

THOUGHT LEADERS

By Alexandra Loli, Ph.D.

The rules of business are being rewritten. Sustainability is no longer framed as a choice between values and profit. It has become a catalyst, a driver of growth, innovation, and resilience. The outdated perception that commitment to sustainability hinders competitiveness has given way to a new reality: Today, the most resilient and future-ready businesses are those that embed sustainability at the core of their operations, products, and culture.

In this Thought Leaders special, published in time with the 23rd annual Corporate Responsibility Conference of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, distinguished executives, academics, and thinkers discuss how sustainability and competitiveness are not opposing forces but mutually reinforcing imperatives. Sharing their insights and strategies, they demonstrate that climate commitments, social responsibility, sustainable supply chains, and transparent governance do not compete with business objectives but, rather, accelerate them.

What emerges is a clear message: Impact and performance go hand in hand. Sustainability is a competitive edge. The path forward is not about trade-offs but about unlocking opportunities. And this issue's Thought Leaders are showing the way.

NO DILEMMA

SUSTAINABILITY VS. COMPETITIVENESS





Sustainability and Competitiveness: The Chamber's Perspective



By John D. Saracakis
President, American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, the relationship between sustainability and competitiveness is the defining challenge—and the greatest opportunity of our time. For businesses, governments, and societies alike, the path forward must integrate both dimensions into a unified and actionable vision of growth. Greece stands at a pivotal juncture. Its economic rebound, coupled with its commitment to the EU's Green Deal, places it at the center of Europe's sus-

tainable transformation. But ambition alone is not enough. We must ensure that policies, capital flows, and business practices not only align but actively accelerate innovation, empower small and medium enterprises, and strengthen competitiveness across all sectors of the economy.

At the American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, we believe that sustainability is not simply corporate responsibility but the core driver of resilience, innovation, and long-term prosperity. Companies that lead in this area are

not only meeting regulatory and stakeholder expectations—they are seizing the advantage by opening new markets, attracting investment, and shaping stronger, more inclusive communities.

The Chamber's role is to serve as a bridge, linking the US and Greek business communities, facilitating dialogue, and promoting practices that make sustainability a source of competitive advantage. We are convinced that the future belongs to those who combine purpose with performance and who see environmental and social steward-

ship not as constraints but as catalysts for progress. There is no dilemma between doing well and doing good. The leaders who embrace this truth are not only preparing for tomorrow—they are actively shaping it.

The future belongs to those who combine purpose with performance and see environmental and social stewardship as catalysts for progress

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Reclaiming Balance

By **Pakis****Papademetriou**

Chair of the AmCham Greece Corporate Responsibility Committee

Political agendas often create dilemmas that don't reflect the practical reality of business or society. The EU's Omnibus proposal is a case in point: It vaguely referenced "burdens" and "compliance costs" without defining them and cited "international competitiveness" without any specific impact assessment. By framing simplification as urgent, policymakers presented a false binary between sustainability and growth.

As the European Central Bank recently warned, excessive deregulation risks limiting ESG data—data that financial markets increas-

ingly rely on for risk management and capital allocation. Investor coalitions, too, emphasize that strong ESG frameworks are essential for pricing longterm risks and enabling responsible investment.

For businesses, the priority is regulatory clarity and consistency, not a rollback that introduces new uncertainty. The real opportunity lies in refining implementation, not redefining ambition.

Simplification is both necessary and feasible, as shown by the first revised drafts of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards. But the political ambiguity surrounding the directives has already eroded confidence.

Europe's foundational values should not be diluted by short-term narratives. We must stay true to our role as a global standard-setter—promoting resilience, long-term value, and competitiveness

across borders. Now is the moment to reframe the business case for sustainability. Sustainability creates value for companies, lenders, and investors alike, across supply chains, portfolios, and stakeholder ecosystems. But this value must also be captured. Businesses that fail to translate sustainability into financial strength risk acting as foundations, generating external value without internal reward.

