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Freedom of Information Act, 1997 – Sections 15 and 16 – Reference Book

Part A

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How the Act operates in the Office

Mission Statement of the Central Statistics Office

Statistics for a Modern Ireland

The efficient and timely provision of high quality information for a changing society

Preamble

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 establishes three statutory rights:

1. a legal right for each person to access information held by public bodies
2. a legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
3. a legal right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself.

The FOI Act asserts, subject to specified exemptions, the right of the public to obtain access to information held by Government Departments, Offices and certain public bodies to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals.

This reference book has been prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of Sections 15 and 16 of the Act.

- It sets out the structure of the Office and how you can make a request to the Office to access information. Access is subject under the act to certain exemptions and specific procedures and time limits apply [\[Part A\]](#)
- It outlines the functions of the Office; details of services and information we provide and how they may be availed of; and the classes of records we hold [\[Part B\]](#)
- In accordance with the terms of Section 16 of the Act, information on the rules, procedures, practices, guidelines, interpretations and precedents used by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for making decisions that affect the rights, privileges or benefits of citizens is also contained within this Reference Book. It also describes the rules and procedures, which are not already publicly available elsewhere, and indicate where the latter may be, accessed [\[Part C\]](#).

Particular note should be taken of the corresponding Department of Finance FOI Section 16 Rules and Practices Reference Book. This describes the human resource, accounting, payment and other statutory and centrally determined arrangements under which the CSO operates as part of the Civil Service.

Statistical Exemption

The FOI Act does not grant a right to identifiable information collected by the CSO for statistical purposes. This is exempted from the access provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 (Section 32).

The confidentiality of identifiable information collected by the CSO for statistical purposes in statutory or voluntary inquiries from individual persons, households, businesses and other undertakings, or indirectly from the administrative records of public authorities, continues to be legally protected under the Statistics Act, 1993 ([Sections 32 and 35 – see Appendix 1](#)).

Statistical information is published by the CSO in aggregate form only. Great care is taken to ensure that details relating to an identifiable person or undertaking are not divulged in statistical releases and publications.

Independence of the CSO in Statistical Matters

The Statistics Act, 1993 also provides that the information collected may be used solely for statistical purposes and that the Director General of the CSO shall have the *sole responsibility* for and *be independent* in the exercise of the functions of deciding the:

- content of statistical releases and publications issued by the Office; and
- timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled by the Office.

Availability of Information

The CSO disseminates a wide range of statistics (see <http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications>). These statistics are copyright, but may be quoted provided the source is acknowledged. The Office also routinely provides information to the public in relation to its functions, activities, statistical methodology, contact points, etc. The FOI Act is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies which is *not* routinely available.

A glossary of some CSO terminology is given in [Appendix 2](#) as the staff of the Office may describe aspects of its work and information holdings in terms that may not be familiar to the general public.

CSO Information Services

The CSO already has a range of well-developed information services. These are detailed on our website in the <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/documents/csoguide.pdf>

These CSO services are described at <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/customerservices.htm>.

Organisation Chart – Senior Management Structure

Updated versions of the [organisation chart](#) are available on the CSO website.

Access to Information

Applications under the FOI Act

Under the FOI Act, anyone is entitled, subject to the specified exemptions, to apply for access to information not otherwise publicly available. Each person has a right to:

- access to records held by the Office;
- correction of personal information relating to oneself held by the Office where it is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading;
- access to reasons for decisions made by the Office directly affecting oneself.

With the exception of records that cannot be divulged under the provisions of the Statistics Act, 1993 the following CSO records come within the scope of the Act:

- all records relating to personal information held by the Office irrespective of when created;
- all other records created from commencement date of the Act (i.e. 21 April 1998);
- any other records necessary to the understanding of a current record;

The Office is obliged (under normal circumstances) to respond to the request within 20 working days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, Public Holidays and Good Friday).

Applications for information under the Act should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork

Phone 021 - 4535168
LoCall 1890 - 313414
Fax 021 - 4535175
E-mail foi@cso.ie

Applications¹ should be in writing (email applications are accepted) and should indicate that the information is being sought under the Freedom of Information Act. If applicable, it should be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see "Charging of Fees" below). The relevant fee should be paid by Bank Draft, Money Order, Postal Order or cheque drawn on a bank in the Republic of Ireland, and made payable to the 'Central Statistics Office'. We do not recommend that cash be sent with requests.

If information is desired in a particular form (e.g. photocopy, CD, etc.) this should also be mentioned in the application. You may be required to prove your identity, especially when seeking personal information, so you may be asked to produce your Birth Certificate, Driving Licence, Passport or other form of identity. As much detail as possible should be given to enable the staff of the Office to identify the record. If an applicant has difficulty in identifying the precise records required, CSO staff will be happy to help.

¹ An [application form](#) is available from the CSO; a copy of which is reproduced at the back of this publication

Charging of Fees

Application fees

A standard application fee of €15 must accompany an FOI request made under section 7 of the Act for a record or records containing non-personal information. A reduced fee of €10 applies if the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.

