Statistics in focus

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

THEME 2 – 23/2001

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

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EU computer and information services surplus up to EUR 2.5 bn in 1999

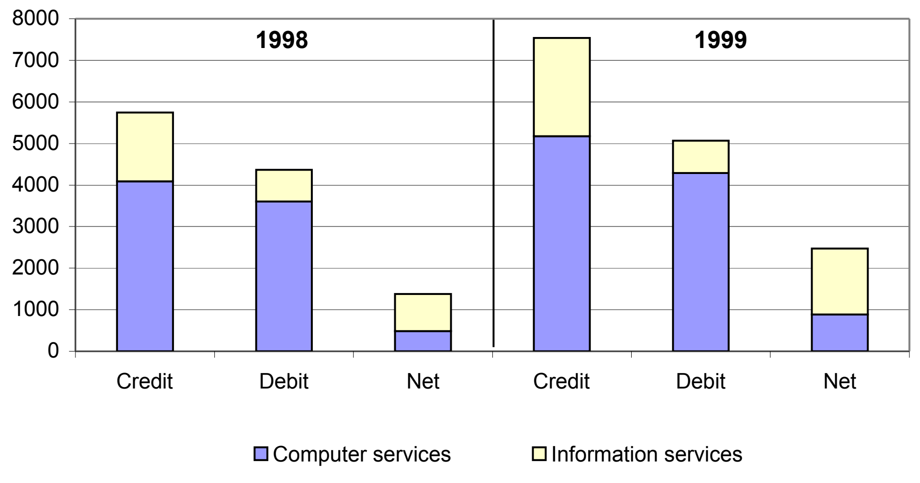
The development of information technologies pushes growth

Nikolaos CHRYSSANTHOU

In 1999, the European Union recorded a surplus of EUR 2.5 bn in its external transactions in computer and information (C&I) services by exporting EUR 7.5 bn and importing EUR 5.1 bn of these services. The largest share of EU external[1] exports and imports in C&I services stemmed from transactions in computer services (69% of the exports and 85% of the imports), the remaining arising from exchanges in information services. The growth in C&I services transactions was probably linked to the international development of information technologies.

With a total of external transactions[2] amounting to EUR 12.6 bn, the EU was the first operator in C&I services in the world. External transactions represented 41% of total EU transactions and the USA was by far the main extra-EU partner. With all countries except the USA, the European Union was a net provider of C&I services. On the other hand, the EU showed a deficit of EUR -0.6 bn with partner the USA. Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom were the most significant actors among the EU Member States in 1999 by generating more than half of total EU external transactions in C&I services.

Breakdown of exports, imports and balance of computer and information services in 1998 and 1999 (Mio ECU/EUR*)



** Mio ECU until the end of 1998, Mio EUR from 1999 onwards*

[1] *Extra-EU*
[2] *Exports + Imports*

In 1999, EU external exports and imports in C&I services reached EUR 7.5 bn and EUR 5.1 bn respectively, the majority of these flows resulting from transactions in computer services

In 1999, the EU enjoyed a surplus of EUR 2.5 bn in computer and information services, confirming and reinforcing its position of net exporter to extra-EU, already observed in 1998 (with a surplus of ECU 1.4 bn). EU external exports and imports in C&I services grew compared to 1998: exports went from ECU 5.7 bn in 1998 to EUR 7.5 bn in 1999 (+31%) and imports from ECU 4.4 bn to EUR 5.1 bn (+16%). In 1999, external exchanges represented 41% of total EU transactions in C&I services.

EU external transactions in computer services and information services in 1998 and 1999

(Mio ECU/EUR)

		1998			1999		
		Credit	Debit	Net	Credit	Debit	Net
Computer and Information services	Extra-EU	5 743	4 360	1 383	7 541	5 068	2 473
	Canada	71	85	- 14	181	87	93
	USA	2 329	2 571	- 242	2 624	3 219	- 595
	Japan	222	96	126	210	74	136
Computer services	Extra-EU	4 089	3 605	484	5 176	4 289	887
	Canada	64	70	- 6	151	70	81
	USA	1 812	2 228	- 416	1 999	2 817	- 818
	Japan	198	73	125	173	57	117
Information services	Extra-EU	1 655	757	898	2 365	778	1 586
	Canada	7	15	- 8	29	16	13
	USA	517	344	174	627	402	225
	Japan	24	22	2	35	17	18

A further breakdown[3] shows that the majority of EU exports in C&I services resulted from transactions in computer services (69%), the remaining 31% corresponding to transactions in information services. On the import side the weight of the component computer services was even larger: computer services made up 85% and the remaining 15% stemmed from information services.