Ultimately, sustainability is not just about environmental ambition or technical standards. It's about connecting people to a shared purpose. What the world needs more of is resilient, resourceful, and respectful businesses, aligned with global principles and committed to longterm impact. Morality and corporate responsibility for climate, a healthier natural environment, and better functioning societies are by no means an obstacle to the business case. They are foundational elements that connect businesses with their stakeholders.

This connection, this commitment to a holistic vision of universal relevance and lasting impact, is the center of AmCham Greece's ambition for Omnia, the 23rd Corporate Responsibility Conference, on October 21, 2025.

Ultimately,
sustainability is
about connecting
people to a shared
purpose

How Sustainability Drives Competitiveness



By Dimitris Agrafiotis
Public and Regulatory
Affairs Manager,
Coca-Cola Hellenic
Bottling Company

For too long, sustainability and business competitiveness have been viewed as mutually exclusive—a false notion that suggests companies must choose between a healthy planet and profitability. However, a growing number of corporate leaders are proving this to be a misconception. They understand that sustainable practices are a critical driver of longterm value, innovation, and resilience, not a cost. This paradigm shift demonstrates that sustainability is not an optional

consideration but rather a fundamental element of a successful business model.

This integrated approach yields tangible benefits that directly impact the bottom line. By optimizing resource use, businesses can significantly reduce operational costs through lower energy consumption and more efficient water management, for example. It's a win-win situation that improves financial performance while reducing environmental impact. Furthermore, a strong commitment to sustainability enhances brand reputation

and fosters deep customer loyalty, especially among a new generation of consumers who actively seek out and support values-driven companies. This proactive stance also attracts top talent, as employees are increasingly drawn to organizations with a clear sense of purpose.

For leading global companies, this is a proven reality. Coca-Cola HBC's long-standing commitment to sustainability, which is consistently recognized with top global rankings, is one example of this integration. By focusing on sustainable packaging and investing in recycled material and refillable bottles, as well as climate action, the company has reduced its environmental footprint and driven innovation across its operations. This proactive approach to sustainability shows that a healthier planet and a more profitable company go hand in hand. It's a powerful lesson: Doing good and doing well are inextricably linked.

Sustainability is a fundamental element of a successful business model

The Winners of Tomorrow Will Be Those Who Compete Responsibly Today



By Rania Assariotaki
Director, Office
of Sustainability,
The American
College of Greece

The notion that sustainability and competitiveness are at odds is increasingly outdated, giving way to a new understanding of sustainability not as a burden but as a source of longterm advantage. Across Europe, the European Green Deal illustrates this shift, setting ambitious targets while creating opportunities for transformation. Organizations that embrace sustainability gain resilience and agility, essential qualities in an era of climate disruption, resource constraints, and

shifting market expectations. Those that hesitate risk falling behind as regulations tighten and consumer preferences evolve.

At the same time, the global context makes this integration more urgent than ever. With climate impacts intensifying and societies demanding responsibility, competitiveness can no longer be measured by financial performance alone. Companies and institutions that align with sustainability are better equipped to withstand disruption and seize emerging opportunities in a changing economy. The benefits are evident: lower costs, reduced risks, and stronger stakeholder trust. Yet the most enduring impact is

cultural. New generations of employees and consumers demand authenticity and purpose in the organizations they engage with. Responding to this expectation ensures not only loyalty but also longterm competitiveness.

For an educational institution, the conclusion is clear: It is not optional but necessary to adopt a 360-degree approach to sustainability. At The American College of Greece, this commitment spans operations, curriculum, and community engagement,

equipping students to lead responsibly and shaping a future where competitiveness and sustainability are inseparable. In the economy of the future, competitiveness wears the face of sustainability.

Those who align with sustainability are better equipped to withstand disruption and seize emerging opportunities

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Sustainability Built On Collaboration



By Loukia Chorafa
Head of Marketing and Communications, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Mastercard

In today's world, stakeholders, from customers and employees to investors and regulators, expect responsibility to be embedded into core strategy. Far from being a burden, this expectation is a catalyst for innovation, efficiency, and growth. At Mastercard, we see sustainability and competitiveness not as opposing forces but as deeply interconnected drivers of longterm value. We call this connection between our business and our impact, doing well by doing good.

