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SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE FUTURE LABOR MARKET: INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC ADAPTATION

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Abstract: *As the global economy rapidly shifts toward sustainability and digitalization, the role of entrepreneurship education teachers has never been more critical in shaping the future workforce. This article explores how innovation, technology, and strategic adaptation influence the development of essential skills needed to thrive in a sustainable economy. It examines emerging trends that are reshaping both teaching methods and labor market expectations, including the circular economy, automation, and sustainable business models. More than ever, education must be dynamic, equipping students with entrepreneurial thinking, creativity, and adaptability. The study highlights the importance of a flexible approach that prepares students not only to navigate change but to drive it. Ultimately, the findings emphasize the need for strong collaboration between educators, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to create a seamless transition from education to a labor market that is both competitive and sustainable.*

Keywords*: Entrepreneurship education, future of work, entrepreneurial skills, innovation, adaptability, sustainable economy.*

UDC: *[001.895:334.72]:331.5*

JEL Classification*: J21, M12, M21, O32.*

1. Introduction

The exploration of the evolution of sustainable entrepreneurship, from an economic initiative to a form of social responsibility and environmental concern, outlined in the specialized literature, highlights the urgent need to adapt entrepreneurial education to the new economic reality shaped by digitalization. As a result, a continuous adaptation of entrepreneurial competencies to the requirements of the 21st century is necessary, with a focus on critical thinking, empathy, and creativity. This analysis creates an overview of sustainable entrepreneurship as a key component in the emerging economic architecture. Recent fiscal, technological, and environmental changes have required a profound reassessment of how the future labor market is structured. The immediate effects of climate change have triggered a re-evaluation of international strategic imperatives, steering efforts toward sustainable practices.

In this context, digitalization, automation, and the rapid development of experimental technologies are transforming job requirements, calling for a rescaling of workers' competencies in an increasingly dynamic market economy. According to the 2023 World Economic Forum labor outlook, the main drivers of occupational evolution over the next half-decade are innovative technology and planetary care. Using transdisciplinary methods, the impact of innovation, technological strategies, and adaptive frameworks on green entrepreneurship is examined, along with approaches to enhance workers' skills for the evolving job market. For the labor market, new technologies, automation, and the shifting landscape of necessary skills pose a considerable challenge, which demands continuous alignment with current trends. Therefore, the development of key competencies such as

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critical thinking, flexibility, inventiveness, adaptability, and collaboration is essential forming a foundational link for both entrepreneurs and job seekers.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, the concepts of sustainable development, circular economy, and green transition have significantly diversified and deepened in the specialized literature, as scholars approach these topics from various perspectives [1]. As such, sustainable entrepreneurship represents more than an innovative strategy for entrepreneurs aiming to revitalize the economy and society. Technically, sustainable entrepreneurship is based on the integration of the three aforementioned strategies, thereby combining what should be preserved and protected (natural capital and social cohesion) with the pursuit of innovation, which generates economic value and contributes to profit [2]. Consequently, sustainable entrepreneurs aim to meet needs comprehensively, striving to achieve a balance between people, planet, and profit. The entrepreneurial competencies required today are increasingly influenced by accelerated digitalization and the advancement of artificial intelligence [3], which calls for both strategic support and a robust educational strategy to foster sustainable entrepreneurship.

