

Losing and finding community in unprecedented times: ISATT National Representatives' coordinator's report 2020-2021

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which made a global landfall towards the end of 2019, has had its impact on ISATT National Representatives' planned activities like everything else around us. Gripped by fear and uncertainty amidst the unfolding daily horrors, fostering care through sustaining community and connection has been my priority over the past year as ISATT national rep coordinator. I have compiled the brief stories of diverse situations shared by national representatives (NRs) laced with their despair and optimism during the first wave of COVID-19. This can perhaps be saved in ISATT archives as part of a memoir of the COVID pandemic times for future.

The year has seen a dip in the membership numbers. However, we have an increase in the number of National Representatives with eight new nations being represented by willing new and old members. These are:

1. Gabriela Jonas-Ahrend, Germany
2. Christina Gellknight, Malaysia (New member)
3. Israel Sanchez, Mexico
4. Ratchanikorn Chonchaiya (Heng), Thailand
5. Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Uganda
6. Samuel O. Oyoo, Kenya
7. Eunice Nyamupangedengu, South Africa (New member)
8. Shradha Kunwar, Nepal (New member)

Samuel Oyoo, a veteran ISATT member, who used to be the NR of South Africa has moved to Kenya and he has been invited to be the national representative for Kenya. South Africa was without an NR since 2017 and now we have Eunice Nyamupangedengu, University of Wits S. Africa to fill that vacancy.

With this strong force of NRs, who are looking forward to engage in ISATT related initiatives more proactively this year, we can not only hope to expand the ISATT community by enrolling new members, but also grow by participating collaboratively in innovative projects.

ISATT related activities:

ISATT connected activities planned by NRs have been slowed by the precipitate shift to teaching and learning online. However, it is apparent from the yearly summaries I received from the NRs that they have been using every opportunity to promote ISATT through newsletters, through talks in various academic platforms, meetings and conferences, identifying potential members and talking to them one on one. Juanjo Mena and Feyza Doyran have recruited two new members each from their respective countries, Spain and Turkey.

NRs' plans for ISATT conferences and webinars:

1. Biennial ISATT conference at Bari, Italy with Loredana Perla heading the conference team
2. ISATT regional conference at Bordeaux, France with Marie-Christine Deyrich as one of the co-organizers
3. A webinar in October/November 2021 that Daniela- Roxana Andron , Sibiu, Romania is willing to organize and host on the theme of good practice: lessons learnt from teaching during COVID time. It is free and for more information you may contact her: daniela.andron@ulbsibiu.ro

Several NRs are engaged in diverse projects and are eager to share their work in the forthcoming ISATT conferences.

Renata Čepić from Croatia has shared the link of her ongoing project: http://www.ufri.uniri.hr/files/znanstveni%20projekti/renata_cepik_projekt.pdf

I am engaged in a project with about 30 ISATT NRs on "*The educational fallout of COVID-19: An international landscape*"

Several NRs have been very active in publishing book chapters and journal articles. The list of publications I put together from the information shared by the NRs has been attached as a separate file.

The quite complex times has not left many enough time for activities that many NRs would have liked to undertake. A few of the messages I received might sound terse: *I have nothing to report*; Others have been apologetic: *Sorry, there's not much news from my side about ISATT*; some expressing regret: *Unfortunately, I didn't have time for much else*. However, these remarks need to be seen against the heroic efforts to stay afloat amidst the depersonalising experience of losing physical community of colleagues and students and dealing with personal tragedies small and big. Coping with the unforeseen challenges springing from the pandemic is in itself a learning that is valuable and, in this sense, I want to acknowledge the contribution of ALL the ISATT NRs in keeping the ISATT community alive through the difficult times each in their own way. I hope that the pandemic will pass soon and we can come together as a community in real space and meanwhile continue to collaborate in ways that allows us to accomplish the mission of ISATT.

I'd like to thank the ISATT administrator, Daniela Hotolean, who has been very supportive in the drive to expand the reach of ISATT by inducting more NRs. I admire the patience with which she responds to the umpteen queries that I have for her. I am also grateful to the encouraging support I have received from the ISATT chair, Cheryl Craig, Secretary, Ruth Kane and all other members of the Executive Committee.

Thank you

Tara Ratnam, PhD

ISATT National Representatives' Coordinator

Independent Teacher Educator and Researcher

India

July 8, 2021

