Revista de Economia, Empresas e Empreendedores na CPLP
Journal of Economics, Business and Entrepreneurship in the CPLP
ISSN 2183-7201 | V12 | Issue 1 | 2026

Innovation, Higher Education and Sustainable Development: Contemporary Perspectives

Inovação, Ensino Superior e Desenvolvimento Sustentável: Perspetivas Contemporâneas

Luís Filipe Sardinha [1] **António Abreu** [2], **João Vidal Carvalho** [2], **Áurea Sousa** [3], **Maria José Gonçalves** [1] **Manuel Silva** [1]

[1] University of Madeira, Portugal
[2] Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal
[3] University of the Azores, Portugal

Corresponding author: Luís Sardinha | luis.sardinha@staff.uma.pt
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0920-7599
DOI: https://doi.org/10.29073/e3.v12i1.1209

Received: 30/05/2026 | **Accepted**: 12/06/2026 | **Published**: 14/06/2026

Abstract

This editorial marks a particularly significant milestone in the trajectory of **e³** – Journal of Economy, Business and Entrepreneurs in the CPLP, corresponding to the publication of the first regular issue following the journal's inclusion in the Scopus database. This achievement represents an important recognition of the journal's scientific quality, editorial rigor, and growing internationalization, while simultaneously reinforcing its commitment to the dissemination of knowledge relevant to both academic and professional communities. The articles included in this issue address current and multidisciplinary topics, reflecting some of the main challenges faced by institutions, students, and territories in a context of profound social, technological, and organizational transformation. Based on the contributions presented, three major thematic axes can be identified: institutional transformation, governance and innovation; students' experiences, competencies and development trajectories; and sustainability, innovation and territorial development. Taken together, the published works highlight the importance of scientific research in understanding contemporary processes of change and in supporting informed responses to future challenges.

Keywords: Scientific journals, Scopus, Higher education, Innovation, Sustainability, Territorial development.

Resumo

O presente editorial assinala um momento particularmente relevante na trajetória da **e³** – Revista de Economia, Empresas e Empreendedores na CPLP, correspondendo à publicação do primeiro número regular após a integração da revista na base de dados ***Scopus***. Esta conquista representa um importante reconhecimento da qualidade científica, do rigor editorial e da crescente internacionalização da revista, reforçando simultaneamente o compromisso com a disseminação de conhecimento relevante para a comunidade académica e profissional. Os artigos que integram este número abordam temáticas atuais e multidisciplinares, refletindo alguns dos principais desafios enfrentados pelas instituições, pelos estudantes e pelos territórios num contexto de profunda transformação social, tecnológica e organizacional. A partir dos contributos apresentados, identificam-se três grandes eixos temáticos: a transformação, governação e inovação institucional; as experiências, competências e trajetórias de desenvolvimento dos estudantes; e a sustentabilidade, inovação e desenvolvimento territorial. Em conjunto, os trabalhos publicados evidenciam a importância da investigação científica na compreensão dos processos de mudança que caracterizam as sociedades contemporâneas e na construção de respostas informadas para os desafios do futuro.

Palavras-chave: Revistas científicas, Scopus, Ensino superior, Inovação, Sustentabilidade, Desenvolvimento territorial

INTRODUCTION

The publication of a new issue of a scientific journal always represents more than the mere gathering of articles. Each edition ultimately reflects the concerns, trends, and challenges that shape a particular moment in research and in society. This issue, however, carries a particularly special significance for **e³** – Journal of Economics, Business and Entrepreneurs in the CPLP.

After several years of editorial consolidation, strengthened scientific quality mechanisms, and increasing internationalisation, the journal has recently achieved one of the most significant milestones in its trajectory: its inclusion in the Scopus database. This achievement represents recognition of the work carried out by authors, reviewers, members of the scientific board, and the editorial team, but it also marks the beginning of a new stage. Being indexed in one of the leading international scientific databases increases the visibility of the research published, broadens its reach within the global academic community, and reinforces the responsibility to continue promoting high standards of rigour, transparency, and editorial quality.

The literature has shown that scientific indexing systems play a decisive role in the circulation of knowledge, in the internationalisation of journals, and in the construction of their academic reputation (Baas et al., 2020). It is a matter of creating the conditions for research produced in different contexts to participate actively in international scientific debates.

