

SME statistics

EU very small enterprises show dynamic growth in 1997

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Statistics in focus

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

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The society we live in is constantly changing. Globalisation of the economy, technological revolution and the economic unification of Europe are three major factors affecting the economic infrastructure of the European Union. These transformations are also reflected in the sectoral structure and size classes of the population of enterprises.

In this context, the numbers of very small enterprises (between 1 and 9 employees) and jobs associated with them expanded rapidly in 1997. In sectoral terms this expansion was accompanied by increasing tertiarisation, with strong growth in both numbers of enterprises and numbers of jobs in the 'other business activities' (operational services like security and cleaning, professional services, consultancy etc.) and 'other services' (computer-related activities, health activities, personal services and so forth) sectors.

These developments are analysed in more detail in the first two sections of this report. A third section deals with the relationship between the trends in employment and in certain structural economic indicators, showing that these evolutions are not related.

More tertiarisation

In 1997, more than a third of all enterprises in the European Union were shops, hotels or restaurants (Table 1). A fifth of EU enterprises were in the 'other services' sector which, together with 'other business activities', showed the strongest growth in terms of numbers of enterprises. The number of firms offering business services grew by 7.5 % in 1997, owing in particular to strong increases in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The trend was similar in both the EU as a whole and the euro-zone, clearly demonstrating the dynamism in services and communications which is the key to the information society.

*Table 1: Trends in numbers of enterprises
in the European Union and the euro-zone, 1996 and 1997*

	EU-15 (%)			EUR-11 (%)		
	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96
Industry and energy	10.9	0.0	0.5	11.3	-0.8	2.3
Construction	13.3	-1.6	1.8	11.4	3.8	4.1
Trade and horeca	35.2	0.2	-0.4	36.8	-0.4	1.1
Transport and communication	5.3	2.1	2.6	5.1	2.9	4.3
Financial intermediation	1.7	3.8	-3.9	1.7	-1.1	-1.3
Other business activities	12.8	7.5	1.4	12.5	8.1	2.3
Other services	20.8	5.5	2.3	21.1	5.5	2.7
All aggregates	18 802	2.0	0.8	14 310	2.4	2.1

(*) % of all aggregates and all aggregates in thousands.

Source: Eurostat — SME database.



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The picture of the European economy in terms of jobs confirms these observations only in part. 'Industry and energy' and 'trade and horeca' together provided more than half of all jobs in the EU in 1997 (Table 2). 'Other business activities' and 'other services', together accounting for a quarter of all jobs, nevertheless boosted employment in 1996 and 1997, with 4.3 % and 4.8 % growth respectively in 1996. In 1997 only 'other business activities' were able to sustain strong growth in jobs of around 7 %, thanks to the expansion recorded in Germany, the United Kingdom and Finland.

Table 2: Trends in numbers of persons employed in the European Union and the euro-zone, 1996 and 1997

	EU-15 (%)			EUR-11 (%)		
	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96
Industry and energy	27.3	-1.4	0.2	28.4	-1.5	0.8
Construction	9.0	-0.3	-1.2	9.1	0.3	-1.2
Trade and horeca	27.1	1.1	1.0	26.0	-0.7	1.3
Transport and communication	7.5	1.5	0.8	7.5	0.1	1.6
Financial intermediation	4.2	0.4	-1.1	4.0	-0.9	-1.4
Other business activities	10.7	7.2	4.3	11.0	7.8	6.0
Other services	14.4	0.4	4.8	13.8	-0.5	4.2
All aggregates	112 720	0.8	1.3	86 380	0.1	1.7

(*) % of all aggregates and all aggregates in thousands.

Source: Eurostat — SME database.

In terms of activity, three sectors account for 80 % of the turnover of European enterprises: 'industry and energy', 'trade and horeca' and 'financial intermediation' (Table 3).

Table 3: Trends in turnover in the European Union and the euro-zone, 1996 and 1997

	EU-15 (%)			EUR-11 (%)		
	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96	1997 (*)	Variation 1996-97	Variation 1995-96
Industry and energy	27.4	4.0	2.5	33.9	0.7	3.4
Construction	5.1	4.8	0.4	5.7	0.0	0.0
Trade and horeca	28.6	4.7	5.1	32.5	0.2	4.2
Transport and communication	4.6	6.7	7.3	5.1	3.5	8.7
Financial intermediation	23.8	:	:	11.1	-0.7	6.1
Other business activities	4.3	:	:	4.8	1.5	8.0
Other services	6.1	:	:	6.7	-0.2	9.6
All aggregates	18 399	:	:	11 659	0.4	4.6

(*) % of all aggregates and all aggregates in billions.

