This article takes a close look at recent trends, focusing on total intra-EU trade in goods and the most traded products. It presents statistics for the EU-27 aggregate and for individual Member States for the period covering 2002 to 2019.

Statistics on international trade in goods between Member States of the European Union (EU) - especially the size and evolution of imports and exports - enable the EU and national authorities to evaluate the growth of the Single Market and the integration of EU economies. These statistics also provide EU businesses with essential information for their sales and marketing policies.

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.

Evolution of intra-EU trade in goods: 2003-2019

The seasonally adjusted value of monthly total exports of goods for EU-27 Member States to other Member States is shown in Figure 1. Between January 2002 and January 2020 exports of goods increased from EUR 120.8 billion to EUR 256.3 billion. There was a sharp decrease in the value of exports of goods from September 2008 to May 2009. Following this decline the value of exports of goods began to increase again. Between March 2011 and May 2014, and again between June 2018 and January 2020, exports were relatively stable.
Since the introduction of the Intrastat data collection system for intra-EU trade in goods on 1 January 1993, the value of intra-EU exports of goods has been consistently higher than that of intra-EU imports of goods. In theory, as intra-EU exports of goods are declared FOB-type value and intra-EU imports of goods CIF-type value, the value of intra-EU imports of goods should be slightly higher than that of intra-EU exports of goods. The analysis presented in this article considers intra-EU exports of goods only, as it is the more reliable measure of total intra-EU trade in goods since, at aggregated levels, total intra-EU exports of goods has better coverage than total intra-EU imports of goods.

**Intra-EU trade in goods by Member State**

There is a wide variation in the value of exports of goods by Member State to partners within the EU (Figure 2a). In 2019, the value of export trade in goods within the EU ranged from EUR 698.8 billion for Germany to EUR 1.3 billion for Cyprus. There were nine Member States whose exports of goods to partners in the EU were over EUR 100 billion in 2019, accounting for 80.8% of the total value of intra-EU exports of goods.
In five Member States (Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Poland), the value of exports of goods to partners in the EU-27 increased more than 10% annually between 2002 and 2019. In nine Member States the annual average growth was between 5% and 10%. (see Table 1). In the remaining 13 Member States average growth was less than 5%. 
Table 1: Exports of goods to other Member States, 2002 and 2019 (EUR billion and %)

Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

In 21 Member States the top three partners account for over 50 % of exports within the EU (Figure 3). For a further five Member States the top three partners have between 40 % and 50 % of exports within the EU. Only in Germany (38.2 %) is this share below 40 %. Germany appeared most often (25 times) as a top three partner. France appeared 11 times as a top three partner and. Italy appeared 10 times.

Figure 3: Distribution of exports of goods to other EU partners by Member State, 2019 (share of total Intra-EU exports of goods)

Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Intra-EU trade in goods balance

It can be difficult to interpret figures in absolute terms for individual Member States. In particular their trade in goods balances must be interpreted with caution for the phenomenon of Quasi-transit.
In 2019, 10 Member States had a trade surplus (Figure 4a). The surplus was highest in the Netherlands (EUR 184.2 billion). It was also above ten billion euro in Belgium (EUR 29.8 billion), Czechia (EUR 23.5 billion), Ireland (EUR 23.1 billion) and Poland (EUR 19.2 billion). There were 17 Member States with a trade deficit. The deficit was highest in France (EUR 111.9 billion). It was also above ten billion euro in Sweden (EUR 17.9 billion), Austria (EUR 17.3 billion), Portugal (EUR 16.9 billion), Romania (EUR 12.5 billion) and Greece (EUR 10.6 billion). In 16 Member States the trade balance was between plus ten billion euro and minus ten billion euro (Figure 4b).

Figure 4a: Trade in goods balance with other Member States, 2019 (EUR billion)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)
In 2002, 18 Member States had a trade deficit for intra EU trade in goods (Table 2). In Italy, Poland and Slovenia this had changed to a surplus by 2019. In 2002, nine Member States had a trade surplus. In Denmark and Finland this changed to a deficit by 2019.

The Netherlands, which had the highest trade surplus in absolute terms, also had the highest ratio of exports to imports (180.3), in 2019 (Table 3). France, which had the highest trade deficit in absolute terms, ranked 21st for its ratio of exports to imports. Its ratio of 70.0 was higher than that of Latvia (68.9), Luxembourg (65.8), Greece (62.5), Croatia (52.5), Malta (43.2) and Cyprus (25.9) which all had a lower deficit in absolute terms.
Table 3: Intra EU exports divided by imports of goods, 2002, 2019 and trend(%)Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Table 4 considers the trade relationship of individual Member States with non-EU partners to add further context to the interpretation of Intra-EU trade in goods balances. It shows the ratio of ‘goods exports divided by goods imports’ by Member State for trade with non-EU partners. In 2019 this ratio was highest in Ireland (174.3), Denmark (162.0) and Germany (155.1) and lowest in Greece (59.2), Cyprus (54.9) and Malta (41.8).

