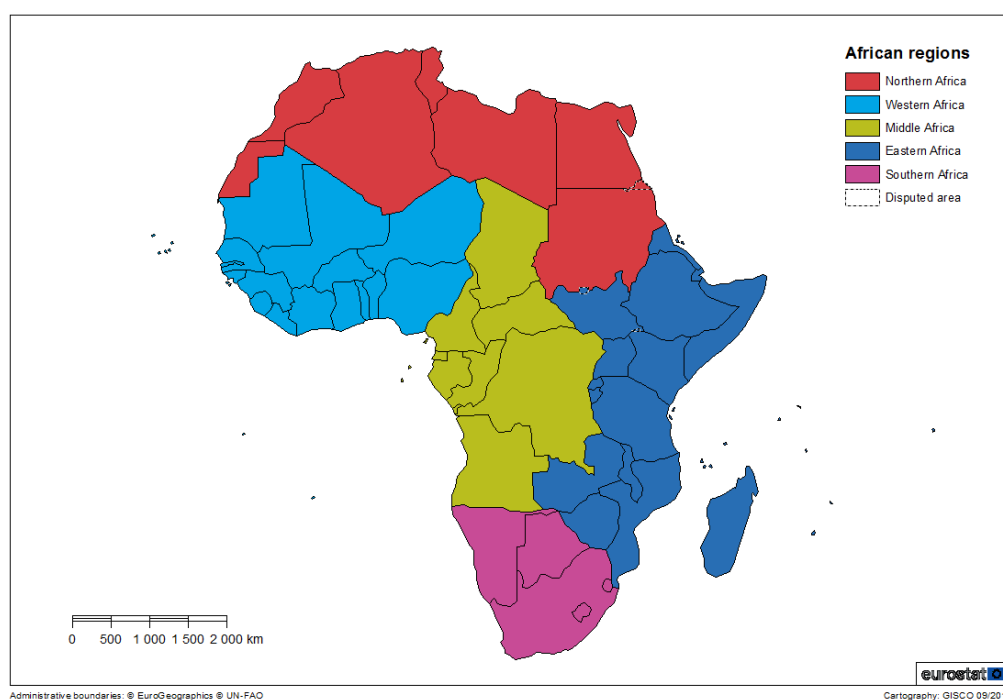


# Africa-EU - international trade in goods statistics

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in September 2018.  
Planned article update: September 2019.*

This article provides a picture of international trade in goods between the European Union (EU) and Africa. It analyses the type of goods exchanged and the shares of each EU Member State in those exchanges. In this article the UN subdivision of Africa in five different regions is used (as shown in Map 1).



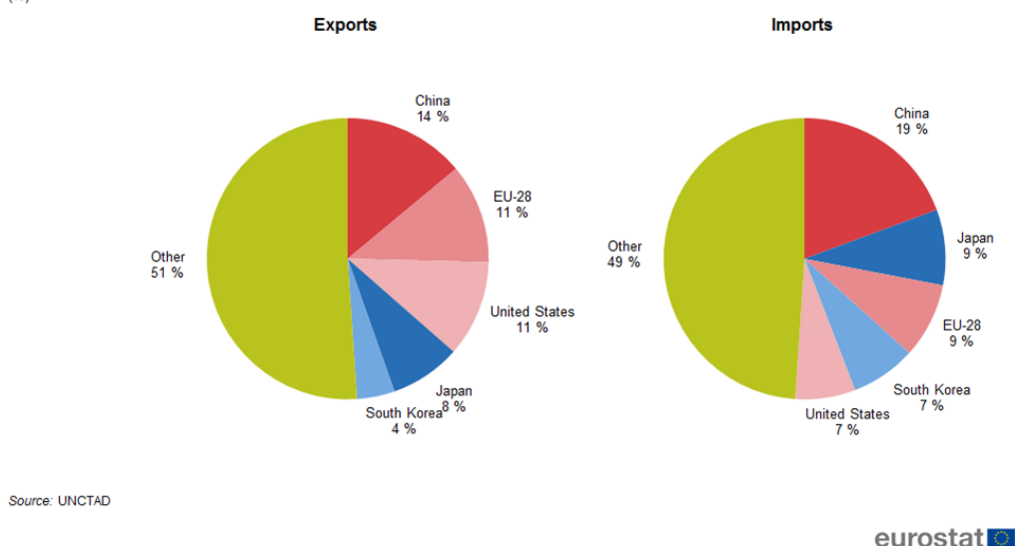
**Map 1: African regions according to the United Nations geoscheme.**

This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main products traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

## Africa's main trade in goods partner is China

The five largest trade in goods partners of Africa are shown in Figure 1. For both exports and imports, China was the largest partner. For exports, the next four largest partners were the EU and the United States (11 % each), Japan (8 %) and South Korea (4 %). For imports, the same four partners appear but in a different order: Japan and the EU (9 % each) were the second largest, followed by South Korea and the United States (7 % each).

