



Theme 6
External trade and balance of payments
Series B
Short-term trends

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Newsletter
Edicom - INTRASTAT 

1 □ 1994

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FOREWORD

This new Eurostat publication appears just one year after the new statistical observation system for the movement of goods between Member States coming into force: INTRASTAT. During the last few months, due to considerable efforts made at National and Community level, INTRASTAT has constantly improved and global results are becoming more reliable. Around ninety percent of the companies are providing their statistical returns on a regular basis. Furthermore, the procedures of the national administrations are so well established that the statistical results are becoming steadily available. However, this doesn't mean that one can move to a more passive attitude. A serious effort has to be made to the improvement of the statistical quality and to the upgrading of the overall efficiency of the system. The actions undertaken by the Committee on the statistics relating to the Trading of Goods between Member States as well as the new perspectives of EDICOM program will support the well running of INTRASTAT in the near future.

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The Newsletter will regularly report on the EU wide actions within the framework of Intrastat/EDICOM. I hope that the persons participating in one way or another in these joint efforts can profit from a combined inspiration by «learning from each other». Finally, the summarising of statistical outcomes in this Newsletter should encourage everybody to continue the course towards the production of high quality statistics.


Alain Chantraine



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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	p	1
<i>Results:</i>	p	4
<i>Availability of results</i>	p	4
<i>Status of data sent to Eurostat on 21 February 1994</i>	p	4
<i>Intra - Community trade, results for June 1993</i>	p	5
<i>Statistical Tables:</i>	p	5
▪ <i>Evolution of intra - Community arrivals</i>		
▪ <i>Evolution of intra - Community dispatches</i>		
▪ <i>Evolution of extra - Community imports</i>		
▪ <i>Evolution of extra - Community exports</i>		
▪ <i>Intra - Community dispatches by principal product groups</i>		
▪ <i>Intra - Community arrivals by principal product groups</i>		
▪ <i>Percentage of intra - Community trade of the total trade of Member States</i>		
▪ <i>Intra - Community arrivals, values indices</i>		
▪ <i>Intra - Community dispatches, values indices</i>		
▪ <i>Trade balances between Member States, January/June 1993</i>		
▪ <i>Principal customers of Member States within intra - Community trade, January/June 1993</i>		
▪ <i>Principal suppliers to Member States within intra - Community trade, January/June 1993</i>		
<i>Intrastat: one year into the system</i>	p	12
<i>Adjustement of data</i>	p	14
<i>Statistical thresholds for 1994 applicable for the Intrastat declaration</i>	p	16
<i>“Edicom” tools and instruments in 1993 and prospects for 1994</i>	p	17
<i>Development of Edi standards in the Intrastat environment</i> ..	p	19
<i>In brief</i>	p	21
<i>List of sales offices of “Office for official publications of the European Communities”</i>	p	23



RESULTS

AVAILABILITY OF RESULTS

In the middle of January Eurostat published the figures on intra-Community trade for the first six months of 1993. The first figures since the implementation of Intrastat had been the subject of a press communiqué in October 1993, which concerned the first quarter of 1993.

These figures are provisional and based on the data supplied by the Member States in accordance with the Community methodology. For some Member States, the results are based on estimates. The main difficulties mentioned in the last Newsletter (non-response from certain companies, problems in applying the regulations and using the informatics tools) have not yet been fully overcome. Consequently, *these figures, which are subject to frequent revision, must be interpreted with caution.*

It should be noted that Intrastat was implemented on 1 January last year following the abolition of customs formalities when the Single Market was put in place. The figures on trade are obtained from the data supplied directly by the companies instead of being derived from information on the customs declarations.

As regards the availability on statistics on extra-Community trade, there have been delays as a result of the priority given to Intrastat in the Member States. Both the Commission and the Member States are making efforts to bring about a rapid improvement in this situation. The delays have, indeed, decreased, but a return to normal is taking longer than expected.

STATUS OF DATA SENT TO EUROSTAT ON 21 FEBRUARY 1994

Period	EUR 12	BLEU UEBL	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	UK
Jan - Déc 92	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
January 93	*	■	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
February 93	*	■	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
March 93	*	■	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
April 93	*	*	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
May 93	*	*	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
June 93	*	*	*	■	■	■	■	*	■	*	■	■
July 93	□	□	*	■	■	■	■	□	■	□	■	■
August 93	□	□	*	■	■	■	■	□	■	□	□	*
September 93		□	*	*	□	■	■		■		□	*
October 93		□	□	○	□	*	■		■		□	*
November 93		□	□		□	*	■		□		□	□
December 93												□

■ Detailed data Intra + Extra

* Detailed data Extra and global data Intra (by partner country only)

□ Detailed data Extra

○ Global data Intra (by partner country only)

INTRA-COMMUNITY TRADE

RESULTS FOR JUNE 1993 - DETAILED FIGURES AVAILABLE
FOR FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, ITALY, PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Following changes to the system of collecting intra-Community data made on 1 January 1993, care must be exercised when comparing 1992 data with 1993 data. The linking of the new INTRASTAT system with the taxation system changes the reference dates for recording goods, which may bring about a reduction in the flows at the start of 1993. This reduction may also be partly attributable to non-replies, as a certain interval is required to check INTRASTAT coverage. It also appears that dispatches are better covered than are incoming goods.

In the first half of 1993, intra-Community trade, measured by incoming goods, are estimated to have fallen by nearly 13% compared with the first six months of 1992, a sharper fall than for extra-Community imports, which are 3% down on the first half of 1992. The trend for incoming goods between the first half of 1992 and the first half of 1993 differs from that of dispatches (-13% and -8% respectively), a discrepancy which calls for circumspection in the interpretation of the decrease in intra-Community trade.



Germany

Germany's intra-Community trade saw a surplus of ECU 3 200 million in the first half of 1993, compared with ECU 3 700 million between January and June 1992. Incoming goods recorded a sharp setback (-18%) compared with the first six months of 1992. This fall, which was matched on a similar scale for dispatches, must be interpreted with caution on account of the introduction of the INTRASTAT collection system.

Germany's surplus for intra-Community trade in manufactured goods fell by ECU 2 700 million, due in large part to the fall in the surplus for machinery and transport equipment. There was a slight reduction in the deficit for "other manufactured goods". The falls in the deficits for food and fuel products lessened the deterioration in the balance for manufactured goods. Incoming 1993: approximately 18%, except for other manufactured goods, which were down 13%. Incoming food recorded a reduction of 18%. The flows of manufactured goods dispatched from Germany also saw sharp falls: dispatches of other manufactured goods were 13% down, whilst other items fell by 19%.



Greece

Greece's intra-Community trade deficit increased by ECU 500 million in the first half of 1993, standing at ECU 3 800 million. Incoming goods to Greece increased by nearly 8% between the first six months of 1992 and the first six months of 1993. It was the only Member State for which an increase in incoming goods was recorded for the first half of 1993 compared with the first half of 1992. Cumulative dispatches from Greece between January 1993 and June 1993 fell by 2.6%.

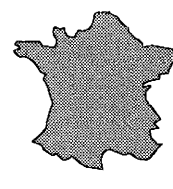
The deficit for machinery and transport equipment increased by ECU 300 million between January to June 1992 and January to June 1993. Incoming machinery and transport equipment increased by nearly 20%, whilst incoming manufactured goods classified by material were 3% down. Dispatches from Greece were supported by flows of other manufactured goods, which were 7.5% up, and reduced by falls in the flows of manufactured goods classified by material (-10%) and food (-3%).



Spain

Spain's intra-Community trade recorded a deficit of ECU 2 500 million in the first half of 1993, an improvement of ECU 3 100 million compared with the corresponding period in 1992. Incoming goods to Spain recorded a fall of 17%. Dispatches saw less of a fall: -6%. This sharper fall for incoming goods compared with dispatches was also seen in the figures for the United Kingdom and Italy. The linking of the INTRASTAT collection system with VAT returns is probably depressing the level of incoming goods, which are subject to tax avoidance.

The improvement in the intra-Community trade balances for machinery and transport equipment (by ECU 1 300 million) and for manufactured goods classified by material (by ECU 800 million) was mainly due to the sharp fall in incoming goods for these two items.



