

# EU international trade in other business services

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in February 2026  
Planned article update: March 2027

## Highlights

In 2024, the EU trade in 'Other business services' with non-EU partners rebounded by 11.0% for exports and 5.0% for imports, compared to 2023.

In 2024, the main contributor to imports from the rest of the world to the EU in 'Other business services' was the sub-item 'Professional and management consulting services' (40.6%), while for exports the largest sub-item was 'Technical, trade-related, and other business services' (41.1%).

In 2024, the EU's top 3 partners for 'Other business services' were the United States, the United Kingdom and Switzerland, together accounting for 58.0% of the exports and 63.0% of the imports from / to non-EU countries.

The role of trade in services in [EU](#) international trade has expanded steadily over the past decade and has become a cornerstone of modern, highly interconnected and globalised economies. International trade in services records transactions between residents and non-residents across 12 main service categories, as defined by the Extended Balance of Payments Services classification (EBOPS 2010) ([EBOPS 2010](#)).

This article focuses on the structure and evolution of EU international trade in 'Other business services' with extra-EU countries. This category is particularly heterogeneous and encompasses 3 main sub-categories<sup>1</sup>, namely:

- research and development (R&D) services
- professional and management consulting services
- technical, trade-related and other business services

Owing to their close links with global value chains, innovation, and cross-border business activity, these services play a central role in the EU's external economic relations. A detailed examination of these sub-categories provides important insights into the EU's competitive position in high value-added services and its integration into global production and knowledge networks. The analysis covers the period 2010-2024.

In 2024, total EU services [exports](#) to [extra-EU](#) amounted to € 1,568 billion, while [imports](#) reached € 1,374 billion, confirming the EU's overall surplus in international trade in services. Among the 12 EBOPS categories, 'Other business services' remained the largest component of services trade with extra-EU partners, accounting for 24.6% of total services exports (€ 385.1 billion) and 31.1% of total services imports (€ 427.7 billion).

On the export side, 'Other business services' was followed by telecommunications, computer and information services (21.9%), transport services (16.5%) and travel services (12.3%). Together, these 4 categories represented more than three quarters of total extra-EU services exports in 2024, underlining the EU's strong specialisation in knowledge-intensive and globally tradable services.

In terms of imports, 'Other business services' was again the dominant category, while charges for the use of

<sup>1</sup>As defined by the [Balance of Payments Manual 6 \(BPM6\)](#) Chapter 10.147

intellectual property not elsewhere included (n.i.e.) ranked second, accounting for 17.2% of total services imports. Transport services (16.2%) and travel services (10.2%) followed, reflecting the EU's continued reliance on non-EU providers for logistics, mobility and intellectual property-related services.

## General overview

Figure 1 shows the evolution of EU trade in 'Other business services' with extra-EU partners between 2010 and 2024. Over the period, imports consistently exceeded exports, resulting in a negative trade balance in all years except 2014, when a small surplus was recorded. The persistent trade deficit, except for 2014, indicates that the EU has consistently imported more of these services than it exported, reflecting strong external demand for business-related services within the EU and continued reliance on foreign providers.

Between 2010 and 2017, both exports and imports of 'Other business services' increased steadily, although imports grew at a faster pace. In 2018, trade contracted slightly, with exports declining by 1.1% and imports by 2.7% compared with the previous year. This was followed in 2019 by a sharp expansion in imports, which rose by 39.7%, the largest annual increase recorded over the period, while exports grew more moderately (+5.2%). As a result, the trade deficit widened.

In 2020, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, both exports (-0.7%) and imports (-2.2%) declined. In 2021, imports fell sharply (-17.1%), recording the largest annual decrease in the series, while exports increased by 4.4%, leading to a substantial narrowing of the trade deficit. The sharp import surge in 2019, followed by the steep decline in 2020 and 2021, illustrates the significant impact of external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic on service trade, particularly in sectors closely linked to global mobility and cross-border business operations.

In 2022 and 2023, trade in 'Other business services' expanded again. Exports rose by 16.9% in 2022 and 7.4% in 2023, while imports increased by 17.3% and 7.8%, respectively. Despite this growth, the trade balance remained negative, with imports continuing to exceed exports.

In 2024, both exports and imports increased further. Exports rose by 11.0%, reaching € 385.1 billion, while imports grew by 4.7%, to € 427.7 billion. As a result, the trade deficit narrowed to € 42.5 billion, its lowest level since 2018, reflecting stronger growth in exports than imports during the year. The strong rebound in both exports and imports from 2022 onwards signals a recovery in international business activity and growing demand for knowledge-intensive services. The faster growth in exports compared to imports in 2024, resulting in a narrowing of the trade deficit, may suggest an improvement in the EU's competitive position in 'Other business services', potentially driven by innovation, digitalisation, and enhanced global business linkages.

