

Waste statistics

1999/0010(COD) - 13/06/2008 - Follow-up document

This report is submitted pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 2150/2002 on waste statistics, which requires the Commission to submit a report on the statistics compiled pursuant to this Regulation and in particular on their quality and the burden on businesses. The report summarises the first results, provides an overview of data quality and includes recommendations for possible amendments to the Regulation. It covers the 25 EU Member States that were legally obliged to submit data in 2006.

It stresses the positive impact of the obligation to document methodologies and to assess data quality in the quality reports. Problems and deficiencies are more visible and show where improvement is needed. In addition, the Regulation gives a boost to coherence between waste statistics and other statistical domains by requiring strict adherence to the NACE classification of economic activities and the use of statistical units as applied in business statistics. It thus enhances the possibility of integrating waste statistics into Environmental-Economic Accounting.

Burden on businesses: Most Member States, however, do not measure the burden in physical terms and are therefore unable to report on this. Five Member States report a burden of between 30 minutes and five hours per respondent. Nevertheless, most Member States are aware of the workload for companies and follow different approaches with a view to reducing the burden and collecting data in an efficient way.

Development in Member States: on the national level, the binding character of the Regulation has clearly strengthened the status of waste statistics within statistical systems. The obligations imposed by the Regulation have led to methodological developments and to changes in national data collection systems. Several countries announced their intention of improving data quality and compliance with the Regulation's requirements. It would seem that the Regulation has advanced the general trend in Member States of avoiding redundant reporting through co-operation between the data collecting institutions and streamlining of reporting obligations. The dual use of data for administrative and for statistical purposes is becoming more commonplace, the bottom line being more consistency between data and a reduced burden on respondents.

Need for revision: although the outcome of the first reporting round confirmed the general approach, some conceptual shortcomings clearly need to be reviewed.

With regard to **breakdown by waste types**, in Annex I and Annex II (Section 2) the Regulation requires generated and treated waste amounts to be broken down by waste categories in a different way for each data set. This was to minimise the required level of detail and hence minimise the burden for Member States.

The experience of the first reporting round clearly shows that the drawbacks of this concept are numerous whereas any advantages are insignificant, with no observable relief for the Member States. Most Member States collect the information at a much more detailed level and reduce the breakdowns when preparing the data for transmission to Eurostat.

The main negative aspects are the following:

- it is not possible to draw up balances for individual waste categories. This greatly hampers data validation and interpretation;

- the level of detail for waste treatment data is too low. Important waste streams are subsumed in non-specific waste categories ('other wastes');
- the presentation and communication of results is very complicated;
- the different formats make it difficult to handle and process the data.

The **current approach should be abandoned** in favour of a common breakdown for both waste generation and waste treatment. The more detailed breakdown of waste categories in Section 2 of Annex I should be used as basis for discussion.

With regard to **regional breakdown of data on waste treatment infrastructure**, the Regulation requires the Member States to provide data on the number and capacity of recovery and disposal facilities at NUTS 2 level. This detailed regional breakdown causes a significant workload for Eurostat and for Member States alike. The proportion of confidential data rises considerably with the regional level of detail, thus limiting the usefulness. The relevance of this detailed information has to be reviewed.

With regard to **breakdown by waste treatment types**, the paper notes that reporting on the treatment of waste aggregates all (10) recovery operations, except energy recovery, into a single reporting category. Furthermore, the required data on waste recovery capacity embraces such treatment operations as composting, recycling of metals and oil refining. In these cases the level of detail seems to be insufficient: information on certain recycling operations would be desirable for the purposes of monitoring waste policy. In particular, there is a growing need to provide data suitable for use as benchmarking against set targets. This highlights the need for consistent data across Member States, for which further refinement of definitions and classifications would probably be required.

Lastly, **disposal operations** (8 treatment types) are broken down into two reporting categories, one of which is virtually unused in Member States.

The **Commission will propose amending the Regulation** in due time for data collection for the reference year 2008:

- to have the same breakdown of waste categories for waste generation and waste treatment by aligning Sections 2 of Annex I and Annex II,
- to review the regional breakdowns in Annex II,
- to review the breakdown of waste treatment categories in Annex II, in particular waste recovery and waste disposal.