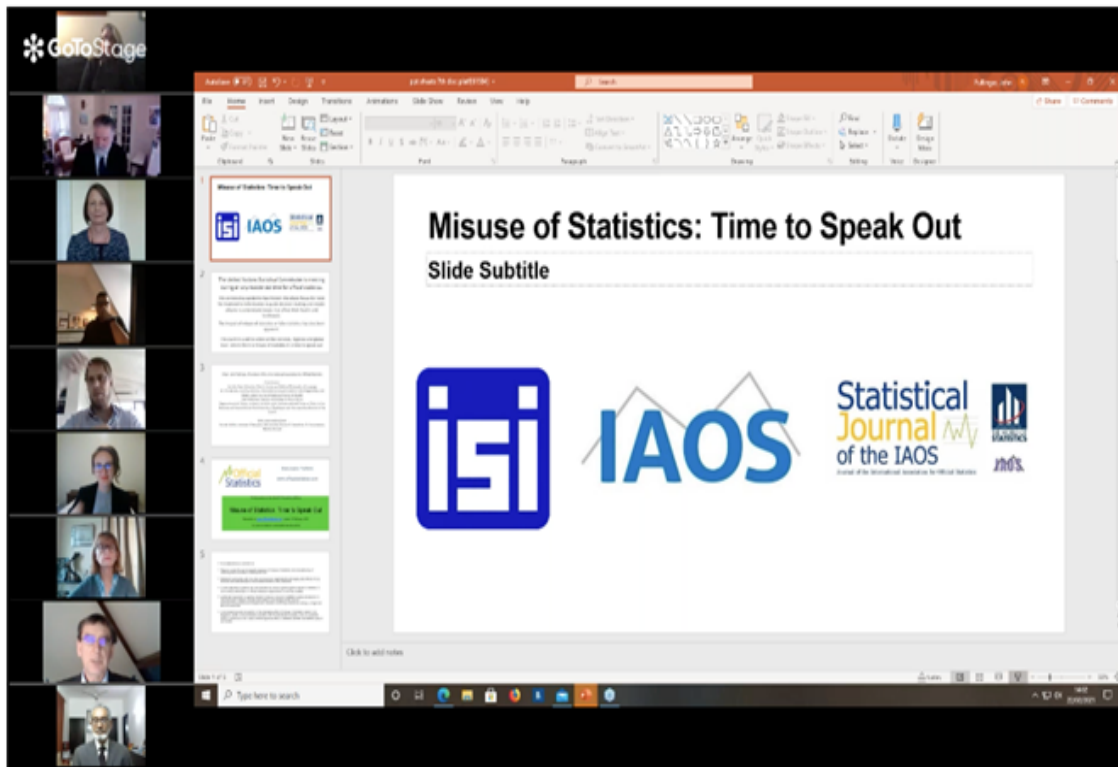




# International Association for Official Statistics 2020-21 Annual Report



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## Message from the President

Dear Friends

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have dramatic effects on people all over the world. There has been devastating tragedy in term of loss of life and there will be longer term consequences for economies and societies that will emerge over the years ahead. I cannot recall a time when statistics have been so much the currency of debate as people, governments and businesses have tried to work out what is going on and how they should act.

The global community of official statistics has stepped up in an extraordinary way to meet the challenge of providing the information needed to guide the decisions that must be made whilst coping with personal anxiety and sadness as well as the restrictions that have come from lockdowns on themselves, their colleagues and their work. Official statisticians have rightly received praise for providing a most essential public service in difficult times.

The International Association for Official Statistics has played its part. Whilst important planned activities have not taken place, notably our conference in Zambia, we have managed to deliver well against our strategic goals by adapting our work to the current environment. The role our Journal has played over the last year has been especially noteworthy. I would like to play tribute to our Editor-in-Chief, Pieter Everaers, his energetic and committed team of volunteer helpers and IOS Press for their support in finding a strong voice for official statistics during this period. I would like to commend in particular the work to issue a special issue of the Journal celebrating the work of official statisticians in Africa and the establishment of the official statistics discussion platform.

As I hand over the Presidency to Misha Belkindas, I look back on my term with great fondness. It has been a joy to work with so many wonderful people and to share and celebrate the work that is done, often without great recognition, by the community of official statistics. Our work helps guide decisions that make our lives more safe, prosperous and fulfilling, our communities more just and secure and our world more sustainable for our children. There can be fewer more vital roles in society.

I would like to thank the members of the IAOS Executive Committee over the last two years who have worked hard to keep the show on the road and adapt to the rapidly changing environment. I am particularly grateful to those Executive Committee members who have got up in the middle of the night to attend virtual meetings. I would also like to give my heartfelt thanks to Nancy McBeth and Jo Green who have advised and supported me throughout my term.

If you are not already a member of the Association, join us. Our voice is stronger with each new member.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. J. P.' followed by a long, sweeping flourish.

John Pullinger

# Chapter 1

## Progress with 2019-2021 strategy

### 1.1 Background

Official statistics are fundamental to democracy. They provide governments, businesses and civil society with the information they need to make good decisions. And they give people and their representatives the tools to have informed debates, to make choices and to hold decision makers to account.

In 2019 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics which have been adopted by the United Nations to guide all nations in developing statistics that meet the test of practical utility.

Developments in technology mean that it is possible to utilise statistical science to gain insights from data that were unimaginable only a few years ago. This means, as Brad Efron memorably said on receiving the International Prize in Statistics at the 2019 World Statistics Congress, that we are on the verge of a new golden age of statistics.

The IAOS is one of the seven associations of the International Statistical Institute (ISI). The ISI has a medium term vision for the period 2017-21 and the IAOS aligns itself with the ISI vision.

### 1.2 Context

IAOS objectives are:

- to promote the understanding and advancement of official statistics and related subjects.
- to foster the development of effective and efficient official statistical services, particularly in developing countries, through international contacts among individuals and organizations, including users of official statistics as well as research institutions.

The world of official statistics is changing fast:

- demands are extending in scope and are up in all fields – users need faster, more fine grained and relevant insight
- many new data sources are available but also many new providers of data services
- we have a challenge to demonstrate trustworthiness and the special value of official statistics in a complex data landscape

The IAOS has many strengths: a growing membership, a well respected journal (SJIAOS), good conferences, the young statisticians prize (YSP), an active community, and the ability to be “free-thinking”. However, we have limited reach and impact with decision makers, our “call to action” for our supporters is not well understood and work rests on few shoulders.

The 2019-21 IAOS Strategy saw opportunities arising from the 25th anniversary of Fundamental Principles, World Statistics Day 2020, the 2020 Census round, data gaps in the indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and recent case studies in official statistics. At the same time, we saw threats confronting statistical institutions in many countries, in particular loss of political (“enough of experts”) and public (“your GDP not our GDP”) support.

### 1.3 Plan Themes for 2019-21

The strategy for 2019-21 built on the existing plan rather than developing a new one and aimed to draw on our core principles: the Declaration on Professional Ethics for Statisticians adopted by the ISI in 2010 (succeeding the 1985 original), as well as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics published in 1994.

The unifying idea behind the IAOS and the principles on which we draw, is that our central interest is our users: those who rely on us to provide a trustworthy guide for the domains we cover to what is going on in the world around them. What matters is the better use of official statistics in public debates, decision making and democratic accountability.