Overall, these movements indicate that 'Other business services' remain a dynamic and strategically important sector within the EU's external trade portfolio, closely tied to global value chains and economic integration beyond goods trade. Monitoring these trends helps to understand the EU's evolving role in the international services market and its resilience to economic disruptions.

### Figure 1: EU trade in 'Other business services' with extra-EU, 2010-2024 Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

Figure 2 and 3 present the contributions of the 3 sub-categories of 'Other business services' to EU imports from extra-EU countries and the EU exports to extra-EU countries between 2010 and 2024.

The import structure of 'Other business services' (Figure 2) shows a dynamic evolution between 2010 and 2024. Until 2018 'Technical, trade-related and other business services' dominated imports, reflecting strong demand for operational and technical support services from non-EU partners. However, in 2019 and 2020, 'Research and development (R&D) services' became the largest import category, driven by a significant surge in imports from € 75.2 billion in 2018 to € 175.7 billion in 2019.

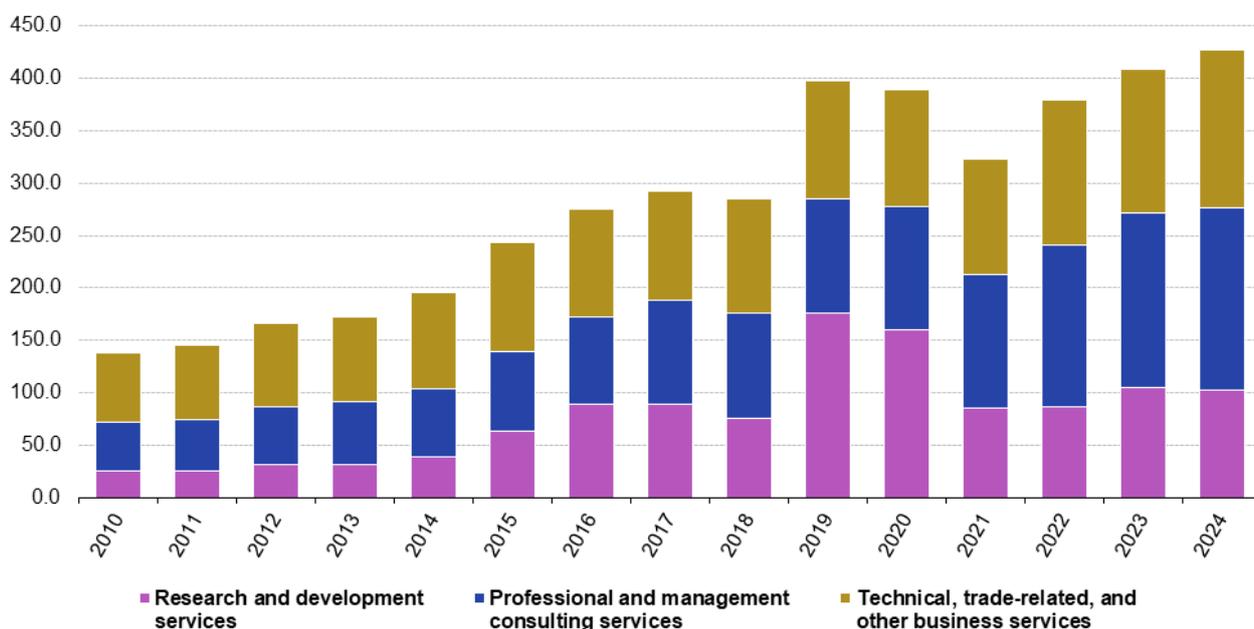
In 2019 and 2020, 'Research and development (R&D) services' surged dramatically, becoming the largest import sub-category (44.2% in 2019 and 41.1% in 2020). This spike highlights intensified international collaboration in innovation and technology transfer. From 2021 onwards, 'Professional and management consulting services' took

the lead as the main driver of imports in this category. Imports of professional and management consulting services increased steadily, reaching € 173.4 billion in 2024 (40.6%). This growth indicates an uplifted need for expertise in strategy, management, and advisory services, likely driven by complex global business environments and digital transformation.

The steady growth across all 3 sub-categories in 2022-2024 reflects the growing demand for specialised knowledge-intensive services in the EU economy, essential for maintaining competitiveness in the global economy and increasing integration of these services in global value chains. The particularly strong rise in R&D services imports in 2023 suggests intensified international collaboration in innovation and development activities.

Overall, the composition of 'Other business services' imports demonstrates dynamic shifts over time, with changing leadership among sub-categories highlighting evolving business needs and external economic conditions.

