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EDITORIAL

The introduction of the single currency, the reform of the present VAT system and the future enlargement of the European Union are factors which will greatly influence the future of Intrastat.

Consolidating the improvements already achieved, thanks to all the measures that have been adopted, requires heightened attention and unstinting effort in the run-up to these major changes.

Since Intrastat came into being in 1993, the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, has concentrated its efforts on improving the quality and availability of data and has also succeeded in reducing the burden on businesses. Some of the simplification measures proposed under the SLIM (Simpler Legislation for the Internal Market) project are in the process of being adopted and others are at the development stage.

The future of Intrastat was dealt with at the seminar on trade statistics held in Kerkrade (Netherlands) on 9-10 March 1998, the purpose of which was to take stock of the Intrastat system and also, by means of various hypotheses and scenarios, to forecast possible developments in the system for collecting intra-Community statistics. Two of the papers delivered at the seminar are reproduced in this edition.

The Edicom Intrastat Newsletter deals, as usual, with the statistical results of intra-EU trade for 1997. It also contains a whole series of articles on the availability and quality of data. Information on Edicom projects is also provided in a report on the latest Task Force meeting, which took place in Vienna in March 1998.

In this issue

INTRASTAT

EDICOM - COMEXT

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INTRASTAT

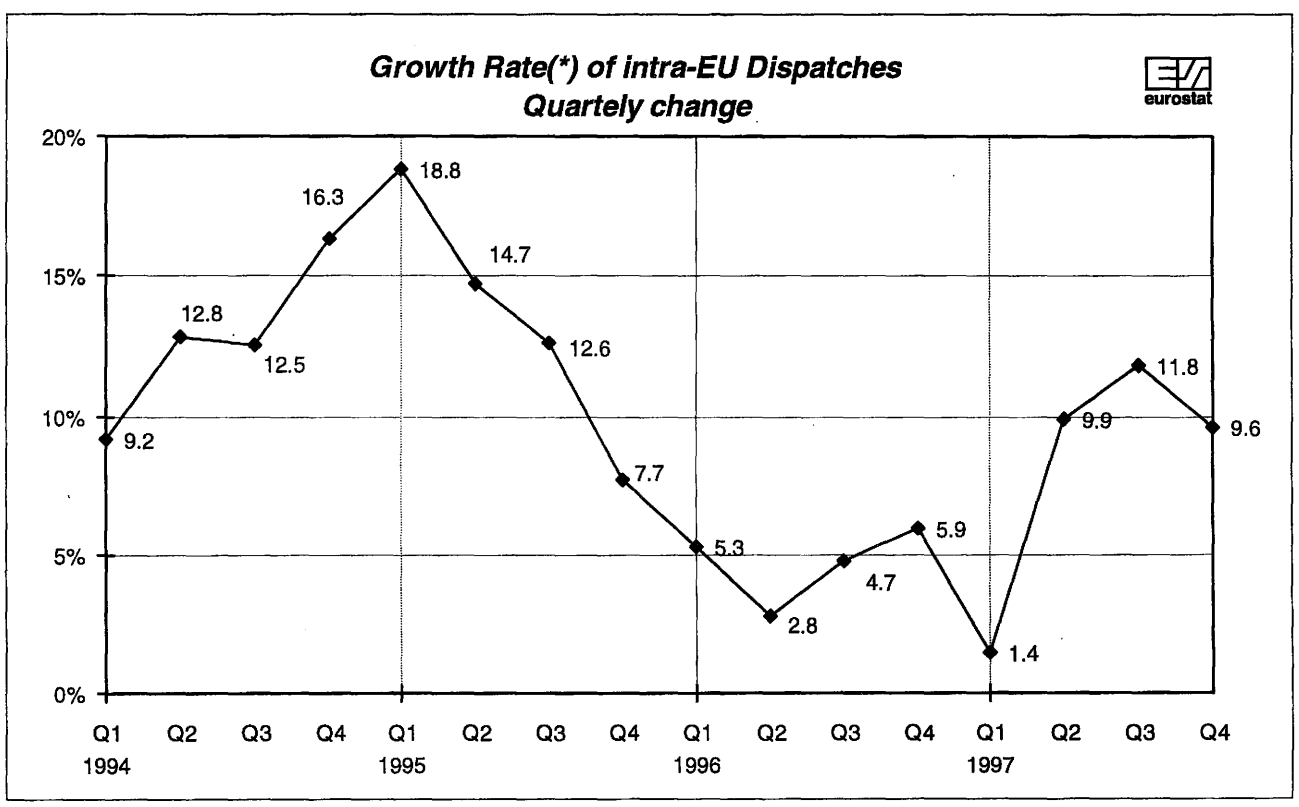
RECOVERY IN INTRA-EU TRADE IN 1997

In 1997 intra-EU trade, as measured by dispatches, totalled ECU 1153 billion. Dispatches grew by 8.1% in 1997 compared with 4.7% in 1996, but this increase still fell well short of the 12.8% recorded in 1994 and the 13.3% for 1995. There was a significant difference between the first quarter, when dispatches grew by only 1.5% over the same period of 1996, and the final three quarters, where growth rates were 9.9%, 11.8% and 9.6%.

Arrivals grew by 6.9% in 1997, following the same quarterly pattern as dispatches.

BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG

The Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) had growth rates of 6.3% for dispatches and 5.6% for arrivals in 1997, slightly below the overall EU growth rate for both flows.



(*) The growth rate is calculated in comparison with the same period of the previous year.

OSCE : 3 L

With regard to its trading partners within the EU, special mention should be made of the sharp rise in trade with the United Kingdom (+20.7% for dispatches and +9.8% for arrivals) and the stagnation experienced in trade with its two main Community partners, Germany and France, which account respectively for around 27% and 22% of the BLEU's intra-EU trade. During 1997, dispatches to Germany rose by only 1.4%, and arrivals by only 0.6%. In the case of France, dispatches showed a modest increase of 3.6%, with arrivals following a similar trend (+3.7%).

DENMARK

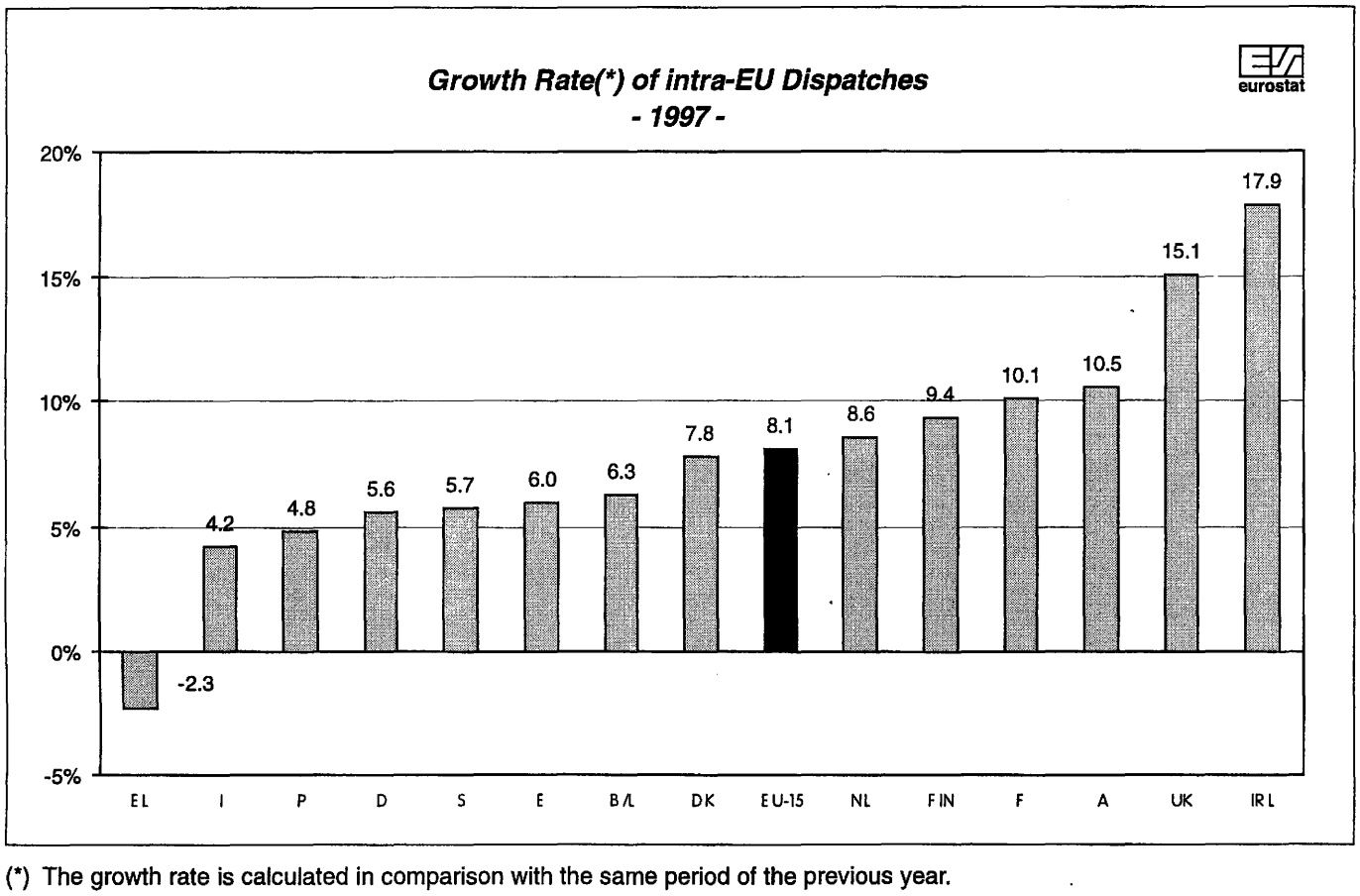
During 1997, Denmark's rate of growth for arrivals showed a notably dynamic trend (+11.5%) outperforming the increase recorded by the EU as a whole, while dispatches matched the EU total at 8.0%.

The slight rise in trade with Germany (+3.0% for dispatches and +2.1% for arrivals), which is Denmark's main trading partner accounting for about one third of its intra-EU trade, was offset by a significant increase in trade with Sweden and the United Kingdom (Denmark's second and third largest partners in intra-EU trade), which occurred both in dispatches (+11.7% and +15.8% respectively) and in arrivals (+10.3% and +10.5%).

GERMANY

In 1997, the growth in intra-EU trade recorded by Germany, which accounts for the biggest share of overall trade within the Community, was below that experienced by the EU as a whole. Germany's dispatches grew by 5.6% during 1997, while arrivals managed an increase of just 2.9%.

This modest rise recorded in 1997 reflected Germany's lacklustre trading performance vis-à-vis its main partners within the EU. In particular, dispatches to the Netherlands and the BLEU were stagnant at 0.0% and +0.7% respectively, while arrivals from Italy fell by 1.8%, and those from France, the Netherlands and the BLEU rose by only 1.0%, 2.2% and 3.9% respectively. These low growth rates were partially offset by a stronger increase in trade with another major trading partner, the United Kingdom (+14.5% for dispatches, +7.9% for arrivals).



(*) The growth rate is calculated in comparison with the same period of the previous year.

GREECE

Greece's total dispatches fell by 2.3% during 1997, making it the only Member State with a fall in either total trade flow. This fall is partly explained by the 5.3% fall in dispatches to the country's main trading partner, Germany. In contrast arrivals rose by 8.4%.

SPAIN

Spanish intra-EU trade grew moderately during 1997. Dispatches rose by 6.0% and arrivals by only 1.7%.

The fall which occurred in dispatches to France (-1.7%) and Germany (+2.2%), Spain's two main trading partners, was offset by the rise in dispatches to Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom (+ 21.1%, +9.4% and +7.1% respectively). As regards arrivals among the above-mentioned countries, only those from Germany showed growth in excess of 6%.

FRANCE

France, which accounts for the second biggest share of trade between the Member States of the European Union, saw growth in dispatches (+10.1%) nearly double that in arrivals (+5.2%).

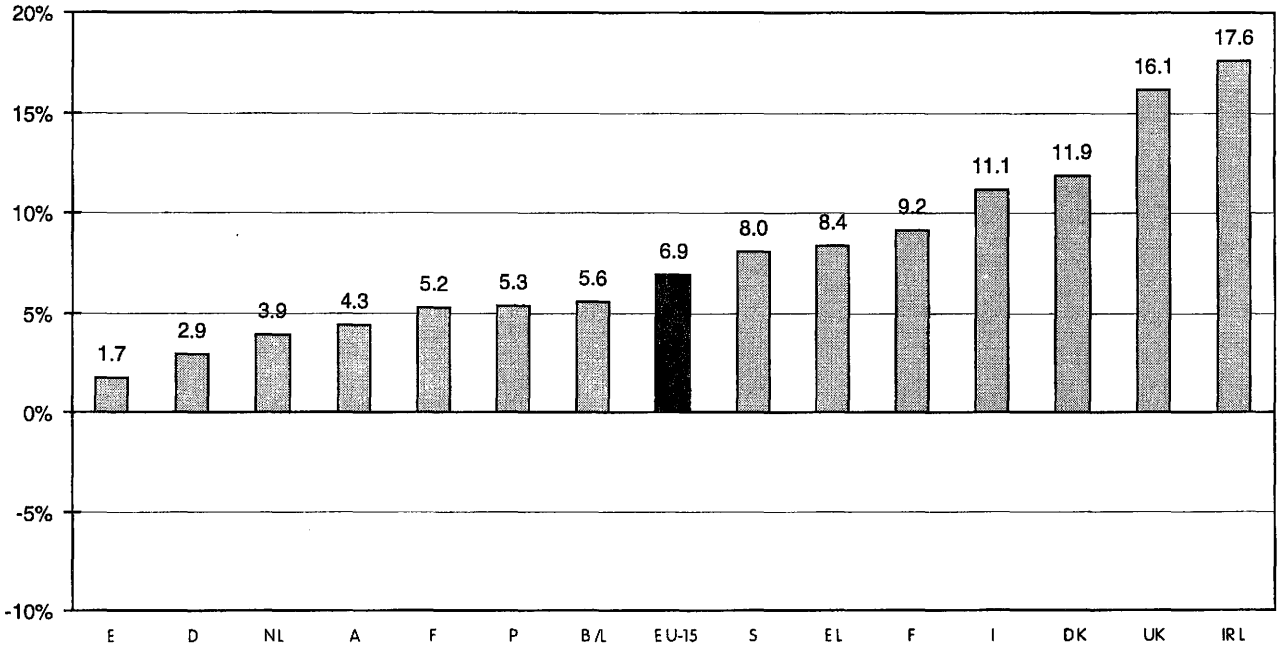
Growth in French intra-EU trade with its main partners during 1997 was very mixed. On the dispatches side, the modest results obtained with Germany and the BLEU (+4.3% and +3.0% respectively) were offset by Italy (+11.9%), Spain (+11.2%) and above all the United Kingdom (+23.7%). Similarly, the decrease in arrivals from Germany and Spain (-2.4% and -1.5% respectively) was only in part offset by the growth in arrivals from the United Kingdom (+13.6%).

IRELAND

Alongside the United Kingdom, it was Ireland that delivered the best results for 1997. Growth in both dispatches

Growth Rate(*) of intra-EU Arrivals
- 1997 -

eurostat



(*) The growth rate is calculated in comparison with the same period of the previous year.

(+17.9%) and arrivals (+17.6%) exceeded the Community average.

Ireland's dynamic intra-EU trade performance is essentially based on growth in transactions with its main Community partner, the United Kingdom (+31.2% for dispatches and +26.7% for arrivals).

ITALY

Italy's growth in arrivals (+11.1%) was much stronger than that in dispatches (+4.2%) in 1997.

Most of Italy's intra-EU trading is done with three partner countries - Germany, France and the United Kingdom, which account respectively for 31%, 22% and 11% of its total trade. The fall in dispatches to Germany (-0.5%) largely explains the modest increase in total dispatches. By contrast, it was the increase in arrivals from these three partners (+3.9%, +7.2% and +13.3% respectively) that enabled overall arrivals growth to outstrip that in dispatches.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands had a higher rate of growth in dispatches than in arrivals (+8.6% and +3.9% respectively).

The Netherlands' main trading partners are the BLEU and Germany, which together account for around 50% of its intra-EU trade. The rates of change in trade with these two countries for dispatches and arrivals were respectively -0.9% and +2.1% for the BLEU and +8.6% and -0.2% for Germany.

AUSTRIA

Austria's intra-EU trade in 1997 was characterised by a much higher growth rate for dispatches (+10.5%) than arrivals (+4.3%).

These results reflect those obtained by Austria with Germany, the country's main partner accounting for approximately 60% of its intra-EU trade. Austrian dispatches to Germany rose by 6.6% while arrivals showed a 0.9% decrease.

PORTUGAL

In 1997, Portuguese intra-EU trade grew at a rate below the average of the European Union as a whole. Dispatches rose by 4.8%, while arrivals were up 5.3%.

The weak growth in Portuguese trade reflects the modest results recorded for Portugal's main trading partners within the EU, with dispatches bound for Germany, Spain and France changing by -0.1%, 1.7% and 3.3% respectively. This was only partly offset by the strong growth in dispatches to the United Kingdom (+17.9%). As regards arrivals, while the changes recorded were all positive, the growth achieved was rather modest except in the case of the United Kingdom (+11.6%).

FINLAND

Finland had very similar growth rates for both dispatches and arrivals in 1997 (+9.4% and +9.2% respectively), which exceeded the Community average.

Approximately 60% of Finnish intra-EU trade is done with Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. On the dispatch side, the modest growth in trade with Germany and Sweden (+2.1% and +3.6% respectively) was offset by the stronger growth in trade with the United Kingdom (+10.0%). As regards arrivals, the situation was reversed, with trade with Germany and Sweden recording growth of +6.5% and +8.3%, and the United Kingdom a fall of 3.5%.

SWEDEN

In 1997, Sweden's dispatches rose by 5.7% and arrivals by 8.0%.

Swedish trade with Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom, Sweden's main trading partners accounting for some 50% of its total trade, grew moderately for both flows.

UNITED KINGDOM

As mentioned above, the United Kingdom - alongside Ireland - turned in the most dynamic intra-EU trade performance in 1997. Dispatches grew by 15.1% and arrivals by 16.1%, both well above the EU average.

The three main trading partners, Germany, France and the Netherlands, account for more than 50% of UK trade within the EU. The development of Britain's dispatches to these three countries is particularly noteworthy, with growth rates of respectively +15.1%, +11.5% and +19.1% having been achieved. On the arrivals side there was particularly strong growth in trade with the BLEU (+22.8%), France (+15.0%) and Italy (+31.3%).