Our impact strategy is expressed through three pillars—people, prosperity, and planet—and all our work is grounded in strong governance principles. When we bring more people, in more places, into the digital economy, we grow our customers, our partnerships, and our revenue. At the same time, for a thriving economy in which people prosper, we need a healthy environment, which is why our efforts to preserve the planet play such an important role.

The lesson we continue to learn is that responsible practices are not a “nice to have” alongside performance. They are the foundation of competitiveness in a rapidly changing world. Companies that balance purpose with profit are better equipped to anticipate risks, attract talent, and deliver sustainable growth.

Equally important is collaboration. No single organization has all the answers, but by working across industries, with policymakers and civil society, we can build the frameworks and solutions that make sustainability scalable and lasting. Looking ahead, I believe the companies that will thrive are those that see sustainability not as a separate agenda but as central to how they define success, building a sustainable world where everyone prospers.

Responsible practices are the foundation of competitiveness in a rapidly changing world

Beyond Trade-Offs: When Impact Drives Performance



By Rouli Christopoulou
Corporate Responsibility Manager, Alpha Bank

The supposed trade-off between sustainability and competitiveness is, in fact, a false dilemma. Companies that ignore sustainability risk not only reputational damage but also declining competitiveness. Those that embrace it discover new drivers of growth. Impact investing illustrates this reality. According to the Global Impact Investing Network, the market has expanded by more than 21% annually since 2019, now surpassing \$1.5 trillion in assets under management.

From this evolution emerge key lessons. First, impact strengthens resilience, equipping companies and economies to withstand shocks from climate events to financial volatility. Second, impact attracts capital, as investors seek strategies that combine performance with purpose. Third, impact redefines value, embedding externalities such as carbon storage, biodiversity, and community livelihoods into investment models.

The experience of Alpha Bank brings these insights to life. Through investment products linked with reforestation initiatives in Greece, every €1,000 invested has translated into one new tree. To date, more than 60,000 trees have been planted, capturing over 9,000 tons of CO₂, generating oxygen for more than 240,000 months, and offering refuge to over 180,000 animals. The reforestation projects, carried out in areas such as Katerini, Thessaloniki, the Pieria mountains, and south Evia, were implemented in collaboration with Reforest'Action and the Forest Research Institute of Thessaloniki, ensuring scientific rigor and longterm impact. Beyond the environmental results, the initiative created new opportunities for local communities, from beekeeping to ecotourism. What began as a financial product became an ecosystem of shared

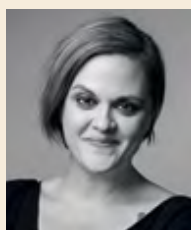
Companies that ignore sustainability risk not only reputational damage but also declining competitiveness

value—economic, environmental, and social.

The path forward is clear: Competitiveness in the decade ahead will not derive from maximizing short-term gains

but from embedding impact at the core of strategy. Those who move early will not only shape a sustainable future—they will lead it.

Navigating the Road to Competitive Sustainability



By Ada Gianneskis
Communications
Director, Greece,
Cyprus, Bulgaria, Ikea

In most cases, one would certainly agree with the “no dilemma” approach to the issue of sustainability vs. competitiveness as the obvious, politically correct option. Yet, that means one bypasses a profoundly fundamental question: Is there a possible or real conflict between managing a company efficiently and, at the same time, maintaining a high level of sustainable practices? Is it all about striking a fine balance between efficiency

and viability? Or perhaps a demanding exercise in navigating a never-ending trade-off, especially given the deteriorating environmental outlook?

Let’s start on the right foot, because in business life, definitions matter.

Being sustainable means two essential things: Firstly, in layman’s terms, to be able to cater to present needs in a manner that ensures future generations can meet their own needs on a relatively equal footing. Secondly, in a demanding market environment (which is now the norm), competitiveness means offering goods or services of “expected” quality and standards, to meet local or global demand adequately. The equation becomes even more complicated as competitive sustainability ideally involves four crucial parameters: social fairness, economic resilience, financial durability, and a planet healthy enough to provide resources across generations.