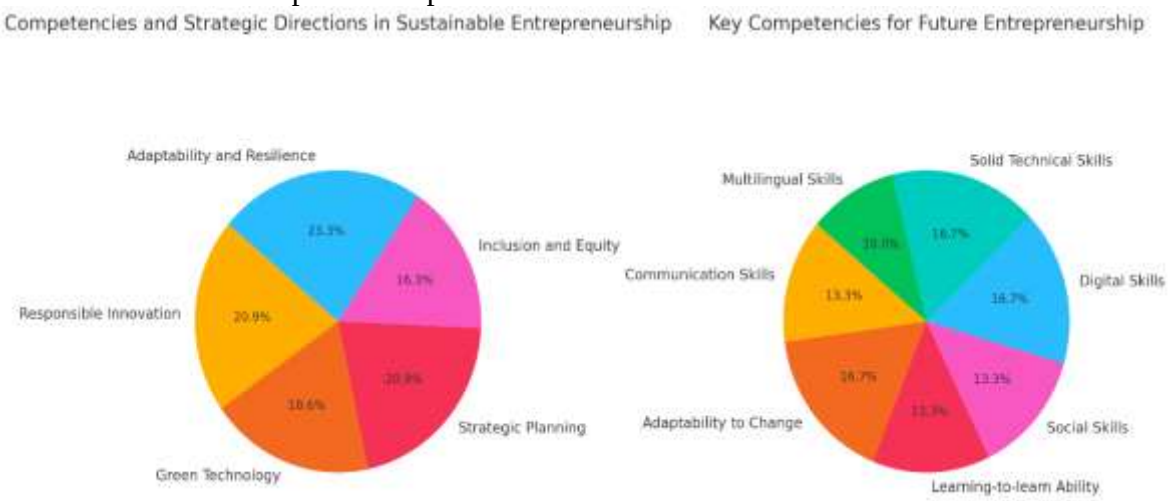

Figure 1. Key competencies in sustainable entrepreneurship
Source: compiled by the author

The convergence of the need for innovation and responsibility has been strongly reflected in the specialized literature in recent years. According to World Economic Forum studies (2023), approximately 23% of occupations will be reconfigured by 2027. Thus, in addition to general challenges, we are witnessing a growing demand for professionals capable of working in a dynamic environment - within a world driven by positive opportunities - where professional training plays a crucial role. In the current context, sustainable entrepreneurs can turn new technologies into powerful allies for achieving their goals. Digitalization and the orientation towards social and environmental purposes enable transformation into sustainable solutions [4]. The integration of AI, blockchain, or big data is becoming a prerequisite for entrepreneurial relevance. The ILO (2018) projection *"Greening with Jobs"* estimates that by 2030, up to 24 million green jobs could be created, provided a coordinated transition to sustainable industries is achieved [5]. By intertwining emerging technologies with social and environmental values, sustainable entrepreneurs are becoming pillars of a fairer and more resilient economy [6].Strategic planning and responsible innovation are now essential tools for coping with an evolving regulatory

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framework and increasingly conscious consumers. Promoting inclusion and equity in access to economic opportunities is not only a moral duty but also a prerequisite for sustainable competitiveness.

The literature emphasizes that through this deep alignment between innovation and sustainability, the resilience of the socio-economic ecosystem can be ensured in the long term (see Figure 2). Therefore, current literature reviews clearly highlight that sustainable entrepreneurship is one of the most promising responses to the major challenges of our time. In this context, education grounded in science - yet open to reality - can foster leaders who understand the necessity of consistently navigating the future.

Figure 2. Main currents in the specialized literature on sustainable entrepreneurship
Source: compiled by the author

3. Methodology

The transition to a sustainable economic model requires a qualitative-descriptive approach that combines conceptual analysis with contextual interpretation of existing data. The aim of this endeavor was to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics of sustainable entrepreneurship in relation to labor market transformations and educational reforms, based on a systematic review of the specialized literature and current strategic documents.

The research followed several distinct methodological stages. The review of scientific literature enabled the identification of key theoretical paradigms and emerging currents in the field. At the core of the analysis lies the integrative synthesis method, used as both a theoretical and applied instrument to merge findings from diverse sources and methodological backgrounds into a coherent conceptual framework [7]. This approach not only enables the consolidation of existing knowledge, but also facilitates the identification of convergence points between research studies and policy frameworks, interpreted through a shared analytical lens: the redefinition of entrepreneurship in the context of the sustainable transition and the reform of competency models aligned with the future economy [8].

The implementation procedure of the integrative synthesis involved several key steps:

- Thematic coding of sources, highlighting core topics such as digitalization as a transformative driver of the labor market and interdisciplinary skills needed for social equity and corporate responsibility;

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- Triangulation of academic and strategic sources, comparing insights across literature types and analytical levels;
- Contextual interpretation of data, aligning results with research objectives and emphasizing the influence of sustainability on skill formation and entrepreneurial models.

