



# Statistics in focus

## ECONOMY AND FINANCE

THEME 2 – 49/2003

### BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

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# European Union international transactions with EFTA countries: Largest trade recorded with partner Switzerland

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EFTA countries accounted for 12% of total extra-EU current account transactions in 2001, being the fourth most important EU partner zone after the USA, Asia and Other European Countries<sup>1</sup>.

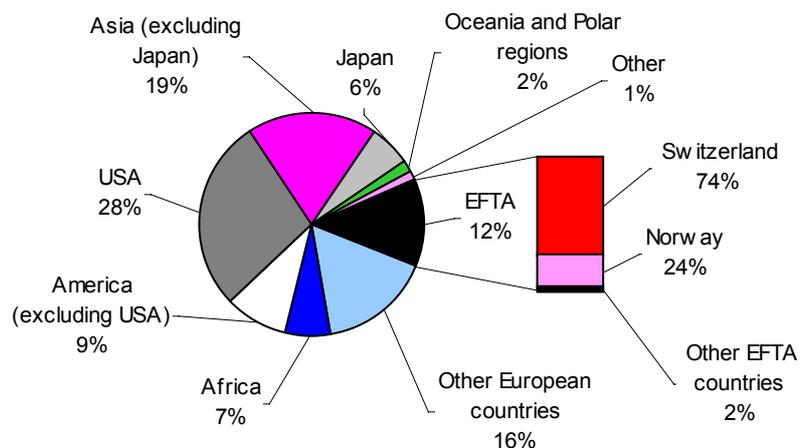
EU current transactions with EFTA countries increased at an average annual rate of 8% from 1995 to 2001, to reach a total (credits+debits) of EUR 399.2 bn in 2001.

Over the 1995-2001 period, the EU current account balance with EFTA countries was almost constantly negative. In 2001 the deficit decreased to EUR 3.1 bn.

The main EU contributors to current transactions with EFTA countries were Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Sweden.

Within the EFTA countries, Switzerland was the main trading partner. Switzerland is in fact the second EU partner for transactions with extra-EU countries after the United States. The EU current account balance with Switzerland recorded a surplus of EUR 4.5 bn in 2001, contrasting with the deficit observed with the aggregate for the EFTA countries.

Chart 1: Total extra-EU current account transactions by partner zone in 2001



<sup>1</sup> Other European countries are European countries other than EU and EFTA countries.

### What is EFTA?

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was established by a Convention signed in Stockholm on 4 January 1960, with the aim of forming a free-trade area in Europe. EFTA now includes four countries: Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Three members of EFTA (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) currently participate in the European Union single market through the European Economic Area (EEA). For its part, Switzerland has concluded a set of bilateral agreements with the European Union.

An updated EFTA Convention has been signed on 21 June 2001, which includes several significant changes. The most important is the integration into the Convention of the principles and rules established between EFTA EEA members and the content of the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union. This means that all EFTA members now will benefit from virtually the same privileged relationship. The modernised Convention is expected to strengthen the cohesion in the economic relations between the four EFTA Member States and provides an enhanced common platform reflecting the relations the EFTA states have with the rest of the world.

### EU current transactions with EFTA countries: Continuous growth over the last five years

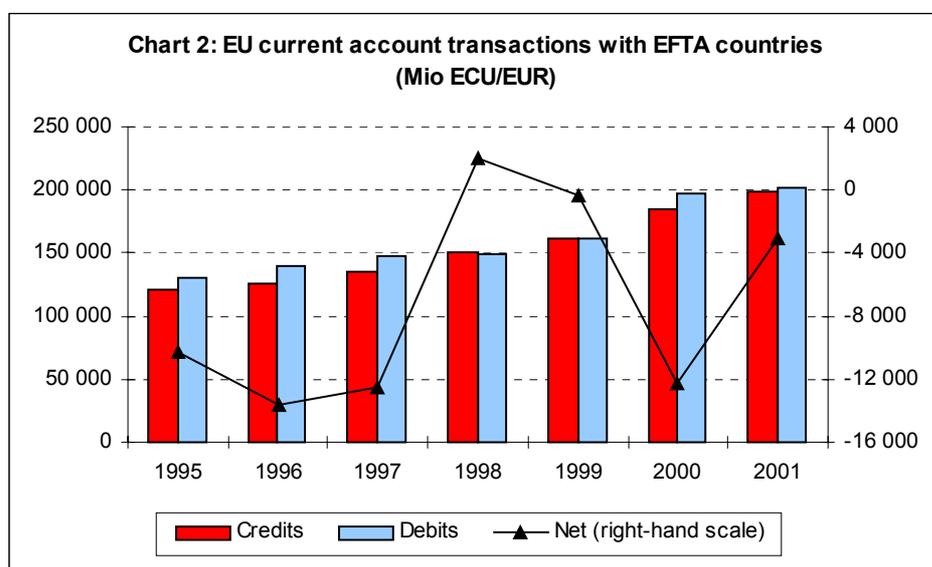
From 1995 to 2001, EU total *current account* transactions with partner EFTA followed an upward trend with an average annual growth rate of 8%. Both EU credits and debits transactions grew by more than half during this period amounting to, respectively, EUR 198.1 bn and EUR 201.1 bn in 2001, as Table 2 shows.