**Contributions of Other business services sub-categories to imports of EU, 2010-2024**  
(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: BOP\_ITS6\_DET)



**Figure 2: Contributions of 'Other business services' sub-categories to imports of EU, 2010-2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

On the export side, 'Technical, trade-related and other business services' has consistently been the largest sub-category throughout the period 2010 to 2024, maintaining steady growth from € 68.9 billion in 2010 to € 158.3 billion in 2024. This reflects strong EU expertise and global demand for technical and operational services.

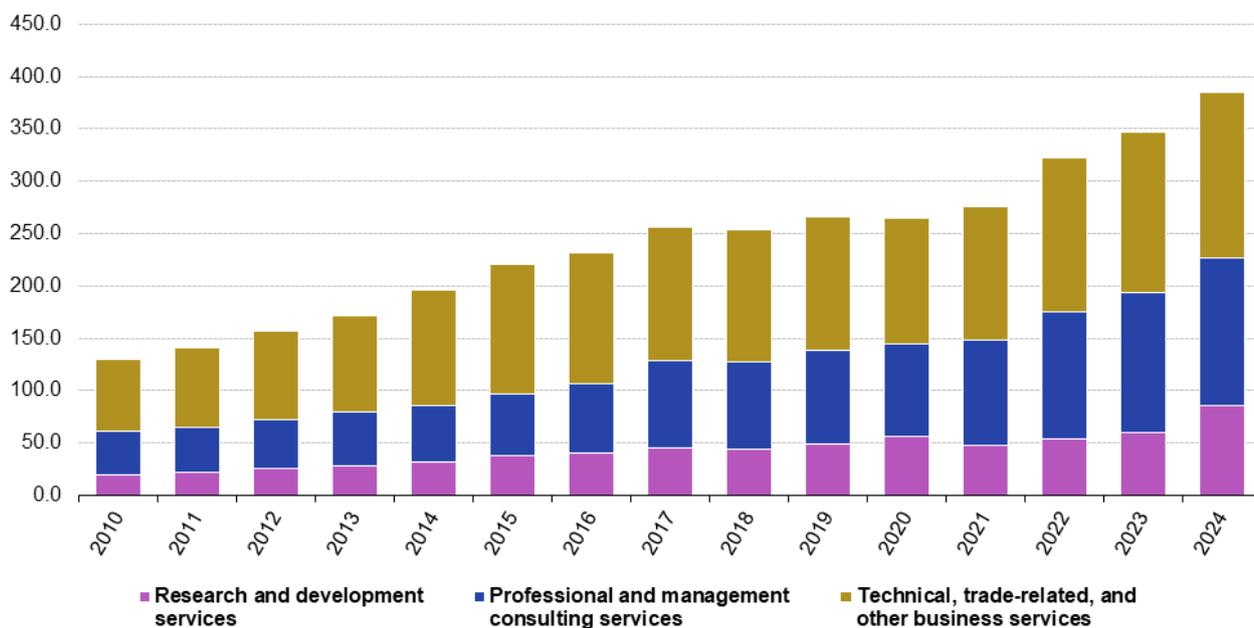
'Professional and management consulting services' exports grew steadily from € 41.8 billion in 2010 to € 141.6 billion in 2024, with particularly rapid increases after 2020, signalling expanding EU leadership in high-level advisory and consultancy services.

'Research and development (R&D) services' exports have also increased, albeit more moderately, from € 19.3 billion in 2010 to € 85.2 billion in 2024, suggesting growing EU engagement in exporting innovation-related services.

The data for 2024 underline the EU's strong and expanding position in knowledge-intensive 'Other business services' trade. While imports highlight increasing reliance on external expertise in R&D and consulting, exports

demonstrate the EU's competitive strengths, particularly in technical services and consultancy. This two-way dynamic reflects the EU's deepening integration into global knowledge networks and underscores the strategic importance of these services for Europe's economy.

**Contributions of Other business services sub-categories to exports of EU, 2010-2024**  
(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: BOP\_ITS6\_DET)



