



International Association for Official Statistics

2022 General Assembly Meeting

Thursday 28th April 2022, 08:00 - 09:00 (CEST)

Format: Hybrid meeting

Apologies: Denise Britz do Nascimento Silva, Jan Robert Suesser

Introduction:

Misha Belkindas, IAOS President, welcomed participants to the IAOS General Assembly (GA).

Item 1: Minutes of the 2021 General Assembly meeting

No comments or objections were raised on the minutes of the 2021 General Assembly and so they were agreed.

Item 2: Review of 2021-2022 activities

Misha outlined a list of 2021-2022 activities, that includes webinars, IAOS membership, Statistical Journal of the IAOS (SJIAOS), Young Statistician Prize (YSP), Standing Committee on Regional and Urban Statistics (SCORUS), 17th and 18th IAOS conferences, and 64th International Statistical Institute (ISI) World Statistics Congress to be held in Ottawa, Canada, in 2023.

He noted that the IAOS had several successful webinars conducted during the reporting period. A brief description of each webinar was included in Misha's presentation. He also informed of an upcoming webinar "Building strong Integrated National Data Systems to transform people's lives" organized in collaboration with the World Bank in mid-June 2022.

Misha updated the GA on the progress of IAOS activities aimed to increase membership in the IAOS. He emphasized that in 2021 – earlier 2022, 187 new members joined the IAOS. This number also includes 12 former members, which the IAOS could reinstate. He also noted that the number of personal members has increased from 408 members in 2020 to 592 members as of early 2022. Misha added that the IAOS has free membership for SJIAOS authors. As of early 2022, there have been 45 IAOS members among SJIAOS authors and in 2021 – the IAOS membership included 99 SJIAOS authors.

SJIAOS

Pieter Everaers, SJIAOS Editor-in-Chief, provided some SJIAOS-related statistics for 2020-2021, including the number of published articles, authors (with a breakdown by experience in the SJIAOS and geographical regions), downloads, SJIAOS website visits and discussion platform statistics. 105 articles were published in 2021. Pieter noted the tendency to have more authors per article in 2021 compared to 2020 (270 authors in 2021 vs. 230 authors in 2020). Visits to the SJIAOS have increased from 48,000 in 2020 to 70,000 with 7,000 downloads in 2021 (the total number of SJIAOS content

downloads for 2016-2020 is 51,000). Also, SJIAOS articles were cited more often in 2021. The number of [SJIAOS website](#) visits (page views) has increased from 32,000 in 2020 to 50,000 in 2021. 17,000 visits were registered at the SJIAOS discussion platform in 2021. While Pieter noted that all the figures show a positive trend, he also mentioned a few exceptions, including the decrease in the number of authors from non-core regions (e.g., non-OECD type of countries). The number of these authors has decreased from 38 authors in 2020 to 21 in 2021. He explained that 2020 was an exceptional year, which included an issue on African statistics with contributions from African statisticians only. There was also a section on the Asia Pacific statistics. Such special issues were not published in 2021. However, comparing to previous years (2019 and years before) the SJIAOS is more integrative and more inclusive, including in terms of contributions from other parts of the world.

Pieter described main themes covered by the SJIAOS in 2021 and early 2022 as well as planned to be covered in the coming months. He also noted that one of the themes (on new developments and training) was open access. Pieter clarified that there is always one complete SJIAOS issue, which is open access based on sponsorship by iOS Press. He also added that thanks to support of the iOS Press all issues had free access to articles dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on official statistics.

Furthermore, Pieter provided information on the content of website discussions, most of which follow main themes of the journal. He noted that in 2022 the focus is on large international projects, including the 50x3000 initiative. The main question is whether these type of large projects are more efficient and more effective than smaller projects. He noted that the 50x3000 initiative project is the largest capacity building project there has ever been, even bigger than the earlier International Comparison Program (ICP) projects. Pieter informed the GA that in June 2022 discussions will focus on positive and negative aspects of standardization in official statistics. He provided a brief background behind this theme. Pieter also noted that there will be a special discussion following the 2022 IAOS conference, which will focus on fostering integrity and trust in the evolving data ecosystem. This theme is based on the work of the reflection group, which will be discussed later, and it follows more or less the discussions on the misuse and trust in statistics.

