



BUSINESS AND CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

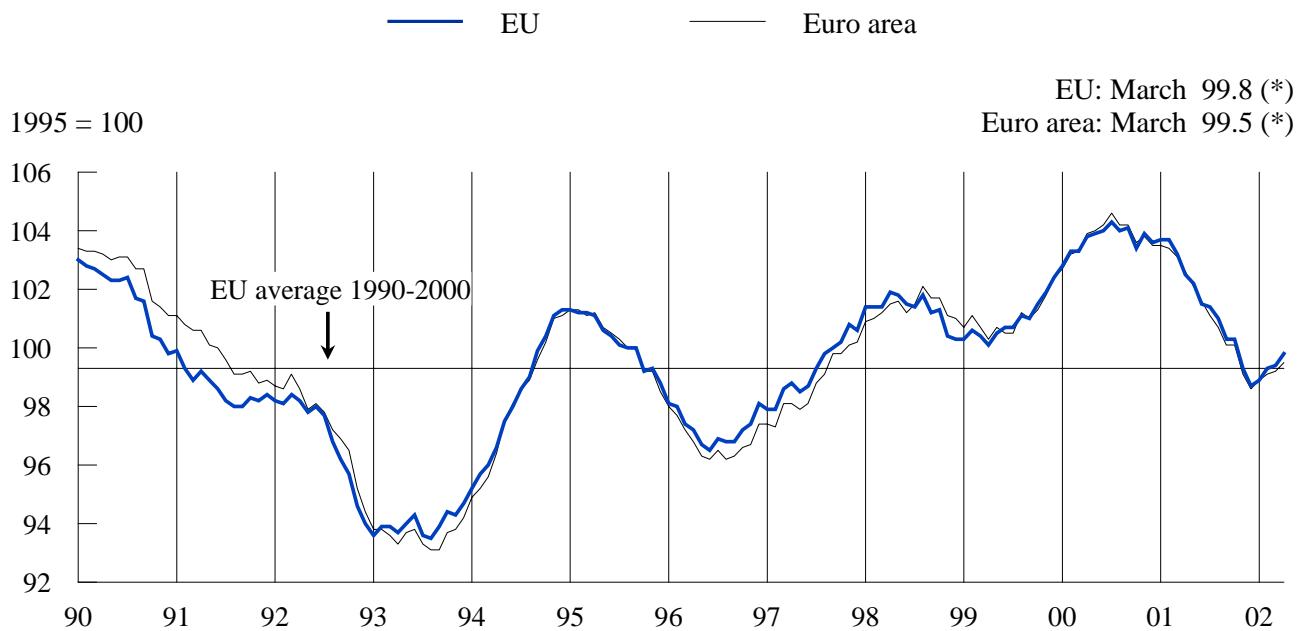
March 2002

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/indicators/businessandconsumersurveys_en.htm

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GRAPH 1: **Economic sentiment indicator (s.a.)**



(*) Provisional data

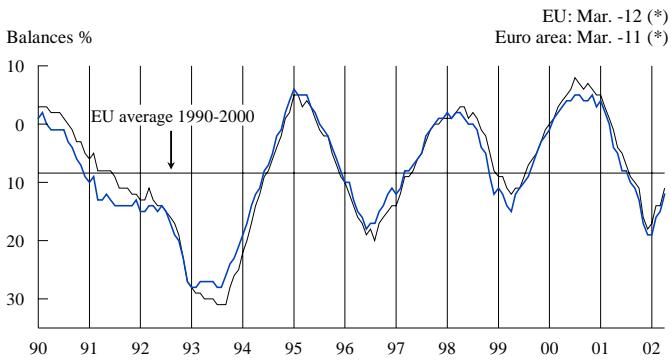
The economic sentiment indicator increases again

The **economic sentiment indicator** went up again in March. It increased by 0.3 and 0.2 percentage points in the EU and the euro area respectively. The economic sentiment indicator in the EU is now only half a percentage point lower than the level reached in August 2001. The change in the economic sentiment indicator between February and March was positive in *Greece* (0.1 percentage points), *France* (0.2), *Ireland* (0.2), *Sweden* (0.3), the *UK* (0.1) and, especially, in *Belgium* (0.8), *Germany* (0.7), *Portugal* (0.5) and *Finland* (0.5). The indicator remained stable in *Denmark* and decreased in *Austria* (-0.4), *Spain* (-0.3), the *Netherlands* (-0.2) and *Italy* (-0.1).

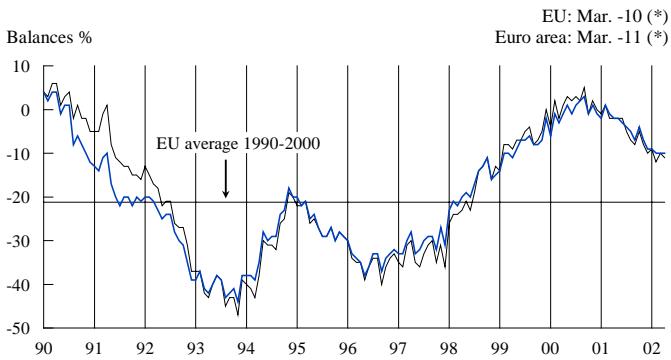
GRAPHS 2-5: Economic sentiment indicator components (s.a.)

