



EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IRELAND

**PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND
IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL
STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF IRELAND IN RESPONSE TO
THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Recommendation:

In the monitoring of the statistical standards of Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating European statistics and other producers of Irish official statistics, the Central Statistics Office should consider moving to a unified benchmark by aligning the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice with the ES CoP, which would simplify communication, enhance understanding and send a signal of increased ambition. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

Current Situation :

European statistics are produced in adherence to the [European Statistics Code of Practice](#) (ES CoP), which is consistent with the [UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#). These codes provide the necessary assurances that statistics are compiled in an objective and independent manner and in accordance with sound statistical and data management principles. Both Official and European statistics are compiled by a wide range of public authorities in Ireland.

While all compilers of European statistics in Ireland adhere to the ES CoP, there were initially no standards in place for the compilation of other Official Statistics by public authorities other than the CSO. It is in this context that the Public Service Reform plan, published in November 2011, tasked the CSO with developing a code of practice for the compilation of Official Statistics produced within the Irish Statistical System. The code of practice delivered by the CSO, and called the Irish Statistical Code of Practice (ISS CoP) is a subset of the ES CoP, based on five principles:

- Professional Independence
- Timeliness and Punctuality
- Accessibility and Clarity
- Commitment to Quality
- Confidentiality.

Only those statistics that are assessed as compliant with the ISS CoP may be published under the ISS CoP Logo. As part of the ISS CoP certification process, the public authority seeking to have a statistical product reviewed for compliance with the ISS CoP must submit a self-assessment questionnaire to the CSO. If the public authority is seeking the ISS CoP logo for a European statistic, the public authority will be required to complete the ES CoP self-assessment questionnaire, based on the principles of the ES CoP. If the public authority is seeking the ISS CoP for other national Official Statistics, they are currently required to submit a self-assessment questionnaire based on the five principles of the ISS CoP.

Improvement sub-action 1.1: Align the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice (ISS CoP) benchmark with the European Statistical Code of Practice (ES CoP)

The CSO will promote the adherence to the ES CoP through CSO chaired interdepartmental forums like the Formal Statistician Liaison Group, Irish Government Statistical Service, and the National Data Infrastructure Champions Group and consult the national statistical producers to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of establishing a uniform benchmark for European and national statistics, highlighting if two separate benchmarks are still required and whether we can align the ISS COP and ES CoP at a greater pace. The CSO will report on the outcome of these consultations so that users are clear on the final decision and rationale behind the benchmarks being used.

Deadline: Q2 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 1.2: Revamp the website www.isscop.ie

The CSO will include additional components on the CSO's work including new sections on the National Data Infrastructure, and Irish Government Statistical Service page etc, to further encourage Departments/Agencies compiling Official Statistics to assess themselves against the ES CoP. The site would serve to continue to promote those Official Statistics (including European Statistics) that have been successfully assigned the ISS CoP logo up to the present time. The website would also be used as a reference tool when contacting individual Departments/Agencies when requesting a self-assessment questionnaire to be submitted to the CSO.

Deadline: Q4 of 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 1.2: Central Statistics Office (CSO)

2. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should build on the present good progress in certification of producers of official statistics to clarify the future of the monitoring process in this area, including the potential use of a peer review mechanism, while working to obtain funding to support the necessary monitoring. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.2)

Current Situation:

The current objective of the CSO is to get public authorities engaged in the ISS CoP certification process, and to generate awareness around the ES CoP. Several public authorities are engaged in the process and the number of statistics certified is growing. Once a public authority submits a self-assessment questionnaire, there is an independent CSO peer review. Members of the internal CSO peer review group are drawn from at least three different divisions from within the CSO.

<p>Improvement sub-action 2.1: Review of existing ISS CoP certified statistical products.</p> <p>The CSO will continue this progress, reaffirm the robustness of the ISS CoP certification and intends to conduct a follow-up review of the awarded European Statistic/Official Statistic every five years after the initial assignment of the ISS CoP logo for the specific statistic(s).</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.1: Central Statistics Office and respective public sector bodies</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.2: Expand the ISS CoP peer review mechanism.</p> <p>CSO plans to review the existing ISS CoP audit process and create a “peer review audit board” including a representative from an external independent public authority and seconded senior statisticians¹. This sub-action will require compiling the external representative’s threshold requirements needed to be a member of the peer review audit board.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.2: Central Statistics Office and respective public sector bodies.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.3: Task the peer review audit board with assessing and reviewing the findings of the internal CSO review group prior to the final submission of a recommendation for certification to the CSO Management Board.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.3: Central Statistics Office and respective public sector bodies.</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 2.4: Task the peer review audit board to discuss the expansion of the ISS CoP certification process within public authorities and to discuss the strategic direction of the ISS CoP process overall.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q4 2025</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 2.4: Central Statistics Office and respective public sector bodies</p>

¹ CSO second statistical staff in various Government Departments/Agencies (known as the “the Host Organisation”), These staff work in the host organisation but are employed by CSO to support the IGSS, and ISS staff who work closely with the CSO.

