

President's Message – March 2019

International political and government challenges for ISI

All international organisations, including professional associations, have challenges associated with operating across countries – the more countries, the more challenges. Some are due to regulations and others to politics or government policies. Despite these difficulties, engagement across different cultures provides wonderful richness to offset challenges.



ISI has particular challenges because of our involvement with Official Statistics and the truly global reach of our mission. Our World Statistics Congresses (WSC) strive to bring together the global statistical community to pursue our mission and many of our objectives, particularly:

- to lead, support and promote the international statistical community;
- to stimulate and disseminate research, best practice and advancement in statistical science and statistical education;
- to grow the statistical community in developing countries and help it to be more inclusive; and
- to promote and develop networking within members.

But the WSC can often bring these changes to the fore. The revision of our long-running WSC model, which will move us from a contract with a national government to a contract with a venue, is to begin with 2021, but will still embody our mission, objectives and all that make the WSC such unique experience.

ISI's Declaration on Professional Ethics was introduced in 1985 and updated in 2010. Much of ISI's declaration is reflected in the UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics but ISI's is aimed to support individuals in their work. ISI's contribution to the 50th anniversary of the UN Statistical Commission [here](#) refers to this distinction. This principle of supporting individuals in adhering to their professional ethics came to the fore during one international challenge some years ago and I take this opportunity on behalf of ISI to thank the Advisory Board on Ethics (ABE) and all those members who have contributed to ongoing discussions of ethics and international challenges.

Some of the challenges are well-publicised while others are not. All members would be aware of the commendation, organised by ISI, of Andreas Georgiou for his extraordinary professional commitment, but there are many issues, specific or general, brought to ISI's attention. ISI's Community Principles were first drafted in 2014, finalised and published in 2017, with the ISI and Association Individual Conduct Policy developed from these and published in 2018. Note again the emphasis in these on individuals in their professional work.

The past decade, with its trends to increasing populism, nationalism and social media, has seen increasing international challenges. As stated in its Community Principles, ISI is committed to acknowledging and taking account of all and any sensitivities across the diversity of individuals, countries and regions. This includes avoidance of political statements in order to fulfil its mission of global networking for all individuals in the entire statistical community.

Striving to fulfil its mission and supporting statistical development worldwide can bring contradictions requiring compromise. In addition, as so many of our members know so well, changes of governments or government leaders and associated changes of government policies can have unforeseen and sudden consequences which even work at the highest level cannot rectify. Some such changes are very public – for example announced by twitter – and some less so. The effects of changes in government policies on conferences are some of the most difficult for professional associations to deal with, because conferences are long in planning and cannot be moved easily or quickly.

In consulting for locations of future ISI WSC and RSC, a number of criteria are taken into account but it is impossible to fully satisfy all of them. All ISI Executive Committees and Councils put enormous effort into finding balances which strive to fulfil ISI's mission and objectives. We call on all members to recognise and support these efforts in continuing to make our World Statistics Congresses the wonderfully unique and leading international gatherings they are, and as inclusive as possible, no matter what difficulties are placed in our way.

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ISI President