Source: Eurostat — SME database.

The faster rate of growth in the EU than in the euro-zone in 1997 was attributable in part to the surge in the strength of the pound sterling (+ 17.5 %).

Turnover data for the sectors 'financial intermediation', 'other business activities' and 'other services' are not comparable between the years 1995 and 1997, owing to methodological changes introduced in the United Kingdom. The figures for the corresponding evolutions thus have been occulted for the European Union.

Among the other sectors, it is in the 'transport and communication' that the strongest evolutions have been recorded in 1996 and 1997, in both the European Union and the euro-zone. This strong progression can

be related to the progress of globalisation and of european integration which have intensified transport flows, as well as to the emergence of the information society and to the remarkable development of communications to which it is associated.

In the euro-zone, 'financial intermediation', 'other business

activities' and 'other services' are also witnessing strong progressions in 1996.

On the whole, the preceding observations confirm the continuing tertiarisation of the European economy, based on the three pillars of personal services, business services and information and communication services.

More very small enterprises offering more jobs in 1997

Very small enterprises (enterprises with one to nine employees) showed the strongest proliferation throughout the economy in 1997 (Table 4), and employment growth too was strongest in this category (Table 5).

The number of very small enterprises has grown in all sectors of the economy in 1997 (Table 4) with an overall growth of 5.5 %. In this category, the growth in numbers of enterprises has been strongest in 'other services', in the European Union as in the euro-zone. In 1997, numbers of enterprises have also grown in the other size-classes, except in that of enterprises without employees at the EU level.

These changes in the population of enterprises are widely reflected in employment trends. Numbers of jobs in enterprises without employees fell in 1997, declining overall by more than 1 % (Table 5). The very small enterprises recorded the biggest increase in the numbers of jobs in the European Union, with an overall progression of more than 1 %.

Numbers of jobs in very small enterprises increased most, by 5.5 %, in 'other business activities'.

The growth in numbers of enterprises in the European Union was thus partially mirrored by a growth in jobs, particularly in very small enterprises.

Table 4: Trends in numbers of micro, very small, medium-sized and large enterprises

	EU-15				EUR-11			
	Class 0	Class 1-9	Class 10-249	Class 250+	Class 0	Class 1-9	Class 10-249	Class 250+
Number of enterprises 1997 (% of all aggregates)								
Industry and energy	7.6	11.7	29.1	44.9	7.3	12.3	30.1	45.7
Construction	14.1	12.3	14.5	5.1	9.4	12.7	15.7	5.2
Trade and horeca	32.0	40.1	27.0	14.4	35.7	39.6	25.9	13.6
Transport and communication	6.4	4.1	5.3	4.5	6.1	4.0	5.3	4.2
Financial intermediation	2.0	1.4	1.2	5.3	2.1	1.4	1.1	5.3
Other business activities	14.3	11.5	9.7	15.4	14.7	11.0	9.3	16.5
Other services	23.6	18.9	13.1	10.4	24.7	19.1	12.5	9.6
All aggregates (*)	9 204	8 298	1 263	37	6 509	6 746	1 025	29
Variation 1996-97 (%)								
Industry and energy	-0.6	0.4	-0.2	-1.3	-1.4	-0.7	0.1	-2.0
Construction	-6.8	5.1	2.5	0.6	4.3	3.7	2.3	-0.4
Trade and horeca	-4.1	4.2	1.5	1.4	-5.1	3.8	1.8	1.6
Transport and communication	1.0	3.9	2.3	0.3	2.9	3.0	2.6	1.9
Financial intermediation	6.7	0.4	-2.4	-3.1	-1.6	-0.2	-3.1	-2.5
Other business activities	4.5	:	5.6	:	5.4	:	4.9	:
Other services	3.3	9.0	2.3	1.1	4.3	7.5	2.1	0.8
All aggregates	-0.8	5.5	1.6	:	0.3	4.7	1.7	:
Variation 1995-96 (%)								
Industry and energy	:	:	0.3	-0.8	:	:	0.9	-0.1
Construction	:	:	-1.6	-1.7	:	:	-1.4	-2.6
Trade and horeca	:	:	-0.8	1.8	:	:	0.4	2.3
Transport and communication	2.5	2.7	3.1	2.4	4.0	4.7	5.2	4.9
Financial intermediation	-3.4	-4.3	-6.7	-5.0	0.7	-3.2	-7.4	-5.8
Other business activities	:	:	4.3	-4.2	:	:	6.4	-4.8
Other services	1.0	3.9	5.4	1.6	0.9	4.8	7.5	0.4
All aggregates	:	:	0.8	-0.7	:	:	1.8	-0.6

