

Structural business statistics overview

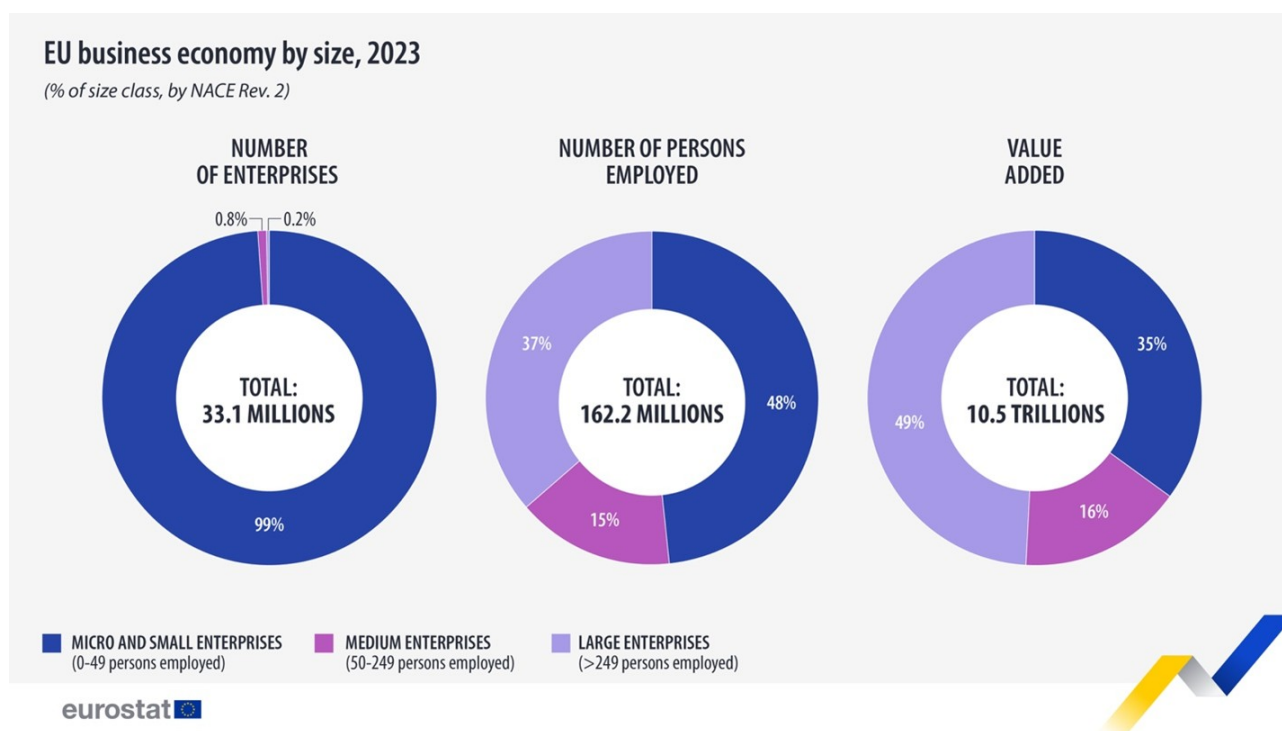
Statistics Explained

Data extracted in September 2025.
Planned article update: October 2026.

Highlights

33.1 million enterprises were active in the EU in 2023, employing 162.2 million persons. Of that total, 99.8% were small and medium-sized enterprises, which employed almost two-thirds of the active population in the EU business economy.

In 2023, the service sector was the biggest of the EU's business economy, accounting for nearly two thirds of the enterprises (63%), half of total value added (49%), and employing over half of the workforce (52%).



This article presents [structural business statistics \(SBS\)](#) that inform in detail about the structure, economic activity and performance of businesses across the [European Union \(EU\)](#), its Member States and [EFTA](#) countries. SBS statistics support the decision-making and monitoring of the policies related to the business sector in the EU. SBS data is also used by the business and scientific communities, and all information is available to the public. SBS cover the 'business economy' (NACE Rev. 2 sections B to N, P to R as well as division S95 and S96) which includes: industry, construction, distributive trades and services. While the statistics presented in this article are generally analysed at the level of [NACE](#) sections, SBS are available at a much more detailed level (for several hundred economic activities). In addition, analysis for different sizes of enterprises is possible, e.g. for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

SBS provide answers to questions on the wealth creation ([value added](#)), [investment](#) and labour input of different economic activities. The data can be used to analyse structural shifts, for example between industry and services, country specialisations in particular activities, sectoral [productivity](#) and [profitability](#) , as well as a range of other topics. Because they are available with an analysis by [enterprise size](#) class, SBS also illustrate the relative role of [large enterprises](#) and [small and medium-sized enterprises \(SMEs\)](#) , which is of particular use to EU policymakers and analysts wishing to focus on entrepreneurship and the role of SMEs and large enterprises in stimulating economic performance and job creation. Furthermore, SBS provide useful background information for an interpretation of [short-term statistics](#) and the [business cycle](#) .

Sectoral analysis

Services activities accounted for the largest share of the [enterprise population](#) within the EU 's [business economy](#) when analysed at NACE Rev. 2 section level for 2023: just under one-fifth (17.6%) of the 33.1 million enterprises in the EU's business economy were classified to distributive trades (motor trade, wholesale trade and retail trade), while close to one in six (15.6%) were in professional, scientific and technical activities – see Figure 1. Many business services have benefitted from outsourcing, which may explain, in part, the structural shift towards services. Human health and social work activities is ranked third among the services activities, accounting for (7.3%) of the EU's business economy, with 2.4 million enterprises.

