

Businesses in the professional, scientific and technical activities sector

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in June 2025
Planned article update: July 2026*

Highlights

The professional, scientific and technical activity sector employed 12.1 million persons and accounted for 7.5% of the employment in the EU's business economy in 2022.

The professional, scientific and technical activity sector generated € 724.1 billion of value added in 2022.

This article presents an overview of statistics for the [European Union's \(EU\)](#) professional, scientific and technical services sector, as covered by [NACE Rev. 2 Section M](#). These activities often require a high degree of education and training and make specialised knowledge and skills available to clients who may be other business users or private individuals. This article belongs to a [set of statistical articles](#) on 'Business economy by sector'.

Structural profile

The [EU](#)'s professional, scientific and technical activity sector (NACE Section M) numbered 5.0 million [enterprises](#) in 2022, an increase of 4.9% compared to 2021. The sector [employed](#) 12.1 million persons, 3.7% more compared to the previous year. It has generated € 724.1 billion of [value added](#), a growth of 6.7% compared to 2021. This sector's contribution to the [business economy](#) (Sections B to N and P to R, as well as Divisions S95 and S96) was 15.6% of the enterprise population, 7.5% of the employment, and 7.2% of value added.

Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

	Value
Main indicators	
Number of enterprises (number)	5 036 423
Number of persons employed (number)	12 068 162
Net turnover (€ million)	1 608 447
Purchases of goods and services (€ million)	918 015
Employee benefits expense (€ million)	442 931
Value added (€ million)	724 145
Gross operating surplus (€ million)	281 246
Share in business economy total (%)	
Number of enterprises	15.6
Number of persons employed	7.5
Value added	7.2
Derived indicators	
Apparent labour productivity (thousand € per head)	60.0
Employee benefits expense (thousand € per head)	54.2
Wage-adjusted labour productivity (%)	110.6
Gross operative rate (%)	17.5

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_oww_act)



Table 1: Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_oww_act)

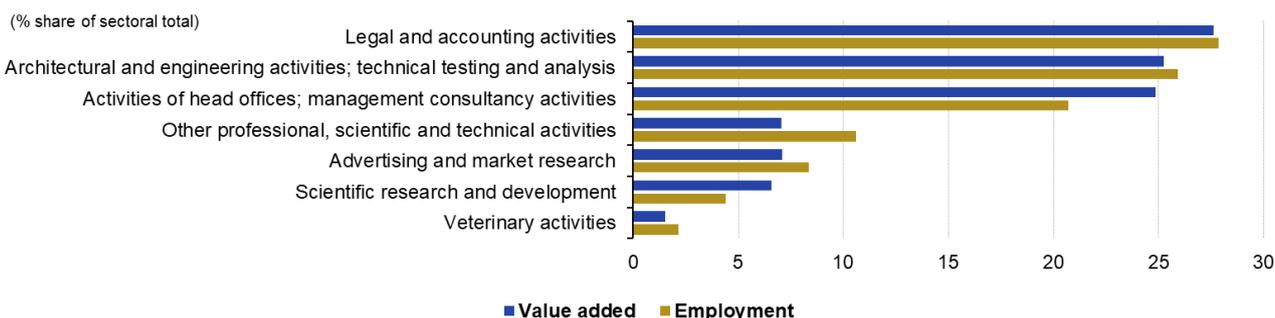
The [apparent labour productivity](#) of the EU's professional, scientific and technical activity sector in 2022 was € 60 000 per person employed, which was slightly below the business economy average of € 62 700 per person employed. The average employee benefits expense ([average personnel costs](#)) within the professional, scientific and technical activity sector were € 54 200 per employee.

The [wage-adjusted labour productivity ratio](#) shows that value added per person employed was equivalent to 110.6% of average personnel costs per employee across the EU in 2022. This ratio was under the business economy average (152.6%) and the fourth lowest in the business economy (Sections B to N and P to R, as well as Divisions S95 and S96). The EU's professional, scientific and technical activity sector recorded a [gross operating rate](#) of 17.5% in 2022, higher than the 11.8% average for the whole of the business economy.

Sectoral analysis

The professional, scientific and technical activities sector can be divided into seven subsectors at the NACE division level. Among these, according to the data available for 2022, there were big differences in their contribution to value added and employment.