EU Euro area

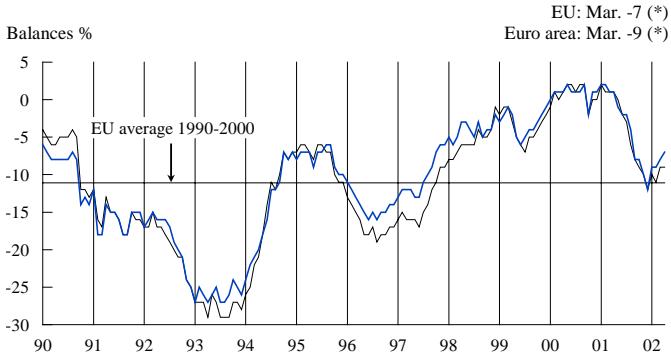
GRAPH 2: Industrial confidence indicator



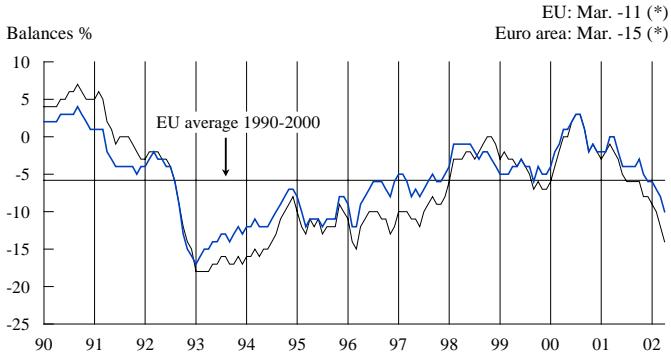
GRAPH 4: Construction confidence indicator



GRAPH 3: Consumer confidence indicator



GRAPH 5: Retail trade confidence indicator (**)



(*) Provisional data

(**) Three month moving average

Such positive developments are mainly attributable to the favourable evolution observed in the *industrial* and, to a much lesser extent, in the *consumer confidence* components. In comparison, *construction* and *retail trade confidence* exhibited more volatile behaviour.

The *industrial confidence indicator* increased 3 percentage points (in balances) in both the EU and the euro area. Industrialists' confidence only fell in three Member States (*Greece, Luxembourg* and *Austria*) and it remained stable in three (*Denmark, Spain* and *the Netherlands*). In five (*Belgium, Germany, France, Italy* and *Finland*) out of the nine Member States where industrial confidence went up, the indicator recorded an increase of 4 percentage points or more. A significant improvement in *production expectations* and, to a lesser extent, the increase recorded by the balances corresponding to *order books* are behind such positive developments of confidence in manufacturing industry across the EU.

The balances of *production expectations* increased by 5 and 6 percentage points in the EU and the euro area respectively. Expectations improved in almost every Member State. The only exception was *Luxembourg*. In *Denmark, Spain, Austria* and the *UK*, production expectations remained unchanged or decreased only marginally. At the opposite extreme, the balances corresponding to *production expectations* significantly

improved (by at least 5 percentage points) in *Belgium, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Finland*, and *Sweden*. Albeit more moderately, *order books* also increased across the EU and the euro area (1 percentage point). The increases recorded by *Belgium, Germany, Portugal* and *Finland* (3 percentage points or more) rank among the highest. As a result, *stocks of finished products* were on a falling path in both the EU and the euro area. The *production trend observed in the recent months* as well as the evolution of *export orders* were positive in the euro area, but stagnated in the EU as a whole. Within such an industrial climate, the number of industrialists having positive *selling price expectations* increased. However, the balance corresponding to this question was still in the red.

The developments observed in the *consumer confidence indicator* were positive for the EU (1 percentage point). However, the indicator remained unchanged in the euro area. Aggregate figures conceal large differences across Member States. Consumer confidence increased in countries such as *Belgium, Germany* and *France*, but fell in, for instance, *Spain* and *Italy*, and remained constant in the *UK*. As a general rule, European consumers do not expect significant changes in their *financial situation over the next 12 months*. Leaving aside *Spain* (-3 percentage points), and *Portugal* and *Finland* (3), the balances corresponding to this question only recorded small changes or did not

change at all in most Member States. Very much the same can be said concerning *savings expectations*. However, the percentage of consumers who consider that the *current situation* is better than in the past 12 months has increased between February and March in both the EU and the euro area. The balances for this question only fell in *Italy* (-2), *Austria* (-1) and the *UK* (-2). Where *unemployment* is concerned, although the percentage of consumers expecting an increase in unemployment still outpaces that expecting a reduction, the difference between both groups has been unambiguously shrinking since November 2001. Interestingly, the percentage of consumers expecting positive *price trends over the next 12 months* fell again in March, thus indicating weaker inflationary expectations by consumers than in February. This is particularly so in the euro area.