3. Recommendation:

To create greater transparency and a basis for system-wide prioritisation, the Central Statistics Office should pursue present efforts to create a consolidated work programme for the Irish statistical system, comprising both Other National Authorities developing, producing, and disseminating European statistics and other producers of Irish official statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.5)

Current situation:

The CSO publishes a comprehensive Statistical Work Programme annually on the Office's direct activities. The Statistical Work Programme outlines the statistical outputs for the year ahead and the legislative underpinning for each output, distinguishing between Irish Official (national) and European Statistics. This is complemented by a follow-up progress report on the Programme. While other public authorities are increasingly developing their own statistical work programmes, and the CSO has also developed a Register of Official Statistics, there is not a consolidated national Statistical Work Programme for the Irish Statistical System.

The CSO has commenced work in developing a consolidated national Statistical Work Programme for the Irish Statistical System, building on progress made on the creation of a Register of National Statistics. This involved coordinating with all public authorities involved in the production of Official Statistics and monitoring subsequent progress of these products.

The information provided in the work plan on CPS planned statistical products is based on the content contained in the Register of Official Statistics. This register details the statistical outputs produced by government Departments and other public sector bodies across the Irish Statistical System (ISS).

Improvement sub-action 3.1: Prepare a first version of a consolidated work programme

The CSO will prepare a first version of a consolidated work programme in 2023 detailing the Official Statistics that the CSO intends to produce for 2023 and the statistical work plans for a few other producers of national and European statistics in Ireland from across the Civil and Public Service (CPS).

Deadline: Q2 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 3.1: Central Statistics Office and all public authorities producing Official Statistics

Improvement sub-action 3.2: Consolidate the national Statistical Work Programme for the Irish Statistical System

The CSO will continue to promote the National Statistical work plan across the statistical system so that coverage of statistics produced by other national authorities will increase over time.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 3.2: Central Statistics Office and all public authorities producing Official Statistics

4. Recommendation

The reviewed Other National Authorities (Department of Health, Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency) should build on and carry through current efforts to improve the provision of metadata, strengthen data access, document quality policies and publish European Statistics directly for an Irish audience. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.4, 2.2, 4.1 and 15.1)

Current situation:

The Environmental Protection Agency has had two European statistical products ISS CoP certified, namely the Waste Framework Directive report and the Joint OECD Eurostat Municipal Indicator. The Department of Health has had seven European statistical products ISS CoP certified, namely the additional module for Eurostat statistics (Joint Questionnaire on Non-Monetary Health Care statistics), the Common module WHO-OECD-Eurostat on Health Care Activities, Health Employment, Hospital discharges, Physical resources, and Workforce Migration. All these products for the two ONAs were also assessed against the ES CoP. The Department of Justice continues to engage in the ISS CoP certification process regarding the European Statistics they produce, and again assessment against the ES CoP will follow.

Improvement sub-action 4.1: CSO supports the other national authorities on metadata, data access, statistical confidentiality and documenting quality

CSO continues to provide support to the Department of Justice, Department of Health and the Environment Protection Agency to improve the provision of metadata, strengthen data access, apply statistical confidentiality and document the quality policies relating to their process and outputs. These supports include encouraging them to engage with the ISS COP certification process further and providing guidance to them in achieving this goal. CSO will also provide training and workshops to promote the use of best practice quality standards in these areas. CSO will also continue to provide assistance to support the publication of European statistics nationally through the supported promotion of the functionality and use of data hosting on CSO's open data portal (data.cso.ie). The Department of Health and the Environmental Protectional Agency will follow up with the support provided by CSO to further improve the quality of their metadata, their data access and documentation of quality.

Deadline: Q2 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.1: Central Statistics Office and the Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Improvement sub-action 4.2: Cooperate with the Department of Justice to improve documentation, metadata and quality policies

For the Department of Justice, both the Department of Justice and the CSO will collaborate to improve the documentation and provision of metadata and document and promote the quality policies relating to their process and outputs e.g., dissemination policy, quality statement and confidentiality commitment documentation. The Department will also engage with the ISS COP certification process with a view to applying for certification in 2025.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 4.2: Central Statistics Office and the Department of Justice.

5. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should continue and step up the efforts towards creating a National Data Infrastructure, with greater use of the provisions in the Statistics Act that equip the Central Statistics Office with powers to coordinate and set standards for producers of official statistics and holders of administrative data, while maintaining a collegial approach. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1bis.1, 2.2 and 10.3)

Current situation:

CSO's approach to this action will as always be informed by Budget outcomes, and CSO will define its short to medium term data stewardship 'offering' to Public Service Bodies (PSBs) (including a detailed action plan) by end Q4 2022. While the CSO has developed strong working relationships with producers and users across the statistical system, the CSO is committed to increasing the level of data services and supports to the system through the delivery of data stewardship.

