

Distributive trades statistics

Structure of the distributive trades sector

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- In the EU, there are around 5 million enterprises operating in distributive trades in 1999 - small businesses dominate in all activities of the sector, but particularly in the retail trade.
- Wholesale businesses have generally the largest average size of the enterprises operating in distributive trades.
- Although there are relatively few large enterprises in distributive trades, these account for substantial proportions of employment.
- Large enterprises generate the biggest proportion of turnover in all distributive trades activities.
- Enterprises in wholesaling generally reach the highest productivity figures in all size classes.

Statistics in focus

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

THEME 4 – 9/2002

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Figure 1: Distributive trades, enterprise density
and average enterprise size in terms of persons employed, 1999



IRL, I, L, NL: 1998 data

Source: Eurostat, SBS database; population aux_ind database

Distributive trades correspond to **Section G** of the NACE Rev. 1 classification and break down into: Motor trade (NACE Rev. 1 G 50), Wholesale trade (NACE Rev. 1 G 51) and Retail trade NACE Rev. 1 G 52) (see also methodology on page 7).

For the purpose of this publication, the enterprises are named according to the following size classes:

1-4 persons employed = micro-enterprises

5-19 persons employed = small enterprises

20-49 persons employed = medium-sized enterprises

50 and more persons employed = large enterprises



Size class structure of distributive trades enterprises

The number of active enterprises in the distributive trades sector of the EU is estimated to reach almost 5 million in 1999, with small businesses in the majority.

The average size of enterprise ranges from 2 to 9 persons employed, as **figure 1** shows.

Enterprises in the southern European Member States, for which

data are available, are on average smaller than in the other Member States of the EU. The highest average size is recorded in Denmark and Austria, at around 9 persons employed per enterprise.

The figures for enterprise density (number of enterprises/population - **figure 1**) confirm the picture of a highly fragmented distributive trades sector in southern European

countries. Italy and Portugal record the highest density, at about 226 enterprises per 10 000 inhabitants; Spain follows with 196 enterprises.

The other countries show a lower enterprise density in distributive trades - many of them record values below 100 enterprises per 10 000 inhabitants.

Table 1: Distributive trades, number of enterprises broken down by employment size class and activity, 1999

	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Motor trade															
Total	20 320	8 727	:	:	69 596	80 888	5 631	159 088	836	21 485	8 083	26 954	9 161	18 556	72 298
1 - 4	16 653	:	:	:	54 619	59 914	:	139 296	:	16 355	4 608	:	8 033	15 731	:
5 - 19	3 180	:	:	:	12 608	17 581	:	18 229	:	4 195	2 767	:	916	2 378	:
20 - 49	393	:	:	:	1 948	2 488	:	1 340	:	705	514	561	134	269	:
50 and over	94	:	:	:	421	905	:	223	:	230	194	:	78	178	:
Wholesale trade															
Total	42 175	22 733	:	:	177 932	160 873	5 361	407 875	2 953	54 305	17 804	49 310	16 443	42 227	119 972
1 - 4	33 573	17 659	:	:	138 977	124 103	:	369 809	:	41 445	11 855	:	14 020	34 651	:
5 - 19	6 783	3 421	:	:	32 484	27 718	:	33 733	:	9 290	4 473	:	1 856	5 851	:
20 - 49	1 343	1 082	:	:	4 747	6 489	:	3 407	:	2 430	862	1 323	369	1 197	:
50 and over	476	571	:	:	1 724	2 563	:	926	:	1 140	614	:	198	528	:
Retail trade															
Total	81 502	31 912	:	:	527 367	379 951	22 688	733 463	2 858	91 140	34 503	135 817	24 353	58 647	216 826
1 - 4	73 178	26 894	:	:	488 506	330 665	:	690 433	:	79 245	25 949	:	21 152	51 476	:
5 - 19	7 253	4 070	:	:	34 993	42 297	:	40 160	:	10 085	7 484	:	2 638	6 051	:
20 - 49	859	725	:	:	3 111	5 236	:	2 144	:	1 305	675	639	403	824	:
50 and over	212	223	:	:	757	1 753	:	726	:	505	395	:	160	296	:

