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

**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**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1.	Aim of the report.....	2
1.2.	Background of the legal framework.....	2
1.3.	Policy context.....	3
1.4.	Coverage of Member States and other countries	3
2.	FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION.....	4
2.1.	Compliance with legal obligations.....	4
2.2.	Data collection methods used in the Member States	4
2.3.	Administrative burden for the Member States	4
2.4.	Reducing and simplifying administrative burden	5
2.5.	Data validation and quality of the statistical data received.....	5
2.6.	Methodological support to Member States	6
3.	STATISTICAL RESULTS	7
3.1.	Trends in road freight transport in the EU	7
3.2.	Data dissemination.....	7
3.2.1.	Eurobase dissemination tables	7
3.2.2.	Publications.....	7
4.	FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ROAD FREIGHT STATISTICS	8
5.	CONCLUSIONS.....	8

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. AIM OF THE REPORT

Under Article 7 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 road¹, the Commission must submit a report on the implementation of the Regulation to the European Parliament and the Council by 31 December 2014 and every three years from then on. This is the second report that fulfils this requirement.

This report outlines the background, policy context and coverage of the legislation. It then discusses issues linked to its implementation and presents the statistical results obtained. The last sections discuss the follow-up to the proposals for the further development of road freight statistics contained in the first report.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 is a recast of Council Regulation (EC) No 1172/98 of 25 May 1998 and the following amendments, aiming to align the legal basis of road transport data collection with provisions under the Lisbon Treaty. As such, the Regulation marks a step forward in the evolution of transport statistics in the EU. It provides a legal basis for the collection of a wide range of data on road freight transport. By requiring that micro-data from surveys of road freight operators are sent to the Commission, it also emphasises quality and comparability of statistical information.

Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 was designed to provide 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. These data are needed for framing, monitoring and evaluating EU policy.

Member States send the information to the Commission in the form of micro-data: this makes it possible to provide users with statistical tables containing different combinations of variables, subject to safeguards on confidentiality.

Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 was conceived so as to limit the burden on transport companies as much as possible. Data collection is based on a sample survey; information is therefore requested only for a sample of transport vehicles, and for a limited amount of time (generally a week). Member States can exclude from the survey transport operations undertaken by vehicles below certain thresholds.²

¹ 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 road. Text with EEA relevance. OJ L 032, 3/2/2012 P. 01-18.

² Each Member State may exclude from the scope of this Regulation 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 maximum permissible weight of 6 tonnes in the case of single motor vehicles.

1.3. POLICY CONTEXT

Development of the common transport policy requires in-depth knowledge of the extent and evolution of road freight transport.

The policy relevance is very high: in the White Paper entitled ‘Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system’,³ ten goals were defined for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system (benchmarks for achieving the 60 % greenhouse gas emission reduction target). 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 of more than 300 km to other transport modes by 2030).

In order to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in the context of the common transport policy, the Commission needs comparable, reliable, synchronised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the scale and development of the carriage of goods by road by EU-registered vehicles, and on the degree of utilisation of vehicles carrying out this transport.

The data collected in the framework of Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 are also extremely valuable for professional organisations, transport companies, researchers, and modellers in the field of road transport, as 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) N° 70/2012 applies directly and in its entirety to all Member States.

It requires that all Member States provide data. Under Article 1(3) of the Regulation, Malta is the only exception to this rule given its low number of goods road transport vehicles registered in the country and equipped with a certified copy of the Community licence. The collection of meaningful and reliable data from a small population of vehicles would impose a disproportionate burden on Maltese enterprises.

Two EFTA countries, Norway and Switzerland, also provide data.

³ COM(2011) 144 of 28.3.2011.

2. FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

2.1. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

There is very high compliance with the data provision obligations defined in Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012. All Member States delivered 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 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) N° 70/2012 have provided a common framework to ensure harmonised data collection and comparable data.

The Commission collects information on national data collection methods (use of registers, sampling methodology, coverage, etc.) every three years and makes it available in its publication on ‘Methodologies used in surveys of road freight transport in Member States and Candidate Countries’.

2.3. ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR THE MEMBER STATES

Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 was designed with the specific objective of keeping the burden on Member States to a minimum. In most of the reporting countries, no specific extra measures had to be taken, as the existing processes were sufficient to meet data collection requirements. The Commission also collected information on the burden on respondents.