The following requests/applications are exempt from fees:

- A request under section 7 for a record or records containing only personal information related to the requester.
- An application under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
- An application under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).

Internal review fees

A standard application fee of €75 must accompany an application for internal review under section 14. A reduced fee of €25 applies if the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.

The following internal review applications are exempt from fees:

- An application in relation to a decision concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
- An application in relation a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
- An application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
- An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit, or a fee or deposit of a particular amount.
- An appeal of a decision which is deemed to be refused because the original request was not replied to within the required time limits.

Review by Information Commissioner

A standard application fee of €150 must accompany applications to the Information Commissioner for review of decisions made by public bodies under section 34.

A reduced fee of €50 applies if

- the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder or
- the person is specified in section 29(2) i.e. a third party with the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner where a public body decides to release their information on public interest grounds.

The following applications to the Information Commissioner do not require an application fee:

- An application concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
- An application in relation a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
- An application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
- An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit exceeding €25 under section 47 in respect of search and retrieval and photocopying of records (decisions in relation to the charging of fees or deposits for search and retrieval and/or photocopying of less than €25 are not subject to review by the Information Commissioner).
- An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee under section 47(6A), or a fee of a particular amount under section 47(6A), on the grounds that the records concerned do not contain only personal information related to the requester or the requester is not a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.
- An appeal of an internal review decision which is deemed to be refused because that decision was not made within the required time limits.

Fees may also be charged as follow:

- **Personal Records:** fees in respect of the cost of copying the records will not apply, save where a large number of records are involved;
- **Other (non-personal) Records:** fees may be charged in respect of the time spent in efficiently locating and copying records (currently €20.95 per hour and €0.04 per copy).

No charges may apply in respect of the time spent by public authorities in considering requests.

A deposit may be payable where the total fee is likely to exceed €50.79. In these circumstances, the public body must, if requested, assist the member of the public to amend the request so as to reduce or eliminate the amount of the deposit.

Charges may be waived in the following circumstances:

- where the cost of collecting and accounting for the fee would exceed the amount of the fee or
- where the information would be of particular assistance to the understanding of an issue of national importance or
- in the case of personal information, where such charges would not be reasonable having regard to the means of the requester.

Section 47 of the FOI Act sets out the rules for applying search and retrieval fees. Fees are currently set as follows in accordance with Statutory Instruments Nos. 264 of 2003, 139 of 1998 and 13 of 1997:

- €20.95 per hour - search and retrieval
- €0.04 per sheet for a photocopy
- €0.51 for a 3½ inch computer diskette
- €10.16 for a CD-ROM
- €6.35 for a Radiograph (X-Ray).

Assistance to persons with a disability

CSO staff are available to provide assistance to persons with a disability to exercise their rights under the FOI Act (e.g. accepting oral requests from requesters who are unable to read, print and/or write due to their disability, enabling the requester to inspect or have records explained to him or her).

Right of Review and Appeal

The Act sets out a series of exemptions to protect sensitive information where its disclosure may damage key interests of the State or of third parties. Where a Department/Office invokes these provisions to withhold information, the decision may be appealed. Decisions in relation to deferral of access, charges, forms of access, etc. may also be the subject of appeal. Details of the review and appeal mechanisms are specified below.

Internal Review

An applicant may seek internal review of the initial decision made by the CSO not to provide the requested record. This will be carried out by a senior CSO officer if the person:

- is dissatisfied with the initial response received (e.g. refusal of information, form of access, charges, etc.), or
- has not received a reply within 4 weeks of the initial application (this is deemed to be a refusal of the request and allows the applicant to proceed to internal review).

Requests for internal review should be submitted in writing and, if applicable, accompanied by the appropriate fee to:

**Director-General
(FOI Internal Review)
Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork**

E-mail foi@cso.ie

A request for internal review must be submitted within 4 weeks of the date of notification of the initial decision or within 8 weeks of receipt of the initial application if the requester has not received a reply within 4 weeks of receipt of the initial application. The Office must complete the review within 3 weeks. An internal review must normally be completed before an appeal may be made to the Information Commissioner.

Review by the Information Commissioner

If dissatisfied with the outcome of internal review, a person may seek independent review of the decision from the Information Commissioner. The failure to reply to an application for internal review within 3 weeks is deemed to be a refusal and the matter can be appealed to the Commissioner.

Appeals in writing may be made directly to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

**Information Commissioner
Office of the Information Commissioner
18 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2**

**Phone 01 - 6395689
LoCall 1890 - 223030
Fax 01 - 6395674 or 01-6395676
E-mail info@oic.ie
Website www.oic.ie**

**Freedom of Information
Acts, 1997 & 2003 –
Section 15 Reference
Book**

Part B

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Guide to the Functions
and Records held by
the Central Statistics
Office

Descriptions & Functions

Historical Perspective

The compilation of Irish statistics commenced in the first half of the 19th century, for example:

- comprehensive decennial Censuses of Population from 1841
- annual Censuses of Agriculture from 1845
- marriage statistics from 1845
- birth and death statistics from 1864.

