2024 HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT:
"Co-creating change for sustainability"

Call for Contributions

The Higher Education Summit 2024 aims to be a space for collective reflection, discussion, and co-creation for those engaged in transforming higher education into a more sustainable, regenerative learning environment.

Transformations are never easy; oftentimes they are disorienting and disruptive. To provoke transformation, there must first be an awareness of problematic yet deeply embedded paradigms and practices; only then can they be critically examined and changed into more sustainable ones. A sustainability-oriented transformation is thus a journey that looks inward through critical reflection, as much as it is one that reaches outward through collective effort and dialogue and moves forward by searching for sustainable solutions. How can higher education transform itself and what would this transformation entail? How could this positively impact the greater community and ultimately lead to meaningful change?

Many suggestions that come from education for sustainability underline the need for a whole-institution approach (WIA), an integrated means to address all educational processes that influence learning. Aligning and coordinating these processes with each other, it drives and stimulates educators to systematically promote learning and find solutions for the problems we face today. Moreover, this approach helps organizations incorporate the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 in an organic and systemic way, with attention to vision, curriculum, pedagogy and teaching, and management of the organization itself, and research. In this way, education professionals are prompted to reflect on their own learning needs and forge more transdisciplinary collaborations within the university, as well as engage with stakeholders outside their organization. The aim is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by co-creating learning environments that stir critical reflection, welcome dialogue, and put primacy in transdisciplinary collective efforts.

We invite you to be a part of this transformative journey in shaping the future of higher education. Join us in Padua from 8-10 September 2024!

This summit is a unique opportunity for you to share your research, sustainable practices, innovative ideas, and experiences in higher education. We believe that dialogue and collaboration among educators and stakeholders in higher education is crucial in addressing the complex and multifaceted challenges that dominate the modern world. Whether you are a passionate educator, a dedicated researcher, a curious undergrad, an eager graduate student, or simply someone with a keen interest in education and sustainability in any context, your presence and contributions at the Higher Education Summit 2024 will be invaluable. Together, we can make a difference and create a brighter, more sustainable future for the next generations. Do not miss this opportunity to connect, collaborate, and inspire change!

The Higher Education Summit 2024 is organized by University of Padua and the COPERNICUS Alliance. Scientific committee: Laura Bierema, Eleonora Di Maria, Francesca Bracci, Concetta Tino, Paola Aiello, Burcu Simsek, Monica Fedeli. Young scientific committee: Marica Liotino, Marianne Araneta

What are we going to talk about?

An organization that embodies education for sustainability must take on a whole-institution approach, looking into various dimensions of the institution such as pedagogy and learning, curriculum, community-connections, capacity-building, institutional practices, and vision, ethos, leadership and coordination (Mathie & Wals, 2022). What does such a transformation look like in each dimension and what does it entail?

We invite you to share your research/practices connected to the different organizational dimensions:

1. **Vision, ethos, leadership, and coordination**
   - Why do we learn? What is the purpose behind our teaching?
   - Includes learner voice and participation
   - At the core of any transformation is the vision of what one is transforming to. In the context of ESD, what is it we aspire our organization to achieve and become? What are the guiding values and principles that would engender authentic sustainability transformation? Who participates in vision-building and how are they involved? How does your organization coordinate amongst the various stakeholders with diverse needs and priorities?

2. **Curriculum (design, content, assessment)**
   - What do we learn?
   - Due to the complexity and interrelated nature of sustainability issues, an ESD curriculum is a glocal one – situated in the local context but broadened by a global view. It also seeks to include knowledge and practices often pushed to the periphery. Topics are cross-cutting, integrating ideas from diverse disciplines to enable a richer view, and work among learners is multidisciplinary. What does your curriculum grounded on sustainability look like? What new voices and knowledge does it include?

3. **Pedagogy and learning (new/alternative learning processes and learning culture)**
   - How do we learn?
   - In this time of rapid and unpredictable change, current pedagogies must inspire curiosity and sustain the motivation of the youth, while helping them navigate the constantly shifting landscape. Sustainability-oriented transformative pedagogies could involve place-based learning, critical reflection and dialogue, experiential learning, and challenge-based learning – to name but a few. How is that organized in your organization?

4. **Institutional practices (walking the talk, experimenting with and learning from creating sustainability on location)**
   - Where do we learn?
   - Organizations rooted in sustainability should grow into a living embodiment of ecological consciousness and care, health and well-being, inclusivity, and democratic participation. This can happen in many ways and in various areas of the organization, e.g. in the

building, in the cafeteria and in the classrooms, in the library. Think about renewable energy, recycling, a healthy and sustainable canteen, a repair shop, classrooms and plazas with lots of greenery, the conscious use of technology, and the accessibility of spaces, the inclusion of subaltern groups, zero tolerance of discrimination and racism. What makes yours an organization that breathes sustainability? How important are sustainable thinking and action to the users within your organization?

