



Brussels, 18.12.2020
COM(2020) 821 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/974 of the European Parliament and of
the Council of 4 July 2018 on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. AIM OF THE REPORT

The Commission has an obligation to report on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/974 on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways ('the Regulation'). The specific timetable laid down in Article 9 of the Regulation is for the Commission to report by 31 December 2020 and every 5 years thereafter. The purpose of this report is to comply with the Commission's reporting requirement.

This report outlines the background, policy context and coverage of the legislation and discusses issues associated with its implementation. The final section describes possible future developments and presents conclusions.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Regulation was designed to provide the Commission, other EU institutions, national governments and the general public with comparable, reliable, harmonised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on developments in the carriage of goods transported by inland waterways within the EU.

As Regulation (EC) No 1365/2006¹ had been substantially amended several times, it was codified and repealed by Regulation (EU) 2018/974 to make it clearer and more streamlined. Only Commission Regulation (EC) No 425/2007² remains in force.

1.3. POLICY CONTEXT

Compared with other modes of transport, which often face congestion and capacity problems, transport by inland waterways is reliable and energy-efficient, and has considerable potential for expanded use.

Inland waterways are a competitive alternative to road transport. In particular, this mode of transport is an environment-friendly alternative in terms of both energy consumption and noise emissions. Moreover, inland waterways provide high safety levels, especially for the transport of dangerous goods. Finally, they relieve the burden on overloaded road networks in densely populated regions.

This sector is highly relevant to transport policy; the 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' White Paper³ sets out 10 goals for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system. The current inland navigation policy for 2014-2020 is embedded in the Naiades II action plan programme⁴. To carry out the tasks in the context of the successive Naiades programmes and the EU common transport policy, European inland waterways statistics are used in the framing, monitoring and evaluating of transport policies and other policies such as the operation of the internal market. Developing EU common transport policy requires in-depth

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1365/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways and repealing Council Directive 80/1119/EEC (OJ L 264, 25.9.2006, p. 1).

² Commission Regulation (EC) No 425/2007 of 19 April 2007 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1365/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways (OJ L 103, 20.4.2007, p. 26).

³ COM (2011) 144 final.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/inland/promotion/naiades2_en (available only in English).

knowledge of the scale of freight transport by inland waterways and the ways in which this mode of transport is changing. The data collected also help promote transport by inland waterways, while helping to integrate this mode of transport into the intermodal logistics chain.

The European Green Deal⁵ is the new growth strategy that aims to make the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and by making the transition just and inclusive for all. The European Green Deal Communication calls for a 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050. Priority actions for a shift to sustainable and smart mobility include:

- boosting multimodal transport;
- supporting the deployment of automated and connected mobility solutions across modes;
- better addressing external costs of transport activities through pricing;
- ramping up the production and deployment of sustainable alternative transport fuels; and
- reducing pollution from transport, especially in cities.

In order to boost multimodal transport, the European Green Deal is calling for a shift of 75% of transport from road to rail and inland waterways. To meet this objective, the European Commission will propose measures to increase the capacity of inland navigation from 2021.

1.4. COVERAGE OF MEMBER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES

The Regulation on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways applies directly and in its entirety to all Member States. It does not need to be transposed into national legislation. However, since not all Member States use transport by inland waterways, the Regulation affects only those where this mode of transport exists.

The Regulation sets a threshold above which Member States are obliged to provide data: the requirement applies to all those where the total volume of goods transported annually by inland waterways exceeds one million tonnes. Currently, 12 Member States are obliged to supply data: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Under the Regulation, countries exceeding the one million tonnes threshold but without international or transit traffic are required to provide only a reduced annual dataset (Table V1 in Annex V to the Regulation). Currently, this does not apply to any Member State.

Five Member States currently provide data on a voluntary basis: Czechia, Italy, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden. Although Czechia is below the threshold set by the Regulation, it reports all the data required. The other four countries provide a reduced annual dataset (Table V1 in Annex V).

Belgium, Czechia, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands and Romania also provide data on vessel traffic (optional Table II2 in Annex II).

Outside the European Union, Serbia, a candidate country, also provides quarterly data on a voluntary basis.

⁵ COM(2019) 640 final.

Since 1 February 2020, when the United Kingdom left the European Union, Eurostat has added to its datasets the new aggregate ‘European Union – 27 countries (from 2020)’ excluding the UK. During the transition period until the end of 2020, the United Kingdom is continuing to send data to Eurostat. These data are made available to users.

2. FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

2.1. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Compliance with the data provision obligations laid down in the Regulation is very good. All Member States provide the datasets required. Delays have only been observed in a few cases. The high level of compliance means that statistics on freight transport via inland waterways in Europe are reliable and of high quality.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED IN THE MEMBER STATES

The data collection and compilation processes differ among reporting countries but follow a traditional bottom-up flow of information. Data suppliers differ between countries, but the most frequent sources are the port and lock authorities. Countries complete their data with information received from a wide range of sources, including customs offices, neighbouring countries, private operators, firms and agencies. Nine of the reporting countries use data obtained from their River Information Service or other similar systems.