The *current account* balance with the EFTA countries was characterised by repeated deficits over the 1995-2001 period, interrupted by a surplus of EUR 2.0 bn in 1998. After the stable deficits registered during the first three years the evolution of the *current account* balance followed a more irregular pattern over the 1998-2001 period resulting in a final deficit of EUR 3.1 bn in 2001.

The significant EUR 9.2 bn contraction of the *current account* deficit in 2001 derived from a larger increase in credits (+7%) than debits (+2%), which led to an overall increase in EU total *current account* transactions with EFTA countries of 4% in 2001, relative to 2000.

EFTA countries were partly responsible for the significant recovery of the extra-EU current balance from EUR -66.5 bn in 2000 to EUR -20.5 bn in 2001. Their contribution to this recovery was far behind that made by partner Asia (whose deficit contracted by EUR 32.7 bn, of which 62% was attributable to Asian countries excluding Japan), and America as a whole (whose surplus increased by EUR 9.6 bn, compared to 2001).

EFTA countries accounted for 12% of total extra-EU current transactions in 2001, positioning themselves as a major international partner for the EU. In 2001, EFTA was the EU's main trading partner for transactions in *services*, *income* and *current transfers* after the USA. In relation to trade in *goods*, EFTA countries recorded a share of 11%, ranking fourth after Asia, the USA and Other European countries.



**Table 1: Total extra-EU transactions and balances by partners and main current account components in 2001 (bn EUR)**

Partners	Total credits and debits										Balance				
	Current account (%)		Goods (%)		Services (%)		Income (%)		Current transfers (%)		Current account	Goods	Services	Income	Current transfers
Extra EU-15*	3250.0	100%	1920.0	100%	618.6	100%	605.1	100%	106.4	100%	-20.5	-0.5	9.0	3.8	-32.9
European Free Trade Association	399.2	12%	204.4	11%	90.5	15%	89.2	15%	15.2	14%	-3.1	-3.1	8.7	-9.6	0.9
Other European countries (1)	514.0	16%	384.5	20%	67.2	11%	51.6	9%	12.0	11%	1.8	18.4	-8.6	-1.7	-7.5
Africa	214.5	7%	147.6	8%	39.2	6%	18.0	3%	12.1	11%	-17.2	-12.9	-0.2	3.0	-9.6
America (2)	288.5	9%	156.6	8%	48.6	8%	73.9	12%	9.8	9%	27.2	14.8	1.5	13.6	-3.1
United States of America	928.5	28%	422.0	22%	243.4	39%	232.1	38%	31.0	29%	56.7	51.1	-1.9	7.0	0.4
Asia (3)	611.9	19%	451.0	23%	82.0	13%	67.2	11%	12.5	12%	-58.3	-48.1	1.1	-6.4	-5.7
Japan	193.7	6%	117.7	6%	28.8	5%	45.7	8%	1.6	1%	-30.8	-28.3	6.5	-8.9	-0.1
Australia, Oceania and other territories	55.2	2%	30.9	2%	11.9	2%	9.9	2%	2.5	2%	12.8	7.4	1.1	5.3	-1.0
Other	44.6	1%	5.4	0%	7.1	1%	17.3	3%	9.8	9%	-9.6	0.1	0.9	1.5	-7.1

\* Differences between the aggregate extra EU-15 and the sum of its components may be due to roundings

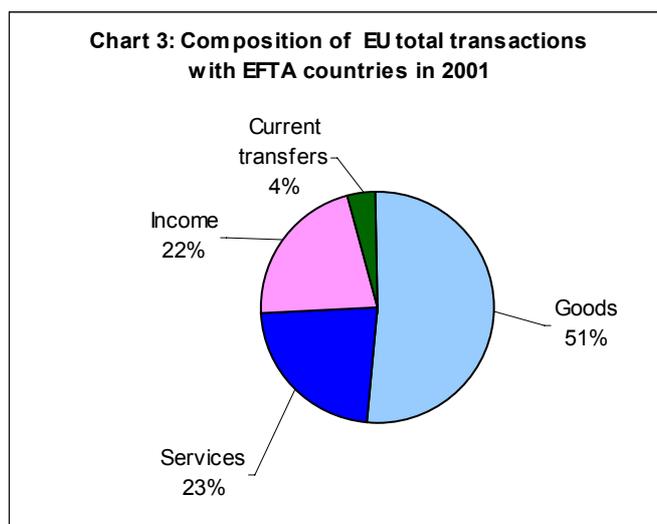
(1) Other European countries are European countries other than EU and EFTA countries

