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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**on the implementation of Regulation (EU) N° 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 road¹ specifies that the Commission must submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the implementation of this Regulation and on future developments by 31 December 2014 and every 3 years after that. This is the third report that fulfils this requirement.

This report outlines the background, policy context and coverage of that Regulation. The first two sections describe its implementation, methodology and data quality issues and look at the burden on the Member States to collect data. They also present the various means of data dissemination. The last two sections refer to possible future developments of road freight transport statistics and provide the main conclusions.

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 road² and marks a step forward in the development of transport statistics in the EU. It is the 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. Such information is needed for framing, monitoring and evaluating EU policies.

Member States send the 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 confidentiality.

Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is designed to limit the burden on transport companies as much as possible. Data collection is based on a sample survey, and therefore 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 survey³.

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 policy relevance is very high. In the White Paper *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system*⁴, 10 goals were defined for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system. These goals set a

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 lower than 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 COM(2011) 144 final.

benchmark for achieving the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60%. Detailed road freight transport statistics are required to monitor progress towards achieving some of these goals (e.g. the goal of shifting 30% of road freight transport activity on distances longer than 300 km to other transport modes by 2030).

The European Green Deal⁵ is the new 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.

The data collected under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 is of importance not only to decision makers but also to 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 Europe. An in-depth knowledge of the market helps improve the competitiveness of companies in the sector.

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 that they provide data. However, in accordance with its Article 1(3), it does not apply to Malta, as long as the number of Maltese-registered goods road transport vehicles licensed to engage in the international carriage of goods by road does not exceed 400 vehicles. For that purpose, once a year Malta must submit to Eurostat the number of vehicles transporting goods by road that are licensed to engage in the international carriage of goods by road; it must do this at the latest by the end of March following the year relating to the number of vehicles transporting goods by road.

Norway and Switzerland also provide data. Montenegro, as a candidate country, has provided data since 2016.

Since 1 February 2020, when the United Kingdom left the European Union, Eurostat has added to its datasets the new aggregate 'European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)' that excludes the United Kingdom. During the transition period until the end of 2020, the United Kingdom is continuing to send data to Eurostat. These data are made available to users.

In compliance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012, countries transmit quarterly data to Eurostat.

⁵ COM(2019) 640 final.

2. FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATION (EU) No 70/2012

2.1. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

There is very high 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 IT changes at national level. 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 of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 provide the framework for the collection of microdata by the Member States.

Eurostat gathers information about national data collection methods (use of registers, sampling methodology, coverage, etc.) every 3 years and makes it available in its publication *Methodologies used in surveys of road freight transport in Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries*⁶.

Moreover, starting with reference year 2018, reporting countries create national metadata files in the template used for the European reference metadata files, the 'Euro SDMX Metadata Structure'. National metadata files contain a statistical presentation of national data as well as information on national legislation, dissemination policy, data quality and statistical processing of data⁷.

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. In most of the countries, no extra measures have to be taken, as the existing processes are sufficient to meet the data collection requirements.

According to the information reported in the national metadata files, the vast majority of reporting countries consider the workload for data provision to be acceptable. There are significant disparities across countries as concerns the burden related to data collection, depending on 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 at around 40 minutes.

Concerning the cost, it varies from country to country as the size of the sample used to collect data differs. In some cases, the sample consists of a few thousand vehicles while in others the sample consists of several hundred thousand vehicles. The cost and burden generated by the data collection is justified in relation to the benefit of the resulting statistics.

The Commission contributes to the efforts of the Member States to produce national 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, allowing them to have complete statistical information on all road freight operations on their territory by trucks registered anywhere in

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-17-114> (Available only in English).

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/road_go_esms.htm (Available only in English).

the EU (except in Malta), in Switzerland and in Norway. The implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 and the D-tables provided by the Commission save the countries the effort of collecting data on the performance of foreign trucks on their territory.

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 of the D-tables by the Member States is in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 6/2003⁸.

2.4. REDUCING AND SIMPLIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Reducing and simplifying administrative burden is a continuous concern for the Commission (Eurostat). 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;
2. the development of updated microdata transmission and validation tools, which provide reporting countries with feedback on data quality and specific errors for each dataset;
3. the organisation of regular meetings of experts from Member States, EFTA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates (Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics and task forces) to exchange good practices and discuss data quality, methodological issues and future progress.

In the future, the burden of data collection could be further reduced if the countries implement digital methods for data reporting to replace paper documents in use today.

2.5. DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA RECEIVED

While data collection and transmission is the responsibility of the Member States, Eurostat takes all measures to detect errors in the data received, and maintains an IT system for data validation and processing.

Overall, the quality of data received from the Member States is very good. All countries revise data if there are errors. For national, international and total transport, a validation process is applied to quarterly microdata, and time series checks are made for quarterly and annual data:

- *Microdata validation*: countries transmit data to Eurostat via the EDAMIS portal. A validation process, implemented by the main IT system, detects basic errors and erroneous codes. Reporting countries receive a validation report for each data transmission, containing details at microdata level to make it easy to correct any errors. Moreover, the Commission is continuously developing its validation rules to meet evolving needs and ensure the production of high-quality statistics.
- *Time series checks*: the Commission considers it important to identify outliers in a time series before data is published. It is important that reporting countries confirm trends where large variations are observed. When necessary, countries submit revised datasets or explanations of the reasons behind significant time series variations.

