

**Statement by the Minister of State Mr. Joe McHugh T.D., on the
Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018
Vote 4 – Central Statistics Office**

**Select Committee on
Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Taoiseach
Thursday 29th March 2018**

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is responsible for the collection, processing and publication of official statistics on economic, social and general conditions in Ireland. Alongside satisfying the statistical requirements of Government, the information published by the CSO is also used by an extensive variety of public bodies, businesses, universities, research institutes and the general public.

There is a significant international dimension to the work of the CSO. The EU institutions, the IMF, OECD and other international bodies are all important users of official statistics. These bodies also have a significant role in defining and monitoring standards for the compilation of comparable information; and the CSO subscribes to the standards set out in the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

The net allocation for 2018 is €48.746 million which compares with €48,584 million in 2017. The allocation provides funding for core outputs and for some additional work including preparatory work for the 2021 Census of population.

The CSO is also implementing a long-term programme of change in how it organises household surveys so that it can meet future information needs as efficiently as possible. The first public output in this regard, the Labour Force Survey Q3 2017, was published on January 16th 2018.

During 2018 the CSO will publish about 300 releases and publications. All of these statistics are published online. Members of the public are increasingly aware of, and able to access, statistics and indicators on the social, economic and environmental issues which affect their daily lives and the online channel is the Office's primary publication method.

The CSO's Statement of Strategy 2017 to 2019 gives priority to delivering the core statistics needed for policy, while keeping a strong focus on cost management. The Office continues to meet all of its commitments under the Public Service Reform Programme and is implementing a programme of reform and continuous business process improvement in the collection and processing of statistics. The report from the Economic Statistics Review Group convened by the CSO was published, along with the CSO's response, on February 3rd 2017. The recommendations in the Group's report focus on how best to provide insight for users into domestic activity given the highly globalised Irish economy. The CSO has been implementing the recommendations incrementally from mid-2017. This will continue during 2018.

The CSO is leading the development of the Irish Statistical System (ISS), by working closely with other Departments and the wider public sector that are involved in the collection, processing, compilation or dissemination of official statistics, to promote a more coherent approach to meeting data needs. It has developed a Code of Practice for the Irish Statistical System, under which the first body is expected to be certified very shortly. It is also strongly promoting the development of a National Data Infrastructure (NDI) which will provide for better co-ordination and greater exploitation of the varied data sources available across the Irish public sector. It will also lead to greater understanding of the importance of data in supporting policy and decision-making and delivering efficiencies in public service provision.

Making better use of data throughout the public sector is an important part of Public Service Reform and will contribute to more evidence-informed decision-making and better measurement of policy outcomes.

Better co-ordination and greater use of administrative data also contributes to reducing the burden on data providers. Since 2008, the CSO has continued to reduce the response burden of its non-agricultural business surveys, as measured through the Response Burden Barometer. A decrease of 38.6% was measured between 2008 and 2016, exceeding the target reduction of 25% over this timeframe.

The CSO Vote for 2018 provides for a total of 801 staff. This represents an increase from 755 in 2017 and reflects the cyclical nature of the work of the Office, in particular Census.

The CSO makes an important contribution to Ireland's public policy, by providing a high-quality and – most importantly – an independent statistical service.

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