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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2012 on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. AIM OF THE REPORT

Article 7 of the Regulation on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road[1] requires the Commission to submit a report on its implementation to the European Parliament and the Council by 31 December 2014.

This report meets that requirement. It outlines the background, policy context and coverage of the legislation, and discusses its implementation, the statistical results and their publication. It then outlines possible future developments and draws the conclusion that the Regulation has improved data quality and timeliness.

1.2. BACKGROUND: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is a recast of Council Regulation (EC) No 1172/98 of 25 May 1998 and subsequent amendments which aimed to consolidate the legal basis for road transport data collection and bring it into line with the Lisbon Treaty by delegating to the Commission the power to adopt non-legislative acts of general application to supplement or amend certain non-essential elements of a legislative act. It provides a legal basis for the collection of a wide range of data on road freight transport. In addition, the provision of road freight survey micro-data to Eurostat, ensures quality and comparability of statistical information produced.

Regulation (EU) Nº 70/2012 aims to ensure that the Commission, other EU institutions and national governments are provided with comparable, reliable, harmonised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the scale and development of the carriage of goods by road. These data are needed for framing, monitoring and evaluating EU policy.

Member States send the information to Eurostat in the form of micro-data: this allows Eurostat, subject to safeguards on confidentiality, to provide users with statistical tables containing many different combinations of variables.

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 was designed to limit the burden on transport enterprises to a minimum. The data collection is based on a sample survey. Information is thus requested only for a sample of transport vehicles, and for a short time (generally a week). Member States can also exclude smaller vehicles from the survey.[2]

1.3. POLICY CONTEXT

Developing a common transport policy requires in-depth knowledge of the scale and developments in road freight transport.

[1] Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2012 on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road. OJ L 32, 3.2.2012.

[2] Each Member State may exclude road transport vehicles with a load capacity or maximum permissible weight below a certain limit from the scope of the Regulation. For single motor vehicles, the limit may not exceed a load capacity of 3.5 tonnes or maximum permissible weight of 6 tonnes.

The data's policy relevance is very high: in the White Paper *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system*,[3] ten goals were set for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system (as benchmarks for achieving the 60 % greenhouse gas emission reduction target). Detailed road freight transport statistics are needed to monitor progress in achieving some of these goals (e.g. the aim to shift 30 % of road freight transport activity over distances of more than 300 km to other modes of transport by 2030). Recent policy documents such as the Commission's *Report on the State of the Union Road Transport Market*[4] also make extensive use of road freight transport statistics. To carry out its tasks under the common transport policy, the Commission needs comparable, reliable, synchronised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the scale and developments in the carriage of goods by road by vehicles registered in the EU, and on the degree of utilisation of these vehicles.

The data collected under the Regulation are also extremely valuable for professional organisations, transport companies, researchers and modellers in the field of road transport, as an in-depth knowledge of the market helps improve business competitiveness in the sector.

1.4. COVERAGE OF MEMBER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES

The Regulation applies directly and in its entirety to all Member States. It does not have to be transposed into national legislation. It requires all Member States to provide data. Under Article 1(3), Malta is the only exception to this rule, given the low number of goods road transport vehicles registered in Malta licensed to engage in the international carriage of goods by road. The collection of high-quality transport data from the Maltese fleet would impose a disproportionate burden on Maltese hauliers as they would have to participate in the surveys more often than their counterparts in other countries.

The non-EU countries Norway and Switzerland also fully participate in the collection of road freight transport statistics along the lines of Regulation (EU) Nº 70/2012. The two EEA countries Iceland and Liechtenstein are currently exempted from the obligation to collect road freight transport statistics according to the Regulation due to the limited number of their respective fleet engaged in international road transport.

EU Candidate countries do not participate in this data collection.

