SJIAOS Discussion Platform

Launch of the 18th discussion

With the release of this issue of the Journal (December 2023), the 18th discussion will be opened. This discussion; '**Are Data Scientists Going to Replace Statisticians?** ' invites readers to react with their opinion on the future 'job' profile of those working in/contributing to the production and dissemination of official statistics. The discussion at the recent 9th EMOS. workshop (Praque, 26–27 October 2023), and the reflections in the editorial of this issue, together with the manuscript on 'Data Science skills for the next generation of Statisticians', constitute the background for this 18th discussion.

The 18th discussion will be opened around mid-December on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www. officialstatistics.com). The readers are invited to react to a series of statements on this issue but are also free to give their overall opinion on this issue.

Several other discussions are still online on the SJIAOS Discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com)

The 17th discussion (September 2023) was planned to deal with '**Artificial intelligence: an opportunity, a challenge or a threat for official statistics'.** Considering the overlap with the 16th discussion (which opened at the end of July), the 16th and 17th discussion are joined. The 16/17th discussion on '***The impact of AI and the availability of data in the so-called Data ecosystem on the development of official statistics***' invites readers to react with their opinion on how far and in what direction the governance of official statistics will change thanks to these developments. The readers are specifically invited to sketch in a maximum of 500 words how in their opinion the (national) statical offices in 2030 are functioning. The contributors are free to choose an emphasis for the production and dissemination but are equally invited to reflect on the governance structures in official statistics in 2030.

The discussion was opened end of July 2023 on the SJIAOS discussion platform. See: https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/16-and-17th-discussion-impact-artificial-intelligence-official-statistics.

The 15th discussion '**Success, failures, challenges and opportunities for official statistics in the development and implementation of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'** was opened at the beginning of May 2023.

The discussion can be found at: https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/15th-discussion-success-failures-challenges-in-the-SDG-development-and-implementation

The discussion builds on the reflection in the editorial in this March issue. The 15th discussion invites readers to react to the statement that official statistics, following the endorsement of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data at the UNSC in 2017, on the one hand, have greatly benefited in strong support for developing new methodologies and indicators, a renewed governance of the statical system, etc. but the other hand is confronted with unrealistic expectations concerning several other indicators, the impossibility of finding/collecting required data and their implementation in general and regional coverage.

The leading question to the discussion is 'did the challenge of developing the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals give a boost to Official Statistics or was it a burden?' Detailed questions will focus on the successes, failures and more specifically the challenges, obstacles and opportunities.

The readers are invited to either react with supporting or disagreeing arguments to this reflection, examples of successes, failures and suggestions on how to tackle challenges.

The 14th discussion: How can official statistics find a way out of the fog?

The discussion statements can be found at:
https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/14th-discussion-how-can-official-statistics-find-way-out-fog

With the release of the December 2022 issue, the 14th discussion was opened. This discussion 'How can official statistics find a way out of the fog?' Builds on the editorial in the December issue, inviting readers to react to the statement that the official statistics are currently in a situation of unclearness regarding the strategies and direction. Readers are invited to either react with supporting or disagreeing arguments to this statement or to contribute with suggestions on how to solve this situation.

This discussion relates strongly to the special discussion launched in September 2022, building on the launch of the Krakow Working Group.

A special discussion on the challenges of "datafied" societies

In parallel to the 13th discussion, a special discussion was launched on the .challenges that our "datafied" societies pose to Official Statistics. This discussion follows the establishment in April 2022, during the IAOS bi-annual Conference, of the "Krakow Working Group". The main points arising from this discussion will constitute useful inputs to the deliberations of the Group. The Krakow Working Group will report on the advancement of its work at the IAOS Conference in Zambia in April 2023 and the ISI Congress in Ottawa in July 2023.

The statements for this discussion have come online on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com) around mid-September 2022.

The 13th discussion: The roles and positions of International Statistical Organizations.

The discussion statements can be found at:
https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/12th-discussion-positive-and-negative-aspects-standardization-official-statistics

With the release of the September 2022 issue of the Journal, the 13th discussion was opened online in mid-November 2022.

This discussion '*The Roles and position of International Statistical Organizations*' builds on the manuscripts in the September special issue with contributions from International Statistical Organizations.

The discussion focuses on the global governance of official statistics and the role and position of International Statistical Organisations. The statements invite the readers to reflect on the role and value of (statis-

tical) 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.