Based on this process, a three-dimensional conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the dynamic interrelation between education, the labor market, and entrepreneurial mindsets:

1. *Labor Market Transformations* - These reflect the ongoing adaptation to technological and socio-economic shifts. Entrepreneurial skills- such as innovation capacity, initiative, originality, and flexibility- are becoming critical in shaping a resilient and future-ready workforce[9]. In light of advancements in artificial intelligence and digital transformation, there is an urgent need to redefine professional competencies and adopt a strategic approach to reforming educational systems. The integration of these three dimensions was achieved by identifying feedback mechanisms linking education, the economy, and entrepreneurial practices. In this way, sustainable entrepreneurial education emerges as a bidirectional channel: investments in education generate essential competencies, while emerging labor market needs drive strategic adaptations in both curricula and public policy.
2. *Reorganization of the Educational System*- This dimension underscores the importance of aligning educational programs with the evolving demands of the labor market and entrepreneurial ecosystems. The digital transformation of educational institutions into entrepreneurial models calls for the integration of innovative technologies and curricular revision to prepare a flexible and proactive workforce [10].
3. *Evolution of Entrepreneurial Paradigms*- A shift from a purely economic rationale toward a socially and environmentally oriented entrepreneurial vision is becoming evident. Entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a strategic tool for systemic transformation, with innovation, technology, and equity forming its foundational pillars. This perspective highlights the complex relationship between strategic decisions, public policies, and professional education[11].

Furthermore, the integrative approach allowed for the correlation of micro-level (individual skills), meso-level (educational practices), and macro-level (policy frameworks) analyses, providing a holistic perspective on the challenges and opportunities of sustainable entrepreneurship. This theoretical construct forms a solid basis for developing evidence-based public policies and innovative educational interventions that are well aligned with current socio-economic transformations[12].

The study is exploratory and interdisciplinary in nature, combining economic analysis with pedagogical and managerial perspectives. The methodology is based on secondary research, grounded in a wide range of recent academic studies, policy reports, and international statistics. This approach not only enabled the identification of global trends but also allowed for the formulation of strategic, evidence-based recommendations in the field of entrepreneurial education and labor market policy[13].

4. Analysis and Interpretation

According to recent studies and strategic frameworks, the circular economy represents a fundamental pillar of economic sustainability, relying on reuse, repair, and regeneration. This model requires new skill sets, such as life cycle assessment of products and innovation in eco-

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design. Emerging professions in the field of sustainability include sustainability consultancy, ecological engineering, and green logistics. At the same time, emerging technologies and automation are accelerating the process of transformation at an unprecedented pace, demanding specialists capable of operating within a circular and responsible system.

In this context, there is a growing need for a shift toward experiential learning, interdisciplinary projects, and adaptive digital training. Today, sustainability is increasingly being framed as a core value in entrepreneurship, and the new generation - Generation Z and Alpha - are increasingly drawn to entrepreneurial initiatives that integrate economic purpose with social and environmental impact [14]. As a result, a new business model is needed - one that is built on ethics, diversity, and social innovation as foundational values [15]. Within this framework, entrepreneurs are emerging as agents of change, capable of building flexible teams with an organizational culture that is responsible and committed to the common good.

Four major dimensions are beginning to shape entrepreneurship, employment, and the development of competencies for the economy of the future:

Emerging Trends in the Future Labor Market

The intersection of accelerated technological progress and the imperatives of sustainable development marks a transformative shift in the economy. According to *The Future of Jobs Report 2023*, approximately 23% of jobs are expected to undergo a profound structural transformation by 2027, driven by technological advancements and the sustainable transition[13]. This dynamic reflects both the emergence of entirely new roles and the gradual disappearance of others - particularly in industries dominated by repetitive and manual tasks. Automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence are already realities across many sectors and are prompting a broad reconfiguration of skills demand. While a modest net decline of about 2% in the total number of jobs is projected - equivalent to approximately 14 million jobs globally - this figure fails to capture the depth of qualitative changes in workforce competencies. It is estimated that around 44% of workers' current skills will be redefined by 2027. A new model of skills is emerging, where analytical and creative thinking, continuous learning, resilience, and adaptability become essential [16]. These competencies underscore the need for workers - and especially entrepreneurs - to effectively navigate the complexity, uncertainty, and multiple transitions of the future economy.

