



## Committee of Public Accounts

Leinster House

Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 618 3074/3790/3169

076 100 1738

Email: [pac@oireachtas.ie](mailto:pac@oireachtas.ie)

**Ref: PAC32-I-1401**

08 August 2019

Dear Ms Fallon,

On behalf of Pádraig Dalton, Director General CSO, please find attached the response to the Public Accounts Committee's request for additional information following the appearance of the Director General before the Committee on 11 April 2019. I would like to apologise to the Committee for the delayed response as the email with the request was inadvertently quarantined.

### 1. CSO Vacancies

The posts referenced by the CSO in Public Accounts Committee represents the number of posts that the CSO is planning to fill throughout 2019. It includes both vacancies and new posts. Of the 86 posts that were sanctioned for filling by the Management Board following a prioritisation exercise in March 2019, 36 are considered to be vacancies and 50 new posts. Key areas for recruitment in 2019 are in the statistical and technological fields.

Twelve statistician vacancies in the CSO plus five vacancies for other Government Departments were filled from the recently advertised Open CSO Statistician competition.

The Technology directorate has a requirement for 21 posts at various grades to be filled during 2019. Eleven are due to be filled from the current PAS-run open competition ICT Specialists (EO level).

Preparation work for Census 2021 has commenced and as a result there will be a gradual staffing up of this area in 2019 and 2020.

This year Internal competitions completed at the grade of HEO, EO Statbank and PO international Relations have been completed. Current recruitment competitions underway include an Open Statistician



An  
Phríomh-Oifig  
Staidrimh

Central  
Statistics  
Office



An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh  
Bóthar na Sceiche Airde,  
Corcaigh, Éire, T12 X00E

Central Statistics Office  
Skehard Road, Cork,  
Ireland, T12 X00E

Corcaigh: +353 21 453 5000

BÁC: +353 1 498 4000

Faca: +353 21 453 5555

R-phost: eolas@cso.ie

Suíomh: [www.cso.ie/en/baile](http://www.cso.ie/en/baile)

Íosghlac: 1890 313 414 (Éire)  
0870 876 0256 (RA/TÉ)

Cork: +353 21 453 5000

Dublin: +353 1 498 4000

Fax: +353 21 453 5555

E-Mail: [information@cso.ie](mailto:information@cso.ie)

Web: [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)

LoCall: 1890 313 414 (ROI)  
0870 876 0256 (UK/NI)

competition, a Graduate Placement Programme 19/20, with a Survey Co-ordinator and Interviewer competitions nearing completion.

Recruitment in the CSO is an on-going process with the number of vacancies changing on a continuous basis. Currently the longest vacancy in the CSO is for a Principal Officer position with responsibility for Governance, Compliance, Legal. This is a new position and it was sanctioned by the Management Board in May 2017.

## **2. Employee Engagement Survey**

In the most recent Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey (CSEES): 681 of CSO staff completed the e-survey, achieving an 81% response rate in 2017, exceeding the 2015 response rate of 72%. CSO results for 2017 across 19 of the 24 themes of questions asked in the survey are mostly better or on a par with the Civil service overall results.

Just 4 themes are slightly below the Civil Service average and the theme of Citizen Impact score is 5 points below. The CSO continued to score highly in the themes of Competence, Well-being, Social Support, Employee Engagement and Coping with Change. However, the lower scoring themes allow us to identify and make improvements in areas such as Involvement Climate, Career Development & Mobility, Innovative Climate and Performance standards.

In response the CSO has developed a CSEES- CSO Action Plan. Staff contributions provided significant feedback and informed the development of the Action Plan which aims to address the key areas identified as needing improvement across the CSO. The Management Board confirmed its commitment to investing in meaningful delivery of these actions and to responding to the inputs from staff across the Office.

## **3. Consumer Price Index (CPI)**

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is designed to measure, in index form, the change in the average level of prices paid for consumer goods and services by all private and institutional households in the country and by foreign tourists while on holiday within Ireland. It serves as the official measure of consumer inflation in Ireland.

While the CPI represents all private households in Ireland, it would not be possible to include every item purchased by households in the survey. Instead, a sample of the most representative goods and services that households purchase are chosen for inclusion in the basket of goods and services. This basket includes a wide range of items such as Food, Clothing, Electricity, Petrol, Rent, Airfares and many more.

The CPI undergoes a thorough review every five years, the most recent of which occurred in January 2017. The main work at the review is to ensure

that the methodological basis upon which the CPI is constructed is robust. Therefore, the composition of the basket of goods and services is examined, the weights of the items in the basket are updated and other methodological changes are implemented.

