

ISI STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2022-2025

The Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 identified four strategic priorities for ISI:

1. Encourage statistical communication and networking;
2. Increase the public voice of statistics;
3. Develop statistical capacity;
4. Secure our financial sustainability.

Following the feedback from the members' survey and discussions with Council we have reviewed these priorities. We confirm that with some updating and more clarification of what we want to achieve over the next five years these four points remain our priorities. In this section we set out what has been achieved under each, and what our plans for the future are.

ISI activities in 2020-2021 were constrained by the COVID pandemic, and as we formulate this strategy, it remains a factor that will limit the way we carry out our future activities.

We continue to recognize that with the limited resources we have – both financial and our own time – we cannot do all we would like to do, and we need to prioritize new undertakings on what is most important. Focusing on these priorities will enable us to tackle several immediate issues that we have identified. The strategic priorities will provide a framework for the ISI's work in the coming years, determining what we spend our time and resources on.

For each priority we set out what we have achieved so far and define the goals for the next four years, which we will monitor in order to show the progress towards our vision.

1. Encourage statistical communication and networking

Providing facilities for networking and encouraging communications between members and with other statistical communities is key to attracting more members and engaging them with the work of the ISI. This will enable ISI to be more effective, and especially help us towards our objectives of leading, supporting and promoting the statistical community; disseminating research and best practice; growing the statistical community in developing countries; advancing the development of younger statisticians and encouraging the continuing participation of older members.

During 2017-2021, we:

- 1) Delivered two World Statistics Congresses.

The ISI World Statistics Congresses are the flagship events of the ISI, characterized by a rich scientific programme and a unique social and cultural programme. WSCs are highly valued by our membership, and provide opportunities for members to meet and network. The WSC 2019 in Kuala Lumpur had a wide range of networking events, and provided a hub

for a range of satellite conferences, meetings of ISI Associations and interest groups, and short courses.

The COVID pandemic meant that the 2021 Congress, planned to be in The Hague, had to be virtual. Despite this, efforts were made to maximize networking, with a virtual opening reception and chat rooms, 'meet the EC' sessions as well as organization of a photographic challenge.

- 2) Delivered and supported workshops and events, including a High Level workshop in Tunisia, and supported events in Bangladesh, Colombia/ Peru, Ghana, India, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania and Taiwan.

These events gave members in the countries/regions an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of interest, and to network. This has become more difficult in the last two years, with COVID. Plans for Regional Statistical Conferences in South America and in Africa were cancelled or postponed.

- 3) Launched a series of online webinars.

The pandemic has emphasized the importance of online networking, and in April 2020, ISI launched a series of webinars, with the support of our Associations. A webinar library including over 24 webinars is now available on the ISI website.

- 4) Set up Working Groups on Data Science and the International Year of Women in Statistics and Data Science.

ISI responded to the interest of members in these areas by setting up these working groups. The Working Group on Data Science led to the formation of a Special Interest Group in 2021.

- 5) Conducted members' feedback surveys every two years and used the results to inform our priorities.

These regular surveys have enabled us to see how the ISI is developing and have helped inform the direction of this strategy. In the 2021 membership survey, we asked members for their feedback on how engaged they felt with the ISI. In a range of 1 to 5, the members gave us a score of 3.2, which is higher than the score of 2.9 we achieved in 2018, but suggests some further effort here is needed.

- 6) Broadened our social media reach with more intensive use of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and blogs.
- 7) Transformed the short course programme, which is usually held in conjunction with the WSC, into an online programme. This has proved to be very successful and generated income for the ISI.

There are a number of areas where members might engage in discussion through blogs, webinars or discussion of position papers at WSCs, and where such discussion would enhance our public voice. These might include:

- The image of statistics and the place of the profession;
- Promoting best practice in statistics;

- Data science and data analytics and the collaboration with computer science;
- Being a champion for the public value of good statistical information and analysis, including on topical and challenging issues;
- Promoting the value of Open Data;
- Defending statistical integrity and ethical standards;
- Being particularly active with politicians and the media;
- Debating the use and misuse of statistics.

Over the next four years we will:

- 1) Develop the WSCs as hybrid conferences, with conference apps, networking opportunities, and opportunities for the membership to engage in the work of the ISI as key to their success for both on-site and virtual delegates;
- 2) Look for opportunities to deliver Regional Statistical Conferences and support workshops that contribute to our objectives;
- 3) Continue to develop our series of webinars and online blogs;
- 4) Improve our website so that it more clearly supports our membership;
- 5) Provide Associations, Working Groups and Interest Groups with facilities for online engagement and networking;
- 6) Develop regional networks where there is a demand for them;
- 7) Conduct a continuing online short course programme, with an on-site short course programme at WSCs.