Table 1
Evolution of intra-European Union trade (EU-15)

(Mio.ECU)

	1993	1994		1995		1996		1997	
	Value	Value	94/93 %	Value	95/94 %	Value	96/95 %	Value	97/96 %
					Dispatches				
EU-15	**797 715**	**899 511**	**12.8**	**1019 297**	**13.3**	**1066 962**	**4.7**	**1153 363**	**8.1**
BLEU	81 804	90 525	10.7	101 998	12.7	106 404	4.3	113 114	6.3
Denmark	20 963	23 004	9.7	25 922	12.7	26 981	4.1	29 095	7.8
Germany	189 958	208 169	9.6	232 722	11.8	237 061	1.9	250 276	5.6
Greece	4 247	4 516	6.3	5 080	12.5	4 615	-9.2	4 507	-2.3
Spain	35 498	42 970	21.0	50 827	18.3	57 287	12.7	60 718	6.0
France	113 609	130 142	14.6	145 033	11.4	149 665	3.2	164 757	10.1
Ireland	17 922	20 994	17.1	25 274	20.4	27 101	7.2	31 943	17.9
Italy	82 566	92 528	12.1	102 384	10.7	110 161	7.6	114 764	4.2
Netherlands	93 052	105 838	13.7	124 167	17.3	129 287	4.1	140 401	8.6
Austria	22 402	24 513	9.4	29 036	18.4	29 405	1.3	32 503	10.5
Portugal	10 529	12 092	14.8	13 952	15.4	15 623	12.0	16 380	4.8
Finland	11 826	14 553	23.1	17 787	22.2	17 651	-0.8	19 304	9.4
Sweden	25 166	30 442	21.0	36 629	20.3	38 196	4.3	40 381	5.7
United Kingdom	88 174	99 224	12.5	108 487	9.3	117 526	8.3	135 221	15.1
					Arrivals				
EU-15	**767 685**	**859 284**	**11.9**	**975 317**	**13.5**	**1022 427**	**4.8**	**1092 570**	**6.9**
BLEU	75 148	80 060	6.5	89 063	11.2	95 196	6.9	100 487	5.6
Denmark	17 877	20 809	16.4	25 221	21.2	25 169	-0.2	28 155	11.9
Germany	172 679	189 960	10.0	214 119	12.7	218 063	1.8	224 345	2.9
Greece	11 843	12 276	3.7	13 879	13.1	13 331	-3.9	14 449	8.4
Spain	43 061	49 611	15.2	59 467	19.9	66 128	11.2	67 275	1.7
France	117 743	134 545	14.3	151 471	12.6	156 651	3.4	164 873	5.2
Ireland	12 129	14 202	17.1	15 978	12.5	18 062	13.0	21 234	17.6
Italy	75 317	86 263	14.5	95 845	11.1	100 188	4.5	111 346	11.1
Netherlands	69 330	77 878	12.3	89 495	14.9	91 976	2.8	95 529	3.9
Austria	28 806	31 792	10.4	38 439	20.9	40 129	4.4	41 863	4.3
Portugal	15 406	16 716	8.5	18 436	10.3	21 152	14.7	22 273	5.3
Finland	8 898	10 727	20.6	14 647	36.5	16 150	10.3	17 631	9.2
Sweden	22 698	27 133	19.5	34 125	25.8	36 118	5.8	39 014	8.0
United Kingdom	96 752	107 315	10.9	115 132	7.3	124 115	7.8	144 095	16.1

Source : COMEXT2 and information transmitted by the Member States up to 21.04.1998

Table 2
Quarterly evolution of intra-European Union trade (EU-15)

(Mio.ECU)

	Q4 96		Q1 97		Q2 97		Q3 97		Q4 97	
	Value	96/95 %	Value	97/96 %	Value	97/96 %	Value	97/96 %	Value	97/96 %
					Dispatches					
EU-15	**278 169**	**5.9**	**276 417**	**1.4**	**293 619**	**9.9**	**278 523**	**11.8**	**304 804**	**9.6**
BLEU	26 825	6.4	28 091	3.1	29 313	7.7	27 474	9.4	28 237	5.3
Denmark	7 281	8.5	6 917	6.0	7 317	12.2	7 103	6.8	7 758	6.6
Germany	61 503	4.9	59 758	-1.0	63 058	7.0	60 792	8.0	66 668	8.4
Greece	1 130	-17.5	1 053	-16.4	1 255	11.8	1 095	-0.7	1 105	-2.3
Spain	15 488	13.4	14 297	-2.2	16 173	9.3	13 132	6.0	17 116	10.5
France	38 778	3.1	39 957	2.6	41 570	10.9	38 901	12.8	44 329	14.3
Ireland	7 257	2.6	7 680	11.2	8 071	17.0	7 570	25.4	8 622	18.8
Italy	28 414	5.1	26 113	-7.7	29 561	5.7	28 471	11.7	30 619	7.8
Netherlands	34 092	8.0	32 980	1.4	35 497	11.9	35 089	13.4	36 835	8.0
Austria	7 359	-0.4	7 713	2.6	8 173	11.3	7 962	10.7	8 655	17.6
Portugal	3 938	11.0	4 121	2.4	4 233	6.3	3 882	5.6	4 143	5.2
Finland	4 618	0.5	4 563	6.9	5 107	9.1	4 585	12.3	5 048	9.3
Sweden	9 868	0.9	9 677	-1.8	10 217	3.1	9 609	12.2	10 878	10.2
United Kingdom	31 619	11.0	33 498	11.0	34 075	19.1	32 857	21.2	34 791	10.0
					Arrivals					
EU-15	**270 414**	**6.4**	**258 745**	**0.1**	**279 399**	**9.4**	**262 609**	**10.2**	**291 816**	**7.9**
BLEU	24 170	8.2	25 041	0.7	25 860	7.7	23 155	4.5	26 431	9.4
Denmark	6 748	1.2	6 563	4.9	7 094	14.3	6 802	14.1	7 696	14.0
Germany	57 450	5.5	53 732	-2.7	56 528	4.8	54 004	5.0	60 081	4.6
Greece	3 699	-10.1	3 211	10.5	3 797	12.1	3 583	7.3	3 858	4.3
Spain	18 101	14.3	15 205	-6.4	17 576	3.8	15 262	2.8	19 232	6.2
France	40 492	3.0	39 809	-1.8	41 654	5.9	39 323	8.4	44 087	8.9
Ireland	4 947	15.2	5 365	19.7	5 241	15.1	5 079	24.5	5 548	12.1
Italy	27 517	2.5	24 701	-4.7	29 112	15.9	26 194	21.0	31 340	13.9
Netherlands	24 083	3.7	22 303	-4.0	24 551	8.2	23 378	6.4	25 296	5.0
Austria	10 115	4.1	10 031	-0.1	10 530	5.4	10 682	6.9	10 619	5.0
Portugal	5 938	26.6	5 405	6.7	5 789	9.4	5 168	6.3	5 911	-0.4
Finland	4 451	10.0	4 107	3.5	4 455	11.8	4 270	14.1	4 799	7.8
Sweden	10 004	4.5	9 224	4.6	9 687	7.3	9 153	10.7	10 951	9.5
United Kingdom	32 699	12.4	34 049	10.1	37 524	21.7	36 556	23.3	35 966	10.0

Source : COMEXT2 and information transmitted by the Member States up to 21.04.1998

Table 3
Structure of intra-European Union trade (EU-15) by principal product groups - Year 1997 -

(Mio.ECU)

Reporting Countries	Foods, beverages, tabacco SITC 0+1		Raw materials SITC 2+4		Fuel products SITC 3		Chemicals SITC 5		Machinery, transport equipment SITC 7		Other manufactured goods SITC 6+8		Other SITC9 + adjustments	
	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %	Value	Evolution 97/96 %
							Dispatches							
BLEU	12 479	-0.4	3 554	11.8	3 123	0.9	20 357	7.3	32 928	1.8	35 849	2.5	4 823	269.6
DK	6 794	7.0	1 251	-5.6	1 360	-5.2	2 585	3.6	7 262	7.4	8 133	-3.5	1 710	810.1
D	13 684	-4.9	5 772	5.2	3 380	-5.4	31 528	3.5	113 922	5.9	61 871	0.9	20 120	41.7
EL	1 194	8.4	548	-33.7	141	57.8	156	4.1	285	20.0	2 044	-2.1	141	13.2
E	9 844	10.4	2 198	16.6	1 252	32.6	4 779	15.7	26 655	2.7	15 688	5.5	300	-50.1
F	23 132	5.5	4 795	8.8	3 792	7.4	22 584	9.1	69 267	14.5	40 905	7.1	282	-34.3
IRL	4 032	-7.0	615	2.3	169	25.0	7 627	36.1	11 344	24.0	6 024	2.5	2 133	52.8
I	8 427	1.7	1 548	0.0	951	62.5	9 883	12.0	42 121	3.9	50 946	2.9	888	4.8
NL	18 953	-7.0	8 733	28.7	9 984	-18.2	17 946	0.0	35 406	13.3	26 181	6.1	23 198	44.6
A	1 508	16.6	1 398	0.9	284	-7.1	2 709	8.5	12 882	9.3	13 686	14.1	38	-73.5
P	987	6.3	792	12.7	183	-4.7	703	7.2	5 458	5.1	8 242	3.7	14	753.9
FIN	331	5.4	1 987	18.5	406	-26.8	1 183	13.3	5 978	9.3	9 183	9.5	236	14.0
S	1 059	14.9	3 661	12.4	1 144	-9.5	3 633	4.8	15 756	5.3	13 510	3.5	1 617	27.4
UK	8 502	4.9	2 253	6.9	11 001	18.7	17 046	8.0	56 377	13.8	31 172	3.5	8 870	238.4
							Arrivals							
BLEU	9 921	1.6	4 112	10.4	7 033	6.2	15 615	7.2	31 257	11.1	28 030	4.1	4 519	-17.1
DK	2 820	14.2	1 249	18.2	569	27.1	3 486	8.9	10 297	9.7	9 239	10.6	495	89.0
D	22 270	-8.9	7 875	0.1	11335.3	1.2	23 166	2.9	75 534	0.4	56 977	-5.7	27 188	65.9
EL	2 563	8.8	341	9.6	109	-7.0	2 321	12.0	4 443	10.6	4 640	5.3	31	-36.7
E	6 375	6.8	2 301	-5.5	844	-17.4	9 317	3.2	30 148	1.3	17 950	3.3	340	-36.8
F	16 604	2.6	4 660	8.0	4 956	2.9	21 421	6.3	67 529	5.5	49 572	5.6	131	-46.7
IRL	2 192	14.1	410	15.4	678	0.5	2 990	20.5	7 043	27.8	5 730	9.5	2 191	16.2
I	13 519	2.5	6 552	8.3	1 526	2.8	17 767	12.0	42 806	15.0	27 890	10.8	1 287	3.6
NL	8 770	-5.4	3 051	3.9	3 049	13.9	10 606	-4.5	27 935	2.7	20 669	-10.3	21 448	36.3
A	2 843	11.8	1 430	12.9	729	0.4	4 844	8.0	16 520	4.1	15 369	3.1	128	-61.8
P	2 226	-2.3	654	8.8	564	30.9	2 595	5.2	8 718	4.9	7 435	7.0	82	-30.3
FIN	1 199	11.7	692	15.6	584	-35.8	2 558	13.5	7 498	10.1	4 665	13.8	435	8.4
S	2 390	3.6	1 035	16.6	1 808	3.5	4 438	4.4	16 709	9.4	10 213	5.5	2 422	22.4
UK	13 970	6.3	3 799	7.4	1 764	-5.3	17 059	8.6	58 775	12.1	34 926	6.4	13 801	198.0

Source : COMEXT2 and information transmitted by the Member States up to 21.04.1998

Table 4
Structure of intra-European Union trade (EU-15) by partner countries - Year 1997 -

(%)

REPORTING COUNTRIES	PARTNER COUNTRIES														
	BLEU	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	TOTAL
								Dispatches							
BLEU	-	1.2	26.1	0.8	4.2	23.7	0.6	7.4	17.2	1.5	1.0	0.8	2.0	13.5	100.0
Denmark	3.2	-	32.5	1.2	3.1	8.4	1.1	5.6	6.8	1.5	0.8	4.1	17.5	14.4	100.0
Germany	10.5	3.2	-	1.3	6.7	19.2	0.9	13.3	12.6	9.3	1.9	1.7	4.2	15.3	100.0
Greece	2.7	1.3	32.3	-	3.9	8.7	0.5	25.9	4.9	2.1	0.8	1.2	2.6	13.0	100.0
Spain	4.0	1.0	19.1	1.4	-	26.5	0.6	14.2	5.3	1.2	12.9	0.6	1.4	11.8	100.0
France	12.6	1.4	25.6	1.3	12.4	-	1.0	14.9	7.2	1.7	2.4	0.7	2.2	16.5	100.0
Ireland	7.5	1.6	18.7	0.5	3.8	11.9	-	4.9	10.3	0.6	0.6	0.7	2.3	36.6	100.0
Italy	4.9	1.5	30.0	3.6	9.5	22.3	0.7	-	5.2	4.2	2.4	0.9	1.8	13.0	100.0
Netherlands	16.0	2.1	35.6	1.0	3.9	13.5	1.0	7.4	-	1.9	1.1	1.1	2.9	12.6	100.0
Austria	2.8	1.2	56.2	0.7	3.6	6.8	0.4	13.5	4.5	-	0.7	0.9	2.0	6.7	100.0
Portugal	5.6	2.3	25.0	0.5	17.6	17.6	0.5	4.8	6.0	1.4	-	1.0	2.7	15.1	100.0
Finland	4.4	5.8	20.9	1.1	4.1	8.1	1.5	5.6	7.8	1.8	1.1	-	18.8	19.0	100.0
Sweden	7.3	11.4	20.6	1.0	4.0	8.6	1.2	5.9	10.4	1.9	0.9	9.9	-	17.0	100.0
United Kingdom	8.6	2.2	21.6	1.1	7.1	17.3	9.6	8.6	14.6	1.2	1.8	1.6	4.6	-	100.0
								Arrivals							
BLEU	-	0.8	25.7	0.2	2.4	19.7	2.4	5.4	24.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	3.6	12.5	100.0
Denmark	5.2	-	30.5	0.2	1.9	7.6	1.6	6.2	11.0	1.4	1.5	4.1	18.1	10.6	100.0
Germany	12.4	3.3	-	0.7	5.7	18.9	1.9	13.1	19.0	6.5	1.9	1.6	3.1	11.9	100.0
Greece	5.5	2.3	21.5	-	5.4	13.8	1.2	25.4	9.4	1.6	0.5	1.3	2.4	9.8	100.0
Spain	5.7	1.1	22.7	0.3	-	26.5	1.7	13.5	7.4	1.5	4.0	1.1	2.0	12.3	100.0
France	14.7	1.4	27.5	0.3	9.8	-	2.1	14.6	10.2	1.2	1.7	0.9	1.9	13.6	100.0
Ireland	2.2	1.3	10.2	0.1	1.7	8.0	-	2.8	6.0	0.3	0.3	1.2	1.7	64.1	100.0
Italy	7.7	1.4	29.6	1.1	7.8	21.8	1.7	-	10.1	3.8	0.7	1.0	2.3	11.0	100.0
Netherlands	17.4	1.7	33.9	0.2	3.8	11.5	2.0	5.7	-	1.2	1.0	1.4	4.3	15.7	100.0
Austria	3.7	0.9	62.9	0.2	1.6	6.0	0.5	11.1	6.5	-	0.4	0.8	1.7	3.6	100.0
Portugal	4.1	0.9	20.0	0.2	30.5	14.3	0.9	10.7	6.0	0.8	-	0.8	1.5	9.3	100.0
Finland	4.7	8.1	23.2	0.3	2.0	6.7	1.2	5.8	9.5	1.7	1.0	-	23.9	11.9	100.0
Sweden	5.7	11.2	28.1	0.3	2.0	8.9	1.8	4.7	11.1	2.0	1.1	8.2	-	14.9	100.0
United Kingdom	9.1	2.3	26.0	0.4	5.1	17.9	7.2	9.4	12.3	1.4	1.7	2.6	4.6	-	100.0

Source : COMEXT2 and information transmitted by the Member States up to 21.04.1998

DATA AVAILABILITY

STATUS OF DATA SENT TO EUROSTAT ON 4 JUNE 1998

❶ Intra + Extra:

✓ Detailed data (CN8 data)

❷ Intra / Extra:

■ Detailed data (CN8 data)

● Global data with breakdown by partner country

	PERIOD	EU-15	BLEU	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
	January	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	February	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	March	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	April	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1	May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	June	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	July	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	August	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	September	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	October	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	November	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	December	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	PERIOD	EU-15	BLEU	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
1	January	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	February		✓	✓	●/■	✓	✓	✓	-/■	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-/■	✓
9	March		-/■	-/■		-/■	✓		-/■	-/■		-/■	-/■	-/■		-/■
8	April															

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR 'BEST PRACTICES AND FUTURE OPTIONS' HELD IN KERKRADE - MARCH 9 AND 10

INTRODUCTION

An international seminar entitled 'Foreign Trade Statistics, best practices and future options' took place on March 9 and 10 in Kerkrade, the Netherlands. The seminar, organised by Statistics Netherlands and Eurostat, sought to provide a forum to discuss possible scenarios for the development of foreign trade statistics beyond year 2000, based on current best practices within the EU Member States. Although special emphasis was given to the Intrastat system, other topics more closely linked to extra-Community trade were also discussed in the seminar.

Participation to the seminar was open to all those interested in developments in foreign trade statistics. It included representatives from:

- national institutes directly responsible for the collection and compilation of foreign trade, in particular National Statistical Institutes, Customs Administrations and Central Banks;
- international and supranational organisations such as UNSTAT, Eurostat and the European Monetary Institute (EMI) and;
- users of these statistics, e.g. research institutes and enterprises.

While most of the participants came from EU Member States and Eurostat, there were also officials representing the EFTA-countries, the Eastern European countries, Russia and Statistics Canada.

CONTENT OF THE SEMINAR

For each topic dealt with, the seminar was designed to allow ample room for discussion by panels and participants following introductory speeches and follow-up comments by discussants. The first day of the seminar was devoted to an evaluation of the collection systems of the Member States while the focus of the second day was on discussion and ideas about the future of international trade statistics, with a number of options and scenarios being presented.

First day: Evaluation of the collection systems

In the morning session, particular attention was placed on the impact of Intrastat on foreign trade statistics in terms of structure of organisations in the Member States, human resources management and budgets. As different administrations are responsible for the Intrastat process in the EU countries, a general evaluation of the system was given by representatives of the different types of organisations involved.

In the afternoon, three different methodological aspects of the Intrastat process were treated in three parallel sessions. Session 1 dealt with input and data collection, session 2 with processing, data-editing and adjustment methods and session 3 with output and dissemination policy.

Session 1 emphasised on the new tasks associated with the introduction of the Intrastat system, in particular the establishment and management of the Intrastat register and the application of the threshold system. New collection techniques taking account of technical developments, in particular the possibilities of EDI were also discussed. In session 2, participants had the opportunity to exchange information on their data adjustment methods for non-response and thresholds, topics which are handled differently by the different Member States. The notion of macro editing as part of a redesign of the processing of international trade statistics at Statistics Netherlands was also introduced. Finally, session 3 focused on user needs, in particular on the difficulty in reconciling the interests of the providers of information who are generally keen to reduce the statistical burden and those of users who want detailed high quality results.

Second day: options and scenarios

The morning session was largely devoted to the data quality aspects and simplification measures of the Intrastat system. Attention was also

drawn to EMU requirements and implications for foreign trade statistics.

Concerning data quality aspects, a number of proposals were put forward to deal with the problems of Intrastat in an efficient manner. A framework for the management of quality in statistical processes was suggested, recommending that quality be treated in every step of the production process and go beyond the intrinsic quality of the end results. A reorientation of future Intrastat work was also proposed by setting clear priorities on future initiatives and adhering to them.

Regarding the Intrastat simplification measures proposed within the SLIM Intrastat team, a redesign of the measures, focusing more on SME interests was recommended. This reflects the difficulties and slow progress in their legislative implementation. Suggestions for improving the Intrastat legislation were also made through the use of a systematic legislative checklist.

The afternoon session made some excursions into the future in the sense that future scenarios for foreign trade statistics were outlined, taking account of developments in global trade patterns. The purpose of these scenarios was to stimulate ideas about the future of international statistics, rather than concretely shape a future statistical system.

For European foreign trade statistics as a whole, a number of potential scenarios such as a system of single observation of goods flows or a system where the Member States focus on activities at which they excel were investigated. Specific options for Intrastat beyond year 2000 were also discussed. These include a two-tier system where the Member States collect global monthly figures based on sampling combined with more detailed, but less frequent data or the collection of data on one flow only.

For Intrastat, the consensus was that the system needs to be further simplified by focusing on the core information requirements. For extra-Community trade, particular attention should be placed on the developments in the customs field, in particular the effects of increased trade liberalisation and simplification of customs formalities which may have strong impacts on the system.

CONCLUSIONS

The seminar was very positively viewed by the participants, also giving the Member States an opportunity to exchange views with a variety of bodies in a way not always possible in the Committee of Intra-Community and External Trade Statistics.

The general view was that matters have moved forward compared to the 1996 Intrastat seminar with a range of possible future scenarios now being investigated. In light of the various challenges facing the statistical community given globalisation, EMU and technological developments such as the Internet, this co-operation can only intensify in the future. The proposals made at the seminar have set a good basis for the future system of foreign trade statistics, and these will be further developed by Eurostat and the Member States.

THE EUROPEAN FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS

Jim Frenken
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This article outlines some future scenarios for international trade statistics in the European Union. Its purpose is to stimulate ideas about the future of international trade statistics. The realism of the scenarios presented is secondary. The author's aim is to promote discussion about the future of international trade statistics. His views do not necessarily coincide with the standpoint of the Central Bureau of Statistics, where he works.

Six possibilities are outlined:

- ***international trade statistics with Eurostat acting as editor-in-chief***
- ***a system of single observation of goods flows***
- ***Eurostat as the sole, central agency collecting international trade statistics***
- ***production of statistics by private enterprises: a free market in statistics***
- ***in future, the statistics only cover trade outside the EU: Extrastat only***
- ***international trade statistics incorporated in sales statistics.***

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Europe of the EU, international trade statistics are not accustomed to change. They are traditional statistics which have undergone little upheaval in this century. A close link with the customs promoted stability and a straightforward approach. The international trade statistics formula had no need to adapt to changing circumstances. In contrast, other types of statistics regularly needed to update their definitions and methods in line with modern requirements.

