

Copernicus Alliance Newsletter No. 5



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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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Dr Ingrid Mulà
COPERNICUS
coordinator

COPERNICUS Alliance Newsletter

This is the Copernicus Alliance (CA) Newsletter No.5. We hope that it provides a valuable knowledge sharing platform for members.

If you would like to make a contribution to the next newsletter please contact Dr Ingrid Mulà by the 15th April 2013 at: office@copernicus-alliance.org.

We would also appreciate it if you could tell us whether you find the newsletters useful and give us some feedback and suggestions for improvement.

The newsletters are only available to CA members.

Partner of the Month

In every CA Newsletter, we showcase the work and activities of one of our partner organisations. The partner of the month is selected for its contribution to sustainable development and ESD.

Open Universiteit, School of Science (The Netherlands) by Joop de Kraker and Paquita Pérez

Open Universiteit, a founding member of the Copernicus Alliance, is the national university for open and distance learning in The Netherlands. The university is a frontrunner in new learning technologies and educational insights and continuously works to improve and innovate its education and to support Dutch higher education in preparing for new learning challenges. Expertise on learning for sustainable development is primarily located in the School of Science, which offers BSc and MSc programmes in Environmental Sciences. Already for more than a decade, its staff members develop and evaluate innovative learning environments that enable students to learn for sustainable development. An example is the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development, which is offered since 2001, in cooperation with more than 10 partner universities from all over Europe. The School of Science participates regularly in national and international projects and programmes in the field of learning for sustainable development, for example the EU-funded projects 'Virtual Campus for a Sustainable Europe' (VCSE) and 'Lifelong Learning Networks for Sustainable Development' (3-LENSUS).

The School's research programme on 'Knowledge production for a sustainable society' includes three main topics: environmental outlook studies, governance of sustainable development, and learning for sustainable development. Under the latter topic, the School investigates and develops ICT-based tools and approaches in support of learning for sustainable development, both in higher education and professional practice, in cooperation with the university's Centre for Learning Sciences & Technologies. In higher education, research focuses on collaborative learning environments that support the development of competences for sustainable development. In the professional practice of sustainable development, social learning among actors plays an important role, and we investigate how ICT-based tools, such as computer models and social network platforms, can support these learning processes. In both contexts, the focus of our R&D efforts is on collaborative knowledge creation for sustainable development and how modern ICT can support this. With this particular focus we aim to make a nationally and internationally unique and innovative contribution to the field of learning for sustainable development.

For more information, please contact Joop de Kraker (jk@ou.nl) and/or Paquita Pérez (paquita.perez@ou.nl).

News

✦ A warm welcome to new CA members!

The CA extends a warm welcome to the **Fondation UVED** (France), the **University of Basque Country** (Spain) and the **Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas** (CRUE, Spain) as new members. We look forward to your participation in our planned activities for this year.

✦ Join us at an exciting CA/UNU IAS Side Event held during the GUNi 6th International Conference on Higher Education (Barcelona, 13 May 2013, 9.30-13h)

As part of our commitment to influence international dialogues, CA has joined forces with UNU IAS to co-organise a side event on the 13th of May during the GUNi Conference. The event, entitled "**The People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education: Engaging communities of learning in change for sustainability**", seeks to:

- share innovative approaches and practices which contribute to the implementation of the HE Treaty
- seek contributions for a UNU IAS/CA publication which will be launched in November 2013

The side event will bring together CA members, Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) and signatories of the Treaty to share insight, challenges and successes in engaging learning communities in change for sustainability. **The side event is free of charge.**

For further information or to book a place, please email Ingrid Mulà at: office@copernicus-alliance.org.

We hope you can make every effort to join us! A CA informal meeting for members will be organised on the 14th May, where CA activities and future network plans will be discussed. Please see below.

