

Editorial:

Opening the Sustainability Research in the Mediterranean

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The Mediterranean region has long been recognized as a cradle of civilization and a crossroads of cultures; yet today it is also one of the most vulnerable areas to the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic instability (Vardopoulos & Passas, 2025). Scientific assessments consistently describe the Mediterranean as a climate change “hotspot”, with regional temperatures increasing approximately 20% faster than the global average (Vardopoulos et al., 2024). Rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and the intensification of extreme weather events, combined with pressures from energy demand, migratory flows, and tourism dependency, generate complex challenges that require coordinated responses (Salvati, 2025). At the same time, the region presents unique opportunities to serve as a living laboratory for sustainability-oriented innovation, particularly in renewable energy, circular economy models, sustainable tourism, and the preservation of cultural heritage (Ciaschini & Imbrenda, 2025).

The launch of *Sustainability Research in the Mediterranean* responds to these realities by providing a scholarly platform that integrates environmental, economic, and socio-cultural perspectives. The journal aims to strengthen the link between global debates on sustainability and the specific challenges and opportunities of the Mediterranean, advancing original, interdisciplinary research that is internationally relevant. Its ambition is to foster dialogue among academics, policymakers, practitioners, and local stakeholders, encouraging contributions that are theoretically robust, methodologically rigorous, and practically oriented.

The scope of the journal encompasses a broad range of issues that shape the region's future. Urban resilience, renewable energy transitions, biodiversity conservation, addressing water scarcity, and designing green infrastructures are crucial to safeguarding ecological integrity. Equally important are economic and financial perspectives, with sustainable finance, ESG reporting, auditing, governance, and green accounting (Passas et al., 2022), serving as central tools to align markets and institutions with the climate neutrality and circularity goals of the European Green Deal. The socio-cultural dimension is no less essential, encompassing responsible tourism, the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, social inclusion, migration, and the role of communities in fostering resilience and well-being.

Each annual volume will consist of four issues. Three issues will focus on the journal's thematic pillars, *id est* Cities and Environment, Economics and Accounting, and Society, Tourism and Culture, while one issue will be dedicated to an emerging or cross-cutting topic, coordinated by a guest editor. A distinctive innovation of the journal will be the inclusion of data papers, which provide systematic documentation of empirical datasets and methodological insights that the scientific community can reuse. In line with the principles of open science, these contributions will enhance transparency, reproducibility, and the evidence base for policymaking in sustainability research.

Intersections That Matter

The inaugural issue of *Sustainability Research in the Mediterranean* brings together a set of contributions that, while diverse in focus, collectively exemplify the intellectual terrain the journal seeks to cultivate. One study interrogates mergers and acquisitions in the Greek banking sector during the Eurozone crisis, revealing how crisis-driven consolidations often failed to produce efficiency gains. Instead, they exposed the fragility of governance under systemic stress and underscored the central role of institutional quality, integration, and trust in building resilience during periods of disruption. Another research turns to environmental governance among listed companies, tracing the uneven but accelerating progress of

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decarbonization, resource efficiency, and ESG reporting across sectors. Here, Mediterranean firms are shown to be deeply embedded in global regulatory currents, with EU directives and ESG indices reshaping investor expectations and the very terms of competitiveness. The credibility of financial systems is further examined through a comprehensive review of external audit quality. Independence, technological innovation, and institutional oversight emerge as critical determinants of trust, reminding us that the integrity of financial reporting is not ancillary to sustainability transitions but a necessary foundation for them. The social dimension of sustainability is illuminated in research on job satisfaction among front-line service employees in tourism and hospitality. Recognition, opportunities for development, and supportive workplace relationships prove central to well-being and retention, an essential reminder that labor dignity is integral to the resilience of tourism-dependent economies. Complementing these articles, the issue introduces a distinctive feature of the journal: a data paper documenting a large-scale survey of 1,503 tourists in Greece concerning sports, spending patterns, and attitudes toward sustainability. This curated dataset provides a valuable resource for future research on sports tourism as a lever of economic development and cultural vitality, and it demonstrates our commitment to transparency, reproducibility, and collective knowledge-building.

Taken together, these contributions illustrate the interwoven character of sustainability challenges in Mediterranean-type contexts: financial stability cannot be disentangled from environmental accountability, and neither can be separated from the human experience of work, leisure, and culture.

Looking Forward

As editors, we are committed to building a journal that captures the complexity of the Mediterranean with intellectual rigor and practical relevance. We look forward to future issues that will continue to draw together diverse disciplines, methodological innovations, and voices from across the Mediterranean and beyond.

With this inaugural issue, *Sustainability Research in the Mediterranean* opens its pages to a research community dedicated to shaping just and resilient futures.

References

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