For computer services, the EU balance displayed a minor surplus of EUR 0.9 bn, which was a slight progression in comparison with 1998 (+0.4 bn ECU). External transactions represented 40% of total EU computer services exchanges[4]. This share is smaller than for other types of services (external transactions made up 44% of total EU transactions in services). This can be explained by the fact that in computer services the proximity to the customer is a “plus” because the best way to clearly identify market opportunities is through familiarity with cultural, administrative, and regulatory issues which clients need to address. Consequently, most service companies concentrate on regional and national markets.

Regarding EU flows in information services with the rest of the world, it appears that exports experienced a remarkable growth of 43% between 1998 and 1999, from ECU 1.7 bn to EUR 2.4 bn, whereas imports stagnated at the 1998 level (EUR 0.8 bn). As a result, the surplus went from ECU 0.9 bn in 1998 to EUR 1.6 bn in 1999. External transactions represented 45% of the total EU transactions in information services.

Due to a faster growth of exports compared to imports in computer and information services, the EU became a net exporter of C&I services from 1996 onwards

Over the period 1992 to 1999, the European Union progressively moved from a position of net importer of computer and information services to one of net exporter.

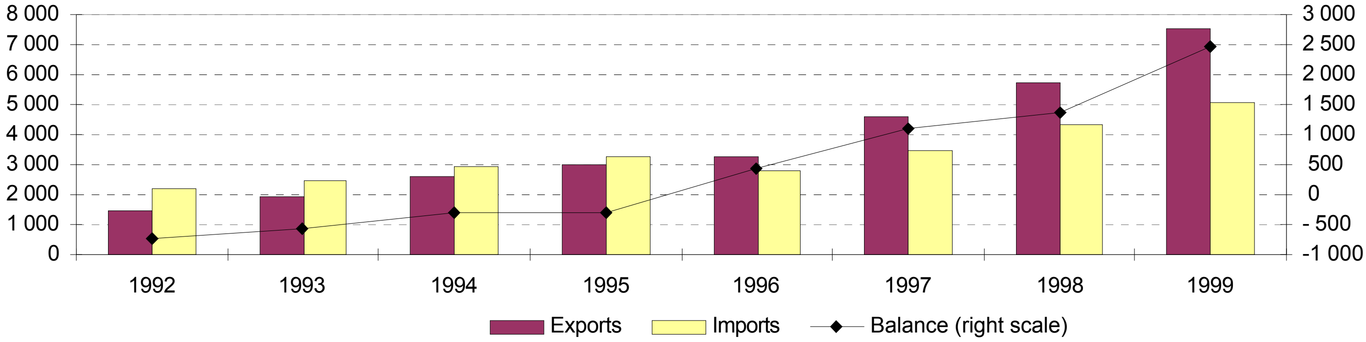
From 1992 to 1995, both EU external exports and imports of C&I services followed an upward trend going from ECU 1.5 bn and ECU 2.2 bn respectively in 1992 to ECU 3.0 bn and ECU 3.3 bn in 1995. Over this period the European Union was a net importer of C&I services, but the deficit slowly contracted. In 1996, the balance turned to a surplus of ECU 0.5 bn. This reversal of the balance was the result of a decrease in imports (-14% between 1995 and 1996) combined with an expansion in exports (+10%).

[3] *Makes the distinction between computer services and information services (see the methodological note).*

[4] *Exports + Imports*

From 1996 to 1999, exports of C&I services grew at an annual average rate of 32% against 21% for imports. The European Union maintained and consolidated its position of net exporter. The weight of exports compared to imports strengthened as the cover rate (exports/imports) went from 116% in 1996 to 149% in 1999.