Improvement sub-action 5.1: Publication of annual National Data Infrastructure dashboard
The CSO will publish an annual NDI dashboard, which monitors and promotes the coverage of three unique identifiers (Person, Business and Location) across public sector data holdings while also promoting the value of the NDI in meeting known and emerging data needs in the public service. As the roll out of data standards continues, the NDI dashboard will be expanded to document the progress being made in the implementation of data standards for key statistical concepts.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 5.2: Increase participation with the NDI by stakeholders

The CSO will promote the level of participation in the NDI through engagement with key stakeholders, users, and policy makers through a broad range of engagement fora. This includes the NDI Champions group which meets quarterly, the Formal Statistics Liaison group which also meets quarterly, the Annual Administrative data seminar as well as other national data seminars and conferences where key users and stakeholders are in attendance. It also includes direct engagement with the Civil Service Management Board, the Assistant Secretary network, the Data Governance Board and key government Departments. These fora and direct engagements provide the opportunity to promote the value of data and enable the treatment of data as a strategic national asset through the harmonisation and greater use (and re-use) of data. This promotion will focus on increasing the awareness of the power of data and the supports and services that the CSO can provide to public sector bodies to unlock the potential of their data. It will also provide the opportunity to influence public sector bodies to engage with the advancement of the NDI in their organisation.

Deadline: Q4 2024 (progress report annually afterwards)

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 5.3: Development and provision of a data room

The CSO will develop and provide a data rooms service based on linked datasets to promote the use of data in public bodies and act as a further encouragement to adopt standards.

Improvement sub-action 5.3.1: Pilot and evaluate the data room in a selected number of public bodies

Deadline: Q3 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.3.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 5.3.2: Roll out and expand, subject to permanent funding, the data room to other public bodies

Deadline: Q4 2025.

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.3.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 5.4: Support the data stewardship role

The CSO will expand the delivery of data supports and services to producers in the national statistical system. As part of the role, CSO will produce a suite of data standards for key statistical concepts to improve the harmonisation and standardisation of data across the statistical system. CSO will also provide support and guidance to producers to enable the implementation of these standards across national administrative systems. CSO will also develop a data standards portal to ensure the standards are accessible and useable as well as the provision of APIs to enable use of the standards in digital services.

Deadline: Q4 2024.

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 5.4: Central Statistics Office (CSO).

6. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office needs to expand the programme of seconded statisticians by convincing producers of official statistics to engage or engage more with the programme and, hence, spread its benefits. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.7, 10.3 and 10.4)

Current situation:

Currently there are 39 CSO statistical staff (statistician and senior statisticians) on secondment to other public authorities as part of the Irish Government Statistical Service (IGSS). This is up from 18 statisticians and senior statisticians in 10 Departments/Offices six years ago. There are a further 7 outstanding requests for extra IGSS staff including for three new organisations. Through on-going actions, the CSO will continue to increase awareness of the Irish Government Statistical Service (IGSS), promoting the expansion of the secondment programme.

Improvement sub-action 6.1: Expand the Irish Government Statistical Service

Expand the Irish Government Statistical Service by highlighting the benefits that the IGSS offers by having dedicated agenda items promoting the IGSS in the CSO's regular engagements with other inter-departmental groups like the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, the National Data Infrastructure Champions Group and the Formal Statistician Liaison Group.

This includes having a standing item on the agenda for each of the quarterly NDI Champions and FSLG meetings where seconded statisticians present the work they are carrying out in their Departments where they are seconded, to show the contribution they are making to the wider system and to share experiences and knowledge with colleagues.

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.1: Central Statistics Office.

Improvement sub-action 6.2: Showcasing collaboration

Showcasing collaborations between the CSO and secondees, highlighting the benefits of such projects, e.g., increased insight from a Pathfinder Report that utilised administrative data from numerous sources as well as showcasing collaborations between the CSO and public authorities in the form of project-based programmes. Examples of these collaborations include the publication and promotion of joint work between CSO, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and SUSI (Ireland's national awarding authority for further and higher education which focused on education outcomes for grant recipients 2012-2022 which was published in September 2024. (<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/fp/fp-eossr/educationandotheroutcomesforsusisupportrecipients2012-2022/>).

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.2: Central Statistics Office.

Improvement sub-action 6.3: Increase the frequency of competitions to recruit statisticians with a view to holding a competition twice a year.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.3: Central Statistics Office.

Improvement sub-action 6.4: Data Science and Statistical Support unit

Creation of a dedicated "Data Science and Statistical Support Unit" within the CSO to be available and ready to be assigned to key public authority policy areas at short notice to tackle bespoke requirements (e.g., Ukraine; COVID-19) and to advise on data strategy development, data acquisition/linking, data engineering/data science, methodology and quality supports, all essential underpinnings for the robust expansion of data-insight work across the wider civil and public service.

Deadline: Q4 2022

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.4: Central Statistics Office.

Improvement sub-action 6.5: Development of a brochure/catalogue of services available from the CSO to public authorities.

Deadline: Q3 2022

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 6.5: Central Statistics Office.

7. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should pursue the Pathfinder programme to continue providing insights into the potential use of integrated data for statistics and policy analysis and thereby convince public sector data holders of the benefits of a National Data Infrastructure with a view to maintaining momentum in this direction. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 9.4, 9.5, 9.6 and 15.3)

Current situation:

CSO will retain its focus on Pathfinder Projects, with a focus on health, education, equality, and housing. These projects have increased the profile of CSO as a provider of analytical services through the provision of aggregated data to policy makers and demonstrated an agility and flexibility in how the CSO does its business. As an additional support to Public Service Bodies (PSBs), the new “Data Science and Statistical Support Unit” will provide additional short-term analytical capacity in Departments who are either facing ‘crisis’ situations or are developing complex multi-dimensional policy proposals.

Improvement sub-action 7.1: Establishment of a new ‘Data Science and Statistical Support Unit ‘

A list of Pathfinder Projects will be formalised and communicated to stakeholders on an annual basis. The new Data Science and Statistical Support Unit will have additional resources assigned, to be either loaned to Departments for short periods (e.g., three-months) or to provide ‘Pathfinder’-type supports from within CSO, including ‘dashboard’ reporting. The first two projects are a loan statistician to the Department responsible for Ukrainian refugees and a CSO based resource to support a major policy initiative in the Department of Social Protection.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 7.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 7.2: Regular report on projects on hand and potential new projects.

Reported to the Management Board only on a quarterly basis. Implementation of projects and resources to be agreed upon by the Management Board.

Deadline: Q1 2024 (quarterly afterwards)

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 7.2: Central Statistics Office

8. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should consider ways to reach consensual agreements with holders of privately held data on access to such data in order to benefit from their potential for statistical innovation and to reduce the burden on traditional providers of information. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 2.4 and 8.6)

Current situation:

The revision of Regulation 223 will facilitate more data access for CSO, in addition to the sources currently available under the Memorandum of Understanding and voluntary arrangements. The difficulties with obtaining sustainable access to privately held data were

discussed extensively during the Peer Review. While data availability improved temporarily during the COVID-19 crisis, this was not sustained subsequently. Also, the data provided was generally in aggregate format which cannot be integrated with other data sources.

Improvement sub-action 8.1: Identify key datasets, creating an initial list of high value private datasets to get access to, in addition to the those already received.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 8.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 8.2: Develop acquisition strategies for each of these datasets, including pilot arrangements and similar short-term actions.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 8.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 8.3: Analyse the revised EU legislation and consider ways to integrate/take it up for national legislation or MoU with holders of private data.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 8.3: Central Statistics Office

9. Recommendation

Building on the progress in creating a National Data Infrastructure, the Central Statistics Office should move as soon as possible towards a population census based on administrative data, though likely supplemented by surveys in areas not covered by administrative data. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 9.4, 9.5, 9.6 and 10.3)

Current situation:

Currently population statistics in Ireland are produced through the “traditional” Census of Population and the Annual Population and Migration Estimates. The primary source of data collection is the Census of Population which is generally carried out every 5 years. In between censuses, Annual Population and Migration Estimates are calculated by trending forward the previous Census of Population using births and deaths data from administrative records and migration estimates from the CSO Labour Force Survey.

The most recent Census undertaken in April 2022 used a traditional model of hand delivery and collection of a paper-based questionnaire by a large team of enumerators. Although the traditional approach was mainly deployed, administrative data sources were integrated into generation of both unit and item values.

The CSO is currently taking a dual approach to modernising the compilation of census type data, centred around both the Traditional Approach and an Administrative Census :

Traditional Approach

It is intended to introduce an online response option for the next Census of Population in 2027. The CSO is continuing to develop the systems to produce annual national population estimates using existing administrative data sources, with the support of the custodians of the relevant data holdings.

Administrative Census

- In Ireland there are no formal administrative registers. There is no Population Register or indeed no Dwellings Register. However, in December 2021, the CSO published Irish Population Estimates from Administrative Data Sources (IPEADS) using data collected from administrative records only. IPEADS currently produces individual statistics only. This frontier output contained experimental population data for April 2020 disaggregated to levels of geographical granularity not previously available for annual population estimates. The estimates were compiled by linking administrative data sets from a range of public service bodies. A series of rules were then applied to decide who should be included in or excluded from the population. IPEADS has just completed its third iteration, with IPEADS 2022 published in June 2024. The IPEADS approach is still experimental and there are aspects of using administrative sources for counting the population that will require further development. These include the relatively limited range of attribute variables available from administrative sources when compared with the Census of Population (where attribute information on topics such as commuting patterns, use of the Irish language, religion, etc is collected) and the production of statistics in small geographical areas. The CSO access to some outstanding public sector data flows will help with both issues, with the possibility of producing household statistics, as will the increased level of Eircodes being collected in the public sector with the move to online public administration of services.

Improvement sub-action 9.1: Further develop the compilation of annual population estimates from administrative data sources through improving the quality of administrative sources in partnership with Public Sector Bodies. The key metrics in assessing these data improvements for the population count are the percentage of records with Eircodes, (currently estimated in the region of 60%) and the percentage of records coming from ‘real time’ sources (approximately 70%), where the activity recorded is from a recent time period.

