

# Statistics in focus

## INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

THEME 4 – 27/1999

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# SME statistics

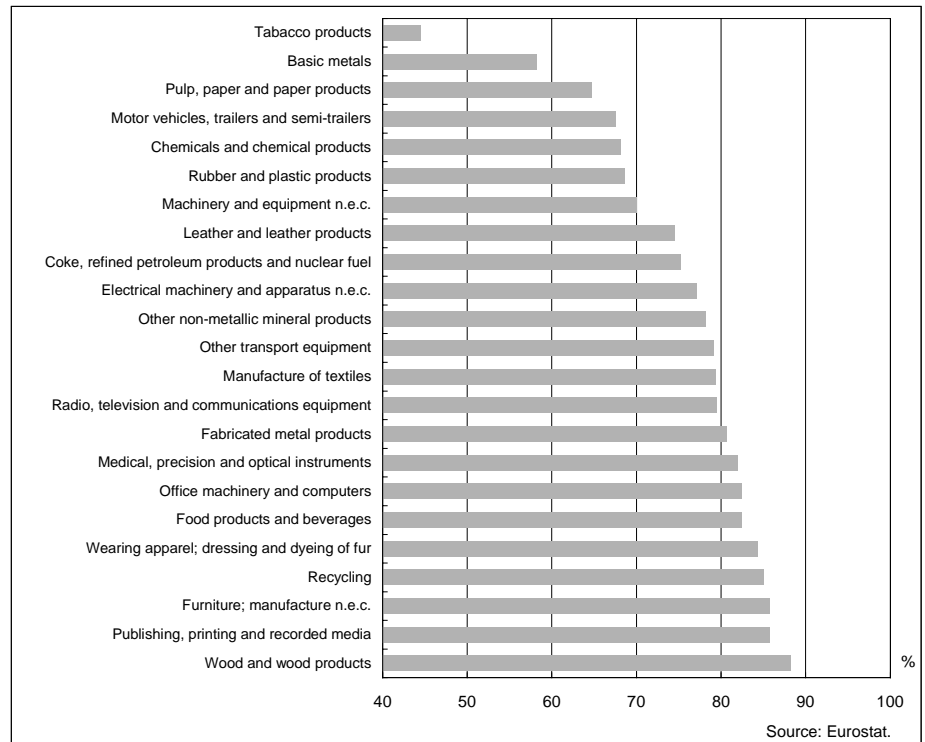
*Most enterprises in Europe's manufacturing industry are micro-enterprises, which employ 4.5 million*

*Maria Pia Vigliarolo*

## 1. Micro-enterprises in Europe's manufacturing industry

In 1995, micro-enterprises — those with 10 or fewer employees — employed 4 573 000 persons, waged or unwaged, or 14.8% of all jobs in Europe's manufacturing industry.

Although micro-enterprises account for the majority of enterprises in almost all sectors of production (as many as 88% in timber working), in no country and no sector do they represent a majority in terms of either jobs or turnover.



*Figure 1*  
*Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises — EU-15, 1995*

The activities where micro-enterprises are best represented are in the main the older industrial sectors (timber, agri-food, mechanical engineering, printing, leather, textiles and clothing) where they account for between a sixth and a third of jobs. But they also represent a significant proportion of more recently-developed industries such as scientific and medical instruments, and computers (more than 10% of jobs). In the highly-concentrated sectors such as the metal industries, motor vehicles, chemicals and nuclear engineering, micro-enterprises account for fewer than 5% of jobs, but this still represents several tens of thousands of jobs in speciality industries.

Italy, with 27% of Europe's jobs in micro-enterprises and, to a lesser extent, Spain, seem to be the countries where the old industrial sectors have survived best or even developed with a strong component of micro-enterprises. The organisation of "industrial districts" in northern Italy has given them a key role in sub-contracting networks.

Conversely, the share of micro-enterprises in employment is weakest in Ireland, Luxembourg and Finland, but also in Germany despite a fairly substantial total of jobs in absolute terms on account of the size of Germany's manufacturing sectors. Recently-industrialised countries such as Ireland have developed through relocations, which leave little room for micro-enterprises. And the German *Mittelstand* model, based on medium-to-large sized SMEs, tends to depress the relative weight of micro-enterprises.