It is precisely within this context that the first regular issue of the journal following its inclusion in ***Scopus*** emerges. The contributions gathered here reflect some of the concerns currently affecting higher education, organisations, territories, and societies. Despite the thematic diversity that characterises the journal, it is possible to identify shared concerns. The transformation of institutions, the preparation of people for increasingly demanding contexts, technological innovation, sustainability, and the valorisation of territories appear as recurring themes throughout this edition.

We are living in a period marked by profound change. Higher education institutions face increasing demands for adaptation, internationalisation, and innovation. Digital transformation is reshaping organisational models previously regarded as stable. New skills are becoming essential for both students and professionals. At the same time, territories seek to assert their identity and competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world, where sustainability has ceased to be merely an environmental concern and has instead assumed a strategic and cross-cutting dimension (Lyulyov et al., 2024; Sporn & Godonoga, 2024).

The articles that make up this issue allow these transformations to be observed from different perspectives. Some focus on institutions and their processes of change. Others examine students, their expectations, skills, and challenges. Still others turn their attention to sustainability, innovation, and the ability of territories to position themselves within an increasingly competitive international context.

For reasons of analytical coherence, these contributions can be read through three main thematic axes. The first brings together studies dedicated to institutional transformation, governance, and innovation. The second focuses on students' experiences, skills, and developmental trajectories. The third addresses issues related to sustainability, innovation, and territorial development. Taken together, these three axes help us understand some of the most significant changes that characterise the present moment and that will continue to influence educational, organisational, and social processes in the years ahead.

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION, GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION

For a long time, discussions on education were strongly associated with the expansion of education systems. The challenge lay in building schools, increasing training provision, and ensuring access for an ever-growing number of students. In many countries, including Portugal, this expansion shaped several decades of educational policies. Today, these concerns remain, but they take on different contours. Institutions continue to grow and to seek ways of responding to new social needs, yet they simultaneously face demands related to quality, sustainability, digitalisation, accountability, and the capacity to adapt to contexts in constant transformation (Gabael et al., 2024; Sporn & Godonoga, 2024).

The studies gathered in this first axis reflect precisely this transformation. Although they focus on different realities, they all address issues related to how institutions organise themselves, make decisions, and seek to respond to increasingly complex challenges. More than discussing formal structures, they invite us to reflect on the governance models that underpin contemporary education systems.

The study dedicated to the evolution of the Educational Charter in Portugal offers a particularly interesting example of this shift in perspective. For many years, educational planning was strongly associated with the physical distribution of school facilities and the management of the educational network. The proposal for a third-generation Educational Charter, however, reveals a markedly different reality. The concepts of connectivity, territorial intelligence, data interoperability, and participation gain a relevance that could hardly have been anticipated just two decades ago. It is not merely a matter of incorporating technology. It is about recognising that educational decision-making processes increasingly depend on the ability to integrate information, anticipate needs, and coordinate different actors and scales of governance.

The studies devoted to Portuguese higher education also point to this growing institutional complexity. The analysis of the relationships between legal status, ownership, and institutional differentiation reminds us that institutions do not form a homogeneous group. Public debate often tends to reduce the system to the classic division between public and private. However, the reality is considerably more diverse. Governance models, control mechanisms, legal frameworks, and funding arrangements profoundly influence how each institution defines its strategies and exercises its autonomy. As recent literature has emphasised, understanding this diversity has become essential for interpreting the evolution of higher education systems and the challenges they face (Gabael et al., 2024; Sporn & Godonoga, 2024).

A similar reading can be applied to processes of merger, acquisition, and institutional restructuring. A few years ago, these phenomena were viewed primarily through the lens of corporate management. Today, they form part of the vocabulary of many higher education systems. In several European countries, institutions have adopted strategies of integration and reorganisation as a way of responding to declining student numbers, increasing competition, and the strengthening of evaluation and accreditation mechanisms (European University Association, 2019). The Portuguese case shows that these dynamics do not stem solely from financial constraints. They are also linked to the pursuit of greater organisational robustness and to the need to ensure conditions of sustainability in a particularly demanding context.