You are invited to contribute to the discussions on: www.officialstatistics.com

Closed discussions

The first discussion kicked off in September 2019 is closed for contributions. The closing article for this discussion Began Nasty and Steve MacFeely: 'You say you want a [data] revolution: Reflections one year on' is published in SJIAOS, Vol36, (2020), Nr. 4, pp. 1299–1306). See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji200722.

The second discussion launched December 2019, 'Reflections on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalized society' was closed in June 2021. The closing article (Walter Radermacher: Governing-by-the-Numbers – Resumé after one and a half years) can be found in SJIAOS, Vol37, (2021), Nr. 2, pp. 701–711. See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji210819.

The third discussion started in March 2020 on the Population and Housing Censuses and was closed in June 2021 with the closing article (Jean-Michel Durr: Population and Housing Censuses: an overdue and old-fashioned instrument or still a modern, severely needed and steadfast tool?) (SJIAOS, Vol37, (2021), Nr. 2, pp. 713–716. See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji210818.

The fourth discussion on the discussion platform was launched in June 2020. The discussion centered around statements taken from the article by Andreas Georgiou:'Pre-release access to official statistics is not consistent with professional ethics' The closing article by Andreas Georgiou (Pre-release access to official statistics is not consistent with professional ethics: Some additional reflections) on this discussion can be found in SJIAOS, Vol 38 (2022), Nr. 1, pp. 321–329.

See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji220939.

The fifth discussion was launched in September 2020 and based Special issue The Future of economic statistics.(Volume 36 (2020) Nr. 3).: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji209007. The closing article for this discussion by Ivo Havinga (Summary of the consultations on the future of economic statistics: Recommendations for a shared economic statistics agenda and the UN Network of Eco-

nomic Statisticians) was published in SJIAOS, Vol38, (2022), Nr. 2, pp. 663–670. See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji220019.

The sixth discussion launched in December 2020 had as theme Successes and challenges of regional cooperation and capacity building in Statistics: the example of the Asia-Pacific region.

This discussion centered around the themes of innovation and transformation in official statistics production and dissemination, especially in developing countries and aimed to highlight, beyond the results and successes, challenges, problems, and pitfalls of national and international initiatives to improve the national statistical systems of low and middle-income countries. The four statements were based on experiences from Asia-Pacific countries as reflected in the special section on the Asia-Pacific Statistics week in Volume 36 (2020) Nr. 4: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji200771. The closing article by Gemma van Halderen en Matthew Shearing (Regional cooperation and statistical capacity development: Successes, challenges and next steps) can be found in SJIAOS, Vol38, (2022), Nr. 3, pp. 1083–1089. See: https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji220071.

The seventh discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform, launched in March 2021 focused on the Misuse of Statistics. This closed discussion has no closing article, as with the new Special discussion on the challenges of "datafied" societies (September 2022) this discussion is renewed.

The eighth discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform, launched in June 2021, focused on the UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics.

This discussion builds on one hand on the manuscript 'Assessing compliance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: A Maturity Model for Continuous Improvement' complementing the Fundamental Principles with the assessment of their compliance by countries and regions based on a Maturity Model for Continuous Improvement[1], illustrating the acceptance of this main framework for high-quality statistics as a still suitable instrument. On the other hand, during the last decennium, there were many events, where the principles were consciously or unconsciously ignored.

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[1] Milicich, R., T. Dickinson, G. Van Halderen, T.Labor, H. Neven: Assessing compliance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: A Maturity Model for Continuous Improvement. In SJIAOS Vol 37 (2021) Nr /2.

The objective of the discussion was twofold: first to generate knowledge and experience with the implementation, application, and effectiveness of the Fundamental Principles, second to inquire especially about major improvements, both to the Fundamental Principles themselves as well as to the compliance and the enforcement of compliance.

The ninth discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform was based on seven statements on 'New Developments in Training in Official Statistics'.

In the Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Volume 37 (2021) Nr. 3, on 'New Developments in Training in Official Statistics' the recent trends in training in official statistics was discussed in 22 manuscripts. The need and rationale for training in official statistics and the necessity to anticipate recent developments, the requirements needed for training in Data Science, a method for assessing the type and content of this demand for training, an overview of existing training in official statistics initiatives, general trends in learning and training, and a selection of examples of training in domains of official statistics or regions.

