"In 2020, 16% of EU enterprises conducted e-sales using only websites or apps, 3% used only EDI-type sales while another 3% used both."

"In 2020, the share of turnover from web sales in the EU was mainly realised via enterprises' own websites or apps."

"In the EU accommodation sector, almost all enterprises making e-sales in 2020 received orders via websites or apps."

This article focuses on the electronic commerce (e-commerce) statistics in the European Union (EU) and is based on the results of the 2021 survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises. E-commerce refers here to the trading of goods or services over computer networks such as the internet by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing orders. It can be divided into e-commerce sales (e-sales) and e-commerce purchases (e-purchases) depending on whether an enterprise receives or places orders respectively. As the questions regarding the e-commerce sales in the survey refer to the previous calendar year, this article refers in particular to e-commerce sales carried out in 2020.

**E-sales record a slight increase over recent years**

In the EU, during the period 2011 to 2020, the share of enterprises that had e-sales increased from 16% in 2011 to 22% in 2020. Similarly, the enterprises' turnover generated from e-sales increased by 6 percentage points during the same period, namely from 14% in 2011 to 20% in 2020 (Figure 1).
The share of enterprises conducting e-sales and the turnover generated from e-sales varied significantly depending on the size of the enterprises (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: E-sales and turnover from e-sales, EU, 2011 to 2020 (% enterprises, % total turnover)**

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: isoc_ec_eseln2, isoc_ec_evaln2)
In 2020, 44% of large enterprises conducted e-sales, corresponding to an e-sales value of 27% of total turnover in this size class. Of the medium-sized enterprises, 29% made e-sales generating 15% of total turnover in this size class. By contrast, 20% of small enterprises engaged in e-sales, generating only 8% of the turnover of such enterprises (Figure 2).

Web sales dominant in all EU countries

E-sales can be carried out via websites or apps (web sales) or in an automated way via EDI (electronic data interchange) type messages; enterprises may offer one or both options to their clients. In 2020, among the EU countries, the percentage of enterprises making e-sales ranged from 12% in Bulgaria and Luxembourg to 40% in Ireland, followed by Denmark (38%), Lithuania and Sweden (both 36%) (Figure 3).
As shown in Figure 3, in 2020, 16 % of EU enterprises conducted e-sales using only websites or apps, 3 % used only EDI-type sales while another 3 % used both channels of e-sales.

Web sales was the dominant mode of conducting e-sales in all EU Member States in 2020. The percentage of enterprises receiving electronic orders only over websites or apps ranged from 32 % in Lithuania to 9 % in Luxembourg. Enterprises consider it important to be visible on the internet. Consequently, websites or apps are increasingly offered by enterprises for various purposes. In particular, websites or apps allow customers to purchase by placing their orders electronically.

By contrast, in 2020, the percentage of enterprises that used only EDI-type messages for their sales ranged from 8 % of enterprises in Denmark and Sweden to 1 % in Romania, Cyprus and Greece. The percentage of enterprises using both channels was highest in Ireland, Denmark and Sweden (all 7 %).

Considering the economic activity breakdown, as shown in Figure 4, in 2020, almost all enterprises conducting e-sales in the ‘Accommodation’ sector received orders via websites or apps (99 %), while 6 % had e-sales via EDI-type messages.
Almost half of enterprises in 'Manufacturing' making e-sales reported that they received orders via EDI-type messages (48 %), followed by enterprises in the 'Transport and storage' sector (38 %) and 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning; water supply' (33 %).

For 'Manufacturing' enterprises, the percentages of those that conducted e-sales via websites or apps and those who used EDI-type messages were relatively close compared to enterprises in other activities, 65 % and 48 % respectively. For all other economic activities, most enterprises received their electronic orders mainly via websites or apps.

It is noticeable that, among the small enterprises making e-sales, 89 % of enterprises had web sales, with only 19 % of sales via EDI-type messages. For medium enterprises, the difference between the shares of sales via the two channels was smaller, with 75 % of enterprises having e-sales via websites and 41 % having EDI-type sales. The percentage gap between web and EDI-type sales was smallest for large enterprises (Figure 5).
While the enterprises conducting e-sales in 2020 mostly sold via websites, rather than via EDI-type messages, in terms of the value of those electronic sales the tendency was the opposite, as the turnover generated from the EDI-type sales was greater than the one generated from web sales. In 2020, EU enterprises generated 20 % of their total turnover from e-sales, consisting of orders via websites or apps (7 % of the total turnover) or via EDI-type messages (13 % of the total turnover) (Figure 6).