(*) Thousands. Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Table 5: Trends in numbers of persons employed in micro, very small, medium-sized and large enterprises

	EU-15				EUR-11			
	Class 0	Class 1-9	Class 10-249	Class 250+	Class 0	Class 1-9	Class 10-249	Class 250+
Number of persons employed 1997 (% of all aggregates)								
Industry and energy	7.1	13.7	34.2	36.5	6.4	14.2	35.0	39.9
Construction	14.0	12.5	11.1	2.9	10.2	12.8	11.9	2.9
Trade and horeca	33.9	38.6	24.6	19.1	37.6	37.9	23.9	15.0
Transport and communication	6.9	4.2	5.8	11.5	6.8	4.1	6.0	12.3
Financial intermediation	1.9	1.4	1.8	9.0	2.0	1.4	1.8	9.2
Other business activities	12.8	9.8	9.8	11.4	12.7	9.2	9.6	13.3
Other services	23.4	19.8	12.6	9.6	24.3	20.4	11.9	7.3
All aggregates (*)	11 009	27 616	35 772	38 323	7 951	22 741	28 458	27 230
Variation 1996-97 (%)								
Industry and energy	1.7	-1.0	0.0	-2.8	-0.6	-1.6	0.4	-3.3
Construction	-5.8	2.5	-0.2	-1.6	4.3	1.2	-0.6	-3.3
Trade and horeca	-4.6	0.7	0.5	5.6	-6.1	-0.6	0.7	1.1
Transport and communication	0.7	3.5	2.8	0.6	1.5	2.8	3.2	-2.2
Financial intermediation	6.8	0.1	-2.6	0.7	-0.9	-0.5	-2.6	-0.6
Other business activities	0.4	5.5	2.1	:	-0.9	4.6	1.9	:
Other services	4.2	0.4	-0.1	-1.5	4.5	-1.3	-0.9	-2.7
All aggregates	-1.2	1.2	0.4	:	-1.1	-0.1	0.5	:
Variation 1995-96 (%)								
Industry and energy	:	:	0.8	-0.3	:	:	1.5	0.1
Construction	:	:	-3.1	-4.5	:	:	-3.1	-7.2
Trade and horeca	:	:	-0.8	4.9	:	:	0.1	3.2
Transport and communication	0.6	0.3	3.7	-0.4	0.6	1.6	5.9	-0.2
Financial intermediation	-3.8	-4.0	-3.2	-0.2	0.3	-3.0	-3.8	-0.9
Other business activities	:	:	3.7	9.8	:	:	5.6	13.3
Other services	-0.7	8.1	3.7	5.5	-2.0	9.4	5.2	-2.4
All aggregates	:	:	0.6	2.0	:	:	1.5	1.3

(*) Thousands. Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Very small enterprises: trends in employment and economic structure in 1997

Data availability (see methodological notes) means that this analysis can be applied to five Member States only: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France and Italy.

The sectoral structure of very small enterprises (between 1 and 9 employees) is fairly homogeneous in these five Member States in terms of both population and employment, subject to a few obvious exceptions such as the weight of 'industry and energy' in Italy and that of 'trade and horeca' in Belgium (see Tables 6 and 7).

Two further structural indicators compare trends in the economic structure of very small enterprises by country and sector: turnover by enterprise and turnover by person employed. These two indicators each reveal a strong variability between countries and sectors alike (Tables 8 and 9).

The analysis shows that the changes in numbers of very small enterprises and jobs do not correspond to similar evolutions in turnover by enterprise and by person employed in the sectors and countries considered (see Figures 1 to 8).

Employment growth and evolutions of turnover by enterprise and by person employed in very small enterprises thus often reveal inverse rankings of countries. This divergence is particularly obvious in 'construction' and 'other services'.

