

Happy New Year to all!

It's a pleasure and privilege to send best wishes for 2017 to everyone. It is also an opportunity to thank everyone for their work and contributions to the family of ISI and its Associations. In fact, every member of the whole ISI family contributes to the international statistical community and ISI's work just by being a member because this helps the ISI maintain and increase its influence and impact across the world.

I often see evidence of the respect in which the ISI family is held globally. Indeed, as commented by a number of respondents to the 2016 members' survey, the ISI family could be said to 'punch above its weight' internationally. The many and diverse reasons featured in responses to the survey. After discussion and consultation, half the survey questions were chosen to be open-ended to encourage freedom of views. Almost 90% of respondents took the opportunity to respond to at least one of these open-ended questions, and the Executive Committee and Council are very grateful for the thoughts and feedback. Running such a survey was clearly appreciated by members, and there is interest in running more surveys within and across our whole ISI family. As in the President's December message, the survey responses were analysed formally and are contributing to the update of ISI's strategic plan. The formal analysis will be published soon on the ISI website along with an overview I am preparing.

The overall strengths of ISI identified by members were its global span and quality nature. Comprehensiveness of statistical coverage, networking and links, quality and passion of members, excellence of 'umbrella' structure, integrity, history, diversity, World Statistics Congresses, genuine commitment to support and development, were just some types of responses.

Apart from some highly individual responses, the responses on weaknesses can be described as those expressing the 'need for more' (resources, support, members, speaking out, conferences, updating), and the challenges of balance and being international ('too large/too small, too diverse/not diverse enough, too many/not enough countries).

Similarly, many responses on opportunities and challenges reflected what is often seen – that these can be the two sides of the same coin, particularly in a truly international association and because of the diverse and immediate nature of statistics. Diversity and globality each have both strengths and challenges. Networking, widening participation and the 'reach' of ISI are certainly core values in our work and plans across the whole extended family - individual and organisational members, Associations, Special Interest Groups, Regional Networks, affiliates and partners.

It is worth saying something here about the history of ISI and about the nature of statistics. ISI's history is not only long and dynamic, but also encapsulates the integrity and vision which contribute to the international respect in which ISI is held. Like many ISI members, I came to ISI via an Association, in my case, the IASE, and the history of ISI's involvement in statistical training and then statistical education is fascinating and still relevant, both directly and indirectly. I can recommend the historical articles on IASE's website, particularly that by David Vere-Jones, whose plenary to ICOTS5 in 1998 was also as insightful as it was thoughtful.

Also like many, my commitment to ISI is because of its genuine dedication to international development and coverage of the whole of statistics and the statistical community in all its manifestations. Statistics works with, within and across all disciplines, government, business, industry and society. Statistics and statistical thinking are pervasive, universal and central to all evidence-based progress but also need to be dynamic in response to new contexts, technologies and demands. The dominant theme in members' responses to the question on strategic directions was 'more' of everything, but statistical coverage and emerging prominent issues also reflected awareness of these challenges internationally and in statistics. As one response commented, we need to *"look and examine locally, act globally"*.

The themes in the 'yes' responses to the question of 'would you recommend ISI to a friend and why', comprised international importance, excellence, big family, professionalism, conferences, publications, opportunities (networking, young statisticians, developing countries), and included some wonderfully quotable quotes. My favourites were *"Why not?"*, and, more seriously, *"It is the really international organisation that covers (all) statisticians - it needs support, and statisticians need its presence to help in their work"*. This returns me to the point that belonging to a community helps to give that community strength – more members means greater strength. There's certainly lots to be done and much that could be done, but I look forward with you and with a combination of pragmatism and optimism to an amalgamation of opportunities and challenges.