[3] COM(2011) 144, 28.3.2011.
[4] COM(2014) 222, 14.4.2014.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

2.1. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Compliance with the Regulation's requirements on data provision is generally good. All Member States deliver the requested datasets, with few delays. This ensures the production of high-quality and reliable statistics on road freight transport in Europe.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED

The Regulation provides a common framework to ensure harmonised data collection and comparability of results. Eurostat collects information on national data collection methods (the use of registers, sampling methodology, coverage, etc.) every three years and publishes it in *Methodologies used in surveys of road freight transport in Member States and candidate countries*.

2.3. ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The Regulation was designed to keep the burden on Member States low. In most reporting countries, existing processes met the data collection requirements and no special measures had to be taken. Eurostat collected information from reporting countries to assess the burden on respondents of implementing the Regulation.

Few Member States were able to assess the burden precisely, but the following conclusions can be drawn.

- for regular data provision, almost all countries that responded consider the workload acceptable.
- the burden of data collection differs greatly across countries, mainly depending on the national data compilation systems available. Countries that developed electronic data collection systems reduced the burden on respondents and the data processing burden. From the information provided, it appears that:
    - the average time needed by respondents to report data for one vehicle with journeys during the survey period was estimated at around 40 minutes (ranging from 5 minutes to 2 hours);
    - the average time needed by respondents to report data for one vehicle with no journeys during the survey period was estimated at around 7 minutes (ranging from 3 minutes to 15 minutes);

The burden to both National Statistical Institutes and respondents of conducting the survey required under the Regulation is offset by the added value of the resulting statistics. In particular:

- Eurostat manages the confidential national micro-data provided by each Member State and compiles detailed national data (D-tables). These tables allow each reporting country to obtain complete statistical information on all road freight operations in their country, including trucks registered in other EU countries. The implementation of this Regulation and the service provided by Eurostat prevents duplication of data collection at national level on foreign trucks.

- there is strong demand from the reporting countries for the statistics produced, as the survey is proving to be very useful for monitoring the road freight market in Europe.
- collecting and managing information at micro-data level means it can be used flexibly to meet specific EU policy needs for a range of statistics promptly, and without extra effort at national level, e.g. to draft reports or evaluate legislation and policy targets. In practice, examples include the production of statistics by distance class, on empty runs or on cabotage.

2.4. ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN REDUCTION AND SIMPLIFICATION

Simplifying and reducing the burden of data collection and reporting is one of Eurostat's continuing concerns. Eurostat is acting on the Member States' feedback, in collaboration with national statistical institutes, by:

1. providing tools (e.g. WebILSE) to facilitate reporting of detailed regional (NUTS 3) data;
2. developing automated micro-data transmission and validation tools and routines, to provide feedback to the Member States on data quality and specific errors on each dataset;
3. promoting and helping to set up electronic questionnaires and web-based reporting systems at national level;
4. holding regular meetings of national experts from all Member States to exchange good practice and discuss data quality, problems and solutions.

2.5. DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA SENT

2.5.1. Micro-data validation and time series checks

While Member States are responsible for the quality of the conduct of the road freight survey, Eurostat is working to detect errors in the data sent and to maintain a high-performing, reliable IT system for data validation and processing. Eurostat gives regular feedback to the Member States on issues that may require further investigation.

Reporting countries make every reasonable effort to address data errors. Eurostat's validation procedure includes steps to validate micro-data detecting errors in codes used, format and out of range values. Additional time series checks for national, international and total transport are made for both quarterly and annual data:

- micro-data: to help them produce datasets that are as error-free as possible, reporting countries receive a validation report for each batch of data sent, containing details at micro-data level to enable the errors detected to be corrected more easily. This follows an iterative process until all errors have been corrected. Eurostat also adapts its validation rules to meet changing needs and to ensure high and enhanced data quality and consistency.

- time series: Eurostat considers it extremely important to identify outliers in time series before publishing the data, as road freight statistics are used in various Commission reports and for drawing conclusions on developments in the road haulage market. It pays specific attention to having reporting countries confirm

trends if significant variations are observed. If necessary, revised datasets are submitted or explanations are provided on underlying reasons for serious time series variations.

Overall, all reporting countries revise data and correct errors detected.

