

EU current transactions in 2000, detailed results¹

EU external current account deficit widened to EUR -65.4 bn

Luis Biedma

Statistics in focus

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

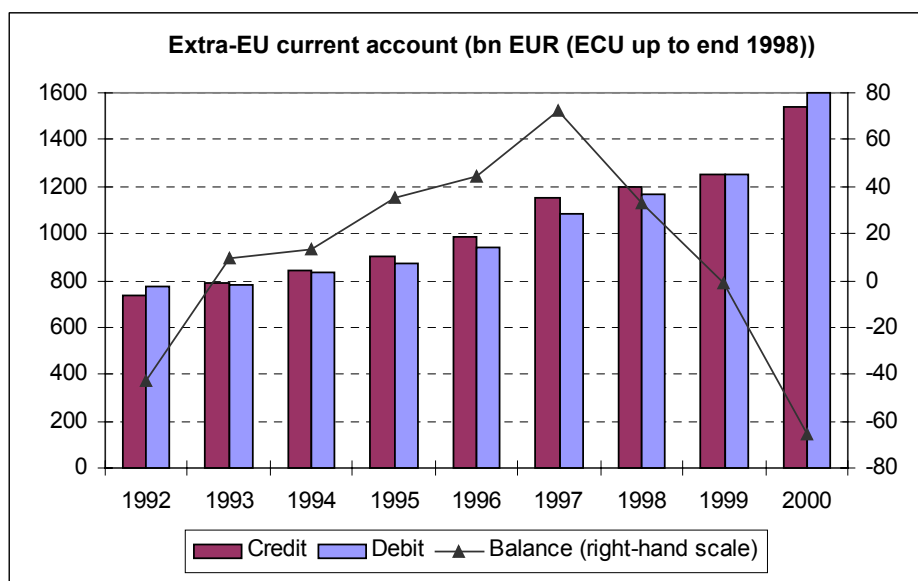
THEME 2 – 15/2002

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

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The EU current account balance with the rest of the world (extra-EU) went down to EUR -65.4 bn in 2000, after having sunk into the red in 1999 for the first time in seven years. At the same time, EU total current transactions (credits + debits) increased by 26% during 2000. The worsening of the EU current account balance was principally due to the adverse result attained in the balance of goods, EUR -53.5 bn. In addition, the surplus in services remained stable at 5.6 bn in 2000. Nevertheless, there were disparate trends between the most relevant types of services; hence, the EUR 1.9 bn surplus in other business services² in 1999 moved into a EUR -3.6 bn deficit in 2000. In contrast, the travel deficit contracted at EUR -3.0 bn in 2000, EUR 2.0 bn less than in 1999. Moreover, in 2000, the EU current account surplus with the USA swelled to EUR 50.5 bn, whilst the deficit with Japan reached EUR -38.8 bn.



Extra-EU current account deficit expanded to EUR -65.4 bn while total current transactions increased by 26% in 2000

The negative balance in trade in goods³ in 2000, EUR -53.5 bn, when compared to the EUR 12.9 bn surplus in 1999, marked the deterioration of the extra-EU current account deficit.



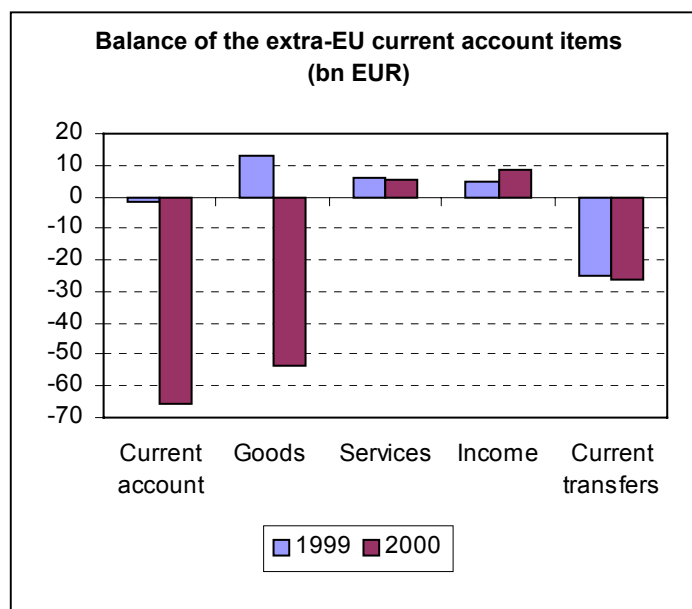
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¹ The contents of this report are further developed in the Eurostat publication 'EU International Transactions', 2002 edition.