Our goal is to demonstrate continued increased engagement and networking among our members as measured by our regular membership survey.

2. Increase the public voice of statistics

ISI has a unique position as the worldwide body of statisticians from all disciplines – academic, government, research and business – not linked to any government or interest group. It is part of our mission to speak up for the profession on topical statistical issues.

During 2017-2021, we:

- 1) Launched a weekly blog – ‘Statisticians react to the news’ - in July 2020, covering issues as varied as ‘Did Hamlet wish for better data?’ and ‘Is early treatment for COVID possible?’;
- 2) Stood up for statisticians under attack, including cases in Greece and Fiji;
- 3) Launched the International Year of Women in Statistics and Data Science in 2020 with a programme of events;
- 4) Affiliated to the International Science Council. The ISC is a (non-governmental) organization with 40 international scientific Unions and Associations and over 140 national and regional scientific organizations including Academies and Research Councils;
- 5) Created a list of media blogs that cover statistical ideas on the ISI web site;
- 6) Put together a list of resources for statisticians interested in COVID-19.

A more effective public voice will demonstrate the relevance of ISI to its mission. ISI will:

- 1) Explore possible ways and structures to meet the scientific challenges of data science and data analytics through collaborative efforts within ISI and the Associations, and with other societies;
- 2) Increase its visibility during the UN Statistical Commission with side events and secure its position as an active participant during the UNSC meeting;
- 3) Identify the issues that we want to develop. There will be a consultation on these with the membership;
- 4) Set up members' groups to look at some of the key statistical issues and produce draft position statements – possibly for discussion at a business session at the WSC;
- 5) Identify key media contacts across the world and develop a facility to respond quickly to issues by identifying possible spokespeople among our membership;
- 6) Use Regional Statistical Conferences as a means of developing national capacities for this work;
- 7) Provide materials that members can use in their countries;
- 8) Encourage members to re-broadcast ISI messages on their own social media so as to increase ISI's visibility further;
- 9) Revitalize the Special Interest Group on Communicating Statistics and Data Science.

Our goal is for members to recognize that the ISI has contributed to raising the public voice of statistics, as measured by our regular membership survey.

3. Develop statistical capacity

Our vision is to help develop the capacity of statisticians so that they are better able to respond to emerging global challenges such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the use of digitization for sustainable development.

We do this by:

- Oversight by the ISI Statistical Capacity Building Committee (SCBC);
- Fostering cross-disciplinary professional cooperation at global and regional levels;
- Coordinating our actions across ISI Associations/disciplines and with global and regional stakeholders;
- Supporting statistical education and literacy initiatives, such as the International Statistical Literacy Programme (ISLP);
- Carrying out activities that reflect the priorities of our members, a creative and efficient use of resources including members and ISI Permanent Office staff, and the ISI's unique qualities.

Many of the activities to improve member engagement, listed under strategic priority 1 for 2017-2021, also helped to develop statistical capability more broadly, which resulted in:

- 1) Delivery of two World Statistics Congresses – in Kuala Lumpur and virtually;
- 2) Delivery and support of workshops and events, including a High Level workshop in Tunisia, and support for events in Bangladesh, Colombia/ Peru, Ghana, India, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania and Taiwan;
- 3) The launch of a series of online webinars;
- 4) Broadening our social media reach with more intensive use of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter;
- 5) Transformation of the short course programme into an online programme.

In addition to this we have provided:

- 6) Online courses in Data Science and Analysis of Survey Data using R, free of charge;
- 7) Support for the second workshop of the West African Statistical Association and the ISI/IFC High Level Meeting on Data Governance in November 2019.

Much of the activity during 2017-2021 was made possible through an agreement with the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB). This agreement ended in December 2020. During ten years, hundreds of statisticians in developing countries profited from the fund. The activities we were able to organize with their support were numerous and diverse – ranging from sponsoring a series of Workshops on Leadership and Management for heads of NSOs in Africa to providing financial support to many members to attend the WSCs and other conferences. Many participants have shared with us their experiences and told us how these opportunities enriched their professional lives and contributed to building statistical capacity in their country.