Following the foundation of the State in 1922 a Statistics Branch was established in the new Department of Industry and Commerce. This Branch was responsible for the compilation of official statistics up until 1949.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) was established in 1949. To ensure its independence on statistical matters, it became a separate Office attached to the Department of the Taoiseach. The Statistics Acts, 1926 and 1946 provided the statutory basis for the compilation of statistics up until 1994.

On 1 November 1994, the Statistics Act, 1993 came into force, providing a modernised basis for the compilation and dissemination of official statistics.

Statistics Act, 1993

The provisions of the Statistics Act, 1993 include:

- The establishment on a statutory basis of the CSO as an independent Office under the aegis of the Taoiseach
- The functions of the CSO, under Section 10(1) of the Act, are the collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State
- In addition, the CSO has authority to co-ordinate official statistics compiled by public authorities, to assess the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities and to ensure that this potential is realised in so far as resources permit
- The CSO may collect information from persons and undertakings and the provision of particular statistics may, by Ministerial Order, be made obligatory
- The Director-General of the CSO is responsible for the management of the Office and is also independent on statistical matters (i.e. has sole responsibility for the statistical methodologies and professional standards to be followed, the content of statistical releases and publications, and the timing and methods of dissemination of the statistics compiled)
- The [National Statistics Board](#), with the agreement of the Taoiseach, has the general function of guiding the strategic direction of the CSO
- The CSO is entitled to have access to administrative records held by public authorities for statistical purposes, subject to some limitations and conditions
- The Act protects the confidentiality of information furnished to the CSO. All individual information relating to persons or concerns must be treated as strictly confidential and such information may only be used for statistical purposes.

Some relevant sections of the 1993 Act are reproduced in [Appendix 1](#).

Mandate and Mission

The mandate of the 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.*

Statistics play an important role in the formation, implementation and monitoring of public policy and programmes at national, regional and local levels. In fulfilling our mandate, we provide statistics to meet the needs of Government and the wider national and international community (i.e. business, EU, international organisations, media, education, researchers, and the public generally) for impartial and relevant information on social and economic conditions.

The CSO's Mission Statement, from our Statement of Strategy 2008-2010, encapsulates our commitment to meeting society's needs for statistical information:

Statistics for a Modern Ireland

The efficient and timely provision of high quality information for a changing society

International Statistical Dimension

There is also a significant international dimension to the CSO's work through the provision of statistics that may be compared directly with corresponding data for other countries.

This is particularly the case in respect of our participation in the European Statistical System (ESS). Meeting EU requirements has been the single most important factor shaping the development of the CSO's work since the 1970s. Since accession to the European Community in 1973 the CSO's work programme has been almost completely driven by the mandatory requirements of EU Directives and Regulations.

The basic principles and rules for how the European Statistical System should function are laid down in Regulation 223/2009. It provides the basic principles and rules regarding:

- cooperation within the ESS as regards European statistics
- statistical governance and establishment of the European Statistical System Committee
- production of European statistics and agreement of European statistical programmes
- dissemination of European statistics
- statistical confidentiality.

In addition, it also requires that the production of European statistics should be governed by the principles of impartiality, reliability, relevance, cost effectiveness, statistical confidentiality and transparency. These principles reflect internationally accepted best practice for the production of official statistics.

EU statistical requirements are laid down in sector-specific legislation; the majority of which are mandatory on member states under Council Regulations and Directives. The principal provisions are listed at <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/eustatslegislation.htm>.

The [European Statistics Code of Practice](#) is recognised under Regulation 223/2009. This sets out the principles by which National Statistical Institutes within the EU should operate. This code comprises 15 principles in relation to professional independence, statistical confidentiality, and the quality, impartiality and objectivity of official statistics.

Statistical Standards

In fulfilling its mandate the CSO applies the best statistical standards and methodology, and adheres to the highest professional standards of impartiality, integrity and independence. These include the [IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard \(SDDS\)](#). The Office fully subscribes to the [UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#). The CSO also rigorously protects the confidentiality of the data provided by survey respondents which, as already emphasised, is legally guaranteed under the Statistics Act, 1993.

The methodology used for the compilation of statistics is published. Details are available on request. In almost all instances the Office now applies methodology that is harmonised at EU level for the production of Community statistics.

Organisational Aspects

CSO Structure

The top management structure of the CSO is comprised of a Director General and a Directorate. The Directorates broadly reflect distinct statistical areas, but with a substantial degree of co-operation and interaction between Directorates and Divisions. Updated versions of the [organisation chart](#) are available on the CSO website while the Directorate and Divisional responsibilities are described at http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/office_structure.htm.