Technological innovation also runs through this set of reflections. The growing interest in the use of blockchain in auditing and quality assurance processes is only one manifestation of a broader transformation affecting organisations across different sectors. Digitalisation has

reshaped work processes, forms of communication, and mechanisms of supervision. In many cases, it has even changed the way institutions produce, store, and use information. Recent studies have shown that digital transformation is no longer viewed as a complementary process but has instead come to occupy a central place in organisational strategies and institutional governance models (Carmo et al., 2025). Similar dynamics can be observed in administrative and financial management processes. The integration of digital technologies into internal control systems has expanded the capacity of organizations to monitor operations, improve information quality, and support evidence-based decision-making. The growing use of integrated information systems, automation tools, and digital monitoring mechanisms illustrates how technological innovation is reshaping not only educational activities but also the organizational processes that sustain institutional performance and accountability. These transformations also raise broader questions regarding the relationship between education, digital skills, and organizational readiness for technological change. Recent debates on artificial intelligence adoption suggest that the capacity of organizations to integrate emerging technologies depends not only on internal resources and strategic choices but also on the educational systems responsible for developing future human capital. In this sense, digital education, AI literacy, and lifelong learning increasingly emerge as strategic dimensions of institutional transformation and innovation.

Interestingly, across the different studies, a question emerges that goes beyond the specific contexts analysed. How can institutions maintain the stability required to fulfil their mission without losing the capacity to transform themselves? The answer is unlikely to be found in a single reform, a single technology, or a single organisational model. The debate surrounding educational governance has shown precisely this. The quality of institutions depends on how effectively they can combine innovation with responsibility, autonomy with accountability, strategic vision with responsiveness to concrete problems. Unsurprisingly, recent reflections published in **e³** itself have emphasised the importance of transparency, governance quality, and the construction of organisations capable of responding to contemporary challenges without losing sight of the principles that justify their existence (Sardinha et al., 2025).

This may well be the central idea running through this first set of articles. Institutional transformation is neither an isolated episode nor a passing trend. It forms part of the everyday reality of educational organisations. Some changes are visible. Others occur more discreetly, within processes, relationships, and decision-making mechanisms. In all cases, they help explain why questions of governance, innovation, and institutional adaptation continue to occupy a central place in discussions about the future of education.

STUDENTS, SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES

While institutions occupy a central place within education systems, students remain their primary raison d'être. Understanding the student experience has become a more complex task than in the past. Academic trajectories are increasingly diverse. Social contexts change rapidly. Students' expectations do as well. Frequently, what determines academic success does not depend solely on the knowledge acquired in classrooms, but on a set of personal, social, and institutional factors that interact continuously.

The articles gathered in this second axis look precisely at this reality. Instead of focusing on structures or organisational models, they focus on people. On their expectations, their skills, the difficulties they face, and the opportunities they find throughout their academic path.

The study on preparation and perceived readiness in higher education reminds us that the transition to university continues to be one of the most demanding moments of academic

life. Entering higher education involves adapting to new learning methods, developing autonomy, and taking on responsibilities that often arise for the first time. Not all students experience this process in the same way. Previous experiences, the resources available, and the support received significantly influence how each student interprets and faces this stage.

The study dedicated to optimism in university students also draws attention to a dimension that is often less visible in the academic experience. The path in higher education is not built only through technical skills or disciplinary knowledge. Factors such as confidence, motivation, the ability to deal with adversity, and expectations regarding the future play a relevant role in how students face challenges and make use of opportunities. Recent studies have been reinforcing the importance of these psychological factors in shaping the intentions, choices, and behaviours of university students (Cardella et al., 2024).

The theme of entrepreneurship also appears with prominence in this set of studies. In recent decades, universities have been called upon to perform functions that go beyond the traditional mission of teaching and research. They are expected to contribute to innovation, to the creation of economic value, and to the development of entrepreneurial skills capable of responding to the demands of increasingly dynamic labour markets. The literature has shown that entrepreneurial intention results from a complex combination of individual, contextual, and institutional factors, in which self-efficacy occupies a central place (Gabael et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024).

The results presented in the study carried out with university students in Paraguay fit precisely within this line of research. The ability to identify opportunities, take calculated risks, and believe in one's own skills continues to prove decisive for the development of entrepreneurial intentions. At the same time, evidence is growing that entrepreneurial education and the support mechanisms provided by institutions can positively influence these dispositions, creating more favourable environments for the development of initiative and innovation (Fan et al., 2024; Song & Lu, 2024).

On the other hand, the challenges associated with student participation in digital contexts remain far from resolved. The study on absenteeism in virtual classes recalls a reality that has become particularly visible in recent years. Access to technology, socioeconomic conditions, family contexts, and levels of academic engagement continue to influence student participation in learning environments mediated by digital platforms. The expansion of online modalities has brought new opportunities, but it has also highlighted inequalities that were not always as visible in face-to-face models.