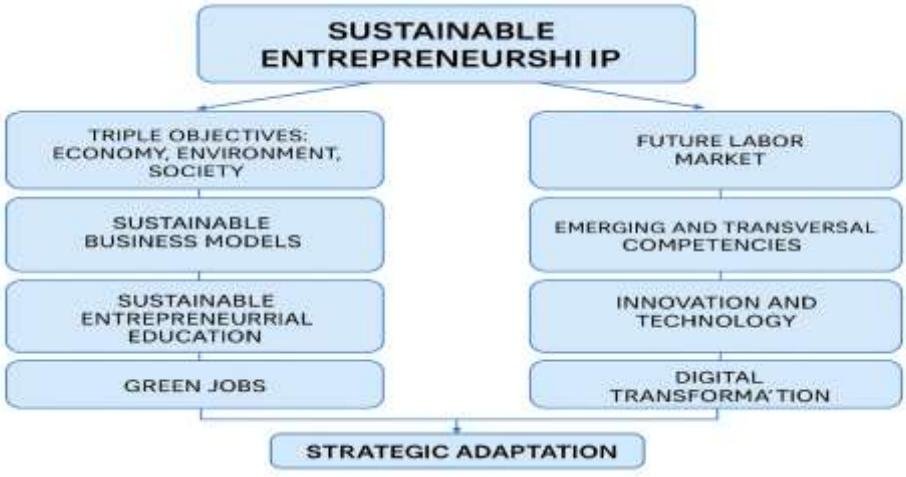

Figure 3. Strategies for adapting sustainable entrepreneurship
Source: compiled by the author

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Sustainable innovation as a driver of employment and economic transformation

Sustainability was initially perceived as a potential impediment to economic growth, potentially leading to job losses. However, the green transition and the emergence of new ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) standards have proven to be powerful drivers of employment - surpassing even automation and globalization in impact. In the field of sustainable entrepreneurship, the number of jobs surpassed 12 million in 2021, and it continues to rise. If the transition is managed efficiently, by 2030, up to 24 million sustainable jobs could be created. After accounting for potential job losses in polluting industries, a net gain of 18 million jobs is projected[17], [18]. A significant shift is also observed within the community of Certified B Corporations (B Corps) - companies verified for their commitment to employees, communities, and environmental stewardship. In 2020, there were 3,700 B Corps, and by now, the number has grown to nearly 8,000 in over 90 countries. Notably, in 2023 alone, more than 1,800 companies obtained certification - the largest growth recorded to date[19], [20]. Young people, who will form the future workforce, are increasingly drawn to such companies. Statistics show that 37% believe companies should prioritize people and the planet over profit, and 75% prefer to work for organizations that clearly uphold social and environmental values[21]. This aligns with the rising demand for sustainability-related roles such as ESG managers and green energy experts. To ensure a sustainable future, it is essential to prepare a new generation of professionals capable of transforming challenges into profitable solutions. The education sector must adapt to the new demands of the labor market by fostering and developing skills tailored to future jobs - those that are sustainable, digitalized, and impact-oriented. Thus, sustainability is emerging as a true economic opportunity, and adaptability to change becomes a key strategy for a resilient economic ecosystem. Interest in concepts like sustainable development, circular economy, and green transition has grown rapidly in recent years, spurring an evolution in both academic and business discourse.