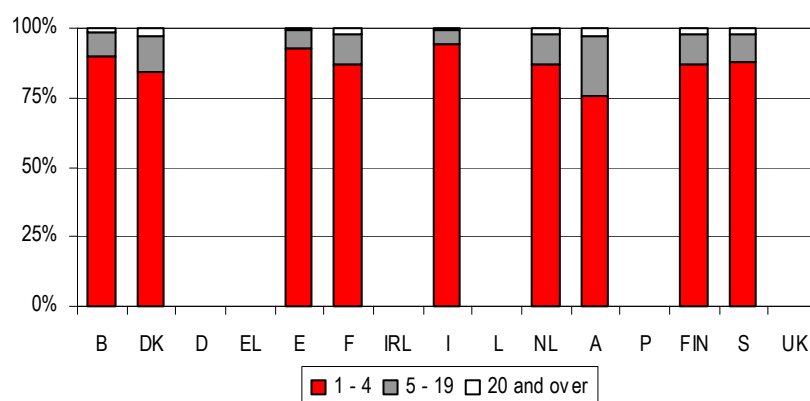
IRL, I, L, NL, P, S: 1998 data; DK: 1998 data for wholesale and retail trade
Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Micro-enterprises predominate in the three distributive trade activities, especially in the retail trade

A further analysis of the distributive trades sector shows a predominance of micro-enterprises (size class 1-4 persons employed) in the three main activities of the sector (NACE Rev. 1 divisions), which are the motor trade, the wholesale trade and the retail trade (**table 1**).

In most countries more than 75%, and in some more than 80%, of enterprises in the motor and wholesale trades employ between 1 and 4 persons.

Figure 2: Retail trade, distribution of the number of enterprises by employment size class, 1999



DK, I, NL, S: 1998 data

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Across all observed countries, micro-enterprises are least frequent in Austria in the two distributive trades activities mentioned above, but they still represent more than half of the enterprise population in this country. Motor traders and wholesalers employing between 5 and 19 persons are more common in Austria than in the other countries observed (*table 1*).

The absolute number of enterprises in the retail trade is higher than in the other two activities (sometimes more than double), with Italy and Spain standing out (at 733 000 and 527 000 businesses respectively) among the countries providing data.

The retail trade has higher proportions of micro-enterprises than the other two activities (1-4 persons employed), as *figure 2* shows.

These account for almost 90% of total retail trade enterprises in most of the observed countries, and for even more in Spain and Italy.

Again the exception is Austria, where even in the retail trade a relatively large proportion of total enterprises (22%) is in the size class 5-19 persons employed. This indicates a tendency towards concentration in this country (*figure 2*).

Wholesale businesses are generally the largest enterprises in distributive trades

Figure 3 shows the average size of enterprises in the three distributive trades activities. It will be seen that the largest businesses on average are wholesalers, while motor traders and retailers tend to be smaller.

The only clear exception to this

pattern is Luxembourg, where the average wholesaler is smaller than the average motor trade and retail trade enterprise.

Italy has by far the smallest average size of enterprises for all three distributive trades activities.

Denmark and Austria have the largest enterprises on average in the three activities, at around 7 and 9 persons respectively employed per enterprise in the motor trade, more than 10 in the wholesale trade and about 8 in the retail trade.

In Ireland, too, enterprises in wholesaling employ more than 10 persons on average, while the average enterprise in the other two activities is noticeably smaller.

Figure 3: Distributive trades, average enterprise size in terms of persons employed, by activity, 1999



IRL, I, L, NL: 1998 data

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Employment in the various size classes

A small number of large enterprises accounts for an important share of distributive trades employment

Although micro-enterprises are most numerous in distributive trades, large enterprises (with 50 or more persons employed) provide a substantial number of jobs in the three distributive trade activities (*table 2*) in most of the countries observed.

In Denmark, Austria and Finland, the relative proportions of employment in large enterprises were generally highest in wholesaling and retailing, at almost 50% or even more (e.g. Austria 54%, wholesale trade). In France, about 40% of the workforce in these two activities is employed in large enterprises.