Priorities for 2022-2023 include:

- 1) Supporting ISI members in networking, particularly at a regional level with a focus on countries in developing regions, developing online communication platforms, and enhancing the impact and legacy of statistical conferences;
- 2) Ensuring that short courses and webinars meet the needs of the capacity building agenda, raising income for further activities where possible;
- 3) Participating in the new World Bank Global Data Facility (successor to the WB Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building);
- 4) Supporting the establishment and vitality of National Statistical Societies;
- 5) Supporting mentoring and coaching among ISI members;
- 6) Making training materials available through our website;
- 7) Supporting the development of crowdfunding approaches for projects;
- 8) Improving and communicating the benefits of ISI membership in line with the ISI's ability to help build personal and institutional statistical capacity.

A key focus will be feeding-in the learning from these activities into the content of the ISI World Statistics Congress in 2023, including the results from trialing pilot activities in specific regions.

Actions

1. Enhance the alignment of the Committee membership to the ISI's priorities and ensure a comprehensive global coverage (including Latin America, MENA, and Asia-Pacific), and set out roles and ways of working during the period of the work plan;
2. Develop the ISI SCBC work plan to support the priorities with specific action areas; consult on the work plan with the ISI Permanent Office, across ISI Associations, including seeking integration with Association Strategies and Journal Editors, and other main external actors in global statistical capacity building;

and, according to the final shape of the work plan/ Committee membership:

3. Trial and Learn activities in Africa – instigate and learn from how ISI can work with other stakeholders on a regional level to support technical and professional level developments according to priority 2) and the implications for other priorities;

4. Investigate concepts and practicalities for proposals across each of the Committee's priorities, reporting back to a business session at the WSC in 2023.

4. Secure our financial sustainability

Our finances are not sustainable in future. We often run a deficit budget, supported by relatively high levels of reserves, but we are aware this is not a position that can continue. About 80% of our income funds our Permanent Office in The Hague. This supports membership recruitment, renewals and administration, designing and maintaining the website and webshop, newsletter, attendance at meetings, WSCs and RSCs, and our finances. We have not had a regular income surplus available to progress strategic initiatives.

The ISI Executive Committee has taken a number of actions in the last four years to address this issue. This has included:

- a) A review of Permanent Office costs;
- b) A review of the costs of servicing our Associations, with some increases in the charges for them;
- c) A review of our membership fees, comparing them with those for other statistical societies, resulting in above inflation increases in 2021, and a recognition that in future years increases will need to at least match increases in our costs;
- d) Removing from our membership list those whose fees were outstanding for more than one year;
- e) Setting up an Income Generating Task Force which has:
 - clarified the benefits for members, as set out on our website
 - prepared a targeted approach to recruiting more institutional members
- f) Bringing the WSC 'in-house' with effect from WSC 2021, meaning that ISI owns the financial risk, but also has the means of securing a financial surplus (as do other professional societies), through sponsorship and short courses;
- g) Delivered a virtual WSC and short courses in 2021, which both provided small financial surpluses (excluding Permanent Office costs).

We will continue to focus on this strategic priority over the next four years by:

1. Expanding and developing our membership base.

Our individual membership continues to fall, and addressing this will be key to develop the ISI's vitality and capacity as well as for financial reasons. However most of our membership income comes from institutional members, and there are greater opportunities here.

Our Elected membership is ageing, is too Euro/North America-centric and is not sufficiently diverse – by gender or by ethnicity, reflecting its origins.

We will address these issues by setting up a Membership Task Force, to follow on from the Income Generating Task Force, in order to

- a) Expand our elected membership;
- b) Understand the diversity of our membership better, and ensure it is reflected in our Committees;
- c) Target the areas where our membership is low;

- d) Improve the retention of existing members;
- e) Develop donation and legacy opportunities for members;
- f) Conduct a campaign to recruit more institutional and corporate members.

2. Developing future WSCs as an income source to fund our capacity building work.

Having developed a new financial model for WSCs, and shown through the WSC 2021 that this is sustainable, we now need to

- a) Strengthen the support that the Permanent Office can provide for this activity;
- b) Develop a sustainable IT platform for future WSCs, RSCs and Association conferences;
- c) Develop longer term international sponsorship agreements;
- d) Attract more exhibitors.

Our goals are to have:

1. A steadily increasing membership bringing us increased income, and retaining a higher percentage of our existing membership;
2. WSCs that bring income to ISI;
3. A sustainable budget for ISI that meets its administrative costs and enables it to progress its strategic priorities.