(2) America excluding USA

(3) Asia excluding Japan

**Structure of the EU current account with EFTA countries:  
Goods and services accounted for 74% of the total current transactions**

As Table 1 and Chart 3 show, the structure of the *current account* with partner EFTA in 2001 reveals that EU trade in *goods* accounted for 51% of the total *current account* transactions (credits+debits) with EFTA countries. *Services* (23%), *income* (22%) and *current transfers* (4%) followed, presenting higher relative shares than those registered for the aggregate extra-EU transactions. This implies that despite the geographical proximity between the EU and EFTA countries, EU trade in *goods* is relatively more intense with other partners. Similarly, EU's transactions in *services*, *income* and *current transfers* with EFTA countries are relatively more significant than with other countries or areas.



EU total trade in *goods* and *services* with EFTA countries experienced an average annual growth of 7% during the 1995-2001 period, smaller than the 10% growth rate registered over the same period for extra-EU transactions, subsequently bringing down the share of EFTA countries in extra-EU transactions from 14.2% in 1995 to 12.3% in 2001.

Looking at the sub-balances of the *current account*, we can see that the *goods* balance played a significant role in driving the *current account* balance fluctuations over the 1995-2001 period. Over the same period the balances for *services* and *current transfers* registered continuous surpluses, whereas *income* maintained a structural deficit over the entire period.

Turning now to the *goods* balance, this showed a record deficit of EUR 8.3 bn in 2000, which shrank sharply to EUR 3.1 bn in 2001. At the same time, the *services* surplus increased markedly and reached EUR 8.7 bn in 2001 (thanks to a significant exports growth of 13% combined with a lower imports growth of 5% relative to 2000) and the *income* deficit narrowed to EUR 9.6 bn in 2001. Conversely, the *current transfers* surplus slightly decreased to EUR 0.9 bn in 2001, partially offsetting the positive contributions of the other *current account's* sub-items.

**Table 2: EU transactions with EFTA countries by main current account components**

*(bn ECU/EUR)*

		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<b>Credits</b>	<b>Current account*</b>	120.5	125.9	135.6	151.1	160.9	185.3	198.1
	Goods	68.6	69.8	74.9	83.7	85.4	95.3	100.7
	Services	30.6	32.1	35.6	38.5	40.5	43.7	49.6
	Income	16.0	17.8	18.8	21.8	27.8	37.8	39.8
	Current transfers	5.4	6.2	6.2	7.0	7.2	8.5	8.0
<b>Debits</b>	<b>Current account*</b>	130.8	139.5	148.1	149.1	161.2	197.6	201.1
	Goods	68.5	72.9	77.6	76.5	81.9	103.7	103.7
	Services	25.1	29.7	30.8	32.6	34.7	38.8	40.9
	Income	33.8	32.5	35.6	35.9	38.4	48.4	49.4
	Current transfers	3.5	4.4	4.1	4.0	6.1	6.8	7.2
<b>Balance</b>	<b>Current account*</b>	-10.3	-13.6	-12.5	2.0	-0.3	-12.3	-3.1
	Goods	0.1	-3.1	-2.7	7.2	3.5	-8.3	-3.1
	Services	5.5	2.4	4.8	5.9	5.7	4.9	8.7
	Income	-17.8	-14.7	-16.7	-14.1	-10.6	-10.6	-9.6
	Current transfers	1.9	1.8	2.1	3.0	1.0	1.8	0.9

\* Differences between the current account and the sum of its components are due to roundings

## EU services surplus with EFTA countries: Boost in 2001 mainly due to the contraction of the deficit in *other business services*

EU trade in *services* with EFTA countries yielded a total volume of transactions of EUR 90.5 bn in 2001, which represented 15% of total extra-EU transactions in *services* (See Table 1).

Table 3 shows the composition of EU exports in *services* towards EFTA countries in 2001: the main contribution came from *travel* (31%), *other business services* (24%) and *transportation* (18%).

Table 3 also shows the composition of EU imports from EFTA countries: the principal contribution was from *other business services* (32%), followed by *travel* (24%) and *transportation* (20%). EFTA residents' tourist expenses in the EU accounted for 21% of extra-EU travel receipts in 2001, second only to those of US visitors (36%).