⁸ Commission Regulation (EC) No 6/2003 of 30 December 2002 concerning the dissemination of statistics on the carriage of goods by road (OJ L 1, 4.1.2003, p. 45).

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*⁹, which outlines the methodological basis for the compilation of road freight statistics in Member States, candidate countries and EFTA countries;
- *Methodologies used in surveys of road freight transport in Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries*, which presents the methodological aspects of the surveys for road freight transport conducted in the reporting countries.

2.7. DATA DISSEMINATION

2.7.1. Eurostat's dissemination tables

Aggregated data, based on the microdata collected under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012, is published in Eurostat's dissemination database¹⁰. Users can obtain detailed statistical tables produced in line with the provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) No 6/2003. There are 43 tables on road freight transport complemented by a single European metadata file and several national metadata files.

2.7.2. Publications

Eurostat produces 'Statistics Explained' articles that provide an analysis of the data for the media and the general public. They cover the following topics:

- General trends in road freight transport¹¹
- Road freight transport by vehicle characteristics¹²
- Road freight transport by journey characteristics¹³
- Road freight transport by type of goods¹⁴
- Road freight transport - Cabotage¹⁵.

These articles are updated annually, except for the one on cabotage, which is updated every 2 years. Articles are updated when the data collection for a given reference year is finalised.

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-16-105> (Available only in English).

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database> (Available in English, French and German).

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_statistics (Available only in English).

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_vehicle_characteristics (Available only in English).

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_journey_characteristics (Available only in English).

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_freight_transport_by_type_of_goods (Available only in English).

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Road_freight_transport_statistics_-_cabotage (Available only in English).

2.7.3. *Anonymised data*

In compliance with Commission Regulation (EU) No 557/2013¹⁶, road freight transport microdata are anonymised and made available to research entities for scientific purposes. Requests for anonymised 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 2018 and 2019, eight research entities in total showed interest in obtaining the anonymised data of the European Road Freight Survey.

2.7.4. *Other means of dissemination*

Data is disseminated also via tailor-made data extractions for users, and in Eurostat news items and publications (e.g. statistical book *Energy, transport and environment statistics*¹⁷).

3. **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ROAD FREIGHT STATISTICS**

The European Green Deal, which aims at making Europe climate neutral by 2050, has announced a set of transformative policies across the 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 equipment and infrastructure. Road freight transport is a particularly significant sector, as it has the highest share in the European Union's inland freight transport (75.3% in 2018).

From June 2018 until March 2020, the Expert Group on Road Freight Transport Statistics met twice. During these meetings, Eurostat, Member States, EFTA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates discussed data needs, ways to improve road freight statistics and how to reduce the data collection burden. One development currently being discussed concerns future statistics on transport by light utility vehicles. Although such vehicles do not transport very heavy loads, they perform a high number of kilometres in urban areas, resulting in a significant contribution to emissions and congestion. Moreover, an increasing use of these vehicles can be observed also on interurban and international journeys. Light utility vehicles have so far been largely outside the scope of European transport policy and the related acquis. This is about to change with the recently adopted Regulation (EU) 2020/1054 and Regulation (EU) 2020/1055. There is an increasing demand for data on the use of light utility vehicles, at least those that are within the scope of European legislation.

Data for light utility vehicles can also be retrieved from the register on roadworthiness tests that gathers information on the engine type, weight class and fuel type of the vehicle as well as its emission-control technology.

A dedicated task force has been exploring this area since 2018, looking into the feasibility and parameters of a data collection on light utility vehicles. Discussions revolve around a methodology to be developed, including definitions, thresholds, data sources and variables to be collected. In the context of this project, in early 2020 the Commission (Eurostat) launched pilot studies on statistics for light utility vehicles. During its most recent meeting on 4 March 2020, the Task Force discussed several methodological aspects and variables that could be collected. The work of the Task Force will continue. The need for data on light utility vehicles is becoming important for many countries and at EU level. However, it is not yet clear if and

¹⁶ 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).

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-DK-19-001> (Available only in English).

to what extent statistics for such vehicles could be collected in the near future, given the high cost and burden involved.

In a recent consultation, the reporting countries identified the benefit of potential additional variables on the type of fuel that vehicles consume and on their emission classes. A variable on the fuel consumed during a journey may also be useful for the calculation of air emissions. Variables regarding automated/autonomous driving may be considered in the future. Data for most of these variables should be retrieved from administrative databases (registers) in order to avoid additional burden on the respondents.

Data for the optional variable 'Possibility of using vehicle for combined transport' could be linked to intermodal statistics. The NACE activity linked to a vehicle is currently requested at 4-digit level; however, it should also be accepted at higher levels and even at the top-sector level of the NACE classification.

Reporting countries have also pointed out the need to make some reporting rules more concrete; e.g., an exact definition of the vehicle population would be very useful as all data collections would be more harmonised and comparable.

The issue concerning the heavy burden that the collection of transport data causes in proportion to a potential small number of road vehicles and the benefit of the collection should also be considered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The experience gained and results obtained through the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 are considered positive. Countries 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 Member States in implementing Regulation (EU) No 70/2012, maintains an IT system for data management and has improved communication to minimise the reporting burden.

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