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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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 AIM OF THE REPORT

Article 7 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 [1] specifies that the Commission must submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the implementation of the Regulation and on future developments by 31 December 2014 and every 3 years after that. This present report is the fourth report that fulfils this requirement.

The first section of this report outlines the background, policy context and coverage of the Regulation. The second section describes its implementation by the Member States and the Commission (Eurostat), the Member States' burden and costs regarding data collection, methodological and data-quality issues, and the various means of publishing road freight transport statistics. The last two sections refer to possible future developments of road freight transport statistics and provide the main conclusions of the report.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is a recast of Council Regulation (EC) No 1172/98 of 25 May 1998 on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road [2] and marks a step forward in the development of transport statistics in the EU. It is the legal basis for collecting a wide range of data on road freight transport.

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 provides the Commission, other EU institutions and national governments with comparable, reliable, harmonised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the scale and development of the carriage of goods by road. This information is needed for framing, monitoring and evaluating EU policies.

Member States send information to the Commission in the form of microdata. This makes it possible to provide users with statistical tables containing different combinations of variables subject to safeguards on data reliability.

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is designed to minimise the burden on transport companies. Data collection is based on a sample survey, so information is requested only for a sample of vehicles and for a limited amount of time (generally a week). Member States can exclude transport operations below certain thresholds from the survey [3]. This, however, could hamper the comparability between Member States and the combination with information from other data sources.

The tables on road freight transport statistics to be disseminated by Eurostat are defined in Regulation (EU) No 202/2010 of 10 March 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 6/2003 concerning the dissemination of statistics on the carriage of goods by road [4].

[1] OJ L 32, 3.2.2012, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 163, 6.6.1998, p. 1.
[3] In accordance with Article 1 of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012, each Member State may exclude road transport vehicles whose load capacity or maximum permissible weight is below a certain limit. This limit may not exceed a load capacity of 3.5 tonnes or a maximum permissible weight of 6 tonnes in the case of single motor vehicles.
[4] OJ L 61, 11.3.2010, p. 24.

### 1.3 POLICY CONTEXT

Development of a common transport policy requires in-depth knowledge of the extent of road freight transport and how it has evolved.

The European Green Deal [5] is a growth strategy that aims to make the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and by making the transition just and inclusive for all. To achieve climate neutrality, a 90% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2050. Priority actions for a shift to sustainable and smart mobility include:

- boosting multimodal transport;
- supporting the deployment of automated and connected mobility solutions across modes;
- better addressing external costs of transport activities through pricing;
- ramping up the production and deployment of sustainable alternative transport fuels; and
- reducing pollution from transport, especially in cities.

In December 2020, the Commission put forward the 'Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future' [6], which outlines the planned steps to transform the EU transport system in line with the ambition of the European Green Deal. The mobility strategy pursues the vision of sustainable, affordable, inclusive, smart, resilient and competitive mobility, and requires a fundamental transformation of the transport sector. This translates into three approaches that should be applied to all modes of transport:

- the first is to reduce dependence on fossil fuels by replacing existing fleets with low- and zero-emission vehicles and increasing the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels.
- the second is to increase the use of less-polluting modes and to shift a substantial part of today's inland freight carried by road (75%) onto rail and inland waterways.
- the third is to internalise the external costs. The mobility strategy is accompanied by an action plan, which lists 82 initiatives in 10 key areas for action with concrete measures to be adopted.

The data collected under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is important not only for decision-makers but also for professional organisations, transport companies, researchers and modellers in the field of road transport. The survey results are fundamental for monitoring the road haulage market in the EU and are regularly used as a reference in Commission communications, staff working documents and impact assessments. In-depth knowledge of the market helps improve the competitiveness of companies in the sector. The Regulation produces statistics that can be also used to assess the potential of shifting goods transport from road to more environment-friendly modes. The share of freight using intermodal transport would be an important future dataset.

### 1.4 COVERAGE OF MEMBER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 applies directly and in its entirety to all Member States and requires them to transmit quarterly data in compliance with its Article 5. However, in accordance with its Article 1(3), Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 will not apply to Malta for as long as the number of Maltese-registered goods road transport vehicles licensed to engage in international carriage of goods by road does not exceed 400 vehicles. For that purpose, Malta must once a year report to Eurostat the number of vehicles that are licensed to engage in international carriage of goods by road. Malta must

[5] COM(2019) 640 final.
[6] COM(2020) 789 final.

report this number at the latest by the end of March following the year to which the number of goods road transport vehicles relates.

