



An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh
Central Statistics Office

PEER REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND *CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE,* *IRELAND'S* IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer reviewer's recommendations and improvement actions in response to the recommendations

Strengthening coordination of Statistical Activities, Statistical Infrastructure and Professional Independence

- 1. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should decisively strengthen coordination of statistical activities across the Producers of European Statistics and in the Irish Statistical System. It should assign human resources and a dedicated budget to implement its coordination role. Coordinated statistical programme planning, supervision of the use of classifications, regular monitoring of data submission to Eurostat and uniform dissemination policies and practices should be established. (Coordination.)**

Current situation:

The Irish Statistical System (ISS) is very much centralised, with in excess of 90% of European statistics produced in the Central Statistics Office (CSO). There are fourteen ONAs which also produce European statistics. The Statistics Act, 1993 gives the CSO authority to co-ordinate official statistics compiled by public authorities, authority to assess the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities and authority to ensure that this potential is realised in so far as resources permit (Section 10(1) and 10(2)). The CSO has access for statistical purposes to records of public authorities (Section 30) and Section 31 requires public authorities to co-operate with CSO in relation to the statistical potential of administrative records.

To date the CSO has implemented a relatively informal coordination role, which includes secondment of professional statisticians to ONAs, organisation of a formal statistical liaison group (FSLG) to provide networking and professional support to seconded statisticians and other statistical professionals in ONAs, access to CSO training and workshops related to the Code of Practice, provision of a tabular dissemination channel (StatBank) and, where applicable, joint implementation of surveys and statistical projects.

In order to improve the utilisation and analysis of statistical data across Government Departments, the CSO proposes the development of an Irish Government Statistical Service (IGSS) which will comprise an organised system of professional statisticians across Government Departments and public bodies, co-ordinated and supported by the CSO. This framework will drive forward the CSO's coordination role across the public sector. Initial discussions with relevant national authorities on the structure and resourcing of this framework have commenced.

Improvement Actions 1.1 – 1.2: Improvement in Coordination of Statistical Activities across the Irish Statistical System

Action 1.1: CSO will specify a framework for an IGSS defining roles and responsibilities and will agree the scope and structure with Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER).

Action 1.2: CSO will identify HR and resource requirements for a Coordination Unit, subject to budget approval by DPER. The work plan for this unit will include: formally coordinating statistical programme planning; supervision of the use of classifications; regular monitoring of data dissemination to Eurostat; reduction and reporting on response burden where surveys take place; encouragement of the use of uniform dissemination policies including publication of advance calendars and a list of custom-designed analyses they have conducted on their websites; provision of training in quality of statistics in conjunction with CSO Quality unit; review of data availability for researcher access; and systematic examination of user needs.

Timeline:

Action 1.1: Q4 2015

Action 1.2: is dependent on resource allocation from DPER and will take a number of years to develop and embed in the Irish Statistical System.

2. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should regularly compile and publish the Irish annual statistical work programme covering statistical surveys and other statistical activities of European statistics. The progress reports should also be published accordingly. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.5 and 11.2.)

Current situation:

The vast majority of the statistical work is driven by the mandatory requirements of the European Statistical Programme. Under the Public Service Management Act, the CSO prepares a three-year Statement of Strategy setting out its corporate goals over a medium-term horizon, and an annual progress report is published. A longer-term modernisation programme – CSO 2020 – is being implemented and is incorporated in the Statement of Strategy.

The detail of statistical work programmes is included in the internal planning process, which comprises divisional action plans and local business plans. Externally, users are informed about new initiatives related to European statistics via statistical Liaison Groups. The CSO has not up to now published a consolidated statistical work programme. A statistical product list and a four month in advance release calendar with timescales of statistical products are available on the CSO website

Improvement Actions 2.1 - 2.3: Improving the publication on a coordinated work programme

Action 2.1: CSO will begin by publishing its own statistical work programme distinguishing European statistics.

Action 2.2: As a second stage, CSO will liaise with Other Producers of European statistics and will produce a coordinated work programme of European Statistics.

Action 2.3: CSO will publish an annual progress report on the coordinated work programme.

Timeline:

Action 2.1: Publish a CSO work programme by Q1 2016 and an annual progress report by Q1 2017

Actions 2.2 and 2.3: Dependent on Action 1.2, dependent on resourcing coordination role

3. The Irish national authorities should develop and implement a data infrastructure, including unique identifiers (personal and business) and postcodes, supporting the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1 and 9.4–9.6.)

