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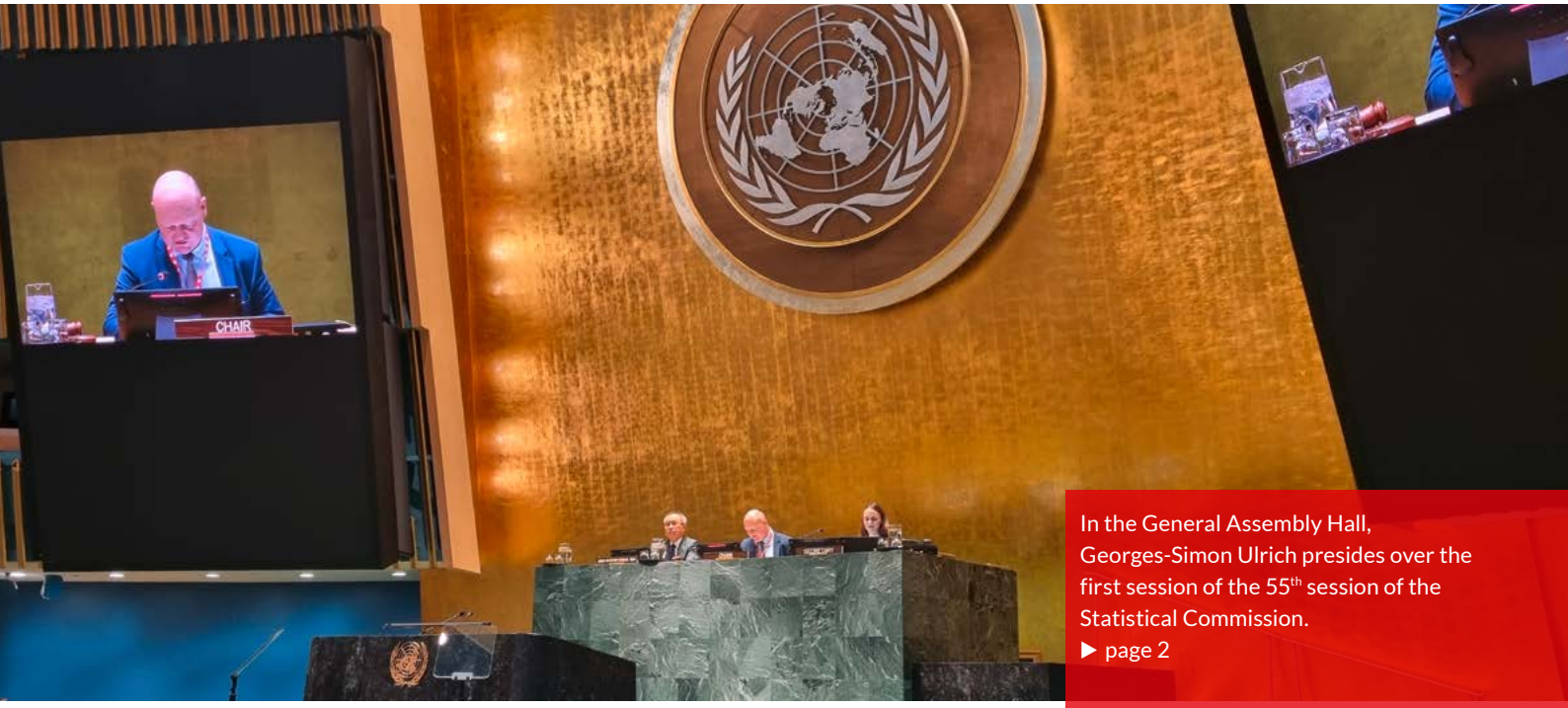
ISSUE 13 • JULY 2024

BEYOND THE HORIZON

INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE SWISS FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE



In the General Assembly Hall, Georges-Simon Ulrich presides over the first session of the 55th session of the Statistical Commission.
▶ page 2

EDITORIAL

THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE HAD AN EXCITING START TO 2024

Dear readers

The new year saw a change of leadership at the Federal Department of Home Affairs for the first time in 11 years. Federal Councillor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider has been at the head of the Department since January 2024, and on 19 February she found time to visit our Office in Neuchâtel. During her visit she emphasised the importance of official statistics, pointing out in particular their independence and the fundamental role they play in democracy and society. Speaking with FSO employees, she underlined how much she appreciated our work. In conversation with the Minister I was able to outline the forthcoming steps in the development of statistical production, while detailing the FSO's


Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director General, FSO

CONTENT

contribution in the areas of data management, data science and artificial intelligence. At a time of digital transformation, synergies arising between the different task areas promise exciting and trend-setting developments in official statistics and for the FSO in its role as a central information and data provider. You can read more about this in the article on data science and AI in this issue.

Still in the same month, the 55th session of the UN Statistical Commission opened in New York with the election of the Bureau. On 27 February I was elected Chair of the Commission for one year. Together with the Bureau, consisting of the five member states Switzerland, Mexico, Tunisia, Slovenia and Republic of Korea, I will moderate the Commission's discussions in the coming year and report on the results. On the last day of the session, the draft resolution on 'an inclusive and representative Statistical Commission to leave no one behind' was adopted. The resolution is intended to make an important contribution to the discourse on inclusivity and representation and, with the gradual expansion of membership from 24 to 54 Commission seats, details the objective of smaller states for greater inclusivity. It was adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council in June 2024. You can read more about this in the article 'An inside look at the Swiss Chairmanship of the UN Statistical Commission' in this issue. It is particularly important to me for statistics to get to grips with challenges such as AI and further development of the data ecosystem at both national and international level.

Another standout event at the beginning of this year was the 2024 World Economic Forum. As part of the WEF, on 17 January the Federal Statistical Office organised the 'Data governance and how we should use data to fight fake news' event in cooperation with Microsoft. The panel discussion stressed the importance of data governance at national and international level as well as the need for comprehensive cooperation. Various approaches were discussed to ensure the public's right to access high-quality information.

Bilateral discussions held in April in Rwanda and the IAOS conference in Mexico in May provided further opportunities to share experiences with other national statistical offices and the wider data and statistics community. For our work in the UN Statistical Commission and other multilateral bodies it is essential to create a shared understanding of the challenges facing us and possible solutions. This is the only way to introduce good international standards.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Beyond the Horizon and wish you a pleasant summer.

Georges-Simon Ulrich,
Director General, FSO

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE SWISS CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

At the end of February, FSO Director General Georges-Simon Ulrich was elected Chair of the UN Statistical Commission. We take you behind the scenes for some highlights from our New York schedule.

The FSO delegation – composed of Director General Georges-Simon Ulrich, Ambassador Benjamin Rothen and representatives from the International and national affairs Section Ambre Crettenand and Pascal Blickle – arrives in New York. In the coming days, they will be attending the meetings and side events of the 55th session of the Statistical Commission at UN HQ. They will also meet with various high-level officials from the United Nations and statistical agencies of other countries. The delegation has come to present Switzerland's agreed position – developed by Swiss experts – in response to each of the agenda topics.