EU external transactions in computer and information services: Exports, imports and balance (Mio ECU/EUR)



The expansion of international flows in computer and information services was in line with the global evolution of the EU information technology (IT) market[5]. Compared to ECU 56 791 bn in 1997, the value of services in the EU IT market increased to ECU 72 988 bn in 1999.

A context propitious to computer and information services transactions

Computer and information sector in the European Union: main results

	1997	1998	1999	Growth rate 1998-1999
Value of services in the IT market (bn ECU) *	56 791	64 152	72 988	14%
Number of personal computers (millions)	73.5	84.7	93.2	10%
Number of Internet hosts (millions)	4.7	6.4	8.6	34%
Number of Internet users (millions)	19.3	36.3	55.9	54%

Sources: International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and European Information Technology Observatory (EITO)
** EITO market value is expressed in bn ECU at constant 1998 exchange rates.*

Firstly, EU computer and information services transactions were supported by the international development of information technologies:

- To improve the quality of customer services, increase productivity and allow immediate access to financial and other commercial information, enterprises resorted more frequently to consultation services to integrate the latest available information technology.
- One element in the development of information technologies is the growing number of personal computers in the world. In the EU for example, the number of PCs rose from 56.2 million in 1995 to 93.2 million in 1999. This phenomenon enhanced services linked to computers (implementation of hardware and software, consultation, database services…). The increasing demand for PCs (in particular from residential consumer and small enterprises) was boosted by the widespread availability of attractively priced personal computers.
- Likewise, the recent development of the Internet confirmed by the evolving number of EU hosts (from 4.7 million in 1997 to 8.6 million in 1999) and EU Internet users (from 19.3 million in 1997 to 55.9 million in 1999) probably had a positive impact on the development of international flows in computer and information services by increasing the demand for implementation, consultation, and database services linked to the Internet. Moreover, Internet development concerns all sectors of the economy: the business sector, private individuals, schools, universities, libraries, administrations…

Two specific events temporarily inflated the demand for computer and information services: the Y2K problem and the Euro. The Y2K problem was widespread: it concerned languages and compilers, operating systems, random number generators and security services, database-management systems, transaction-processing systems, banking systems, spreadsheets, phone systems. In fact any system using dates was threatened. Moreover, the establishment of the Euro as the official euro-zone currency was and is also a general concern but with effects more extended over time as the introduction will be gradual.

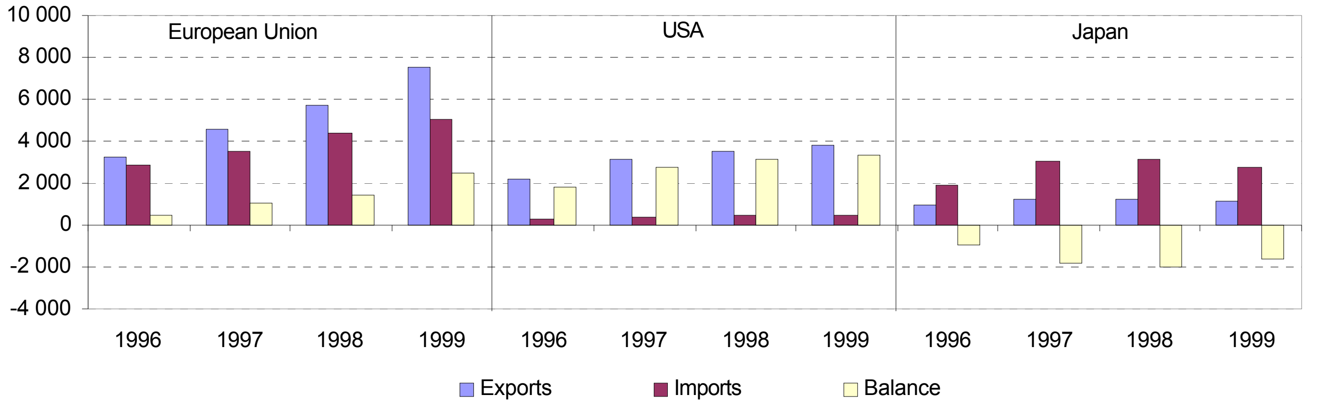
[5] *Information technology market refers to the combined industries of hardware for office machines, data processing equipment, data communication equipment and services.*