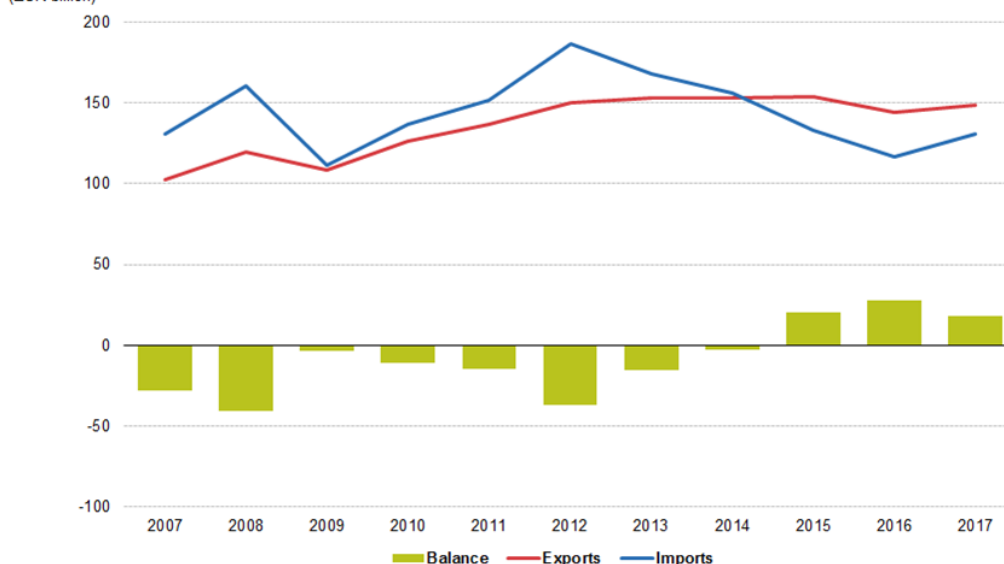
**African trade in goods: export and import shares with main partners, 2017**  
(%)



**Figure 1: African trade in goods: export and import shares with main partners, 2017 %**Source: UNCTAD

From the EU perspective, following the financial crisis, imports of goods from Africa fell more than exports and, consequently, the EU's trade in goods deficit with Africa nearly disappeared in 2009 (see Figure 2). After the crisis, both imports from and exports to Africa picked up, with imports growing slightly stronger. This trend continued until 2012, when the trade deficit reached EUR 37 billion. However, afterwards imports from Africa decreased, while exports continued to grow. The year 2014 was a turning point, when exports and imports were almost balanced. Two years later, in 2016, the EU had a record surplus in trade in goods (EUR 28 billion). In 2017, this surplus decreased to EUR 18 billion due to growing imports from Africa.

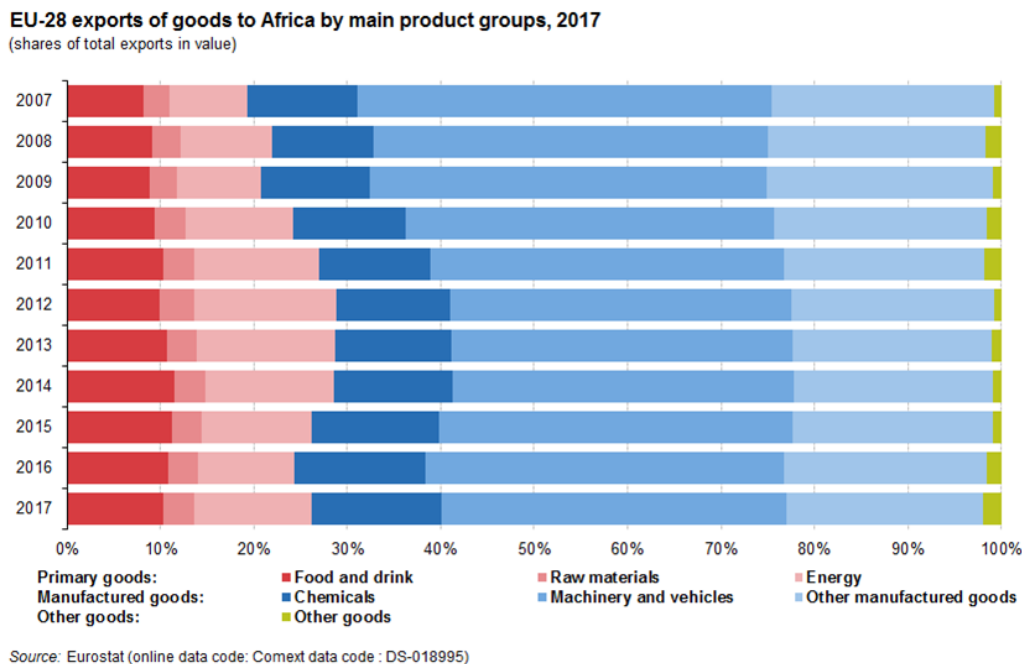
**EU-28, trade in goods exports, imports and balance with African countries, 2007-2017**  
(EUR billion)



