



Strategy for Statistics, 1998-2002

National Statistics Board

Pn. 5990

Price: £5.00

September 1998

© Government of Ireland 1998

Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged.

ISSN 0791-1947
ISBN 0-7076-1871-1

Published by the Stationery Office, Dublin.

Designed and printed by the Central Statistics Office.

Preface

As Ireland faces into the 21st century, the need for high quality official statistics continues to grow rapidly. The changing patterns of trade, the growth in international capital flows, the developments in the labour market, the complex demographic patterns, and the requirements of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) mean that our statistical requirements are set to expand further. Official statistics are a part of the national infrastructure, underpinning the best management of the resources of the Irish economy to the benefit of Irish society. An inadequate statistical infrastructure undermines the quality of public policy making within Ireland and the credence of Irish policy makers involved in negotiations with the European Union. Inadequate statistics also weaken economic activity by damaging the strategic direction of investment and trading activity of businesses.

Strategy for Statistics, 1998-2002 is the third strategy document prepared by the National Statistics Board. Like its predecessors, this document provides a framework for formulating policy on national statistics over the next five years and sets out the priorities identified by the Board. In preparing the strategy, the Board has tried to anticipate the needs and issues likely to arise in

this period and has identified a number of areas where statistical developments will be crucial. These include requirements associated with EU membership and especially EMU, the rapid growth of the services sector, the changing labour force and related social patterns, the growing importance of environmental and energy issues, and the use of technology both to reduce the burden of statistical collection and to improve the dissemination of statistical outputs to policy makers, business people and researchers.

This strategy shows that there are considerable challenges ahead for the Central Statistics Office, which has primary responsibility for producing Ireland's official statistics. While the costs of meeting many of these can be met within the CSO's existing resources, additional resources will have to be sought from government over the period of the strategy. The Board stresses that the cost of producing adequate data is very small compared with the cost of mistakes that can result from policy decisions based on inadequate data.



The Board has seen considerable progress in the provision and quality of statistics over the past five years, as the CSO has striven to maintain and develop the statistical infrastructure at a time when the bulk of its activities were being relocated to Cork. It has also seen the CSO work to meet the needs of its users, benchmarking itself in the process against highly respected international statistical offices. On behalf of the Board, I would like to congratulate the CSO and its staff for the progress that has been made over the past five years.

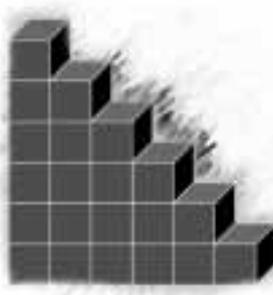
Frances Ruane
Chairperson

Summary

The main function of the National Statistics Board, as specified in the *Statistics Act, 1993*, is to guide the strategic direction of the Central Statistics Office (CSO). This report, *Strategy for Statistics, 1998-2002*, contains the Board's strategic plan for the coming five years.

The plan has five main thrusts:

- It aims to provide the high quality statistics required nationally and by the EU to determine on a factual basis the need for policy initiatives as well as the progress such initiatives are making. In particular, the implementation of Economic and Monetary Union will require accurate monitoring to support macro-economic policy coordination and the conduct of the single monetary policy.
- The plan aims to fill the gap in the underdeveloped area of social statistics. This is especially important now because Ireland is undergoing significant social and demographic change, and there is an urgent need for national policy makers and others to address new challenges and problems.
- There is a need for the CSO to respond to its statutory responsibilities for the coordination of the statistics being produced by other Government Departments and agencies. In particular, the Board will seek improvements in the areas of environmental, energy, and R&D and innovation statistics.
- Given the costs of producing the statistics, they should be used as widely as possible. While there has been a significant improvement in the accessibility and usability of official statistics in recent years, further significant progress will be required over the coming years.
- Since one of the costs in producing statistics is the reporting burden that it places on respondents, especially Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the Board recommends that steps, such as the increased use of administrative sources for statistical purposes and cross-agency cooperation on data demands, be taken to alleviate this burden.



The Board's priority objectives over the period 1998-2002 are as follows.



Macro-economic Statistics (Chapter 2)

- ◆ the compilation of the extensive additional Balance of Payments detail required, beginning in 1999, to meet the needs of the future European Central Bank (ECB);
- ◆ the publication of quarterly national accounts beginning in 1999;
- ◆ improvement in the quality of the constant price estimates in the National Accounts in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact;
- ◆ publication of the Balance of Payments statistics within 12 weeks for the first quarter of 1999;
- ◆ publication of detailed External Trade statistics within 14 weeks (global estimates in 10 weeks) by 2000;
- ◆ continued development of the EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) in collaboration with Eurostat and other member states;
- ◆ the updating of the CPI and HICP weights in December 2002 (based on the results of the proposed 1999-2000 Household Budget Survey) and 5-yearly thereafter.



Social and Demographic Statistics (Chapter 3)

- ◆ the consolidation of the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) by 1999 so that its full potential is realised as an invaluable source of information on labour market and social issues;
- ◆ the completion of a comprehensive review of the presentation and coherence of labour market statistics in 1999 once the QNHS results are on stream;
- ◆ the conduct of a Household Budget Survey (HBS) in 1999-2000;
- ◆ the introduction of administrative procedures for the compilation of statistics on divorce to an international standard;
- ◆ the conduct of a Census of Population in 2001 following maximum consultation with users, the advance piloting of any changes, and the full use of modern technology.



Business Statistics (Chapter 4)

- ◆ the implementation of the new EU annual structural and short-term business indicators Regulations with priority on the expansion in the range of statistics available for the Services sector;
- ◆ the expansion of short-term earnings series to cover all sectors of the economy;

- ◆ the improved timeliness of business statistics;
- ◆ the conduct of a Census of Agriculture.



Other Statistical Aspects (Chapter 5)

- ◆ more active CSO role in improving environmental statistics in cooperation with the relevant departments and agencies;
- ◆ collaboration by the CSO with relevant departments and agencies in the publication of a more comprehensive and coherent body of energy statistics;
- ◆ continued liaison with Forfás on R&D and innovation statistics;
- ◆ continued priority on minimising the statistical reporting burden on businesses, especially SMEs;
- ◆ establishment of user liaison groups for the main statistical subject matter areas by the end of 1998;
- ◆ finalisation of arrangements to give researchers access to anonymised Census of Population microdata.



CSO Organisational Developments (Chapter 6)

- ◆ the full implementation of the Government's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) modernisation programme in the CSO;
- ◆ the development of the CSO IT function to maximise efficiencies and produce added value to statistical products;
- ◆ the implementation of the CSO's Customer Service Plan;
- ◆ the implementation of the organisational change recommended in the 1997 consultancy report commissioned by the Board.

The Board will assess in regular reports the progress being made by the CSO in implementing this strategic plan.

