

# The Cumulus Strategic Plan

CEB VIII  
2022-2025

*Human-centered design thinking, when rooted in universal and sustainable principles, has the power to fundamentally improve our world. It can deliver economic, ecological, social and cultural benefits to all people, improve our quality of life and create optimism about the future, and create individual and shared happiness.*

(The Kyoto Design Declaration, 2008)

Design discipline is growing globally and becoming a large complex eco-system. We are living in a world of complexity and uncertainty; anything that we took for granted only a day ago could abruptly alter. **Cumulus Association is reflecting such a diverse and plural environment, always respecting the emerging differences, and nurturing the values of plurality, global engagement, and open dialogue, to generate a welcoming and friendly environment for innovation and joyful experiences.**

**Design education is tackling new unforeseen challenges to respond to the present and future questions emerging from society, the environment, the economy, and technology.** This calls for the development of new pedagogical, research, and practical approaches that will promote the role of designers and artists. The answer cannot rely just on local approach; rather it must share global solutions to improve the development of high-level educational programs and research worldwide. This is the reason why educational art and design institutions are increasingly joining Cumulus Association, believing to be part of an open international context for knowledge sharing and networking while also interacting, collaborating, and partnering globally to find opportunities for international development.

**Along with the expansion of Art and Design Schools across the world, our association has steadily grown in size and scope beyond the limits of Europe, reaching roughly 370 members from 69 countries.** Consequently, it now stands as one of the most significant international associations and a point of reference for design education worldwide. The richness of our Association stands in the plurality and diversity of its members, spanning from big to small educational institutions, from public to private, from Universities to Colleges, Academies, and Schools of Art, Design and Media.

**This is opening to a number of opportunities and, at the same time, a number of challenges we tackled in the last two years and will face for the next year as Cumulus Executive Board VIII, while taking on the leadership role of the association in changing and challenging times:** the registration

as an independent association, the post-pandemic era, among others, are circumstances that made us work through a very inspiring and participatory plan for the 2022-2025 period, activating the participation of all members of the association.

When starting our work, we wanted to take care of each member to be included in networks of educational and research projects, supporting them to be a key player in the development of long-lasting smaller initiatives, which are filling Cumulus agenda after and in-between the main conferences, so to reinforce our sense of community for the future.

As priority, **we are working to address the values of our association, to nourish the motivations of our members, and to maintain the unity of our large community.** As a consequence, we are working **to support and reinforce the current programs and initiatives, such as the Working Groups, the Design Competitions, and the Student Ambassador Program; as well as to promote and develop the new initiatives, such as the series of Global and Regional Meetings and the Cumulus PhD Network for knowledge sharing between current and future doctoral programs, or the Students Talent Camp**, which is providing a real and unique chance for our students, or the development of our editorial activity; and to design and start new projects and initiatives, to enrich our conferences, to develop new channels of networking while involving all our members.

It is a work of design thinking and co-design, leveraging the aspirations and dreams of our members.

As per our 2022-2025 CEB strategic plan, we recognize some **strategic areas of development:**

- **supporting** the underserved design communities around the world;
- **strengthening** the activity and the organization of the Secretariat;
- **sustaining** collaborative and participatory practices for a shared-governance;
- **reinforcing** the established activities in Cumulus;
- **favoring** the activities of the Working Groups;
- **getting closer** to the members with regional activities;
- **developing** a sustainable and strategic growth of Cumulus;
- **starting** initiatives for and from the members;
- **encouraging and assisting** collaborative projects between our partners;
- **introducing** approachable projects that serve and network the students;
- **shaping** the future of Cumulus conferences in the post-pandemic era;
- **celebrating** the long history of Cumulus;
- **boosting** the editorial strategy and the publication activity;

- **increasing** member's engagement through platforms and media;
- **caring** about the financial health of the Association;
- **nurturing and further developing** strategic partnerships and alliances with international associations.

As part of the strategic plan, we started **a large co-design participatory process to better understand the future of Cumulus** through the expectations of the members and a participatory conversation **to expand the Kyoto Design Declaration for the future**. The Cumulus Executive Board VIII, with the leading contribution of the Founders and the Past Presidents are working on a participatory co-design process aimed at the development of the Kyoto Design Declaration to meet the challenges of the future of Design education, research, and practice.

The Kyoto Design Declaration was drafted by the founder of Cumulus Yrjö Sotamaa in 2008, and it served as a founding document for the generations to come on Cumulus. Still, this is serving as a pillar for the values of our Association, which is playing an important role in advocating the values of the global community of design educators and researchers.

While recognizing the emerging challenges of our global world, the Cumulus Executive Board together with the founders Yrjö Sotamaa, Raimo Nikkanen and Eija Salmi, recognize the strategic value of broadening the focus of the Kyoto design Declaration to ecological transition, societal regeneration, peace building, ethical thinking and understanding the evolving digital world and Artificial Intelligence, to name a few.

**The next year is important for the overall future of our association. The Cumulus Executive Board VIII, the President and the Secretary General are working together**, while acknowledging the right speed and protocols for decision-making, balancing progressive and strategic management, with human respect and empathy, and always striving for the unity, democracy, and progress of our Association.

As a final note, a few words to **thank all the Cumulus members** from any part of the world who are trusting our association and contributing with energy and ideas; **the Secretary General** who is endlessly and tirelessly serving our Association throughout its long history; and of course, **the Cumulus Executive Board VIII**, which is working hard and carefully to secure the future of Cumulus.

April 25, 2024  
Lorenzo Imbesi and the CEB VIII