In his role as vice-chair of the UN Statistical Commission, Georges-Simon Ulrich meets Chilean Ambassador Paula Narváez, who is President of the UN Economic and Social Council to which the Statistical Commission is attached, to discuss ideas for strengthening dialogue between the two bodies. The delegation also met with Amandeep Singh Gill, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy for Technology, for a discussion that revealed a great deal of common ground on data stewardship and future perspectives in this area.

Ambassador Benjamin Rothen leads the first round of negotiations on the draft resolution for 'an inclusive and representative Statistical Commission to leave no one behind'. The aim is to reach consensus on a text setting out the goals for effective and inclusive working methods in the Statistical Commission (see box).

Georges-Simon Ulrich is unanimously elected Chair of the Statistical Commission and takes his place at the podium from which he will chair the Commission's meetings for the remainder of the week. In his opening address, he highlights the Commission's important work to ensure the comparability of data in official

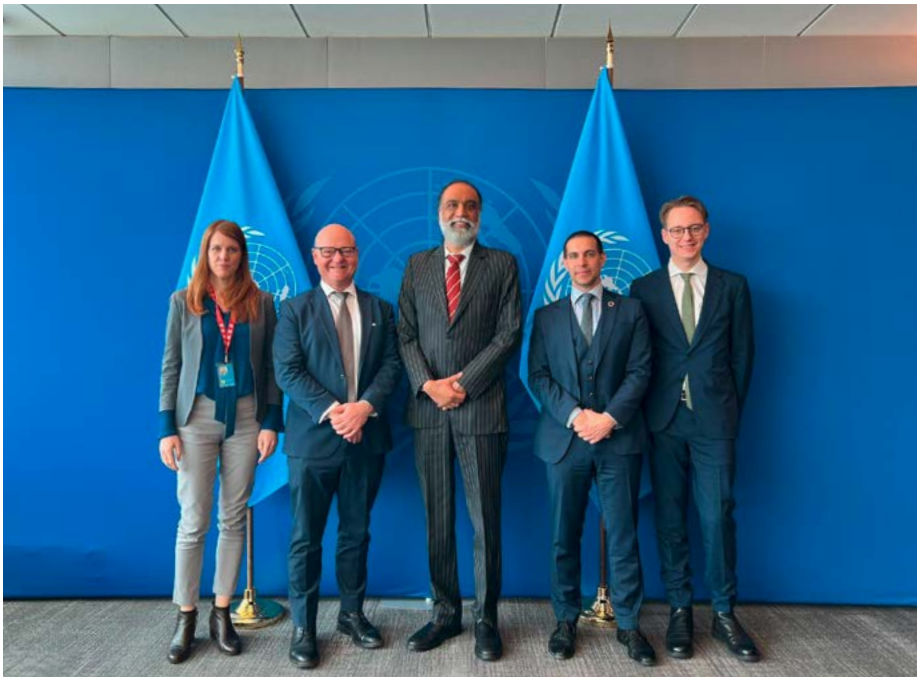
statistics, in addition to efforts in newer fields such as data management. Colleagues from Tunisia, Mexico, Republic of Korea and Slovenia join Mr Ulrich as elected members on the Commission's Bureau who will work together throughout the year until the next session.

Following the adoption of the agenda, Mr Ulrich opens the debate on the first substantive agenda item, concerning proposals for more effective implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Ambassador Benjamin Rothen then explains Switzerland's position regarding these important principles, which were adopted by the Commission 30 years ago. By Thursday afternoon, the assembled delegates will have covered many other topics, such as indicators to measure progress on the SDGs, national accounts, agricultural statistics and data science.

More than 50 people gather at the invitation of the FSO and UN Women for a discussion exploring the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence in advancing gender equality as part of the Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative. Topics include how to address bias in data and AI models.

Georges-Simon Ulrich bangs his gavel one last time and declares the 55th session of the Statistical Commission closed. Earlier this morning, the Commission adopted a draft resolution on inclusion and representation in the Commission, a compromise that was the outcome of three rounds of negotiations. In total, the Commission adopted 23 decisions covering the various agenda items, marking the end of the week-long meeting of the international statistical community. As always, the session allowed decisions to be reached on current and upcoming challenges in data and statistics and provided an opportunity to share best practices.

Pascal Blickle, Ambre Crettenand, International and national affairs, FSO



Rahel Pema, Minister, Head of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN; **Georges-Simon Ulrich,** Director General, FSO; **Amandeep Singh Gill,** UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology; **Benjamin Rothen,** Ambassador, Head of International and national affairs, FSO; **Pascal Blickle,** International Affairs Officer, FSO (from left to right)

Resolution on 'an inclusive and representative Statistical Commission to leave no one behind'

How to ensure adequate representation has been a topic of debate at the Statistical Commission for several years. Last autumn, the Commission's Bureau presented a background note outlining six goals for a more inclusive and representative Commission. This note and the subsequent draft resolution are the outcome of a broad consultation. The Bureau mandated Switzerland and its Ambassador Benjamin Rothen to moderate the negotiations on its behalf.

The resolution adopts the goals set out in the background note. These include ensuring that the Commission remain as technical as possible, guaranteeing the inclusion of all relevant actors and ensuring continued acceptance of the standards adopted by the Commission. The Commission and its members should also play an active role in discussions on data and statistics within the UN system. And finally, by progressively increasing the number of seats from 24 to 54, the Commission aims to respond to smaller states' long-standing request for greater inclusion.

Following approval by the Statistical Commission, the text was adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council in 5 June 2024. Ten additional members will be elected to the Commission for the first time in April 2025 and the Commission will meet with 54 members from 2028.

LINKS

Opening address (27 Feb.)

Exploring the Risks and Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Advancing Gender Equality

Report on the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission (PDF, 1 March)
- Draft resolution: An inclusive and representative Statistical Commission to leave no one behind
- Background note for the draft resolution

Discussion exploring the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence in advancing gender equality (PDF, 28 Feb.)

Representatives of numerous UN member states, international organisations and civil society devoted a week to numerous topics relating to data and statistics in the Statistical Commission (1 March).

THE NEW DATA SCIENCE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Coordination Committee held its first meeting on 27 March 2024 in Bern, bringing together representatives of the federal and cantonal offices active in the growing fields of data science and AI. This meeting made a major contribution towards identifying the new committee's priority topics and common goals as well as its strategic coordination.

The Data Science and AI Coordination Committee is the latest committee in the Swiss landscape of committees organised around statistics and data and their protection, analysis, management and exploitation. This new committee aims to ensure a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead, to establish a dialogue on topics of interest and to enable cantonal and federal administrations to share experiences with one another.

Around forty participants from federal and cantonal administrations took part in three thematic workshops in small groups. The aim of each workshop was to identify committee members' needs and to formulate their expectations. The first workshop identified the main topics relating to data science and artificial intelligence. The second workshop established a common understanding of the goals, enabling the committee to achieve a sense of direction. The third workshop focused on what is required specifically to stimulate effective coordination.