The shock was all the greater for international trade statistics when, in 1993, free movement of goods was introduced in the European Union. This change was a revolution for international trade statistics. For those in charge, it was not easy to devise an appropriate, flexible response right away. Today, with the proverbial hindsight, you could say that in the run-up to the revolution in 1993 there was insufficient preparation for radical change. Worse still, when it subsequently became apparent how the free movement of goods would affect statistical information, no adequate answer was available.

As we have said, that conclusion is obvious now, five years later. Yet there is still no interpretation of recent statistical history on which EU Member States generally agree. That is why there is no vision of the future of international trade statistics built on such a consensus. The experts have different ideas about the past, present and future of statistics. There seem to be no clear trends in opinions and recommendations.

The methodology for observing trade between Member States of the European Union is based, as it always was, on the customs system. In statistics, the EU's internal trade is handled in the same way as its external trade. The statistics on the bulk of the Member States' international trade, their trade with one another, reflect the concepts used in trade with non-EU countries. The changed character of goods flows within the Europe of 15 is being ignored. People are still behaving as if the nature of sales of commodities and products today is still the same as in the good old days of customs duties on trade in the EU.

It is therefore not surprising that contradictions and defects persist in the trade figures of the 15 EU Member States. But they do not go unnoticed. Private users of the final figures are complaining. Criticism is also coming from the users of intermediate statistical products, such as national accounts departments and central banks.

If you were looking for something positive to say, you might remark in response to the criticism that the customers have

not yet all gone away shaking their heads. They are watching international trade statistics in the hope of a change for the better. But they will inevitably turn away if statisticians persist in their rigid approach. If statisticians do not succeed in correcting the contradictions and improbabilities in their reports, they will lose part of their usefulness. But users will certainly turn away if the doubts and hesitancy of 1993 are repeated on subsequent occasions. And those occasions are already visible on the horizon. They have already been announced. In Europe, political measures which will affect international trade statistics are under consideration.

The next section (2) briefly reviews some potential moves in relation to a random selection from among possible future events which will have a decisive impact on statistics: introduction of a single currency, the euro, the advent of European Monetary Union, EMU, the replacement of the present VAT system, and reductions in administrative requirements for citizens and businesses. Do statisticians have an appropriate answer to this type of radical change in Europe? Are statisticians in a position to think and plan ahead? In any case, they would do well to start on a few mental exercises now. And because, being a statistician who is closely involved, I do not wish to shirk that, I shall now proceed to take a relatively simplistic look at the future.

2. A FORETASTE OF THE FUTURE

National borders will become less and less significant in the European Union. It will become steadily easier for goods to cross national borders. Schemes and institutions are on the way which will influence the everyday life of consumers and producers accordingly. The delights of European unity are likely to be very noticeable for them. Consumers and producers will be pleased. They may even ask for more.

Europeans themselves are becoming increasingly mobile. As they cross borders to go to work or on holiday, they come up against differences between nations. After the end of a foreign trip, when collecting up and putting away the many foreign banknotes and coins for next time, they think how easy it would be if there were just one currency in Europe and one system of effecting payments.

That single currency, the euro, will soon be here. International trade in goods in the EU will be seen in a different light. Other aspects will also be important in commercial contracts between businesses and consumers in the various Member States. The current system of settlement in foreign currencies means that people in charge of managing payments have to monitor trends in trade. On international markets, prices of goods are subject to fluctuations which are also often reinforced or attenuated by exchange rate variations. The alert businessman knows how to turn this to advantage. The characteristics of international transactions will change as soon as EMU and the euro have become accepted by many countries. Exactly how those changes will turn out is difficult to say.

The importance of certain characteristics which dominate international transactions in goods today will diminish. On the other hand, there will be demand for types of information which are still as yet beyond the field of vision of most parties involved. The businessman will see his market expand. He will benefit from the enlargement of the internal European market. The obstacles which impede movements of goods and money in the internal EU market will be demolished. The European Union will negotiate with partners outside Europe, and that, too, will benefit the businessman.

Anyone in business will be particularly interested in the plans for further reductions in administrative expense. Several Member States have found that their citizens and businesses are confronted by an unnecessary plethora of formal requirements. Sometimes, surveys formed part of this burden. And in some cases, the statistical services benefited in part from the administrative requirements imposed by other agencies. Member States have taken steps to reduce the financial burden. Excessive administrative burdens have also been found at European level, and this has led to a series of proposals entitled SLIM: Simpler Legislation for the Internal Market. There is an ever-present danger that the existence of both Community and national legislation may cause a rapid increase in administrative costs. Action plans to turn the tide are therefore unlikely to be confined to the SLIM initiative. Public servants will probably increasingly be asked to produce or support plans for simplification.

The final European VAT system which will replace the present one is anxiously awaited. Proposals have been put forward, to a mixed reception. Intensive and possibly also lengthy debate on the future VAT system therefore seems likely. If, in due course, the proposals are accepted in a form similar to the original one, then this will have radical implications for the international trade statistics. In many countries, VAT information is a keystone in the production of statistics. There are actually some Member States where the organisation of VAT records and statistics is closely interlinked. This co-operation will be finished if the proposed plan for charging VAT by destination is brought in. On the other hand, new types of information will be required for the smooth operation of the system. Additional statistical data will soon be

needed to determine the final destination of goods in order to monitor consumption. Those statistics can be used to settle tax revenue between Member States.

Citizens will probably be pleased about the changes relating to VAT, EMU and the euro. They are acquiring a taste for it and certainly do not want to return to the old situation. This attitude on the part of the general public might perhaps encourage further simplification and cost reductions.

3. INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

I am not afraid to use clichés here. So: we live in an information society. There is a large and constantly growing market for good, fast information. Information on trade is vital to the economy. Knowledge of opportunities and possibilities gives the players on the economic stage an advantage in business. Maximum information is desirable in order to conclude lucrative deals. For decades, international trade statistics have done good service here. And they still can in the years ahead, provided they match the needs of the trading partners involved in the import and export of goods.

Where official international trade statistics are deliberately or inadvertently lacking, there is soon competition from people offering alternatives. Private entrepreneurs fill the gap left by the statistical services. We can see this, for example, in the field of individual information on creditworthiness. Private data banks provide specific data on individual companies to supplement the information on general financial standing or creditworthiness available from official sources.

However, it is not true that official statistics ought to cover all demand in any sector. Government statistics need not offer information on anything and everything. Apart from the market served by public agencies there is also a market for private services. Official statistics are a public service. I put it to you that official statistics should only be supplied where private operators are unable or unwilling to provide the service. In the case of international trade statistics, the aim is to produce fast, reliable information on the national macro-economic situation. It is not feasible or worthwhile for private operators to produce these statistics. They could probably achieve some success on the market in micro-economic information. Private operators can meet the demand for information on products and regions. In the long term, official European international trade statistics will only be retained if they can show that they have their uses in the macro-economic segment of the information market.

When looking into the future, we should also consider the allocation of roles between Eurostat and the statistical services of the Member States. At the moment, 15 Member States supply Eurostat with jigsaw puzzle pieces and this supranational statistical service has to put them together. When it finds that the pieces do not fit, there is little it can do. Eurostat is not in a position to improve the figures itself. Take a situation in which the Netherlands reports exports of bananas worth x million euros to Germany. But Germany reports imports from the Netherlands at half that figure. An external expert might have an opinion on that. That person works for Eurostat or is consulted by Eurostat. According to current attitudes, Germany or the Netherlands would regard a correction by Eurostat as a rebuke. There is little chance of such a decision being accepted, given the current international view of the sovereignty of national statistical services.

No statistical service likes to be corrected, but it is a fact that figures can be interpreted better from a different context. In the case of the international trade statistics we have not reached the point where we accept interference, let alone welcome it. But can we persist in this rigid attitude and also fail to respond adequately to the inconsistencies and errors pointed out in the statistics?

In short, I see three main existential questions for European international trade statistics. How can we meet the future need for information? Where do you draw the line between public statistics and private provision of information? How are roles to be allocated between the statistical services of the EU and the Member States?

4. THINK UP NEW IDEAS!

In a new situation, routine reactions will often be inadequate. Learned responses and tried and tested reflexes have less effect once the environment changes significantly. And the old set of responses is also inadequate in a radically transformed statistical environment. The recent lesson on the free movement of goods (1993) demonstrates that once again. It also shows that the lesson is not an easy one to learn. Although things went very wrong, hardly any fundamental conclusions have been drawn. And it seems very difficult to arrive at common conclusions. The 15 Member States plus Eurostat have their own ideas, which are difficult to reconcile.

The committee of expert statisticians, the Methods Committee, talks a lot of sense, but members often do not agree. One reason is that the countries involved arrive at different ideas at different times.

Some proposals go too far for one and not far enough for another. Furthermore, different languages are used and even after translation that still hampers proper understanding.

In the groups of experts and working parties which come under the Methods Committee, communication is somewhat better. These groups are on a smaller scale. They examine problems and devise solutions. They take their time and therefore give the Member States the opportunity to think. Understanding can mature. However, there are also drawbacks to the smaller scale. There is no automatic, broadly based support for the group's proposals, and the general consultation has yet to begin. That consultation may later reveal that the proposals are unlikely to receive sufficient support from society as a whole. Another danger lies in the degree to which groups of experts and working parties can be influenced. The size and composition of the groups makes it easier for conclusions to be steered in a particular direction. If that direction differs from the course intended by the majority, the groups do not really aid communication.

Perhaps a new idea would offer a way out. The present forms of consultation hamper alert, appropriate responses. When other countries join the EU shortly, consultation will become even more difficult. NB: we are not assuming any unwillingness, only a lack of understanding, or understanding developing at different rates.

How can we get over this impasse? Is it time for a think-tank? A small group with authority that identifies where we are going wrong and points the way to salvation? I do not see myself as a great European expert or authority, but perhaps I can prompt a brainstorm among the real experts with the following future scenarios.

5. SCENARIOS

Predictions are difficult to make, especially looking far ahead. But before we move on in this section, we need to put things in context. Some possible developments are outlined below for European international trade statistics, but I am not hoping to become famous for predicting the future. It may be interesting, amusing and possibly embarrassing to bring out these scenarios again in 10 years' time. In the context of this report, they are merely intended to stimulate the reader, who should think about the feasibility of the future scenarios put forward and compare them with his own ideas. It is this sort of mental exercise that helps international trade statistics prepare for the future. That future will be different from anything we can imagine now. And it will certainly be different from today's reality.

5.1. Now

At the moment, the Member States of the European Union produce national statistics on international trade. Each month they pass on this statistical information to Eurostat, the statistical service of the European Union. In some respects the information produced nationally differs from what is supplied to Eurostat. The definitions used by Eurostat for its statistics differ from the national concepts. These discrepancies have little effect on the macro-economic results, though for some types of goods there is a noticeable deviation. As a rule, the differences between national statistics on international trade are also small at macro level, but sometimes considerable for certain products.

In international trade statistics, the intra-EU element of goods flows is distinguished from the extra-EU element. The statistics on trade in goods between EU Member States are commonly known as Intrastat statistics. By the same token, Extrastat is about statistics on trade in goods between EU and non-EU countries. Now that internal customs borders have been abolished, there is, strictly speaking, no longer any import or export of goods between Member States, because the terms 'import' and 'export' were reserved for goods entering or leaving free circulation. In the EU there is a single free market in goods. We now refer to 'purchase' and 'supply' when we are talking about trade between Member States. These words have not become accepted in everyday language. Import and export are still the terms normally used for international trade in goods in general.

Regulations 1736/75 and 3330/91 lay down strict rules on the information that the Member States must collect and pass on to Eurostat each month. For the observer in 1998, the details of these Regulations raise many questions. For example: Why is everything described in such detail, including the collection of data in the Member States? Would it not have been sufficient to give a broad definition of the statistics and the obligation to supply information to Eurostat? Conservatism is rumoured to be the main reason why these Regulations have thwarted effective action since 1993.

Eurostat uses the national statistics received each month to compile its European reports, amalgamating the Member States' statistics and producing a report on trade in Europe (Intrastat) and trade outside Europe (Extrastat). As regards incoming information, time is a constant problem for the European statistical service, as there are always countries which have to contend with incidental difficulties, and Eurostat always has to wait for the last one. It is the last country that determines when the data are complete and the figures can be added up.

Thus, Eurostat publishes and quotes from national sources. Once the trade figures have been added together, contradictions may emerge in the Intrastat section, because the Member States record their mutual trade twice. This reveals the defects in the present statistical observation system. International discrepancies can be identified in these 'mirror' statistics. The differences in quality compared to the foreign trade statistics before 1993 are also apparent.

5.2. Eurostat as editor-in-chief

In the preceding section I described the current situation. But of course it could be different. For example, Eurostat could conceivably give up waiting for the last report to come in. It could also interpret the figures instead of quoting them literally. Rather than quoting dual sets of observations, for example, it might in future present intra-EU trade according to its own view. It might report on the intra- and extra-EU trade which it considers has taken place.

For some Member States, this looks like a judgment on the quality of their international trade statistics. In contrast, others might be used to comparing their own results with those of other statistical services. In many countries, the national accounts serve as a framework for consolidation, for integrating but above all harmonising divergent figures. The export of goods has to tally with output, imports, consumption/investment and stocks.

The national accounts are a suitable framework for testing the quality of the different sets of statistics. A comparable framework will have to be developed at supranational level. It will be based on the separate sets of international trade statistics which are amalgamated into mirror statistics. These are figures obtained by straightforward addition. It is double-entry book-keeping without any quality guarantee for the individual figures.

The mirror statistics can be considerably enhanced by qualitative assessment of the two overlapping observations. Discussion of the reliability of the separate flows of goods will be fruitful and stimulating for the experts concerned. Comparison is instructive. Countries with weak figures are not quoted so often. They are sure to enter into discussion with Eurostat and the statistical services of their trading partners in the EU. An effort will be made to convince Eurostat that they are equally good, or otherwise improvements will be made in the statistical observation. In either case, the taxpayer and users of statistics will benefit.

Processing the mirror statistics into a single set of statistics in which the dual observation is converted to a single observation is the next step. The two versions of one flow of goods are converted to a single figure. The two sets of statistics available are used as the source. The conversion is also backed by information on the characteristics of the two sets of statistics. Other sources may be useful here, too; for example, transport and production statistics might be used in this exercise.

5.3. Single observation

Duplicate observation of trade between Member States can be easily eliminated by halving the international trade statistics. Observation of one trade flow per Member State is sufficient. One might choose to observe exports: information on them is often the easiest to acquire. The national survey agency can readily contact the entrepreneur who usually knows most about the transaction in question. In contrast, people asking about imports often come up against problems of distance and time. The origin or source of imported goods is harder to identify than the ultimate destination of exported goods.

Moreover, the choice between observing imports or exports is not central to the problem of single observation. The advantages and disadvantages of single observation have already been described on many occasions. There are examples of its use in practice (US-Canada, Belgium-Netherlands). The analyses need to be updated. Plans must of course be geared to the current situation in the EU.

The heart of the problem is that, in principle, we depend on other nations to provide national information. To obtain a prompt and reliable picture of national exports and imports, we are dependent on fourteen Member States. Appraisal of all the other advantages and disadvantages is overshadowed by this one: (in)dependence.

Single observation forms the subject of one of the SLIM studies to be conducted in the next few years. The pros and cons are bound to be examined at length in the report. I shall therefore confine myself here to mentioning this option without going into too much detail.

5.4. Eurostat as a survey agency

Why should all those Member States go on making individual contact with the undertakings which largely determine the end result of the international trade statistics? Surely it would be far more efficient to adopt a central approach? Decide on a single format for a questionnaire with the necessary legal basis and question only the undertakings which have a substantial impact on the overall picture.

Eurostat conducts the survey itself. The Member States abandon their Intrastat

observations. Eurostat questions 50,000 undertakings with the highest turnover in Europe. As a rule, it receives the completed questionnaires in electronic form. Eurostat receives most of the information each month by telephone, or on diskette and tape. Selecting the largest European undertakings means that the most modern data media can be used. Questionnaires on paper become a curiosity. Late and incomplete data from the 50,000 are supplemented by statistical techniques. Eurostat estimates the missing data.

The advantages are enormous. Undertakings whose trade is irrelevant are released from the obligation to submit returns. At a rough guess, the Intrastat system will no longer apply to a million businesses. In fifteen Member States the department producing the international trade statistics can be cut by at least half. Given a return date of three weeks from the end of the reporting month and another three weeks' production time, it would be possible to issue a press release on intra-EU trade within two months. That is an attractive prospect for users of rapid macro-information. Advocates of simplified administrative requirements will also welcome this idea.

5.5. Free market in statistics

Government is withdrawing from various areas. It is making plenty of room for private institutions and undertakings to take over the work. This is happening among both national and supranational authorities in Europe. We can therefore ask whether the borderline between public and private statistics should not also be redrawn.

Progressive privatisation is promoted by many politicians They say that good products depend on sufficient competition. A stimulus is necessary to encourage efficiency. Competition is also worth considering in the case of activities which have hitherto been largely the preserve of the public sector. The conclusion may be that competition is also desirable in the case of statistics.

As a rule, statistical services confine themselves to information of general interest. Private research agencies concentrate on market segments with more specific characteristics and customer requirements. In the past, international trade statistics kept fairly close to the territory of the private agencies. In many countries, [public] statistical services actually provide services which are reserved for private enterprises elsewhere. Now that the time is ripe to review the core tasks, many people are saying that statistical services should cater mainly for the general interest. If requests for information can be met by private enterprises, then the government - in this case the official statistical service - withdraws. Catering for the specific requirements of customers seeking information is not then regarded as a core task for the government. Market information is a retail product supplied by private enterprises. Government statistics are presented as a collective service provided for all citizens by public agencies.

Anyone who readily endorses that may be prepared to think on it further. Would it not be possible for private statistical undertakings to take on the intra-EU trade statistics? Eurostat puts out a call for tenders and awards the contract for the Intrastat survey and publications to the best bidder. The Member States abandon their activities in this field and Eurostat Directorate C has far less to worry about. Eurostat acts as the client and receives the report, which naturally meets the set specifications.

5.6. Extrastat only

In the Europe of the future, intra-EU trade will be more like domestic sales than foreign trade. This concerns trade between businesses in different Member States. Such transactions will generally be settled in the same currency under the rules of one and the same tax system. These transactions are therefore more like a part of sales. Goods flows could therefore be seen as part of sales statistics, for example. More on this in the next section.

Having concluded that Intrastat belongs with sales, the next question is what to do with Extrastat. In the European Union, it is only Extrastat that still seems to fit the concept of international trade. One could therefore simply decide to give up observing intra-EU trade, producing international trade statistics on extra-EU trade only.

There are several ways of working out extra-EU statistics. We might adopt the current method of collection by the Member States in the first instance, with figures being forwarded to Eurostat. We have had ample experience of national collection followed by central collection at Eurostat. It works well, but has the disadvantage that availability of the final result is delayed. The total costs are also considerable. On the other hand, the costs are lower if Eurostat itself collects the figures direct from businesses in the Member States. A centralised European approach also speeds things up. It cuts out the middle-men, the national statistical services. Combining statistical functions also produces economies of scale.

5.7. Sales statistics

In the Europe of the future, we shall regard goods flows which currently come under Intrastat as more like domestic sales than foreign trade. Intrastat is therefore regarded as part of sales, which is why it could form part of the sales statistics.

Surveys are conducted to ask businesses about their sales. They also provide information on the breakdown between domestic and foreign sales, distinguishing in the case of foreign sales between EU and non-EU.

Perhaps, then, we can finally agree on a single nomenclature for sales statistics and trade statistics. It is deplorable that two major sets of statistics use two different nomenclatures. Both are required pursuant to European Regulations. Historians might just consider how that could be. Statisticians should concern themselves with rectifying this flaw as quickly as possible as far as Europe is concerned.

Also, it is not only businesses' sales of goods that we need to break down, but also the types of services. There has long been widespread demand for the development of service statistics. The worldwide provision of services is expanding rapidly without the nature of that growth being sufficiently understood.