² The item 'other business services' covers merchanting and other trade related services; operational leasing; legal, accounting, management consultancy and public relations services; advertising, market research and public opinion polling services; research and development services; architectural, engineering and other technical services; agricultural, mining and on-site processing; other; services between affiliated enterprises, n.i.e.

³ According to the Balance of Payments concept: (exports FOB – imports FOB).

EU external transactions in *services* settled with a EUR 5.6 bn surplus in 2000, EUR 0.2 bn lower than in 1999. In contrast, the surplus achieved in *income* (EUR 8.6 bn) was almost double the 1999 figure. The EU structural deficit in *current transfers* totalled EUR -26.1 bn in 2000, EUR 1.3 bn larger than the previous year. The current account deficit represented 0.8% of the EU GDP⁴ after showing a record surplus of 1.0% in 1997. Regarding the main EU partners, the USA presented a current account deficit of 4.5% of the GDP in 2000, whereas Japan showed a surplus of 2.5% of its GDP.



Total extra-EU current credits amounted to EUR 1538.2 bn while debits added up to EUR 1603.6 bn in 2000, leaving annual growth rates of 23% and 28%, respectively. This spectacular expansion was supported by a world output growth⁵ of 4.7%, the highest in over 15 years.

Nevertheless, the components of the current account did not all grow at the same pace. Exports of *goods* to non-EU-countries went up to EUR 909.0 bn while imports reached EUR 962.6 bn in 2000; these figures were attained due to annual growth rates of 23% and 32%, respectively. EU imports and exports of *services* both grew by 18% in 2000, the former totalling EUR 292.6 bn whereas the latter added up to EUR 298.2 bn. *Income* credits swelled by 30% whereas debits rose by 29%, amounting to EUR 297.3 bn and EUR 288.7 bn, respectively. Finally, *current transfers* credits totalled EUR 33.7 bn while debits went up to EUR 59.7 bn due to annual increases of 21% and 14%, respectively.

Snapshot of the EU current account

Total extra-EU current account transactions (credits + debits) added up to EUR 3141.7 bn in 2000, 59% of which were due to trade in *goods*, while transactions in *services* and *income* represented 19% each, and *current transfers* the remaining 3%.

**Evolution of the extra-EU current account and its main items' balances
(bn EUR (ECU up to end 1998))**

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<i>Current account</i>	-42.5	9.6	13.2	35.3	44.2	72.2	32.7	-1.5	-65.4
<i>Goods</i>	-34.7	11.9	21.3	28.2	43.0	70.1	45.0	12.9	-53.5
<i>Services</i>	13.8	12.9	11.9	12.0	12.8	16.2	10.2	5.8	5.6
<i>Income</i>	4.0	10.2	6.5	18.7	6.1	6.7	-3.1	4.6	8.6
<i>Current transfers</i>	-25.6	-25.5	-26.4	-23.6	-17.8	-20.8	-19.3	-24.8	-26.1

Therefore, when the EU current account balance incurs a deficit, a deterioration of the *goods* balance is likely to be behind the scenes. During the period 1992 to 2000, the EU achieved continuous surpluses in the balance of *services* with the rest of the world. However, the balance went down from ECU 13.8 bn in 1992 to EUR 5.6 bn in 2000. At the same time, the EU had a structural deficit in *current transfers*. Regarding the balance of *income*, EU receipts exceeded payments typically since 1992, the only exception being 1998. The surplus generated by *income* transactions amounted to EUR 8.6 bn in 2000, EUR 4.0 bn more than in 1999.