France

France's intra-Community trade deficit decreased by ECU 500 million between the first half of 1992

and the first half of 1993, to stand at -ECU 2 000 million. Incoming goods and dispatches recorded falls of 12% and 11% respectively compared with January to June 1992.

The deficits for manufactured goods classified by material and chemical products saw an overall improvement of ECU 1 000 million between the first half of 1992 and the first half of 1993. The deficit for machinery and transport equipment increased by ECU 400 million. Incoming manufactured goods classified by material and machinery and transport equipment recorded sharp reductions (-17% and -13%). Incoming chemicals were 8% down. Dispatches of chemicals saw a slight fall (-4%) in comparison with those for machinery and transport equipment (-16%) and manufactured goods classified by material (-13%).



Italy

In the first half of 1993 Italy recorded a surplus of ECU 2 400 million, whereas for January to June 1992 it had a deficit of ECU 5 400 million.

Incoming goods fell by a quarter compared with the first six months of 1992, with dispatches down 10%. The balance for intra-Community trade in manufactured goods improved by ECU 6 200 million compared with the first half of 1992, of which ECU 3 500 million was attributable to machinery and transport equipment. The deficit for food fell by ECU 1 200 million between the first half of 1992 and the first half of 1993. Incoming machinery and transport equipment and manufactured goods classified by material plummeted (-30%), while incoming chemicals and food dropped by around 20%. Dispatches of machinery and transport equipment decreased by 14%, whilst dispatches of other manufactured goods fell by nearly 6%.



Portugal

Portugal recorded an intra-Community trade deficit of ECU 2 800 million for the first half of 1993, close to the level for the first six months of 1992. Incoming goods fell by 3.7% between January to June 1992 and January to June 1993, whilst dispatches fell by 4.6%. The balances by type of product in the first half of 1993 remained close to their levels for the corresponding period in 1992. Incoming machinery and transport equipment fell by 2.9%, and incoming manufactured goods classified by material were 9.3% down. Dispatches of machinery and transport equipment fell by 7%. Dispatches of manufactured goods classified by material and other manufactured goods decreased by 3.6% and 1.6% respectively.



United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's intra-Community trade deficit decreased by ECU 2 000 million in the first half of 1993 compared with the same period in 1992, standing at ECU -1 000 million for the first six months of 1993. Incoming goods were 12% down, compared with a reduction of 8% for dispatches. The intra-Community trade deficits for machinery and transport equipment and manufactured goods classified by material saw a reduction of nearly ECU 1 000 million each. Incoming manufactured goods classified by material and other manufactured goods plummeted by 20% and 25% respectively. Incoming machinery and transport equipment fell by 7%, whilst incoming chemicals to the United Kingdom remained at the level for the first half of 1992.

EVOLUTION OF INTRA - COMMUNITY ARRIVALS

Values in millions of ECU

	1990	1991	1992	January - June 1992	January - June 1993
EUR 12	663 525.3	703 099.1	716 660.7	368 160.1	317 138.9
<i>France</i>	124 360.2	128 402.2	130 908.6	66 925.9	58 619.2
<i>Belg.Luxbg.</i>	69 713.4	72 288.8	72 599.5	37 759.9	35 106.1
<i>Netherlands</i>	63 996.1	65 386.8	67 062.4	34 134.6	31 278.0
<i>Germany</i>	145 714.5	171 682.2	172 729.6	87 081.3	71 583.8
<i>Italy</i>	82 166.6	84 970.2	85 692.7	46 555.7	34 865.9
<i>United-Kingdom</i>	89 704.0	84 978.4	86 910.5	44 326.8	39 668.6
<i>Ireland</i>	11 530.5	11 633.5	12 074.3	5 989.8	5 410.6
<i>Denmark</i>	13 680.3	14 467.6	14 861.7	7 360.6	6 913.2
<i>Greece</i>	9 986.5	10 489.7	11 427.0	5 500.4	5 940.7
<i>Portugal</i>	13 499.8	15 346.2	17 270.8	8 453.1	7 751.2
<i>Spain</i>	39 173.4	43 453.7	45 123.5	24 072.1	20 001.5

EVOLUTION OF INTRA - COMMUNITY DISPATCHES

Values in millions of ECU

	1990	1991	1992	January - June 1992	January - June 1993
EUR 12	656 498.2	688 191.9	697 427.8	359 577.2	330 524.7
<i>France</i>	109 472.9	117 458.1	121 380.8	63 835.0	56 562.3
<i>Belg.Luxbg.</i>	69 854.2	71 690.7	71 412.1	37 439.6	39 615.3
<i>Netherlands</i>	82 026.4	82 449.7	81 870.2	42 058.9	41 892.7
<i>Germany</i>	169 614.7	174 287.3	179 200.1	90 950.3	74 737.7
<i>Italy</i>	77 905.8	80 642.2	79 388.3	41 179.0	37 273.9
<i>United-Kingdom</i>	75 702.0	82 813.5	80 208.2	41 369.0	39 473.7
<i>Ireland</i>	13 936.8	14 527.5	16 202.8	8 111.3	8 094.5
<i>Denmark</i>	14 497.5	15 855.8	17 022.8	8 595.3	8 421.1
<i>Greece</i>	4 063.3	4 453.7	4 957.1	2 184.1	2 136.3
<i>Portugal</i>	9 436.3	9 897.6	10 623.2	5 413.6	4 901.5
<i>Spain</i>	29 988.4	34 115.9	35 162.2	18 441.0	17 415.7

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EVOLUTION OF EXTRA - COMMUNITY IMPORTS

Values in millions of ECU

	1990	1991	1992	January - June 1992	January - June 1993
EUR 12	461 507.0	494 046.0	487 606.6	249 956.5	239 319.3
<i>France</i>	66 956.4	71 097.3	67 865.7	34 988.2	33 871.4
<i>Belg.Luxbg.</i>	28 731.0	30 072.9	28 685.9	15 164.2	14 094.6
<i>Netherlands</i>	42 894.3	45 509.4	46 905.1	24 018.6	21 280.1
<i>Germany</i>	122 484.5	142 929.2	142 753.2	70 933.3	68 856.3
<i>Italy</i>	60 385.2	61 697.3	59 178.4	31 763.1	29 443.3
<i>United-Kingdom</i>	84 993.7	83 397.2	83 356.2	42 841.0	44 683.0
<i>Ireland</i>	4 626.3	5 082.2	4 611.8	2 322.8	2 959.8
<i>Denmark</i>	11 770.8	12 204.9	11 971.8	6 265.8	5 713.2
<i>Greece</i>	5 574.8	6 915.6	6 632.4	3 198.6	3 369.9
<i>Portugal</i>	6 033.8	5 973.9	6 116.5	2 988.8	2 679.0
<i>Spain</i>	27 056.1	29 166.0	29 529.7	15 472.1	12 368.6

24.02.94

EVOLUTION OF EXTRA - COMMUNITY EXPORTS

Values in millions of ECU

	1990	1991	1992	January - June 1992	January - June 1993
EUR 12	415 279.2	423 429.3	436 060.7	213 034.2	226 056.5
<i>France</i>	64 996.4	67 219.6	71 019.9	34 805.8	33 436.3
<i>Belg.Luxbg.</i>	22 389.3	22 870.4	23 372.7	11 426.1	13 241.3
<i>Netherlands</i>	24 361.8	24 983.5	26 015.4	12 831.8	14 193.6
<i>Germany</i>	142 175.5	149 062.3	151 544.3	72 878.2	77 260.9
<i>Italy</i>	55 384.7	55 524.4	57 719.2	28 665.3	31 745.2
<i>United-Kingdom</i>	67 009.4	63 192.6	63 009.5	31 412.6	33 753.1
<i>Ireland</i>	4 532.4	4 840.5	5 471.2	2 739.8	3 181.1
<i>Denmark</i>	13 335.5	13 416.2	14 178.3	6 901.3	7 001.7
<i>Greece</i>	2 232.5	2 505.6	2 567.1	1 114.2	1 450.6
<i>Portugal</i>	3 263.4	3 145.5	3 417.7	1 598.1	1 384.5
<i>Spain</i>	15 598.4	16 668.7	17 745.3	8 661.1	9 408.2