Most competent national authorities apply validation checks using internally developed control procedures before sending the information to Eurostat. The validation rules cover many aspects of the process, including data format, codification, internal consistency of each dataset, consistency between different datasets and variables, and time series consistency.

All reporting countries make direct or indirect use of data collected at national level, either for policy purposes or for dissemination.

2.3. COST AND BURDEN FOR THE MEMBER STATES

Eurostat is constantly trying to reduce and simplify burdens and receives regular feedback from Member States on this matter. In cooperation with the national statistical institutes, it is implementing specific measures to reduce the burden of data collection and reporting. These include:

1. the development of a distance matrix to facilitate reporting;
2. the development of automated transmission and validation tools and routines, which provide feedback to the Member States on data quality and specific errors in each dataset;
3. the organisation of regular meetings of national experts from Member States, European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries, candidate countries and potential candidates (i.e. the Expert group on Inland Waterways Transport Statistics and task forces) to share good practices and discuss data quality, issues and solutions.

According to the feedback collected through a questionnaire sent to the Member States in February 2020, most countries consider the collection of data to be useful and the cost and burden of data collection to be justified given the benefits of the data collected. One country regards the reporting of transit data as a major burden.

2.4. DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA RECEIVED

A high level of standardisation has been achieved in the technical arrangements for data transmission. Data are transmitted electronically to Eurostat via EDAMIS⁶, respecting the structure of data files and the record format. Thanks to a validation system implemented in EDAMIS, basic errors and incorrect codes are detected swiftly, and the information is rapidly incorporated into Eurostat's production database.

Once data have been loaded into Eurostat's production database, detailed quality checks are applied to the data transmitted. This validation includes the internal consistency of the datasets, consistency over time, consistency between datasets, and a comparison of results between partner reporting countries (mirror checks).

Overall, data quality can be considered good. Nevertheless, efforts are still required, especially to reduce the asymmetries highlighted by the mirror checks and to improve reporting of transit data.

2.5. METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES

Eurostat provides continuous methodological and technical support and makes every effort to maintain a high-quality data and metadata information system.

Eurostat has produced a *Reference Manual on Inland Waterways Transport Statistics*⁷ that provides Member States with guidance on implementing the Regulation. The reference manual is updated regularly (usually annually) to include the most recent information, documentation or guidelines relevant to collecting these statistics.

2.6. PILOT STUDIES ON THE AVAILABILITY OF STATISTICAL DATA RELATING TO PASSENGER TRANSPORT BY INLAND WATERWAYS

Article 5 of the Regulation requires the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to investigate the development of statistics on passenger transport by inland waterways, including by cross-border transport services. More specifically, Article 5 stipulates that the Commission is to:

- a) develop, by 8 December 2018, the methodology for relevant data collection;
- b) launch voluntary pilot studies to be carried out by the Member States that provide data within the scope of the Regulation on the availability of statistical data relating to passenger transport by inland waterways, by 8 December 2019;
- c) submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council by 8 December 2020.

Article 5 also states that the report to the European Parliament and the Council must present the results of the pilot studies. Depending on the results of that report, and within a reasonable period, the Commission is to submit, if appropriate, a legislative proposal to amend the current Regulation with regard to statistics on passenger transport by inland waterways.

⁶ EDAMIS (electronic dataflow administration and management information system) is the information system to implement the single entry point policy. All data files exchanged between Eurostat and its partners at national and international level are transmitted electronically through the EDAMIS application. In the case of transport statistics, the expected data format is laid down in the related legislation and further specified in technical manuals.

⁷ [https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/361f0475-4c86-4ff8-b83e-6cf3759f377e/Reference%20Manual October 2019.pdf](https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/361f0475-4c86-4ff8-b83e-6cf3759f377e/Reference%20Manual%20October%202019.pdf) (available only in English).

The Commission covered part of the costs of the pilot studies by awarding grants to the national statistical institutes and other national authorities.

Eurostat, together with the Member States, has developed a draft methodology for statistics on passenger transport by inland waterways. In line with Article 5(1) of the Regulation, this draft methodology was finalised on 6 December 2018 and made available to the Member States for use in their pilot studies. The pilot studies comprise two modules: statistics on passenger transport by inland waterways (module 1) and statistics on accidents involving inland waterways (module 2). In June 2019, grants to carry out pilot studies were awarded to seven countries: Croatia, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania and Sweden.

The topic was discussed by DIMESA (the Eurostat meeting of directors of sectoral and environmental statistics and accounts), which supports the work being done in this area.

