

## The 18<sup>th</sup> CEA (Europe) & 37<sup>th</sup> CEA (UK) 2026 Annual Conference

### Sustainable Finance, AI and the Circular Economy: Pathways to a Sustainable Future

**Organizer:** Chinese Economic Association (CEA) UK/Europe

**Local Host:** University College Dublin (UCD)

**Conference Dates:** 5-7<sup>th</sup> August 2026

**Venue:** UCD, Ireland

**Conference Chairs:**

- Professor Bing Xu, Heriot-Watt University
- Professor Liming Wang, UCD
- Professor Wing Thye Woo, University of California, Davis

#### Conference Overview

The 2026 Annual Conference of the Chinese Economics Association (Europe/UK) will focus on the theme "***Sustainable Finance, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Circular Economy (CE)***", exploring how financial systems, policy frameworks, and technologies—especially AI—can work together to drive large-scale CE transitions and foster long-term sustainability.

As climate change intensifies, resources become increasingly constrained, and global geopolitical uncertainties rise, reimagining financial systems has never been more urgent. Traditional capital allocation models are increasingly inadequate for building long-term ecological and economic resilience. In this context, sustainable finance has emerged as a transformative force for channelling capital into circular business models, low carbon/circular technologies, resource-efficient systems, and inclusive economic pathways.

Sustainable financial instruments such as blended finance, green bonds, and impact investments are essential to mitigating systemic risks and enabling industries to withstand disruptions related to supply chains, trade, environmental and conflict-drive energy volatility. These instruments also play a key role in closing financing gaps for SMEs, enhancing circular asset valuation, and promoting regulatory alignment.

In parallel with financial innovation, AI and digital technologies, including blockchain, big data, and machine learning—are reshaping how capital is deployed and monitored. These technologies improve transparency, operational efficiency, ESG tracking, and real-time risk assessment. They also

provide critical infrastructure for advancing sustainable finance and circularity, enabling more equitable access to capital and greater automation in compliance, reporting, and performance measurement.

However, several challenges persist. These include the need to strengthen accountability in sustainable finance, harmonise fragmented regulatory frameworks, and foster greater policy alignment and collaboration between public and private sectors. Overcoming these obstacles requires innovative financial frameworks, robust governance mechanisms, and a shared foundation of trust among financial institutions, industry stakeholders, and regulators.

Ultimately, the transition to a CE requires more than financial capital—it calls for a fundamental shift in how value is created, measured, and distributed. Embedding equity, resilience, and regeneration into financial systems is essential to redefining success around long-term social and environmental value creation, rather than short-term financial returns.

### **Conference Objectives and Themes**

This conference will serve as a dynamic, interdisciplinary platform for researchers, policymakers, financial professionals, and sustainability practitioners to explore how finance and innovation can be strategically leveraged to tackle these systemic challenges—from financing CE-aligned infrastructure to managing climate and geopolitical-related financial risks embedded within global financial systems.

Participants will engage with cutting-edge research and forward-looking strategies to support system-level transformation across finance, production, and sustainability. The programme will critically examine both the opportunities and constraints of sustainable finance.

We welcome submissions addressing a broad range of topics that reflect the intersections of finance, CE, AI and digital technology and global uncertainty. Topics include, but are not limited to:

- Behavioural insights into responsible, ethical, and sustainable investing.
- Blockchain for traceability, accountability, and trust in circular supply chains.
- Circular business models and supply chain transformation.
- CE practices across industrial sectors (e.g., electronics, chemicals, etc.).
- Digital finance, AI, and fintech applications in CE transitions.
- Economic security, financial sovereignty, and strategic CE alignment.

- E-waste recycling governance, supervision, and innovation.
- Financial and non-financial drivers of CE adoption.
- Financing innovation, clean technologies, and decarbonization pathways.
- Financial regulation, taxonomies, and sustainability disclosure frameworks.
- Financing reverse logistics and responsible material recovery systems.
- Green bonds, carbon markets, and climate-related financial disclosures.
- Greenwashing, ESG integrity, and accountability in sustainable finance.
- Geopolitical risks and their impact on CE and financial resilience.
- Public-private partnerships for circular infrastructure development.
- Resource efficiency and economic resilience through circularity.
- Sustainable finance strategies prioritising long-term value creation.
- The role of financial institutions in enabling CE transitions.
- Venture capital and private equity in circular and sustainable technologies.

