



**An Phríomh Oifig Staidrimh**  
Central Statistics Office

# Statement of Strategy 2012-2014

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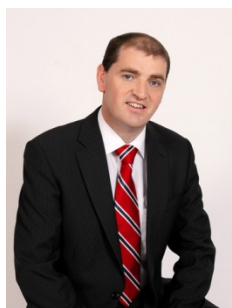
## Foreword

I welcome this Statement of Strategy 2012-2014, prepared by the Central Statistics Office. It sets out the important role of official statistics to inform and support our national recovery. I am very impressed by the professionalism of the CSO and the breadth of information which it produces. This professionalism is clearly demonstrated across the CSO's work programme including, last year, the collection and processing of Census 2011.

Statistical information is more important than ever before, to guide decision-making and to measure the social, economic and environmental performance of our nation. Official statisticians face many challenges. There are many new policy-driven demands for statistical information, not least those arising from the EU/IMF programme. At the same time, the CSO must work within the general resource constraints and play its part in reducing administrative burden. I am pleased to note that the CSO is taking a concerted and integrated approach to these combined challenges; and that continuous improvement is at the heart of this strategy.

The CSO is taking a lead role in developing the Irish Statistical System; and is working closely with other Departments and public bodies to promote a coherent approach to meeting statistical data needs and to extend the statistical use of administrative data. This work is a key element of Public Service Reform – *joined-up Government needs joined-up data* – and I am happy to support the CSO in advancing this co-ordinated approach.

Finally, I would like to commend the values and principles which inform the CSO's work – notably the provision of an independent statistical service and the Office's adherence to the highest international standards for statistics. Adherence to these values and principles ensures that we have a statistical service which provides a trusted and high-quality service. I would like to thank all the staff of the CSO for their dedication to providing this service and to wish them well in implementing this strategy.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Paul Kehoe'.

Paul Kehoe TD  
Government Chief Whip and  
Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach

## Introduction

This is the CSO's sixth Statement of Strategy and it covers the period 2012 to 2014. Over the course of our fifth strategy, since 2008, there have been profound changes in our operating environment. The economic crisis has raised awareness of statistical information as an essential input to sound decision-making; and there is increasing demand for statistics and for quality assurance in relation to the production of statistics.

The CSO's priority continues to be the delivery of the core annual statistical programme, to inform national policy and to meet EU and other international obligations, while keeping a strong focus on continuous improvement as a way of reducing costs. In addition to the core programme, we face cyclical and new demands for statistics. These demands are substantial and, in a climate of scarcity, we need to develop innovative approaches to the production of statistics.

Two important projects in this Statement of Strategy are the review of options for Census 2016 and the complete transformation of our system for conducting household surveys, to provide an effective response to new requirements for social and household statistics.

We are increasingly working with other bodies as part of a more integrated Irish Statistical System. To support this, we are developing a code of practice and standards for the gathering, use and dissemination of statistics across the public service. This is a key action in Public Service Reform, which will help to improve the way statistical information is used to support decision-making. It is also a key action in ensuring that all organisations in Ireland which produce official statistics meet the standards required by the European Statistics Code of Practice, which was updated and extended in 2011.

Our mission statement – *Statistics: Information for Ireland* – reflects the fact that our task goes beyond just publishing statistics. We are constantly developing our online products, to make information accessible and useful, and we are extending our outreach programme to promote and explain official statistics.

Implementing this strategy over the next three years will be a daunting task: we must meet current and future needs, reduce costs and reduce burden. However, I am confident from the positive way that all staff of the CSO have met the challenges of the past three years, that we will succeed in advancing this strategy for 2012 to 2014.



Gerard O'Hanlon  
Director General



## Overview of Strategy 2012-2014

### CSO Mandate - Statistics Act 1993

Under the Statistics Act 1993, the mandate of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) is:

*“The collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State.”*

The Act provides a comprehensive mandate for compiling official statistics on an independent and objective basis. The Act protects the confidentiality of the information provided to the CSO, which may only be used for statistical purposes; and confidential data may not be disseminated or otherwise communicated to third parties, including Government Departments or bodies.

The Director General has sole responsibility in relation to professional statistical matters (i.e. statistical methodologies, professional standards, the contents of statistical releases and publications, and the timing and methods of publishing statistics).