We aimed to focus our work in each of our activity areas on delivering an outcome where the IAOS is seen as a leading global advocate for official statistics with the result that:

- Parliaments and Governments recognise value of official statistics and invest in them through strong laws and adequate funding, with a particular attention to the capacity of Official Statistics to inform national and international decisions and to track progress in all the SDG domains.
- Commentators refer to official statistics as fundamental to democracy
- The impact of poorly supported official statistical systems on countries and citizens is widely understood and referenced

This implied five themes for our strategic plan:

1. **Focus on users** so that the value of official statistics is understood and recognised. This required us to analyse the key users of official statistics and make sure we reached them. Leading figures outside official statistics acting as advocates, including politicians, central bankers and other public figures, were seen as highly effective champions (Outcome theme)
2. **Build on existing activities** rather than develop new ones: the conference, the journal, young statisticians prize each with a clear focus that supports our outcomes. (Output theme)
3. **Develop IAOS processes** to deliver activities focused on outcomes: EXCO agendas and actions designed to help those responsible for each activity area. Improved two-way communication to engage and enrol. (Process theme)
4. Increase resources by growing membership still further. We have had a growing membership in recent years. We hoped to build on this progress and **recruit more members**, especially in Africa and other underrepresented regions and amongst younger

people, to increase the breadth, depth and diversity of our community. (Resources theme)

5. Enhance capability: we aimed to build new **partnerships** with others who share our goals eg Parliaments, data ethics bodies, National Statistical Associations/Societies and organisations like PARIS21, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, open data/fact checking organisations and consumer groups. At the same time, we wanted to deepen existing partnerships with the ISI and its Associations. Relationships with National Statistical Institutes (and other producers of official statistics including central banks and ministries) were seen as especially important. Specifically, we planned to support the ISI strategic priority for capacity building, the ISI strategic plan for the Public Voice for Statistics and the new ISI Special Interest Group on Communicating Statistics and Data Science. IASE was another priority partnership given the imperative to build statistical literacy and capability. (Capability theme)

## **1.4 Progress during 2020-21**

### **1.4.1 Theme 1: focus on users**

The central outcome sought by the IAOS is for the value of official statistics to be understood and recognised. The strategy noted the value of leading figures outside official statistics acting as advocates, including politicians, central bankers and other public figures. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of this ambition. In those countries where official statistics is appreciated by government and the wider community statistics have become an even more vital public service, guiding decision makers and enabling the public to understand what is going on. In those countries where official statistics are weaker and less well recognised, offices have been closed, data collection disrupted and the evidence base for decision making weakened still further.

The IAOS has been active in highlighting the value of official statistics so that the good practices adopted in some countries can be used as case studies by users in other countries to make the case for building statistical capacity as a part of the infrastructure for pandemic recovery. Examples include:

- Discussion platform on “official statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis”
- SJIAOS papers: “trust in statistics and why it matters” and “misuse of statistics: time to speak out”
- IAOS webinars: “the importance to society of high quality public statistics”, “new world order and official statistics in Nigeria” and “misuse of statistics, time to speak out”
- United Nations Statistical Commission Side Event on “misuse of statistics: time to speak out”
- Presentations: “statistics shining a light” (as part of Asia Pacific Statistics Week) and “statistics are a human right” (a Stats and Stories podcast)

## **1.4.2 Theme 2: build on existing activities**

This section of the report gives a brief overview of progress against the strategic plan. More detail on each item can be found in later chapters of this report.

### **1.4.2.1 the conference**

The centrepiece of the 2019-21 strategy had been the IAOS/ISI conference in Zambia. As a result of the pandemic the conference was postponed but is expected to take place in the coming planning period.

As an alternative to the conference the IAOS has been active in running webinars:

- Misuse of Statistics: Time to Speak Out (6 October 2020): 269 attendees
- New World Order and Official Statistics in Africa (22 October 2020): 52 attendees
- The Importance to Society of High Quality Public Statistics (5 November 2020, joint with IASS): 131 attendees
- United Nations Statistical Commission Side Event (22 February 2021): 283 attendees

### **1.4.2.2 the journal**

IAOS aims to be the world-wide known vehicle to spread knowledge and innovation in official statistics. To this aim, the Statistical Journal of IAOS (SJIAOS) is a core element of our Association as it serves as a knowledge disseminator, exposing quality and relevant research to the statistical community. To complement this role, in August 2019, beyond the registered receivers of the printed version of the journal and the pre-press and on-line version, the SJIAOS website has been launched with pages on news, events and a discussion platform with every quarter a discussion on an issue of general interest for Official Statistics. Further a twitter account has been opened and especially used for quick updates during conferences and important events. Via the links between the websites relevant for official statistics (IAOS, SJIAOS, IOS Press and ISI) the community of official statisticians has accurate, timely and coordinated access to all relevant information.

#### **1.4.2.2.1 general profile of SJIAOS Volume 36 (2020)<sup>1</sup>**

Volume 36 (2020) of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS has 158 manuscripts in five issues (4 regular and one supplement) authored by more than 250 colleagues from over 60 countries. In total it features around 1400 pages. From the five issues, the specials, Vol36/1 on the Population and Housing Census 2020, and Vol36/3 on The Future of Economic and Business statistics and the Covid-19 sections as well as the section in the December issue (Vol36/4) on the Asia-Pacific statistics could thanks to sponsoring organizations and IOS Press be published free access. Free access for the supplement issue on Official Statistics in Africa is under negotiation.

The SJIAOS discussion platform has had in 2020 six discussions. Four regular and the two special discussions on COVID-19 and its impact. Especially the first discussion on the COVID-19 statistics and the discussion on the Population and Housing Census have been very lively.

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<sup>1</sup> For reporting on SJIAOS the planning period for the strategy (2020/2021) is less convenient than per Volume year. Therefore, for quantitative reporting on the targets Volume figures will be used.

#### **1.4.2.2 Targets**

##### **2.1 Increase the number of citations to articles published in SJAOS.**

In 2020 SJAOS attracted via the SJAOS and IOS Press website over 32000 page views for SJAOS content (compared to around 12000 in 2019). Via the officialstatistics.com site there were over 16000 page views on the content. Quality and relevance of the articles is measured via number of citations and rate of cited documents. In 2020 the number of citations has increased by 50% compared to 2019. Since 2015 these numbers have been steeply raising. A two-year process for receiving an official impact-rating for the Journal (beyond the informal ratings) was started in 2019 and should result in official ratings in 2021. A point of concern is the relative high level of self-citation<sup>2</sup>. However, as the Journal is rather unique in its category this is understandable. In 2020, the number of downloads of articles published in the period 2016-2020 from SJAOS approaches 30000, of which around 10000 were published in 2020.

Even so the SJAOS discussion platform was often visited. In total there were in 2020 over 10000 visits to the discussion platform. Especially the Covid discussion was, with over 4000 visits, intensively followed. The number of discussion contributions in the September and December issue is still limited, but expected to further increase. On the social media @Officialstat1 the journal enjoys over 350 followers.

##### **2.2 Positioned SJAOS in at least the third quartile for statistics, probability and uncertainty.**

During 2020-2021 SJAOS has continued increasing its number of readers and the diversity of the manuscripts it publishes, moving itself even more at the vanguard of the discussion of emerging issues in official statistics. Compared to similar oriented Journals on 'Official Statistics' SJAOS has an overwhelmingly larger number of manuscripts.

Circa 300 anonymous reviews of the manuscripts from this period were performed by over 100 reviewers. Around 75 manuscripts for the 5 issues for this period were actively solicited. The attractiveness for publishing via the Journal is also reflected in the number of non-solicited offered manuscripts. The rejection rate for the non-solicited manuscripts was around 25%, meaning that concretely around 25 manuscripts have been rejected or withdrawn. 153 manuscripts were invited for revision and 10 accepted without comments.

##### **2.3 Attract innovative researchers and new talent to publish in the SJAOS.**

The 250 authors of the 145 manuscripts in Volume 36 represent a wide range of over 60 nations. The objective for the Journal is to achieve a globally more balanced distribution of authors and readership. The share of authors coming from regions outside the traditional core areas of the journal (Western Europe, North America, Australia/New Zealand) has grown from 13% in the period 2017- 2019 to 38 % in 2020. This is partly caused by the special section in the December issue (Vol36/4) and the supplement to the Volume with contributions from respectively statisticians from the Asia-Pacific and the African region. But even when the contributors to the special section and issue are excluded the ratio of contributors from outside the core areas has raised to over 20%. It is hoped that in the coming volumes this share of authors from this regions will raise further.

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<sup>2</sup> Manuscripts in the journal, cite articles from the same journal.



A special achievement is the extra issue, Vol 36/supplement, on Official Statistics in Africa. This issue was planned as an issue in the context of the 2020 IAOS Conference in Zambia that was cancelled due to the pandemic. Despite the cancellation of this conference it was possible to publish an issue with 15 articles on a wide variety of themes prepared by African colleagues.

On the readership, as shown by the substantial increase in the number of visits to the Journal (from ca 12000 in 2019, to 48000 in 2020) more use has been made of the Journal. It is expected that the special section on Asia-Pacific Statistics as well as the supplement on Official Statistics in Africa has generated an increased readership in these traditionally non-core areas for the Journal.