✦ **Come along at the CA informal meeting for members organised during the GUNi Conference (Barcelona, 14 May 2013, Time to be Confirmed)**

CA is planning to organise an informal meeting for members, which will take place on the evening of the 14th May in Barcelona. The aim of the meeting is to provide an informal space for members to meet, share CA developments and progress as well as to discuss future network activities. Details of this meeting will be confirmed soon. **We hope that all of you will be able to attend and participate in the dialogues!**

Please confirm your attendance at: office@copernicus-alliance.org

✦ **EU Project to support network activities submitted!**

We are pleased to announce that the ERASMUS Academic Network Project "University Educators for Sustainable Development (UE4SD)" was successfully submitted to the EACEA on the 31st of January. The project seeks to support the work of CA and was developed by a steering group composed by the University of Gloucestershire (lead organisation, UK), Charles University (Czech Republic), Leuphana University (Germany) and the University Autónoma of Madrid (Spain).

The project involves 55 higher education institutions, organisations and associations in 34 countries seeking pathways for progressing sustainability innovation in the HE curriculum. The partnership will map opportunities for university educators to develop ESD competences through professional development and identify how competences can be best developed to enhance quality academic practice in the area of sustainability. It will identify leading practice in this area in Europe and develop a publication and online platform of resources to support changes to curriculum development and academic provision in universities.

We would like to thank all CA members involved in this project for their invaluable support. We will know whether the project has been successful in the summer.

✦ **London South Bank University/Higher Education Academy/CA Workshop: "Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum: Practising what we teach" (London South Bank University, 12 March 2013, 10.15 – 16.30)**

We are pleased to invite all members to participate at this workshop co-organised by London South Bank University, the Higher Education Academy (UK) and CA. The event is led by David Clemson, facilitator of the Innovative Teaching and Learning CA Working Group.

Keynote Speakers: Prof Clemens Mader and Prof Daniella Tilbury, COPERNICUS Alliance

An interdisciplinary workshop for academics and practitioners focused on enhancing ESD in business and management, hospitality, leisure, marketing and tourism.

- Embedding the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (UN PRME) within the curriculum.
- Evaluating approaches to learning and teaching that are congruent with the People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education (2012).

The workshop includes the launch of the new HEA book on Enhancing Education for Sustainable Development in Business and Management, Hospitality, Leisure, Marketing, Tourism (2013).

Please register in advance [here](#).

✦ **CA supports Charles University Environment Center and Schumacher Institute for Sustainability Systems Conference "Transdisciplinary Research on Sustainability in Europe: generic issues" (Prague, 23-24 May 2013)**

The Schumacher Institute for Sustainability Systems and the Charles University Environment Center, supported by CA, will co-host a transdisciplinary research workshop in Prague, Czech Republic, on May 24&25 under the auspices of the CONVERGE EU FP7 research project and Czech MOSUR project. The one and a half day workshop is designed for experts from across the EU area who are working in Transdisciplinary Research for Sustainability (TDRS). The event is for professionals from European Research Area (ERA) organisations and policy areas and for those who are running (or have run) transdisciplinary research projects on sustainability. The aim of the workshop is to help inform the EU's research agendas and meta-agendas about evaluation, conduct and processes of TDRS with information, perspectives and analyses from practitioners, and to discuss and develop recommendations to the ERA to help enable better and more productive TDRS.

For more information and to register your interest in participating, click [here](#).

✦ **University of Graz Update by Mario Diethart**

Sustainability4U lectures series from March to June 2013

"Sustainability4U" is a joint initiative of the four universities in Graz – all COPERNICUS Alliance members – namely University of Graz, University of Technology Graz, Medical University Graz, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. For the fourth time they organize a lecture series entitled „EU – EUROPEAN UTOPIA? – Sustainability as basis for society“. During March and June eight lectures will be held by university researchers as well as external well known speakers that address various topics such as mobility, climate change, human rights or demographic change. The lectures series are open for everybody and held

in German language. More information is available on the [Sustainability4U website](#).