Table of

Contents

	Chairperson's Preface	1
	Executive Summary	3
Chapter 1	Background	9
	Introduction	9
	The National Statistics Board	10
	National dimension	11
	EU dimension	12
	Recent statistical developments	13
	Implementation of Board's strategic plan	14
Chapter 2	Macro-economic Statistics	15
	Overview	15
	EMU requirements	16
	European System of Accounts	17
	Consumer and Wholesale Price Indices	17
	Timeliness	18
	Quality	18
	Board's priority objectives	19
Chapter 3	Social and Demographic Statistics	21
	Overview	21
	Quarterly National Household Survey	22
	Review of Labour Market statistics	23

	1999-2000 Household Budget Survey	24
	Time Use Survey	24
	Vital Statistics	25
	2001 Census of Population	25
	Board's priority objectives	26
Chapter 4	Business Statistics	27
	Overview	27
	Industrial, Building and Service statistics	28
	Labour Costs statistics	29
	Agricultural statistics	30
	Board's priority objectives	31
Chapter 5	Other Statistical Aspects	33
	Development of other statistical areas	33
	Data collection	34
	Consultation with users and providers	35
	Access to CSO microdata	36
	Board's priority objectives	36
Chapter 6	CSO Organisational Developments	39
	Strategic Management Initiative	39
	Information technology	40
	Customer service focus	40
	Organisational change	40
	Board's priority objectives	41
Appendix 1	CSO Activities	45
Appendix 2	Membership of National Statistics Board	48



Background

Introduction

The Irish economy has been transformed over the last decade due to the pursuit of sound fiscal policies, the social partnership process, high levels of foreign direct investment and EU transfers, and the demographic fundamentals. Employment is growing significantly and the average output of our citizens per head continues to improve relative to the European average.

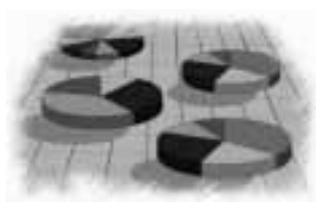
Looking ahead, it is clear to the Board that developments over the next few years, and in prospect in the decades ahead, will have profound implications for the country. In demographic terms, within the next few years, it is likely that those factors that have allowed us to expand our labour force significantly in recent years — the impact of the high birth rate in the past, the increased female participation — will continue. The level of immigration, though difficult to anticipate, may also contribute to the labour force. In the longer term, however, as the century proceeds, there are concerns that the contribution of some of these factors will gradually diminish and that the labour force could well contract over a period when the number of persons reaching retirement age starts to increase dramatically.

More immediately, Ireland is on the threshold of joining the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). This will pose significant new challenges for the conduct of policy. Similarly, there is a real prospect that the level of European funding, reflecting the maturing of the Irish economy, will be significantly reduced. Major changes in EU agricultural policy and the enlargement of the Union will also have a substantial impact on the structure of the economy.

In addition, there are major issues of social concern that have to be addressed by policy makers. Examples include the long-term unemployed, economic disadvantage in significant parts of the country both urban and rural, the homeless, and the drug and crime problem.



There are major challenges to be addressed in the decades ahead in ensuring that policy is adapted over time to address all the needs of Irish society in an increasingly competitive international market-place. Against this background, there is a requirement to provide policy makers with a clear understanding of the nature and extent of the economic and social changes taking place. Statistical information provides the main foundation for this understanding.



High-quality statistical information — impartial, relevant, comprehensive and up to date — is particularly important for the formation, implementation and monitoring of policy and programmes at national and international levels. Nationally, there is a need for economic, social, demographic, and business statistics to understand the factors influencing change and the relationships between them. Internationally, the needs of the EU and EMU are the main driving forces of the demand for new and harmonised statistical information.

The challenge facing producers of statistics world-wide is to adapt to changing times. New information is required. It is needed more quickly, and increasingly it is needed in electronic rather than paper form.

Statistics are not just used by policy makers. They are also extensively used by the business community, trade associations, trade unions, researchers, the media and the general public. Generally, there is an increased awareness across all sections of society of the value of statistical information. Statistics are also important on the international front because of the importance of external trade in goods and services, the attraction of inward investment, and the globalisation of business and financial markets.

The National Statistics Board



The main functions of the National Statistics Board, as set out in the *Statistics Act, 1993*, are to guide the strategic direction of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and to set priorities for the collection and compilation of official statistics.

The CSO, as the primary provider of statistical information in Ireland, has been in operation for almost half a century. Its mandate, as defined in the Statistics Act, covers the collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State.

The Board operates on the basis of five-year Strategic Plans. A timescale of five years was chosen to allow for the CSO's cyclical



resource requirements: major statistical activities such as the Census of Population and the Household Budget Survey cause very large year to year variations in its staffing and expenditure levels. It also parallels the five yearly statistical planning cycles at EU level. The 1998-2002 Community Statistical Programme will shortly be agreed at Council. These strategies, which promote the development of national and EU statistics, are inter-linked and provide a dominant input to the CSO's corporate planning process under the Government's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI).

The plan presented in this report relates to the period 1998-2002. The previous two plans covered the periods 1988-1992 and 1993-1997. Progress in implementing these latter plans has been assessed by the Board in a series of annual or biennial reports covering the period since 1988.

The current membership of the Board is given in *Appendix 2*.

National dimension

In preparing this plan, the Board consulted a wide range of national users in a survey in early 1997. About 160 completed questionnaires were received from Government departments, local authorities, health boards, State-sponsored bodies, political parties, the media, education and research institutes, consultants and market research organisations, financial institutions, stockbrokers, and various representative bodies.

The Board is appreciative of the many organisations and individuals who responded to its survey.

This survey provided very valuable information in preparing the Board's Strategic Plan. It also provided an important input to the *CSO's Customer Service Plan 1998-1999*.

Generally, respondents commented reasonably positively on the existing statistical products and services and identified many improvements that had been made over the past few years.

It is, however, clear from the results of the survey that users are demanding further significant improvement over the coming years. In particular, they want more detailed information, they want it presented in new ways, and above all they want it more quickly.

The Board is also particularly conscious of the burden that statistical reporting places on business. While statistical requirements must clearly be balanced with the reporting burden, there is a need to alleviate this burden as far as is practicable.





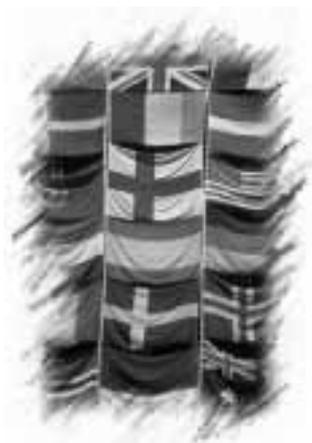
The Board is fully aware that, traditionally, there has been a severe shortage of official social statistics. In a survey of users in 1995, strong support was expressed for the development of social indicators. The need for social information is all the more important given the widespread social change taking place in Ireland at the moment.

The gap in social statistics will be progressively filled over the coming years by the new Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). Apart from collecting information on the labour market each quarter, the survey will also include important social information. The Board is confident that the inclusion of social modules in this major survey will go a long way towards meeting the needs expressed by users.

While the CSO is the main provider of statistical information in Ireland, some statistics are also compiled by other Government Departments (*eg*, education, health, housing, energy, and crime). The Board intends to focus more on these activities in the future.

EU dimension

The Board is conscious of EU statistical requirements. It is fully aware of future needs and planned developments because of the CSO's involvement in all stages of the Community statistical planning, development and implementation processes. The main purpose of the EU statistical system is to provide the European institutions, national governments, economic and social decision makers, and individual citizens with the statistics needed to implement, monitor and evaluate Community policies, programmes and activities.



