

Impact of COVID-19 on international trade by Member State

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in March 2022.

Planned article update: no date foreseen

" In all Member States except Belgium, Croatia and Cyprus, EU imports grew faster than exports in 2021. "

" Extra EU imports of goods recovered more strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic than exports, causing the EU trade surplus to turn to a deficit in September 2021. "

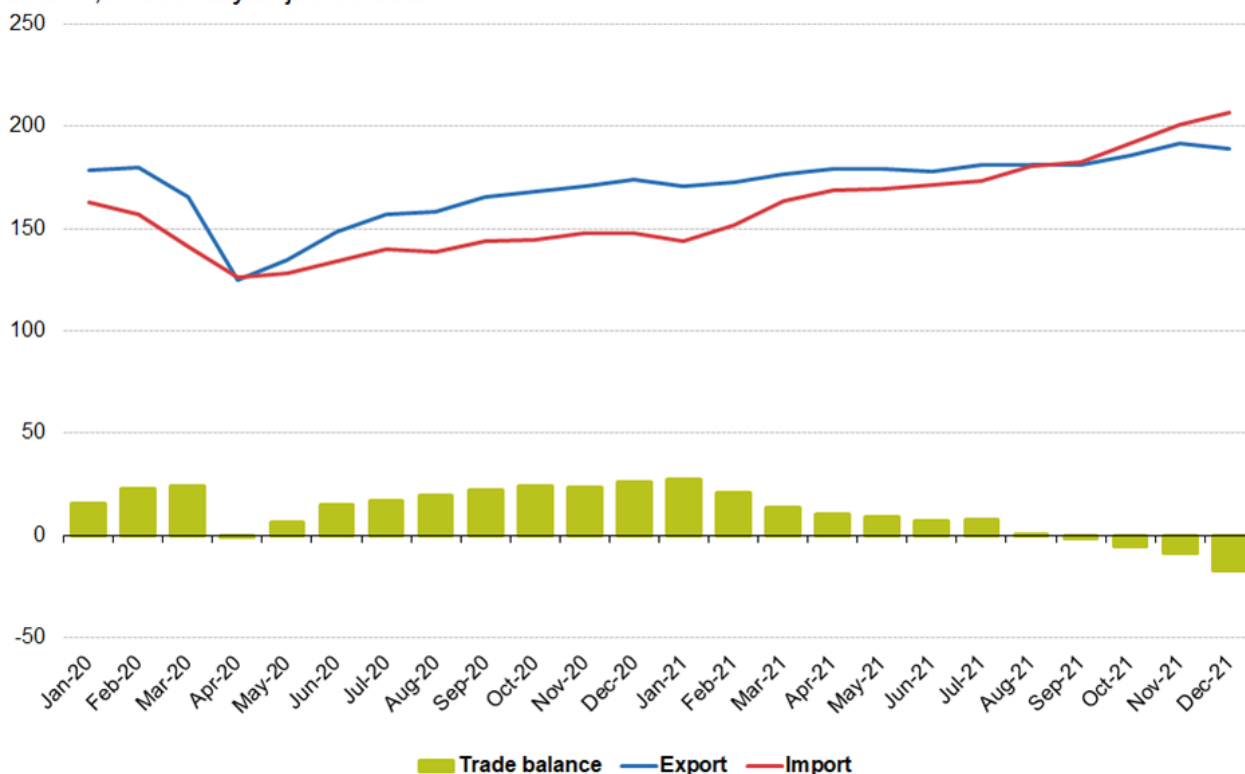
To help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries around the world have taken a variety of restrictive measures which have negatively affected international trade in goods in 2020. However in 2021 both exports and imports recovered strongly in most Member States. This article is part of an online publication containing articles on the [Impact of COVID-19 on international trade in goods statistics](#) . In this article, the impact by Member State is presented. To ensure comparability over time, seasonally and working-day adjusted data are used.

Comparison with the previous year

Figure 1 shows the decline in extra EU trade due to restrictive measures taken relating to the COVID-19 virus. The drop in exports between February and April 2020 was larger than the drop in imports, leading to a trade deficit in April 2020. At first, exports recovered more strongly than imports, creating an increasing surplus. However, in 2021, imports grew more strongly than exports turning the surplus into a deficit.

