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# Ecological Economics

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ecolecon](https://www.elsevier.com/locate/ecolecon)

# How the energy procurement switching strategies (driven by the Russia-Ukraine conflict) impact the global sustainability? The global sustainability dashboard

ABSTRACT

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The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has underscored the criticality related to the dependence on energy supply from Russia and the lack of energy autonomy by European countries. To obtain a progressive detachment from the Russian energy supply dependency, European countries have been adopting some measures, aimed at switching the natural gas supply from Russia to other countries, reducing the consumption of natural gas, and replacing energy source typology, e.g., switching from methane to coal or renewable sources. This paper develops a tool based on the Input-Output methodology, named Global Sustainability Dashboard (GSD), designed for assessing the potential consequences of a national strategy aimed at replacing energy source suppliers. GSD adopts 14 indicators to consider the three main sustainability dimensions (i.e., economic, environmental, and social) at both the national and global scale. As an illustrative case, the Italian energy diversification strategy is analyzed, to demonstrate the practical implementation of GSD. Findings are discussed from the numerical perspective.

#### **1. Introduction**

ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Energy security Russia-Ukraine conflict Multi-regional input-output Sustainability impacts

Nowadays, the global economy is highly dependent on imports of energy and therefore the national energy security depends on a stable network of international trade in energy [\(Shepard](#page-23-0) and Pratson, 2020). Nevertheless, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has instigated significant alterations in the geopolitical balances that existed before February 24, 2022 ([Orenstein,](#page-23-0) 2023). This event is generating widespread apprehensions and a spectrum of repercussions, notably within sectors such as the economy, finance, environment, energy, and society (Chen et al., [2023](#page-22-0); [Garbellini](#page-22-0) and Lampa, 2023; Jiang and [Chen,](#page-22-0) 2024; [Khurshid](#page-22-0) et al., 2024; [Khurshid](#page-22-0) et al., 2023; Lei et al., [2023\)](#page-23-0). In particular, in Europe, in a very short period, the criticality related to the dependence of energy supply on Russia and the lack of energy autonomy of European countries have become evident [\(Colgan](#page-22-0) et al., 2023; [Cui](#page-22-0) et al., [2023;](#page-22-0) [McWilliams](#page-23-0) et al., 2023). Additionally, this geopolitical turmoil has intensified the escalation in energy source prices, a trend triggered by the pandemic (Mišík and [Nosko,](#page-23-0) 2023): the combined effect of both the pandemic and war crises led to the increase in natural gas prices up to the – previously unpredictable – level of  $+780\%$  in August 2022 compared to May 2021 prices. In response to the above-mentioned events, the European Commission has adopted some emergency measures, intending to shield national economies and maintain an unchanged aggregate energy supply, all the while safeguarding households and enterprises [\(Matkovic](#page-23-0) and Anne, 2022). Nevertheless, over the medium and long term, aligning with the Union's energy strategy ([Eu-](#page-22-0)ropean [Commission,](#page-22-0) 2022), the European Commission's decision<sup>1</sup> involves a gradual and increasingly substantial reduction of reliance on Russian gas until complete autonomy is achieved, particularly via implementing three strategies: (1) replacement of supplies (e.g., from Russia to other countries); (2) replacement of energy sources (e.g., from methane to coal and renewable sources); and (3) reduction and saving of consumption (Ministry for Energy [Transition,](#page-23-0) I, 2022). In this regard, the diversification strategy in investments in gas infrastructures, aimed at providing better security of supply improvement and preventing high costs and uncertainties in the European gas market, has become a hot

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108328>

Available online 8 August 2024 Received 8 February 2024; Received in revised form 26 July 2024; Accepted 31 July 2024





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#### topic nowadays (e.g., [Hauser,](#page-22-0) 2021).

This paper deals with the first of the above-mentioned strategies, i.e., the replacement of supplies. Specifically, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that evaluate, in a comprehensive view, the impacts that measures of energy diversification, aimed at reducing the energy dependency from Russia, play on the three dimensions of sustainability (i.e., economic, environmental, and social), not limiting to consider the local level but addressing also a global perspective. In this regard, due to the strong interdependencies among global supply chains ([Dubois](#page-22-0) et al., [2004;](#page-22-0) Tang et al., [2016](#page-23-0)) – recognized as relevant also for energy supply chains [\(Meckling](#page-23-0) and Hughes, 2018) – the act of consumption within a single country can precipitate environmental repercussions across numerous other nations through multifaceted pathways [\(Duan](#page-22-0) and [Jiang,](#page-22-0) 2018; Fraccascia and [Giannoccaro,](#page-22-0) 2019; [Skelton](#page-23-0) et al., 2011; Zhu et al., [2022](#page-24-0)). Accordingly, traditional indicators based on domestic consumption (e.g., domestic resource extraction and emissions) are insufficient for comprehensively evaluating the environmental impacts attributed to (changes in) final consumption.

Although an increasing number of studies has been produced in a very short period, the literature has mainly focused on studying the economic consequences of the conflict.

Several studies have been devoted to assessing the consequences the conflict played on the energy market (Chen et al., [2023](#page-22-0); [Umar](#page-23-0) et al., [2022\)](#page-23-0), which garnered significant attention due to the direct influence on global trade equilibrium (e.g., [Bricout](#page-22-0) et al., 2022), as well as on the global production and marketing chains of food raw materials<sup>2</sup> (e.g., [Abay](#page-22-0) et al., 2023). Other studies have addressed the environmental impact of war operations<sup>3</sup> (e.g., [Rawtani](#page-23-0) et al., 2022). Nevertheless, assessing the overall sustainability impacts of energy diversification strategy is of high importance, given the strong interconnection among the economy, environment, and society (e.g., [Dong](#page-22-0) et al., 2024; [Luo](#page-23-0) et al., [2024;](#page-23-0) Zhao et al., [2024\)](#page-24-0).

Aimed at filling this gap, this study develops the Global Sustainability Dashboard (GSD), designed for assessing the potential consequences that a national strategy aimed at replacing energy source suppliers would play on the three sustainability dimensions at both the national and global scale. In particular, our approach relies on the Input-Output methodology [\(Dietzenbacher](#page-22-0) and Lahr, 2004; [Leontief,](#page-23-0) 1986) and uses the global Multi-Regional Input-Output (MRIO) tables, which are able to describe the interdependences among the national economies of some countries where each national economy is modelled in terms of a certain number of industry sectors. These tables encompass data that delineate the intricate network of global economic interdependencies and their corresponding environmental ramifications. The Input-Output approach has been proved very useful in mapping regional and international trade [\(Chen](#page-22-0) et al., 2018; Du et al., [2017;](#page-22-0) Zhu et al., [2022](#page-24-0)) and its impact in terms of sustainability (Ivanova and [Wieland,](#page-22-0) 2023; [Mubako](#page-23-0) et al., 2013; [Wiedman](#page-23-0) and Lenzen, 2018). Indeed, as stated before, the act of consumption within a single country might precipitate environmental repercussions across numerous other nations through multifaceted pathways: the Input-Output approach is able to take into account these mechanisms and reveal the underlying paths. Moreover, the input-output methodology has been employed to facilitate various sustainability assessments. For example, Lang and [Kennedy](#page-23-0) (2016) utilized global multiregional input-output models to evaluate the worldwide operational footprint of higher education institutions across five