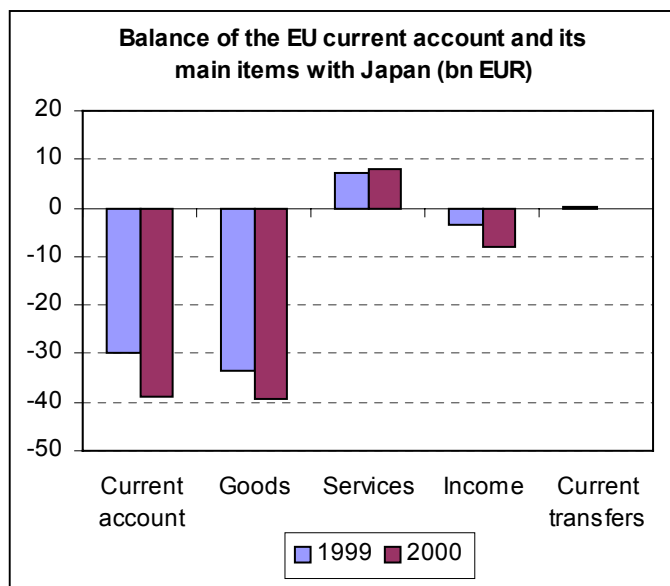
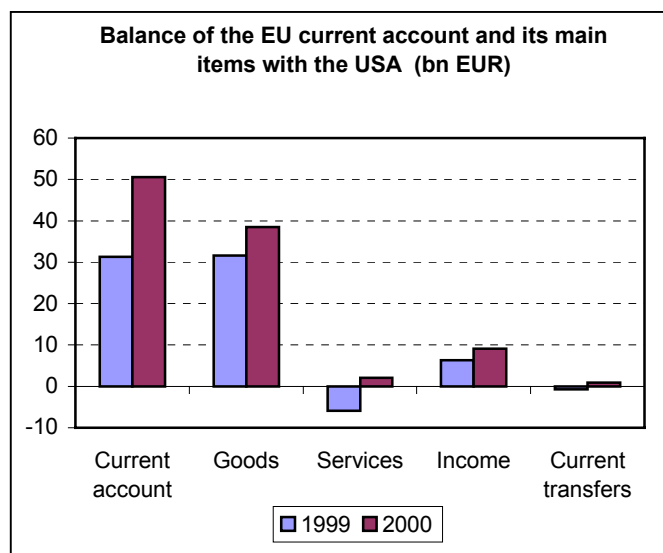
EU current account surplus with the USA boosted to EUR 50.5 bn in 2000

EU current transactions with partner USA went strongly up in 2000, with credits growing by 28% and debits increasing by 25%. This resulted in a total volume of transactions of EUR 917.1 bn, which represented 29% of total extra-EU current transactions. These bilateral flows led to a EUR 50.5 bn surplus for the EU, topping that of 1999 by EUR 19.2 bn. Moreover, the surplus could be described as an overall surplus since all the main items' balances of the current account had a plus sign.

⁴ Source: Eurostat, National Accounts. National Accounts aggregates in current prices.

⁵ Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook, October 2001. Growth rate in real terms.

Trade in *goods* resulted in a EUR 38.5 bn surplus, while *current transfers* credits exceeded debits by only EUR 0.9 bn. This surplus in *goods* accounted for 76% of the total EU current account surplus with the USA. Regarding *services*, the surplus added up to EUR 2.0 bn opposed to the EUR -5.9 bn deficit in 1999. This reversal of the *services* balance was sustained by an increase in the *transportation* surplus of EUR 3.1 bn, the change of the EUR -1.4 bn *travel* deficit into a EUR 1.4 bn surplus and the reduction in the *other services*⁶ deficit of EUR 2.0 bn.



EU deficit with Japan widened to EUR -38.8 bn in 2000

EU current transactions with Japan expanded by 24% in 2000 and amounted to EUR 203.9 bn, equal to 6% of total extra-EU current transactions. These flows led to a current account deficit with Japan of EUR -38.8 bn, EUR 8.9 bn wider than in 1999. This deficit stemmed mainly from the result recorded in the exchanges of *goods*, i.e. a EUR -39.2 bn deficit, EUR 5.5 bn larger than in 1999. Trade in *goods* took up 63% of total bilateral transactions. EU trade in *services* with Japan yielded a EUR 8.2 bn surplus in 2000, EUR 1.0 bn greater than that achieved a year earlier. Concerning the two other main components of the current account, *income* finished in the red in 2000 at EUR -7.8 bn, whereas flows relating to *current transfers* were practically balanced.

Looking into the *services* item, the surplus in *transportation* more than doubled, reaching EUR 2.3 bn whereas the surplus in *travel* grew more modestly and stayed at EUR 4.0 bn. However, the surplus in *other services* contracted by EUR 0.5 bn, influenced by the EUR 0.7 bn reduction in the *other business services* surplus.