For a substantial group of colleagues working in official statistics, the SJIAOS is a regular venue for publishing. Nevertheless, in volume 36, mainly due to the Special section on Asia-Pacific statistics and the supplemental issue on Official Statistics in Africa, the number and rate of first time authors has increased with an estimated 40%.

#### **2.4 Encourage the discussion of SDGs indicators and emerging issues in the SJIAOS.**

The Journal combines a focus on emerging issues via individual or smaller sections of manuscripts with a more in depth treating of specific issues via specials and larger and recurring sections. Since the June issue (Vol36/2) each issue started with manuscripts on Covid-19. Beyond these articles on the Covid-19 impact, the Journal centered via specials in March (Vol36/1) on Population and Housing Census round 2020 and in September (Vol36/3) on the Future of Economic and Business statistics. The June and December (regular) issues covered a wide variety of other topics, ranging from manuscripts awarded the Young Statisticians Prize 2020 to Governing by the numbers (D4P) and many articles based on papers from the 2019 ISI WSC in Kuala Lumpur.

Via direct soliciting main reports on important emerging issues (open data, fundamental principles, data stewardship, citizen data) from the UNSC or other meetings are published.

##### **1.4.2.3 young statisticians prize**

The IAOS places great importance on fostering the development of effective and efficient official statistical services and pays particular attention to nurturing young official statisticians to speak up. In this regard, the Young Statistician Prize celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and continues to be a centrepiece of our offerings.

In 2020 and 2021, issues chosen by young statisticians included data access, use of the R package, big data, differential privacy, COVID-19, machine learning, model-based estimation and forecasting methodologies.

The prize was expanded in 2020 to include a new category of special commendation for a paper from a developing nation. This expansion recognised the focus of the IAOS on fostering development of official statistics, particularly in developing nations. Mr Madi Mangan from The Gambia Bureau of Statistics was the inaugural winner of the special commendation prize for his paper, *Household Consumption Allocation and the Collective Household Model: Children Share of Household Resources in The Gambia*.

The 2021 Prize delivered several firsts: the first winning submissions from authors from the Netherlands, Brazil and Indonesia.

To celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the Young Statistician Prize and in conjunction with the ISI Women in Statistics initiative, an Invited Paper Session at the 2021 World Statistics Congress will feature female prize winners sharing their thoughts on what the Prize means to them and what they are doing now in their careers. We are pleased to also have Ms. Mariana Kotzeva, Director-General of Eurostat, join the session as a distinguished female leader in official statistics.

We congratulate all winners, past and present, and thank all authors for participating in the IAOS Young Statistician Prize. The Prize would not be such a success without the commitment of supervisors and institutions to nurturing young official statisticians. The Prize is also extremely grateful to the international judging panel who freely give their time and commitment. Together, the IAOS and the global statistical community are fostering talent, especially in developing nations, for our future success.

### **1.4.3 Theme 3: develop IAOS processes**

The intention was to focus the key processes of the IAOS on outcomes.

The most important IAOS process is the General Assembly. The IAOS General Assembly was held in virtual format on 20 August 2020.

The IAOS Executive Committee (EXCO) is the central mechanism for the operation of the IAOS. EXCO has met on:

- 9 January 2020 (virtual)
- 4 March 2020 (at the United Nations Statistical Commission in hybrid format)
- 3 April 2020 (virtual)
- 4 June 2020 (virtual)
- 7 August 2020 (virtual)
- 3 November 2020 (virtual)
- 7 January 2021 (virtual)
- 30 March 2021 (virtual)

The emphasis on virtual meetings has enabled a more frequent pattern of discussions. This in turn has allowed better knowledge sharing, brainstorming of ideas and focus on delivery of the objectives of the Association.

### **1.4.4 Theme 4: recruit more members**

A central theme of the strategy for 2019-21 was to recruit more members, since our voice is stronger if we are seen to have a high and growing membership. In the past, membership has tended to grow in the years when our conference is held and then falls back without the recruitment opportunities that the conference provides. Even though our conference in Zambia was cancelled, we have had a record breaking year for membership.

We have recruited 165 new members and reinstated 8 former members. In addition we have followed up on members who initially did not renew their membership and only 7 members cancelled their subscriptions.

The result has exceeded our expectations, with no fall in any of the categories of paid membership. Especially noteworthy has been the rise from 55 to 106 in institutional members.

The category of free membership for SJIAOS authors has been particularly fruitful, with 94 new members in this category compared with very small single figure numbers in most previous years. This has been another aspect of the success of the Journal over the last 2 years. Hopefully we will be able to retain these new members when their period of free membership ends.

#### **1.4.5 Theme 5: partnerships**

Throughout the year there has been a strong emphasis on working through the ISI family rather than acting alone as an Association. IAOS members have been active on a range of ISI-led initiatives. Notably, we were instrumental in the creation of the ISI webinar programme. We also held, with IASS, the first joint webinar as part of that programme.

In taking forward IAOS activities we have sought to work in partnership. For example, our United Nations Statistical Commission Side Event featured a philosopher, an ethicist and a fact checker as well as colleagues from the statistics community.

## Chapter 2: Conferences and Webinars

### 2.1 Zambia Conference

During the 2019-20 period, the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS), the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats) planned for a 2020 Conference: *Better Lives 2030: mobilising the power of data for Africa and the world. (Bringing together statisticians and all those in government, universities and education who care about the value of statistics to society.)*

Seven themes were selected:

1. Future of Statistics for Africa: statistics that leave no one behind
2. Skills for Africa in the era of data
3. Official statistics in society: they matter to all of us
4. Big data. Opportunities arising from the new data ecosystem.
5. Statistics making a difference: public health, prevent and cure
6. Statistics making a difference: environment and climate
7. Statistics making a difference: from data to progress

The conference programme was designed to deliver:

- A forward looking prospectus for statistics to help improve decision making over the next 10 years
- An opportunity to bring together diverse communities to foster innovation and partnership
- A focus on Africa through Agenda 2063 and the SDGs
- Capacity building in Zambia and across the region

The Scientific Programme Committee issued a call for proposals: for a session, lasting 90 minutes in total and including three or four speakers plus a discussant; for a contributed individual paper, to be organised in special topic sessions; for a contributed individual poster; and suggestions for pre-and post-conference workshops, events or meetings.

#### **2.1.1 Strand 1: “Future of Statistics for Africa: statistics that leave no one behind”**

Agenda 2063 sets out the vision for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. This strand was designed to explore how statistics can help guide decision makers to realise this vision. Five years into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and with only ten years to go to 2030, how can relevant, comprehensive and disaggregated statistics assist in understanding who is getting left behind and what needs to be done to ensure that they are not?

Providing the necessary statistical information at a time of considerable change requires fundamental questions to be asked about the future of the census and other domains of official statistics and methodology.

Subthemes included:

- How can statistics help guide decision makers to realize the Agenda 2063 vision?
- How can statistics assist in understanding who is getting left behind and what needs to be done to ensure that they are not?
- How are we realizing the benefits of the data revolution? Are we prepared for future changes in the data ecosystem?
- The 2020 Census round is in full swing. The census is a once in a decade opportunity to ensure that all are counted. What is the future for the census?
- Where should we be going with surveys and use of administrative data? What is the future role of non-official sources of data? What new methods will we need?

### **2.1.2 Strand 2: “Skills for Africa in the era of data”**

The data revolution has changed the supply and paradigms for how we access and use information and data. How can we develop competence for the young generations? How can we help professionals, leaders, politicians, journalists, engineers and officials to update their skills to fully benefit from modern data?

In addition to papers, this strand was designed to consider opportunities for workshops, training courses and other engagement activities for young generations.

Sub-themes included:

- Equipping our children to succeed in a data rich world. What are the skills they need and how can we ensure that they are developed?
- Statistical offices struggle to develop and retain junior staff. How can we ensure that the future of official statistics is safeguarded by bringing on the next generation of professional staff?
- How can we help leaders need to understand the potential of data and data analytics? Leaders in statistics increasingly need to have deep technical credibility, strong management competence and the ability to navigate a complex and hazardous political landscape. How can we support them in getting the skills they need?
- The public often receive official statistics through the medium of journalism. How can we support journalists to write better, more compelling (and accurate) stories about numbers?
- To be an effective citizen we need to be able to make sense of statistics and to be sceptical of statistical claims. How do we foster statistical literacy for all?

