

**THE BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES**  
**THE FACULTY OF THEORETICAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS**

**HABILITATION THESIS**  
**FROM ECONOMIC GROWTH TO**  
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

**THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS AND BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**  
**IN PROMOTING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**Thesis Summary**

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The habilitation thesis is determinant in the academic career of a professor, serving as an important step toward achieving higher academic distinction and scholar recognition. It is a comprehensive document that demonstrates the candidate's ability to conduct independent research, to contribute significantly to the development of economic literature, and to supervise doctoral students in the next future. This thesis goes beyond my PhD dissertation by highlighting a broader analysis of sustainable development through the lens of economic growth and institutional framework that drives business environment toward progress. In this regard, I intend to highlight my academic portfolio, centred on most significant contributions in the topics mentioned above. Furthermore, my future development plan both as professor and researcher can also be found in a dedicated section of this thesis. Thus, the present habilitation thesis consists in two main parts.

The first part is dedicated to the **MAIN RESEARCH DIRECTIONS** centred around the relevant issues for our modern society, such as economic growth (with a particular focus on new growth theory), economic and human development, and sustainability. These directions aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how economic growth, development, human well-being, and sustainability are interconnected.

A special focus on Romania, EU members and European policies can also be found in this first part. In recent years, the European Union (EU) has increasingly emphasized the importance of integrating sustainable development principles into its economic policies due to the urgent need to address climate change and resource depletion. Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Report, is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This concept encompasses two critical dimensions: economic and environmental. The economic dimension focuses on stimulating growth and prosperity through efficient resource utilization, innovation, and equitable distribution of wealth. On the other hand, the environmental dimension emphasizes the need to protect and preserve natural resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity.

Economic growth and development are primarily explored in this first section. Economic development is crucial for society as it leads to improved standards of living and enhanced quality of life. By fostering economic growth, countries can create more jobs, increase income levels, and reduce poverty. This growth facilitates access to better healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which are essential for improving individual well-being and progress. According to Sen, economic development expands the real freedoms that people enjoy by providing them with opportunities to higher living standards. Moreover, economic development contributes to

social stability and political cohesion by reducing inequality and creating more inclusive economies. Economic development also provides governments with the necessary resources to invest in public goods and services, such as education, healthcare, and public safety, which are crucial for social welfare and stability. In this regard, the Human Development Index offers a more nuanced understanding of development, recognizing that economic growth alone does not fully reflect a society's progress in the long-run.

This traditional view, which dominated economic thinking for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is followed by an analysis of sustainable development, since the first is widely recognized as insufficient for addressing the multifaceted challenges of contemporary society. As Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi argue, focusing solely on economic dimensions of societal progress can lead to policies that exacerbate environmental issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and pollution. As Upreti points out, the economy is a subsystem of the environment, and ignoring ecological limits can lead to unsustainable practices that deplete natural capital and degrade ecosystems. New aggregate indexes, such as the Environmental Performance Index developed by Yale University, have been developed to measure environmental health and sustainability. By including air quality, water resources, biodiversity, and climate change policies, the EPI helps countries track their environmental performance and identify areas for improvement. Therefore, a combination of economic indicators such as GDP growth, employment rates, and income levels, alongside environmental metrics like carbon emissions, resource consumption, and biodiversity health, as well as social indicators such as education, healthcare access, and income inequality are integrated into the Sustainable Development Goals to measure the sustainable performance.

The research findings of the papers that I have selected for this thesis suggest that the environmental dimension of development should be seen as complement and not a substitute for economic development. The Sustainable Development Goals target all segments of society, including governments, civil society, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. Thus, it is largely recognized that the private sector is essential in achieving these goals due to its resources and activities. Schaltegger highlight that sustainable entrepreneurs are key agents in transitioning to a sustainable economy by creating innovative solutions to environmental and social challenges. Similar research findings show that private companies are the main solution drivers for the economy, society and environment. Moreover, Scheyvens et.al. emphasizes that private sector has the needed human and capital capabilities to help the government in achieving the SDGs. In evaluating this role, other research papers provide similar findings,

concluding that the private sector significantly contributes to the SDGs by providing resources, expertise, and experiences. The 2030 Agenda points out that the private sector is an essential stakeholder and has a significant contribution in the progress of the SDGs. While SDG implementation relies also on voluntary efforts, debates between governments and the private sector continue regarding mandatory versus voluntary responsibilities. Moldavska and Welo emphasize a new holistic business strategy that focuses on social and environmental outcomes alongside economic gains. Analysing the role of collaborative governance, Florini and Pauli stressed the need for greater public sector coordination and support to enable private sector investment in positive SDG outcomes. Roos et.al. identified benefits of environmental impact assessments, including biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, public participation and information access, environmental impact mitigation, and regulatory compliance. These benefits help the private sector in integrating sustainable development in their business strategies.

Therefore, entrepreneurial business, institutional frameworks and innovations are recognized as indispensable in the sustainable development equation. Entrepreneurs drive economic growth, promote social inclusion, and address environmental challenges through innovative solutions and sustainable practices. Their role, further explored in this thesis, is crucial in creating a more resilient and sustainable future, highlighting the need for supportive policies and investments that promote entrepreneurial ecosystems.

This initial section of the thesis aims to synthesize the findings and contributions derived from my research published in both international and national reviews and books. The reviewed studies demonstrate a multidimensional approach in understanding the dynamics of economic progress within the context of market economies. They underscore the fundamental role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for innovation and economic advancement, illustrating how institutional frameworks shape incentives to entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, these works emphasize the importance of well-defined property rights and supportive institutional environments in fostering sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, the research explores the intersection of economic activities with environmental sustainability and social well-being. It explores how economic policies and practices impact renewable energy consumption, the usage of e-commerce, climate resilience, and social equity. By examining transaction costs and the regulatory environment, the studies highlight how these factors influence business decisions and overall economic performance. Overall, the conference papers, articles, and books mentioned above offer a comprehensive view of how economic theories and public

policies intersect with broader social and environmental concerns. They provide valuable insights into the complexities of achieving sustainable development goals while promoting inclusive growth and effective governance.

The second part, **DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITY**, illustrates the developments in my academic career, both at a personal level as a professor and within the broader academic community of ASE. This section highlights various teaching roles I have had since 2000, and my efforts to continuously improve the learning experience for students. Additionally, it presents my involvement in ASE community, throughout research projects, and initiatives aimed at advancing the goals of our academic community. In the field of scientific research, I have demonstrated a constant engagement with exploring the determinants of economic growth and human development. My research on growth and economic development, institutional economics, and business environment has resulted in more than 40 publications as (author, co-author or editor) in books, scientific journals and conferences. More recently, as my research illustrates, I proved a strong commitment in exploring the complexities of economic systems and their impact on sustainable development. Moreover, this pattern stimulates me to explore, in the next future, interdisciplinary research opportunities that bridge economics with environmental science, sociology, and technology. Following a balanced approach, I intend to continuously develop both my research activity and contributions to our academic community, especially to the strategic initiatives of our university related to international accreditations.