

Synthesis and Follow-up of the September 2022 Meeting of the Research Council Towards the XX World Congress of Sociology

This Research Council meeting took place online on September 24th 2022

Sixty-six delegates from RC/WG/TG took part in this meeting.

Sari Hanafi (president of the ISA and of the 2023 congress), Izabela Barlinska (ISA Executive Secretary), Cecilia Delgado-Molina (ISA Social Media Manager) attended the meeting, as well as members of the ISA "Research coordination committee" (EC-RCC) and Executive Committee, including Jan Fritz, Hiroshi Ishida, Koichi Hasegawa and Tova Benski.

Geoffrey Pleyers, ISA Vice-President for Research, chaired the meeting and wrote this report, with contributions by Cecilia Delgado, Jan Marie Fritz, Debra Davidson and Izabela Barlinska.

The main points RC/WG/TG are invited to share their perspectives or join an initiative.

- Meeting of the RC/WG/TG Social media manager (on Saturday 22 or 29 October)
Please send the name and address of the person in charge of your RC/WG/TG social media to Cecilia Delgado isa-socialmedia@isa-sociology.org **before October 5th**.
- Does your RC/WG/TG plan to organize a preconference in Melbourne? Let me know **before October 30th** if you need help finding a space to hold it. Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be
- Don't forget to reply to the survey sent by Research Council task force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and help us diffuse it to ISA members in your RC/WG/TG. Contact: Debra Davidson dda-vidso@ualberta.ca
- If your RC/WG/TG is active with the UN or wants to join the ISA initiatives and activities at the UN, please contact Jan Marie Fritz fritzj@ucmail.uc.edu
- The RCC (8 EC members elected by the RCs) suggests organizing the 2025 ISA Forum as a presential/on-site Forum. It would take place in Europe, Africa or Latin America (see page 8). If confirmed, the proposal will be discussed by the ISA Executive Committee. Let us know your RC/WG/TG opinion and arguments about the 2025 Forum on the Research Council mailing list (isa-researchcouncil2021@listes.uclouvain.be) or by sending me an email (Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be) **before October 20th**.

September 2022 Meeting of the Research Council

Saturday September 24th, 11am to 1pm UTC/GMT.

1. 2023 World Congress: Calls for abstract and session organizing

- As the deadline for abstract proposals is nearing (September 30th), it is crucial to mobilize our RC/WG/TG program coordinators and members.
- At this stage, the number of uploaded abstracts is in line with previous conferences. The last few days are crucial as most colleagues send their abstracts in the last 48h or 24h.
- Some RC/WG/TG have received a good number of abstracts, while others struggle to mobilize their core membership. It is partly linked to the way the panels have been diffused by each RC/WG/TG. It also depends on the geography of membership. RCs who have 70% or 80% of their membership in Latin America and Europe face a greater challenge. While mobilizing some of these members is crucial, a congress in Australia is also an opportunity to extend membership in Australia and East Asia and to empower members from these world regions to take a more active role in the Congress and in the RC/WG/TG.
- *Sari Hanafi* took part in the meeting. He reminded us of the importance of a "presential" congress and of meeting colleagues from different regions of the world. He explained that the XX ISA World Congress will be organized primarily as an on-site event with a limited hybrid format, as stated in the letter he sent to the program coordinators. Chairs / Co-chairs of the sessions as well as program coordinators must be present in-person on-site (consider logistics reasons to hybrid sessions). He explained that 80% of presenters are expected to come to Melbourne.
- Several RC/WG/TG reacted to this presentation by asking questions both in the chat and in the meeting. Several of these questions related to a series of confusions and a lack of information about the "hybrid format" of the congress. Some regretted that some sessions are being cataloged as "virtual sessions", which may generate problems for participants planning to go to Melbourne may run into problems with their institutions if their session is labeled 'virtual' and this could discourage attendance. Others RC delegates asked to confirm that all the panels will be hybrid and mentioned that some colleagues who submitted a proposal thinking that all sessions would be hybrid and also not knowing that they would have to pay a full registration fee even if the person only intended to take part in one session.
- The problem of visas to enter Australia is another concern. It has been mentioned how strict the process is with the Australian government. Sari Hanafi mentioned that he has discussed it with the local committee and that they are working on it.
- Most questions and concerns raised by members of the research council focused on three issues: the nearing deadline for the submission of abstracts, clarification on a hybrid format and a request to lower the registration fees.
- As the chair of the Research Council, Geoffrey Pleyers was committed to asking the relevant ISA committees to examine these issues. A letter (in the annex, below this report) was sent within 48 hours to the ISA president and VPs.