### National Statistics Board and the Irish Statistical System

The National Statistics Board (NSB), with the agreement of the Taoiseach, has the general function of guiding the overall strategic direction of the CSO. The board's *Strategy for Statistics 2009-2014*<sup>1</sup> takes a “whole system” view of official statistics, with an emphasis on the role of statistics in making informed policy choices and on the potential for greater statistical use of administrative data. While significant progress has been made, the board's 2011 position paper – *“The Irish Statistical System: The way forward”*<sup>2</sup> – identifies a number of practical, ethical and legal issues which need to be addressed in order to give full effect to an Irish Statistical System.

The paper restates a long-term vision for the statistical system, with an emphasis on the following three areas for action in the short to medium term:

- The development of the administrative data infrastructure to maximise all available data sources;
- The introduction of professional statistical standards for the production and dissemination of all official statistics;
- The resolution of certain data protection concerns that serve to constrain the full realisation of the statistical potential of data sources.

<sup>1</sup> [National Statistics Board - Strategy for Statistics 2009-2014](#)

<sup>2</sup> ["The Irish Statistical System: The way forward" and "Joined Up Government needs Joined Up Data"](#)

These issues involve the entire public service and are reflected in the Government's plan for Public Service Reform<sup>3</sup>. Under the reform plan, the CSO will advance a more integrated approach to realising the statistical potential of administrative data across the public service, in line with the Office's role under the Statistics Act. The CSO will develop a code of practice and standards for the gathering, use and dissemination of statistical data; will review current legislation to identify the scope for greater use of statistical data; and will work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to promote consistent approaches to data across the public service.

### Meeting Current and Future Statistical Needs

Our priority is to deliver the core annual statistical programme, needed for national policy and required by EU Regulations. In delivering this programme, we must continue to keep a strong focus on improving our business processes to reduce costs. Wherever possible, we will aim to improve the scope, timeliness and quality of our core outputs.

In addition to the core programme, we face cyclical and new demands for statistics – in macroeconomic, business, environmental and social / household statistics. The transformation of our household survey system, to meet new needs in a cost-effective way, will be a significant challenge in the next three years.

There is also active discussion, at international level, of the actions which will follow from the Stiglitz report<sup>4</sup> on the measurement of economic performance and social progress. This report identified the need, which has been generally accepted by EU Governments, for more data on sustainability and well-being, in addition to more traditional economic indicators.

We will engage in ongoing consultation with the main users of statistics, to define the scope of the above data requirements and, subject to cost, to deliver new outputs. The first step in reviewing the options for Census 2016 has been the consultation of users in relation to data needs.

We will evaluate the impact on data providers of all new statistical requirements and will aim to use existing data sources – including existing surveys and administrative data sources – wherever possible.

### Guiding Principles and Values

The independent position of the CSO, as defined in the Statistics Act, 1993, reflects international best practice for the organisation of official statistics. The CSO subscribes

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<sup>3</sup> [Public Service Reform Plan](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress](#)



fully to the *UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*<sup>5</sup> and the *European Statistics Code of Practice*<sup>6</sup>. Throughout our work, we abide by the following six core values, based on the international principles:

- Statistical professionalism
- Independence and Integrity
- Respect for statistical confidentiality
- Excellent service to our customers
- Respect for our data providers
- Value for money.

The European Statistics Code of Practice was updated in 2011, in line with the greater emphasis at EU level on verifying the quality and standards of national statistical systems. The code applies to national statistical offices, but also to Departments and other state bodies which produce official statistics from surveys or other sources.

The development by the CSO of a national code of practice and standards for statistical data is, therefore, an important step in fulfilling the international obligations of the Irish Statistical System. The compliance of national statistical systems with the Code of Practice will be subject to review, co-ordinated by Eurostat, from the start of 2013.

#### Mission Statement and Goals - 2012 to 2014

The mission statement “*Statistics: Information for Ireland*” reflects how statistics are used today. Within that overall mission, the actions in this strategy are grouped into the following five high-level goals, which comprise an integrated approach to the challenges facing official statistics in the next three years:

1. Meet Statistical Needs
2. Develop the Irish Statistical System
3. Promote Awareness and Use of Statistics
4. Increase Efficiency
5. Reduce Burden.

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<sup>5</sup> [UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#)

<sup>6</sup> [European Statistics Code of Practice for the National and Community Statistical Authorities](#)

## Statistics: Information for Ireland - CSO's Key Priorities 2012-2014

### Goal 1 Meet Statistical Needs

The actions under this goal aim to deliver our existing core annual statistical programme; and, wherever possible, improve timeliness and quality, and meet new demands for statistics. We will continue to review the core programme and contribute to the identification at EU level of statistics which are no longer needed.