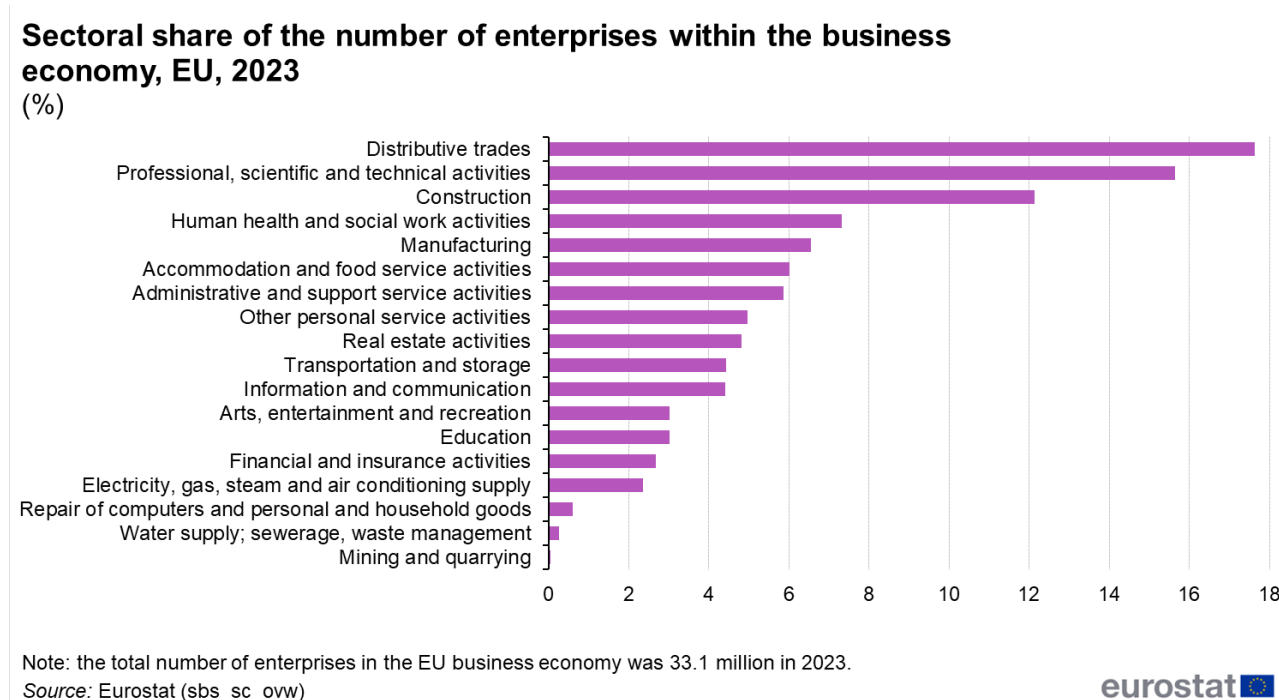


Figure 1: Sectoral share of the number of enterprises within the business economy, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

The business economy workforce ([persons employed](#)) reached over 162.2 million in 2023 in the EU, and generated a total of € 10 460 [billion](#) of value added.

Among the NACE Rev. 2 sections within the business economy, 'Manufacturing' was the largest in terms of value added: about 2.2 million manufacturing enterprises in the EU generated approximately € 2 470 billion of value added in 2023, while providing [employment](#) to 30.3 million persons. Distributive trade enterprises had the second largest share of employment: these enterprises provided employment to over 29.8 million persons and generated € 1 576 billion of value added. Financial and insurance activities had the third highest value added (€ 955.7 billion) but only the tenth largest workforce (5.0 million persons). 'Professional, scientific and technical activities' had the

fourth highest value added (€ 779.3 billion) and only the sixth largest workforce (12.4 million persons).

Table 1: Value added, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_ovw)

Number of persons employed, EU, 2023
(thousands)