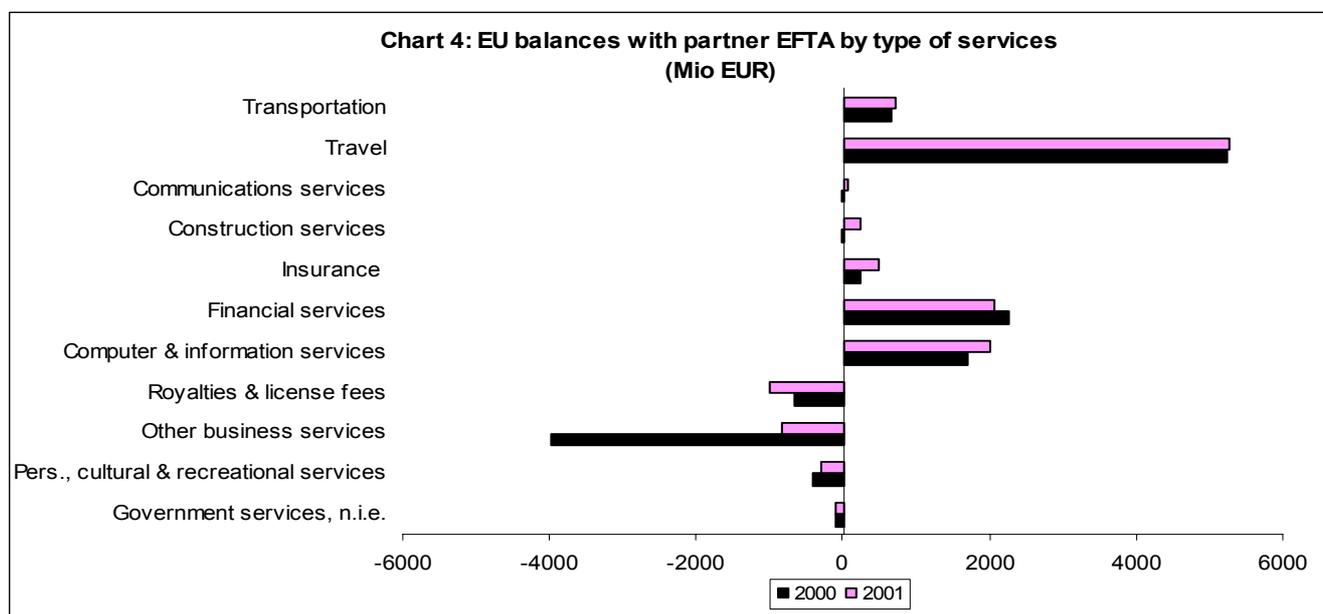
**Table 3: EU trade in services with EFTA countries in 2001 (bn EUR)**

Services*	Transportation	Travel	Communications services	Construction services	Insurance services	Financial services	Computer and information services	Royalties and license fees	Other business services	Personal, cultural and recreational services	Government services, n.i.e.	Other services		
												2000	2001	
<b>Exports</b>	49.6	9.0	15.1	0.9	1.0	1.2	4.9	3.1	1.4	12.1	0.8	0.1		
% of total exports of services to EFTA	100%	18%	31%	2%	2%	2%	10%	6%	3%	24%	2%	0%		
<b>Imports</b>	40.9	8.3	9.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	2.8	1.1	2.4	13.0	1.1	0.2		
% of total imports of services from EFTA	100%	20%	24%	2%	2%	2%	7%	3%	6%	32%	3%	0%		