Current situation:

This recommendation refers to “national authorities” and the driving role rests primarily with the DPER and the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). The development of a National Data Infrastructure (NDI) will be driven by the need to improve service delivery and achieve administrative efficiencies. In turn, this will have a downstream statistical benefit in improved availability of usable administrative data sources. The CSO has been active in advocating to Government an integrated approach to administrative data across the public service, including promotion of consistent approaches to identifiers, classifications and geo-spatial / postcode data in service planning and delivery. This requirement is emphasised in successive CSO Statements of Strategy. The National Statistics Board (NSB), in its strategic role of guiding the development of official statistics in Ireland, has also advocated the development of a national data infrastructure for the better use of administrative data in the production of official statistics.

Improvement Action 3: Improving the National Data Infrastructure

The CSO will provide technical assistance and support to Central Government Departments on the development of the national data infrastructure and will continue to advocate across relevant fora for the wider use of PPSNs, postcodes and introduction of unique business identifiers on all relevant administrative records. CSO will work with the NSB in further supporting the development of the NDI.

Timeline:

Ongoing

4. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should continue improving both the frame for the population surveys, and the business register. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.3 and 8.3.)

Current situation:

Both the frame for the population surveys and the business register are compliant with EU requirements and are regularly reviewed and updated. The business register is updated on a quarterly basis using Revenue Commissioner (Tax Office) and other available business data. While there is no population or household register in Ireland, the frame for household surveys is based on the Census of Population household data and is updated every 5 years following the quinquennial Census of Population. In between censuses it is updated with administrative data on new dwellings or other changes. The CSO continually reviews its business and household survey frames as new sources of data become available.

Improvements in administrative data sets, resulting from recommendations 3 & 6, will improve the potential of those sources to support statistical registers.

Improvement Action 4: Improving the frame for the population surveys and business register

CSO will continue to monitor the availability of all potential data sources to consider their use in improvements to the frame for population surveys and business register.

Timeline:

Ongoing

5. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should have the unconditional legal right to collect information for European statistical purposes. The Other National Authorities producing European statistics should have the right to compel response to statistical surveys of European statistics. The Irish legislative, administrative and statistical authorities should take actions to amend legal provisions accordingly. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 2.1 and 2.3.)

Current situation:

Under Section 23 of the Statistics Act, the Director General of the CSO may prepare forms, questionnaires and other records for the collection of information; and under Section 24 the Director General may invite any person or undertaking to provide information on a voluntary basis.

The mechanism for mandatory collection is as follows: Under Section 25, the Taoiseach (or a delegated Minister) may make an order making it a requirement for persons or undertakings to provide information. Under Section 26, the Director General or an Officer of Statistics may issue a notice requiring a person or undertaking to provide information, pursuant to an order made under Section 25. The person or undertaking receiving the notice is obliged to provide the information. While this mechanism for mandatory collection depends on a Ministerial Order, the technical contents of that order are always specified by the CSO and the experience of the CSO is that this mechanism has not constrained its ability to specify requirements and collect data.

There are very few circumstances in which ONAs conduct direct surveys, as they mainly use their own organisations' administrative data sources. Arrangements for mandatory collection by ONAs can be made under the Statistics Act, as it stands. Section 11(1) provides for joint statistical projects between CSO and other bodies; under Section 20(b) any person collecting data under such a joint project is an Officer of Statistics; and under Section 26, an Officer of Statistics may issue a notice requiring the provision of information, pursuant to an order made under Section 25.

7. The Irish legislative authorities should adopt legal provisions for professional qualifications and selection criteria of the Director General of the Central Statistics Office of Ireland and heads of statistical sections of the Other National Authorities producing European statistics. The legal framework should also stipulate renewability of the appointment of the Director General of the Central Statistics Office. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 1.8.)

Current situation:

Under Section 12(1) of the Statistics Act, 1993, the Director General of the Central Statistics Office is appointed by the President, on the nomination of the Taoiseach. The post of Director General is filled by means of an open competition conducted by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) which is responsible for the selection process for all posts at Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General levels in the Civil Service. The post of Director General of the CSO is at Secretary General level. The requirements for the post of Director General are based on the professional skills and competencies needed to lead a national statistical institute and are published in the

Information Booklet for the post. The Director General holds a fixed term contract for a period of seven years or until he/she reaches the age of 60; this applies to all Civil Service posts at Secretary General level.

The statistical heads of other producers of European statistics have been appointed on the basis of professional criteria. In many cases, the statistical head is on secondment from the CSO. Senior Statisticians seconded from the CSO to Head of Statistical Unit posts have been appointed from internal CSO competitions based on the necessary leadership, managerial and professional skills. The framework for an Irish Government Statistical Service (see Recommendation 1) will include a statistical career structure containing the professional criteria and process for selection of the statistical head of other producers of European statistics.

