

Waste statistics

1999/0010(COD) - 14/02/2020 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report on statistics compiled pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 2150/2002 on waste statistics and their quality.

The report concerns the quality of the data collection, which took place in 2018, on waste generated and treated in 2016. The data collection required by the Regulation consists of three parts: waste generation, waste treatment and waste treatment plants, the latter being disaggregated at NUTS II level.

The report concludes that significant progress has been made in the development of waste statistics since the last report in 2016. Overall, most countries have provided data of adequate quality.

Completeness

The completeness of the data provided by countries has steadily improved: the number of missing values and the number of countries reporting missing values have significantly decreased for waste generation data collections between the reference years 2010 and 2016.

The total number of missing values decreased from 1668 for reference year 2010 to 97 for reference year 2016. Most of the missing values concerned household waste.

The trend is the same for waste treatment data. There were no missing values for waste treatment in 2016, which is an improvement compared to the 263 missing values for reference year 2010.

Comparability and accuracy of data

The cross-country comparability of waste statistics has reached a relatively high level for most waste categories and sectors and considerable progress is being made to ensure full data coverage.

Compared to the 2014 reference year, improvements in coverage could be observed in eight countries for the 2016 reference year. Two important findings from the validation of the 2016 statistics are as follows:

- some countries are not yet able to report on the treatment category 'backfilling' or use the backfilling category to report landfilling. This problem was detected during validation. The Commission (Eurostat) asked the concerned countries to improve this situation in order to report fully correct data sets;
- mineral waste is of relatively limited relevance, but accounts for a large share of total waste. For this reason, the Commission (Eurostat) developed an additional indicator 'Waste excluding major mineral waste'.

The report also notes that there are several differences between statistics on waste treatment and statistics on waste generation. The amount of waste generated differs from the amount of waste treated in the EU by about 200 million tonnes since 2008. This corresponds to about 10% of all waste generated. The trend has been stable since 2008.

These differences do not result from the fact that the statistics for the two categories are of different quality. Rather, it reflects differences in the purpose and concepts used for the two categories. However, depending on the waste class, the difference is expected to be within certain limits. If these limits are exceeded, the respective Member State is asked for explanations.

Indicator development

Data produced are used to calculate indicators. To monitor the progress in Europe's transition towards a circular economy, Eurostat provides easy access to the relevant data for policy makers and the public in the form of 10 indicators. The indicators waste generation, food waste, recycling rate, specific waste streams and contribution of recycled materials to raw materials demand are produced with data collected under the Regulation, or are retrieved directly from these data.

Outlook

The legislation on waste revised under the circular economy package contains more precise rules on the measurement of waste-treatment operations and more precise definitions. This will also improve the comparability of waste statistics across countries. The Commission continues to work with Member States through other measures, for example through seminars and exchanges of best practices. A statistical investigation of major mineral waste would require additional efforts.

After the 2016 data collection, data on waste generation and treatment are now available for 7 reference years, i.e. for the period from 2004 to 2016. With the lengthening of the time series, the data are becoming increasingly useful, for example for developing indicators or as input for climate-related analyses.