Meeting the EU's requirements is a key factor influencing the development of the Irish statistical system. This has intensified in recent years with the completion of the Single Market and the introduction of the EMU. The Board considers that the impact of EU statistical demands over the years has, despite occasional drawbacks such as the need for excessive detail, been positive. There has been a resultant increase in the range of statistics available, albeit at the cost of additional resources, from sources such as the Labour Force Survey and the Labour Costs Survey. These statistics, while clearly of benefit to the EU, are also of considerable benefit to users nationally, both in and outside Government.

The 1998-2002 *Strategy for Statistics* will inevitably be largely driven by EU statistical requirements. This will mainly involve the adoption of the new EU System of National Accounts (ESA95),



Recent statistical developments



implementing new annual and short-term business statistics regulations covering all sectors of the economy, and meeting the emerging financial statistical requirements for managing the EMU. The burden is also being accentuated by the increasing use of statistics for administrative purposes (*eg*, determination of national contributions to the EU budget, structural fund allocations), which significantly adds to the pressure on and the scrutiny of the statistics being produced. As these demands are a direct consequence of Ireland's EU and EMU membership, the Board considers that resources should be made available to meet them.

Appendix 1 provides a table of CSO activities, showing the numbers of staff allocated. It also shows the EU obligation, if any, that underpins the activity.

There have been significant developments in the Irish statistical system in recent years. These include:

Macro-economic statistics

- The satisfactory completion of the first phase of a major programme to improve the quality of the annual National Accounts and the quarterly Balance of Payments estimates;
- The development and publication of Regional Accounts, which will provide an important input to the negotiations for the current round of EU structural funds;
- The successful introduction of a monthly updated Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the parallel EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) in January 1997 to meet Maastricht convergence requirements;

Business statistics

- The improvement of Services statistics by the introduction of annual inquiries covering the Distribution sector each year and other sectors on a systematic 3-year rotating basis;
- The introduction of quarterly stocks and capital expenditure inquiries as part of the preparations for the publication of quarterly national accounts;
- The introduction of quarterly employment and earnings series for the public and financial sector;

Labour market and social statistics

- The initiation of the new Quarterly National Household Survey



(QNHS) of 39,000 households starting in the September-November 1997 quarter covering the labour force and a rotating set of social topics;

- The efficient operation and timely publication of the 1996 Census of Population, a huge undertaking involving the temporary employment of 3,500 field and over 200 office staff;

Other developments

- The development of arrangements in 1997 under the provisions of the *Statistics Act, 1993* allowing researchers access to anonymised micro datasets for statistical analysis purposes;
- The introduction of more user-friendly statistical releases in 1997;
- Increased provision of data in electronic form.

Implementation of Board's strategic plan



The Board will assess progress being made over the coming years in the implementation of the objectives set out in the Plan. It expects that, when the next user survey is undertaken in the later stages of the period covered by the Plan, it will indicate a considerable improvement in the satisfaction of statistical customers, both users and data providers. This improvement should cover the range and timeliness of the statistics available, greater analysis and interpretation of the statistics produced, and the use of the most modern methods of dissemination.

The Board's objectives for the coming five years are spelt out in the remaining chapters of this report.

Chapter



Macro-economic Statistics

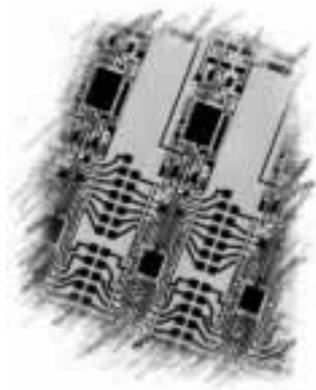
Overview

Ireland is undergoing major economic development. The economy is changing as a result of major structural shifts, and the economic environment is becoming increasingly complex because of factors such as globalisation, new and varied working arrangements, environmental concerns, and the impact of the communications revolution.

At the international level, the needs of the EU and of EMU are the main driving force for macro-economic statistics. Ireland will be part of a monetary union where formulation and implementation of a single monetary policy will be the responsibility of the European Central Bank (ECB). The ECB will need timely and detailed economic and financial statistics. Ireland must play its part in ensuring that its contribution to the aggregate statistics is comprehensive and accurate. Equally well, in areas such as price statistics and measurement of growth rates, a key factor will be the achievement of harmonisation among member states.



At overall EU level, membership has continued to change the context for our macro-economic statistics. Economic accounts and related statistics are a key requirement for the analysis of the economic situation in each country. They must be compiled in accordance with agreed standards and methodologies. National accounts are also used for a number of Community administrative purposes, principally GNP for the calculation of Ireland's contribution to the EU budget and regional accounts in the context of structural funds. These new administrative uses have propelled statistics into a central policy role, which has focused the attention of a new set of critical users on quality.



At national level, management of the rapidly changing economy requires an understanding of the factors influencing change and of the relationship between them. In discussing the current period of rapid economic growth, *Partnership 2000* states that "... the challenge is to maintain a shared understanding of the mechanisms and relationships in the Irish economy".

The challenge facing all producers of statistics is to provide the data that policy makers, analysts and businesses need to further such understanding. The National Accounts provide a comprehensive framework within which data can be presented in a coherent and consistent manner to assist in this task. The new quarterly national accounts will help to meet the need for more up to date macro-economic indicators.

Ireland is heavily dependent on its trade with the rest of the world. There must, therefore, be continued priority given to both the External Trade statistics and the Balance of Payments.

EMU requirements

To meet EMU and other international needs, an intensive multi-annual development programme for Balance of Payments (BoP) and International Investment Position (IIP) statistics has been underway for the last two years. Its purpose is to strengthen the foundation for the collection and compilation of financial flows and stocks data. This will also address the greater analytical needs of national users. The new information will provide much greater detail on the nature of transactions and stocks, and will also provide sectoral and geographic analysis. The IIP data will be compiled annually.



The first step in this programme was the introduction in 1996 of the new treatment of the retained earnings of the direct investment enterprises and of royalties, together with the move of capital transfers from the current to the capital account. The next step in 1997 was the inclusion of the results of the direct investment element of the recently developed Foreign Assets and Liabilities Survey. The main developments now in hand are the redesigning of forms for existing surveys, the introduction of new surveys from the first quarter of 1998 to expand the coverage of the financial services sector (including the International Financial Services Centre), and the change to a quarterly frequency for the existing annual Survey of Foreign Assets and Liabilities.

The Board recognises the need to meet the requirements of EMU. The developments being undertaken in the BoP will also be of

benefit nationally in giving users a better understanding of the country's international trading position while continued development of the EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) will enhance the quality of the national series.

European System of Accounts



ESA95 is the EU version of the new UN System of National Accounts (SNA), which must be applied for the purposes of GDP/GNP compilation in all member states from 1999 onwards under EU Regulation 2223/96. In addition, the Regulation specifies a substantial extension in the scope of the system and the compilation of a wide range of additional tables and analyses.

