

Letter from the President

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SURVEY STATISTICIANS (IASS)

Dear IASS colleagues,

Back in January the Executive Committee agreed on your behalf that the IASS should add its name as a signatory to a statement (<http://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/GeorgiouStatement.pdf>) urging the Greek authorities to end the legal proceeding against Andreas Georgiou, former President of the Greek national statistical service, ELSTAT, and other ELSTAT officials for their work at ELSTAT during the period 2010-2015. Sadly, they did not do this and in June The Greek Supreme Court sentenced Andreas to two years on probation and ruled that he must face further charges. This case highlights the need to protect statistical integrity from political interference in the most robust manner possible. At least one commentator has suggested that some statistical frameworks might benefit from review: <http://bruegel.org/2018/06/the-european-union-must-defend-andreas-georgiou/> .

The IASS will continue to support and promote statistical rigour, integrity and independence. We will speak out whenever it is appropriate to do so. Our particular remit concerns data collected by means of statistical surveys. We should seek to ensure that neither the design of surveys, nor the analysis of survey data and publication of results, is influenced by political pressure. There is a role for all of us to stay alert to these possibilities.

To my mind, one of the most important roles of the IASS is to provide a means to share the expertise and knowledge of our members across the global community. The number of specialist survey statisticians in any one country, let alone within a single organisation, is typically rather small. It is easy to become rather isolated and unaware of new ideas and methods being developed in other places. To that end, we aim to be a global network, bringing people and ideas together.

This publication, *The Survey Statistician*, provides an important channel of communication throughout our network. Our twitter account provides another channel. But there remain considerable benefits in making personal, face-to-face contacts. To that end, the IASS sponsors workshops, conferences and short courses around the world. We have sponsored four such events in 2018 and in October we will be inviting organisers of events taking place in 2019 to apply for support. If you are involved in organising a survey statistics event in 2019, or have colleagues doing so, please get in touch.

In addition to giving these events general support, the IASS is particularly keen to enable the participation of statisticians who have few opportunities to participate in such events and who would be particularly likely to benefit from participation. With that in mind, we were recently successful in bidding for funds to support the participation of statisticians from developing countries at three of the conferences and workshops that we are supporting in 2018. The funds come from the ISI's allocation from the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and should cover the costs of around twelve participants across the three events. I am delighted that we have managed to do this, and I am looking forward to meeting some of these participants and hearing their feedback on our events.

Our thoughts, like those of the other ISI sections, are now turning towards the next World Statistics Congress in Kuala Lumpur in August 2019. Information about the WSC appears elsewhere in this issue, so I will not repeat it here. I would encourage you – our members – to take this opportunity to get involved, whether that be in organising a session, presenting a paper, or simply participating in the Congress and choosing from the wide and varied scientific and social programme. The WSC is always a wonderful event, with much to enjoy, much to learn, and many friends to make from around the world. Come to Kuala Lumpur if you can!

Peter Lynn,
IASS President