	Industry, construction and market services	Mining and quarrying	Manufacturing	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	Construction	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Transportation and storage	Accommodation and food service activities	Information and communication	Financial and insurance activities	Real estate activities	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Administrative and support service activities	Education	Human health and social work activities	Arts, entertainment and recreation	Repair of computers and personal and household goods	Other personal service activities
EU	162 151.8	376.9	30 286.2	1 425.4	1 597.8	13 930.7	29 795.2	10 312.8	11 318.4	7 369.6	4 989.4	2 729.6	12 381.5	14 083.4	2 500.1	13 479.3	2 324.5	355.5	2 915.4
Belgium	3 941.7	2.4	519.2	22.3	28.3	361.4	635.8	231.1	192.0	168.0	121.1	75.2	369.5	491.1	21.1	592.2	57.0	5.1	53.1
Bulgaria	2 200.0	18.8	494.0	33.3	30.8	158.8	513.3	153.8	144.9	144.8	66.1	43.2	125.1	115.4	14.7	69.8	28.3	4.9	37.4
Czechia	4 262.8	18.8	1 273.3	42.1	56.7	415.0	741.4	293.7	180.3	179.8	94.6	88.8	317.6	274.8	35.3	141.9	38.4	12.3	55.6
Denmark	2 245.4	4.0	338.8	17.8	13.6	199.5	488.1	156.4	156.5	133.6	97.7	60.8	199.6	166.7	18.4	112.5	52.3	4.3	25.0
Germany	38 313.0	36.6	8 161.8	424.5	303.1	2 622.8	6 280.3	2 060.5	2 142.3	1 567.3	1 105.7	643.1	2 645.6	3 177.0	462.4	5 585.3	456.7	40.3	583.3
Estonia	550.0	2.3	109.0	5.6	3.7	58.9	102.5	38.1	26.8	40.9	17.3	19.9	45.5	38.3	5.8	16.1	9.7	0.8	9.9
Ireland	2 345.5	3.4	272.4	13.3	11.2	206.4	419.7	113.8	243.2	150.3	134.5	39.1	219.3	189.3	67.9	170.8	44.3	3.2	43.1
Greece	3 488.2	6.0	388.4	31.0	16.5	186.3	838.9	188.1	725.7	112.6	70.8	30.9	291.6	177.9	113.1	160.9	69.6	10.8	66.3
Spain	15 778.5	19.0	2 144.8	45.1	181.8	1 344.5	3 139.8	973.6	1 662.2	651.3	456.1	264.6	1 150.6	1 623.9	528.5	886.6	371.4	48.6	296.1
France	20 790.8	15.4	3 260.7	231.7	222.8	2 056.7	3 755.1	1 485.4	1 410.4	1 089.4	861.9	318.9	1 550.7	2 240.6	304.7	1 259.4	241.0	58.1	400.3
Croatia	1 310.0	2.0	276.4	15.1	30.8	150.8	255.5	80.8	124.1	67.4	38.1	13.1	98.0	68.2	13.2	29.8	17.2	4.3	23.3
Italy	18 638.3	16.0	3 917.6	97.9	229.3	1 625.2	3 455.7	1 193.4	1 655.5	865.5	532.3	289.7	1 513.1	1 543.4	141.4	1 075.1	207.5	43.9	454.2
Cyprus	401.2	0.6	37.7	2.4	2.3	39.1	77.5	22.6	57.2	26.3	22.7	4.3	41.7	20.0	13.1	15.2	8.3	0.6	9.0
Latvia	675.1	3.4	115.5	9.5	6.8	61.0	140.9	65.6	32.3	42.7	15.6	27.1	42.3	39.0	11.4	28.5	12.0	1.4	19.5
Lithuania	1 287.5	2.4	231.9	13.1	12.3	135.6	247.3	188.9	53.4	58.9	21.6	42.8	85.9	84.2	24.6	38.6	18.8	3.1	23.6
Luxembourg	399.5	0.3	34.2	2.0	1.6	52.9	55.1	24.7	24.1	22.9	48.5	5.0	51.7	40.5	2.5	26.5	2.0	0.2	4.6
Hungary	3 330.7	3.7	778.6	38.7	43.5	330.2	606.4	198.6	160.2	87.8	76.8	308.4	269.9	46.3	81.7	45.6	12.1	78.6	
Malta	258.8	0.2	25.2	1.8	2.0	19.1	42.6	18.4	26.0	14.0	12.1	5.1	25.5	29.4	5.8	11.4	13.9	0.8	4.7
Netherlands	8 665.5	8.3	768.9	35.1	31.5	562.0	1 623.0	448.2	544.2	385.0	298.0	81.9	815.3	1 001.3	130.8	1 608.4	180.1	13.3	129.4
Austria	3 803.9	7.5	733.7	38.3	23.8	359.4	720.1	226.6	323.8	151.3	122.9	64.8	291.8	261.4	50.3	280.6	64.8	3.8	80.1
Poland	11 524.3	147.3	2 881.1	148.0	150.2	1 147.0	2 399.2	919.9	325.6	562.6	349.5	203.2	798.0	575.2	176.9	450.8	64.8	31.7	188.8
Portugal	4 614.5	9.7	752.7	16.6	39.4	430.4	842.1	222.2	445.2	162.4	96.9	99.9	340.7	608.7	116.6	232.7	79.8	8.3	84.0
Romania	4 831.9	27.1	1 108.3	62.5	87.4	516.2	1 008.3	442.4	211.9	278.4	98.3	56.7	281.7	344.3	41.4	111.9	67.9	13.5	67.1
Slovenia	792.9	2.3	224.8	8.9	11.1	85.3	124.4	56.6	44.1	36.1	19.6	7.3	71.9	39.0	10.2	24.3	12.9	1.9	11.4
Slovakia	1 842.3	4.6	491.4	17.6	19.5	201.1	329.0	117.8	64.7	88.2	42.0	35.6	168.8	134.7	14.6	59.9	20.7	4.4	25.9
Finland	1 772.1	6.8	330.0	14.9	12.8	180.1	283.7	131.0	82.4	116.7	51.3	27.5	143.8	180.9	11.9	142.0	27.5	2.8	25.1
Sweden	4 087.4	8.4	615.9	36.1	25.0	427.3	669.4	260.4	252.7	273.1	106.3	104.4	387.6	348.3	117.2	266.3	112.1	3.2	37.8
Iceland	161.2	0.2	23.2	1.9	0.9	19.1	28.6	13.8	18.1	9.7	0.0	2.6	11.8	11.9	4.2	7.4	3.9	0.2	3.3
Norway (*)	1 983.6	71.4	223.1	16.9	10.6	275.2	386.4	148.9	117.6	113.2	50.4	31.2	177.8	138.7	33.7	125.8	36.0	0.0	0.0
Switzerland	3 668.8	4.5	679.7	33.0	17.5	326.0	599.3	245.0	231.0	176.0	274.8	57.4	331.4	331.1	98.8	157.0	69.1	2.7	30.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina (*)	613.4	15.8	171.6	17.8	13.8	41.1	157.2	39.9	37.8	30.3	0.0	0.0	3.7	27.1	18.5	6.0	11.7	10.4	1.4
Montenegro (*)	175.4	2.0	13.7	3.5	4.6	17.7	52.2	13.0	20.7	10.5	0.0	0.0	3.7	15.4	11.6	0.7	0.9	5.2	0.0
North Macedonia	445.7	3.8	118.5	8.6	10.1	30.6	98.8	30.1	23.1	21.6	11.6	2.4	26.0	21.1	3.5	20.4	10.0	1.0	4.8
Albania (*)	559.9	9.2	104.7	11.6	12.5	58.2	137.1	23.9	57.0	25.5	0.0	0.0	3.9	26.7	36.9	11.7	16.3	7.0	4.8
Serbia	1 787.3	15.7	491.2	38.9	38.7	116.8	392.0	128.3	94.8	107.7	43.8	11.6	119.3	103.0	18.6	22.6	24.6	5.1	13.6