Norway and Switzerland also provide this data. Concerning candidate countries, Montenegro and North Macedonia have been providing this data since 2016 and 2020 respectively. Albania is currently taking the necessary actions to develop and implement the road freight transport survey. Eurostat takes every opportunity to encourage candidate countries and potential candidates to design and carry out their road freight transport surveys, so that they comply with the EU's legislation in the field of statistics.

# 2 FOLLOW-UP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATION (EU) NO 70/2012

## 2.1 COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

All Member States maintain a very high level of compliance with the data provision obligations defined in Regulation (EU) No 70/2012. All Member States deliver the requested datasets, with delays only in a small number of cases mainly due to updates of their IT systems and staff turnover. This makes it possible to produce high-quality, timely and reliable statistics on road freight transport in Europe.

## 2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED IN THE MEMBER STATES

The methodological arrangements laid down in Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 provide the framework for the collection of well-defined microdata by the Member States on the basis of national surveys.

Eurostat gathers information about national data collection methods (use of registers, sampling methodology, coverage, etc.) and makes it available in its publication *Methodologies used in road freight transport surveys in Member States, EFTA and candidate countries* [7].

Moreover, reporting countries update their national metadata files annually in the 'Euro SDMX Metadata Structure' template. National metadata contain a statistical presentation of road freight transport data; information on the relevant national legislation, dissemination policy and data quality; any methodological updates; and information on the survey and the statistical processing of data [8].

## 2.3 BURDEN AND COSTS FOR THE MEMBER STATES

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is designed to keep the burden on Member States to a minimum. Most Member States do not have to take extra measures because their existing processes are sufficient to meet the Regulation's data collection requirements.

According to the information reported in the national metadata, the vast majority of reporting countries consider the workload for data provision to be acceptable. There are significant disparities between countries as concerns the burden and cost of the data collection. These depend on the size of the sample used to collect data, which varies from country to country, and the national data compilation systems. The average time for respondents to report data for one vehicle with transport activity during the survey period is estimated by most countries to be around 30-45 minutes. A few countries report average times in the range of 20-30 minutes.

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/ks-gq-21-002 (available only in English).
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/road_go_esms.htm (available only in English).

The Commission contributes to the efforts of the Member States to produce national road freight transport statistics. Eurostat manages the national microdata and compiles statistics (D-tables) for transport activity in every country by vehicles registered in other countries. These statistics are sent back to the national statistical authorities, so that they have complete statistical information on all road freight operations in their territory by trucks registered anywhere in the EU (except in Malta), in Switzerland and in Norway and can produce complete national statistics. The implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 and the D-tables provided by the Commission save reporting countries the effort of collecting data on the performance of foreign trucks in their territory with dedicated national surveys. The cost and burden generated by the data collection is therefore more than outweighed by the benefit of the resulting statistics.

Furthermore, collecting and managing information at microdata level gives Eurostat flexibility in meeting user needs for statistical information, without delays and additional effort at national level. The dissemination of road freight transport statistics by Eurostat and the further publication of D-tables by the Member States is in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 202/2010.

### 2.4 REDUCING AND SIMPLIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Reducing and simplifying administrative burden is an ongoing goal for the Commission. In cooperation with national statistical institutes, Eurostat implements specific actions to reduce the national burden of data collection and reporting. These actions include:

1. the development of tools to facilitate the reporting of detailed regional data (e.g. tables matching postcodes and NUTS [9] level 3 codes in order to use information which is originally coded only by postcode);
2. newly developed dataset validation tools, which allow reporting countries to validate their data before they officially transmit them to Eurostat and to provide feedback on specific errors for each dataset;
3. regular meetings of experts from Member States, EFTA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates (in the Commission's Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics and task forces if necessary) in order to exchange good practices and discuss data quality, methodological issues and future progress.

To reduce the burden on respondents, several Member States have been reporting data using e-questionnaires, electronic Excel worksheets or mobile applications for transport instead of paper documents. More countries are expected to apply similar methods in the near future.

### 2.5 DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA RECEIVED

Data collection and transmission is the responsibility of the Member States, but Eurostat takes all necessary measures to detect any errors in the data received and maintains a sophisticated IT system for data validation and processing. Since 2022, Eurostat has been developing an advanced and sounder IT system that contains two improved components: new data validation tools, which have been implemented since January 2023; and powerful software (Statistical Analysis Systems - SAS) for the processing of microdata and metadata. The new IT system will be fully developed by

[9] Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background (available in English, French and German).

