

EFTA-EU - international trade in goods

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in October 2022

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" In 2021, manufactured goods dominated EU trade with EFTA countries, with 83 % of total exports and 67 % of total imports. "

" Switzerland was the largest EFTA partner for both EU exports and imports of goods in 2021. "

" Germany was the largest EU exporter of goods to EFTA countries in 2021, with € 71 billion and also the largest importer of goods from EFTA countries with a value of € 62 billion. "

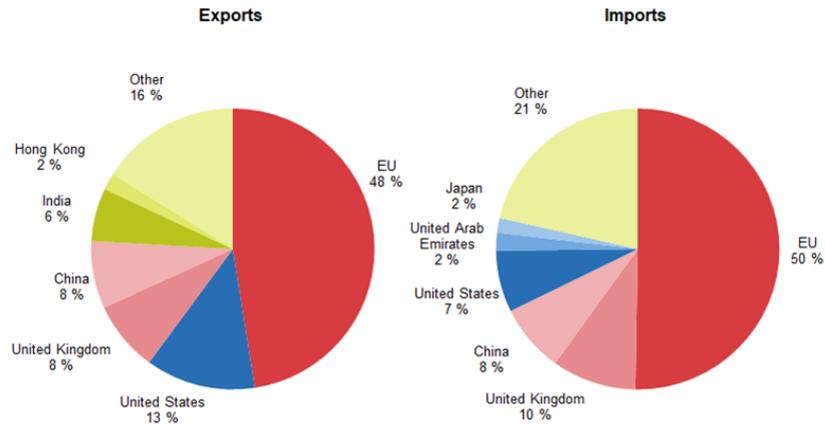
This article provides a picture of the international trade in goods between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and [EFTA](#) . It analyses the type of goods exchanged between them and the shares of each EU Member State in those exchanges. The countries belonging to EFTA are Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main products traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

EU main trade in goods partner EFTA

Figure 1 shows the largest trade in goods partners of EFTA countries in 2021. The EU (48 %) is by far the largest export destination, followed by the United States (13 %), the United Kingdom and China (both 8 %). The EU accounted for half of EFTA imports, ahead of the United Kingdom (10 %), China (8 %) and the United States (7 %). Trade among EFTA countries accounted for less than 1 % of their total trade.

EFTA trade in goods with main partners, 2021

%



Source: UNCTAD

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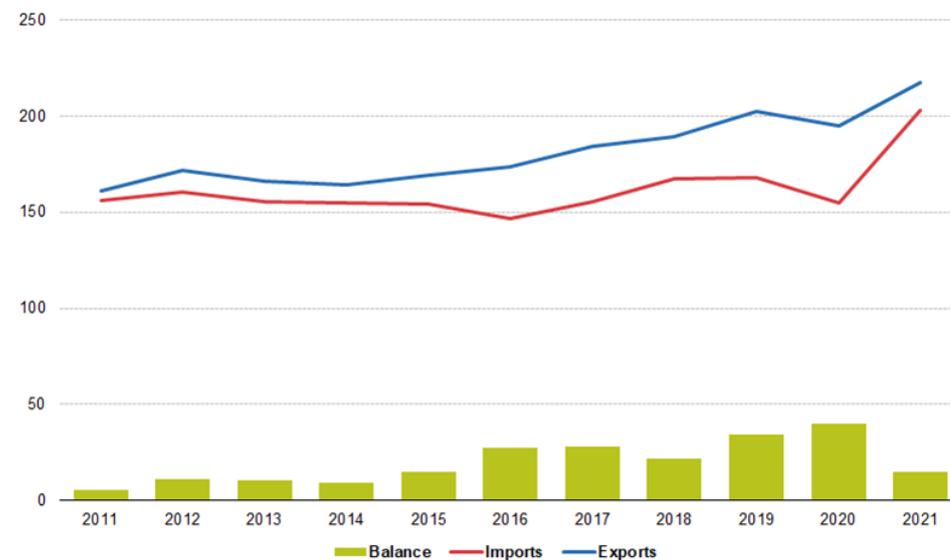
Figure 1: EFTA trade in goods with main partners, 2021 (%) Source: UNCTAD

