

**An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh**  
Central Statistics Office



# Statement of Strategy 2015-2017

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# Statement of Strategy 2015-2017

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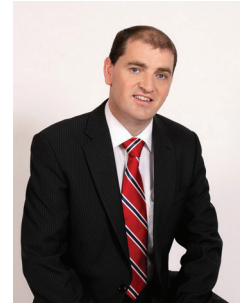
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## Foreword

I welcome the CSO's Statement of Strategy 2015-2017. This strategy builds on the CSO's last Statement of Strategy 2012-2014 and outlines how the CSO will deal with the changes in the domestic and international operating environment.

I wish to acknowledge the publication of CSO 2020 which is a long term strategic framework that will drive transformative change and allow the CSO to meet the changing needs of its customers.



The Statement of Strategy 2015-2017 sets out an ambitious work programme for the CSO for the next three years. The high level goals set out in this document will be reflected in the CSO's work programme and in the individual work programme of every member of CSO staff. The CSO's work is crucial in informing debate and supporting decision making. Good quality statistics help people to understand the changes taking place in Ireland's economy and society.

I am confident that CSO management and staff are focused on meeting the needs of their broad range of users, and indeed their respondent's. The CSO are also embarking on a significant programme of transformation which is set out in their long-term strategic framework document, CSO 2020, and the achievement of the corporate objectives set out in this Statement of Strategy will play an important role in the achievement of their longer-term objectives.

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

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

**September 2015**



## Introduction from the Director General

Welcome to our new three-year Statement of Strategy. This Strategy, which is my first as Director General, sets out how we will meet our customers' needs and the changes we will need to make to meet these needs.

This Statement of Strategy 2015-2017 builds on the work carried out during 2013, when we developed a long term, seven year strategy, for the CSO. "CSO 2020" was developed following discussions with a broad range of stakeholders. This Statement of Strategy 2015-2017 continues to place service to our customers at the core of what we do. It also emphasises the core values of our organisation, namely independence, objectivity and confidentiality, adherence to which are central to maintaining and further developing public trust in official statistics.



The demand for information, and the complexity of the demand, has grown significantly in recent times. In this strategy we are committing ourselves to a programme of change focused on delivering continual improvement in what we deliver and how we deliver it. The world in which we live is changing fast and indeed is changing continuously. Operating in such an environment requires an ability to adapt and innovate if we are to remain relevant. The pace of change in recent times has created many challenges but also a range of opportunities. The CSO will focus on the "art of the possible" while remaining cognisant of, but not paralysed by, the challenges.

The recent report of the UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development highlighted the importance of official statistics. The report states "Data is the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability. Without high-quality data providing the right information on the right things at the right time; designing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies becomes almost impossible."

Our customers will be the ultimate arbiters of the success of this strategy: Will they see an improvement in quality and timeliness? Will they see a range of new products and dissemination channels? Will they see a coherent Irish Statistical System over the next three years? Benchmarks such as these will guide us over the lifetime of both the Statement of Strategy 2015-2017 and CSO 2020.

The commitment and adaptability of the staff of the CSO will be central to the overall achievement of our corporate objectives and I am confident that by working together we can achieve the aims set out in this strategy.

Whether you supply us with data, use our statistics or work for the CSO, I hope you will read this strategy and understand how we are planning to meet the challenges ahead.

