COMPARATIVE INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING RESEARCH NETWORK

CIGAR NETWORK
Comparative International Governmental Accounting Research

Newsletter

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This issue focuses on the CIGAR Workshop held in June 2026 in Malta

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The 18th CIGAR Network Workshop held in Valletta on 23-24 June 2026

The University of Malta proudly hosted the 18th CIGAR Workshop and the 6th IPSASB Research Forum on 23 and 24 June 2026. The Workshop entitled "**Financialisation and measurement in public sector financial reporting and management accounting**" aimed to attract contributions that are focused on public sector accounting, and to link theory with practice. The 32 papers presented at the Workshop covered also public sector audit, financial reporting standards, consolidation, budgeting, sustainability and ESG reporting. Over 65 participants attended the Workshop, mainly European, coming from 14 different countries. There were also five participants from Brazil; a speaker from Australia; and the IPSASB Forum participants included Asian and African researchers.

The Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy of the University of Malta, Professor Simon Grima, opened the Workshop with a welcome note. This was followed by an encouraging address by Professor Sandra Cohen, the Vice Chair of CIGAR.

Mr Charles Deguara, the Maltese Auditor General, delivered the first keynote speech on the challenges faced by his Office when auditing Public Private Partnerships, highlighting the practical difficulties of auditing the financial aspects of public services. The second keynote speech by Professor David Heald, provocatively argued that public sector accounting setters should continue to derive their standards from IFRS, customising for specific public sector circumstances where appropriate.

The Workshop included two interesting plenary roundtable discussions on: (1) AI and public sector accounting research, chaired by Professor Sandra Cohen; and (2) Standard setting for sustainability reporting, chaired by Professor Jens Heiling. This Newsletter includes detailed contributions by the Chairpersons about these two plenary discussions. Also included in this Newsletter is a report prepared by Professor Marco Bisogno, as the leading Guest Editor of the CIGAR-PMM Annual issue, on the plenary held during the Workshop, highlighting the win-win relationship between CIGAR and PMM and the benefits for researchers to publish their work in this annual issue.

The CIGAR Assembly officially closed the Workshop, led by the Chair, Professor Giuseppe Grossi, who addressed the assembly through an online communication. The Treasurer presented the financial report of the CIGAR Network, and the venue for next year's event was announced: **Rome.**

Wednesday afternoon was dedicated to the IPSASB Research Forum, chaired by Andreas Bergmann, Dave Warren and Ross Smith. Four research papers were presented, focusing on current topics like bridging IPSAS and Government Finance Statistics, IPSAS disclosure challenges, and climate-related standard setting.

At the end of the first day of the Workshop, the participants enjoyed a cultural walking tour around Valletta, ending at Ta' Nenu's Restaurant with a traditional Maltese dinner. The CIGAR Network website includes links to a photo album, presentations by the speakers and several papers that were presented during the Workshop.

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The organisers received positive feedback from the participants, and we hope to have made the founder members of the CIGAR Network proud. Since last year's CIGAR event held in Athens, our community has suffered two losses with the demise of **Professor Rowan Jones** on 29 July 2025 and **Professor Klaus Lüder** on 16 May 2026. It was opportune that we had celebrated Professor Lüder's 80th birthday last August through a dedicated special edition in his honour. Both gentlemen left behind a rich legacy of academic literature on public sector accounting.