24.02.94

**INTRA - COMMUNITY DISPATCHES
BY PRINCIPAL PRODUCTS GROUPS**

January - June 1993

Values in millions of ECU

REPORTING COUNTRIES	Food trade SITCI 0+1	Raw materials SITC 2+4	Energy products SITC 3	Chemical products SITC 5	Engine, transport SITC 7	Others manufact. items SITC 6+8	Others SITC 9
France	9 144	1 863	1 372	7 431	22 288	14 349	115
Germany	5 123	1 811	844	9 693	35 081	21 423	763
Italy	2 837	461	273	2 796	12 960	17 634	313
United-Kingdom	2 978	715	1 638	5 689	14 984	10 317	1 697
Greece	538	250	30	72	96	1 127	23
Portugal	288	278	121	202	1 135	2 878	0
Spain	2 830	585	301	1 180	8 013	4 401	44

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**INTRA - COMMUNITY ARRIVALS
BY PRINCIPAL PRODUCTS GROUPS**

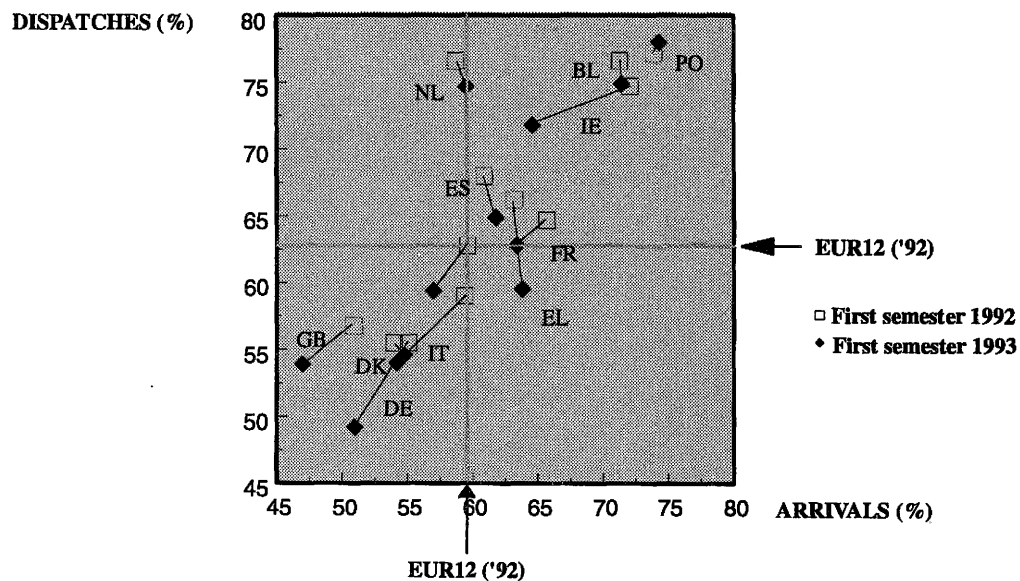
January - June 1993

Values in millions of ECU

REPORTING COUNTRIES	Food trade SITCI 0+1	Raw materials SITC 2+4	Energy products SITC 3	Chemical products SITC 5	Engine, transport SITC 7	Others manufact. items SITC 6+8	Others SITC 9
France	6 604	1 416	1 735	7 488	23 606	17 643	24
Germany	9 071	2 459	4 496	7 781	26 566	19 519	1 692
Italy	5 464	2 024	416	5 611	12 770	8 005	576
United-Kingdom	4 717	945	685	5 354	15 969	10 119	1 235
Greece	998	109	42	799	2 319	1 651	21
Portugal	768	193	261	830	3 263	2 387	50
Spain	1 987	690	288	2 699	8 980	5 236	17

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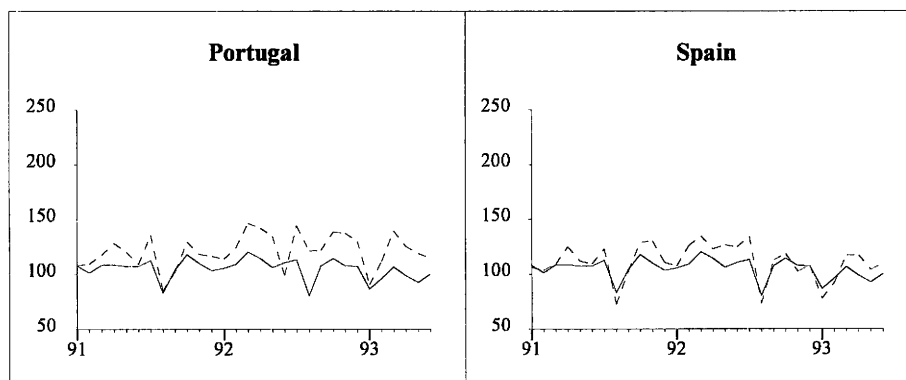
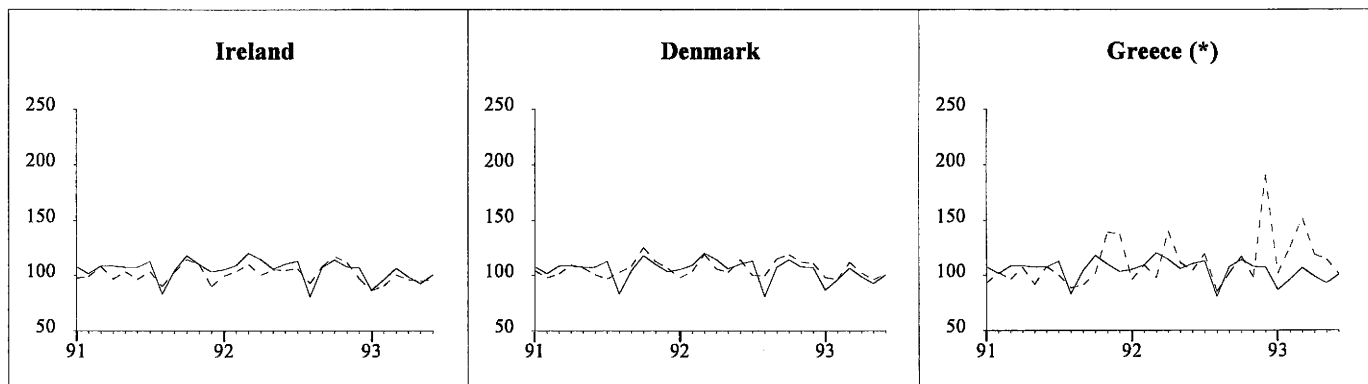
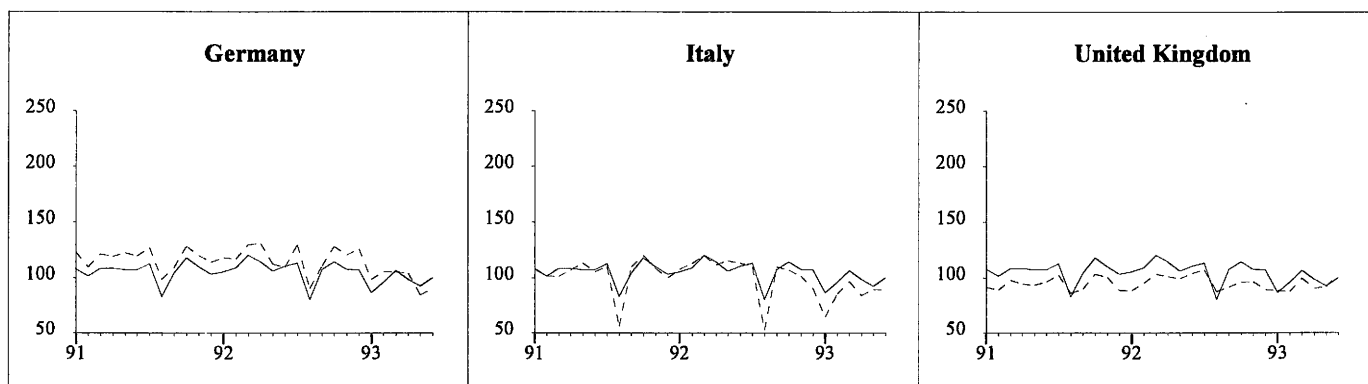
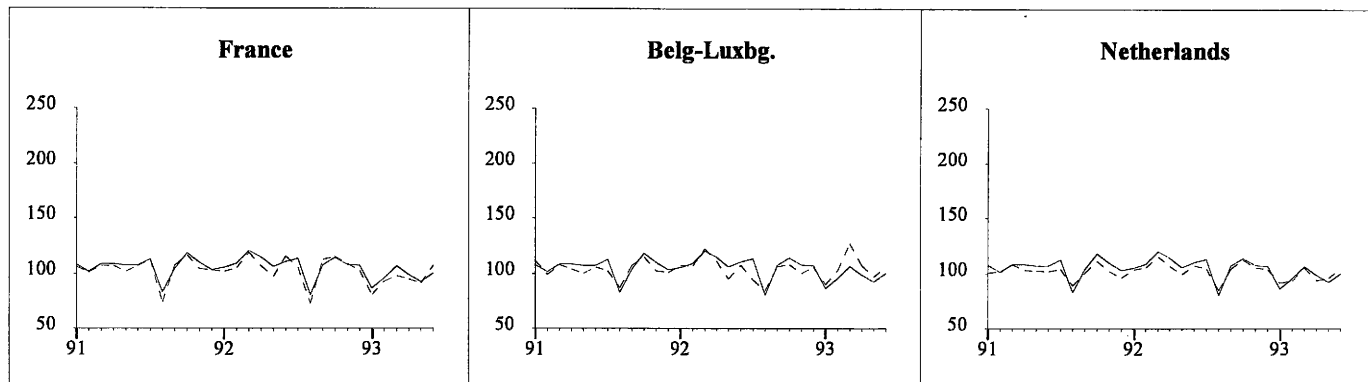
**PERCENTAGE OF INTRA - COMMUNITY TRADE
OF THE TOTAL TRADE OF MEMBER STATES**



