

15th Meeting of the Ottawa Group

10 – 12 May 2017

Session 5: Commercial property prices

Developing a new commercial property statistical system (CPSS) for Ireland

Barra Casey, CSO Ireland

The recent crisis in the Irish property market has highlighted the need for comprehensive, objective and independent commercial property statistics to provide greater insight and transparency into the commercial property market in Ireland. At international level, the development of a methodological framework for Commercial Property Price Indicators is one of the key priority actions identified by the G20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI).

In Ireland, the recent development by CSO of statistics in the area of residential property has shown the extra insight that can be gained when administrative data is combined from multiple sources. For commercial property, a variety of administrative data sources already exist. The key challenge is integrating the data sources into a coherent consistent system.

The Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) began a project in July 2016 (funded and supported by Central Bank of Ireland and the National Asset Management Agency) to ascertain whether it was possible to develop a Commercial Property Statistical System (CPSS). The aim was that CSO would design and develop statistics on commercial property covering the overall stock, the stock under construction (referred to as pipeline in this paper) and the transactions (sales and leases) of commercial property.

A key aspect of the project was the ability to match different data sources using unique identifiers and also using a technique known as fuzzy matching. Analysing different data sources available in Ireland, it was found there is potential to build a pipeline database of commercial property and a stock/register database of commercial property. However, a multitude of problems were found in the matching of transactions (sales and leases) data; namely a lack of unique identifiers in the datasets, fundamentally different units of measurement, a lack of detail in postal addresses and uncertainty on whether we are matching like-for-like. This is in direct contrast to the CSO's success in matching these data sets for residential property. The paper briefly explores other potential data sources.