The 10th discussion: 'Statistics on difficult to measure population groups: challenges to leave no-one not included is triggered by the manuscript 'Improving official statistics on stateless people: challenges, solutions, and the road ahead, by Mary Strode (and Melanie Khanna in Volume 37 (2021) Nr 4). Concentrating on the need for such statistical information, the challenges in collecting them as well as aspects of confidentiality and protection in data sharing and it will stress the importance of data being comparable over contexts and time and using the same definitions, concepts, questions and methodologies.

The 11th discussion: Large international projects on the development of official statistics, the 50 × 2030 Initiative as an example. Was opened in March 2022. This discussion is triggered by the special section concerning the 50 × 2030 Initiative, as presented in this issue (Vol 38, (2022) Nr 1) via seven manuscripts and a guest editorial. The 50 × 2030 Initiative to close the agricultural data gap is a multi-partner program that addresses current shortcomings in the quality and availability of agricultural data by transforming country data systems in 50 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America by 2030. In the discussion, via a set of thought-provoking statements, the ambitions, structure, and content of the 50 × 2030 initiative will be proposed for reflection, as well as the role, structure, and governance aspects of such large international project.

The 12th discussion: The positive and negative aspects of 'standardization' in official statistics' was

opened with the release of the June 2022 issue of the Journal (Vol 38, (2022), Nr 2) was triggered by the section on 'Standards, guidelines and recommendations' in this specific issue.The statements in the discussion to be commented on, questioned if the frequent use of cross-national comparisons dismisses the cultural specificities of a country or region. It also asked if the standards that are used to produce the indicators for cross-national comparisons are sufficiently implemented to allow for valid comparisons. And in general, one might question if there is a misfit between the emphasis on and practice of cross-national comparisons by international organizations and the attention to the level and awareness of the implementation of the standards used to produce the indicators on the country level.

Two special discussions in the context of the COVID-19 crisis: are also closed.

The discussion 'Crises, politics and statistics: Official statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, focuses on the roles of Official Statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. It stated the important role that official statistics will have to play in the phase of worldwide recovery from the pandemic and the rapid investments and actions that are needed to fulfill properly this role. It also emphasizes the importance of investing in achieving the objectives of the SDG indicators, the need to develop new statistics and use modern data sources, and last but not least the establishment of a new role of official statistics in the public statistical infrastructure.

The discussion 'Official statistics methods need investments to be robust enough to maintain sufficient product quality in times of economic downturns' was based on statements extracted from the article 'Robust official business statistics methodology during COVID-19-related and other economic downturns' by Paul A. Smith and Boris Lorenc (respectively. University of Southampton; Bright Lynx Research; European Network for Better Establishment Statistics). This article is available as a blog on: https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/robust-official-business-statistics-methodology-during-COVID-19-related-and-other, as well as a manuscript in Vol. 37 (2021) Nr. 4: https://content.iospress.com/download/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji210870?id=statistical-journal-of-the-iaos%2Fsji210870.

Some background on the SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJIAOS) launched a new 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 you to contribute to important discussions at a time of your choosing.

The ISI World Statistics Conference, the IAOS conference, and Journals like the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, are the traditional platforms where views on new developments and important issues in Official Statistics are exchanged. However, conferences occur only a few times per year, journal issues are released maybe four times per year, and typically only reach specific interest groups. This new online discussion platform of the SJIAOS is an opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics, to contribute to topical discussions, at your convenience.

Every three months there is a new discussion item. With each issue of the SJIAOS, a new discussion topic will be launched via a leading article. Statements from this article will then invite you to post your opinion and arguments. Each discussion will run for a year and be closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s). When fully up and running (after four journal issues), there will be four different discussion topics open for your contribution at any one time.

The discussion platform can be found in a prominent place on the new SJIAOS website (www.officialstatistics.com). Contributions have to be in English, have to be clear and concise, specifically addressing one of the statements, and should not exceed 25 lines. When considered useful, references to a longer text (article, paper) can be added as an attachment. Contributors are required to register on the discussion platform. Anonymous contributions are not appreciated.

The SJIAOS discussion platform editor (Pieter Everaers) moderates the discussions and the quality of the contributions (but of course not on the positions taken), takes decisions on the integrity of the arguments and is available for support when needed.