The EU was the first exporter and importer of computer and information services in the world though the USA benefited from a more significant internal market

The European Union was traditionally and by far the world's largest exporter and importer of computer and information services. In 1999, total EU external transactions were approximately three times greater than US and Japanese ones: they amounted to EUR 12.6 bn for the EU against EUR 4.3 bn for the USA and EUR 4.0 bn for Japan. These results contrasted with other information technology indicators for which the USA largely overtook the EU and Japan. In terms of the number of personal computers, Internet hosts and Internet users per 100 inhabitants, the EU and Japan were relatively close to each other whereas the USA showed a significant advance. In 1999, when the USA counted 52 PCs per 100 inhabitants, the EU and Japan registered 25 and 29 PCs per 100 inhabitants, respectively. In terms of Internet hosts, the ITU[6] showed a density of 19.6 for the USA, against 2.3 and 2.1 for the EU and Japan. Likewise the USA recorded a greater density of Internet users (with 40.5 Internet users per 100 inhabitants) than the EU (14.9) and Japan (14.5).

Finally, the value of the information technology market of the USA amounting to ECU 350 767 bn in 1999 was likewise far ahead the EU and Japan. Nevertheless, for this indicator, the EU significantly overtook Japan, given that the EU value of the IT market (reaching ECU 207 100 bn in 1999) was twice the Japanese one (ECU 94 566 bn).

EU, USA and Japanese external transactions in computer and information: exports, imports and balance (Mio ECU/EUR)



With such a large internal market, and also because the USA is often at the root of technologies, it seems natural that the USA is a net exporter of C&I services. Indeed in the whole period 1996-1999, both the USA and the European Union recorded surpluses in their external transactions in computer and information services. However, the surplus registered by the USA constantly surpassed that of the EU. In 1999, the EU surplus reached EUR 2.5 bn against EUR 3.4 bn for the USA. This significant surplus registered by the USA was the result of exports reaching EUR 3.9 bn, combined with a low level of imports. Usually, EU imports are approximately ten times greater than US imports.

Contrasting with the EU and USA, Japan held a deficit in computer and information services from 1996 to 1999. However, between 1998 and 1999 its deficit slightly narrowed from ECU -2.0 bn in 1998 to EUR -1.6 bn in 1999.

Information technology in EU, USA and Japan in 1999

	EU	USA	Japan
Value of the IT market (bn ECU)	207 100	350 767	94 566
PCS per 100 inhabitants	25.0	52.0	29.0
Internet hosts per 100 inhabitants	2.3	19.6	2.1
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	14.9	40.5	14.5

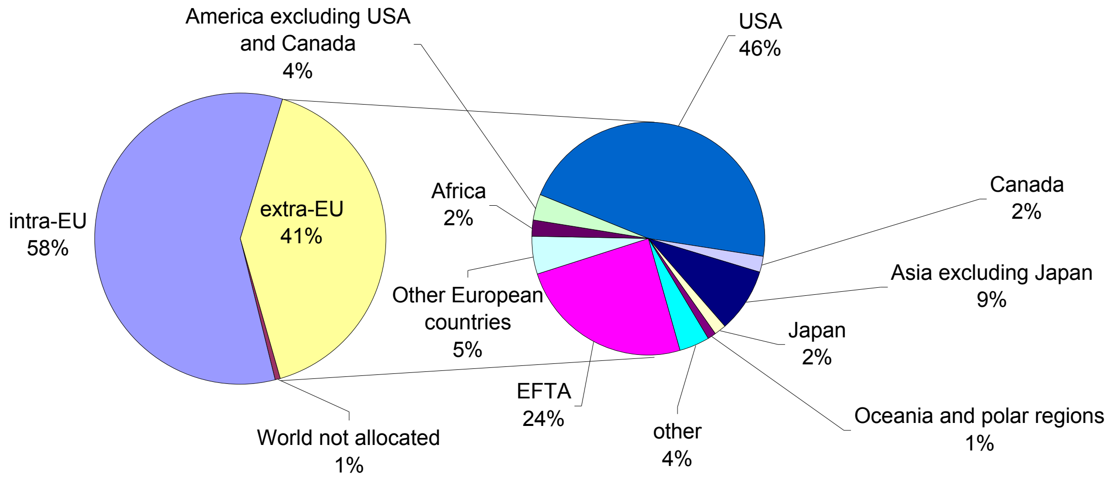
Source International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