In the motor trade, enterprises with 50 or more persons employed are less significant to employment.

In Austria, Finland and Sweden, large motor traders employ slightly more than a third of the motor trade workforce, and in France around a quarter. Italy, which generally tends to have smaller businesses in all distributive trades activities, employs some 20 000 people in large motor trade enterprises, corresponding to less than 5% of the motor trade workforce in this country.

Employment in the other size classes is also distributed unevenly. Medium-sized enterprises (with between 20 and 49 persons employed) are slightly less significant in general, least of all in the retail trade.

In some countries, employment in

distributive trades shows a tendency towards small firms (5-19 persons employed) and micro-enterprises (1-4 persons employed). This is noticeable in Italy, Spain and to a lesser extent Belgium.

This trend is particularly evident in the

retail trade in Spain and Italy, where micro-enterprises employ about 800 000 people and more than 1 million respectively, equivalent to some 60% of the total retail workforce in these two countries (*table 2 and figure 4a*).

Table 2: Distributive trades, number of persons employed in the different employment size classes, by activity, 1999

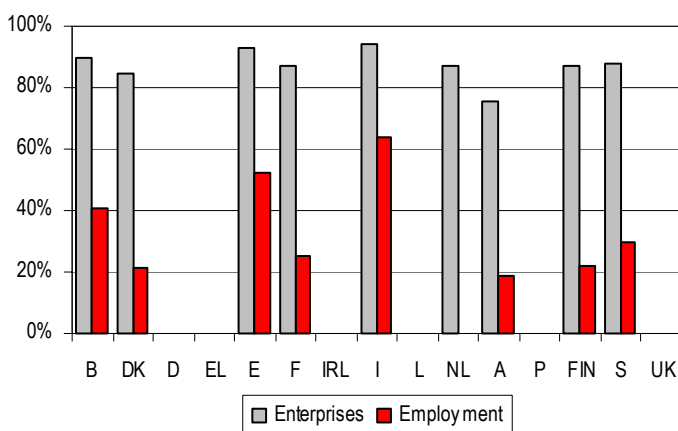
	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Motor trade															
Total	80 129	65 084	:	:	322 843	430 783	33 601	439 370	5 885	138 542	77 291	135 708	35 014	75 814	:
1 - 4	28 030	:	:	:	105 390	99 672	:	234 738	:	:	10 710	:	10 361	22 562	:
5 - 19	26 793	:	:	:	107 420	141 729	:	145 700	:	:	24 905	:	8 005	19 501	:
20 - 49	11 725	:	:	:	59 393	79 204	:	37 660	:	:	15 028	17 652	3 962	8 196	:
50 and over	13 581	:	:	:	50 640	110 178	:	21 272	:	:	26 648	:	12 686	25 555	:
Wholesale trade															
Total	220 374	176 800	:	:	879 431	970 557	56 344	1 015 231	12 499	431 243	192 550	266 319	82 946	217 000	:
1 - 4	52 271	22 873	:	:	237 996	105 093	:	511 597	:	:	21 587	:	14 539	49 011	:
5 - 19	61 598	33 026	:	:	292 958	251 160	:	275 721	:	:	41 240	:	16 979	53 206	:
20 - 49	40 433	32 516	:	:	143 154	201 051	:	98 458	:	:	26 286	39 834	11 178	35 801	:
50 and over	66 072	88 385	:	:	205 323	413 253	:	129 455	:	:	103 437	:	40 250	78 982	:
Retail trade															
Total	285 501	195 857	:	:	1 439 388	1 506 544	152 361	1 599 917	17 206	661 780	267 576	420 591	113 421	240 083	:
1 - 4	116 337	42 197	:	:	751 554	382 019	:	1 026 373	:	:	50 754	:	25 163	71 569	:
5 - 19	57 496	36 835	:	:	279 795	326 627	:	293 264	:	:	62 969	:	24 555	51 274	:
20 - 49	25 774	21 044	:	:	91 505	163 712	:	62 820	:	:	19 423	18 990	11 645	23 935	:
50 and over	85 894	95 781	:	:	316 534	634 186	:	217 460	:	:	134 430	:	52 058	93 305	:

IRL, I, L, NL, P, S: 1998 data; DK: 1998 data for wholesale and retail trade
Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Figure 4: Retail trade, importance of micro enterprises for number of enterprises and employment, 1999

a) Enterprises with up to 4 persons employed

b) Enterprises with 5 or more persons employed



DK, I, NL, S: 1998 data

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Focusing on the retail trade, **figure 4** illustrates the distribution of the number of enterprises and employment in the observed size classes: 1-4 persons employed (micro-enterprises) and 5 or more persons employed.