Improvement Actions 5.1/7 – 5.2: Review of legislation

Action 5.1/7: CSO will examine the Statistics Act 1993 in the light of recommendations 5 and 7, taking cognisance also, for Recommendation 7, of Article 5a(4) of Regulation 223/09 as amended by Regulation 2015/759, and propose amendments, where deemed necessary.

Action 5.2: CSO will further explore with appropriate ONAs the potential to use existing mechanisms under the Statistics Act to compel response to statistical surveys undertaken by ONAs where the data being collected by the ONA is to be used solely for statistical purposes. If this approach proves problematic the CSO will explore other avenues to provide a legislative solution.

Timeline:

Action 5.1/7: The CSO will propose amendments, where deemed necessary, to the relevant authorities by the end of Q4 2016

Action 5.2: Q4 2016

6. The National Statistics Board, the Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should take steps to ensure that all statistical authorities are involved in the design of administrative data, making them more suitable for statistical purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.1 and 8.7.)

Current situation:

Under Section 31(2) of the Statistics Act 1993, public bodies must consult the CSO when any system for the storage or retrieval of information is being introduced, revised or extended, or when any statistical survey is being undertaken.

The CSO are generally acknowledged as data experts and considerable progress has been made in developing the co-operation between the CSO and other public bodies to promote the statistical potential of administrative data sources. Specific examples of progress in this area include: the SPAR projects (Statistical Potential of Administrative Records) carried out by the CSO under the NSB strategies from 2003 to 2008, to identify and evaluate the statistical potential of data holdings; the signature of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with several public bodies agreeing the supply of administrative data for statistical use and specifying data requirements; the establishment of the CSO's Administrative Data Centre as the focal point for developing the use of administrative data in the CSO; and the development of new statistical products based on administrative data. Other initiatives – the Formal Statistical Liaison Group (FSLG), advocacy by the CSO in the context of public service reform, participation in key committees such as the public sector Council of Chief Information Officers – also support greater use of administrative data for statistical purposes.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, the CSO agrees that more needs to be done to pro-actively implement Section 31(2) of the Statistics Act, along with corresponding provisions of regulation 223/209. Specific steps include the provision of more tangible guidelines on data requirements and more active engagement with public bodies, via the IGSS framework described under Recommendation 1.

Improvement Actions 6.1 – 6.2: Design of administrative systems

Action 6.1: CSO will develop guidelines for those public bodies developing administrative systems outlining the core data infrastructure needed to meet statistical requirements, including identifiers, classifications and geography.

Action 6.2: CSO will engage with Other National Authorities and Government Departments developing administrative systems, to determine key issues of statistical importance.

Actions 6.1 – 6.2 are linked to Actions 1.1, 1.2 & Action 3 and dependent on appropriate level of resources for the coordination role.

Timeline:

Action 6.1: Q1 2017 (Dependent on resources from DPER)

Action 6.2: Ongoing

Further advancing a process-oriented organisation and strengthening quality management

- 8. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should move towards a more integrated approach in quality management. The generic guidelines on statistics quality management should be reviewed ensuring their completeness, regular monitoring and updating. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1–4.3.)**

Current situation:

The CSO's commitment to quality is paramount and is underpinned by the Office Standards and Guidelines on Quality in Statistics. Project 1 of the CSO 2020 change programme is the development of a new Quality Management Framework (QMF). This will be a far-reaching programme of improvements to the quality management documentation and practices for every statistical process. In implementing the QMF, the Office Standards and Guidelines will be updated and new procedures will be implemented to ensure that the quality documentation is up-to-date and that standardised metadata are in place. Development of the QMF is already under way and there will be a staged approach to implementation of the various strands of the programme across the Office, in order to maintain current operational requirements. This is a significant programme of change and will take a number of years to implement and embed across the Office.

Improvement Actions 8.1 – 8.2 – Integrated Quality Management Framework

Action 8.1: CSO will implement a Quality Management Framework (QMF) as part of the CSO 2020 programme of change. The QMF programme includes the review and update of the generic guidelines on statistics quality management and improvements in documentation and standardisation of metadata.

Action 8.2: CSO will develop a system of monitoring implementation of the guidelines.

Timeline:

Action 8.1: Development of the QMF is already under way. Implementation of the QMF will begin in Q1 2016 and extend over a number of years in accordance with the breadth of the programme. Update of Quality guidelines due Q3 2017. Implementation of the QMF is tentatively outlined for the end of 2018.