Extending sales statistics to include questions which break down domestic and foreign sales in more detail need not in itself make the survey more burdensome. The addition of questions concerning the volume of services should not add to the burden either. If there is any danger of that, then it is worth considering reducing the burden elsewhere so that the increase in the administrative burden on undertakings in the survey is virtually balanced out. One way of achieving that is to reduce the frequency, which is at present monthly. We might consider devising a quarterly system of statistics.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this report was to provoke a response. As a group, the statisticians who work on international trade statistics do not outwardly present a progressive image. With the future scenarios set out above, I have tried to show that the people responsible for international trade statistics cannot rest on their laurels. They will be facing many challenges demanding an appropriate response. It will take not only imagination but also courage to find answers to new developments. Sitting around and taking no action will mean disaster. We know that from recent history. There are some splendid challenges for fresh young blood and for older people with energy and enthusiasm. The challenges offer an excellent chance to improve the standing of a professional group and restore the image of international trade statistics. Surely we are not going to repeat the mistakes of 1993?

FOREIGN TRADE STATISTICS AND EMU REQUIREMENTS

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This paper sets out the requirements for foreign trade statistics in Stage Three of Monetary Union. The first part provides information on the overall framework of the statistical requirements of the European Central Bank in Stage Three. Descriptions of statistical competence, co-operation with other organisations and the internal organisation of the European System of Central Banks are given. The second part presents the European Central Bank's requirements with regard to foreign trade statistics.

INTRODUCTION

'Nothing is more important for monetary policy than good statistics' (1). Hence the Treaty on European Union requires the European Central Bank (ECB) to collect, with the assistance of the national central banks (NCBs), the statistical information needed for the implementation of the single monetary policy. The focus of the policy responsibilities of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) will be the single currency area as a whole.

The first part of this paper provides information on the overall framework of the statistical requirements of the ECB in Stage Three. Statistical competence, co-operation with other organisations and the internal organisation of the ESCB are described. The second part presents the ECB's requirements with regard to foreign trade statistics.

STATISTICAL COMPETENCE OF THE ECB

Article 5.1 of the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and of the European Central Bank states that the ECB will collect the statistics necessary in order to undertake the tasks of the ESCB. In addition, and in accordance with Article 5.3, the ECB undertakes to contribute to the harmonisation, where necessary, of the collection, compilation and distribution of statistics in the areas within its fields of competence.

The ECB will assume full competence for money and banking statistics at the European level from the start of Stage Three. Balance of payments statistics and financial accounts statistics are fields for which the ECB and the European Commission will have shared competence. Price and government finance statistics are of vital interest to the ESCB, but will lie within the competence of the European Commission. A wide range of other economic statistics will be monitored closely by the ECB but are also the responsibility of the European Commission.

STATISTICAL CO-OPERATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL IN STAGE THREE

Article 5.1 of the ESCB/ECB Statute requires the ECB to co-operate with Community institutions in carrying out its statistical tasks. Close co-operation will be especially necessary in the areas of shared competence and where the ECB has a vital interest. There is close contact between the European Monetary Institute (EMI) and the European Commission (EUROSTAT), often involving NCBs and national statistical institutes, via the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics, cross-membership of working groups and task forces, participation in international statistical forums and bilateral meetings. This is essential if good quality, clearly expressed and fully consistent statistics covering the euro area and the European Union as a whole are to be compiled in an economical and timely fashion.

(1) 'The statistical requirements for Monetary Union', European Monetary Institute, July 1996.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

As far as the organisation of statistical work within the ESCB in Monetary Union is concerned, Article 5.2 of the ESCB/ECB Statute states that the NCBs should carry out this task, to the extent possible. To provide the statistics necessary for the ESCB to perform its functions, the NCBs will collect data relating to their national territory within a common framework, aggregate the data, and send the aggregates to the ECB, where statistics covering the euro area will be compiled. While the ECB will take the lead in developing statistical concepts, the NCBs will continue to be involved at the conceptual stage, since they will retain considerable expertise in statistical matters, remain close to the reporting agents, and continue to be responsible for data collection, as far as possible.

STATISTICAL REQUIREMENTS

The new statistical requirements for Stage Three of Monetary Union established by the EMI and - where appropriate - in consultation with the Commission were set out in 1996. An overall timetable for the implementation of the statistical requirements for Stage Three was drawn up and the detailed statistical requirements for the definition and implementation of the single monetary policy and foreign exchange operations were presented.

The requirements concern four broad groups of statistics which are interrelated to some extent, namely:

1) money and banking statistics;
2) balance of payments statistics;
3) financial and related statistics, including quarterly and annual Monetary Union Financial Accounts (but excluding money and banking and balance of payments statistics); and
4) statistics on prices and costs and background economic statistics.

For all these statistics, the ECB's requirements relate to definitions, breakdowns, timeliness and frequency.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DATA REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of the future ECB for balance of payments data are outlined below. The Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) has also formulated requirements in relation to balance of payments statistics and foreign trade data; however, those requirements are not discussed here.

The ECB will compile a balance of payments for the single currency area as a whole, i.e. a balance of payments for Monetary Union as a whole vis-à-vis the Rest of the World. The ECB will require balance of payments statistics at three different frequencies: monthly, quarterly and annually. Also International Investment Position data on an annual are required. The aim is to produce a monthly balance of payments for the single currency area showing the main items affecting monetary conditions and exchange markets and, in addition, a quarterly/annual balance of payments to enable the further analysis of external transactions to be carried out. The scope, underlying concepts and implementation timetables for the monthly balance of payments statistics will be different to those for quarterly/annual statistics.

For the purposes of monetary policy and foreign exchange operations, the ECB's requirements with regard to the *monthly* balance of payments for the single currency area are confined to broad categories of transactions known as key items. The primary reason for this is that Member States have only six weeks after the end of the reporting period within which to produce highly aggregated data. Some deviation from international guidelines is permitted.

In contrast to the quarterly and annual requirements, recording on a full accruals basis is not required for monthly data and Member States may instead provide data for the Current and Financial Account on a settlement basis. The ECB will need to receive key items from the Member States for the monthly balance of payments which will be suitable for the compilation of an aggregate balance of payments for the single currency area. The key items will be required on a net basis from mid-March 1998 (January 1998 data) and from mid-March 1999 (January 1999 data). Credits and debits/assets and liabilities and a split into MUMS/non-MUMS and EMU assets/EMU liabilities will be required. These key items will be required within six weeks of the end of the reference month. The collection of data from reporting agents will be organised by the national authorities with this deadline in mind. Estimates or preliminary data will also be acceptable if this would enable Member States to meet the specified six-week deadline.

The aim of the monthly balance of payments statistics will be to form a clear picture of developments in the most important and variable items, and to do so quickly enough for this to be of use for monetary policy purposes. The information must be of sufficient quality to be useful and not misleading to users, i.e.

policy-makers, but it is understood that some rough edges will inevitably remain owing to the strict deadline by which these data will have to be submitted.

The ECB will require *quarterly* details within three months of the end of the quarter to which the data relate. These data will need to be in such a form as to enable an aggregated balance of payments to be compiled for the single currency area. Quarterly data will be required with effect from June 1999 (for first quarter 1999 data), with a split between Monetary Union Member States and the Rest of the World. The same will apply to annual data, which will be required with effect from March 1999 (1998 data).

The ECB will also compile an International Investment Position. The aim is to have an (annual) statement of the external assets and liabilities of the single currency area as a whole, for the purposes of monetary policy and exchange market analysis, and to assist in the compilation of balance of payments flows.

FOREIGN TRADE DATA REQUIREMENTS

The European Commission (EUROSTAT) has full responsibility for foreign trade statistics while the ECB is the only institution to compile a monthly balance of payments. Aggregate trade data will form an essential part of the monthly balance of payments statistics to be compiled by the ECB. As the monthly balance of payments key items will be used as an important tool for monetary policy purposes in Stage Three of Monetary Union, the data will have to be made available very rapidly. Strictly speaking, the ECB's data requirements only cover extra-Monetary Union data and therefore exclude all intra-Monetary Union transactions. Only extra-Monetary Union foreign trade data will be required by the ECB.

Nevertheless, the ECB will take a strong interest in intra-Monetary Union foreign trade (i.e. INTRASTAT) data for statistical compilation reasons. Unless or until the composition of Monetary Union becomes identical to that of the European Union, foreign trade between Monetary Union Member States and those EU Member States not participating in Monetary Union will form part of extra-Monetary Union foreign trade. The main concerns of the EMI regarding intra-EU trade, from the point of view of compiling a monthly Monetary Union Balance of Payments, relate to the availability and quality of data (2).

Owing to the delays in receiving INTRASTAT data, most EU Member States are as yet unable to provide timely monthly balance of payments statistics with a split between Monetary Union Member States and the Rest of the World. The time-lags concerned may be as large as twenty weeks. For trade data with a geographical breakdown - which will be needed in order to make the distinction required from 1999 onwards between Monetary Union Member States and non-Monetary Union Member States - the delays are even longer. In spite of recent improvements, there are still long delays in many of the Member States.

Following studies conducted by EUROSTAT, the quality of the INTRASTAT data has been found to be questionable. The main problems arising from a balance of payments compilation point of view lie in: 1) the high non-response rate of the enterprises responsible for providing trade data; and 2) the large discrepancies discovered in the mirror data on trade between Member States (i.e. one country's imports from a Member State do not match the corresponding information from the exporting country). A significant undervaluation of arrivals in relation to dispatches has been discovered. The problems identified with regard to the quality of INTRASTAT data may have an impact on the Monetary Union aggregated balance of payments item 'Errors and Omissions'.

For the ECB it will be essential to improve the timeliness of intra-Monetary Union foreign trade data. A possible solution for the ECB would be to accept other sources, such as early estimates or settlement data. An investigation should be carried out to look at possible ways in which the provision of INTRASTAT data could be accelerated by means of improving processing methods and efficiency.

(2) For more details, see EUROSTAT's 'Report from the SLIM/INTRASTAT Team', 21 October 1996, and the 'EUROSTAT Newsletter Edicom-INTRASTAT 2/1995'.

THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK SLIM / INTRASTAT

(SIMPLIFICATION OF LEGISLATION)

In the 1997 / 2 issue of the Newsletter a brief summary was given of the state of play regarding the two SLIM / INTRASTAT proposals for amending the basic INTRASTAT regulation, which were presented by the Commission in the beginning of June 1997.
One proposal is aims at reducing the number of optional data elements collected, and the other is focuses on simplifications concerning the application of the nomenclature.

1. INTERNAL MARKET COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 1997

At the Internal Market Council meeting last November a political agreement was reached regarding the two proposals.

As far as the reduction in data elements were concerned the presidency of Luxembourg succeeded in establishing strong support for a compromise. Where this the optional data elements port of loading/unloading and port of transhipment are to be deleted. To ease the burdens on SMEs a threshold should be introduced for the collection of mode of transport and the terms of delivery.

Regarding nomenclature it was agreed that the Combined Nomenclature should (continue to) be the single nomenclature for intra and extra-Community trade statistics. Furthermore it was decided that computer tools should be developed to facilitate the classification of goods including a list of the commercial terminology used by enterprises. An explicit reference to the simplification of the CN in the framework of the SLIM/CN project was also made.

2. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S REACTION

On 19 March, 1998 the European Parliament's commission on economic, monetary and industrial affairs presented its report on the two INTRASTAT proposals. The report was adopted unanimously, and the amendments proposed by the EP was adopted at the plenary session 1 April, 1998.

The report supports the proposals of the Commission. However, it was emphasized that a further reduction of the burdens on businesses, in particular the SMEs, was necessary.

The majority of amendments (6 out of 8) concerned the considerations.

The two amendments concerned with the articles introduced a considerable reduction of optional data elements including a thresholds for the SMEs, and from these enterprises no collection of optional data elements would take place from the year 2000. Contrary to the Commission's proposal the EP proposed to maintain the information on region of origin / destination due to the importance of this information for some countries.

In respect of nomenclature it was proposed that the CN should be the single nomenclature in intra and extra trade statistics. However, for certain goods not all 8 digits of the commodity code would be needed but only the first 6 digits corresponding to the Harmonised System (HS). The way to apply this simplication - in general or sectorwise - should be determined by the Commission, but a partnership between users, providers and national administrations would play an important consultative role.

3. THE COMMISSION'S REACTION

At the EP's plenary session (31 March, 1998) Commissioner Mr. de Silguy stated that the Commission found the amendments of the EP useful and relevant in the sense that they reinforced the simplification impact of the Commission's initial proposal. The Commission intended therefore to incorporate all of the amendments in its amended proposal except the immediate deletion of the terms of delivery. For this data item a transition period should be introduced allowing the Member States to adapt their statistical systems.

4. COUNCIL MEETING APRIL 1998

On 27 April, 1998 the Council's working group for economic questions examined the Commission's amended proposal, which was presented in the light of the amendments proposed by the EP.

The Council rejected with unanimity the amended proposal, and repeated its strong support of the political agreement reached at the Internal Market Council meeting last November.

This agreement will form the basis of a common position which is now under preparation, and which will be adopted soon.

It has been proposed that the Council proposal be applied as of 1 January 1999, however, with the possibility of a transition period of up to two years for Member States in which significant changes of computer systems are needed.

5. STEPS TO COME

The well informed reader may already know that the INTRASTAT proposals are subject to the codecision procedure. This explains the strong involvement of the EP, and the "ping-pong game" between the institutions.

The next step of the procedure will be the formal adoption of the common position of the Council.

The Council will then present to the European Parliament its arguments for rejecting the Commission's amended proposal, and will draw attention to the common position, i.e. the proposal of November last year.

The Commission is, however, also expected to present its position to the EP regarding the Council's proposal.

The EP's reaction to the Council proposal will determine the timetable of the following steps. The EP has in principle 3 month to react. It may accept the common position, reject it or propose amendments during its second reading.

Futher EP amendments could mean a conciliation procedure between Council and EP with the Commission acting as a mediator.

With this outlook, simplifications for enterprises are not round the corner. Agreement between the institutions will probably not be reached until some time in 1999.

EU TRADE BALANCE: WHICH IS THE BEST FIGURE?

Recently, users have contacted Eurostat because of large discrepancies in trade figures published by Eurostat compared with those published in the OECD Economic Outlook (see annex: table 47 in OECD Economic Outlook, 62 December 1997). In this table, for 1996, a **surplus of 164,0 bn US$** is reported for the EU whereas Eurostat published in foreign trade statistics an EU trade balance of **55,4 bn US$** for the same period.

Who is right? Of course, the answer should not be too difficult - probably a printing error. A cross-check in the data bases of other international organisations should provide a quick answer. The result of this exercise: IMF(DOTS) offers a EU trade balance of **107,3 bn US$** and UNSD (COMTRADE) one of **110,2 US$** (UNSD). Well, not only our less experienced users are bit confused. Should one calculate just the mean of all these figures in order to get a good approximation of what could be the real value? More time - which users normally cannot afford - was necessary to clarify the case. There are three dimensions which have been identified and which are presented as follows:

1. CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

What is not discernible at first glance is the fact that the 160 bn US$ published by OECD has been calculated according to the BOP concept. A clear reference to the concept used would help to avoid false interpretation. Only the External indicators tables included in the different country reports allow us to assume that the trade balance figures in the annex have been calculated according to the BOP concept as such figures are shown together with invisibles, net and current account.

One part of the observed discrepancy can be explained by conceptual differences. How significant could this part be? The following tables indicate the differences between BOP data (OECD, Economic Outlook) and foreign trade statistics data (OECD Series A and COMEXT); in the first table (OECD/OECD) in 6 of the 14 declarant countries the trade balances differ by less than 3 bn US$, in another 6 countries the differences range between 3 and 6 bn US$. Only for France and Italy higher differences (9,7 and 17 bn US$) have been noticed. This picture does not change very much when comparing OECD BOP with COMEXT data. The total difference due to change of concept amounts to 50,7 bn US$ in the OECD/OECD comparison and to 66,7 bn US$ in the OECD/COMEXT comparison. The EU 15 total in COMEXT (97,4 bn US$) differs from the above mentioned 55,4 bn US$ because of the aggregation method used (see next paragraph).

1996 *(Bn US$)*

	OECD B.O.P.	*OECD Series A*	*Absolute difference*
EU-15	**164.1**	**113.4**	**50.7**
Belg.Lux	9.1	13.6	4.5
Denmark	7.6	6.1	1.5
Germany	71.3	68.2	3.1
Greece	-15.6	-15.7	0.1
Spain	-14.9	-19.9	5.0
France	15.0	5.3	9.7
Ireland	15.2	12.4	2.8
Italy	60.7	43.7	17
Netherlands	20.0	16.4	3.6
Austria	-4.7	-10.3	5.6
Portugal	-9.6	-10.2	0.6
Finland	11.1	9.7	1.4
Sweden	18.6	18.9	0.3
United K.	-19.7	-25.0	5.3

1996 *(Bn US$)*

	OECD B.O.P.	*Special trade Intra adjusted*	*Absolute difference*
EU-15	**164.1**	**97.4**	**66.7**
Belg.Lux	9.1	10.3	1.2
Denmark	7.6	6.1	1.5
Germany	71.3	65.5	5.8
Greece	-15.6	-15.7	0.1
Spain	-14.9	-18.6	3.7
France	15.0	2.4	12.6
Ireland	15.2	13.9	1.3
Italy	60.7	44.0	16.7
Netherlands	20.0	12.9	7.1
Austria	-4.7	-10.3	5.6
Portugal	-9.6	-10.6	1.0
Finland	11.1	9.7	1.4
Sweden	18.6	18.0	0.6
United K.	-19.7	-30.2	10.5

NB: Bn = 1000 million

2. AGGREGATION METHOD USED

If the trade balance for the EU is calculated by aggregating the individual trade balances of Member States (intra + extra-Community trade) the resulting figure should be close to the figure calculated by aggregating just the individual extra-Community trade balances of the Member States. In fact the intra-Community trade balance should ideally be close to 0 or slightly negative due to cif/fob valuation differences. However, the Intrastat collection system is far from perfect and produces an intra-Community trade surplus of nearly 60 bn US$ in 1996. Obviously, this amount, which represents the error in intra-Community trade statistics, should not be taken into account when establishing the trade balance for the EU as a whole.

This is true not only for trade balances established according to ITS but also for those established according to the BOP concept, as for these a large majority of Member States use foreign trade statistics to calculate the goods items of the current account.

Thus, the difference of more than 100 bn US$ between the OECD figure and Eurostat's figure for the EU trade balance is partly explained by the conceptual difference and partly by the aggregation method used. The trade balance for the EU as a whole is published by Eurostat foreign trade statistics on the basis of extra-Community trade. This explains also the difference with the IMF and COMTRADE figures which have been obtained by aggregating intra and extra-Community flows.

3. DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN TRADE STATISTICS

Depending on the aggregation method used, the EU trade balance (according to the ITS concept) vary in the various data bases as follows (extraction date 29.1.1998):

EU trade balance in 1996 (in Bn US$)

	extra	intra + extra
IMF:	46.6	107.3
COMTRADE:	38.3	110.2
OECD:	n.a.	113.4
COMEXT:	55.4	110.9
COMEXT rev.:	40.7	97.4

In general the differences are quite small, and even astonishingly small if one takes into account existing methodological differences (e.g. general/ special trade, country of origin/ of consignment, transit movements). The revised COMEXT figure for 1996 takes into account the change in the definition of the statistical territory of the EU, which includes since 1.1.1997 the French Overseas Departments and the Canary Islands, as well as French trade in military goods.

In conclusion, none of the figures mentioned in the first two paragraphs can be considered as accurate. **But a surplus of about 40 bn US$ can be considered at present as the best figure available for the EU trade balance in 1996** (according to the special trade concept and cif import/fob export valuation).

ADDENDUM

Trade flows by declarant country

The main purpose of this paper was to clarify the situation regarding the EU trade balance. However, the relatively small discrepancies observed for the EU trade balance as a whole in the different data bases (for the same aggregation method) masks the fact that at the level of declarant Member State as well as the break-down by intra and extra-Community trade large differences occur. In some cases explanations could be found (e.g. country of origin/ of consignment, transit, etc.); nevertheless there remain a series of questions, as for example:

1. Differing intra/extra break-down:

It is known that the COMEXT intra/extra trade break-down is slightly different from the COMTRADE break-down (e.g. because of country of consignment used in intra trade); but why is the IMF break-down different from COMTRADE (and from COMEXT)?

1996: EU15	COMTRADE	COMEXT	IMF
extra exports	38.60%	36.60%	42.40%
extra imports	38.80%	36.40%	42.80%

2. Differing totals:

Why are IMF EU 15 totals 46.4 Bn US$ (exports) and 52.5 Bn US$ (imports) higher than the corresponding totals in OECD, Series A?