5. **Capacity building (continued professional development of all staff)**
   - Who do we learn from?
   - In higher education, it isn't just the students who need to learn – the teachers, staff, policy-makers, cleaners, and workers must take part in the transformative learning process as well. How can we engage members of the organization's community to renew knowledge and comprehension of wicked problems and change their practice to address them in a sustainable way? What kind of opportunities or spaces are provided to allow staff to discuss, learn and ask about, listen to, and reflect on sustainability-related issues?

6. **Community-connections (university-society interface)**
   - Who do we learn with?
   - While it takes a village to raise a child, it takes the whole community to tackle a wicked problem. Higher education institutions are deeply embedded in their social and cultural context, and any transformation must extend beyond the four walls of any organization and into the wider community. The whole community becomes a living laboratory for authentic learning and meaningful engagement. What do we have to offer our partners in the immediate community and vice versa? What does our network look like and how do we expand it toward those who want to learn with us? How do we ensure equitable collaborations? How far do our partnerships go?

Submission deadline:

30 March 2024

Notification of acceptance:

30 April 2024

How can you take part?

If you would like to present at this conference, you must first identify which of the dimensions of the whole-institution approach (WIA) to sustainability your proposal falls under. Your proposal might cover more than one dimension; however, you will need to specify the primary one and then mention those that are secondary. Another option is to address the WIA as a whole, with its complexity, potential contradictions and operational challenges. We are also more than happy to welcome proposals from students or teacher-student collaborations.

Please note, that you can submit a maximum of two proposals, one as a primary author and another as a secondary author. You cannot submit two proposals as the primary author. You can choose among **four presentation formats:**

1. Facilitate a teaching and learning lab
2. Present a paper
3. Organize a network corner
4. Lead a collective intelligence workshop

Teaching and learning lab

Would you like to narrate or demonstrate your research/practice in a creative and interactive way? This kind of presentation is for those who are keen on using creative strategies such as videos, theater, graphic arts, poetry, dance, etc., to share their sustainability-oriented practice or research. You could also weave in inquiry or dialogue to actively engage participants and get their feedback.

What should the proposals look like?

800-1000 words

The lab could explore the following questions:

- What practice would you like to narrate or demonstrate?
- How did this practice come about and who are normally involved in this practice?
- What research/theory is this practice anchored on?
- How will this be presented to participants? What creative methods will you use?
- In which way can participants contribute?

Paper presentation

Are you carrying out empirical research in any of the dimensions of the WIA to sustainability? Would you like to present a practice that has greatly benefited your institution? This presentation type is for those with data that could support the effectiveness or impact of an innovation or practice to make higher education institutions key actors for sustainability.

What should the proposals look like?

800-1000 words

Papers should be based on:
- Research (e.g. quantitative or qualitative research, mixed-methods research, action-research, case study, meta-analysis, design-based research)
- Theory (e.g. conceptual study, model or theory development)
- Practice for sustainability (sustainable practices in a real-world environment, proposes new actions, and practices for formal and informal setting)

- Sustainable organizations-in-action (e.g. policies, culture, behaviors in the organizations to develop a sustainable mindset)

Network corner

Are you looking to get ideas that could spark or reinvigorate your sustainability-oriented plans? Would you like to connect with like-minded researchers or practitioners to get tips on implementing, maintaining, or evaluating a research topic or initiative within your institution? Perhaps you would like to get in touch with existing communities or create a new network of individuals engaged in similar research topics or practices. This presentation type is for you. It's a chance to meet like-minded researchers, academics, students or practitioners to establish or expand the community.

What should the proposals look like?

400 words

The proposal could answer the following questions:
- What is your project idea?
- What are the challenges that you want to share in this network?
- What questions would you like to ask?
- What competencies are you looking for to strengthen your network, and face the challenges you met?

Collective intelligence workshop

If you're engaged in sustainability-grounded research but are still in the middle of your process, this presentation format could benefit you. Perhaps you would like to share your research to get fresh ideas or a different perspective, or you could be stuck and in need of feedback. You could also be excited to share what you have so far, even if you haven't completely analyzed your data yet.

What should the proposals look like?

400 words

The proposal could answer the following questions:
- What is your project idea?
- What step of your research are you working on?
- In which way can your research contribute to facing sustainability challenges?
- In which way can participants contribute?

Evaluation criteria for all proposals:

- Connection to the topic of sustainability explained clearly
- A theoretical basis for conceptualizing sustainability explained clearly
- Quality of writing: well-crafted sentences, clear explanations and logic, accessible language

Additional criteria for paper presentations:

Makes significant contribution to discourse about theory, practice, and/or research