- After consultation, the deadline to send abstracts was maintained (September 30th), notably to remain consistent with what has been announced in social media and with the ISA long term tradition not to extend deadlines. It was also mentioned that whatever the deadline, many abstracts are sent in the last 48 hours or 24 hours. The other two requests will be examined on October 1st.
- Several participants thanked Izabela Barlinska for her efficient work in answering the questions RC/WG/TG addressed to the secretariat by email.

2. Next steps: abstract selection and updates in the panel organization

October 7 - November 7, 2022 24:00 GMT

Abstracts selection: Session Organizer must complete selection of abstracts and provide a final presentation designation (oral, distributed, poster, roundtable). Session Organizers move good quality abstracts unsuited for their sessions to the Program Coordinator's bin for transfer to another session.

Note: abstracts transfers should be done to the Program Coordinator's bin as early as possible so that good abstracts may be transferred to other appropriate sessions to enable organizers to consider these transferred abstracts and make decisions within the deadlines.

Session Organizers add chairs, co-chairs, discussants, and panelists to their sessions as needed.

November 8 – 25, 2022 24:00 GMT

Abstracts re-location: Program Coordinator re-locates to other sessions good quality abstracts considered unsuited by Session Organizers from the Program Coordinator's bin.

No more sessions can be added after that deadline.

An important stage of the congress organizing starts on October 7th, when the session organizers and RC/WG/TG program coordinators will select the abstracts and update the panels. Some practical advice for this important step:

- Please carefully read Guidelines for Program Coordinators and sessions organizers: <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/world-congress/melbourne-2023/guidelines-for-program-coordinators-and-session-organizers-2023>
- Based on past Congress submissions, probably 30% to 40% of those who have sent a proposal will not make it to Congress. In this perspective, it is safe to select some additional abstracts in each session (6 or 7 abstracts, if you plan to have 4 speakers). Let the authors of the "additional abstract" know that they will most probably be on that panel but that they may be moved to a Roundtable session (in presential) or as a "distributed paper" (presential or virtual participation) if all four selected panelists make it to the Congress in Melbourne.
- Please keep in mind that the Congress should be an exciting experience for those who travel to Melbourne. It is not desirable that colleagues who travel to Australia spend most of the week attending session on-site and listening to fully online panels screened in a room in Melbourne.
- After October 7th, and then again in December and in April 2023, it will be possible to adapt your RC/WG/TG sessions program based on the number of abstracts accepted in each session (and in April on the confirmed and registered participants). At these stages, the Program Coordinators may notably withdraw a session or merge two sessions to open a timeslot for a new session.

- The **Roundtable sessions** (a session with 5 tables in the same room with 4-5 papers presented at each of the 5 tables) are a good option to prolong your most insightful panels by complementing the main panel by one or two tables (4-5 speakers each) on the same topic and possibly with the same chairs/organizers in your RC/WG/TG roundtable sessions. Note that roundtable sessions must be presential/held on-site.

3. Practical issues concerning the 2023 World Congress

3.1. RC/WG/TG Pre-conferences

Several RC/WG/TG take advantage of the Congress to organize a one or two days "preconference" with their members. Some RCs dedicated their preconference to a PhD researchers' workshop. Others combined formal panels with socializing sessions and activities or joined activities organized by local colleagues or social actors.

In previous Forums and congresses, the LOC or the host university provided a free room for these preconferences. This time, the LOC asks the RC/WG/TG who intend to organize a preconference, to see if one of their members is based in Melbourne and could book a room at her/his university. If it is not the case, we will contact the LOC and local universities to find a room for all the RC/WG/TG who wish to organize a preconference.

- ➔ Could you please send me an email (Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be) before October 20th to inform me if your RC/WG/TG plans to organize a preconference activity in Melbourne? (No detail on the content of this preconference are needed at this stage.)
- ➔ Please note that The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) will organize pre-Congress events and workshops. https://www.tasa.org.au/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=671860&module_id=539256

3.2. Housing

Housing is a major budget item for those who take part in the Congress and hence it is important to seek a way to decrease its costs. The Local Organizing Committee has been contacted on this issue since March 2021 and has been reactive. Dan Woodman, the chair of the LOC, confirmed that "plenty of hotel and hostel options will be available with shared dorm type accommodation starting at around \$35USD per night". In addition, he confirmed that the price of the hotel rooms that will be proposed on the congress website will not be higher than in other booking sites.