EU trade in goods with EFTA countries continues to be in surplus

Between 2011 and 2021, EU exports to EFTA countries increased by 35 % from € 161 billion to € 218 billion (see Figure 2). In this period imports from EFTA countries grew by 30 % from € 156 billion to € 203 billion. Consequently, the trade surplus increased from € 5 billion in 2011 to € 15 billion in 2021. In this period the trade surplus peaked in 2020, at € 40 billion.

EU trade in goods with EFTA countries, 2011 - 2021

€ billion



Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

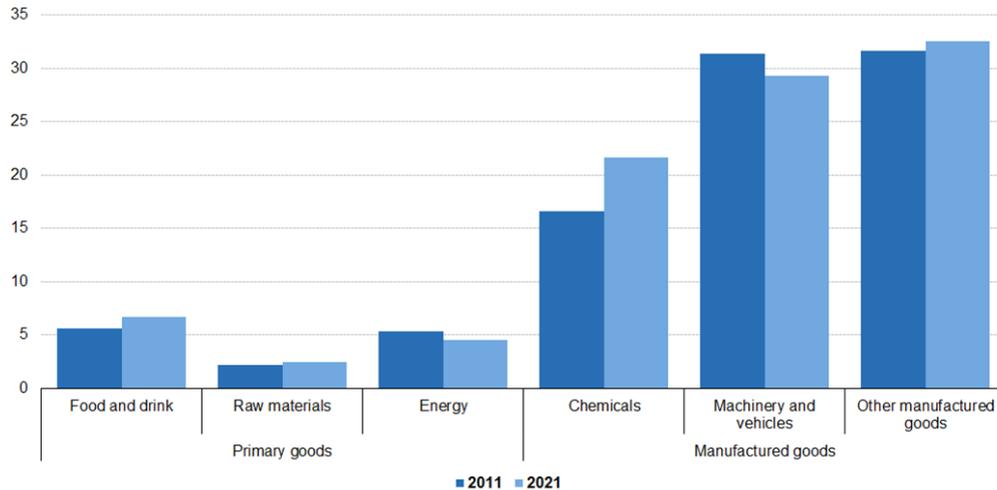
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Figure 2: EU trade in goods with EFTA countries, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Manufactured goods dominate exports to EFTA partners

In 2021, 83 % of goods exported to EFTA countries were manufactured goods (see Figure 3). A similar share (80 %) had been recorded in 2011. Within manufactured goods, there was a slight decline in the share of machinery and vehicles (from 31 % in 2011 to 29 % in 2021), while chemicals rose from 17 % to 22 %. The share of primary goods also rose from 13 % in 2011 to 14 % in 2021.

EU exports to EFTA countries by product group, 2011 and 2021
(shares of total exports in value)



Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 3: EU exports to EFTA countries by product group, 2011 and 2021 (shares of total exports in value)
Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

On a more detailed level the most exported products were medicaments, motor cars and medicinal products. Among these three products, medicinal products grew the most between 2011 and 2021 (+182 %), but medicaments (+136 %) also more than doubled. Exports of cars (+21 %) grew more modestly.