While the central theme is **Sustainable Finance, AI and the Circular Economy**, the conference also welcomes outstanding contributions in broader areas of **economics, finance, sustainability, and digital innovation** that align with the vision and mission of the CEA (UK/Europe).

## Conference Planning

### 1. Confirmed Keynote Speakers (Listed in Alphabetical Order)

- **Professor Ming Lu**, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
- **Professor Steven Ongena**, University of Zurich
- **Professor Wim Vanhaverbeke**, University of Antwerp
- **Professor Miaojie Yu**, Liaoning University
- **Professor Bohui Zhang**, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen
- **Professor Jun Zhang**, Fudan University

### 2. Paper Submission

- Submissions should be made via this email: [ceaukeu2026@gmail.com](mailto:ceaukeu2026@gmail.com)
- Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026

*Notifications of acceptance for the conference will be sent to the submitting authors by the end of April 2026. Submissions received earlier will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and acceptance notifications may be issued earlier accordingly.*

### 3. Publication Opportunities

The best papers will be invited to submit to the journals listed below. However, please note that an invitation does not guarantee acceptance, as all submissions will undergo the standard peer-review process.

#### 1) Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies (JCEBS)

The *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies (JCEBS)* is the official journal of the Chinese Economic Association (UK/Europe). It is dedicated to publishing original research that addresses key aspects of sustainable development, with a particular focus on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its multidisciplinary approach spans economics, finance and business, with an emphasis on research that contributes to the understanding of global challenges such as climate change, the integration of big data and financial technology into economic systems, and the promotion of equality and diversity. It particularly values research that provides insights into the dynamics of financial development, economic growth, and the role of inclusive institutions in promoting sustainable and equitable development.

## 2) Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies (JCEFTS)

The *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies (JCEFTS)* is to publish high-quality research on economic, business, and foreign trade issues relevant to China and its economic relations globally. It welcomes research papers based on theoretical insights, empirical testing of 'accepted' theory, literature reviews, case studies and papers which present conceptually new and thoughtful arguments, whether theory or policy-focused.

## 3) Journal of Environmental Management (JEM)

### Intangible Assets and Visible Impact: Corporate Responses to the Climate Challenge

This Special Issue invites research examining how firms respond to climate risk through intangible environmental assets, ESG disclosure quality, governance and assurance mechanisms, and stakeholder trust. The focus is on how credibility, visibility, and legitimacy shape the effectiveness of corporate climate strategies across different institutional and regulatory contexts. Contributions drawing on corporate governance, environmental economics, disclosure, and legitimacy perspectives are welcome.

**Guest Editors:** Sajid Mukhtar Chaudhry and Rizwan Ahmed

**Submission deadline:** 31 December 2026

## 4) Engineering Management

*Engineering Management (EM)* is dedicated to advancing the frontiers of knowledge and technology in engineering management. From international and interdisciplinary perspectives, the scope of the journal includes (but is not limited to): Industrial Engineering and Intelligent Manufacturing; Construction Engineering and Intelligent Construction; Energy and Environmental Systems; Traffic Engineering Systems Management; Logistics Systems and Supply Chain Management; Information Management and Information Systems; Technology and Innovation Management; and Systems Engineering Theory and Application.

## 5) Structural Change and Economic Dynamics Journal (SCED)

*Structural Change and Economic Dynamics (SCED)* was launched in 1990. It publishes articles about theoretical and applied, historical and methodological aspects of structural change in economic systems. The journal publishes work analysing dynamics and structural change in economic, technological,

institutional and behavioural patterns.

#### 6) China Economic Review

The *China Economic Review* publishes original research works on the economy of China, and its relation to the world economy. We seek, in particular, quantitative and analytical papers dealing with institutional change, policy and performance of the Chinese economy; research that compares the development process in China with that in other countries is encouraged.

