



Irish Statistical System

Code of Practice

for

Official Statistics

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Introduction

Official Statistics are an integral part of any developed society. To be of value statistics must be produced in an independent and objective manner to ensure public trust. Official statistics play an important role in providing evidence to inform policy makers in support of policy formulation and evaluation.

European statistics are produced in adherence to the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP), which is consistent with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. These codes provide the necessary assurances that statistics are compiled in an objective and independent manner and in accordance with sound statistical and data management principles.

In an Irish context many see the Central Statistics Office (CSO) as the sole provider of Official Statistics. However, both Official and European Statistics are compiled by a wide range of public authorities.

While all compilers of European Statistics in Ireland adhere to the ES CoP there are no standards in place for the compilation of other Official Statistics by public authorities other than the CSO. It is in this context that the Public Sector Reform plan, published in November 2011, tasked the CSO with developing a Code of Practice for the Irish Statistical System.

This Code applies to the compilation of Official Statistics produced within the ISS. It is a subset of the ES CoP. Statistics carrying the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice (ISSCoP) logo indicate they are Official Statistics and adhere to the ISSCoP.



Principle 1: Professional independence

The production of Official Statistics is based on the application of independent, transparent and objective standards and free from any political or other external interference. The objective is to ensure credibility and public trust in Official Statistics.

Indicator

- 1 Official statistics are compiled in a professional and independent manner free from political and other external interference.
- 2 Statistical units or those involved in the compilation of Official Statistics within public authorities are independent in the exercise of the following:
 - ◆ the statistical methodology and professional standards to be applied;
 - ◆ the content of statistical outputs to be issued;
 - ◆ the timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled on behalf of that organisation.
- 3 Public authorities designate a statistical co-ordinator with responsibility for monitoring standards across data sources.

Principle 2: Timeliness and punctuality

Official Statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

Indicator

- 1 Timeliness and periodicity take into account user requirements.
- 2 Advance release calendars are publicly available with a 'not later than' publication date.

Principle 3: Accessibility and clarity

Official Statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with the appropriate supporting information.

Indicator

- 1 Official Statistics are listed on the ISSCoP website (www.isscop.ie).
- 2 Standard statistical outputs and products are made available to everyone free of charge.
- 3 Official Statistics are made available in a readily accessible format.
- 4 Users are informed of the methodology and any changes to the methodology will be communicated to users.
- 5 Data systems are designed or are capable of being adapted to allow for the extraction of raw data for analytical purposes. Section 31 (2) of the Statistics Act, 1993 sets out the legislative framework for co-operation between the CSO and public authorities on these issues.

Principle 4: Commitment to Quality

All compilers of official statistics should systematically and regularly review processes to support continual improvement in process and product quality.

Indicator

Official statistics are assessed against the principles of relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, accessibility and clarity, sound methodology and appropriate statistical procedures.

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Public authorities ensure that statistical outputs do not lead to the direct or indirect identification of an individual person or entity.

Definitions:

The Irish Statistical System comprises those parts of the Public Sector involved in the collection (whether directly or indirectly), processing, compilation or dissemination of Official Statistics. In Ireland, Official Statistics are produced by the CSO, as well as a range of other government departments, agencies and state bodies.

Official Statistics are defined in the Statistics Act, 1993 as statistics compiled by the CSO or any other public authority whether under the Statistics Act, 1993 or otherwise.

For the purpose of the ISS CoP, Official Statistics will be agreed between the Director General of the CSO and the head of the relevant public authority, being considered to be of sufficient public interest and satisfying the following criteria:

- ◆ produced by or on behalf of a public authority.
- ◆ continuous i.e. there should be a reasonable expectation that the published statistic will be updated with new data to provide comparability over time.
- ◆ where a statistic is produced as a “one-off” the Director General of the CSO, in consultation with the responsible public authority, may deem the statistic an Official Statistic if it is considered to be of public interest.
- ◆ in the public domain.

Contact details

For more information on the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice

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