International economic situation pushed up deficit

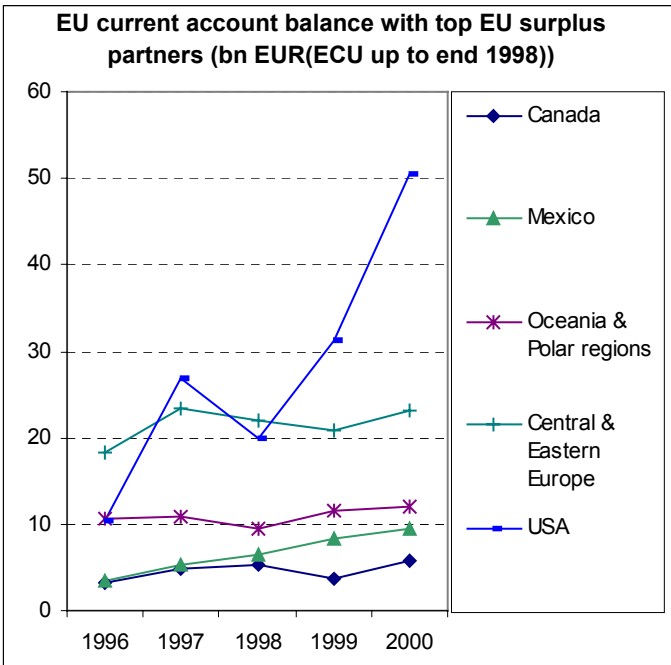
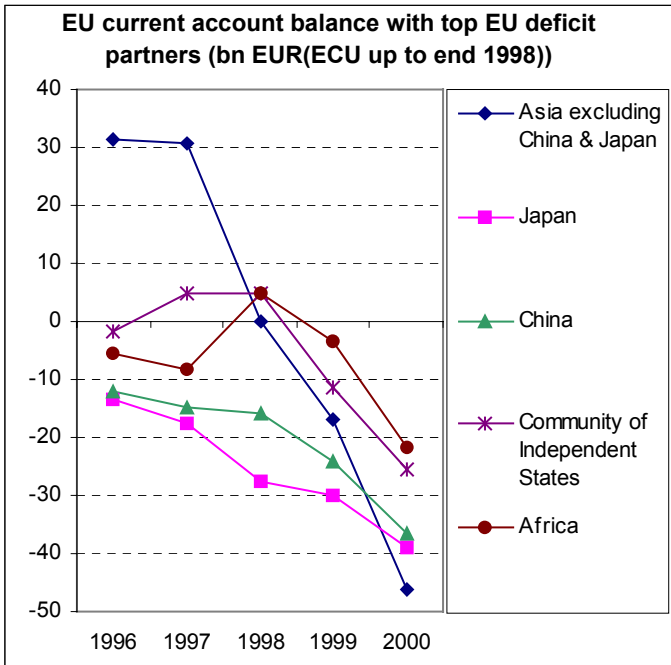
As a general rule, from a geographical perspective, existing EU bilateral deficits became substantially deeper whereas former surpluses expanded slightly during 2000. The downward trend⁷ of the EU current account balance, initiated in 1998 after the peak in 1997, continued in 2000. However, this deterioration of the balance is partly attributable to various external shocks.

As a result of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the EU current account balance with Asia worsened remarkably. In 2000, the EU current deficit with Asia expanded to EUR -121.6 bn from EUR -70.9 bn in 1999. This increase of more than EUR 50 bn explains, to a great extent, the total current account deficit accrued during 2000. The EUR -110.2 bn deficit in the balance of *goods* was the main reason behind this general worsening. In 2000, EU debits with partner Asia rose by 33% whilst credits increased by 23% after two years of negative and low growth (-10% in 1998 and 3% in 1999); thus, the volume of EU total current transactions with Asia reached EUR 809.9 bn in 2000.

⁶ The item 'other services' covers services other than transportation and travel. It includes communications services, construction services, insurance services, financial services, computer & information services, royalties and licence fees, other business services, personal, cultural & recreational services and government services n.i.e.

⁷ The provisional figures show that this trend could reverse in 2001.