Pieter also provided information on the workshop organized by the SJIAOS. He shared about the new Manuscript Tracking System. This system has more advanced functionality, for instance, it includes a plagiarism detection function. Pieter expects that by the time the September-December issue of the SJIAOS is out, the new Manuscript Tracking System will be more or less fully in use.

Pieter informed of the changes in the list of emphasis editors, including four emphasis editors resigned and five new editors welcomed. In total there are about 40 emphasis editors working with the SJIAOS. Pieter thanked all the emphasis editors and reviewers for their great efforts and the work done.

Pieter also reminded of the SJIAOS Advisory Board chaired by Steve MacFeely, which gives the SJIAOS Editor-in-Chief some support in deciding on very controversial and difficult issues.

Finally, Pieter briefly discussed SJIAOS plans for 2023 to stay at the forefront, which are tied with the interest in all innovative specialized themes. He mentioned that the 2022 IAOS conference has resulted in 12 commitments for manuscripts. Pieter added that he is keen to stimulate open data and fair publishing, which means improved availability of data and metadata to authors. Pieter also noted the SJIAOS focus to increase authorship and readership beyond traditional core regions.

Misha added that the IAOS advertised the position of the SJIAOS Editor-in-Chief. Pieter Everaers is completing his tenure in July 2023 during the ISI Congress. A few good candidates applied for the position. An interview committee was set up comprising several IAOS Executive Committee (ExCo) members. The interview committee will start working on the selection process in early May 2022.

Young Statisticians Prize

Next, Gemma Van Halderen, YSP Focal Point, gave an update on the progress of the Young Statisticians Prize activity over the past two years. She reminded that the YSP is an international prize encouraging young statisticians to take an active interest in official statistics. She emphasized that it is one of IAOS key ways encouraging statisticians to take an active interest in official statistics.

The prize is awarded for the best papers in the field of official statistics written by young statisticians and there are three prizes for the first and second prize, and a new prize introduced for developing countries. Young statisticians are considered those 35 years old and under. Gemma added that it is a very inclusive process for everybody involved in the industry.

An international selection panel is set up to review submissions for the YSP each year. The selection panel scores submissions based on four criteria, including (i) scientific and/or strategic merit, (ii) originality, (iii) applicability of the ideas in the practice of statistical organisations, and (iv) quality of exposition. She clarified that the originality may mean the originality in the context of particular country because statistical systems and official statistics have varying degrees of maturity across the globe. In terms of quality of exposition, she added that the YSP has been working very closely with the SJIAOS to improve writing skills of young statisticians.

Gemma provided statistics of 2022 YSP submissions. In 2022, 33 submissions from 43 authors (19 male and 24 female authors) from Asia, Americas, Europe, Africa and Oceania regions were received for the prize. 20 submissions are from developed nations and 13 submissions are from developing nations. Gemma added that it was particularly pleasing to see the huge interest from young statisticians in Africa -- 18 submissions for the YSP were from Tanzania, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Egypt, Morocco, and Zimbabwe.

Gemma noted that the number of submissions in 2022 was high compared to the previous year when only around 18-19 submissions were received. She thanked the global statistical community involved in YSP outreach activities for promoting the prize and helping maintain interest in the YSP.

Gemma shared a broad timeframe for review of the YSP submissions. She concluded that winners are expected to be announced in June 2022.

