



# oikos

An overview of 20 years of  
promoting sustainable  
development in higher education

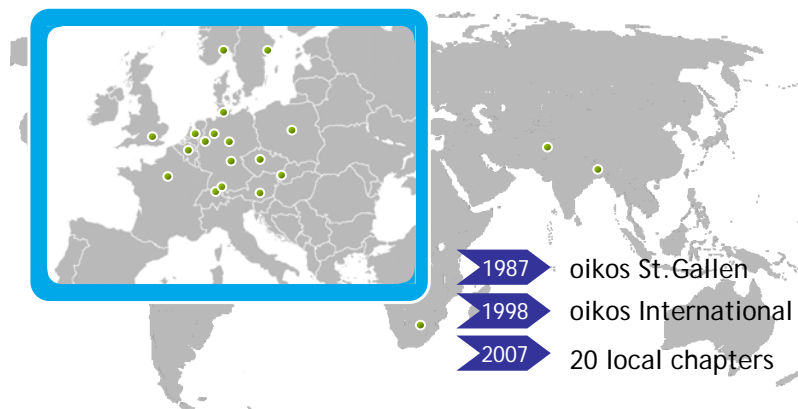
[www.oikos-international.org](http://www.oikos-international.org)

[www.oikos-stgallen.org](http://www.oikos-stgallen.org)

30-Apr-08

[www.oikos-international.org](http://www.oikos-international.org)

## the oikos network worldwide



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2

## The oikos Approach

### What is oikos?

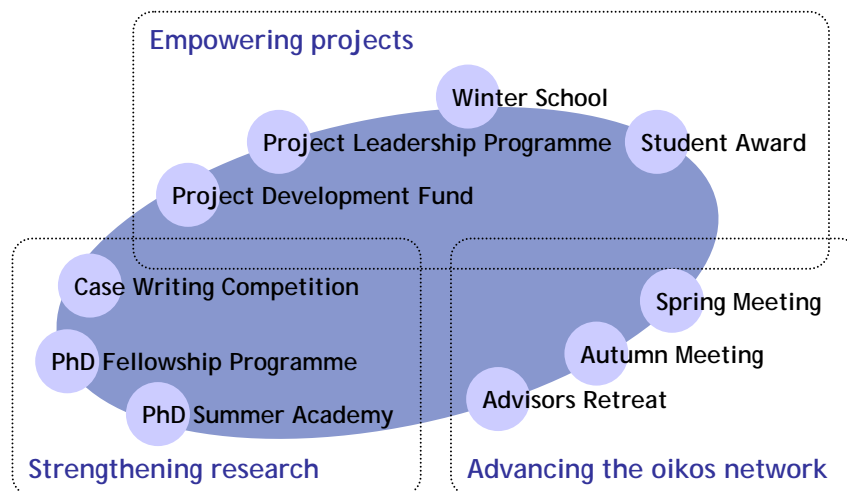
- A student organization with over 400 members in 20 cities worldwide
- A project platform for activities connected with sustainable development (more than 120 projects per year)

### What does oikos do?

- Offers management and logistical support to the teams executing the projects
  - Ex.: oikos board of executive advisors
  - Ex.: Project development fund
- Each local "chapter" has a board of students leading the local organization (1 year term)
- There are different projects per "chapter" and per year
  - Entirely depends on the students



## oikos International projects



## Examples of oikos St. Gallen projects

### **oikos Conference**

- Annual two day conference on any subject connected to sustainability
- The oikos-Conference 2008 is on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of October, and is titled "*Core or Elective?- Social Responsibility in Higher Education*" ([www.oikos-conference.org](http://www.oikos-conference.org))

### **oikos ModelWTO**

- Annual 5 day event where 60 students from over the world come to St. Gallen for a simulation of the WTO negotiations

### **oikos Sustainability Award**

- A price of CHF 3000 for the best Master thesis in the field of sustainability

### **oikos & Pizza**

- At least once per month oikos invites a speaker to give a short presentation on some topic related to sustainability, which is followed by a discussion round. All happens in an informal atmosphere with pizza and drinks available. oikos members and non-members are welcomed and present.

## oikos Objectives

### **oikos Mission**

- To strengthen action competence for sustainable development among tomorrow's decision makers.

### **oikos Target Group**

- Tomorrow's decision makers (= today's students)
  - oikos tries to influence the target group directly through projects and indirectly by changing the university

## oikos Principles of Approach

### Projects

- Nearly all influence oikos has on its target group, comes through projects
- The diverse field of projects reaches a very broad audience
- The creativity of oikos members is well expressed in the variety of projects undertaken

### Support and continuity

- By offering managerial and logistical support, the oikos organization guarantees high quality projects
- The organization of each local chapter guarantees a certain continuity of oikos' activities

## Getting Started and Steps to Implement

### Two-way approach

- Motivated students and oikos members start their own projects
- The oikos board recruits and selects members/students to execute their projects

### Project is implemented by a "team", which is responsible for its success

- A "team" carries out and is responsible for an entire project
- oikos provides support, generally on demand from the "team"

## Risks and Success Factors

### Success Factors

- Identify and cooperate with interested and motivated persons in the university (Professors, PHD-Fellows and administrators)
- Achieve change through dialogue, not activism
- Reach the mainstream students through interesting and high profile events
- Find the win-win situations for university as well as oikos. Focus on how universities can achieve a competitive advantage.

### Risks

- When projects are not enough diversified, only one type of student is reached (the “*anyway interested one*”)
- It is difficult to have a continuous organization, when it is only run by students. They rarely spend a long period of time at one university. In some years it is difficult to find successors
- One lesson that oikos has learned is *not to focus on what the university doesn't do and does wrong*

## Conclusions

### Achievements

- The Institute for Economy and the Environment (IWOe-HSG) at the University of St. Gallen was founded after years of oikos' activities
- The growth of oikos from St. Gallen to an international organization
- Numerous classes on sustainable development (all are electives) are offered at the University of St. Gallen (and other universities)
- Over the years, thousands of students have been reached by the oikos message
- There are three permanent oikos PHD positions at the University of St. Gallen

### Challenges

- Make sustainable development an integrative and obligatory part of mainstream business education
- Reach those professors and students who are not interested in sustainability and “get the message across”