These issues find an echo in recent reflections on the challenges of sustainable higher education. Concern with the quality of education cannot be limited to academic results or institutional indicators. It also involves creating conditions that allow students to develop skills, build life projects, and participate fully in educational processes. In this sense, the sustainability of higher education is deeply linked to the ability of institutions to respond to the needs of their students and to follow the social transformations that shape the contemporary world (Manea et al., 2023).

Throughout this set of studies, a simple idea emerges. Students are not only recipients of educational policies nor merely users of education systems. They are active participants in the processes of learning, innovation, and social change. Understanding their experiences, expectations, and trajectories continues to be an essential condition for thinking about the present and the future of higher education.

Sustainability, innovation and territorial development

For a long time, the development of territories was analysed mainly through economic indicators. The growth of productive activity, the creation of employment, or the attraction of investment were the main elements used to assess their performance. Although they remain relevant, these indicators are no longer sufficient to understand contemporary reality. Territories compete for talent, for visitors, for companies, and for investment opportunities. They also compete for the ability to build a recognised and distinctive identity.

In this context, the way a territory presents itself to the outside has come to assume growing importance. The image of a country, a region, or a city is no longer only a consequence of its development. In many cases, it has become an integral part of the strategies used to promote it. The literature on "**country branding**" and "**place branding**" has shown precisely this evolution, highlighting how territorial reputation can contribute to the attraction of resources, to the valorisation of local assets, and to the strengthening of economic and social competitiveness (Aguilera-Cora et al., 2025; Tijani et al., 2024).

The relationship between sustainability and territorial development has been widely discussed in recent research. Contemporary approaches increasingly recognise that economic growth, environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and innovation should not be viewed as separate dimensions, but rather as interconnected elements of development strategies. Studies have shown that territories capable of integrating these dimensions tend to be better positioned to respond to demographic, technological, and environmental challenges while strengthening their long-term competitiveness (Lyulyov et al., 2024; Aguilera-Cora et al., 2025).

The very notion of territorial development has been becoming more comprehensive. Issues related to quality of life, innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusion, and sustainability are today often analysed in an articulated way. This perspective is also present in reflections published in **e³**, which have highlighted the need to promote development models capable of generating economic value without losing sight of the social and environmental dimensions that sustain the progress of communities (e.g. Manea et al., 2023; D. Pereira et al., 2023; R. Pereira, 2021).

Perhaps for this reason, current debates on territorial development are increasingly less focused on the isolated promotion of resources or infrastructures and increasingly oriented towards the construction of ecosystems capable of combining innovation, sustainability, and identity. Territories are not only geographical spaces. They are spaces of relation, of memory, of knowledge, and of value creation. The way they can mobilise these elements will continue to influence their capacity for affirmation in a world marked by profound economic, social, and environmental transformations (El-Dabt et al., 2025).

Final Considerations

The articles gathered in this issue do not offer a single view of the challenges of the present. Nor would that be the role of scientific research. Their value lies precisely in the diversity of perspectives, methodologies, and contexts analysed. Taken together, they remind us that the major transformations of our time do not occur in isolation. They cut across institutions, influence individual trajectories, and redefine the way territories build their future.

In a period in which the speed of change often seems to surpass our capacity for understanding, research continues to play an irreplaceable role. Not because it provides definitive answers, but because it helps to formulate better questions, to challenge

established certainties, and to build knowledge capable of supporting more informed and responsible decisions.

It is with this commitment that **e³** begins this new stage of its editorial path. Inclusion in ***Scopus*** constitutes an important recognition of the work carried out over recent years, but it represents above all an increased responsibility towards authors, reviewers, readers, and institutions. Continuing to promote rigorous, relevant, and socially useful research remains the main challenge. It is also the best way to contribute to a scientific community that is more open, more critical, and better prepared to understand the complexity of the contemporary world.