Extra EU trade in goods, 2020 - 2021

€ billion, seasonally adjusted data



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_27_2020msbec)

eurostat

Figure 1: Extra EU trade in goods, 2020 - 2021 (EUR billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

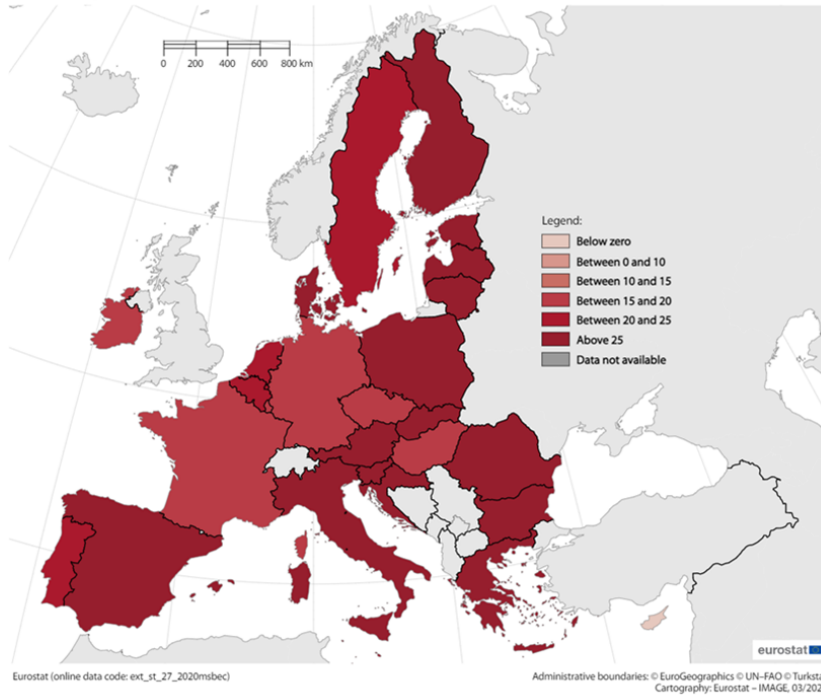
Maps 1 to 4 show the growth rates of both intra-EU and extra-EU imports and exports, comparing 2021 with 2020. With very few exceptions, imports and exports increased more than 10 %.

In 15 Member States extra EU imports increased more than 25 % from 2020 to 2021, with the largest increases occurring in Estonia (49 %) and Greece (48 %). Five Member States had increases between 20 % and 25 % and six Member States between 20 % and 25 %. Imports decreased only in Cyprus (- 7 %).

There were no Member States whose extra EU exports fell between 2020 and 2021. Increases below 10 % were seen only in Ireland the Netherlands, Slovakia, Denmark and Germany. The most frequent range was between 20 % and 25 % (9 Member States). Greece (+ 40 %) and Cyprus (+ 32 %) had the largest increases.

Extra EU imports of goods by Member State

% change 2020-2021



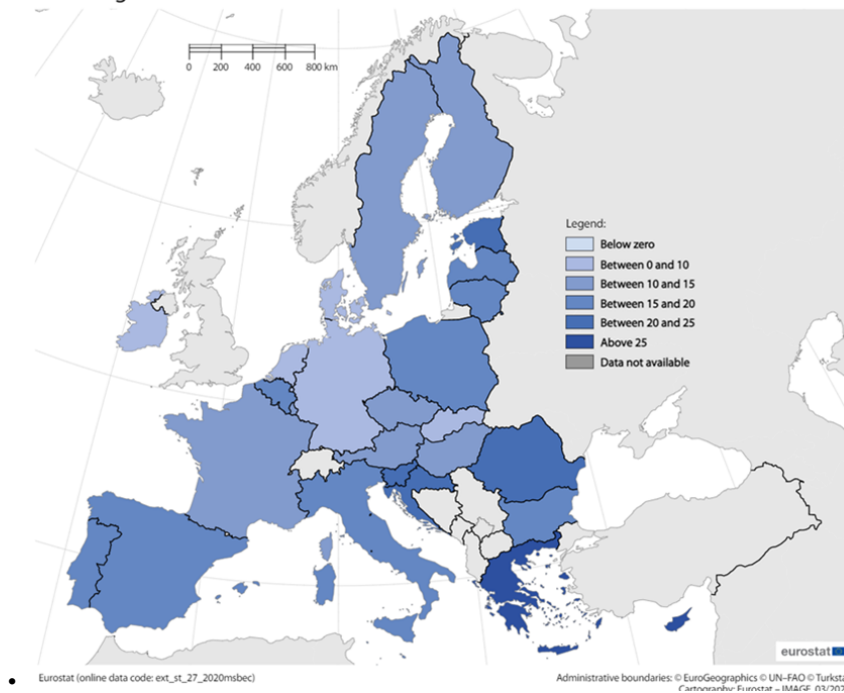
Map 1: Extra EU imports of goods by Member State

