
COPERNICUS

The COPERNICUS University Alliance is a **European network of universities and colleges** committed to transformative learning and **change for sustainable development**. Founded in 1993 in Geneva, almost 20 years later the Alliance itself and especially the Charter that emerged have undergone a significant transformation. The Charter thus remains a strategic reference document but is complemented by an action plan with concrete objectives. The vision of the Alliance is to promote cooperation between educational institutions and stakeholders in the area of higher education and the challenges of **Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD)**, with the aim of addressing the issue at the level of the whole institution. The Alliance focuses on innovative approaches that can contribute to a sustainable future both locally and globally.

The Alliance sees **mutual respect, commitment to rules, and collaboration** among members as central values.

COPERNICUS has identified four main challenges to a sustainable university future:

- "Value-based research and teaching are often believed to be problematic by academics, who consider freedom of thinking to be the highest good at a university; **sustainable development is often perceived as an imposed norm** and therefore rejected in principle.
- Assessment processes are currently measuring what can be measured instead of what should be measured, and the entire institutional setup of higher education institutions relies on **competition rather than on collaboration**.
- **Activities at higher education institutions tend to be compartmentalized**; while this is necessary to ensure expertise and efficiency in science, teaching, and operations, it also hampers the systemic, interdisciplinary, and inter-operational approach needed for sustainable development and for moving from "knowing to doing".
- Are we able to take up the challenge of teaching and researching with sustainable development in mind? This requires a focus on **competences in addition to knowledge**, as well as a shift from teaching to learning – which lecturers find challenging, in particular, given the notorious lack of professional development to support these changes towards education for sustainable development."

Overcoming these barriers is anchored in the Alliance's Action Plan and in line with the international 2030 Agenda .

CU's representative in the COPERNICUS Alliance and a member of the Advisory Board is RNDr. Jana Dlouhá, Ph.D. from the Charles University Environment Centre .