✦ **University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) Updates by Matthew Aversano-Dearborn**

“Climate Friendly Climate Research” Project running in 2013

“Does flying around the world to conferences suggest a real and urgent concern for the effect of greenhouse gas emissions on the climate?” (Thompson 2011)

In January the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, the Vienna University of Economics and Business, the University of Salzburg and the Alpen-Adria University, Klagenfurt began to work on a collaborative project in the framework of the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria entitled “Climate Friendly Climate Research”. This project is funded by the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research as part of the Austrian contribution to the EU Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) CLIMATE, on the basis of and to put into practice the JPI CLIMATE’s ‘sustainability principle’ which aims at mitigating the carbon footprint of research and research programming operations. The project will be actively supported by and provide input to the work of JPI CLIMATE representatives and their institutions across Europe.

This project aims to help provide a break-through in climate (friendly) research, reducing the carbon footprint of (climate) research whilst increasing its credibility. As such, it aims to go beyond business as usual and use the opportunity to jointly identify and develop innovative and inspiring approaches at different levels and stages of the research and research programming processes.

Guest Professorship, Dr. Ben Champion, at BOKU, Vienna

Dr. Ben Champion is Director of Sustainability as well as Assistant Professor of Geography at Kansas State University in the USA.

The BOKU Department for Sustainable Agricultural Systems invited Dr. Champion to the BOKU as a guest professor to offer a block seminar entitled “History and Evolution of Modern Food Systems – The Perspective from the US” in January 2013. In addition to the seminar, Dr. Champion also met with the BOKU Centre for Global Change and Sustainability, where he presented the results of a research project on climate change education in the US Midwest, and gave two public lectures on sustainability in the agro-food system. Both his seminar and his public lectures were well attended and followed by lively Q&A sessions.

Values as performance indicators (WaL): A path to active climate protection for universities?

WaL is a pilot project being conducted by BOKU and the University of Brighton in the UK, which aims to identify the values that are important for BOKU stakeholders, as well as indicators for those values. People’s decisions are driven by the values they hold, frequently unconsciously and sometimes to the virtual exclusion of a rational assessment of the facts. Some values provide a better source of motivation for engaging in activities that reduce the CO2 footprint of individuals and organizations than other values. The intention of this project is to trigger a discussion about the identified values and indicators with relevant stakeholder groups. These discussions should lead to inclusion of identified indicators in routine evaluations, and thereby strengthen those values that eventually lead to more climate friendly and sustainable actions.

Project coordinator and contact person: Maria Miguel Ribeiro: maria.ribeiro@boku.ac.at

Events

✦ **University of Gloucestershire, Keele University and Higher Education Academy (UK) Workshop: “Developing Graduate Attributes through Sustainability” (University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, 15 March, 10 – 16h)**

This free one day workshop to held at the University of Gloucestershire (UK) focuses on the delivery of ESD and graduate attributes using an interdisciplinary ‘Hybrid’ Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach.

This workshop is the outcome of a three-year project funded by the Higher Education Academy’s National Teaching Fellowship Scheme entitled ‘Hybrid problem-based learning: a scalable approach to sustainability education?’; a collaboration between Keele University, The University of Manchester and Staffordshire University. The Hybrid-PBL approach has been developed to enable the delivery of PBL-style teaching to larger cohort numbers in a less resource intensive way for the teaching and learning of sustainability education. This will be explored during the workshop along with links to other pressing agendas in Higher Education including Graduate Attributes, Employability, and Internationalisation amongst others.

This workshop is aimed at educators from any discipline who have interests in developing: 1) problem-based learning approaches, 2) education for sustainability, 3) graduate attributes and 4) the use of social media in teaching.

Further details about the workshop, a programme for the day and the workshop booking form can be found [here](#).

If you are interested in attending then please complete a booking form and return to Barbara Rainbow, sustainability team, rainbow@glos.ac.uk.

Publications and resources

✦ **New Online Guide to ‘Quality Education for Sustainability in Higher Education’ developed by the University of Gloucestershire**

The University of Gloucestershire has led a unique sector wide research project, which aimed to change the face of the higher education curriculum to make it more relevant to global sustainability challenges. Funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Leadership Governance and Management Fund, it is the largest national project to deal with sustainability as a curriculum and whole-of-institution priority. The online guide contains video clips, insights, tips and adaptable tools for institutions, to support them in embedding EfS through quality assurance and enhancement systems.