(% change 2020 - 2021)

Source: Eurostat ([ext_st_27_2020msbec](#))

Extra EU exports of goods by Member State

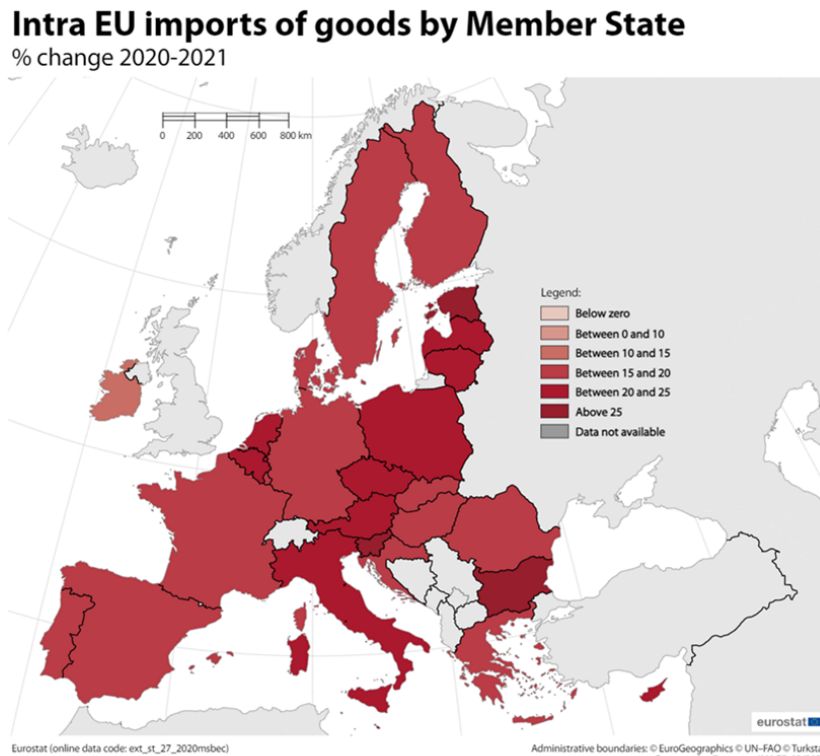
% change 2020-2021



Map 2: Extra EU exports of goods by Member State
(% change 2020 - 2021)
Source: Eurostat ([ext_st_27_2020msbec](#))

In 13 Member States intra EU imports increased between 15 % and 20 %. Only Ireland was slightly below that. Increases of more than 25 % were seen in Estonia, Slovenia, Bulgaria (all 26 %) and Malta (27 %).

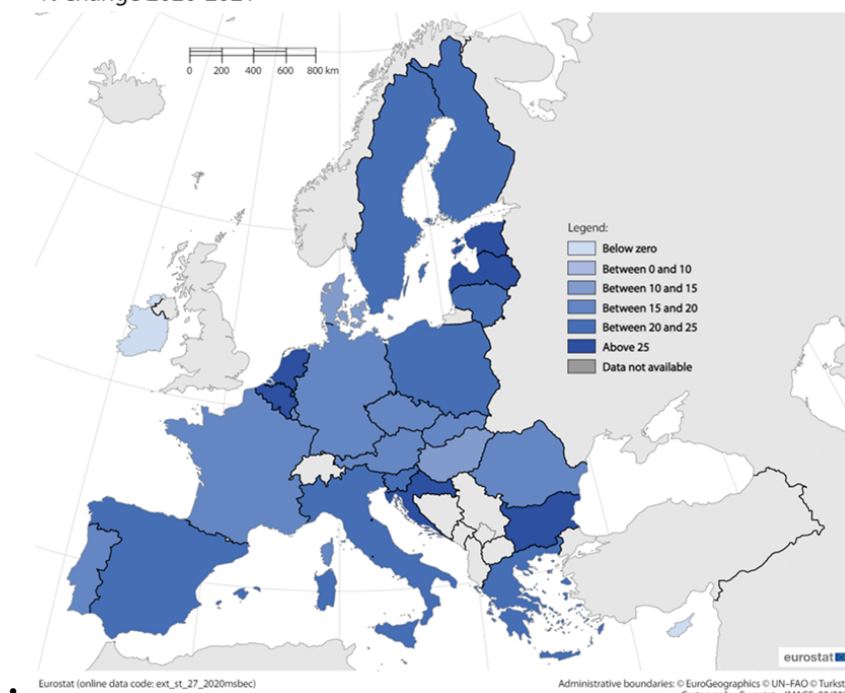
In two Member States intra EU exports fell between 2020 and 2021, namely Cyprus (-5 %) and Ireland (-4 %). The most frequent ranges were between 15 % and 20 % as well as between 20 % and 25 % (both 8 Member States). Intra EU exports increased most in Bulgaria, the Netherlands (both 26 %), Latvia (28 %), Belgium, Estonia (both 29 %) and Croatia (30 %).



