

Editorial

The global Official Statistics system is challenged to deliver

1. Introduction

At the moment it looks like the world is moving from one crisis to the next; the COVID-19 pandemic, the world Energy situation, Refugees and international migration, Climate Change and related disasters, Industrial Production Chains, Raising consumer prices, Housing shortages, just to name a few. The well-being of populations is at stake, inequalities between population groups might increase, and national and international stability is impacted. These crises are strongly related, not in the least because they all impact national and international financial reserves. More than ever before policymakers are forced to make well-thought choices on short-term savings and investments, but also on long-term strategic approaches. High-quality official statistics are indispensable to allow combining exhaustively the statistical information from relevant domains to properly monitor, to insightful now- and forecast, and to assess the correctness of decisions taken.

The global statistical system is heavily challenged to deliver. Comparable indicators between countries and regions are the cornerstone of many policies. Since around 1980 indicators are traditionally collected by (statistical branches in) International Organizations based on internationally agreed standards for official statistics. The number of international statistics has since then been steadily growing, and in the last decennium with the invite to the UN Statistical Commission to lead the development and production of indicators to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals, this role has even further increased.

The UN Statistical Commission brings together at the world level the (statistical offices of the) UN Member countries with the (statistical branches of) International UN and non-UN Organizations. These statistics branches of the International Organizations are gath-

ered in the so-called Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA).¹ These International Statistical Organizations (ISOs) are a binding factor for the global statistical system. For the IAOS these organizations are also important stakeholders in the quality and completeness of global statistics. Their main role is on the one hand the development and implementation of international statistical standards and recommendations and on the other hand, producing and disseminating for their own use and for international use comparable information for countries and regions.

In this special issue of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS, the focus is fully on the role and diversity of activities of the ISOs, as they are organized in the CCSA. The articles in this issue give an overview of the background and history of the CCSA, the role of the international organizations in the governance of the global statistical system, their role in capacity building in statistics and support to countries, and their involvement in the development of standards, coordination, producing and disseminating comparable statistics as well as methodological innovation.

The Guest editorial, ‘*A brief glimpse into the fascinating world of international statistics*’ authored by Angela Me (UNODC, Vienna), Haishan Fu (World-Bank, Washington DC) and Steve MacFeely (WHO, Geneva), gives an excellent introduction and detailed summary description of the manuscripts in this issue. Special thanks go to Steve MacFeely for the initiation and coordination of this effort.

This issue ends with the closing article by Gemma van Halderen and Matthew Shearing on the sixth discussion on the SJIAOS Discussion Platform (www.sjiaos.org).

¹ See also the annex to this special section at the end of this issue of the Journal.

officialstatistics.com). In ‘*Regional Cooperation and Statistical Capacity Development: Successes, challenges and next steps*’ they react to the comments on the discussion statements that were based on the publication in the December 2020 issue of the Journal of 13 manuscripts based on papers presented by South East Asian statisticians during the 2020 Asia-Pacific Statistics week. The role of UN-ESCAP, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, one of the regional UN ISOs, in capacity building in statistics is nicely illustrated by this article, by sharing an example of effective coordination from a UN Regional Commission, and the key features of current coordination efforts by the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the UN. The article also describes the planned content of the ISI’s Capability Building Committee’s 2022–2025 strategic plan. This plan aims to provide an opportunity to review overall coordination efforts and promote inclusive capacity development efforts

I wish you pleasant readings of these interesting articles.

2. SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the IAOS launched the online platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics (www.officialstatistics.com) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites interested readers to contribute to important discussions at a time of their choosing. With each release of an issue of the Statistical Journal, a new discussion topic is launched via a leading article or based on a section in the Journal. Each discussion runs for about a year and is closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s).

The section on Asia-Pacific Statistics in the December 2020 issue of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Volume 36/4, presented 13 articles from Asia-Pacific authors, aiming to show an element of capacity building in statistics via mentored drafting of manuscripts for science publishing in statistics. The closing article on the 6th discussion by Gemma van Halderen and Matthew Shearing presents the results of the discussion and gives Insight into the most recent developments in the Coordination of Capacity building efforts.

Launch of the 13th discussion: The roles and position of International Statistical Organizations’

With the release of this issue of the Journal (September 2022), also the 13th discussion will be opened. This discussion ‘*The roles and position of International Statistical Organizations*’ will build on the manuscripts in the September special issue with contributions from the International Statistical Organizations. The discussion will especially focus on the global governance of official statistics and the role and position of the International Statistical Organizations. The statements will invite the readers to reflect on the role and value of (statistical) data, their role as a public good and the role of the UN member states, the International Statistical Organizations and the UN Statistical Commission in the development and management of official statistics.

The exact statements will come around mid-September online on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com).

For more information about the statements and how to react see the introduction to the ‘SJIAOS Discussion Platform at the end of this issue. Several other discussions are also still online on the SJIAOS Discussion Platform (www.officialstatistics.com).

3. Some words about the next issues

The next two issues: December 2022, Volume 38 (4), and March 2023, Volume 39 (1).

For December 2022 (Vol. 38 (4)) a diversity of manuscripts is expected among them several based on papers from the Krakow 2022 IAOS Conference. The March 2023 issue is planned as a Special issue on the ‘*History of Official Statistics*’. There are still slots available in this issue for relevant manuscripts, so, do not hesitate to inform me when you have a ready manuscript or an idea for a manuscript for this Special. (pevssjiaos@gmail.com).

Of course there are always slots for other manuscripts; authors are kindly invited to submit their manuscripts to: <https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts>.

Pieter Everaers
Editor-in-Chief
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Statistical Journal of the IAOS
E-mail: pevssjiaos@gmail.com