Technology and digital transformation in support of sustainability

Technological progress, far from being a neutral force, is now becoming an essential ally of sustainability. Digital transformation does not act in isolation but operates in synergy with ecological and social imperatives, offering concrete solutions to the major challenges of the 21st century. In today's economic landscape, organizations that implement integrated strategies of digitalization and sustainability not only maintain market relevance but also become key agents of industrial transformation. According to World Economic Forum data, a clear trend has emerged: 75% of global entities anticipate massive adoption of digital technologies by 2027. This shift will lead to a reconfiguration of the labor market through the emergence of hybrid roles, new value models where financial performance and positive impact become interdependent, and structural changes driven by the rise of business ecosystems based on digital collaboration and circular principles. From an applied perspective, digital technologies - such as big data, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) - enable optimization of logistics flows, reduction of waste, increased efficiency across value chains, and real-time monitoring of environmental impact. By adapting to technology, sustainable entrepreneurship becomes both innovative and empowering. As a result, sustainable start-ups can access international markets via digital platforms, mobilize financial resources through crowdfunding, and engage openly in innovation ecosystems[22]. Small businesses, in turn, can leverage digitalization to improve performance and meet consumer demand more effectively. Studies show that entrepreneurs who have embraced digitalization were

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better equipped to overcome recent crises - such as the COVID-19 pandemic - demonstrating superior digital resilience[23]. Looking to the future, emerging technologies such as 5G, edge computing, augmented reality, and biotechnology will open new frontiers for sustainability. AI-assisted bioeconomy, for example, can generate alternative materials with minimal carbon footprints, while the collaborative economy - enabled by digital platforms - can reduce resource underutilization and enhance systemic efficiency.

Sustainable entrepreneurial education and skills adaptation

In a world marked by profound economic, social, and climate transformations, entrepreneurial education must become a catalyst for sustainable change[24], [25]. Recent data show a growing interest among young people in entrepreneurship. According to a 2023 Flash Eurobarometer survey, 46% of young Europeans express a desire to start their own businesses, but more importantly, this generation is driven by a vision of business that is measured not only by profit but also by social impact and environmental responsibility (see Figure 4)[26]. Three out of four young people say they want to work for companies that uphold strong values, protect the environment, and contribute to community well-being. This is not just a preference, but a call for change. As a result, education plays a critical role, particularly in the development of competencies aligned with emerging labor market trends and sustainable entrepreneurship. This form of entrepreneurship merges innovation with sustainability and demands a new set of skills that empower youth to navigate complexity and generate impact. The Sustainable Entrepreneurship Education (SEE) model is essential due to its practical approach, where students learn through real projects, collaborate with their communities, and directly experience how they can make a difference. Investing in such education is vital—students must be provided with both the tools and the confidence they need. In doing so, their creativity and sense of responsibility will become essential contributors to a sustainable economic future.

