

49/2020 - 25 March 2020

## International trade in goods in 2019

## EU trade in goods balance close to €200 bn surplus in 2019

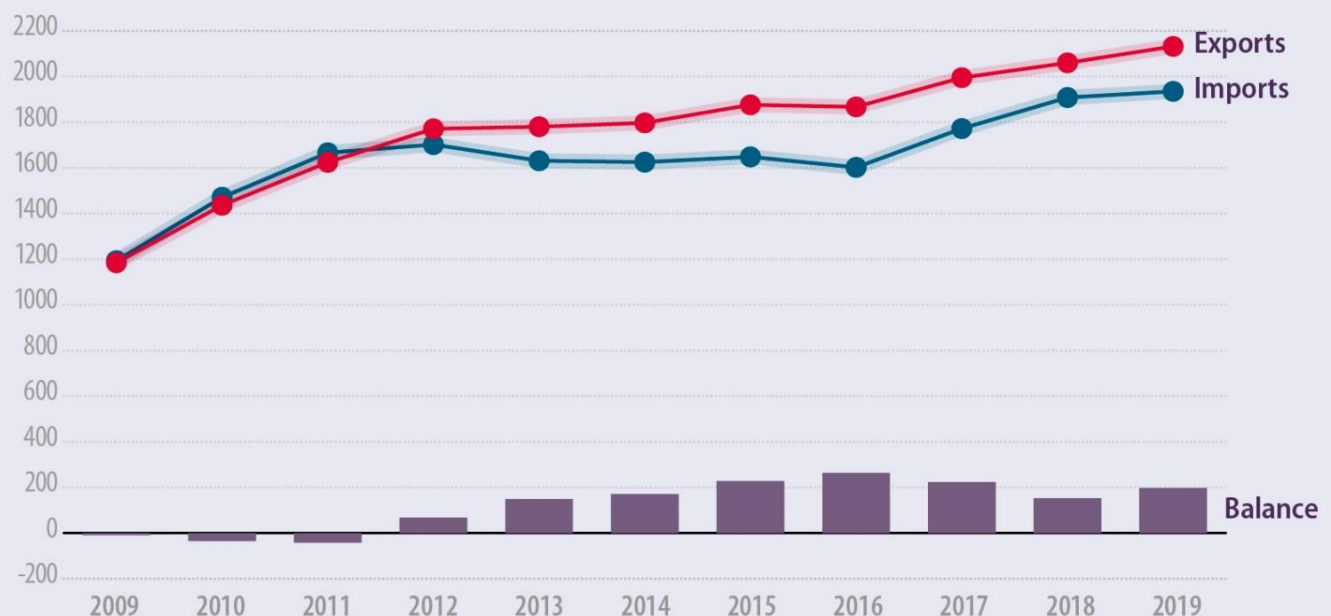
At Member State level, trade within the EU largely prevails

In 2019, the trade in goods balance of the **European Union of 27 Member States (EU)** was in surplus by €197 billion, a significant increase with respect to 2018 (+€152 bn). Looking at the trend over time, after recording a small deficit between 2009 and 2011, the EU trade balance recorded a continuous surplus that peaked at €264 billion in 2016, and then decreased in 2017 and 2018.

Looking at the evolution of the flows, extra-EU exports of goods rose significantly between 2009 and 2012, remained relatively stable until 2016 and then increased again to reach €2 132 billion in 2019. Imports followed roughly the same pattern as exports. They increased between 2009 and 2011, remained stable between 2011 and 2016 and rose again to reach €1 935 bn in 2019.

These data are issued by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. A selection of [infographics](#) on international trade in goods is also available on the Eurostat website.

### Evolution of extra-EU trade in goods (€ bn, 2009-2019)



*EU represents the European Union of 27 Member States (without UK) for the entire period shown*

[ec.europa.eu/eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat) 

## Germany, main export destination for a majority of Member States

In almost all EU Member States, the main partner for exports of goods in 2019 was another member of the European Union, except for **Germany** and **Ireland** (the United States was the main destination of exports) as well as **Sweden** (Norway) and **Lithuania** (Russia). Overall, **Germany** was the main destination of goods exports for 16 Member States.

