

CALL FOR PAPERS

Annual Meeting of the European Business History Association (EBHA) 2025

Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, 26th – 28th June, 2025

Theme: Business History: An Approach to Understanding Sustainability Challenges

The European Business History Association (EBHA) is pleased to announce its Annual Meeting to be held in Brussels, Belgium, in 2025. We invite scholars from across the globe to submit papers that explore the theme “Business History: An Approach to Understanding Sustainability Challenges”. This conference aims to broaden the discourse around sustainability by encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions within the historical context of business practices.

Scope and Objectives

In its most comprehensive sense, sustainability can be defined as the interrelated dimensions of economic stability, social equity, and environmental protection. Historically, the narrative of modern capitalism and the rise of large-scale businesses has placed significant emphasis on the expansion of manufacturing firms through the extensive use of fossil fuels. Business historians have long sought to understand why certain countries and companies have been more successful than others in establishing capitalist enterprises. This traditional focus, however, often fails to consider the broader implications of business practices on sustainable development.

Emerging research on sustainability aims to transcend this emphasis, advocating for a more profound integration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability considerations in the study of business history. These discussions recognize that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the interconnectedness of the three dimensions in question. *Economic stability* encompasses not only growth and profitability, but also resilience and the capacity to adapt to changing environmental and social conditions. In order to achieve social equity, businesses must consider the impact of their operations on local communities, labor practices, and their contribution to *social cohesion*. The concept of *environmental protection* emphasizes the necessity to mitigate the negative impacts on the natural world. This is achieved through the implementation of practices that reduce pollution, conserve resources, and address climate change.

The integration of sustainability into business history is not merely an academic exercise; it is a critical response to a global imperative. By examining historical perspectives on sustainability, scholars can provide valuable insights into contemporary debates and policy discussions, thereby assisting in the shaping of a more sustainable future. The EBHA Annual Meeting in Brussels, the city that houses the official seats of the European Union institutions, offers a unique opportunity to align academic discussions with policy-making processes at the heart of Europe. The EBHA Annual Meeting will facilitate this integration by encouraging contributions that elucidate the multifaceted relationships between businesses and sustainability throughout history.

Potential Themes and Questions of Interest

We encourage contributions that address a wide array of themes related to sustainability in business history, including but not limited to the following:

- **Defining Sustainability in Business History:**
 - How has the concept of sustainability evolved in the historiography of business history?
 - What theoretical frameworks can help integrate sustainability into business history research?
- **Firms' Contribution to Economic Growth and Social Cohesion:**
 - How have different types of firms, from large Chandlerian enterprises to SMEs, contributed to sustainable economic growth?
 - What roles have firms played in fostering social cohesion within their communities?
- **Sustainability for Family Companies:**
 - How have family-owned businesses managed sustainability?
 - What unique challenges and opportunities do family businesses face in integrating sustainability into their practices?
- **Social Embedding in SMEs:**
 - How do small and medium enterprises (SMEs) embed social sustainability into their operations?
 - What are the historical examples of SMEs contributing to social equity and community development?
- **Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and Knowledge Transfer:**
 - How have MNEs facilitated the transfer of sustainable practices and technologies across borders?
 - What historical case studies illustrate successful knowledge transfer for sustainability in MNEs?
- **Heterogeneity of Green Entrepreneurship:**
 - How diverse is green entrepreneurship in terms of business models, industries, and geographical regions?
 - What historical trends can be identified in the evolution of green businesses?

- **Corporate Responses to Sustainability Challenges:**
 - How have businesses historically responded to environmental regulations and activism?
 - What lessons can be learned from the various waves of corporate environmentalism since the 1960s?

- **Economic and Environmental Histories of Capitalism:**
 - How can business historians contribute to the Great Acceleration and Anthropocene debates?
 - What historical insights can inform current policy discussions on sustainable capitalism?

Papers on a range of other topics will also be considered. These include, **but are not limited to**, entrepreneurship, economic growth, innovation, power and business, race and inequality, responsible business, risk, sustainability, and taxation. In addition to proposals for individual papers, scholars are invited to submit full panel sessions. This will help to create more coherence within the conference program. For panel sessions, we strongly recommend integrating a variety of comparative national, regional, or sectoral perspectives.

We also invite other formats, such as workshops, debates, and poster presentations. Journals are invited to propose fast-track sessions.

Submission Guidelines (www.ebhabrussels2025.org)

We invite submissions for individual papers, full panels, and roundtable discussions.

Deadline for Submissions: 15 January, 2025

Expected Notification of Acceptance: 31st March, 2025

Paper and panel proposals must be submitted online at www.ebhabrussels2025.org

Please have the following information and documentation ready:

1. Author information

- Affiliation
- Short CV (up to 250 words), including authored publications related to the proposal

2. Abstract (up to 350 words), including information important to the program committee decision:

- A clear statement of the research question
- Brief information on the theoretical/conceptual framework used
- Major research areas to which the paper relates

3. In case of joint papers. one of the authors need to attend the conference if the proposal is accepted.

NB: once accepted, papers submitted for the conference should have at least 12 pages (3,500 words minimum) to allow for productive discussions in the sessions and remarks by the commentators. Papers will be uploaded to the conference website.

Requirements for session proposals

The EBHA welcomes different types of session proposals to the annual EBHA congress. We especially encourage paper sessions and panels which can be ninety minutes long or two-hours (if needed to accommodate more papers). The EBHA also encourages “workshops” of groups of scholars who want to use the opportunity of the congress to have their regular or specific meeting, e.g. in order to create research frameworks and develop papers or to prepare a book or journal special issue. Session proposals should include:

(1) Title and a short abstract including the objectives of the session/panel/workshop and the issues to be addressed.

(2) Presenters’ information: affiliation and short CV (up to 1 page long).

Other relevant information to consider is:

• **Paper Sessions** – Three to four presenters. The instructions given above for single papers also apply here.

• **Panels** – Three to five presenters suggested by the applicant. The instructions given above for single papers also apply here. Provide details about the chair and discussant

• **Workshops** – Workshops usually take place immediately before the congress starts. The precondition for workshop formats is openness to new participants; all material to be discussed must have been published on the conference webpage three weeks before the congress.

• **Poster presentations** – quite common for presentations by PhD scholars, or scholars presenting their research projects, etc.

Conference Details

Location: Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium

Dates: Thursday 26th June – Saturday 28th June, 2025

Contact Information: For any inquiries, please contact ebhabrussels2025@ulb.be

Program Committee Members

Adoración Álvaro Moya (CUNEF, Madrid; EBHA President)

Kenneth Bertrams (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Bram Bouwens (Utrecht University)

Eric Godelier (Ecole Polytechnique, Paris)

Julien del Marmol (Université Libre de Bruxelles)