Editorial

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1. Special themes in this issue 'the impact of the covid-19 pandemic' and 'Misuse of statistics: Time to speak out'.

In February 2021 the COVID-19 pandemic is still raging around the world. Not only the varying number of infections, hospitalizations and deceases – in the second, third or maybe even fourth wave, with or without the mutant versions of the virus – but now also testing strategies and vaccination programs are the dominating topics in newspapers, journals, talkshows on television, blogs and other news media. The duration of the crisis, the policy reactions with soft and strong lock-downs, the reactions of affected businesses or groups of people (from school kids to forced home workers) cause many societies to be seriously out of balance; not only economical but also socio-cultural and on the individual level psychological. The information from the diversity of political and societal sections, coming via a variety of media channels, can sometimes hardly be distinguished as being mere facts, as fake, as real or as false. The quality of communication, c.q the correct use of statistics, as well as the ethical aspect of official statistics is – as illustrated by the many disputed numbers and policy decisions based on the numbers, also very much at stake.

Official statistics deals in roughly three ways with the pandemic: epidiomelogical focussing on the trends in numbers; the statistics on the socio-economic and more and more also cultural impact on society; and thirdly on the need to examine and adopt procedures for the production and dissemination of official statistics.

In this issue there are manuscripts on the epidiomelogical and social economic impacts of the pandemic for specific population groups (indigenous people) and regions (Kolkata and suburbs in India) as well on the importance of correct basic population data like those from the population census and finally also on anticipat-

ing the correct procedures to measurement of the effect of the pandemic in time series as used for simulations and policy making.

The broad interest in the figures and the involvement of many different stakeholders with different agenda's makes the treatment of COVID-19 statistics and related numbers to a potential source for mis-communicating, misleading and misuse. State leaders are caught on giving false numbers, intentionally or non-intentional and are even blamed for misleading by close collaborators in communicating the for the population at large important statistics on the pandemic.

Misuse of statistics is a phenomenon as old a statistics it self. Regulatory systems like the Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics, statistical laws and rules for ethical behavior of statisticians aim to avoid and whenever needed correct forms of misuse of statistics. The data revolution, new data sets (Big Data) and open data all cause an even more complex society with an increasing number of stakeholders that is supposed to comply with these official statistics quality and behavioral requirements. Times of crisis like we are now in at a world-wide scale, 'invites' even more than in normal times those who have an interest in specific figures to massage, manipulate or even falsify information.

All this makes the special section on Misuse of statistics in this issue even more current, and surely justifies the second part of the title: Time to speak out.

Beyond on misuse of statistics, in this issue several articles are presented that focus on the impact of the new data sources for the governance of statistics. As usual there are also several illustrations of how such data can be purely from a methodological and analytical point be used to answer relevant policy questions.

I invite authors to submit manuscripts that describe these current developments, from theoretical and empirical perspective and with emphasis not only on analytical results and their policy relevance but also on the

quality of the data and the governance of the production processes. To support the exchange of experiences and knowledge, I repeat the invite to authors all over the globe to submit articles that statistically describe the differentiated effects of the pandemic and the effect on producing and disseminating statistics.

For submission of manuscripts the following link brings you into the submission system: https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts.

2. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on official statistics

This issue contains six manuscripts that explicitly describe elements of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ellie Moellers, John Meara, Maureen Jones and Sabrina Juran (USA) state in '*The Importance of Geographic and Demographic Data from Census*' that the COVID-19 pandemic not only threatens the successful conduct of censuses in many countries through delays, interruptions that compromise quality, or complete cancellation of census projects but that it also brings at risk subsequent national response and resilience initiatives and jeopardizes the success of every nation's census projects and the rights of every individual to be counted.

In March 2019 (Vol35, (2019), Nr. 1) a special issue of the Journal was dedicated to statistics on Indigenous People. The articles were prepared by the International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement (IGIHM). This is a 4-country group established to promote improvements in the collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of Indigenous health data, including the impact of COVID-19. In this issue (Vol37, (2021), Nr. 1) we again welcome some manuscripts from this group. In three articles it reports on the epidiomelogical effects of the pandemic and the socio-economic impact in four countries.

In '*Overview: The international Group for indigenous Health measurement and COVID-19*' Michele Connoly, Kalinda Griffiths, John Waldon, Malcolm King, Alexandra King and Francis C Notzon provide data on cases and deaths for the total population as well as the Indigenous populations of each of the involved countries. Brief summaries of the impact are provided for Canada and New Zealand.