In some Member States, over a quarter of exports went to one single partner. This partner was Germany for **Czechia** (32% of exports of goods), **Austria** (29%), **Poland** and **Hungary** (both 28%), and the United States for **Ireland** (31%). For extra-EU trade, the three main destinations of EU exports in 2019 were the **United States** (18% of all extra-EU exports), the **United Kingdom** (15%) and **China** (9%).



EU exports refer to extra-EU exports only, while exports of Member States refer to total exports (both intra- and extra-EU)

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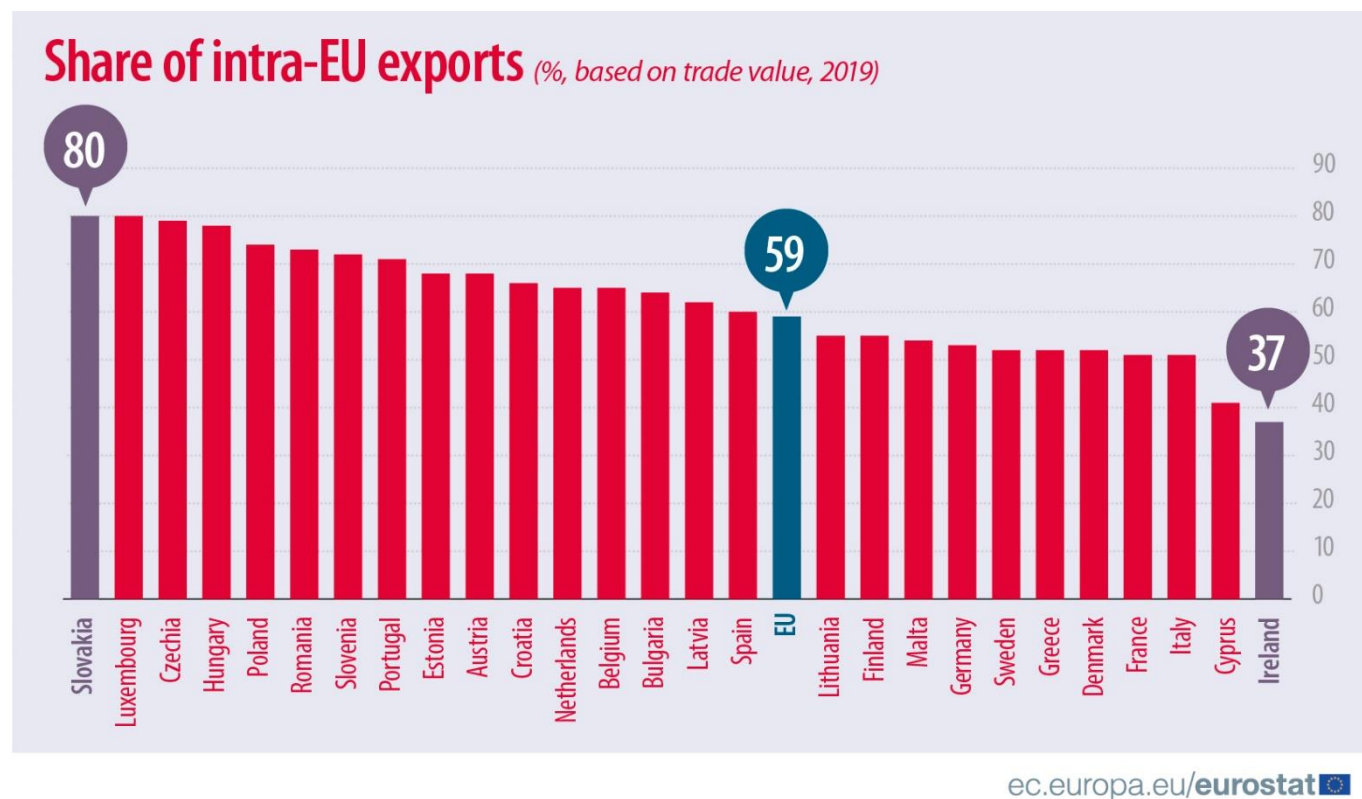
Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)

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## Intra-EU exports prevail in all Member States apart from Ireland and Cyprus

In 2019, the 27 EU Member States exported a total of €5 193 bn of goods, of which €3 061 bn (or 59%) were destined for another Member State (intra-EU trade).