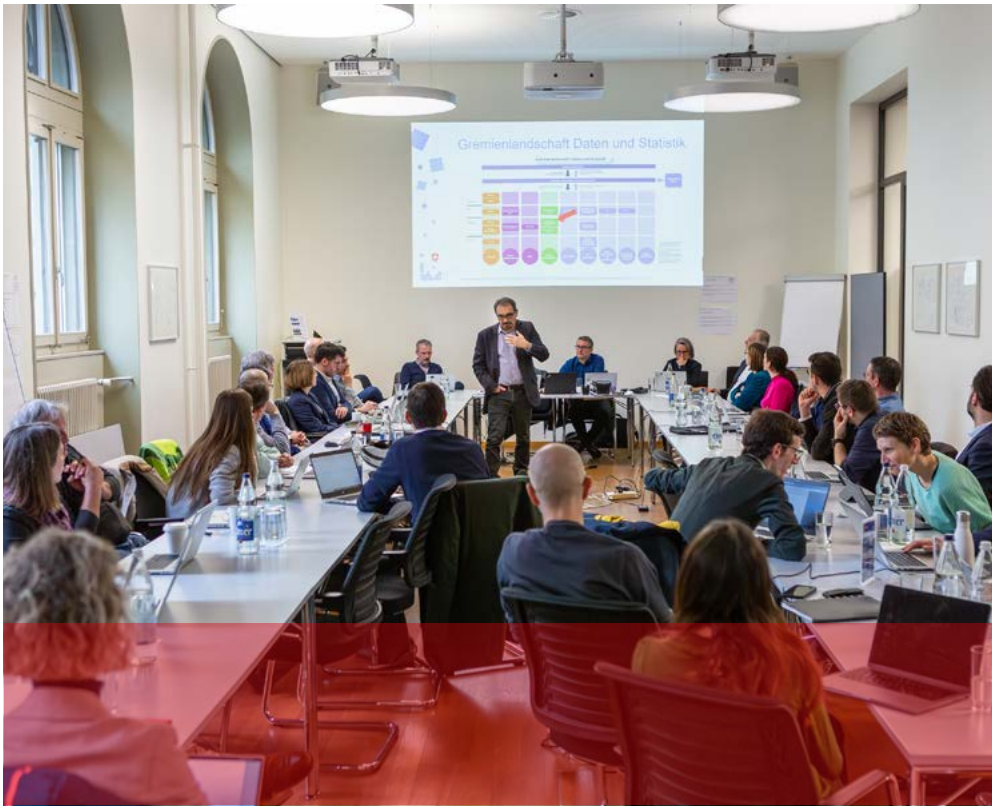
This first meeting also provided an opportunity to present the activities of the Data Science Competence Center (DSCC) and those of the Competence Network for Artificial Intelligence (CNAI), which are part of the Federal Council's official mandate, in particular its data science strategy. The DSCC is a service provider in the field of data science and AI for Swiss public administrations (Confederation, cantons and communes). The CNAI, in its role as a network, aims to establish a common terminology around AI. The CNAI is also compiling a list of AI projects within the federal administration to provide an overview of the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning within the Confederation. Both the DSCC and the CNAI are attached to the FSO and promote the sharing of knowledge and best practice through community meetings.

The meeting was organised and run jointly by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) and Digital Public Services Switzerland (DPSS). These two organisations actively support innovation in the field of data, while respecting the values of the rule of law. Following this first meeting, members received the minutes of the meeting, summarising the main points of the discussions. This common basis will enable a second meeting to be organised, taking into account the needs expressed and the knowledge acquired.

Olexiy Lavrynets, Data Science and AI section, Communication Manager, FSO

The workshops were organised using the 'World Café' method, i.e. 20 minutes of discussion for each group.

The meeting was chaired by **Bertrand Loison,** Vice Director of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO, standing) and by **Andreas Burren,** Head of IT Coordination at Digital Public Services Switzerland (DPSS, seated to the left of the screen).



LINKS

Data Science Competence Center (DSCC)

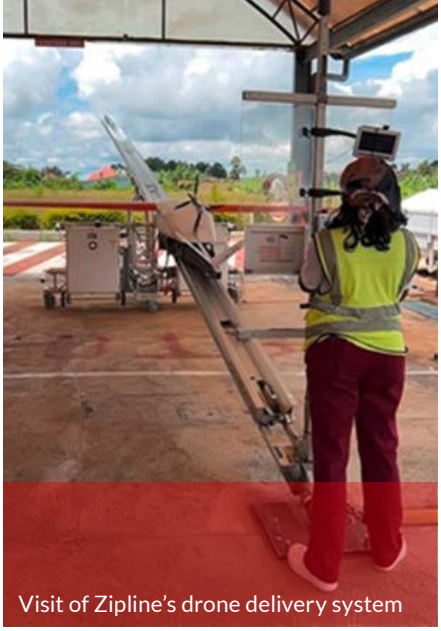
Competence Network for Artificial Intelligence (CNAI) **cnai.swiss**

The federal administration's data science strategy – Common bases, competences and objectives for the application of data science (Publication by FSO)

Digital public services Switzerland.ch

Should you wish to learn more about our national communities, do not hesitate to visit the dedicated website: swissdatacommUNITY.ch

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD DATA: A SWISS DELEGATION VISITS RWANDA TO DISCUSS STATISTICS AND INNOVATION



Visit of Zipline's drone delivery system

Every minute, there is a loud whir and an unmanned aerial drone takes off next to us, carrying blood supplies and medicines to remote health centres in Rwanda. Within five minutes of an order being placed via WhatsApp, a package is swiftly prepared and dispatched to a remote region. This impressive project by the American company Zipline in partnership with Rwanda is driving major improvements in healthcare in the country. But what is the real impact of such projects? And how do we know the drones are getting the right supplies to the right people? How do countries know if they are on the right track to achieve their healthcare goals? This is where data and statistics come in. And that was the focus of our trip to Rwanda.

In April 2024, I accompanied FSO Director General Georges-Simon Ulrich and the head of International and national affairs Benjamin Rothen on a working visit to Rwanda. The objectives of the trip were to clarify increased cooperation within the UN Statistical Commission, to present the idea of a global metadata platform, to clarify Rwanda's potential participation in the platform and to gain a comprehensive understanding of Rwanda's national system with regard to data and official statistics. The exchange with the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kigali proved invaluable in preparing for the trip. The staff of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) offered crucial insights into the context that allowed us to better understand what we saw and heard during the visit.