**Figure 2: EU-28, trade in goods exports, imports and balance with African countries, 2007-2017 (EUR billion)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

## Manufactured goods dominate exports to Africa

In 2007, 80 % of goods exported from the EU to Africa were manufactured goods (see Figure 3). This share fell to 72 % in 2017, while the share of primary goods rose from 19 % to 26 %. The declining share of manufactured goods was mostly caused by the declining share of machinery and vehicles, from 44 % in 2007 to 37 % in 2017.



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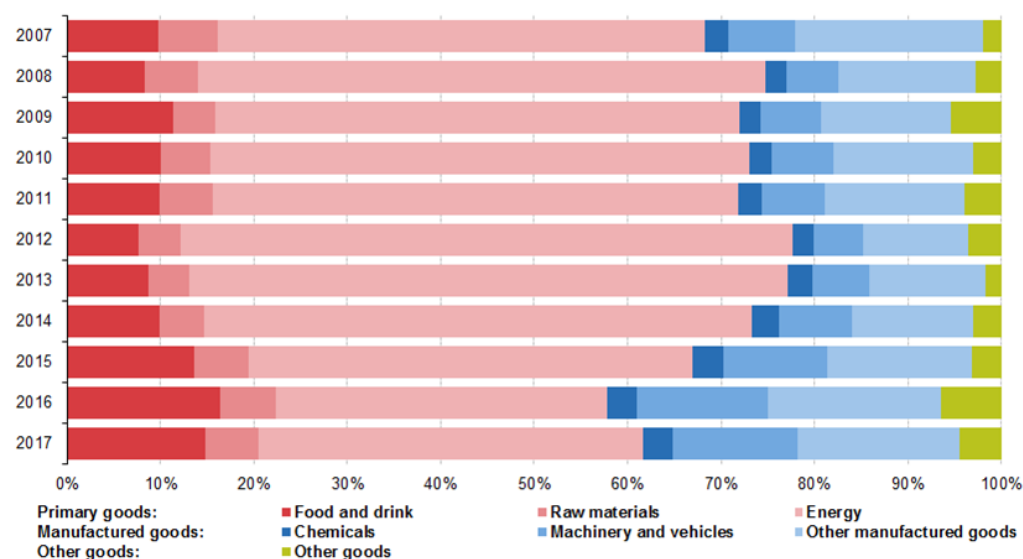
**Figure 3: EU-28 exports to Africa by main product groups, 2017 (shares of total exports in value)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

## Primary goods dominate imports with Africa

For imports from Africa, primary goods are the largest group (see Figure 4). However, between 2007 and 2017 there share decreased from 68 % to 62 % mainly due to the decreasing share of energy. In the same period, the share of manufactured goods rose from 30 % to 34 %. This was due to increasing imports of machinery and vehicles from 7 % to 13 %, while the drop in imports of other manufactured goods was smaller (from 20 % to 17 %).

