

# Steel industry: annual Community statistics on steel for 2003-2009

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The Commission presents its report on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 on the production of annual Community statistics on the steel industry for the reference years 2003-2009. After the expiry of the ECSC Treaty on 23 July 2002, Regulation (EC) No 1840/2002 on the prolongation of the ECSC steel statistics system after the expiry of the ECSC Treaty was adopted to ensure the prolongation until 31 December 2002 of the ECSC steel statistics system. In order to implement the Community policies on the steel industry, it was deemed necessary to continue collecting statistics on the steel industry after 31 December 2002. As no other existing statistical system at a European level was able to satisfy the need for such statistics, a new Regulation based on the Treaty establishing the European Community, i.e. Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 was adopted. It provides for a transitional phase running from 2003 to 2009 in order to determine whether steel statistics can be integrated into other statistical systems.

The Regulation specifies that, within five years, the Commission must:

- assess the benefits accruing to the Community, the Member States and the providers and users of statistical information of the statistics produced in relation to their costs;
- assess the quality of the statistics produced;
- verify synergy with other Community activities;
- propose any changes considered necessary to improve the operation of Regulation (EC) No 48/2004.

**Benefits and costs:** steel statistics are mainly collected for their use as a policy-making tool and as an instrument for facilitating economic analysis by the players in the relevant sector (e.g. public authorities, enterprises, federations), as well as a source of information for citizens and enterprise. Statistics on the number of downloads of Eurostat data tables are available and can be used to gauge the interest attributed to the statistics by their users. In the course of 2008 users have downloaded data from the steel statistics tables 1 725 times. Users are relatively more interested in the Annual statistics on capacity and the Yearly statistics on the steel and cast iron scrap balance sheet. The report sets out an overview of the uses of steel statistics based on the results of a survey among the main users of the information, including the Commission's services and the European Confederation of Iron and Steel Industries. With regard to costs, all enterprises of the steel industry taken together spent an estimated 2000 hours on the survey, amounting to an estimated cost of between EUR 80 000 and 100 000. On that basis, the **impact of Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 on the overall statistical burden on enterprises may, therefore, be deemed rather low**. It should be noted, however, that this only concerns enterprises with 50 or more employees. Almost all of these enterprises are required to reply to several other statistical surveys, which means that the **total statistical burden for these individual enterprises is relatively high**. The survey on costs also revealed that, in the majority of cases, the costs of reporting authorities were higher than those of the enterprises of the sector. The overall cost at EU level for the reporting authorities is estimated to be between EUR 400 000 and EUR 500 000, corresponding to approximately 10.000 working hours on processing and compiling steel statistics. The total cost for the provision of steel statistics for the entire EU economy can therefore be estimated at between **EUR 480 000 and EUR 600 000**.

**Quality of steel statistics:** the report examines the timeliness, punctuality and completeness of data sets available to users and the extent to which confidentiality rules reduce data availability. It notes that most of the Member States that are required by Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 to transmit steel statistics transmitted the data before the deadline laid down in the Regulation.

As far as the dissemination of statistical data by Eurostat is concerned, all data for the reference year 2007 were duly published before 1 December 2008. Only two of the countries that transmitted data provided incomplete data. Data availability at EU level is influenced by the fact that the 2007 data are missing for Spain for several series. As Spain's steel industry represents a significant part of the EU steel industry, this has a negative impact on the quality of the EU aggregates, for which the missing data need to be estimated.

**Synergies with other Community statistics:** the report analyses the extent to which other statistical data sets collected and disseminated by Eurostat covering the iron and steel industry can be used to replace the statistical information currently being collected and disseminated under Regulation (EC) No 48/2004. It looks at Structural Business Statistics, statistics on industrial production, external trade statistics, statistics on energy consumption and on air emissions.

**Future of steel statistics:** as Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 covers the collection of data for the reference years 2003-2009 only, the expiry of the transitional period is likely to mean that none of the steel statistics covered by this Regulation will be collected after the transitional period comes to an end. The report discusses the Community aims with regarding to simplification and states that the steel industry is the only sector in the non-agricultural business economy that is subject to the collection of detailed data on the use of raw materials, energy consumption by type of plant, investments and capacities. There is no justification for producing such detailed statistics on a regular basis for one specific sector. Therefore, in order to keep the burden on businesses as low as possible, the data needs could be met by special ad-hoc studies rather than by the regular production of official statistics.

Based on the need for clear priority-setting in the field of statistics, an analysis of the cost of data collection, the use of the steel statistics and the availability of data relating to sectors of similar interest in the EU, the Commission does not intend to propose a Regulation for the continuation of the collection of the steel statistics. As a result, steel statistics - as defined in Regulation (EC) No 48/2004 - will not be available for reference years beyond 2009.