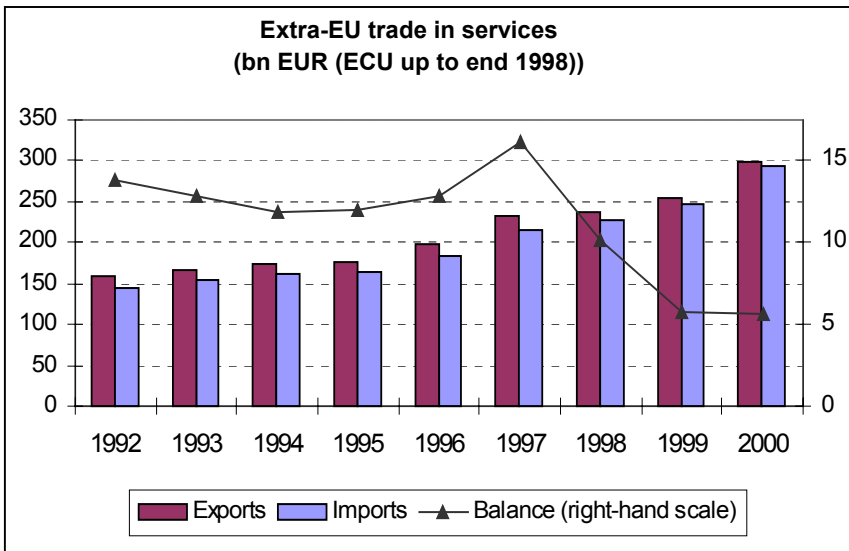
Additionally, the supply shock relative to the increase in oil prices⁸ in 2000 (56.9%, measured in USD) played a key role in the expansion of the EU deficit. Furthermore, the weakness of the euro during 2000 also had severe repercussions on the balance since it contributed in making EU imports dearer. Subsequently, the EU current balance with OPEC⁹ countries plummeted in 2000 by EUR 31.5 bn, driving the deficit to EUR -33.4 bn. EU debits with OPEC countries climbed by 63% to EUR 115.3 bn whereas credits increased by 19% up to EUR 81.9 bn. The deficit was worse off in general with all net exporters of primary products like Africa, where the EU balance dropped to EUR -21.6 bn in 2000 from EUR -3.6 bn in 1999. Debits grew by 38% up to EUR 113.8 bn while credits rose by 17%, amounting to EUR 92.1 bn.



The current account balance with the main industrialised countries improved in 2000; hence, the surpluses with the USA, Canada, Central and Eastern European Countries, Australia and Mexico increased. The results with OECD countries show that the EU current account surplus stepped up from EUR 85.3 bn in 1999 to EUR 117.8 bn in 2000.

EU trade in services in 2000: almost double 1992 volume

Trade in *services* has grown markedly since 1992 with EU imports and exports of *services* rising from ECU 304.5 bn in 1992 to EUR 590.8 bn in 2000. The annual growth rate of trade in *services* attained in 2000 was the highest since 1992, with both credits and debits growing by 18%. However, over the same period, debits rose more rapidly than credits, and consequently the surplus diminished from ECU 13.8 bn in 1992 to EUR 5.6 bn in 2000. Since 1997, when the balance of *services* reached a high with ECU 16.2 bn, the surplus contracted uninterruptedly, although the contraction was much more tempered in 2000 (-3% in 2000 against -43% in 1999).

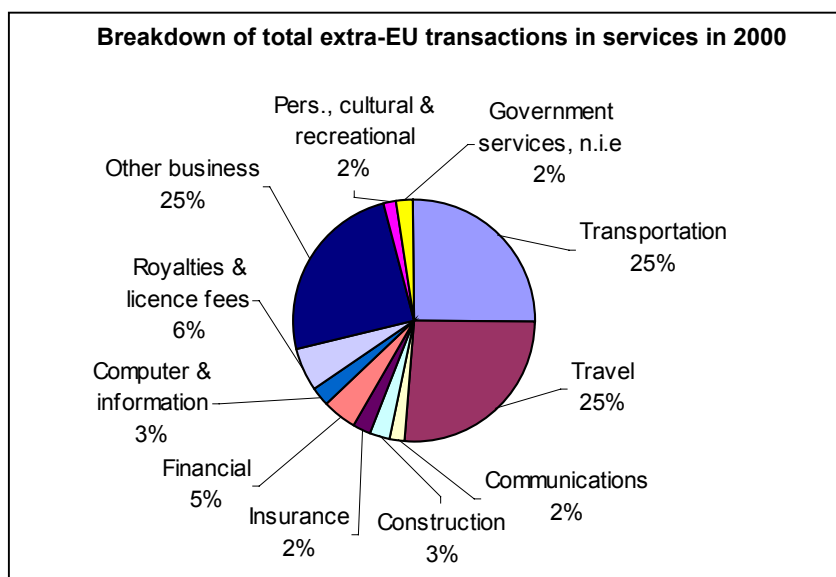


⁸ Source: IMF. *World Economic Outlook*, October 2001.