### EU-28 imports of goods from Africa by main product groups, 2017

(shares of total exports in value)



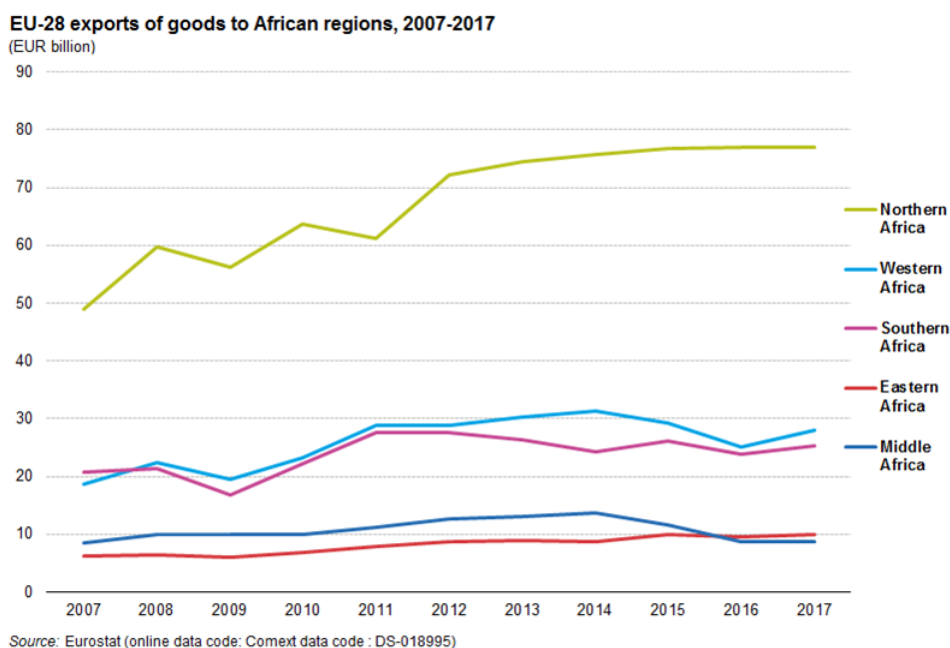
Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-018995)

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Figure 4: EU-28 imports from Africa by main product groups, 2017 (shares of total exports in value)Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

### Northern Africa largest trade in goods partner

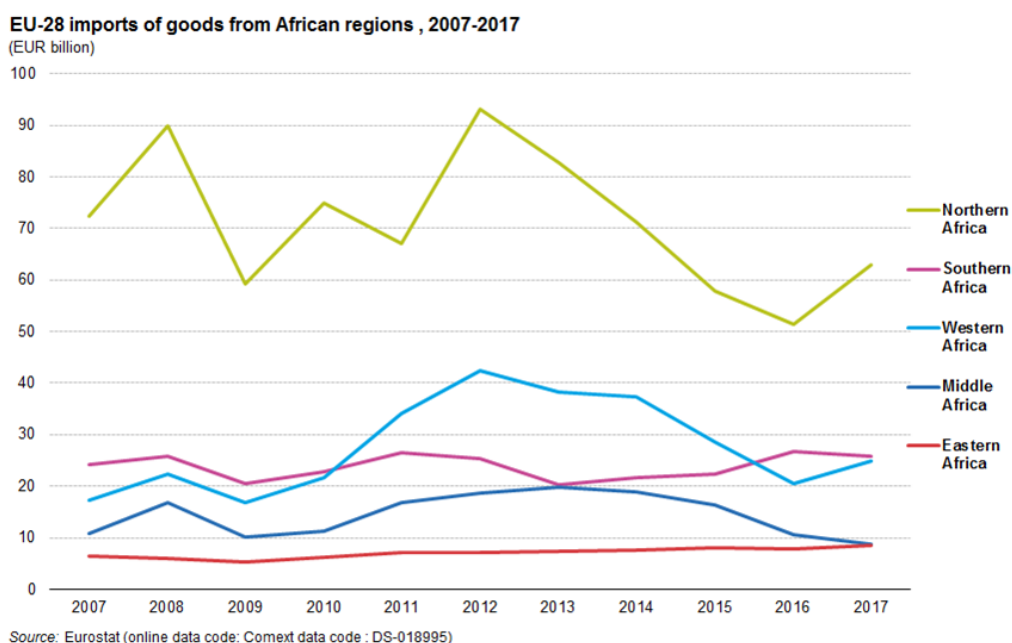
EU exports of goods to Northern Africa rose from EUR 49 billion in 2007 to EUR 77 billion in 2017 (see Figure 5), equivalent to an average annual growth rate of 4.6 %. Among the five African regions, Eastern Africa (4.9 %) had the highest growth rate for exports. The growth rate for EU exports to Western Africa was 4.2 %, while for Southern Africa (2.0 %) and Middle Africa (0.2 %) it was significantly lower. Figure 5 also reveals that these growth rates were mostly driven by the first half of the analysed period.



