



THE ECONOMY OF DAILY LIFE

ANALYSING LIVING STANDARDS
IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

VALENCIA
30 JUNE - 2 JULY 2025

Call for Papers

The research group *Cultures i Societats de l'Edat Mitjana* (CiSEM) at the University of Valencia is organising the IV Doctoral School in Economic History of the Middle Ages, to be held from 30 June to 2 July 2025, which will be dedicated to *The Economy of Daily Life: Analysing Living Standards in Medieval Europe*.

With a long-standing tradition dating back to the origins of social and economic history, debates on living standards have experienced a remarkable resurgence in recent decades. This renewed interest has been driven by contributions from various fields, significantly broadening the theoretical and methodological approaches to this fascinating subject. In particular, the question of the transformation of living standards in English society during the Industrial Revolution proved essential. Since Robert Allen's seminal monograph, the so-called "baskets" have served as an innovative analytical tool. As a result, research definitively shifted towards exploring the evolution of prices and wages, leading to an increasingly specialised debate that allowed these tools to be adapted to different geographical contexts, such as the Mediterranean world. Moreover, it enabled scholars to refine other crucial elements, such as the number of days worked or the contribution of different household members to the domestic economy. Ultimately, these approaches not only clarified the debate but also provided valuable studies addressing a wide range of issues.

Medievalists and early modern historians soon showed great interest in incorporating these approaches into their work. When combined with traditional study methods, they offered significant insights into a period marked by increasing production and circulation of consumer goods, which became more widespread. Thus, historiography has highlighted the sustained growth of living standards in Western Europe since the early stages of the late medieval crisis, often linked to the rise in real wages due to labour shortages. However, the growing disparity of this phenomenon became evident during the so-called "price revolution," which led to a divergence in major price and wage trends between northern and southern Europe, or between the Atlantic and Mediterranean regions. This differentiation became one of the decisive aspects of the so-called "Little Divergence," a topic that remains widely discussed among historians.

These lines of research have enabled a general reconsideration of a long-standing debate. This reassessment demands recognition of the achievements made, but also a comparison with other ways of approaching the subject, such as traditional studies on height or innovative possibilities offered by research into diet, which allow living standards to be examined in connection with new perspectives. In this way, the issue can be linked to key aspects such as subjective perceptions of material well-being, which has received increasing attention in recent years, or the impact of economic inequality on these standards. Therefore, alongside the quantitative approaches and methods necessary to calculate baskets and estimate the purchasing power of the population, the study of living standards also considers qualitative approaches based on household material comfort or deprivation, as evidenced, among other sources, by inventories of goods or dowries.

For this reason, the Doctoral School will address the latest research on living standards, with a particular focus on training doctoral students and early-career researchers in theoretical and methodological aspects. Papers and presentations will be the essential means to understand living standards and the socio-economic complexities of the medieval population, offering a more

comprehensive view of how these aspects were intrinsically linked to daily life and social structures.

Applications

To highlight the wide range of available sources and methodological approaches on the subject, the Doctoral School will feature internationally renowned scholars delivering keynote lectures. This will be followed by presentations by doctoral students and early-career researchers. The three invited professors are **Robert Allen** (New York University Abu Dhabi & University of Oxford), **Alexandra de Pleijt** (Wageningen University & Research), and **Lluís To** (University of Girona). In addition, senior professors and researchers from various Spanish universities involved in the School's activities will also participate.

We encourage doctoral students and early-career researchers interested in the topic to submit their proposals. Submissions should be sent in PDF format to laura.miquel@uv.es and ldomingo@uji.es by **30 April 2025** and must include:

- Short résumé (1,000 characters max.)
- Contact information
- Summary of the proposal (2,000 characters max.) highlighting:
 - The sources employed
 - The geographic and temporal scope

In order to ease the dialogue between researchers from different countries, the language of preference will be English, although presentations may also be made in Spanish, Catalan, French, and Italian. Those using one of these languages should complement their oral presentation with a PowerPoint presentation in English.

The scientific committee will select the accepted proposals in May 2025. Selected participants will have 20 minutes for their presentation during one of the different sessions of the Doctoral School.

The Universitat de València will cover the accommodation and living expenses of the speakers during the days of the School. Travel expenses will be paid by the participants. The Spanish Society of Medieval Studies (SEEM) and the Association *Societas Historicorum Coronae Aragonum* (HISCOAR) offer complementary grants for members who wish to attend (see <https://medievalistas.es/becas-seem/> and <https://hiscoar.org/participation-in-events/>).

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