



**ISSN 0353-8648**  
**eISSN 2217-3668**

**Vol. 63 (1)**

**SPECIAL ISSUE:**  
**MULTI-CRITERIA ANALYSIS AND**  
**URBAN DECISION-MAKING**

**EKONOMSKE**  
**TEME**

**ECONOMIC**  
**THEMES**



**Niš, 2025**

## **EKONOMSKE TEME**

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**U finansiranju ovog časopisa učestvuje**

**MINISTARSTVO NAUKE, TEHNOLOŠKOG RAZVOJA I INOVACIJA REPUBLIKE SRBIJE**

**Časopis je indeksiran u sledećim bazama: EBSCO i DeGruyter Open (Sciendo).**

**Adresa Redakcije:**

Ekonomski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Trg kralja Aleksandra Ujedinitelja br. 11, Niš

Tel. +381 18 528-624, 528-601

E-mail: ekonomske-teme@eknfak.ni.ac.rs Web: <http://www.economic-themes.com/>

**Štampa: Atlantis, d.o.o. Niš**

**Tiraž: 100**

**ECONOMIC THEMES**  
**- published quarterly -**

**Publisher:** Faculty of Economics, University of Niš

**For publisher:**  
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**This journal is partly financed by**  
**MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION OF**  
**THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**  
**Journal Economic Themes is indexed and abstracted in: EBSCO and De Gryter Open (Sciendo)**

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**Printed by: Atlantis Niš**  
**Circulation: 100**

## Editorial

We are pleased to present the first issue of Economic Themes for the year 2025, dedicated to the theme “**Multi-Criteria Analysis and Urban Decision-Making.**” This special issue brings together a selection of scientific contributions developed within the framework of the Horizon Europe project “*Twinning for Excellence in Smart and Resilient Urban Development: Advanced Data Analytics Approach UR-DATA*” (HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-02, Grant Agreement No. 101059994). The project aims to enhance inclusive and data-informed policy development in urban and regional contexts, with an emphasis on integrating multi-criteria methods, institutional analysis, and evidence-based planning.

The special issue of the Journal Economic Themes presents to readers six scientific papers, which are the result of researching in a field of main goals of mentioned Project. The contributions assembled in this volume reflect the interdisciplinary and policy-oriented spirit of the UR-DATA initiative. Through diverse analytical approaches - ranging from empirical case studies to conceptual modeling - these papers offer new insights into the challenges and opportunities facing urban governance, sustainable development, and institutional transformation in Europe and beyond. The contributions reflect the project’s overarching aim of fostering interdisciplinary research and informing evidence-based public policy through diverse methodological and thematic approaches.

The issue opens with the original scientific paper “Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Urban Areas: Case Study Rasina District,” which offers an in-depth environmental and hydrological analysis. By applying the Basin Demographic Emission Index (BDE) and the Serbian Water Quality Index (SWQI), the authors provide a nuanced view of water resource sustainability in central Serbia, calling for long-term planning and integration of sustainability principles into water management systems.

The issue continues with review paper “The Conundrum of the Modified Areal Unit Problem (MAUP) for Urban Decision-Making Across Scales,” which critically reflects on how spatial data aggregation affects urban planning and governance. Highlighting the risks of statistical distortions in urban analytics, the paper advocates for methodological awareness and interdisciplinary approaches in spatial decision-making.

In the original scientific paper titled “Gender Equality in Europe: Differences and Challenges among European Countries,” the authors employ principal component and cluster analysis to evaluate disparities in gender equality across the EU. The paper identifies four distinct country clusters and emphasizes the need for tailored policies to improve political and economic opportunities for women, especially in post-socialist and traditional societies.

The review paper “Export-Promoting Policies, Agglomeration, and Growth” presents a theoretical contribution to understanding the role of trade subsidies and firm agglomeration in influencing global growth and welfare. By modeling labor reallocation

and knowledge spillovers, the study provides insights into the implications of policy asymmetries between agglomeration and non-agglomeration economies.

A practical application of decision-support tools is illustrated in original scientific paper titled “Supplier Selection in Institutions of Residential Care,” which utilizes the Group Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to evaluate procurement criteria in Serbian social care institutions. The findings reveal the predominance of price, alongside rising attention to sustainability and transparency, and propose the integration of multi-criteria frameworks in public procurement reform.

Another important contribution comes from the paper “Advancing the Integration of Informal Waste Pickers into Urban Waste Management Systems: Potentials and Limitations.” Based on empirical research in Serbia, this study highlights the critical but marginalized role of informal waste collectors. It argues for their formal integration into municipal systems to improve both environmental outcomes and social equity.

Together, the papers in this issue reflect the multi-dimensional approach of the UR-DATA project and its commitment to connecting local realities with broader policy and research frameworks. They not only present original academic contributions but also offer concrete policy implications relevant to urban sustainability, institutional governance, and social inclusion across Europe.

We thank all the contributors and reviewers whose efforts made this special issue possible.

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