Action 8.2: Begin in 2018 and is dependent on the timeframe for the implementation of the QMF.

9. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should substantially strengthen and resource the central methodology unit beyond what was planned for 2015. The methodology unit should promote standardised documentation of statistical methods. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4, 7.1 and 7.2.)

Current situation:

Starting from a very small base, the CSO was granted some additional resources for methodology in 2015 and has prioritised staffing in this area. Since January 2015, the methodology unit comprises one Senior Statistician and 4.5 (full-time equivalent) Statisticians. While this level of staffing will allow the unit to change its focus from small short-term projects sponsored by specific business areas to more strategic methodological support across the whole organisation, it will not be adequate to support the actions needed under this Peer Review and the CSO 2020 programme. Methodology is key to supporting statistical quality, standardisation of processes, and more efficient use of resources. Investment in the methodology unit will be necessary in order to implement the CSO 2020 Quality Management Framework (QMF), to implement Office-wide standardisation of methodology, and to implement the specific recommendations (10 to 13) on statistical processes and quality contained in this review.

Improvement Actions 9.1 – 9.2 – Resourcing Methodology Unit and promotion of standardised documentation

Action 9.1: Assign approved staffing to central Methodology Unit in accordance with resources already sanctioned by DPER covering the period 2015 – 2017.

Action 9.2: CSO to seek agreement from DPER to obtain additional resources to further strengthen the central Methodology Unit in order to provide strategic methodological support.

Actions 9.1 – 9.2 are linked to Action 10/11 below.

Timeline:

Action 9.1: Q1 2016 subject to sourcing the appropriate skill set through the successful completion of a Statistician recruitment competition which has already commenced.

Action 9.2: We will be seeking approval during Q4 2015 with subsequent resource allocation during 2016.

10. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should improve sampling methods, including coordination of samples, and consistently and publicly report on sample selection and estimation methods. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 6.4, 8.3 and 9.2.)

Current situation:

The methodology unit in CSO has not been in a position to offer formal in-house methodological support or common guidelines on methods for sampling and estimation. While the unit is working to support strategic rather than short-term developments over the course of 2015/16, further investment in methodology will be needed. However, work has been ongoing in business areas to improve sampling methods and coordination of samples. For example, as part of the Household Survey Development Project, a dedicated register and sampling unit for social surveys was established in 2014. This will ensure that expertise in this area is developed and that best practice sampling and estimation procedures are followed. There is ongoing review of our central business register as a sampling frame for business surveys.

Standard reports on Quality & Methods for all statistical outputs provide information on sample selection and estimation methods and are published on the CSO website.

11. In the guidelines on statistics quality management or in the related reference documentation, the Central Statistics Office of Ireland should specify the standards on how to handle sampling and non-sampling errors together with procedures aimed at reducing different types of errors. Editing and imputing standards should be improved, advancing macro-editing. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.2, 8.5 and 12.2.)

To date, the methodology unit in CSO has not been in a position to offer formal in-house methodological support or common guidelines. Expertise in statistical processes and methodologies (e.g. sampling, imputation, editing) has been vested in the professional staff (statisticians and senior statisticians) at domain level and is therefore somewhat decentralised across the organisation. Investment in the Methodology Unit will aim to provide more centralised and co-ordinated support for statistical techniques, including the handling of sampling and non-sampling errors, editing, macro-editing and imputation.

Improvement Action 10/11: Improvement of sampling methods

Subject to resource allocation, the work programme of the Methodological unit will include specifying standardised statistical procedures for the Office on; sample selection; sample coordination and reporting; handling sampling and non-sampling errors and reduction of errors; editing and imputation.

Linked to Recommendation 9.

Timeline:

To begin Q4 2016 and dependent on appropriate resourcing.

12. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should develop a common glossary of terms and definitions, as well as make the classifications publicly available on its website. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.2 and 10.4.)

Current situation:

The CSO has in place a central classifications database. The concepts, definitions and classifications defined by the CSO are applied in accordance with European and national legislation. Database products (i.e. tables to be published in StatBank) cannot be disseminated unless the classification originates from this classifications database.

Improvement Actions 12.1 – 12.2 – Development of a common glossary of terms and publication of classifications

Action 12.1: The CSO Classification and Standards (CARs) unit will review and update the classifications listed publicly on the website.

Action 12.2: A common glossary of terms and definitions used by the CSO will be created.

Timeline:

Action 12.1: Beginning Q3 2016 and commence publishing on the website by Q4 2016

Action 12.2: Q2 2016 and dependent on resources.

13. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should provide staff training courses on the quality of statistics. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.1 and 7.6.)

Current situation:

The CSO has a specialised Training and Development unit with a dedicated training manager. The unit provides e-learning, structured statistical training at three levels, and personal development training. Staff take part in many internal and external training courses, including relevant ESTP courses. There is a programme of targeted training on specific statistical techniques (e.g. dealing with non-response, design and testing of questionnaires) which has been delivered by international experts. Statisticians working in other public bodies attend CSO training courses. As part of the CSO 2020 QMF programme the quality manager will develop specific in-house training courses on the quality principles and, as it develops, the CSO quality management framework and policy.

As the QMF is embedded in the CSO, quality training will be extended to the Other National Authorities producing European statistics via the proposed Coordination Unit in conjunction with the CSO Quality Manager.

Improvement Actions 13.1 - 13.2: Provision of training on quality across the office and for ONAs

Action 13.1: As part of QMF implementation further training on quality will be delivered across the Office initially on quality principles and subsequently in accordance with the roll out of the QMF and the update of the quality guidelines.

Action 13.2: CSO will work with Other National Authorities to provide staff training courses on Quality of Statistics

Timeline:

Action 13.1: Q2 2016 for initial quality training. Training on updated quality guidelines beginning Q3 2017.

Subsequent quality training dependent on the implementation timeframes for the QMF. The pace of implementation is dependent on resources in the Quality unit.

Action 13.2: Refer to Action 1.2 for ONAs, dependent on resourcing coordination role

14. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should increase electronic data collection from businesses in order to reduce costs and make data submission more convenient. Common data collection applications, where applicable, should be used by the Other National Authorities producing European statistics. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should establish a common portal for business data collection. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 9.3 and 10.2.)

Current situation:

The CSO has successfully introduced electronic data collection and is committed to increase the share of electronic collection. Electronic forms are currently being used for a number of short term and structural business surveys and some surveys are now e-form only, with usage rates steadily increasing over time. Quarterly earnings statistics are extracted directly from payroll software packages. The mobile electronic collection system for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is being upgraded and a similar system is being introduced for tourism surveys. This will bring the share of electronic collection to over 71% in business statistics domains. The CSO is researching a common portal for business data collection. Other Irish bodies producing European statistics conduct fewer and smaller surveys and work mainly from administrative data sources.

Improvement Actions 14.1 – 14.2: Improvement to electronic data collection

Action 14.1: The CSO will examine the feasibility of establishing a common portal for business data collection and of extending its use to Other Producers of European Statistics where survey data is collected.

Action 14.2: The CSO will continue to modernise the data collection in CPI and Tourism statistics using mobile device electronic collection.

Timeline:

Action 14.1: Q4 2016

Action 14.2: Beginning Q2 2016 (timeframe is subject to additional staff resourcing)

15. The Other National Authorities producing European statistics should introduce regular measurement of the response burden. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should complement its performance indicators of the response burden by introducing these indicators for the household surveys. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 9.1 and 9.2.)

Current situation:

The CSO has prioritised the reduction of burden and the replacement of data collection via survey with administrative data sources where the appropriate quality standards can be met. The CSO measures the response burden of business and agricultural surveys and has reduced the burden by 32% since 2008. The amount of data collected from small enterprises in CSO's structural business surveys has been substantially reduced, by using administrative data sources, and a business register survey has been completely replaced by administrative data. Agricultural surveys make extensive use of registers of livestock and crops. The volume of data on earnings which CSO needs to collect, while still meeting EU regulations, was reviewed and reduced in 2010 and quarterly earnings statistics are extracted electronically from payroll software systems. A project to compile structural earnings data from administrative and statistical records is close to completion, which will replace the National Employment Survey.

The CSO's large cases unit (LCU) is a single point of contact for the largest enterprise groups in the State. The unit has engaged in a form-simplification exercise to reduce the burden while still collecting the necessary information. The Household Survey Development Project will introduce telephone interviewing while also simplifying questionnaires for social surveys. The CSO has continued to promote further usage of e-forms rather than paper-based collection for businesses and many surveys are now e-form only.

ONAs conduct a limited number of surveys as they mainly use administrative data.

Improvement Actions 15.1 - 15.2: Improvement in publication of response burden by the CSO and the ONAs

Action 15.1: CSO to begin publishing the response burden collected for QNHS and EUSILC and develop this for all household surveys.

Action 15.2: CSO will work with Other National Authorities producing European statistics to introduce response burden measurement where surveys take place.