3. Differing intra/extra break-down, equal totals:

E.g. UK total exports(1996) amounts to about 259 Bn US$ in all three data bases;

however, why are there different intra / extra exports figures (e.g. UK extra exports COMTRADE: 112.6, COMEXT: 109.4, IMF: 131.8)?

4. Differing totals:

E.g. France: total imports of France (1996) are 276.2 Bn US$ in COMTRADE, 279.1 OECD,Series A, 288.4 in IMF(DOTS) and 301.5 in COMEXT.

OCDE, Economic Outlook, 62, Dec. 1997
Annex Table 47. Trade balances

(Bn $)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997*	1998*	1999*
United States	-25.5	-28.0	-36.5	-67.1	-112.5	-122.2	-145.1	-159.6	-127.0	-115.2	-109.0	-74.1	-96.1	-132.6	-166.2	-173.6	-191.2	-201.3	-235.7	-252.2
Japan	2.1	20.0	18.1	31.5	44.3	54.3	89.8	91.5	92.2	80.0	69.4	96.1	124.5	139.3	144.1	131.2	83.6	98.9	112.9	118.6
Germany	7.5	15.2	24.1	19.4	21.6	27.8	54.2	67.5	76.4	75.0	69.2	19.0	27.9	41.2	50.9	65.0	71.3	78.0	93.7	108.8
France	-14.0	-10.1	-15.5	-8.0	-4.4	-5.0	-1.4	-7.8	-7.6	-10.3	-13.1	-9.5	2.4	7.2	7.1	11.0	15.0	29.8	38.3	44.1
Italy	-15.9	-10.8	-7.9	-1.7	-5.1	-5.5	4.7	0.2	-0.7	-1.7	0.9	-0.2	3.2	33.1	35.5	44.7	60.7	54.6	57.3	60.7
United Kingdom	3.2	6.5	3.3	-2.3	-7.1	-4.3	-14.0	-18.9	-38.2	-40.4	-33.4	-18.1	-23.0	-20.2	-17.0	-18.3	-19.7	-20.6	-33.5	-36.4
Canada	7.9	5.5	15.1	14.2	15.7	11.9	7.2	9.2	8.8	6.5	9.5	6.1	7.5	9.9	14.1	24.6	30.1	19.4	19.5	22.4
Total of above countries	-34.7	-1.8	0.8	-14.2	-47.6	-43.0	-4.7	-18.0	3.9	-6.1	-6.5	19.3	46.4	77.9	68.5	84.7	49.8	58.9	52.5	66.1
Australia	1.4	-2.2	-2.1	0.0	-0.8	-1.0	-1.8	0.5	-0.6	-3.4	0.4	3.5	1.6	0.0	-3.2	-4.2	-0.9	2.0	-1.0	-1.5
Austria	-6.3	-4.5	-3.0	-3.2	-3.2	-3.1	-4.0	-4.8	-4.8	-5.5	-6.9	-8.6	-8.4	-7.3	-8.7	-5.1	-4.7	-4.2	-4.3	-4.4
Belgium-Luxembourg	-3.8	-3.5	-2.1	-0.6	-0.2	0.6	2.3	1.3	2.7	2.3	1.7	2.1	3.7	5.8	6.8	10.0	9.1	9.7	11.5	13.2
Czech Republic	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	-0.3	-0.9	-3.7	-6.0	-5.4	-5.1	-4.9
Denmark	-2.0	-0.9	-0.8	0.2	-0.2	-0.7	-1.1	0.8	1.9	2.4	4.9	4.7	7.0	7..7	7.4	6.8	7.6	6.3	7.8	8.7
Finland	-0.7	0.3	0.2	0.1	1.5	0.9	1.7	1.5	1.2	-0.2	0.7	2.3	3.8	6.3	7.5	12.3	11.1	9.9	10.9	11.6
Greece	-5.6	-5.4	-4.7	-4.3	-4.2	-5.0	-4.4	-5.4	-6.0	-7.3	-10.1	-10.0	-11.6	-10.5	-11.3	-14.6	-15.6	-15.7	-17.3	-18.9
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	-4.0	-3.7	-2.4	-2.7	-2.7	-2.9	-3.2
Iceland	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Ireland	-2.2	-2.2	-1.1	-0.2	0.3	0.6	1.1	2.6	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.3	7.0	8.1	9.3	13.5	15.2	16.0	17.6	19.5
Korea	-4.4	-3.6	-2.6	-1.8	-1.0	0.0	4.2	7.7	11.4	4.6	-2.0	-7.0	-2.1	1.9	-3.1	-4.7	-15.3	-5.7	-2.0	0.4
Mexico	-3.1	-3.9	7.0	14.1	13.2	8.4	5.0	8.8	2.6	0.4	-0.9	-7.3	-15.9	-13.5	-18.5	7.1	6.5	1.6	-2.4	-7.9
Netherlands	-0.2	5.6	6.2	5.5	6.6	6.7	7.6	6.2	10.0	9.8	11.9	11.9	12.3	17.0	18.8	21.1	20.0	17.8	20.4	22.8
New Zealand	0.3	0.2	-0.3	0.3	-0.5	0.0	0.1	0.6	2.1	1.0	0.9	2.1	1.6	1.7	1.4	0.9	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.5
Norway	1.9	3.0	2.3	4.4	5.2	4.8	-2.1	-0.7	-0.4	3.6	5.5	7.3	8.2	6.8	6.9	7.8	13.0	13.6	16.5	18.3
Poland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	-2.5	-0.9	-1.6	-7.9	-11.7	-14.5	-16.5
Portugal	-3.9	-6.9	-4.7	-2.9	-2.0	-1.4	-1.6	-3.5	-5.4	-4.8	-6.7	-7.7	-9.4	-8.0	-8.2	-9.0	-9.6	-9.3	-10.1	-11.0
Spain	-11.7	-10.0	-9.3	-7.7	-4.7	-4.8	-7.1	-13.6	-18.7	-25.5	-29.1	-30.4	-30.2	-14.9	-14.7	-17.6	-14.9	-12.5	-15.1	-17.5
Sweden	-2.2	0.1	-0.4	1.9	3.4	2.3	5.1	4.5	4.8	4.0	3.4	6.3	6.7	7.5	9.6	16.0	18.6	18.1	20.2	21.7
Switzerland	-5.0	-2.5	-1.3	-2.3	-2.3	-2.0	-2.0	-3.1	-3.2	-4.4	-3.5	-2.5	2.4	4.9	5.2	5.1	4.9	4.5	6.0	6.7
Turkey	-4.6	-3.9	-2.7	-3.0	-2.9	-3.0	-3.1	-3.2	-1.8	-4.2	-9.6	-7.3	-8.2	-14.2	-4.2	-13.2	-9.6	-9.5	-9.1	-8.9
Total of smaller countries	-52.0	-40.3	-19.5	0.7	7.9	-3.2	0.0	0.1	-0.2	-23.1	-35.4	-36.3	-31.2	-7.3	-4.3	24.7	19.3	23.0	27.1	28.5
Total OCDE	-86.8	-42.1	-18.7	-13.5	-39.7	-39.8	-4.7	-17.9	3.7	-29.2	-41.9	-17.0	15.2	70.6	64.2	109.5	69.0	81.9	79.6	94.6
Memorandum item European Union	-57.9	-26.6	-15.6	-3.9	2.1	9.0	43.0	30.5	19.4	1.8	-2.6	-33.9	-8.3	73.1	93.0	136.0	164.0	178.1	197.3	223.0

* Estimates and projections

1996 EU Trade Balances

(Bn US$)

	COMTRADE SITC Rev. 3	IMF	OECD B.O.P.	OECD Series A	Special trade Intra adjusted	Special trade Intra mirror
EU-15	**110.2**	**107.3**	**164.1**	**113.4**	**97.4**	**40.7**
Belgium-Lux	10.4	14.3	9.1	13.6	10.3	10.6
Denmark	5.8	6.2	7.6	6.1	6.1	6.5
Germany	68.3	68.3	71.3	68.2	65.5	42.5
Greece	*-15.7*	-17.3	-15.6	*-15.7*	-15.7	-16.8
Spain	-20.3	*-18.6*	-14.9	-19.9	-18.6	-21.0
France	7.8	-0.2	15.0	5.3	2.4	-8.8
Ireland	9.8	12.4	15.2	12.4	13.9	14.4
Italy	43.9	43.9	60.7	43.7	44.0	44.6
Netherlands	16.5	16.5	20.0	16.4	12.9	6.0
Austria	-9.4	-9.5	-4.7	*-10.3*	-10.3	-9.2
Portugal	-10.9	-10.3	-9.6	-10.2	-10.6	-12.6
Finland	9.7	9.2	11.1	9.7	9.7	9.8
Sweden	18.9	17.9	18.6	18.9	18.0	17.0
United Kingdom	-24.5	-25.3	-19.7	-25.0	-30.2	-36.6
Misc						-5.6

1996 EU Trade Data

(Bn US$)

	Extra EU-15			Intra EU-15			Total		
	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance
EU-15	**795.7**	**758.4**	**37.3**	**1 268.2**	**1 195.3**	**72.8**	**2 063.9**	**1 953.7**	**110.2**
Belgium-Lux	47.0	39.4	7.5	121.5	118.6	2.9	168.5	158.1	10.4
Denmark	18.9	13.1	5.8	30.0	30.0	0.0	48.9	43.1	5.8
Germany	222.6	199.3	23.4	290.1	245.1	44.9	512.7	444.4	68.3
Greece	*5.4*	*10.0*	*-4.6*	*5.9*	*16.9*	*-11.1*	*11.3*	*27.0*	*-15.7*
Spain	29.0	40.9	-11.9	72.0	80.4	-8.4	101.0	121.3	-20.3
France	102.9	100.3	2.6	181.1	175.9	5.3	284.0	276.2	7.8
Ireland	13.8	15.6	-1.8	31.8	20.2	11.6	45.6	35.8	9.8
Italy	111.6	81.0	30.6	139.2	125.9	13.3	250.8	207.0	43.9
Netherlands	50.9	66.3	-15.4	126.5	94.6	31.9	177.4	160.9	16.5
Austria	20.7	19.6	1.1	37.1	47.7	-10.5	57.8	67.3	-9.4
Portugal	4.7	8.3	-3.6	18.4	25.8	-7.4	23.2	34.1	-10.9
Finland	19.2	12.8	6.4	21.4	18.1	3.3	40.6	30.9	9.7
Sweden	36.4	19.8	16.6	46.5	44.2	2.3	82.9	64.0	18.9
United Kingdom	112.6	132.0	-19.3	146.7	151.9	-5.2	259.4	283.9	-24.5

Source - COMTRADE, SITC Rev. 3 (except Greece - EU Special trade + Intra trade adjusted)

(Bn US$)

	Extra EU-15			Intra EU-15			Total		
	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance
EU-15	**879.5**	**841.9**	**37.6**	**1 194.4**	**1 124.7**	**69.7**	**2 073.9**	**1 966.6**	**107.3**
Belgium-Lux	52.3	41.9	10.3	122.5	118.5	4.0	174.8	160.5	14.3
Denmark	17.7	13.2	4.5	29.4	27.7	1.7	47.1	40.9	6.2
Germany	241.3	214.0	27.3	271.6	230.6	41.0	512.8	444.5	68.3
Greece	4.5	9.3	-4.7	5.0	17.6	-12.6	9.6	26.9	-17.3
Spain	*29.5*	*36.4*	*-7.0*	*73.5*	*85.1*	*-11.6*	*102.9*	*121.5*	*-18.6*
France	129.5	131.4	-2.0	158.7	157.0	1.7	288.1	288.4	-0.2
Ireland	16.2	16.0	0.1	31.2	19.0	12.2	47.4	35.0	12.4
Italy	124.2	89.6	34.5	126.7	117.4	9.3	250.8	207.0	43.9
Netherlands	44.0	67.8	-23.8	133.5	93.2	40.3	177.4	161.0	16.5
Austria	22.0	20.6	1.4	35.8	46.7	-10.9	57.8	67.3	-9.5
Portugal	8.2	16.0	-7.8	15.7	18.2	-2.5	23.8	34.1	-10.3
Finland	18.8	12.6	6.2	19.7	16.7	3.0	38.4	29.3	9.2
Sweden	39.8	23.3	16.5	44.7	43.3	1.4	84.5	66.6	17.9
United Kingdom	131.8	149.8	-18.0	126.5	133.8	-7.3	258.3	283.6	-25.3

Source - IMF (except Spain - EU Special trade + Intra trade adjusted)

1996 EU Trade Data

(Bn US$)

	Extra EU-15			Intra EU-15			Total		
	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance
EU-15							**2 027.5**	**1 914.1**	**113.4**
Belgium-Lux							151.6	138.0	13.6
Denmark							50.9	44.8	6.1
Germany							512.8	444.5	68.2
Greece	Not			Not			*11.3*	*27.0*	*-15.7*
Spain							102.0	121.9	-19.9
France							284.5	279.1	5.3
Ireland							47.4	35.0	12.4
Italy	available			available			249.2	205.5	43.7
Netherlands							150.3	133.9	16.4
Austria							*58.2*	*68.5*	*-10.3*
Portugal							23.7	33.9	-10.2
Finland							40.4	30.7	9.7
Sweden							83.0	64.2	18.9
United Kingdom							262.2	287.2	-25.0

Source - OECD, Series A (except Austria and Greece - EU Special trade + Intra trade adjusted)

(Bn US$)

SPECIAL TRADE	Extra EU-15			Intra EU-15			Total		
INTRA ADJ.	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance
EU-15	**783.6**	**742.9**	**40.7**	**1 357.5**	**1 300.8**	**56.6**	**2 141.1**	**2 043.7**	**97.4**
Belgium-Lux	41.1	45.2	-4.1	135.3	121.0	14.4	176.4	166.1	10.3
Denmark	17.2	13.3	3.8	34.3	32.0	2.3	51.4	45.3	6.1
Germany	223.0	182.1	40.8	301.7	277.0	24.7	524.6	459.1	65.5
Greece	5.4	10.0	-4.6	5.9	16.9	-11.1	11.3	27.0	-15.7
Spain	29.5	36.4	-7.0	73.5	85.1	-11.6	102.9	121.5	-18.6
France	112.6	100.5	12.0	191.3	201.0	-9.7	303.9	301.5	2.4
Ireland	13.9	11.5	2.4	34.3	22.9	11.5	48.2	34.3	13.9
Italy	111.8	81.0	30.8	139.3	126.1	13.3	251.1	207.1	44.0
Netherlands	39.2	73.7	-34.4	164.4	117.1	47.3	203.6	190.7	12.9
Austria	20.9	17.6	3.3	37.3	51.0	-13.6	58.2	68.5	-10.3
Portugal	4.8	8.3	-3.6	19.8	26.9	-7.0	24.6	35.2	-10.6
Finland	18.7	10.9	7.8	22.4	20.5	1.9	41.1	31.4	9.7
Sweden	36.4	21.0	15.3	48.4	45.8	2.6	84.8	66.9	18.0
United Kingdom	109.4	131.3	-21.9	149.5	157.8	-8.3	258.9	289.1	-30.2

Source - EU Special trade + Intra trade adjusted

(Bn US$)

SPECIAL TRADE	Extra EU-15			Intra EU-15			Total		
INTRA MIRROR	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance
EU-15	**783.6**	**742.9**	**40.7**	**1 357.5**	**1 357.5**	**0.0**	**2 141.1**	**2 100.4**	**40.7**
Belgium-Lux	41.1	45.2	-4.1	135.3	120.7	14.7	176.4	165.8	10.6
Denmark	17.2	13.3	3.8	34.3	31.6	2.6	51.4	45.0	6.5
Germany	223.0	182.1	40.8	301.7	300.0	1.6	524.6	482.2	42.5
Greece	5.4	10.0	-4.6	5.9	18.0	-12.1	11.3	28.0	-16.8
Spain	29.5	36.4	-7.0	73.5	87.5	-14.0	102.9	123.9	-21.0
France	112.6	100.5	12.0	191.3	212.2	-20.9	303.9	312.7	-8.8
Ireland	13.9	11.5	2.4	34.3	22.3	12.0	48.2	33.8	14.4
Italy	111.8	81.0	30.8	139.3	125.5	13.8	251.1	206.5	44.6
Netherlands	39.2	73.7	-34.4	164.4	123.9	40.4	203.6	197.6	6.0
Austria	20.9	17.6	3.3	37.3	49.9	-12.5	58.2	67.4	-9.2
Portugal	4.8	8.3	-3.6	19.8	28.9	-9.0	24.6	37.2	-12.6
Finland	18.7	10.9	7.8	22.4	20.4	2.0	41.1	31.3	9.8
Sweden	36.4	21.0	15.3	48.4	46.8	1.6	84.8	67.8	17.0
United Kingdom	109.4	131.3	-21.9	149.5	164.1	-14.7	258.9	295.5	-36.6
Misc intra	-	-	-	-	5.6	-5.6	-	5.6	-5.6

Source - EU Special trade + Intra trade adjusted + Mirror intra arrivals

METHODS OF ADJUSTING STATISTICS ON THE VALUE OF TRADE

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The Working Group on Adjustment of Data and Quality consisting of representatives from Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Eurostat, has produced a document about improving the quality of Intrastat statistics. This paper is a summary of that document which considers the need for adjustments and suggests possible methods (the actual choice of methods being at the discretion of each individual Member State).

Harmonisation of coverage of statistics should be attempted. In order to produce complete and accurate statistics, adjustments need to be made to EU trade statistics. There should be a Commission Regulation requiring Member States to provide their best monthly estimates of total arrivals and dispatches, including estimates for non-response, and adjustments for below threshold trade. Trade statistics should be broken down by partner country, and a commodity breakdown should also be considered.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The main aim of the document produced by the Working Group on Adjustment and Quality is to give guidance on the choice and application of methods of adjusting for trade not covered by monthly statistical declarations for Intrastat. Separate adjustments are needed for total arrivals and dispatches at the appropriate level (e.g. partner country). Where assumptions are not satisfied for the whole population, it may be necessary to use different methods for different types of traders. For this as well as other reasons, the level at which estimates are computed need not necessarily be the same as the level at which adjustments are applied to the statistics released.

1.2 Possible deficiencies of statistics based solely on Intrastat statistical declarations and corresponding adjustments required to produce complete monthly statistics are summarised as follows:

- ***COMPLETE NON – RESPONSE:***
  Estimates are required for the value of trade for those Providers of Statistical Information (PSIs) not submitting any declarations.

- ***PARTIAL NON-RESPONSE:***
  Where PSIs have not declared all transactions for the period of account (outstanding transactions being declared either at a later date, or not at all), estimates are required for the value of these missing transactions.

- ***NO TRADE BELOW THRESHOLD***
  Though statistical declarations for Intrastat are not required by smaller traders, it is nevertheless necessary to ascertain the value of ***below-threshold trade*** at least by partner country.

- ***TRADE NOT DECLARED MONTHLY***
  Trade is not always declared monthly in Member States but it is necessary to produce comparable monthly statistics. Declarations may cover a longer period, and trade may need to be distributed to individual months.

2. REGULATIONS & QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 The aim of adjustments is to improve the quality of statistical information Member States provide to Eurostat and other users. Fitness for purpose in meeting user needs should be considered. Key considerations are comparability of EU statistics, speed of delivery, timeliness and level of accuracy for different levels of detail.

2.2 EU regulations require PSIs to report all EU trade but do not require Member States to make adjustments for non-response. Quality requirements focus on accuracy of statistics (on an annual basis), and on periodicity. The simplification threshold has to be defined so that at least 95% of the total value of arrivals/dispatches are covered by statistical declarations for Intrastat. Quality requirements for the assimilation threshold are more detailed. However, the regulations are not clear in all respects.

2.3 Member States are required to transmit information to Eurostat on a monthly basis; though traders are not always required to submit declarations monthly.

3. METHODS OF ADJUSTMENT

3.1 Estimation may be done for individual traders or for groups of traders (e.g. on a commodity group basis). A number of methods depend upon classifying traders. Criteria that may be used for classification include size, main commodity group/s traded in, and countries traded with. Some individual PSIs make a significant contribution to the overall value of trade at the partner country level or commodity group. These "crucial" PSIs may be worth considering separately.

3.2 Where Intrastat data is not on a monthly basis, a breakdown is needed either before estimates are made or afterwards. Values for longer periods may be broken down according to either number of months or days covered, or relative values of monthly declarations over the period covered.