The Overview is followed by two separate articles with more detailed discussion of the COVID-19 experience in Australia and the US. In '*COVID-19 among American Indians and Alaska natives in the United States: an early look*' Michele Connoly, Bette Jacobs and Francis C. Notzon (USA), show that to date the US has experienced the greatest number of cases and deaths to COVID-19 in the world, but that the impact has been even greater on American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN). Despite numerous disadvantages related to poor socioeconomic status and preexisting health conditions, Tribal sovereignty, community strength and resiliency have been important factors in limiting the burden of disease on Indigenous Americans.

In '*In the pursuit of equity: COVID-19, Data and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia*' Kalinda Griffiths, Ian Ring, Richard Madden and Lisa Jackson Pulver (Australia) discuss some of the important events in pandemic planning regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how this relates to surveillance and monitoring in the emerging and ongoing threat of COVID-19 within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The authors also identify some of the data considerations required in the future to monitor and address public health.

The impact on economic and living conditions of middle-class households of Kolkata and its neighborhood in India during 'lockdown' is described by Bandana Sen and Aloke Kar in '*Impact of Initial Period of Lockdown in Kolkata and suburbs, India'*. They provide results from on an on-line survey of households revealing that inflow of regular normal income had ceased altogether for over 40%. About 15% of the households suffered from outright job loss or complete denial or withholding of wages and salaries payments of their members in paid employment and another about 27% reported complete closure of small businesses run by them. The normal-times income had altogether ceased for over a half of the households of the lowest income group. They provide detailed information which socio economic groups are worst hit. The results also show that food grains distribution through the Public Distribution System (PDS) played a decisive role in averting an imminent famine-like situation, but that, despite free food grains distribution, about 5% of the sample households could not arrange three meals a day for all its members

The COVID-19 outbreak has also a large impact on production and dissemination of statistics. In his contribution '*Seasonal adjustment of Irish official statistics during the COVID-19 crisis*', Patrick Foley (Statistics Ireland) shows the evident effects of the pandemic in most of the Irish infra-annual socio-economic time series statistics. From these effects it is evident that to provide useful information for analysis and policy the

COVID-19 effects on time series data need to be identified and treated to ensure that seasonally adjusted data is trustworthy, accurate and reliable. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland has taken a pro-active approach to seasonal adjustment during this crisis, using intervention models from the onset of the pandemic. The paper outlines the statistical framework that underpins their seasonal adjustment response

3. Misuse of statistics

The second section in this issue focusses with five contributions on 'Misuse of statistics'. This recurrent and evidently very important theme has also been the theme of two events that took place during the last six months. A webinar hosted by the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS) on 6 October 2020 as a side meeting to the UN World Data Forum (UN-WDF) and on 22 February 2021 a side meeting to the UN Statistics Committee (UNSC) brought together many voices on this issue, describing specific cases, their impact but also the way this misuse currently is, can and should be treated. Also the seventh discussion at the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com) will revolve around this theme. Background for the four statements for this discussion can be found in the five contributions in this issue of the Journal but also in earlier work that has been done in this field.

In the first contribution Jenny Saul (Waterloo Chair in Social and Political Philosophy of Language) in an interview with Pieter Everaers '*Lying and misleading; intentional and non intentional falsehood in the context of misuse of statistics*' explains the language and speech component in the context of misuse of statistics. Jenny Saul is expert in how language can be used (and misused) in conversations in general and especially political and has done several advisory projects on the language used in the world of statistics. She explains how due to societal, IT and also the COVID-19 pandemic it is becoming increasingly complicated to bring it about that the general public has a solid understanding of statistics that are important in their lives, and of the implications of the statistics. In communicating messages with erroneous or false statistical information she distinguishes between intentional or unintentional use. She underlines the importance for providers of statistics to reflect on possible misinterpretations, and to take steps to prevent those. The same goes for inappropriate inferences that are likely to be drawn from

statistics. She considers it reasonable to classify the use of statistics as misleading if the audience is likely to draw such inappropriate inferences, and therefore to arrive at beliefs which are unsupported by the relevant evidence. A responsibility for statistics providers of avoiding misleading with statistics is to try to prevent this from happening. 'One won't always be successful, but it is always worth trying. The provider of statistics may have more luck preventing these moves from the well-intentioned but ill-informed person then they have preventing them from the manipulative politician'.