Amongst the micro-enterprises, one-man businesses are notably numerous in all manufacturing sectors in the United Kingdom (more than a third of all employment in micro-enterprises, and more than a quarter of all European one-man businesses). Their growth was favoured by the labour-market reforms introduced in the early 1980s. But the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Belgium and Greece, one-man businesses account for only a small proportion of jobs in micro-enterprises.

Micro-enterprises always take a bigger share of the total of jobs in their sector than in the total of turnover. In practice they often subcontract within the sector, which would explain why their turnover per person employed is lower than amongst the main contractors. But the labour-intensiveness of micro-

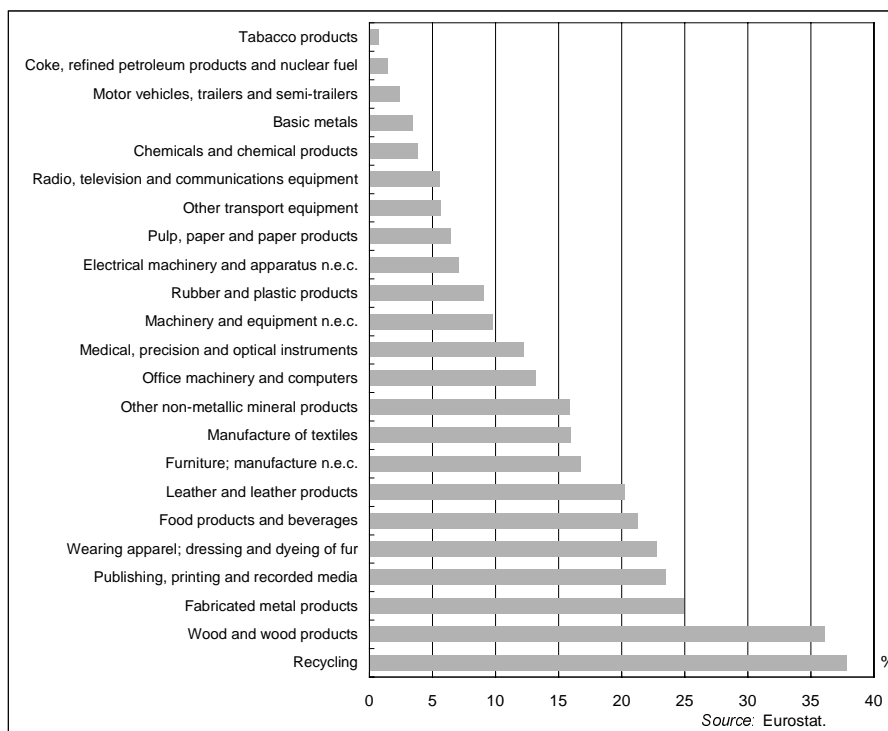


Figure 2  
Share of micro-enterprises in total employment — EU-15, 1995

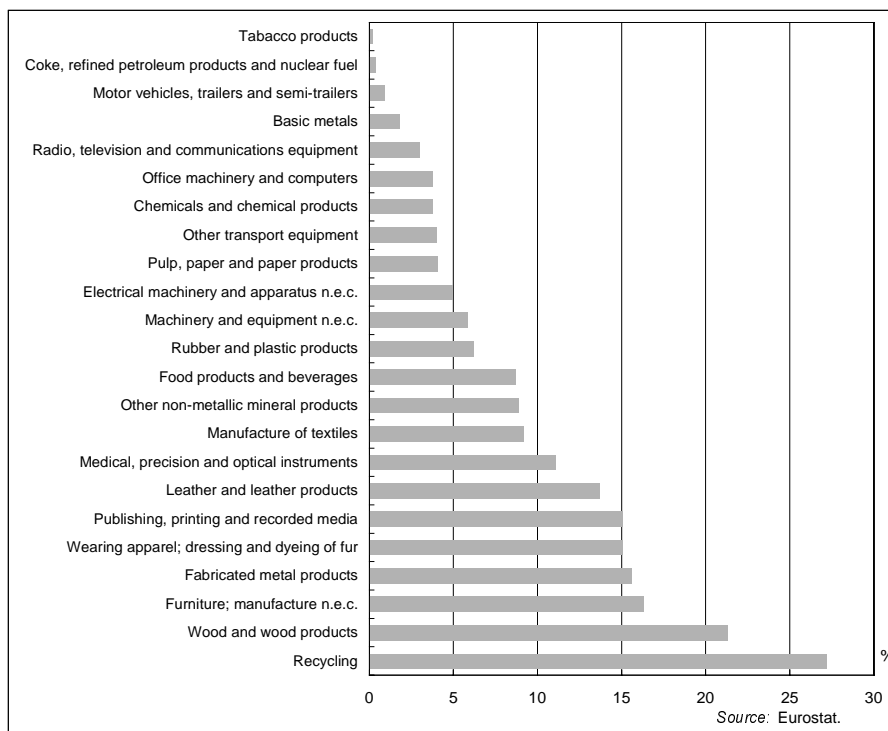


Figure 3  
Share of micro-enterprises in turnover — EU-15, 1995

enterprises is also accounted for by intensiveness of the activities in the generally lower level of capital which they specialise.

## 2. The importance of micro-enterprises in certain sectors

The sectors we have studied account for half the manpower and a third of the turnover of manufacturing. It is in these that

micro-enterprises are most significant. In all the sectors studied, wage-earners account for between 93% and 98% of total employment,

indicating a fairly marginal rate of self-employment.

### Food products and beverages NACE 15

With more than 800 000 jobs, micro-enterprises account for 21.3% of employment in the sector, though only 8.7% of turnover. This is the most capital-intensive of the sectors studied (1), and micro-enterprise is a feature of the skilled food trades — bakery, patisserie and pork butchery — which continue to flourish in southern Europe: Italy (40% of jobs), Spain (24%) and Portugal (26%), but also in Belgium (35%) and France (30%).

Table 1

Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises number of persons employed and turnover EU-15 — 1995						