Most exported products to EFTA countries, 2011, 2019 and 2021

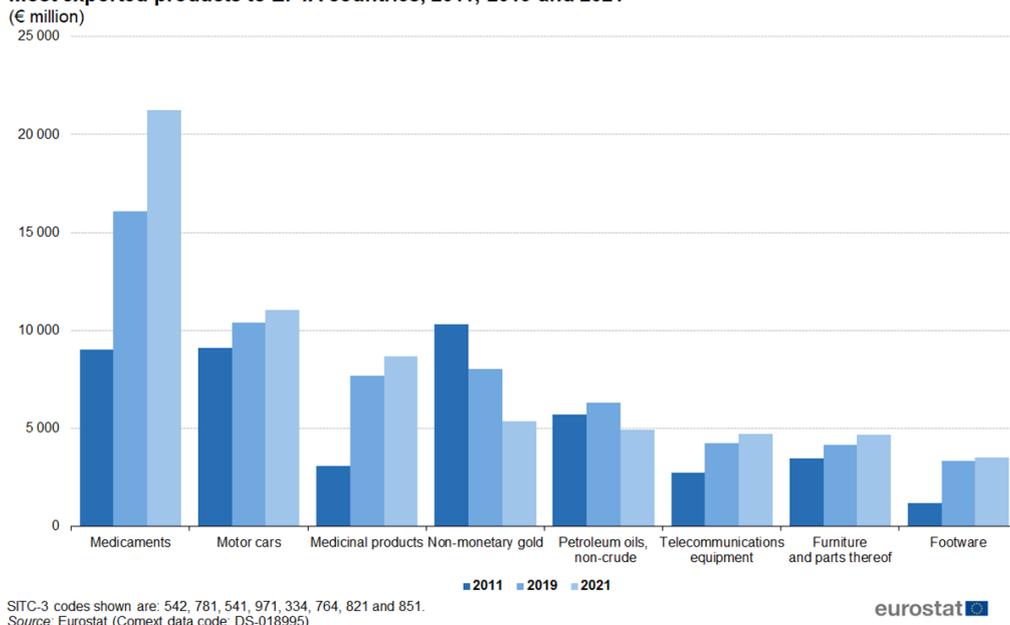
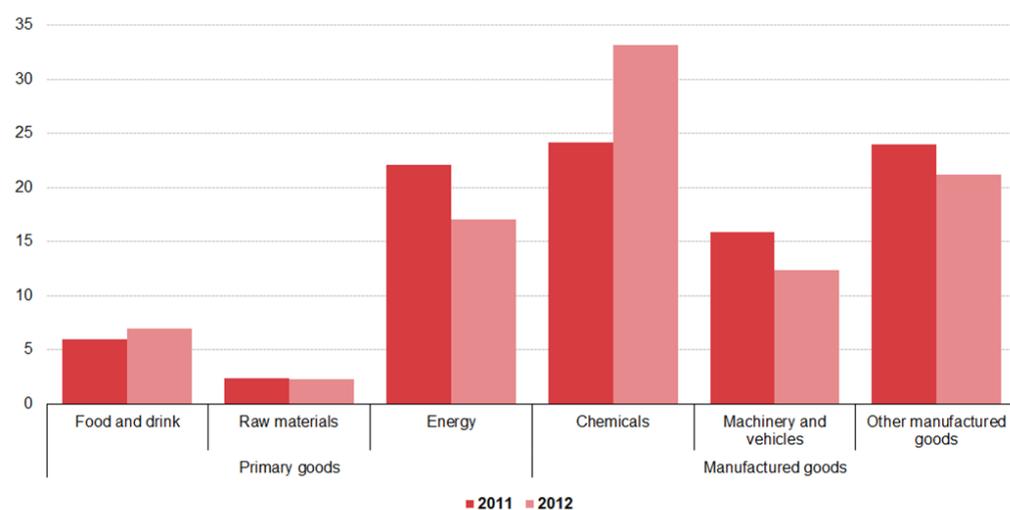


Figure 4: Most exported products to EFTA countries, 2011, 2019 and 2021 (€ million) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Manufactured goods were also the largest group in imports of goods from EFTA countries (see Figure 5). Between 2011 and 2021, their share increased from 64 % to 67 % while the share for primary goods dropped from 30 % to 26 %. Within manufactured goods, there was an increase in the share for chemicals - from 24 % in 2011 to 33 % in 2021 - and a decline in the share of machinery and vehicles (from 16 % to 12 %) and other manufactured goods (from 24 % to 21 %).