\* Differences between totals and the sum of the components are due to roundings

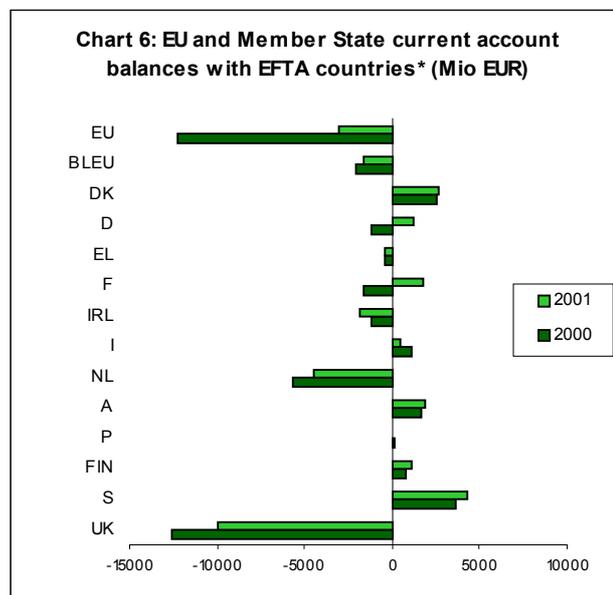
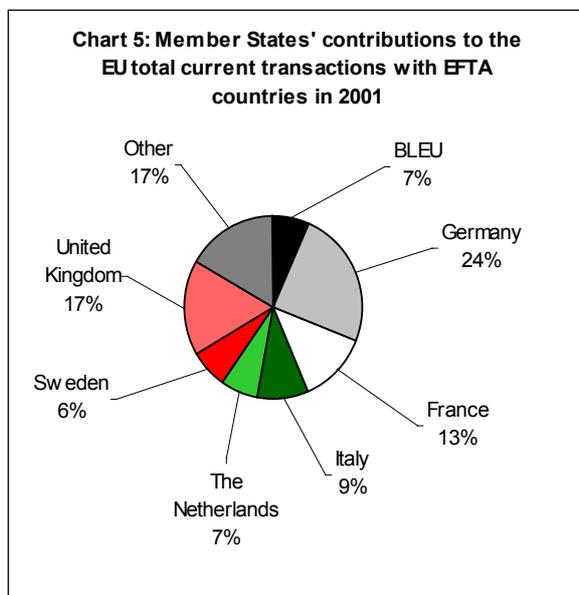
The significant expansion of the EU *services*' surplus with EFTA countries in 2001 (from EUR 4.9 bn to EUR 8.7 bn, according to Table 2) was mainly due to the reduction of the deficit in *other business services* (EUR 3.2 bn relative to 2000), caused by the strong increase in exports (+53%) and a much lower increase in imports (+8.9%). In addition, some *other services*' sub-items positively contributed to the overall balance of *services*, although more moderately, as shown in Chart 4. This was the case for *insurance services* and *computer & information services* that increased their surpluses to EUR 0.5 bn and EUR 2.0 bn respectively. Similarly, the balance in *construction services* shifted from deficit to surplus with a variation of EUR 0.3 bn compared to 2000. By contrast, *financial services* registered a decrease in its surplus to EUR 2.1 bn in 2001 and *royalties and license fees* deficit widened to EUR 1.0 bn in 2001, which contributed to attenuate the positive effects of the other sub-components.

Inside the item *other services*, different sub-items showed significant growth. *Computer & information services* experienced growth of 16%, totalling EUR 4.2 bn in 2001 and accounting for 21% of the total extra-EU market in this type of services. Total EU-EFTA imports and exports in *insurance services* and *construction services* also registered significant growth of 15% and 14% respectively, entirely due to the expansion of exports for both types of services. These growths yielded a total volume of EUR 1.9 bn for *insurance services* and EUR 1.8 bn for *construction services* with partner EFTA in 2001, making up shares of 17% and 11% respectively of total extra-EU transactions for each type of services.



## EU Member States' contributions to *current account* transactions with EFTA countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy were the main trading partners in 2001

The breakdown of EU transactions with EFTA by EU Member States highlights how important geographical proximity is. As Chart 5 shows, in 2001 three countries bordering Switzerland (Germany, France and Italy) contributed largely to the current transactions with EFTA countries (with shares of 24%, 13% and 9% respectively of total EU-EFTA transactions). The UK registered a lower share in total current transactions with EFTA countries than it did for extra-EU transactions as a whole (-5 points, accounting for 17%) even if it maintained its leading position after Germany. Sweden had a share of 6% (gaining 4 points compared to its weight in extra-EU transactions), as a consequence of its trade with Norway, its neighbouring EFTA country.



\* Spanish data are not available at the country level for the current account

France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden had an important role in improving the EU *current account* balance with EFTA countries in 2001, as shown in Chart 8. The balances of both France and Germany turned from a deficit to a surplus, registering variations in net terms of EUR 3.4 bn and EUR 2.4 bn respectively compared to 2000. At the same time, the deficits of the UK and the Netherlands significantly decreased to EUR 9.9 bn and EUR 4.5 bn respectively in 2001. Finally, Sweden experienced an increase in its surplus to EUR 4.3 bn in 2001, contributing also positively to the EU balance, although less markedly than the other Member States mentioned.

The analysis of EU transactions with EFTA countries by *current account* components shows that the leading position, within the EU, in *goods* and *services* was achieved by Germany for both import and export flows in 2001. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the UK ranked first for *income* receipts and payments, accounting for more than one third of the EU *income* transactions with EFTA states. Regarding *current transfers*, Italy retained the biggest share in credits (24%), whereas France had the largest proportion of debit flows (25%, one point more than Germany). For more details, see Table 4.