National Statistics Board

The [National Statistics Board](#) was initially set up on a non-statutory basis in 1986. It was established on a statutory basis when the Statistics Act, 1993 came into operation in November 1994. Its function, set out in the Act, is to guide the strategic direction of the CSO and, in particular to:

- establish priorities for the compilation and development of official statistics;
- assess the resources of staff, equipment and finance which should be made available for the compilation of official statistics; and
- arbitrate, subject to the final decision of the Taoiseach, on any conflicts that may arise with other public authorities relating to the extraction of statistics from records or to the co-ordination of statistical activities.

The Board has eight members. Two are senior representatives of the Department of Finance and Department of the Taoiseach. Five persons are nominated, two by the Taoiseach and three by organisations representative of the users of official statistics and providers of information under the Act. The Director General of the CSO is an *ex officio* member of the Board.

The Board prepares five-year *Strategies for Statistics*, following an extensive consultative process, for agreement by Government. Progress in implementing these strategies is assessed by the Board in regular reports.

Classes of Records

Identifiable Statistical Information

These records include all information collected directly for CSO statistical purposes in statutory or voluntary inquiries from persons, households, businesses and undertakings, or indirectly from the administrative records of public authorities held on completed questionnaires, worksheets or data bases. This information is statutorily protected under the Statistics Act, 1993² and is exempted from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003.

² Similar statutory protection applies to birth and death records under Section 73 of the Civil Registration Act, 2004.

Information Generally Available to the Public

This information includes:

- statistical publications and regular Statistical Releases issued by the CSO (see <http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications>)
- details of the activities of the Office, descriptions of statistical methodology and other national, EU and international statistical related documentation and publications available from the relevant subject matter area
- ad hoc statistical analyses, not incorporated as part of standard reports or releases, which are provided to users on request.

Other Statistical Related Information

These records include survey and field staff instructions, correspondence with survey respondents, other correspondence, statistical worksheets, micro-data bases, methodological manuals, operational instructions, methodology and processing guidelines, EU meeting papers and documentation, and other miscellaneous statistical and operational records held in paper (on Official Files registered with the central Registry or local work files) or in electronic form.

Staff Information Material

This information includes:

- [Code of Practice on Statistical Confidentiality](#)
- Outline of the assignments of responsibilities by the Director General for the performance of functions under Section 4(1) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997 with effect from 25 September 2009
- Safety Statements
- Write Well, Write Clearly: CSO Usage and House Style
- Official circulars, office notices and other staff information documentation.

These documents are available from Human Resources.

Human Resources Records

These records relate to:

- Human Resources records including Official Personnel Files for each staff member, flexi-time printouts, staff salary files, travel/subsistence claims and payments, overtime records, refund of fees (third level courses), database of staff qualifications and training records, training course nominations and attendance, recruitment and promotion interviews records and assessments, and other miscellaneous staff-related records (including sick leave, dismissals, compensation, work reports, clearances, representations, etc.) in paper or electronic form
- Local management staff records relating to sick leave, annual leave, probation reports, increment reports, promotion assessment forms, field staff recruitment and administration, training courses, flexi-time records, correspondence with Human Resources, etc in paper or in electronic form.

Financial Records

These records include files and other documentation relating to annual Estimates, Appropriation Accounts, purchases and expenditure records, EU contracts and receipts, tender documents, payments to suppliers, petty cash accounts, register of non-IT assets and other miscellaneous financial related records in paper or in electronic form.

IT Records

These records include computer systems specifications and programs, computer operation and systems application instructions, requests for proposals, tender documents, purchase records, correspondence with suppliers, other correspondence, register of IT assets, consultancy reports, software, software licences, helpdesk reports, software/hardware evaluation reports, software audits, service reports, disaster recovery plans, IT strategy, training material, training administration documentation, systems usage records, national and international meeting papers and documentation, and other miscellaneous paper and electronic IT related files, documents and records held in IT Division or sections.

Other Records

These records include, strategy statements, divisional action plans, local business plans, reports, publications, consultancy reports and other miscellaneous correspondence, administrative documentation and other information held in paper or electronic form.

**Freedom of Information
Acts, 1997 & 2003 –
Section 15 Reference
Book**

Part C

.....
Information on Rules,
Practices and
Procedures in relation
to Decision Making by
the Central Statistics
Office

Financial and Procurement Procedures

Financial Procedures

The financial and accounting rules and procedures in the CSO accord with relevant legislation and with the circulars and guidelines issued by the Department of Finance (see its [FOI Act Section 16 Reference Book](#)). Information is also available in the [Public Financial Procedures](#) publication.

Procurement Procedures

Supplies, services and works are procured by the CSO in accordance with [European procurement law](#) and the policy and rules set out in [Section 16 of the Department of Finance's FOI Act Reference Guide](#) and the [Department of Finance Public Procurement Guidelines](#) that are available on the national e-tendering website, www.etenders.gov.ie.

