CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SUSTAINABILITY GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT AUTHORITIES

University of Parma
March 21, 2025

Conference subject-matter

In the 21st century, sustainability has assumed a pivotal role in political and regulatory debates. Many Charters adopted in recent years by International Organizations, as well as numerous national constitutions, include provisions aimed at ensuring sustainability. Being often programmatic in nature, these norms remain largely unimplemented in the absence of public authority intervention. Moreover, procedural norms designed to give concrete effect to these provisions have rarely been adopted. As a result, the need to develop sustainability governance models – enabling law and policy to more effectively contribute to sustainability – has become both a pressing necessity and a complex challenge.

In order to design innovative governance models, it is essential not only to redefine the role of the three traditional branches of government (legislative, executive, and judiciary) and to reconsider their interactions, but also to evaluate whether additional institutional solutions emerged in recent decades – such as participatory democracy and the active involvement of Independent Authorities and specialized courts – could contribute in shaping new models of sustainability governance.

Organized as part of the 'New Sustainability Governance (NESUS-G)' Project, aimed at exploring and proposing innovative governance solutions to enhance sustainability in the fields of natural resources, food sustainability, and climate change, the Conference organized by the University of Parma's Research Unit will particularly focus on the role Independent Authorities in the European

Union (both at supranational and national levels) and in non-EU legal systems can – or already – play in assessing and promoting sustainability (in its threefold dimension) and sustainable decisions, with a particular emphasis on the agri-food sector.

The conference will be structured into two sessions. The first session will host leading experts from different geographical areas and with different legal and scientific backgrounds. The second session will be dedicated to contributions from young researchers selected through the present Call for Papers.

Independent Authorities can variously contribute to the development of new sustainability governance models by providing risk assessments or evaluation data employed, in different ways, in the political decision-making processes. The role and value attributed to the decisions or opinions expressed by those actors thus imposes a serious investigation on the impact on traditional powers and, more vastly, on the relationship between political and legislative decisions and scientific evaluations. Moreover, Independent Authorities (such as the Italian *Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato*) could be attributed the role of ensuring consumers protection as well as a correct functioning of the market by detecting and punishing dysfunctional phenomena such as greenwashing or false or misleading green claims. Independent Authorities could also be empowered with delicate functions such as controlling and monitoring the accountability of public and private actors choices with regards to their compliance with environmental, social, and economic sustainability criteria.

For the purpose of this selection, innovative contributions in the field of legal studies – including Comparative Public Law, Constitutional Law, European Union Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Administrative Law – will be considered.

Preferential topics to be addressed

Within the framework of the conference theme, submissions may address (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- The role of Independent Authorities in assessing and ensuring environmental and food sustainability (e.g., EFSA, FDA, EEA).
- The powers attributed to Independent Authorities in evaluating the effectiveness of sustainability policies and legislative measures, especially considering the impact on food and agri-food sector.

- New approaches and strategies for sustainability assessment, especially considering the agri-food sector.
- The role of scientific sustainability assessment attributed to Independent Authorities and their relationship with other traditional powers (such as legislators both at national and supranational level or government).
- The impact of scientific evaluations attributed to Independent Authorities on the decision-making process concerning sustainability governance.
- The need to reform existent Independent Authorities or to create new ones specifically devoted to sustainability assessment.
- The interaction between Independent Authorities and public authorities to create and ensure sustainable governance models.
- The role of Independent Authorities in ensuring competition and consumers protection facing the (mis)use of claims or information based on sustainability by different market actors.

Eligibility

The conveners encourage submissions from both PhD candidates and junior scholars (postdoctoral researchers, research fellows, assistant professors, etc.) at the early stages of their academic careers.

To submit an abstract

Interested scholars are invited to submit a CV and an abstract, in English, of no more than 500 words. Submissions should be sent to nesusg.unipr@gmail.com by 1st March 2025**.** Applicants will be notified by March 7, 2025. The Conference will be held in a presential format. Selected authors will be required to submit an extended abstract of the speech by March 17, 2025. The judgment of the Scientific committee that will evaluate the abstracts is final and unappealable.

Registration, travel, and lodging

There is no fee to participate in the conference. The conveners will provide accommodation and travel costs for paper presenters.

Conveners

The Conference is organized by the Parma Research Unit of the PRIN 2022 PNRR PROJECT 'New Sustainability Governance (NESUS-G)', Principal Investigator Professor Tania Groppi, Local Unit Coordinator Professor Lucia Scaffardi.

Scientific Committee

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