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**INTRA - COMMUNITY ARRIVALS
VALUE INDICES**

1990 = 100

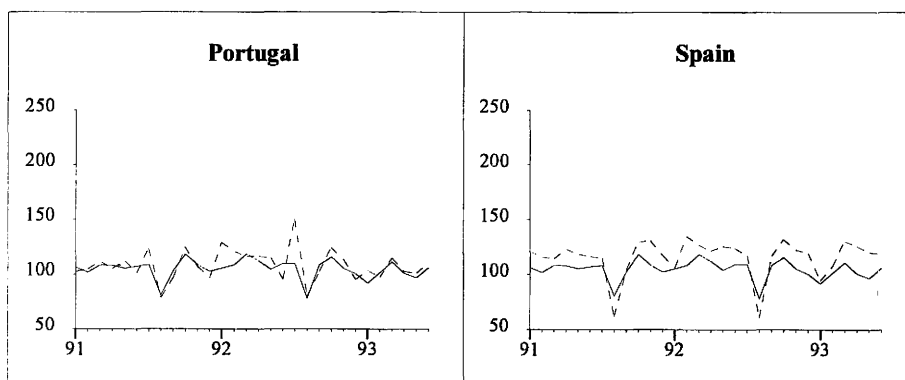
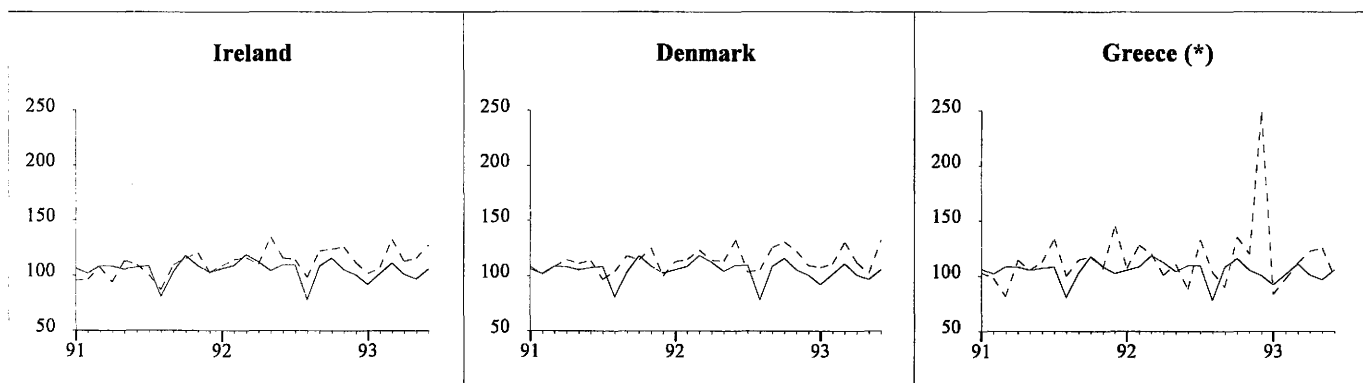
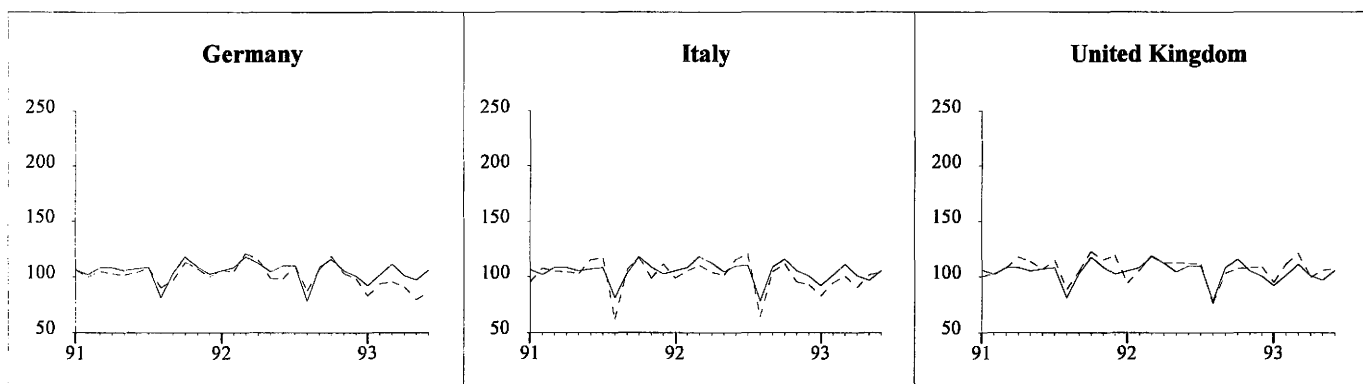
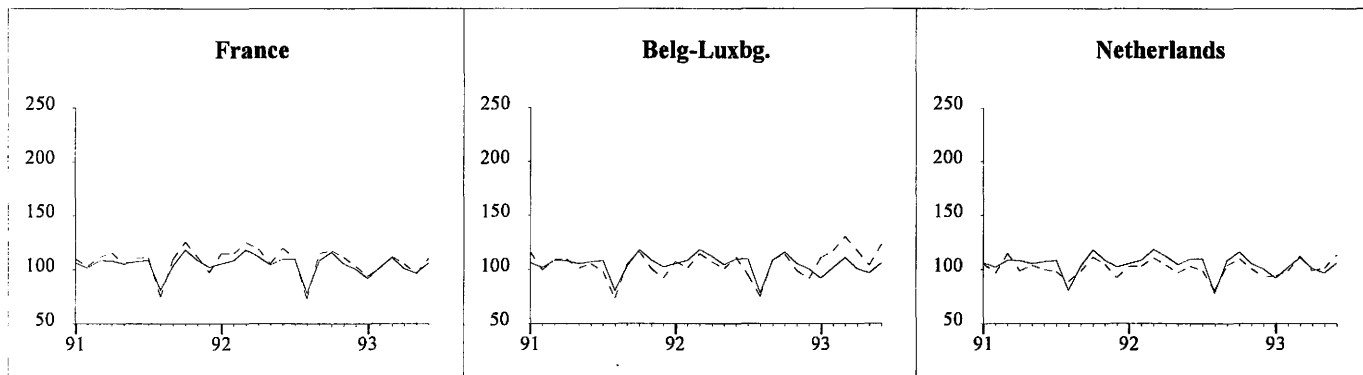


----- Reporting country

————— Eur 12

(*) The figure reported for December 1992 also contains the data originating from earlier returns which for technical reasons have been aggregated with those of December 1992.