To put things in perspective, sustainability vs. competitiveness is a difficult conundrum. It faces one major barrier that often becomes a game changer, for better or for worse: a just transition for all, complicated by global institutional chaos. The year 2025 marked a big leap from the post-1945 status quo.

From the European Union’s Green Deal to the US Inflation

Actions are a one-way ticket to adaptation through innovation, alignment, and cooperation

Reduction Act, one phrase that captures the lingering tension between ambition and reality is: “Drill, baby, drill.” Meanwhile, under President Trump’s leadership, global economic dialogue often shifted toward a transactional, zero-sum approach, prioritizing short-term national gains over multilateral consensus.

Let us sum up the challenges ahead: asymmetrical regulations, policy inconsistencies, carbon pricing mechanisms, SME-inclusive initiatives, and workforce reskilling. These are some of the prerequisites for forging futureproof markets and economies, in both sustainable and competitive terms.

Am I pessimistic? No. I’m just a pragmatic navigator through troubled waters. To paraphrase a song: Words and taglines come easy. Actions, in our case, are a one-way ticket to adaptation through innovation, alignment, and cooperation. And in my mind, the decisive dilemma comes down to one word: synergy.

Enhancing Competitiveness Through Sustainable Transformation



By Martha Kesisoglou
Corporate Affairs
Executive Director,
Nova

Greece’s economic rebound, following the crisis, has been hard-won, with its alignment with the European Union’s Green Deal marking a pivotal moment. The country now faces a fundamental challenge: balancing ambitious sustainability commitments with the imperative of preserving and enhancing competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic global economy.

Environmental transformation is no longer optional. The EU’s goals, such as the Fit for 55 package and carbon neutrality by 2050, set binding obligations that demand both immediate and longterm actions. Greece has identified green infrastructure, renewable energy, and the circular economy as strategic pillars for sustainable development. In parallel, regulatory pressures

The path forward lies in integrating growth and sustainability within a coherent and forward-looking strategy

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and investor expectations around ESG compliance are intensifying, prompting industries to rethink operations and value chains.

Yet competitiveness remains critical. Companies, particularly in sectors such as tourism and agriculture, must preserve cost efficiency to remain viable amid significant challenges. Greek SMEs, the backbone of the national economy, face difficulties accessing the funding and expertise needed to make sustainable transition successful. Many still question the tangible benefits of these changes. On top of that, evolving sustainability requirements risk raising operational costs, adding further pressure to businesses already navigating a complex landscape.

The path forward lies not in juggling growth and sustainability as competing priorities, but in integrating them within a coherent and forward-looking strategy. This means fostering innovation, aligning public and private efforts, using EU funding tools such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility effectively, and ensuring policy consistency under a longterm industrial vision that builds resilience. When well executed, sustainable transformation can enhance, rather than hinder, competitiveness.

Integrity as a Driver of Competitiveness



By Elina Konstantinou
Head of Marketing and Communications,
Zepos & Yannopoulos

The conversation around sustainability often falls into false dilemmas such as responsibility versus performance and ethics versus efficiency. Yet the current regulatory landscape in Europe shows that integrity and competitiveness are inseparable.

Take the European Commission's Omnibus package. It was meant to accelerate corporate accountability, but with timelines now pushed back, the signal is clear: Regulation will not move as fast as it should. That

leaves businesses with a choice: Follow the minimum requirements, or embrace governance and transparency as strategic imperatives that go beyond compliance.

Strong governance—anchored in clarity, accountability, and integrity—does more than satisfy regulators. It builds resilience in times of institutional uncertainty and creates trust among investors, employees, and communities. That trust, in turn, becomes a source of competitive advantage: Reputations are strengthened, capital flows more easily,

and stakeholder relationships deepen.

Businesses that move ahead voluntarily on ESG disclosure demonstrate leadership not only within their industries

but also in shaping future standards. Their actions send a clear signal: Transparency is not a burden; it is a differentiator. By embedding ethical practices into their core, these companies don't just respond to regulation; they redefine the playing field.