As already noted, the CSO has introduced, for national purposes, two of the features of the new system of particular importance to Ireland, namely the treatment of royalties and the profits of foreign direct investment enterprises. All remaining methodological changes affecting the existing accounts will be introduced in 1999.

The extension of the scope of the system and the extra detail will be introduced gradually in line with derogations agreed with the EU. Planning and preparatory work will continue over the period of this Strategy with the early introduction of quarterly accounts being the main additional output.

Work has been progressing on the compilation of financial accounts, and a first set of flow accounts in respect of 1995 and some earlier years will be published during 1998. Other extensions and additional analyses will be introduced between 2002 and 2005.

The Board is conscious of the major demands which EU requirements will place on National Accounts over the coming years. It endorses the CSO strategy to introduce gradually the extra detail, but regards the planned introduction of quarterly accounts in 1999 as a priority.

Consumer and Wholesale Price Indices

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) was successfully updated in November 1996 and changed to a monthly frequency to allow the compilation of the monthly EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) in compliance with the Maastricht Treaty convergence requirements. A harmonised EU methodology has been agreed for the bulk of consumer goods and services. Problematic methodological issues relating to the treatment of housing, health and education remain to be resolved. The Board recommends that the CSO continue to be proactively involved in the discussions of these issues with a view to developing a fully harmonised HICP.



There is particular concern at EU level that the weighting basis of the HICP is kept up to date to reflect any changes in consumer expenditure patterns. The proposed 1999-2000 Household Budget Survey (HBS) will allow both the HICP and CPI weights to be updated after an interval of five years (instead of the traditional seven years) in December 2002. The Board recommends that the HBS be conducted every five years subsequently to allow the HICP and CPI weights to be updated at this increased frequency.

The Wholesale Price Index is an important advance indicator of inflationary trends in the economy. Its components are also likely to be increasingly used in calculating the External Trade Price Indices and for deflation purposes in the compilation of both the monthly Production Index and the National Accounts. The Board recommends that its coverage be intensified and extended for this purpose.

Timeliness



Users demand continued improvements in timeliness. In the National Accounts context, the detailed annual accounts are now published within six months of the end of the reference year. However, users need more up to date indicators of the overall performance of the economy; this need will be met by the introduction of quarterly accounts in 1999. The timeliness of the annual Regional Accounts will also be improved with the target of publishing the results within 24 months; this information is critical for EU Structural Fund negotiations.

Continued efforts must also be made to improve the timeliness of the External Trade statistics and the Balance of Payments data. The former suffered, in common with all EU member states, from the discontinuation of intra-EU Customs controls and the introduction of the new Intrastat survey system. The initial publication delays of 33 weeks have now been reduced to 18 weeks for the full detail and 14 weeks for early global estimates. The Board endorses the aim to reduce this to 13 weeks (one quarter) for the full level of detail. In the case of the BoP, the objective is to produce the quarterly estimates in 12 weeks.

Quality

Considerable work has been undertaken in recent years to improve the estimates of GDP and GNP at current prices. GNP Directive 89/130, which is the basis for Ireland's contribution to the EU budget, has been the focus for much of this work. This now ensures that the estimates for all member states are increasingly being harmonised so that they can be readily used for comparison purposes and to compile EU-wide aggregates.



Some improvements have also been made to the estimates at constant prices. However, there will now be an increased emphasis on this dimension because of the statistical requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact. EU legislation to support the Pact is being developed. The Board considers that the CSO should play a full role in meeting its requirements. This will be of benefit nationally by improving the precision of the constant price estimates and by ensuring greater comparability internationally. New data sources will be required to meet these needs; one of the main repercussions will be a requirement to develop price indicators for the outputs of the services sector.

In the case of the External Trade statistics, the quality at an aggregate level is good. However, there continues to be a need to improve the detailed commodity by country detail where errors in trader returns and the need for estimation can affect quality.

Board's priority objectives

In summary, the Board's priority objectives for macro-economic statistics over the period 1998-2002 are:

- ◆ the compilation of the extensive additional Balance of Payments detail required, beginning in 1999, to meet the needs of the future European Central Bank (ECB);
- ◆ the publication of quarterly national accounts beginning in 1999;
- ◆ improvement in the quality of the constant price estimates in the National Accounts in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact;
- ◆ publication of the Balance of Payments statistics within 12 weeks for the first quarter of 1999;
- ◆ publication of detailed External Trade statistics within 14 weeks (global estimates in 10 weeks) by 2000;
- ◆ continued development of the EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) in collaboration with Eurostat and other member states;
- ◆ the updating of the CPI and HICP weights in December 2002 (based on the results of the proposed 1999-2000 Household Budget Survey) and 5-yearly thereafter.





Social and Demographic Statistics

Overview

While most attention has been focused in recent times on the spectacular growth in the economy, Ireland is also undergoing significant social and demographic change. To some extent the social and economic changes are clearly linked — for example, employment growth and improved economic performance. However, much of the change is more deep-rooted and has its own momentum. The fall of over a third in the birth rate in the early 1980s, the long term movement towards a more urban-based society, and the rapid changes recently recorded in family and household structures are all indicators of this underlying change dynamic.

A changing society brings with it the urgent need for policy makers in particular to address new challenges and problem issues. The volatility of some factors and the longer-term implications of others must be taken into account. The unpredictability of migration flows is an example of the former while the future pension implications of a falling birth rate is an example of the latter.

A principal focus will continue to be on the labour force where there has been an unprecedented growth in employment in recent years. Though much of the growth has been in full-time employment, new patterns of working time such as part-time and contractual employment and new forms of work such as teleworking and homeworking have emerged. These are likely to expand in the context of the growing demand for flexible work arrangements and the





need to achieve a better balance between work and family life. Labour market policies designed to address the problem of long-term unemployment have also tended to stimulate the growth in part-time and contractual employment.

A clear understanding of the nature of the changes taking place, and the reasons for them, is vital if policy is to be effective. This presupposes that there is a solid framework in place for producing relevant and timely statistics on social and demographic conditions.

Traditionally, social and demographic statistics have been relatively underdeveloped in Ireland. This reflected the high cost of undertaking household surveys and censuses, the absence of comprehensive registers of the population, and the higher priority accorded within the statistical system to developing economic and business statistics. In the recent past, however, there has been a marked change in this situation. The introduction of the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in September 1997, in place of the annual Labour Force Survey, has been the single most important development and is a major step forward. The timely processing and dissemination of the 1996 Census of Population has also been most welcome and is indicative of a more client-oriented approach by the CSO. The improvement in the frequency of the Household Budget Survey, from seven years to five, and the pilot testing of a methodology for conducting time use surveys are also worthy of note. The main challenge over the next five years is to consolidate the progress made to date and, in particular, to exploit to the fullest extent the rich analytical potential of the new and improved data sources.



Aside from household surveys, administrative sources are the other main means of providing social and demographic data. Vital Statistics and the Live Register analyses are the two prominent examples. Other statistics are produced independently by the relevant Departments and include regular data on education, health and welfare programmes. The Board considers that greater attention should be given to the exploitation and coordination of these sources, and the CSO should be given the resources to allow it to pursue the mandate given to it under the Statistics Act in this regard.