During the Research Council meeting, a participant proposed to contact The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) to promote solidarity housing, i.e. the possibility for colleagues and students in Melbourne to host international students and colleagues at a reduced cost or for free.

The RC/WG/TGs also have the capacity to take concrete actions to reduce the housing costs for some of their members. The easiest way to decrease the cost is to share a room. RC/WG/TGs may inform their members about this possibility and help them to get in touch with another member that wishes to share a hotel or hostel room or rent a flat together.

3.3. ISA registration grants

The ISA has doubled the amounts provided for registration grants to be allocated directly by the RC/WG/TG to the members they select according to the established rules (See point 5. Rules for ISA Registration Grants Allocation of the Guidelines for Program Coordinators and Session Organizers <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/world-congress/melbourne-2023/guidelines-for-program-coordinators-and-session-organizers-2023>). Applications for Registration Grants will open in January and close on January 30th.

The Australian Sociological Association (TASA), with the support of ISA, has also made bursaries available to support travel to Melbourne for PhD students and Early Career Scholars from B and C countries in the Asia-Pacific region ([details here](#)).

3.4. A greener congress

The ISA-Research Coordination Committee has sent some suggestions and recommendations to the LOC to lower the carbon footprint of the Congress. This document was prepared by Koichi Hasegawa and Allison Loconto and approved by the Executive Committee.

3.5. Research Council meeting in Melbourne and Training session for new RC/WG/TG officers

There will be three meetings of the Research Council at the Congress. The first meeting on Sunday, June 25, 2023, at 10:30-12:20 will be a business meeting. At the second meeting on Wednesday 28, 2023, at 21:00-23:00 Delegates of the Research Council and of the Council of National Associations (the Assembly of Councils) will elect ISA President and Vice-President. At the third meeting on Thursday, June 29, 2023, at 21:00-23:00 Delegates of the Research Council will elect 8 members of the ISA Executive Committee.

A training session will be organized for the RC/WG/TG newly elected and re-elected officers, possibly on the day the final day of the congress or on the following day (July 2nd) in Melbourne. It will be a unique opportunity to get to know the new ISA Executive committee, ISA current and future Executive Secretaries and fellow RC/WG/TG officers with whom the new RC/WG/TG officers may plan conferences and joint sessions in the next four years. Some past-RC/WG/TG officers will be invited to share some good practices and the challenges they have faced during their mandate.

4. ISA & RC/WG/TG Social media

Cecilia Delgado-Molina has recently started to work as ISA Social Media Manager. She will become the ISA Executive Secretary after the 2023 World Congress. In September 2022, her work has focused on promoting the calls for abstracts for the 2023 congress.

- Social Media presence is crucial for the future of our organization. Currently, ISA is on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram, and including publications, the ISA has ten social media profiles.
- The ISA secretariat remains in charge of publications such as Isagram, the announcements on the ISA website for calls, and your Forthcoming Activities; and we encourage you to share with us all your information.

Cecilia provided the guidelines of the social media communication strategy she intends to develop with and for the RC/WG/TG.

- As a new social media manager, Cecilia will develop an image on social media that allows us to identify each account individually, but at the same time, the ISA as a whole, and we have started to use all the ISA official languages. We want to develop a step-by-step strategy with all the RC, TG & WG to enhance your presence on social media, but without overburdening.
- In the following weeks, she will provide the RC/WG/TG with some information and practical advices for your social media strategy.
- We want to enhance the work by compiling and sharing all the good practices that many RCs are already doing.
- Cecilia and Geoffrey propose **a meeting with the RC/WG/TG social media managers** or the person in charge of social media in the RC/WG/TG. The meeting will take place on **Saturday October 22nd**.
- To organize this meeting and allow RC/WG/TG social managers to share their good practices, a mailing-list will be set up. **Please send the email of your RC social media manager to Cecilia before October the 5th. isa-socialmedia@isa-sociology.org**
- Please feel free to contact her with any idea or specific need you have. ISA Social Media Manager, Cecilia Delgado-Molina, email: isa-socialmedia@isa-sociology.org

5. The UN... and You

Jan Marie Fritz, an EC member who represents the ISA to the UN in New York City, gave a brief report. She indicated that the ISA is encouraging our individual members; their RCs and NAs; as well as their universities and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to become active in UN activities.