Sustainability and competitiveness meet when businesses treat governance as a catalyst instead of a constraint. In to-

day's world, where performance is measured not only in profits but also in principles, leadership belongs to those whose strategy and governance are rooted in values—and in a longterm view.

Leadership belongs to those whose strategy and governance are rooted in values—and in a longterm view

Success Requires Both Vision and Responsibility



By Katerina Kypreou
Corporate Communications and CSR Senior Manager,
LAMDA Development

The world is changing at a pace that we could not have imagined even a few years ago. Climate change turning into a climate crisis, technological leaps and AI expansion, geopolitical instability, and new demographic data are shaping a global environment that is full of challenges and upheavals.

In this environment, sustainability is not just a concept, a compliance obligation, or a strict regulation, and it is definitely not an opposing force to competitiveness.

At LAMDA Development, we acknowledge this as we create inspiring life spaces and redesign urban living. As we transform a historic site into a vibrant smart city, we are setting a new benchmark for how urban development can generate longterm value for people, businesses, and the planet, showcasing that sustainable practices aren't just environmental commitments. They're the competitive advantages that position Greece as a strategic player on the global map.

But this is not just about responsibility, it is about performance. By embedding sustainability into every layer

of planning and technology, we unlock efficiency, reduce risk, and attract investment, creating a city that is as economically competitive as it is sustainable. Fast forwarding to the (near) future, organizations will not be rewarded only for making a profit but mainly for creating and sustaining value in the economies and communities they serve.

In that direction, LAMDA Development designs projects and creates experiences that demand both vision and responsibility, and The Ellinikon is proof that sustainability and competitiveness are not opposing goals. In this debate, there is no dilemma: Sustainability is the foundation of true competitiveness.

In the future, organizations will be rewarded mainly for creating and sustaining value in the economies and communities they serve

Balancing Sustainability With Competitiveness



By Alexia Macheras
Sustainable Retail
and Corporate
Communication
Manager, AB
Vassilopoulos

Being part of the AB Vassilopoulos family, one can experience firsthand how a company can balance sustainability with competitiveness. AB's commitment to environmental responsibility is evident in many ways, such as, for example, its pioneering packaging recycling system, operating over 100 centers and recycling over three million packaging materials annually. This initiative not only reduces waste but also builds customer trust and loyalty, showing how

a company can be about more than just profit.

Our pledge to cut plastic usage and food waste by 50% by 2025 also reflects a forward-thinking mindset. These goals align with global sustainability trends and go further than legal obligations, resonating with a growing number of environmentally conscious customers. Our collaboration with local organizations, such as the American Farm School,

Ethical business practices and profitability can go hand in hand

further demonstrates our dedication to community-based sustainability through smart farming and education not only of our consumers but also of young local producers. Over the years, we have managed to integrate sustainability practices without compromising our market position. The company's transformation plan, focusing on expanding its franchise network and enhancing fast delivery services, shows strategic agility. By investing in digital platforms and aiming to grow our e-commerce share, we adapt to modern consumer habits while maintaining our sustainability commitments.

We strive to exemplify how a food retailer can lead in sustainability while staying competitive in a dynamic market. We hope that our efforts can inspire confidence and loyalty, proving that ethical business practices and profitability can go hand in hand.

The Necessity of Operating Responsibly



By Katerina Papakonstantinou
Corporate and
Government Affairs
Manager, Mondelēz
Greece

Recognizing that sustainability is not a separate initiative but rather a core driver of long-term business success, at Mondelēz International, we believe that operating responsibly is essential to remaining competitive in a rapidly changing world.

Our approach focuses on integrating sustainable practices across our value chain, from sourcing ingredients to reducing our environmental footprint and empowering communities.

For example, our Cocoa Life program aims to improve the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and promote sustainable cocoa farming practices, ensuring a reliable supply of high-quality cocoa for our iconic brands while contributing to a more equitable and environmentally sound cocoa sector.