### **2.1.3 Strand 3: “Official statistics in society: they matter to all of us”**

In a crowded space, how do we ensure that the message of official statistics cuts through and is understood by all, and that official statisticians listen and provide statistics that resonate and are relevant to people’s lives?

Sub-themes included:

- How do we communicate the role of official statistics and engage with politicians, media and civil society? How do we address issues of autonomy, independence and relevance and protect the position of the national statistics office and its leaders?
- To help decision makers, statistics need to connect with politicians and be able to be used to hold them to account. What are the mechanisms that support this?
- For official statistics to truly serve democracy, good engagement is also needed with the media and civil society. How can we work together?
- How do we make the case for autonomy and independence for official statistics and find a voice that protects the position of the national statistics office and its leaders?

#### **2.1.4 Strand 4: “Big data. Opportunities arising from the new data ecosystem.”**

To succeed in the new data ecosystem there needs to be a strong partnership between official statistics and other actors, including in data science and artificial intelligence. How can we build such partnerships?

Sub-themes included:

- How can we make a success of partnerships and coordination in the emerging data ecosystem?
- Capacity within the system is far below what is needed to respond to the agenda in front of us. How do we make the case for resources, develop new business models that better match demand and supply and find ways to enhance the capability of the system?
- The new ecosystem demands new rules. What part can statisticians play in areas like data ethics where we have both much to offer and much to learn if we are to navigate successfully and sustain public confidence?

#### **2.1.5 Strand 5: “Statistics making a difference: public health, prevent and cure”**

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development states Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 3. The aim is that we achieve each SDG target by 2030. Statistics plays a growing role in producing the analytical and operative tools to reach the goal. Progress in and use of statistics will save the lives of millions of people. Topics covered in this strand will address in particular Africa’s public health crisis, the world’s most acute one.

#### **2.1.6 Strand 6: “Statistics making a difference: environment and climate”**

Several SDGs point to the urgency to face the climate crises which we have produced ourselves:

- SDG 6 aims to achieve clean, accessible water for all
- SDG 7 calls for affordable and clean energy
- SDG 13 states that the world needs climate actions, because climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, everywhere

- SDG 14 promotes a careful management of our oceans and of life under water, as a global resource for all
- SDG 15 is about life on land, and the importance to protect forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.

Statistics contributes fundamentally to all these goals with powerful methods and practical instruments for a sustainable future. Topics covered in this strand were designed to describe how statistics helps to solve these challenges.

### **2.1.7 Strand 7: “Statistics making a difference: from data to progress”**

Despite extraordinary advances in the collection of data and processing of information, much of the potential residing in contemporary data sources remains unexploited. Fulfilling the promise of the big data revolution, statistics and machine learning produce new methodologies and analytical tools to extract knowledge from complex data to deliver insight. There is a dramatic scope for industries, companies, public and private, and for nations to create value from employing novel ways of analysing complex data.

The digitalisation of African societies and economies is proceeding rapidly and we are preparing to exploit data for the benefit of its people. Innovation in all sectors of the African economy will benefit from statistical approaches. Topics covered in this strand were designed to focus on exploiting data for progress and development and propose methods and algorithms which allow understanding and predicting systems and processes.

An important subtheme was statistical education and training of new generations, to deliver statistical competence and capacity for progress.

### **2.1.8 Organisation**

The Scientific Programme Committee reviewed all proposals received and selected 133 papers for inclusion in the programme with a good spread across all themes for the conference. Alongside this the Local Organising Committee had arrangements in place with the venue and other local organisations and the conference was well-supported by sponsors.

### **2.1.9 Impact of Covid-19**

Following the advice of the Zambia Government, the conference, which was planned to take place 19-21 May 2020, was postponed and is now expected to take place at a later date.

The next IAOS conference will be in Krakow, Poland in April 2022.

## **2.2 Webinars**

As an alternative to the conference the IAOS has been active in running webinars.

### **1. Misuse of Statistics: Time to Speak Out**

The webinar took place on 6 October 2020 and attracted 269 attendees.

The webinar was chaired by John Pullinger, the keynote speaker was Ed Humperson, Director General, Office for Statistics Regulation, UK with panellists Martine Durand, Pali Lehohla, Andreas Georgiou and Hernan Munoz.

Watch the video recording [Misuse of Statistics - Time to Speak Out](#).

You can also have a look at the presentations:

- [John Pullinger](#)
- [Martine Durand](#)
- [Ed Humpherson](#)
- [Pali Lehohla](#)
- [Hernán Muñoz](#)
- [Andreas V Georgiou](#)

## 2. New World Order and Official Statistics in Africa

The webinar took place on 22 October 2020) and attracted 52 attendees.

The webinar was organised by Peter Popoola, chaired by John Pullinger with speakers Prof. O. E. Olubusoye, Dr Pieter Everaers, Dr Iyabode F. Oyenuga and Prof. D. A. Agunbiade.

Watch the video recording [New World Order and Official Statistics](#).

Read the papers:

- [Osuolale Peter Popoola, PhD \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Osuolale Peter Popoola, PhD](#)
- [Dr Iyabode F. Oyenuga](#)
- [Prof. O. E. Olubusoye](#)
- [Prof. D. A. Agunbiade](#)
- [Dr Pieter Everaers](#)

## 3. The Importance to Society of High Quality Public Statistics

The webinar took place on 5 November 2020 to celebrate World Statistics Day. It was organised jointly with IASS and attracted 131 attendees.

- The webinar was chaired by John Pullinger with keynote speakers Dr. Walter J. Radermacher and [Eric Rancourt](#)

Watch the video recording: [Joint IAOS-IASS Webinar to Celebrate World Statistics Day](#)

### 3.3.4. United Nations Statistical Commission Side Event

The webinar took place on 22 February 2021 as a follow up to the event held on 6 October 2020. It was intended to bring to the attention of the United Nations Statistical Commission the issues related to misuse of statistics. It attracted 283 attendees.

A number of related papers were published in the Statistical Journal of the IAOS alongside an open debate on the Journal's discussion platform.

The United Nations Statistical Commission was meeting during an unprecedented time for official statistics. The coronavirus pandemic had thrown into sharp focus the need for trustworthy information to guide decision making and enable citizens to understand issues



that affect their health and livelihoods. The impact of misuse of statistics or false statistics had also been apparent.

This event was a call to action at the national, regional and global level: where there is misuse of statistics it is time to speak out. The aim was to examine the issues raised from diverse perspectives and propose solutions to an issue that matters greatly to all members of the Statistical Commission and is relevant to many of the items on the agenda for the 52nd meeting.

The webinar was chaired by John Pullinger. Contributors were: Jennifer Saul, Waterloo Chair in Social and Political Philosophy of Language, Dr. Pronab Sen, Country Director, International Growth Centre's India Programme, and Editor, Indian Journal of National Income & Wealth, Kate Wilkinson, the deputy chief editor at Africa Check, Regina Ammicht Quinn, professor of ethics with the International Center of Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tuebingen and the executive director of the Centre. There were also interventions from Hernán Muñoz, the former National Director of Planning, Institutional and International Relations of the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC) of Argentina, Andreas V Georgiou, Visiting Lecturer and Visiting Scholar at Amherst College, USA, where he teaches courses on statistical ethics and institutions and on macroeconomic programming, Pali Lehohla, the former Statistician-General of South Africa, a position he held from 2000 up to 2017, Vincent F. Hendricks, Professor of Formal Philosophy at The University of Copenhagen, Ed Humpherson, head of the UK Office for Statistics Regulation and Martine Durand, OECD Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics and Data until end 2019

You can watch the [recording of this event](#).

You can read the papers:

- [Andreas Georgiou](#)
- [Regina Ammicht Quinn](#)
- [Jennifer Saul](#)
- [Martine Durand](#)

## **Chapter 3. Statistical Journal of the IAOS**

### **3.1 The content of the issues during 2020-2021**

During 2020 the SJIAOS published more than 155 manuscripts (articles, editorials and guest editorials) in four issues and a supplement, covering around 1400 pages. The March and June issue of Volume 37 (2021) will contain some 65 manuscripts. The manuscripts in Vol36 and the two issues in Vol37 (including articles and editorials), covered varied subjects, varying from articles on governance aspects of official statistics, the use and need for official statistics in policy making, pre-release, ethics and access to confidential data, the use of all sorts of new data sources, creating trusted smart statistics, on the Sustainable development Goal indicators, the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, and a variety of specific themes. Each issue was given a special theme, connected to the discussion item on the SJIAOS website discussion platform.