Josette Caruana▪

Sustainability Reporting and Standard-Setting in the Public Sector

The recent heat wave across Europe was a fitting backdrop for the roundtable on the second day of the CIGAR Network Workshop in Malta. The roundtable was moderated by CIGAR Board Member **Jens Heiling** and examined where public sector sustainability reporting currently stands and where reporting, together with the auditing of that reporting, is heading. **Patricia Au** of the **Australian Accounting Standards Board** grounded the discussion empirically. Australia has tracked the work of the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) closely, since the voluntary AASB S1 mirrors IFRS S1, while the mandatory and climate-focused AASB S2 adopts the IFRS S2 core content. The public sector picture in Australia is more heterogeneous, as the Commonwealth and New South Wales are phasing in mandatory entity-level reporting with material simplifications such as scenario analysis and Scope 3 emissions, currently unaudited and under trial, while Victoria reports on a different basis and other jurisdictions consider whole-of-government approaches. Decisively, AASB user research shows that the primary users, namely sovereign bond investors, superannuation funds and insurers, credit rating agencies, parliamentarians, and the taxpayers/community, seek a whole-of-government/whole-of-economy perspective together with stronger connectivity between budget, policy, and financial information.

At the national level, **Francine Pace Caruana** of **Malta's Ministry for Energy, the Environment and the Regeneration of the Grand Harbour** showed how an administration institutionalises the SDG agenda. Malta's Sustainable Development Act marked the initial milestone for the sustainable development in Malta. In the meantime, two Voluntary National Reviews were performed. Notably, since 2019, every budget measure is aligned to the SDGs, with estimated impacts disclosed in an annual progress report, which embeds sustainability within the budget cycle rather than alongside it. **Charles Deguara**, **Auditor General of Malta**, turned to assurance by drawing on performance audits of poverty and obesity. His central point was that auditing the SDGs ultimately means auditing governance. Because the goals interlock, the auditor must look across government as a whole rather than at single programmes, revealing weaknesses in coordination and policy coherence. He cautioned that a target is not automatically measurable and that figures mean little without stakeholder engagement to explain the trends and context.

At the international level, **Ross Smith, Technical Director of the IPSASB,** presented **IPSASB** SRS 1, *Climate-related Disclosures*, the Board's first sustainability reporting standard, developed in response to demand for a public sector-specific instrument addressing the fiscal consequences of climate risk. Its anticipated benefits include a global baseline, enhanced comparability and data availability, and the integration of climate considerations into decision-making, within a deliberately sequenced programme that anticipates a further standard on the climate-related outcomes of public policies. **Arman Vatyan** of the **World Bank** situated this within the question of reform capacity. Through the PEMPAL and PULSAR networks, and the first global Sustainability Auditing Guide co-developed with the CIGAR Network, the emphasis falls on credibility, since sustainability information becomes decision-useful only when embedded in public financial management systems, internal controls, and assurance. The Guide offers internal auditors a risk-based and maturity-sensitive approach, while the extended PULSE diagnostic adds dedicated pillars for sustainability reporting frameworks and reform prerequisites.

Taken together, the panel portrayed a field maturing from voluntary practice toward formalised standards, yet showing a structural tension between investor-oriented entity-level models and the whole-of-government, budget-linked information users demand. Assurance emerged as the decisive factor. Without credible audit, and without the systems that make information auditable, reporting risks remaining a mere declaration. The alignment among the AASB, IPSASB, and the World Bank, supported by supreme audit institutions and CIGAR guidance, points to an international architecture now taking shape.

Jens Heiling▪

AI in Public Sector Accounting Research – Input from a roundtable reflecting different approaches on a challenging theme

During the 18th CIGAR Workshop in Malta a roundtable dealing with "AI in Public Sector Accounting (PSA) Research" was organized to echo views and ideas dealing with AI disruptive innovation that has already affected several aspects of everyday life, offering a plethora of opportunities but also inducing risks in a dynamic, unprecedented manner. Academic research could not have been left untouched. In this panel, which I had the privilege to Chair, we aimed at discussing the multifaceted challenges that AI creates for publishers and academics under their dual role as researchers and reviewers and brainstorm on how public sector accounting research could find a suitable way to productively navigate in the AI era with ethos and resilience.