In accordance with public policy all CSO procurements are made following competitive tendering. Following the award of a contract, the criteria on which the selection was based are communicated to unsuccessful tenderers on request. For procurement above certain thresholds, the approval of the Government Contracts Committee (GCC) is required if the contract is not being awarded to the lowest tender.

In the case of large contracts for supplies and services the CSO complies with the rules set out in [European procurement law](#) - in particular the [EU Thresholds](#) (exclusive of VAT) above which advertising of contracts in the Official Journal of the EU is obligatory.

IT-Related Procurements

All IT-related procurements conform with [European procurement law](#) and the relevant rules and procedures set out by the IT Control Unit of the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) in the Department of Finance.

Payment Procedure

Internal procedures have been put in place in order to comply with the [Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997](#) as amended by the Late Payment in Commercial Transactions Regulations 2002.

Engaging Consultants

The CSO operates under an administrative budget agreement and adheres to the provisions of that agreement in relation to delegated sanction to engaging consultants. All consultancy projects are put out to an appropriate competitive procedure and comply with [European procurement law](#).

Employment of Permanent Staff

Recruitment

The permanent office staff in the CSO are civil servants recruited through open public competitions held by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). These competitions are advertised (see <http://www.publicjobs.ie/publicjobs/home.do>).

Appointments to the CSO from competitions for general service grades (e.g. Clerical Officer, Executive Officer) are, as vacancies arise, made from panels of successful applicants maintained by PAS over a period of time.

Special open public competitions are held for the appointment to the Statistician grade in the CSO. Details of competitions are available from PAS.

Household Survey Collection Unit (HSCU) Field Staff

The CSO employs full-time permanent Field Co-ordinators and permanent part-time HSCU Interviewers on the Quarterly National Household Survey and EU-SILC survey. These staff are recruited under licence issued by the [Commission for Public Service Appointments](#) (CPSA).

Appointments to the grade of HSCU Co-ordinator and Interviewer are, as vacancies arise, made from panels of successful applicants maintained by the CSO.

Conditions of Service

The conditions of service of permanent staff in the CSO are detailed in the [Civil Service Personnel Code](#) website maintained by the Department of Finance or, in the case of HSCU field staff, are set out in the contract of employment. The CSO, as an employer, is committed to a policy of equal opportunity.

Flexible Working Hours

The CSO operates a Flexible Working Hours Scheme agreed by management and staff.

Refund of Fees Scheme

The CSO operates a refund of fees scheme in respect of relevant courses attended by staff members pursued in their own time.

Employment of Temporary Field Staff

Recruitment of Temporary Clerical Officers

The CSO recruits Temporary Clerical Officers under licence issued by the [Commission for Public Service Appointments](#) (CPSA) or through PAS. These competitions are advertised.

Temporary Clerical Officers are employed under a fixed term contract. The contract complies with the provisions of The Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003. Temporary Clerical Officers are appointed to unestablished positions.

Appointments of Temporary Clerical Officers are, as vacancies arise, made from panels of successful applicants maintained by the CSO or PAS as appropriate.

Fieldwork

The CSO employs full-time and part-time staff on a temporary basis for fieldwork throughout the country relating to some of its statistical inquiries. In some instances this involves the direct collection of statistics (e.g. Census of Population, Quarterly National Household Survey, Household Budget Survey).

Temporary field staff are appointed to unestablished positions. These staff are recruited under licence issued by the CPSA. The salary and conditions of service relating to the different categories of field posts are agreed by the Department of Finance. Copies are available from CSO Human Resources Section. Application forms are normally available directly from the CSO or PAS. Successful applicants are selected, following shortlisting and competitive interview, in accordance with the job requirements set out in the recruitment documentation available to all applicants. The CSO implements best human resource practices and observes the requirements of relevant Civil Service regulations and employment law in the management of field staff. Examples of temporary field staff positions in the CSO are outlined below.

Ongoing Field Staff Operations

Household Survey Collection Unit (HSCU) Temporary Field Staff

The CSO employs temporary part-time Interviewers on the Quarterly National Household Survey and EU-SILC survey.

Tourism Enumerators

The CSO employs temporary part-time Enumerators at airports and seaports. The Enumerators conduct sample surveys of persons entering and leaving the country. The results are used to provide estimates for overseas tourism and travel. These part-time Enumerators are recruited as necessary, directly by the CSO (see www.cso.ie).

Price Collectors

A national team of Price Collectors collects prices from retail and service outlets in a sample of towns and cities throughout the country. The data collected is used in the compilation of the Consumer Price Index. Recruitment of replacement Pricers is carried out directly by the CSO (see www.cso.ie).

Occasional Field Staff Operations

Census of Population

The CSO recruits its largest temporary field force for the five-yearly Census of Population. The field force structure encompasses Census Liaison Officers, Regional Supervisors, Field Supervisors and Enumerators required to deliver and collect the Census forms from every household in the State during an 8-10 week period.

All of the temporary field staff are recruited through open competition organised by the CSO. The positions are advertised both nationally, locally and on the CSO website (www.cso.ie).