Please click [here](#) to access the online guide.

✦ **New Publication from the University of Basque Country: "La Sostenibilidad desde la Universidad: una reflexión interdisciplinar"**

This publication developed by the University of Basque Country (Spain) aims at engaging the reader in one of the most important challenges of the 21st Century. At present, sustainable development is one of the main national and international concerns and calls for new ways of understanding the relationships between people and the environment. Universities are key players to promote innovative thinking and practice in the area of sustainable development.

The University of Basque Country is committed to embed sustainability in a whole-institutional approach and providing learning opportunities for their students and staff to contribute to building a better future. Contributions to this publication were sought from academics and lecturers at the University coming from different backgrounds and disciplines such as Law, Architecture, Humanities, Sociology or Chemistry. Authors of this publication reflect on the challenges that sustainability poses to their courses and how they address them through their teaching.

For more information about this publication, please contact Ms Aitxiber Zallo at aitxiber.zallo@ehu.es.

✦ **Views and Experiences about Sustainability at Ibero-Americans Universities**

This report is one of the products of the co-operation amongst the Universities of São Paulo, Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) and Autónoma de Madrid (Spain). It includes theoretical approaches but also practical experiences which describe how various higher education institutions from Brazil, Spain, Argentina, Chile and England have embedded sustainability in their activities. **The document is accessible [here](#)** (only in Spanish and Portuguese).

✦ **The Sustainable University – Process and Prospects by S. Sterling, L. Maxey and H. Luna**

Written by leading exponents of sustainability and sustainability education, this book brings together examples, insight, reflection and strategies from the experience of ten universities, widely recognised as leaders in developing sustainability in higher education. The book thus draws on a wealth of experience to provide reflective critical analysis of barriers, achievements, strategies and potential. It critically reviews the theory and practice involved in developing the sustainable university in a systemic and whole institutional manner, including the role of organisational learning.

Please click [here](#) for more information about this publication.

Other

✦ **Education for Sustainable Development after 2014 and DESD Final Report Questionnaires**

As lead agency for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), UNESCO is preparing the final report on the DESD. This report will take stock of the growth of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) throughout the DESD and give an updated picture of ESD. It will be launched at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in 2014 and will be an important tool for stakeholders and partners to use achievements and lessons learnt for ESD implementation beyond 2014.

At the same time, UNESCO is preparing the follow-up to the DESD and ways forward in ESD. The 190th session of the UNESCO Executive Board requested the Director-General "to develop, in consultation with Member States, and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the proposal for a programme framework, led by UNESCO, which should ... address education at all levels and in all forms, be based on a comprehensive sustainable development agenda, while also encouraging strategic focus and national commitment."

In light of these two processes, UNESCO is inviting stakeholders to participate in the final phase of the Monitoring and Evaluation effort of the DESD and to contribute to formulating what the future of ESD should look like. If you would like to take part in this process, please complete the following questionnaires prepared by UNESCO:

- **Questionnaire 1 – Education for Sustainable Development after 2014** is due by 30 March 2013. Click [here](#) to complete this questionnaire.
- **Questionnaire 2 – UN Decade of ESD Final Report** is due by 31 October 2013. Please click [here](#) to complete this questionnaire.

✦ **Launch of the International Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education**

The Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education will be launched at the 27th Session of United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Governing Council in Nairobi, Kenya on the 20th February 2013.

The Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education brings together global organisations which have created sustainability assessment tools designed to support universities and colleges improve their social, economic and environmental accountability. By coming together it is our goal that more universities and colleges learn about the value of sustainability assessment tools to improve the sustainability performance across the whole of their institution. The Platform is also designed to assist commitments of HESI, Higher Education Sustainability Initiative signatories, by providing a range of tools and options in assessing and improving their sustainability performance. It can also support complimentary Rio+20 initiatives such as the People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education.

For further information about this initiative 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 Charter](#) which identifies ten change pathways for sustainable development in higher education.

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