### **3.2 Volume 36, Issue 1, March 2020**

Special theme: Population and Housing census round 2020

This issue contains 27 articles, 25 scientific contributions and two guest editorials (by respectively the Guest editor for this issue, Jean-Michel Durr, (INSEE) and by Stefan Schweinfest, (UNSD) and a list of earlier in the Journal published articles concerning Population and Housing Censuses.

With countries all over the world already experiencing census field work for the 2020 Round and roughly a similar number still preparing, a Special issue of the Journal on this topic is indeed very timely. Studying the organisation, the methodologies and learning from the results of other censuses is for many countries an essential activity in preparing their own census methodology. This Special issue gives a broad and world wide overview of the many aspects of census taking. The length of the list, at the end of this issue, of articles published on this topic in this Journal since 1998 (Volumes 14-35) underlines the relevance of the Population Census discussions in the work of Official Statistics. For a more detailed introduction into the theme of this issue and the structure of the Journal, I can refer to the Guest Editorial by Jean-Michel Durr.

### **3.3 Volume 36, Issue 2, June 2020**

Special theme: The ISI World Statistics Conference 2019, Kuala Lumpur

The issue contains 32 articles. Thanks to strong efforts from several authors and flexibility by IOS Press, the issue starts with 4 very timely articles on Covid-19. The overall theme of the issue relates to the ISI 2019 WSC as many of the manuscripts are based on solicited papers from sessions from the 2019 ISI World Statistics Conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Following the contribution on the history of ISI (Jean-Louis Bodin) and on the IAOS Strategy 2019-2021 (John Pullinger), four articles (based on the ISI WSC session 235) illustrate the leading theme on 'Pre-release access to official statistics', also as topic for the fourth discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform. The issue contains furthermore a second set of manuscripts around the theme 'The future role of Official Statistics in the informational ecosystem' (Data4Policy (D4P)). Another set of manuscripts, on the boundaries and roles of

official statistics, is also based on the ISI WSC session. The rest of the issue contains 16 articles on a variety of topics like household income, employment, SDG,s, GDP calculations. Interesting to mention is that many former prominent Statisticians contributed to this issue.

### **3.4 Volume 36, Issue 3, September 2020**

Special theme: The Future of Economic and Business Statistics

The September 2020 issue (Vol 36 (2020) Nr. 3) is dedicated to the Future of Economic and Business statistics. Nineteen manuscripts, in total circa 50 authors have contributed on invitation of the Guest Editors Ivo Havinga (UNSD). An additional guest editorial is signed by Stefan Schweinfest (UNSD), Anil Arora (Statcan) and Ivo Havinga (UNSD).

The articles are for an important part based on the work of the Friends of the Chair Group (FoC Group) on Economic Statistics. This FoC Group was invited, already 12 months before the far-reaching consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic became apparent, by the Statistical Commission at its 50<sup>th</sup> session in 2019, to consider the future of economic statistics. The Statistical Commission in particular provided the mandate to the FoC Group to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the current system of economic statistics, take stock of the governance arrangements of existing statistical groups and statistical initiatives, and provide recommendations on the working methods and the update of the system of economic statistics. The challenges and lessons learned for business and economic statistics and especially also the lessons from the Covid-19 crisis, made clear that the future system of economic statistics becomes more relevant than ever, but at the same time needs to be more responsive and agile to meet the collective needs of users.

The publication of the Special Issue on the future of economic statistics became, with the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact, timelier than ever and shows the ways this set of statistics can be organized and guided by multi dimensional statistical frameworks and needs to be agile and responsive to user needs on the national, international and regional scale. It also shows how the outreach of this work can take place, via partnerships and cooperation and capacity building efforts.

### **3.5 Volume 36, Issue 4, December 2020**

Special themes: COVID-19 and Official Statistics & Asia-Pacific Statistics.

This fourth issue of Volume 36 of the Journal contains some 35 high quality articles from authors from all over the world. It starts with three articles on COVID-19. The huge impact of the pandemic is becoming more and more visible in almost all economic and social achievements of the last decennia in developed and developing countries. The first article details some of the key findings and reactions as described by the response to COVID-19 by the Chief Statisticians of the International Statistical System. In the second article the status of censuses of agriculture in 150 countries and territories is reviewed and in the third article it is shown how relevant and reliable statistical information about the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations is as a crucial weapon in effective public health system response.

The second section with 13 articles, gives a glance on the progress in the UN ESCAP (Asia Pacific) member countries in producing and disseminating official statistics. These manuscripts are based on papers from younger statisticians from the Asia-Pacific region as

presented during the Asia-Pacific statistics week. This section is followed by two more manuscripts in the series on the 'The future role of Official Statistics in the informational ecosystem'. (Data4 Policy as started in December 2019). The issue proceeds with two of the four award winning manuscripts from the IAOS Young Statisticians Prize 2020 (YSP 2020) and a variety of manuscripts on main Developments in the governance of Official Statistics, Sustainable development Goals, Population Census and Income and wealth statistics, Health statistics, Financial accounts, Statistical techniques and methodology and Statistical disclosure control.

### **3.6 Volume 36, Supplement to Volume 36, December 2020**

Special theme: Official Statistics in Africa

This issue with 15 articles, prepared by authors from the African region and mainly stemming from papers originally planned for the joint IAOS/regional ISI conference in Zambia. The articles cover a wider variety on topics, ranging from describing the training in statistics in universities and schools, work on SDG's poverty and for example specific agricultural statistics.

In the Guest Editorial, Oliver Chinganya elaborates on the context of Official Statistics in Africa, showing both the current situation, the results and successes but also the challenges of implementing new developments in governance, methodologies and data sources for statistical systems in the African region. The issue also contains a tribute to Charles Lufumpa who will, after a three decades career as Director of Statistics at the African Development Bank (AfDB), soon retire. In this position Charles Lufumpa has been playing a crucial role in the development of official statistics in Africa. The tribute has been prepared by Misha Belkindas and contains an interview with Charles Lufumpa but also a set of statements from his former colleagues and friends in African statistics.

This special could be realized thanks to the support by a guest editorial team: Ben Kiregyera (Uganda), Hugues Kouadio (Ivory Coast), Badia Ettaki (Morocco), Gary Dunnet (New Zealand) and James Whitworth (UK/Greece) for their excellent cooperation. Of course a word of thanks goes also to the authors for their excellent work and to IOS Press for facilitating and publishing this extra issue as supplement to Volume 36 of the Journal.

### **3.7 Volume 37, Issue 1, March 2021**

Special theme: Misuse of statistics

The March 2021 issue (Vol37/1) issue contains 6 manuscripts on the impact of Covid-19 on our societies, specific population groups and the production of statistics. The main theme of the issue is 'Misuse in statistics' with articles based on the United Nations Statistical Commission Side Event on Misuse of Statistics. Three articles, one commentary and one interview deal with this topic and also featured as sources for the statements for the seventh discussion on the discussion platform. Two remaining manuscripts from the YSP 2020 were followed by three manuscripts on governance aspects, two of these respectively on 'Open Data' and 'Bog data sources mapped to the fundamental principles' have a documentary role. Four sections follow, Governance by the numbers (5 articles), Nowcasting (4 articles), Agricultural statistics (2 articles) and Quality (3 articles). The issue closed with 4 articles on other themes.

### **3.8 Volume 37, Issue 2, June 2021**

Special theme: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Official Statistics – Assessing Compliance with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The June issue (Vol37/2) is a regular number with a great variety in themes covered. It contains five manuscripts on Covid-19, one article on Governance in Official Statistics and one contribution on Governing by the numbers (D4P). The article on Governance in Official Statistics focuses on assessing compliance with the United Nations Fundamental principles of Official Statistics via a Maturity Model for Continuous Improvement, is also the background for the 8<sup>th</sup> discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform. Further, this issue contain two articles on Agricultural statistics, two on Quality in statistics and 8 articles on a variety of topics.