The ***construction confidence indicator*** did not change in the EU, while it recorded a fall of 1 percentage point in the euro area. This is the result of very large differences across Member States. The falls recorded in countries such as *Denmark* (-4), *Spain* (-7) and *Austria* (-12) compensated for relatively large increases observed in *Ireland* (11), *Finland* (19) and the *UK* (5). At the aggregate level, the improvement recorded in *order books* (2 percentage points in the EU and 1 in the euro area) was balanced by the worsening in *employment expectations* (-1 in the EU and -3 in the euro area). Yet, managers in the construction sector across both the EU and the euro area consider that *activity* improved in March compared with preceding months. Accordingly, as in the case of industrialists, the percentage of managers in the sector revealing positive *price expectations* is increasing. However, in terms of levels, the balances are still far from those observed 10 to 12 months ago.

The ***retail trade confidence indicator*** stagnated in the euro area and slightly worsened in the EU. Again, this is the result of large differences across Member States. While the increase was significantly large in *Belgium* (7 percentage points), *Denmark* (5) and *Germany* (9), significant falls were recorded in *Austria*, the *UK* and *Italy*. Overall, the factors behind the evolution of this indicator in March seem to reflect rather volatile perceptions and expectations. While the assessment of the *current business situation* was positive in both the EU and the euro area, the percentage of managers in the retail sector declaring an increase in *stocks* rose in March. Analogously, although the *expected business situation* worsened, the percentage of retailers having the *intention of placing new orders* increased with respect to those not having such intentions.

The developments observed in the ***services confidence indicator***, which is not yet included in the composition

of the economic sentiment indicator, were in line with those of industrial confidence. The indicator increased in both the EU and the euro area (5 percentage points in balances). However, such aggregate figures conceal a large dispersion across Member States. The indicator actually fell in seven countries (*Belgium*, *Greece*, *Spain*, *Ireland*, the *Netherlands*, *Portugal*, and *Sweden*) and remained stable in *Austria*. The assessment of the *current business climate* significantly improved, as did opinion about the *evolution of demand* compared with the past. Where the *expected evolution of demand* is concerned, an increasing majority of managers in the sector considered that it was positive. Accordingly, the assessment of both the *recent* and the *expected evolution of employment* also improved in March compared with February.

The IFO institute released in March the **World Economic Survey** (WES – formerly the Economic Survey International), which assesses economic trends in the world through quarterly interviews with 900 economic experts in 80 countries. Where *Western Europe* is concerned, as for the rest of the world, economic experts expect a significant improvement of business in the next two quarters. This is consistent with the results released during the last three months on the basis of the business and consumer surveys. The *Economic Climate in the US* is also positive. The *euro* is considered undervalued, while, according to experts, the *US dollar* is overvalued. Finally, *unemployment* and *insufficient demand* are still considered the two most *urgent economic problems* not only in the EU but also world-wide.

Overall, confidence indicators in the ***accession countries*** pointed to an improvement of industrialists' confidence and to a worsening in the construction sector. No significant changes were recorded in the consumer and retail trade indicators for this group of countries as a whole. The confidence indicator in the *industrial sector* only fell in *Lithuania* and *Slovenia*. It remained stable in *Bulgaria* and increased in the rest of the group, including the three largest countries (*Czech Republic*, 5 points; *Hungary*, 1; *Poland* 2). However, the developments recorded by the *consumer confidence indicator* were more mixed. The indicator increased strongly in *Hungary* but fell in *Poland* and the *Czech Republic*, as well as in *Romania* and *Bulgaria*. Leaving aside *Slovakia*, *construction confidence* decreased everywhere on a monthly basis, especially in *Bulgaria*, *Hungary* and *Poland*. Finally, the *retail trade confidence indicator* improved in *Bulgaria*, *Hungary*, and *Poland*, but fell in *Slovakia* and the *Czech Republic*.

TABLE 1* (continued) : Indicators of confidence and economic sentiment (s.a.)