impact categories: energy consumption, water usage, material usage, land use, and  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  emissions. Peters et al. [\(2021\)](#page-23-0) utilized a multiregional environmentally extended input-output model to evaluate the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the clothing and footwear value chain. Their study primarily addresses key environmental indicators such as energy consumption, climate impact, and water resource usage, along with socio-economic factors including wages and employment. Readers interested in deepening the literature about the measurement methods of sustainability and input-output models are referred, for instance, to the review by [Wiedman](#page-23-0) and Lenzen (2018). Furthermore, such an approach has been used to investigate the impact of rapid changes in output production due to exogenous shocks [\(Contreras](#page-22-0) and [Fagiolo,](#page-22-0) 2014; Galbusera and [Giannopoulos,](#page-22-0) 2018; [Zhang](#page-24-0) et al., 2023), as well as scenarios and policies related to the energy security [\(Kartal](#page-22-0) et al., [2023;](#page-22-0) Prabhu and [Mukhopadhyay,](#page-23-0) 2023; [Supasa](#page-23-0) et al., 2017).

Our approach leverages the concept of Global Emission Chains introduced by Fraccascia and [Giannoccaro](#page-22-0) (2019) to derive an optimal and non-redundant set of 14 sustainability indicators, which holistically encompass all the three sustainability areas, at the level of the single industry of the single country, thus introducing the concept of GSD. To design the GSD, we relied on data sourced from EXIOBASE 3 ([Stadler](#page-23-0) et al., [2018](#page-23-0)), a comprehensive global detailed Multi-Regional Supply-Use Table (MR-SUT) and Input-Output Table (MR-IOT) and one of the most extensive Environmentally-Extended-MRIO systems worldwide available. The MR-IOT serves as a tool for evaluating the environmental repercussions linked to the ultimate consumption of product categories. EXIOBASE 3 employs rectangular tables in a 163 industries by 200 products classification as its fundamental structure. Notably, this system encompasses 44 countries, five Rest of World regions, three employment skill levels per gender, 417 emission categories, 662 material and resources categories. As an illustrative case, we analyze the Italian energy diversification strategy to demonstrate the practical implementation of our methodology.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a brief review of the scientific literature regarding the most important research areas that have been investigated regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. [Sec](#page-3-0)[tion](#page-3-0) 3 presents the adopted methodology to design the GSD. The case study is presented in [Section](#page-4-0) 4. Finally, the paper ends with discussion, implications, and conclusions in [Section](#page-10-0) 5.

## **2. Literature review: Sustainability implications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict**

A wide range of literature has investigated the (actual and potential) consequences of geopolitical shocks from several perspectives. For instance, from an economic perspective, geopolitical risks are able to affect natural resource prices (e.g., Li et al., [2023;](#page-23-0) Liu et al., [2024](#page-23-0); Mignon and [Saadaoui,](#page-23-0) 2024; [Zheng](#page-24-0) et al., 2023), which in turn can impact the global and local economic stability (e.g., [Sokhanvar](#page-23-0) et al., [2023;](#page-23-0) Zhao et al., [2023](#page-24-0)). Nevertheless, geopolitical shocks might promote technological progress and drive the transition towards the adoption of renewable energy sources (e.g., Ben [Cheikh](#page-22-0) and Ben Zaied, [2024;](#page-22-0) [Pengfei](#page-23-0) et al., 2023).

Concerning the Russia-Ukraine conflict, due to the relevance of the events that occurred so rapidly, to date, a substantial volume of research has already emerged in this short span, aiming to dissect this phenomenon from several perspectives (e.g., Cui et al., [2023](#page-22-0); [Prohorovs,](#page-23-0) 2022; [Steffen](#page-23-0) and Patt, 2022; [Umar](#page-23-0) et al., 2022). In this regard, several studies explored the relationship between geopolitical risk and economic policy uncertainty that is leading to no longer negligible environmental consequences (e.g., [Anser](#page-22-0) et al., 2021; Khan et al., [2023;](#page-22-0) Pata et al., [2023](#page-23-0); [Sweidan,](#page-23-0) 2023). This literature review is not intended to be exhaustive on the topic, but rather to provide the readers with an overview of the main investigated research areas concerning the sustainability implications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Several studies addressed the economic repercussions of the conflict.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Notably, Ukraine holds a pivotal position as a primary exporter of such materials, particularly to impoverished and emerging nations; disruption of these exports could potentially result in substantial losses of these resources, thereby instigating a global food crisis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The explosions of munitions of different types and the destructions determine an environmental impact on air, land, and water, which not only is attributable to the GHG production, but also to the enormous releases in the environment of toxic substances of various origins.

European nations swiftly implemented commercial and financial sanctions with the aim of economically isolating Russia. For this reason, there has been some interest in analyzing the *short-term economic effects of isolating Russia from international trade*, thus generating interruptions in the economy in different isolation scenarios. In this regard, [Estrada](#page-22-0) and [Koutronas](#page-22-0) (2022) introduced the concepts of "trade suffocation" and "investment desgrowth", new economic phenomena to explain the uncharted territory of economic sanctions and their consequences on the affected economies. [Mardones](#page-23-0) (2022) highlighted that Russia would face a drop in production of 10.1% in the scenario with sanctions from the European Union and 14.8% when the sanctions are also applied by Australia, Canada, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Fang and Shao [\(2022\)](#page-22-0) underscored that the Russia-Ukraine conflict markedly elevates the volatility risk within commodity markets, particularly those pertaining to agricultural products, metals, and energy. Additionally, they noted the existence of significant risk spillovers between the metal and energy markets.

Ukraine holds a prominent position as a major global producer of food raw materials. Given that Ukraine's agri-food exports to the EU-27 reached 5.4 billion euros in 2020, accounting for a substantial 28% share, $<sup>4</sup>$  the economic dimensions of the crisis are intricately interlinked</sup> with developments in the agri-food sector. For this reason, from the economic and social sustainability perspectives, the *consequences on the food supply chains security* have been subjected to thorough examination in various studies. For instance, Abay et al. [\(2023\)](#page-22-0) employed a global vulnerability analysis to pinpoint the most vulnerable regions and countries, while Ben [Hassen](#page-22-0) and El Bilali (2022) underscored the immediate and far-reaching cascading repercussions of the conflict on worldwide food security. The study by Jagtap et al. [\(2022\)](#page-22-0) delved into the consequences of the conflict on the efficiency and adaptability of global food supply chains, particularly following the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. They highlighted the dual sources of instability, which resulted in food price hikes leading to shifts in demand among countries reliant on imports from Ukraine. The investigation identifies six key segments of the most vulnerable impacted food supply chains and proposes strategies and solutions to mitigate the resultant supply chain disruptions.