Deadline: Q4 2027

Responsible institution for improvement sub action 9.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 9.2: Further develop the compilation of annual population estimates from administrative data sources through the publication of an annual series of such estimates produced solely from administrative data sources. These have already been compiled for reference years 2020-2022 and published as frontier estimates. It is planned to continue this series and enhance the quality of the estimates as administrative data sources and methodologies improve.

The CSO will continue to use administrative data to address non-response in any future census as well as increasing the use of administrative data to replace questions that were previously asked directly of respondents.

The CSO will continue to engage with stakeholders in the years ahead to decide the best census model to deliver Irish requirements into the future. The CSO will launch a public consultation on the future of census taking and present a range of options taking into account national and international requirements.

Deadline: Q4 2027

Responsible institution for improvement sub action 9.2: Central Statistics Office

10. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should clarify the principles for pricing the increasing range of services provided to producers of official statistics, holders of administrative data and other public sector bodies. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 10.4)

Current situation:

While CSO provides a range of services that could generate a market value under ‘data stewardship’, a consistent pricing policy for products still needs to be developed in line with the following principles

- Recognising that Official Statistics are a “Public Good”
- Equality of access
- Willingness/ability to pay – for example, if the CSO charges for RMF access, only funded researchers will have the ability to pay for the service and ‘pure’ researchers will be disadvantaged
- Taking account of European legislative changes
- Taking account of the demands on CSO from an ‘expectation of service’

Improvement action 10: Develop a Pricing Policy

The CSO will develop a pricing policy for its services containing a description on which services continue to be free, a cost recovery model for large surveys, other recovery arrangements, etc. The policy will be made public. The Organisational Capability Review proposes that CSO develops a more formal approach to prioritisation and cost recovery.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement action 10: Central Statistics Office

11. Recommendation

The Department of Finance should consider changing the budgetary arrangements under which European Union grants for statistics development work do not reach the Central Statistics Office. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Current situation:

Note: The Department of Finance became The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform

As a general principle, Government accounting is on a gross basis, i.e., receipts are not netted off against payments. As a rule, all revenues of the State are paid into the Central Fund of the Exchequer. Departmental receipts fall into two categories: they may be appropriated in aid of expenditure borne on a vote or they must be surrendered directly to the Central Fund as Exchequer extra receipts. The approval of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform should always be obtained before determining whether to treat a particular type of receipt as an appropriation-in-aid or an Exchequer extra receipt.

Improvement action 11: Engagement with Department of Public Expenditure & Reform

Engage with Department of Public Expenditure & Reform to establish how funds from European Statistical System development grants could be credited to the Central Statistics Office budget rather than Appropriations in Aid.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement action 11: Central Statistics Office, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

12. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office needs to pursue efforts to create a comprehensive system of cost accounting by outputs to facilitate prioritisation and the full and fair pricing of services rendered. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 3.2, 3.4 and 10.1)

Current situation:

The Central Statistics Office vision is to achieve “Independent Insight for All”, an objective underpinned by its Core Value of “serving the public”. As such, the CSO produces its outputs as a public good, varying and extending the range of its activities and products in response to statutory obligations and emerging policy support and insight requirements. The CSO does not charge for its products, which are universally accessible.

Accordingly, the CSO’s primary focus has historically been on input cost accounting, to ensure that it has adequate resourcing in relevant areas of the organisation as a function of emerging general demands. Increasingly, the CSO is being approached directly to support Government Departments and associated bodies (e.g., OECD) with data collection needs in specific public policy areas. When commissioned in this manner, such work is increasingly being conducted on a “pay per output” basis, whereby an existing internal Work Support System (WSS) is used to cost each activity, using apportionment of the “time” cost for personnel and the flow through of other direct costs. This system is proving adequate to satisfy the needs of both the CSO and the requesting Department. The CSO does not have a commercial mandate and is not required to be “self-funding” beyond the exchequer vote. Should this change in the future, there would be a clear incentive to explore cost accounting more fully as an aid to effective output product costing.

Improvement sub-action 12.1: Annual Expenditure Review meeting

To further develop business insights into cost and product accounting, an annual expenditure review meeting will be held with each Assistant Director General and their Heads of Division. Finance Division will provide overall costs per Head of Division and facilitate the review.

Deadline: Q2 2023 (annually afterwards).

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 12.2: Annual report to Management Board on review and consideration of actions arising.

The Assistant Director General for Corporate Affairs will submit a report to the Management Board on the expenditure review.

Deadline: Q4 2023 (annually afterwards).

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 12.3: Reviewing Product Cost-based Accounting

CSO will undertake a consultancy project to review the growing complexity of its work which demands greater financial insight for decision making. This will include consideration of the possible increased use of cost accounting in the CSO with budget estimates, product cost and service delivery as well as implications of same.