[6] *International Telecommunication Union*

More than for other types of services, the dynamism of transactions in computer and information services depends on the partner country's degree of development

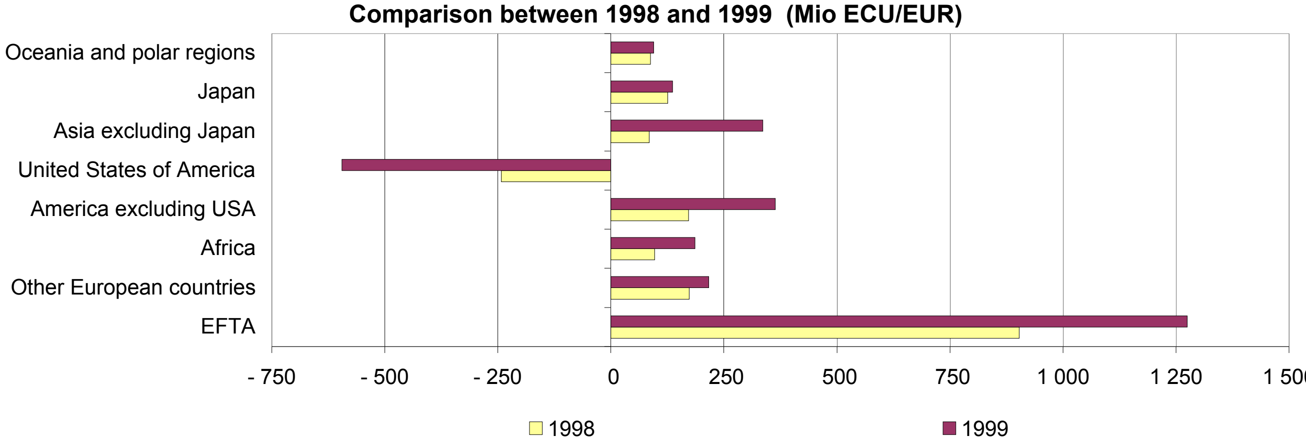
In 1999, the EU performed 41% of its total transactions in computer and information services with the rest of the world. The geographical breakdown of this share among the main extra-EU partners was significantly different, compared with the breakdown usually observed for services as a whole. More than for other types of services, the degree of the partner country's development seems to be an essential factor in the intensity of C&I services exchanges. The USA, unsurprisingly main extra-EU partner, generated 46% of total EU external transactions in computer and information services while they accounted for 37% of the total EU transactions in services. Industrialised countries such as EFTA countries occupied a more important place in EU external transactions in C&I services (24%) than in EU external transactions in services (14%). In contrast, EU transactions with less technologically advanced countries (re-constructing countries or developing countries) were not as developed for computer and information services than for services: other European countries and Africa represented respectively 5% and 2% of EU external transactions in computer and information services against 10% and 7% in EU external transactions in services.

Breakdown of total EU transactions in computer and information services by partner zone in 1999