		Since 01/1990				2001											
		Min.		Max.		Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
		Value	Date	Value	Date												
NL	1. industrial conf. ind.	-12	05-93	6	10-00	-2	-2	-3	-4	-4	-5	-9	-9	-9	-8	-5	-5
	2. consumer conf. ind.	-20	07-93	31	04-00	6	10	6	6	-2	-2	-6	-7	-2	4	6	5
	3. construction conf. in	-20	09-93	27	12-00	16	16	13	13	10	8	7	6	5	5	5	3
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	1	03-95	29	10-99	15	19	20	23	21	23	18	22	21	22	23	21
	=5. economic sent. ind.	96.0	05-93	104.7	04-00	101.6	101.9	101.4	101.3	100.7	100.6	99.6	99.7	99.8	100.3	100.8	100.6
	6. services conf. ind.	-9	07-93	35	03-99	22	23	20	21	24	21	18	18	18	14	15	13
A	1. industrial conf. ind.	-30	09-93	8	03-90	-9	-9	-13	-15	-16	-19	-23	-21	-22	-20	-16	-18
	2. consumer conf. ind.	-16	04-96	11	08-00	8	8	6	2	-1	-3	-4	-1	-1	1	4	9
	3. construction conf. in	-60	04-96	-15	04-00	-27	-34	-43	-44	-43	-43	-42	-45	-46	-38	-26	-38
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	-24	07-97	4	07-00	-11	-4	-7	-7	-10	-4	-9	-10	-2	-11	-5	-13
	=5. economic sent. ind.	96.7	04-96	99.6	07-00	98.7	98.8	98.4	98.1	98.0	97.9	97.5	97.7	97.7	97.8	98.3	97.9
	6. services conf. ind.	0	01-02	30	03-98	19	22	13	9	6	6	1	1	5	0	8	8
P	1. industrial conf. ind.	-28	07-93	6	03-98	-5	-6	-5	-5	-7	-7	-11	-9	-8	-11	-10	-8
	2. consumer conf. ind.	-38	11-93	-1	07-91	-20	-22	-24	-26	-24	-26	-27	-30	-26	-28	-28	-24
	3. construction conf. in	-55	05-94	-1	12-97	-4	-2	-3	-4	-6	-4	-5	-6	-16	-19	-17	-19
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	-22	05-93	4	07-99	-11	-8	-10	-12	-13	-12	-13	-15	-11	-14	-16	-14
	=5. economic sent. ind.	96.1	06-93	102.5	05-98	100.8	100.6	100.5	100.4	100.3	100.2	99.7	99.6	99.8	99.2	99.3	99.8
	6. services conf. ind.	-12	01-02	24	11-97	3	-1	7	4	0	2	-9	-3	-1	-12	-3	-7
FIN	1. industrial conf. ind.	-24	01-93	29	11-94	-3	-7	-7	-10	-15	-15	-12	-13	-12	-8	-12	-4
	2. consumer conf. ind.	6	11-01	23	02-00	13	14	13	11	9	8	8	6	7	9	13	13
	3. construction conf. in	-98	09-91	48	06-98	-4	-12	-16	-27	-19	-10	-7	-19	-30	-21	-26	-18
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	-17	11-00	8	06-97	-9	-7	-6	-5	-4	-4	-8	2	3	-2	-2	3
	=5. economic sent. ind.	94.5	09-91	101.5	12-97	99.7	99.5	99.4	99.0	99.0	99.1	99.2	99.0	99.0	99.2	99.2	99.7
	6. services conf. ind.	-6	11-96	61	09-00	49	26	25	42	10	12	7	11	6	30	27	34
S	1. industrial conf. ind.	-29	10-01	15	05-00	-14	-19	-22	-25	-23	-24	-29	-25	-23	-20	-16	-14
	2. consumer conf. ind.	-10	09-96	24	08-00	6	5	8	5	1	-3	-3	-2	2	2	9	12
	3. construction conf. in	-83	12-93	25	01-01	3	6	9	4	3	-8	-19	-27	-30	-25	-20	-17
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	-8	10-01	27	04-00	-7	0	-4	-1	-5	-8	-8	0	2	5	6	9
	=5. economic sent. ind.	97.1	06-96	101.6	08-00	99.1	99.0	98.9	98.7	98.6	98.2	97.8	98.0	98.2	98.5	99.0	99.3
	6. services conf. ind.	-21	11-01	46	02-01	23	7	-2	-2	-8	-12	-18	-21	-19	-17	-14	-16
UK	1. industrial conf. ind.	-40	02-91	11	02-95	-12	-17	-11	-13	-18	-20	-20	-22	-31	-23	-20	-19
	2. consumer conf. ind.	-28	10-92	7	04-98	-3	-4	-1	-1	-6	-5	-12	-9	-8	-6	-5	-5
	3. construction conf. in	-80	06-91	3	09-01	-5	-8	-4	-1	-4	3	-1	-3	-4	0	-8	-3
	4. retail trade conf. ind.	-27	09-92	17	11-96	2	3	3	9	12	7	-1	7	10	6	8	3
	=5. economic sent. ind.	95.6	02-91	101.9	10-97	100.8	100.3	100.9	101.1	100.7	100.5	100.1	100.2	99.8	100.3	100.2	100.3
	6. services conf. ind.	6	11-01	38	12-97	16	17	15	24	12	11	7	6	12	11	7	16

* In the tables : (s.a.) = seasonally adjusted, (n) = not seasonally adjusted, := not available.

The economic sentiment indicator (1995 = 100) is composed of the industrial confidence indicator (40%), the consumer confidence indicator (20%), the construction confidence indicator (20%), and the retail trade confidence indicator (20%). All confidence indicators are balances.

Source: unless stated otherwise European Commission business and consumer surveys.

TABLE 6 (continued) Monthly survey of services — Monthly questions ^(a)

Balances: i.e. differences between the percentages of respondents giving positive and negative replies (s.a.)

