

**E-commerce** can be defined generally as the sale or purchase of goods or services, whether between businesses, [households](#), individuals or private organisations, through electronic transactions conducted via the internet or other computer-mediated (online communication) networks.

The term covers the ordering of goods and services which are sent over computer networks, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or service may be conducted either on- or off-line.

Orders via manually typed e-mails, however, are excluded.

For the [EU survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals](#), e-commerce is defined more specifically as the placing of orders for goods or services via the internet. Also included in the definition are:

- buying financial investments - such as shares;
- confirming reservations for accommodation and travel;
- paying for information services from the internet;
- buying via online auctions.

For the [EU survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises](#), e-commerce refers to the placement of orders (an order is a commitment to purchase goods or services) via computer networks. E-commerce may be effectively done via websites (which allow for online ordering or reservation or booking, e.g. shopping cart) or an exchange of electronic messages, EDI-type messages. EDI-type (Electronic Data Interchange) e-commerce refers to structured transmission of data or documents between enterprises by electronic means allowing automatic processing using for example EDI format or XML format.

## Further information

- [Individuals' level of digital skills](#) (ESMS metadata file — isoc\_sk\_dskl\_i21)
- [ICT usage in households and by individuals](#) (ESMS metadata file — isoc\_i)
- [Digital economy and society - dedicated section](#)

## Related concepts

- [e-business](#)

## Statistical data

- [E-commerce statistics for individuals](#)
- [E-commerce statistics](#)