In the second contribution in this section '*Artificial Intelligence and the Role of Ethics*', Regina Ammicht Quinn (Professor of ethics with the International Center of Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tuebingen (Germany) and the executive director of the Centre) asks how principles and values that are important for a democratic society can be translated into a digital democratic society. Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an exposure of the data revolution and leading to an extensive quantification of the social, the political and the individual person should be continuously examined for its effects, insisting that the non-quantifiable areas of human life are as important as any quantifiable aspects. She especially concentrates on two issues of data resulting from AI: representation gaps – where minorities and a majority (women) are under- or misrepresented in data; and data silhouettes – where the body, the self and human life seems to be deciphered by data alone. She concludes that good regulation is not an obstacle to research and business, but that is necessary to create trust in AI.

John Pullinger (UK, president of the IAOS) explores in his paper '*Misuse of Statistics: Time to Speak Out*' the safeguards available to protect against misuse of statistics. His starting point is that statistics is the currency of current debate and the basis for sound decisions. If they are misused the currency of debate is devalued and the basis for decision making is undermined. Without confidence in statistics, decision makers are flying blind when they make their choices and citizens are in the dark in seeking to hold those decision makers to account. Misuse of statistics undermines trust and by doing so it undermines democracy. He describes the nature of the threats and how they are changing before assessing the responses.

This contribution sketches the tone of important discussions held earlier in and aside of international meetings and urgently to be proceeded in the official statistics community to 'call attention to the misuse of statis-

tics'[1] as a follow up of the earlier side events and initiatives like the World Stat initiative. Pullinger concludes in his article that there is unfinished business to be taken forward. 'A strengthened data ecosystem that does not tolerate misuse of statistics is needed at the national and global levels if the public good that could be generated is not to be seriously undermined. We should cheer on those who produce statistics that serve the public good and call shame on those who suppress, distort, manipulate and misuse numbers to mislead, cover up and divert attention from what is really going on. There is an opportunity to give fresh impetus to efforts to implement a system of governance for statistics serving the public good that will serve the citizens of all nations. Now is the time to grasp that opportunity'.[2]

Misuse impacts economies, policies and societies to a very large extent. It involves societies and individual persons and their intentional or negligible communication of information with the effect of unfair personal or group benefits. Andreas Georgiou (Visiting Lecturer and Visiting Scholar Amherst College, USA) argues that the manipulation of official statistics is corruption and indeed it is grand corruption and political corruption. In '*The manipulation of official statistics as corruption and ways of understanding it*' he argues that even when in recent times steps have been taken to help make corruption in official statistics more difficult, instances of corruption persist. To decisively address the problem he proposes a schematic model for understanding corruption in official statistics based on the characteristics of the manifestations or phenomena of corruption in official statistics. The benefit of having such a model is that it enables one to identify what institutional or legal setting, action, institution or person presents a problem, vulnerability or source of risk in a given system of production of a specific official statistical product in a given country, and how to address it. The model can also inform a discussion about what needs to be changed at the level of international/supranational arrangements, whether concerning institutional settings, processes, or legal and ethical frameworks, affecting the production of official statistics.

Finally in this section on Misuse of statistics, Victor Beker (University of Belgrano and University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina) in his contribution[3] 'Use and abuse of official statistics in Latin America' presents the context of government interference with statistical activities. He describes how in Latin America and the Caribbean the colonial past affected and still affects the production of statistics. In detail he sheds the light on the government interference in 2007 in the Argentinian Consumer Price Index (CPI) and related statistics. The forgery at concealing the rise in inflation led to statisticians in the National Statistical Office that refused to cooperate to be demoted, and dismissed while others resigned. Others like private consultants and researchers were subject to criminal prosecutions and punished with hefty fines for the "crime" of publishing their own price estimates. The paper inspired by the Argentinian experience concludes with some recommendations to safeguard the integrity of official statistics