December 2023 and will enhance the standards of the quality checks performed. The road freight transport data collection will benefit from this modernised data validation and processing system.

Overall, the quality of data received from the Member States is very good. All Member States revise data if errors are detected. Eurostat applies a detailed validation process to quarterly microdata and time-series checks to quarterly and annual freight transport data.

- Microdata validation: Member States transmit datasets to Eurostat via the EDAMIS portal and in files that are compatible with the SDMX standard (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange). A robust three-step validation process is then applied to the received datasets.
  - Firstly, the STRUVAL (STRUctural VALidation) tool validates each dataset in terms of format, completeness of mandatory fields, and correctness of structure and codes used.
  - Secondly, the CONVAL (CONtent VALidation) tool validates the content of each dataset on the basis of predefined rules. Reporting Member States receive a validation report for each transmitted dataset that contains details which make it easy to correct any errors. Eurostat is continuously updating the applied validation rules to meet evolving needs and ensure the production of high-quality statistics.
  - Thirdly, another set of validation rules is applied within the IT data management system, where the data are required to be 99.5% correct before they can be stored in a database for further processing.
- Time-series checks: the Commission considers it important to identify outliers in a time series before data is published. Eurostat therefore performs time-series checks on both quarterly and annual data. It is important that reporting countries confirm trends when large variations are observed. When necessary, countries submit revised datasets or explanations of the reasons behind significant time-series variations. These explanations are listed in the document *Country and table specific notes* [10].

### 2.6 METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES

Eurostat continuously provides methodological and technical support to Member States and maintains a reliable data and metadata information system for the production of road freight transport statistics.

Eurostat has produced two reference manuals for implementing Regulation (EU) No 70/2012:

- *Road freight transport methodology* [11], which outlines the methodological basis for the compilation of road freight transport statistics in Member States, EFTA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates;
- *Methodologies used in road freight transport surveys in Member States, EFTA and candidate countries*, which presents the methodological aspects of the surveys for road freight transport conducted in the reporting countries.

[10] https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/0c7a12bf-2645-4509-9339-a266f3e1e44d/library/f54dbc3c-55e5-469d-b8e1-4872271562da/details (available only in English).
[11] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-16-105 (available only in English).

## 2.7 DATA DISSEMINATION

### 2.7.1 Eurostat's dissemination tables

Aggregated data based on the microdata collected under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 are published in Eurostat's dissemination database [12]. Users can obtain detailed statistical tables produced in line with the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 202/2010. There are 43 tables on road freight transport complemented by a single EU metadata file and several national metadata files.

In 2022, Eurostat disseminated a new table on territorialised road freight transport performance (in tonne-kilometres), which is defined as the performance in a national territory independent of the haulier's country of registration. To calculate the series of territorialised transport performance, the international road transport performance declared by each Member State is broken down into the performance that took place in each other EU Member State. The redistribution of transport performance data to other Member States involves modelling the likely journey itinerary and projecting it onto the EU road network. Eurostat calculates this with the help of a distance matrix. The new table presents total, national, international and cabotage transport performance for each EU Member State, the EU-27 as a whole, Norway and Switzerland. The national and cabotage data used for the production of this table is the data collected under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012.

### 2.7.2 Publications

Eurostat produces *Statistics Explained* articles on road freight transport that provide an analysis of the data for the media and public. They cover the following topics:

- general trends in road freight transport [13]
- road freight transport by vehicle characteristics [14]
- road freight transport by journey characteristics [15]
- road freight transport by type of goods [16]
- road freight transport - cabotage [17]

These articles have been updated annually (except for the article on cabotage which was updated every 2 years until 2022 but will also be updated annually as from 2023). Articles are updated when the data collection for a given reference year is completed.

### 2.7.3 Anonymised data

In compliance with Commission Regulation (EU) No 557/2013 [18], road freight transport microdata are anonymised and made available to research entities for scientific purposes. Requests for anonymised

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database (available in English, French and German).
[13] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_statistics (available only in English).
[14] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_vehicle_characteristics (available only in English).
[15] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_journey_characteristics (available only in English).
[16] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_type_of_goods (available only in English).
[17] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Road_freight_transport_statistics_-_cabotage (available only in English).

data are received by the Commission (Eurostat) and access is granted following the joint approval of the Commission (Eurostat) and the national statistical authorities. In 2021, 2022 and the first 8 months of 2023, access was granted to anonymised data of the European Road Freight Survey to seven different research entities.