Micro-enterprises provide scarcely a quarter of jobs in retailing in the majority of the observed countries.

The exceptions are Italy and Spain, where enterprises in this size class employ more than half of the retail workforce. In Belgium, around 40% of those working in retailing are employed in micro-enterprises.

Among the other size classes, large enterprises (with 50 and more persons employed) are particularly significant in retailing, employing up to

50% of the total retail workforce in some countries, such as Austria and Denmark.

The size class 5-19 persons employed also offers employment to a large number of people in retailing, generally amounting to around one-fifth of the total retail workforce (**table 2**).

Turnover and productivity in the various size classes

Table 3: Distributive trades, turnover in the different employment size classes, by activity, 1999 (Mio. euro)

	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Motor trade															
Total	42 621	20 148	:	:	71 610	118 543	9 994	127 359	2 372	57 244	20 191	25 349	12 864	23 797	195 317
1 - 4	7 814	:	:	:	8 688	16 164	:	40 924	:	:	1 724	:	2 214	4 161	:
5 - 19	9 811	:	:	:	16 874	25 465	:	34 313	:	:	4 335	:	2 001	4 925	:
20 - 49	5 508	:	:	:	19 133	25 392	:	18 703	:	:	4 064	3 528	2 294	2 923	:
50 and over	19 488	:	:	:	26 915	51 523	:	33 419	:	:	10 068	:	6 355	11 788	:
Wholesale trade															
Total	135 424	73 504	:	:	241 844	477 122	20 150	295 139	7 018	224 274	72 168	58 982	41 000	84 144	523 267
1 - 4	26 905	11 106	:	:	43 765	55 050	:	71 512	:	:	7 901	:	3 942	10 989	:
5 - 19	36 518	13 891	:	:	75 170	109 326	:	94 559	:	:	16 186	:	6 487	18 041	:
20 - 49	23 843	13 003	:	:	42 796	96 094	:	45 965	:	:	10 768	10 067	4 539	13 950	:
50 and over	48 158	35 504	:	:	80 114	216 653	:	83 104	:	:	37 313	:	26 032	41 163	:
Retail trade															
Total	47 465	26 507	:	:	129 192	278 878	15 172	195 540	2 792	64 510	34 997	32 846	21 701	37 386	315 593
1 - 4	14 690	4 800	:	:	48 579	46 943	:	90 127	:	:	5 216	:	3 564	6 834	:
5 - 19	9 175	4 715	:	:	24 401	49 088	:	45 130	:	:	7 388	:	4 636	7 972	:
20 - 49	5 019	2 749	:	:	9 217	35 160	:	11 020	:	:	2 639	1 843	2 712	4 556	:
50 and over	18 581	14 244	:	:	46 996	147 686	:	49 263	:	:	19 754	:	10 790	18 023	:

IRL, I, L, P, S: 1998 data; DK: 1998 data for wholesale and retail trade
1999 data are expressed in millions of euro, those for the year 1998 in millions of ECU.
Source: Eurostat, SBS database

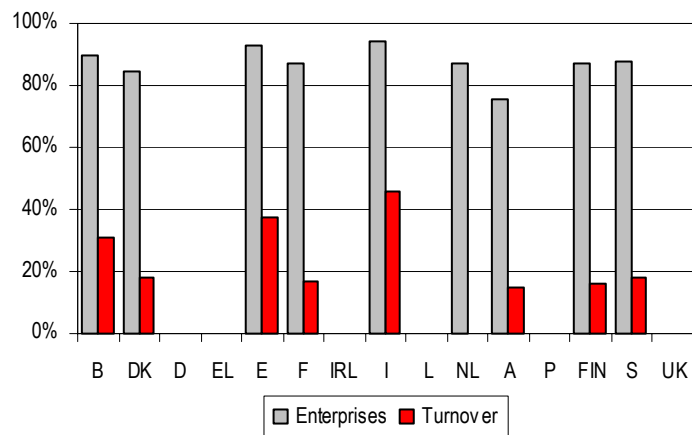
Most distributive trades turnover is generated in large enterprises