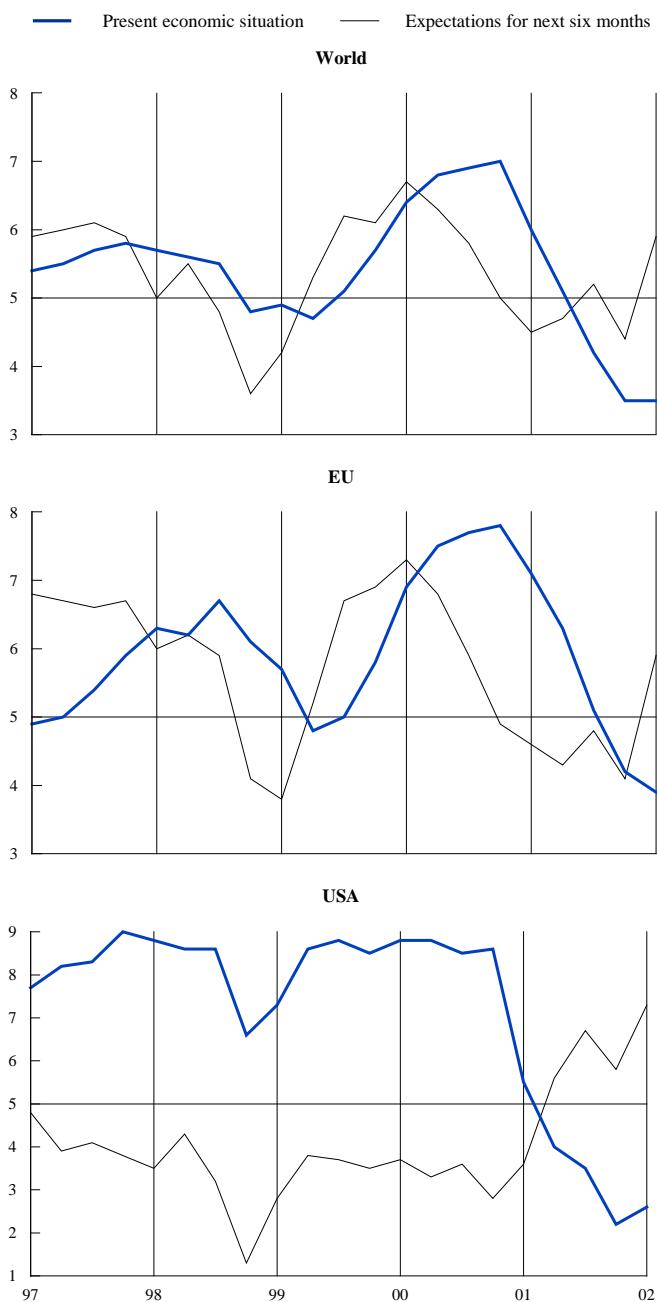
EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN RECENT MONTHS	Since 01/1990								2001						2002		
	Min.		Max.		Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	
	Value	Date	Value	Date													
EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN RECENT MONTHS	EU	-4	12-01	27	06-00	9	10	7	12	8	9	2	0	-4	1	-2	1
	Euro area	-5	12-01	26	06-00	8	9	5	11	8	9	2	-1	-5	0	-3	2
	B	-13	03-02	30	08-98	10	9	8	7	4	5	1	-8	-11	-5	-2	-13
	DK ⁽ⁿ⁾	1	11-01	23	06-00	10	11	12	9	11	4	3	1	1	5	6	6
	D	-14	12-01	44	03-99	8	8	1	8	5	5	-6	-10	-14	-10	-11	-8
	EL	-61	06-01	45	06-00	-57	-59	-61	-42	-43	-45	-5	-4	-3	-7	-14	-12
	E	7	03-02	45	08-98	11	15	13	25	10	24	21	11	12	12	25	7
	F	-27	06-93	23	03-00	15	15	14	10	8	7	-3	-6	-11	-5	-8	4
	IRL	-8	01-02	25	02-98	0	5	0	0	-6	0	-4	-5	-4	-8	-5	-4
	I	-6	06-01	24	06-00	-6	-6	-6	11	12	12	10	8	2	12	-3	12
	NL	2	03-94	66	06-98	12	13	15	20	18	14	9	9	8	4	8	7
	A	-5	01-02	18	06-00	7	12	7	4	-1	2	-3	0	-3	-5	-3	-2
	P	-2	08-01	27	07-98	0	7	3	1	-2	1	12	5	20	5	15	5
	FIN	-26	04-97	91	11-97	59	52	38	49	25	17	22	44	20	27	8	4
	S	-37	01-02	42	01-01	38	19	11	1	-16	-18	-7	-20	-29	-37	-29	-29
	UK	5	02-02	35	06-00	10	14	17	17	16	14	9	8	5	11	5	6
EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYMENT EXPECTED IN THE MONTHS AHEAD	EU ⁽ⁿ⁾	-3	11-01	26	01-01	18	15	14	12	8	5	2	-3	0	9	9	12
	Euro area	-4	11-01	21	02-01	16	14	14	9	6	2	0	-4	-3	5	8	11
	B	-8	01-02	34	11-99	27	29	19	20	14	4	-6	-4	-8	-8	-4	0
	DK ⁽ⁿ⁾	2	09-01	20	06-00	14	11	14	11	6	2	6	3	5	10	14	17
	D ⁽ⁿ⁾	-10	10-01	15	02-01	10	10	9	1	0	-1	-10	-9	-9	-1	2	5
	EL	-59	06-01	50	04-99	-55	-57	-59	-25	-26	-26	-2	0	1	-21	-8	-7
	E	3	11-01	41	04-00	10	3	17	25	17	30	18	3	10	22	24	7
	F	-31	06-97	22	06-00	15	14	14	4	0	-14	6	-1	-2	-4	2	2
	IRL	-4	12-01	31	04-98	5	8	7	7	0	2	0	0	-4	0	5	4
	I	-6	01-97	34	06-00	22	22	22	12	12	12	8	7	6	9	6	15
	NL	5	10-01	40	03-99	26	25	21	20	16	15	5	9	11	12	12	15
	A	-3	10-01	27	09-98	11	12	10	11	4	2	-3	-2	4	1	2	2
	P	-6	02-02	30	05-98	2	2	3	4	2	10	20	10	24	-2	-6	-5
	FIN	-31	11-96	82	12-00	51	38	42	31	5	8	60	-1	8	2	-10	5
	S	-35	11-01	62	09-00	29	12	-11	10	-12	-11	-19	-35	-30	-17	-15	-18
	UK	4	06-00	34	06-98	31	25	23	27	23	21	17	11	19	29	17	23