Gemma's final remarks on the YSP included the following points: (i) 2020 and 2021 first place winners have not been able to take up the travel part of their prize due to COVID-19. The IAOS team is in regular contact with winners and identifying opportunities, which may include an ISI conference in Canada in July 2023, etc., (ii) Quality of expositions remains an issue. She reiterated that the team worked with the Editor-in-Chief of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS to contribute writing tips to the 'writing journal submissions' workshop, and (iii) The IAOS saw a bounce back in 2022 on the number of submissions. Gemma expressed gratitude to all IAOS members who promoted the prize and mentored young statisticians to make a submission.

Misha added that opportunities to travel to present a winning paper at one of the conferences also include the next IAOS conference to be organized in Livingstone, Zambia, in 2023.

SCORUS

Teodora Brandmueller, SCORUS Chair, gave an update on SCORUS activities. SCORUS is a standing committee/subcommittee of the IAOS. Its main profile is to reach out to regional, urban and local statisticians and engage them in the work of the IAOS. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the past two years the main focus of the SCORUS had been organization of webinars. Teodora briefly discussed the topics covered by the webinars. On average, each webinar was attended by 80 participants. SCORUS also contributed to the IAOS and ISI conferences. SCORUS was also part of the project to support new methodologies, and new classifications at an international level in urban and rural areas. This project was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2020. A paper covering this work is also expected to be published in the SJIAOS.

Teodora noted that the SCORUS Statute dated 2005 was renewed in 2021. The Statute was approved by the IAOS ExCo. A GA was also organized in July 2021.

For those interested in the SCORUS work, Teodora shared communication channels used by the SCORUS.

17th IAOS conference in Zambia

On behalf of Zamstat colleagues, who were not able to attend the conference due to visa issues, Oliver Chinganya, Programme Chair of the IAOS 2023 conference in Zambia, provided an update on the IAOS conference to be held in Livingstone, Zambia. The conference was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New dates for the conference put forward by the Government of Zambia are April 4-6, 2023. The conference will be held in Livingstone, Zambia. Oliver noted that the theme of the conference will, most likely, be revised as the earlier confirmed theme was identified before the COVID-19 outbreak. The venue for the conference remains the same, it is the Avani Hotel in Livingstone, Zambia.

Oliver added that the Zambian team is revamping all the committees in preparation of the conference. The Scientific Programme Committee (SPC) will also be reconstituted. Oliver noted that some of the papers will be those prepared for the previously planned conference, but a lot of new submissions are also expected. Therefore, the team will be reaching out to the IAOS community to become part of the SPC to review the papers and finalize the conference programme.

Oliver also brought to the GA attention that the IAOS conference in Zambia will be a joint event with the ISI capacity building regional conference, as discussed earlier.

As for the funding, the conference in Zambia is hopeful to be sponsored by the Eurostat and IPUMS International. The World Bank will also be approached for financial support.

18th IAOS conference in Poland

Misha provided a brief overview of the 2022 IAOS conference being held in Krakow, Poland. He thanked the Statistics Poland and Krakow office and Dominik Rozkrut, President of Statistics Poland, personally, for the great organization of this face-to-face conference. About 275 delegates have attended the conference. The conference was supported by the Eurostat grant administered by the UN Statistics Division and a smaller grant provided by the World Bank. Misha noted that the administration of the grant went seamlessly. He expressed his gratitude to Stefan Schweinfest and Ronald Jansen from the UN Statistics Division and their staff for the excellent job done.

Misha noted that, unfortunately, most of the people who were supposed to attend the conference did not come due to visa problems. He noted that it is very frustrating that the hosting country could not issue visas to allow people to attend the conference. Despite all the efforts put into helping delegates get visas issues, neither Statistics Poland, nor the IAOS, could do anything more about it.

Misha mentioned that all conference materials will be posted on the [conference website](#). Misha also shared about the special one-day long event by invitation of the IAOS President. The meeting was held one day prior to the conference. It discussed issues of fundamental principles of official statistics (FPOS), census taking in difficult adverse times as well as issues of use/misuse, trust in official statistics. The meeting agreed on creating a small a reference group, which will work on these issues. The creation of such group is in compliance with the IAOS Statute. Misha noted that the GA meeting is an opportunity to announce the creation of this group, called Krakow group on use, misuse and trust in official statistics. For starters, Misha requested Martine Durand and Jan Robert Suesser to lead the group. They will be responsible for the Terms of Reference and work plan for the group. In terms of membership, the group is not expected to be a big, but a small and workable group.