The conflict is exerting an impact on the global geopolitical framework, particularly within the realm of the *energy sector and energy exchanges*. Zakeri et al. [\(2022\)](#page-24-0) analyzed the effects on the global energy sector of both the COVID-19 pandemic (which caused drastic fluctuations in energy demand and the loss of more than 99,000 jobs in the first months of the pandemic only in the USA) and the war, that posed substantial challenges to energy security. Particularly, the war underscored the imperative for enhanced energy diversification and heightened reliance on local, renewable energy resources. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that global policymakers are predominantly prioritizing shortterm objectives, seeking new fossil fuel supply channels to bolster energy security. Consequently, the opportunity for phasing out fossil fuels could be missed. The joint effects of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict exert an influence also on the creation of fair and just financing mechanisms necessary for accelerating the transition required by the decarbonization agenda. The increase in raw material and labor prices caused by the two crises has consequent impacts on global supply chains and technology. This creates an unfair landscape, as entities seeking access to green technologies – which are typically more costintensive to implement – find themselves impeded from doing so. Paradoxically, these stakeholders often find themselves at the forefront of bearing the consequences of climate change impacts ([Allam](#page-22-0) et al., [2022\)](#page-22-0). Moreover, geopolitical changes, related to different crisis scenarios, are leading to energy price shocks that affect the global economic stability (Zhao et al., [2023\)](#page-24-0).

This issue transcends the purview of developing economies. Analogous reflections regarding energy investments, notably in the context of potential impediments to the proliferation of clean primary energy technologies, are also under scrutiny within well-structured and adeptly managed energy systems. The study conducted in Norway by [Malka](#page-23-0) et al. [\(2023\)](#page-23-0) underscores that achieving the decarbonization objectives and ensuring security of supply necessitate the adoption of a mitigation strategy centered on diversifying the national energy landscape and instituting large-scale integration of renewable energy sources. Furthermore, achieving zero emissions by the end of 2050 is impossible without applying the carbon tax and post-carbon capture storage (CCS), especially in the oil and gas sector.

Moreover, the energy transition is modifying the corporate positioning of the European international oil companies (IOCs). Notably, several studies have underscored that the augmented fragmentation within the political and market landscape of the energy sector will result in a diminished overall geopolitical influence wielded by IOCs (e.g., [Bricout](#page-22-0) et al., 2022). [Lambert](#page-23-0) et al. (2022) critically evaluated the novel gas supply policies of the European Union (EU) alongside the pragmatic potential for diversifying gas provisions in the short and medium terms. Their analysis emphasized that attaining adequate supplementary gas supplies to replace approximately two-thirds of Russian supplies — per the REPower EU policy — within a condensed timeframe is a challenging endeavor for the EU. Consequently, within the medium term spanning 2023 to 2030, both the United States and Qatar may emerge as pivotal contributors of additional Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supplies for the EU, consequently curbing Russia's market shares, revenues, and political influence.

The situation in Germany holds particular significance, given its substantial reliance on imports from Russia. The study of [Halser](#page-22-0) and [Paraschiv](#page-22-0) (2022) delves into the economic consequences of the embargo, evaluating both the impact on demand and the supply-related factors capable of alleviating the resultant supply deficit. The study computes a potential for short-term import substitution of 13 billion cubic meters (bcm), while accounting for demand reductions across various sectors estimates a cumulative maximum of 24.1 bcm. Nonetheless, even under the most optimistic outlook, there appears to persist an import shortfall of roughly 9 bcm per annum. Consequently, this underscores the necessity for a deferred transition away from coal and nuclear power, an accelerated integration of renewable energy, and judicious consideration in implementing consumer restrictions.

The literature has also addressed the *environmental* concerns of the war. [Pereira](#page-23-0) et al. (2022) and [Rawtani](#page-23-0) et al. (2022) discussed the detrimental effects that military activities exert on diverse environmental facets, encompassing air quality and the emission of greenhouse gases, biodiversity, soil composition, and the morphological alteration of landscapes, alongside the availability and quality of water resources, as well as the potential for radiation leakage from nuclear facilities. Accordingly, due to the intense fighting, there is evidence of severe air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The heightened deforestation and the consequential destruction of habitats are profoundly impacting biodiversity, thereby potentially affecting wildlife populations, and diminishing the ecosystems' capacity to effectively regulate both air quality and climate dynamics. The ongoing conflict is projected to precipitate soil degradation, subsequently impinging upon agricultural productivity, a matter of particular significance, given Ukraine's global prominence in the domain of food production. The impacts on human health are already tremendous and are expected to be even higher due to exposure to high levels of contamination and sanitary conditions degradation.

Ultimately, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has extended to the *cyberspace* with an unprecedented intensity and scale of opinion fighting. The social cognitive war fighting with cyber-physical-social systems (CPSS) would significantly impact every aspect of our life and an analysis of the evolutionary dynamics of public opinion fighting seems to play a significant role (Chen et al., [2022](#page-22-0)).

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.](https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11684) [php/L/IT/IDPagina/11684](https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11684)

<span id="page-3-0"></span>All in all, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that evaluate the impacts on the three dimensions of sustainability at the local and the global level of measures such as the energy suppliers' switching strategy.

## **3. Methodology**

The(GSD is a tool developed based on the Global Emission Chains (GECs) proposed by Fraccascia and [Giannoccaro](#page-22-0) (2019). The GEC of the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country highlights the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by each of the industries of each country per economic unit of final demand of industry *j* of country *k*, due to the international trade. While GECs are limited to consider only  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  emissions, the GSD is computed on a set of 14 indicators, which are described in the reminder of this section.

## *3.1. Data source*

In this paper, the MRIO tables provided by EXIOBASE 3 database ([Stadler](#page-23-0) et al., 2018) are used. These tables cover 49 countries (28 EU members, 16 major economies, and five rest of the world regions) for the years from 1995 to 2011 – additionally, estimations that go up to 2022 are available. For each of these countries, 163 industries are considered. For each year, there is a harmonized global level input-output table recording the input-output relationships between any pair of industries in any pair of countries. Data are in current basic prices expressed in million euros.

MRIO tables – and specifically those provided by EXIOBASE – are composed by three parts: (1) the transaction matrix (Z) is a (163  $\times$  49)  $\times$ (163 × 49) matrix whose generic element  $Z_{(m-1)\times 163+i,(k-1)\times 163+j}$  denotes the output produced by the *i*-th industry of the *m*-th country that is transferred to the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country; (2) the vector of the aggregated final demand  $(\overrightarrow{f})$ , which is given by the sum of household consumption and government expenditures of each country, is a (163  $\times$ 49) × 1 vector, whose generic element *f*(*m*<sup>−</sup> <sup>1</sup>)×163+*<sup>i</sup>* denotes the final demand observed by the *i*-th industry of the *m*-th country; (3) the vector of the total output produced  $(\overrightarrow{x})$  is a  $(163 \times 49) \times 1$  vector, which is the sum of the output destined as intermediate product to other industries and the output destined to fulfill the final demand, whose generic element  $x_{(m-1)\times 163+i}$  denotes the total output by the *i*-th industry of the *m*-th country.