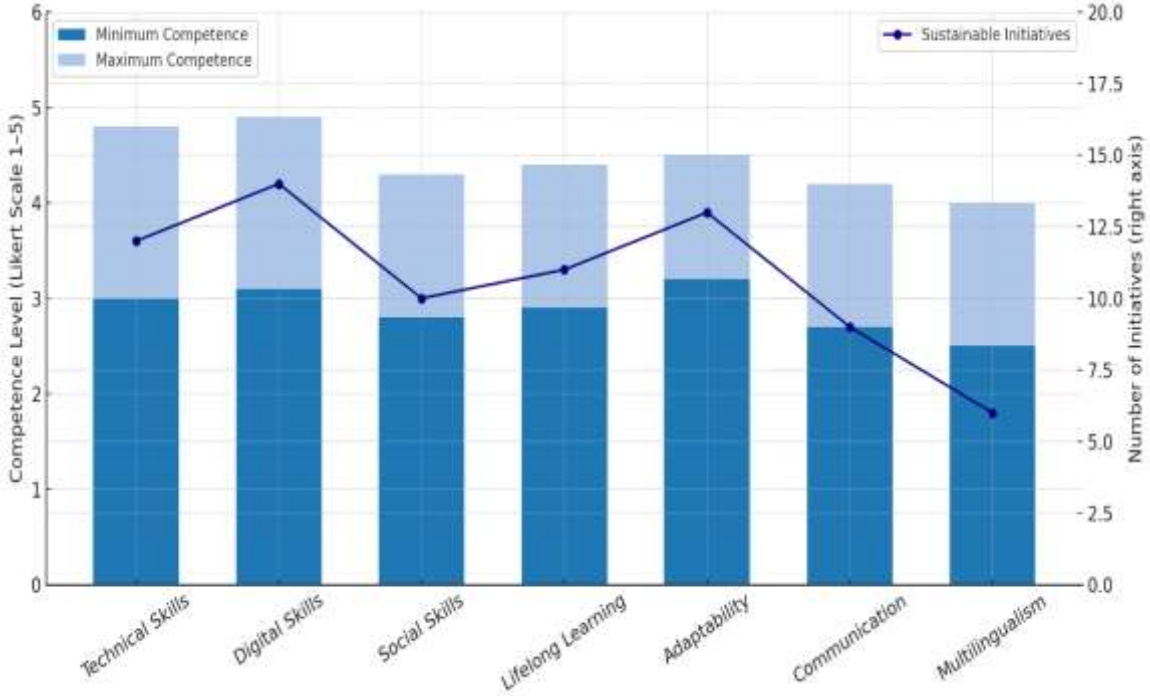

Figure 4. Entrepreneurial competencies and sustainable initiatives
Source: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/

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The Sustainable Entrepreneurship Education (SEE) model is essential due to its practical, hands-on approach, through which young people learn by engaging in real-world projects, collaborating with their communities, and directly experiencing how they can make a difference. It is timely and necessary to invest in education, equipping youth with the tools and confidence they need, so that their creativity and sense of responsibility can actively contribute to a sustainable economic future [28]. According to the study by Rosário and Raimundo (2024), universities and high schools around the world are already adopting SEE models, yet the main challenge remains integrating these initiatives into a coherent educational strategy. The impact is already visible: recent studies show that students who take part in sustainable entrepreneurship modules develop a stronger intention to create businesses with positive impact. In Romania, successful programs such as Junior Achievement offer youth practical and relevant learning opportunities, while initiatives like EFdeTeach support teachers in integrating sustainability concepts into their teaching practices. At the same time, in the Republic of Moldova, entrepreneurial education has been introduced into the curriculum from primary to university level, along with support for pilot projects implemented within the vocational education system. These efforts are carried out in collaboration with international organizations such as the EU, UNDP, and UNICEF [27], [29], [30].

5. Conclusions

The economy of the future is being built at the intersection of innovation, sustainability, and adaptability. From the perspective of academic research, sustainable entrepreneurship emerges as a strategic solution for transforming the labor market. It simultaneously addresses the need to create jobs, protect the environment, and promote social equity.

This research outlines three key dimensions that simultaneously influence entrepreneurship, employment, and skills development for a future-oriented economy:

1. Environmental and social responsibility redefines the purpose of tomorrow's economy and provides a clear path forward.
2. Adaptability and openness to change are increasingly vital in an economic landscape shaped by digitalization and automation. The ability to engage in lifelong learning, manage uncertainty, and integrate new technologies is becoming essential. Both entrepreneurs and employees must develop competencies that allow them to adapt quickly and responsibly.
3. Development of transversal skills is crucial for the economy of the future. These include not only technical knowledge but also critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Such competencies are foundational for an entrepreneurial mindset capable of responding to complex and interconnected needs.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for an adaptive and integrated response to the current challenges of the sustainable economy, placing a strong emphasis on the crucial role of education and public policy in shaping the competencies required for the future labor market. Consequently, the study presents a set of strategic recommendations, developed through a synthesis of relevant academic literature and policy documents, with the aim of supporting the effective implementation of sustainable approaches in both education and entrepreneurship. To reinforce the applied dimension of the research, these recommendations have been categorized according to two key stakeholder groups:

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educational institutions, as vectors for competence development, and decision-makers, as agents of structural reform in economic and educational policy frameworks.

Figure 5. Strategic Recommendations for Educational Institutions and Decision-Makers
Source: compiled by the author

As shown in Figure 5, educational institutions are encouraged to invest in digitalization, foster green skills, and promote cross-sectoral collaboration to support sustainable innovation. Policymakers are urged to adopt a holistic vision of sustainability, recognizing digital transformation and environmental responsibility as complementary pillars of the emerging economy. Ultimately, the desired transformation can only be achieved through shared commitment and courageous vision. Sustainable entrepreneurship has the potential to serve as a key engine of a balanced economy - one that actively safeguards both human dignity and ecological integrity.

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