![An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh / Central Statistics Office]

CSO Quality Strategy

2020—2023

PLAN QUALITY

ASSURE QUALITY

OWN QUALITY

MANAGE QUALITY

EXPAND QUALITY

Message from the Director General

I am pleased to share with you the CSO's "Quality Strategy 2020-2023" which sets out the vision on how statistical quality will continue to be improved across the CSO and the Irish Statistical System (ISS).

This strategy builds on the successful implementation of the Quality Management Framework (QMF) since 2016. It outlines ambitious goals, together with practical actions, designed to ensure that CSO outputs are of the highest statistical quality.

Maintaining trust in official statistics is now more important than ever. The CSO is responding to an increased need for new and more complex statistical outputs, while at the same time facing increasing competition from other producers of data. What sets the CSO apart from competitors, and fosters trust amongst decision makers, is the range and access to data we have available, the sound methodology that underpins our work and our shared recognition of the importance of high-quality processes and outputs.

Staff within the CSO and across the ISS are acutely aware that the responsibility for producing high quality statistics lies with us all. The quality strategy reflects this understanding and reinforces everyone's role in continually improving the quality of our statistics.

In the implementation of this strategy we will all work together to champion, enable, and demonstrate sustainable quality improvement through the attainment of the five high level goals detailed in this document.

The quality strategy is a cornerstone of the CSO Statement of Strategy 2020-2023 which sets out the organisation's vision regarding the provision of statistical leadership across the entire public service. Central to this is embedding the use of common standards and appropriate governance practices for data usage across the ISS. We will also continue to increase awareness across the public service of the key data stewardship role the CSO plays in the growing maturity of the National Data Infrastructure.

Finally, the current pandemic environment has propelled the need for trustworthy information into the heart of public debate. Quality data is fundamental to good decision-making and through the implementation of the Quality Strategy 2020 – 2023 we can continue to fulfil this vital societal need.

Pádraig Dalton
Director General
October 2020

Own Quality

All CSO staff understand their role in the production of high quality statistics.

Actions

A. The CSO will embed a culture of personal ownership of quality, where quality is seen as everyone's responsibility.

B. The Quality Division will develop and deliver a suite of quality related training courses and supports that will reinforce the role that everyone plays with regard to quality.

C. The Quality Division will implement a communications strategy so that staff are kept informed and updated on the various quality related supports and initiatives and can understand how these initiatives will assist them in managing quality improvement.

Goal 2

Plan Quality

Identify and take opportunities to build quality into our statistical processes from the outset.

Actions

A. New quality guidelines and standards will be developed and implemented to provide guidance on the principles to be followed when planning, running and evaluating statistical processes.

B. The CSO will promote and support the use of common classifications and statistical standards across the national statistical system to assist in improving the consistency and coherence of outputs.

C. CSO will expand its use of metadata management tools to support the integration and standardisation of metadata in all stages of statistical production.

D. The CSO will develop and introduce formal survey planning structures incorporating pre-defined quality management controls by default.

Manage Quality

CSO will continue to support statistical areas so that the quality of their processes and outputs are measured and managed.

Actions

A. The CSO will implement the Eurostat standard for quality reporting - this will eliminate the need for separate national and Eurostat Quality Reports.

B. The CSO will provide users, both external and internal, with information/metrics to allow them to assess and understand the quality of the data that they are using.

C. Governance structures will be developed and embedded to ensure that QMF implementation is sustained and advanced.

Goal 4

Assure Quality

Provide assurance on the quality of our data sources, processes and outputs.

Actions

A. The CSO, in cooperation with statistical producers, will continue to develop and increase the level of maturity of the assurance environment in the CSO and the ISS.

B. The CSO will continue to ensure that all data assets are managed and governed in line with international best practice.

Goal 5

Lead and support the implementation of the QMF across the ISS.

Actions

A. All European outputs from the ISS will be compliant with the CSO's QMF regarding the availability of process maps, metrics, survey documentation and associated metadata.

B. The CSO will develop a roadmap to support producers in the ISS in advancing and achieving ISS Code of Practice certification.