**Table 4: EU and Member State transactions with EFTA countries by main items in 2001 (bn EUR)**

	Credits					Debits				
	Current account*	Goods	Services	Income	Current transfers	Current account*	Goods	Services	Income	Current transfers
<b>European Union (1)</b>	198.1	100.7	49.6	39.8	8	201.1	103.7	40.9	49.4	7.2
BLEU	12.2	3.9	5.4	2.6	0.4	13.9	4.2	3.8	5.5	0.4
Denmark	8.1	4.1	2.5	1.2	0.3	5.4	3.0	1.3	0.7	0.4
Germany	49.6	33.5	7.8	7.3	1.0	48.4	29.8	10.8	6.1	1.7
Greece	1.4	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.1	1.9	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0
Spain (2)	-	2.2	5.2	-	0.6	-	3.3	2.4	-	0.1
France	26.2	12.3	6.5	6.1	1.3	24.4	13.3	4.6	4.7	1.8
Ireland	4.2	3.2	0.6	0.4	0.1	6.1	1.4	1.1	3.6	0.1
Italy	18.0	11.1	3.9	1.1	1.9	17.6	10.8	4.0	2.1	0.7
The Netherlands	11.5	5.7	3.3	2.2	0.3	16.0	8.2	3.4	4.0	0.4
Austria	8.2	4.5	2.6	0.9	0.3	6.4	2.3	2.0	1.8	0.3
Portugal	1.9	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.8	1.9	1.4	0.3	0.2	0.0
Finland	3.2	1.9	0.3	0.9	0.0	2.1	1.3	0.3	0.3	0.1
Sweden	15.1	8.2	4.4	2.2	0.4	10.8	6.5	2.4	1.4	0.5
The United Kingdom	29.3	9.0	5.7	14.3	0.3	39.2	17.0	3.9	17.9	0.5

\* Differences between the current account and the sum of its components are due to roundings

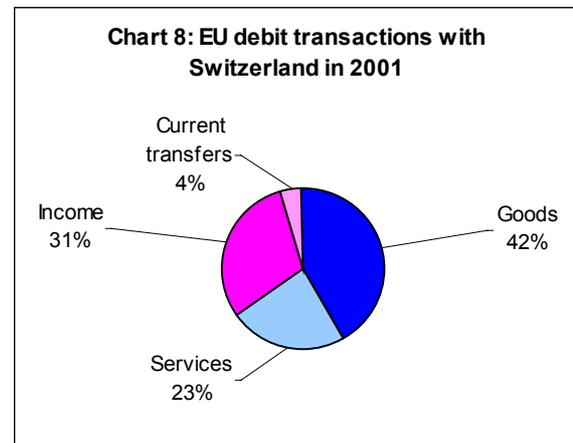
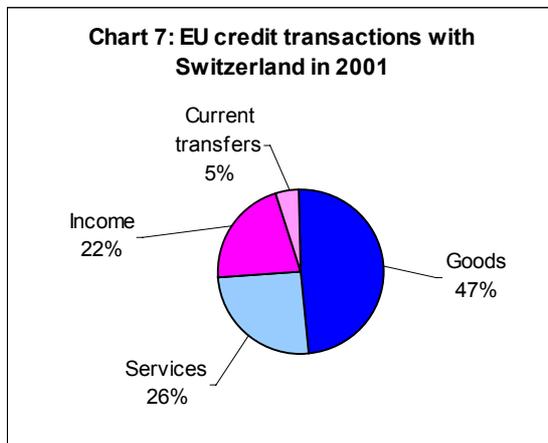
(1) European Union Institutions are included in the European Union aggregate

(2) Spanish data are not available at the country level for income and current account

## Switzerland is the second EU partner and the biggest contributor to the EU current transactions with the EFTA countries

Chart 1 shows EFTA's share in total extra-EU *current account* transactions for year 2001. Switzerland alone accounted for 74% of EU total current transactions with EFTA countries. Norway followed with a share of 24% and Iceland together with Liechtenstein reached a cumulative share of 2%.

Switzerland is the second EU partner after the United States. In year 2001 EU total credit and debit transactions with Switzerland amounted to EUR 293.8 bn (see Table 5); 9% of total extra-EU current transactions.



Contrary to the aggregate for the EFTA countries, the EU balance with Switzerland registered a surplus of EUR 7.8 bn in 2001 (with an increase of EUR 3.3 bn relative to 2000). This expansion of the *current account* surplus was the result of a larger increase in credits (+6%) than in debits (+3%), consolidating the position of the EU as a net creditor with Switzerland. The reason for the negative EU current account balance with EFTA countries in 2001 was the high EU deficit in the balance of goods with Norway which reached EUR 15.7 bn and offset the surplus of EUR 2.9 bn registered by trade in services.

The pattern of the *current account* with Switzerland showed the importance of the level of EU *income* payments representing 31% of the EU *current account* debits with Switzerland in 2001 (+6 points compared to *income* debit flows with EFTA countries of which Switzerland made up 90%).