### Goal 2 Develop the Irish Statistical System

This goal comprises ongoing professional support by the CSO for departmental statistical units; and a co-ordinated approach to the production and dissemination of statistical data across the public service. It reflects key aspects of Public Service Reform and the recently updated European Statistics Code of Practice. The CSO is taking a lead role in developing standards for statistical data and dissemination in the public service; and will review the relevant legislation to identify how the use of statistical data can be improved.

### Goal 3 Promote Awareness and Use of Statistics

We will continue to develop our online services for the provision of statistical releases and tables, to maximise the availability and use of the information we publish. We are also extending our educational outreach programme to promote statistical awareness; and will continue to organise regular seminars to explain statistics to users.

### Goal 4 Increase Efficiency

We are implementing an ongoing programme of business process reviews, so that we can continue to deliver our core statistical programme at lower cost. Our strategies on Human Resources and Information Technology will play an important part in this, as will our approach to Shared Services. A particular challenge will be the total transformation of our household survey system, to meet future requirements for social and household surveys.

### Goal 5 Reduce Burden

We are continuing to implement an integrated programme of burden reduction in our business surveys. Between 2008 and 2010, we reduced burden by 18%. While future reductions will not be so dramatic, we will continue to publish the annual Response Burden Barometer and maintain a strong focus on burden reduction. The evaluation of data options and impacts on data providers will be an integral part of planning for new surveys.

## Summary: CSO's Mission, Values and Goals

### Legal Mandate

Statistics Act, 1993

### International Standards

UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

European Statistics Code of Practice

### Mission Statement

*Statistics: Information for Ireland*

### Values

Statistical professionalism  
Independence and Integrity  
Respect for statistical confidentiality  
Excellent service to our customers  
Respect for our data providers  
Value for money

### High-Level Goals 2012-2014

1. Meet Statistical Needs
2. Develop the Irish Statistical System
3. Promote Awareness and Use of Statistics
4. Increase Efficiency
5. Reduce Burden

## Goal 1 Meet Statistical Needs

Deliverables	Output Measures
Deliver core statistical outputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-time publication in line with CSO Timeliness Monitor.</li> <li>• Continue to develop scope and quality of our core outputs.</li> <li>• Publication of all Census 2011 reports in 2012.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
Review options for Census 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report by Q1/2012 on options for Census 2016.</li> </ul>
Identify and address new data needs arising from national and EU policies and from EU/IMF programme; and keep core statistical programme under continuous review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing consultation with users to define impact of new data requirements in macroeconomic, business, environmental and social / household statistics.</li> <li>• Identify actions arising from Stiglitz report on measurement of economic performance and social progress.</li> <li>• Subject to cost, develop plans to meet new data needs in line with Goals 2 to 5.</li> <li>• Continue to review the core programme and contribute to the identification at EU level of statistics which are no longer needed.</li> </ul>
Complete the PIAAC (OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) survey cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of data collection in Q1/2012.</li> <li>• Publication of internationally comparable results on adult literacy and numeracy in Ireland, by OECD in 2013.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Detailed schedule in <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/>

## Goal 2 Develop the Irish Statistical System

Deliverables	Output Measures
Support Departmental Statistical Units, to meet policy-related statistical information needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing professional support by the CSO for statistical units.</li> </ul>
Develop a code of practice and standards for the gathering and use of data for statistical purposes across the Public Service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of Code of Practice and Data Standards by December 2012.</li> <li>• Assistance to other public bodies in applying the statistical quality and impartiality principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice for non-CSO statistics.</li> <li>• Publication of standardised documentation on statistical quality for non-CSO statistics, via <a href="http://www.statcentral.ie">www.statcentral.ie</a> website.</li> </ul>
Assess the legislative environment for statistical data, to identify the scope for additional and greater uses of data and any necessary legislative changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on legislative environment for statistical data, identifying areas for potential change, by December 2012.</li> <li>• Proposals for legislative change, if applicable, to be developed by June 2013.</li> </ul>
Support 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing support and promotion of data standards across the Public Service, in conjunction with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.</li> </ul>