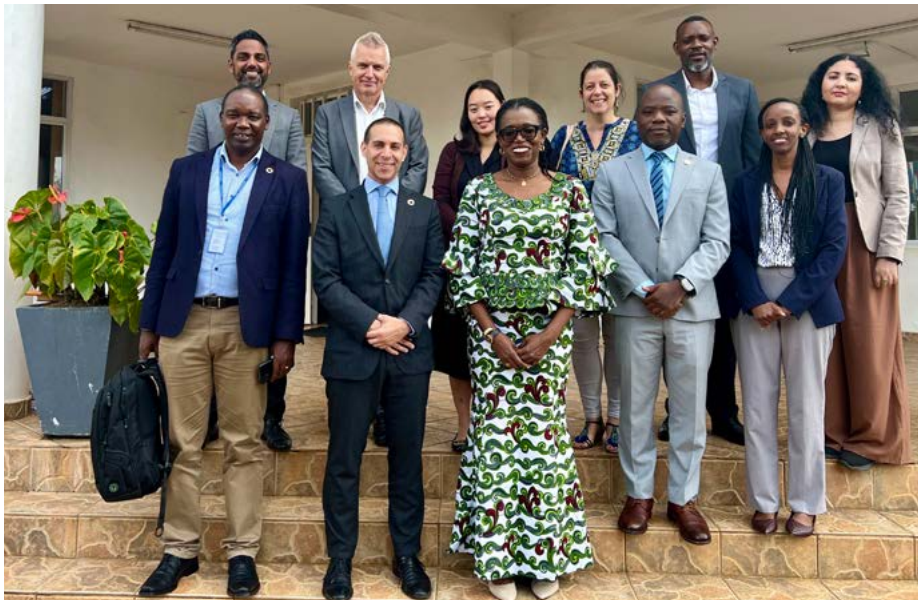
A former superior of mine spoke enthusiastically about an 'elevator approach' in the multilateral system. This concept emphasises the importance of ensuring that policy decisions made at the UN level are effectively implemented at the country level, while simultaneously ensuring a 'reality check' on the ground to ensure the right decisions are being made multilaterally. With FSO Director General Georges-Simon Ulrich serving as the Chair of the UN Statistical Commission since February 2024, this visit to Rwanda was an important opportunity to discuss the ongoing multilateral initiatives in New York and Geneva with a nation very engaged in data and statistics. Rwanda is recognised by the data and statistics community as one of the strongest voices in Africa. The country is home to the UN Regional Hub for Big Data and Science in Africa and chairs the Executive Committee of PARIS21, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, which is hosted at the OECD.

The delegation also used the talks in Rwanda to present Switzerland's idea of a global metadata platform based in Geneva. The platform would aim to facilitate the comparison and multiple use of data across international boundaries while upholding the principle of national data sovereignty. Discussions are already underway with technology companies to program AI chatbots such as ChatGPT to access the 'good data' published by states and international organisations, with the aim of increasing transparency and stemming the spread of fake news. Switzerland has committed to conducting a feasibility study later this year, and Rwanda has expressed keen interest in participating in the pilot project for the platform.

During the visit to Rwanda, the Swiss delegation took the opportunity to present the priorities of the FSO: statistics, data management and data science. The delegation also learnt a lot about how Rwanda works with national data and statistics. Switzerland's strategy of multiple use of data across different administrative units is already being implemented to some extent in Rwanda.

In line with the federal government's Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy, which aims to raise Switzerland's political profile and strengthen relations with African states, the visit to Rwanda made it possible both to find partners for multilateral projects and to gain new insights for Switzerland's own nationwide projects.

Dr Steve Tharakan, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland to Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda



Meeting of the Swiss delegation with representatives from various UN agencies

LINKS

Swiss Cooperation Office and Consular Agency in Rwanda

International (meta-) data platform
Find more information in the new brochure (PDF)

Find more pictures on the visit to Rwanda on the last page 14

IOAS CONFERENCE, MEXICO
FROM RAW DATA TO INFORMED DECISIONS: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES IN DATA GOVERNANCE

The world of data has changed dramatically as a result of the digital revolution, not least because the concept of data has changed and broadened. The digitalisation of data needs to be supported by a well-structured data architecture and good data governance. At the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS) conference in May, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) organised a session on data governance together with the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System and the World Health Organization (WHO). The discussion was about why data governance matters and the leading role played by national statistical offices (NSOs).

One of our speakers, **Daniel Casados Rosas, Chief Strategy and Data Officer at Scitum,** shares some of his thoughts about data governance.

Datafication: a foundation for data governance

The availability of data empowers us to better understand global challenges and to come up with equitable solutions. While the digital transformation has facilitated the widespread availability and accessibility of data in computable formats, datafication should be viewed as a distinct evolution. Datafication not only digitalises data, it transforms data into a valuable asset that can be used to drive innovation and solve complex problems. In this sense, datafication is a crucial pillar for data governance, providing a framework to manage, protect and ethically use data to maximise its value for society.

Promoting datafication starts with creating homogeneous definitions and criteria for concepts that like 'data' vary globally due to different cultural and legal interpretations. Establishing common definitions for data and related terms like information, documents and identity is vital for global coordination. Such coordination requires ongoing dialogue among governments, businesses and civil society to develop regulatory frameworks that reflect diverse needs and concerns.

Datafication calls for a dedicated approach to understanding and managing data independently of existing frameworks, which often fail to address data in an effective way. Recognising data as a valuable asset means developing comprehensive practices and regulations tailored to the unique characteristics and challenges presented by that data. This ensures effective data management, contributing to societal progress and well-being.

Public data and private data

Distinguishing between public and private data is crucial for privacy, transparency and innovation. Public data, such as government records, encourage transparency and citizen participation, whereas private data such as personal information must be protected to preserve the autonomy of the individual and prevent misuse. Striking the right balance between access to information and privacy requires clear policies on data collection, storage and sharing, and increased awareness of data privacy and rights.

Traditional definitions of public and private data, which are often tied to the interpretation of information, are insufficient. Datafication emphasises understanding data in its raw form before interpretation, which mitigates potential ambiguities, thus enabling more effective policy-making. Recognising the contextual nature of data helps clarify

Daniel Casados Rosas, Chief Strategy and Data Officer at Scitum; **Malarvizhi Veerappan**, Program Manager at the World Bank; **Miosotis Rivas Peña**, General Director of the National Statistics Office of the Dominican Republic and Chair of the Statistical Conference of the Americas; **Georges-Simon Ulrich**, Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and Chair of the UN Statistical Commission and **Benjamin Rothen**, Ambassador and Head of International and national affairs at Swiss Federal Statistical Office

their treatment and classification, aiding in the distinction between public and private data.

Data and indicators

Data processing initially interprets raw data to create indicators, which are essential for decision-making in both public and private sectors. Government agencies generate indicators to inform public policy, but such indicators also guide the decisions of individuals and organisations. National statistical offices' role in establishing objective indicators rather than subjective interpretations fosters trust and credibility in data management.

With their focus on creating indicators that provide a comprehensive view of social, economic and demographic phenomena, government agencies are central to datafication. Their impartial approach makes them a key source of reliable information, which is essential for informed decision-making.

Data governance

Data governance involves establishing agreements among various societal actors, including governments, businesses and civil society to ensure data is used responsibly and ethically. Data management policies, regulations and structures protect privacy, security and confidentiality. Data governance promotes transparency, accountability and collaboration, fostering trust among stakeholders.

A governing institution, such as a national datafication agency, could lead and coordinate datafication initiatives. This neutral and independent agency would formulate policies and standards, promote data management practices and facilitate data exchange. It would also raise public awareness about datafication and governance, ensuring comprehensive data management for the benefit of society.