We are also committed to reducing our environmental impact through initiatives focused on packaging innovation, waste reduction, and energy efficiency. By investing in sustainable packaging solutions, we are minimizing waste and contributing to a circular economy. These efforts not only benefit the environment but also enhance our brand reputation and resonate with increasingly conscious consumers.

At Mondelēz, we see sustainability and competitiveness as mutually reinforcing; they are intertwined. By embracing

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sustainable practices, we are building a more resilient, efficient, and responsible business that is well-positioned for longterm sustainable growth and success. Our commitment and goal are a future where both people and planet thrive, a holistic approach that can only bring benefits to all involved.

Embracing sustainable practices builds more resilient, efficient, and responsible businesses

The Strategic Power of Sustainable Business



By Melina Thomaidou
Head of Communications and Patient Relations, AbbVie Pharmaceuticals

In today's competitive and rapidly evolving business landscape, sustainability is more than just doing good, ensuring compliance, or managing reputation. It is imperative for achieving enduring excellence and securing lasting competitive advantage. Beyond goodwill, sustainability unlocks true business potential.

Indeed, this strategic integration of environmental, social, and governance principles demonstrably leads to tangible competitive advantages.

Companies leading in ESG gain faster market access and achieve preferred status with regulators and partners.

This holistic approach drives significant operational and financial efficiencies. Energy-efficient operations and circular economy models reduce operational costs, while carbon neutrality goals spur innovation in logistics and production, directly improving profit margins.

For the pharmaceutical sector, responsible business practices extend beyond ethical necessity; they are a strategic and powerful catalyst for growth and progress. Patient-centric innovation and sustainability are interconnected: Healthy people require a healthy planet. Embracing green chemistry and eco-design in drug development reduces waste, enhances scientific

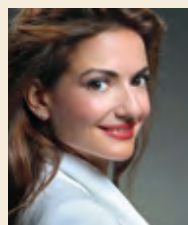
Patient-centric innovation and sustainability are interconnected: Healthy people require a healthy planet.

excellence, and drives next-generation therapeutics, significantly bolstering societal trust.

An authentic commitment to sustainability attracts exceptional talent, strengthens corporate culture, and boosts employee engagement and pride. Transparency in environmental and social performance builds crucial trust with stakeholders, regulators, healthcare professionals, patients, and society at large, fortifying brand reputation. This enhanced reputation and trust directly translate into tangible financial benefits: ESG-aligned companies consistently outperform peers, attracting impact investors and securing longterm value.

The evidence is overwhelming, sustainability is the engine of innovation, talent, and the cornerstone of financial resilience. Sustainable leadership isn't just a competitive advantage; it's the very definition of progress.

Integrating Sustainability Is About Investing in the Future



By Maria Xytaki
Group Corporate Affairs, Communications and ESG Senior Manager, Saracakis Group of Companies

European directives such as the Omnibus and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) highlight a fundamental shift: Companies must demonstrate not only financial performance but also the principles guiding their impact on humanity. This shift pushes organizations to move beyond compliance and embrace sustainability as a core element of competitiveness, embedding ethical principles and responsible practices into their business strategy and corporate culture.

Our experience in mobility and, recently, in environmental services illustrates this reality. For example, integrating circular economy practices in vehicle and machinery operations has not only reduced environmental impact but also uncovered efficiencies that strengthen longterm resilience. Similarly, investing in renewable energy for facilities and improving energy efficiency are not simply sustainability actions; they are cost-management strategies that enhance competitiveness and mitigate risk in a volatile energy market.

Sustainability also extends beyond the environment. Road safety programs aimed at young drivers demonstrate how businesses can address a pressing social challenge while

reinforcing their societal relevance. Continuous investment in employee development strengthens adaptability and innovation—qualities essential for longterm competitiveness in a rapidly transforming industry.

Embedding transparency, ethical governance practices, fair business conduct, and responsible employment principles into decisionmaking creates trust, an intangible yet invaluable asset. Trust attracts partners, motivates employees, and anchors stakeholder confidence, which in turn reinforces business performance. Competitiveness rooted solely in short-term gains is fragile. Competitiveness built on principles is enduring.

