Universitatea Transilvania din Brașov

# HABILITATION THESIS

# SUMMARY

## Sustainable Finance and Corporate Responsibility: Convergences between Financial Education, ESG Reporting and Sustainable Entrepreneurship

**Domain: FINANCE**

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The paper entitled "***Sustainable Finance and Corporate Responsibility: Convergences between Financial Education, ESG Reporting and Sustainable Entrepreneurship***" proposes an integrative and multidimensional analysis of how new economic paradigms oriented towards sustainability are reflected in financial, educational and corporate practices.

In the current context, the research explores the connections between sustainable financing sources, financial education, non-financial reporting (Environmental, Social, and Governance -ESG) and corporate social responsibility, with a particular emphasis on the Romanian space and on convergences with European trends.

The paper, in a dichotomous structure, considers: *(B-i) Scientific, professional and academic achievements, by disciplinary and interdisciplinary thematic directions* and *(B-ii) The plan for the evolution and development of the professional, scientific and academic career*.

The first section includes a description of the scientific, professional and academic activity carried out to date, which is part of a coherent program developed in accordance with the requirements of national and international academic research, as well as with the current needs of society. The research carried out reflects a deepening of the themes of interest in the fields of finance and accounting, integrated reporting, education and corporate governance in the context of sustainable development. This part includes three major research directions (subsections): *2.1. Sustainable finance, financial education and equity for a sustainable society*; *2.2. ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) reporting and the integration of sustainability for financial performance* and *2.3. Risk Management and Sustainability: Strategic Levers for Sustainable Finance and Economic Performance*

*Subsection 2.1* includes research papers grouped into four areas of interest that explore the role of sustainable finance in steering the economy towards socially and environmentally responsible investments.

It also addresses the educational and entrepreneurial dimension of sustainability - an essential condition for implementing sustainable economic practices. The interest of young entrepreneurs in Romania in identifying and using feasible sources of financing in accordance with the principles of sustainability, in the context of modern entrepreneurial education, is analyzed. The research highlights how the choice of funding sources correlates with

sustainable strategies and business models, revealing a process of convergence between education, entrepreneurial initiative and sustainable development objectives.

Through a territorial approach, the influence of education on regional economic growth in the European Union is also analyzed, highlighting the differences and convergences between national and regional levels. The analysis carried out on education at regional and national level in the European Union (EU), including Romania, highlights a strong correlation between the level of education and economic development indicators, such as GDP per capita, employment rate or regional technology and innovation. European regions with constant investments in education – especially in vocational training, higher education and research – have a greater capacity to attract sustainable funding and implement ESG projects.

Emerging themes such as gender parity in academic management structures are also introduced, in a vision that integrates sustainability and gender equity as interdependent elements.

*Subsection 2.2* includes works on two other research directions and focuses on ESG reporting and the integration of sustainability for financial performance. Topics such as digitalization, automation and artificial intelligence for integrated reporting processes are covered, highlighting the changes in the accounting and consulting sector, in particular through the use of chatbots and other digital tools. Reporting on sustainability and environmental responsibility is gaining strategic importance in assessing the performance of organizations. In Romania, this field is in a process of maturation, being influenced both by the requirements of European legislation (such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive – CSRD) and by the growing pressures of investors, consumers and civil society. Furthermore, the research brings to the forefront the perceptions and expectations of Romanian consumers regarding corporate responsibility, using the study of the textile industry as an example of an economic sector in which sustainability, ethics and transparent communication become imperative.

*Subsection 2.3* highlights how the identification, assessment and management of risks – from financial to environmental and social – become strategic tools for aligning economic decisions with sustainability objectives. Through a systematic review of the literature on the interdependencies between risk management, sustainability and financial performance of companies, it explores how risk management practices – especially those related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks – are integrated into sustainable corporate strategies and how they influence companies' financial indicators. The results

highlight that the effective integration of sustainability into risk management contributes to reducing uncertainties, increasing resilience and improving long-term financial performance.

Through this integrated approach, the thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of how financial education, modern reporting tools and corporate responsibility can align to support the transition to a sustainable economic ecosystem.

The second section of the thesis entitled: *(B-ii) The plan for the evolution and development of the professional, scientific and academic career* outlines the strategic directions of the author's professional, scientific and academic development, in accordance with the topic of the thesis and the current priorities of interdisciplinary research in the fields of sustainable finance, corporate governance and financial education. The plan aims to consolidate expertise in applied research, active participation in national and international scientific networks, involvement in sustainable finance projects and the formation of advanced skills in the field of ESG reporting and educational innovation. At the same time, the development of the academic career is pursued through publication in specialized journals, coordination of teaching activities and promotion of inter-institutional collaborations, with the aim of contributing to the progress of knowledge and the training of new generations of specialists.

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