Michaela Lavender (Managing Editor of Public Money and Management) stressed that scholarly publishing faces a pivotal moment because generative AI challenges editorial practices that have been in place for over 200 years. While major publishers have broadly aligned their AI policies, many key questions remain unresolved. Drawing on industry guidance and the views of 31 editors from leading journals, she argued that AI should support, not replace, human judgement. There was broad agreement from the editors she consulted that AI is useful for limited tasks such as language editing, but should definitely not be used for peer review, editorial decision-making, or generating scholarly content. Transparency, disclosure, confidentiality, and accountability are essential. Michaela stressed that academics, as the major stakeholders in scholarly journal publishing, need to speak up to make sure that the journals continue to supply quality information. In the current climate of increased submissions, academics must start promoting the need for reviewing to be considered an important part of the job of being a scholar.

Anatoli Bourmistrov (Professor in Business Administration at Nord University Business School, Bodø, Norway) discussed the growing role of AI in academic publishing and research. He outlined how AI is affecting each stage of the publication process, including authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers. Common principles are highlighted when comparing Emerald and Elsevier policies: AI cannot be an author; transparency in AI use is required; human oversight remains essential; and confidentiality of contributors must be protected. Anatoli also raised concerns about AI's impact on scholarly voice, intellectual ownership, and writing quality, arguing that ethical AI use alone is insufficient. While AI can improve research processes and knowledge production, researchers must maintain critical thinking, originality, and control over their work.

Anne Stafford (Professor of Accounting and Finance, Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester) contended that privacy and ethics should be treated as core safeguards, not afterthoughts, in using AI in PSA research. Privacy matters because data access redistributes power: researchers must ask who controls data, models and consequences, not merely whether data is protected. Ethics matters because AI use affects judgement, accountability, transparency, fairness, authorship and public value. The key takeaway is cautious adoption: use AI, but disclose tools, challenge model outputs, protect people and institutions, and ensure human judgement always prevails. This keeps research credible, responsible and publicly beneficial for public trust and democratic accountability over time.

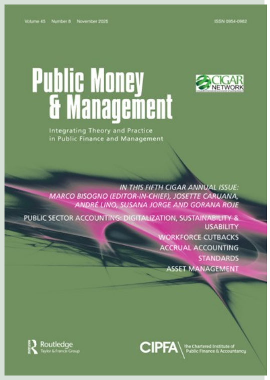
Drawing on psychology literature, **Cecilia Langella (Assistant Professor, Department of Economic Sciences and Business Management, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)** highlighted that AI is in a position not only to augment human cognition, but also to reshape its architecture. By pre-processing information, AI interacts with human thinking, both in its intuitive and analytical dimensions. This poses significant epistemological and ethical risks. Prioritization of statistical frequency over saliency of information may introduce epistemological confusion, foster homogenization, diminish creativity, and erode critical reflection. Scholars should, therefore, engage in a deeper debate about the utility and appropriateness of AI across research (and peer review) stages, also questioning whether activities commonly regarded as low value-adding (e.g., writing) are in fact essential for generating new ideas.

The panel discussion suggested that AI is neither simply a threat nor merely a productivity tool. It challenges fundamental assumptions about expertise, authorship, accountability, and trust. It is a multifactorial game changer. We, the PSA scholars, need to face how to use AI responsibly in our own research practices and adapt to a publication process environment that will be definitely changing. The future of our field will depend not on how much AI we use, but on how thoughtfully we integrate human judgment, ethical reflection, and public value into AI-enabled research and practice.

As a personal note, I wonder if we meet again in five years' time at another CIGAR conference and discuss the same topic, whether we will have succeeded in adapting PSA research to AI in a productive, responsible and ethical manner without abolishing the human qualities and characteristics that have elevated PSA research to its current status.