### **3.9 The SJIAOS Website**

The SJIAOS website was launched in August 2019. The site covers the discussion platform and news, a calendar and a link to the on-line version of the Journal. The SJIAOS discussion platform has had nine discussions (two in 2019, six in 2020 and one in 2021). There have been six regular and two special discussions on COVID-19 and its impact. The discussion on COVID-19 and the discussion on the Population and Housing Census were very lively. To generate extra attention for the Statistical Journal in the next months a more detailed analysis well be done to find ways to improve the accessibility for the audience to participate actively in the discussions.

## Chapter 4. Young Statisticians Prize

### 4.1 2020 prize winners

The IAOS places great importance on fostering the development of effective and efficient official statistical services and pays particular attention to nurturing young official statisticians to speak up. In this regard, the Young Statistician Prize celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and continues to be a centrepiece of our offerings.

Established in 2011, the international prize is designed to encourage more young statisticians to take an active interest in official statistics. The prize is awarded for the best paper in the field of official statistics written by a young statistician and authors are encouraged to address and propose solutions to pressing methodological or strategic issues in the area of official statistics at the regional, national or international levels. In 2020 and 2021, issues chosen by young statisticians included data access, use of the R package, big data, differential privacy, COVID-19, machine learning, model-based estimation and forecasting methodologies.

Ms. Kenza Sallier was the first prize winner of the 2020 Young Statistician Prize with her paper on *Toward More User-Centric Data Access Solutions: Producing Synthetic Data of High Analytical Value by Data Synthesis*. Ms. Sallier's paper was the first winning submission from Canada in the eleven-year history of the Prize. She was joined by first-time winners from Statistics Austria, Mr. Joannes Gussenbauer and Mr. Gregor de Cillia for their paper on *The R-Package surveysd: Estimating standard errors for Complex Surveys with a Rotating Panel Design*. Mr. James Bailie from the Australian Bureau of Statistics received third place for his paper on *Big Data, Differential Privacy and National Statistical Organisations*.

The prize was expanded in 2020 to include a new category of special commendation for a paper from a developing nation. This expansion recognised the focus of the IAOS on fostering development of official statistics, particularly in developing nations. Mr Madi Mangan from The Gambia Bureau of Statistics was the inaugural winner of the special commendation prize for his paper, *Household Consumption Allocation and the Collective Household Model: Children Share of Household Resources in The Gambia*.

The Prize includes the opportunity to present the winning paper in person at an international conference but unfortunately due to COVID-19, Ms. Sallier has been unable to take up this opportunity. Nevertheless, a special event was organised by the UK Office of National Statistics in 2020 for Ms. Sallier to present her paper and share her experiences with the IAOS Young Statistician Prize.

### 4.2 2021 prize winners

Young statisticians from Statistics Canada again took out first place in 2021. Ms. Elham Sirag and Mr. Gautier Gissler won first prize with their paper on *Estimating excess mortality in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic: Statistical methods adapted for rapid response in an evolving crisis*.

The 2021 Prize also delivered several other firsts: the first winning submissions from authors from the Netherlands, Brazil and Indonesia. Mr. Kevin Kloos of Statistics Netherlands won second place with his paper on *A new generic method to improve machine learning*

*applications in official statistics* and Mr Caio Gonçalves (João Pinheiro Foundation) and Ms. Luna Hidalgo (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)) won third place for their paper *Model-based single-month unemployment rate estimates for the Brazilian Labour Force Survey*. Mr. Muhammad Fajar and Mr. Zelani Nurfalah of Badan Pusat Statistik – Statistics Indonesia received a special commendation for their paper *Hybrid Fourier Regression-Multilayer Perceptron Neural Network for Forecasting*.

To celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the Young Statistician Prize and in conjunction with the ISI Women in Statistics initiative, an Invited Paper Session at the 2021 World Statistics Congress will feature female prize winners sharing their thoughts on what the Prize means to them and what they are doing now in their careers. We are pleased to also have Ms. Mariana Kotzeva, Director-General of Eurostat, join the session as a distinguished female leader in official statistics.

We congratulate all winners, past and present, and thank all authors for participating in the IAOS Young Statistician Prize. The Prize would not be such a success without the commitment of supervisors and institutions to nurturing young official statisticians. The Prize is also extremely grateful to the international judging panel who freely give their time and commitment. Together, the IAOS and the global statistical community are fostering talent, especially in developing nations, for our future success.

## Chapter 5. Standing Committee on Regional and Urban Statistics

To support the 2019-2021 IAOS Strategy SCORUS was planning its biannual conference in June 2020, which had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, SCORUS organised three webinars jointly with Eurostat in 2020 under the theme “Regional and Local statistics for more informed policy making”. The webinars addressing the following topics and questions:

### European City statistics in Europe and beyond

- Production of city level statistics with focus on demography
- Dissemination and visualization of municipality level data with easy and intuitive tools
- Using open source geospatial tools to measure accessibility of public services

### Regional and local statistics in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

- How regional, local and geospatial statistics can help policy makers to take better decisions
- How to measure the differential territorial impact of COVID-19
- What are the effects of the pandemic on regional and local statistics
- Sharing experiences and plans related to the COVID-19

### Communication of regional and local level statistics

- How to make regional statistics relevant and usable for all stakeholders
- Sharing experience on how to communicate regional and local statistics
- Statistical maps – best practices

Documentation related to the webinars is available [here](#).

### Promoting the use of harmonised territorial classification for the production of official statistics

Following up on the outcomes of previous conferences, SCORUS has for many years promoted the use of harmonised territorial classifications for the production of official statistics. A coalition of several international organisations, the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UN-Habitat and the World Bank, has developed two harmonized definitions of cities and rural areas: the *Degree of Urbanisation* and the *Functional Urban Area* definitions. These definitions are not intended to replace national definitions, but to complement them to facilitate international comparisons and support monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. SCORUS welcomed this work and promoted it for endorsement at several fora. This work has now been endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, with the Degree of Urbanisation becoming a recommended method to delineate cities, urban and rural areas for international statistical comparisons. In 2021 the [Methodological manual](#) helping to apply the method has been produced.

The **SCORUS website** is available under [www.scorus.org](http://www.scorus.org). The content of the website will be moved in the near future since the host organisation cannot maintain it any longer. SCORUS is grateful for the work done in the last year by Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia and the



support received in previous years and looking forward to the cooperation with Statistics Poland in this matter.

SCORUS also maintains a **LinkedIn group** to gather people interested in SCORUS matters.

## **Management**

### **SCORUS Management:**

*Chair:* Teodora Brandmueller, e-mail: [teodora.brandmueller@ec.europa.eu](mailto:teodora.brandmueller@ec.europa.eu)

*Vice chair* Jagdev Singh Virdee, email: [jsvirdee@hotmail.com](mailto:jsvirdee@hotmail.com)

*Secretary:* Wendy Thomas, e-mail: [wlt@umn.edu](mailto:wlt@umn.edu)

*Members:* Dominika Rogalinska, e-mail: [D.Rogalinska@stat.gov.pl](mailto:D.Rogalinska@stat.gov.pl)

Ari Jaakola, email: [ari.jaakola@hel.fi](mailto:ari.jaakola@hel.fi)

Stephen KC Leung, e-mail: [kceliza@netvigator.com](mailto:kceliza@netvigator.com)





## **Annex 1. IAOS Executive Committee 2019 – 2021**

President – Mr John Pullinger – United Kingdom

President-Elect – Mr Misha Belkindas – United States of America

### *Regional representatives:*

Ms Gemma Van Halderen – Oceania

Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin – East Asia

Ms Hasnae Fdhil – Arab and Middle East Countries

Rev. Peter Popoola - Africa

### *Other members:*

Ms Ada Van Krimpen – Director ISI, Ex officio

Mr Pieter Everaers – Editor-in-chief, SJIAOS

Mr Jan-Robert Suesser – Europe, IAOS representative to the ISI WSC

Ms Teodora Brandmueller – SCORUS Chair

Ms Nancy McBeth – Special advisor to the President

Mr Rolando Ocampo – Latin America and the Caribbean

Ms Ariunzaya Ayush – Conference advisor for Zambia 2020

### *Special invitees:*

Mr Oliver Chinganya – Chair of the SPC for the 2020 Zambia conference

Mr Ronald Jansen – UNSD

Mr Kees Zeelenberg – Chair of the SPC for IAOS-OECD 2018

## Annex 2. President's Messages

### A2.1 April 2020

This is a great time of challenge for everyone, demonstrating just how connected we are across the world both in our vulnerability and in our strength.