### *3.2. The global sustainability dashbord*

To build the Global Sustainability Dashbord (GSD) within EXIOBASE we have selected a set of indicators belonging to the three areas of sustainability (i.e., social, environmental, and economic) that are relevant to our study, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon. The methodological approach employed to derive an optimal and non-redundant selection of indicators was based on the findings of [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018). This study emphasized that, although MRIO databases supply extensive data on various environmental pressures and impacts, large sets of impact indicators are not ideal for targeted communication with decision-makers. Therefore, drawing upon the indicators available in EXIOBASE (base year 2011;

#### **Table 1**

Indicators used by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018).



version 3.2.4), they proposed an optimal set of environmental impact indicators from a numerical standpoint, which are displayed in Table 1.

In the current study, EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4) serves as the chosen database. Since there is no complete correspondence with the database used by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018), from EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4) we have selected the indicators in line with those proposed by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018). Specifically, for the indicators from "2" to "6" displayed in Table 1, the most likely heuristic selection of indicators both aligning with the study by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018) and present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4) appears to be encompassed by the set displayed in Table 2.

The existing differences compared to Steinmann's choice concern the following indicators: (1) "Particulate matter formation (Hierarchist)" (PM10 intake, [kg]) of the ReCiPe 2008 method (indicator "1" in Table 1) and (2) "Land occupation damage to ecosystem quality" [PDF  $\times$  m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  y/m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  y] of the Impact2002+ method (indicator "7" in Table 1) – this indicator being derived directly from the Eco-indicator 99 method (Goedkoop and [Spriensma,](#page-22-0) 2000). Specifically, both these indicators are not present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4), which is the data source used for this study. Therefore, through the most likely heuristic selection of indicators present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4), the indicator "Particulate matter formation (Hierarchist)" (PM10 intake, [kg]) of the ReCiPe 2008 method has been replaced by the following two indicators: (1) PM10 [kg] and (2) Particulate matter/ Respiratory inorganics midpoint | ILCD recommended CF | emissionweighted average PM2.5 equivalent [kg PM2.5-eq] – both present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4). Note that the inclusion of the indicator estimating PM2.5 is conservative, as it allows for the evaluation of a pollutant that, in terms of human health, has the potential to be more harmful than the impact caused by PM10. This inclusion thus enhances the level of detail in the analysis. Furthermore, through the most likely heuristic selection of indicators present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4), the "Land occupation damage to ecosystem quality" [PDF  $\times$  m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  y/m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  y] indicator of the Impact2002+ method, has been replaced by the following four indicators: (1) Damages to human health caused by climate change (H.A) | ECOINDICATOR 99 (H. A) | [DALY]; (2) Damage to Ecosystem Quality caused by ecotoxic emissions (H.A) | ECOINDICATOR 99 (H.A) [PDF  $\times$  m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  yr]; (3) Damage to Ecosystem Quality caused by the combined effect of acidification and eutrophication (H.A) | ECOINDICATOR 99 (H.A) | [PDF  $\times$  $\rm m^2 \times \rm yr$ ]; and (4) Land use Crop, Forest, Pasture [km<sup>2</sup>]. In addition to incorporating land use, these indicators also account for human health damages induced by climate change, as well as the impacts on ecosystem quality resulting from ecotoxic emissions and the combined effects of acidification and eutrophication. Similar to the previous replacement, this inclusion further enhances the level of detail in the analysis.

The previous list is finally integrated with the following indicators, in

## **Table 2**

Selected indicators available in EXIOBASE 2021, version 3.4, aligned with [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018) findings.

#	Indicator / impact	Unit
$\overline{2}$	Freshwater aquatic ecotoxicity (FAETP inf)   Problem oriented approach: baseline (CML, 1999)   FAETP inf. (Huijbregts, 1999 & 2000)	kg 1.4-dichloroben- zene eq.
3	Marine aquatic ecotoxicity (MAETP inf)   Problem oriented approach: baseline (CML, 1999)   MAETP inf. (Huijbregts, 1999 & 2000)	kg 1.4-dichloroben- zene eq.
4	Climate change midpoint   ILCD recommended CF   Global warming potential 100 years	kg CO2-Equivalents
5	Terrestrial ecotoxicity (TETP100)   Problem oriented approach: non baseline (CML, 1999)   TETP 100 (Huijbregts, 1999 & 2000)	kg 1.4-dichloroben- zene eq.
6	Photochemical oxidation (MIR; very high NOx)   Problem oriented approach: non baseline (CML, 1999)   MIR 1997; very high NOx (Carter, 1994, 1997, 1998; Carter, Pierce, Luo & Malkina, 1995)	kg formed ozone

<span id="page-4-0"></span>order to cover also the economic and social dimensions: (1) Value added [ $\varepsilon$ ]; (2) Employment [1000 p.]; and (3) Employment hour [hr].

The above-mentioned indicators represent a heuristic selection of indicators present in EXIOBASE (base year 2021; version 3.4) aligning with those identified by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018) that are not available in the database we selected for this study. Other selections of indicators could potentially cover the three environmental, economic, and social areas. The heuristic choices we made, closely aligning with the results of [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018), allowed a limited number of indicators to be obtained, with which to construct the dashboard.

All in all, the resulting GSD proposed in this study adopts the indicators displayed in [Table](#page-5-0) 3 that adopts an appropriate re-numbering. The Sustainable Development Goals mainly related to each indicator are reported.<sup>5</sup>

All in all, the development of the GSD involved obtaining an optimal and non-redundant set of indicators by adapting the indicators proposed by [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018) from EXIOBASE version 3.2.4/2011 to the indicators available in the database utilized in the present study (EXIOBASE version 3.4/2021). Discrepancies identified between the indicators in the two databases were addressed using a conservative approach: additional indicators were identified, which, from an impact perspective, could potentially pose greater harm compared to the impact associated with the original indicators that could not be utilized. Moreover, we augmented the resulting indicators with one indicator of economic sustainability and two indicators of social sustainability.

The GSD is therefore made up of fourteen indicators relating to the three areas of sustainability: eleven indicators out of fourteen describe the environmental impacts to underline how important this aspect is both in the original choice of [Steinmann](#page-23-0) et al. (2018) and in the choices made in this work. The ecological aspects considered by the indicators represent a set of impact categories that cover every aspect of possible damage.

In particular, the GSD of the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country highlights the numerical value of each of the above-mentioned 14 indicators computed at the global level, per unit of output produced by that industry. Differently from GECs, which consider the final demand, we decided to take into account the overall output production, which is considered to be more representative. For instance, considering the indicator "PM10", the GSD of the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country will report the kg of PM10 produced at the world level per unit of output produced by that industry of that country.

In order to build the GSD, we relied on EXIOBASE, which includes data on the above-mentioned sustainability indicators computed for each industry of each country for each year between 1995 and 2011, plus estimated data for each year between 2012 and 2021. For the sake of simplicity, only the procedure used to compute the indicator "Employment hours" (EH) of the GSD is presented; notice that all the other 13 indicators can be computed via the same mathematical approach.