**Pádraig Dalton**  
Director General

**September 2015**





## CSO Mandate

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

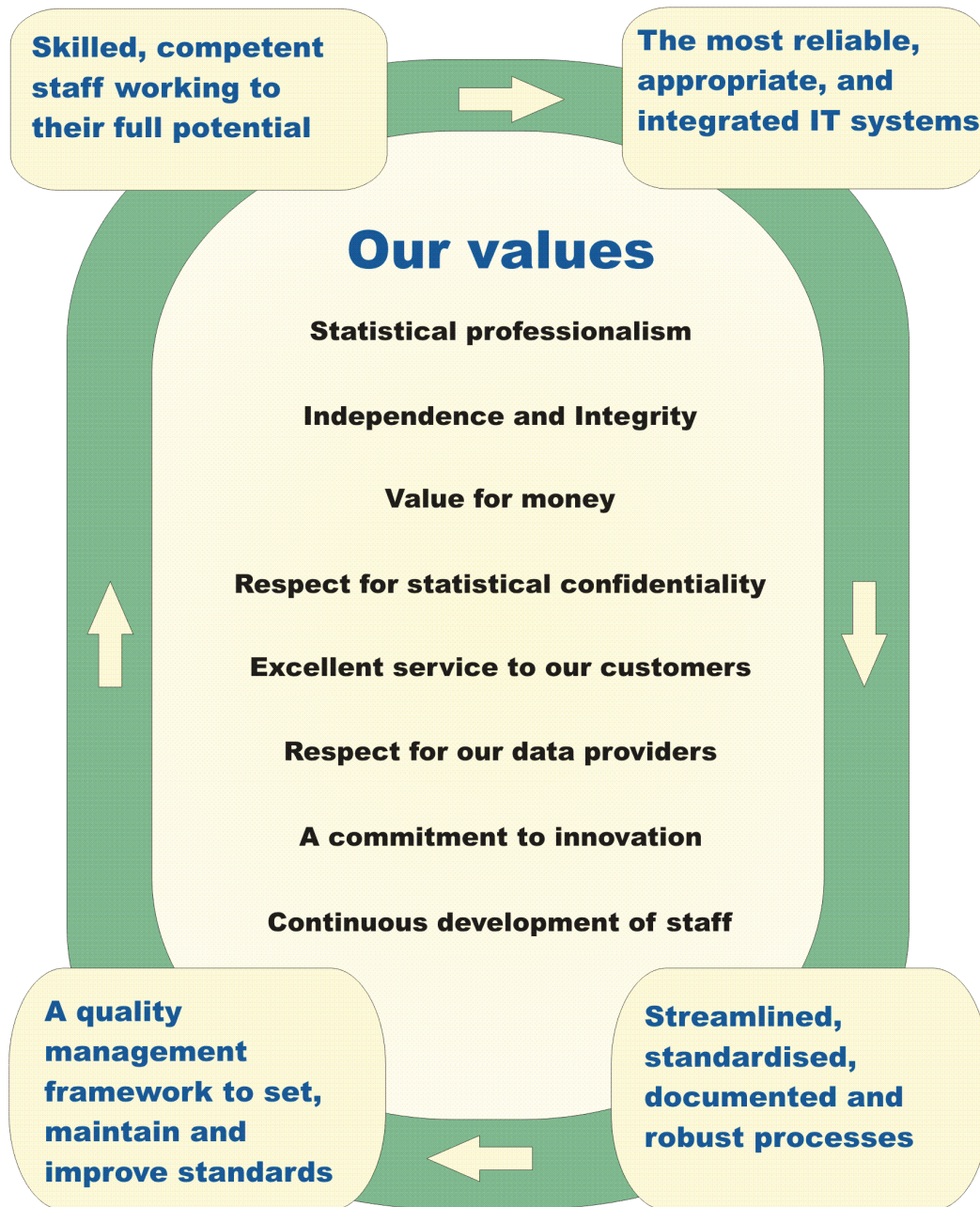
*“The collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State.”*

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 Office exists primarily to provide high quality impartial and relevant statistical information to meet the needs of policy makers at national, regional and local level, decision makers in the business community, EU institutions, international organisations, media, researchers, and the public generally.

## Our Guiding Values

The independent position of the CSO, as defined in the Statistics Act, 1993, reflects international best practice for the compilation of official statistics. The CSO subscribes fully to the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice. Throughout our work, we abide by the core values as illustrated below, which are based on international principles:

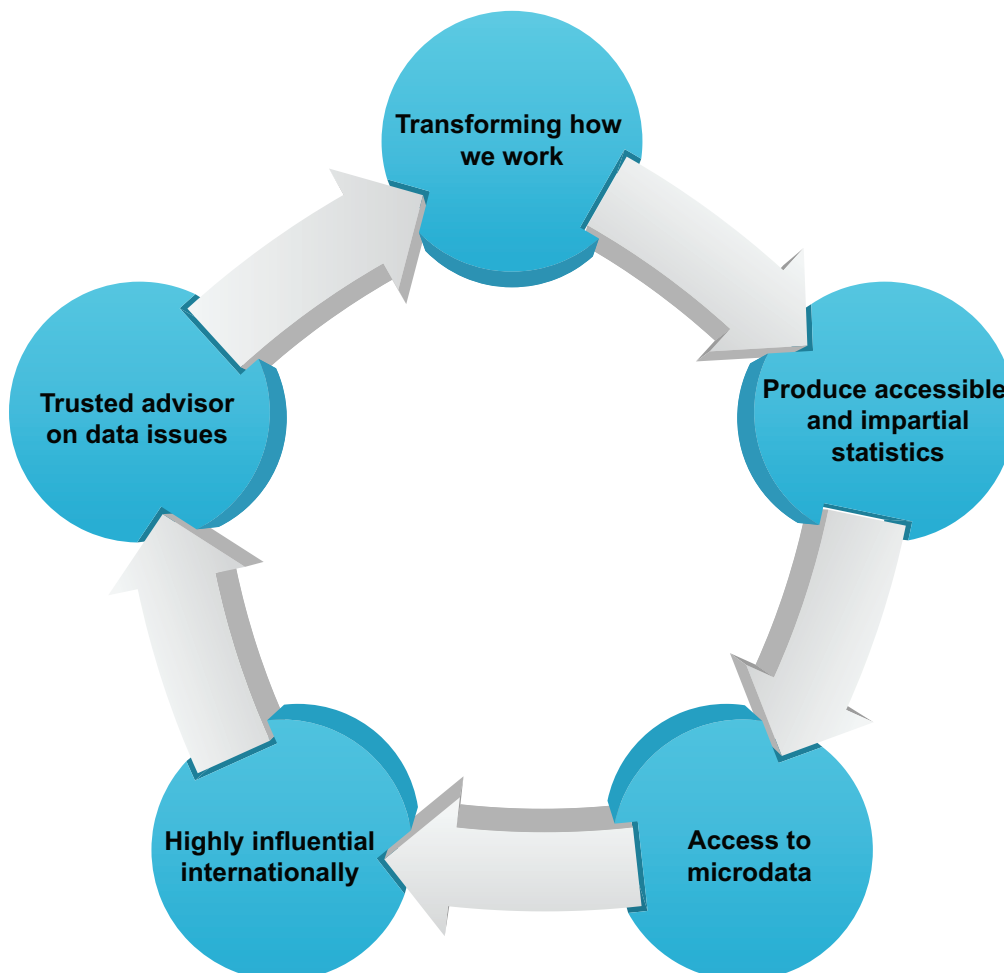


## Our Strategic Framework – CSO 2020

Our Mission Statement “Providing Information for Ireland” reflects the central role we have in providing high quality information to both policy makers and citizens alike. We must strive to deliver on our role of collecting, compiling and publishing independent and objective statistics in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible so that we meet the increased demand for statistical data.

In 2013 the CSO published an ambitious strategic framework focused on developing and transforming how we operate over a seven year time period to 2020. This framework, CSO 2020, outlines the need for change, details how we will transform the way we work and our vision of where the Office will be positioned by the year 2020.

CSO 2020 provides us with the strategic framework which details the goals and strategic direction to enable us to deliver on our Mission Statement. The focus of the strategy is on adapting and changing the focus of CSO in line with the changing needs of data users and in doing so creating a modern, proactive and flexible organisation. CSO 2020 is built around the following 5 priorities:



## The changing environment in which we operate

### ◆ **The European Statistical System (ESS)**

The ESS is a partnership between Eurostat, the EU Statistical Office, the National Statistical Institutes of the member states, and other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. The primary objective of the ESS is to guarantee that European statistics, compiled in all the Member States of the European Union, are comparable, reliable, relevant and usable. Eurostat leads the work by developing statistics across country borders and ensuring the availability of harmonised European statistics of a high quality. Approximately 90% of the CSO's work programme is driven by European statistical legislation (Eurostat and the European Central Bank).

The CSO is committed to the development of the European Statistical System, through the ESS Vision 2020 programme which builds upon a holistic approach to reach quality and efficiency gains. The ESS Vision 2020 programme elaborates the European systems' approach to statistics embracing the opportunities provided by the digital transformation and emerging data sources; putting quality as an overarching element in the statistical production process; suggesting new modes of collaboration and emphasising the importance of dissemination and user engagement to drive continuous improvements.