The CSO will recruit Temporary Clerical Officers for the Census of Population 2011. Appointments of Temporary Clerical Officers for the Census of Population 2011, as vacancies arise, will be made from a panel of successful applicants maintained by the CSO or PAS.

HBS Survey

The CSO employs a temporary field force for the HBS (Household Budget Survey) to collect household expenditure and income details from a national sample of households.

PIACC Survey

The CSO employs a temporary field force for the PIACC Survey (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) to collect data on what activities adults do in their daily lives, such as reading, finding information, and using computers and technology, and to learn about their education and work experience.

Statistical Inquiries

Statistical Requirements

The CSO compiles a wide range of statistics to meet national (i.e. Government, business, researchers, general public, etc.), EU and other international requirements. The bulk of the statistics produced are now mandatory under [EU statistical legislation](#).

Most of the information required for this purpose is collected directly by the CSO from households and businesses. The information is generally collected on a sample basis to minimise the statistical reporting burden on the community. The samples used for this purpose must be representative and a high response is necessary to ensure that the derived results are accurate and reliable.

Legal Basis for Statistical Inquiries

The Statistics Act, 1993 provides the legal basis for all statistical inquiries, both statutory (i.e. obligatory) and voluntary, undertaken by the CSO.

The Act provides a statutory guarantee that identifiable information collected in the course of CSO inquiries will be treated as *strictly confidential* and will be used only for statistical purposes.

The CSO assigns the highest priority to ensuring that information relating to identifiable survey respondents is never revealed. Only aggregate results are published.

Household Inquiries

The five-yearly Census of Population is the only statutory household survey conducted by the CSO. The other household surveys, principally the QNHS (approximately 39,000 households each quarter), are conducted on a voluntary basis. Other than the Quarterly Travel Inquiry, conducted by post, household data is directly collected by CSO Interviewers who carry official identification.

Statutory Statistical Inquiries

The majority of CSO surveys are voluntary. For some critical statistical inquiries, principally in the business statistics area, a Statutory Order under Section 25 of the Statistics Act, 1993 is made, requiring persons or undertakings to provide particular information to the CSO. Participation is compulsory under law in these statutory inquiries.

The current statutory inquiries and corresponding [Statutory Orders](#) are available on the CSO website.

Business Inquiries

The CSO conducts monthly, quarterly and annual surveys covering all sectors of the economy. Other than the annual Census of Industrial Production and the annual Census of Building and Construction, these business surveys are conducted on a sample basis to minimise the statistical reporting burden on the business sector. Particular efforts are made to minimise the data demands on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). However, it is essential that SMEs are represented at an appropriate level in CSO inquiries to ensure that their major contribution to the growth of

the economy is monitored and reflected in the national statistics. Newly established businesses and a rotating proportion of existing enterprises are covered in ongoing special inquiries to ensure that the basic data (e.g. name, address, legal status, number of persons engaged) held on the CSO Business Register is up-to-date so that representative samples are selected.

Business inquiries are conducted by post. The covering letter makes it clear whether or not the inquiry is statutory. It also specifies the latest date for the return of data. CSO contact points are specified for assistance if a business has difficulty in understanding the data requirements. Best estimates are accepted if exact information is not readily available.

The timeliness and accuracy of CSO business statistics depends on the promptness, level and quality of responses to its inquiries. The following is the usual procedure in cases where a business has not responded to a statistical inquiry by the specified date:

- a written reminder is first issued
- this is followed up by a telephone reminder if there is still no response.

For statutory inquiries, the CSO does everything possible to encourage businesses to respond and to facilitate them in meeting the survey requirements (e.g. acceptance of best estimates). A non-respondent is referred to the CSO Enforcement Unit only as a last resort. A warning letter is then issued to the company Secretary or proprietor advising that if a return is not received by the appointed date, the case will be forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor who may initiate legal proceedings under Section 36 of the Statistics Act, 1993.

Legal Offences

Under the Statistics Act, 1993 it is an offence for a person or undertaking to:

- fail to provide information requested in a statutory inquiry (Section 36)
- prevent an Officer of Statistics (i.e. a CSO staff member or field officer) carrying out her/his duties (Section 37)
- obstruct the Director General or an Officer of Statistics in the exercise of her/his functions under the Act (Section 40)
- wilfully destroy, damage or falsify any document or record issued for the collection of statistics for a statutory inquiry (Section 42)
- provide information, written or oral, or deliver a document, knowing it to be false, in purported compliance with a requirement under the Act (Section 43).

Legal Penalties

A person or undertaking found guilty of an offence under the Act is liable:

- on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding €1,269.74, or
- on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €25,394.76.

Where a person or undertaking is convicted of an offence under Section 36 (i.e. failure to provide information requested in a statutory inquiry), s/he shall, if the contravention continues after conviction, be guilty of an offence on every day on which it continues and for each such offence be liable:

- on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding €60, or
- on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding €1,269.74.