Deadline: Q1 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.3: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 12.4: Reviewing report and developing action plan

CSO will review consultancy report and decide on action plan.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 12.4: Central Statistics Office

13. Recommendation

As the Central Statistics Office moves forward to undertake Supported Quality Appraisals, it should ensure that such appraisals will cover the entire Statistical Work Programme within a reasonable timeframe while also establishing criteria for the prioritisation of appraisals across statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 4.3).

Current situation:

The Supported Quality Appraisal (SQA) model provides for an in-depth review of statistical production, considering national and European quality standards and provides direct support from relevant corporate areas in the implementation of any recommendations for quality improvement arising out of the appraisal. The model incorporates elements of statistical auditing and quality assessment, using independent internal expertise, to conduct an evaluation of existing practices against best practice standards and the implementation of the ES CoP principles. The model also includes a commitment to the delivery of ongoing support for the implementation of recommendations arising from the evaluation from the Methodology, Quality Unit and Technology divisions of CSO. At present the number of reviews carried out each year is limited to three due to the availability of supporting resources.

CSO intends to review the current operating process of the Supported Quality Appraisal scheme.

Improvement sub-action 13.1: Review of Supported Quality Appraisal Methodology

A review of the current SQA methodology and a redesign of the SQA process to allow for increased coverage and frequency of SQA's to occur.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 13.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 13.2: Examination of Scope

The examination of the possibility of extending the scope of the appraisals to include statistical outputs produced across the Irish Statistical System.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 13.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 13.3: Strategic selection process for appraisal scheme

Developing a more strategic selection process for inclusion in the appraisal scheme so that there are clear criteria for identifying and developing a SQA work programme so that reviews of strategic outputs can be better prioritised and planned.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 13.3: Central Statistics Office

14. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should push forward with reform efforts in business sector data collection and processing, in order to reduce response burdens, raise the efficiency of data collection and enhance data quality. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.2, 9.3 and 10.4)

Current Situation:

The majority of the CSO's more than 16 enterprise surveys have moved to eQ (electronic questionnaires) and a further project to move all elements of the collection process to electronic format is underway.

In parallel with the electronic collection process, the CSO is implementing a Response and Compliance programme to improve survey campaign management with a particular focus on response rates to business surveys.

Increasingly, statistical products combine data from multiple sources to produce new analysis. For example, the annual SBS datasets already use administrative data on business taxation combined with survey returns. Similarly, new statistical products such as Business Signs of Life combine multiple administrative data sources. To sustain the production of blended outputs, to manage the impact of falling response rates, and to assure quality, this work needs to be based on a repeatable data warehouse approach. As such, the CSO is investing in a cross-enterprise statistics research project which seeks to assess the utility and quality of each variable, identifying alternative administrative sources where possible, eliminating un-used or under-used collection and enhancing coherence across data collection.

All of this sits within a wider technology project which, taking a meta-data led approach, will create an integrated system for digital data capture for enterprises from the central business register to the respondent portal which will seamlessly incorporate both survey and administrative data sources.

Improvement sub-action 14.1: Full electronic engagement and implementation of response and compliance programme

Build internal application for the management of email addresses, with stakeholders and in line with GDPR and other legal requirements. Move all survey reminders to e-mail and commence legal action against selected non-respondents.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 14.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 14.2: Utility of data project Complete project to review the utility and quality of all variables across all enterprise surveys and transmissions and implement recommendations. Interim recommendations will be implemented during the delivery period of the project, through several milestone reports.

Deadline: Q2 2026
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 14.2: Central Statistics Office
Improvement sub -action 14.3: Digital Data Capture for Enterprises CSO will assess and address the challenge of developing a system of digital data capture encompassing both administrative and survey data, enhancing respondent engagement and taking a meta-data first approach to the development of an integrated data flow through existing and new systems. This will involve several discrete elements, with the first interim milestones.
Improvement sub-action 14.3.1: Develop project scope and high-level programme of deliverables (external business analyst)
Deadline: Q3 2024
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 14.3.1: Central Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 14.3.2: High-level design for integrated system (external solutions architect)
Deadline: Q1 2025
Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 14.3.2: Central Statistics Office
Improvement sub-action 14.3.3: Implement the project for digital data capture for enterprises
Deadline: Q4 2027
Responsible institution for improvement action 14.3.3: Central Statistics Office

15. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office in some respects offers an attractive “package” to new recruits, taking into account the non-monetary elements, which should be communicated effectively outside the Central Statistics Office while considering adjustments to further increase the attractiveness of the package. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.5 and 7.6)

Current situation:

The CSO meets its general grade staffing demand through a centralised civil service recruitment agency, the Public Appointments Service. However, the CSO has developed its own in-house professional recruitment team to meet specialist staffing demands, specific to the CSO. This strategic decision has been very successful in terms of the CSO being able to recruit specialist skills into the organisation in a very efficient and controlled manner. In a very challenging labour market, there is persistent pressure to maintain a strong competitive position for CSO as an attractive employer for technically skilled personnel. CSO is focused on distinguishing itself and asserting a strong and distinctive position for data literate candidates seeking rewarding careers in official statistics.