Quarterly National Household Survey

As already stated, the introduction of the QNHS in September 1997 marked a huge step forward in the development of social and demographic statistics. The main objective of the survey is the timely provision, within three months of the reference quarter, of detailed information on employment and unemployment. The use



of laptop computers at the collection stage will facilitate the achievement of this demanding target. Undoubtedly, the availability of sub-annual data of this quality will be most welcome to policy makers, researchers and all others who need to monitor developments in the labour market. The timely availability of quarterly survey-based estimates of unemployment should help to avoid the misinterpretation of the Live Register as such a measure.

Aside from providing data on the labour market, the survey will also provide over time information on a range of social topics through the regular inclusion of social modules in the quarterly surveys. The Board considers that it is absolutely essential that the social modules are carefully planned and implemented and, in particular, that there is full consultation with representative groups of relevant users for each topic. Modules should be decided up to one year in advance of the target quarter. The Board is putting a process in place to achieve this objective. Under the process, it will recommend to Government each year in June up to three topics to be included in the survey in the year beginning the following June.

The Board is anxious that the rich analytical potential of the QNHS be fully exploited by all statistics users. It particularly welcomes the arrangements put in place under the provisions of the *Statistics Act, 1993* to provide researchers with anonymised microdata files for analysis purposes. It also supports CSO plans to establish a data bank of LFS and QNHS results to facilitate access by users.

Review of Labour Market statistics



In tandem with the release of the first results from the QNHS, the CSO will, as agreed by Government, adopt the ILO standards as the primary means of presenting national figures on employment and unemployment (instead of the longstanding self-classification principal economic status approach). A key focus will be on the Standardised Unemployment Rate (SUR). This rate will be complemented by five ancillary indicators of potential labour market supply. These indicators were developed by the CSO in response to recommendations made in Report No. 13 of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and endorsed by the Interdepartmental Strategy Group on Employment and Unemployment (SGEU). In approving these ancillary indicators the Government emphasised that the CSO should ensure that they should not be misinterpreted as unemployment rates, an emphasis that is fully supported by the Board.

Notwithstanding this development, it is clear that further work needs to be done to improve the presentation of labour market sta-

tistics and to address the coherence of data from different sources. The Board therefore welcomes the CSO's intention to initiate such a review in 1999 when the results from the QNHS are on stream. As in the past, it will be essential to ensure that this review and any resulting changes are agreed in consultation with all interested parties.

1999-2000 Household Budget Survey



This large-scale survey of approximately 8,000 households has been traditionally undertaken at regular seven-year intervals. However, to meet the need for more regular updating of the Consumer Price Index, and to avoid overlapping with the 2001 Census of Population, the next HBS will be undertaken in 1999-2000, five years after the last survey in 1994-1995.

The survey is the only source of comprehensive data on the income and expenditure of private households. It plays a crucial role in underpinning the expenditure estimates in the annual National Accounts. The Board considers that it should be undertaken every five years in future. As with the QNHS, it is anxious to ensure that its rich analytical potential is exploited to the fullest extent, and supports fully the CSO's plans to disseminate these data more widely.

Time Use Survey



There is an increasing interest in having information on time related issues such as unwaged work (mainly undertaken by women) in the home, use of leisure time, and the existence and extent of new work practices such as teleworking and working from the home. Time Use household surveys are undertaken in an increasing number of countries to meet this need. A small pilot study (limited to 200 households) was undertaken in 1997 in response to a commitment given in *Partnership 2000* (paragraph 5.11) to evaluate the full extent of the contribution of unpaid work to the national economy. Similar pilot tests were undertaken in a number of other EU countries as part of a programme to develop a common European survey methodology.

These surveys require all participants to keep a detailed log of activities throughout the day. As such they place a heavy burden on respondents and are very costly in terms of processing resources. Preliminary indications from the pilot test suggest that a viable methodology can be developed. The Board recommends that the pilot test should be fully evaluated before further developments are considered. While the demand for a full survey is likely to grow, the Board is conscious that these surveys are relatively expensive and must therefore be assessed in the context of other priorities.

Accordingly, it is recommended that a time use survey should only be conducted if the full resources required are made available by Government.

Vital Statistics



The CSO publishes a considerable range of statistics on the vital events of births, deaths and marriages registered each quarter, and annually on the basis of the registration date (where there is an in-built lag of up to two years because of delays in some registrations). The Board appreciated the priority that was given to publishing the quarterly statistics on the current timely basis, but was concerned with the slippage in the timeliness of the annual report due to the decentralisation of the CSO to Cork. However, it notes the improvement in the recent past and welcomes the CSO's commitment to clear the backlog by the end of 1999.

The Board finds the current situation regarding the compilation of statistics on *divorce* to be unsatisfactory. Since the administrative records pertaining to divorce applications are held by the Courts, they are not accessible under the provisions of the *Statistics Act, 1993*. Thus the CSO is not in a position to compile divorce statistics in line with international standards. Efforts by the Board and the CSO to redress this situation have not been successful to date. While the number of applications for divorce have been low up to now, there is, nevertheless, a very important point of principle involved. In effect, a new administrative system has been put in place, which, despite representations, does not permit the compilation of important national statistics.

2001 Census of Population

The next 5-yearly Census of Population is due in April 2001. This will be an important historical event as it will benchmark the population at the start of the new millennium. The Board identifies the following key objectives for the conduct of this Census:

- (a) There should be a comprehensive consultation process to ensure that the census questionnaire meets the needs of users to the maximum extent, having regard to feasibility, resource and response burden limitations.
- (b) Modern technology should be further exploited at the data capture (*eg*, imaging) and processing phases to reduce the costs of the census and to improve the timeliness of results.
- (c) Greater use should be made of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) at all stages of the census operation to take advantage of the significant advances made by the Ordnance Survey in the areas of electronic mapping and geo-referencing.



(d) Dissemination of census results in electronic form should be pursued as a particular priority.

In setting these objectives, the Board is aware that it is essential to research and pilot changes of this nature in advance. This will require an investment of both time and resources in a preparatory phase that must be completed by the end of 1999. The Board considers that this investment will be more than repaid in increased efficiencies in the conduct of the Census and in the value added to the census outputs.

Board's priority objectives



In summary, the Board's priority objectives for social and demographic statistics over the period 1998-2002 are:

- ◆ the consolidation of the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) by 1999 so that its full potential is realised as an invaluable source of information on labour market and social issues;
- ◆ the completion of a comprehensive review of the presentation and coherence of labour market statistics in 1999 once the QNHS results are on stream;
- ◆ the conduct of a Household Budget Survey (HBS) in 1999-2000;
- ◆ the introduction of administrative procedures for the compilation of statistics on divorce to an international standard;
- ◆ the conduct of a Census of Population in 2001 following maximum consultation with users, the advance piloting of any changes, and the full use of modern technology.



Business Statistics

Overview

The spectacular growth of the economy, the information requirements of Government for policy formulation and of businesses for company investment and corporate planning purposes to sustain this development, as well as the necessity to monitor and adapt to the resulting changes, highlights the critical importance of the availability of timely statistics on the business sectors. Information on wages and earnings is particularly important for wage negotiations between the social partners, and also for the early identification of any emerging inflationary pressures in the economy.

