



MCAA
MARIE CURIE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Marie Curie Alumni Association

Newsletter



**Final message from
the MCAA Board 2024–2026**

**The new MCAA Board
for 2026–2028 takes office**

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Acknowledgment



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Editorial

Dear MCAA community,

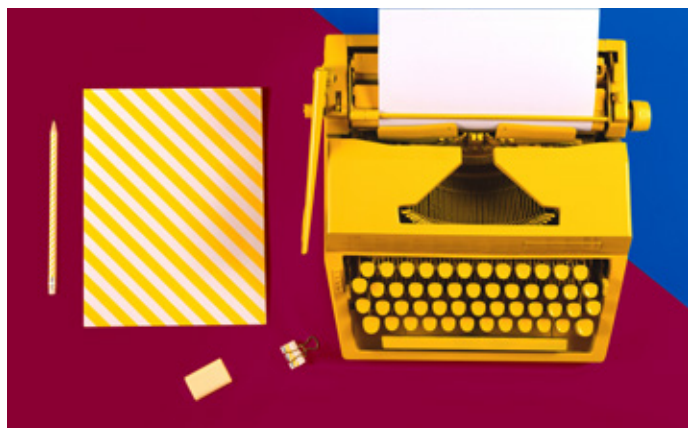
This issue is dedicated to the people whose work often happens behind the scenes. Serving on the MCAA Board means balancing a demanding voluntary role with research, professional, and personal commitments, all while helping steer a global community.

In the following pages, I interviewed members of the previous 2024–2026 Board and brought together a selection of their reflections on their two-year mandate. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to sincerely thank every Board member for the countless hours, dedication and passion they have invested in making the MCAA stronger.

This issue also celebrates the expertise within our community. Srishti Goyal explores how economic models inform climate policy, offering an accessible introduction to the tools behind evidence-based decision-making. Together, these articles showcase the many ways MCAA members contribute to society: by strengthening our Association, advancing research, and sharing knowledge for the benefit of us all.

Eliška Koňáříková  

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Message from the Board

Dear readers,

Stepping into a new Board mandate is both an honour and a responsibility. Scientific research is rarely a comfortable, linear path; it is shaped in laboratories, field sites, libraries, and informal meetings amalgamated over coffee through resilience, curiosity, and collective effort. The same holds true for our Association.

Over the past two years, the outgoing Board has done tremendous work in reinforcing the foundations of the MCAA and expanding our international voice. As the 2026–2028 Board takes office, we are proud to reflect the true global breadth of our community, with Board members spanning South America, North America, Asia, and Europe. This multilateral perspective strengthens our commitment to build upon these solid pillars with practical ambition.

But this is not the final goal; there is still ground to cover: Our priority is to make the MCAA even more representative across all regions and to actively champion the career development of our members, both present and future. In an era marked by rapid technological shifts and complex global challenges, safeguarding the researchers behind the science and nurturing our bottom-up collaborative drive are more essential than ever.

To our members, Chapters, and Working Groups: This Association thrives because of your energy and ideas. Together, let us turn challenges into shared breakthroughs. Bring your ideas to the Board!