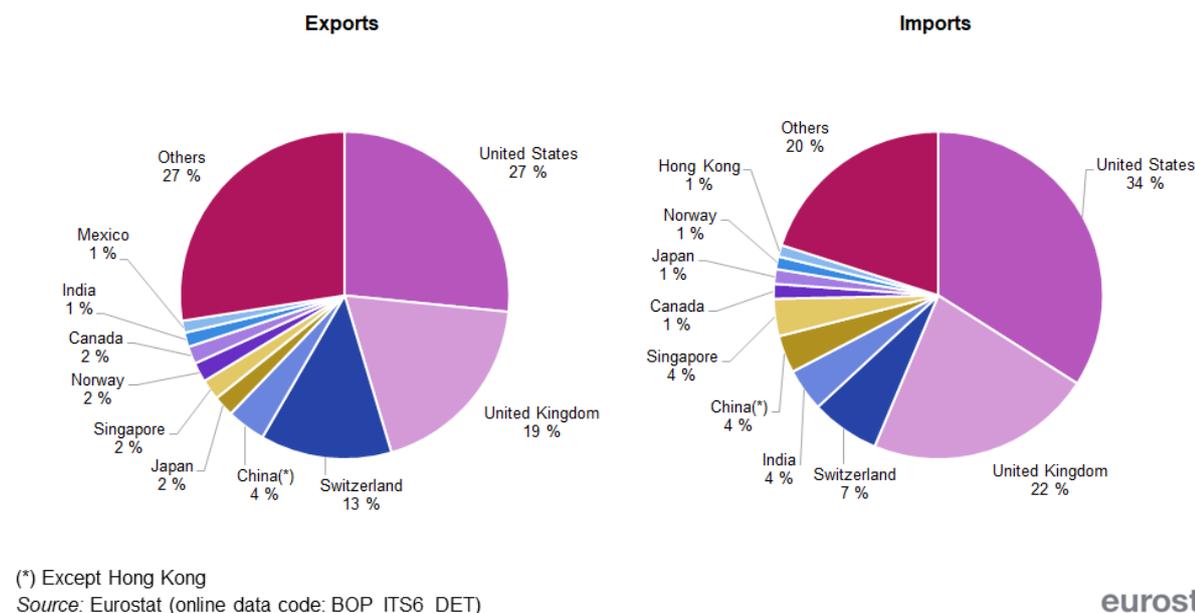
**Figure 3: Contributions of 'Other business services' sub-categories to exports of EU, 2010-2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

### Other business services - main trading partners

In 2024, the United States remained the EU's main partner for trade in 'Other business services', accounting for 34.0% of imports and 26.6% of exports. The United Kingdom was the second-largest partner, with 22.3% of imports and 18.8% of exports, followed by Switzerland, contributing 6.8% of imports and 12.9% of exports (see Figure 4).

These figures indicate that the EU continues to rely heavily on a small number of key extra-EU partners for high-value, knowledge-intensive services. The strong shares of the United States and the United Kingdom reflect deep business, innovation, and consultancy linkages, while Switzerland's high export share highlights its role as a strategic hub for specialised technical and financial services.

## Main trading partners' share of EU in Other business services, 2024



**Figure 4: Main trading partners' share of EU imports and exports of 'Other business services', 2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

## Research and development (R&D) services

'R&D services'<sup>2</sup> consist of services associated with basic research, applied research and experimental development of new products and processes.

The evolution of EU trade in 'R&D services' with extra-EU partners shows a persistent trade deficit, as imports have exceeded exports in all years from 2010 to 2024 (see Figure 5). Between 2010 and 2014, imports were only marginally higher than exports, but 2015-2016 saw a sharp surge in imports, widening the deficit. A slight improvement in the balance occurred in 2017-2018, but 2019-2020 experienced another large increase in imports (for 2019 the increase was 133.5% compared to the previous year), while exports grew only modestly, resulting in the largest deficits in the series.

In 2021, both imports and exports fell to levels like 2018, reflecting pandemic-related disruptions. From 2022 onwards, trade rebounded, with imports and exports rising moderately. In 2024, imports reached € 102.4 billion, while exports were € 85.2 billion, leading to a trade deficit of € 17.2 billion. The deficit, although smaller than during the 2019-2020 peak, highlights the EU's continued reliance on extra-EU partners for R&D services, particularly in cutting-edge innovation and experimental development.