Table 4: Extra EU exports divided by imports of goods, 2002, 2019 and trend(%)Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

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Comparing Table 3 and Table 4, there were nine Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania) with a trade deficit in both intra and extra EU trade. There were seven Member States (Belgium, Czechia, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia) with a deficit in intra EU trade, but a surplus in extra EU trade. There were eight Member States (Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Finland, Sweden) with a surplus in intra EU trade, but a deficit in extra EU trade. Finally, there were three Member States (Germany, Ireland, Italy) with a trade surplus in both tables.

When considering the trade relationships between a country and its trading partners, consideration must also be given to trade in services to get a more complete picture. See for example the recent article on Trade in Services.

Intra-EU trade in goods compared with extra-EU trade in goods

In 2019, 17 Member States had a ratio of total exports to total imports between 85 % and 115 % (Table 5). Eight Member States (Latvia, Romania, Portugal, Luxembourg, Croatia, Greece, Malta and Cyprus) had a ratio of less than 85 %, while two Member States (Ireland and Germany) had a ratio of more than 115 %.

Table 5: Total exports divided by imports of goods, 2002, 2019 and trend(%)Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

In 2019, most Member States had a share of intra EU exports between 50 % and 75 %. It was above 75 % in Hungary (78 %), Czechia (79 %), Luxembourg (80 %) and Slovakia (80 %). Only in Ireland (37 %) and Cyprus (41 %) was the share of intra EU exports lower than 50 % and extra EU exports were higher than intra EU exports.
The unweighted average ratio for Member States of intra EU exports to extra EU exports decreased by 25 percentage points (pp) between 2002 and 2019. The largest decreases were in Slovakia (-315 pp), Estonia (-116 pp) and Hungary (-54 pp). The ratio increased in seven Member States. The largest increases were in Malta (59 pp), Romania (57 pp) and Bulgaria (34 pp).

Table 2: Exports of goods: intra EU divided by extra EU, 2002, 2019 and trend(%)Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Table 2: Exports of goods: intra EU divided by extra EU, 2002, 2019 and trend(%) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995
Intra-EU trade in goods by main product groups

Figure 6 shows the share in intra EU exports of goods by product type. Between 2002 and 2019, the share increased for Chemicals (4 pp), Energy (2 pp) and Food & drink (1 pp). It remained more or less stable for Raw materials and Other goods. It decreased for Other manufactured goods (3 pp) and Machinery & vehicles (5 pp).

Figure 5: Intra EU exports by type of goods, 2002 and 2019 (% of total exports of goods)
Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

In 2019, international trade in manufactured goods was more than four times as high as trade in primary goods in the EU. In all Member States the share of manufactured goods was higher than the share of primary goods although there were considerable differences between Member States. In Czechia (10.3) and Slovakia (10.0) the share of manufactured goods was more than ten times as high as the share of primary goods, while ratios below two were found in Estonia (1.4), Lithuania (1.7) and Latvia (1.8).
Table 7: Share in total trade by type of goods and Member State, 2002-2019(%) Source: Eurostat - Comext DS-018995

Source data for tables and graphs
- Intra-EU trade in goods - tables and graphs (Excel file)

Data sources
EU international trade data comes from Eurostat’s COMEXT database. COMEXT is the Eurostat 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 countries. International trade aggregated and detailed statistics disseminated from Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process. Because COMEXT is updated on a daily basis, data published on the website may differ from data stored in COMEXT in case of recent revisions.

Information on intra-EU trade is collected by the EU Member States using the various media placed at the disposal of the information providers. These may be paper or electronic declarations provided for at national level. The declarations are addressed directly to the competent national administrations.

European statistics on international trade in goods are compiled according to the EU concepts and definitions and may, therefore, differ from national data published by Member States.

Context
The EU’s single or internal market is a market where goods, services, capital and people can circulate freely. The free movement of goods principle requires that national barriers to the free movement of goods within the EU be removed. Articles 34 to 36 of the Treaty of the functioning of the European Union prohibit quantitative restrictions on imports, exports or goods in transit and all similar restrictive measures between member countries. All measures capable of hindering directly or indirectly such imports are considered to be quantitative restrictions.

Additionally, because the 27 Member States of the European Union share a single market and a single external
border, they also have a single trade policy. Both in the World Trade Organization, where the rules of international trade are agreed and enforced, and with individual trading partners, EU Member States speak and negotiate collectively.

The importance of the EU’s internal market is underlined by the fact that the proportion of intra-EU trade in goods is higher than extra-EU trade in goods in most EU Member States with few exceptions. The variation in the proportion of total trade in goods accounted for by intra-EU trade reflects to some degree historical ties and geographical location.

See also
- Intra-EU - most traded goods
- International trade in goods
- The EU in the world - international trade
- International trade in services

Main tables
- International trade in goods, 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, see:
  - International trade in goods - aggregated data (ext_go_agg)
  - International trade in goods - detailed data (detail)

Dedicated section
- International trade in goods

Methodology
- International trade in goods statistics - background
- International trade in goods (ESMS metadata file — ext_go_agg_esms)
- User guide on European statistics on international trade in goods

Legislation
- Summaries of EU Legislation: Intrastat: statistics relating to the trading of goods between EU countries
Visualisations

- Did you know? Some funny and curious facts about trade of the EU
- Top 5 partners in trade in goods
- My Country in a bubble

External links

- European Commission - Globalisation
- European Commission - Trade
- European Commission - Single market for goods