

**Statement by the Minister of State Mr. Jack Chambers T.D., on
the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2022
Vote 4 - Central Statistics Office**

**Select Committee on
Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Taoiseach
Wednesday 9 February 2022**

The Central Statistics Office is Ireland's national statistical institute and is responsible for the production, co-ordination and qualitative oversight of Official Statistics for Ireland. The CSO is an independent Office of the Civil Service under the aegis of the Taoiseach.

The National Statistics Board, with the agreement of the Taoiseach, has the general function of guiding the overall strategic direction of the CSO under the Statistics Act 1993. This independent position reflects international best practice for the organisation of official statistics.

The role of the Director General of the CSO, as prescribed by the Statistics Act 1993, provides that the officeholder acts independently and exercises sole responsibility in professional Statistical matters.

EU legislation introduced in 2015 fundamentally changed the role of that of National Statistical Institutes across the Union. Following this legislation, the Director General of the CSO now has responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the quality of all European Official Statistics in Ireland.

It is thus the responsibility of the CSO to ensure that all compilers of European Statistics in Ireland are adhering to the quality and methodological standards set out by the EU and detailed in the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Under the terms of the Statistics Act 1993, the Director General may request any public authority to consult and cooperate with him for the purpose of assessing the potential of records as a source of statistical information. In addition, the Act stipulates that a public authority shall consult with the Director General, where it intends to introduce, revise or extend the retrieval of information or make a statistical survey.

There is a significant international dimension to the work of the CSO. The EU institutions, Eurostat and the ECB primarily, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 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. The CSO subscribes to the standards set out in the UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Indeed, the CSO will undergo a review of its alignment with these standards during February 2022, known as a Eurostat Peer Review. The review process forms part of the European Statistical System strategy to monitor the implementation of the Code of Practice.

The objective of such reviews is to consider the compliance of members with the Code of Practice, to ensure the implementation of the common quality framework underpinning European Statistics and to help the statistical authorities to further improve and develop their national statistical systems.

The reviews cover all the Member States of the EU and EFTA as well as Eurostat. CSO will be assessed under the 16 principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice. The outcome of the Peer Review will be a set of recommendations to assist the CSO to further improve and develop the Irish statistical system.

The Central Statistics Office plays a vital role in the functioning of the State in providing independent and verifiable data to citizens and policy makers on a broad range of topics including social, economic and environmental issues. The ability of the CSO to inform has been evident throughout the pandemic.

CSO delivered on the vast majority of the planned Statistical Work Programme for 2021, publishing 439 releases and publications. Of these 40 were new products providing insight into issues as varied as the Business Impact of Brexit on SMEs, Productivity in Ireland 2010-2019, the rental sector in Ireland and Ecosystem Accounts. CSO has continued to publish a series of new surveys, outputs and formats to capture the evolution of Ireland's economy and society since the COVID-19 outbreak.

Alongside the new products developed and delivered to provide additional insight, CSO has provided statistical and analytical expertise and new data services to support analysing health data sources in a safe and secure environment. CSO has continued to supported epidemiology modelling, analysis of health and of real time data and analysis to provide insight regarding trends and identifying emerging issues all to support central government's response to the pandemic.

Census of Population 2022

The planned 2021 Census of Population was deferred because of the COVID-19 pandemic and will now take place on the third of April 2022. The publicity campaign for the 10-week live census field operation will commence with a launch on March 3rd and will cover all media channels, informing people about the Census, their obligations and encouraging responses.

The delivery of forms to the public will commence at the end of February, with all forms expected to be collected before the end of May. The processing of the forms will begin immediately on receipt and is expected to run until the end of December. A preliminary population count will be released before the end of June. CSO is making every effort to ensure that the Census being undertaken will be comprehensive, inclusive and safe and it will provide valuable and accurate data for our country in the years ahead.

Sexual Violence Survey

CSO has developed a significant new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. The Sexual Violence Survey involves the collection of highly sensitive personal data from householders in a manner which is confidential, ethical and designed to support accurate and reliable survey results. Achieving an appropriate sample, assuring confidentiality, and offering appropriate supports to participating householders and CSO staff are all key priorities.