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs_sc_ovw)

(*) not available

(*) Confidential

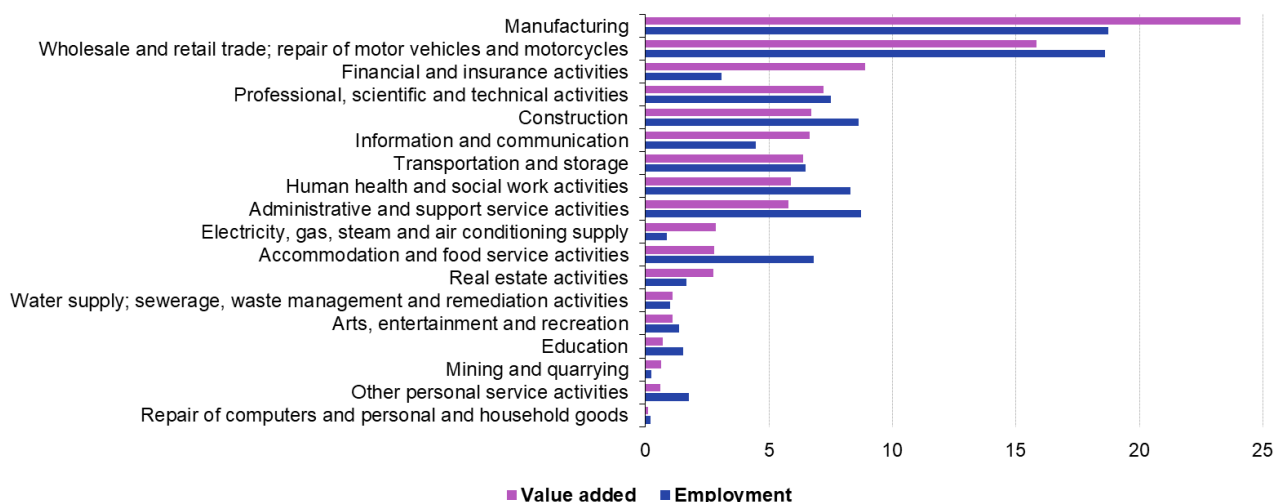
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Table 2: Number of persons employed, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_ovw)

Figure 2 distinguishes the value added and employment contributions of the various sectors to the business economy totals. The industrial activity of 'manufacturing' contributed more in terms of value added than employment to the overall business economy, indicating an above average [apparent labour productivity](#). This was also the case in some of the service activities, namely 'Financial and insurance activities', which had the highest apparent labour productivity overall, as well as 'Real estate activities', as 'Information and communication services', 'Arts, entertainment and recreation' and 'Other personal service activities'. By contrast, the 'Construction sector' and a number of services – notably 'Repair of computers and personal and household goods' as well as 'Accommodation and food services' and 'Administrative and support services' (which includes cleaning and security services, as well as employment services such as the provision of temporary personnel)– reported relatively low levels of apparent labour productivity. 'Transportation and storage' and 'Human health and social work activities' have highest difference in the share between value added and employment. Distributive trade also presents a lower share in value added than employment; however, it represents the second largest contributor after 'Manufacturing' in terms of both value added and employment. It should be noted that the employment data presented are in terms of head counts and not, for example, [full-time equivalents](#), and there may be a significant proportion of persons working part-time in some of these service activities, which may explain, at least to some degree, their relatively low levels of apparent labour productivity.

Analysis of value added and employment within the business economy, EU, 2023

(% of value added and employment within the business economy)



Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_ovw)

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Figure 2: Analysis of value added and employment within the business economy, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_ovw)