Among all EU Member States, the percentage of turnover from e-sales ranged from 4 % in Cyprus to 38 % in Ireland, followed by Czechia (30 %), Belgium and Denmark (both 28 %).

Figure 6 shows the contribution of web sales and EDI-type sales to total turnover. The share of the total turnover generated from EDI-type sales ranged from 1 % in Greece and Cyprus to 21 % in Ireland and Czechia. In contrast, the share of total turnover from web sales ranged from 3 % in Bulgaria and Cyprus to 12 % in Belgium and 16 % in Ireland.
As Figure 7 shows, large enterprises – with 250 or more employees and self-employed persons – rely in principle more on ICT and standards that integrate EDI-type sales within their business processes. In fact, large enterprises reported the highest share of turnover from e-sales (27 %), most of it from EDI-type sales (18 %).
Figure 7: Turnover from e-sales broken down by web sales and EDI-type sales, by size class, EU, 2020 (% total turnover) Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_evaln2)

The highest shares of total turnover from e-sales were reported by enterprises in ‘Accommodation’ (38 %), ‘Manufacturing’ (25 %) followed by ‘Wholesale and retail trade’ (21 %). However, enterprises in ‘Accommodation’ generated most of their e-sales turnover from web sales (36 %) whereas those in ‘Manufacturing’ from EDI-type sales (20 %). Enterprises in ‘Wholesale and retail trade’ realised slightly higher turnover from web sales (11 %) than from EDI-type sales (10 %) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Turnover from e-sales broken down by web sales and EDI-type sales, by economic activity, EU, 2020 (% total turnover) Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_evaln2)
Web sales predominantly carried out via own website or apps

Looking further into web sales, these can be carried out via own websites or apps or via e-commerce marketplaces available on external websites or apps. E-commerce marketplaces, and in general online platforms, may facilitate economic growth by enabling sellers to access new markets and reach new customers at lower cost.

In the survey on 'ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises', the respondents were asked to indicate if they had web sales of goods or services via the enterprise's own website or apps or via an e-commerce marketplace website or apps. An enterprise may use one or both web sales possibilities.

As Figure 9 shows, in 2020, 87 % of EU enterprises with web sales used their own websites or apps, and 45 % used an e-commerce marketplace. The highest percentages of enterprises with web sales via their own websites or apps were registered in Czechia and Finland (both 98 %), while the lowest share was registered in Lithuania (47 %). Finland (19 %), Czechia (21 %) and Denmark (24 %) had the lowest percentages of web sales via marketplaces. On the other hand, using web sales via marketplaces was most common in Lithuania (66 %), Italy (63 %) and Germany (58 %).

![Web sales broken down by own website or apps and marketplace, 2020 (%) enterprises with web sales](image)

Note: Only countries with available results for both indicators are displayed.
Not available: Montenegro (unreliable), North Macedonia (not available)
Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_ec_eseln2)

Figure 9: Web sales broken down by own website or apps and marketplace, 2020 (% enterprises with web sales) Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_eseln2)

Turnover from web sales mainly generated by sales via own websites or apps

Moreover, as far as the turnover generated from web sales is concerned, EU enterprises realised 7 % of their total turnover from web sales in 2020, where 6 % was realised from web sales via own websites or apps and only 1 % from sales via online marketplaces. The highest percentages of turnover realised through web sales via own website or apps were recorded in Ireland (15 %) and Belgium (12 %). On the other hand, the turnovers generated via marketplaces were the highest in Greece and in Lithuania (both 4 %) (Figure 10).
Turnover from web sales mainly from other enterprises and public authorities

In 2020, web sales accounted for 7 % of the total turnover of the enterprises. Of this, 4 % came from web sales to other enterprises and public authorities (B2BG) while 3 % came from web sales to private consumers (B2C). The highest percentages of turnover resulting from web sales to other enterprises and public authorities were registered in Ireland (10 %), while in Malta, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus the share recorded was less than 3 %. The share of web sales to private consumers in the total turnover of the enterprises ranged from 1 % in Bulgaria and Slovenia to 7 % in the Netherlands (Figure 11).
Cross-border web sales within the EU not fully exploited by enterprises