Sandra Cohen▪

CIGAR–PMM annual issue

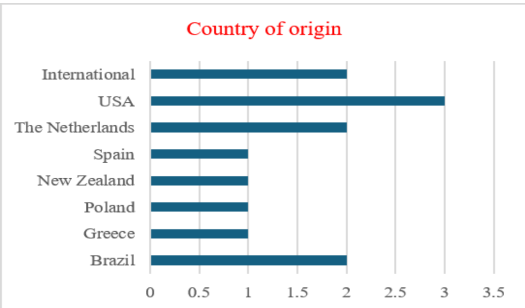


The CIGAR Workshop hosted a session devoted to presenting the scope and main results of the CIGAR–PMM annual issue. More specifically, the outcome of issue 5 (PMM, Vol. 45, No. 8, November 2025—see https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rpmm20/45/8?nav=tocList) was presented, along with an overview of the ongoing issue 6.

The editor-in-chief of PMM, Andreas Bergmann, and the managing editor, Michaela Lavender, opened the session by highlighting that the collaboration between the CIGAR network and PMM has been a win-win strategy and that PMM's editors and board and the journal's publisher trust that the collaboration will continue in the future. Professor Bergmann also thanked the editorial team for their excellent work and expressed his appreciation for the quality of the articles in the 5th issue.

On behalf of the editorial team, composed of Josette Caruana, Susana Jorge, André Lino and Gorana Roje, the leading editor, Marco Bisogno, referred to the 5th issue and presented the main results, emphasising that the articles accepted for publication cover different geographical areas (see figure 1).

Fig. 1: Countries of origin of published articles in the 5th issue



The issue was very balanced, as it included four research articles, four new development articles, and five debate articles. Another three research articles were accepted after the deadline, and they will be included in issue 6.

Three authors who published in issue 5, namely, Jiseul Kim, Jan van Helden, and Nives Botica Redmayne, attended the online session in Malta. They summarised the main contents of their articles and expressed their gratitude to the editorial team for their constructive support.

A quick overview of issue 6 was also presented: 14 research articles and 3 new development articles have been received, with 4 papers already accepted.

The session was concluded by highlighting the main benefits of publishing in the CIGAR–PMM annual issue. This refers to the quality of the journal (which is an A-rated journal in ABDC), as well as the benefit of the whole issue being made free to view by the publisher for four months after publication. Furthermore, papers published in the CIGAR–PMM annual issue reach the CIGAR community and publicise the CIGAR brand internationally, while promoting comparative research. Last, but not least, submitting authors can count on a supportive and constructive editorial team!

Therefore, the editorial team is waiting for submissions for the 7th annual issue. The deadlines are: Research articles: end of October 2026; New development articles: end of February 2027; and Debate articles: end of April 2027.

Marco Bisogno▪

Announcements

The Eternal City is hosting the Biennial CIGAR Conference 2027

We are pleased to announce that the **Biennial CIGAR Conference 2027** will take place in **Rome, Italy**, from **23–25 June 2027**, under the theme **"Public Sector Accounting, Audit, and Accountability Practices in a Time of Grand Challenges."**

The **Ph.D. Doctoral Colloquium** will be held on **23 June 2027** at **LUMSA University**, Via di Porta Castello 44. The **main conference** will take place on **24–25 June 2027** at the **Department of Business Studies, Roma Tre University**, Via Silvio D'Amico 77.

Join colleagues and friends in the Eternal City for three days of academic exchange, dialogue, and networking surrounded by Rome's timeless beauty, iconic landmarks, and green spaces. Submit your abstract by 7 February 2027 and the full paper by 23 May 2027. Early bird registration until 1 May 2027. Look out for further information in future CIGAR communications.

Crafting Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management

The Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management and Qualitative Research in Management & Accounting are organising the third edition of "Crafting Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management" to be held in Naples on 5–6 November 2026. This involves two days dedicated to qualitative research methods, mutual feedback, and exchange in the beautiful Villa Doria D'Angri. https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7469697247363026944/

The event is open to up to 50 PhD students and emerging scholars. No registration fees. Deadline for registration and submission: 30 September 2026. Register here: https://lnkd.in/di9AGZGW