Sectoral analysis of Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022



Note: Ranked on employment

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_ovw_act)

eurostat

Figure 1: Sectoral analysis of professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_ovw_act)

Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

	Number of enterprises	Number of persons employed	Net turnover	Value added	Employee benefits expense
	(thousands)			(€ million)	
Professional, scientific and technical activities	5 036.4	12 068.2	1 608 446.5	724 145.0	442 931.1
Legal and accounting activities	1270.9	3 300.0	300 000.0	200 000.0	100 000.0
Activities of head offices; management consultancy activities	1200.9	2 500.0	500 000.0	180 000.0	:
Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis	1084.1	3 127.2	384 693.8	182 717.9	119 493.9
Scientific research and development	80.9	530.0	98 000.0	47 600.0	32 000.0
Advertising and market research	361.0	1 009.0	160 611.1	51 347.2	33 164.9
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	948.5	1 280.0	120 000.0	51 000.0	23 000.0
Veterinary activities	90.2	262.2	21 870.6	10 929.9	5 857.5

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Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_ovw_act)

eurostat

Table 2a: Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_ovw_act)

Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

	Apparent labour productivity	Average employee benefits expense	Wage-adjusted labour productivity	Gross operating rate
	(thousand € per head)		(%)	
Professional, scientific and technical activities	60.0	54.2	110.6	17.5
Legal and accounting activities	60.6	:	:	:
Activities of head offices; management consultancy activities	72.0	:	:	:
Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis	58.4	52.9	110.5	16.4
Scientific research and development	89.8	66.7	134.7	15.7
Advertising and market research	50.9	44.9	113.3	11.3
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	39.8	41.8	95.3	23.3
Veterinary activities	41.7	32.4	128.6	23.2

(:) not available

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_ovw_act)

eurostat

Table 2b: Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_ovw_act)

Country overview

The most specialized EU countries in employment terms in the professional, scientific and technical services sector in 2022 were Cyprus and Luxembourg as each contributed to more than 10% of their business economy employment in these activities. Luxembourg was also in the top ranking in relation to the most specialized EU countries for value added, exceeded only by Malta, each with double-digit shares of at least 10% in 2022.