3.3 Sample survey methods may be used to produce figures instead of methods covering all traders. This is intended not so much for adjustment as for other purposes, e.g. to enable early estimates to be made.

Complete Non-response

3.4 Estimation of missing trade for individual PSIs not submitting any current statistical declarations for Intrastat may be based on:

A Their own previous values (individual past values, or extrapolations/ forecasts).

B Their own previous values projected forward by growth rates for groups of similar respondents.

C Their own fiscal values, disaggregated using information from Intrastat declarations (e.g. using a breakdown calculated on the basis of previous Intrastat declarations).

3.5 A further method - Method D is to take total value of trade for all PSIs, and use total Intrastat declarations for disaggregation. Information from other sources (e.g. other organisations, or Member States) may be useful to supplement work in this area or for comparative purposes.

Partial Non-Response

3.6 There are advantages in being able to identify partial respondents at an early stage even though this is not as easy do as for complete non-respondents. Various suggestions for doing this are: to compare respondent's current values with past values, or values from other sources e.g. fiscal values. As trade can vary for many possible (economic, commercial or other) reasons, however, there is a danger of incorrectly treating PSIs as a partial respondent and over-estimating.

3.7 An estimate for non-response may be added to a PSI's partial response to estimate total response. Similar estimation methods may be used as for complete non-response e.g. using past (complete) response. Alternatively, PSIs may be simply treated as not having responded at all. In this case estimation is to be done for complete non-response and any partial response is ignored.

Below Threshold Trade

3.8 Methods suggested rely on estimation of the total value of trade (ar-

rivals/dispatches) below threshold trade using fiscal sources, and disaggregation of total value using other methods.

3.9 A number of disaggregation methods are possible. These include:

I. Taking traders below the threshold as being similar to those just above.

II. Selecting traders above threshold on the basis of suitable and available criteria such as size and primary activity.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The main recommendations of the Working Group may be summarised as follows:

- Member States should attempt to quantify the aggregate value of trade not covered by statistical declarations for Intrastat. This includes trade missing through both complete and partial non-response, as well as trade below the assimilation threshold.
- Where there is consistent bias, the production of adjusted monthly statistics on a regular basis should be considered.
- Estimates should be clearly distinguishable from declared values.
- Faster procedures could used for making initial estimates, and more accurate but more intensive methods at a later stage.
- A breakdown by partner country is recommended and it is also suggested that a breakdown by commodity group be considered.
- Current adjustment methods should be evaluated taking into account accuracy of results achieved and relative simplicity/ complexity of methods used.
- Member States should document in detail how they carry out adjustments including methods used and assumptions made.
- Member States should regularly review the quality of trade statistics including estimates .
- There should be a Commission Regulation requiring member States to provide estimates of aggregate trade including estimates for non-response and adjustments for trade below threshold.

4.2 It is was also thought that further work on the evaluation of alternative methods would be beneficial.

MIRROR STATISTICS

Mirror statistics are, broadly speaking, a tool for assessing the quality of trade data.

The collection of data on intra-EU trade involves recording each transaction between Member States twice: goods passing from Member State A to Member State B are declared as dispatches to country A and arrivals in country B. Arrivals and dispatches should, theoretically, be very close but not identical since, if all trade is covered, arrivals should be slightly higher than dispatches owing to the CIF/FOB concepts. But this has no longer been the case since the introduction of the Intrastat system.

Since the introduction of the Intrastat system, quality has been checked by means of "mirror" tables which depict and analyse the mirror flows between the Member States (see Annex).

Two factors underlying mirror discrepancies are due to the Intrastat system:

1. this collection system applies a threshold which exempts small businesses from making statistical returns;

2. there has been an increase in the non-response rate since the system for collecting intra-Community statistics has no longer been based on customs records but on declarations sent by operators to the competent national administrations.

DISCREPANCIES IN EUROPEAN UNION TRADE

The following concentrates on the intra-EU discrepancies observed between 1993 and 1997. The 1997 figures will very likely be revised in the future.

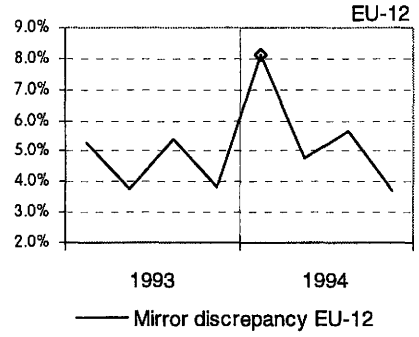
Between 1993 and 1997, the annual discrepancy between dispatches and arrivals in the European Union remained relatively stable: 4.5% to 5.6%. On the other hand, the quarterly variation was much wider (2.9% to 8.1%). However, if we exclude four quarters (see graph) from the 20 observed between 1993 and 1997, the range is considerably smaller: 3.9% to 6.1%.

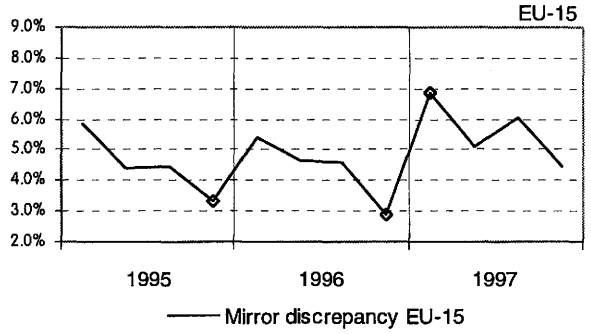
If bilateral comparisons between Member States are made, the above distortions may be even greater.

UE discrepancies

	EU-12		EU-15		
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
			(Bn. ECU)		
EU discrepancies	29.5	39.8	44.0	44.5	60.8
			(%)		
EU discrepancies	4.5%	5.5%	4.5%	4.4%	5.6%

EU discrepancies = (EU dispatches - EU arrivals) / EU arrivals





BILATERAL MIRROR DISCREPANCIES

In this section the trade declared by each Member State is compared with the corresponding mirror flow declared by its trading partners(1).

Between 1993 and 1997, the annual bilateral mirror discrepancies varied for arrivals from +5.6% to -13.1% and for dispatches from +19.3% to -1.5%.

The quarterly bilateral mirror discrepancies reveal asymmetries which are even more pronounced and more variable than those observed annually.

It seems that the accession of the three new Member States has not had a major impact on these discrepancies: there is no significant break in the time series either for total trade or for trade by partner country.

More detailed information on mirror statistics (mirror discrepancies) is available in the "Mirror Leaflet", which describes specific features of intra-EU trade with the purpose of identifying and analysing certain problems relating to intra-EU asymmetries.

Bilateral Mirror Discrepancies - Arrivals

	EU-12		EU-15		
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
			(Bn ECU)		
BLEU	1.7	-3.4	-1.6	0.2	2.5
Denmark	-0.1	-0.2	1.3	0.2	1.5
Germany	-11.5	-11.0	-16.5	-18.5	-23.6
Greece	0.0	-0.1	0.4	-0.9	-1.0
Spain	-2.4	-2.9	-2.1	-2.0	-9.3
France	-11.9	-8.7	-8.1	-9.6	-10.4
Ireland	-1.2	-1.7	0.2	0.5	-0.1
Italy	-0.8	-1.9	-0.1	1.4	1.7
Netherlands	-2.4	-2.8	-2.4	-5.4	-9.6
Austria	-	-	1.8	0.8	2.2
Portugal	-0.8	-1.0	-1.7	-1.6	-3.4
Finland	-	-	0.3	0.1	0.4
Sweden	-	-	0.0	-0.8	-1.3
United Kingdom	0.2	-2.5	-5.5	-4.9	-7.3
			(%)		
BLEU	2.4	-4.2	-1.7	0.2	2.6
Denmark	-0.6	-1.4	5.6	0.9	5.6
Germany	-7.2	-6.3	-7.2	-7.8	-9.5
Greece	0.0	-1.2	2.9	-6.3	-6.6
Spain	-5.5	-5.8	-3.4	-2.9	-12.2
France	-9.6	-6.3	-5.1	-5.8	-5.9
Ireland	-8.9	-11.2	1.1	2.6	-0.3
Italy	-1.2	-2.3	-0.1	1.4	1.6
Netherlands	-3.6	-3.8	-2.6	-5.6	-9.1
Austria	-	-	4.9	2.0	5.6
Portugal	-5.3	-5.6	-8.3	-7.1	-13.1
Finland	-	-	2.2	0.4	2.2
Sweden	-	-	0.1	-2.1	-3.3
United Kingdom	0.3	-2.5	-4.5	-3.8	-4.8

discrep in value = (Member State arriv. - EU Partner disp.)
discrep in % = (Member State arriv. - EU Partner disp.) / EU Partner disp.

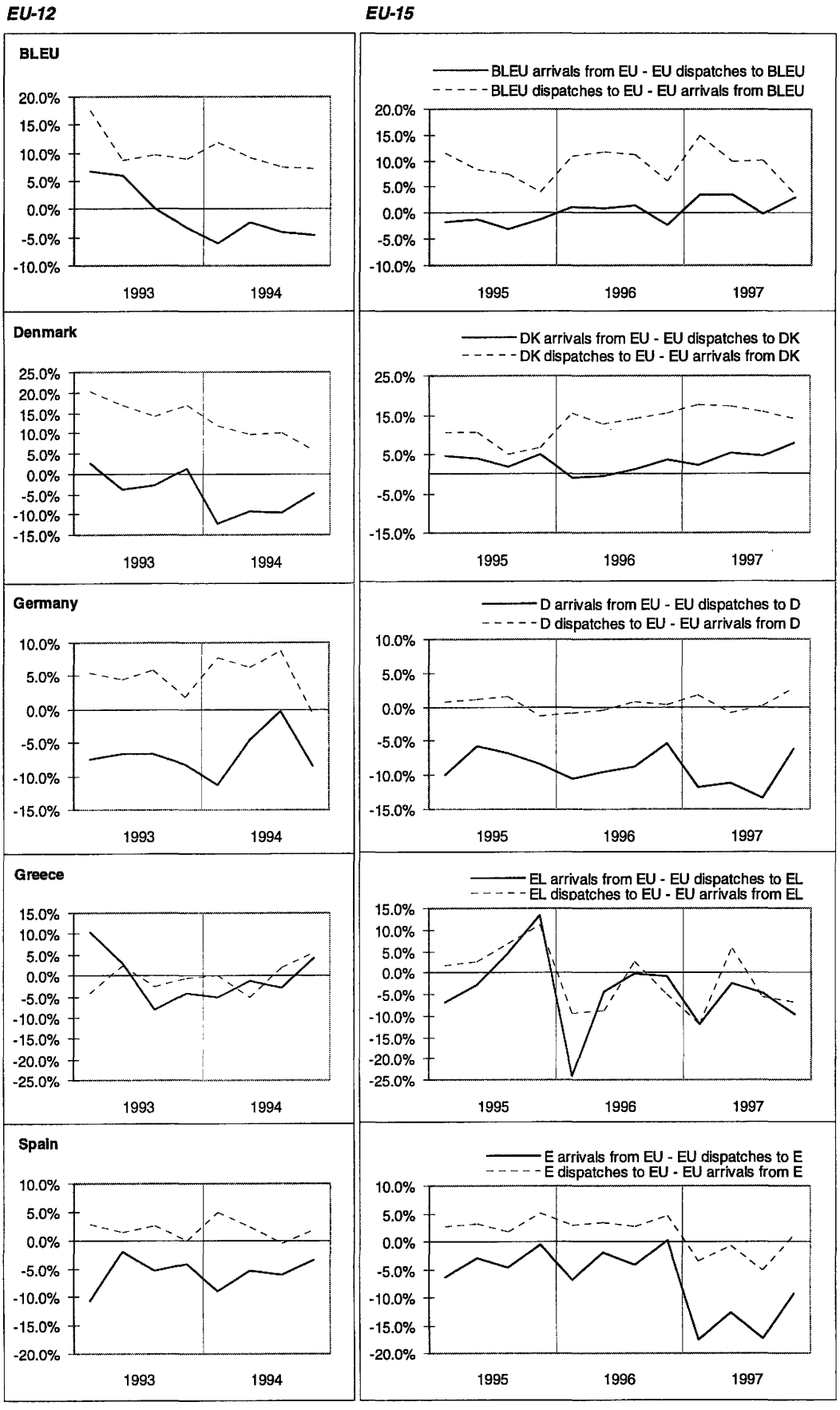
Bilateral Mirror Discrepancies - Dispatches

	EU-12		EU-15		
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
			(Bn ECU)		
BLEU	7.9	7.1	8.0	10.7	10.9
Denmark	2.5	2.9	4.1	3.9	4.7
Germany	6.8	8.9	1.2	-0.3	2.5
Greece	0.0	0.0	0.3	-0.2	-0.2
Spain	0.5	0.9	1.8	2.2	-0.5
France	-1.7	3.7	6.1	4.5	8.0
Ireland	0.3	0.9	1.4	2.8	4.6
Italy	5.6	8.1	7.9	11.7	12.0
Netherlands	2.3	5.1	8.9	5.4	6.6
Austria	-	-	3.8	3.1	5.0
Portugal	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2
Finland	-	-	0.8	0.9	1.3
Sweden	-	-	1.6	1.4	1.0
United Kingdom	5.9	6.1	3.3	3.3	10.0
			(%)		
BLEU	11.1	8.9	8.6	11.1	10.7
Denmark	17.0	18.6	18.8	17.0	19.3
Germany	4.4	5.3	0.5	-0.1	1.0
Greece	-1.1	0.6	6.0	-5.1	-4.1
Spain	1.5	2.2	3.6	4.0	-0.8
France	-1.5	3.0	4.4	3.1	5.1
Ireland	1.5	4.4	6.1	11.7	16.9
Italy	7.8	10.3	8.4	11.9	11.7
Netherlands	2.6	5.3	7.7	4.3	4.9
Austria	-	-	15.2	11.9	18.1
Portugal	0.6	4.7	2.3	3.5	1.5
Finland	-	-	5.0	5.2	7.2
Sweden	-	-	4.7	3.8	2.5
United Kingdom	7.7	7.1	3.1	2.9	7.9

discrep in value = (Member State disp. - EU Partner arriv.)
discrep in % = (Member State disp. - EU Partner arriv.) / EU Partner arriv.

(1) Please note that part of the data ('Other intra-EU trade (countries non-specified) not classified elsewhere') supplied by the Member States are not broken down by partner country and are therefore not included in the following tables and graphs.

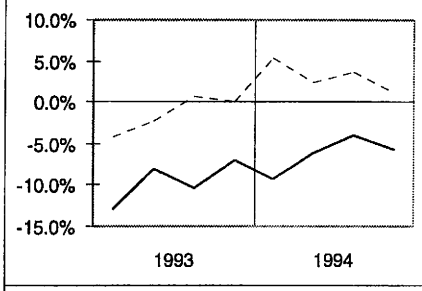
EU quarterly bilateral mirror discrepancies