The performance of the *industrial* sector is critical to employment and economic growth. Up to date information on production trends, employment and earnings levels, and structural changes at sectoral level, is essential for economic management and policy formation. Product information in conjunction with data on external trade is critical to businesses for measuring market size and identifying market opportunities. Much of the industrial growth continues to be generated by the foreign-owned sector. This gives rise to the need to monitor the relative performance of indigenous and foreign-owned industry, and the extent to which Irish industry is being affected by globalisation and how this is impacting on the management decision-making process within companies.

In Ireland, statistics on *services* are still, as in many other countries, relatively underdeveloped despite some significant improvements in recent years. The main reason for this is that the sector is dominated by small enterprises, which are difficult to survey. However, the range of statistics must be improved as the sector has rapidly expanded in recent years and now accounts for over 60% of employment in Ireland. Because of Ireland's position on the periphery of Europe and its environmental advantages, industries such as





transport and tourism are critical for future development. More comprehensive information is needed to underpin policy development in these and other services areas. A clear indication of the present gap in the information base is the shortage of information on earnings in this sector.

The EU Commission and the EMI/ECB have clearly signalled the importance of having the necessary industrial, building and services statistics available for monitoring economic performance at national level and for the EMU as a whole. This need is reflected in the range of new statistical legislation that has recently been introduced or is currently being discussed at Council. Their improvement is also central to implementing the new European System of National Accounts (ESA95).

Irish *agricultural* statistics have developed significantly since the country's accession to the EC. This development was largely driven by the information needs of the Commission for the management of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The statistical development and ongoing survey costs involved were well justified in the context of the significant EU financial transfers to the Irish agricultural sector. Although the sector has been declining in relative terms, it is still a major contributor to the Irish economy. The main statistical challenge is to modify the existing outputs to meet the new needs of a re-focused CAP. This will involve a greater emphasis on income support, rural development, and conservation of the environment.

Industrial, Building and Service statistics

A number of significant requirements will influence the development of industrial, building and service statistics over the next few years. These include

- the requirement under EMU for a range of timely economic indicators;
- the requirements of EU Regulation 58/97 on Structural Business Statistics;
- the implications of an EU Regulation on Short-term Statistics, which is likely to be finalised in the first half of 1998;
- the need to improve timeliness to comply with the IMF Bulletin Board (<http://dsbb.imf.org>) requirements.

The new EU Structural Regulation 58/97 will impact most heavily on the services area. There is a requirement to survey all services sectors on an annual basis (at present they are systematically surveyed over a three-year cycle), and to publish provisional results within 10 months. This is a particularly challenging requirement.



The forthcoming EU Short-term Regulation requires monthly information on turnover and a deflator of sales for the retail sector; quarterly turnover for the other services sectors; and quarterly employment information for all services sectors. It is hoped to adapt existing inquiries to meet some of these requirements, and so help to reduce the burden on these sectors.

There is ongoing pressure to develop more detailed statistics on tourism at national, regional and sectoral level. Not only are there national users with an interest in significantly greater detail for the sector, but there are also very demanding mandatory requirements under EU Council Directive 95/57. Work commenced on two new surveys during 1997, relating to

- (a) the level of tourism infrastructure available in Ireland and the related occupancy rates;
- (b) the demand for tourism by Irish residents.

The Board wishes to see the development work completed and the new statistics published in 1999.



Work is ongoing to develop enhanced information on transport in compliance with EU Council Directive 95/64 relating to maritime statistics and the carriage of goods and passengers by sea. There are also draft EU Regulations requiring more statistics in respect of air and road transport. The Board recommends that EDI technology should be used as far as possible for the collection of these data.

Many of the requirements involve improved timeliness. In this regard the Board welcomes the CSO's commitment to produce:

- a provisional monthly production index within six weeks;
- an early overall index of quarterly industrial earnings within three months;
- early results from the Census of Industrial Production and Census of Building within 10 months;
- the Prodcom results with a significantly reduced time lag: the statistics for 1996 will be published with a 19 month delay and it is planned to reduce this to about a year; (the Regulation requires some results within six months).

Labour Costs statistics

There is a considerable demand nationally for more information on earnings and labour costs. This is an area of critical interaction between the Government, employer bodies and the trade unions. Some advances have been made recently with the publication of



additional information for the public service and for banking, insurance and building societies. However, there is a strong demand for information on earnings across all the services sectors. The Board considers this to be a priority objective.

There are also clear signals from the EMI/ECB that an Employment Price Index covering all sectors of the economy would be among the more important indicators required following EMU. This would be a very demanding and expensive project. It requires the application of CPI-type methodology to a basket of occupations representative of all occupations/sectors in order to measure changes in the total (not just earnings) employment cost.

The results of the 1995 Structure of Earnings Survey and the 1996 Labour Costs survey will be published during 1998. These will add significantly to the information available on the costs of employing labour across a range of sectors including some services sectors. These surveys are carried out on foot of statutory EU requirements, and both surveys will have to be carried out on an alternating two-year cycle in the future, with the next Labour Costs Survey in 2000 and the Structure of Earnings Survey in 2002.

The Board strongly supports the development of short-term earnings series over a wider range of services sectors as a priority. It is clear to it, however, that there is no possibility of the CSO also conducting ongoing EU Labour Costs and Structure of Earnings Surveys as well as introducing an Employment Price Index unless additional resources are sanctioned to meet these critical national and EU requirements.

Agricultural statistics

Agricultural statistics are well developed in Ireland, largely underpinned by EU legal requirements for CAP purposes. The new EU Farm Structures Survey (FSS) Regulation 2467/96 requires a Census of Agriculture to be undertaken in 1999 or 2000 with a sample FSS in 2003, 2005 and 2007. The impact of the FSS Regulation is that the annual June enumeration is increased from a sample of 30,000-35,000 farms to around 80,000 farms every two years.



The implementation of the new European System of Accounts (ESA95) standards and the development of quarterly and regional accounts will have a significant impact on the methodology of the agricultural accounts. The statistical concept of the “national farm” has been abolished with the consequence that transactions between farms will in future have to be estimated. A comprehensive review of methodology, including these new requirements, is being undertaken.



Most EU member states can provide estimates of the total income of agricultural households. The Board supports the CSO's initiative, in collaboration with Teagasc, to develop a methodology to provide similar estimates for Ireland.

Apart from the EU legal requirement, a Census of Agriculture is required to determine the changes that have occurred in the structure of the agriculture sector since the last Census in 1991 and to provide an updated benchmark for the ongoing sample surveys. The Board supports the CSO proposal that the Census of Agriculture be undertaken in 2000 by post, using administrative farm registers held by the Department of Agriculture and other agricultural bodies.

Board's priority objectives



In summary, the Board's priority objectives for business statistics over the period 1998-2002 are:

- ◆ the implementation of the new EU annual structural and short-term business indicators Regulations with priority on the expansion in the range of statistics available for the Services sector;
- ◆ the expansion of short-term earnings series to cover all sectors of the economy;
- ◆ the improved timeliness of business statistics;
- ◆ the conduct of a Census of Agriculture.



