gratitude to all members who helped us to establish our *Higher Education Summits* – or HES as many of us call it now – as our most visible network activity. HES has become our main brand. The summit is organised annually, alternating between a face-to-face edition and an online edition (to reduce our travel footprint). One of the main changes that has proven successful, is the joyful and equal partnership (SDG17) that we established with the student organisations oikos International, SOS International and Students4Sustainability in organising the online editions. The students now have a permanent seat in our Advisory Board and one of their alumni (Michael Yang) is one of our new Co-Presidents. This way we wanted to lead by example, hoping that we can show our members that taking student voices seriously can speed up the process for systemic change that we need so much to slow down the Great Acceleration. We believe that this is our second handprint we leave.

Thirdly, and maybe more behind the scenes, we reached out to other national or thematic networks of higher education institutions for sustainability. This network of networks, once initiated by the German network DG HochN, is now a constant in our daily operations. We learnt from other networks what we can do to better serve our members. It marked the start of a round of consultations with our members. One of the things we learnt during this consultation round, was that our members want to meet each other more often than once a year during the HES. So we experimented with “Happy Hours”, and eventually established a new successful format: the “CA Exchange”. Through this webinar series we highlight activities in our network and foster interaction and exchange between colleagues from different member institutions and beyond. The CA Exchange can be used by our members as a dissemination channel in European projects, and is one of our continuous efforts to inspire learning for sustainability.

We had many more ideas, but there's only one page to write a foreword. Although Eglé and Tom say goodbye (Elisabeth remains in the Leadership Team), they promised to become CA *groupies*. They wish the new team lots of luck and inspiration in moving up the gear for higher education for sustainability.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Hofmann".

Asst. Prof. Elisabeth Hofmann
Co-President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Kuppens".

Assoc. Prof. Tom Kuppens
Co-President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eglé Staniškienė".

Prof. Eglé 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), **Assoc. 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
- ◆ **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
- ◆ **Michael Yang** Student Representative
oikos International, 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 2025. We report on them below.

3.1. HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT 2025



Goals 1, 2, 3, 5

19-20 November 2025

online

~85 participants

25 countries

The 2024 Higher Education Summit "Bold Education in Scary Times – Shaping a Just, Safe and Regenerative Future" was co-organised by the COPERNICUS Alliance, oikos, SOS International and Students4Sustainability. From 19-20 November 2025, over 85 participants from 25 countries joined the two-day online conference. The program was full of brave, creative and interactive sessions as well as thought-provoking keynotes and panel discussions featuring Joshua Amponsem, Jean-Christophe Carteron, Oshin Ghiotto, Michiel van Harskamp and Isabel Menezes. Recordings and additional materials are available on the conference website. [Read more](#)

3.2. CA Cooperation Funds



Goal 5

1 initiative supported

4 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 2025, one initiative was supported through a CA Cooperation Fund:



SOS International Summit

7-10 May 2025

Participating CA members: SOS International, oikos, University of Hasselt, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

The SOS International Summit was hosted by the Green Office in Ghent under the theme "Mobilizing Student Leadership for Environmental Justice". More than 100 students, educators, and leaders from around the world convened

to outline a decisive, action-oriented path toward a sustainable and equitable future. The post-summit compendium of presentations highlights a commitment to moving beyond traditional sustainability and embracing the urgency of Environmental Justice. [Read more](#)

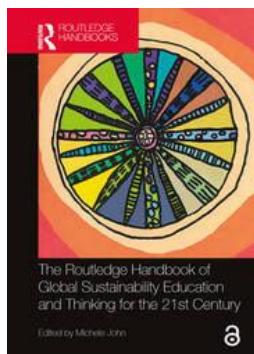
3.3. CA Publications



Goals 2, 3, 4

1 publication

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.



“Key learnings from integrating sustainability in European higher education institutions – The value of networks and reflective leadership”

Weiss, M., Mulà, I., Zimmermann, A.B. & Diethart, M.

This study – published as a chapter in the [Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Education and Thinking for the 21st Century](#) – explores rich stories from five European universities (University of the Basque Country, Daugavpils University, Hasselt University, Kaunas University of Technology, Vienna University of Economics and Business), shedding light on integration processes to embed sustainability in different ways, with a focus on the leadership skills of pioneers, their learning journeys to develop competencies and skills for sustainability integration, and their insights into networks as safe spaces to engage in collaborative learning. [Read more](#)

3.4. CA Conversations

As we can see in the annual greenhouse gas balance, most greenhouse gas emissions are generated in the areas of energy and mobility. In 2023, total emissions amounted around 12,680 tonnes of CO₂ equivalents, with mobility accounting for the largest share (7,200 t CO₂eq), followed by energy (3,880 t CO₂eq), resources (1,600 t CO₂eq) and changes in inventories (40 t CO₂eq).