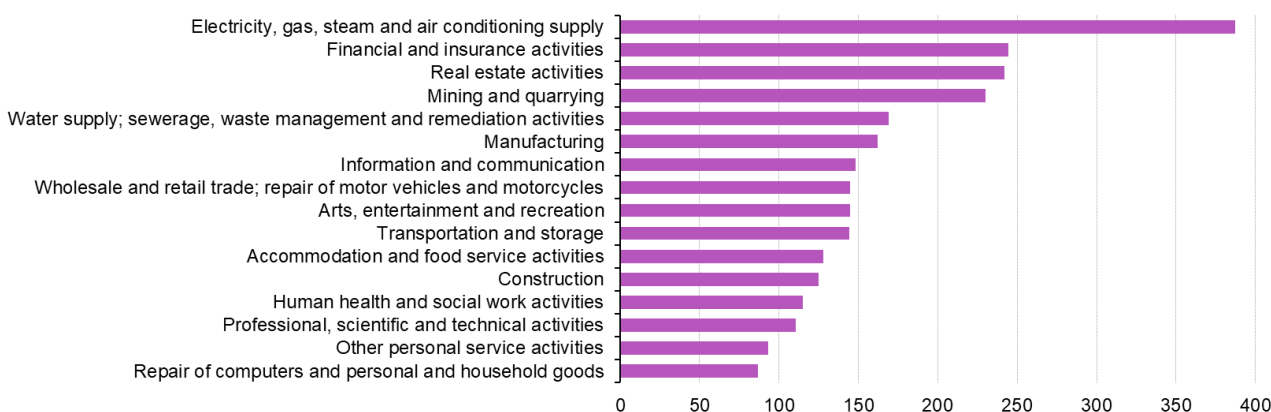
Varying rates of part-time work also help explain, in part, the considerable differences in average [personnel costs](#) within the business economy of the EU, as shown in Table 3. Average personnel costs in the EU was highest in the 'Financial and insurance activities' at € 78 350 per employee in 2023 and were slightly lower for the 'Electricity, gas steam and air conditioning supply' sector (€ 71 300 per employee) and 'Information and communication' (€ 65 600 per employee). Average personnel costs for the 'Financial and insurance activities' sector were almost 4 times as those recorded for 'Accommodation and food services' (€ 22 150 per employee) and more than twice those recorded for 'Repair of computers and personal and household goods' (€ 32 230 per employee), 'Arts, entertainment and recreation' (€ 35 090 per employee) and 'Distributive trades' (€ 36 600 per employee). The variation in average personnel costs was even more marked between EU countries: for example, for the 'Information and communication' sector average personnel costs ranged (among those EU countries for which data are available) by a factor of more than 10, from a high of € 97 900 per employee in Ireland to a low of € 30 500 per employee in Croatia; within the 'Manufacturing' sector average personnel costs ranged by a factor of 7, from a high of € 79

250 per employee in Denmark and € 78 750 per employee in Belgium to a low of € 13 200 per employee in Bulgaria.

Table 3: Average employee benefits expense, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_ovw)

The influence of part-time employment is largely removed in the [wage adjusted labour productivity ratio](#), which shows the relation between average value added per person employed and average personnel costs per employee (see Figure 3). This ratio was particularly high (387%) in the EU 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' activities in 2023, as well as in 'Financial and insurance' activities (244%) and in 'Real estate activities' (242%). The wage adjusted labour productivity ratio, for which information is available, fell below 100% in 2 services activities: 'Other personal service activities' and 'Repair of computers, personal and household goods'.

Wage adjusted labour productivity within the business economy, EU, 2023 (%)



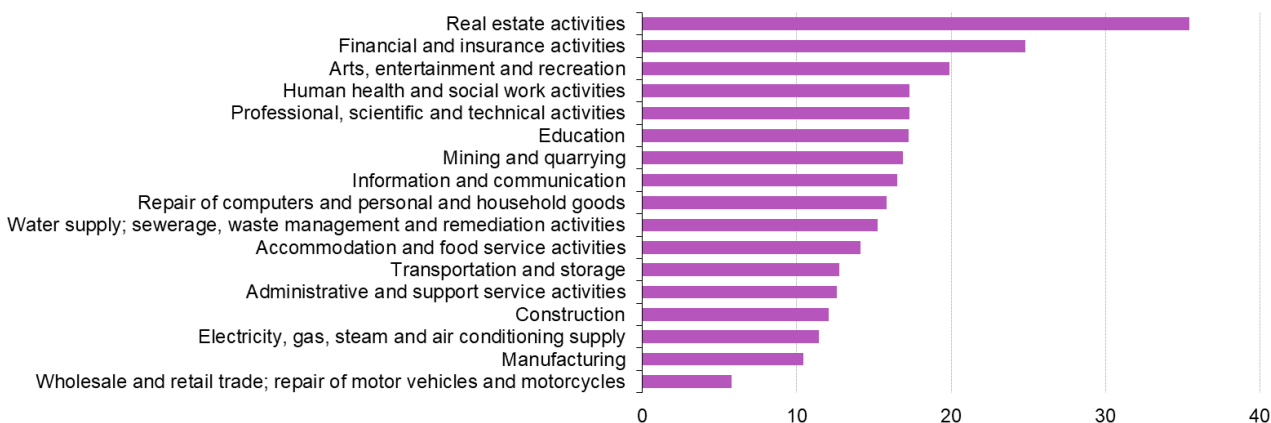
No data available due to confidentiality for Administrative and support service activities, Education
Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

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Figure 3: Wage adjusted labour productivity within the business economy, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

The **gross operating rate** shown in Figure 4 relates the **gross operating surplus** (value added less personnel costs) to the level of **turnover** and in this way indicates the extent to which sales are converted into gross operating profit (before accounting for depreciation or taxes). Due at least in part to the very high level of sales inherent in wholesaling and retailing, the EU distributive trades sector displayed the lowest gross operating rate across NACE sections, at 5.8% in 2023. Capital-intensive activities (such as 'Real estate activities'; 35.5% and 'Financial and insurance activities'; 24.8%) tended to have high gross operating rates as the gross operating surplus by definition does not take account of financial or extraordinary costs related to capital expenditure.