Map 3: Intra EU imports of goods by Member State
(% change 2020 - 2021)
Source: Eurostat ([ext_st_27_2020msbec](#))

Intra EU exports of goods by Member State

% change 2020-2021



Map 4: Intra EU exports of goods by Member State
(% change 2020 - 2021)

Source: Eurostat ([ext_st_27_2020msbec](#))

Comparison with the same quarter previous year

Tables 1 and 2 compare the total (meaning intra and extra EU) imports and exports by quarter in 2021 with the same quarter in 2020.

In the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020, imports of goods were already increasing in all but five Member States. However, they increased more strongly in the second quarter when 25 Member States had their best quarter of 2021. Only the Netherlands, Finland and Malta peaked in the fourth quarter.

Growth rates of imports of goods by Member State, 2021

% change compared to same quarter previous year, seasonally adjusted data

	2021-Q1	2021-Q2	2021-Q3	2021-Q4	Trend
Malta	-21.0	40.5	45.8	53.4	
Greece	0.5	46.6	33.5	45.9	
Slovenia	5.2	47.5	39.3	38.7	
Lithuania	9.0	45.0	29.6	37.6	
Finland	1.8	26.5	21.6	36.4	
Belgium	1.4	36.6	26.3	35.5	
Spain	-0.7	48.5	24.3	32.0	
Netherlands	6.7	28.8	26.8	31.7	
Bulgaria	9.1	44.0	27.7	30.8	
Estonia	13.3	48.4	36.4	29.7	
Croatia	4.7	37.3	25.5	28.8	
Italy	4.8	46.5	24.7	28.2	
Portugal	-5.0	47.9	20.9	28.1	
Poland	8.7	47.4	24.3	24.7	
Austria	6.8	37.9	22.5	24.7	
France	3.4	35.0	14.5	24.5	
Luxembourg	5.3	34.3	9.1	23.6	
Latvia	7.1	42.7	35.8	23.3	
Sweden	8.0	29.9	20.5	23.0	
Denmark	10.3	26.2	18.7	22.5	
Germany	2.3	30.1	16.1	21.4	
Romania	5.4	49.5	19.4	18.2	
Hungary	7.1	38.5	16.9	14.5	
Czechia	8.6	38.6	20.2	14.0	
Slovakia	6.1	50.7	12.5	13.8	
Ireland	-1.4	40.1	11.9	13.4	
Cyprus	-5.1	35.1	21.1	3.7	

Data sorted by fourth quarter 2021. Blue bars are positive values, red bars are negative values.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_27_2020msbec)



Table 1: Growth rates of imports of goods by Member State, 2021 (% change compared to the same quarter previous year) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

Exports show more or less the same pattern as imports, with the second quarter being the peak quarter for 23 Member States. Finland's peak was in the third quarter while Ireland, Cyprus and Denmark followed in the fourth quarter.

Growth rates of exports of goods by Member State, 2021

% change compared to same quarter previous year, seasonally adjusted data

	2021-Q1	2021-Q2	2021-Q3	2021-Q4	Trend
Cyprus	-24.4	-6.8	39.6	79.7	
Croatia	9.8	46.4	21.8	35.7	
Belgium	1.9	40.9	28.8	32.7	
Greece	9.5	44.3	32.6	32.1	
Slovenia	6.5	34.9	25.4	29.3	
Latvia	8.7	33.1	29.2	25.6	
Lithuania	8.5	34.0	18.4	25.3	
Bulgaria	9.4	37.5	25.5	25.3	
Estonia	13.3	40.3	34.2	23.4	
Finland	4.4	23.9	25.2	23.3	
Netherlands	4.5	30.3	24.2	22.1	
Sweden	4.2	29.8	19.2	18.9	
Spain	6.0	45.4	18.8	18.6	
Denmark	0.4	16.3	7.5	18.5	
Austria	4.8	28.6	14.6	16.1	
Romania	3.6	58.0	13.5	15.0	
Luxembourg	5.4	26.4	17.2	14.9	
Poland	11.7	42.1	15.6	14.2	
Portugal	6.9	47.9	12.1	14.2	
France	-1.4	41.5	14.6	14.1	
Italy	5.2	49.6	13.3	13.0	
Germany	2.3	34.0	11.4	11.6	
Ireland	-8.7	6.9	0.8	9.0	
Slovakia	13.6	46.7	2.6	8.9	
Malta	-1.1	37.5	10.9	8.7	
Hungary	8.8	39.5	5.9	7.2	
Czechia	10.8	39.6	8.1	4.4	