Other Statistical Aspects

Development of other statistical areas

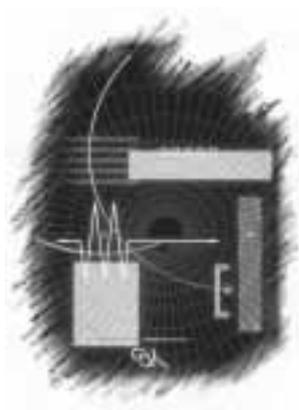
While it is mainly the CSO that compiles Ireland's economic, demographic and social statistics, other Government Departments and public bodies produce statistics for topics such as education, housing, health, and reported crime. The Board's mandate covers all official statistics, not just the statistics produced by the CSO. It is concerned about the underdeveloped and non-integrated state of many of these other statistical areas.

While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has done valuable work in coordinating a range of environmental indicators, considerable work is still needed to integrate these into the wider statistical framework and to keep pace with international developments. The Board considers that the CSO should play a greater role by ensuring harmonisation of classifications used by the different producers, using its existing household and business surveys to collect relevant data, and developing satellite environmental accounts.

Energy statistics is another area of concern to the Board. The CSO collects a range of statistics on energy in its various surveys. The Department of Public Enterprise also collects energy-related data. Both organisations should collaborate to ensure that a more comprehensive and coherent body of energy statistics is published.

R&D and innovation statistics are presently collected by Forfás in line with OECD and Eurostat standards. The CSO should ensure that these can be aligned with its industrial statistics insofar as this is possible. This will help to ensure that data on R&D and innovation can be examined at a sectoral level in the context of other industrial statistics such as employment, sales, exports and value added.



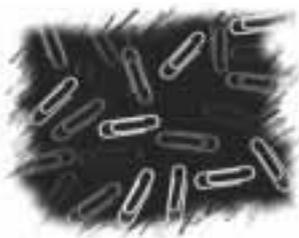


In these three areas in particular, the Board expects the CSO to develop its coordination role over the coming five years.

More generally, the Board is concerned that a lack of strong coordination mechanisms may mean that certain statistics compiled by other official bodies cannot be used in the most effective manner. Any lack of coordination in collection and compilation limits the value of the resultant statistics. It also carries the strong risk that duplication will arise, generating additional costs for businesses and other respondents. There can be further costs (for example, to consultants and others in evaluating and assimilating the data); these costs could be avoided by appropriate investment in the statistical infrastructure. The Board will therefore commission a study of the scope for achieving greater coordination and cost-effectiveness in the collection and dissemination of statistics across the public service.

Data collection

High quality statistics are critically dependent on the cooperation of survey respondents. While statistical inquiries addressed to the business community constitute only a very small proportion of the total information demands made by public bodies, the Board is very conscious of the burden that such inquiries place on respondents, particularly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). However, it is essential that SMEs are appropriately represented in statistical inquiries to ensure that their growing importance is monitored and the significant contribution they make to economic growth is reflected in the official statistics.



Statistical needs must be balanced with reporting burden. The Board recognises the steps taken by the CSO to alleviate this burden. For example, it generally conducts sample surveys instead of full coverage, uses thresholds to exclude small businesses, and accepts good estimates if the actual data are not readily available. In its new Corporate Plan, the Office plans for increased consultation with data providers and business representative bodies, the expansion of the use of data directly from company accounts, and the review of the design and content of questionnaires. The Office has recently offered to accept monthly management accounts in place of some traditional industrial inquiries from some enterprises with fewer than 50 persons engaged. If this pilot initiative proves successful, the offer will be extended in SMEs in all industrial sectors over time.

An up to date comprehensive register of business is essential for ensuring that sample surveys provide accurate results and that the

reporting burden on SMEs is spread more evenly. During the past year, the CSO has invested heavily in updating its existing register system. New custom-designed technology has been acquired from the New Zealand Statistical Office and is now being used to update the register system. The new system should be operational by December 1998 and should help to minimise the reporting burden.



Modern technological developments also offer the possibility not only of reducing the response burden of business inquiries but also of improving the timeliness and quality of the data returned. For example, this could be achieved if statistical reporting requirements were distinguished in business administrative and accounting software and transferred directly to the CSO using electronic data interchange (EDI). Another possible development is the replacement of paper forms by electronic questionnaires on diskette, embodying software that would validate the data entered by respondents and prompt corrections. The Board recommends that the CSO closely monitor the development of these new reporting techniques with a view to adapting them to Irish circumstances.

The statistical potential of administrative records should also be optimised to minimise the reporting burden and to avoid duplicating requests for information that has already been provided to other public bodies. A wide variety of administrative sources is already used for statistical purposes. Although long lead-in times may be involved, the Board recommends that priority continue to be given to the development of further administrative sources for statistical purposes.

Consultation with users and providers



The CSO is required under the *Statistics Act, 1993* to “maintain close and regular contact with the principal users and suppliers of statistics”. There is continuous consultation between the CSO and its two principal customers, namely the Government and the EU. There are also a variety of consultative mechanisms with other statistical users.

The Office has ongoing direct contact with its data providers and periodically liaises with their representative bodies. Seminars and press conferences are also regularly held. A number of liaison groups exist and special working groups of independent experts (eg, labour market statistics and population projections) are established as required.

The Board, however, considers that this consultative process should be put on a more structured basis. It recommends that user

liaison groups, meeting at least annually, be permanently established for the main statistical subject matter areas (eg, macro-economic, demographic, labour market, social, business and agriculture statistics) before the end of 1998, and that a comprehensive survey of users and suppliers be conducted every five years as preparation for each strategic plan.

Access to CSO microdata



Official statistics should be used as extensively as possible subject to the confidentiality of survey respondents being strictly maintained. The *Statistics Act, 1993* allows the provision of non-identifiable individual data for statistical analysis and research purposes. This is a standard practice in many countries and has long been requested by Irish researchers, who understandably wish to work directly on the basic data.

The CSO leaflet *Arrangements for Researchers to access Anonymised Micro Data* explains the contractual access arrangements and the steps taken by the CSO to anonymise the data. Researchers can now access anonymised microdata from the Labour Force Survey and the Household Budget Survey under these arrangements. The Board considers that priority should be given to finalising arrangements for providing access to a sample of anonymised Census of Population microdata.

In March 1998, the Royal Irish Academy's Social Science Research Council published a report entitled *The Irish Data Archive Feasibility Project*, prepared by The Data Archive, University of Essex. The report highlighted the advantages to be gained from the establishment of a dedicated Irish electronic data archive, following precedents in many other European countries. The Board supports this initiative and welcomes the CSO's commitment to deposit anonymised household datasets in the archive when it is established.

Because of the relatively small population involved, micro-information relating to businesses cannot be adequately anonymised. However, in this area the CSO facilitates researchers by providing them with custom-designed analyses, or by allowing them to analyse micro-databases (which do not contain direct identification) within the CSO. In the latter case, they are formally appointed as Officers of Statistics under the 1993 Act subject to its strict confidentiality provisions.