Timeline:

Action 15.1: Q1 2016 for QNHS and EUSILC and for all Household surveys by Q3 2017

Action 15.2: Refer to Action 1.2 for the ONAs, dependent on resourcing coordination role

Strengthening User Orientation

- 16. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should seek out user needs more systematically, institutionalising the relationship and improving communication with users. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 11.1.)**

Current situation:

The Statistics Act 1993 requires the CSO to “maintain close and regular contact with the principal users and suppliers of statistics” – Section 11(2). User engagement is one of the pillars of the CSO 2020 change programme. Emerging user needs and satisfaction with outputs and dissemination methods are identified through a number of channels – press conferences on major statistical publications attended by media and power users, regular CSO conferences and seminars on statistical themes (e.g. Business Statistics, Administrative Data), briefings to the Oireachtas (Parliamentary) research service, sectoral Liaison Groups, steering / advisory groups on specific topics such as QNHS Modules and the Census of Population. These contacts are also an important forum for presenting statistical developments and receiving feedback from users.

The CSO 2020 programme has set up a project on Customers and Outputs which will make recommendations on how CSO interacts with users.

Improvement Actions 16.1 - 16.4: Improvement to user consultation

Action 16.1: CSO will redesign its website to improve navigability for users.

Action 16.2: CSO will continue to provide data seminars and engage with users via liaison groups where appropriate.

Action 16.3: CSO 2020 project on customers and outputs to report on its findings on interaction with users, some of which can feed into the proposed user satisfaction survey (see Recommendation 17).

Action 16.4: CSO to appoint a Head of Dissemination and External Communications who will develop further mechanisms to capture user needs more systematically, standardise the consultation process within the Office and improve communications with users.

Refer to Action 1.2 for the ONAs, dependent on resourcing coordination role

Timeline:

Action 16.1: Q4 2015.

Action 16.2: Ongoing

Action 16.3: Q3 2015

Action 16.4: Q1 2016

17. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should prepare and implement a plan to increase the regularity of user satisfaction surveys and to make sure that the results are used to design corresponding improvement actions. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 4.3, 11.3 and 15.1)

Current situation:

The CSO has committed to conduct a user satisfaction survey by an independent company and review its findings to design improvement actions.

Improvement Actions 17.1 – 17.2 – Increase in regularity of user satisfaction surveys

Action 17.1: The CSO will commission an independent user satisfaction survey and use the results to design improvement actions

Action 17.2: Based on the experience of Action 17.1, the CSO will determine the frequency of future user satisfaction surveys.

Timeline:

Action 17.1: Survey Q1 2016. Improvement plan Q4 2016

Action 17.2: Dependent on Action 17.1.

18. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should elaborate a comprehensive dissemination policy. It should make public its revisions policy, which should be regularly reviewed. The Other National Authorities producing European statistics should also develop and publish dissemination policies. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 8.6 and 15.1.)

Current situation:

The CSO's publication and dissemination policy is available on its website and sets out the policy on announcement and publication of statistical releases, special analyses, press releases and conferences and the StatBank dissemination database. It also documents the limited pre-release practices for certain CSO statistics. A revisions policy is published internally. Other producers of European statistics do not currently publish dissemination policies.

The CSO 2020 Project on Customers and Outputs will make recommendations on a comprehensive CSO dissemination policy.

Improvement Actions 18.1 - 18.3: Publish an improved dissemination and revisions policy. Develop and publish a dissemination policy for ONAs

Action 18.1: The CSO will review and update its current dissemination policy.

Action 18.2: The CSO will update and publish its revisions policy.

Action 18.3: The CSO will work with all ONAs to develop and publish dissemination and revisions policies.

Timeline:

Action 18.1: Q4 2016

Action 18.2: Q2 2016

Action 18.3: See Action 1.2 above for ONAs, dependent on resourcing coordination role

19. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should elaborate and implement a media response procedure and formal guidelines to write press releases and conduct press conferences. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 1.7 and 6.8.)

Current situation:

While the CSO has no specific written policy, the Office does intervene if and when appropriate. Generally, public intervention by the Office is rare. The relevant Director or the Director General deals with criticism on a case by case basis in a manner proportionate to the situation. In the online environment, the Office responds when it thinks it appropriate to do so, and where intervention would be considered to be effective. The CSO 2020 Project on Customers and Outputs will make recommendations on a CSO dissemination policy including media response.

Improvement Action 19 – Media Response

CSO will elaborate a media response procedure and document existing practices, following the appointment of a new Head of Dissemination and External Communications. See Action 16.4.