#### 7) Journal of Digital Economy (JDE)

Journal of Digital Economy (JDE) is a peer-reviewed, open access journal. It is the official English-language journal of the Tsinghua University Institute of Economics in China. While the Industrial Revolution transformed humanity from early agrarian societies to an industrialized age, the 21st century is witnessing the rise of a digital civilization. JDE sheds light on how this digital era is expanding, restructuring and challenging existing knowledge and traditional methodology. It is a platform for both theoretical and empirical contributions to multiple disciplines, including, but not limited to, Economics, Management, Sociology, Political Economy, Computer Science and Environmental Science. JDE examines ways to improve economic well-being, social equity and environmental sustainability in the digital era. It welcomes practice and policy-oriented studies that tackle the challenges and harness the opportunities distinctive to our time.

#### 8) Energy and AI

*Energy and AI* provides a fast and authoritative open access platform to disseminate the latest research progress in the cross-disciplinary area of energy and artificial intelligence (AI). The journal focuses on innovative applications of AI that address the critical challenges in energy systems, energy materials, energy chemistry, energy utilization & conversion, and energy & society, as well as other important pressing issues in energy research. The journal also considers papers on the development of bespoke AI technologies and methodologies for advancing energy, decarbonization and sustainable development, such as data-driven approaches, optimization algorithms and AI ethics.

## 9) Industrial Management and Data Systems

*Industrial Management & Data Systems (IMDS)* focuses on topics treating the interface between operations management and information systems. *IMDS* is interdisciplinary in nature and serves researchers and practitioners the necessary information to enable them to explore and apply the potential of new technologies to all aspects of management activities such as marketing, management information systems, operations management, business strategy, innovation, organization behaviour, business process management and supply chain management.

## 10) Other Supporting Journals

Additional journal partnerships to be announced.

### 4. Gala dinner

A formal dinner will be hosted during the conference to facilitate networking and engagement in an informal setting.

### 5. Committee

- **Jian Chen**, University of Nottingham
- **Dimitris Christopoulos**, Heriot-Watt University
- **Yizhe Dong**, University of Edinburgh
- **Yuning Gao**, Tsinghua University
- **Yundan Gong**, Aston University
- **Wenxuan Hou**, University of Edinburgh
- **Lucy (Yue) Liu**, University of Edinburgh
- **Dan Luo**, University of Reading
- **Jeff Kettle**, University of Glasgow
- **Eoin McLaughlin**, Heriot-Watt University
- **Zhifu Mi**, University College London (UCL)
- **Shumiao Ouyang**, University of Oxford
- **Renaldi Renaldi**, University of Birmingham
- **Ke Rong**, Tsinghua University
- **Wenlong Shang**, Imperial College
- **Yukun Shi**, University of Glasgow
- **Edward Sweeney**, Heriot-Watt University
- **Senmao Xia**, University of Surrey
- **Zezhong Xiao**, University of Macau
- **Mahmoud Wagih**, University of Glasgow

- **Xiaobing Wang**, University of Manchester
- **Ji Yan**, Durham University
- **Chao Yin**, University of Edinburgh
- **Xiaohua Yu**, University of Göttingen
- **Peng Zhou**, Cardiff University
- **Paul Walsh**, University College Dublin

## 6. Conference Fee and Registration

The conference registration fee is **£320 (academics) and £160 (PhD students)**, which include conference materials, refreshments, lunch and Gala dinner: [https://ceaukeu.org/?page\\_id=992](https://ceaukeu.org/?page_id=992)

## 7. Venue

The conference will be held at University College Dublin (UCD), a leading European research university offering world-class facilities and a dynamic environment for academic exchange. Located in Dublin, Ireland, UCD provides the perfect setting to foster international collaboration while immersing participants in a city renowned for its literary heritage, historic landmarks, and dynamic contemporary culture.

## 8. Tourist Attractions:

While in Dublin, participants can visit:

- **Trinity College Library & the Book of Kells** – a must-visit for lovers of history, art, and literature.
- **Dublin Castle & St. Patrick's Cathedral** – for a glimpse into Ireland's political and religious past.
- **Temple Bar District** – enjoy traditional Irish music, local pubs, and lively atmosphere.

For those extending their stay, we recommend:

- **Cliffs of Moher** – Ireland's most iconic coastal views (day trip or overnight).
- **Galway City** – a charming bohemian town with arts, food, and music (2.5 hours by train).
- **Glendalough & Wicklow Mountains** – stunning monastic ruins and nature trails, just south of Dublin.
- **Belfast & Giant's Causeway** – Northern Ireland's dramatic coastline and history (can be done in a day with tour operators).