With regard to turnover, the pattern in distributive trades is similar to that of employment:

a small number of large enterprises generates a substantial part of the sector's turnover (**table 3**).

This is particularly evident in the Scandinavian Member States and in France and Austria, where enterprises with 50 or more persons employed account for about half of the turnover in the three distributive trades activities.

Figure 5: Retail trade, importance of micro enterprises in terms of number of enterprises and turnover, 1999



DK, I, NL, S: 1998 data

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Amongst smaller enterprises, the size class 5-19 persons employed is generally the most significant in terms of turnover in all distributive trades activities, and most of all in the wholesale trade, where it generates up to 31% of total turnover in Spain, for example.

Micro-enterprises are generally less

important in terms of turnover generated, and even in countries such as Italy or Spain, where they employ more than half of the workforce, they fail to reach comparable proportions of the turnover generated in the respective distributive trades activity.

Figure 5 again focuses on the

significance of micro-enterprises to the retail trade and compares the number of enterprises with the turnover generated in each country. Of the countries providing data, only Belgium (31%), Spain (38%) and Italy (46%) have over 20% of total retailing turnover generated by micro-enterprises.

Table 4: Distributive trades, simple labour productivity in the different employment size classes, by activity, 1999 (1 000 euro)

	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Motor trade															
Total	40.1	36.2	:	:	25.3	35.4	32.1	26.3	45.7	35.5	39.7	16.2	41.7	36.6	:
1 - 4	22.4	:	:	:	14.9	28.3	:	16.8	:	:	29.8	:	31.0	25.1	:
5 - 19	36.7	:	:	:	24.7	31.9	:	31.5	:	:	32.5	:	34.3	34.0	:
20 - 49	45.7	:	:	:	31.8	38.0	:	43.8	:	:	38.8	18.4	49.3	40.3	:
50 and over	78.4	:	:	:	40.4	44.4	:	64.0	:	:	50.9	:	52.7	47.5	:
Wholesale trade															
Total	57.5	53.7	:	:	30.4	51.0	50.6	39.7	59.5	:	51.9	24.0	57.7	50.4	:
1 - 4	37.6	55.4	:	:	23.1	45.3	:	27.6	:	:	43.6	:	48.1	29.1	:
5 - 19	53.3	55.8	:	:	29.9	49.0	:	44.6	:	:	50.6	:	52.9	50.1	:
20 - 49	64.1	53.7	:	:	35.3	50.5	:	60.8	:	:	56.5	26.0	61.7	55.6	:
50 and over	73.1	52.4	:	:	36.0	53.9	:	61.3	:	:	53.0	:	62.0	61.4	:
Retail trade															
Total	26.0	25.5	:	:	17.2	32.3	16.3	20.1	30.1	19.8	26.4	11.4	31.7	27.0	:
1 - 4	18.5	25.7	:	:	13.7	28.8	:	15.1	:	:	21.9	:	25.1	17.6	:
5 - 19	25.2	30.1	:	:	17.4	33.5	:	25.8	:	:	28.7	:	32.8	29.5	:
20 - 49	29.2	27.0	:	:	18.2	30.0	:	27.4	:	:	28.3	14.3	35.0	30.8	:
50 and over	35.7	23.3	:	:	25.2	34.5	:	33.7	:	:	26.8	:	33.7	31.9	:

IRL, I, L, NL, P, S: 1998 data; DK: 1998 data for wholesale and retail trade
1999 data are expressed in thousands of euro, those for the year 1998 in thousands of ECU.
Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Large enterprises have high labour productivity figures

Table 4 gives an overview of the productivity values reached in the different size classes and activities of distributive trades. The values measuring simple labour productivity (also called apparent labour productivity) are obtained by dividing value added by the total number of persons employed, disregarding any working time arrangements (e.g. part-time employment etc) of the employed.