(a) The indicator is the arithmetic average of the balances (%) for the questions on business climate and recent and expected evolution of demand.

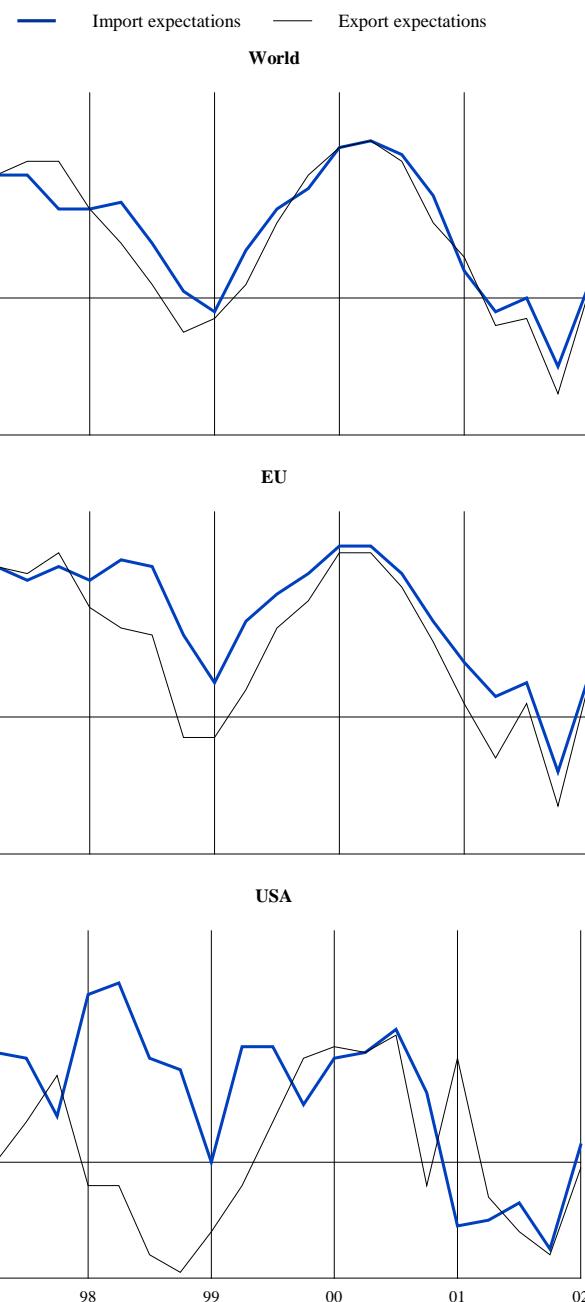
(n) Not seasonally adjusted.

GRAPHS 6-8: "World economic survey" (*)

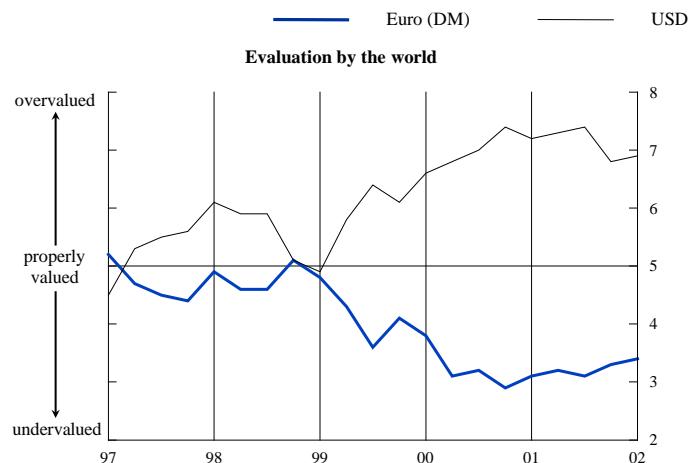
GRAPH 6: Present economic situation and expectations for the next six months