EU imports from EFTA countries by product group, 2011 and 2021

(shares of total imports in value)



Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 5: EU imports from EFTA countries by product group, 2011 and 2021 (shares of total imports in value) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

On a more detailed level, two of the three most imported products, namely medicinal products and medicaments were also among the three most exported products. Both medicinal products (+130 %) and medicaments (+72 %) grew between 2011 and 2021. By contrast, imports of crude petroleum oils decreased by 6 % and fell from most

imported product in 2011 to second most imported product in 2021.

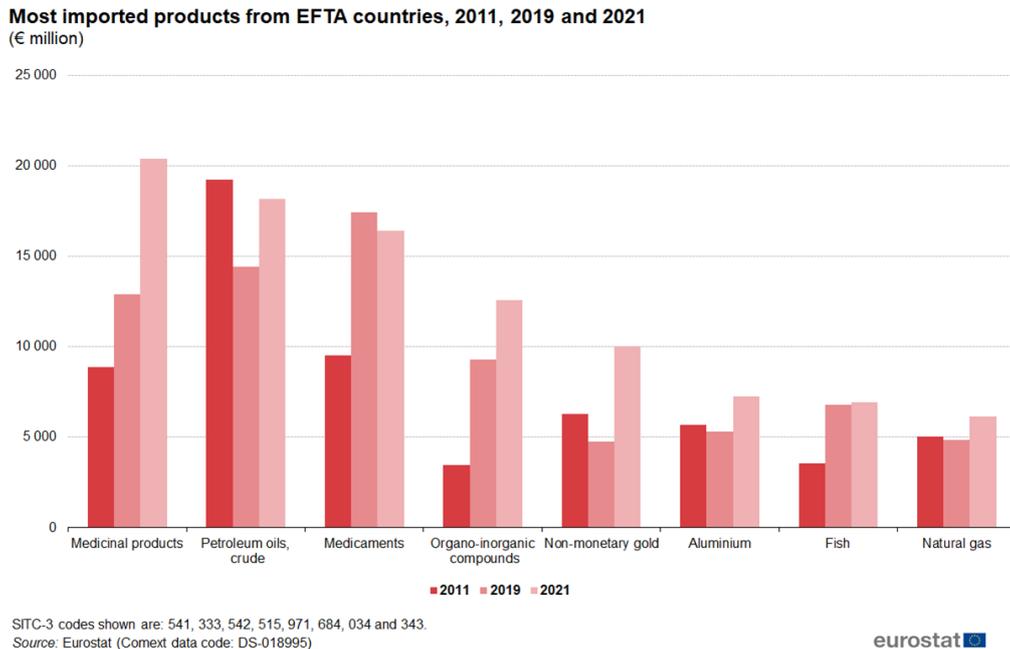


Figure 6: Most imported products from EFTA countries, 2011, 2019 and 2021 (€ million) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Switzerland is the largest EFTA partner for EU imports and exports of goods

Table 1 shows the exports, imports and trade balance for trade in goods between the EU and EFTA countries. In 2021, measured in total EU trade (exports + imports), Switzerland (€ 280 billion) was the largest partner, ahead of Norway (€ 131 billion). Concerning the exports flow, Iceland as a partner recorded the highest average annual growth rate (8.6 %) between 2011 and 2021, while trade with Liechtenstein (0.1 %) grew the least. For imports, Switzerland and Iceland recorded the highest average annual growth rate (both 3.7 %) between 2011 and 2021 while Norway (1.2 %) and Liechtenstein (1.1 %) had more modest growth rates. In 2021, the EU had a trade deficit with Norway of € 18 billion and a trade surplus with Switzerland of € 33 billion while trade with Iceland and Liechtenstein was almost balanced.