Sustainability is not an obstacle to competitiveness, but a pathway to it. When organizations align their strategies with principles—ethical governance, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility—they strengthen their ability to adapt, innovate, and grow. By integrating sustainability into the business model, organizations not only comply with directives but also futureproof their operations, ensuring that performance and purpose go hand in hand.

Competitiveness rooted solely in short-term gains is fragile. Competitiveness built on principles is enduring.

Sustainability is reshaping how we define value, purpose, and the future we want to be part of

Sustainability and Business Performance: A Competitive Advantage



By Maria Ziouvelou
Chief Marketing Officer & Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility Leader, Deloitte

As extreme weather events and resource scarcity escalate, the environmental crisis has forced us to rethink our role. Businesses are increasingly expected to translate responsibility into meaningful, longterm growth.

In recent years, we at Deloitte Greece have re-examined what it means to embed sustainability into our operations. It now shapes how we assess risk, pursue innovation, and create value.

Through *WorldClimate*, our global strategy to drive responsible climate choices, we are committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2040. Since 2019, in Greece, we have reduced emissions by 71% and energy consumption by 57%. Our offices run on renewable energy, over 90% of our fleet is electric or hybrid, and we've adopted advanced waste management practices. Beyond the metrics, this journey has shifted mindsets, sparked cross-functional collaboration, and revealed new efficiencies. We've learned that cultural change is just as essential as technical solutions. Empowering employees through education and volunteering has led to stronger engagement and unexpected innovation.

Working with clients has further deepened our perspective. ESG isn't just about compliance; it's about preparing

for change: market expectations, climate risks, investor scrutiny. In many cases, sustainability becomes a lever for longterm competitiveness.

Through community-focused projects, such as the sustainable development of Astypalaia and Halki, and smart city consulting in Ellinikon, we've seen how sustainability can foster regional innovation and economic growth. These efforts reinforce

a broader lesson: sustainability is not a fixed formula, but a path shaped by context, choices, and longterm thinking. For us, sustainability is no longer a separate track; it's reshaping how we define value, purpose, and the future we want to be part of.



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CR Insights

Sustainability as Competitive Strategy



By Prof. Ioannis Ioannou
Associate Professor
of Strategy and
Entrepreneurship,
London Business
School

For years, we've been told that sustainability and competitiveness pull in opposite directions. That investing in environmental or social priorities means sacrificing financial performance. That assumption no longer holds.

The ground has shifted. Climate change, resource scarcity, and social pressure now shape business risk and opportunity in ways traditional metrics often miss. Companies that take sustainability seriously—not as a PR exercise but as a core strategy—are

building resilience, trust, and longterm value. They're getting ahead of regulation, buffering against volatility, and attracting talent and customers who care about impact as well as performance.

Firms such as Schneider Electric, Interface, and Natura show that this is more than theory. It is strategy in action. But to make this the norm rather than the exception, the system itself must evolve. Our markets still reward short-term returns over long-term preparedness. That's why I've argued for what I call "aligned capitalism," a shift in the rules, incentives, and financial tools that govern the market, so they reflect the real world boundaries businesses now operate within.

The real choice facing businesses today is how to align sustainability and performance in ways that build longterm advantage. It's a choice between helping lead an orderly transition—deliberate, strategic, and resilient—or facing a disorderly one, marked by crisis and costly disruption.

Those who act early, by investing in future-fit models and shaping markets that recognize their value, set the pace for what competitiveness will mean in the years ahead.

The real choice today is how to align sustainability and performance in ways that build longterm advantage

New Competitive Sustainability



By Dr. Martin Porter
Executive Chair,
University of
Cambridge Institute
for Sustainability
Leadership (CISL)
Brussels

Even with all the powerful evidence now available on the negative impacts on the global economy of the environmental crisis and the positive advantages from successfully and rapidly realizing a transition to a genuinely sustainable form of development, the question of how best to approach this unique challenge continues to be presented all too often as one in which the costs of delay and inaction are often understood to outweigh the benefits of ambition and innovation. As a result, even in a region such as Europe,

with a clear commitment to leading in this agenda, sustainability and competitiveness are increasingly presented as somehow in conflict, sometimes through lazy thinking and sometimes from deliberate, narrow self-interest.