**INTRA - COMMUNITY DISPATCHES
VALUE INDICES
1990 = 100**



----- Reporting country

————— Eur 12

TRADE BALANCES BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

January - June 1993

Values in millions of ECU

REPORTING COUNTRIES	PARTNER COUNTRIES										
	France	Belg.Luxbg.	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	United-Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
France	-	-1 428.2	-1 573.2	-1 680.1	163.7	1 406.1	- 760.0	- 113.8	409.3	548.7	970.5
Germany	598.1	546.7	-2 623.7	-	90.4	2 990.9	- 729.1	58.9	635.3	342.7	1 357.7
Italy	560.5	- 760.8	-1 676.0	1 492.2	-	806.8	- 308.9	- 120.8	667.0	819.5	928.6
United-Kingdom	- 609.1	533.3	- 563.7	-2 187.3	- 193.4	-	651.6	- 159.9	348.3	59.3	706.5
Greece	- 631.0	- 264.7	- 503.2	- 825.4	- 813.0	- 369.1	- 78.6	- 103.2	-	- 14.6	- 201.5
Portugal	- 432.0	- 185.5	- 174.7	- 387.3	- 740.7	- 76.4	- 22.8	57.0	24.3	-	- 911.5
Spain	- 506.9	- 331.2	- 403.0	-1 538.2	- 160.4	- 476.2	- 150.4	- 113.9	129.0	1 006.9	-

10.02.94

PRINCIPAL CUSTOMERS OF MEMBER STATES WITHIN INTRA - COMMUNITY TRADE

January - June 1993

Flow : Dispatches

Values as a percentage

REPORTING COUNTRIES	PARTNER COUNTRIES										
	France	Belg.Luxbg.	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	United-Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
France	-	13.8	7.6	30.8	16.6	14.7	0.8	1.3	1.2	2.7	10.7
Germany	24.3	13.8	15.0	-	15.3	15.5	0.8	3.5	2.0	2.1	6.7
Italy	25.1	5.7	5.2	36.3	-	11.6	0.5	1.3	3.2	2.7	8.3
United-Kingdom	17.7	11.7	11.3	23.6	9.2	-	9.5	2.6	1.4	2.2	6.6
Greece	11.6	2.9	3.9	41.0	25.5	10.4	0.4	1.2	-	0.8	2.4
Portugal	21.0	4.6	7.2	25.9	4.1	14.4	0.5	2.7	0.8	-	18.8
Spain	29.5	4.7	5.0	21.7	14.8	11.1	0.7	0.9	1.1	10.6	-

NB : For Germany and United Kingdom 1 % and 4.2 % of dispatches respectively are not included.

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PRINCIPAL SUPPLIERS TO MEMBER STATES WITHIN INTRA - COMMUNITY TRADE

January - June 1993

Flow: Arrivals

Values as a percentage

REPORTING COUNTRIES	PARTNER COUNTRIES										
	France	Belg.Luxbg.	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	United-Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
France	-	15.7	10.0	32.6	15.7	11.8	2.0	1.5	0.4	1.6	8.6
Germany	24.5	13.7	19.4	-	15.8	12.0	1.9	3.6	1.2	1.7	5.1
Italy	25.3	8.3	10.4	34.6	-	10.1	1.5	1.7	1.5	0.6	6.2
United-Kingdom	18.8	10.0	12.5	28.6	9.5	-	7.6	2.9	0.5	2.0	4.6
Greece	14.8	5.5	9.9	28.6	22.9	9.9	1.5	2.2	-	0.5	4.2
Portugal	18.9	5.3	6.8	21.4	12.2	10.1	0.6	1.0	0.2	-	23.6
Spain	28.3	5.7	6.4	26.7	13.7	12.1	1.3	1.3	0.3	4.2	-

NB : For Germany and United Kingdom 1 % and 4.2 % of arrivals respectively are not included.

10.02.94

INTRASTAT: ONE YEAR INTO THE SYSTEM

When customs formalities were abandoned with the completion of the single market on 1 January 1993, a system was set up to collect directly from enterprises statistical information on the trading of goods between Member States (INTRASTAT).

This system was developed by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, in close cooperation with the Member States.

The new system has led to such fundamental changes that the national administrations, which have had a limited amount of time in which to take them into account, are still facing major problems with both collecting and processing the data.

Experience to date and an analysis of the first published results would suggest that caution is called for. Nevertheless, the Member States and the Commission have been quick to make or to plan substantial and rapid improvements in the way the system is operating.

A REMINDER: WHAT IS INTRASTAT?

It is the system for collecting statistics on intra-Community trade which came into force on 1 January 1993. Its main characteristics are as follows:

- It provides for *information to be collected directly from enterprises*, which every month send a summary declaration to the appropriate statistical department, containing data for the previous month. In some Member States, these declarations have both a statistical and a fiscal status. Only a few data have to be supplied - type of goods, partner country, value and quantity of the goods, nature of the transaction, delivery terms and mode of transport. The Member States may, if they choose, require additional data such as country of origin or statistical procedure.
- It is based on *a close link with the system of VAT declarations* relating to intra-Community trade. The Member States' tax authorities are thus obliged to transmit to the statistical departments, at least every quarter, a list of operators who have acquired or delivered goods and the value of these transactions,

to enable a check to be made on the exhaustiveness and quality of the statistical data.

It aims to *lighten the burden on enterprises as far as possible*. For all of them, the constraints are fewer than with the previous system, and the application of a system of thresholds has meant that many of them are either exempt from formalities altogether or have substantially fewer data to transmit than previously.

In addition, *the acquisition and transmission of data have been modernised* under a vast project known as EDICOM. Numerous tools have been developed and promoted both for the parties responsible for providing the information, in particular making software available for electronic data processing, and for the statistical departments, improving the system they use to collect and process data.

OPERATING THE INTRASTAT SYSTEM: NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES TO BE OVERCOME

As with any new system, the operators and authorities dealing with Intrastat have had and are still having to cope with certain difficulties. The problems have been pinpointed and are in course of resolution. The following are the main problem areas:

Response rate

It is not easy to measure the enterprise response rate. No time series of data on enterprises are available for all the Member States and it has not yet been possible systematically to compare the results with figures from tax sources.

Nevertheless, in some Member States the non-response rate for the first six months of 1993 has been estimated at around 15% of all operators, leading to a loss of between 3% and 5% of the total value concerned. Considerable resources will need to be mobilised to improve the coverage rate for small enterprises, where the main problem seems to lie. The

situation is now improving noticeably after numerous reminders, but there are marked variations from one Member State to another.

□ *Transmission deadline for declarations*

Many enterprises are still experiencing major internal organisational problems leading to delays in transmitting declarations, with time lags becoming shorter only slowly and at different rates in different Member States. It would seem that the main problems are with computerised management and the availability of the documents (chiefly invoices) needed to fill in the declarations.

□ *Classification of goods*

In view of the level of detail of the Combined Nomenclature, many enterprises, especially non-computerised SMEs, have had to cope with the problem of classifying products and processing many of the lines on the declaration. This latter problem has been exacerbated by the lack of a threshold by transaction: with the new system, the thresholds are fixed by enterprise and depend on the importance of the enterprise concerned as regards intra-Community trade.

□ *Link with taxation*

The constraints imposed by the system on the processing of certain transactions (contract work or triangular trade, for example) complicate the work of the operators and any comparisons of data for monitoring purposes.

□ *Data processing*

The shortage of time available to the national authorities for adapting their computer systems has had a negative impact on both data processing (leading to delays with the provision of intra-Community data) and, indirectly, trade with non-Community countries.

The application of thresholds, in particular, whilst simplifying matters for the vast majority of enterprises, has made processing more complex for national authorities. New burdens have been imposed upon them, such as the management of registers of operators or, possibly, adjustments to the data collected.