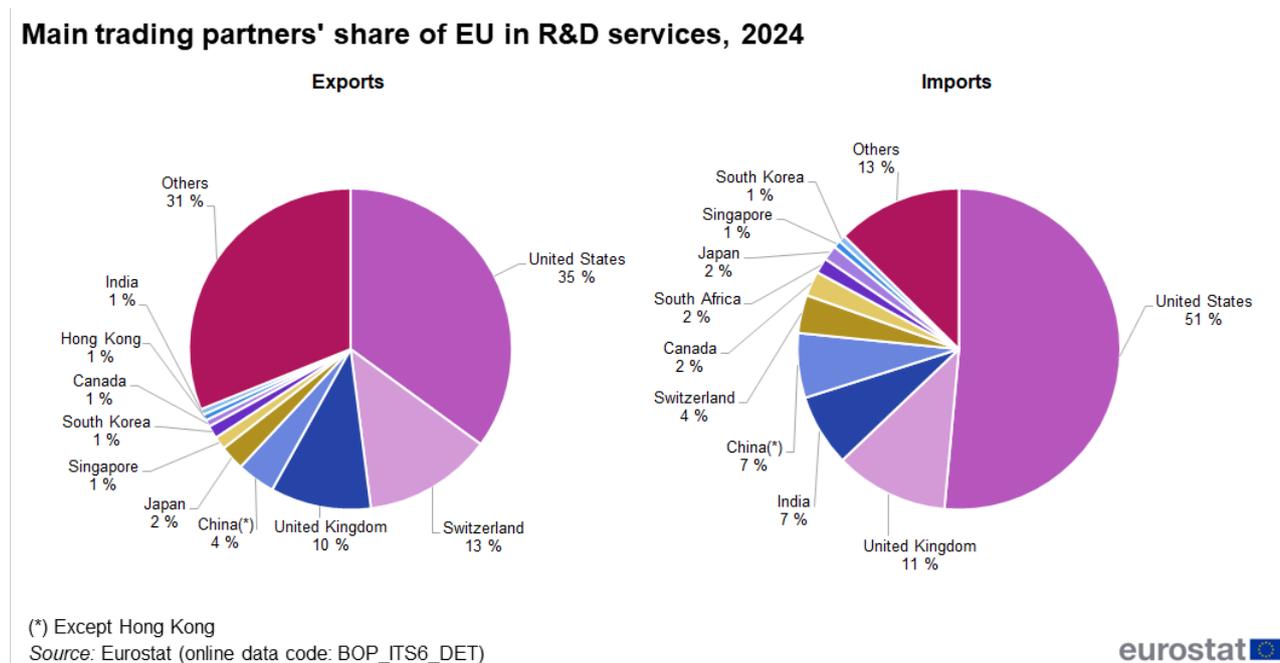
**Figure 5: Evolution of 'Research and development services' trade for EU, 2010-2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

### Research and development (R&D) services - main trading partners

In 2024, the United States remained the EU's largest trade partner for 'R&D services', accounting for 35.1% of exports and 51.4% of imports. The United Kingdom was the second-largest import partner (11.4%), followed by India (7.3%). For exports, Switzerland was the second-largest partner (12.9%), followed by the United Kingdom (10.1%) (see Figure 6).

<sup>2</sup>As defined by the [Balance of Payments Manual 6 \(BPM6\)](#) Chapter 10.147

The dominant role of the United States reflects the EU's deep collaboration with a leading innovation hub in both importing and exporting 'R&D services'. The presence of Switzerland as a key export partner indicates strong EU engagement in specialised, high-value research and experimental development services, while the UK and India remain important contributors to the EU's knowledge-intensive service networks. Overall, these patterns underline the EU's integration into global R&D and innovation networks and the strategic importance of these partnerships for sustaining competitiveness.



**Figure 6: Main trading partners' share of EU in 'Research and development services' trade, 2010-2024**  
 Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

## Professional and management consulting services

'Professional and management consulting services'<sup>3</sup> comprise:

- Legal services, accounting, management consulting, managerial services and public relations services;
- Advertising, market research and public opinion polling services.

EU imports of these services have consistently exceeded exports, resulting in a trade deficit throughout 2010-2024 (see Figure 7). From 2010 until 2023, imports grew steadily, with a notable peak in 2022 (+20.4%). Exports also grew most years, though at a slower pace, causing the deficit to gradually widen. In 2024, this trend continued, with imports reaching € 173.4 billion and exports € 141.6 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of € 31.8 billion.

The continued gap highlights the EU's strong demand for external consultancy and professional expertise to support complex business, managerial, and market activities. Meanwhile, the steady growth of exports reflects the EU's emerging strength and competitiveness in delivering high-value advisory and consulting services internationally.

**Figure 7: Evolution of 'Professional and management consulting services' trade for EU, 2010-2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