Countries	Enterprises		Persons employed		Turnover	
	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total (Million ECU)
EU-15	82.5	287 676	21.3	3 785 075	8.7	600 980
B	89.8	11 390	34.7	116 505	11.0	25 291
DK	76.9	2 558	14.4	92 960	4.8	19 835
D	66.0	56 597	18.2	939 986	5.4	139 823
EL	82.9	6 338	19.7	64 788	8.2	21 167
E	84.2	38 996	23.6	418 119	13.1	62 525
F	90.3	62 672	29.6	605 303	10.6	118 808
IRL	44.0	878	2.9	46 355	0.9	12 517
I	89.6	60 978	40.5	439 762	14.4	75 559
L	71.0	231	21.2	3 601	6.8	764
NL	71.6	5 248	13.0	226 350	4.9	11 895
A	51.9	2 629	7.6	76 909	6.7	13 786
P	87.6	18 709	26.4	140 466	10.5	9 948
FIN	78.6	1 789	6.7	44 915	3.4	8 028
S	71.6	1 875	8.6	66 071	3.7	12 435
UK	81.8	16 788	5.6	502 985	3.8	68 599

Source: Eurostat.

### Timber and furniture trades NACE 20 and 36

Globally, these sectors have characteristically low levels of labour productivity and of investments, particularly the furniture trade (1). Micro-enterprises account for 800 000 jobs, proportionally more in the timber trades (one third of jobs in the sector) than in furniture (one sixth), which is relatively concentrated. In the furniture trade, micro-enterprises' share of turnover is close to their share of employment, indicating that their market is independent of manufacturing industry's.

Table 2

Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises number of persons employed and turnover EU-15 — 1995						
Countries	Enterprises		Persons employed		Turnover	
	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total (Million ECU)
EU-15	86.8	355 757	22.5	3 513 371	18.4	203 467
B	88.9	8 281	36.9	58 209	25.0	8 346
DK	83.7	4 695	14.4	50 766	9.8	5 086
D	72.4	48 986	7.4	1 654 996	10.1	53 929
EL	87.0	4 246	26.7	17 113	19.3	2 556
E	90.2	50 825	45.2	265 655	31.2	14 198
F	88.2	32 344	28.6	272 205	16.6	25 311
IRL	69.7	933	15.7	13 890	9.4	1 146
I	90.2	104 429	45.6	485 048	22.8	39 730
L	79.8	89	46.4	593	44.0	50
NL	83.1	8 293	30.7	54 571	18.2	3 443
A	86.8	13 482	38.2	110 069	25.7	9 688
P	88.0	21 600	36.6	120 162	24.3	3 734
FIN	89.8	5 084	18.1	39 890	14.1	4 382
S	79.7	4 284	18.0	57 550	10.3	8 090
UK	90.6	48 186	29.7	312 654	23.8	23 778

Source: Eurostat.