4. Manuscripts from IAOS Young Statisticians Prize 2020 (YSP 2020)

The IAOS YSP is an international prize, which is designed to encourage more young statisticians to take an active interest in official statistics, and is awarded for the best paper in the field of official statistics written by a young statistician. In the YSP 2020 competition the first place was awarded to Ms. Kenza Sallier (Statistics Canada) with her article "*Toward More User-Centric Data Access Solutions: Producing Synthetic Data of High Analytical Value by Data Synthesis*". (Vol36, 2020, pp. 1059–1066). The third place was awarded to "*Big Data, Differential Privacy and National Statistical Organisations*" (Vol36, 2020, pp. 1067–1074) by Mr. James Bailie (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The second place of the 2020 IAOS YSP was awarded to Mr. Johannes Gussenbauer and Mr. Gregor de Cillia (Statistics Austria) with' *The R-Package surveysd: Estimating standard errors for Complex Surveys with a Rotating Panel Design*. They present an innovative approach for calculating variance estimates for net changes for indicators regarding trends in surveys with a rotating panel design. The presented tool, R-Package

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[1] Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations (2013). World Stat. Oxford Martin School. Webpage https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/commission/WorldStat_Hosting_Criteria.pdf.

[2] See Pullinger (2021), Misuse of statistics: time to speak out. In SJIAOS Vol37/1.

[3] This article is an updated version of the article that was published in ESTADISTICA, vol. 68, December 2016, pp. 43–53. It is published in SJIAOS conform the agreement on the yearly exchange of one manuscript between the Statistical Journal of the IAOS and ESTADISTICA.

surveysd, supports a straightforward way for producing estimates and corresponding standard errors for such complex surveys using bootstrap techniques. Based on data from the user database for the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions they show how the method can lead to a significant decrease in variance assuming that structural patterns for the indicator in question remain fairly robust over time.

A special YSP commendation for a paper from a developing nation went to: "*Household Consumption Allocation and the Collective Household Model: Children Share of Household Resources in The Gambia*" by Madi Mangan (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics). This paper studies the household demand for six categories of household goods using household income and expenditure survey data of the Gambia, directed to analyze the allocation of resources among young and adult members of these households. The analysis based on a collective quadratic Almost Ideal Demand System (CQUAIDS) estimated by a Feasible Generalized Nonlinear Least Squares (FGNLS), shows the effect of demographic, distributive factor, price and income elasticities on the shares of household resources.

5. Governance in official statistics

The three manuscripts in this section all start from the 'Data revolution'. They cover the enormous amount of data available via open data, the adherence with the fundamental principles of the use of these new data sources and the opportunities of modern IT and management systems to analyze, monitor and evaluate the economic situation in a situation with a large amount of available data from different data sources.

In '*Open Data for Official Statistics: History, Principles, and Implementation*' Shaida Badiee, Eric Swanson, Caleb Rudow (Open Data Watch) provide a documentary and exhaustive manuscript on Open Data. The premise of the data revolution of access to all forms of data is the starting point for an extensive review of the development of standards for the production and dissemination of open data, the implementation of these standards in national statistical systems, tool kits, readiness assessments, and maturity models that are available to guide national statistical offices (NSOs) in the adoption of open data. While focusing on open data for official statistics, many of the discussed concepts and principles are applicable to data produced by other functions of government, by academic researchers, civil society organizations, and even private entities.

The second important documentary manuscript[4] in this section is the contribution 'Mapping big data sources to the fundamental principles' by Dominik Rozkrut (statistics Poland), Gemma van Halderen (UN-ESCAP, Thailand) andOlga Swierkot Struzewska (statistics Poland). The data revolution and the current high demand for accurate and timely data is taken as the starting point for examining the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the context of eight new and big data sources. Based on an in-depth analysis they conclude that each data source can be used for the production of official statistics in adherence with the Fundamental Principles and argue these data sources should be used if National Statistical Systems are to adhere to the first Fundamental Principle of compiling and making available official statistics that honor citizen's entitlement to public information.

In '*Decision-Making Support System as Policy Tool – Serbian Experience*' Miladin Kovacevic, Katarina Stancic (Statistics Serbia) argue that the data revolution is a big challenge and an opportunity for National Statistics Offices (NSOs). The contribution introduces a new statistical tool (Decision-Making Support System DMSS) to facilitate policy-making based on trusted statistics. It is argued how the tool can be used to transform the NSO's role in the statistical system into an active participant in public debate in contrast to the previous traditional, usually passive role of collecting, processing and publishing data. The tool strongly supports the integration of statistics into public policies and connects the knowledge and expertise of official statisticians on one side with political decision makers on the other. The implementation of the tool is illustrated on the system of economic indicators for the Republic of Serbia.