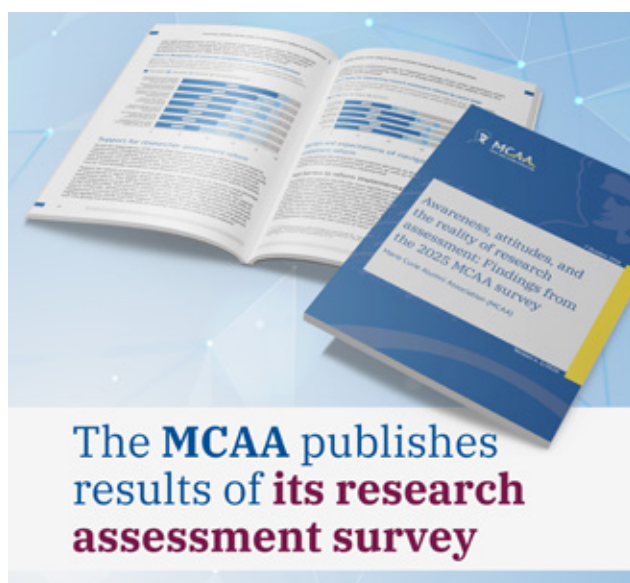
Eugenio H. Otal

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Updates from the MCAA

The new MCAA Board takes office

On 30 August 2026, the new MCAA Board began its two-year term. The new Board comprises Chair **Ornela Bardhi**, Vice-Chairs **Ashish Avasthi** and **Ana Paula Mendonça**, Treasurer **Pablo Emiliano Tomatis**, Secretary **Maria Magdalena Razalan**, and ordinary Board members **Sabina Cveček**, **Fan Mo**, **Eugenio Otal**, **Roxana Radu**, **Sandra Rebok**, and **Magdalini Theodoridou**. They take over from the 2024–2026 Board, which closed an impactful term on 29 August, with a final meeting held on 28 August. [Read more](#)



The MCAA launches new survey report

We have published a report including the findings of the MCAA survey on research assessment conducted last year. Titled “**Awareness, attitudes, and the reality of research assessment: Findings from the 2025 MCAA survey**,” the report provides insights into how researchers experience research assessment in practice, as well as the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. On **7 October**, we hosted a public online event to present the findings of our survey and engage in constructive dialogue with the broader research and innovation community. [Read the report](#)

New MCAA Academy mentoring programme

Applications are still open for mentors for our **new mentoring programme, “Transitioning from academia to industry,”** pairing researchers considering a move beyond academia with mentors who have already made the transition. The programme runs for **six months**, starting in early **November 2026** and is free and open to MCAA members. The mentor call closes on **9 October 2026**. To apply, you must first register on the MCAA Academy platform. [Read more](#)





The MCAA Annual Conference 2027 location announced

Save the date: The next **MCAA Annual Conference** will take place on **14-17 April 2027 in Bucharest, Romania!** Stay tuned for more information on the [MCAA website](#) in the coming weeks and months.

Call to host the MCAA Annual Conference 2028

With the MCAA Annual Conference host for 2027 already confirmed, we are now looking for a city to host the **2028 edition**. MCAA members based in EU Member States can submit their applications by **16 October 2026**. To see what makes our conference a memorable event, check out the [highlights from this year's edition](#) in Brussels.

[Submit your application to host the conference](#)



Celebrating 30 years of the MSCA

On **1 October**, the MCAA Board and Executive Director joined leading voices from academia, politics and business for the European Commission's event "**Celebrating 30 years of MSCA - Curiosity that changes the world**" in Brussels, celebrating three decades of the MSCA programme and the community behind it. The following day, Board and Secretariat members [hosted representatives of the European Commission](#) at the MCAA's Brussels office, where the new Board introduced itself and discussed future collaboration with the Commission.





Owning your story: Confidence, contribution and narrative CVs

16 October 2026 12:00–13:30 CEST

Participate in the PEP-CV workshop

We are organising two Peer Exchange Platform for Narrative-style CVs (PEP-CV) workshops on recognising, communicating, and developing narrative CVs. The first workshop, titled “**Owning your story: Confidence, contribution and narrative CVs**,” will be held **online on 16 October from 12:00 to 13:30 CEST**. During the session, **Heledd Jarosz-Griffiths**, Researcher Development Advisor (PGR Development) at the University of Leeds, and **Pooja Khurana**, Career Development Manager at the MCAA, will explore the beliefs and assumptions that shape how researchers understand their achievements and contributions, as well as ways to recognise and communicate them beyond traditional measures of academic success. [Find out more and register to attend](#).