MD: Where do you see the biggest challenges when it comes to reducing emissions? Is it energy, mobility, infrastructure? Or perhaps more on the social side such as changing habits of staff and students? Do you have priorities that you are following and examples of measures that you can highlight?

IM: I see the challenges in the area of thermal energy, where the University of Graz is dependent on the mix of district heating. New construction projects are already being equipped with geothermal energy, but district heating covers the majority of our heating requirements. In terms of electricity, we have already achieved our reduction target by switching to U246-certified green electricity. Furthermore, we are also trying to reduce consumption with various measures and become more independent due to the expansion of photovoltaic systems. The area of mobility is another major challenge. The modal split is already very good for both, staff and students. Nevertheless, we are aiming for improvements by further expanding the cycling infrastructure, promoting sustainable commuting for staff and trying to improve public transport connections through discussions with the city. Business trips to conferences or project meetings are clearly a research task. On the one hand, measures are being taken to enable business trips to conferences or project meetings as sustainable as possible. At the same time, we



Goals 1, 3, 5

2 interviews

In our series "A conversation with..." we put CA members and their activities in the spotlight. In 2025, we published two interviews.



Bordeaux Montaigne University (France), Frédéric Hoffmann (Vice President), Elisabeth Hofmann (Head of the UNESCO Chair for Training of SD professionals), Emma Gresset (Pedagogical Engineer):

"Things are moving in French universities: We now have a legal obligation to train all our bachelor students in 'Ecological Transition for Sustainable Development'."

[Read more](#)



Ukrainian National Forestry University (Ukraine), Volodymyr Zahorskyi (Rector), Vasyl Lavnyy (Vice-Rector for Research), Ihor Soloviy (Professor, Inst. of Social Sciences, Administration and Law), Uliana Pavliuk (Deputy Director, Inst. of Computer Science and Information Technologies, UI GreenMetric Ranking coordinator):

"In the face of war we believe that sustainability is not only a framework for environmental stewardship – it is a pathway to national green recovery, institutional renewal, and global solidarity."

[Read more](#)

3.5. CA Exchange



 Goal 1, 3, 5

 3 sessions

Through the new webinar series "CA Exchange" the CA highlights activities in the network and fosters interaction and exchange between colleagues from different member institutions and beyond. CA members can host a CA Exchange, e.g. to share project results (dissemination), present new publications, get feedback on ongoing research, find project partners, or host an interactive workshop.



"CCREDO – Co-creation of teaching and learning materials for education for sustainable development"

29 January 2025

Lise Janssens introduced the initiative "CCREDO – Co-creation of teaching and learning materials for education for sustainable development". She explained what a lesson design workshop is and illustrated how to organize lesson design workshops and co-creation initiatives to support education for sustainable development. [Read more](#)



“Frustrated about the need to mark an inspiring ESD session? Let’s think about it together!”

2 June 2025

Jordan King (early career researcher and Director of Innovations in Honors and Professor of Practice at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, US), joined former CA President Anne Zimmermann and CA Co-President Elisabeth Hofmann presented two examples of student-centered assessment approaches from the US and France. [Read more](#)



“Cycling to Care – Intergenerational Well-being and Climate Resilience on the Move”

9 December 2025

Giulia Sonetti (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya – Barcelona Tech & ISGlobal), introduced the project *Cycling to Care (C2C)* and shared emerging findings from pilot interventions in Barcelona, where young volunteers cycle with older residents to explore emotional, social, and environmental transformation in everyday urban life. The session explored the role of affective and experiential learning in sustainability transitions and how universities can foster well-being through place-based, intergenerational collaboration. [Read more](#)

3.6. CA Website, Newsletter and LinkedIn



Goal 5



26 website news entries



5 newsletters



453 newsletter recipients

Through the [CA website](#), the [CA newsletter](#) and our [LinkedIn channel](#) we provide and distribute information about the network and promote members' activities. The CA newsletter informs over 450 subscribers about CA initiatives, members' activities, events, publications, 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

1 project

The CA has developed a profile that has made our non-profit network an attractive partner for European projects: In 2025, the CA was actively involved in one Erasmus+ project. 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.