□ *Informatics and data communications tools*

The products developed under the EDICOM project are now proving extremely useful, but they had a difficult start because they arrived late on the market and it has taken time to fine-tune them.

**ONE YEAR ON:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTRASTAT**

Despite the difficulties, by far the majority of the Member States are not pessimistic in their assessment of the way the system has been operating and do not think that any radical revisions are needed.

On the other hand, the system is being strengthened via numerous actions initiated by the Commission or the Member States, mainly for the following purposes:

□ *To improve the information available to operators*

The main idea is to improve the response rate. During the past year, campaigns have been conducted in most of the Member States to provide information for enterprises and to remind them of the obligation to submit declarations, and these are beginning to pay off. Eurostat would like further campaigns to be run to promote modern data processing tools.

□ *To define methods of adjusting and estimating the data collected*

Work is under way on harmonised methods of filling the gaps when information is missing because enterprises have submitted either no declarations at all or very simplified ones. This work has already led to corrections of the aggregate results in many Member States.

□ *To simplify further the operators' task*

Several possibilities may be explored here, but the Commission and the Member States are also concerned to maintain high-quality statistics. Two draft Commission regulations are due for adoption, one

exempting the operators from supplying the net mass of certain products and the other simplifying the declaration for low-value transactions.

Other drafts will be examined, in particular with a view to simplifying the classification of certain types of goods.

- *To develop informatics and data communications tools and adapt them to the requirements of each Member State*

The EDICOM project is entering a new phase with the proposal for a Council Decision on data communication networks between administrations for statistics on the trading of goods between Member States. This proposal is allocating a budget of ECU 20 million for the next two years and will involve the Member States more closely in the decision-making process.

- *To make the statistics available more quickly*

A draft Commission regulation is currently being adopted to fix deadlines for the transmission of results to Eurostat. A system has also been set up to exchange provisional results, at aggregate level, prior to making detailed figures available.

* * *

By bringing all these endeavours into play, Eurostat has already been able to publish results by partner country for the first half of 1993. It is very likely that the detailed results for the same period will be available for all the European Union by the end of the first quarter of 1994. One year after Intrastat came into force, varying degrees of difficulty remain from one Member State to another, but overall the situation has improved.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

ADJUSTEMENT OF DATA

A Task Force on the adjustment of Intrastat data met on 12 July 1993 in order to:

① **draw up a documented list of adjustment methods used or planned by the Member States;**

② **draw up recommendations to the Committee for estimating :**

- trade by businesses under the assimilation threshold as accurately as possible;
- missing information at the most detailed level possible. This matter concerns, *inter alia*, the Member States which, as a result of introducing a simplification threshold, do not have any information concerning the quantities, supplementary units or modes of transport used for businesses below the threshold;

③ **propose adjustment methods to be used in the event of non-response or partial response at the most detailed level possible.** This problem is the most sensitive and difficult and obviously demands priority attention.

The conclusions of this meeting were presented at the last meeting of the Committee on Methods, where formal recommendations will in future be distributed for the three areas under examination.

However, some of these recommendations come up against the problem of the lack of detailed historical data in several Member States.

- *The first area concerns estimating aggregated data forwarded by businesses below the assimilation threshold.*

The recommended method involves estimating the missing data each month on the basis of the data provided by businesses just above the threshold. This method, described in the Task Force documents and tested on British and Danish data, appears able to provide acceptable results at the level of cross-referencing with the partner countries and the first four digits of the Combined Nomenclature. Beyond this level, the estimates are much more approximate.

□ *The second area concerns the evaluation of missing data (quantities, supplementary units, etc.) particularly in the declarations by businesses below the simplification threshold, in the Member States where such a threshold exists.*

The Task Force's recommendation is to base the estimate on a table of average value/quantity (or value/supplementary unit) ratios calculated on the basis of intra-Community trade for 1993, or for 1992 where no data are available for 1993.

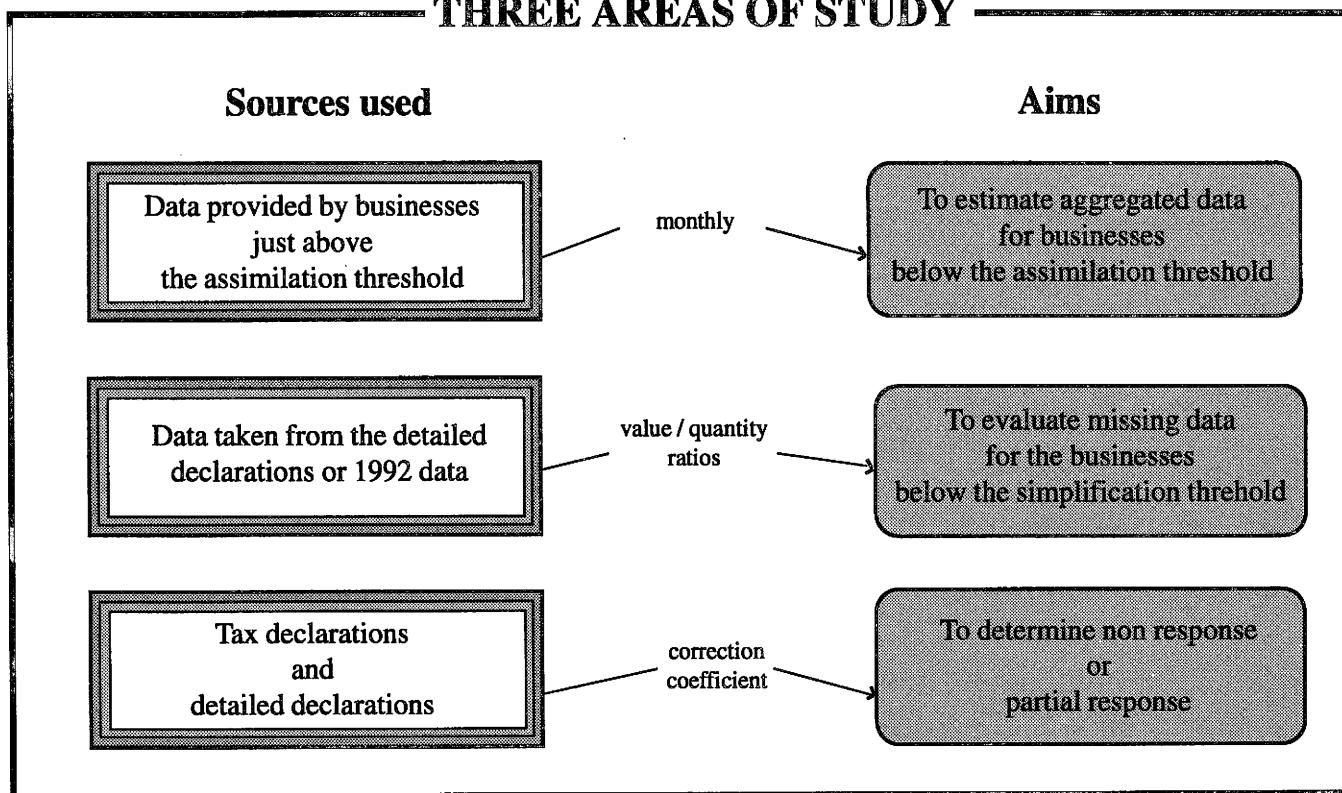
□ *The third area, which is the most significant in quantitative terms, is the handling of non-response and partial response.*

The recommended method is to estimate the statistical value on the basis of the value entered in the tax declaration, using a correction coefficient

based on the detailed declaration. In the case of businesses which have not made a tax declaration and as soon as the historical data are adequate, it is suggested to use, for each missing business, the rates of growth between a reference period to be specified and the current period of similar businesses which did reply.

This latter method, which in any event is not practicable for the time being in all the Member States, cannot permit monthly allocation of the missing data at the most detailed level of the Combined Nomenclature. A study is under way in the United Kingdom in order to identify more clearly the level of detail at which this method could realistically work.