Although frustrating, this is perhaps not surprising, given that the ecological, social, economic, and political systems in which these questions are posed are not just complex but are themselves interrelated and often go beyond the capacity of a single business, investor, policymaker, consumer, or academic to directly impact. But that is also why those whose senior roles enable them to appreciate the importance of rapid progress see how their own behavior and action might be a contributor to system change, not just improvement in one part of it.

The Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) now has a wide agenda that seeks to support corporate advocacy and public engagement through harnessing the market power of competition with the development of policy frameworks that drive transformational and purposeful innovation and commercial success for the most dynamic, forward-thinking, and ambitious companies invested in this. And a specific further way in which CISL Europe has been seeking to engage in this with that perspective in mind is to rethink the way we define and measure competitiveness with a view to improving this public debate, government policy, and also corporate performance as a result. At the heart of this is the novel notion of new competitive sustainability.

New competitive sustainability notably goes beyond Draghi, whose recent report on the future of European competitiveness has been so central to forming the latest EU strategic agenda, but whose orthodox approach focuses on productivity gain, especially through technology innovation, as the key measure of success and economic growth. Whilst this is also important, and many of Draghi's recommendations are welcome and important to finally and boldly act upon at the EU level, this narrow view of sustainable competitiveness fails to capture the structural transformation and paradigm shift that the sustainability transition is driving in economics. As a result, it does not fully capture where the EU has current strengths or some competitors have weaknesses, or show clearly where the EU's strategic competitive advantage could yet lie, given its investment and leadership in the climate and sustainability agenda to date.

CISL has now published two editions of its Competitive Sustainability Index (CSI), an innovative, JRC-endorsed framework that embeds the latest thinking on the economics of purposeful innovation as well as socio-technical transitions that go to the core of sustainable development and utilizes the most up-to-date data on sustainable economic activity from the ECB. It therefore delivers a much richer, more nuanced picture of which countries and their value chains or sectors are leading or lagging, what and where investment in innovation should be targeted, and which policies and tools should be packaged together for best results. As a result, individual companies can have more clarity themselves as to where their own strategies should be directed.

It thus offers a clearer picture of how competitiveness and sustainability can and should be harnessed together and not seen in opposition and allows for better analysis and assessment of the trade-offs that remain necessary on this transition. And in this world where old orthodoxies are being left behind, it gives an opportunity for the EU to lead in reframing a global approach and to benefit from doing so.

Traditional views of sustainable competitiveness fail to capture the structural transformation and paradigm shift that the sustainability transition is driving in economics

Regenerative Thinking for Competitive Advantage



By Scott Seivwright
Co-Founder,
Being Beyond Better

There is no longer a dilemma between sustainability and competitiveness. The only real question is how we design our businesses to serve both.

Today's landscape is shaped by disruption: Supply chains are increasingly unstable, AI is redrawing productivity curves, and the retirement of the boomer generation is tightening capital and accelerating a shift in values. New generations are entering the workforce—and investment circles—expecting businesses to lead ethically, regenerate resources, and deliver genuine social value.

In this context, sustainability is not a constraint. It is a compass. The companies that thrive will be those that embed responsible practice into their operations and their value propositions. They will attract top talent, secure loyalty, reduce volatility, and open new markets.

High performance now demands clarity: Prioritizing short-term wins while building stable, regenerative revenue streams. This includes reevaluating investment bets: shifting from extractive growth to strategic resilience, where longterm return is grounded in planetary and social limits. Competitiveness without sustainability is brittle. But aligned together, they become a flywheel of innovation, trust, and adaptive strength.

The most forward-looking leaders already know: The market is not asking for a trade-off. It is asking for transformation.

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The market is not asking for a trade-off. It is asking for transformation. There is no dilemma. Only the call to surf the change wave that we are in. We are entering the greatest competitive shift since the dawn of industry — and this time, sustainability is the battleground. The future belongs to those who meet human need without costing the Earth. Everyone else is already obsolete. 🌱

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