With more than three-quarters of goods exported to other EU Member States, **Slovakia** and **Luxembourg** (both 80% intra-EU in total exports), **Czechia** (79%) and **Hungary** (78%) recorded the highest shares of intra-EU exports in 2019. At the opposite end of the scale, **Ireland** (37%) and **Cyprus** (41%) were the only Member States that exported more goods to non-EU countries than within the EU in 2019.



Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)



## Germany, also main source of imports for majority of EU Member States

As for exports, the main partner for imports of goods in 2019 was another member of the European Union in all Member States except **Ireland** (the United Kingdom was the main partner for goods imported), **Lithuania** (Russia) and the **Netherlands** (China, see country note). Overall, **Germany** was the main source of goods imports for 16 Member States.

In six Member States, more than 25% of imports of goods came from a single partner country in 2019: **Austria** (41% of imports of goods originated from Germany), **Luxembourg** (34% from Belgium), **Portugal** (30% from Spain), **Czechia** (29% from Germany), **Ireland** (28% from the United Kingdom) and **Poland** (27% from Germany).

For extra-EU trade, the main country of origin of goods imported into the EU in 2019 remained **China** (19% of all extra-EU imports), followed by the **United States** (12%) and the **United Kingdom** (10%, see methodological note).



EU imports refer to extra-EU imports only, while imports of Member States refer to total imports (both intra- and extra-EU)

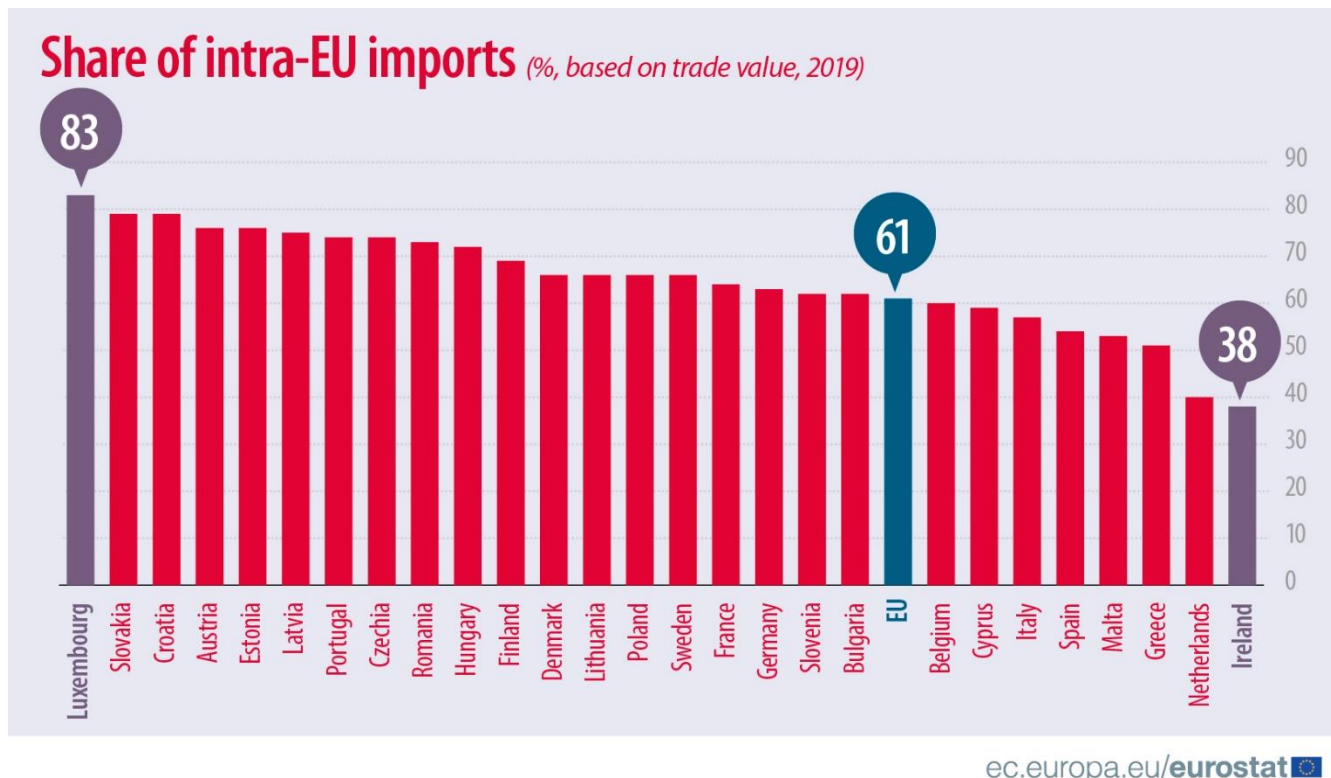
[ec.europa.eu/eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)