2.7. PILOT STUDIES ON THE AVAILABILITY OF STATISTICAL DATA ON ACCIDENTS INVOLVING INLAND WATERWAYS

Article 5 of the Regulation does not refer to statistics on accidents. However, data on accidents involving inland waterways is another important area for the Commission. Specifically, it aims to develop a system for harmonised collection of statistics on accidents and incidents involving inland waterway vessels, including cross-border traffic.

Eurostat publishes data on accidents associated with five modes of transport (rail, road, aviation, maritime, and inland waterways (partially)). Data on accidents involving rail, aviation and maritime transport are collected by European Agencies focusing specifically on those areas. The Commission Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport collects accident data involving road. However, no such agency exists for data on accidents involving inland waterways. The figures published by Eurostat are provided by some Member States on a voluntary basis (see the *Reference Manual on Inland Waterways Transport Statistics*).

However, this collection is not complete. To obtain complete statistical data on all five modes of transport, Eurostat has reviewed and further developed the methodology for accidents in passenger and freight transport by inland waterways and included a dedicated module in the pilot studies.

The results of this module on accidents will help to improve the collection of data on accidents involving inland waterways.

2.8. DATA DISSEMINATION

Eurostat releases the data collected under the Regulation through the Eurostat dissemination database, which can be accessed free of charge from Eurostat's website. The database contains 17 tables on inland waterways transport, accompanied by a detailed metadata file.

Eurostat also produces three 'Statistics Explained' articles that provide an analysis of the data for the media and the general public⁸. Data dissemination also includes tailor-made data extractions for users and policy-makers, Eurostat news items and data in Eurostat publications (e.g. the *Energy, transport and environment statistics* statistical book⁹).

⁸ [Inland waterways freight transport - quarterly and annual data](#) (available only in English).
[Inland waterway transport statistics](#) (available only in English).

[Inland waterways - statistics on container transport](#) (available only in English).

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-DK-19-001> (available only in English).

3. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INLAND WATERWAYS FREIGHT, PASSENGERS AND ACCIDENT STATISTICS

The European Green Deal Communication has announced a set of transformative policies across economic sectors, including transport. Inland waterways transport statistics can help with setting and monitoring policy targets. This is achieved by providing data on volumes of goods transported, equipment and infrastructure.

It is possible to envisage collecting new or more detailed variables while taking account of data users' needs and carefully evaluating the likely burden on respondents. In this context, better coverage of data by port of loading/unloading and of data by type of cargo is of particular interest. There is also a need to investigate how existing or new data could contribute to monitoring the carbon intensity and energy efficiency of inland waterway transport.

Another area of possible improvement is the harmonisation of definitions and code lists between inland waterways and other modes involved in the intermodal transport of freight. This would contribute to better comparability of transport figures for different modes.

Inland waterways have the potential to increase their role in passenger transport. Data on passengers could provide interesting information on the use of the different types of inland waterway transport (e.g. cruises, transport by ferryboats and waterbuses, etc.)

The Commission has been working to develop a harmonised European 'distance matrix' tool at port-to-port level. In the matrix, the total distance from port to port is broken down into the individual distances travelled in each of the countries passed through along the journey. One of the goals of the matrix is to help reduce the burden associated with collecting transit data. Its future application depends on data availability at port-to-port level. It also depends on identifying the geographical position of the port more precisely and consistently and on improving the geographical network of inland waterways.

Countries should be encouraged to provide data by port of loading/unloading and by type of cargo; both categories are currently provided on a voluntary basis only.

The geographical coverage of the statistical collection could be extended through future EU enlargements and through voluntary involvement of third countries and/or international organisations via cooperation agreements.

Feedback collected through a questionnaire sent in February 2020 to the Member States shows that five countries (of the nine that responded) do not have in mind any specific requirements for improving the current Regulation. They mentioned that scarce resources, as well as increased cost and burden, may limit their capacity to collect new data or to expand the collection of existing data types (e.g. data on passenger transport or data broken down by type of cargo). At the same time, they recognise that current European initiatives (such as the European Green Deal) may create new data needs to be evaluated and discussed. The need to develop further the distance matrix for transport by inland waterways was emphasised, in particular because it will reduce the burden involved in collecting transit data. Better harmonisation of definitions should also be considered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The experience gained and the results obtained from implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/974 can be rated as positive. A mechanism that is well established at both Eurostat and national level enables high-quality comparable results.

Eurostat takes all necessary measures to help Member States implement the Regulation. It has developed an appropriate information system and has implemented communication methods that help minimise the data management burden on the reporting countries. Eurostat has also been providing support to further improve data quality and reduce the burden of collecting and reporting data.

As regards the use of the data collected, the results obtained have an immediate application in developing, implementing and monitoring policies on transport by inland waterways at national and EU level.