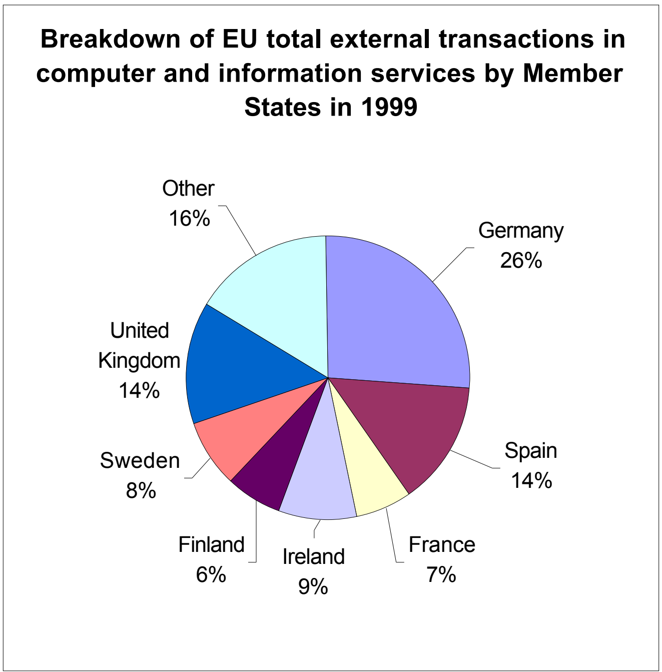


Both in 1998 and 1999, the EU was a net exporter of computer and information services from all countries except the USA. Between 1998 and 1999, surpluses generally expanded. The EU made the most important surplus with partner EFTA (EUR 1.3 bn in 1999). With partner the USA, the European Union was a net importer of C&I services. The deficit observed with this partner enlarged from ECU -0.2 bn in 1998 to EUR -0.6 bn in 1999.

EU balance in computer and information services with selected partners: Comparison between 1998 and 1999 (Mio ECU/EUR)



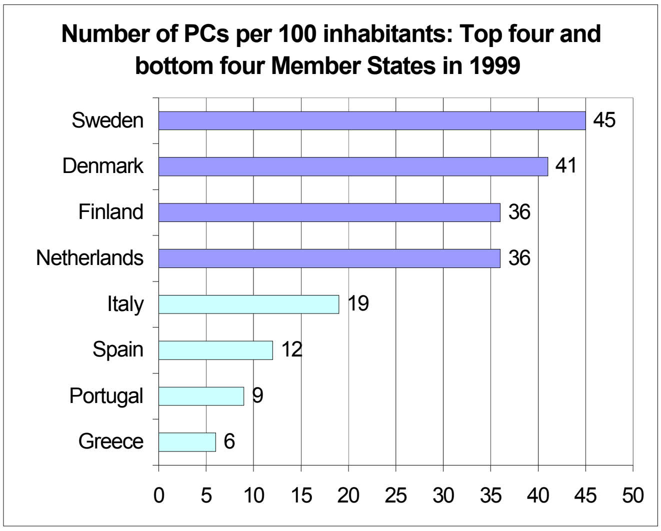
Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom made up 54% of total EU external transactions in computer and information services in 1999

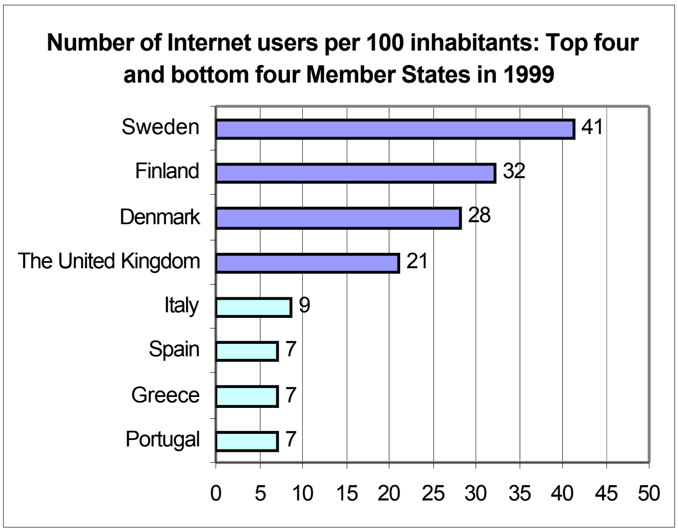


In 1999, three Member States shared 54% of total EU external transactions in computer and information services: Germany (26%), Spain (14%) and the United Kingdom (14%).

The intensity of international transactions in C&I services in the Member States is closely linked to other indicators of the Information technology sector such as the value of their information technology market, the number of PCs, or the number of Internet users. Indeed, by totalling 46% of the EU value of Information technology market, 45% of the EU number of personal computers and 51% of the EU number of Internet users, Germany and the United Kingdom once again distinguished themselves from the other EU Member States.

However, these results must be viewed carefully because they are connected to the population of these two countries. Indeed, looking at the densities (number of PCs per 100 inhabitants or number of Internet users per 100 inhabitants), Sweden significantly overtook these two countries. In 1999, Sweden had 45 PCs and 41 Internet users per 100 inhabitants whereas Germany and the United Kingdom both recorded 30 PCs and respectively 19 and 21 Internet users per 100 inhabitants. More generally, Northern EU Member States showed higher densities than Southern EU MS. Highest PC and Internet user densities were found in Sweden, Denmark and Finland while the lowest were observed in Greece, Portugal and Spain.