Let  $e^{EH}$  be the (163  $\times$  49)  $\times$  1 vector whose generic element  $e^{EH}$ <sub>(*k*−1)×163+*j* denotes the amount of employment hours required by in-</sub> dustry *j* of country *k*.<sup>6</sup> Then, the (163  $\times$  49)  $\times$  1 vector *ei*<sup>*EH*</sup> is computed by the following equation:

$$
\overline{et^{EH}} = \widehat{\mathbf{x}}^{-1} \bullet \overline{e^{EH}} \tag{1}
$$

where the generic element  $ei_{(k-1)\times 163+j}^{EH}$  denotes the amount of

employment hours required by industry *j* of country *k* for each unit of output produced. Finally, the  $(163 \times 49) \times (163 \times 49)$  *S<sup>EH</sup>* matrix is computed as follows:

$$
S^{EH} = \hat{e}i^{EH} \bullet (Z \bullet \hat{x}^{-1})
$$
 (2)

where the "hat" is used to denote a square matrix so that  $\hat{e}^{EH}_{uu} = e^{i^{EH}_{u}}$  $u = 1...(163 \times 49) \times (163 \times 49)$  and  $\hat{e}_{uv}^{EH} = 0 \forall u \neq v$ . Here, the generic element *SEH* (*m*<sup>−</sup> <sup>1</sup>)×163+*i,*(*k*<sup>−</sup> <sup>1</sup>)×163+*<sup>j</sup>* indicates the amount of employment hours required by the *i*-th industry of the *m*-th country per economic unit of output produced by the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country. Hence, the amount of employment hours required at the global level for economic unit of production of the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country (denoted as  $EH_{ik}$ ) can be computed as the sum of the above-mentioned column, i.e.:

$$
EH_{j,k} = \sum\nolimits_{m=1}^{c} \sum\nolimits_{i=1}^{n} S_{(m-1)\times 163 + i,(k-1)\times 163 + j}^{EH} \tag{3}
$$

Similarly, we can compute the amount of employment hours required by all the industries of the *m*-th country per economic unit of output produced by the *j*-th industry of the *k*-th country (denoted as  $EH_{j,k}^m$ ) as follows:

$$
EH_{j,k}^{m} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} S_{(m-1)\times 163+i,(k-1)\times 163+j}^{EH}
$$
 (4)

As an example, [Table](#page-12-0) 8 in Appendix A1 displays a piece of the S matrix computed for the indicator "employment hours" considering the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry of two countries, i.e., Russia and Italy. According to Eq. (3), 4791.83 employment hours are required at the world level to produce one million euros of output by the Russian "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry, while 7498.73 employment hours are required to produce one million euros of output by the correspondent industry in Italy. Furthermore, to produce one million euros of output produced by the Italian "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry, 0.0066 employment hours are required by the Russian "Processing of Food products" industry and 0.5616 employment hours are required by the Italian "Processing of Food products" industry.

[Table](#page-12-0) 9 in Appendix A2 displays the employment hours required by all the industries of each country (over the rows) per economic unit of output produced by the Russian (first column) and Italian (second column) "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry, computed according to Eq. (4). For instance, it can be noted that producing one million euros of output of the Russian "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry requires 4338.63 domestic employment hours, 16.07 h by Indian industries, and 15 h by Chinese industries. Producing one million euros of output of the Russian "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry requires 3904.24 domestic employment hours, 160.01 h by Indian industries, and 68.83 h by Chinese industries. This table can thus be used to highlight who are the countries mostly involved, in terms of employment hours required, in the production chain of the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry.

GSD works under the assumption that all the outputs generated by one industry have the same workforce intensity. Such an assumption is due to the lack of input-output tables for specific products and is also adopted by other studies (Caro et al., [2017;](#page-22-0) de Vries and [Ferrarini,](#page-22-0) 2017; Fraccascia and [Giannoccaro,](#page-22-0) 2019).

## **4. Case study: The Italian switching strategy for natural gas**

In this section, the GSD is applied to assess the sustainability impacts of the energy switching strategy adopted by the Italian government. We selected this case due to the significant role that Russian gas has played in fulfilling the domestic natural gas demand – around 40% of the overall demand in 2021, with 30.4 billion cubic meters out of 76 billion

Please notice that the association between the SDGs and the impact categories is a subject of ongoing exploration within the scientific community, and the associations proposed in the table represent only a general indication deduced from some studies that have begun to address this topic [\(Hannouf](#page-22-0) et al., [2023](#page-22-0); Sanyé-Mengual and Sala, 2022).

 $^{\rm 6}$  This vector has been built according with the data available on EXIOBASE 3 in another format.

## <span id="page-5-0"></span>**Table 3**

Indicators used for the Global Sustainability Dashboard.



cubic meters of gas consumed.7 Immediately close to the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the Italian government recognized the urgent necessity to implement strategic measures, aimed at ensuring the security of domestic supplies and mitigating the adverse repercussions on industries and households stemming from the conflict. Accordingly, the Ministry of Ecological Transition<sup>8</sup> launched the

<sup>7</sup> [https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/](https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/Piano_nazionale_contenimento_consumi_gas_naturale_MASE.pdf) [Piano\\_nazionale\\_contenimento\\_consumi\\_gas\\_naturale\\_MASE.pdf](https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/Piano_nazionale_contenimento_consumi_gas_naturale_MASE.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Currently, the name of that ministry is "Ministry of Environment and Energy Security".

"*National plan for the containment of natural gas consumption*", encompassing several initiatives designed chiefly to: (1) rapidly diversifying the origin of the supplies of gas imported from Russia to other states, replacing 25 Gscm (giga standard cubic meter) of Russian gas with gas from other countries by 2025; (2) maximizing the use of available gas pipeline infrastructures to achieve a capacity of around 12 Gscm (doubling from Algeria, doubling from Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), increasing the national production from the current 3 up to 6 Gscm); and (3) augmenting the national Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) re-gasification capacity to approximately 13 Gscm (comprising up to 3.5 billion cubic meters from Egypt, 1.4 billion cubic meters from Qatar, a gradual increase of 4.6 billion cubic meters from Congo, and approximately 3.0–3.5 billion cubic meters from ongoing negotiations with other countries like Angola, Nigeria, Mozambique, Indonesia, and Libya).

The remainder of this section is divided into two subsections. Section 4.1 concerns the application of the GSD to the case study. Section 4.2 presents the numerical results.

## *4.1. Application of GSD to the case study: Scenarios analyzed and computations of the effects*

The scenario analyzed in the numerical case study results from the following actions, in line with the "*National plan for the containment of natural gas consumption*" (Ministry for Energy [Transition,](#page-23-0) I, 2022): (1) reduction by 25 GScm in the import of natural gas from Russia; (2) increase by 3 GScm in the domestic production of natural gas; and (3) increase by 22 GScm in the import of natural gas from the rest-of-theworld. In particular, referring to the last action, the following increase in natural gas imports have been considered: 6 GScm from Algeria, 3.5 GScm from Egitto, 4.6 GScm from Congo, 3 Gscm from Angola, Libya, Mozambique, and Nigeria (here, we have assumed that such an increase is equally shared among these countries, i.e., that each of them contributes with  $0.75$   $GScm<sup>9</sup>$ ), 1.4  $GScm$  from Qatar, 3  $GScm$  from Azerbaijan, and 0.5 GScm from Indonesia.