A pilot survey was conducted between April and June 2021, which has informed arrangements for the formal survey, the field operation of which is planned to commence in June 2022 and will run until November.

Growing up in Ireland study

Work is progressing on the data collection and processing of the next wave of the States longitudinal study of children and youth, Growing up in Ireland, from 2023. A questionnaire for the pilot survey of the 25-year-old cohort is going into the field in April / May 2022. Planning is underway to return face to face collection at airports and ports, which ceased in March 2020.

Household Budget Survey

The Household Budget Survey, which was delayed because of its requirement for in-household interaction with a CSO field interviewer, will go into the field later this year, surveying all members of a sampled household on their expenditure. Data collected from this survey is used for many purposes but is required now to reweight the Consumer Price Index.

CSO has also continued to develop new interactive graphics, infographics, new formats such as the Bulletins and Frontier Series, and outputs to provide the additional insight needed by the public, businesses and policy makers both on the impact of the pandemic and across more general social, economic and environmental issues. CSO produced 189 press releases and 127 infographics in 2021, to support understanding of the data and provide insight for citizens, businesses and policy makers alike.

Economic indicators

CSO has continued to publish key economic indicators and has tracked the impact of the crisis on business sectors and the economy via the Monthly Exports and Imports of Goods, the Quarterly National Accounts, Government Deficit and Debt, the Quarterly Balance of Payments, the Labour Force Survey, the Monthly Unemployment and Live Register, the Survey on Income and Living Conditions, Births, Deaths and Population Estimates, the Consumer Price Index & Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices, the Wholesale Price Index, Monthly Industrial Production and Turnover, and the Retail Sales Index amongst others.

Security of Data

Being both trustworthy and confidential are core strategic values for CSO. Security is embedded into its culture. Significant attention and awareness is allocated to the protection of CSO data and information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification or destruction. Continual development of the organisation's security capability is ongoing.

A series of both practical and tactical measures are being implemented to mitigate against Cyber Attacks. These include but are not limited to security reviews, annual cyber training for its people, continuous strengthening of data governance, and the ongoing deployment of new technology security initiatives across the organisation.

National Data Infrastructure

As Ireland continues to move out of the pandemic CSO will provide the necessary insights onto how our economy and society is reacting and progressing. It is crucial that CSO has sustainable, secure access to data and can reuse high value data sources in the form of administrative data and some private data sources to provide timely and accurate data that is meaningful to policy makers.

The quality of data is crucial and CSO is driving the building of the National Data Infrastructure and the use of unique identifiers such as the PPSN, the Eircode and business identifiers, to ensure that data throughout the Civil and Public Service is collected, managed and shared efficiently and effectively. This work will support the Civil Service Renewal Action Plan's themes of Digital First and Embedding Innovation and Evidence-Informed Policy and Services.

CSO has the unique expertise to support and deliver on both these themes within CSO itself and across the Civil Service. This will build on the quality of data across the data ecosystem, which will support the delivery of Official Statistics and deliver insights for the creation and evaluation of policy.

Digital Transformation

CSO is also embarking on a Digital Transformation journey, enabling it to modernise and provide for the capability to meet increasing government, business and citizen expectations for digital services. A Digital first Census forms the centrepiece, enabling the citizen to complete future Censuses of Population Online. The CSO has obtained €1.5 million funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for development of an online platform for data collection. This funding will assist in the planning and implementation of the digital census program of work on a multi annual basis. CSO has acquired this funding for five years, to a total value of over €9 million.

2022 Estimates

Turning to the CSO's budget, the net allocation for 2022 is €103.485 million. The increase in 2022 reflects the cyclical impact of CSO's activities, primarily for the additional staff required for the 2022 Census of Population. The Census requirement includes an uplift in census headquarter staff plus provision for over 5,500 temporary staff required to distribute and collect the census forms.

Members of the public are increasingly aware of, and able to access, statistics and indicators on the social, economic and environmental issues, as demonstrated by over 23 million web hits on the CSO website and over 19 million hits on PXStat, in 2021.

The funding provided reflects the Government's commitment to the Office to meet its obligations under national and EU law, to continue to develop the Irish Statistical System, to deliver a Census of Population and to produce new outputs to meet domestic demand through the provision of trusted and robust official statistics.

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