### 2.7.4 Other means of dissemination

Data on road freight transport is also disseminated via tailor-made data extractions for users in Eurostat's news items (e.g. *Increase in road freight transport as of 2021* [19]) and other Eurostat publications (e.g. *Key figures on European transport* [20], *Key figures on the EU in the world* [21], the *Eurostat regional yearbook* [22] and *Key figures on the European food chain* [23]). The data are also disseminated in the publications of other Commission directorates-general, in particular those of the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (e.g. the *Statistical pocketbook* [24]). All data included in tailor-made extractions and publications are also published in Eurostat's dissemination database.

## 3 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ROAD FREIGHT STATISTICS

The European Green Deal, which aims at making the EU climate-neutral by 2050, includes a set of transformative policies across the various economic sectors, including transport. Road freight transport statistics can help with setting and monitoring policy targets. This is achieved by providing data on volumes of goods transported, kilometres travelled, and road transport equipment and infrastructure. Road freight transport is a particularly significant sector because it accounts for the highest share of the EU's inland freight transport (77.3% in 2021 in terms of tonne-kilometres) [25].

Eurostat, the Member States, the EFTA countries, the candidate countries and potential candidates discuss data needs, ways to improve road freight transport statistics and ways to further reduce the data collection burden during the meetings of the Commission's Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics.

One development that started in 2018 concerns future statistics on transport by light utility vehicles. These vehicles do not transport very heavy loads but do travel a large number of kilometres in urban areas and therefore make a significant contribution to emissions and congestion. Moreover, an increasing use of these vehicles can also be observed in interurban and international journeys. The need for data on light utility vehicles is becoming important for many countries because they are being integrated into the scope of the EU's transport policy and related legal acts. Part of the data for light utility vehicles can be retrieved from registers on roadworthiness tests that gather information on the vehicle's engine type, weight class, fuel type and emission-control technology.

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[18] Commission Regulation (EU) No 557/2013 of 17 June 2013 implementing Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics as regards access to confidential data for scientific purposes and repealing Commission Regulation (EC) No 831/2002 (OJ L 164, 18.6.2013, p. 16).
[19] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230725-1 (available only in English).
[20] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-key-figures/w/ks-07-22-523 (available only in English).
[21] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-key-figures/w/ks-ex-23-001 (available only in English).
[22] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-flagship-publications/-/ks-ha-22-001 (available only in English).
[23] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-key-figures/w/ks-fk-22-001 (available only in English).
[24] https://transport.ec.europa.eu/facts-funding/studies-data/eu-transport-figures-statistical-pocketbook/statistical-pocketbook-2022_en (available only in English).
[25] Source: Eurostat table *Modal split of inland freight transport*: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TRAN_HV_FRMOD/default/table?lang=en (available in English, French and German).

A task force dedicated to transport by light utility vehicles was created in 2018 to discuss a methodology for collecting data, including definitions, thresholds, data sources and variables. In 2022, the task force produced a methodological document along with options for potential questionnaires to be used for a relevant data collection. The suggested methodology is being tested by several Member States in the context of the 2022 Eurostat grants. Once the results of the projects funded by the grants are available, the group will fine-tune the proposed methodology.

In a written consultation in 2022, reporting countries were invited to provide their input regarding potential improvements and new variables in the data collection for road freight transport. Their input to this consultation concerned:

- the harmonisation of the vehicle categories to be surveyed for collecting data under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012;
- an additional variable on fuel type;
- the potential elimination of the optional variable A1.1 ('possibility of using vehicle for combined transport');
- a proposal to report the optional variable A1.6 on NACE categories at two-digit level instead of four-digit level;
- a new optional variable on the emission class of motor vehicles.

These points were discussed during the 2022 meeting of the Commission's Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics and will be followed up in future meetings of this group.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The experience gained and results obtained from the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 on statistics for road freight transport remain positive. The Member States comply with the data provision obligations, and the resources allocated at both national and Commission level permit the production of high-quality results. The Commission supports the Member States in implementing Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 and encourages candidate countries and potential candidates to design and carry out road freight transport surveys. The Commission has been modernising its IT system for validating and processing the transmitted microdata, and has broadened the dissemination of road freight transport statistics. The Commission's Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics remains the body where the implementation of the Regulation and its potential improvements is actively discussed.

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 continues to be an efficient and effective tool for the production of reliable and comparable road freight transport statistics at both EU and national level, thus preventing duplication of work. The statistics produced are disseminated as tables in Eurostat's dissemination database and publications, as anonymised datasets and as tailor-made extractions. Road freight transport statistics are valuable for designing and assessing policies and for monitoring the road haulage market in the EU.