Data sorted by fourth quarter 2021. Blue bars are positive values, red bars are negative values.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_27_2020msbec)



Table 2: Growth rates of exports of goods by Member State, 2021 (% change compared to the same quarter previous year) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

Comparison with the previous quarter

Tables 3 and 4 compare the total (meaning intra and extra EU) imports and exports by quarter in 2021 with their previous quarter.

Without exception, in all Member States the second quarter of 2020 had the largest decrease of imports compared with the previous quarter. The third quarter of 2020 saw the imports of all Member States increase as did the fourth quarter of 2020 except in Finland, Luxembourg and Malta. Indeed, the third quarter saw the highest quarter to quarter growth for 24 Member States. Only Cyprus (Q4-2020), Malta (Q2-2021) and the Netherlands (Q4-2021) had their peak quarter later.

Growth rates of imports of goods by Member State, 2020-2021

% change compared to the previous quarter, seasonally adjusted data

	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	Trend
Belgium	-0.8	-18.2	13.0	5.1	4.4	10.2	4.5	12.7	
Spain	-2.9	-28.9	26.6	5.6	4.3	6.4	6.0	12.2	
Lithuania	-5.8	-17.7	20.1	5.4	4.5	9.5	7.4	12.0	
Cyprus	9.8	-32.9	16.0	30.5	-6.5	-4.6	4.0	11.8	
Croatia	0.3	-20.3	16.0	8.4	4.5	4.5	6.0	11.3	
Greece	-1.7	-22.5	19.2	1.2	7.5	13.0	8.5	10.6	
Ireland	-3.8	-17.9	21.0	9.0	-8.9	16.6	-3.4	10.5	
Finland	-0.2	-14.6	11.9	-1.6	8.3	6.0	7.6	10.3	
Portugal	-0.7	-32.6	31.3	3.6	3.6	4.9	7.4	9.7	
France	-7.2	-20.1	23.4	0.8	4.1	4.3	4.7	9.6	
Luxembourg	-7.5	-16.0	24.7	-3.4	4.1	7.1	1.3	9.5	
Slovenia	-2.9	-22.1	18.8	9.8	3.5	9.2	12.2	9.4	
Germany	-1.2	-16.1	12.7	4.3	3.8	6.7	0.6	9.0	
Netherlands	-5.8	-10.7	6.8	4.2	7.3	7.8	5.2	8.3	
Italy	-5.4	-22.5	24.0	5.2	3.8	8.2	5.5	8.2	
Slovakia	-0.4	-27.5	33.2	5.8	3.9	2.9	-0.6	7.0	
Poland	0.7	-21.4	23.6	6.6	4.9	6.6	4.2	7.0	
Sweden	-3.7	-13.2	12.0	4.8	6.0	4.4	4.0	6.9	
Bulgaria	-2.4	-20.4	17.5	4.2	12.0	5.0	4.1	6.8	
Romania	1.4	-27.7	28.9	7.7	5.0	2.6	2.9	6.6	
Austria	-0.4	-16.1	13.1	4.5	7.7	8.3	0.5	6.3	
Denmark	-1.5	-7.8	8.3	2.4	7.8	5.5	1.9	5.6	
Hungary	-2.2	-19.3	21.6	5.7	3.3	4.4	2.6	3.6	
Czechia	-3.1	-17.5	17.1	8.5	3.5	5.3	1.6	2.9	
Estonia	-3.7	-14.6	15.5	8.0	6.4	11.8	6.1	2.7	
Malta	-1.1	-26.3	3.2	-3.1	7.3	31.1	7.1	1.9	
Latvia	1.2	-16.4	14.8	6.3	5.0	11.4	9.2	-3.4	

Data sorted by fourth quarter 2021. Blue bars are positive values, red bars are negative values.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_27_2020msbec)



Table 3: Growth rates of imports of goods by Member State, 2020-2021 (% change compared to the previous quarter) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

With the exception of Cyprus, for all Member States the second quarter of 2020 had the largest decrease of exports compared with the previous quarter. The third quarter of 2020 saw the exports of all Member States increase except for Cyprus. The third quarter was the peak quarter for 21 Member States. The exceptions were Malta, Finland (both Q4-2020), Bulgaria (Q1-2021), Cyprus, Croatia and Denmark (all Q4-2021).