Dissemination of Statistics

Dissemination Arrangements

CSO statistics are disseminated in a variety of ways. Details of the CSO dissemination arrangements are described at <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/dissemination.htm>.

CSO Library

The CSO Library services are described at <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/publiclibrary.htm>.

Research Access to Microdata Records

Under the provisions of Section 34 of the Statistics Act, 1993, the CSO may provide access to microdata files under strict conditions to ensure that the integrity and confidentiality of data collected under the Act is maintained. Details of research access to Microdata Records are available at http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/access_microdata.htm.

Research Access to Vital Statistics Records

Section 73(5) of the Civil Registration Act, 2004, allows for the use of vital statistics records for medical or social research purposes. Details of research access to Vital Statistics records can be found at <http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/ravitalstats.htm>.

CSO Complaints Procedure

The CSO is committed to providing a high quality service to all who deal with the Office. Details of how to complain are set out at <http://www.cso.ie/contactus/complaintsproced.htm> where a person is not satisfied with the service provided. Complaints will be dealt with promptly, impartially and in confidence.

Part D

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extracts from the Statistics Act, 1993

Independence of the Director General in Statistical Matters

Section 13 - *The Director General shall have the sole responsibility for and be independent in the exercise of the functions of deciding –*

- (a) the statistical methodology and professional statistical standards used by the Office;*
- (b) the content of statistical releases and publications issued by the Office;*
- (c) the timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled by the Office.*

Protection of Information

Section 32 - *All information furnished by a person, undertaking or public authority under this Act shall be used only for statistical compilation and analysis purposes.*

Section 33 - *(1) No information obtained in any way under this Act or the repealed enactments which can be related to an identifiable person or undertaking shall, except with the written consent of that person or undertaking or the personal representative or next-of-kin of a deceased person, be disseminated, shown or communicated to any person or body except as follows -*

- (a) for the purposes of a prosecution for an offence under this Act;*
- (b) to officers of statistics in the course of their duties under this Act;*
- (c) for the purposes of recording such information solely for the use of the Office in such form and manner as is provided for by a contract in writing made by the Director General which protects its confidentiality to his satisfaction.*

(2) The Office may, for statistical purposes only, assign codes derived from information collected under this Act classifying undertakings listed in the administrative systems of other public authorities by economic activity and size (persons engaged) categories.

(3) The Taoiseach may by order prescribe such further prohibitions on the disclosure of identifiable records or information obtained under this Act or the repealed enactments for such periods as may be prescribed.

(4) Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require a person or undertaking to provide information in relation to a matter on which information was sought in circumstances that would entitle the person or undertaking to decline to give the information in a civil proceeding in any court or on the grounds of privilege.

Section 34 - *The Office may provide, for statistical purposes only, information obtained in any way under this Act or the repealed enactments, in such form that it can be directly or indirectly related to an identifiable person or undertaking, to such persons and subject to such charges, conditions and restrictions as the Director General may determine.*

Section 35 - *In the case of a Census of Population undertaken under this Act or under the repealed enactments, the restrictions of sections 32 and 33 of this Act shall cease to apply 100 years after the date of the relevant Census.*

Appendix 2 – Glossary of CSO Terminology

Term	Explanation
Aggregated data	Aggregations of data which does not allow the direct or indirect identification of information relating to individual survey respondents (i.e. persons, households, business enterprises or branches)
Anonymised micro-data	Data relating to individual survey respondents, from which all information (i.e. name, address, reference numbers, location codes, business description, etc.) which might allow them to be directly or indirectly identified is deleted.
Administrative data	Data extracted from the administrative systems of public bodies used for statistical purposes that avoid the need for the CSO to make duplicating requests from persons, households or business in direct statistical inquiries.
Census	The complete coverage of a particular population of units (e.g. all persons, farms, retail outlets, etc.) in the country.
Classification	A statistical system for systematically breaking a particular attribute or characteristic into non-overlapping meaningful sub-categories for analysis purposes (e.g. occupations, economic activity, marital status, household tenure, etc); these are generally standardised at EU and UN level to allow international comparisons.
Coding	The assignment of numerical or other identifiers to the sub-categories of a classification.
DAPs	Divisional action programmes agreed on an annual basis for the implementation of the CSO's Strategy Statement.
Data file	An electronic medium holding information
DED	District Electoral Division (an administrative geographic area).
Dissemination	The publication, sale, or provision of statistics in any other manner or form either directly or indirectly through other persons or undertakings (<i>section 3, Statistics Act, 1993</i>).
Directive	A legal instrument agreed by the EU Council that has mandatory application on Member States.
Division	An organisation unit in the CSO headed by a Senior Statistician or Principal Officer responsible for a particular statistical or administrative programme of activities.
EAs	Enumeration Areas – small census or survey areas in which all constituent households or other entities are enumerated by CSO field staff.
Establishment	Local branch or unit of a business involved in a single economic activity.
ESA	European System of National Accounts.
Eurostat	The Statistical Office of the EU, located in Luxembourg and responsible for the development and co-ordination of the European Statistical System.
EU-SILC	EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions
Editing	The computerised checking of the consistency of survey data and classifications.
Field Staff	Full-time or part-time staff engaged in collecting data directly from survey respondents.
Files - official	Files containing information that are registered with and tracked by Office Services Unit.
Files - working	Non-registered files used by staff and sections for day-to-day work-related activities.
Files - personnel	Registered files maintained by Personnel Section for individual CSO staff members containing personnel-related details.
Grossing	A statistical technique that adjusts sample results to give estimates of the population by allowing for use of differential sampling survey response rate.