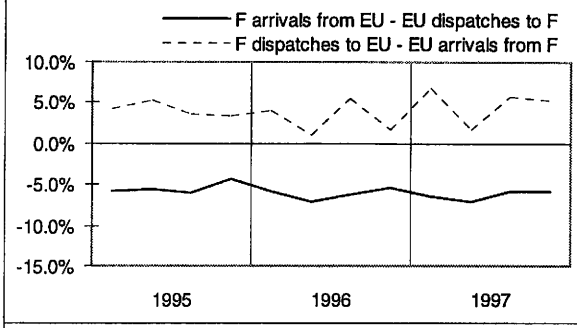


EU quarterly bilateral mirror discrepancies

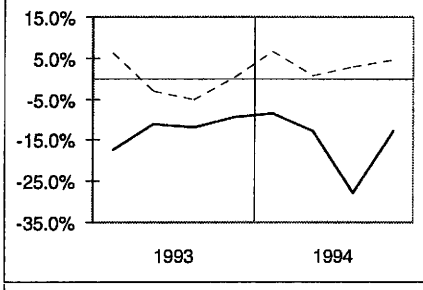
EU-12 *EU-15*

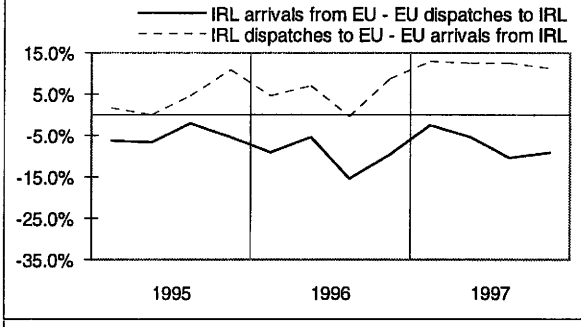
France



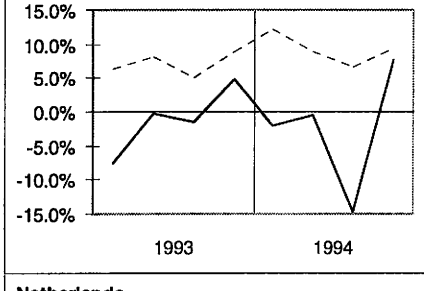


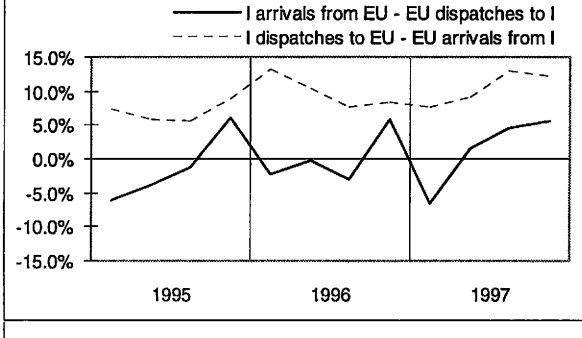
Ireland



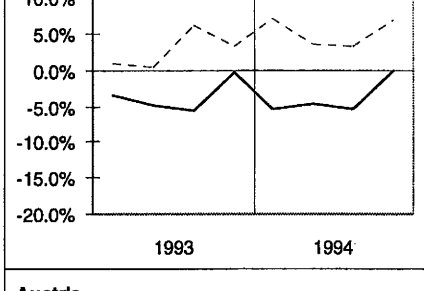


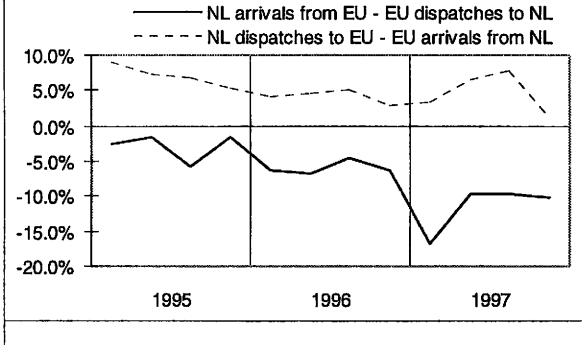
Italy



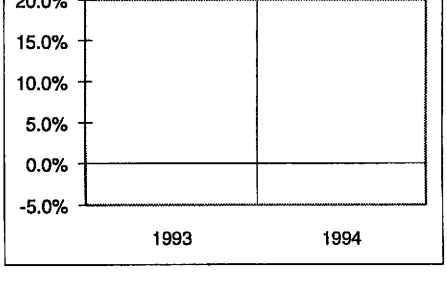


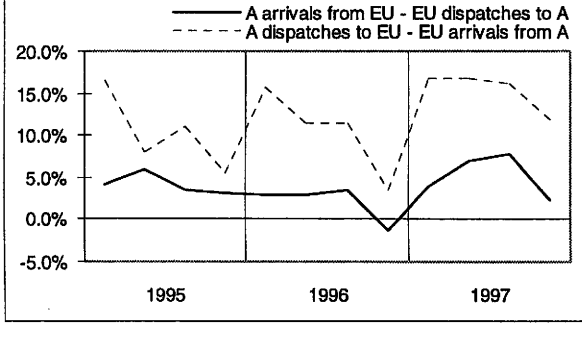
Netherlands



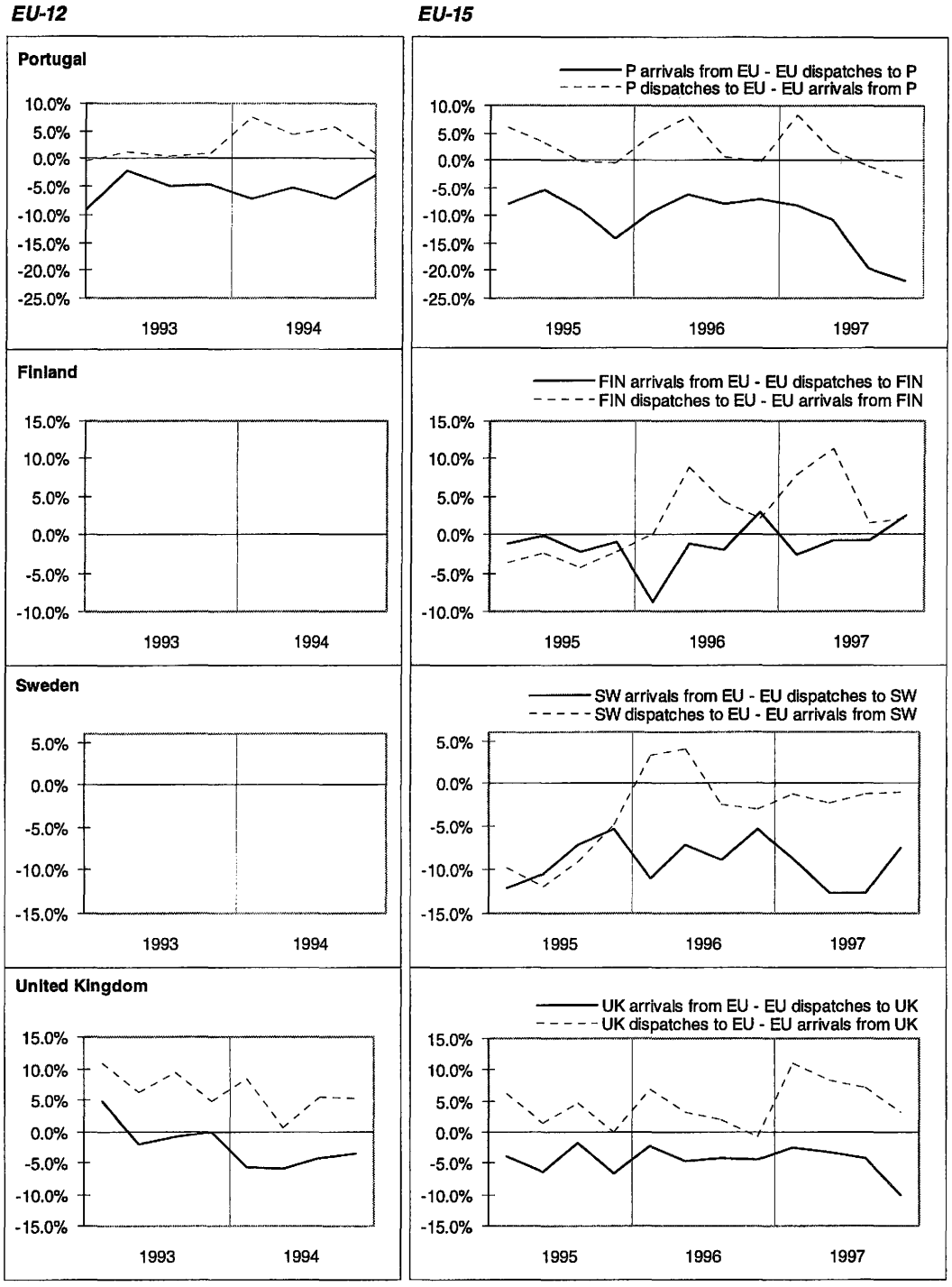


Austria





EU quarterly bilateral mirror discrepancies



Annex

Intra-European Union Trade (Community Concept)

Year 1997

1: value reported by importing country

2: value reported by exporting country

3: (2) - (1)

4: (3) / (1) * 100 (in %)

5: [(1) - (2)] / (2) * 100 (in %)

Note: these tables contain only figures which can be broken down by partner countries.

- ✱ For Denmark, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
- ✱ For Greece, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
- ✱ For Spain, 0.89% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
- ✱ For Ireland, 6.18% of arrivals and 2.60% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.

(Mio. ECU)

Exporting Countries		IMPORTING COUNTRIES													
		BLEU	✱ Denmark	Germany	✱ Greece	Spain	France	✱ Ireland	Italy	✱ Netherlands	Austria	✱ Portugal	✱ Finland	✱ Sweden	United Kingdom
BLEU	1	.	1 470.2	27 896.9	798.4	3 809.3	24 422.3	441.1	8 573.8	16 404.8	1 559.2	923.5	807.8	2 069.5	13 132.1
	2	.	1 382.9	29 500.2	870.2	4 796.4	26 844.6	670.5	8 394.8	19 456.5	1 672.3	1 140.6	927.2	2 228.4	15 229.1
	3	.	-87.4	1 603.4	71.8	987.1	2 422.2	229.4	-178.9	3 051.7	113.2	217.1	119.5	158.8	2 096.9
	4	.	-5.9%	5.7%	9.0%	25.9%	9.9%	52.0%	-2.1%	18.6%	7.3%	23.5%	14.8%	7.7%	16.0%
	5	.	6.3%	-5.4%	-8.2%	-20.6%	-9.0%	-34.2%	2.1%	-15.7%	-6.8%	-19.0%	-12.9%	-7.1%	-13.8%
✱ DK	1	784.4	.	7 361.3	330.5	772.3	2 338.7	251.4	1 544.8	1 629.6	375.4	197.1	1 398.6	4 090.7	3 344.3
	2	928.8	.	9 452.8	353.6	903.6	2 430.4	308.7	1 616.8	1 975.6	426.7	226.2	1 192.4	5 079.5	4 199.1
	3	144.4	.	2 091.5	23.2	131.4	91.7	57.3	72.0	346.0	51.3	29.1	-206.2	988.8	854.8
	4	18.4%	.	28.4%	7.0%	17.0%	3.9%	22.8%	4.7%	21.2%	13.7%	14.8%	-14.7%	24.2%	25.6%
	5	-15.6%	.	-22.1%	-6.5%	-14.5%	-3.8%	-18.6%	-4.5%	-17.5%	-12.0%	-12.9%	17.3%	-19.5%	-20.4%
D	1	25 841.0	8 600.4	.	3 104.4	15 271.4	45 558.9	2 027.1	33 007.9	31 974.1	26 336.6	4 446.2	3 997.5	10 287.2	37 449.8
	2	26 273.4	7 943.6	.	3 132.4	16 812.6	48 073.9	2 186.0	33 258.6	31 572.2	23 384.5	4 804.0	4 148.0	10 501.9	38 185.0
	3	432.4	-656.8	.	28.0	1 541.2	2 515.0	158.9	250.7	-401.9	-2 952.1	357.8	150.4	214.7	735.1
	4	1.7%	-7.6%	.	0.9%	10.1%	5.5%	7.8%	0.8%	-1.3%	-11.2%	8.0%	3.8%	2.1%	2.0%
	5	-1.6%	8.3%	.	-0.9%	-9.2%	-5.2%	-7.3%	-0.8%	1.3%	12.6%	-7.4%	-3.6%	-2.0%	-1.9%
✱ GR	1	169.6	67.2	1 537.9	.	197.7	445.1	15.2	1 186.6	228.8	101.8	34.3	60.0	98.4	558.4
	2	123.3	58.8	1 454.8	.	173.7	394.2	21.8	1 168.1	220.5	96.8	34.3	54.2	119.0	587.3
	3	-46.3	-8.4	-83.1	.	-24.1	-50.9	6.6	-18.5	-8.2	-5.0	0.0	-5.8	20.7	28.9
	4	-27.3%	-12.5%	-5.4%	.	-12.2%	-11.4%	43.3%	-1.6%	-3.6%	-4.9%	0.0%	-9.7%	21.0%	5.2%
	5	37.6%	14.2%	5.7%	.	13.9%	12.9%	-30.2%	1.6%	3.7%	5.2%	0.0%	10.7%	-17.4%	-4.9%
✱ E	1	2 441.5	534.5	12 809.1	775.2	.	16 232.3	339.5	8 676.9	3 608.4	665.4	6 793.0	337.6	728.6	7 319.6
	2	2 429.8	587.3	11 493.0	854.1	.	15 973.7	366.2	8 531.1	3 170.6	732.6	7 744.2	339.7	866.9	7 090.6
	3	-11.7	52.8	-1 316.1	79.0	.	-258.6	26.6	-145.8	-437.8	67.1	951.2	2.2	138.4	-229.0
	4	-0.5%	9.9%	-10.3%	10.2%	.	-1.6%	7.8%	-1.7%	-12.1%	10.1%	14.0%	0.6%	19.0%	-3.1%
	5	0.5%	-9.0%	11.5%	-9.2%	.	1.6%	-7.3%	1.7%	13.8%	-9.2%	-12.3%	-0.6%	-16.0%	3.2%
F	1	19 791.0	2 139.1	42 324.7	1 992.2	17 861.4	.	1 596.9	24 226.9	10 880.1	2 507.3	3 187.2	1 147.8	3 265.4	25 802.6
	2	20 802.3	2 294.8	42 325.3	2 166.3	20 524.0	.	1 652.7	24 676.7	11 876.1	2 727.7	3 968.7	1 175.1	3 713.0	27 310.1
	3	1 011.2	155.7	0.6	174.2	2 662.6	.	55.8	449.8	996.1	220.4	781.5	27.2	447.6	1 507.6
	4	5.1%	7.3%	0.0%	8.7%	14.9%	.	3.5%	1.9%	9.2%	8.8%	24.5%	2.4%	13.7%	5.8%
	5	-4.9%	-6.8%	0.0%	-8.0%	-13.0%	.	-3.4%	-1.8%	-8.4%	-8.1%	-19.7%	-2.3%	-12.1%	-5.5%
✱ IRL	1	2 417.8	458.8	4 363.7	174.0	1 158.0	3 428.9	.	1 838.5	1 882.6	197.6	195.3	205.2	661.8	10 360.4
	2	2 341.5	505.2	5 822.5	147.6	1 190.8	3 695.8	.	1 534.3	3 204.7	189.3	200.7	205.8	704.1	11 389.2
	3	-76.3	46.3	1 458.9	-26.3	32.9	267.0	.	-304.3	1 322.1	-8.3	5.4	0.7	42.3	1 028.8
	4	-3.2%	10.1%	33.4%	-15.1%	2.8%	7.8%	.	-16.5%	70.2%	-4.2%	2.8%	0.3%	6.4%	9.9%
	5	3.3%	-9.2%	-25.1%	17.8%	-2.8%	-7.2%	.	19.8%	-41.3%	4.4%	-2.7%	-0.3%	-6.0%	-9.0%

Annex

Intra-European Union Trade (Community Concept)
Year 1997

1: value reported by importing country

2: value reported by exporting country

3: (2) - (1)

4: (3) / (1) * 100 (in %)

5: [(1) - (2)] / (2) * 100 (in %)

Note: these tables contain only figures which can be broken down by partner countries.

- * For the Netherlands, 1.29% of arrivals and less than 0.1% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country
- * For Portugal, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
- * For Finland, 2.43% of arrivals and 1.05% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
- * For Sweden, 6.20% of arrivals and 3.85% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.

(Mio. ECU)

Exporting Countries		IMPORTING COUNTRIES													
		BLEU	* Denmark	Germany	* Greece	Spain	France	* Ireland	Italy	* Netherlands	Austria	* Portugal	* Finland	* Sweden	United Kingdom
I	1	5 462.3	1 749.7	29 453.9	3 666.5	9 112.7	24 113.3	557.1	.	5 407.5	4 633.9	2 384.9	1 005.7	1 732.7	13 516.5
	2	5 673.0	1 736.5	34 379.7	4 086.1	10 865.2	25 599.2	767.6	.	5 987.6	4 767.7	2 792.9	1 067.0	2 095.1	14 946.4
	3	210.8	-13.2	4 925.8	419.6	1 752.5	1 485.8	210.6	.	580.1	133.8	408.0	61.3	362.4	1 429.9
	4	3.9%	-0.8%	16.7%	11.4%	19.2%	6.2%	37.8%	.	10.7%	2.9%	17.1%	6.1%	20.9%	10.6%
	5	-3.7%	0.8%	-14.3%	-10.3%	-16.1%	-5.8%	-27.4%	.	-9.7%	-2.8%	-14.6%	-5.7%	-17.3%	-9.6%
* NL	1	24 891.2	3 098.2	42 637.6	1 353.9	5 010.1	16 910.3	1 198.4	11 299.6	.	2 741.2	1 331.2	1 630.5	4 074.5	17 724.5
	2	22 400.9	2 907.0	50 023.8	1 474.0	5 428.8	18 899.0	1 340.8	10 322.5	.	2 714.5	1 506.7	1 614.4	4 094.5	17 673.8
	3	-2 490.2	-191.2	7 386.2	120.0	418.7	1 988.8	142.4	-977.1	.	-26.7	175.5	-16.1	19.9	-50.7
	4	-10.0%	-6.2%	17.3%	8.9%	8.4%	11.8%	11.9%	-8.6%	.	-1.0%	13.2%	-1.0%	0.5%	-0.3%
	5	11.1%	6.6%	-14.8%	-8.1%	-7.7%	-10.5%	-10.6%	9.5%	.	1.0%	-11.6%	1.0%	-0.5%	0.3%
A	1	844.9	381.8	14 495.8	226.1	1 029.0	1 947.3	67.6	4 212.1	1 130.9	.	176.7	289.3	742.0	1 992.8
	2	907.2	396.1	18 260.0	229.9	1 173.6	2 211.1	120.6	4 390.0	1 462.3	.	216.0	304.6	660.3	2 171.4
	3	62.3	14.3	3 764.2	3.9	144.6	263.8	53.0	178.0	331.4	.	39.3	15.3	-81.7	178.6
	4	7.4%	3.7%	26.0%	1.7%	14.1%	13.5%	78.5%	4.2%	29.3%	.	22.2%	5.3%	-11.0%	9.0%
	5	-6.9%	-3.6%	-20.6%	-1.7%	-12.3%	-11.9%	-44.0%	-4.1%	-22.7%	.	-18.2%	-5.0%	12.4%	-8.2%
* P	1	774.4	412.8	4 246.8	78.7	2 702.6	2 833.0	67.1	834.4	925.6	178.0	.	176.1	389.1	2 518.6
	2	911.5	372.0	4 084.3	84.7	2 878.3	2 874.4	88.6	791.1	976.2	236.1	.	162.4	434.1	2 474.3
	3	137.1	-40.8	-162.5	6.0	175.7	41.4	21.5	-43.3	50.6	58.1	.	-13.7	45.0	-44.2
	4	17.7%	-9.9%	-3.8%	7.6%	6.5%	1.5%	32.1%	-5.2%	5.5%	32.7%	.	-7.8%	11.6%	-1.8%
	5	-15.0%	11.0%	4.0%	-7.1%	-6.1%	-1.4%	-24.3%	5.5%	-5.2%	-24.6%	.	8.4%	-10.4%	1.8%
* FI	1	906.9	1 157.4	3 594.4	193.1	711.2	1 513.0	248.1	1 089.6	1 358.3	334.6	183.3	.	2 985.2	3 742.2
	2	834.9	1 111.3	3 996.5	211.1	783.0	1 544.9	288.3	1 075.4	1 490.3	343.1	203.4	.	3 594.9	3 624.9
	3	-71.9	-46.0	402.2	18.1	71.8	31.9	40.1	-14.2	132.0	8.5	20.1	.	609.7	-117.3
	4	-7.9%	-4.0%	11.2%	9.4%	10.1%	2.1%	16.2%	-1.3%	9.7%	2.5%	10.9%	.	20.4%	-3.1%
	5	8.6%	4.1%	-10.1%	-8.6%	-9.2%	-2.1%	-13.9%	1.3%	-8.9%	-2.5%	-9.9%	.	-17.0%	3.2%
* SW	1	3 575.1	5 092.1	7 026.5	345.5	1 374.3	3 222.8	338.4	2 557.6	4 081.2	706.4	339.9	4 104.1	.	6 633.2
	2	2 842.4	4 427.5	8 000.5	373.4	1 551.1	3 321.1	451.8	2 288.1	4 054.3	729.7	347.6	3 838.0	.	6 601.6
	3	-732.7	-664.6	974.0	28.0	176.9	98.3	113.4	-269.5	-26.9	23.3	7.6	-266.1	.	-31.6
	4	-20.5%	-13.1%	13.9%	8.1%	12.9%	3.0%	33.5%	-10.5%	-0.7%	3.3%	2.2%	-6.5%	.	-0.5%
	5	25.8%	15.0%	-12.2%	-7.5%	-11.4%	-3.0%	-25.1%	11.8%	0.7%	-3.2%	-2.2%	6.9%	.	0.5%
* UK	1	12 587.0	2 992.8	26 596.9	1 408.7	8 265.1	22 533.7	12 769.5	12 297.5	14 786.8	1 525.8	2 080.1	2 043.4	5 470.4	.
	2	11 607.4	2 958.0	29 258.7	1 492.3	9 581.5	23 399.3	13 043.3	11 616.3	19 692.6	1 618.4	2 467.8	2 224.6	6 261.1	.
	3	-979.7	-34.8	2 661.8	83.6	1 316.4	865.6	273.8	-681.3	4 905.9	92.6	387.7	181.2	790.6	.
	4	-7.8%	-1.2%	10.0%	5.9%	15.9%	3.8%	2.1%	-5.5%	33.2%	6.1%	18.6%	8.9%	14.5%	.
	5	8.4%	1.2%	-9.1%	-5.6%	-13.7%	-3.7%	-2.1%	5.9%	-24.9%	-5.7%	-15.7%	-8.1%	-12.6%	.

Annex

Intra-European Union Trade
Year 1997

Community concept *(Mio. ECU)*

A		IMPORTING COUNTRIES													
EXPORTER		BLEU	* Denmark	Germany	* Greece	Spain	France	* Ireland	Italy	* Netherlands	Austria	* Portugal	* Finland	* Sweden	United Kingdom
EU-15	1	100 487.1	28 155.0	224 345.4	14 447.1	67 275.3	165 499.7	19 917.4	111 346.4	94 298.6	41 863.1	22 272.8	17 203.4	36 595.5	144 094.9
	2	98 076.4	26 681.0	248 052.0	15 475.9	76 662.9	175 261.7	21 306.8	109 663.8	105 139.5	39 639.4	25 653.2	17 253.5	40 352.8	151 482.7
	3	2 410.6	1 474.0	-23 706.7	-1 028.8	-9 387.6	-9 762.0	-1 389.4	1 682.5	-10 840.8	2 223.7	-3 380.4	-50.0	-3 757.3	-7 387.8
	4	2.5%	5.5%	-9.6%	-6.6%	-12.2%	-5.6%	-6.5%	1.5%	-10.3%	5.6%	-13.2%	-0.3%	-9.3%	-4.9%

B		EXPORTING COUNTRIES													
IMPORTER		BLEU	* Denmark	Germany	* Greece	* Spain	France	* Ireland	Italy	* Netherlands	Austria	* Portugal	* Finland	* Sweden	United Kingdom
EU-15	1	102 308.9	24 418.9	247 902.7	4 701.0	61 261.6	156 722.6	27 342.6	102 796.8	133 901.1	27 536.2	16 137.2	18 017.2	39 397.3	125 357.6
	2	113 113.7	29 094.3	250 276.1	4 506.9	60 179.8	165 212.8	31 131.6	114 764.2	140 400.6	32 503.0	16 368.1	19 102.1	38 827.2	135 221.2
	3	10 804.8	4 675.4	2 373.4	-194.2	-1 081.7	8 490.2	3 789.1	11 967.4	6 499.5	4 966.8	230.9	1 084.9	-570.1	9 863.6
	4	10.6%	19.1%	1.0%	-4.1%	-1.8%	5.4%	13.9%	11.6%	4.9%	18.0%	1.4%	6.0%	-1.4%	7.9%

C		EU-15
EU-15	1	1 087 801.7
	2	1 150 701.6
	3	62 900.0
	4	5.8%

D		EU-15
EU-15	1	1 093 192.9
	2	1 153 839.3
	3	60 646.4
	4	5.5%

Table A	1: value reported by importing country 2: value reported by exporting country	3: (1) - (2) 4: (3) / (2) * 100 (in %)
Table B	1: value reported by importing country 2: value reported by exporting country	3: (2) - (1) 4: (3) / (1) * 100 (in %)
Table C	1: value reported by importing country 2: value reported by exporting country	3: (2) - (1) 4: (3) / (1) * 100 (in %)
Table D	Same as table C including data not broken down by partner country	

Remarks concerning tables A, B & C :

* For Denmark, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Greece, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Spain, 0.89% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Ireland, 6.18% of arrivals and 2.60% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For the Netherlands, 1.29% of arrivals and less than 0.1% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Portugal, less than 0.1% of arrivals and dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Finland, 2.43% of arrivals and 1.05% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.
* For Sweden, 6.20% of arrivals and 3.85% of dispatches are not included in the breakdown by partner country.