Growth rates of exports of goods by Member State, 2020-2021

% change compared to the previous quarter, seasonally adjusted data

	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	Trend
Cyprus	1.5	-13.3	-16.4	15.3	-9.6	6.9	25.3	48.5	
Croatia	4.0	-15.9	15.0	6.4	6.7	12.2	-4.3	18.5	
Malta	-6.7	-20.4	6.8	14.9	1.2	10.7	-13.9	12.7	
Lithuania	-0.6	-14.5	16.1	4.1	5.0	5.6	2.6	10.2	
Denmark	-0.5	-9.9	5.0	-1.2	7.3	4.4	-2.9	8.9	
Slovenia	0.7	-19.3	17.3	5.3	6.8	2.2	9.0	8.6	
Finland	-9.8	-10.8	8.3	10.2	-2.0	5.9	9.5	8.5	
Romania	-1.6	-31.9	41.1	7.0	0.7	3.9	1.4	8.5	
Belgium	0.3	-19.1	14.7	4.7	4.9	11.9	4.9	7.8	
Slovakia	-3.9	-24.6	42.5	1.4	4.2	-2.7	-0.3	7.7	
Greece	1.2	-21.1	14.6	7.4	12.8	4.0	5.3	7.0	
Portugal	-6.2	-28.0	37.0	4.5	3.7	-0.3	3.9	6.4	
France	-6.4	-28.9	28.0	6.8	1.5	2.0	3.7	6.3	
Poland	-0.9	-18.7	24.7	7.5	2.5	3.4	1.4	6.2	
Spain	-3.8	-24.7	28.1	6.1	3.5	3.3	4.6	6.0	
Czechia	-4.5	-19.7	27.3	9.7	-1.2	1.2	-1.4	6.0	
Italy	-5.5	-26.7	34.0	6.2	0.9	4.2	1.4	5.9	
Sweden	1.4	-15.5	11.5	6.1	4.1	5.3	2.4	5.9	
Hungary	-1.6	-22.8	31.9	4.4	2.3	-0.9	0.1	5.7	
Germany	-2.7	-22.5	20.9	5.3	3.7	1.5	0.5	5.6	
Bulgaria	-1.1	-15.3	7.9	5.7	13.2	6.5	-1.6	5.5	
Netherlands	-3.3	-14.6	10.0	6.1	4.8	6.5	4.9	4.2	
Austria	-0.6	-16.4	14.8	2.6	6.5	2.5	2.3	3.9	
Ireland	9.3	-13.6	9.4	-4.0	0.7	1.1	3.1	3.8	
Latvia	3.5	-11.4	11.2	6.0	4.0	8.4	8.0	3.1	
Estonia	2.0	-13.1	14.3	11.7	2.1	7.6	9.4	2.6	
Luxembourg	-1.8	-11.1	12.6	0.2	5.2	6.6	4.4	-1.7	

Data sorted by fourth quarter 2021. Blue bars are positive values, red bars are negative values.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_27_2020msbec)