As shows Table 5, the income balance with Switzerland registered a deficit amounting to EUR 11.6 bn in 2001, whereas the other *current account* components had surpluses in their balances. The *goods* surplus totalled EUR 12.6 bn in 2001 with an increase of EUR 2.2 bn compared to 2000 (the biggest variation of the *current account*). *Services* experienced a surplus of EUR 5.8 bn (EUR 1.0 bn wider than in 2000) and *current transfers* recorded a slight contraction of its surplus of EUR 0.5 bn (counterbalancing part of the positive effects of the other items).

**Table 5: EU current account with partner Switzerland**

(bn EUR)

	2000			2001		
	Credits	Debits	Net	Credits	Debits	Net
<b>Current account*</b>	142.8	138.3	4.5	150.8	143.0	7.8
Goods	68.5	58.2	10.4	72.4	59.8	12.6
Services	35.4	30.6	4.8	38.5	32.7	5.8
Income	31.8	43.9	-12.2	33.1	44.7	-11.6
Current transfers	7.1	5.6	1.4	6.8	5.9	0.9

\* Differences between the current account and the sum of its components are due to roundings

### EU trade in services with Switzerland: Key role attained by financial services, royalties and licence fees and personal, cultural & recreational services in the EFTA countries

In 2001, the EU's total *services* transactions with Switzerland reached EUR 71.2 bn, which represents 79% of the trade in *services* with EFTA countries amounting to EUR 90.5 bn (Table 1) and corresponding to 12% of the extra-EU total *services*.

The breakdown of the EU's imports and exports in *services* with Switzerland roughly followed the same pattern as for the EU with the EFTA countries.

Chart 9 shows that, concerning EU exports and imports of *financial services* with EFTA countries, Switzerland contributed almost entirely to the EFTA group accounting for 92% and 94% respectively in 2001 (with a share of 22% of the total extra-EU *financial services*). EU *royalties and licence fees* and *personal, cultural & recreational services* imported from Switzerland also accounted for 93% of the EU imports registered with partner EFTA. On the other hand, the EU's *services* transactions with Switzerland that contributed to a lower extent to the aggregate of the EFTA countries were *transportation* for both credit and debit flows (with the same share of 67%) and credits of *construction services* and *government services n.i.e.* (representing 52% and 56% respectively of the EFTA countries).

As shown in Table 5, over the 2000-2001 period, the balance in *services* with partner Switzerland increased its surplus as a result of a faster growth in exports (+9%) than imports (+7%), following the same pattern as the *services* surplus with partner EFTA.

Chart 9: EFTA states' weight in EU exports and imports of services with this economic zone in 2001