2.5.2. Benchmarking the results with other statistics

European road freight statistics collected under the Regulation are based on the vehicles' country of registration. Each reporting country collects a sample of movements, inside and outside its territory, by lorries registered in the country, but does not collect information on transport by foreign hauliers within its territory. Since no information is collected twice by different countries about the same operation, the quality of the results cannot be checked using mirror checks. The quality of road freight statistics can only be checked using other complementary data sources or surveys.

CAFT is a roadside survey (every five or six years) at the Swiss borders. It is very different comparing to the survey based on Regulation (EU) 70/2012 and with very little overlapping. Eurostat, on the basis of a number of assumptions, has compared its regulatory data on road freight transport with CAFT (the Cross-Alpine Freight Transport survey) data. With the exception of moderate outliers, probably due to low sample sizes and survey method, there is a good fit between the data sources, highlighting the quality of the data sent under the Regulation. Eurostat intends to repeat this exercise in future to ensure the consistency and quality of the statistics produced.

2.6. METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Eurostat provides continuous methodological and technical support to the Member States to implement the Regulation and an effort is made to maintain a high-quality data and metadata information system.

Eurostat produced two manuals containing methodological guidance for reporting countries:

- *Road freight transport methodology*, which is the basis for compiling road freight statistics in Member States, candidate countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries; and
- *Methodologies used in surveys of road freight transport in Member States and candidate countries*.

These manuals are updated regularly to reflect developments in road freight data collection. The latest versions can be downloaded from the Eurostat website.[5]

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/publications

3. STATISTICAL RESULTS

3.1. TRENDS IN ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT IN THE EU

3.1.1. Development of road freight transport in the EU

Road transport remains the most important mode of goods transport. In terms of tonne-km, it accounts for more than 70% of all inland transport modes, this share being relatively stable over the last decade. Nevertheless, the recent economic crisis had a significant impact on road freight transport in Europe. In 2012, road freight transport activity in the EU measured in tonne-km was about 12% below its peak in 2007.

National transport by domestic hauliers represents almost two thirds of total freight transport by road. National transport performed by foreign hauliers accounts for about 1.5% of total road freight transport and for about 2.0% of total national road freight transport. The cabotage penetration rate, which measures the share of foreign hauliers in the national road freight transport market for hire and reward, was 2.3% in 2012. It has recently grown somewhat, in particular following the lifting of transitional restrictions on hauliers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007.

International transport's share (including cross-trade transport) increased over the last decade from 30 % of total road freight transport in 2004 to 33 % in 2012, reflecting the effect of the single market in the European Union. Some 78% of international transport is carried out by hauliers registered in one of the two countries between which goods are moved. The remaining 22 % is carried out by hauliers from a third European country as part of cross-trade operations, the fastest-growing market segment over the past decade.

In 2012, 'hire and reward' operations (carriage for remuneration) accounted for 85 % of total road freight transport, the remaining 15 % being 'own account operations'.

All distance classes fell between 2008 and 2012, with the shorter and longer distances most affected: in 2012, transport in tonne-kilometres for movements under 150 kilometres was 15 % below the 2008 level while that for movements over 1 000 kilometres was 14 % down. Furthermore, 56% of freight journeys (in terms of tonne-kilometres) are over 300 kilometres. EU transport policy aims at shifting 30% of road transport operations over these longer distances by 2030 to rail and waterborne transport, and more than 50% by 2050.

In terms of tonnes transported, the major product groups carried in the Member States were mining and quarrying products (26 % of the total in 2012), other non-metallic mineral products (14 %), food, beverages and tobacco (12 %) and agricultural products (9 %). The major product groups in tonne-kilometres were food, beverages and tobacco (17 % of the total), agricultural products (11 %), other non-metallic mineral products (8 %), chemicals and metal ores (8 % each), metal products and wood products (7 % each).

