Introduction to the section

Effectiveness of the outreach of official statistics standards and guidelines, methodologies and recommendations for developing statistical systems

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Standards, guidelines, and recommendations in statistics are undoubtedly important building blocks of modern global official statistics. The role and development, implementation, and monitoring of harmonized standards in statistics as well as the challenges in implementing and using were the topic of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS Special Invited paper Session (IPS) during the 2021 ISI World Statistics Conference in the Hague. In four contributions the main characteristics of statistical standards, their implementation by the custodian organizations, and the capacity of national statistical systems to adapt to these standards were discussed.

Ivo Havinga in *'Stylized facts of statistical standards of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations*, describes the work of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations, being the highest decision-making body of the global statistical system, and presents the centrality of the statistical standard in the terms of reference that guides the normative work of the Statistical Commission.

Stephen MacFeely, Anu Peltola, Nour Barnat, David Cristallo, Ekatarina Chernova, and Onno Hoffmeister, in *'The role of international organizations in statistical standards-setting and outreach: An overview of the UNCTAD contribution'* examine the development of standards and discusses how international organi-

zations provide capacity development, and some challenges therein, to help countries improve their capacity to achieve the best international standards.[1]

In the manuscript *'Role of international, regional and country organizations in adapting to food and agriculture statistical standards and regional differences'* Valerie Bizier, Pietro Gennari, Dorian Kalamvrezos Navarro (all FAO), argue that the adoption of international standards in producing internationally comparable official statistics is by no means a linear process. The authors show how especially for the SDGs, the financial, professional and technological capacities of national statistical agencies vary greatly between countries and regions, as does the level of political support and commitment to statistics.

Lisa Bersales in *'Standards in Social statistics: the capacity of national statistical systems to adapt to the international standards, problems, challenges'* describes how National statistical systems, faced with the demand for more timely and granular social statistics, are challenged given on one hand the availability of

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[1] The International Statistical Organisations, play an important role in the development, implementation and monitoring of standards. In the context of the SDG indicators they are considered the custodians of the methodology of the indicators related to the SDG's.

other information from less traditional data sources, but on the other hand, lack of resources and technical knowledge on international standards; lack of inventory of international standards for entities within the national statistical system; lack of knowledge by line ministries on professional and technical independence and code of ethics; inadequate human and financial resources and insufficient awareness among line ministries on the importance of implementing international standards. She concludes that this all creates a deficiency of data that urgently needs to be addressed to produce official statistics.

In a fifth contribution, Hugues Kouadio as discussant argues that the effectiveness of the outreach of official statistics' standards and guidelines are essential to maximizing the effectiveness of statistical outputs and the efficiency of the production process, however, for the developing countries one should consider issues of capacity in implementation in line with the correct outreach and implementation of standards.

The presentations and discussion during the sessions as well as earlier experiences with the work on standards and guidelines led to a reflection on the positive and negative aspects of 'standardization' in offi-

cial statistics. In the final contribution to this section, this reflection is described in a contribution for discussion with as title '*Standards as the backbone for official statistics, how well do they fit within national and international systems*'? In this contribution, a set of linked questions to the international community of statisticians is formulated on the principles behind and the role of standards and the validity of cross-national comparisons considering the deficiencies in implementation and use of the harmonized standards. These questions are also the topic for the 12th discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com).

The manuscript '*Delineation of cities, urban and rural*', by Lewis Dijkstra, Aleksandra Galic, and Teodora Brandmuller, is an example of the development of a statistical standard. In this paper, the authors present the development of a harmonized definition of cities, towns and rural areas for international comparison called the Degree of Urbanisation. This new method based on a population grid allows for a harmonized comparison of urbanization across the globe. This manuscript has not been part of the Invited Paper Session, however as it gives an example of the development of a standard it has been added to this section.