

Guest editors' introduction

Uvodna reč urednica tematskog broja

The concept of sustainable development implies promoting well-being by fostering a harmonious balance between economic progress, environmental protection and social equity i.e. the establishment of societies characterised by peace, justice and inclusivity. The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), envisages the advancement of holistic development (economic, social and environmental) on a global scale, taking into account the needs of the most marginalised groups in society.

Socio-demographic trends can have a profound impact on current and future socio-economic challenges. The course and pace of these trends vary greatly from country to country and are characterised by strong regional demographic differences. In some areas, there is widespread poverty combined with high birth rates, while in others, which are among the most important drivers of global economic growth, the population is ageing rapidly. These expected demographic changes may jeopardise the achievement of the SDGs and pose new challenges, but they also offer opportunities for innovative solutions and policy responses.

As our global community navigates unprecedented demographic shifts, technological advancements, and environmental challenges, understanding socio-demographic dimensions

is essential to developing effective strategies that promote lasting social, economic and environmental sustainability. Demographic patterns, which include factors such as population dynamics, ageing and migration, weave a tapestry that profoundly influences the course of sustainable development at local and global levels. Technological progress, which drives economic growth and socio-economic inequalities, is dynamically interrelated. However, this technological push also triggers environmental risks and requires a delicate balance to address the socio-demographic dimensions of environmental challenges. Successful sustainable development initiatives take into account the diverse characteristics of populations and promote equity, inclusion, resilience and environmental responsibility. By reconciling demographic considerations with sustainable development goals, societies can overcome challenges and capitalise on opportunities for long-term well-being.

The thematic issue *Sociodemographic Trends and Sustainable Development* brings together different perspectives on how demographic factors influence sustainability, economic growth and environmental concerns. The articles in this issue address specific topics: the potential of the degrowth model as a substitute for high-growth, consumption-led approaches to development; the relationship between sociodemographic factors and the green finance;

the implications of demographic ageing for fiscal balance; the impact of demographic factors on the effectiveness of public administration training programmes; the problems of household economic sustainability; the attitudes of university students towards environmental challenges; and their migration intentions.

The article "Degrowth between normativism and reality" deals with one of the core issues of sustainable development: the balance between economic growth and ecological sustainability. It contrasts conventional growth models with alternative frameworks such as degrowth, which propose a shift towards sustainable development without the pursuit of endless economic expansion. By ranking countries according to their sustainable development and economic outcomes, this research adds an empirical dimension to the discussion and demonstrates the complexity and practical challenges of implementing degrowth strategies. This paper not only broadens the discussion on sustainable development models, but also sheds light on the socio-demographic implications of the transition to alternative paradigms, which are central to understanding long-term trends in global development.

Exploring the role of socio-demographic trends in shaping sustainable outcomes, the paper "How do socio-demographic factors affect green finance growth?" provides valuable insights through the lens of green finance. As green finance is central to supporting environmental goals, the study establishes a link between socio-demographic factors such as education, income inequality and population age, and government investment in green research and development. This link emphasises

the crucial influence of social structures and demographic dynamics on national sustainability strategies. Empirical evidence supports the idea that the socio-demographic context strongly influences the effectiveness of green fiscal policy, which is consistent with the broader theme of demographic trends as drivers of sustainable development.

Population ageing and its fiscal consequences are at the centre of the study "Impact of population ageing on fiscal balance in the European Union," which offers important insights into how demographic changes directly affect the fiscal sustainability of EU governments. The findings reveal the growing financial burden on public budgets due to population ageing, especially through higher health expenditure and a shrinking tax base. By providing empirical evidence of the negative fiscal impact, this paper emphasises the importance of taking demographic factors into account when designing fiscal policy and long-term economic planning. As governments face increasing pressure to reconcile fiscal sustainability with social welfare, the findings from this study offer a valuable contribution to the policy debate concerning the ways to address the long-term challenges of demographic change.

The article "The influence of demographic characteristics on the effectiveness of public administration training programs" addresses the intersection of socio-demographic factors and institutional effectiveness, which is crucial for the sustainable development of public governance. The paper shows how demographic characteristics, in particular work experience and job roles, influence the success of capacity building efforts in public adminis-

tration. As effective public administration is critical to achieving sustainable development goals, the study provides evidence on how the internal dynamics of public institutions, shaped by demographic characteristics, can improve institutional performance. By focusing on capacity building in public institutions, this research aligns with the broader theme of fostering resilient and adaptable governance structures that are crucial for long-term sustainable development.

Study "On the economic sustainability of Russian households at a socially acceptable level" conducts an in-depth analysis of the thresholds that define socially acceptable criteria for economic sustainability in different types of households in Russia. The authors have created a methodological framework for assessing the economic sustainability of households, emphasising the importance of self-sufficiency and resource management in maintaining socially acceptable levels of consumption and savings. By illustrating the complex interplay between internal household factors (such as composition and labour potential) and external influences (such as labour markets and social support), the paper provides the basis for a deeper understanding of households' economic behaviour and their sustainability strategies.

Authors from North Macedonia analyse the factors that influence the migration intentions of university students in their article "Crossroads of aspiration: unveiling the migration intentions among university students in North Macedonia". Through the use of exploratory factor analysis and logistic regression, the study provides insights into the socio-demographic, living condition, and educational variables that

shape students' decisions to migrate or stay in the country. Their empirical analysis emphasises the significant role of students' educational background and satisfaction with living conditions in their migration intentions and points to the potential problem of brain drain that could adversely affect the country's economic growth. This research provides valuable insights into the motivations for student migration and makes the findings relevant for the policy makers in similar developing countries, particularly in the Western Balkans.

The paper "Environmental attitudes among Serbian university students" also examines the motivations and behaviours of university students, but focuses on their environmental attitudes and behaviours in relation to climate change and sustainability. By identifying key factors (such as self-assessed environmental awareness, gender and family recycling habits), the study provides insights into the way in which these factors shape students' engagement in pro-environmental behaviours. The study emphasises the role of university students as future leaders and decision-makers in addressing environmental challenges, and recommends actions that promote a deeper understanding of sustainability and inspire collective action.

The thematic issue also contains a review of edited volume "Disaster, construction, and reconstruction: essays on ethical and social perspectives" and a review of thematic section "Science and education for sustainable development" from the *European Journal of Transformation Studies*.

As this thematic issue provides both theoretical insights and empirical evidence on the socio-demographic di-

mension of sustainability, we are confident that it will not only contribute to the academic discourse, but also provide practical recommendations for the policy makers and practitioners committed to achieving the SDGs. We hope that this thematic issue will serve as a valuable resource in advancing knowledge and inspire action for a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable future.

Jelena Zvezdanović Lobanova¹ 
Dijana Štrbac² 

¹ *Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia*

² *Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia*

Correspondence:

Jelena Zvezdanović Lobanova,
Institute of Social Sciences,
Kraljice Natalije 45, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Email:

jzvezdanovic@idn.org.rs

EDITORIAL DISCLOSURE

As part of this thematic issue, one of our guest editors, Dr Dijana Štrbac, along with her coauthors, contributed an article titled “The influence of demographic characteristics on the effectiveness of public administration training programs”. In the interest of maintaining editorial independence and transparency, this paper was handled entirely by the core editorial team of *Stanovništvo* and was subjected to the journal’s standard peer review process, to which both guest editors were blind.

How to cite: Zvezdanović Lobanova, J., & Štrbac, D. (2024). Guest editors' introduction. *Stanovništvo*, 62(2), 179–182. <https://doi.org/10.59954/stnv.661>

<https://doi.org/10.59954/stnv.661>