Generally speaking, only a few Member States were able to precisely assess the burden generated by the Regulation’s implementation. Nevertheless, the following conclusions could be drawn:

- For regular data provision, the vast majority of reporting countries that responded consider the workload to be acceptable.
- There are significant disparities across countries as concerns the burden related to data collection, especially depending on the national data compilation systems available. More particularly, based on the sample of reporting countries that provided information on this, it appears that:
 - the average time required for respondents to report data for one vehicle with journeys during the survey period was estimated at around 10 to 45 minutes, depending on the data collection system used;
 - the average time required for respondents to report data for one vehicle without activity during the survey period was estimated at around 2 to 7 minutes;
 - the possibility to collect and send data in electronic format significantly reduces the reporting burden on respondents.

It must be noted that the burden generated by the data collection survey conducted in the context of Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 is compensated by the value added by the resulting statistics. More particularly:

- The Commission manages the confidential national micro-data provided by each Member State and compiles detailed national data (D-tables). These tables allow each reporting country to have complete statistical information on all road freight operations on their territory by trucks registered anywhere in the EU (except in Malta), in Switzerland and in Norway. The implementation of this Regulation and the service provided by the Commission prevents duplication of data collection at national level on foreign trucks.
- The participating countries have a strong interest in the statistics produced; the survey results provide added value and are fundamental to the monitoring of road haulage market in Europe.
- Collecting and managing information at micro-data level gives flexibility in meeting specific EU policy needs where statistical information is required, without delay and without requiring additional effort at national level. Such information is often required by policy services to draft reports or evaluate relevant legislation and policy targets.

2.4. REDUCING AND SIMPLIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Reducing and simplifying administrative burden is a continuous concern for the Commission. Based on Member State feedback the Commission, in collaboration with national statistical institutes, is implementing specific actions to reduce the burden of data collection and reporting on national authorities and survey respondents. These actions include:

1. the development of tools to facilitate the reporting of detailed regional data (NUTS 3);
2. the development of automated micro-data transmission and validation tools and routines, providing Member States with feedback on data quality and specific errors for each dataset;
3. promoting and assistance in implementing electronic questionnaires and web-based reporting systems at national level;
4. the organisation of regular meetings of national experts from Member States (working groups and task forces) and experts from neighbouring countries to exchange good practices and discuss data quality, problems and solutions.

2.5. DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA RECEIVED

While the quality of the implementation of the road freight survey is the responsibility of Member States, the Commission takes all measures to detect errors in data received and maintains a performing and reliable IT system for data validation and processing. The Commission gives Member States regular feedback on issues that may require further investigation.

Reporting countries make all reasonable efforts to address errors, in particular those that are recurring. The validation procedure includes quarterly and annual micro-data validation and time series checks for national, international and total transport:

- *Micro-data validation*: to ensure the production of error-free datasets, reporting countries receive a validation report for each data transmission, containing details at micro-data level to make it possible to easily correct any errors detected. This follows an iterative process until all errors have been corrected. 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 (Eurostat) considers it important to identify the outliers in a time series before the data are published, as road freight statistics are used in various Commission reports to draw conclusions on the evolution of the road haulage market. It specifically requires that reporting countries confirm trends where significant variations are observed. When necessary, Member States submit revised datasets or explanations of the reasons behind significant time series variations.

All reporting countries revise data if there are errors.

2.6. METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES

The Commission continuously provides methodological and technical support for the implementation of the road freight transport statistics Regulation and ensures that a high quality data and metadata information system is maintained.

In order to provide reporting countries with methodological guidance on implementing Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012, the Commission produced two reference manuals:

- *Road freight transport methodology*⁴, 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 and Candidate Countries*,⁵ which presents the methodological aspects of the road freight transport surveys conducted in the reporting countries.

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-16-105?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fweb%2Ftransport%2Fpublications>

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-14-007?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fweb%2Ftransport%2Fpublications>

3. STATISTICAL RESULTS⁶

3.1. TRENDS IN ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT IN THE EU

Within the European Union, road freight transport accounts for the main share of freight transport carried out by inland transport modes (at around 75 %, this figure has been relatively stable over the last decade). In 2015, road freight transport activity in the EU, measured in tonne-kilometres increased by 2.4 % compared to 2014. Nevertheless, it was still 7.6 % below the pre-crisis peak of 2007 and only slightly above the 2010 level (0.7 %).