⁹ Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Composition of EU trade in services remained unchanged in 2000

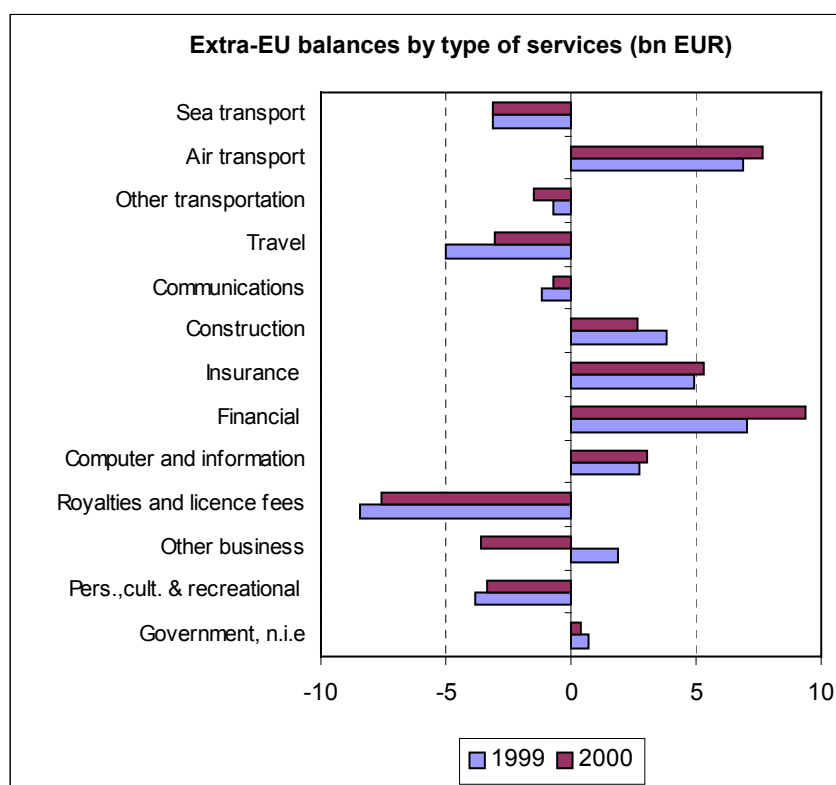
The share of the main categories of services in relation to the total remained practically unchanged in 2000. Three quarters of the total transactions in services corresponded to *transportation, travel and other business services*. *Royalties and licence fees* represented 6% of total services whilst *financial services* accounted for 5% after boosting by 32% in 2000. *Computer and information services* and *construction services* cornered 3% of EU total transactions in services each. Finally, *insurance services, communications services, personal, cultural and recreational services* and *government services, n.i.e.* presented all a share of 2%.



EU services in 2000: travel deficit contracts by EUR 2.0 bn and transactions in transportation services boost by 23%

Air transport presented a EUR 7.6 bn surplus in 2000, which contrasted with the deficits recorded by *sea transport* and *other transportation*, EUR -3.1 bn and EUR -1.5 bn, respectively. Moreover, exports and imports of *transportation services* increased by 23% and 24%, respectively, together amounting to EUR 149.7 bn, mainly due to the striking rise of *sea transport*, which saw a 35% growth in 2000. Additionally, the deficit in *travel* contracted notably in 2000, totalling EUR -3.0 bn. The volume of *travel* transactions in 2000 was more than double that of 1992.

The customary EU surplus in *insurance services* rose to EUR 5.3 bn in 2000; however, the main contribution to the EUR 5.6 bn surplus in the balance of services was from *financial services*, which yielded a EUR 9.3 bn surplus in 2000 (EUR 2.3 bn more than in 1999). Both exports and imports of *financial services* rose by 32% in 2000 in relation to 1999 recording an unprecedented growth rate. Hence, exports amounted to EUR 18.7 bn while imports totalled EUR 9.3 bn. Nevertheless, concerning cumulative growth since 1992, the most stunning raise was recorded in *computer and information services*; these transactions multiplied more than four-fold during this period, passing from ECU 3.7 bn to EUR 15.7 bn.



The noteworthy deficit recorded in *royalties and licence fees* (EUR -7.6 bn), together with the EUR -3.6 bn deficit in *other business services*, counterbalanced part of the positive results achieved in other items. Regarding *royalties and licence fees*, the deficit registered by this item has become a structural phenomenon in the EU, predominantly due to the amount of the deficit accrued with the USA, i.e. EUR -10.1 bn in 2000. Nevertheless, the deficit narrowed by EUR 0.9 bn in relation to 1999.