The table shows that the wholesale trade generally records higher

labour productivity values than either the motor or the retail trade.

This can be explained by the characteristics of wholesaling itself, which is more capital-intensive (with largely automated procedures) than the other two activities.

The retail trade has generally the lowest labour productivity of the three activities. However, it should be borne in mind that the higher number of part-time workers in retailing influences these values.

The values for the motor trade generally fall between those for the other two activities.

Large enterprises (50 or more persons employed) generally record the highest labour productivity in all distributive trades activities, which is assumed to be due to their rationalisation capacity.

Large motor traders tend to equal or even exceed the productivity values of wholesalers.

Only in a few cases do medium-sized enterprises (20-49 persons employed) record slightly higher productivity values (**table 4**) than large enterprises.

Coming soon: DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES IN EUROPE, 2001 - 1995-1999 data

In a few weeks' time Eurostat will release a comprehensive panorama publication with a detailed analysis of the distributive trade sector and its activities. The analysis is based mainly on SBS data and contains a structural overview of the sector as well as an in-depth analysis of its activities: motor trade, wholesale trade and retail trade.

An analysis of special themes such as electronic commerce, concentration tendencies in retailing, etc., based largely on external data sources, will also be presented in this publication.

The publication will be available in paper format and on CD ROM.

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Database

This issue of *Statistics in Focus* (SiF) is based on structural business statistics collected under the terms of Council Regulation (EC, EURATOM) No 58/97 of 20 December 1996. The reference data are stored in Eurostat's reference database *New Cronos* (Theme 4 - domain SBS, collections:

ENTERP: annual enterprise statistics, dft files *enter_ms*);

SIZECLASS: annual enterprise statistics broken down by size class, dft file: *trade_ms*

Data on population used to calculate ratios are taken from Eurostat's *aux_ind* database.

The figures presented reflect the situation of the database as of 20 January 2002. Only data being from 1998 or more recent have been used for the analysis.

No data are available for Member States or EU aggregates that are not shown in the graphs or tables.

Statistical classification

The data were collected mainly on the basis of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev. 1). This SiF deals with NACE **Section G** (Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods) which breaks down into the following divisions:

50: Sale, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; retail sale of automotive fuel;

51: Wholesale and commission trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles;

52: Retail trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of personal and household goods.

Variables

Number of enterprises

A count of the number of enterprises registered to the population concerned in the business register, corrected for errors, particularly frame errors. Dormant units are excluded.

Number of persons employed

The total number of persons who work in the observation unit (employees receiving remuneration, working proprietors and unpaid family workers) as well as outside working persons who belong to the unit and are paid by it. It includes all persons who are on the payroll of the enterprise, whether they are temporarily absent (excluding long-term absences), part-time, seasonal or home workers, apprentices etc. The number of persons employed excludes manpower supplied to the unit by other enterprises and persons carrying out repair and maintenance work in the enquiry unit on behalf of other enterprises.

Turnover

Turnover comprises the totals

invoiced by the observation unit during the reference period, which corresponds to market sales of goods or services supplied to third parties. It includes all duties and taxes on the goods and 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.

Value added at factor cost

Value added at factor cost is the gross income from operating activities after adjusting for operating subsidies and indirect taxes.

The above SBS variables are laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No 2700/98 of 17 December 1998.

Simple labour productivity

Simple (or apparent) labour productivity is defined as value added per person employed.

More info on business statistics methodology:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/ramon/>

or

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/dsis/bmethods/info/data/new/main_en.html

The above-mentioned regulations and statistical classification can be downloaded under 'legal texts'.

Further information:

➤ Databases

New Cronos, Theme 4 Domain - SBS, Theme 2 - Domain AUX IND

To obtain information or to order publications, databases and special sets of data, please contact the **Data Shop** network:

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joachim.hubertus@cec.eu.int. This publication was produced in collaboration with Paola ZITO. ORIGINAL: English

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