6. Governing by the numbers: Data4Policy

A series of manuscripts in the Journal on the '*The future role of Official Statistics in the informational ecosystem*' was introduced in the December 2019 issue (Vol 35/4) with the opening article '*Governing-by-the-numbers/Statistical governance*' (Radermacher, Vol 35/4, pp. 519–538). This opening article was accompanied by two articles and followed by five articles in the June 2020 issue (Vol 36/2), two articles in the December

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[4]This manuscript is an edited and revised version of an unofficial background paper prepared by a United Nations Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics for the 51st session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

2020 issue (Vol 36/4) as well as a number of comments on the corresponding discussion platform. In this issue (Vol 37/1) the threat of publications on 'Data4Policy' will be continued with five more articles. This section in this issue, the third block of articles on D4P is introduced by a guest editorial by Walter Radermacher (Germany).

7. Nowcasting

The high pressure for national and international statistical offices to provide more up-to-date information for monitoring sustainable development and providing timely evidence for policy makers has led to an increased interest in nowcasting. Technological innovations, new data sources and the emergence of big data have created additional opportunities to follow economic and social developments with reduced time lags, in some cases even in real-time. Many initiatives have been taken to explore the possibilities of nowcasting, however harmonization on these efforts was relatively limited. To overcome this, in February 2020, a technical workshop was organized by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System (CCS-UN) to discuss current practices, identify gaps where additional methodological work is needed, share successful communication strategies and identify opportunities for collaboration. The section on Nowcasting in this issue of the Journal contains four manuscripts presented at the workshop. This section is introduced by a guest editorial by Steve MacFeely (UNCTAD, Switzerland).

8. Agricultural Statistics

The International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS) is a three year recurrent well established international conference with a clear focus on the domain of Agriculture and related statistics. The successful ICAS VIII conference in November 2019 in New Delhi, India, was again a milestone in the exchange of expertise on new developments in agricultural statistics. In this issue two manuscripts from this conference will be presented. A further three articles from this conference are expected in the next issue (Vol37, (2021), Nr. 2) of the Journal.

One of the main sources for agricultural information on harvest, stocks and characteristics of the farmers is still the Agricultural Census. The procedure and methodologies for collecting the basic information is

due to the data revolution also fast changing. In their contribution '*Agricultural census 2020 – how to reduce costs and burden? The European Statistical System approach*' Andreas Lazar, Johan Selenius, Christine Wirtz and Denisa Florescu (Eurostat, Luxembourg) present the technical and methodological aspects of the newly modified system for the European agricultural censuses. Under the new set-up, EU countries can reduce the burden on respondents while increasing the availability of statistics for the census 2020. A set of 184 core variables is collected as a census for all farms above common physical thresholds in all countries with the target of covering 98% of each country's agriculture. For sub-samples of farms, the core variables will be supplemented with variables grouped in three modules. The system allows countries to use multiple sources and methods to obtain data subject to meeting pre-defined quality requirements.

In the second contribution Jairo Castano (FAO, Italy) in '*Integrating agricultural statistical operations for optimal data collection*' reports on the FAO World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 (WCA 2020). The WCA advocates the development of an integrated multi year programme of statistical operations involving Agricultural Census (AC), current surveys and other data collection operations. The rationale of this program is that by integrating the diverse operations, the AC can focus on collecting essential structural items, while regular agricultural sample surveys and administrative registers can focus on collecting non-structural data needed more frequently. This approach would also avoid that, due to the needs, when a census of agriculture is planned, the pressure exerted tby stakeholders on the census agency to collect both structural and non-structural data (atypical for a census), leading to an overburdening the census questionnaire and ultimately jeopardizing the quality of the census operation, can be avoided. Castano shows that an increasing number of countries are making efforts towards better integrating statistical activities.

9. Quality in statistics

The 10th European Conference on Quality in Statistics planned for 9–12 June 2020 to be held in Budapest Hungary, was cancelled due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This conference is considered to be a main recurrent (two yearly) event to facilitate the exchange of experiences and new insights in developments in quality management and procedures

and governance for achieving official statistics of a high quality. In earlier issues of this Journal there were many manuscripts published that originated from papers and presentations from this series of conferences. When the decision was taken to cancel the 2020 Conference the Journal, with the help and agreement of the organizing committee, could approach successfully the authors of around 10 papers to prepare their paper as a submission to the Journal. In this issue the first three manuscripts dating from this initiative will be presented. In the next issue (June 2020, Vol37/2) another two articles planned for this conference will be presented. The other manuscripts will follow in the second half of 2021 and March 2022.