EU trade in goods with EFTA countries, 2011 and 2021

€ billion and %

| | Exports | | | Imports | | | Total trade (exports+imports) | | | Trade balance | |
|---------------|---------|-------|--------------------------------|---------|-------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| | 2011 | 2021 | Average annual growth rate (%) | 2011 | 2021 | Average annual growth rate (%) | 2011 | 2021 | Average annual growth rate (%) | 2011 | 2021 |
| Switzerland | 115.4 | 156.5 | 3.1 | 86.0 | 123.7 | 3.7 | 201.4 | 280.2 | 3.4 | 29.5 | 32.8 |
| Norway | 43.2 | 56.6 | 2.7 | 66.4 | 74.5 | 1.2 | 109.6 | 131.1 | 1.8 | -23.2 | -18.0 |
| Iceland | 1.5 | 3.4 | 8.6 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 7.0 | 5.8 | -1.0 | -0.1 |
| Liechtenstein | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.1 |

Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

Countries are sorted on the value of total trade (exports + imports)

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Table 1: EU trade in goods with EFTA countries, 2011 and 2021 (€ million and %) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Germany is the largest trade in goods partner for EFTA countries

The largest EU exporter of goods to EFTA countries in 2021 was Germany. German exports of goods to EFTA countries had a value of € 71 billion, making up 11.3 % of Germany's total extra-EU exports. This share was highest in Slovenia where 34.9 % of extra-EU exports was destined for EFTA countries (Table 2).

Exports of goods to EFTA countries, 2021

€ million and %

| | EUR million | % of EFTA in extra-EU exports |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| EU | 217 770 | 100.0 |
| Germany | 71 318 | 11.3 |
| Italy | 29 222 | 11.9 |
| Sweden | 19 183 | 25.8 |
| France | 18 614 | 8.3 |
| Netherlands | 16 252 | 7.5 |
| Austria | 9 342 | 17.6 |
| Denmark | 8 071 | 16.1 |
| Belgium | 7 992 | 5.1 |
| Spain | 7 346 | 6.0 |
| Poland | 6 017 | 8.3 |
| Slovenia | 5 466 | 34.9 |
| Czechia | 3 751 | 10.0 |
| Ireland | 3 653 | 3.7 |
| Finland | 3 077 | 10.1 |
| Slovakia | 1 451 | 8.5 |
| Hungary | 1 330 | 5.1 |
| Lithuania | 1 159 | 7.9 |
| Romania | 1 078 | 5.4 |
| Portugal | 895 | 4.9 |
| Estonia | 805 | 13.4 |
| Latvia | 437 | 6.8 |
| Croatia | 335 | 5.5 |
| Bulgaria | 290 | 2.5 |
| Luxembourg | 275 | 10.2 |
| Greece | 270 | 1.5 |
| Cyprus | 108 | 4.6 |
| Malta | 35 | 2.6 |

Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

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Table 2: Exports of goods to EFTA countries, 2021 (€ million and %) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

With € 62 billion, Germany was also the largest importer of goods from EFTA countries, with these imports accounting for 14.2 % of Germany's total imports from outside the EU. This share was highest in Sweden where 32.8 % of extra-EU imports originated from EFTA countries (Table 3).

Imports of goods from EFTA countries, 2021

€ million and %

| | EUR million | % of EFTA in extra-EU imports |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| EU | 203 030 | 100.0 |
| Germany | 62 130 | 14.2 |
| Netherlands | 30 754 | 8.2 |
| France | 17 649 | 8.6 |
| Sweden | 17 340 | 32.8 |
| Belgium | 15 913 | 9.5 |
| Italy | 12 426 | 6.1 |
| Spain | 10 415 | 6.5 |
| Austria | 9 515 | 21.7 |
| Ireland | 5 611 | 8.9 |
| Denmark | 5 606 | 17.2 |
| Slovenia | 4 462 | 20.8 |
| Poland | 2 469 | 2.5 |
| Finland | 1 864 | 8.4 |
| Czechia | 1 462 | 3.1 |
| Romania | 1 285 | 4.7 |
| Greece | 956 | 3.0 |
| Hungary | 637 | 1.8 |
| Portugal | 513 | 2.4 |
| Slovakia | 380 | 2.0 |
| Estonia | 362 | 6.5 |
| Bulgaria | 319 | 2.1 |
| Lithuania | 271 | 2.2 |
| Croatia | 207 | 2.8 |
| Latvia | 192 | 3.5 |
| Luxembourg | 165 | 6.8 |
| Malta | 64 | 2.9 |
| Cyprus | 63 | 2.1 |