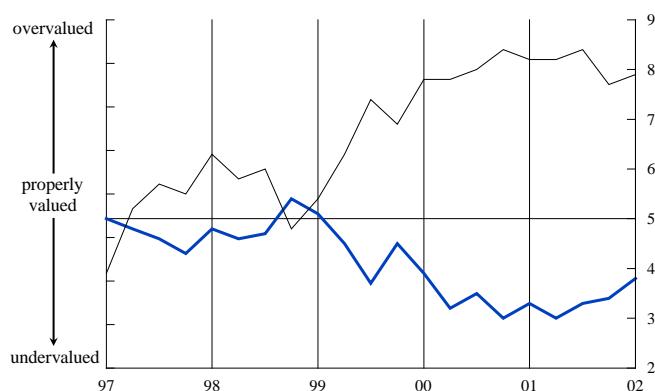
GRAPH 7: Import and export expectations for the next six months



GRAPH 8: Evaluation of currencies

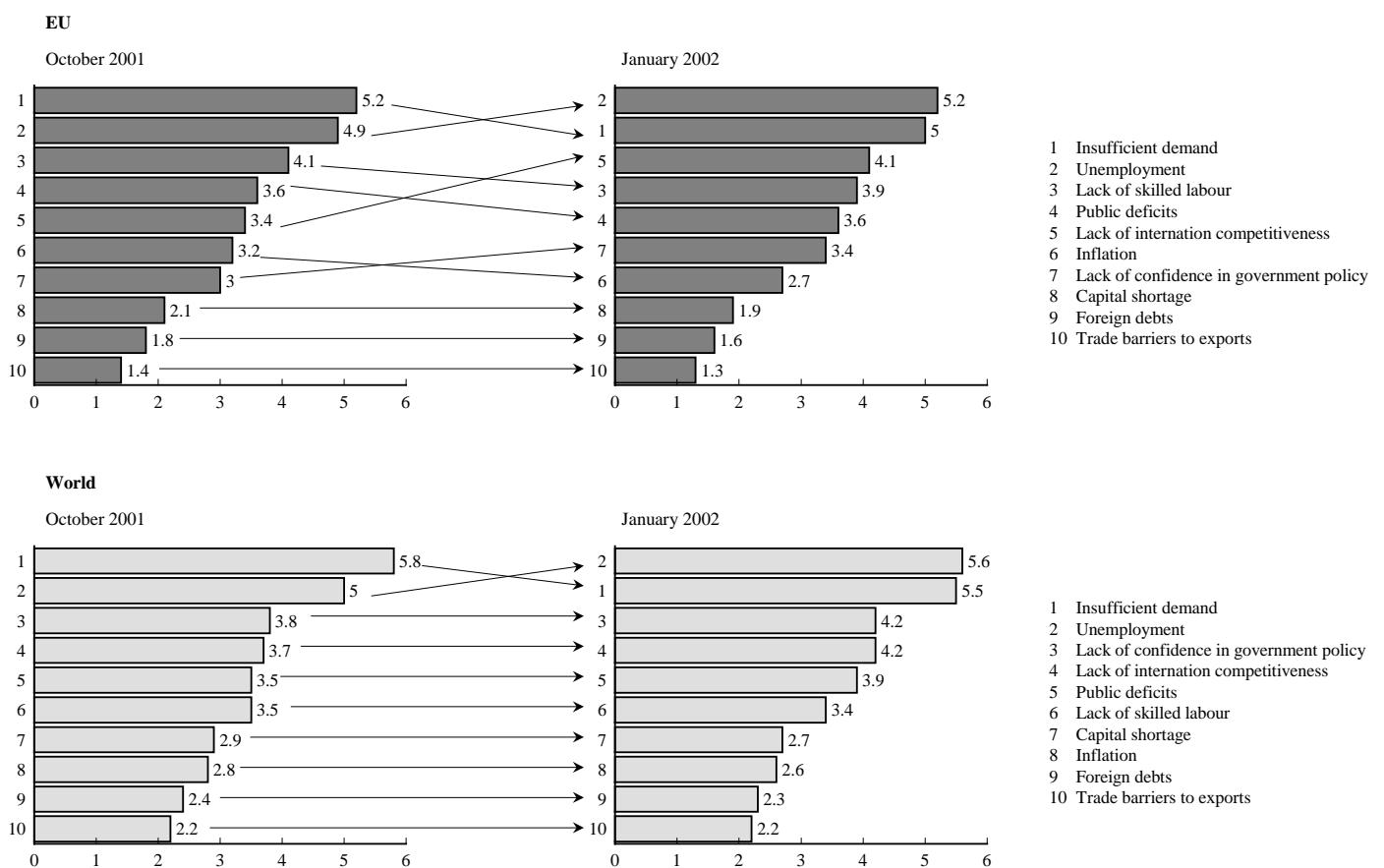


Evaluation by EU countries



(*) The World Economic survey is conducted by the IFO Institute on behalf of the European Commission 4 times per year (January, April, July, October) and is based on the answers of approximately 500 experts in more than 80 countries. The replies are 'graded': positive responses (+) receive a grade of 9, indifferent ones (=) a grade of 5, and negative ones (-) a grade of 1. Grades between 5 and 9 imply a preponderance of positive replies or increases, while grades between 5 and 1 indicate that negative replies or decreases predominate.

GRAPH 9: Changing views on problems considered important at the present time (averages for the European Union and the world) (*)
October 2001 to January 2002



(*) 1 = not so important, 5 = fairly important, 9 = very important

Source: WES conducted by IFO.