### ◆ **Irish Statistical System**

In Ireland, official statistics are produced by the CSO as well as by a range of other government departments, agencies and state bodies. The Irish Statistical System comprises those parts of the public sector involved in the collection compilation or dissemination of official statistics.

Although the idea of an 'Irish Statistical System' was clearly envisaged in the drafting of the 1993 Statistics Act, the concept was first clearly articulated by the National Statistics Board (NSB) in their seminal 2003 – 2008 'Strategy for Statistics' (NSB, 2003). Ten years after the publication of that strategy, the launch of the Code of Practice for the Irish Statistical System was another important milestone in the formal development and acknowledgement of that system. To support the code, a new website ([www.isscop.ie](http://www.isscop.ie)) has been launched along with a formal logo to help brand the code and the system itself.

In broad terms, the NSB proposed that a statistical system must be: needs driven; user oriented; quality certified; and cost effective. A key pillar of the NSB strategy was that the CSO should work with Government Departments and Agencies to maximise the use of administrative data to generate official statistics.

Exploiting the statistical potential of existing data sources is a key focus for the CSO. A key success factor in the exploitation of administrative data sources will be the development of a National Data Infrastructure allowing for the linking of administrative data sources from public bodies through the use of unique identifiers. While some progress has been made, the full potential of a joined up Irish Statistical System has not yet been fully achieved.

In addition to the development of the national data infrastructure the CSO will work with public bodies to enact the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice, which sets out the standards for the compilation of Official Statistics by public bodies. This will ensure greater accessibility, transparency and consistency in the production of all Official Statistics. In addition, the revisions to the EU regulation on European Statistics includes a requirement on the CSO to coordinate the statistical activities of all national authorities that are responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

### ◆ **Data Security**

With the availability of huge volumes of data from secondary data sources (i.e. administrative, Big Data and private data sources), and the need to create new statistical indicators from linked data sources,

there will be many challenges in the areas of data security, privacy and confidentiality. The CSO must balance the need for meeting the demand for new statistical outputs through the use of secondary data sources while ensuring that data protection and privacy requirements are respected. To this end the CSO will liaise with the Data Protection Commissioner to construct a framework for data sharing and matching that respects individual privacy but enables the effective and efficient compilation of official statistics.

◆ ***Communications and Dissemination***

The communications challenges facing official statisticians are many. We have an ongoing challenge to maintain and strengthen public trust in official statistics. We also have a challenge to consider in the context of the “quality-timeliness debate”. In today’s fast-moving and technologically advanced world where information is readily available at the touch of a screen, the value of slower and more carefully produced official statistics may become less apparent to users. However, official statistics must continue to be produced in a considered, professional, and methodologically sound manner, resisting the temptation to sacrifice quality for faster or more expedient products. Nonetheless the producers of official statistics do have a responsibility to work to meet the changing needs of the modern citizen in a digital age and to educate users about the advantages that official statistics have over other less rigorous sources of information.

We must also work to ensure that we turn statistics and data into information and knowledge. The development of new products and dissemination channels, including the more widespread usage of data visualisation techniques will be a key focus over the duration of this Strategy.

◆ ***New production methods and efficiency gains***

The CSO will explore new ways of collecting data, including mixed mode collection, web based data collection and exploiting secondary data sources.

We will continue with initiatives to minimise response burden on our respondents, including the more widespread use of administrative data and exploiting the potential of Big Data. This presents us with the opportunity to harvest existing data sources, reduce dependence on traditional and more expensive sources while helping to reduce costs, improve coverage and possibly timeliness.

We will continue our work on the identification and exploitation of Big Data sources for official statistics. However while Big Data will present many opportunities, we must be aware that it is still very much in an evolutionary phase. As a statistical community we are still trying to identify the specific Big Data sources that can and will support the production and dissemination of Official Statistics. As part of this process we have to inform our users of developments so that their expectations are both achievable and realistic.