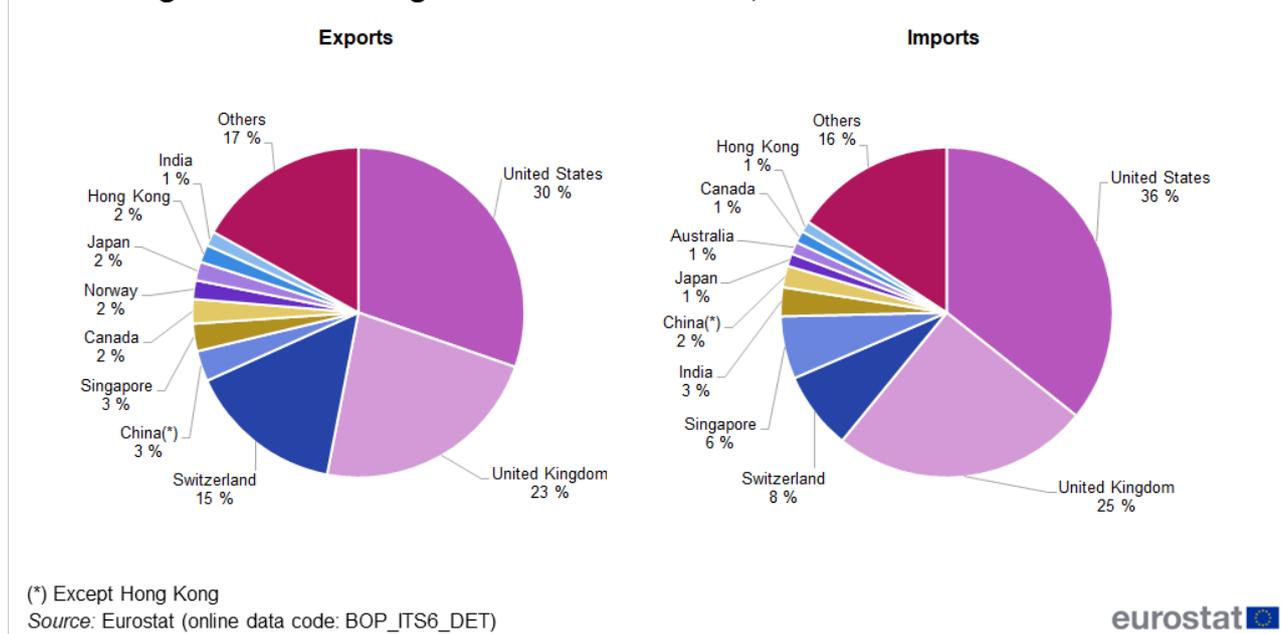
<sup>3</sup>As defined by the [Balance of Payments Manual 6 \(BPM6\)](#) Chapter 10.149

## Professional and management consulting services – main partners in 2024

In 2024, the United States remained the EU's largest trading partner for Professional and management consulting services, accounting for 35.8% of imports and 30.4% of exports. The United Kingdom was the second-largest partner with 25.1% of imports and 22.7% of exports, while Switzerland ranked third with 7.6% of imports and 15.2% of exports (see Figure 8).

Analytical insight: The dominant role of the United States highlights the EU's strong transatlantic consulting and advisory links, reflecting reliance on US expertise for high-level professional services. The UK and Switzerland also play key roles, supporting both imports and exports of knowledge-intensive services. Overall, these patterns underscore the EU's integration into global consulting networks and the strategic importance of these partnerships for sustaining competitiveness in professional services.

### Main trading partners' share of EU imports and exports of Professional and management consulting services with extra-EU, 2024



**Figure 8: Main trading partners' share of EU imports and exports of 'Professional and management consulting services' with extra-EU, 2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

## Technical, trade-related and other business services

'Technical, trade-related and other business services'<sup>4</sup> comprise:

- architectural, engineering and other technical services;
- waste treatment and environmental remediation, agricultural and mining services;
- operating leasing services, trade-related services;
- other business services such as: distribution services related to water, steam, gas and other petroleum products and the supply of air-conditioning, placement of personnel, security, photographic services, publishing, real estate, etc.

Figure 9 presents the evolution of trade in 'Technical, trade-related and other business services' over the period 2010-2024. Throughout the period, exports consistently exceeded imports, resulting in a positive trade balance in

<sup>4</sup>As defined by the [Balance of Payments Manual 6 \(BPM6\)](#) Chapter 10.151

all years.