Join the Science Diplomacy Hub powered by CUSP

The Consolidating European Science Diplomacy (CUSP) project has launched the Science Diplomacy Hub, a dedicated space for the science diplomacy community in Europe and beyond. It is open to practitioners, researchers, and policymakers working in or interested in science diplomacy, providing a space to share news and opportunities, engage in discussions, and collaborate through thematic and network groups. [Sign up here](#)



The MCAA Annual Report 2025 is out

We are pleased to present our **Annual Report 2025**, covering a year in which the MCAA reached **over 24,000 members** across more than **155 countries**. The report provides an overview of a landmark year for our Association and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) community, highlighting activities that have strengthened the research and innovation landscape in Europe and beyond. [Read more](#)

The MCAA adopts a Gender, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy for 2026–2029

The MCAA has adopted a **Gender, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (GDEI) Strategy** covering 2026–2029, also serving as the Association's official Gender Equality Plan under Horizon Europe. Designed to embed equality and inclusion directly into the MCAA Long-Term Strategy, it ensures that inclusive practices guide every event, career initiative, and policy decision across the Association. [Read more](#)



Collaboration between the MCAA and UKRI

We have joined forces with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to support the **professional development of UKRI Guarantee Fellows** through a dedicated programme. It offers researchers funded by UKRI through the Horizon Europe Guarantee scheme **networking opportunities, educational resources, and financial assistance** to foster their professional growth and advance their careers. [Read more](#)

The MCAA joins ARION, a new project on research assessment

The MCAA is one of the partners of **Advancing Research Assessment through integrated Open practices and Narrative (ARION)**, a new Horizon Europe project supporting research-performing and research-funding organisations in translating responsible research assessment principles into practical, institutionally embedded change. Launched on **1 September 2026**, ARION unites 14 formal participating organisations, with the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) initiative contributing as a strategic global partner on responsible research assessment. The project consortium gathered in Athens, Greece, on 16–17 September for **the project kick-off meeting**. [Read more](#)

Insights from the MCAA conversations on inclusive research assessment

On 14 July 2026, we gathered together researchers, policymakers, funders, and university networks at the Press Club Brussels Europe and online to discuss inclusive research assessment. The event was organised as part of the dissemination tour of the **CoARA Working Group Towards an Inclusive Evaluation of Research (TIER)**. [Read more](#)



Farewell from the MCAA Board 2024–2026

Looking back, building forward

Every MCAA Board begins its mandate with ambitions, fresh ideas, and a commitment to serve the Association. Two years later, those ambitions have been tested by reality, shaped by unexpected opportunities, and transformed into valuable lessons. As the 2024–2026 Board reflects on its term, one thing becomes clear: while individual portfolios differed, all Board members shared a common goal to leave the MCAA stronger than they found it.

Towards strong foundations

The 2024–2026 MCAA Board members are most proud not of a single project, but of the foundations they helped build for the future. Over the past two years, the Association has undergone significant changes: a new visual identity and website, improvements to governance and internal processes, strengthened data protection, enhanced financial stability, and the continued professionalisation of the Secretariat.

Pavlo Bazilinskyy, the previous Treasurer, worked hard to achieve stability and order in financial processes: “I learned that diversifying funding sources, not just managing one grant well, is what actually protects the MCAA long-term. The Association’s current financial health is proof of what our Board and Secretariat can build together.”

Others highlight the importance of continuity and collective effort in supporting an organisation that continues to expand its activities, raise its visibility, and strengthen its role within the European research landscape. “What surprised me most was the extraordinary opportunity to collaborate with researchers, policymakers and international organisations across Europe and beyond. Representing the MCAA in international policy and scientific events reinforced our visibility and strengthened our role as a trusted voice for the MSCA community,” says **Virginia Helena Albarracin**.



AI image: OpenAI · Prompt: Fabrizio Martina

Board meeting in Brussels in January 2026. From the left: Ornela Bardhi, Hakim Ferria, Maria Romano, Joaquin Capablo, Virginia Helena Albarracin, Corinne Portioli, Maria Magdalena Razalan, Pavlo Bazilinsky, Irene Castellano Pellicena, and Gian Maria Greco. Farah Islam is missing from the picture.



Bridging these varied backgrounds into shared action was a key focus for the Board. **Maria Romano** comments, “The most rewarding moment was seeing discussions and ideas shared during Board meetings and Annual Conferences become concrete initiatives that eventually created real value for the community, especially considering the MCAA’s increasing impact in the European research ecosystem.” Several also emphasise the importance of strengthening relationships with European institutions, National Contact Points, and other stakeholders, helping ensure that the voice of the MSCA community is heard in discussions about the future of research and innovation in Europe.