The most exceptional variation in terms of net flows concerned *other business services*, passing from a EUR 1.9 bn surplus in 1999 to a EUR -3.6 bn deficit in 2000. The balances of all its sub-items recorded larger deficits or a less significant surplus than in 1999. Thus, the largest deficit, obtained in *merchandising and other trade related services*, passed from EUR -0.2 bn in 1999 to EUR -3.9 bn in 2000. The deficit in *operational leasing* stood at EUR -0.8 bn in 2000 compared to EUR -0.1 bn in 1999, whereas the surplus in *miscellaneous business, professional and technical services* decreased by EUR 1.0 bn to EUR 1.2 bn.

Euro-zone's¹⁰ external deficit in the balance of services rose to EUR -13.8 bn

The patterns followed by the euro-zone and the EU concerning the exchange of *services* with the rest of the world have had much in common in recent years, i.e. the balances have visibly tended to worsen. However, in 2000 the EU saw a EUR 5.6 bn surplus in *services* with non-EU countries, while the euro-zone registered an external deficit of EUR -13.8 bn. In fact, the euro-zone's ECU 0.7 bn surplus achieved in 1997 turned into a slight deficit of ECU -0.1 bn in 1998. At this point, the balance fell sharply in 1999 down to EUR -10.9 bn and worsened further in 2000 to EUR -13.8 bn, although the drop slackened off in 2000.

The main factors aggravating the euro-zone's deficit in 2000 were, first, the EUR 2.3 bn surplus in *transportation* in 1999 turned into a EUR -0.8 bn deficit in 2000; the EUR 3.0 bn expansion of *sea transport* deficit was among the principal triggers. Second, the decline in the *construction services* surplus to EUR 2.7 bn (EUR 1.6 bn fall). Third, the adverse evolution of the balance of *other business services*, which plunged to EUR -21.0 bn. This deficit reflected the performance of the balances of *merchandising and other trade-related services* (EUR -6.0 bn deficit) and *miscellaneous business, professional and technical services* (EUR -14.6 bn deficit) in 2000. In opposition to this, the *travel* surplus increased notably in 2000 up to EUR 14.5 bn, EUR 5.6 bn higher than in 1999. Moreover, the EUR -1.0 bn deficit in *insurance services* in 1999 turned into a EUR 0.4 bn surplus in 2000.

Comparison between extra-EU and extra-euro zone trade in services in 2000 (bn EUR)

	Exports		Imports		Net	
	EU	EUR-11	EU	EUR-11	EU	EUR-11
Services	298.2	276.5	292.6	290.3	5.6	-13.8
<i>Transportation</i>	76.4	68.3	73.3	69.1	3.0	-0.8
Sea transport	32.8	23.2	35.9	32.6	-3.1	-9.4
Air transport	34.6	33.7	27.0	23.4	7.6	10.3
Other transportation	8.9	11.4	10.4	13.1	-1.5	-1.7
<i>Travel</i>	74.7	79.5	77.7	65.0	-3.0	14.5
<i>Other services</i>	147.2	128.7	141.6	156.1	5.6	-27.4
Communications services	5.6	5.8	6.3	6.6	-0.7	-0.8
Construction services	9.3	10.3	6.6	7.6	2.6	2.7
Insurance services	9.1	4.7	3.7	4.3	5.3	0.4
Financial services	18.7	13.6	9.3	12.6	9.3	1.0
Computer and information serv.	9.4	10.4	6.3	7.7	3.1	2.7
Royalties and licence fees	13.3	8.5	20.9	18.9	-7.6	-10.3
Other business services	71.7	64.5	75.3	85.5	-3.6	-21.0
Pers.,cult. and recreational serv.	3.2	2.7	6.6	7.8	-3.3	-5.1
Government services, n.i.e	6.9	8.1	6.6	5.1	0.4	3.0
<i>Services not allocated</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Exports and imports of *services* both grew by 16% during 2000 reaching EUR 276.5 bn and EUR 290.3 bn, respectively. Exports and imports of *transportation services* increased more than the average of total services (18% against 16%), adding up to EUR 137.4 bn. On the other hand, *travel* transactions grew slightly below this average (15%), to give EUR 144.5 bn. Transactions in *financial services* increased by 29% up to EUR 26.2 bn, and *communications services* by 24% to EUR 12.4 bn.

¹⁰ Please consult methodological notes on page 7 about possible differences between the data published by Eurostat and the ECB.