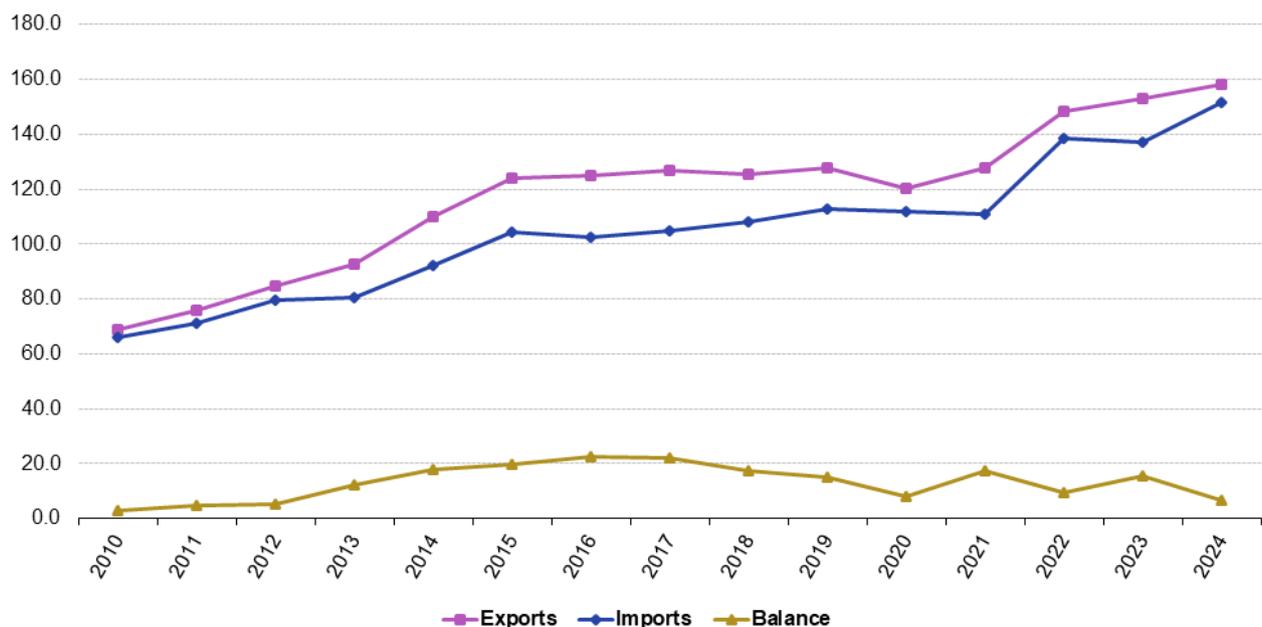
From 2010 to 2019, exports and imports increased or remained broadly stable, reflecting steady demand and supply conditions. In 2020, exports decreased by 6.0%, while imports remained broadly unchanged, leading to a marked reduction in the trade balance. This development reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on investment-related and on-site service activities.

In 2021, exports increased by 6.5%, returning to their 2019 level, while imports declined slightly. In 2022, imports increased significantly (+25.1%), while exports grew at a more moderate pace, suggesting a strong rebound in domestic demand for technical and trade-related services following the easing of pandemic-related restrictions.

In 2023, imports had a slight decrease, while exports continued to increase, resulting in a further improvement in the trade balance. In 2024, both exports and imports reached the highest levels for the observed period.

Overall, the observed developments point to a high degree of resilience in 'Technical, trade-related and other business services'. The sustained export surplus over time indicates a comparative strength in internationally tradable technical and professional services, while recent trends suggest a shift towards more stable and less cyclical export growth compared with imports.

**Evolution of Technical, trade-related and other business services trade for EU, 2010-2024**  
(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: BOP\_ITS6\_DET)

eurostat

**Figure 9: Evolution of 'Technical, trade-related, and other business services' trade for EU, 2010-2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

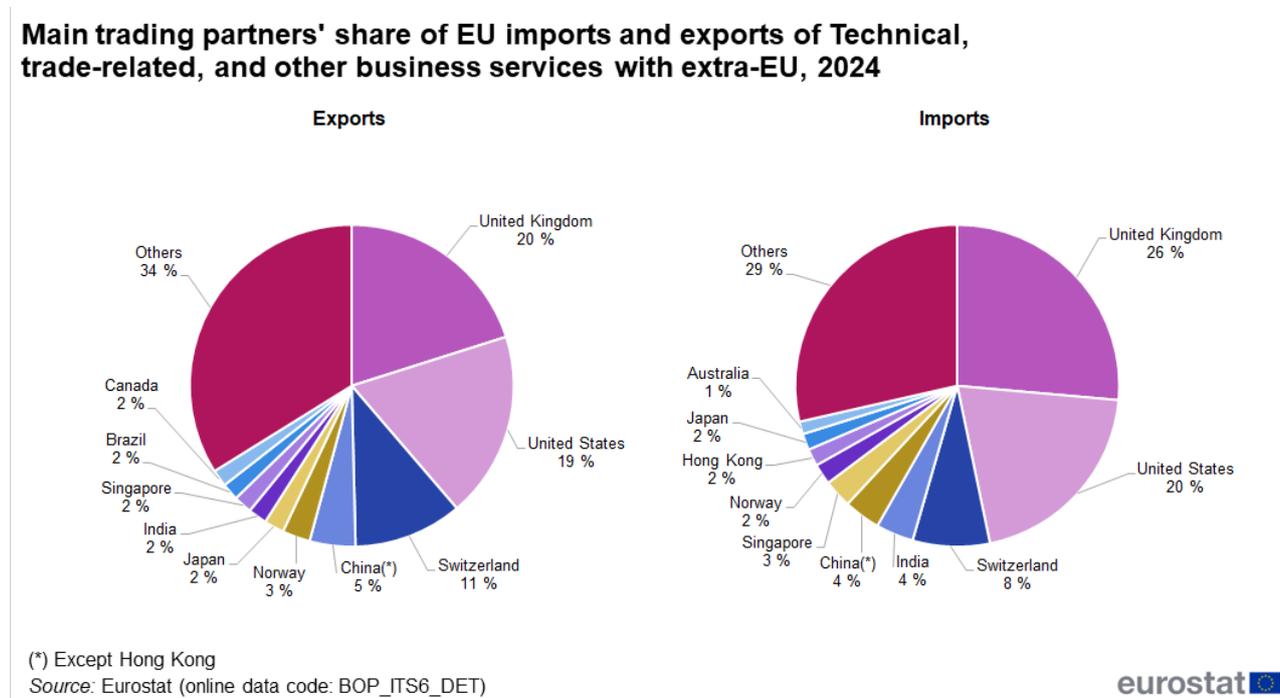
### Technical, trade-related and other business services - main trading partners