The input-output tables display data in monetary terms. In order to convert Scm into euros, we have adopted the following approach. First, from the input-output tables referring to 2021 we have extracted the monetary value of the output of the Russian "Extraction of natural gas and services related to natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry purchased by Italy, which is equal to 7532 million euros. Then, we have divided such an amount by 30.4, which is the amount of GScm that Italy purchases from Russia.<sup>10</sup> As a result, we have computed the economic value of natural gas as  $247.77$  ( $=7532/30.4$ ) million euros per GScm.<sup>11</sup> This data has been used to model the monetary value of the above-mentioned actions. In particular: (1) the reduction by 25 GScm in the import of natural gas from Russia has been modelled as a decrease by 6194.26 (= $25 \times 247.77$ ) million euros in the output of the Russian "Extraction of natural gas and services related to natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry; (2) the increase by 3 GScm in the domestic production of natural gas has been modelled as an increase by 743.31 (=3  $\times$  247.77) million euros in the output of the Italian "Extraction of natural gas and services related to natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry; (3) the increase by 22 GScm in the import of natural gas from the rest-of-the-world (Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Libya, Mozambique, Qatar) has been modelled as an increase in the outputs of the "Extraction of natural gas and services related to natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry of the following countries: (a)  $4236.88$  (= $17 \times 247.77$ ) million

<sup>10</sup> [https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/](https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/Piano_nazionale_contenimento_consumi_gas_naturale_MASE.pdf)

euros by rest-of-the-world African countries (denoted by WF region in EXIOBASE); (b) 346.88 (=1.4  $\times$  247.77) million euros by Middle-East countries (denoted by WM in EXIOBASE); and (c) 867,2 (=3.5  $\times$ 247.77) million euros by Asian countries (denoted by WA in EXIOBASE).

## *4.2. Results*

[Table](#page-7-0) 4 and [Table](#page-7-0) 5 display the value of all the 14 indicators for the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry, computed according to Eq. [\(3\)](#page-4-0) and Eq. [\(4\)](#page-4-0), respectively for Italy, Russia, African countries (WF), Asian countries (WA), and Middle-East countries (WM). It can be noticed, for instance, that producing one million euros of output in Italy would release 32.28 Kg of PM10 (indicator 12) globally ([Table](#page-7-0) 4), of which 17.88 Kg (55.4%) within the national borders ([Table](#page-7-0) 5). Producing the same amount of output by the Russian "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry would produce 57.5 Kg of PM10, of which 54.92 Kg (95.5%) within the national borders. Hence, it can be noted that, with reference to the PM10 indicator, the Italian production would be more environmentally friendly than the Russian one, ceteris paribus. This means that, ceteris paribus, replacing one million euros of natural gas extracted in Russia with one million euros of natural gas extracted in Italy would decrease the PM10 by 2.58 (=57.5–54.92) Kg. Alternatively, the Russian production is more environmentally friendly at the global level in terms of terrestrial ecotoxicity (indicator 10): 4.61 kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq. vs. 34.76 kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq. generated by the Italian production ([Table](#page-7-0) 4). Nevertheless, if we consider the local perspective, i.e., where this impact is generated, it can be noted that 3.92 kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq. (corresponding to the 85% of the overall impact) are released in Russia per million euro of output produced by the Russian industry vs. 2.86 kg 1.4 dichlorobenzene eq. (corresponding to the 8.3% of the overall impact) released in Italy by the Italian industry ([Table](#page-7-0) 5).

[Table](#page-8-0) 6 displays the effects of the Italian diversification strategies on the 14 indicators introduced in [Table](#page-5-0) 3 computed at the Italian level (see Eq. [\(4\)\)](#page-4-0). The table highlights the total effect and also decomposes it according to its three main drivers: (1) the reduction of imports of natural gas from Russia; (2) the increase in national (Italian) production; and (3) the increase in exports from the rest of the world. For instance, considering the employment hours indicator, the table shows that 2.94E+06 new employment hours will be created in Italy, as the result of: (1) 2.90E+06 new employment hours thanks to the increase in the national production of natural gas; (2) 4.07E+04 new employment hours thanks to the increase in the imports of natural gas from the restof-the-world – these further hours are driven by the increase in the intermediate outputs provided by Italy to the rest-of-the-world countries, which will be required because of their higher production of natural gas; and (3) the reduction of 7.07E+03 h due to the lower imports of natural gas from Russia – such a reduction is driven by the lower demand of Italian intermediate products by Russia.

It can be noted that all the indicators are higher than zero. In particular, from the economic and social perspectives, increasing the national extraction of natural gas would create new value added and new employment at the national level. However, the Italian diversification strategy would decrease the environmental performance at the national level, mainly driven by the increase in the Italian production of natural gas. For instance, let us consider the PM10 indicator: at the national level, the PM10 emissions would rise by 9610 Kg, as the result of 9480 additional Kg due to the increase in the national production of natural gas, 534 additional Kg due to the increase in the natural gas import from the rest-of-the-world, and a reduction of 400 Kg thanks to the reduction in the natural gas imports from Russia.

[Table](#page-8-0) 7 displays the effects of the Italian diversification strategies on the same indicators, in this case computed at the global level (see Eq. [\(6\)](#page-4-0)). From the economic and social perspectives, the Italian diversification strategy would allow to create new value added  $(+562 \text{ M}\text{E})$  and new employment  $(+1.64 \cdot 10^8$  employment hours). Indeed, the negative

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Such an assumption is driven by the lack of data about which specific quantities will be supplied by each of these four countries.

[Piano\\_nazionale\\_contenimento\\_consumi\\_gas\\_naturale\\_MASE.pdf](https://culturaeconsapevolezza.mase.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-01/Piano_nazionale_contenimento_consumi_gas_naturale_MASE.pdf)<br><sup>11</sup> As a double check, this value is consistent with the price of natural gas between April and May 2021 ([https://www.eex.com/\)](https://www.eex.com/)

#### <span id="page-7-0"></span>*M. De Nicol*` *o et al.*

#### **Table 4**

Numerical values of all the 14 indicators computed for the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry of several countries, according to Eq. [\(3\)](#page-4-0). Data are per million euros of output.