Quality Vision 2023

This strategy sets out what remains to be achieved in ensuring that our users can have full confidence in the quality of the statistical outputs produced by the CSO. Its implementation will provide assurance to producers of statistics in the CSO and the ISS that their statistical outputs adhere to the highest international standards of quality. By focusing on the people, processes and methodologies behind the production of high-quality statistics, and being transparent about how our statistics are compiled, we will contribute to the ongoing delivery of the aims set out in the CSO Statement of Strategy 2020 – 2023.

The Quality Strategy is based on five high level goals which, when implemented, will ensure that our quality systems will stand up to scrutiny, will allow our users to understand the quality of our outputs and will ensure ongoing compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP).

Core drivers of Quality

While the CSO has always been regarded as a producer of high-quality statistics, the 2014 ES CoP Peer Review reinforced the importance of documenting processes and providing evidence of quality. Instead of simply "knowing" that our work was of good quality, the CSO committed to providing proof of this quality through the comprehensive documentation of our systems and processes. This required a major cultural shift for the organisation. At the same time, there was increased international scrutiny of how official statistics are produced, leading to significant updates to European Statistical legislation. New legislation reinforced the key role that quality plays in National Statistical Institutes and broadened the CSO's remit to include responsibility for the quality of all European Statistics produced across the entire national statistical system. These were all key drivers for change from a quality perspective.

The QMF journey since 2016

Recognition of the need to demonstrate quality was crystallised in the CSO 2020 strategy which led to the development of the QMF and the creation of a new Quality Division. A key goal for the Quality Division since 2016 has been to enhance the robustness of the CSO's statistical processes and systems through a quality management transformation programme. This programme concentrated on documenting our key assets, inputs, processes and supporting technological resources, thereby improving transparency, ensuring repeatability over time and safeguarding corporate knowledge for the entire organisation.

A key factor in the QMF's continued success is the high level of collaboration of all staff in the CSO with the quality team which has ensured that each of the QMF initiatives are successfully implemented, supported and, more importantly, maintained. The QMF has driven the practical and cultural changes required to move to a more transparent, documented, quality management system and has increased understanding of the importance of being able to prove quality throughout any organisation involved in the production of official statistics.

The success of the QMF has not just been limited to the CSO. The quality team and the statistical producers in the ISS have worked together to improve their quality frameworks through the implementation of key QMF initiatives. Some departments have achieved ISSCOP certification, while others are just beginning this journey through active engagement with the Statistical System Coordination Unit and the quality team as they prepare for the next round of ESS Peer reviews.

CSO Quality Strategy 2020-2023

GSBPM cycle: SPECIFY NEEDS, BUILD, COLLECT, PROCESS, ANALYSE, DISSEMINATE, EVALUATE, DESIGN

Outer ring: Documentation, Metadata, Data Management, Standards, Metrics, Assurance

Building Trust

Key successes to date

CSO staff and the QMF team have achieved some key successes to date, including:

- The establishment of the UNECE Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) as the business process model for the Office. The GSBPM is the central plank on which each of the QMF initiatives are built.

- The introduction of standardised survey documentation for all statistical processes, categorised by GSBPM phase.

- The production of detailed process maps, supported by key process metrics, for all statistical products in the CSO.

- The development of the Quality Information System – a data repository which stores all quality related documentation and which is accessible to all staff to facilitate transparency and comparability.

- CSO outputs are now supported by standardised metadata on the Methods page on the CSO website which describes the methodology and processes followed.

- The introduction of a new annual self-assessment Quality Review System which allows survey owners to review the quality of their statistical processes against the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice for each phase of the GSBPM they are using.

- The introduction of a wide range of data and process governance initiatives including: a new corporate data storage model, a Directory of Products and Services and the development of a Data Inventory.

- New data governance structures have been implemented so that all our data assets are stored, accessed and managed in a consistent, standardised manner.

- The introduction of a new quality assurance model (Supported Quality Appraisals) to independently review the quality and methods of statistical outputs and to support the delivery of improvements.

- The embedding of a new metadata management application (Colectica) as a core corporate tool in the Social Statistics Division, helping to modernise and standardise the processes around questionnaire design, variable specifications and metadata management.