Gross operating rate within the business economy, EU, 2023



Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

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Figure 4: Gross operating rate within the business economy, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

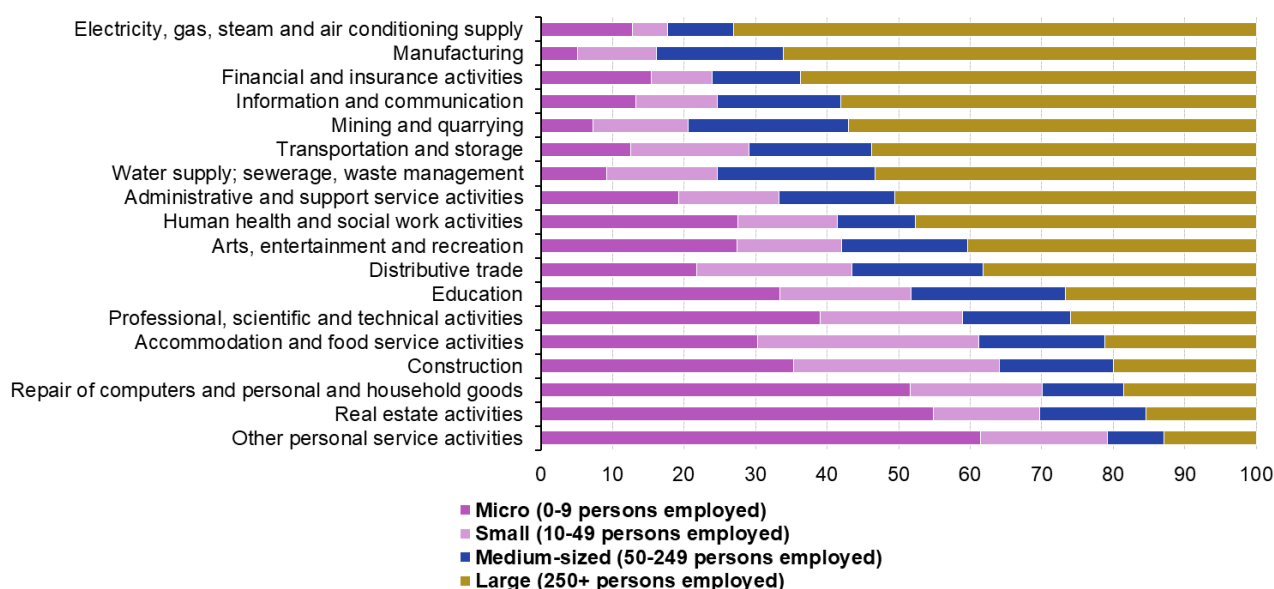
Size class analysis

Structural business statistics can be analysed by enterprise size class (defined in terms of the number of persons employed). The overwhelming majority (99.8%) of enterprises active within the EU's business economy in 2023

were micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – some 33.0 million – together they contributed 51.4% of the value added generated within the EU's business economy. More than 9 out of 10 (99.1%) enterprises in the EU were **micro enterprises** (employing less than 10 persons) and their share of value added within the business economy was considerably lower, around one-fifth (19.6%).

Enterprise size class analysis of value added, EU, 2023

(% of sectoral total)



Note: Estimates. For the purpose of the article some percentages have been calculated, which causes a lower reliability.

Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

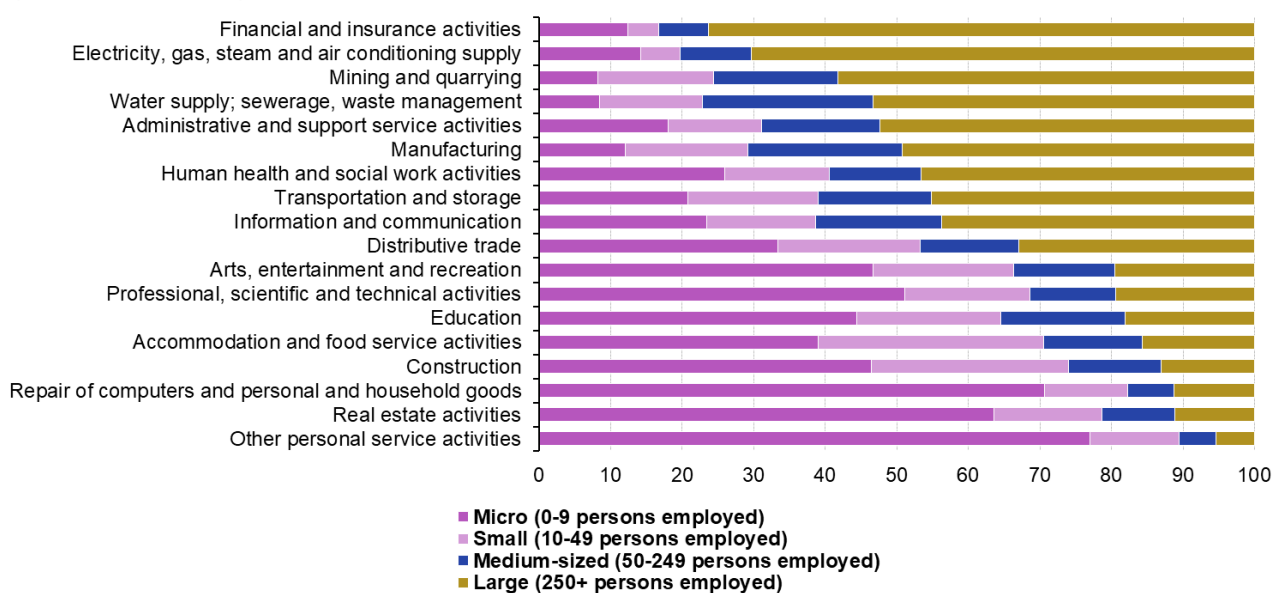
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Figure 5: Enterprise size class analysis of value added, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

Perhaps the most striking phenomenon of SMEs is their contribution to employment. Almost two-thirds (63.5%) of the EU's business economy workforce was employed in an SME in 2023. Some 19.9 million persons worked in SMEs in the distributive trades sector, 15.4 million in manufacturing and 12.1 million in construction.