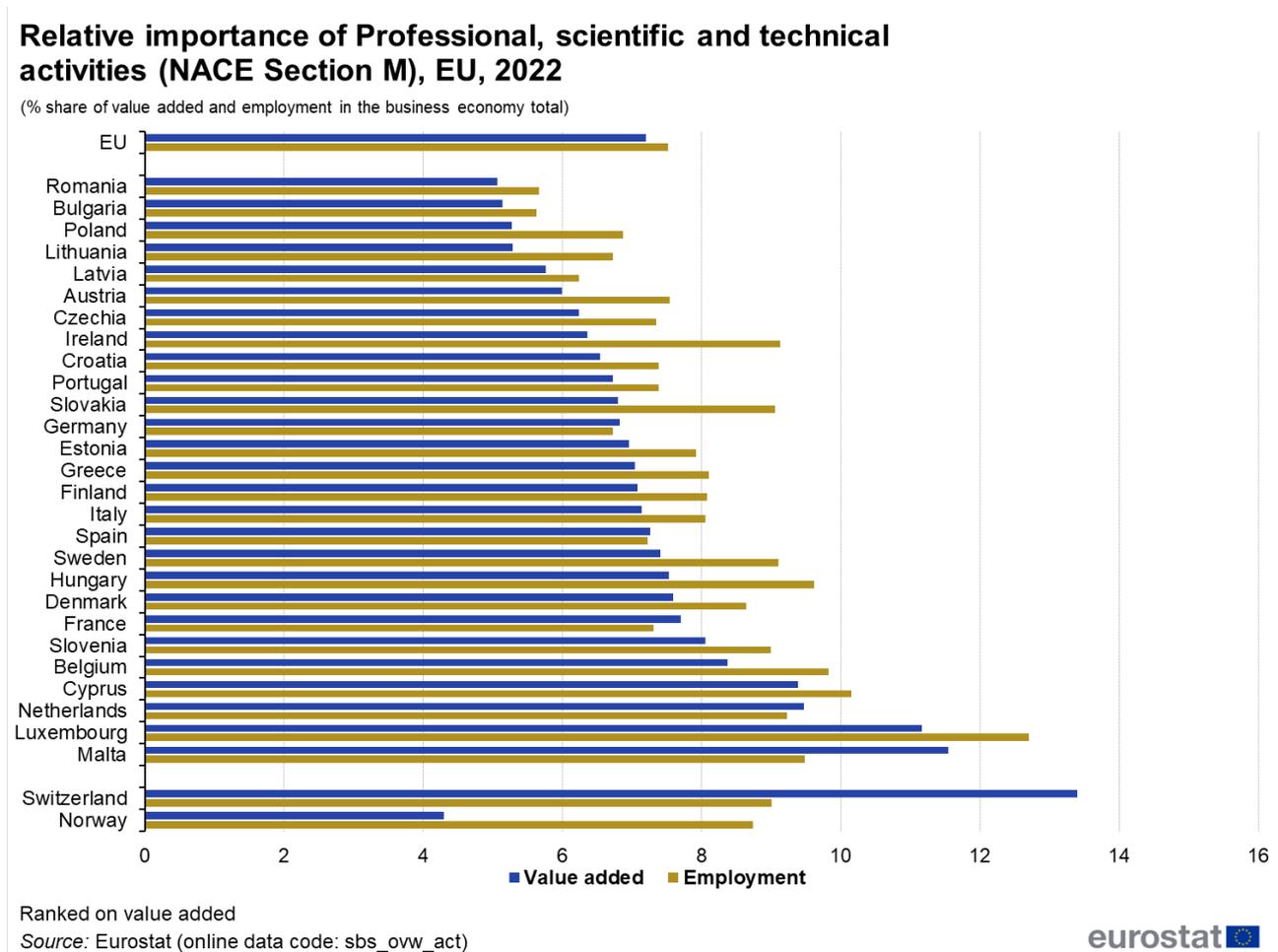
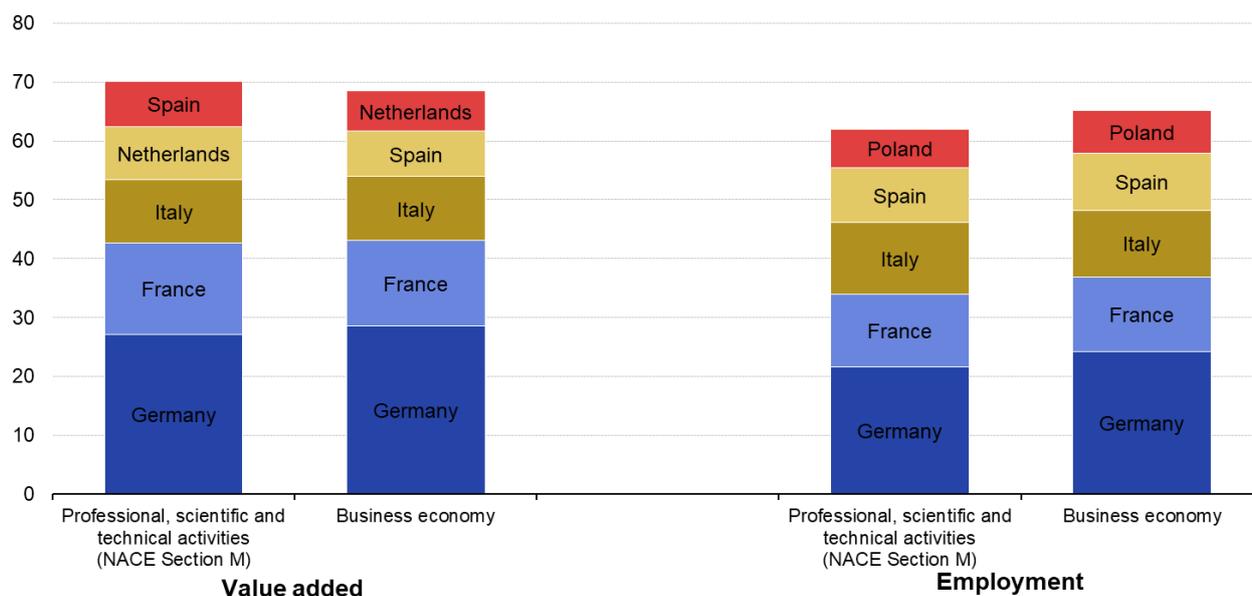


Figure 2: Relative importance of Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022
 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_oww_act)

Germany had the largest share of EU within the professional, scientific and technical services sector in 2022 in both value added (27.1%) and sectorial employment (21.6% of the total). The 5 largest EU countries generated 70.2% of the EU's value added and contributed to almost two thirds (62.0%) of the EU's employment.

Concentration of value added and employment, Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

(cumulative share of the five principal Member States as a % of the EU total)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_oww_act)



Figure 3: Concentration of value added and employment, Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_oww_act)

In absolute terms, Germany generated € 196.3 billion of value added in professional, scientific and technical activities in 2022.

Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

	Number of enterprises	Number of persons employed	Turnover	Value added	Employee benefits expense	Gross investment in tangible non-current assets
	(thousands)			(€ million)		
EU	5 036.4	12 068.2	1 608 446.5	724 145.0	442 931.1	58 838.3
Belgium	197.1	381.7	79 434.1	32 433.8	13 541.2	6 709.4
Bulgaria	47.5	122.0	5 317.4	2 553.5	1 531.4	303.7
Czechia	210.4	310.7	26 340.1	9 519.0	5 582.7	1 426.6
Denmark	41.5	191.7	39 156.8	17 221.6	14 857.0	533.5
Germany	470.5	2 604.9	371 849.8	196 305.3	121 809.6	17 023.1
Estonia	24.7	43.0	3 285.9	1 463.3	820.2	164.9
Ireland	51.6	209.4	87 191.5	26 963.4	11 873.9	1 984.5
Greece	156.4	276.2	13 948.7	6 402.8	2 917.2	314.9
Spain	443.5	1 124.7	115 713.6	56 318.6	36 154.4	3 121.1
France	669.4	1 498.3	229 697.9	112 299.0	86 321.7	10 078.5
Croatia	37.7	92.8	5 031.9	2 356.8	1 439.9	104.6
Italy	878.7	1 465.9	157 750.8	77 991.3	27 288.9	3 247.0
Cyprus	12.3	38.4	3 483.4	1 675.5	1 092.5	36.9
Latvia	20.1	42.7	2 637.3	1 151.3	695.9	102.9
Lithuania	43.7	83.7	4 248.8	2 060.3	1 103.9	303.6
Luxembourg	10.8	50.0	63 910.4	5 873.7	5 016.6	257.9
Hungary	174.6	323.3	16 628.6	7 270.7	3 971.9	1 132.4
Malta	7.6	22.5	3 121.3	1 485.6	560.7	38.5
Netherlands	443.6	789.6	156 107.5	65 086.5	41 188.6	2 780.7
Austria	91.2	282.9	34 996.8	17 178.9	10 184.2	1 139.3
Poland	361.5	791.5	51 583.6	20 105.3	12 050.1	2 436.2
Portugal	149.2	322.0	20 592.0	9 546.4	6 161.8	1 248.3
Romania	112.0	266.2	13 830.9	6 758.7	3 231.0	870.1
Slovenia	39.7	70.2	6 757.4	2 944.0	1 449.3	240.9
Slovakia	96.4	164.5	12 280.8	3 949.3	2 112.4	787.3
Finland	68.2	142.6	19 725.7	9 492.1	7 659.7	451.4
Sweden	176.5	356.7	63 823.6	27 738.5	22 314.5	2 038.9
Norway	62.0	170.9	37 510.6	18 321.4	14 814.9	1 238.7
Switzerland	25.0	321.0	162 897.2	61 124.7	:	3 799.3

(:) not available

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_oww_act)



Table 3a: Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_oww_act)

The apparent labour productivity of the professional, scientific and technical services sector in 2022 varied from € 20 900 per person employed in Bulgaria, to € 128 800 per person employed in Ireland. It was even higher, at € 190 400 per person employed in Switzerland (not an EU country). However, after adjusting for the average employee benefits expense the ranking of countries according to the wage-adjusted labour productivity was a bit different. The highest wage-adjusted labour productivity was recorded in Ireland, followed by Malta. At the other side, Czechia and Poland had the lowest wage-adjusted labour productivity ratios.

Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022

	Apparent labour productivity (thousand € per head)	Average employee benefits expense	Wage-adjusted labour productivity (%)	Gross operating rate
EU	60.0	54.2	110.6	17.5
Belgium	85.0	73.9	114.9	23.8
Bulgaria	20.9	18.2	115.1	19.2
Czechia	30.6	33.6	91.1	14.9
Denmark	89.8	86.3	104.2	6.0
Germany	75.4	57.8	130.5	20.0
Estonia	34.0	25.7	132.5	19.6
Ireland	128.8	64.7	199.1	17.3
Greece	23.2	21.8	106.4	25.0
Spain	50.1	46.5	107.7	17.4
France	75.0	75.8	99.0	11.3
Croatia	25.4	20.1	126.1	18.2
Italy	53.2	46.4	114.6	32.1
Cyprus	43.6	30.6	142.5	16.7
Latvia	27.0	19.9	135.8	17.3
Lithuania	24.6	21.0	117.0	22.5
Luxembourg	117.4	108.2	108.5	1.3
Hungary	22.5	22.7	99.1	19.8
Malta	66.0	33.5	197.3	29.6
Netherlands	82.4	73.1	112.8	15.3
Austria	60.7	56.1	108.3	20.0
Poland	25.4	26.5	95.9	15.6
Portugal	29.7	29.1	102.0	16.4
Romania	25.4	15.3	166.0	25.5
Slovenia	41.9	34.6	121.3	22.1
Slovakia	24.0	24.5	97.9	15.2
Finland	66.6	66.9	99.6	9.3
Sweden	91.3	63.9	143.0	10.1
Norway	107.2	95.2	112.6	9.4
Switzerland	190.4	:	:	14.2