<p>Improvement sub-action 15.1: Adoption of a new Employer of Choice Strategy</p> <p>The Management Board of the Central Statistics Office will develop and approve a new Employer of Choice Strategy, encompassing a suite of actions designed to support the Office's recruitment and retention of skilled staff in support of its business objectives. The overarching Strategy will be given effect via a corporate project with multiple strands, including but not limited to the sub-actions.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q1 2023</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.1: Central Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.2: Enhancing relations with academia</p> <p>Enhancing relations with academia and other structures, in order to identify and target prospective employees equipped with highly sought skillsets needed by a modern data led organisation. This will include increased participation in graduate fairs, graduate development programmes, apprenticeship programmes as mechanisms to raise awareness and promote interest in the CSO as an employer.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.2: Central Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.3: Leverage new communication channels</p> <p>Leverage new channels including social media, podcasting and the CSO website Career's Page to raise the profile of the Office as a progressive employer, to showcase the benefits of a civil service and CSO career and to preview the CSO as a great place to work, for example via interviews with staff and spotlighting progressive outputs worked on by new recruits etc</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.3: Central Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.4: Address grade-related terms and conditions issues</p> <p>Engage with Department of Public Expenditure to address long-standing grade-related issues posing challenges to talent acquisition and retention.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.4: Central Statistics Office</p>
<p>Improvement sub-action 15.5: Talent Management System</p> <p>Invest in a Talent Management System to systematise and collate access to recruitment, career management and skills development related data both for business and staff member use.</p>
<p>Deadline: Q2 2024</p>
<p>Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.5: Central Statistics Office</p>

Improvement sub-action 15.6: Develop enhanced on-boarding and early career management support

Continue the development of the CSO SmartStart Year 1 programme for new recruits and promotees, designed to offer a high level of corporate and business area support for new starters and those embarking on roles at a higher level, to encourage upskilling, management training and support and guidance in navigating any challenges arising.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.6: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 15.7: Develop Career Development Pathways

Design career development models highlighting the diversity of skills and experiences available across the varying areas of CSO and encouraging mobility within the organisation as a route to a rewarding and continuously challenging career. In addition, develop a job-profiling model to support identifying Career Development Pathways across all grades in the CSO, to support upskilling of general service grade staff wishing to move into skilled statistical work.

Deadline: Q2 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 15.7: Central Statistics Office

16. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should consider ending the practice of pre-release access, which conflicts with the notion of equal access, or, if it is maintained, to increase transparency on the criteria behind individual decisions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 6.7)

Current situation:

At present there are only a limited number of situations where pre-release access is provided to Government officials on the morning of a release. These relate mainly to National Accounts, Labour Force Statistics and Crime. Access is restricted to pre agreed officials, details of whom are published on www.cso.ie.

Improvement action 16: Amend pre-release access register

Amend pre-release access register to include criteria behind decision to provide access and review at agreed intervals

Deadline: Q4 2023

Responsible institution for improvement action 16: Central Statistics Office

17. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should consider whether statistical releases could provide more analytical explanations of developments and more contextual material without compromising the need to be seen as impartial. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.1)

Current situation:

Over the last three years there has been a drive to focus on narrative and context in releases and press releases were the key means of providing this layer of analysis. One of the challenges, however, is that not all statistical areas are willing to use a press release for every release or even at times of increased media focus on a particular topic such as increasing house prices or the rising cost of construction materials. Also, it became clear that not everyone was accessing both the press release and the statistical release and so were losing out on key context and data.

To address this issue, the Communications & Dissemination division has developed a new publication format, which incorporates key elements of the press release such as key findings and a statistician's comment into the body of every statistical release.

The Communications & Dissemination team are taking a greater role in the approval of each release ahead of publication to ensure that clear, concise language is used to improve accessibility to CSO data. This approach has been successfully piloted and is now being gradually rolled out to all releases. There is evidence of greater media pick-up where the new format has been applied, with many outlets echoing the language used in the release or directly quoting the statistician. Some releases, that used the new format, were covered by the media for the first time.

Improvement sub-action 17.1: Conduct a review of statistical releases

The Communications & Dissemination Division will conduct a comprehensive review of all the statistical releases (new formats and emphasis on text) and provide feedback to the Management Board of where improvements can be made.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 17.2: Define a new release format

The Communications & Dissemination team will then work with the statistical areas to make the necessary improvements in terms of context and narrative.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 17.3: Roll out new release format

In conjunction with this, the Communications & Dissemination team will also continue the roll out of the new release format developed in 2022 and will also advise on reviewing the titles of some releases to help clarify or indicate what data each release might contain.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 17.3: Central Statistics Office

18. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should elaborate a strategy for relations with academia, which would cover inputs from academia to ongoing statistical production, inputs in the context of development activities as well as activities to raise the profile of the Central Statistics Office as a potential employer among students at universities and similar institutions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 7.5 and 7.7)

Current situation:

The Central Statistics Office has had a long history of engagement with academia both through co-operation by our statistical staff with teaching faculty in Irish academic institutions in the context of modules on official statistics and through the development of dedicated academic programmes, in particular the European Masters in Official Statistics, now accredited for delivery through University College Dublin and University College Cork.

