

In Memoriam:

Dr Jorge Todesca (28 December 1946- 21 February 2020), at the service of statistics and of democracy

Our sister society, IASI (the Inter-American Statistical Institute), announced in the March issue of its newsletter that Dr. Jorge Todesca passed away on 21 February at the age of 73, just two months after the end of his four-year term as director of the Argentinean INDEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos).

He was appointed on 21 December, 2015 by the newly elected President of the Nation, Mauricio Macri, after eight years of manipulation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) by INDEC under governmental pressures. These manipulations affected by a domino effect all of INDEC's statistical production: growth of real GDP was largely overvalued and the evolution of the number of people living below the poverty line was underestimated. During these eight years, Dr Todesca's consultancy firm Finsoport remained firm in the decision to publish figures that belied official data. As a result, Finsoport was fined and Dr. Todesca himself suffered a criminal complaint.

The main task assigned to Dr Todesca upon his appointment was therefore to recover the credibility of Argentine's official statistics and reintegrate INDEC at international level. Especially, he coordinated the preparation of a new and modern statistical law to give INDEC real professional independence and prevent the recurrence of the manipulations of past years. The final text sent to the Argentinean Congress (still pending approval) faithfully respected the spirit of the initial proposal prepared at INDEC with the support of OECD, IMF and UNSD.

During his four-year term Dr Todesca had to deal with health problems, but made a huge effort to fulfill his task and leave a legacy. The international statistical community supported Dr Todesca in this difficult but so important task. He believed that it was important to present the challenges faced as a contribution to the statistical community, in particular by participating in ISI Congresses and IAOS Conferences. For instance, he was one of the invited speakers in the IAOS Special Meeting on "NSOs Professional Independence: Threats and Responses" prior to the IAOS 17th Conference organized at the OECD premises in September 2018. He strongly believed in the idea that the international statistical community can play in many ways a fundamental role as a game changer for better statistical systems.

In the name of their members, the ISI and IAOS convey their sympathy to the Argentine statisticians and express their condolences to Dr Todesca's family.

Dr Marco Lavagna was appointed Dr Todesca's successor on 21 December, 2019. Dr. Lavagna was one of the members of the Congress Committee which published from 2008 to 2015 the so called "Indice Congreso" (one idea supported by Dr Todesca) in opposition to the fake index published by INDEC at that time. Dr Lavagna promised to keep his predecessor's policy. We wish him all the best for his term of service.

Jean-Louis Bodin