The first manuscript '*Updating the Paradigm of Official Statistics: New Quality Criteria for Integrating New Data and Methods in Official Statistics*' by a group of authors from Statistics Netherlands (Sofie De Broe, Peter Struijs, Piet Daas, Arnout van van Delden, Joep Burger, Jan Van den Brakel, Olav Ten Bosch en Kees Zeelenberg), aims to elicit a discussion of the existence of a paradigm shift in official statistics through the emergence of new (unstructured) data sources and methods that may not adhere to established and existing statistical practices and quality frameworks. The paper discusses strengths and weaknesses of several data sources. Via discussing methodological, technical and cultural barriers in dealing with new data and methods in data science the paper concludes with suggestions of updating the existing quality frameworks. The authors take the position that there is no paradigm shift but that the existing production processes should be adjusted and that existing quality frameworks should be updated in order for official statistics to benefit from the fusion of data, knowledge and skills among survey methodologists and data scientists.

The contribution by Hans Viggo Sæbo and Marius Andersen (Statistics Norway) '*Coordination and quality assurance by a programme for official statistics*' presents the new Statistics Act from Norway that was adopted by the Government at the end of 2020 prescribing a multi-annual programme for official statistics. This programme defines requirements for and the content of official statistics, and which authorities will be responsible for the production of these statistics. The innovation in this new act is the emphasis in the programme on coordination and cooperation as a key for improving the quality of official statistics.

The contribution details how a programme for official statistics can promote coordination, cooperation and quality improvements of official statistics. It also describes how the preparation of the act has revealed challenges like issues linked to professional independence and impartiality of producers of official statistics and the relationship between official statistics and management information.

The third contribution in this section is prepared by Jolanta Szutkowska (Statistics Poland). In her manuscript '*Improvement in the methodology and quality of measurement of the Producer Price Index (PPI) in industry from the perspective of data users*' she argues that within the changing environment of the ICT technology and digital economy, there are growing expectations of users in relation to producer price statistics in the context of Producer Price Index (PPI). It is important to keep providing data on producer prices that reflect current price trends in a timely and accurate manner. Besides describing the main components of producing the PPI, she presents methodological challenges and exemplary actions to improve the methodology and quality of measurement of producer price statistics in the context of innovation and digitization of the economy. These changes concern such areas as selection of representative items, updating of weights, methods of adjustment to quality changes in products, harmonized data quality assessment programme for the PPI obtained from on-line digital platforms ("big data"). She argues that in the context of producer prices, the need to explore new methodological possibilities will arise because of the short life cycle of goods and services in the innovation economy. These situations may cause difficulties in monitoring trends in prices due to too short series of data for statistical observations. Another important issue will be the evaluation of the role of automation and robotization of Industry 4.0 as a price forming factor in producer prices and the impact of this phenomenon on methodological solutions in price statistics.

10. Manuscripts on other themes in this issue

In '*Employment Indicators: Russian Experience in Assessing and Methodology for Analyzing Compliance with SDG Indicators*' Elena Zarova, Konstantin Laykam, Elvira Dubravskaya and Sergey Musikhin (Russia) show the features of applying the requirements of international standards to assess informal employment and they specifically propose methods for assessing informal employment in the formal sector of the economy, i.e. those enterprises that submit employment reports to the national statistical office. This

phenomenon occurs according to the authors in many countries but the methodology for the evaluation of the effects on employment statistics seems in practice to be rather diverse. The authors test a theoretical idea to come to more coordinated decisions on regulating informal employment by assessing sustainable causal relationships between informal employment indicators and the main components of sustainable development goals.

Statistical disclosure is a recurrent and important theme in manuscripts for the journal, exemplifying the relation between official statistics providers and their users. Rainer Lenz and Tim Hochgürtel (Germany) start from the statement that as part of statistical disclosure control National Statistical Offices can only deliver confidential data being sufficiently protected meeting national legislation, and when releasing confidential micro data to users, such data holders usually apply what are called anonymization methods to the data. They argue in their paper '*Random disclosure in confidential statistical databases*' that in real world micro data, incompatibility between data sets and not unique combinations of quasi-identifiers are very likely and it is nearly impossible for a user to decide whether or not two records refer to the same underlying statistical unit. This makes them conclude that disclosure risks estimated thus far are overrated in the sense that revealed information is always a combination of systematically derived results and non-negligible random assignment.