64th ISI World Statistics Congress

Steve MacFeely, IAOS Representative to ISI, noted that 2023 is going to be a busy year hosting the IAOS conference in Zambia in April 2023 and ISI World Statistics Congress in Canada in July 2023. Steve announced that the call for proposals for Invited Paper Sessions (IPSs) and Contributed Paper Sessions (CPSs) for the World Statistics Congress is now open. He encouraged the GA to start thinking about sessions they would like to propose. The call ends in July 2022. He noted that by the end of the year abstracts and papers have to be submitted.

Item 3: IAOS Strategic Plan

Misha mentioned that a broad overview of the IAOS Strategic Plan for 2021-2023 was presented to the GA on July 8, 2021. After the IAOS core team together with the ExCo had worked hard on the Strategic Plan, on January 20, 2022, its final draft was put up on the IAOS website for consultation with a deadline for comments on March 1, 2022. No comments or objection had been received by the stipulated deadline.

The Strategic Plan builds on previous two IAOS Strategies for 2017-2019 and 2019-2021. Basic IAOS activities, such as organization of international conferences, publication of the SJIAOS, YSP, carry on from Strategy to Strategy. The progress in implementation of these activities is reviewed under item 2.

Misha noted that the other activities in the Strategic Plan, including increase in IAOS membership and improved financial picture, are yet to be achieved. The work on these activities is in progress. Misha emphasized that the improved financial picture will allow the IAOS to do more on capacity building working together with the ISI and Statistical Capacity Building Committee. One of the potential candidates for collaboration in this direction would be the World Bank with their new [Global Data Facility](#).

Misha also added on the issue of strengthened communication with stakeholders, which is also one of the activities in the Strategic Plan for 2021-2023. The IAOS has broadened the base of stakeholders in effort to mimic the new data ecosystem. So, in addition to official statisticians, the IAOS is trying to bring in private sector representatives - suppliers of data. Data users and fact checkers should also be part of IAOS stakeholders, a few of them, e.g. Gallup, have already expressed interest in joining the IAOS as an institutional member.

As for the Strategic Plan activity aimed to contribute to promotion and defense of FPOS, further to the April 25 meeting the IAOS will continue working on this activity, including on the delivery of a few webinars on this issue. Hopefully, the first webinar will be organized by the end of 2022. A few other webinars are planned before that, including one on big data with a focus on Africa.

The IAOS will also continue working on the exposure of facts of misuse of statistics. The IAOS organized a webinar titled “Ethics, trust, governance and use of data: Enhancing Official Statistics Capacity to address these issues” as a side event at the UN Statistical Commission 2022 in February 2022.

The IAOS is also working on enhancing the work of subcommittees. Misha noted that the update on the SCORUS work was provided by Teodora under item 2. He also reiterated the creation of a new reference group and that the work plan for the group will be drafted.

Finally, the Strategic Plan includes a chapter on Institutional IAOS functions. Misha reminded that the IAOS is a volunteer organization and many of GA meeting participants have served on the ExCo over the past years. ExCos are also comprised of volunteers. Current ExCo members are geographically distributed across different continents, from North and South America to Australia. Despite different time zone challenges, the ExCo meets every 2-3 months.

With that Misha concluded his brief introduction of the Strategic Plan for 2021-2023. He reminded the GA that the final draft of the Strategic Plan was posted on the IAOS website and that no objections to the Strategic Plan have been received. The GA agreed with the Strategic Plan for 2021-2023. The final document will be published on the IAOS website.

Item 4: Other business

No other business was discussed. Misha brought the 2022 General Assembly to a close.

Enclosure: Presentation on Review of IAOS 2021-2022 Activities