REFERENCES

Aguilera-Cora, E., Fernández-Cavia, J., & Codina, L. (2025). Place branding and sustainable development: A scoping review. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, 21*(1), 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-024-00338-5

Baas, J., Schotten, M., Plume, A., Côté, G., & Karimi, R. (2020). Scopus as a curated, high-quality bibliometric data source for academic research in quantitative science studies. *Quantitative Science Studies, 1*(1), 377–386. https://doi.org/10.1162/qss_a_00019

Cardella, G. M., Barba-Sánchez, V., Meseguer-Martinez, Á., Hernández-Sánchez, B., & Sánchez-García, J. C. (2024). Analyzing university students' entrepreneurial intentions under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 20*(4), 2567–2590. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-024-00945-x

Carmo, J. E. S., Lacerda, D. P., Klingenberg, C. O., & Piran, F. A. S. (2025). Digital transformation in the management of higher education institutions. *Sustainable Futures, 9*, 100692. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.100692

El-Dabt, L., AlReshaid, F., Park, K., AlBuloushi, N., & Al-Enzi, A. (2025). Sustainable strategic nation branding through sports: Leveraging soft power via mega-event hosting. *Frontiers in Sociology, 10*, Article 1521396. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1521396

Estermann, T., & Pruvot, E. B. (2015). *University mergers in Europe*. European University Association.

European University Association. (2024). *Trends 2024: European higher education institutions in times of transition*. European University Association.

Fan, J., Hu, J., & Wang, J. (2024). How entrepreneurship education affects college students' entrepreneurial intention: Samples from China. *Heliyon, 10*(10), e30776. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e30776

Ismail, R., Vanderstraeten, J., & Slabbinck, H. (2024). The student entrepreneurial intention cloud: A review of reviews. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2344046

Lyulyov, O., Pimonenko, T., Chen, Y., Kwilinski, A., & Yana, U. (2024). Countries' green brands within the context of sustainable development goals. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, 9*(3), 100509. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2024.100509

Manea, G.-C., Cozea, A., & Abreu, A. (2023). Sustainable education and the challenges of the contemporary world. *e3, 9*(2), 9–15. https://doi.org/10.29073/e3.v9i2.762

Pereira, D., Carvalho, M., Martins, S., Carvalho, A., Pinto, A., Santos, E., & Castro, M. (2023). Smart tourism destinations in the 21st century society: Contributions of the information professional. *e3, 9*(2), 27–36. https://doi.org/10.29073/e3.v9i2.792

Pereira, R. S. C. (2021). O sistema de economia circular e a Agenda 2030: Análise da evolução em Portugal. *e3, 7*(1), 97–124. https://doi.org/10.29073/e3.v7i1.381

Sardinha, L. F., Abreu, A., Sousa, Á., Gonçalves, M. J., Vidal de Carvalho, J., & Silva, M. (2025). Organizational transformation, digital innovation and responsible science: Contemporary perspectives. *e3, 11*(2), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.29073/e3.v11i2.1051

Song, Y., & Lu, G. (2024). The impact of university entrepreneurship support on college students' entrepreneurial intention: A cognitive-affective perspective. *The International Journal of Management Education, 22*(3), 101087. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2024.101087

Sporn, B., & Godonoga, A. (2024). Higher education institutions as change agents in society: Perspectives on adaptation and impact. *European Journal of Higher Education, 14*(Suppl. 1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2024.2412764

Tijani, A., Majeed, M., Ofori, K. S., & Abubakari, A. (2024). Country branding research: A decade's systematic review. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2307640

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS (CREDIT)

Conceptualization, LS, ÁS; validation, JV; investigation, JV, ÁS, MJG, MS; writing—original draft preparation, JV, AA, LS; writing—review and editing, LS, MJG, MS; supervision, AA, JV, LS.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study did not involve human participants or animals and therefore did not require ethical approval.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editorial Board would like to express its sincere gratitude to all authors, reviewers, members of the Scientific Committee, and readers whose commitment and dedication continue to contribute to the growth and consolidation of **e³** – Journal of Economy, Business and Entrepreneurs in the CPLP. We also acknowledge the invaluable support of our editorial team and partner institutions, whose efforts have been fundamental to maintaining the quality, integrity, and international visibility of the journal.

The publication of this issue holds particular significance as it represents the first regular issue released following the journal's inclusion in the ***Scopus*** database. This achievement reflects the collective work of all those who have contributed to the journal's development over the years and reinforces our commitment to fostering high-quality scientific research and knowledge dissemination within the international academic community.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DISCLOSURE

Generative artificial intelligence tools were used exclusively to assist in the translation and linguistic revision of this editorial. The authors reviewed and validated all content and remain fully responsible for its accuracy and integrity.