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3. Evolution of Specific Consumption of Steel

The world iron and steel industry has experienced significant changes during the last two decades. After a long period of growth which continued through the 1960s, long-term structural changes occurred in every industrialized region of the world, with steel consumption declining in the west by 1975 and in the CMEA countries by the end of the 1970s.

The United Nations Economics Commission for Europe (ECE), through its Steel Committee, has just published *The Evolution of the Specific Consumption of Steel*. This study analyses global and sectoral steel consumption in all regions, focusing more deeply on 15 countries representing western and eastern industrially developed countries, as well as nations of the developing world.

The 230-page publication examines, among other things, the possible reasons for the decline in steel consumption, the role of iron and steel in the national economy and the evolution of the specific consumption of steel on the global level in all regions; the effects of technical improvements in the steel industry and in the main steel-consuming sectors; and the evolution of the specific consumption of steel in the most intensively steel-consuming sectors in selected countries of the ECE region and in developing countries.

The study contains a survey of forecasts of world steel production and consumption and assessments of the perspectives of the evolution of the specific consumption of steel. It also analyses the reasons for the decline in steel consumption.

More industries using less steel

The fall in steel consumption in the 1970s, particularly after 1973, the study concludes, was preceded by a decrease in shares of investment and of construction activities in the European Economic Community (EEC) countries, the United States and other industrialized

countries. The same was true for shares of construction in the CMEA and other European countries. It was also accompanied by a decrease in shares of manufacturing industries. The slow-down of GDP and other economic sectors, however, was not as strong as that of steel consumption itself.

In highly developed and industrialized countries, the number of industries using less steel increased. Steel, however, is still one of the basic industrial raw materials and its quality, properties and rational use are gradually compensating for its lower growth in tonnage terms.

The rise of steel production and consumption in the developing countries has been impressive. Between 1960 and 1980, their share in world steel consumption more than doubled and their share in production nearly trebled. However, they started from a very low level and have far to go before becoming steel sufficient. The approximately 74 per cent of the world's population which lives in developing countries accounts for only 14 per cent of world production and 21 per cent of world consumption of steel.

Steel production in industrialized countries has, on average, been surpassing consumption. World trade has been growing and its structure changing in the direction of more costly and high-quality steels. The consequence of this is a broad internationalization of the steel industry and its non-autarchic development, despite the present trends of establishing individual steel industries in nearly every country.

The Evolution of the Specific Consumption of Steel (\$23.00, Sales No. E.84.II.E.17) may be obtained from bookstores and distributors throughout the world or through the United Nations Sales Section, New York or Geneva. For more information, please contact the ECE Information Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Steel in Buildings
L'acier dans le bâtiment
Stahl im Hochbau
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