Timeline:

Q4 2016

20. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should publish a more precise list of users with privileged access to statistical releases and proceed to take action to better monitor the appropriate use of this privilege. Other National Authorities producing European statistics should make the list and the details of privileged access public, taking into account that privileged access has to be limited and controlled. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7.)

Current situation:

The CSO grants a very limited pre-release access to individuals with a designated role within a limited number of specified Government Departments, as allowed for under the European Statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.7. This limited access is described on the CSO website. The published description of the pre-release access currently refers to access being granted to the specified Government Departments and does not properly reflect the limited access to designated individuals which is in operation. The CSO monitors the appropriate use of this privilege and will continue to do so in the future.

Improvement Actions 20.1 - 20.2: Publish a more precise description of the limited pre-release access in operation within the CSO and ONAs.

Action 20.1: The CSO will publish a more precise description of the limited pre-release access in operation within the CSO.

Action 20.2: The CSO will work with ONAs to develop and publish a dissemination policy that incorporates privileged access, where it exists, to statistical releases relating to European statistics.

Timeline:

Action 20.1: Q3 2015

Action 20.2: See Action 1.2 in relation to dissemination policies for Other Producers of European statistics, dependent on resourcing coordination role

21. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should develop a more user-friendly advance release calendar, including regular major revisions, providing precise release dates earlier than currently. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 6.5.)

Current situation:

The CSO currently publishes a static four month in advance calendar on its website with “not later than” dates and a weekly announcement confirms the exact release date one week in advance. Major revisions or changes in methodology are communicated via a number of methods: press conferences; direct contact with major users; via the statistical release itself; and, generally, an introduction to series article is published.

Improvement Action 21: Develop a more precise and user friendly Release Calendar

The CSO will develop and publish a more user friendly advance release calendar, which will include regular major revisions and precise release dates one month in advance.

Timeline:

Q2 2016.

22. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should publish a list of custom-designed analyses they have conducted on their websites. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.3.)

Current situation:

The CSO provides, on a fee basis, special series and analyses to individual users tailored to their particular needs. Where such analyses are in frequent demand they are incorporated into the regular release. The CSO will run computer programs by specialist users on its computer data files in a manner which preserves the confidentiality of the individual records. Section 5.6.1 of the Standard Reports on Methods and Quality describes the extent to which custom-designed analysis is available for each statistical output.

Improvement Actions 22.1 - 22.3 : Publish a list of custom designed analyses by the CSO and by ONAs

Action 22.1: The CSO will prepare a policy on custom designed analyses including a procedure for general release.

Action 22.2: The CSO will publish on its website a list of custom-designed analyses we produce for users.

Action 22.3: The CSO will work with the ONAs to prepare a policy on custom designed analyses including a procedure for publication, as appropriate, on ONA websites.

Timeline:

Action 22.1: Q4 2015

Action 22.2: Q2 2016.

Action 22.3: See Action 1.2 above, dependent on resourcing coordination role

23. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should develop remote access to further facilitate the use of microdata for scientific and research purposes. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicators 7.7 and 15.4.)

Current situation:

A dedicated project under the CSO 2020 programme is the development of remote access to micro-data for statistical research. The NSB has recommended that the CSO and other data producers in the ISS continue to facilitate requests for access to microdata files for legitimate statistical research purposes, including the development of a remote access option, subject to all the necessary security, data protection and statistical confidentiality safeguards being in place.

Currently, research access is provided exclusively on-site in the CSO for business statistics; such data may not be taken off-site. Under limited conditions, demographic and social data sets may be analysed off-site; access depends on the particular data set, which may never contain direct identifiers, and on the capacity of the researcher and their organisation to meet CSO's security and control requirements.

Under the CSO 2020 project, a review of the existing environment for access to microdata has been completed and four project sub-groups have started to work on enhancing centralised management, IT infrastructure, policies and awareness. Five key principles are being observed: safe data, safe people, safe setting, safe projects and safe outputs.

Improvement Action 23.1 - 23.2: Development of Remote Researcher access

Action 23.1: The CSO as part of a CSO 2020 project will develop a remote access technical solution to further facilitate the use of microdata for scientific and research purposes. Together with the technical solution an administrative and governance structure will be put in place.

Action 23.2: CSO to investigate the feasibility of extending any Remote Access facility developed to host access to microdata from Other Producers of European Statistics, where appropriate.

Timeline:

Action 23.1: Q1 2016. Dependent on resource allocation.

Action 23.2: Dependent on Action 23.1 and resourcing coordination Action 1.2 of ONAs.

24. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should develop a more formalised systematic approach to compare and reconcile evidence from different data sources describing the same phenomenon. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 14.4.)

Current situation:

The CSO constantly monitors coherence and comparability. Corresponding data sources in other domains and relevant administrative data are used for checking data quality and coverage and for benchmarking. Conceptual and definitional differences are highlighted in statistical releases, background notes and quality reports. Differences between outputs that are not due to conceptual or definitional differences are resolved as far as possible. Where there are conceptual or definitional differences between data sources, users are informed about the reasons for differences between corresponding aggregates and indicators.

The Large Cases Unit (LCU) has a pivotal role in ensuring consistency across data sources for largest enterprises. The unit is based in the National Accounts division and it brings together data from business statistics (SBS, Prodcum, Business Register, STS, Earnings surveys), from Trade, Balance of Payments and National Accounts surveys, and from administrative sources (taxation, company registration) to ensure coherence and completeness of data across domains and between all relevant statistical areas and the National Accounts.

The CSO's Administrative Data Centre (ADC) actively identifies the potential of new sources of administrative data – to provide new analysis and to help improve quality and benchmarking for existing statistical sources.

Improvement Action 24: Development of formal system to check coherence and comparability

The CSO will appoint a high level project team to:

- draft instructions on coherence checking as part of GSBPM sub-process 6.2 (Validate Outputs) – for incorporation in the overall quality guidelines;
- identify priority domains and variables for regular coherence checking;
- incorporate statistical coherence checking in regular business processes;
- establish reporting mechanisms to provide assurance regarding coherence checking.

Timeline:

High level project team in place: end of 2015.

Development of formal system to check coherence and comparability: Q4 2017.

25. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland and the Other National Authorities producing European statistics should directly link standardised metadata with public statistical database and statistical releases. Metadata should be provided in accordance with the Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure standard. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 15.5.)

Current situation:

All statistical results are disseminated with the respective metadata. However, descriptive metadata are not always linked to the output directly but are easily found on the CSO website. The CSO seeks to make improvements in the area of metadata through the CSO 2020 QMF sub-project on defining and implementing metadata standards.

Standard Reports on Methods and Quality and methodological background notes are available for all outputs and are linked to electronic releases.

Improvement action 25.1 - 25.3: Improve availability of standardised metadata for statistical outputs in the CSO and the ONAs

Action 25.1: The CSO 2020 QMF project on metadata will specify joint metadata for CSO disseminate data on Statbank and electronic releases.

Action 25.2: This standard will be implemented as part of the QMF.

Action 25.3: Other Producers of European Statistics that publish data on the CSO web portal will be required to link standardised structured metadata to their statistical outputs.

Timeline:

Action 25.1: Q1 2016.

Action 25.2: Beginning Q2 2016. Implementation dependent on overall QMF project implementation.

Action 25.3: Timeframes dependent on both Action 1.2 including resourcing coordination role and implementation within CSO arising from Action 25.1

26. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland should improve its cost-accounting systems by introducing a systematic product- and process-based accounting approach. It should also develop and introduce internal measurement and benchmarking of cost-effectiveness. (European statistics Code of Practice, indicator 10.1.)

Current situation:

CSO expenditure reports are based on cost-centre accounting. For staff costs, this often aligns closely with statistical processes and products. However, support area and overhead costs are generally not allocated *ex-post* to relevant cost centres. For large projects, including EU and other externally-funded projects, costs are estimated *ex-ante* and are tracked during project implementation. Project codes are assigned and staff time on these projects is recorded. However, a time-reporting system is not used universally throughout the Office. A sub-project of the CSO 2020 programme is currently working on the introduction of an Office-wide time reporting system which will use high-level categories from the GSBPM to record time worked. This information will feed into improved process and product based metrics of costs.

Improvement action 26.1 - 26.3: Improve cost accounting systems and measurement of cost-effectiveness

Action 26.1: The CSO 2020 QMF project will introduce a time recording system in the Office which will introduce measurement of time spent by staff on GSBPM processes and individual surveys. This will improve product- and process-based metrics.

Action 26.2: CSO will appoint a professional accountant to introduce improved cost-accounting systems to allow product and process based accounting.

Action 26.3: CSO will implement improved accounting systems that will allow more effective measurement and benchmarking of cost-effectiveness. This is dependent on the implementation of Actions 26.1 & 26.2.

Timeline:

Action 26.1: Q1 2016

Action 26.2: Appointment of professional accountant Q1 2016

Action 26.3: Beginning Q3 2016, followed by review of cost effectiveness beginning Q4 2016 (dependent on implementation of an effective time recording system in the Office).