SDG-iLevel – Leveraging Individual SDG Contributions by University Staff
EU Erasmus+ project, 02/2022-02/2025, 6 partners from 4 countries

After three years, the *SDG-iLevel* project was successfully concluded in February 2025. The project created approaches, methods, and tools aimed at uncovering, harnessing, and strengthening the individual contributions of higher education employees to the SDGs. The following project outcomes are available: Online Visibility Booster, Self-Nudging Online Toolkit, MOOC "Empowering University Staff to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals", Policy and Implementation Guidelines, and Departmental Roadmaps.

[Read more](#)

3.8. Outreach activities



Goals 4, 5

Participation in several national or international events and committees

Together with [DG HochN \(German Society for Sustainability at HEIs\)](#) the CA facilitates an exchange between higher education networks in Europe. Four 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 is represented in the **Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs)** by **Jana Dlouhá**, CA Advisory Board member. She attended the **14th Global Conference of Regional Centres of Expertise for Education for Sustainable Development** in Okayama, Japan. 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 200 RCEs in the global network contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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 2025 according to membership type and change to 2024									
Institutional Members		Trial Members		HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies		Student Organizations		Observers & Individual Members	
									
21	+1	0	0	2	±0	2	±0	4	±0

Members in 2025				
				
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	
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna	Austria	Institutional Member	2012	
Charles University Environment Centre	Czech Republic	Institutional Member	2012	
University of Basque Country	Spain	Institutional Member	2013	
The University of Warsaw	Poland	Institutional Member	2014	
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	
Kaunas University of Technology	Lithuania	Institutional Member	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	International Observer	2022
UC Leuven-Limburg	Belgium	Institutional Member	2023
Bern University of Applied Sciences	Switzerland	Institutional Member	2023
Students Organising for Sustainability International	(UK)	Student Organization	2024
oikos International	(Switzerland)	Student Organization	2024
Ukrainian National Forestry University	Ukraine	Institutional Member	2025
Collectif pour l'Integration du developpement durable et de la Responsabilité Societale dans l'Enseignement Supérieur (CIRSES)	France	Association	2025
Individual Researchers	1 Belgium 1 Ireland 1 Canada	Individual Members	

Location of Institutional Members in 2025



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 2025, the membership fees contributed € 21,800.00 (from 28 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 2025 Higher Education Summit was co-organized with oikos, SOS International and Students4Sustainability. The administrative part was handled by oikos, so there were no costs for the CA for the conference.

One Cooperation Fund was granted to foster collaboration between members.

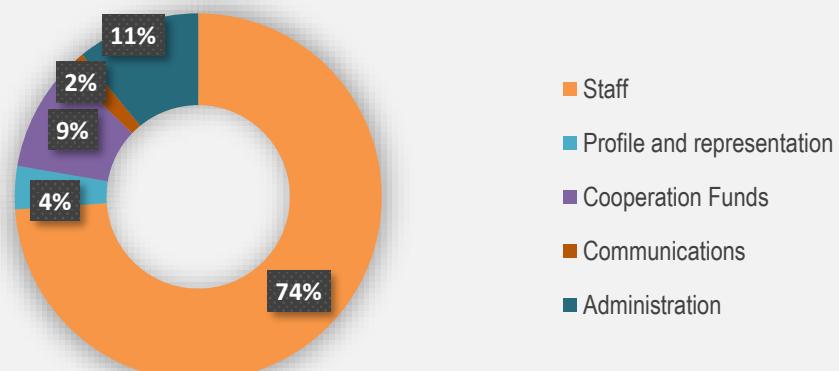
In addition to the described expenditures an important part of the CA workload was covered by in-kind contributions of the whole CA Leadership Team.

The year 2025 closed with a positive balance of € 758.55, resulting in a total account balance of € 21,572.51 at the end of 2025.

Finances in 2025 (in €)

			
Membership fees			
20 Institutional Members	20,000.00	15,551.42	Staff
2 HE NGOs, Associations & Agencies	1,200.00	0.00	CA Events
2 Student Organizations	200.00	800.00	Higher Education Summit 2025
4 Individual Members and Observers	400.00	2,000.00	Profile and representation
		397.54	Cooperation Funds
		2,292.49	Communications
			Administration
	21,800.00	21,041.45	
	758.55		Balance 2025
	20,813.96		Carried forward from 2024
	21,572.51		TOTAL BALANCE

Allocation of expenditures in 2025



COPERNICUS ALLIANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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