(:) not available

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_oww_act)



Table 3b: Key indicators: Professional, scientific and technical activities (NACE Section M), EU, 2022 - Source: Eurostat (sbs_oww_act)

Data sources

Coverage

In NACE the following seven divisions are included as part of this sector:

- legal and accounting activities (Division 69);
- activities of head offices and management consultancy activities (Division 70);
- architectural, engineering and technical consultancy services (Division 71);
- scientific research and development (Division 72);
- advertising (including direct mailing) and market research (Division 73);

- other professional, scientific and technical services such as design, photography, translation and interpretation services (Division 74);
- veterinary services for farm animals and pets (Division 75).

The professional, scientific and technical services sector does not include activities of holding companies that are not engaged in managing (which are classified as a financial activity), while management consultancy does not include educational consultancy activities (which are part of the education sector). Test drilling in connection with mining operations is considered part of the [mining and quarrying sector](#) (Section B) rather than technical consultancy.

Data sources

The analysis presented in this article is based on the main dataset for [structural business statistics \(SBS\)](#), size class data and regional data, all of which are published annually.

The main series provides information for each EU Member State as well as a number of non-member countries at a detailed level according to the activity classification NACE. Data are available for a wide range of variables.

In structural business statistics, size classes are generally defined by the number of persons employed. A limited set of the standard structural business statistics variables (for example, the number of enterprises, turnover, persons employed and value added) are analysed by size class, mostly down to the three-digit (group) level of NACE. The main size classes used in this article for presenting the results are:

- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): with 1 to 249 persons employed, further divided into:
 - micro enterprises: with less than 10 persons employed;
 - small enterprises: with 10 to 49 persons employed;
 - medium-sized enterprises: with 50 to 249 persons employed;
- large enterprises: with 250 or more persons employed.

Structural business statistics also include regional data. Regional SBS data are available at NUTS levels 1 and 2 for the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway, mostly down to the 2-digit (division) level of NACE. The main variable analyzed in this article is the number of persons employed. The type of statistical unit used for regional SBS data is normally the [local unit](#), which is an enterprise or part of an enterprise situated in a geographically identified place. Local units are classified into sectors (by NACE) normally according to their own main activity, but in some EU Member States the activity code is assigned on the basis of the principal activity of the enterprise to which the local unit belongs. The main SBS data series are presented at national level only, and for this national data the statistical unit is the enterprise. It is possible for the principal activity of a local unit to differ from that of the enterprise to which it belongs. Hence, national SBS data from the main series are not necessarily directly comparable with national aggregates compiled from regional SBS.

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Businesses in the professional, scientific and technical activities sector - 2022 data](#)

Many of the services covered within this article could be performed in-house by enterprises themselves, but purchasing (outsourcing) them from service providers enables them to focus on their core activities, taking advantage of the specialization offered by service providers. As such, an efficient and successful professional, scientific and technical services sector can contribute to the overall [competitiveness](#) of an economy.

Some professional and technical services are closely regulated by national governments and professional bodies, with restrictions on the number of entrants into the profession, rates charged and billing arrangements, organisational structure of businesses providing these services, exclusive rights enjoyed by practitioners, and the ability to advertise.

The freedom to provide services and the freedom of establishment are central principles to the [internal market](#) for services. They guarantee EU enterprises the freedom to establish themselves in other Member States, and the freedom to provide services on the territory of another Member State. The [Directive on services in the internal market](#) (COM(2006) 123) aims to achieve a genuine internal market in services, removing legal and administrative barriers to the development of services activities between Member States. As well as covering many professional, scientific and technical services (with the notable exception of services covered by notaries), the Directive applies to a wide variety of services including industrial and construction activities, as well as distributive trades, accommodation and food services, real estate, administrative and support service activities.

Explore further

Other articles

- [Other analyses of the business economy by NACE Rev. 2 sections](#)
- [Structural business statistics – overview article](#)
- [Structural business statistics at regional level](#)

Thematic section

- [Structural business statistics webpage](#)

Publications

- [Structural business statistics – SBS metadata file](#)

Selected datasets

- [Structural business statistics \(sbs\)](#)

External links

- [European Commission – Competition](#) , see:
- [Professional services](#)
- [– Internal market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs](#) , see:
- [Single market for services](#)

Legislation

- [Details on SBS Legislation](#)
- [European Business Statistics Regulation](#)