(1) See table page 6.

Here, too, Italy and Spain stand out (as many as 60% of timber trades jobs in Italy, one of the highest

percentages of any sector in any strong wood-working tradition country), but also, in absolute (Austria, Germany). numbers of jobs, countries with a

### Fabricated metal products NACE 28

Micro-enterprises, with 750 000 jobs, account for nearly a quarter of jobs, but only 15% of turnover in a sector characterised by fairly high labour productivity, and where micro-enterprises usually work in a subcontracting position in trades such as boiler-making, bar-turning and general mechanical engineering.

Their significance is particularly high in southern Europe (more than a third of the sector's jobs in Spain, Italy and Portugal) but also, in absolute job numbers, in the countries which were first to industrialise (Germany, United Kingdom).

Table 3

Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises number of persons employed and turnover EU-15 — 1995						
Countries	Enterprises		Persons employed		Turnover	
	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total (Million ECU)
EU-15	80.7	304 049	24.9	3 059 088	15.6	270 281
B	84.9	7 559	26.7	70 625	19.8	7 692
DK	83.4	5 040	20.6	49 063	17.5	4 163
D	75.5	53 269	18.2	857 868	10.3	88 540
EL	81.6	1 880	22.9	13 537	13.9	2 767
E	86.6	39 194	37.9	258 659	25.4	17 403
F	71.6	31 549	19.8	444 645	13.4	43 117
IRL	64.6	786	16.2	10 724	10.4	840
I	82.1	83 792	35.8	585 411	21.6	44 164
L	50.4	137	7.3	4 070	2.2	1 120
NL	69.5	5 794	21.0	102 242	15.4	10 143
A	55.7	2 647	11.1	67 039	11.4	7 578
P	90.9	15 782	36.8	76 607	23.3	2 402
FIN	86.3	3 846	26.1	26 752	21.2	2 737
S	77.7	5 704	24.2	71 163	16.0	7 259
UK	83.6	47 070	22.5	420 683	19.2	30 355

Source: Eurostat.

### Textiles and textile products NACE 17 and 18

These sectors have the lowest level of labour productivity of all those studied. Investment per person employed is particularly low in the clothing sector.

The jobs accounted for by micro-enterprises are more significant in the clothing sector (23%) than in the more concentrated textile trade (16%). Their weight is greatest in Italy, which has half Europe's jobs in textile trade micro-enterprises, and also in Spain. In countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands, where only vestiges of the clothing sector survive, the relative weight of micro-enterprises is correspondingly higher (30 to 40% of jobs).

Table 4

Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises number of persons employed and turnover EU-15 — 1995						
Countries	Enterprises		Persons employed		Turnover	
	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total (Million ECU)
EU-15	82.3	249 271	19.3	2 544 353	11.6	194 648
B	79.0	5 207	15.7	75 763	11.1	9 484
DK	87.2	2 622	20.4	20 669	13.3	2 020
D	87.5	33 425	16.2	335 603	4.8	24 662
EL	82.9	7 346	19.2	60 795	12.0	8 647
E	83.4	28 482	25.1	240 095	16.5	14 166
F	74.8	15 636	13.4	273 585	10.9	28 334
IRL	45.7	556	3.9	21 517	4.2	1 033
I	80.7	91 339	27.2	728 763	13.0	65 456
L	86.8	53	14.7	1 613	1.9	584
NL	78.6	2 633	21.1	41 593	9.0	3 144
A	63.3	1 928	11.9	47 543	8.0	3 648
P	77.7	19 405	10.9	274 412	6.9	7 208
FIN	90.5	2 310	16.4	15 167	14.5	1 218
S	82.8	1 172	25.1	12 994	14.2	1 414
UK	87.8	37 157	16.0	394 241	15.4	23 629

Source: Eurostat.

