

NSB National Statistics Board

Press Statement

National Statistics Board supports use of PPS Number

The National Statistics Board has called for a more systematic use of administrative records as a primary source for official statistics. "The taxpayer already pays for a mass of data to be collected as a by-product of everyday administration" said Statistics Board Chairperson Professor Frances Ruane. "It is sensible to make maximum use of existing data to compile the official statistics needed to inform the development of policy".

The Board has also called for better links between statistics collected by different government departments and agencies so that complex relationships between different areas can be recognised in policy formulation. To facilitate statistical links between these data, the Board supports the wider use of the Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) when citizens use public services, as long as personal confidentiality can be fully safeguarded and the stringent standards of the Data Protection Commissioner can be met. Such links, for example, between statistics on health service use and on social welfare status, could help improve planning of services for those who are users of multiple state services. "The use of a postal code system for all Irish addresses would also be a great help in providing valuable spatial information" said Professor Ruane. "It would allow us to develop small area statistics for Ireland, ultimately allowing better planning and targeting policies to address problems of local communities".

The Board emphasises the value of statistics to society and the need for comprehensive and up-to-date statistics to underpin the development of public policy generally. Its **Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008** published today, outlines an approach that collects, organises and analyses economic, social and environmental statistics in an integrated way across the public service. This will allow complex policy issues to be evaluated from all angles. Increased consultation with user representatives and public interest groups should be part of this process.

The Board recommends that a new statistics network, centred around the Central Statistics Office, be set up within the public sector to enhance the value of existing data within and across departments and agencies. One of the tasks of this network will be to harmonise the definitions used by different parts of the public service and to put in place compatible systems which will allow us to monitor economic, social and environmental change more efficiently.

The National Statistics Board is the statutory body appointed by government to guide the strategic direction of the Central Statistics Office.

For further information, contact Gerry Brady (NSB Secretary) at 01 498 4006 or nsb@cso.ie

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– ENDS –

Board Members Professor Frances Ruane (Chairperson), Ms Paula Carey, Mr Frank Cunneen, Mr Ciaran Dolan, Ms Mary Doyle, Mr Derek Moran, Ms Helen NicFhlannchadha, Mr Donal Garvey (Director General CSO)

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