THREE AREAS OF STUDY















STATISTICAL THRESHOLDS FOR 1994 APPLICABLE FOR THE INTRASTAT DECLARATION

The Member States have informed Eurostat of their statistical thresholds for 1994. These thresholds, which apply to intra-Community trade, will obviate the need for a large number of companies to submit a statistical declaration.

Compared with the thresholds applied in 1993, only the United Kingdom and Portugal have introduced

changes; the United Kingdom has increased its assimilation thresholds by £5 000, whilst Portugal has increased the assimilation threshold to 12 million escudos for incoming goods and has abolished the simplification threshold of 12 million escudos.

Member States	Currency	Thresholds			
		Assimilation		Simplification	
		Dispatch	Arrival	Dispatch	Arrival
France (FR) 	FRF	250 000	250 000	1 400 000	700 000
Belgium (BE) 	BEF	4 200 000	4 200 000		
Luxembourg (LU) 	LUF	4 200 000	4 200 000	10 000 000	10 000 000
Netherlands (NL) 	NLG	175 000	175 000	400 000	400 000
Germany (DE) 	DEM	200 000	200 000		
Italy (IT) 	ITL	150 000 000	150 000 000		
United Kingdom (GB) 	GBP	140 000	140 000		
Ireland (IE) 	IEP	500 000	100 000		
Denmark (DK) 	DKK	800 000	500 000		800 000
Greece (GR) 	GRD	7 500 000	5 000 000	22 500 000	13 000 000
Portugal (PT) 	PTE	17 000 000	12 000 000		
Spain (ES) 	ESP	4 000 000	4 000 000	14 000 000	14 000 000

«EDICOM» TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS IN 1993 AND PROSPECTS FOR 1994

The EDICOM-project (Electronic Data Interchange in Commerce) started under the name COMEDI in 1992. The main objective was to constitute basic conditions for the technical framework of the new statistical observation system, Intrastat. At the end of the preparation year and during the first months of 1993 the most important deliverables could be brought on the market for practical implementation.

In that period the first prototype versions of the software products IDEP (Intrastat Data Entry Package) and CN8 (Combined Nomenclature) became available for the Member States; Luxembourg and Denmark decided to start the free distribution of the nationally adjusted versions immediately. It offers the companies the possibility to compile in a rather easy way the periodic Intrastat reports in accordance with the national requirements. In The Netherlands a large scale dissemination took place of a comparable «in house developed» package IRIS. In most of the other Member States versions were sent out only for testing.

The effective usage of the software appeared out of to be modest in 1993. About 10,000 firms a total of 450,000 made use of one of the «official» packages. However, this does not mean that the remaining companies applied declarations on paper. About 43,000 firms, representing 46% of the data records, implemented their own or commercially developed standard software with 'electronic' output on diskettes, magnetic tapes or telecom.

The national administrations of nine Member States received, with financial support from Commission, the disposal of specific disk/fax configuration for the processing of the received EDI returns. For the declarations on paper a pilot project with an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) in Germany was supported by EDICOM. This method of processing large numbers of paper forms appeared to be successful.

As a format for the electronic returns, the Commission adopted the EDIFACT-message «INSTAT». A user guide of this message was published in April 1993. The standard is not yet fully implemented in all Member States but most of the administrations are able to process internally the returns with this format. Some authorities still prescribe national (flat ASCII file) specifications. In the United Kingdom an EDIFACT message under the name SEMDEC is in use. On the other hand the application of the INSTAT-message is growing. Pursuing the au-

tonomous growth of the usage of EDIFACT by trading companies, the standard is expected to become automatically more important.

The ultimate objective of Intrastat is, of course, the compilation of the statistics on the goods movements within the European Union. EDICOM has achieved some important technical results in this field during the year 1993. The development of the prototype of the «Comext 93» data base system could be terminated. This system gives the possibility to handle large data sets of statistical information. The procedural steps are the specification of the contents, the import of files (without sizing limitations) and after that, the retrieval of details. The previously started Comext CD-ROM application could be made more attractive by adding corresponding nomenclatures and the introduction of an interactive Windows procedure for defining selections on trade data.

As far as the technical developments are concerned, the 1993 actions were mainly focused on optimisation of the products. Much attention is paid to the adjusting of the tools and instruments to the specific national needs. Moreover the adaptations of IDEP and the Instat-message for the countries in which the periodic settlements on VAT are combined with Intrastat (France and Italy).

To summarise, it can be concluded that in 1993 good progress was made at the technical level. But that the effective implementation remained somewhat retarded. One reason for this was that the product delivery experienced a certain delay by which the products could not be brought on the market before the start date of the Internal Market. Another, not less important, reason was the fact that the Member State authorities considered it their first concern to bring into motion the Intrastat system as such. They granted, as is fully understandable, less priority to the optimisation of the process.

Now, the turning point seems to have been reached. The Intrastat system is put on the rails and the results of the statistical observation are, though not completely perfect, quiet satisfactory. The emphasis of the actions which follow will lie on the improvement of the statistics and the promotion of the efficiency of the processing systems of the reporting companies as well as the national administrations. A Decision of the Council of the European Union is under preparation which aims to give the EDICOM efforts a legal base, sustained by financial resources (20 million ECU for the years 1994

and 1995). The allocation of this budget to specific projects is still the subject of discussions between the parties involved. Nevertheless we may give an indication on the main fields of attention.

*A*s a result of a strategic study on «Promotion and Distribution» national action plans will be designed for the promotion of EDI-usage by companies reporting Intrastat. In a previous inventory study in the Member States it appeared to be obvious for everybody that the migration to fewer declarations on paper deserves a high priority. Via nationally organised actions, under the responsibility of the competent national organisation, the application of electronic data processing by the reporting companies will be promoted. One of the means, apart from general information campaigns and provision of documentation, could be the free distribution of the developed software.

*O*ne other topic will be the support of the logical evolution towards the usage of modern telecommunication techniques. The software IDEP will get a separate

telecom-module on basis of the STATEL application programming interface (a protocol independent communication layer developed for applications in the field of statistics). Pilot projects are foreseen for testing out the practical implementation. Further the COMEXT system will be extended with data retrieval procedures via telecommunication. Since COMEXT is «transportable», (national utilisation) is also a possibility for pilot experiments.

*T*he last domain of continuous care will of course be the maintenance, improvement and extension of existing projects. The investments of the past can only remain profitable if the tools and instruments evolve in accordance with the fast changing environment.