Cybersecurity and data

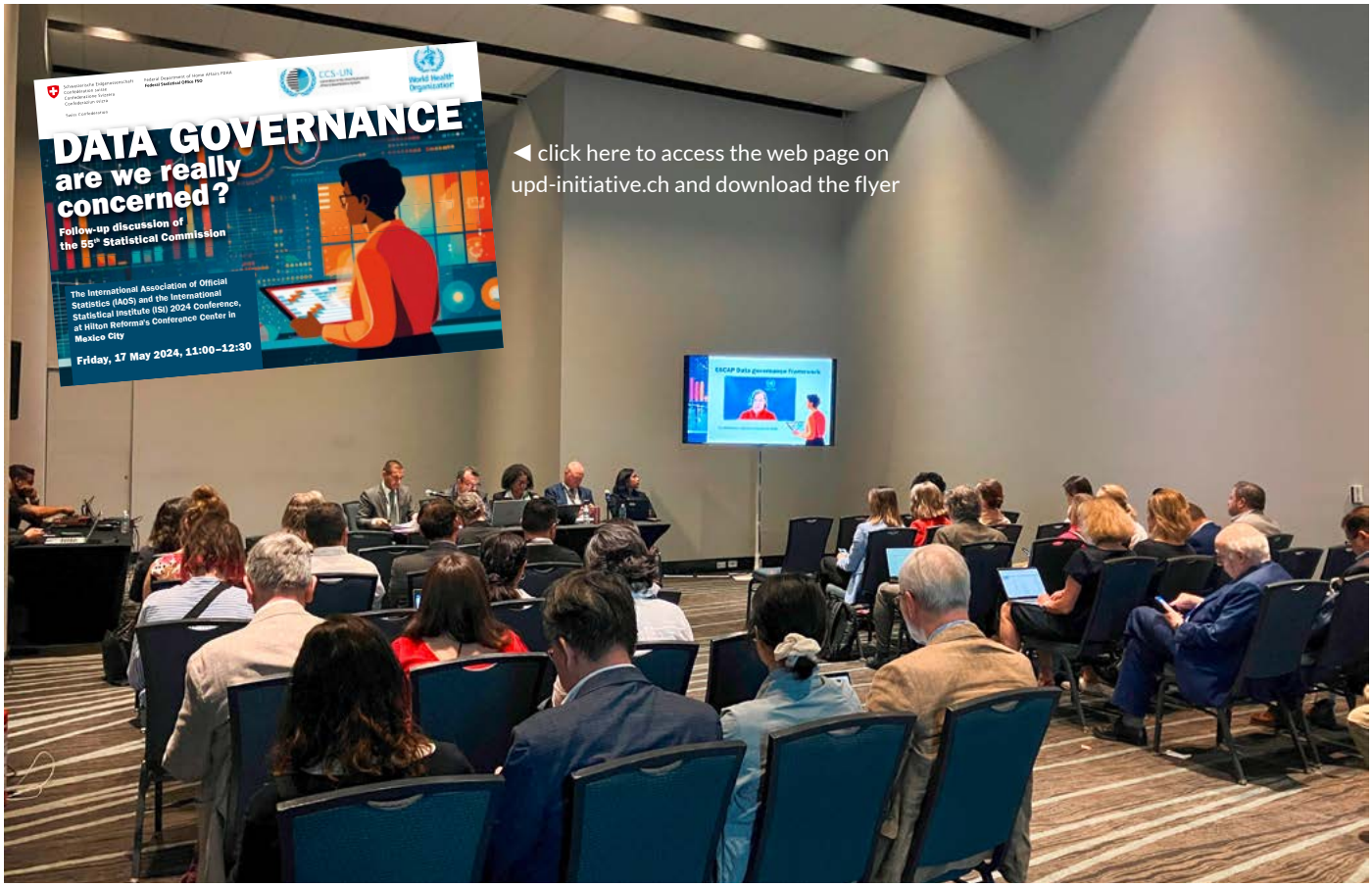
Cybersecurity is central to data protection and must be accessible to all, not just technological elites. Ensuring internet access also means enabling access to data while upholding cybersecurity rights. Traditionally, cybersecurity has focused on large data holders due to complexity and cost, but democratising access to data necessitates inclusive cybersecurity. This means we need to rethink cybersecurity as a fundamental right embedded in all data transactions.

Research and development should integrate cybersecurity into daily data transactions for the benefit of all users, including small businesses often lacking in data protection. Datafication implies democratising digital transformation principles, making cybersecurity an inclusive, de facto element by design.

Conclusion

Data governance must assign a distinct space to data, beyond abstract concepts like 'digital transformation' and 'industry 4.0'. Datafication creates a framework in which local, national and international communities collaborate to utilise data for societal benefit. This collaborative approach ensures data governance protects privacy and security while promoting innovation and development in a digitalised world.

Daniel Casados Rosas,
Chief Strategy and Data Officer at Scitum



TACKLING CHALLENGES IN HEALTH CARE TOGETHER

The tri-national DACH meeting on medical classifications, terminologies and standards took place at the invitation of the FSO on 24/25 January 2024. Participants from Germany (Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices, BfArM), Austria (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, BMSGPK) with the participation of ELGA GmbH, and eHealth Suisse took part in the two-day event in Neuchâtel. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange ideas and knowledge and to discuss the progress made in each country.

The meeting opened with a word of welcome to the approximately 30 participants. Topics discussed included the organisations' key areas of interest, the introduction of ICD-11 (11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases), semantic and technical interoperability in the healthcare system and the revision of the German version of the SNOMED CT (Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms).

The introduction of the ICD-11 diagnostic classification

As a WHO collaborating centre, the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) is playing a key role in German-speaking countries in the introduction of ICD-11 diagnostic classification published by the WHO. In addition to coordinating the introduction of the ICD-10-GM (German Modification) in Germany, the institute's focus is on translation and the transition of the ICD-10-GM to ICD-11. As the integration of the ICD-10-GM into the German healthcare system has been highly complex, it is not yet clear when ICD-11 will be implemented. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK) is focusing on the digitalisation of the healthcare system. The challenges of implementing ICD-11 have also been recognised in Austria. In Switzerland, the introduction of ICD-11 depends on the one hand on the transition from the ICD-10 GM to ICD-11 and on the other on the progress of translating the classification into the national languages German, French and Italian. The FSO played an active part in the German translation of ICD-11 under the direction of the BfArMs. A date has not yet been established for the implementation of ICD-11 in Switzerland.

DACH meeting

Tri-national (Germany = Deutschland, Austria, Switzerland = Confoederatio Helvetica in Latin) meeting

Participants of the DACH meeting on medical classifications, terminologies and standards on 24/25 January 2024 at the FSO

Interoperability and SNOMED CT

DigiSanté, a programme for the promotion of digital transformation, was presented on the second day. The programme is supported by a guarantee credit to develop and highlight the I14Y interoperability platform as Switzerland's national metadata catalogue for the digitalisation of the healthcare system. The European eHDSI (eHeath Digital Service Infrastructure) is part of the eHealth network and, like eHealth, aims to encourage the introduction of electronic patient records. The eHDSI is a platform to coordinate activities in order to harmonise the electronic exchange of medical data and is managed by all EU associated health ministries.

There is also cooperation between the Austrian ELGA AG, the BfArM and eHealth Suisse in setting up an online terminology server to provide standardised medical terminologies. Another joint effort by the three neighbouring countries is to develop and translate the German version of SNOMED CT. For international-level comparison this nomenclature enables the indexing of complex medical information with the required level of technical detail.

