

A dissemination policy at the service of EU citizens

One million user sessions and 300 000 publications downloaded per month

Since 1 October 2004, **Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities**, has made all its data and publications available free of charge on the Internet. This significant change enabled Eurostat to fully play its role as a public service institution, by giving free access to economic and social information on the euro-zone, the EU and the 25 Member States. More than 300 million data, from many different domains, are available online, varying from consumer prices, through poverty and environmental indicators, to detailed external trade data by product.

The implementation of the free dissemination policy has produced very successful results in 2005, both in terms of number of users and products downloaded. The number of user sessions reached nearly one million per month. There was a six-fold increase in data downloaded; a four-fold increase in access to the pre-defined tables; and a four-fold increase in the number of publications downloaded to 300 000 per month. Work is continuing to further improve the functionality and user-friendliness of the site.

On 30 March 2006, the European Information Association¹, a professional organisation for librarians and information professionals who work with EU information worldwide, presented Eurostat with the 2005 Award for European Information Sources for its website², in recognition of the steps that Eurostat has taken to make statistical data widely and freely available through the site.

1. See <http://www.eia.org.uk/>
2. **How to get the information?** Depending on the needs of the user, there are two ways to access the data through the Eurostat site, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat>. From the homepage, the "Tables" link takes general users to sets of predefined tables of key data, which include "Structural indicators", "Sustainable development indicators", "Euro-indicators" and "Long-term indicators". For specialist users, "Data" leads to more detailed data, which can be extracted online. There are links to the methodology, which follows the IMF's common Special Data Dissemination Standard. Electronic versions of all Eurostat publications are also available free of charge online, and can be downloaded in PDF format. To provide help and guidance to Internet users of European statistical data, there is a **central support function** in Eurostat and 22 **national support centres** based in National Statistical Institutes. Contact details of all national and central support centres can be found through the "Contact" link on every page of the Eurostat site.

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