In 2023, micro enterprises in the EU employed more people than any other enterprise size class in almost half of the service sectors (at the section level of detail). This pattern was particularly pronounced for 'Real estate activities', the 'Repair of computers', 'Personal and household goods' and 'Other personal service activities' where an absolute majority of the workforce worked in micro enterprises. By contrast, for 'Financial and insurance activities' as well as 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' and 'Mining and quarrying', 'Water supply, waste and remediation' and 'Administrative and support service activities', large enterprises employed more than half of the workforce.

Enterprise size class analysis of employment, EU, 2023 (% of sectoral total)



Note: Estimates. For the purpose of the article some percentages have been calculated, which causes a lower reliability.

Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

eurostat

Figure 6: Enterprise size class analysis of employment, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (sbs_sc_oww)

Business demography

Business demography statistics are presented in Table 4, which shows [enterprise birth](#) and [enterprise death](#) rates as well as the average size of newly born enterprises in terms of their employment. There are significant changes in the stock of enterprises within the business economy from one year to the next, reflecting among other things the level of competition, entrepreneurial spirit and the business environment.

Eurostat publishes detailed Business demography statistics compiled along the requirements of the new framework for European Business Statistics (EBS). Several improvements enhance the data's capacity for analysis of the activity of enterprises in the EU, in particular for high-growth and young high-growth enterprises (also known as gazelles). The data now cover more economic activities, e.g. within services (education; human health and social work activities; arts, entertainment and recreation) and financial and insurance activities. Moreover, regional Business demography statistics are now available for all EU countries. In 2023, the rate of enterprise births in the EU was 10.5%. Among the EU countries it ranged from 6.2% in Austria to 17.1% in Malta and 19.6% in Lithuania. The average employment size of newly born enterprises in 2023 varied between 0.4 persons in Finland and 2.0 persons in Greece. At the EU level, the average size of newly born enterprises was 1.1 persons. In 2023, enterprise death rates, which are based on provisional data, were particularly low in Hungary (2.6%) Greece (3.4%), the Netherlands (5.0%) and Austria (5.1%), ranging up to 27.5% in Estonia, 16.6% in Ireland, and 16.5% in Bulgaria. At EU level, the preliminary rate of enterprise deaths stood 8.5%. In most EU countries more companies were created than dissolved. The exceptions to this were Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Poland and Slovakia where the number of enterprises dissolved surpassed the number of companies created.

Enterprise demography, business economy, EU, 2023

	Enterprise birth rates (% of enterprise births among active enterprises)	Average employment size of newly born enterprises (number of persons employed)	Enterprise death rates (% of enterprise deaths among active enterprises) ⁽¹⁾
EU	10.5	1.1	8.5
Belgium	8.2	1.3	5.5
Bulgaria	10.7	1.2	16.5
Czechia	9.1	0.8	6.7
Denmark	7.3	1.0	9.8
Germany ⁽²⁾	8.4	1.5	8.9
Estonia	14.3	1.2	27.5
Ireland	11.9	1.6	16.6
Greece	8.5	2.0	3.4
Spain	9.1	1.2	7.8
France	14.0	0.6	10.9
Croatia	12.5	1.3	5.3
Italy	7.8	1.2	5.7
Cyprus	9.7	0.9	7.2
Latvia	12.9	1.0	6.2
Lithuania	19.6	0.7	16.2
Luxembourg ⁽³⁾	9.0	1.1	7.8
Hungary	9.4	1.1	2.6
Malta	17.1	1.2	6.6
Netherlands	9.4	0.6	5.0
Austria	6.2	1.3	5.1
Poland	11.5	1.4	12.4
Portugal	16.8	1.2	11.5
Romania	12.4	1.5	7.1
Slovenia ⁽³⁾	10.5	1.1	6.6
Slovakia	11.7	1.1	13.7
Finland	9.0	0.4	8.8
Sweden	8.2	0.9	6.9
Iceland	11.2	0.9	10.4
North Macedonia	9.3	2.4	12.8
Serbia	12.5	2.5	9.9

Source: Eurostat (online data code: bd_size)

Note: Industry, construction and market services (except activities of membership organisations)

(:) not available

⁽¹⁾ Enterprise death rates: provisional or estimates

⁽²⁾ Average employment size of newly born enterprises: estimate: Germany and Iceland.

⁽³⁾ Break in series

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Table 4: Enterprise demography, business economy, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (bd_I_form)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [SBS overview: tables and figures](#)

Data sources

Eurostat's structural business statistics describe the structure, conduct and performance of economic activities, down to the most detailed activity level (several hundred sectors). Without this structural information, short-term data on the economic cycle would lack context and would be more difficult to interpret.