**Publishing, printing and reproduction of recorded media  
NACE 22**

This highly-innovative sector has the highest labour productivity of all the sectors studied. Micro-enterprises account for 23% of jobs (400 000), but only 15% of turnover. This is accounted for by their market position, either as subcontractors, or as low-capital-intensity local businesses ("small town" printers).

In absolute numbers, the United Kingdom's micro-enterprises lead the employment figures in this sector, whilst in relative terms Italy, Belgium and Spain stand out with a third of job.

Table 5

Share of micro-enterprises in the population of enterprises number of persons employed and turnover EU-15 — 1995						
Countries	Publishing, printing and reproduction of recorded media — NACE 22					
	Enterprises		Persons employed		Turnover	
	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total	Micro (%)	Total (Million ECU)
EU-15	85.8	184 486	23.5	1 708 557	15.1	179 835
B	92.7	7 355	32.7	47 604	20.9	5 668
DK	88.6	4 590	15.9	52 554	19.2	3 895
D	76.7	28 116	14.8	417 139	9.1	47 694
EL	86.2	1 666	21.5	13 392	13.9	2 252
E	87.7	18 726	34.2	129 336	23.6	12 097
F	83.3	21 014	24.3	219 055	16.2	29 314
IRL	61.3	568	8.6	13 302	3.7	1 887
I	84.8	22 634	34.0	174 775	15.7	16 958
L	76.5	81	16.0	1 109	8.8	110
NL	79.8	6 012	20.0	98 821	18.6	9 984
A	17.5	457	1.1	24 869	0.4	3 646
P	83.3	4 927	27.8	37 911	22.8	1 852
FIN	85.3	2 521	15.3	29 951	12.6	3 172
S	81.9	4 748	23.0	52 887	15.6	6 341
UK	91.3	61 071	27.0	395 852	18.5	34 962

Source: Eurostat.

The study concentrated on the sectors where micro-enterprises have the greatest weight both relatively and in absolute job numbers. This means the sectors which were first to be industrialised, such as the food trades (21.3% of the sector's employment in micro-enterprises), the timber and furniture trades (22.5%), metal trades (24.9%), textiles and clothing (19.3%) and publishing, printing and recorded media (23.5%). These sectors are generally suffering from a decline in employment which affects micro-enterprises as much as others.

It can be seen that in the sectors of the second industrial wave, such as motor vehicles and chemicals, where employment is also waning, micro-enterprises are very poorly represented. They account for 2.4% of employment in motor vehicle construction and 3.9% in chemicals.

On the other hand, micro-enterprises can be found in the positive trend of business start-ups and job creation in the most recent sectors of computer and communications equipment, and scientific and medical instrument-making.

Micro-enterprises account for 13.2% of employment in the manufacture of office machinery and computers, and 12.3% in medical, precision and optical instruments, watches and clocks. In these cases, micro-enterprise is a result of a process of innovation by new business start-ups, and also of production methods which are less subject to mass production and scale economies constraints.

Table 6

Labour productivity in the sectors considered (in 1 000 ECU per person employed) in the 15 Member States of the European Union, plus EU mean — 1995							
Countries	NACE Rev. 1						
	15	17	18	20	22	28	36
B	52.48	40.43	29.67	39.41	51.12	50.37	41.08
DK	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
D	46.77	35.36	31.64	44.57	40.93	45.20	39.85
EL	22.47	16.57	11.45	17.27	18.25	22.22	:
E	31.06	23.08	15.01	18.62	33.08	24.93	18.37
F	50.96	33.80	27.00	35.09	55.38	39.56	36.44
IRL	65.24	20.48	14.43	26.43	72.94	29.43	:
I	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
L	:	:	:	33.55	:	46.74	27.56
NL	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
A	:	44.68	25.70	37.61	53.33	44.57	31.56
P	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
FIN	43.63	35.50	25.11	36.50	43.79	38.30	32.68
S	:	37.21	32.42	44.31	41.72	42.98	37.31
UK	37.86	24.26	16.56	26.65	43.32	28.91	26.07
Mean calculated on the base of available data	43.81	31.14	22.90	32.73	45.39	37.56	32.32
: Not available							

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database.