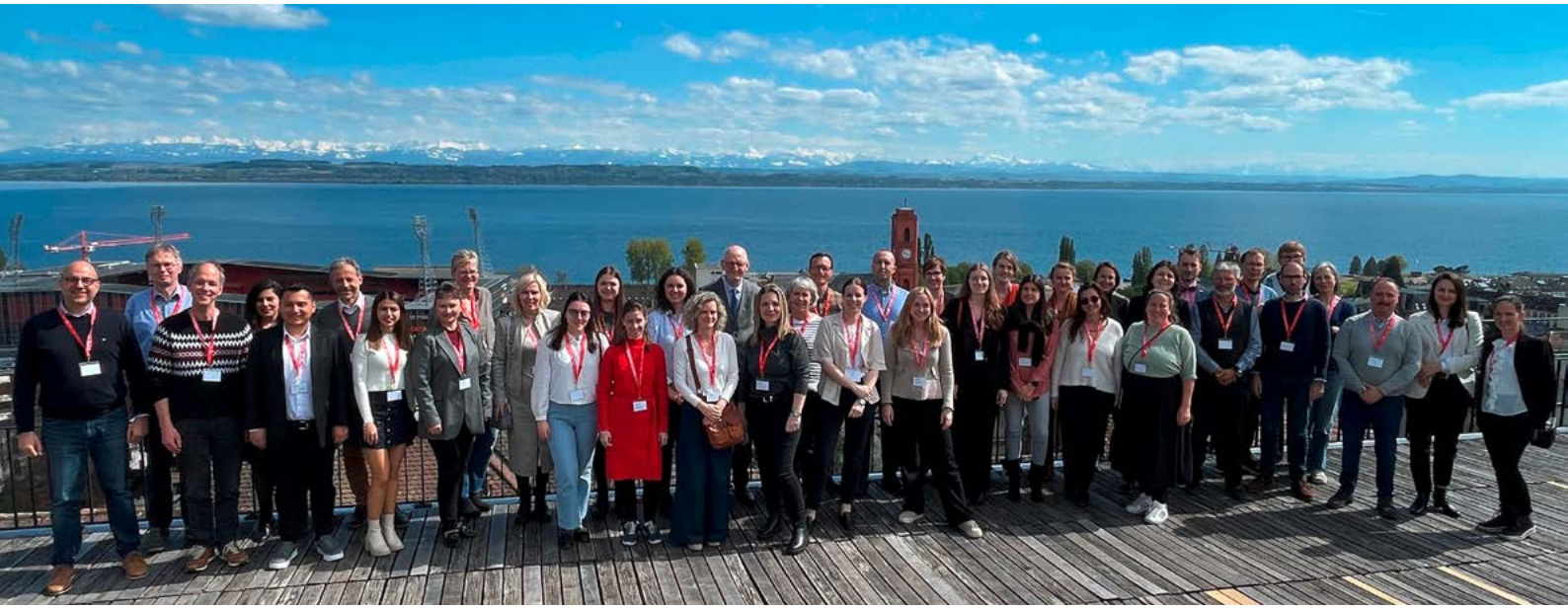
The three countries already cooperate in the areas of medical classification, terminology and standards. However, the digitalisation of the healthcare system will require even closer cross-border cooperation in the future. A drinks reception followed by a cheese fondue and white wine in the historic centre of Neuchâtel provided participants with a pleasant backdrop for further discussions.

Patrick Dreher, Head of Medical Classifications, FSO

17TH WORKSHOP ON LABOUR FORCE SURVEY METHODOLOGY, NEUCHÂTEL

FOCUSED ON QUESTIONNAIRE AND SURVEY DESIGN, ESTIMATION METHODS AND THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT SURVEY MODES

Since 2006, a workshop on labour force survey (LFS) methodology has been held annually in a different country. This year, it was hosted by Switzerland, which welcomed around fifty participants to the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). The workshop provides an opportunity for participants to share their in-depth knowledge of the methodology for a type of survey carried out in every European country.



The Member States of the European Union (EU), EFTA, and the EU candidate countries are members of a Labour Market Working Group led by Eurostat. This group discusses upcoming developments in the labour force survey and submits proposals to the European Commission regarding how the survey should be carried out. In 2005, the group decided to set up an annual workshop to promote the exchange of ideas, hosted by a different country each time. Since 2006, four cycles of four years have taken place. In 2024, Switzerland had the honour of launching the 5th cycle by hosting the 17th annual Workshop on Labour Force Survey Methodology, dedicated to survey design and sampling. The event, held on 25 and 26 April, brought together around 50 participants from 30 different countries.

This year's call for contributions resulted in 19 presentations across five sessions, alternating between presentations and discussions. The first session was dedicated to questionnaire design. Four countries presented their work and reflections on the development of the LFS questionnaire, which had to be adapted to meet the new requirements of the IESS (Integrated European Social Statistics) Regulation. This regulation sets out a common framework for European statistics on persons and households covering labour market issues. As the panellists noted, adapting to new regulations is not always simple, as it is necessary to maintain comparability with national data while introducing new concepts and definitions.

The second session allowed us to focus on aspects of survey design. One interesting presentation highlighted the importance of well-designed survey invitation letters. Another panellist demonstrated the value of developing engaging applications for interviewers, which can both motivate them and help monitor the implementation of the surveys.

The third session was dedicated to calibration and estimation procedures for labour force surveys (LFS). Six countries presented their work, ranging from the use of auxiliary variables from registers to the calculation of estimates based on models and the practical use of R software in the calibration phase.

During the fourth session we were able to share overall experiences on the effects of moving from single mode to mixed mode surveys, in particular on the temporary work calculations. One country also explained how it uses R-indicators to estimate possible biases arising from survey modes.

Finally, the national representatives who chaired the last session talked about different options for improving the LFS, in particular with regard to the gross income variable, the amount of which is not easy to obtain through questions.

There was a lot to talk about during breaks and after each session, and the conversation continued during an enjoyable social event that included a tour of Neuchâtel's old town on a tourist train, followed by a dinner at the Hotel Beaulac.

Sylvie Regli Greub, Head of Labour Force Survey, FSO

Labour force surveys are carried out in the 28 EU member states, four EU candidate countries and three EFTA member countries including Switzerland. In Switzerland, the survey is called the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS).