National transport carried out by domestic companies represents around two-thirds of total road haulage activity, while the 2015 cabotage penetration rate was around 3 %, i.e. on average 3% of all national road haulage activities in the EU were carried out by foreign hauliers.

The deepening of the integration of the EU's Single Market contributes to higher growth rates for international road haulage operations than for national ones. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of tonne-kilometres from national road haulage activities carried out by domestic hauliers decreased by 6.5 %, while those from international transport operations (including cabotage) increased by 14.9 %.

3.2. DATA DISSEMINATION

3.2.1. Eurobase dissemination tables

Aggregated data are loaded into Eurobase, the Commission's (Eurostat) reference dissemination database, as soon as they have passed validation checks. Users can obtain detailed statistical tables made available in line with the provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) N° 6/2003 of 30 December 2002 concerning the dissemination of statistics on the carriage of goods by road⁷, regarding the data transmitted in the frame of Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012, for the period from 1999 onwards.

3.2.2. Publications

The Commission (Eurostat) also produces *Statistics Explained articles*⁸, covering the following topics:

⁶ Statistical data and analysis of trends are available at the Commission's (Eurostat) internet page: (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>) and the Commission's (DG MOVE) dedicated reports: (<https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/mobility-package-overview-of-the-eu-road-transport-market-in-2015.pdf>)

⁷ Commission Regulation (EC) No 6/2003 of 30 December 2002 concerning the dissemination of statistics on the carriage of goods by road (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 001, 04/01/2003 P. 0045 - 0049

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Transport>

- General trends in road freight transport
- Road freight transport by vehicle characteristics
- Road freight transport by journey characteristics
- Road freight transport by type of goods

These articles are updated annually, when data collection is finalised for a given reference year.

In compliance with Commission Regulation (EU) N° 557/2013 of 17 June 2013 implementing Regulation (EC) N° 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics as regards access to confidential data for scientific purposes⁹, road freight transport micro-data are anonymised and made available to researchers as scientific use files.

4. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ROAD FREIGHT STATISTICS

Several task force and working group meetings have taken place with Member States in 2015-2016 to examine and propose ways of improving data quality and reducing the data collection burden, and to discuss the feasibility of collecting information on empty truck journeys on a mandatory basis and data related to trucks' fuel consumption. A number of areas where existing expertise can help improve data quality and reduce the data collection burden were identified during these meetings, namely:

- reporting on vehicles not in use,
- simplification of the survey questionnaire,
- use of administrative data,
- benchmarking of survey results,
- use of new ways to report survey data.

In the latest version of the Road Freight Statistics Manual, the Commission presented good practices in the above-listed areas from selected Member States. These will support the further development of road freight statistics, improve data quality, and reduce the reporting burden. Member States still hesitate to agree to a mandatory collection of information on empty journeys (right now it is voluntary) and to the collection of data on the fuel consumption of trucks due to the related increase in the reporting burden. At the same time, an improvement in the availability of statistics reported on a voluntary basis by Member States was observed in recent years. Furthermore efforts for producing more detailed statistics on fuel consumption in the transport sector are made in energy statistics ensuring coherence with the overall energy balances.

⁹ 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 Text with EEA relevance, OJ L 164, 18.6.2013, p. 16–19

5. CONCLUSIONS

The experience gained and results obtained with the implementation of Regulation (EU) N° 70/2012 can be considered as largely positive. The resources allocated to maintain statistical production at both national and Commission level have permitted the production of comparable and high-quality results. The Commission supports Member States in implementing the Regulation and producing high quality statistics. It has developed and maintained an information system and strengthened communication to minimise the burden for reporting countries. It has also provided guidance for further improving data quality and reducing the data collection and reporting burden by publishing national good practices.

The Regulation has proven to be an efficient and effective tool for the production of high-quality reliable and comparable road freight transport statistics at both EU and national level, avoiding duplication of work. In one Member State, the national road freight transport survey was replaced by the road freight survey under Regulation (EU) No 70/2012. The Commission encouraged other Member States to follow this example. The statistics produced are regularly used for monitoring and assessing road freight transport policies at national and EU level.