Table 7

Investment per person employed in the sectors considered (in 1 000 ECU) in the 15 Member States of the European Union, plus EU mean — 1995							
Countries	NACE Rev. 1						
	15	17	18	20	22	28	36
B	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
DK	6.81	3.96	2.22	7.59	4.89	4.64	4.46
D	9.26	4.55	1.69	7.88	4.73	4.69	3.75
EL	7.43	3.92	1.48	2.26	2.66	3.69	:
E	2.69	2.54	0.48	1.40	2.08	1.61	1.13
F	7.96	4.25	1.70	4.89	4.15	3.72	3.29
IRL	6.94	3.55	1.61	3.94	6.59	3.89	:
I	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
L	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
NL	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
A	:	5.30	1.47	8.07	6.93	5.82	3.95
P	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
FIN	11.81	6.62	1.39	14.95	5.75	5.85	3.19
S	:	3.40	1.92	10.59	5.41	6.04	3.81
UK	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Mean calculated on the base of available data	7.56	4.23	1.55	6.84	4.80	4.44	3.37
: Not available							

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database.

## ➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

### Variables

#### Number of enterprises

A count of the number of enterprises registered to the population concerned in the business register. The enterprise is defined as the smallest combination of legal units that is an organisational unit producing goods or services, which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making.

#### Number of persons employed

The number of persons employed is defined as the total number of persons who work in the observation unit (inclusive of working proprietors, partners working regularly in the unit and unpaid family workers), as well as persons who work outside the unit who belong to it and are paid by it.

#### Turnover

Turnover comprises the totals invoiced by the observation unit during the reference period, and this corresponds to market sales of goods or services supplied to third parties. It includes all duties and taxes on the goods or services invoiced by the unit, with the exception of the VAT invoiced by the unit vis-à-vis its customers and other similar deductible taxes directly linked to turnover.

Source: Eurostat, SME Database

#### Other indicators used

##### Labour productivity

This is the ratio of the value added at factor cost and the number of persons employed. Value-added at factor cost is the gross income from operating activities

after adjusting for operating subsidies and indirect taxes. It can be calculated from turnover, plus capitalised production, plus other operating income, plus or minus changes in stocks, minus the purchases of goods and services, minus other taxes on products which are linked to turnover but not deductible, minus the duties and taxes linked to production.

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database

##### Investment per person employed

This is the ratio of the gross investment in tangible goods and the number of persons employed. Gross investment in tangible goods is defined as the investment during the reference period in all tangible goods. Included are new and existing tangible capital goods whether bought from third parties or produced for own use (i.e. capitalised production of tangible capital goods) having a useful life of more than one year including non-produced tangibles such as land.

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database

##### Sectoral coverage

The analysis covers only Section D of the NACE (manufacturing industry), i.e. Divisions 15 to 37. Those divisions correspond to the following activities:

NACE 15	Food products and beverages
NACE 16	Tobacco products
NACE 17	Manufacture of textiles
NACE 18	Wearing apparel; dressing and dyeing of fur
NACE 19	Leather and leather products
NACE 20	Wood and wood products
NACE 21	Pulp, paper and paper products
NACE 22	Publishing, printing and reproduction of recorded media

NACE 23	Coke, refined petroleum products and nuclear fuel
NACE 24	Chemicals and chemical products
NACE 25	Rubber and plastic products
NACE 26	Other non-metallic mineral products
NACE 27	Basic metals
NACE 28	Fabricated metal products
NACE 29	Machinery and equipment n.e.c.
NACE 30	Office machinery and computers
NACE 31	Electrical machinery and apparatus n.e.c.
NACE 32	Radio, television and communications equipment and apparatus
NACE 33	Medical, precision and optical instruments, watches and clocks
NACE 34	Motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers
NACE 35	Other transport equipment
NACE 36	Furniture; manufacturing n.e.c.
NACE 37	Recycling

For the purposes of analysis, in the second part of the study certain divisions of the NACE have been grouped: wood, wood products and furniture (NACE 20 and NACE 36, the later also including a small volume of miscellaneous activities) and textiles and clothing (NACE 17 and NACE 18).

##### Estimates

Data on Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom are available for the year under review. All other data, except those on labour productivity and investment per person employed, are estimated for 1995 by extrapolation from trends observed in previous years.

Source: Eurostat, SME Database

# Further information:

## ➤ Databases

New Cronos  
Domain SBS and SME

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