

# Structural business statistics

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This report covers the implementation of Council Regulation 58/97/EC, Euratom ("the SBS Regulation"). It seeks to provide information about the manner and the extent to which each of the Member States have implemented the SBS Regulation as well as to report on the actions undertaken by the Commission to work towards producing comparable European structural business statistics. The Commission analysis is based on the state of play end 2002. The effectiveness of the SBS is based on a set number of targets relating, inter alia, to data availability, coverage and freshness of data. The provisions of the Regulation are analysed as follows:

- Regulatory evolutions: Since the Regulation was first adopted two amendments have taken place and one adaptation process was implemented using the Comitology procedure. As a result of these changes the following new elements were introduced. First a fifth annex concerning a framework for structural business statistics for life and non-life insurance activities was inserted, with a starting reference period of 1996. Secondly, less useful parts of the statistical requirements were reduced thus leaving greater room in the future for new investigations or developments of the SBS Regulation. Thirdly, two new annexes concerning credit institutions and pension funds, and two variables relating to expenditure on environmental protection, were added.
- Data availability: The Commission reports a dramatic improvement in the volume of data availability. On average, the availability ratio for sixteen countries and for the main series has increased from 54% to 82%.
- Confidentiality: Whilst confidentiality remains a concern there have, nevertheless, been some improvements in this field. Firstly, national confidentiality rules have become more and more harmonised. Secondly, IT investments in tools for automatic treatment of confidentiality have been made with the co-operation of National Statistical Institutes.
- Timeliness: Based on the data received, the average delay after the deadline, fell from more than 5 months for reference year 1996 to 1.5 months for reference year 2000.
- Evaluation of quality: In the 1999 Member State reports, information for each of the points was provided except in a few cases concerning the item "non-response"
- Assessment of burden: Progress remains slow on the assessment of response burden as very few Member States regularly collect such information.
- Users' needs and SBS developments: Users' needs for structural business statistics have continued to grow and diversify. An analysis of progress in the new Member States is annexed to the Report. To conclude, since the adoption of the Regulation, most Member States and Norway have made great strides in the making of high quality data available to users of the European SBS data. Those who have not achieved all of the implementation measures have, nevertheless, continued their efforts in 1999 and 2000. Ireland needs to make some improvements, particularly as far as the thresholds which need to be removed in industry and construction are concerned. Similarly, the poor availability of Greek data is the largest single problem in the implementation of the Regulation. In response to its analysis the Commission proposes a number of actions and recommendations. They are:

- A Eurostat report system that will be regularly updated to show progress on implementation.
- On going Commission/Member State contact through the National Statistical Offices to encourage a full implementation of the SBS Regulation.
- The development of a quality programme in which quality will be measured and quality problems will be addressed.

Continuing efforts by Eurostat to make data available more rapidly as well as the improvement of data treatment procedures.

- The launching of a second round of consultation on the possibility of adapting parts of the SBS Regulation that were not considered in the first round of adaptations completed in September 2002.