The first priority at such a time is to keep safe and to continue to support our colleagues and their families. Despite the inability to travel, I have seen an upsurge in contact between IAOS members. Many are extremely busy in high pressure situations providing the evidence necessary for their governments and communities to make good decisions in the face of uncertainty and high risk to life as well as economic and social upheaval. The breadth and depth of our support network will be of critical importance in the weeks and months ahead.

A wide range of resources has been developed for use by official statisticians. The UN resource ([covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/](https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/)) provides a good way in to explore what is available alongside regional and local hubs such as the Africa UN knowledge hub for Covid-19 ([knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/](https://knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/)) and professional gateways such as the one developed by the ISI ([www.isi-web.org/index.php/covid-19](http://www.isi-web.org/index.php/covid-19)) . A very challenging issue for many countries is how to proceed with census plans ([unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/COVID-19/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/COVID-19/)).

Whilst in some countries official statisticians are in high demand and actively engaged in supporting their governments (such as New Zealand and UK) in others the NSI is shut and there is a risk of gaps in critical data (such as CPI) as the crisis develops. The position in parts of Africa is especially difficult.

As far as the activities of the IAOS are concerned, despite the postponement of the Zambia conference ([iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/265-2020-iaos-isi-conference-in-zambia-postponed](https://iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/265-2020-iaos-isi-conference-in-zambia-postponed)), we are proceeding with a special Africa issue of the Journal. The June issue will highlight the statistical response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have also started a discussion on official statistics in the context of the Covid-19 crisis ([officialstatistics.com/news-blog/crises-politics-and-statistics](https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/crises-politics-and-statistics)). This discussion will help us gather ideas about the wider implications for official statistics in terms of the statistical service needed, use of emerging data sources and coordination at the international level. Encouragement for our community to step up has come from the United Nations Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed in her address to the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data Board ([www.data4sdgs.org/news/un-deputy-secretary-general-participates-data4sdgs-meeting-board](https://www.data4sdgs.org/news/un-deputy-secretary-general-participates-data4sdgs-meeting-board)).

Since my last message we have been able to continue our activities in one way or another. Our strategy for 2019-21 was agreed and published following consultation ([iaos-isi.org/index.php/about-us/strategy](https://iaos-isi.org/index.php/about-us/strategy)); a moving tribute to Jorge Todesca, former Chief Statistician of Argentina, who died in February, was written by our founding President, Jean-Louis Bodin ([iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/266-in-memoriam-dr-jorge-todesca](https://iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/266-in-memoriam-dr-jorge-todesca)); and many IAOS members attended the United Nations Statistical Commission (one of the last meetings to take place before so many of us have been locked down). Former IAOS President, Shigeru Kawasaki was elected as Chair ([unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/bureau/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/bureau/)) and did a great job steering the meeting through a long and complex agenda. In addition, I had the

opportunity in January to join Prof Samuel Annim and his team for the launch of the Ghana Statistical Service corporate plan([statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/storage/img/GSS\\_Corporate Plan 2020\\_2024.pdf](https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/storage/img/GSS_Corporate_Plan_2020_2024.pdf))

IAOS friends will also be interested to see the attached report published on 20 March by the US State Department on human rights practices for Greece ([www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/](https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/)) which helpfully highlights the still ongoing case of Andreas Georgiou in the section related to respect for the integrity of the person: denial of fair public trial. The American Statistical Association has also once again drawn attention to the continuing concerns about his case ([www.amstat.org/ASA/News/Appeal-Hearing-Delayed-for-Greeces-Andreas-Georgiou.aspx](https://www.amstat.org/ASA/News/Appeal-Hearing-Delayed-for-Greeces-Andreas-Georgiou.aspx)).

We had hoped to showcase our Young Statisticians Prize winners at the Zambia conference. Along with so many other things, that opportunity is now delayed but I would like to take this opportunity to announce who they are and be the first to offer congratulations to the prize winners:

1. Kenza Sallier (StatCan): *Toward More User-Centric Data Access Solutions: Producing Synthetic Data of High Analytical Value by Data Synthesis*
2. Johannes Gussenbauer and Mr. Gregor de Cillia (Statistik Austria): *The R-Package surveysd: Estimating standard errors for Complex Surveys with a Rotating Panel Design*
3. James Bailie (Australian Bureau of Statistics): *Big Data, Differential Privacy and National Statistical Organisations*

Also, congratulations to the winner of the special commendation for a paper from a developing nation:

- Madi Mangan (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics): *Household Consumption Allocation and the Collective Household Model: Children Share of Household Resources in The Gambia*

Finally, a big Happy Birthday to Florence Nightingale who remains, 200 years since her birth, such an inspiration to all who work in nursing and in statistics.

The IAOS Annual report for 2018-19 is available [here](#). The report will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting which will be scheduled once the position with Covid-19 is clearer. In the meantime, if you have comments on it please email them to [contactiaos@gmail.com](mailto:contactiaos@gmail.com).

John Pullinger

## **A2.2 August 2020**

This has been a year when everyone has been talking about statistics. Alongside the fear and tragedy of the global COVID-19 pandemic, people are looking to statistics for guidance on the things that matter to them. How safe is it for me go out? What are my future prospects for employment? What are the impacts on different communities? How will we pay back the debts our governments are running up?

Issues that have always been central to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are now being debated in locked down virtual forums across the world. How can we mobilise the power of data to help make better decisions? How do we judge which data is trustworthy and which is being produced to hoodwink us into accepting a false picture, deflect our attention or make us believe in the world view of some vested interest?

The IAOS has been active in airing these issues in recent months and has highlighted many examples, good and bad, from which we can learn. The [June issue of our Journal](#) has some excellent papers on COVID-19, on pre-release access and other questions related to trust in statistics and much more. The Journal provides a great platform for sharing and learning. The current issue has seen record levels of interest from readers. The Editor is always on the look out for good material. If you have something you wish to submit, I encourage you to do so.

In the meetings I have been part of, ranging from [Asia-Pacific Statistics Week conference](#) to MIT's [Computational Social Science for Impact](#) the mood has been the same: how can statistics make a difference and help us navigate towards a better future? In my presentations I have drawn inspiration from the past: from Florence Nightingale and W Edwards Deming in particular.

At the same time, we must be on the look out for situations when the cause of good statistics has been frustrated by the proliferation of bad information or by roadblocks placed in the way of getting good information. Recent developments with the United States Census, as [highlighted by the American Statistical Association](#), need to be seen for what they are. Undermining an accurate census undermines democracy and people's right to good information about the society in which they live. The theme developing from the COVID-19 pandemic that [trustworthy statistics are a human right](#) is striking a chord amongst people with widely different political views. Without trustworthy data how can different perspectives be demonstrated and judged? [Trusted statistics help us make better decisions and live better lives](#) .

From the evidence I have seen from around the world these last few months, I remain optimistic. There are political leaders who appreciate the value of good statistical evidence to help their countries make better decisions. There is a community of official statisticians ready to step up, step forward and step on the gas to rise to the challenge. With statistically savvy politicians and politically savvy statisticians, we will be able to chart a course for better lives, whatever COVID-19 and all the other complexities of the world today throw up.

The IAOS General Assembly is next week. At the General Assembly, we will give an update on the 2020 IAOS conference, and also officially launch the 2021 Young Statistician Prize. Both of these activities are key ways of building the community of official statisticians. [Please join us](#) to have your say on the work of our Association.

John Pullinger

## **A2.3 September 2020**

### ***Nominations for IAOS Executive Committee***

I am pleased to inform you that the Nominating Committee for the IAOS Executive Committee members (2021-23) has been set up with Mario Palma as Chair and Ola Awad, Oliver Chinganya, Angela Me and Shigeru Kawasaki as members. The duty of the Nominating Committee is to make nominations for the posts of President Elect and four executive members for the next term under the Presidency of Mr. Misha Belkindas.

The Executive Committee is the main leadership group for the IAOS. I have been fortunate during my term as President to be supported by a talented, committed and diverse group of colleagues. Please think hard about individuals who could make a valuable contribution to serve the IAOS in this way. The task is important but not necessarily onerous: the Executive Committee meets only a few times a year. For those who can get more deeply involved there are also plenty of opportunities through our conferences and webinars, journal, the Young Statisticians prize and other activities.