DEVELOPMENT OF EDI STANDARDS IN THE INTRASTAT ENVIRONMENT

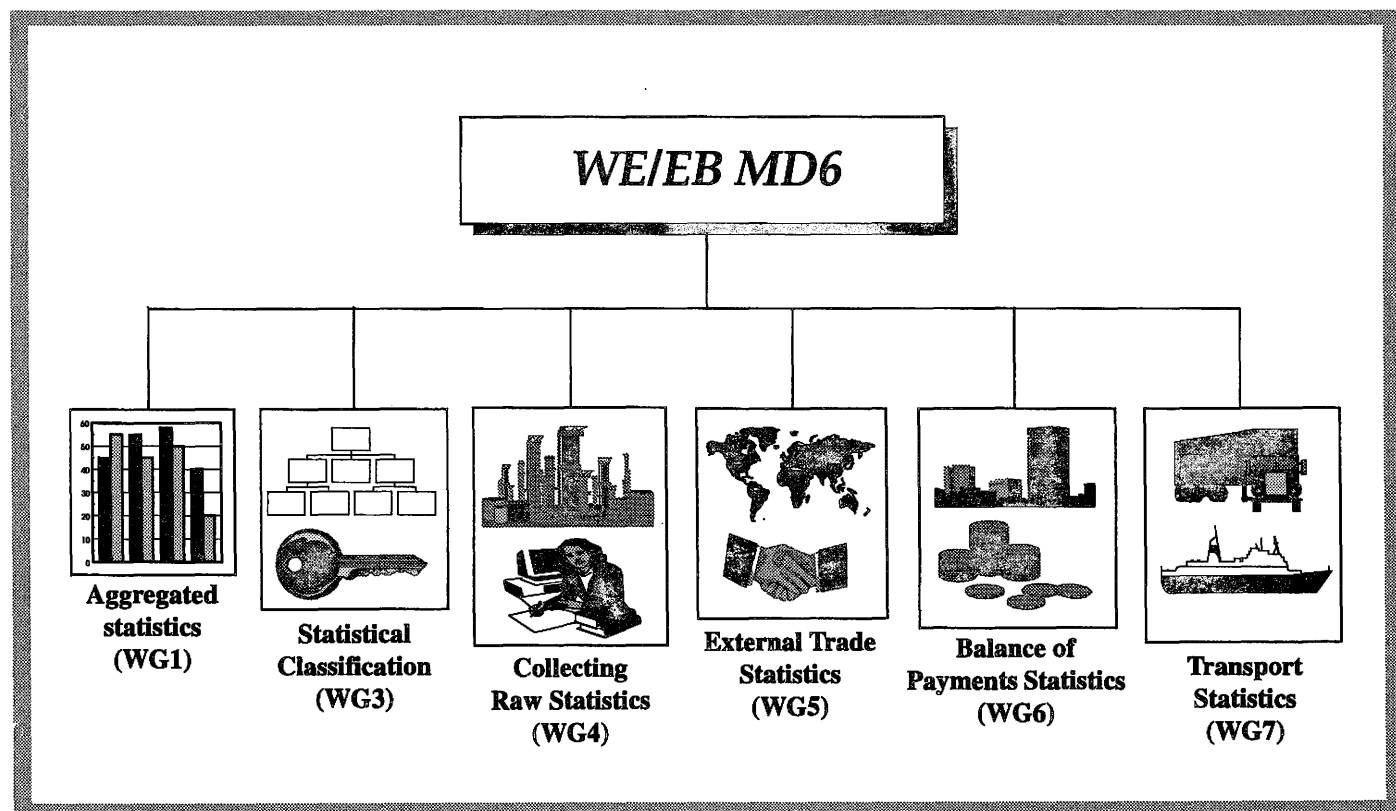
The promotion of the usage of modern data processing technologies within the Intrastat environment is the main objective of EDICOM. It aims primarily to lead to the diminishing of the burden on the providers of the statistical declarations. Of course the collecting administration, on the other side of the information chain, can also profit from a higher degree of electronic reporting by the economic operators.

The EDICOM - efforts will fully be in line with the objectives, formulated in the Maastricht Treaty, concerning the promotion of telecommunication. Amongst the tasks to be fulfilled in this field are the setting up of standards for the information to be exchanged between parties, the jargon of EDI and «messages». The Commission of the European Union has adopted «EDIFACT» of the UN/ECE (Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations) as a standard to be used in applications related to commerce.

One of the first messages developed in this framework was CUSDEC, the equivalent of the Single Administrative Document for the customs declarations on imports and exports. As a new information source for the statistics of the goods movement between Member States, Intrastat made the choice for a partly amended subset of the customs message with the name INSTAT. In the meantime a legal base for the practical application of this message was settled by a Commission Regulation on the «Media» for the Intrastat-return.

In this article we want to give some information on organisational aspects concerning the development and maintenance of the EDIFACT messages in the Intrastat-environment.

WESTERN EUROPEAN EDIFACT BOARD



The working group on Trade facilitation (WP4) of the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (with its seat in Geneva) coordinates and guides the worldwide activities concerning the promotion, de-

velopment and support of standards and procedures for «Electronic Data Interchange For Administration, Commerce and Transport». The effective actions are mainly prepared and undertaken under the umbrella of the 6 re-

gional EDIFACT Boards. Amongst these are as its working area the Western European Edifact Board with the European Union and the EFTA countries.

The WE/EB Board guides twelve working groups, the so called message development (MD) groups. The following domains are covered: Trade, Transport, Customs, Finance, Construction, Statistics, Insurance, Tourism, Healthcare, Social Administration, Exchanges between Administrations and Public Procurement. There are, of course, in several cases overlaps between the subjects to be handled. As a result of a flexible organisation structure direct co-operation can be guaranteed, if needed, between the working groups.

The message development group for Statistics is MD6. This group consists of 6 Working groups, namely: Aggregated Statistics, Statistical Classification, Collecting Raw Statistics, External trade Statistics, Balance of Payment Statistics and (shortly launched) Transport Statistics. The secretariat is in the hands of Eurostat in Luxembourg.

WORKING GROUP TRADE STATISTICS (WG5)

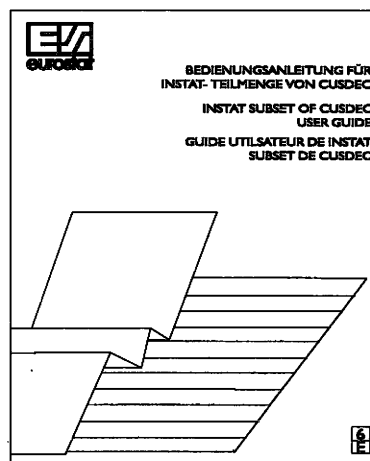
All EDIFACT messages related to the system of collecting basic material for trade statistics and the dissemination of the statistical results are or will be developed by the working group «Trade Statistics, MD5». The Member States' administrations are encouraged to participate on a regular base in the activities of this group together with representatives of Eurostat. Governor of WG5 is Mrs. Marie-Françoise Rivet (DG Douanes de la

France); general expert support is provided by Mrs. Silvy Colas.

The group has given first priority to the development of a message for the electronic version of the Intrastat-returns. This message received the name: «INSTAT, SUBSET OF CUSDEC». A user guide for the first version (trial 91.1) of this message is published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. The update to version 92.1 is expected to be published at the end of the first quarter of 1994.

Currently the Instat message is accepted as Intrastat returns by the majority of the Member States. However, since the Intrastat obligations differ (slightly)

from country to country, the competent national administration has to be contacted before effective application. The message with the updated version can also be applied in the Member States with a combined periodic declaration for VAT and Intrastat (France and Italy).



The Working Group 5 will remain responsible for the maintenance of the Instat message. Other activities currently being undertaken concerning in particular the development of messages for Extra trade, are the confirmation of the receipt of returns and the dissemination of statistical tables.

DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION

A documentation package on the Message Development Group 6 - Statistics can be obtained from the MD6 Secretariat, Room B3/71A, Eurostat A1, JMO Building, L-2920 Luxembourg.

The publication «Instat, subset of Cusdec, user guide» is available via the normal distribution channels of EC publications, ISBN 92-826-5816-3, see list of sales offices on page 23.

For more specific information please contact:

☎ MD6 secretariat: Mrs. Jaqueline Janssen: fax +352-4301-32594

☎ WG5: Mr. Pongas: fax + 352-4301 34762

IN BRIEF

□ *For statistics on trade with non-member states*, the methodology based partly on the customs regulations remains the same; however, the current basic Regulation adopted in 1975 must be adapted to take account of the changes in the intervening period and of the separate treatment of intra-Community trade statistics since the entry into force of Intrastat.

The Council will shortly begin an examination of a proposal for a Regulation, whilst a draft implementing Regulation is being discussed with the Member States in the Committee on External Trade Statistics.

□ *The nomenclature of countries and territories* for the statistics on external trade and trade between Member States for 1994 was published in the Official Journal of the European Communities of 18 December 1993 (Commission Regulation (EC) No 3478/93).

□ *Calendar of meetings for 1994*

① *Committee on External Trade Statistics / Committee on the statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States*

- from 25.01.1994 to 28.01.1994

- from 12.04.1994 to 15.04.1994
- from 25.10.1994 to 28.10.1994
- from 22.11.1994 to 25.11.1994

② *Customs Code Committee - nomenclature (Luxembourg)*

- from 15.02.1994 to 18.02.1994
- from 28.03.1994 to 30.03.1994
- from 26.04.1994 to 29.04.1994
- from 13.09.1994 to 16.09.1994
- from 14.11.1994 to 17.11.1994

③ *Edicom*

- 30.03.1994
- 25.05.1994
- 30.11.1994

④ *Edifact -MD6*

- from 17.03.1994 to 18.03.1994 in Athens
- from 16.05.1994 to 17.05.1994 in Vienna
- from 30.06.1994 to 31.06.1994 in the Netherlands





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