LINKS

Workshop website:
lfs2024.bfs.admin.ch

Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS):
www.slfs.bfs.admin.ch

DACH 2024: A SUCCESSFUL MEETING ON THE FAST-FLOWING RHINE

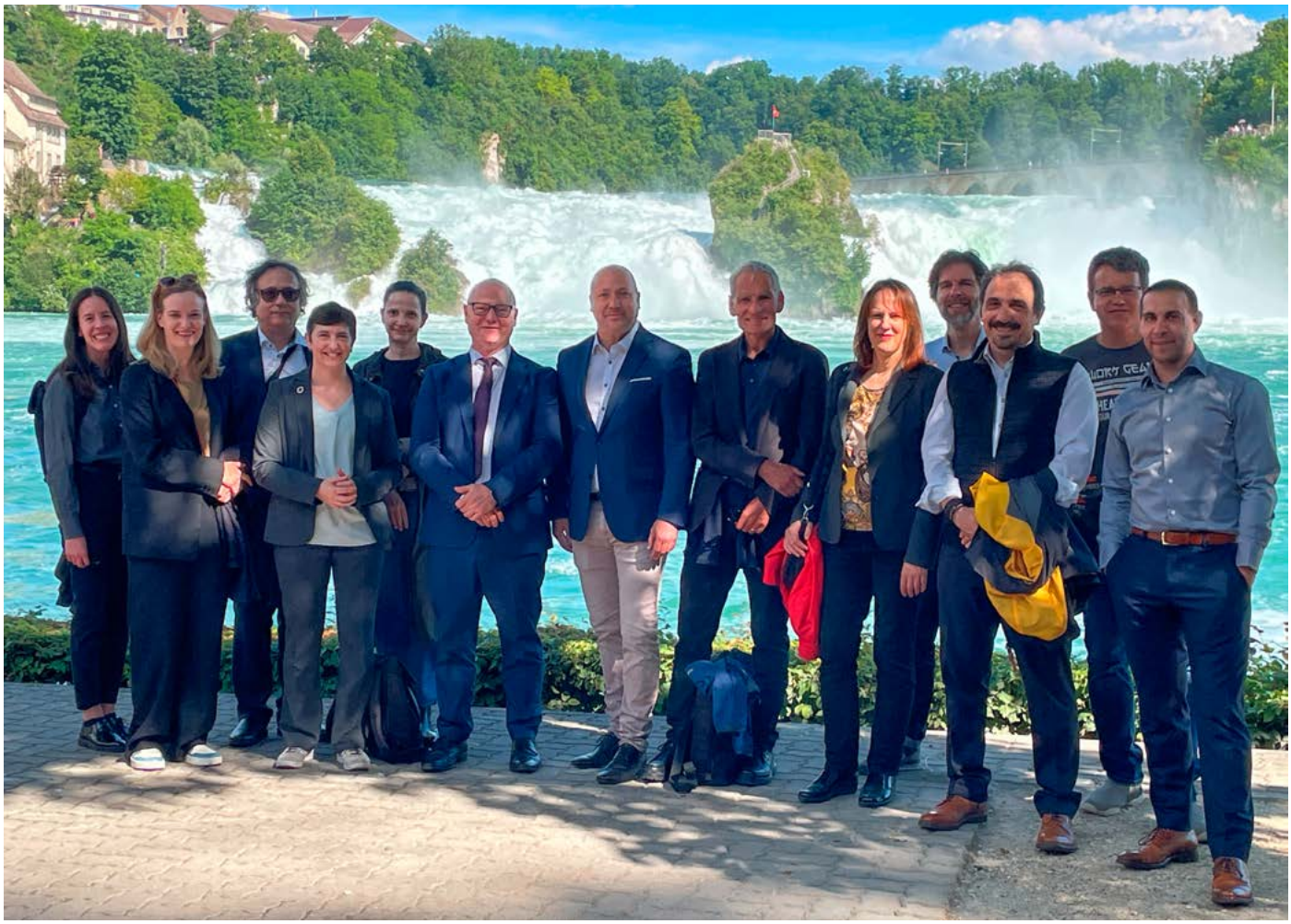
On 13 and 14 June, the heads of the German, Austrian and Swiss statistical offices convened for their annual meeting. This year, Switzerland was pleased to host its German-speaking neighbours in the beautiful city of Schaffhausen. Like every year, the three countries engaged in intensive discussions covering a wide range of topics.

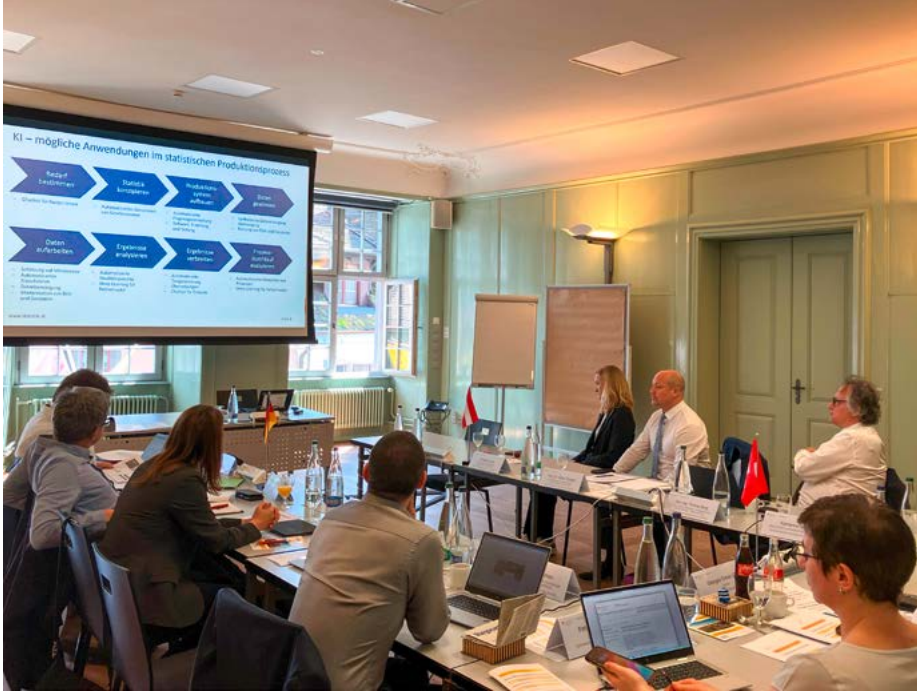
As the host country, Switzerland had the privilege of proposing two topics for discussion. The first was devoted to the role played by national authorities in the European statistical system (ESS) with regard to common European data spaces (CEDS). This topic was first raised at last year's DACH meeting and has since been actively discussed at various international events, largely thanks to the impetus provided by Austria and Switzerland.

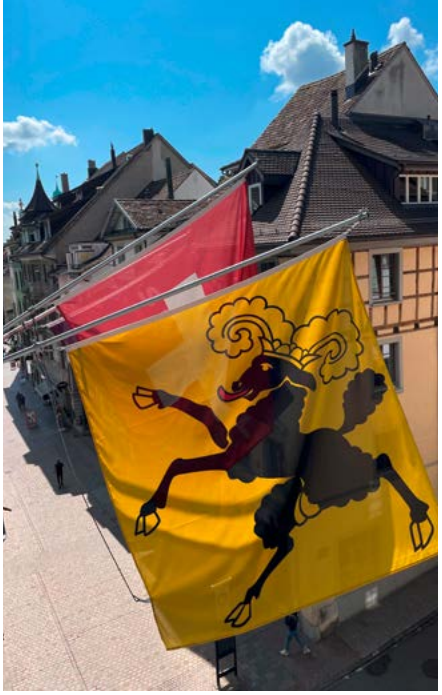
The three countries are in agreement that the National Statistical Offices, with their extensive expertise in data management, should play a role in these emerging data spaces. This is vital to prevent a disconnect between the new data spaces and the existing statistical system.

Nevertheless, further clarification is needed regarding specific data spaces and the required level of involvement from public authorities. There will be opportunities to address these points at the upcoming high-level meeting in Hungary this autumn and the DGINS/ESSC conference in Tallinn, both of which will discuss the content of the ESS shared vision for 2030.

The second discussion slot was devoted to Switzerland's major healthcare digitalisation programme, DigiSanté. In addition to explaining the objectives of the programme, the presentation highlighted why it is essential that the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) play a central role. The FSO is doing this by implementing specific projects, for example







to explore the secondary use of data for planning, monitoring and research applications. In so doing, it is creating important foundations for the emerging healthcare data space.