The ISA has opened a new page on its website “The UN... and You” with information on upcoming UN activities that could be of interest to members, links to subscribe to UN newsletters that are of particular interest, information about how to become active in UN activities as well as news RCs/NAs about their own UN activities. <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/opportunities/united-nations-and-you> If you can contribute information about any of these areas, please contact Jan at jan.fritz@uc.edu

The RCs are encouraged to appoint someone who is interested in UN activities to be a liaison for the group between the ISA and the RC. RCs might also let their members know that the ISA will hold a session at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in March 2023 at the UN in New York City. The session may be in-person or virtual. The priority theme for the meeting is: *Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*. If you or a member of your research division is conducting research or doing intervention in this area, please submit a presentation proposal to Rosemary Barberet at rbarberet@jjaycuny.edu

A professional development session dedicated to the ISA and its RC/WG/TG activities at the UN will be organized during the World Congress in Melbourne. If you would like to provide information or learn more about UN involvement, please attend the session. If you would like more information about the session, please contact Jan at jan.fritz@uc.edu

6. Research Council Task Force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

This task force is chaired by Debra Davidson (president of RC24) and has two core missions. The first one is to identify the obstacles and barriers that hinder equity, diversity and inclusion in the ISA and to come up with some suggestions. The second mission is to gather the good practices from the RCs and see how each RC may become more diverse and inclusive. The RC play a key role in recruiting and welcoming our new members to allow them to take an active role in our association life and project, and this is a crucial level if we want to make the ISA more inclusive.

The EDI Task Force launched its member survey this month. Until Saturday September 24th, we collected 262 responses. Some brief highlights of notable findings so far include the following:

- respondents were 51% male; 49% female
- The list of countries of residence indicated was quite extensive, at least 30 different countries.
- English was the primary language for 66%, the list of other languages was extensive. The next most prominent are Spanish, Portuguese, German, French, Japanese.
- 26.4% identified with a minority, marginalized or under-represented group. This included a long list, including sex and gender, age, linguistic, ethnic, racial, and religious identities.
- 45.5% strongly agreed that the leadership of their PCs/WGs/TGs prioritizes inclusivity.
- 32.7% strongly feel they have a sense of belonging in those groups,
- 34.6% feel the procedures for elections of officers in those groups is fair.

-9.7% indicated that they have had an uncomfortable or negative experience within ISA activities that they would attribute to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other aspect of their personal identity. The experiences listed varied by context, and severity. At least one individual indicated they do not wish to divulge the specifics of their experiences for fear of being identified.

- We encourage Council members to remind members to fill out the survey so we can achieve a higher response rate. *Contact: Debra Davidson ddavidso@ualberta.ca*

Two professional development sessions dedicated to "Equity Diversity and Inclusion" in the ISA and its RC/WG/TG will take place during the World Congress in Melbourne: "Principles Supporting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the ISA" & "Practicing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in ISA Research Committees, Working Groups, and Thematic Groups"

7. Perspectives on the 2025 ISA Forum of Sociology

In the past few weeks and months, several RC presidents and officers and a couple of EC-RCC members contacted the VP for Research about the 2025 ISA Forum of Sociology. They had good arguments for organizing it "on-site" rather than only online, which led to re-open the decision about the 2025 Forum. A short reminder. During the pandemic, in 2021, the Research Council voted in favour of an "on-site" Forum with a slim margin (52%). The EC voted in favour of an "online Forum" with a majority of one vote.

Many arguments have already been raised in favour and against holding an "on-site" Forum in 2021. There are available here: <https://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/imgen/1054-vpr-letter-10-may21.pdf>

Two new arguments may lead to reversing the decision and organizing the 2025 "on-site".

1. This Forum may be crucial to maintain ISA membership between two congresses that will be held in places that are remote (2023 in Melbourne) for the majority of our members.
2. All the other major regional and international associations in social sciences have held major congresses this year or will hold them next year. The balances of these encounters are very positive, with people enthusiastic about meeting again. As an additional argument, if the ISA does not organize an international forum in 2025, it does not mean that most of our colleagues will decrease their flight travels but rather that they will attend another international conference.