Board's priority objectives

In summary, the Board's priority objectives for other statistical areas over the period 1998-2002 are:

- ◆ more active CSO role in improving environmental statistics in cooperation with the relevant departments and agencies;



- ◆ collaboration by the CSO with relevant departments and agencies in the publication of a more comprehensive and coherent body of energy statistics;
- ◆ continued liaison with Forfás on R&D and innovation statistics;
- ◆ continued priority on minimising the statistical reporting burden on businesses, especially SMEs;
- ◆ establishment of user liaison groups for the main statistical subject matter areas by the end of 1998;
- ◆ finalisation of arrangements to give researchers access to anonymised Census of Population microdata.

Chapter



CSO Organisational Developments

Strategic Management Initiative

As its mandate includes assessing the resources required for compiling official statistics, the Board is concerned that the CSO, in implementing this *Strategy for Statistics*, should operate as efficiently as possible.

The work of the Office will be significantly influenced and its efficiency increased as part of the Civil Service modernisation programme, which is being implemented under the Government's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) programme. A wide range of changes will be introduced in the areas of human resource management, financial management, IT, etc with a view to improving the efficiency of the public service with a primary focus on improved outputs and customer service.

The CSO, in common with all Government Departments and Offices, has prepared statements of strategy covering 1998-2000 as required under the *Public Service Management Act, 1997*. This plan sets out the strategic direction of the CSO over this period to provide both management and staff with a clear guide to its corporate goals and business objectives.

The plan sets key developmental objectives for statistical (macro-economic, demographic and social, business) and support (IT, HR, customer service) programmes. The business objectives embody the statistical priorities of the Board and the EU.

Staff training and development is a vital feature of the SMI. The



CSO has already invested significantly in this area following the 1995 Training Needs Analysis by an external consultancy firm. The Board endorses the CSO's continued commitment to the training and development of its staff.

Information technology



The appropriate deployment of IT is critical for the effective and efficient functioning of the CSO and for the timely production of statistics. The challenge for the CSO is to develop the IT function in ways which best meet the needs of the statistical and support areas of the Office, maximise efficiencies in collection, processing and disseminating statistical information, and provide added value to statistical products through the use of leading edge analytical tools.

The priority developmental objectives in the coming years are:

- closer alignment of IT with the business needs;
- migration to an open systems client-server architecture to fully network PCs, integrate software tools, and easily share data in a manner that balances the development of centralised and end-user computing;
- development of integrated data management systems for the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of statistical data;
- support the move to the process-based approach in the business statistics area, particularly by re-engineering existing processing systems, adoption of generalised processing software, use of database management systems and the introduction of imaging data capture technology.

Customer service focus

The CSO is committed to the provision of high quality services to all its customers across the whole range of its activities. This is a focal priority of the Government's SMI programme and the May 1997 recommendations of the consultants who reviewed the operational capability of the CSO. The Office has in recent years developed an increased focus on its external customers and public image. In common with other Government Departments and Offices in the civil service, the CSO published a *Customer Service Plan* for 1998-1999. The Board recommends that priority be given to its implementation.

Organisational change

In 1996, the Board commissioned a consultancy review of the organisational performance and capability of the CSO. The report, delivered in May 1997, made some key recommendations on the



organisation of the CSO. In particular, it recommended that the CSO should change from a production-driven to a customer-driven organisation. It also recommended that the CSO should move from a product-based to a process-based structure in the business statistics area, separating data collection and editing from data analysis and dissemination within broad product families.

Both the Board and CSO management endorsed these and other recommendations made by the Consultants, and as a result the CSO is now undergoing a process of organisational change.

The Board is confident that the CSO can, to an even greater extent than in the past, meet the many challenges it faces: the increasing needs of its national and international customers, the need for increased efficiency in the production of statistics, the opportunities provided by the Information Society, and the organisational change recommended in the 1997 consultancy report.

Board's priority objectives



In summary, the Board's priority objectives for CSO organisational developments over the period 1998-2002 are:

- ◆ the full implementation of the Government's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) modernisation programme in the CSO;
- ◆ the development of the CSO IT function to maximise efficiencies and produce added value to statistical products;
- ◆ the implementation of the CSO's Customer Service Plan;
- ◆ the implementation of the organisational change recommended in the 1997 consultancy report commissioned by the Board.

Appendices

Appendix



CSO Activities

Core serving staff numbers in April 1998

Cork activities	Staffing	EU Requirement
Division C1	1	
Census of Industrial Production (A)	15	Regulation
Monthly Production	16	
<i>Production Index (M)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Turnover Index (M)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
Employment & Earnings	15	
<i>Industry (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Financial Services (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Public Service (Q)</i>		
<i>Structure of Earnings</i>		<i>Directive</i>
Building & Construction	10	
<i>Census (A)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Earnings (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Planning Permissions (Q)</i>		
<i>Employment (M)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Quantity Surveyors Inquiry (Q)</i>		
Business Field Force	7	
Prodcom Inquiry (A)	10	Regulation
Total	74	
Division C2	1	
Retail Sales Index (M)	9	Regulation
Service Inquiries (A)	10	Regulation
Business Register	17	Regulation
Tourism & Transport	29	
<i>Tourism & Travel (Q)</i>		
<i>Tourism Accommodation (M)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Household Travel Inquiry (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Road Freight Survey (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>





<i>Motor Licenses (M)</i>		
<i>Maritime/Air Statistics (Q)</i>		<i>Directive</i>
<i>Tourist Enumerators</i>	5	
Stocks & Investment Inquiry (Q)	11	
Total	82	

Division C3	1	
Information Technology (IT)	49	

Division C4	1	
Agriculture Surveys & Register	16	Regulation
Processing & Prices (M)	17	Acquis Communautaire
Agricultural Production & Accounts (A)	7	Regulation
Total	41	

Division C5	1	
National Household Survey (Q)	19	Regulation
Live Register (M)	2	
Vital Statistics (Q)	12	
Total	34	

Division C6	1	
Consumer Prices (M)	17	Regulation
Wholesale Prices	6	Acquis Communautaire
Total	24	



Division C7	1	
Personnel	14	
Training & Management Services	7	
Finance	11	
Office Services	17	
Dissemination & Customer Services	18	
Total	68	

Total Cork Divisions	373	
-----------------------------	------------	--



Dublin activities	Staffing	EU Requirement
Division D1		
National Accounts	37	Regulation
Division D2		
Balance of Payments	17	Regulation
Division D3		
External Trade; Board Secretariat	12	Regulation
Division D4		
Demography	30	
Division D5		
Statistical Methods & Developments	3	
Data Bank Unit (Cork)	2	
Support services		
Administration/Library	16	
Information Technology (IT)	14	
Total Dublin Divisions	131	
Total Cork and Dublin	504	
Directorate	5	
Total core serving staff	509	

Appendix



Membership of National Statistics Board

The Board's current membership is:

- Professor Frances P Ruane,
Associate Professor of Economics, Trinity College
(Chairperson)
- Ms Paula Carey
Research Officer, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Mr Steve Couldwell
Managing Director, Smith & Nephew Limited
- Mr Ciarán Dolan
Economic Adviser, Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers'
Association
- Mr David Doyle
Assistant Secretary, Department of Finance
- Ms Marian Harkin
Secondary School Teacher, Sligo
- Mr Dermot McCarthy
Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach
- Mr Donal Murphy
Director General, Central Statistics Office (*ex officio*
member).

Mr Adrian Redmond, Senior Statistician, is Secretary to the Board.