ISI Side Event at the 50th Session of the UN Statistical Commission

PREPARATION AND SKILLING FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS CAREERS

Wednesday, 6 March, 8:15-9:30 am

You are invited to an ISI side event of the UN Statistical Commission. The International Statistical Institute (ISI) is an international professional society whose mission is to lead, support and promote the understanding, development and good practice of statistics worldwide, by providing the core global network for statistics. This is reflected in its slogan 'Statistical Science for a Better World'.

Panel discussion:
Chair: John Pullinger, National Statistician, UK

Panellists:
Gabriella Vukovich, President, Hungarian Central Statistical Office
To raise issues related to the changing needs of national statistical offices, including:

- *Traditional vs new skills needed in NSOs; data scientists or statisticians?*
- *Statisticians as data managers; statistical knowledge and data management knowledge*
- *HR issues related to the inflow of new generations*

Steve MacFeely, Head of Statistics & Information, UNCTAD
To speak on Official Statistics in a data driven world and implications for education, including discussion on the elements of literacy and implications for education

Helen MacGillivray, ISI President, Editor of *Teaching Statistics,* former IASE President
To discuss advantages and disadvantages, freedoms and restrictions in teaching statistics in universities, including trends in universities which have an impact (for good and bad) on teaching statistics

Discussant:
Haishan Fu, Director, Development Data Group, The World Bank Group

Abstract of session:
Although backgrounds for official statistics careers vary, most enter national statistical offices (NSO's) as graduates of some suitable undergraduate program, including statistics. There has been significant development of training for official statistics at the postgraduate level. More than 20 European universities participate in the European Master in Official Statistics. The wide variety of training of NSO staff by global and regional institutions to strengthen statistical capacities was a key motivator in establishing GIST, the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training. Participants in this type of training and training at the

postgraduate level, are usually working, or have worked, mostly in NSO's or closely associated government departments or agencies.

There has been increasing collaboration between NSO's and those involved in school education, most notably through competitions such as the ISI's ISLP (International Statistical Literacy Project) Poster competition (http://iase-web.org/islp/Poster_Competition_2018-2019.php_). There is also increasing emphasis on school statistics teaching that enables students to engage with current social issues, such as ProCivicStat (http://iase-web.org/islp/pcs/), funded with support from the European Commission.

Hence we see considerable inservice and postgraduate training developments, and emerging linkages at school level to increase awareness of official statistics, but what of the undergraduate level? Many NSO's put considerable effort into attracting graduates from suitable quantitative degree programs, including statistics, finance, economics, and mathematics, and some have established significant ongoing research and/or staff links with selected university departments or faculties. But official statistics is just one of innumerable destinations for such graduates, and is very different to many, not just in content but also in type of workplace. This session considers what type of generic skills and workplace preparation at the undergraduate level are of assistance for official statistics workplaces, whether and how these fit in university undergraduate programs, how to increase undergraduate understanding of what is involved in official statistics careers, and awareness of the longer-term career possibilities. The panel of speakers, chair and discussant will contribute from a variety of backgrounds and current experiences, and the session will allow for questions and comments from the audience.