#### **Table 5**

Numerical values of all the 14 indicators computed for the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry of several countries, according to Eq. [\(4\)](#page-4-0). Data are per million euros of output.



consequences of reducing the imports from Russia are more than compensated by the positive consequences of increasing the national production of natural gas and increasing the imports from the rest-ofthe-world countries. Unfortunately, such a strategy would result in a decrease in all the environmental performance indicators at the world level. Indeed, according to Table 4, producing one million euros of output of "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry in Russia would generate 32.3 kg of PM10; producing the same amount in Italy would generate 57.5 kg (+78% compared to Russia), in African countries 189 kg ( $+485%$ ), in Middle-East countries 85.6 kg ( $+165%$ ), and in Asian countries 188 kg (+482%). Such a result can be due to the fact that different countries might adopt different production technologies (e.g., [Cheng](#page-22-0) et al., 2023; [Tokito,](#page-23-0) 2018; [Wang](#page-23-0) et al., 2023). Perhaps,

the technologies used by Russia are more advanced, in terms of environmental efficiency, than those used by the considered African and Asian countries ([Economides](#page-22-0) and Wood, 2009; Gallego-álvarez et al., [2014;](#page-22-0) Orazalin and [Mahmood,](#page-23-0) 2018; [Shvarts](#page-23-0) et al., 2018; [Usman](#page-23-0) et al., [2021\)](#page-23-0).

[Fig.](#page-9-0) 1 depicts the delineated impacts segmented by geographical location, with corresponding numerical data provided in Appendix A2. From the economic and social perspectives, it can be noted that Russia is the more negatively affected country; nevertheless, four other countries would face light negative consequences: Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia. Greece and Cyprus, on the other hand, would experience slight adverse repercussions solely concerning the value added at the domestic level. In contrast, the most favorable impact is anticipated for Italy, in

#### <span id="page-8-0"></span>**Table 6**

Effects on Italy of the Italian diversification strategy, decomposed for: (1) effect of cutting the imports of natural gas from Russia; (2) effect of increasing the national production of natural gas; and (3) effect of increasing the imports of natural gas from the rest of the world.



#### **Table 7**

Global effects of the Italian diversification strategy, decomposed for: (1) effect of cutting the imports of natural gas from Russia; (2) effect of increasing the national production of natural gas; and (3) effect of increasing the imports of natural gas from the rest of the world.



tandem with its newly engaged suppliers, notably Algeria, Egypt, and Congo. It can be noted that while for African countries the increase in employment is almost proportional to the increase in the value added, for Italy and Qatar the increase in employment is less than proportional to the increase in the value added. This phenomenon could be attributed to the relatively less labor-intensive nature of the natural gas extraction supply chains in Italy and Qatar as compared to their counterparts in African countries (e.g., Černý et al., 2024; [Cooper](#page-22-0) et al., 2016).

Changes in environmental performance appear, on average, conversely proportional to changes in economic and social performances. In other words, countries whose economic and social performances increase tend to exhibit a decline in environmental performance. Nevertheless, some interesting – and sometimes counterintuitive – results can be highlighted:

- Despite a decrease in the value added, Russia would face a decrease also for two environmental performances, namely "Damages to human health caused by climate change" (+18.99 DALY) and "Climate change midpoint" (+1.01E+08 kg CO2-Equivalents). This result is fully counterintuitive; rather, one would have expected an

<span id="page-9-0"></span>

**Fig. 1.** Graphical representation of the effects of the Italian diversification strategy, computed at the country level, according to the GSD. Indicators considered: (a) Value added [€]; (b) Employment; (c) Employment hours; (d) Damages to human health caused by climate change [DALY]; (e) Damage to Ecosystem Quality caused by ecotoxic emissions [PDF  $\times$  m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  yr]; (f) Damage to Ecosystem Quality caused by the combined effect of acidification and eutrophication [PDF  $\times$  m<sup>2</sup>  $\times$  yr]; (g) Freshwater aquatic ecotoxicity [kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq.]; (h) Marine aquatic ecotoxicity [kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq.]; (i) Terrestrial ecotoxicity [kg 1.4-dichlorobenzene eq.]; (j) Photochemical oxidation [kg formed ozone]; (k) Climate change midpoint [kg CO2-Equivalents]; (l) Particulate matter/Respiratory inorganics midpoint [kg PM2.5-eq]; (m) PM10 [Kg]; (n) Land use Crop, Forest, Pasture [Km<sup>2</sup>].

<span id="page-10-0"></span>

**Fig. 1.** (*continued*).

increase in all the indicators concerning the environmental performance in Russia, driven by the lower production of natural gas. However, it can be noted that the value of the "Damages to human health caused by climate change" indicator decreases by 62.36 DALY as the effect of the Italian reduction of natural gas imports from Russia ([Table](#page-16-0) 11), while increases by 80.13 DALY as the effect of the increase in natural gas production in Italy [\(Table](#page-18-0) 12), and further increases by 1.21 DALY as the effect of the Italian increase in natural gas imports from other countries [\(Table](#page-18-0) 12). This outcome discloses the hidden role of Russia within the natural gas extraction supply chain in Italy, presumably involving the provision of intermediate products to Italian companies – underscored by the noteworthy rise of 38 million euros in Russia's value added attributed to Italy's amplified natural gas production (as indicated in [Table](#page-18-0) 12). An analogous trend can be highlighted for the "Climate change midpoint" indicator.

- An opposite result can be found for Switzerland (− 0.057 DALY, − 273,109 kg CO2-Equivalents), Finland (− 0.052 DALY, − 286,439 kg CO2-Equivalents), and Norway (-0.2196 DALY, -1,030,987 kg CO2-Equivalents): in these countries, the increase of such two indicators couples with an increase in the value added. Norway also shows an important decrease in "Photochemical oxidation" (− 395.29 kg formed ozone). Hence, these countries would benefit from the Italian switching strategy from both the economic and environmental perspectives, ceteris paribus.
- China shows an increase in the value of the three ecotoxicity indicators (i.e., "Freshwater aquatic ecotoxicity", "Marine aquatic ecotoxicity", "Terrestrial ecotoxicity"), as well as in the value of the two particular matter indicators (i.e., "Particulate matter/Respiratory inorganics midpoint" and "PM10"). From the numerical perspective, such an increase is similar to what happens in Angola, a country that is directly involved in the Italian diversification strategy. Such an increase might be due to the role that China plays in the African and Asian supply chains of natural gas extraction, perhaps

because of providing these countries with intermediate products (e. g., [Cahen-Fourot](#page-22-0) et al., 2020; [Deng](#page-22-0) et al., 2021; Xu et al., [2023\)](#page-24-0) – indeed, notice the increase of 7 M€ in the Chinese value added driven by the Italian increase in natural gas imports from other countries ([Table](#page-18-0) 12).

### **5. Discussion, implications, and conclusions**

This paper proposes the GSD to assess the sustainability implications, at the global and local levels, of an energy switching strategy undertaken by a given country. From the methodological perspective, the GSD is useful to map the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the global production chain of single industries. The proposed tool relies on the input-output approach and exploits the MRIO tables provided by the EXIOBASE database ([Stadler](#page-23-0) et al., 2018). The GSD of a given industry is computed on an optimal set of 14 non-redundant indicators (see [Table](#page-5-0) 3), which take into account the three dimensions of sustainability.

From the theoretical perspective, the GSD has several strengths: (1) thanks to its high granularity, it can be used to assess multiple impacts at the level of a single country; (2) it allows to underscore hidden and even counterintuitive impacts, which would have been difficult to find using traditional methods of analysis; and (3) thanks to its high flexibility, it can be adopted to model many other strategies, different from those considered in this paper. Furthermore, although GSD considers 14 indicators, the mathematical approach used to compute them can possibly be adopted for many other indicators.