3.1.2. Cabotage

Cabotage, i.e. national transport for hire and reward carried out by foreign hauliers, is currently once more in the spotlight of EU road transport policy. The existing rules on

cabotage, set out in Regulation (EC) No 1072/2009,[6] are being evaluated and their regulatory fitness is being assessed. Commission work in this field is largely based on data collected under Regulation (EU) Nº 70/2012. At the same time, the subject of cabotage is gaining in political importance in a number of Member States, as recent discussions in the Working Group on road freight transport statistics have shown. Some professional associations consider the level of cabotage to be higher than is reflected in Eurostat's official statistics, although there is currently no statistical evidence to support this claim.

Despite cabotage's relatively small share of road transport operations overall, there is a need to further improve the quality of the relevant statistics. The 2014 Working Group on road freight statistics concluded that improving the overall quality of the survey (by increasing the response rate, enhancing the quality of registers, better sampling, improving data transmission tools, etc.) would ultimately improve the accuracy also of cabotage data. Eurostat will follow political developments in this field closely and re-evaluate the statistical situation accordingly. Eurostat will also continue to publish data on the cabotage penetration rate to support the debate.

3.2. PUBLICATION OF THE DATA

3.2.1. Eurobase tables

Aggregated data are loaded into Eurobase, Eurostat's reference database, as soon as they have passed validation checks. Users may thus obtain detailed statistical tables under Commission Regulation (EC) Nº 6/2003 concerning the dissemination of statistics on the carriage of goods by road, based on data sent under Regulation (EU) Nº 70/2012, covering the period from 1999 onwards. The set of metadata available in Eurobase is regularly updated to reflect the latest methodological developments in the various reporting countries.

3.2.2. Publications

Eurostat also produces articles in the series *Statistics Explained*, covering the following topics (see related links):

- General trends in road freight transport
- Road freight transport by vehicle characteristics
- Road freight transport by journey characteristics
- Road freight transport by type of goods
- Road freight transport statistics – cabotage

These articles are updated annually, each time the data collection is finalised for a given reference year.

[6] OJ L 300, 14.11.2009, p. 72.

4. PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

4.1. NEW CHALLENGES

Efforts to reduce the burden on respondents while increasing the response rate and data quality will continue.

Eurostat and the Member States have already identified several new fields of action, such as:

- developing the existing data reporting mechanisms to enable respondents to provide more data of a higher quality while reducing the reporting burden and cost: some reporting countries have already started to introduce new standards such as the XML format, allowing data to be sent faster while increasing its consistency and reliability;
- using electronic toll systems to complement and benchmark survey results and improve data quality;
- further exploiting available data to model transport flows and set parameters useful for transport policy and modelling, such as average load factors by transport type, or distance class;
- making the survey results more useful for evaluating market opening, transport efficiency, road transport market trends and the modal split;
- making the survey results more useful for producing more detailed statistics on greenhouse gas emissions from road transport.

4.2. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING THE LEGAL BASIS

While Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 provides a good basis for evaluating the current road freight transport market, ways of addressing new data needs arising from policy developments without significantly increasing the reporting burden have been identified. They may be discussed with Member States in future Working Group meetings.

This may include:

- a data collection on energy consumption in road freight transport: data collection of this kind, already carried out by some Member States, may initially be introduced on a voluntary basis and at an aggregate level (on an annual basis); it would allow more precise assessment of the impact of road freight transport on the production of greenhouse gas emissions;
- mandatory collection of data on ‘empty journeys’: this is currently optional under the Regulation, and not all countries report empty vehicle-kilometres; making it mandatory would allow better assessment of the energy efficiency and operational efficiency of the EU’s road freight transport sector.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 has had a broadly positive impact, enabling rapid production of comparable, high-quality results.

Eurostat makes considerable efforts to help Member States implement the Regulation and produce high-quality statistics. It has developed an information system, and introduced communication methods that minimise the data management burden for the reporting countries. It is continuously adapting its validation rules to make them more practical and efficient for data checking and processing and so help Member States reduce the reporting burden of both respondents and administrations.

The Regulation has proven indispensable for producing national and EU road freight statistics and avoiding duplication of work. The statistics are regularly used in monitoring and assessing road freight transport policies at national and EU level. Publishing the data has raised their visibility and provided a better return on the investment of resources.