E-commerce enables enterprises to establish their presence in the market at national level and to extend their economic activities beyond borders. Moreover, e-commerce has the potential to reshape the European Single Market for enterprises and private consumers by enabling price and product-related comparisons in a borderless market environment. In 2020, almost all EU enterprises with web sales (19 %) reported that they sold to customers in their own country, while only 8 % of enterprises made web sales to other EU countries. The largest proportions of EU enterprises in 2020 with web sales to other EU countries were recorded in Austria (15 %), followed by Malta, Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovenia (all 12 %). In contrast, the web sales to other EU countries were lowest in Bulgaria (3 %) and Romania (4 %) (Figure 12).
The majority (56 %) of EU enterprises having received orders via a website or via apps during 2020 reported no difficulties for their web sales to other EU Member States. However, more than four in ten (43 %) reported hampering factors. These mainly concerned economic reasons – such as the high costs of delivering or returning products (28 %), difficulties related to the different VAT system in the Member States (17 %), linguistic and technical barriers – such as the lack of knowledge of foreign languages (10 %) or adapting product labelling for sales (11 %) or judicial reasons related for instance to resolving complaints and disputes (13 %) (Figure 13).
Figure 13: Difficulties experienced when selling to other EU countries, EU, 2020 (% of enterprises with web sales to other EU countries) Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_wsobs_n2)

Source data for tables and graphs

- E-commerce statistics - graphs and tables

Data sources

Data presented in this article are based on the results of the 2020 survey on "ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises". Statistics were obtained from enterprise surveys conducted by National Statistical Authorities in the first months of each year. The surveys’ reference period is the current situation of the survey period or for questions on e-commerce the preceding calendar year.

In 2021, 148 000 of the 1.5 million enterprises in the EU were surveyed. Of the 1.5 million enterprises, approximately 83 % were small enterprises (10-49 employees and self-employed persons), 14 % medium (50-249) and 3 % large (250 or more).

The observation statistical unit is the enterprise, as defined in the Regulation (EC) No 696/1993 of 15 March 1993. The survey covered enterprises with at least 10 employees and self-employed persons. Economic activities correspond to the classification NACE Revision 2. The sectors covered are manufacturing, electricity, gas and steam, water supply, construction, wholesale and retail trades, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities, information and communication, real estate, professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support activities and repair of computers and communication equipment.

Source data shown as ‘:’ refer to data that are unavailable, unreliable, confidential or not applicable. Unreliable data are included in the calculation of European aggregates. Data presented in this article may differ from the data in the database on account of updates made after the data extractions used for this article. Data in the database are organised according to the survey year.
Context

A Europe fit for the digital age is a major priority of the European Commission. The EU’s digital strategy aims to make this transformation work for people and businesses, while helping to achieve its target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. The strategy is built on three pillars: (1) Technology that works for the people; (2) A fair and competitive digital economy; (3) An open, democratic and sustainable society.

New EU rules on e-commerce include actions related to ending unjustified cross-border barriers, facilitating cheaper cross-border parcel deliveries, protection of online customer rights and promoting cross border access to online content. The European Commission breaks down online barriers so that people may enjoy full access to all goods and services offered online by businesses in the EU.

Other articles

• Cloud computing - statistics on the use by enterprises
• ICT specialists - statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises
• E-business integration
• ICT security in enterprises
• Social media - statistics on the use by enterprises
• Digital economy and society statistics - enterprises

Tables

• Digital economy and society

Database

• Digital economy and society, see:
  ICT usage in enterprises (isoc_e)
    Summary of EU aggregates (isoc_ci_eu_en2)
    E-commerce (isoc_ec)
      E-commerce sales (isoc_ec_eseln2)
      Value of e-commerce sales (isoc_ec_evaln2)
      Obstacles for web sales (isoc_ec_wsobs_n2)

Dedicated section

• Digital economy and society

Publications

• Digital economy & society in the EU Digital publication
• Recent Eurostat publications on Digital economy and society

Methodology

• ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises (ESMS metadata file — isoc_e_esms)
Legislation

- Regulation (EC) No 696/1993 of 15 March 1993 on the statistical units for the observation and analysis of the production system in the Community

External links

- Digital Agenda for Europe