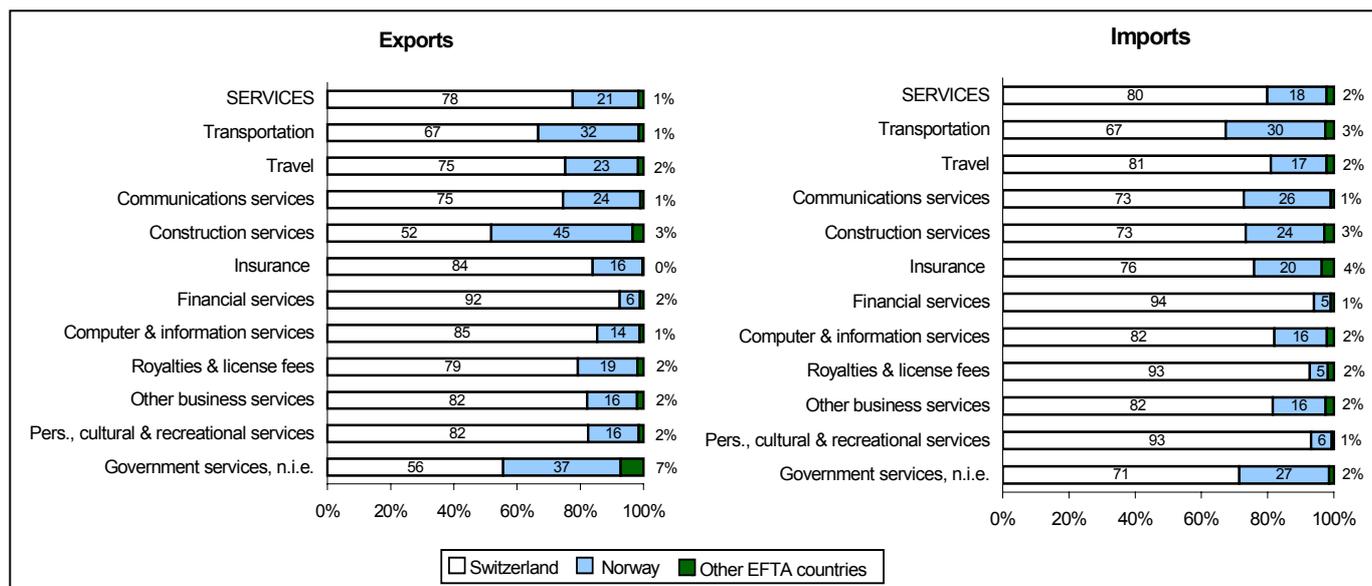


Table 6 shows that the improvement of the *services* surplus with partner Switzerland in 2001, as that of EFTA as a whole, was mostly attributable to *other business services* that recorded a contraction of its deficit to EUR 0.6 bn. Exports in both *construction services* and *insurance services* increased consistently by 36%, pushing up their corresponding balances to equilibrium and EUR 0.5 bn respectively (with differences of EUR 0.1 bn and EUR 0.3 bn relative to 2000).

At the same time, *computer & information services* surplus increased to EUR 1.7 bn and *personal, cultural & recreational services* deficit narrowed slightly, by EUR 0.1 bn relative to 2000. On the other hand, compensations to the overall *services* balance were shown primarily by the *royalties and license fees* deficit that expanded to EUR 1.1 bn in 2000, followed by *travel* and *financial services* both reducing their surpluses by EUR 0.2 bn relative to 2000. The other remaining sub-components did not significantly affect the balance of *services* with Switzerland presenting mostly unchanged balances compared to the previous year.

Table 6: EU balances with partner Switzerland by type of services (Mio EUR)

Items	Balance		
	2000	2001	Variation
Transportation	434	424	-9
Travel	3 561	3 407	-154
Communications services	18	62	43
Construction services	-114	-41	73
Insurance	197	469	272
Financial services	2 068	1 878	-191
Computer & information services	1 512	1 748	236
Royalties & license fees	-747	-1 114	-367
Other business services	-1 569	-603	966
Pers., cultural & recreational services	-447	-354	94
Government services, n.i.e.	-88	-85	2

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The data used in this issue of Statistics in Focus are from the Balance of Payments statistics. The balance of payments records all economic transactions between a country (i.e. its residents) and foreign countries or international organisations (i.e. the non-residents of that country) during a given period. As part of the balance of payments, the **current account** takes care of real resources and is subdivided into four basic components: **goods, services, income and current transfers**.

**Goods** cover general merchandise, non-monetary gold, goods for processing, repairs on goods and goods procured in ports by carriers. When calculating the balance of payments both exports and imports should be valued free on board (f.o.b.). Trade in **services** is the second major category of the current account, and it is subdivided in three components: **transportation, travel and other services**. Inside the item **other services** you find the sub-items: *communication services; construction services; insurance services; financial services; computer and information services; royalties and licence fees; other business services; personal, cultural and recreational services; government services*. **Income** contains two main items: *Compensation of employees* records wages, salaries and other benefits, in cash or in kind, earned by individuals for work performed for economic units whose place of residence is different from their own. *Investment income* covers income that a resident entity derives from the ownership of external financial assets (credit) and income non-residents derive from their financial assets invested in the compiling economy (debit). This includes interest and dividends on direct, portfolio and other investments. **Current transfers** are all transfers that are not transfers of capital. They directly affect the level of disposable income and should affect the consumption of goods and services.

The EU balance of payments is compiled by Eurostat in accordance with the methodology defined by the fifth edition of the International Monetary Fund Balance of Payments Manual (BPM5). The EU balance of payments is compiled by Eurostat aggregating cross-border transactions of EU residents' vis-à-vis non-EU residents as reported by the 15 Member States. The balance of payments of the EU institutions is added to the EU aggregate.

The European Central Bank ECB compiles Balance of Payment data for the Euro-zone. See the ECB website <http://www.ecb.int/stats/mb/eastats.htm>. Eurostat provides, for the Euro-zone, the annual detailed breakdowns of the item services, both by components and geographical breakdown.

### Further reading

IMF, *Balance of Payments Manual*, fifth edition (BPM5), 1993.

United Nations, *Manual on Statistics of international trade in services*, 2002.

*European Union international transactions, data 1991-2001*, Eurostat, 2003. A CD-ROM with the geographical breakdown of the EU current account is part of this publication.

*OECD Statistics on International Trade in Services 1992-2001*, OECD, 2003.

About EFTA: *Brief Guide to the Updated EFTA Convention* (June 2002); *European Economic Area* (June 2002); *Four European Nations: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland* (June 2002), all available from EFTA secretariat.

# Further information:

## ➤ Reference publications

Title EU international transactions – Data 1991-2001  
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ORIGINAL: English.

Alessandro Lupi carried out the data processing and statistical analysis

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