Table 6: Numbers of very small enterprises in EU Member States as a % of all aggregates — 1997

	B	DK (*)	F (*)	I (*)	FIN	Median value
Industry and energy	12.3	13.1	12.6	17.5	13.6	13.1
Construction	15.4	16.8	15.2	14.2	14.1	15.2
Trade and horeca	49.7	44.5	38.4	39.3	32.3	39.3
Transport and communication	4.0	5.3	2.8	3.4	11.7	4.0
Financial intermediation	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.5	0.9	1.1
Other business activities	8.3	11.0	9.7	11.9	14.0	11.0
Other services	9.7	8.3	20.2	12.3	13.4	12.3
All aggregates (**)	124	65	988	1 628	81	124

(*) DK, F, I: 1996.
(**) Thousands. Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Table 7: Numbers of persons employed by very small enterprises in EU Member States as a % of all aggregates — 1997

	B	DK (*)	F (*)	I (*)	FIN	Median value
Industry and energy	11.5	14.8	14.3	21.2	15.7	14.8
Construction	10.9	16.1	16.3	14.7	14.6	14.7
Trade and horeca	56.2	46.6	38.0	38.0	33.0	38.0
Transport and communication	4.5	4.8	3.2	3.4	11.0	4.5
Financial intermediation	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.7	1.1	0.9
Other business activities	7.8	10.3	9.7	8.9	12.5	9.7
Other services	8.3	6.9	17.5	12.1	12.2	12.1
All aggregates (**)	790	349	3 714	4 929	235	790

(*) DK, F, I: 1996.
(**) Thousands. Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Figure 8, giving the aggregates for all sectors of activity, shows inverse trends in employment and structural economic indicators in two countries: Denmark recorded a drop in job numbers accompanied by a rise in turnover by both enterprise

and person employed, while the opposite applied to France, which also recorded the strongest variations.

Table 8: Turnover by enterprise in very small enterprises
ECU thousands — 1997

	B	DK (*)	F (*)	I (*)	FIN	Median value
Industry and energy	545	527	338	215	355	355
Construction	309	352	208	178	243	243
Trade and horeca	914	720	481	362	569	569
Transport and communication	866	523	365	316	230	365
Financial intermediation	651	354	950	153	3 317	651
Other business activities	431	295	318	136	173	295
Other services	281	299	214	141	171	214
All aggregates	671	537	354	251	370	370

(*) DK, F, I: 1996.

Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Table 9: Turnover by person employed in very small enterprises
ECU thousands — 1997

	B	DK (*)	F (*)	I (*)	FIN	Median value
Industry and energy	92	86	79	58	107	86
Construction	69	68	51	57	81	68
Trade and horeca	127	128	129	123	192	128
Transport and communication	122	106	85	104	84	104
Financial intermediation	85	162	284	44	976	162
Other business activities	72	59	85	60	67	67
Other services	51	67	66	48	65	65
All aggregates	106	100	94	83	128	100

(*) DK, F, I: 1996.

Source: Eurostat — SME database.

Figures 1-8 — Very small enterprises: trends in numbers of persons employed and structural indicators by sector of activity — 1997

Figure 1: Industry and energy

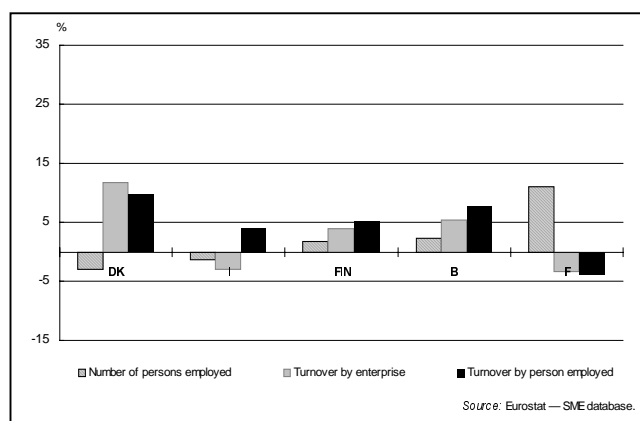
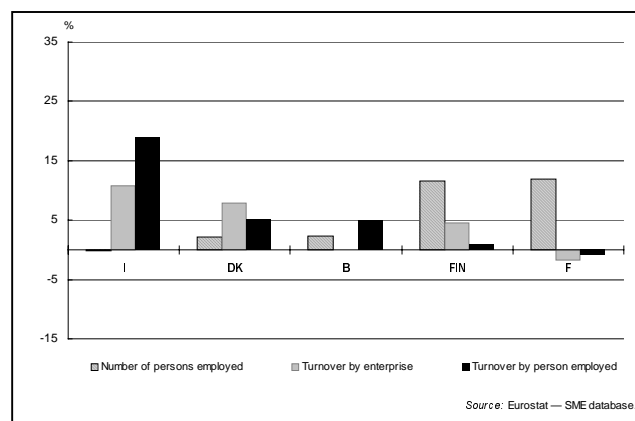


Figure 2: Construction



NB: 1995-96 trend for Denmark, France and Italy.
1996-97 for Belgium and Finland.