Euro-zone partners in trade in services

The four EU Member States not in the euro-zone¹¹ in 2000 (Denmark, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom) accounted for nearly one third of total extra-euro-zone exports of *services*. Similarly, 27% of the total extra-euro-zone imports of *services* came from these four countries, the United Kingdom being the main exporter.

Geographical breakdown of the extra-euro-zone trade in services (bn EUR)

	Exports			Imports			Net		
	1999	2000	Var.(%)	1999	2000	Var.(%)	1999	2000	Diff.
<i>Extra-EUR-11</i>	238.3	276.5	16%	249.2	290.3	16%	-10.9	-13.8	-2.8
EU without EUR-11 (1)	73.4	86.8	18%	67.5	77.4	15%	5.9	9.4	3.6
EFTA(2)	27.5	28.1	2%	26.8	28.9	8%	0.7	-0.9	-1.6
Other European Countries (3)	17.1	18.9	11%	20.5	25.4	24%	-3.5	-6.5	-3.0
Africa	11.1	12.2	10%	13.2	15.4	17%	-2.1	-3.2	-1.1
America excluding USA	13.9	17.2	24%	15.7	17.9	14%	-1.8	-0.7	1.1
USA	56.8	71.2	25%	70.6	82.4	17%	-13.7	-11.2	2.5
Asia excluding Japan	19.6	20.6	5%	23.2	28.2	22%	-3.6	-7.7	-4.1
Japan	10.2	12.1	20%	5.9	7.0	18%	4.2	5.2	0.9
Oceania and Polar Regions	2.3	2.6	11%	2.3	2.7	15%	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
Other	6.5	6.8	5%	3.4	5.0	45%	3.0	1.8	-1.2

(1) EU Member States not in the euro-zone: Denmark, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom

(2) European Free Trade Association. It includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland

(3) European countries other than EU and EFTA countries

The USA was the largest recipient of the euro-zone's *services* outside the EU in 2000; exports to the USA amounted to EUR 71.2 bn (25% more than in 1999). At the same time, it was the leader in the provision of *services* to the euro-zone; imports of *services* from the USA went up to EUR 82.4 bn (17% more than in 1999). Thus, the deficit narrowed to EUR -11.2 bn. However, it must be highlighted that there was a gap of EUR 13.2 bn between the euro-zone's balance with the USA and the EU's, since the latter achieved a EUR 2.0 bn surplus with the USA. This was chiefly due to the considerable bilateral surplus attained by the United Kingdom, EUR 10.5 bn.

► ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The methodological framework used is that of the fifth edition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Balance of Payments manual.

The EU balance of payments is compiled by Eurostat in accordance with a methodology agreed with the European Central Bank (ECB) based on extra-EU transactions, i.e. by aggregating cross border transactions of EU residents vis-à-vis non-EU residents as reported by the 15 participating Member States. The balance of payments of the EU institutions is added to the EU aggregate. The ECB compiles the euro-zone aggregate following the same agreed methodology excluding cross-border transactions within the euro-zone. The EU institutions are treated as non-resident of the euro-zone.

Published data for the euro-zone, which include detail on services only, have been validated by the ECB. In fact, annual detailed breakdowns of the item services for the euro-zone transactions are made available by the Member States only to Eurostat. They do not match up exactly with those released by the ECB because of different "cut-off" dates for receiving Member States' data for processing (revisions could take place between these "cut-off" dates) and different treatments of some (minor) not allocated flows.

Geographical breakdown of goods imports

This year, most EU Member States supplied imports of goods data allocated geographically according to the "principle of consignment", thus conforming to the international standards. This methodology consists of reporting intra-EU imports of goods according to country of consignment (community concept) rather than origin (national concept). For the calculation of the EU aggregate, country data have been harmonised in order to create one single methodological break in 1997.

Methodological difference between Eurostat and the ECB for the compilation of investment income flows

The EU-15 current account data are not fully comparable to the euro-zone figures released by the ECB. Indeed, a new methodology has been implemented by the ECB for the geographical allocation of portfolio investment income, which has consequences on investment income, income and the current account. In fact, it has been decided that receipts on portfolio investment income would be allocated geographically according to the residency of the security issuer rather than that of the immediate counterpart. On the basis of intra-EU receipts, payments on portfolio investment income should be allocated consistently between intra and extra-EU according to the residency of the end-investor. Due to a shortage of data, this methodological change could not be implemented for the compilation of the EU-15 aggregate.

Both institutions and the European Union Member States are currently working in order to minimise these discrepancies in the future.

¹¹ Greece became a member of the euro-zone on 01/01/2001.

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