In an online consultation in September 2022, the members of the EC-Research Coordination Committee expressed themselves unanimously in favour of an "on-site" Forum in 2025.

The consultation is now open for the RC/WG/TG, who may express their opinion on the Research Council mailing list until October 20th isa-researchcouncil2021@listes.uclouvain.be or by sending an e-mail to ISA Vice-President Research Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be

The results of these two consultations will be submitted to the ISA Executive Committee.

8. Other information

1. Executive committee meeting in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, April 2022

This hybrid meeting of the ISA Executive Committee was notably dedicated to the following items:

- ➔ Shortlist and selection process of the future ISA Executive Secretary (starting in August 2023).
- ➔ New rules for ISA Social media. The EC notably decided to give priority to the events and news coming from the ISA National Associations, RC/WG/TG, ISA publications or ISA Congress. We also decided to hire a new Social media manager.
- ➔ Candidacies for the 2027 World Congress.
- ➔ The Finance and Membership committee proposed to create a Solidarity Fund, to offer student membership grants and to double the "registration grants" for the 2023 congress.
- ➔ We worked on an agreement with the Mattei Dogan Foundation to set up a new ISA Award for Global Sociology.
- ➔ Professional development sessions proposed by the RCC and the Research Council were approved.

2. Global Dialogue

Breno Bringel, president of RC47, has been appointed as the new editor of the ISA magazine Global Dialogue. Congratulations!

He has been invited to discuss its projects for the ISA journal at the next Research Council meeting.

3. Next Research Council meeting

January or February 2023.

The main point in our meeting agenda will focus on RC/WG/TG internal elections that will take place during the 2023 World Congress.

Annex: Letter to the ISA president and vice-presidents

September 26th 2022.

Dear Sari, Dear colleagues,

The Research Council meeting has gathered 64 RC/WG/TG presidents on Saturday the 24th of September. All the RC/WG/TG are mobilized to diffuse the call for abstracts and mobilize colleagues to attend the XX World Congress of Sociology. The Congress was the main point on the meeting agenda. RC/WG/TG presidents and Program Coordinators raised a series of questions and concerns about the Congress. They also sent emails in the past few weeks by RC presidents who expressed their difficulties to convince / mobilize their members to submit an abstract.

All the participants were grateful to Sari for attending the meeting, listening to these concerns and replying within the time constraints. They also expressed their gratitude to Izabela, "a key person for the ISA" (to quote a participant), for her clear and fast replies to the emails and questions that are sent to her by RC/WG/TG presidents and program coordinators.

Below are three concerns and proposals that were raised and repeated by several participants in the meeting.

1. Please update the ISA President's 28 June 2022 letter so as to clarify how the conference will be hybrid. While Sari's replies brought clarifications on some points, some of them diverged from the rules announced in the letter he sent in June. For example, the letter states that "oral sessions...must include 80% in-person presentation to qualify for a hybrid format." A written revision will help RC/WG/TG's organize consistently, and help alleviate concerns of our members. Several representatives also sought clarification that they would be permitted to run ONLY online sessions at the Congress. Other points would be easier to communicate to the entire membership if they were put in writing. For instance, during the Research Council, it was not clear to all participants that *every* session will be scheduled in a room equipped with screens to enable both in-person and online participation (with the exception of Roundtables, poster sessions, Ad Hoc sessions, Sessions of National and Regional Associations, and Professional Development Sessions).
2. Given this confusion in the rules for virtual participation, and the difficulty some organizers face in mobilizing colleagues to take part in the Congress, please consider extending the deadline for the Call for Abstracts by 2 weeks. This request has been repeated by several participants and had strong support among the council members. An alternative proposal with a similar aim is to keep the deadline but to announce 24 hours before the deadline elapses a one- or two-week extension.
3. A third and recurrent request to the ISA is that "given these unsettling times, and the goal of inclusive participation, please consider lowering the registration fees". Some participants insisted on lowering the registration for virtual participation.

These converging requests found a broad support among the Research Council. However, it should be noted that given the time constraint and the nearing of the deadline for the call for abstracts, no votes were organized on these three requests. As the chair of the Research Council and of this meeting, I committed to sending these three requests to Sari as president of the ISA and of the Congress, and to the Congress Program Committee, asking you to examine them in a brief delay.

I gathered these requests and questions as a chair of the meeting. I hope they will be examined by the presidents and VPs in the briefest delay.

Sincerely

Geoffrey Pleyers