TABLE 7: Business and consumer surveys in the accessing countries (AC) (s.a.) ^(a)

		Since 01/1990								2001						2002		
		Min.		Max.		Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	
		Value	Date	Value	Date													
INDUSTRIAL CONFIDENCE INDICATOR	AC total	-23	03-99	12	04-95	-7	-7	-10	-9	-13	-11	-16	-17	-15	-11	-11	-8	
	BG	-30	06-93	8	11-95	-4	-6	-5	-2	-2	-2	-11	-7	-8	-9	-5	-5	
	CY⁽ⁿ⁾	-2	01-02	10	06-01	:	7	10	-2	0	7	-2	6	4	-2	5	7	
	CZ	-31	03-99	27	06-00	11	9	1	6	0	1	-9	-10	0	2	-1	4	
	EE	-31	07-92	19	03-01	11	9	10	9	9	7	2	3	0	5	11	18	
	HU	-15	05-99	8	04-98	1	-1	-4	-7	-6	-8	-11	-13	-12	-12	-11	-10	
	LV	-44	04-93	6	03-02	-4	-7	-3	2	2	0	-1	-2	-5	4	4	6	
	LT	-37	11-98	0	07-95	-2	-3	-10	-11	-6	-9	-7	-8	-6	-7	-7	-8	
	PL	-29	10-01	8	10-97	-17	-19	-21	-23	-28	-23	-29	-28	-28	-21	-20	-18	
	RO	-21	07-92	27	04-96	-1	:	:	1	:	:	-1	:	:	3	:	:	
	SK	-23	12-95	26	05-96	1	13	12	10	5	3	2	-7	2	6	-1	12	
	SI	-21	03-99	18	06-00	1	-3	-1	-4	-6	-6	-11	-8	-9	-8	-4	-6	
CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDICATOR	AC total⁽ⁿ⁾	-28	12-01	-22	09-01	:	-26	-25	-25	-27	-22	-24	-25	-28	-25	-26	-26	
	BG⁽ⁿ⁾	-36	03-02	-12	08-01	:	-25	-21	-13	-12	-20	-30	-31	-31	-32	-35	-36	
	CY⁽ⁿ⁾	-38	10-01	-9	06-01	:	-14	-9	-22	-17	-26	-38	-31	-21	-18	-19	-22	
	CZ	-36	03-98	1	04-01	1	0	-5	-5	-6	-6	-3	-4	-4	-2	-4	-5	
	EE	-56	04-93	-7	08-01	-36	-20	-18	-17	-7	-14	-17	-20	-19	-10	-9	-8	
	HU	-59	04-95	-6	03-02	-21	-20	-21	-19	-20	-19	-18	-16	-14	-17	-13	-6	
	LV	-48	03-93	4	09-01	:	-11	-4	-6	-4	4	-2	0	2	-2	-5	-4	
	LT⁽ⁿ⁾	-33	05-01	-22	01-02	:	-33	-30	-24	-24	-25	-30	-28	-26	-22	-25	-24	
	PL⁽ⁿ⁾	-40	08-01	-27	09-01	:	-38	-36	-35	-40	-27	-31	-33	-39	-37	-36	-38	
	RO⁽ⁿ⁾	-29	03-02	-20	06-01	:	-22	-20	-21	-22	-23	-26	-27	-24	-27	-27	-29	
	SK⁽ⁿ⁾	-48	09-99	-23	05-00	-36	-33	-33	-32	-28	-29	-31	-27	-28	-27	-27	-27	
	SI	-29	06-99	-12	06-01	-12	-15	-12	-14	-15	-13	-16	-18	-15	-16	-24	-24	
CONSTRUCTION CONFIDENCE INDICATOR	AC total	-64	06-93	1	06-96	-30	-31	-30	-33	-33	-35	-36	-35	-26	-33	-34	-36	
	BG	-56	10-93	-7	02-02	-14	-21	-14	-21	-21	-24	-17	-16	-16	-17	-7	-18	
	CZ	-64	06-99	3	06-95	-8	-8	-4	-8	-12	-17	-10	-10	-16	-14	-13	-14	
	EE	-45	10-99	27	01-97	0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	
	HU	-21	07-96	12	09-98	-1	0	1	1	1	2	-7	-7	-8	-3	-4	-7	
	LV	-63	07-93	-11	07-98	-35	:	:	-30	:	-32	:	:	-13	:	:	:	
	LT	-76	07-00	-15	07-98	-56	:	:	-47	:	-45	:	:	-44	:	:	:	
	PL	-61	03-02	-23	03-98	-53	-53	-53	-55	-55	-56	-57	-54	-32	-56	-59	-61	
	RO	-59	07-99	36	04-96	-14	:	:	-24	:	-20	:	:	-5	:	:	:	
	SK	-86	07-99	18	03-97	-29	-38	-42	-43	-41	-38	-39	-36	-38	-33	-26	-21	
	SI⁽ⁿ⁾	1	11-01	27	06-93	1	0	0	-2	-1	-4	-4	-5	-4	-4	-4	-3	

(a) All data are balances.

(n) Not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Surveys conducted by national statistical (and other) institutes and harmonised by European Commission.