You are invited to make nominations (including self-nominations) for the IAOS Executive Committee by 20 November. Submissions should contain the CV and contact details of the proposed candidates and should be sent to [contactiaos@gmail.com](mailto:contactiaos@gmail.com).

### ***Upcoming Webinar - MISUSE OF STATISTICS: TIME TO SPEAK OUT -- Tuesday 6th October 2020, 14.00-16.00 CET***

This webinar focuses on Fundamental Principle 4: Prevention of misuse, which states that the statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics. It features leading figures in the statistical world with direct personal experiences of applying Principle 4 (Ed Humpherson, Martine Durand, Pali Lehohla, Andreas Georgiou and Hernan Munoz). There will be time for open discussion and reflection on future actions. Registration is open at [www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/278-misuse-of-statistics-time-to-speak-out](http://www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/278-misuse-of-statistics-time-to-speak-out).

### ***2021 IAOS Young Statisticians Prize is now open.***

The Prize is awarded for the best paper in the field of official statistics written by a young statistician.

In addition to monetary prizes, the first-place winner will receive travel funds to present the paper at an international conference. Due to COVID-19, details of the conference will be decided in conjunction with the winner and may include the rescheduled IAOS 2020 Conference or a 2021 ISI World Statistics Congress Satellite Conference in memory of Fred Smith and Chris Skinner being held in Southampton, UK, 8-10 July 2021.

You can find the relevant information in all UN official languages [here](#). I would appreciate it if you would share information about the competition in your office and the wider National Statistical System in your country. More information is available at <http://www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/latestnews/277-2021-iaos-young-statisticians-prize> The closing date is 12 February 2021.



## ***Zambia IAOS 2020 Conference - Better Lives 2030: mobilising the power of data for Africa and the world***

This conference was previously planned for May 2020. It is now expected that the conference will be held in September 2021 in Livingstone, Zambia. Updates will be posted at [www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/conferences](http://www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/conferences)

### ***The new world order and official statistics in Africa***

A webinar on this topic is scheduled for 22 October 2020. More information is available on the [website here](#) and [registration is now open via this link](#).

### ***SJIAOS***

The [September issue](#) has a special theme on The Future of Economic and Business Statistics, building on the work of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics, commissioned by the UN Statistical Commission. This issue will also set the scene for the fifth discussion on the Official Statistics discussion platform - [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com). The [June issue](#) contains articles from some of the sessions at the [ISI World Statistics Conference 2019](#), including articles on pre-release access of official statistics which formed the basis for [the fourth discussion on the Official Statistics discussion platform](#) [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com). This issue is open access. Our thanks to IOS Press for their support.

The Official Statistics platform -[www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com) is proving to be an important place for all parts of the official statistics community to discuss current issues. The discussion on [“Pre-release access to official statistics”](#), has been very active and I encourage everyone to take part in this and other discussions.

Finally, thanks to those that were able to attend the virtual General Assembly in late August. The minutes of that meeting are [available here](#).

John Pullinger

## **A2.4 November 2020**

In this latest newsletter, we cover upcoming deadlines for IAOS activities, highlights of the recent IAOS webinars, key decisions made in the recent IAOS Executive committee meeting, and an update on the SJIAOS.

### **Upcoming deadlines**

#### **Nominations for the 2021-2023 IAOS Executive – close 20 November**

The Nominations Committee chaired by Mario Palma is still seeking nominations for the 2021-2023 Executive, which will be led by President Elect Misha Belkindas. Submissions should contain the CV and contact details of the proposed candidates and be sent to [contactiaos@gmail.com](mailto:contactiaos@gmail.com) by 20 November.

#### **2021 World Statistical Congress –Invited Paper Session Proposals close 30 November 2020**

The 63rd ISI World Statistical Congress 2021 will be a virtual event, to be held from 11 - 16 July 2021. Proposals close on 30 November 2020, through the submission system -

see <https://www.isi2021.org/>. Contact Jan Robert Suesser, IAOS representative on the Programme Committee for more information too ([jrsues@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jrsues@wanadoo.fr))

## **YSP 2021**

Reminder that submissions close on 12 February 2021. See <http://www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/statistics-prize> Remember too that mentoring younger colleagues can also be a great way to help contribute.

## **Recent IAOS Webinars**

Since early October, IAOS has coordinated a range of webinars, which despite the busy international webinar agenda have enjoyed active support. These have included:

IAOS and IASS Joint webinar to celebrate World Statistics Day: On the importance to Society of High Quality Public Statistics - 5 November 2020

Eurostat and SCORUS: Regional and local statistics for more informed policy making - 26 - 27 October 2020

New World Order and Official Statistics in Nigeria - 22 October 2020

Misuse of Statistics: Time to Speak Out - 6 October 2020

Our thanks again to speakers and attendees. Presentations and links to the Video Recordings are at <http://www.iaos-isi.org/index.php/webinars>

Proposals welcome for future webinars

Do you have an idea for a webinar related to current issues in official statistics? IAOS, with the support of the ISI Head Office are looking for ideas for webinars in early 2021. Please send suggestions, including possible speakers to [ContactIAOS@gmail.com](mailto:ContactIAOS@gmail.com)

## **Key decisions made by the Executive Committee**

### **Zambia 2020 Conference**

The Executive confirmed the importance of holding the Zambia 2020 conference, as soon as practical. The Executive, in conjunction with the ISI and the Zambia Statistics office, expect to make a decision in early 2021.

### **Follow up on Misuse of statistics webinar**

The Executive is actively looking at ways to progress many of the fundamental issues discussed in the Misuse of statistics webinar. This will include articles in the March 2021 issue of the SJIAOS, as well as another webinar. If you want to contribute, or have ideas on how the IAOS can progress this work, contact John Pullinger at [ContactIAOS@gmail.com](mailto:ContactIAOS@gmail.com). Possible contributions to the SJIAOS on this topic should be sent to the SJIAOS editor at [pevssjiaos@gmail.com](mailto:pevssjiaos@gmail.com)

### **Membership – and outstanding Membership fees**

The Executive reviewed the latest report from the ISI Head Office on membership. While membership numbers are up slightly since the previous year although a number of people have not yet paid their membership fees for 2020. If this applies to you, renew asap.

Remember our membership fees are key to many of our activities including the YSP, running of webinars, planning and preparation for conferences.

### **Upcoming SJIAOS issues**

#### **December 2020, Volume 36, Issue 4.**

The issue includes articles on Covid-19, in particular the impact on official statistics production. In parallel there is a discussion on this item on the Official Statistics discussion platform ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) Other articles in the December issue include a section with 13 papers from younger official statisticians from the Asia-Pacific Statistics week, a section on 'Governing by the numbers (Data4Policy)', along with three of the winning manuscripts from the 2020 YSP. Beyond these, some 15 more articles deal with a variety of topics. This issue also includes an article closing the first discussion ("*You say you want a [data] Revolution*") of the Official Statistics discussion platform.

#### **Supplement to Volume 36: Extra issue in 2020 "Official statistics in Africa"**

While the 2020 Zambia conference has been delayed, it was decided to go ahead with an extra issue of the Journal to not lose the momentum of the extra attention on statistics in Africa. This extra issue contains around 15 manuscripts from the African region. These will be pre-published (on-line) on the Journal's website and it is expected that the paper issue of the supplement of the Vol 36 of the Journal will also be available at the end of the 4th quarter of 2020.

#### **Call for Papers for future SJIAOS issues**

The SJIAOS welcomes papers for future issues. If you have a possible paper, or even an idea for a paper, contact Pieter Everaers, the SJIAOS editor at [pevssjiaos@gmail.com](mailto:pevssjiaos@gmail.com).

#### **SJIAOS Website Discussion Platform - [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com).**

Remember that the Discussion platform is the ideal venue to discuss and debate many of the current issues in official statistics. Discussions are based on statements from key papers in the SJIAOS. In June a discussion on 'Pre-release access to official statistics is not consistent with professional ethics' was launched. This was followed in September by two discussions - Crises, politics and statistics: Official statistics in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and a discussion on The Future of economic statistics.

The December issue of the SJIAOS will also launch a discussion on Successes and challenges of regional cooperation and capacity building in Statistics: the example of the Asia-Pacific region

**John Pullinger**