But as Virginia adds, “The MCAA’s greatest strength is its people.” We should not forget the individuals. “Supporting diverse career paths will remain a central commitment, reflecting Europe’s growing demand for talent across sectors. By strengthening both our governance and external partnerships, I hope to help ensure the MCAA remains a trusted, forward-looking organisation for researchers at every stage of their careers,” continues **Ornela Bardhi**.

Plans, reality, and professional growth

The Board’s work extended well beyond internal governance. Many members highlight initiatives that directly benefit the community: launching the first mentoring programme, strengthening collaboration between Chapters and Working Groups, improving engagement with members, supporting researchers pursuing careers beyond academia, and embedding gender equality, diversity and inclusion into the Association’s long-term strategy.

Highlighting the complex nature of the community the Association serves, previous Chair **Gian Maria Greco** observes: “Diversity in an organisation of researchers is not only demographic; it is structural. Researchers differ by discipline, career stage, sector, contract, institutional and national system, resources, mobility history, and professional stability.”

Looking back at the promises they made at the beginning of their mandate, the Board members agree that leadership rarely follows the original plan. Priorities shifted as the Association evolved, new challenges emerged, and volunteer responsibilities had to be balanced with demanding professional careers. Rather than seeing unfinished objectives as failures, they describe the experience as one of continuous learning.

“I now better understand a two-year volunteer mandate as a learning journey from the inside. My guiding principle has remained kaizen, continuous improvement, staying engaged and contributing step by step,” shares **Hakim Ferria**.

Pavlo confirms the personal growth: “Serving alongside colleagues from very different research



AI image: OpenAI · Prompt: Fabrizio Martina

and professional backgrounds sharpened how I lead my own group at the university: more delegation, clearer documentation, more transparency.”

Other members reflect that serving on the Board taught them to better align ambition with capacity and organisational priorities. The overall message is clear: progress is rarely linear, but every step contributes to building a stronger organisation.

The invisible work of leadership

“Building strong foundations may not always be the most visible work, but it enables the MCAA to better serve its members and grow sustainably,” explains Ornela.

One of the strongest recurring themes throughout the reflections is the amount of work that happens behind the scenes. Many admit they were surprised by the complexity of running an international association powered largely by volunteers. Strategic decisions require extensive coordination, consultation, and diplomacy, while implementing even small initiatives often depends on collaboration between Board members, the Secretariat, Chapters, Working Groups, and external partners.

Gian Maria echoes this behind-the-scenes reality of Board work: “A Chair is visible, but the work is often invisible. It lies in the conditions under which other members can

act. Creating conditions is neither passive nor always harmonious: processes sometimes have to be defended. The Chair’s task is to help the association develop the relationships, procedures and confidence through which it can steer itself.”

“Serving on a Board of 11 members plus the Secretariat teaches you a lot about collective leadership: listening carefully, understanding different perspectives, and practising diplomacy,” elucidates Hakim. And Corinne Portioli continues, “What surprised me most was how much leadership is about building trust, empowering people, and creating systems that enable others to succeed.”

Representing a diverse membership also requires bridging different institutional domains. As Gian Maria reflects: “Leadership at the MCAA involves translating researchers’ experiences into institutional conversations, and institutional processes back into something meaningful to researchers.”

Others highlight the importance of diplomacy and communication when working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Maria Romano is suggesting: “Listen actively, encourage shared ownership, and build from the foundations already created, using continuity as a starting point to further develop and strengthen future initiatives.”

Although the Board’s work is often challenging, it has also been deeply rewarding. Members

describe representing the MCAA at international conferences and policy events, seeing new mentoring initiatives come to life, receiving positive feedback from members, and witnessing discussions around the Board table become real projects that benefit the wider community. For many, the greatest reward has simply been working alongside passionate colleagues united by a common purpose: supporting researchers across disciplines, countries, and career stages.

Message to the next Board and the MCAA community

When asked what advice they would give the incoming Board, the answers converge around a few simple principles. Plan carefully, but remain flexible. “Time flies, and in order to ensure things get done, you need to define realistic timelines and clearly identify responsible people to lead the actions,” adds **Joaquin Capablo**.