### Goal 3 Promote Awareness and Use of Statistics

Deliverables	Output Measures
Continue to improve the structure and format of statistical releases and tables on <a href="http://www.cso.ie">www.cso.ie</a> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New online delivery format for statistical releases and tables in place by end of 2012.</li> <li>• Delivery of online thematic reports.</li> <li>• Accessible commentary and greater visual presentation of statistical results.</li> </ul>
Develop Open Data policy for all published statistics on <a href="http://www.cso.ie">www.cso.ie</a> and <a href="http://www.statcentral.ie">www.statcentral.ie</a> , to maximise availability and use of statistical information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish all CSO statistical tables on the <a href="http://www.cso.ie">StatBank</a> section of <a href="http://www.cso.ie">www.cso.ie</a> – full coverage by 2014.</li> <li>• Monitor and promote Open Data uses of StatBank.</li> </ul>
Promote and extend the use of statistical data in economic and social research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop online system for secure remote access for research purposes, during 2012.</li> <li>• Develop external partnership for research use of data.</li> </ul>
Extend outreach programme to promote statistical awareness in education sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Census@School project.</li> <li>• John Hooper Medal, statistical poster competition at second level.</li> <li>• CSO sponsorship of Donal McCarthy Scholarship, postgraduate scholarship in statistics at UCC.</li> <li>• Launch Professional Diploma on Official Statistics, with IPA.</li> </ul>
Develop social media policy for promotion of official statistics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop social media policy in 2012.</li> <li>• Implement policy by end of 2012.</li> </ul>
Conduct regular seminars on the use of statistical information in government, business and society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual programme of seminars and conferences.</li> <li>• Statistical briefings for key external organisations.</li> <li>• Conduct seminars across Ireland on Census 2011 results.</li> </ul>

## Goal 4 Increase Efficiency

Deliverables	Output Measures
Rolling programme of business process reviews, using Lean Six Sigma and other methodologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement annual rolling programme of business process reviews.</li> <li>• Measure impacts on improved timeliness and cost of statistical production.</li> </ul>
Transform household surveys system to meet future data needs on social issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation plan, with costed options, by Q1/2012.</li> <li>• New survey system in place from Q3/2014.</li> </ul>
Develop and implement HR Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare unified HR Strategy by Q1/2012.</li> <li>• Implement HR policies to support the skills and competencies needed by a modern statistical service.</li> <li>• Meet ECF targets for phased staff reduction.</li> </ul>
Implement IT Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing implementation of IT Strategy 2010-2012, in line with CSO business improvement priorities.</li> <li>• Prepare updated IT strategy in 2012, to ensure continued alignment with future CSO requirements.</li> <li>• Upgrade the National Accounts IT compilation system.</li> </ul>
Implement shared services solutions where available and appropriate to CSO needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrate payroll to Civil Service central system by end-2012.</li> <li>• Migrate to central Civil Service financial management system by end-2013.</li> <li>• Migrate to HR shared service in line with D/PER implementation timetable.</li> </ul>

## Goal 5 Reduce Burden

Deliverables	Output Measures
Evaluate options and impacts for all new statistical requirements – household and business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation built into survey planning process for all household and business sector surveys.</li> <li>• For all new statistical requirements, identify scope for use of existing sources, statistical or administrative, in place of new data collection.</li> </ul>
Meet the 2007-2012 burden reduction target on business of 25%.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual publication of CSO Response Burden Barometer for business statistics.</li> <li>• Ongoing action programme to manage and reduce response burden.</li> <li>• Review of Intrastat burden reduction options, in co-ordination with Eurostat.</li> </ul>
Continue to re-balance statistical data sources from traditional paper towards e-forms and re-use of existing data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of surveys providing e-forms option.</li> <li>• Numbers / percentage of respondents using e-forms option.</li> <li>• Number of survey returns based on re-use of existing data, rather than on direct collection.</li> <li>• Include internet-based collection in review of options for Census 2016 (Goal 1).</li> </ul>



## How we'll implement this strategy

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan for this strategy will set out, for each action point under the five high-level goals, the responsible owner within CSO, the timetable for the action, and information on progress to date. This reporting template will be monitored each month by the CSO Senior Management Committee, to ensure that progress is in line with the strategy; and will also form the basis of the annual report on the strategy.

### Divisional Action Plans (DAPs)

At a more detailed level, the CSO's internal planning structures are aligned with the strategy. In December 2011, the Divisional Action Plan (DAP) template was updated to reflect the high-level goals for the period 2012 to 2014. The Senior Management Committee meets each Head of Division twice each year, in December and June, to ensure that divisional plans are being achieved and that they are contributing, in a co-ordinated way, to the overall strategy.

### Integration with Public Service Reform plans

This Statement of Strategy is also closely aligned with the plans for Public Service Reform; and we will continue to monitor and report on progress under the following frameworks:

- Public Service Reform – CSO Integrated Reform Delivery Plan
- Croke Park Agreement – CSO Action Plan
- Organisational Review Programme (ORP) Action Plan.