Consumer preferences are continuously changing. For the CPI to accurately measure consumer inflation, the goods and services that are included in the CPI basket should reflect these updated preferences. Information on consumer preferences was gathered from the CSO's team of price collectors and research was also carried out by CSO office based staff. However, the Household Budget Survey (HBS) was the main source of information. The latest HBS was carried out between February 2015 and February 2016 and consisted of a weekly diary of household expenditure and a more detailed survey to capture larger and less frequent purchases.

In January 2017, the number of items in the CPI basket was reduced from 634 items to 615 items.

#### **Accommodation:**

With respect to the cost of accommodation in the CPI, both short-term accommodation (e.g. hotels and guesthouses) and longer-term accommodation (e.g. private rents) are included in the basket of goods and services. In terms of longer-term accommodation, there are specifically three items that are covered:

- Private rents
- Local authority rents
- Owner-occupied housing

Private rents account for 5.7% of the CPI basket while local authority rents and owner-occupied housing account for 0.9% and 2.7% respectively.

**Private Rents:** Rental prices are collected directly from Estate Agents throughout the country via letter and email correspondence. Responses include both new and existing rentals. Prices are obtained for 4 categories: 1 Bed Apartment; 2 Bed Apartment; 3 Bed Semi Detached; and 4 Bed Semi Detached.

**Local Authority Rents:** These are similarly collected via letter correspondence directly with County Councils and the City Councils throughout Ireland. Councils supply the office with the current total rent and the total number of houses.

**Owner-occupied housing:** The CSO uses a model, based on a standard profile of mortgages, to estimate the monthly change in mortgage interest payments by households for owner-occupied accommodation. In

terms of the methods available for CPI calculation, this is a payment rather than an acquisition approach to measuring price change. The purchase of a house or apartment can represent the acquisition of a major capital asset (i.e. investment) and/or the consumption of accommodation. For this reason, this method excludes purchases without a mortgage and capital repayments. The inputs used in updating the model each month include mortgage interest rates and changes in the RPPI. A detailed technical description of the model used in the CPI for Owner-Occupied Housing is included in section 7.3 of the CPI - Introduction of Updated Series (Base 2010=100) report which is published on the CSO website:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/methods/consumerpriceindex/CPI - Introduction to series 2016.pdf>

#### **4. Regional GDP**

The latest release of the County Incomes and Regional GDP was published on the website on the 3rd of April this year and is available at the following link:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2016/>

This release contains data on Primary, Total and Disposable Household Income by NUTS3 region and by county up to 2016 with preliminary estimates for 2017 (Table 1a). The release also contains data on Gross Value Added and Gross Domestic Product by NUTS3 region and by sector of activity up to 2016 with preliminary estimates for 2017.

The County Incomes and Regional GDP release is based on data produced in the annual National Income and Expenditure release which was most recently published in July 2018. Following the completion of the National Income and Expenditure release the County Incomes and Regional GDP release is compiled. The compilation combines elements from the National Income and Expenditure data with various other sources to produce Income and Gross Value Added broken down geographically.

#### **5. Government Finance Statistics - Classifications**

Since 2015 the CSO has published methodological notes and supporting documentation on significant classification decisions relating to the government sector. A full listing of all government sector bodies and public corporations is also updated twice a year to coincide with the biannual Excessive Deficit Procedure notification. The register and information about its compilation is available at:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/governmentaccounts/classificationdecisions/registerofpublicsectorbodiesinireland/>

In 2018 the CSO published guidelines for government departments and agencies seeking advice on classification issues - these guidelines can be

accessed at

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/governmentaccounts/classificationdecisions/guidelinesonmethodologicaladviceandstatisticalclassificationdecisions/>

Notes on the following classification decisions are available at the links below:

(i) Note on third level Institutes being on/off balance sheet

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/governmentaccounts/classificationdecisions/classificationofuniversities/>

(ii) Note on Housing organisations being on/off balance sheet

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/governmentaccounts/classificationdecisions/classificationofapprovedhousingbodies/>

#### 6. Irish Water Classification

The CSO has published a note on the classification decision on Irish Water being on/off balance sheet on our website. The note can be found at the following link:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/governmentaccounts/classificationdecisions/classificationofirishwater/>

If the Committee requires any additional information on any of the matters address in this correspondence, please let me know.

Kind regards,



---

Ciaran Dooly

Head of International Relations, Policy and Planning

Tel: +353 21 4535126

ciaran.dooly@cso.ie