## Intra-EU imports prevail in almost all Member States

In 2019, the 27 EU Member States imported a total of €4 937 bn of goods, of which €3 002 bn (or 61%) came from another **EU** Member State (intra-EU trade).

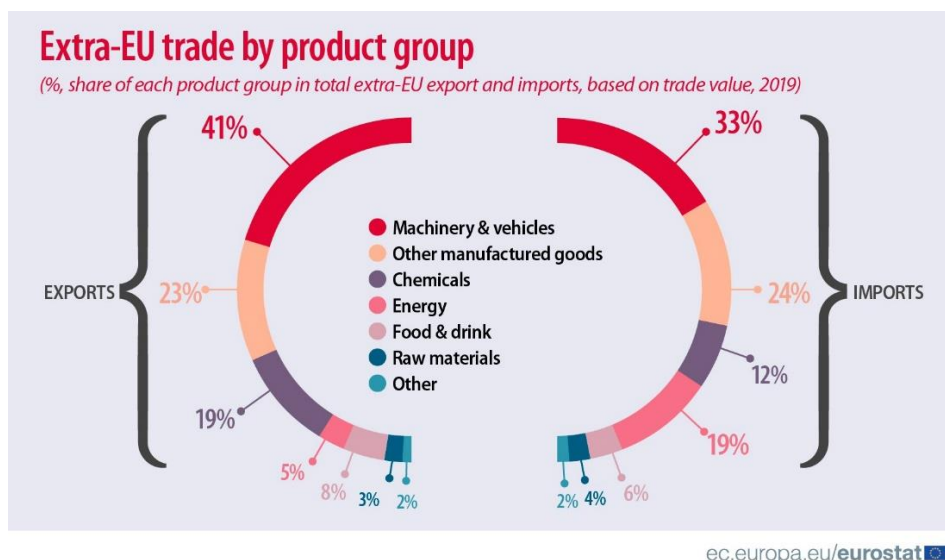
More than three-quarters of total imports of goods originated from another EU Member State in **Luxembourg** (83%), **Slovakia** and **Croatia** (both 79%), **Austria** and **Estonia** (both 76%). In contrast, **Ireland** (38%) and the **Netherlands** (40%) were the only Member States where less than half of the imports came from within the EU. In the latter case, this is largely due to the so-called 'Rotterdam effect' (see country note).



Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)

## Machinery & transport equipment dominated both EU exports and imports

In 2019, machinery and transport equipment continued to play a major role in **EU** trade in goods with the rest of the world, accounting for 41% of total extra-EU exports and 33% of imports. Other manufactured goods (23% of extra-EU exports and 24% of extra-EU imports) as well as chemicals (19% of extra-EU exports and 12% of extra-EU imports) also played a significant role in **EU** trade in goods in 2019. Energy made up a minor share of extra-EU exports (5%), but accounted for 19% of all imports.



Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)

## 40% of EU trade is with the United States, China and the United Kingdom

In 2019, the **United States** (€616 billion, or 15.2% of total extra-EU trade in goods, i.e. the sum of exports and imports), **China** (€560 bn, or 13.8%) and the **United Kingdom** (€512 bn, or 12.6%) were the three main goods trading partners of the **European Union of 27 Member States (EU)**, well ahead of **Switzerland** (€257 bn, or 6.3%), **Russia** (€232 bn, or 5.7%), **Turkey** (€138 bn, or 3.4%) and **Japan** (€124 bn, or 3.0%).

However, the trends observed over time differ for these top trading partners of the **EU**. After remaining relatively stable around 12% between 2009 and 2014, the share of the **United States** in **EU** total trade in goods increased since to reach 15% in 2019. The share of **China** has increased from 11% in 2009 to almost 14% in 2019. The share of the **United Kingdom** decreased from nearly 15% in 2009 to slightly below 13% in 2019. The shares of **Switzerland**, **Turkey** and **Japan** have remained relatively stable over the period, while the share of **Russia** has fluctuated.



EU represents the European Union with 27 Member States (without UK) for the entire period shown

[ec.europa.eu/eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Source dataset: [DS-016890](#)

## Geographical information

The **European Union** (EU27) includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

The United Kingdom left the European Union on 31 January 2020. Information on dissemination of European statistics from 1 February 2020 is published on the [Eurostat website](#).

## Methods and definitions

This News Release is based on data available on 18 March 2020. These are provisional figures based on information provided by Member States. They are subject to frequent revision for up to two years after the year in question. Furthermore, national concepts may differ from the harmonised methodology used by Eurostat, leading to differences between figures in this release and those published nationally.

Products are classified according to the [Standard international trade classification \(SITC\)](#), Revision 4. Other manufactured goods includes articles made of leather, rubber and wood, paper, textiles, metals, building fixtures and fittings, furniture, clothes, shoes and accessories, scientific instruments, clocks, watches and cameras.

As data for all EU Member States are available according to a harmonised methodology, in theory the intra-EU balance should be 0. However, bilateral comparisons have revealed persistent discrepancies in the mutual Member States' intra-EU trade, called **asymmetries**. For example, this means that, for a given period and a specific product X, exports from France to Austria do not equal imports of Austria from France. There are different reasons for these asymmetries, including methodological issues (such as CIF/FOB valuation, deliveries to vessels and aircraft, system of threshold for providing statistical information) but also mismatch in data reporting.

The EU27 data reflect the political change in the EU composition so the United Kingdom (UK) is considered as an extra-EU partner country for the EU27 for the entire period, although the UK was part of the internal market during this period, meaning that data on trade with the UK were based on statistical concepts applicable to trade between the EU Member States. Consequently, while imports from any other extra-EU27 trade partner are grouped by country of origin, the UK data reflect country of consignment. In practice this means that the goods imported by the EU27 from the UK were physically transported from the UK, but part of these goods could have been of other origin than the UK. For this reason, data on trade with the UK are not fully comparable with data on trade with other extra-EU27 trade partners like China.

## Country note:

Dutch trade flows are over-estimated because of the so-called '**Rotterdam effect**' (or **quasi-transit** trade): that is goods bound for other EU countries arrive in Dutch ports and, according to EU rules, are recorded as extra-EU imports by the Netherlands (the country where goods are released for free circulation). This in turn increases the intra-EU flows from the Netherlands to those Member States to which the goods are re-exported. To a lesser extent, Belgian figures are similarly overestimated.

## For more information

Eurostat [website section](#) dedicated to trade in goods statistics

Eurostat [database](#) on international trade in goods

Eurostat [Statistics Explained article](#) on international trade in goods statistics

Eurostat [infographic](#) on EU international trade in goods in 2019

European Statistics [Code of Practice](#)

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