In 2024, the United Kingdom was the EU's largest trading partner for both imports and exports of Technical, trade-related and 'Other business services', accounting for 26.4% of imports and 20.1% of exports. The United States ranked second, with 20.3% of imports and 18.7% of exports, followed by Switzerland, with shares of 7.7% of imports and 10.9% of exports (see Figure 10).

The sustained importance of these partners reflects the high degree of integration between the EU and other

advanced economies in knowledge-intensive and trade-supporting services. The concentration of trade among a limited number of partners also suggests that 'Technical, trade-related and other business services' are closely linked to established business networks, regulatory compatibility and demand for high value-added expertise.

Overall, developments in 2024 indicate a stable geographical pattern of trade, with no major shifts in partner composition, underlining the structural nature of the EU's trade relationships in this services category.



**Figure 10: Main trading partners' share of EU imports and exports of 'Technical, trade-related and other business services' with extra-EU, 2024** Source: Eurostat (bop\_its6\_det)

## Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file](#)

## Data sources

Data on EU trade in 'Other business services' are taken from Eurostat's reference database on international trade in services and are compiled in accordance with the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, sixth edition (BPM6). The data are updated annually and are available from 2010 onwards for EU aggregates, all EU Member States and non-EU partner countries, including the (European Free Trade Association (EFTA)), candidate countries and other partner countries.

Data for years prior to 2010 are also available in the Eurostat database; however, they are compiled according to the previous balance of payments methodology (BPM5) and are therefore not fully comparable with BPM6-based data.

Statistics on the EU's trade with the extra-EU are calculated as the sum of trade conducted by the 27 Member States and the EU institutions (except the [European Central Bank](#) and European Stability Mechanism) with the countries outside the EU. Intra-EU trade flows are excluded.

## Context

International trade in services forms a key component of the current account of the balance of payments and records transactions between residents and non-residents of a country over a given period. These transactions are compiled in accordance with the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, sixth edition (BPM6), which distinguishes 12 main service categories, including "Other business services".

EU trade in services with extra-EU countries showed a sustained upward trend between 2010 and 2024, for both exports and imports. This growth was interrupted only in 2020, when services trade contracted sharply as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting widespread restrictions on mobility, transport and cross-border business activity. From 2021 onwards, services trade recovered and resumed its pre-pandemic growth trajectory.

## Footnotes

### Explore further

#### Other articles

- [All articles on balance of payments](#)
- [Balance of payments and international investment position manual \(BPM6\)](#)
- [Measuring international trade in services - from BPM5 to BPM6](#)
- [Services trade by enterprise characteristics - STEC](#)
- [EU international trade in transport services](#)
- [International trade in services](#)
- [Services trade statistics by modes of supply](#)
- [International Trade in Services statistics - background](#)

#### Database

- [Balance of payments - international transactions \(t\\_bop\\_6\)](#)
- [International trade in services, geographical breakdown \(bop\\_its6\)](#)

#### Thematic section

- [International trade in services - Overview](#)
- [Balance of payments](#)

#### Visualisation

- [International trade in services - Statistics Illustrated](#)

#### Methodology

- [Balance of payments - International transactions \(BPM6\)](#) (ESMS metadata file — bop\_6\_esms)
- [International trade in services, geographical breakdown \(BPM6\)](#) (ESMS metadata file — bop\_its6\_esms)

## Legislation

- [Regulation \(EC\) No 184/2005](#) of 12 January 2005 on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment. ( [Summary](#) )
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 555/2012](#) of 22 June 2012 amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment, as regards the update of data requirements and definitions.
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2016/1013](#) of 8 June 2016 amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment.

## External links

- [European Commission — Trade](#)
- [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\) — International Trade in Services: Recent Methodological Developments](#)
- [Newsletter of the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services](#)
- [OECD — Services trade](#)
- [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\) — Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 \(MSITS 2010\)](#)