

Introduction

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLICATION

This publication gives a comprehensive picture of the structure, development and characteristics of European business and its different activities: from energy and the extractive industries to communications, information services and media. It presents the latest available statistics from a wide selection of statistical sources describing for each activity: production and employment; country specialisation and regional distribution; cost structures, productivity and profitability; the importance of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs); workforce characteristics; external trade etc.

The accompanying CD-ROM presents the paper publication in an easily accessible electronic format, including all the data, graphs and tables in Excel format. It also contains more complete, detailed datasets on which the publication is based, a means of easily accessing the most up-to-date live data, as well as a large amount of background information.

The publication covers what is referred to here as the 'business economy', which is the sum of industry, construction and services. It does not cover agriculture, forestry and fishing, nor the public administration and largely non-market services such as education and health.

The 'business economy' is divided into 23 main sectors, which are analysed in detail in separate chapters. These sectoral chapters consist of an overview of the activity in question, followed by a number of subchapters that analyse each of its component activities.

The chapters and subchapters present a standard set of information complemented by available sector specific information, highlighting aspects of specific concern and distinguishing features for each activity. Each chapter concludes with a statistical annex presenting a selection of the most important indicators. Note that because of data availability, financial services is kept separate from the other sectors, which means that comparisons are made with the total non-financial business economy or the non-financial services sector. The analyses focus on the EU-25, but available data for Bulgaria, Romania, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland are included in the statistical annexes.

The first chapter provides a general overview of the EU-25's business economy, with comparisons across the main sectors. In addition, some information of a horizontal nature is presented, such as research and development, business demography, the importance of foreign controlled enterprises, etc.

DATA SOURCES

The main part of the analysis contained within European business is derived from structural business statistics (SBS): both the traditional business statistics which are disseminated regularly, but also specific information compiled on a multi-yearly basis and the latest results from development projects on topics of key political interest.

Other data sources which are used regularly include short-term statistics, the labour force survey, Prodcom (statistics by product) and external trade (the last two only in the industrial chapters). In addition, use has also been made of specialist sources for particular areas, notably transport, energy, research and development, environmental, audiovisual, tourism and information society statistics, as well as national accounts.

This edition of European business has also benefited from the co-operation of a wide variety of professional trade associations (representative organisations of various activities) and other non-official bodies. Tables and figures presenting data from these non-official sources are easily recognised as they appear in a shaded box.

TIME FRAME

The majority of the data presented within this edition of European business was extracted from Eurostat databases during June and July 2006. The text was written during the third and final quarters of 2006. Data are generally available for 2003 for structural business statistics (SBS), for 2004 for industrial product (PRODCOM) statistics, and for 2005 for external trade (Comext) statistics, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and short-term business statistics (STS).

MORE STATISTICS AVAILABLE ON-LINE

The publication presents only a selection of the most important data available. Readers who are interested in knowing more about a certain topic or sector, or who would like to download the freshest data are encouraged to consult the detailed data available in Eurostat's databases. These are available free of charge from Eurostat's web-site at:
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>.

The detailed structural business statistics (SBS) data sets are available under the theme 'Industry, trade and services' (select 'Data' / 'Industry, trade and services' / 'Horizontal view' / 'Structural Business Statistics').

Users of the CD-ROM that accompanies this publication may also access Eurostat data in a variety of formats through the DATA component.

EUROPEAN BUSINESS DEDICATED WEBSITE

Within Eurostat's website several dedicated sections are available which provide more information on a certain topic. The European business dedicated section provides access to a selection of publications, data and background information describing European business and associated topics, compiled by Eurostat's structural business statistics unit. This dedicated section has been redesigned to coincide with the release of the 2006 edition of the European business - Facts and figures publication.

One new feature is a presentation of statistics by topic (including special topics such as globalisation, SMEs, foreign controlled enterprises, etc), with specific links to publications, data, methodology, policy documents, etc.

The European business dedicated section is located directly under the theme 'Industry, trade and services' on the Eurostat website or by using the following link:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/url/page/PGP_DS_EUROBUS/PGE_DS_EUROBUS_01.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS EDITION

A number of changes in the structure and organisation of the chapters have been made when compared with the 2005 edition, essentially to try to follow more closely the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE Rev. 1.1), which is the basis for most statistical sources.

1. The non-energy mining and quarrying and energy chapters have moved from the beginning of the second section to the third section, and transport via pipelines has been moved from the energy chapter to the transport services chapter;
2. Construction and real estate services have been separated with the latter moving into the section on services;
3. The chapter on tourism has been replaced by a chapter more focused on hotels and restaurants, while the services offered by travel agents have been moved into the chapter on transport services;
4. Two chapters on business services and communications, information services and media have been re-organised and separated into new chapters on communications and media, business services, and real estate, renting and R&D.