

## **Report on the ISI lunchtime event “ISI and NSSs (National Statistical Societies) — Partnerships for Statistical Development”**

The Lunchtime event was attended by more than 80 participants coming from more than 30 different countries. The event took place on 17 July 2017 at the *Palais de Congrès* in Marrakech, and was sponsored by Elsevier.

### **Introduction**

ISI and NSSs have many common interests and initiatives, which can benefit from coordinated efforts. To organize a proactive development of statistical capacity building and literacy, ISI recognizes that a better engagement with NSSs is needed. A few questions were put forward:

- What opportunities do the NSSs see for collaboration with ISI towards increasing capacity and impact of statistics in their countries/regions?
- Are there opportunities for increasing the 'public voice' of statistics in their countries with ISI's support? In what topics? Who could contribute?
- Are there opportunities for co-hosting ISI Regional Statistics Conferences or other events in their countries?

Statistics is being challenged nationally and internationally and we should all strive for changes. A stronger cooperation between ISI and NSSs needs to be developed, with the establishment of stronger links among ISI, its seven Associations and NSSs.

### **Presentations**

After the clarification of the aforementioned questions and the introduction of the speakers, the Marrakech lunchtime meeting on ISI and the NSS's started with invited presentations by Maurizio Vichi (Italy), Andriette Bekker (South Africa) and Jean-Louis Bodin (France).

Maurizio Vichi, Full Professor at the Department of Statistical Sciences, Sapienza University of Rome, is the current President of FENStatS (Federation of the European National Statistical Societies). In his talk, on “Intensifying the Collaboration between Users, Producers and Methodologists of Statistics via ISI and the Network of NSSs, NSOs and Universities”, he spoke about the role of regional networks of ISI and NSSs, giving the example of FENStatS, which can be considered as the European Regional network of ISI. Statistics professionalism was also among his main concerns, and he addressed an important development topic, the federation of NSSs, reporting the European experience in the field.

Andriette Bekker, Full Professor and Head of the Department (HoD) of Statistics at the University of Pretoria, was the representative of the South Africa Statistical Association. In a talk entitled “Out of Africa: Capacity Building—a South African Perspective”, she took an institutional viewpoint, as an HoD, speaking about structural, social, discipline and economic challenges, as well as capacity problems in Statistics in South Africa. Her conclusion was

that funding, although important, on its own does not provide a solution. In her opinion ISI can support with a continual professional development for educators, through videos, short courses, graduate/post-graduate lectures, identification and mentoring of undergraduates with significant potential, joint supervision, collaboration, and young researchers-post doc opportunities. ISI should provide a helping hand and partnerships, mentorship opportunities, support for interconnectivity-research networks, within the principles of excellence, equity, transparency and fairness.

Jean-Louis Bodin, an international consultant at INSEE (*Institut National Français de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*), former President of the ISI (1999-2001) and representative of the French Statistical Society, in a talk entitled “International Experiences in National and International Associations“, has first provided an historical perspective on the birth in the XIXth century of the first statistical societies to meet concerns of the civil society and businesses, mentioning RSS and ASA (1830-1850), *Société de Statistique de Paris* (1865), ISI (1885). It was mentioned that before 1945, the ISI was more or less playing the role of the UN Statistical Division today, but also with some scientific debates, like the controversy on representative surveys (1895), the maximum likelihood theorem (1923), and statistical tests (Neyman, 1936). In his opinion, ISI needs to promote the unicity of statistics, the dissemination of statistical knowledge (meetings, journals), ethics, training and promotion of statistical literacy, professional accreditation and certification, young statisticians. ISI also needs to defend the integrity of statistics and the independence of statisticians, particularly the ones unjustly attacked because of their professional activity. Some questions were put forward: Registration, Institutional structure: federation of national statistical societies? Or association of individuals? Potential partners: not only the official Panafrican institutions (UNECA, AUC, AfDB) but also academic partners.

## Discussion

Due to scheduling constraints, the Marrakech lunchtime meeting on ISI and the NSS's had to close after a brief but active discussion. Apart from the deserved congratulations for the ideas put forward by the lecturers, interesting suggestions and comments came from UK (particularly Jane Hutton and David Spiegelhalter), Russia (particularly Irina Eliseeva), and Africa. All agreed that a deeper involvement between NSSs and ISI was needed, to the benefit of both. ISI's endeavours to serve the statistical community around the world and to improve public awareness of the role of statistics in progress and welfare are integral to a commitment to “Statistics for a Better World”. In order to fulfil these goals, ISI needs to reinforce bonds with the NSSs, and to serve as well as a forum where NSSs can share experience, retrieve news, launch new projects and announce calls for collaboration. On the other hand, NSSs are expected to reinforce the lobbying strength of the ISI, namely by advising their members to join the ISI. Practical steps to attain those goals can be:

- To create a “NSSs corner” at the web page of the ISI, where NSSs can share news;
- Further, to create a linked archive with a more extensive presentation of each NSS: history, projects, highlights of past events and perhaps an interview with an NSS president or representative, including focusing on what the NSS expects from the ISI;
- To ask NSSs to join ISI and to encourage their members to join the ISI, namely to ask NSSs presidents to include an “ISI Statistics for a Better World Lecture”, as an open event in the congresses of their societies. Statistics and citizenship, Statistics and public health policies, Statistics fighting the exclusion of minorities, Statistics in scientific research, Statistics and the environment, Statistics and quality standards,

Statistics and economy regulation, - these are just some topics that can inspire a 'Statistics for a Better World Lecture'.

In order to enhance public visibility of Statistics, it would also be interesting to ask NSSs to encourage their members to submit contributed papers to conferences in other fields.

Since the event was sponsored by Elsevier, it would perhaps be reasonable to suggest Elsevier to create an "Elsevier-ISI Statistics for a Better World Prize", to be awarded biannually at the ISI World Statistical Congress.

### **Closing**

The discussion ended with a few final remarks from the three invited speakers, who agreed about the need of a deeper relationship between academic and official statisticians through a stronger involvement of NSOs, NSSs and even Universities in the ISI structure.

Ivette Gomes  
ISI Vice-President