Though performing 14% of total EU external transactions in computer and information services, Spain only made up 5% of the value of the EU information technology market. In fact, the largest share of Spanish total transactions was attributable to exports of information services in 1999. For Spain, computer services only represented 22% of total transactions in computer and information services. Moreover, Spain totalled merely 5% of the EU number of PCs and 5% of the EU number of Internet users in 1999 and, as already seen, Spanish densities (number of PCs per 100 inhabitants and number of Internet users per 100 inhabitants) were among the lowest of all EU Member States. In contrast, France, which only accounted for 7% of EU external transactions in computer and information services, made up 19% of the EU value of Information technology.

Selected indicators of the information technology market for individual EU Member States in 1999

	Value of information technology market (bn ECU)	Number of PCs (millions)	Number of Internet users (millions)	Number of PCs per 100 inhabitants	Number of Internet users per 100 inhabitants
BLEU	6 254	3.4	1.5	35	16
Denmark	5 134	2.2	1.5	41	28
Germany	50 631	24.4	15.9	30	19
Greece	1 065	0.6	0.8	6	7
Spain	9 850	4.8	2.8	12	7
France	38 482	13	5.7	22	10
Ireland	1 461	1.2	0.4	32	12
Italy	18 336	11	5.0	19	9
Netherlands	11 431	5.7	3.0	36	19
Austria	4 554	2.1	0.9	26	11
Portugal	1 570	0.9	0.7	9	7
Finland	3 326	1.9	1.7	36	32
Sweden	9 376	4	3.7	45	41
The United Kingdom	45 605	18	12.5	30	21

Source ITU and EITO

➢ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The data used in this issue of Statistics in Focus are from the Balance of Payments statistics.

The Balance of Payments (BOP) of the European Union is compiled as the sum of the harmonised balance of payments accounts of the fifteen Member States. The balance of payments of the EU Institutions is added to the EU aggregate.

The methodological framework is that of the fifth edition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Balance of Payments manual.

computer and information services cover computer data and news-related service transactions between residents and non-residents. In the OECD-Eurostat Classification, they are further broken down into

(a) Computer services include hardware and software consultancy and implementation services; maintenance and repair of computers and peripheral equipment; disaster recovery services, provision of advice and assistance on matters related to the management of computer resources; analysis, design and programming of systems ready to use (including web page development and design), and technical consultancy related to software; development, production, supply and documentation of customised software including operating systems made on order for specific users; systems maintenance and other support services such as training provided as part of consultancy; data processing such as data entry, tabulation and processing on a time-sharing basis; web page hosting services (i.e. the provision of server space on the internet to host clients' web pages); and computer facilities management Excluded are packaged (non-customised) software which are considered as goods and non-specific computer training courses which are considered as other educational services.

(b) Information services including database services – database conception, data storage, and the dissemination of data and databases (including directories and mailing lists), both on-line and trough magnetic, optical, or printed media; and web search portals (search engine services that find internet addresses for clients who input keyword queries); Information services also include news agency services (provision of news, photographs, and feature articles to the media) and direct, non-bulk subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals.

External statistics are also used in this Statistics in Focus. These statistics come from:

- The *European Information Technology Observatory (EITO)* for the value of the Information technology market.

The **Information Technology market** refers to the combined industries of hardware for office machines, data processing equipment, data communications equipment and services. The EITO market value is expressed in Million ECU at constant 1998 exchange rates.

- The *International Telecommunication Union (ITU)* for the number of Personal computers, the number of Internet hosts and the number of Internet users.

Personal computers (PC): includes portables, desktops and personal workstations. Board-level products are excluded. Data on the number of PCs by country from ITU represent estimates.

Internet hosts are the computers that are directly connected to the Internet and have their own IP address and full two-way access to other nodes on the network.

Internet users: persons using the Internet. The number is several times higher than the number of Internet hosts. Data relate to persons above a defined age limit. Data on the number of Internet users from ITU represents estimates.

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