Coverage, units and classifications

Structural business statistics cover the 'business economy', which includes industry, construction and many services (NACE Rev. 2 sections B to N, P to R as well as division S95 and S96). Structural business statistics do not cover agriculture, forestry and fishing, nor public administration. Structural business statistics describe the business economy through the observation of units engaged in an economic activity; the unit in structural business statistics is generally the enterprise. An enterprise carries out one or more activities, at one or more locations, and it may comprise one or more legal units. Enterprises that are active in more than one economic activity (plus the value added and turnover they generate, the people they employ, and so on) are classified under the NACE heading corresponding to their principal activity; this is normally the one which generates the largest amount of value added.

NACE Rev. 2 was adopted at the end of 2006, and implemented in structural business statistics from the 2008 reference year. Compared with NACE Rev. 1.1, this has enabled a broader and more detailed set of information to be compiled on services, while also updating the classification to identify new areas of activity better.

Starting with the reference year 2021, Structural Business Statistics are compiled under the legal basis of the [EU regulation 2019/2152](#) on European business statistics and its implementing act, [EU regulation 2020/1197](#) on technical specifications and arrangements.

Size class and regional analysis

Structural business statistics are also available with an analysis by region or by enterprise size class. In structural business statistics, size classes are defined by the number of persons employed, except for specific data series within retail trade activities where turnover size classes are also used. A limited set of the standard structural business statistics variables (for example, the number of enterprises, turnover, value added and persons employed) is analyzed by size class, mostly down to the three-digit (group) level of NACE. For statistical purposes, SMEs are generally defined as those enterprises employing fewer than 250 persons. The number of size classes available varies according to the activity under consideration. However, the main groups used in this article are:

- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): with less than 250 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 contain a comprehensive set of basic variables describing business demographics and employment characteristics, as well as monetary variables (mainly concerning operating income and expenditure, or investment). In addition, a set of derived indicators has been compiled: for example, ratios of monetary characteristics or per head values.

Business demography

Business demography are statistics about, amongst other things, the birth, survival (followed up to five years after birth) and death of enterprises within the business population. It reports changes in the stock of enterprises within the business economy from one year to the next, reflecting among other things the level of competition, entrepreneurial spirit and the business environment. Within this context the following definitions apply.

- Enterprise birth amounts to the creation of a combination of production factors, with the restriction that no other enterprises are involved in the event. Births do not include entries into the business population due to mergers, break-ups, split-offs or restructuring of a set of enterprises, nor do the statistics include entries into a sub-population that only result from a change of activity. The birth rate is the number of births relative to the stock of active enterprises.
- Enterprise birth rate: number of enterprise births in the reference period divided by the number of enterprises active in that same period.

- Enterprise death amounts to the dissolution of a combination of production factors, with the restriction that no other enterprises are involved in the event. An enterprise is only included in the count of deaths if it is not reactivated within 2 years. Equally, a reactivation within 2 years is not counted as a birth.
- Enterprise death rate: number of enterprise deaths in the reference period divided by the number of enterprises active in that same period.
- Average employment size of newly born enterprises: average number of persons employed in the reference period (t) among enterprises newly born in t divided by the number of newly enterprises born in it. If an enterprise was created later in the year with one self-employed person, the rounded annual average might be less than 1.

SME Relief Package and aligned to the SME definition regulated by the Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

Context

In March 2020, the European Commission presented a new [Industrial Strategy for Europe](#) that laid out a plan for how the EU's world-leading industry could lead the twin green and digital transitions, drawing on the strength of its traditions, its businesses and its people to enhance its competitiveness. It set in motion a new policy approach to deliver on this, focused on better connecting the needs and support provided to all players within each value chain or industrial ecosystem. To support this, it underlined the fundamentals of industry - innovation, competition and a strong and well-functioning single market - while strengthening EU global competitiveness through open markets and a level playing field.

In May 2021, the Commission [updated the EU Industrial Strategy](#) to ensure that its industrial ambition took account of the circumstances following the COVID-19 crisis, while ensuring EU industry could lead the way in transitioning to a green, digital and resilient economy. In particular, it focused on strengthening of the resilience of the Single Market; supporting Europe's open strategic autonomy through dealing with dependencies; supporting the business case for the twin transitions. The [internal market](#) remains one of the EU's most important priorities. The central principles governing the internal market for services were set out in the [EC Treaty](#). This guarantees EU enterprises the freedom to establish themselves in other EU countries and the freedom to provide services on the territory of another EU country other than the one in which they are established.

With the [Single Market Programme \(SMP\)](#) the European Commission helped the single market reach its full potential and ensured Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic providing an integrated package over the period of 2021-2027 to support and strengthen its governance.

SMEs are often referred to as the backbone of the European economy, providing a potential source for both jobs and economic growth. In March 2020, the European Commission adopted a Communication on SMEs referred to as [An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe](#). The objective was to unleash the power of Europe's SMEs of all kinds to lead the twin transitions. It aimed to considerably increase the number of SMEs engaging in sustainable business practices as well as the number of SMEs employing digital technologies. Ultimately, the goal was that Europe became the most attractive place to start a small business, make it grow and scale up in the single market.

In September 2023 the European Commission presented the [SME Relief Package](#) that aimed to provide short-term relief, boost long-term SME competitiveness and resilience, and foster a fair and SME-friendly business environment. The actions set up all revolve around the three main operational challenges for SMEs – administrative burden, finance and skills – with the aim to achieve very concrete goals: providing an enabling regulatory framework, reducing reporting requirements, simplifying taxes, fostering liquidity, improving access to finance, providing SMEs with the right skills and supporting them throughout their life cycle.

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