Source: Eurostat (Comext data code: DS-018995)

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Table 3: Imports of goods from EFTA countries, 2021 (€ million and %) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Source data for tables and graphs

- [EU trade in goods with EFTA countries](#)

Data sources

EU data is taken from [Eurostat's COMEXT](#) database. COMEXT is the reference database for international trade in goods. It provides access not only to both recent and historical data from the EU Member States but also to statistics of a significant number of non-EU member countries. International trade aggregated and detailed statistics disseminated via the Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process.

Data are collected by the competent national authorities of the EU Member States and compiled according to a harmonised methodology established by EU regulations before transmission to Eurostat. For extra-EU trade, the statistical information is mainly provided by the traders on the basis of customs declarations.

EU data are compiled according to EU guidelines and may, therefore, differ from national data published by the Member States. Statistics on extra-EU trade are calculated as the sum of trade of each of the 27 EU Member States with countries outside the EU. In other words, the EU is considered as a single trading entity and trade flows are measured into and out of the area, but not within it.

Methodology According to the EU concepts and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU Member States and non-EU member countries) do not record exchanges involving goods in transit, placed in a customs warehouse or given temporary admission (for trade fairs, temporary exhibitions, tests, etc.). This is known as 'special trade'. The partner is the country of final destination of the goods for exports and the country of origin for imports.

Product classification Information on commodities exported and imported is presented according to the [Standard international trade classification \(SITC\)](#). A full description is available from Eurostat's classification server [RAMON](#).

Unit of measure Trade values are expressed in millions or billions (1 000 millions) of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in case of sale or purchase at the national border of the reporting country. It is called a **FOB** value (free on board) for exports and a **CIF** value (cost, insurance, freight) for imports.

Context

Trade is an important indicator of Europe's prosperity and place in the world. The block is deeply integrated into global markets both for the products it sources and the exports it sells. The EU trade policy is one of the main pillars of the EU's relations with the rest of the world.

Because the 27 EU Member States share a single market and a single external border, they also have a single trade policy. EU Member States speak and negotiate collectively, both in the [World Trade Organization](#), where the rules of international trade are agreed and enforced with individual trading partners. This common policy enables them to speak with one voice in trade negotiations, maximising their impact in such negotiations. This is even more important in a globalised world in which economies tend to cluster together in regional groups.

The openness of the EU's trade regime has meant that the EU is the biggest player on the global trading scene and remains a good region to do business with. Thanks to the ease of modern transport and communications, it is now easier to produce, buy and sell goods around the world which gives European companies of every size the potential to trade outside Europe.

Other articles

- [International trade in goods](#)
- [Extra-EU trade in goods](#)

Main tables

- [International trade in goods](#) (t_ext_go), see:

International trade in goods - long-term indicators (t_ext_go_lti)

International trade in goods - short-term indicators (t_ext_go_sti)

Database

- [International trade in goods](#) (ext_go), see:

International trade in goods - aggregated data (ext_go_agg)

International trade in goods - long-term indicators (ext_go_lti)

International trade in goods - short-term indicators (ext_go_sti)

International trade in goods - detailed data (detail)

- [Full access to detailed statistics on international trade in goods \(Comext\)](#), see:

EU trade since 1988 by SITC (DS-018995)

Dedicated section

- [International trade in goods](#)

Methodology

- [International trade in goods statistics - background](#)
- [International trade in goods](#) (ESMS metadata file — ext_go_esms)
- [User guide on European statistics on international trade in goods](#)

Data visualisations

- [Top 5 partners in trade in goods](#)

External links

- [European Commission](#)
- [Globalisation](#)
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