As a case study, GSD is used to assess the consequences of the Italian energy diversification strategy, driven by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, on the three key dimensions of sustainability. Thanks to the GSD, it is possible to underscore the extent to which the energy replacement strategy designed by the Italian government will create new value added and employment at both the national and global levels, but is detrimental in terms of environmental performance worldwide.

Specifically, the findings offer novel insights into the environmental repercussions stemming from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. To date, scholarly investigations have predominantly concentrated on evaluating the direct environmental consequences [\(Racioppi](#page-23-0) et al., 2022; [Rawtani](#page-23-0) et al., [2022\)](#page-23-0); however, our study sheds light on the potential indirect environmental ramifications resulting from the redirection of energy sourcing away from Russia towards other nations. Indeed, the extensive integration of natural gas within global supply chains (see, e.g., [Kan](#page-22-0) et al., [2020](#page-22-0), Kan et al., [2019](#page-22-0)) underscores the necessity of considering indirect impacts to avoid underestimating their effects.

Moreover, these findings emphasize the imperative of transitioning towards low-carbon energy sources, a stance corroborated by a substantial body of literature (e.g., [Anekwe](#page-22-0) et al., 2024; [Bogdanov](#page-22-0) et al., [2021;](#page-22-0) Healy and [Barry,](#page-22-0) 2017; Papadis and [Tsatsaronis,](#page-23-0) 2020; [Zhang](#page-24-0) et al., [2024\)](#page-24-0), consistently with the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, from an environmental perspective, switching from Russia to another supply of natural gas can be an effective solution only in the short period, aimed at ensuring energy security to citizens and companies. In this regard, multiple solutions exist for reducing natural gas consumption in Italy in the short term, as outlined by [Pastore](#page-23-0) et al. [\(2022\).](#page-23-0) Nonetheless, over the long term, nations ought to advocate for the substitution of fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. In this respect, numerous studies in the literature have underscored the potential environmental benefits stemming from such a transition ([Udemba](#page-23-0) and Tosun, 2022; Vögele et al., 2023; [Zakari](#page-24-0) et al., 2022). Furthermore, a transition towards renewable energy sources holds the potential to enhance the resilience and stability of the energy landscape by shielding nations from the inherent volatility of conventional energy markets and geopolitical tensions (Carfora and [Scandurra,](#page-22-0) 2024).

Beyond its relevance to the particular case study under scrutiny, policymakers can leverage the GSD for conducting preliminary analyses and hypothetical scenarios, aimed at delineating strategies oriented towards both short-term and long-term objectives. Regarding the shortterm outlook, where policymakers must ensure energy security for companies and households, the GSD can aid policymakers in a specific country in discerning the most suitable alternative suppliers of natural gas to Russia, considering their (indirect) environmental impact at the national level. In this context, the efficacy of these strategies in advancing all Sustainable Development Goals – not solely those pertaining to energy – can be readily evaluated. Regarding the long-term outlook, the GSD can assist policymakers in the transition towards renewable and cleaner energy sources, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, it can support them in formulating innovative energy strategies aimed at shifting from natural gas to renewable energy sources. In both scenarios, the anticipated impacts of these strategies at both the national and global levels, encompassing considerations beyond the economic sphere, can be forecasted.

This paper has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, our study relies on the input-output methodology, which could be subject to several uncertainties, related to data quality, as well as assumptions and simplifications. In our specific case, EXIOBASE provides MRIO tables with data updated up to 2011, while data concerning the upcoming years are just forecasts. Nevertheless, EXIOBASE is recognized as a reliable database for input-output analysis – with reference to both

real and forecasted data – and has driven many contributions in the literature ([Tukker](#page-23-0) et al., 2018), even regarding the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Chai et al., [2024;](#page-22-0) [Martínez-García](#page-23-0) et al., 2023; [Zhang](#page-24-0) et al., 2023). Furthermore, Exiobase is quite well aligned with the most popular multi-regional input–output (MRIO) databases ([Giljum](#page-22-0) et al., [2019](#page-22-0); [Moran](#page-23-0) and Wood, 2014; [Steubing](#page-23-0) et al., 2022). Even though our study is based on forecasted data, the methodology still remains valid and can be applied to the new data, once they will become available. Future studies could be devoted to conduct uncertainty analyses ([Lenzen](#page-23-0) et al., 2010; [Yamakawa](#page-24-0) and Peters, 2009) to further refine our results. Furthermore, EXIOBASE is used as data source to build the GSDs, whose indicators are constrained by information available in the database. Other indicators could be used to assess the global sustainability, if other databases are used as a data source.

Our study relies on a static input-output model. Although these models have been proven effective to study the impact that exogenous shocks would play on the economic structure and environmental performances at the country level (Petrella and [Santoro,](#page-23-0) 2011; [Rocco](#page-23-0) et al., [2020\)](#page-23-0), more recently several authors have proposed to study these dynamics via dynamic input-output models (Galbusera and [Giannopoulos,](#page-22-0) [2018;](#page-22-0) Pichler and [Farmer,](#page-23-0) 2022). In this context, static input-output models might exhibit limitations in capturing dynamic processes, such as price fluctuations, and they presuppose an immediate transition to a new scenario, thereby disregarding transitional dynamics that could be more effectively explored through alternative model frameworks. In this regard, future studies could be conducted by adopting dynamic inputoutput models.

Finally, future studies could adopt the GSD to assess the sustainability impacts of other kinds of energy strategies, such as the replacement of fossil fuels with green energy, as well as to assess which is the best scenario in terms of different energy mix.

## **CRediT authorship contribution statement**

**Michele De Nicolò:** Writing – review  $\&$  editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Luca Fraccascia:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Pierpaolo Pontrandolfo:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

#### **Declaration of competing interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## **Data availability**

Data are available in appendix

#### **Acknowledgments**

Gratitude is owed to the four anonymous referees, whose comments were very useful in improving the quality of this manuscript.

<sup>12</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7>

## <span id="page-12-0"></span>**Appendix A1: Pieces of the S matrix and the EH matrix presented in [Section](#page-3-0) 3.2**

## **Table 8**

Part of the S matrix – Eq. [\(2\)](#page-4-0) – computed with respect to "employment hours" indicator for the "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry in Russia and Italy (data in employment hours per million  $\epsilon$ ). The last row is computed according to Eq. [\(3\).](#page-4-0)



## **Table 9**

Employment hours required by all the industries of each country (over the rows) per economic unit of output produced by the Russian (first column) and Italian (second column) "natural gas extraction, excluding surveying" industry. Data is computed according to Eq. [\(4\)](#page-4-0).



# **Appendix A2: Detailed numerical results**

#### **Table 10**

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Detailed results, decomposed by country, of the Italian diversification strategy. The first row displays the values at the global level.



(*continued on next page*)







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<span id="page-16-0"></span>**Table 11**







(*continued on next page*)

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<span id="page-18-0"></span>**Table 12**









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