Term	Explanation
Help Desk	A system for logging users to log requests for assistance from a support service.
Identifiable data	Information that allows the identification of the survey respondent or data provider that it relates to its identification to be determined either directly (e.g. by name, address, reference number) or indirectly (e.g. by some distinguishing feature such as business activity, size, location).
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Index	A statistical indicator which measures trends on a numerical scale by reference to a base of 100.
Intrastat	An EU harmonised survey to collect information on external trade transactions directly from importers and exporters introduced in January 1993 when Customs controls were discontinued on the completion of the EU Single Market.
IT	Information Technology
LBPs	Local Business Plans for the implementation of the Statement of Strategy
Methodology	The design, sampling, definitions, classification, processing, estimation aspects of statistical operations.
Micro-data	Data relating to individual survey respondents and data subjects (i.e. individual data).
NACE	<i>Nomenclature statistique des Activites economiques dans la Communaute Europeenne</i> . The EU classification of economic activities.
NUTs	The EU classification of geographic areas. In Ireland, level 1 relates to the whole country, Level 2 - Regions and Level 3 - Regional Authorities.
Office Notice	A notice relating to administrative matters issued by CSO management.
Official statistics	Statistics compiled by the CSO or any other public authority whether under the Statistics Act, 1993 or otherwise (<i>section 3, Statistics Act, 1993</i>).
Panel	A set of selected entities; usually staff qualified for appointment or promotion, or the households or businesses covered in a regular statistical inquiry.
Personal files	Files held in the Office by individual CSO staff for personal purposes
Population	The complete set of units comprising any national or statistical domain (e.g. all persons or business enterprises in the country).
PQ	Parliamentary Question
Prodcom	The EU-wide harmonised classification of products produced by the industrial sector (directly linked to the external trade commodity classification) specified in Council Regulation No. 3924/91
Request for Proposal	A request to commercial concerns to submit tenders for the provision of specified products or services.
Sample	A selection (generally random and representative) of units from a population of interest.
SAS	Statistical Analysis Software available generally on the CSO computer network.
Section	The basic organisational unit in the CSO responsible for a particular activity
SDS	Systems Development Service in the IT Division responsible for the development, maintenance and updating of computer applications.
SMC	Senior Management Committee comprised of the Director General, Directors and two Heads of Division on a rotating basis.
SMG	The Senior Management Group consisting of all Heads of Divisions and the Directorate.
Statistical confidentiality	The statutory guarantee provided that any identifiable information that the CSO obtains directly through surveys or indirectly from administrative records will be treated as strictly confidential (i.e. not divulged to any other Government Department or body) under national (<i>Statistics Act, 1993</i>) and EU legislation.
Taskforce	A group established to consider an urgent issue or implement an operation in a short span of time.

Term	Explanation
Ungrossed	Sample data that has not been grossed to provide representative population estimates to allow for differential sampling and response rates.
Undertaking	The whole or part of a business enterprise, agriculture holding, institution, association or public authority (<i>section 3, Statistics Act, 1993</i>).
Weights	Factors used in statistical estimation to allow for the differential representation of units in a population.
Working Groups	A group that meets regularly to consider a particular issue.
Worksheets	Clerically compiled calculations, summaries, etc.



Central Statistics Office
An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh

Skehard Road, Cork
Phone (01) 4984000 or (021) 4535000

Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 & 2003 CSO Application Form

1. *Applicant details* (please use **BLOCK** capitals)

First Name Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss/Other)
 Surname
 Address

Phone - Work Home Fax

2. *Are you making this request for an Organisation/Company* (✓) ?

If Yes, state:

- *Organisation/Company name*

- *Position you hold in it*

3. *Details of Request*

In accordance with Section 7 of the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 & 2003

(a) I request access to records containing (✓):

Personal information relating to myself Non-personal information
 (you may be asked to provide proof of your identity)

(b) relating to the following matter (*describe in as much detail as possible*):

(If insufficient space please attach a separate sheet containing additional information)

4. *Form of Access Required* (please tick ✓ in appropriate box)

photocopy of the record inspection of the record

other form of access: specify ⇒

Signature Date

Send the completed application form to

⇒ **Freedom of Information Officer**
Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork
E-mail: foi@cso.ie

Phone queries to Extension 5168 at:
 (021) 4535000 or (01) 4984000