Rethinking Sustainable Entrepreneurship: The Italian Case in Global Perspective

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Abstract:

In the current context of ecological changes, social inequalities and technological advances, entrepreneurship is becoming more and more central in shaping equal and sustainable economic growth. Based on data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2024/2025, this abstract investigates the relationship between perceived systemic barriers, sustainability orientation and entrepreneurial activation. The work aims to link global insights with national Italian patterns, highlighting the main drivers and constraints that determine sustainable entrepreneurship.

GEM data show that more than 78% of early-stage entrepreneurs globally say they consider social and environmental impacts in their decision-making, with a significant presence of female entrepreneurs among those most committed to sustainability goals. However, critical gaps remain in digital awareness, access to resources, and ESG-aligned institutional support—especially in low-income economies and peripheral entrepreneurial ecosystems. Italy is aligned with these global trends in sustainability: an increasing number of early-type entrepreneurs report a commitment to reducing environmental impact and enhancing social value, although often without matching growth ambitions or measurable KPIs.

For the Italian case, the analysis also incorporates insights from the Sustainable Employability Digital Index (SEDI), a digital framework developed to assess how sustainability and equity are embedded in Italian business ecosystems and labour market dynamics. SEDI provides a complementary lens to GEM by helping to contextualise individual-level entrepreneurial behaviour within broader systemic conditions. In particular, it translates sustainability orientation into measurable components such as environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and digital readiness. This approach enables a more