Official Statistics are being used more and more to inform public policy and decision making, leading to increased formal scrutiny of national statistical systems and the compilation of economic indicators. The CSO welcomes this focus and is committed to meeting these higher levels of scrutiny.

◆ ***Increased User Demand***

The vast majority of official statistics are compiled in accordance with EU legislation and statistics are increasingly being used to monitor outcomes in key policy areas. This represents a challenge for the CSO as we balance the needs of national users with the compulsory requirements of EU regulations.

Apart from the additional data needs and quality assurance work necessitated by the increased oversight of macroeconomic indicators, a significant number of new data needs have emerged in recent years. At EU and National levels user driven demand in areas such as Health, Adult Education, House Prices and the Environment have resulted in additional outputs. The demand for new statistics will continue so we need to remain responsive and agile to meet these increasing demands from Europe, national users and key stakeholders.

◆ ***Civil Service Renewal***

The CSO is fully committed to the ongoing programme of change in the Civil Service which seeks to

build capacity to respond to existing and future challenges and improve the performance of the Civil Service and its staff. The Civil Service Renewal Plan provides the framework for renewing the Civil Service over the next three years. The Plan outlines a vision for the Civil Service and practical changes that will create a more unified, professional, responsive, open and accountable Civil Service, providing a world-class service to the State and to the people of Ireland. Strong leadership and active participation in the implementation of this programme of change will be a key focus over the period. As part of the implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Programme the CSO will conduct an annual Employee Engagement Survey for the Civil Service, beginning in 2015.



## CSO Statement of Strategy - Deliverables from 2015 to 2017

To achieve our mission and meet the challenges facing official statistics, the CSO will:

1. Meet the annual statistical **work programme required under EU** legislation.
2. Ensure Ireland has a professional, independent and high quality system of official statistics that provides our customers with the best possible information, in a manner that bears international scrutiny and meets the highest international standards.
3. Build on its understanding of customer and user needs for data and develop relationships to jointly identify future requirements and channels of delivery. In particular we need to take account of our core customer needs as follows:
  - » **Government and policy makers** need to know how Ireland is performing, need data to formulate policies to improve economic and social conditions, and need evidence to evaluate policy outcomes.
  - » **The citizens of Ireland** need objective, independent and impartial information to help them make better personal and business decisions.
  - » **Eurostat** and other international organisations need timely, high quality and harmonised data in order to provide internationally comparable data.
  - » **Our data suppliers** need to know that we seek only essential information, that we are continuing to minimise burden and that we treat their data in the strictest confidence.
4. Develop the Irish statistical system in line with the legislative powers of the Statistics Act 1993, the revision to the EU Regulation on European statistics (including the coordination of statistical activities of Other National Authorities), and the National Statistics Board Strategy 2015-2020.
5. Develop a new dissemination strategy focused on turning data and statistics into information and knowledge and meeting the needs of our broad range of users. We will develop new products and dissemination channels with a specific focus on the visualisation of official statistics.
6. Publish all aggregate data in an Open Data format (free machine-readable format) which has the potential to make statistics more widely available and will encourage the re-use of published statistics.
7. Develop a quality management framework which will include a system of metrics for data quality, metadata standards, and strong documentation to re-enforce public trust in the official statistics.
8. Implement a programme of Modernisation encompassing:
  - » Greater use of secondary data sources, including administrative data and big data, to meet the demands of users in an efficient and effective manner and minimise the burden on respondents;
  - » Embed enterprise architecture as a discipline in ICT;
  - » Introduce more efficient data collection models (e.g. computer assisted telephone interviewing, web based data collection);
  - » Exploit geographical information systems (including Eircodes);
  - » Embed business process review using the Lean Six Sigma methodology as a culture rather than a programme of work;
  - » Embed statistical modernisation process models and the roll out of staff development instruments (including Continuous Professional and Personal Development and a skills register);

9. Conduct a Census of population in 2016 and produce and publish all reports to the agreed time frame;
10. Encourage the use of our data by providing researchers with efficient access to microdata subject to legal and confidentiality provisions, (including the introduction of a secure remote access system);
11. Engage constructively at the international level to ensure the CSO is highly influential in shaping the modernisation and development of Official Statistics at the global level.



## **Annex 1: Organisational Structure**

# Senior Management Group