“Build on what previous Boards have achieved while remaining open to change,” suggests Corinne.

This idea of ongoing institutional development is shared by Gian Maria, who stresses: “A representative organisation does not become representative once and remain so. It has to keep creating the conditions under which representation is possible, including the conditions under which it can be challenged by the people it claims to represent.”

Others add that it is important to trust the Secretariat, strengthen collaboration with the Chapters and Working Groups, communicate openly, and never lose sight of the community the Association exists to serve.

Ultimately, sustaining the Association relies on ongoing effort from the entire membership, as Gian Maria concludes: “None of this can be guaranteed by a Board or a strategic document. It depends on practices that the organisation as a whole must renew.”

Altogether, the Board members thank the community for their trust, enthusiasm and willingness to voluntarily give back.

“The MCAA is much more than a network; it is indeed a community built by people who choose to contribute. Stay involved, share your expertise, and don't hesitate to step forward,” Corinne encourages the MCAA members.

“The Board is here to support you, but the Association's success depends on all of us,” summarises Ornela.

“Let's keep connecting, sharing, and building it together,” concludes Hakim.

We thank the MCAA Board members 2024–2026 for contributing to this article.



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Articles by the MCAA community

Economic models and where to find them



Srishti Goyal is an Economic Modeller at E3-Modelling S.A. (WSP), where she works on climate and energy policy analysis. Her research focuses on decarbonisation, just transition, and the distributional impacts of climate policies, with an interest in governance and equity dimensions, including gender. Her work generates policy-relevant insights from economic modelling to support inclusive and evidence-informed decision-making. Alongside her research and professional work, she is an Editorial Board Member of the MCAA Newsletter and serves as Board Secretary of the Wavemakers United Foundation. She also mentors early-career women economists through the Women in Economics Mentoring Programme.

What does it take to understand how climate policies affect economies and societies? During my Martí i Franquès COFUND fellowship and beyond, I explored economic modelling and what these tools can and cannot tell us about designing a just transition.

During my PhD, as a Martí i Franquès COFUND fellow, I wanted to learn a type of economic model that is widely used to analyse climate and energy policy. Instead, most of my research relied on [input-output \(IO\) modelling](#), another well-established approach in economics. I attended courses and summer schools, understood the theory, but never felt confident applying these models myself.

The type of model I had been trying to learn is called a [Computable General Equilibrium \(CGE\) model](#). Looking back, I realised that learning a method works best when you have a real problem to solve and someone to catch your mistakes along the way. That environment for CGE modelling was not quite there during my PhD.

So after finishing, I went looking for it.

I soon discovered that relatively few organisations around the world develop and apply CGE models in practice. Most of them are international organisations or government bodies, and they are typically looking for CGE experts, not CGE enthusiasts. After a long search, I found a position where I could finally learn and apply CGE modelling to real policy questions. That place

works with [GEM-E3](#), one of Europe's most widely used CGE models, and I am genuinely excited to share what I have been learning.

What do economic models actually do?

Designing climate policy is not straightforward. Every decision involves trade-offs between emissions reduction, economic performance, and social equity, and these trade-offs are rarely obvious at first glance. Economic models help make them visible.



The poster illustrates how real-world data on the economy and environment is analysed to study the impacts of climate change on economic agents, from households and workers to entire sectors, and how economic modelling can help analyse adaptive and mitigative policy responses. Presented at La Nit de la Recerca, 30 September 2022, Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Credit: Srishti Goyal

CGE models like GEM-E3 are economy-wide frameworks. They represent how different parts of the economy interact, including production, consumption, trade, energy use, and emissions, all within a single consistent structure. This is what distinguishes them from IO modelling. IO models are powerful for tracing supply chain effects, but CGE models go further: they capture behavioural responses, price changes, and feedback loops across the entire economy.

A simple example: if you introduce a carbon price, energy costs rise. That affects production costs, which ripples into consumer prices, trade competitiveness, and labour markets. Without an economy-wide model, many of these effects stay hidden.

Why does this matter for a just transition?

The just transition is the idea that moving to a low-carbon economy must be fair as well as effective. But “just” means different things to different people. Who bears the cost of decarbonisation? Which regions or income groups are most affected? Which workers face job losses, and where might new opportunities emerge?