Member States appear in the graphs in ascending order of growth in the number of persons employed.

Figures 1-8 — Very small enterprises: trends in numbers of persons employed and structural indicators by sector of activity — 1997 (following)

Figure 3: Trade and horeca

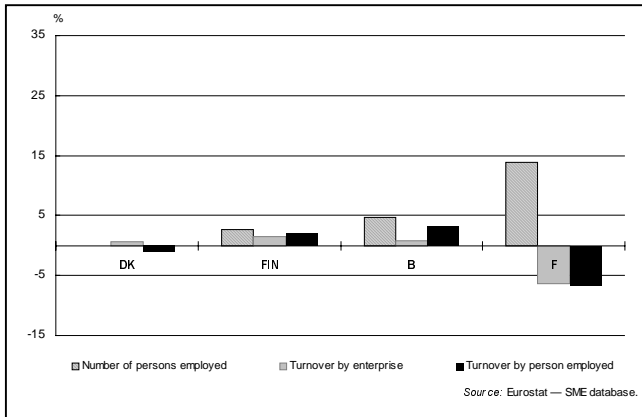


Figure 4: Transport and communication

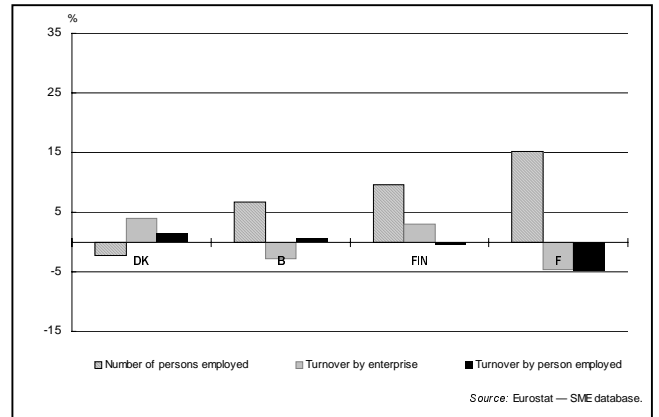


Figure 5: Financial intermediation

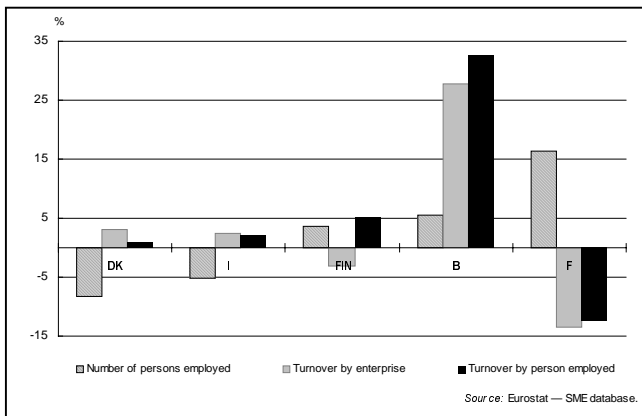


Figure 6: Other business activities

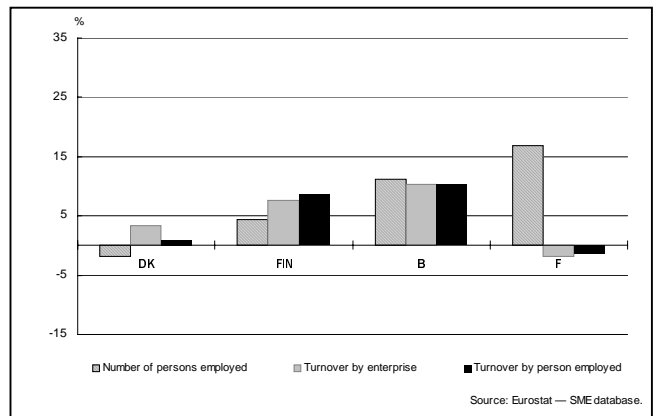


Figure 7: Other services

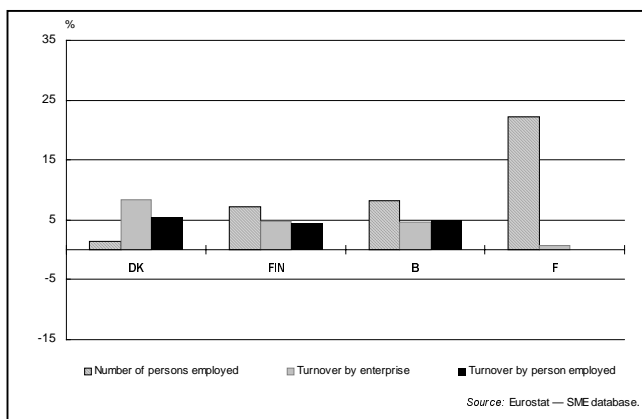
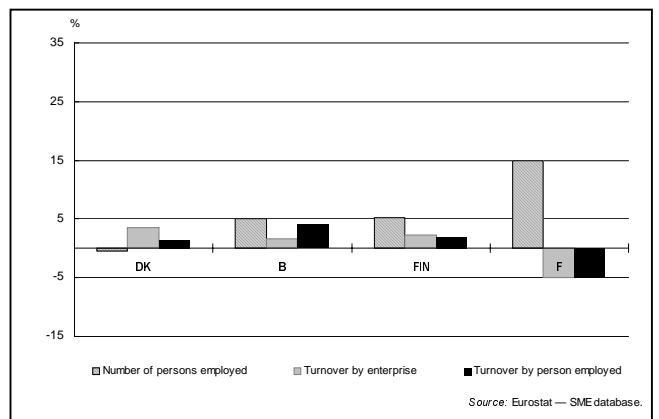


Figure 8: All aggregates



NB: 1995-96 trend for Denmark, France and Italy.
1996-97 for Belgium and Finland.

Member States appear in the graphs in ascending order of growth in the number of persons employed.

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

• SME database

This database covers the main economic indicators on small and medium-sized enterprises. The data are broken down by standardised employment size class and by activity, following the NACE Rev.1 classification system. The data are collected by Member States on a voluntary basis.

• 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.

Structural economic indicators

- Turnover by enterprise;
- turnover by person employed.

• Sectoral coverage

Industry and energy:

NACE Rev.1 10-41.

Construction:

NACE Rev.1 45.

Trade and horeca:

NACE Rev.1 50-55.

Transport and communication:

NACE Rev.1 60-64.

Financial intermediation:

NACE Rev.1 65-67.

Other business activities:

NACE Rev.1 74.

Other services:

NACE Rev.1 70-73, 85, 90, 92 and 93.

All aggregates:

Sum of the seven aggregates above.

• Size classes

Enterprises without employees:

0 employees;

Very small enterprises: 1-9 employees;

Small and medium-sized enterprises:

10-249 employees;