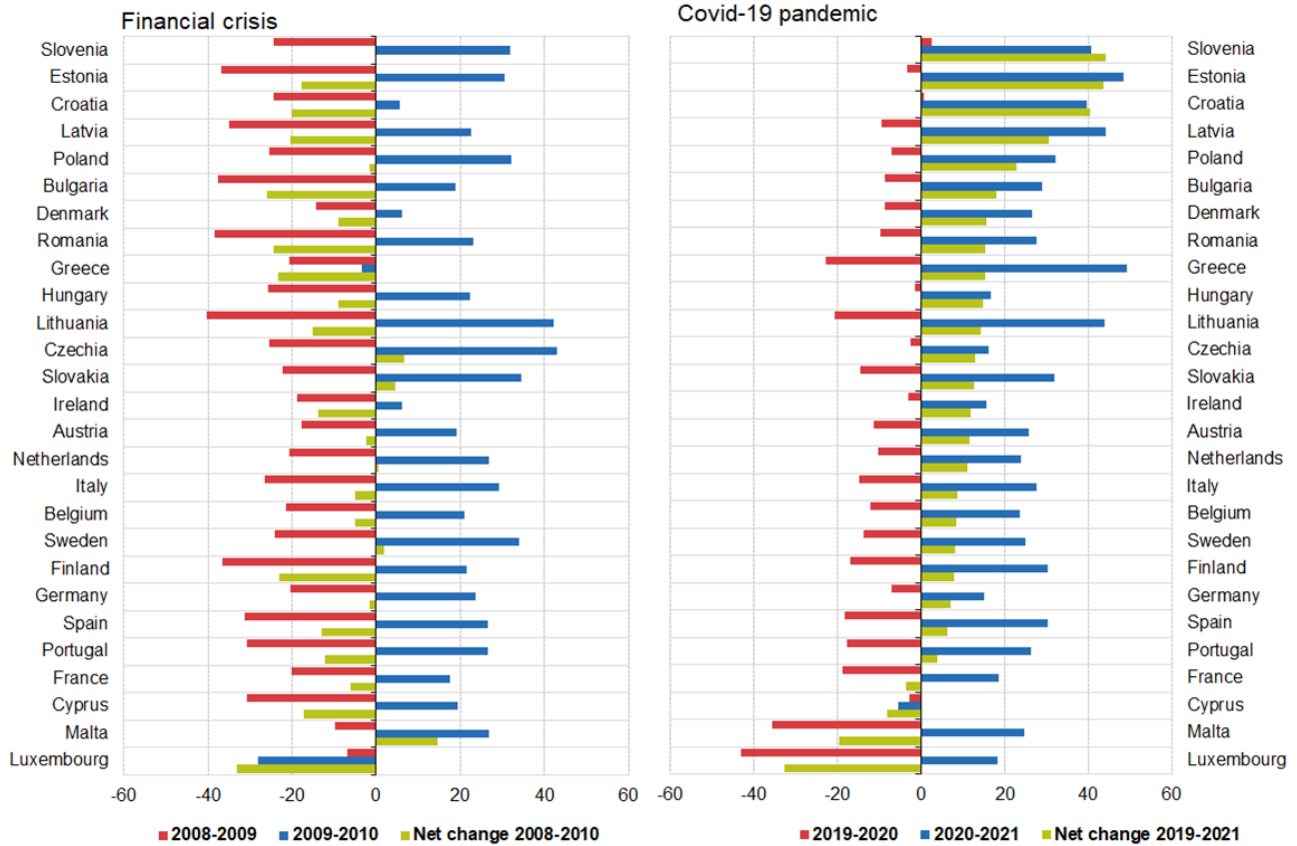
Table 3: Growth rates of exports of goods by Member State, 2020-2021 (% change compared to the previous quarter) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

Trade in goods during the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial crisis

Figure 2 compares the shock and recovery of imports of goods between the financial crisis of 2009 and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, by Member State. For all Member States, imports during the financial crisis fell more than during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exceptions were Greece, Malta and Luxembourg which were also the countries with the largest drop in imports in 2020. In the year after the initial shock of the financial crisis all Member States except Luxembourg and Greece increased their imports while in the COVID-19 pandemic the only exception was Cyprus. The net effect of those shocks and recoveries was still negative for all but five Member States (Czechia, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden) in 2010. By contrast in 2021 the net effect was positive for all but four Member States (France, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta).

Imports during the financial crisis and Covid-19 pandemic, by Member State

% change



Countries are sorted by net growth 2019-2021
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-645593)