Setia Pramana, Siti Mariyah and Takdir Takdir (Politechnic University and Statistics Indonesia) show how – based specifically on price statistics – massive data if being mined and analyzed correctly can provide valuable alternative data sources for official statistics. In their manuscript '*Big Data Implementation for Price Statistics in Indonesia: Past, Current, and Future Developments*' they provide a comprehensive review of experiences in exploiting various Big Data sources for price statistics, followed by the current development and the near future plans. Limitations, challenges, and advances for each approach would be presented.

The final article in this issue deals with the quality of meta data. Vikas Kumar (Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, India) in 'Usability of India's Government Statistics' reflects on the quality of metadata as a crucial determinant of usability/interpretability of data. He draws attention in the paper to the poor quality of India's government statistics and the paucity of metadata necessary to understand the problems. The poor quality of metadata impairs cross sectional as well as inter-temporal comparisons and policymaking apart from

concealing biases and lapses of government statisticians. The paper draws on the experience of three states Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur and Nagaland and is a call for more attention and precision in metadata and their relation to effective policymaking.

I wish you pleasant readings of these interesting articles.

11. SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the IAOS launched the on-line platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics (www.officialstatistics.com) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites to contribute to important discussions at a time of own choosing. With each release of an issue of the Statistical Journal, a new discussion topic is launched via a leading article or based on a section in the Journal. Each discussion runs for a year and is closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s).

See: www.officialstatistics.com.

12. Some words about the next issues (Vol. 37 (2021), Nr. 2, Nr. 3.)

The next two issues of the journal are already in full preparation. The June 2021 issue (Vol. 37 (2021), Nr. 2) will be an issue with several sections, each containing 4 to 8 articles. The issue will start with manuscripts on COVID-19, it will contain a few more articles on quality from the due to the COVID-19 outbreak cancelled 2020 European Quality in Statistics Conference as well as a few more articles from the 2019 International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS) conference in New Delhi, edited by Linda Young (USA, NASS). The issue will contain further a range of other manuscripts dealing with a diversity of other topics. The June 2021 issue will also have the closing manuscript of the second SJIAOS discussion: *Why should there still be a need for elaborate official statistics in the future?* As well as the closing article on the third discussion '*Population censuses; are statistical dinosaurs able to adapt? Population and Housing Censuses: an overdue and old fashioned instrument or still a modern, severely needed and steadfast tool?*

A Guest Editorial team (Pedro Campos, Reija Helenius, Helen MacGillivray, Steve MacFeely, Hugues

Kouadio and Pieter Everaers) is in full swing to prepare the September Special issue (Vol37 (2021), Nr. 3) on '*New developments in statistical training and Data Science*'.

Beyond these issues with a diversity of manuscripts, there is for the coming four issues one more Special Issue planned: a guest editorial team has started preparing a Special Issue on 'New developments in Statistical Capacity Building'. The team is in search for additional authors and manuscripts, so, do not hesitate to inform me when you have a manuscript or idea for a manuscript for this specials. (pevssjiaos@gmail.com).

Of course there are always slots for other manuscripts; authors are kindly invited to submit their manuscript to: https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts.

13. The COVID-19 pandemic and new ways of soliciting manuscripts

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially changed the international conference agenda. Conferences are canceled or postponed (or organized virtually). As for many other research fields the cancelation or change of format of the international conferences has an important impact. Many Journals (also SJIAOS) are partly based on the active soliciting by the editors of articles on important and relevant new developments via the participation in conferences, networking and observing presentations listening to peers etc.

Virtual conferences are more and more seen as a good alternative. In general it is easier to participate in a virtual conference (from home, no traveling costs, etc). However the oversight and flexibility for the editor in chief will be substantially restricted compared to walking around and switching sessions in physical conference, and this risk that Journals will – to a lesser extent than before – be able to catch at an early stage important developments. New ways to solicit manuscripts are experienced. The editorial board of SJIAOS is inviting all readers, the editors and reviewers and other interested not to hesitate to send important papers and manuscripts for review. The editor in chief and editorial boards members will also, more than before, try to be involved at an early stage in discussing contributions from the virtual conferences.

https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts.

Pieter Everaers
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