Large enterprises: 250 employees or more.

• Estimates

To obtain data for the EU as a whole, Eurostat has estimated certain data for each Member State in order to compensate for incomplete or non-harmonised original data.

Belgium 1997:

Number of persons employed: estimates based on original data on the number of employees.

Denmark 1996:

Number of enterprises: estimates of 'financial intermediation' and 'other services'.

Number of persons employed and turnover: estimates of all aggregates except 'construction' and 'other business activities'.

France 1996:

Number of persons employed: estimates based on original data on the number of employees.

Italy 1996:

Number of enterprises, number of persons employed, turnover: estimates of 0 and 1-9 employee size classes based on original data for the 0-9 employee class.

Finland 1997:

Turnover: estimates of the 'transport and communication', 'financial intermediation' and 'other services' aggregates.

Germany 1995-1997:

All data are estimates by the *Institut für Mittelstandsforschung* (IFM).

Notes:

Turnover data for the sectors 'financial intermediation', 'other business activities' and 'other services' are not comparable between the years 1995 and 1997, owing to methodological changes introduced in the United Kingdom. The figures for the corresponding evolutions thus have been occulted for the European Union.

The analysis by country includes only countries for which the method of estimating missing data does not entail correlations in the evolutions of variables. Are thus excluded countries for which, for example, turnover has been estimated on the basis of the number of persons employed.

The median value is defined as the value which stands at the middle of a set of values ranked by increasing order.

Further information:

➤ Databases

New Cronos, Domain SME

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