Latterly, CSO has focused on bringing advanced academic expertise to bear in the development of its own in-house expertise, a recent example of which is collaboration with Professor David Haziza from Ottawa University and Statistics Canada. Training has been provided to staff in the CSO and ISS in the areas of:

- Weighting & Calibration
- Imputation and non-response
- Sampling (upcoming in October 2022)

Professor Haziza is also collaborating with CSO and providing advice on the following areas related to advanced sampling:

- Methods for dealing with non-probability samples.
- Sampling methods for rare populations.
- Implicit versus explicit stratification.
- Multiple-frame sampling and combining samples from multiple frames.
- Oversampling - for example to account for differential response rates across sub-groups and oversampling in the context of something like the wealth survey where we need to oversample wealthy households.
- Any special features of business surveys.

Increasingly, the CSO is committing to collaboration with academia to promote research and engagement in key priority areas for official statistics.

Improvement sub-action 18.1: CSO Research Programme

The CSO Management Board has approved a proposal to create a CSO Research Programme. The primary objective of the programme is to support and develop statistical research within the CSO and promote collaboration with researchers and academia. The programme includes a plan to host an Annual Research Conference which would include papers and presentations both from within the CSO and from across the academic/research community, building new links and strengthening existing relationships.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 18.2: Reinvigorated Graduate Programme

The CSO will offer a re-invigorated Graduate Programme filled with development opportunities for graduates. The success of the programme will be promoted through engagement with universities and other educational institutions. The re-invigorated Graduate Programme is a means of promoting longer term connections with academia, building a link between academia and CSO and making the CSO an employer of choice in the marketplace. The timing of the updated programme has now also been changed so that recruitment begins soon after graduate fairs have been completed.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 18.3: New CSO Careers Page

A new Interactive Careers Page on CSO website will welcome potential staff to an exciting organisation filled with opportunities to develop and progress. A QR code will take potential staff direct to the careers page. The new careers page will act as a shop window for potential staff promoting the CSO as an Employer of Choice. HR are also working with a marketing company on recruitment messaging. This will feed into the development of the new Careers Page and CSO's social media messaging around recruitment.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.3: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 18.4: Attendance at National Events

Attendance at Nationwide events also raises the profile of the CSO and ensures that it is a recognisable brand. The CSO will promote its brand and work at these nationwide events.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 18.4: Central Statistics Office

19. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should consider ways to reform the access to microdata for research and to facilitate such access for different categories of users without compromising data confidentiality. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.4)

Current situation:

The CSO has developed an online system for researcher access which will be rolled out in early 2023, and many smaller reforms are taking place in the context of ongoing liaison with researchers. In addition to CSO's current liaison group with the Irish Economic Association, CSO is developing links with researchers in its own research programme and through engagement with Science Foundation Ireland research programmes.

Improvement sub-action 19.1: Streamline Research Microdata File (RMF) access

Streamline application and approval process for access to RMFs. A new online system for managing the application, approval and access to RMF datasets has been developed by CSO IT. This will give visibility to researchers and CSO staff on all stages of the application process and will facilitate more accurate reporting on processing times.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 19.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 19.2: Agree governance with stakeholders

It is likely that different levels of administrative data access will be facilitated for different types of researchers in future, based on a public interest test, in addition to necessity and proportionality. This may require new governance structures for advising CSO on research projects, in addition to more bespoke data provision in future. CSO will involve stakeholders in the new structures which may need a legal basis. The CSO will develop guidelines for the different levels of access (e.g., different sampling rates) that different categories of users can expect under the public interest test in consultation with the new governance supports.

Deadline: Q4 2024

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 19.2: Central Statistics Office

20. Recommendation

The Central Statistics Office should pursue user and non-user surveys at a frequency of not less than every third year. In this context, the Central Statistics Office may consider opening such surveys to cover other producers of official statistics as well. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.3)

Current situation:

The 2022 User and non-user Survey has been completed and the results have been compiled and are attached. The last time CSO did such a survey was 2017.

Improvement sub-action 20.1: High-level customer and non-user survey

The CSO will conduct a high-level customer and non-user survey every three years. This means that the next survey will be conducted in 2025.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.1: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 20.2: Analyse the possibility to cover other producers

As regards extending the surveys to cover the producers of official statistics, the CSO will consider whether a question can be incorporated into the 2025 survey to measure awareness of official statistics produced by other Government bodies. In addition, the CSO will consider whether it would be worth encouraging other Government departments and producers of official statistics to conduct their own tailored user surveys.

Deadline: Q2 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.2: Central Statistics Office

Improvement sub-action 20.3: Introduce Pop-ups and analytical tools

Consider the introduction of user feedback pop-ups on www.cso.ie and explore the use of other analytical tools.

Deadline: Q4 2025

Responsible institution for improvement sub-action 20.3: Central Statistics Office