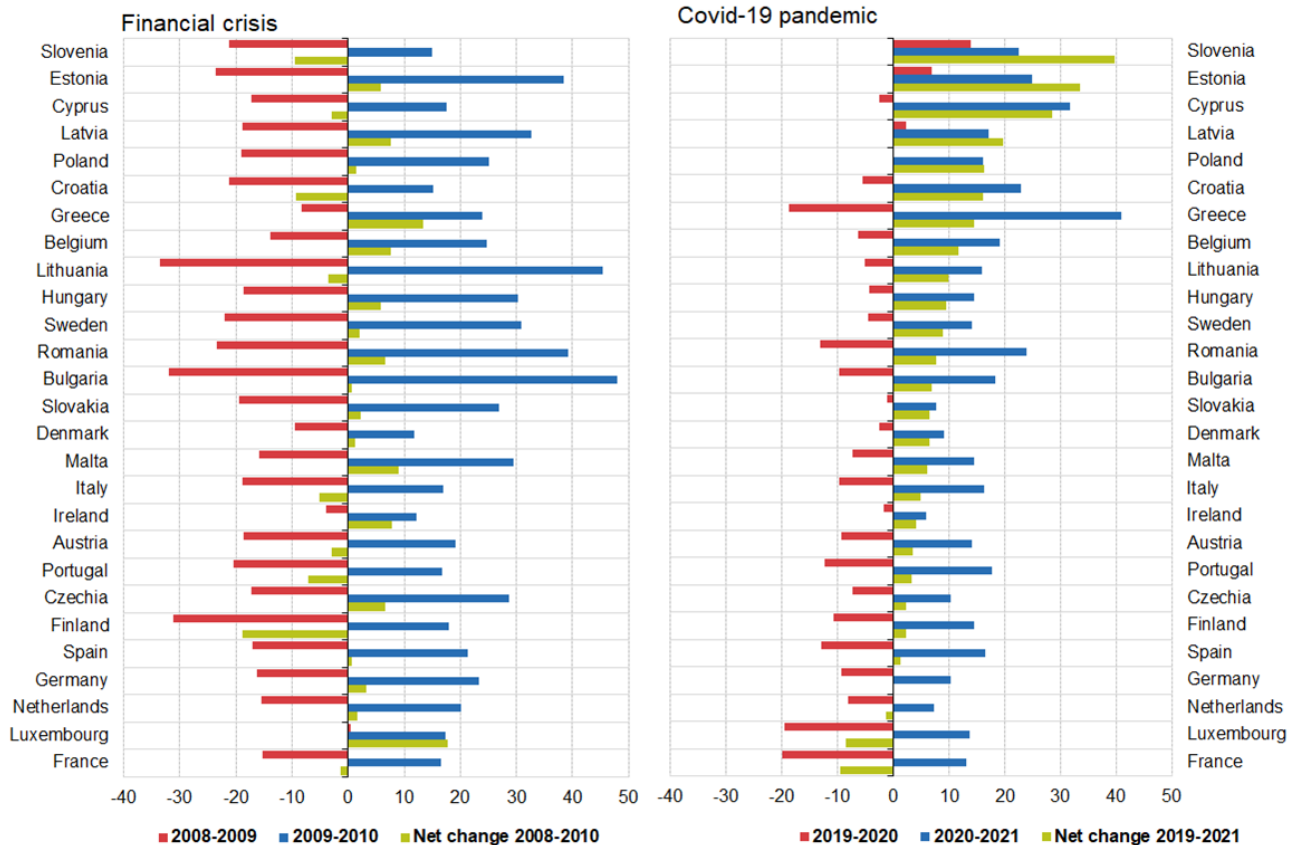
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Figure 2: Imports during the financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, by Member State (% change) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

Figure 3 compares the shock and recovery of exports of goods between the financial crisis of 2009 and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, by Member State. For all Member States, exports during the financial crisis fell more than during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exceptions were Greece, France and Luxembourg which were also the countries with the largest drop in exports in 2020. In the year after the initial shock of the financial crisis as well as in the COVID-19 pandemic without exception all Member States increased their exports. The net effect of those shocks and recoveries was negative for only nine Member States (France, Cyprus, Austria, Lithuania, Italy, Portugal, Croatia, Slovenia and Finland) in 2010, while in 2021 the net effect was positive for all but three Member States (France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands).

Exports during the financial crisis and Covid-19 pandemic, by Member State

% change



Countries are sorted by net growth 2019-2021
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-645593)

el

Figure 3: Exports during the financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, by Member State (% change) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_27_2020msbec)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file](#)

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 third 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 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 Community 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.

The EU-27 data reflect the political change in the EU composition. Therefore, the United Kingdom was considered as an extra-EU partner country for the EU-27. However, the United Kingdom was still part of the internal market until the end of the transitory period, meaning that data on trade with the United Kingdom were still based on

statistical concepts applicable to trade between the EU main partners. As a consequence, while imports from any other extra-EU-27 trade partner are grouped by country of origin, the United Kingdom data reflect country of consignment. In practice this means that the goods imported by the EU-27 from the United Kingdom were physically transported from the United Kingdom but part of these goods could have been of other origin than the United Kingdom. For this reason data on trade with the United Kingdom are not fully comparable with data on trade with other extra-EU-27 trade partners.

Methodology

According to the EU concepts and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU Member States and non-EU 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.

Unit of measure

Trade values are expressed in millions or billions (10⁹) of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in the event 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 bloc is deeply integrated into global markets both for the products it sources and the exports it sells. The EU trade policy is an important element of the external dimension of the 'Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' and 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, and 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](#)

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 \(DS-018995\)](#)

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Data visualisations

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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](#)

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