

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, June 2009



Production of crude steel for the 66 countries reporting to the IISI in April was estimated to be 89.5 million tonnes, a decrease of 23.6% over April 2008. The total of the 4 months to date was 354.1 million tonnes, 22.7% below the January to April period in 2008. Excluding China, which accounted for 48% of world production in the first four months of 2009, the fall in April was 35.9%, with the four months total down by 36.2%.

In the European Union 27, crude steel production was down 48.6% in April at 9.5 million tonnes compared to April 2008, and fell by 44.2% in the 4 months to date to 40.3 million tonnes. Monthly production in Germany decreased by 53% in April, and by 43% in the January to April period to 9.2 million tonnes. Steel production in France fared almost as badly dropping by 50.5% in the month, and by 42.5% in the four months to date to 3.8 million tonnes. Italian crude steel production decreased by 45.4% in April, and by 42% in the year to date to 6.5 million tonnes. Spanish production only fell by 38% in April, while the year to date was down 37.5% to 4.2 million tonnes. In the UK, production fell by 47% in April, bringing the 4 months total down 43.7% to 2.7 million tonnes. The largest drop in steel production in the first four months of the year was in Romania, where it fell by 63.5%, compared to only 19.8% in Greece, the smallest decrease out of the 27 countries.

Exports of steel by the 27 EU countries fell by 40% in the first two months of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008. The sharpest drop in steel exports was in Hungary and Romania where the January and February total was 68% below the previous year. Poland was not far behind with a 62% drop in exports. Nearly all of Hungary's exports were to other EU countries with its largest market being Germany. Poland's largest market was also Germany. However, Romania's largest market was Turkey followed by Italy. The country whose exports were least affected by the recession was Greece, where exports only fell by 5.4%. Greece's largest market in 2008 was Bulgaria followed by the USA; however, in 2009 the USA and Macedonia were the largest markets.

Imports of steel by the 27 EU countries in the first two months of 2009 fell by 41.4%, with Spain showing one of the largest decreases at 61.5%. The largest exporters of steel to Spain were France and Portugal.

In the rest of Europe Turkish production decreased by 13.4% in April and by 18.8% in the four months to 7.5 million tonnes. The four months total for Serbia dropped by 69% to 204 thousand tonnes with the Swiss total down 42% to 286 thousand tonnes.

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New car registrations in Europe fell by 12.3% in April compared to the previous April, according to ACEA, the European Car Manufacturers Association, while the four months total was down by 15.9% to 4.7 million cars. Registrations in Germany, the largest market, actually rose by 19.4% in April, which was almost certainly due to the industry scrapping scheme. The year to date total increased by 18.4% to 1.2 million cars. In contrast, Italy, with the second largest market, saw registrations fall by 7.5% in April, with the four months total down 16.3% at 728 thousand cars. French registrations fell by 7.1% in April, and by 4.8% in the year to date to 690 thousand. The situation in the UK is much worse with registrations dropping by 24% in April, and by 28.5% in the year to date to 614 thousand cars. The Spanish four month total, however, was down 43.7% to 265 thousand cars. Among the newer EU members registrations in Poland actually rose by 1.6% in the four months to 117 thousand cars, with the Czech Republic up 1.8% to 49 thousand cars. However, the Romanian total dropped by almost 59% to 40 thousand cars.

Crude steel production in the CIS countries fell by 30% in April, with Russian production down 26.6% and the Ukraine total down 37.6%. This brought the year to date for the CIS down 32.8% with Russia's four month total down 31.5% to 17.3 million tonnes. Ukrainian steel production dropped by 37.9% in the year to date to 9.1 million tonnes. Kazakhstan's steel production fell by 24.6% in the four months to 1.2 million tonnes.

On the North American continent US steel production fell by 53% in both April and the year to date, bringing the year to date total to 15.9 million tonnes. Canadian steel production was down by 44% in April, while the four months total was down 43% to 3.2 million tonnes. Mexican steel production, however, did rather better only decreasing by 30% in April, with the year to date total down 28% to 4.2 million tonnes.

Crude steel production in South America showed a drop of 36% with Brazilian production down 40% in April and 41.7% in the year to date to 6.7 million tonnes. Steel production in Argentina fell by 44% in April, while the four months total was down 42% to just under 1.1 million tonnes. Venezuelan production, however, only decreased by 0.8% in April, while the year to date total was 10% down at 1.5 million tonnes.

In Africa and the Middle East, South African production decreased by 22% in April, although the year to date total was down 25.7% to 2.2 million tonnes. Egypt's steel production decreased by 16.4% in April, while the four months total was 23.8% down at 1.7 million tonnes. Iranian production, however, actually rose by 3.2% in the month, bringing the year to date total up 12.9% to 3.8 million tonnes.

Turning to the Far East, China's steel production decreased by 3.9% in April, leaving the four months total flat at 170.1 million tonnes. Japanese crude steel production fell by 43.6% in April, while the January to April total was down by 43.1% to 23.3 million tonnes. South Korean production decreased by 10.5% in April with the year to date total at 14.6 million tonnes, 19.4% down on the same period in 2008. In India, however, production showed a rise of 8.1% in April, bringing the four months total to 18.2 million tonnes, 1.6% down on 2008. Crude steel production in Taiwan was estimated to be down by 40.6% in April, while the year to date total fell by 41.2% to 4.3 million tonnes.

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