These are distributional questions, and they require distributional answers. Tools like GEM-E3 are particularly valuable here because they can simulate not just aggregate economic outcomes, but how impacts are spread across sectors, households, and countries. This makes trade-offs visible in a way that supports more transparent, evidence-based policy debates.

In the EU, models like GEM-E3 underpin impact assessments and long-term strategies such as the European Green Deal. Similar models are also widely used by organisations such as the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the WTO (World Trade Organization), which gives a sense of how central this kind of analysis has become to global economic governance.

Models inform, but do not decide

Economic models are not crystal balls. Their results depend on assumptions about behaviour, technology, and market structure. They can tell you what might happen under a given set of conditions, not what will happen. And they cannot capture everything. Social dynamics, political feasibility, and lived experience lie beyond what any model can quantify.

This is where co-creation becomes important in practice. When modellers work alongside domain experts, policymakers, and stakeholders throughout the research process, the assumptions built into models become better grounded in real-world constraints. It also helps ensure that the right questions are being asked in the first place, not just the ones that are easiest to model.

In large European research frameworks such as Horizon Europe, this collaboration also extends to how models are combined technically. It is common for multiple models to be soft-linked, meaning the outputs of one model serve as inputs to another. For example, energy system models may generate technology pathways that

feed into macroeconomic models like GEM-E3. This integration allows for a more comprehensive picture of complex transitions than any single model could provide on its own.

Modelling is therefore best understood as a tool that informs judgement, not one that replaces it. A just transition requires not only robust analytical tools, but also inclusive processes that reflect the perspectives of those most affected.

After years of studying these tools without fully applying them, I am glad to now work with them in practice. If you are curious about how economic models shape the policy world around us, I hope this offers a useful starting point, and perhaps some encouragement if you are still searching for the right environment to grow into the work you want to do.

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Editorial information

About

The MCAA Newsletter is the main communication channel for and about the MCAA community. It is a publication venue for science communication and public outreach. Its main aim is the dissemination of information about past and current MSCA projects, as well as activities of MCAA Chapters and Working Groups, events, and members' achievements.

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Instructions for submission

Authors interested in submitting an article should read the Editorial Guidelines and the Editorial Rules, and then submit an article exclusively through the form available on the [MCAA Newsletter website](#).

Editorial Board

Ashish Avasthi (outgoing member), Ornela Bardhi (incoming member), Pradeep Eranti, Polat Goktas, Kannan Govindaraj, Srishti Goyal, Gian Maria Greco (outgoing member), Eleni Ilkou, Sharanpreet Kaur, Eliška Koňářiková, Ana Paula Mendonça (incoming member), Eugenio Otal (incoming member), Shanmugapriya Periyannan (incoming member), Maria Magdalena Razalan (outgoing member), Maria Romano (outgoing member).



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Accessibility statement

The MCAA believes in a society based on diversity. A society where diversity is the norm, not a deviation. A society where diversity is a strength, not a weakness. Access barriers are created by a society that does not acknowledge the value of diversity. Diversity and access are foundational elements of the flourishing of the research endeavour.

As a community of researchers, the MCAA is committed to increase the accessibility of its products, services, and events. Under the leadership of the Editorial Team of the Communication Working Group, with the support of other Working Groups and the MCAA Board, the MCAA has been promoting a series of actions aimed at increasing the inclusivity of its community and reducing access barriers.

Since the June 2021 issue, the MCAA Newsletter has a new layout. The new design should make the reading experience more accessible by reducing a number of barriers our readers may face.

The new layout complies with many requirements of major print and digital accessibility standards and guidelines. For example, background and foreground colours were selected and paired so as to fulfil the AAA level requirements for colour contrast devised by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). Colour selection and pairing also complies with requirements for colour blindness. The text is not justified in order to keep the spacing between words consistent and regular in the entire text. Line spacing and font size were revised and increased too. Each macro-section is identified by a different colour so as to provide the reader with a map of content organisation. Last but not least, the PDF file now complies with PDF accessibility requirements and can be used by screen readers.



accessible