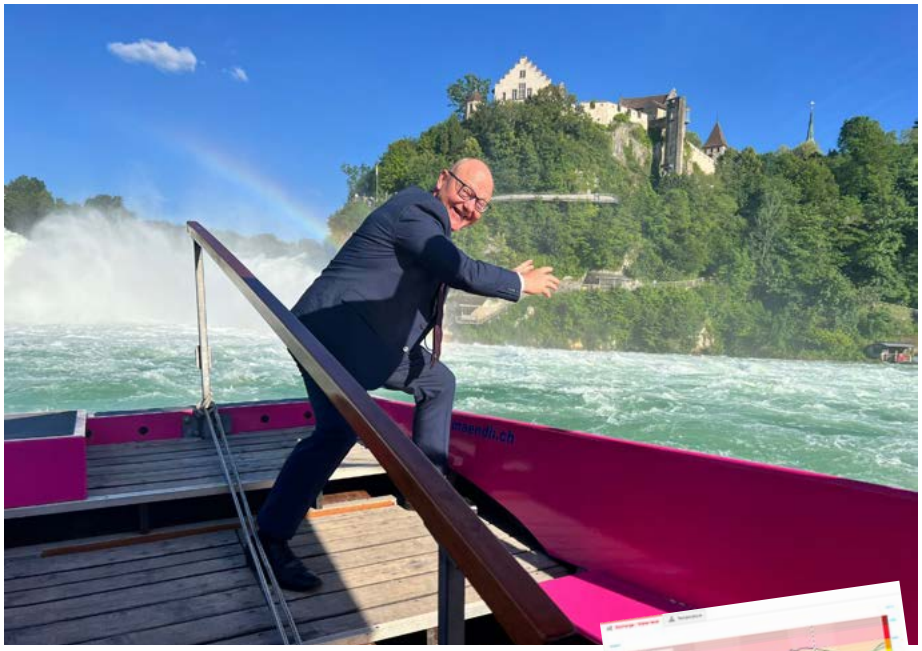
Austria contributed some excellent insights on artificial intelligence (AI), highlighting the potential, opportunities and risks for official statistics. While AI presents clear opportunities, the challenges were also explored in depth, through key questions including how best to integrate AI within organisations to fully harness its potential, how to help employees develop the necessary skills and what cooperation with the scientific community should look like. Finally, the discussions turned to the overarching guidelines needed at European level to mitigate the main risks associated with the adoption of AI in official statistics.

Germany concluded the agenda with a highly topical issue for the whole European statistical system, namely the revision of EU Regulation 223/2009 and the possibilities it offers. The debate focused on whether the proposed changes would achieve the revision's stated objective of making the ESS 'fit for the future'. The revision is designed to make the ESS more responsive – especially in times of crisis – and to facilitate access to and shared use also of privately held data sources. With a view to continuing these efforts, the participants also identified several unresolved issues and unknowns that require follow-up and clarification. We are looking forward to meeting our colleagues again in a year's time in Berlin.

A welcome break from these in-depth discussions was provided by a trip to the impressive Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen – a must see for visitors to the Swiss canton of Schaffhausen. On a boat trip undertaken in glorious sunshine, the attendees of the DACH meeting were able to take in Europe's largest waterfall from all angles. The falls were truly spectacular since the Rhine was flowing at almost one million litres of water per second in June, almost twice as much as usual. According to the statistics 😉, this phenomenon is only observed every 20 years or so. Fortunately, no one fell overboard (although some came close!) and the whole delegation arrived safe and sound for an enjoyable dinner.

All in all, with stimulating discussions among competent colleagues and an unforgettable outing, this year's meeting of the German-speaking countries was a resounding success.

Petra Keller Gueguen,
Head of Director General's Office, FSO



◄ ▲ Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen
Discharge data is available online (hydrodaten.admin.ch) ►

OUTLOOK 2024

Dear readers

Quite a lot has happened in the first six months of the year. Among the highlights so far was the election of Switzerland to Chair of the UN Statistical Commission but also the discussions we had with the National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda. I am always impressed by how different the national data and statistics systems are when viewed at close range. It's one thing to read about it in a paper but quite another to experience this first hand.

I am looking forward to working with Rwanda on the global metadata platform and one of our key tasks will be to conduct a feasibility study. By the end of the year we will have clarified how the platform can be established in Geneva and who our partners are going to be on this venture. Funding of the platform presents a major challenge.

In September, the adoption of the Global Digital Compact is expected to take place during the Summit for the Future. The agreement covers areas such as data governance, data flows and artificial intelligence. In parallel, the Bureau of the Statistical Commission is discussing how its new terms of reference will be implemented. The Compact's adoption and the implementation of the terms of reference both depend on how the Commission will look in the future and, above all, the topics on the agenda.

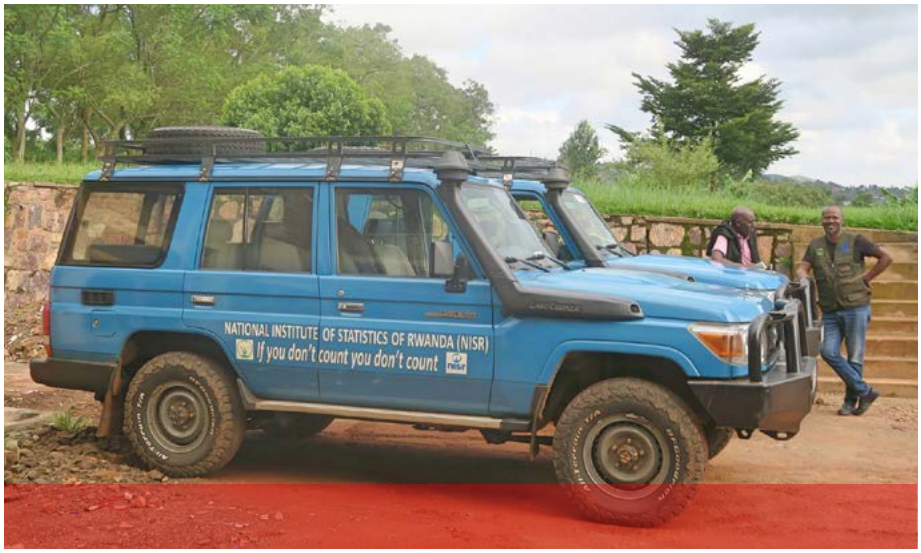
Another major event will be the 5th UN World Data Forum in Medellin, Colombia. The Forum's programme will be publish soon and alongside this we will have the opportunity to discuss the use and added value of data for the 2030 Agenda. FSO is organising two sessions, more information will be published on the UPDI website.

I wish you all a pleasant and relaxing summer and look forward to seeing you again either online or in person.

Benjamin Rothen, Ambassador,
International and national affairs INA, FSO

Accompanying surveyors from the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) on household visits to collect statistical data

Find more pictures and text on the visit to Rwanda on page 6



Published by:	Federal Statistical Office (FSO)
Editors:	International and national affairs INA, FSO
Topic:	00 Statistical base and overviews
Original text:	German, French and English. Translation LING
Layout:	Publishing and Dissemination PUB, FSO
Pictures:	Photos were provided by the authors
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