STATISTICAL LEGISLATION ON INTRA- AND EXTRA-COMMUNITY TRADE (*)

João SOUSA(**), Eurostat

INTRASTAT: THE BEGINNING

After some twenty uneventful years, the advent of the single market on 1 January 1993 prompted many changes to legislation on the Community's internal and external trade statistics.

The removal of customs barriers at the borders between Member States meant that the source of all data for statistics on the trading of goods between Member States also disappeared. This was the reason for Intrastat, a system for data collection that no longer relied on an administrative source (customs or other authority) but used information supplied directly by firms.

The legislation that came into force on 1 January 1993 comprises:

a) a basic regulation - Council Regulation (EEC) No 3330/91 - containing the main outline of the new system, especially data collection, links with the VAT system, data required and the basis of the threshold system;

b) an implementing regulation - Commission Regulation (EEC) No 3046/92 - which supplemented the basic regulation by providing provisions for applying the new legislation, especially the definitions of the variables and clarifications regarding the scope of statistics on trade between Member States;

c) a regulation dealing solely with statistical thresholds - Commission Regulation (EEC) No 2256/92 - which set the necessary quality criteria so that the Member States could establish thresholds;

d) a regulation on statistical information media - Commission Regulation (EEC) No 3590/92 - presenting Community forms and how to use them.

INTRASTAT: THE PROGRESS

The introduction of the Intrastat system represented a real upheaval in statistics in general, and in statistics on trade between Member States in particular. The fact is that Intrastat marked a switch from a system based on an existing administrative source (customs forms) to a system of direct collection from economic operators, while retaining the same level of detail and completeness as before.

It therefore comes as no surprise that during the start-up phase there were difficulties both for the providers of statistical information, who as a rule were unaccustomed to such compulsory form-filling (which was usually done by intermediaries), and for the national authorities, who had to cope with a deterioration in the quality of information and a sizeable number of 'non-responses'. What was missing was a system of direct checking by customs authorities that allowed necessary corrections to be made, together with a system of penalties to curb the rising number of 'non-responses'. Another problem was that Eurostat noticed that the Member States were beginning to transmit their results with delays that were far too long to allow proper dissemination of the results at Community level.

These difficulties and shortcomings initially led to a number of decisions designed to remedy them. In addition to a campaign to make the Member States and economic operators aware of the need for prompt and accurate information, there were also two other legislative measures that were adopted:

a) Commission Regulation (EC) No 1125/94 laying down the deadlines for the Member States to transmit their results to Eurostat: ten weeks after the end of the reference month for the detailed figures, but only eight

(*) Eurostat Unit C4 produces every year a publication containing all current legislation on statistics relating to the trading of goods (see Newsletter No 2/97, page 23).

(**) Mr João Sousa was a Eurostat official between 1989 and 1998 and worked on the introduction and development of the Intrastat system from its conception. However, the views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect Eurostat's opinion.

weeks for the overall figures broken down solely by Member State;

b) Commission Regulation (EC) No 2820/94 fixing a threshold value for individual transactions, below which operators are not required to declare each transaction but may group them under a single heading.

The purpose of these two measures was to ensure that information arrived on time for it to be disseminated as quickly as possible and also to ease the burden on those responsible for providing statistical information.

AND THEN EXTRASTAT

Once the Intrastat system had been introduced, the statistics on trade with non-member countries were the only statistics to continue using customs sources. But changes here meant reworking the entire legislative basis, which had become obsolete, not only because the methodology had drifted apart from the methodology on trade between Member States, but also because of the number of changes to customs legislation that meant that the concepts used tended to differ from those used in statistical legislation.

A new set of legislation to cover the statistics on the trading of goods with non-member countries was thus drafted and discussed with the Member States, before being adopted between 1995 and 1996. It comprised the following regulations:

a) Council Regulation (EC) No 1172/95, the basic regulation, which lays down the general guidelines for statistics on trade with non-member countries, especially the scope of application, links with customs authorities, data to be collected and transmission of results to Eurostat;

b) Commission Regulation (EC) No 840/96 on implementing procedures, especially with regard to definitions of data required and other clarifications for the collection of data and for the transmission of results.

This legislation was supposed to remain as unchanged as possible, but it was inevitably affected by economic and statistical requirements and also for technical reasons, which were expressed by the Member States (national authorities responsible for trade statistics) and by economic operators. The result was that two amendments to the basic regulation were adopted:

a) Council Regulation (EC) No 476/97 designed to take account of the planned inclusion of the French Overseas Departments and the Canary Islands in the statistical territories of France and Spain respectively;

b) Council Regulation (EC) No 374/98 for a nomenclature based on the ISO alpha-2 code to replace the nomenclature of countries and territories based on a numeric code.

A Commission regulation, listing the codes of countries and territories to be used for external trade statistics, is scheduled to be adopted shortly.

The next few years will see various changes to the legislation covering extra-Community trade statistics. Work is under way on globalisation, adjustments in the light of UN recommendations, treatment of indirect movements and the effects of simplifying customs formalities.

AND THEN CAME SLIM

In February 1996 the EU ministers launched the SLIM initiative designed to simplify Community legislation and its application in a number of specific sectors. The Intrastat system was selected as one of the first four pilot areas.

Based on the results of a survey of suppliers and users of the system in every Member State and other European organisations (professional groups, universities, etc) and even Commission departments, and following a seminar attended by representatives of the same groups in Luxembourg in March 1996, a working party led by the Director-General of Eurostat adopted a series of measures designed to simplify the Intrastat system.

Apart from reforms to be introduced in the medium or long term (single flow, sampling, ...) and which are still in the process of being examined, the working party also came up with a number of proposals that could be adopted sooner. These covered simplification of the Combined Nomenclature, abolition of some data currently collected (two proposals for Council regulations) and simplification of declarations of net mass and value (two proposals for Commission regulations).

After some effort, the Commission adopted to get the two regulations described below:

a) Commission Regulation (EC) No 2385/96, which allows those responsible for providing information to omit declaring net mass for more than 300 product headings on the grounds that net mass is not the most appropriate unit of measurement for these products and is not sufficiently reliable;

b) Commission Regulation (EC) No 860/97, which limits the requirement to declare statistical value to large enterprises in view of the fact that its calculation poses some problems; for the majority of those required to provide information, the value to be declared is now the VAT tax value or simply the invoiced amount.

AND SLIM NOW?

The two proposals for Council regulations that were mentioned in the previous section are still going through the process of co-decision prior to adoption. Differences of opinion between the European Parliament and the Council are likely to delay the initial schedule (1 January 1999).

Where the Commission is concerned, a new proposal for a regulation to aiming at expanding the list of products for which information on net mass is abolished (see above) will soon be adopted. The new list will contain just over 500 product headings, including those in the current list.

In addition to these firdt results, SLIM-Intrastat is has helped to lay the groundwork for starting and successfully completing similar actions. However, its progress ought to be thoroughly examined, especially with regard to contractions and difficulties related to the standing position of the Commission as well as the exchange of information and decisional procedure at the level of other european institutions finally to difficulties related to relations with the professional world. In this sense, the exercise will have served as a good example.

In the future, the focus will be on the long-term measures that are currently the subject of several studies, especially the single flow system. If this were adopted, it would be a great simplification. However, it must not be forgotten that its introduction also depends on the stability and uniformity of the current system. The SLIM-Intrastat action is far from running its course, and the next two or three years will call for extra effort before we arrive at a system that is simple for suppliers but comprehensive and first-rate in quality for users. In other words, we have to strike a difficult balance between what one side needs and the other wants.

6 May 1998

EDICOM 1998
COMMISSION DECISION

Concerning the approval of 28 proposed measures which qualify for Community financing pursuant to Council Decision 96/715/EC of 9 December 1996 on inter-administration telematic networks for statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States (EDICOM).

THE COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Council Decision 96/715/EC of 9 December 1996 on inter-administration telematic networks for statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States (Edicom(1)), and in particular Article 5 thereof,

Whereas the proposals form part of the annual work programme drawn up to implement the set of measures provided for in Article 1 of Decision 96/715/EC;

Whereas the Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities, established by Council Decision 89/382/EEC (Euratom(2)), has delivered a favourable opinion on the drawing up, quantifying and approving of this annual work programme;

Whereas the Committee on statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States, set up by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3330/91(3) of 7 November 1991 on the statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States, has delivered a favourable opinion;

Whereas, for the measures subject to financial contributions to the Member States, the Committee on statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States has delivered a favourable opinion on 3 measures of a total value less than or equal to ECU 200 000 governed by the procedure set out in Article 7 of Decision 96/715/EC, and on 13 measures of a total value of more than ECU 200 000 governed by the procedure set out in Article 6 of the same Decision;

Whereas for the other measures concerning contracts and studies, the Committee on statistics relating to the trading of goods between Member States has delivered a favourable opinion on 4 measures of a total value less than or equal to ECU 200 000 governed by the procedure set out in Article 7 of Decision 96/715/EC, and on 8 measures of a total value of more than ECU 200 000 governed by the procedure set out in Article 6 of the aforementioned Decision;

Whereas the Commission must take a decision regarding the approval of the proposals which qualify for Community financing,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION

Article 1

For 1998, the proposals relating to the decentralized measures listed in annex shall receive Community financing up to the amounts stated in that annex, and the proposals relating to the centralized measures listed in annex may receive Community financing up to the amounts stated in that annex.

Done at Brussels, 31.3.1998

For the Commission,

(1) OJ No L 327, 18.12.1996, p.34

(2) OJ No L 181, 28.06.1989, p. 47

(3) OJ No L 316, 16.11.1991, p.1

ANNEX

(ECU)

Description of projects	Amount of Community financing
FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO MEMBER STATES	
Contributions to the national authorities responsible for statistics on the trading of goods concerning the following activities:	
· Automation and telematic tools for PSIs	
· Automation and telematic tools for CNAs	
· Standards	
· Methods	
· Organisation/Administration/Management	
Belgium	374 600
Denmark	227 200
Germany	533 000
Greece	183 200
Spain	325 100
France	492 900
Ireland	192 400
Italy	446 000
Luxembourg	146 100
Netherlands	334 200
Netherlands (IRIS upgrade)	285 000
Austria	239 400
Portugal	221 100
Finland	201 100
Sweden	275 000
United Kingdom	387 700
TOTAL	**4 864 000**
CONTRACTS AND STUDIES	
Coordination, assistance and support	200 000
Organisation of Task Force/Meetings/ Seminars	150 000
Infrastructure / Computer equipment	150 000
Implementation of SLIM	200 000
· Analysis and summary	
Statistical concepts and methods	220 000
· Impact of United Nations concepts	
· Globalisation	
SUBTOTAL	**920 000**

(ECU)

Description of projects	Amount of Community financing
CONTRACTS AND STUDIES	
SUBTOTAL	**920 000**
Statistical analyses	300 000
· Quality analyses	
· Data adjustments	
· Technical support	
Telematic tools/Electronic forms	920 000
· IDEP/CN8 support and maintenance, EDICOM project management support	
· EDIFACT support for EDICOM	
· Assistance for the EDICOM project	
· Support and corrective and ongoing maintenance of the Windows version of IDEP/CN8	
· Infrastructure, meetings	
Statistical production and databases	450 000
· Collection and pre-processing	
· COMEXT development	
· Support and assistance	
Nomenclature	500 000
· Related products	
· Access to the CN	
· Consolidation and linguistic extension	
Exploitation of data and derived data	400 000
· Desktop publishing	
· Indices/Conversion	
· Alignment of intra-EU trade	
· Press releases and Statistics in Focus	
On-line dissemination	300 000
· CD-ROM COMEXT	
· INTERNET	
Analyses, methods and specific EDICOM measures	846 000
· Analysis of alternative data collection systems	
· Simpler classification of goods	
· Administrative source of the data	
· Intrastat/VAT	
· Cost-benefit analyses	
· Other measures	
TOTAL	**4 636 000**

EDICOM TASK FORCE

On the 12th and 13th of March, 1998 the Task Force EDICOM met in Vienna. The meeting was organised by the Austrian Central Statistical Office (ÖSTAT) in co-operation with Eurostat.

DAY 1: PLENARY SESSION

The central subject of day 1 were Internet projects for Intrastat. After an overview of the many possibilities to use Internet facilities within the EDICOM project, several Member States reported on their current and planned Internet projects.

Belgium presented its Internet projects for the collection and the diffusion of Intrastat data. Since the beginning of 1998, e-mail can be used to send declarations, in parallel with the existing Bulletin Board System. Belgium is in favour of the development of Internet facilities in IDEP/CN8. For the dissemination of statistical data, two sites are, or will be available for the public: the OBCE site (Office Belge du Commerce Extérieur) and at the end of the year the site of the Belgian National Bank.

In France, a Minitel solution has been available for many years for the Intrastat declaration and it is possible to send declarations by e-mail since September 1997. A survey amongst IDEP/CN8 users showed that 16% of the companies were connected to the Internet, while in 30% of the companies a modem was available. New developments include the possibility to download about 2,000 (!) different administrative documents, an on-line form to prepare Intrastat declarations ('DEB sur le WEB'; DEB = Déclaration des Echanges de Biens, WEB = World Wide Web, also known as WWW) and a server to provide personalised statistical data for which the user may have to pay.

In both Belgium and France, many of the PSIs (Providers of Statistical Information) now using the available e-mail facilities were not telecommunication users before.

The CBS in the Netherlands has operated their WEB site for 3-4 years now. The general site has roughly 25,000 visitors per month, while the specific on-line database has some 5,000-10,000 visitors monthly. Future developments may include the distribution of output (including feedback) to companies, information on regulations and new developments and tools for trade statistics. The latter could include help on FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), on-line forms and the Combined Nomenclature on-line.

The United Kingdom presented the current and new developments on their data capture system. The rapid shift from paper declarations to electronic declarations (paper no longer allowed after 1 January 1999) requires many changes in the 'back-end systems'. The aim of the new system is to increase submission by EDI by accepting data via the Internet and allowing compressed data. Internet submission may be in the form of file attachments and (on-line or off-line) electronic forms. Other future Internet developments include: automatic data rejection, publications, sending of information directly to traders, dissemination of statistics. Pay back of the high costs of development is expected in the future from the reduction of the number of paper declarations.

DAY 2: IDEP/CN8

The second day (Friday the 13th!) was dedicated to IDEP/CN8 (Intrastat Data Entry Package with the Combined Nomenclature at 8 digit level). Currently, IDEP/CN8 is used by about 25,000 enterprises in 12 Member States. It is not distributed in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom is however offering the CN8 part of the package to their PSIs. In Germany and the Netherlands, the Dutch CBS-IRIS package is used instead.

There are three major projects relating to IDEP/CN8 carried out by Eurostat in 1998: to make the package Year 2000 compliant, the introduction of the Euro and the development of a Windows version. Furthermore, pilot projects on down-loading IDEP/CN8 from the World Wide Web and sending IDEP/CN8 generated declarations via the Internet are, or will be conducted this year.

DOS version 7 of IDEP/CN8 will be the version for 1999. It will be available to the Competent National Administrations (CNAs) on 1 October 1998. This version will be Year 2000 compliant and include the Euro. The CNAs will then have to adopt the package to the national requirements: translation of new and changed texts, setting of parameters,

update of manuals. As soon as the Combined Nomenclature for next year becomes available, the administrations can produce copies of IDEP/CN8 to be distributed to the PSIs.

In January 1998, the development of a Windows version of IDEP/CN8 commenced. Of course, the Windows version will also be Year 2000 compliant and include the Euro. Additionally, this version will contain two new features: it will be multi-lingual and multi-national.

Multi-lingual means: CNAs will be able to install more than one language in IDEP/CN8 so that users can switch between the installed languages. Multi-national means: it will be possible to install the national Intrastat rule sets of more than one Member State and to generate declarations for different Member States with one IDEP/CN8 package.

STUDY ON THE CO-OPERATION WITH SOFTWARE SUPPLIERS

The software market should provide enterprises with commercial solutions for the automated generation and electronic submission of Intrastat declarations. As this is not sufficiently the case, a study was carried out by Eurostat to find out what hinders the software suppliers from developing Intrastat solutions and how these obstacles can be overcome.

The study is based on a survey among the competent national administrations and interviews with enterprises and software suppliers. The study was completed in April 1998.

The reasons why software suppliers have failed to develop solutions for Intrastat include:

- IDEP/CN8 and CBS-IRIS are already available on the market and free to enterprises.
- Software suppliers face difficulties in receiving Intrastat rules and regulations.
- The yearly changes to the Intrastat legislation including the Combined Nomenclature cause high investment in maintenance.
- It is difficult for software suppliers to identify potential markets as enterprises are reluctant to spend money purely for the sake of fulfilling statistical obligations.

The study recommends a series of actions to the competent administrations at national and Community level, including:

- Changes in Intrastat legislation should be kept to a minimum.
- Central contact points should be set up at National and Community level for software suppliers developing Intrastat solutions.
- Conformity labels should be awarded to software solutions meeting the standards required.
- The introduction of legal measures at national level should be investigated wherby certain paper solutions are no longer permitted.
- The main suppliers of accounting and business software should be contacted and encouraged to integrate Intrastat with their existing software packages.

The general consensus seems to be, that if one major business software supplier could be convinced to integrate Intrastat into his product, then others would follow within a short time.

COMEXT NEW VERSION

The number of people using the COMEXT system grew steadily throughout 1997, and there are now more than 600 people with access to the data base.
In order to improve the service to users, the software for accessing the data base has been upgraded. Version 2.1 has been replaced by version 3.
The new version incorporates many improvements, covering both content and functions.

CONTENT

New data have been loaded:

Comtrade SH Domain

This domain contains the figures of the United Nations data base, classified according to the Harmonised System. This domain supplements the information that can currently be found in SITC_R2 and SITC_R3

IMF Trade Domain

This domain contains the International Monetary Fund's aggregated data on world trade.

Transport Domain

This domain contains the EU Member States' external trade data, classified by mode of transport.

Currency Exchange Rate Domain

This domain provides access to the exchange rates of the EU Member States' currencies against the ecu.

The content of the COMEXT system data base should be expanded in 1998, particularly with the addition of data for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

THE NEW FUNCTIONS

The requests expressed by users during the 1997 survey of user satisfaction have been incorporated where possible in the new version. The new functions cover several aspects:

Installation

Network installation is possible with the new interrogation software for the COMEXT data base. This interface is also compatible with the Windows NT operating system.

Display

Some displays have been changed to make it easier to read information, such as progress of data retrieval, or to display results better (preliminary retrievals).

Data Handling

Ranking functions are better than before and can also be used on displays of results (ranking possible for part of retrieved data).

Date Retrieval/ Retrieval Definition

There is a new data retrieval format. This format, which can be transferred directly to EXCEL or DBASE, allows users to retrieve multidimensional tables without any limit to the number of columns or lines.

It is also possible to import or export retrieval plans and user lists. This allows users to exchange work (retrieval definitions and/or code lists).

Please contact the COMEXT help team for more information:
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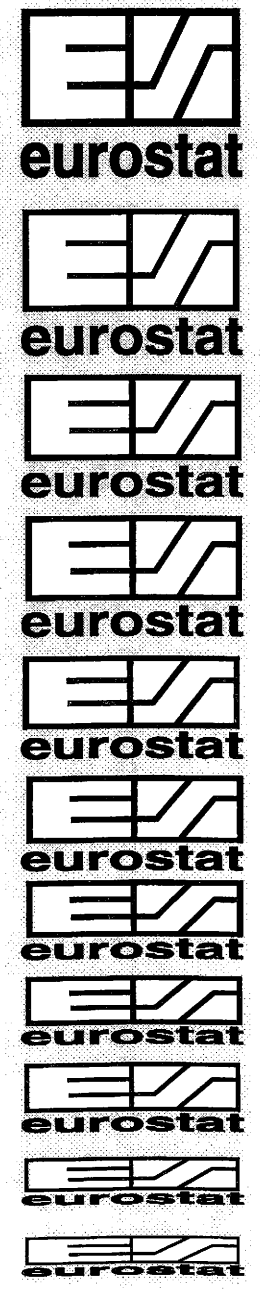

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