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**Figure 5: EU-28 exports of goods to African regions, 2007-2017 (EUR million)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

In 2007 and 2017, EU imports of goods from Africa stood at EUR 131 billion, although they had been as high as EUR 187 billion in 2012. Figure 6, depicting the evolution of imports in the five African regions, shows a decline of imports from Middle and Northern Africa, which was fully offset by a growth of imports from Southern, Eastern and Western Africa. Still, in 2017, imports from Northern Africa made up almost half of all imports from Africa

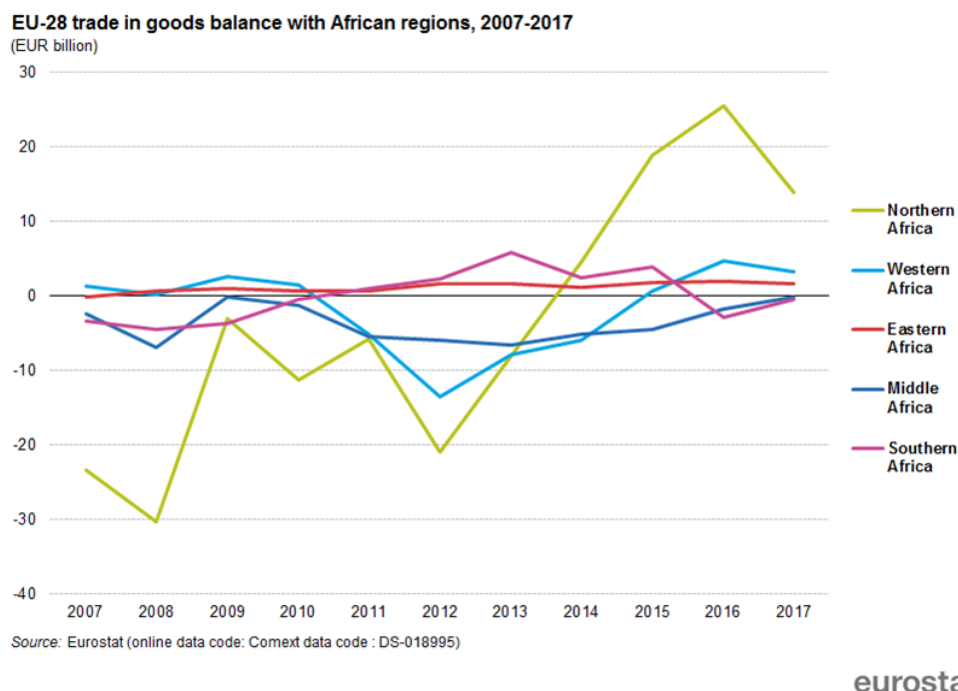


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**Figure 6: EU-28 imports of goods from African regions , 2007-2017 (EUR million)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

In 2017, the EU had small trade in goods deficits with Middle Africa (EUR -0.1 billion) and Southern Africa

(EUR -0.5 billion) and trade in goods surpluses with Eastern Africa (EUR 1.6 billion), Western Africa (EUR 3.2 billion ) and Northern Africa (EUR 13.9 billion), as shown in Figure 7. It is interesting to note that the EU was running a substantial deficit with Northern Africa up until 2014, when this turned to a quite substantial surplus.



**Figure 7: EU-28 trade in goods balance with African regions, 2007-2017 (EUR million)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

### Spain, France, Germany and Italy largest EU trade in goods partners for Africa

France (EUR 26.7 billion), Germany (EUR 25.6 billion), Spain (EUR 17.6 billion) and Italy (EUR 17.4 billion) were the largest exporters of goods to Africa in 2017 (Figure 8). Together they accounted for almost 60 % of all EU exports to Africa. Portugal (31 %), Cyprus (23 %), Malta (19 %) and Spain (18 %) had the highest shares for exports to Africa in their total exports to countries outside the EU.

### Exports of goods to Africa by Member State, 2017

(EUR million and %)

	EUR million	% of Africa in extra-EU
France	26 651	13.7
Germany	25 605	4.8
Spain	17 577	18.4
Italy	17 421	8.8
Netherlands	13 420	9.4
Belgium	13 044	12.2
United Kingdom	9 771	4.8
Portugal	4 368	30.6
Sweden	2 833	5.1
Poland	2 280	5.5
Romania	2 139	14.1
Greece	1 789	13.4
Austria	1 656	3.9
Denmark	1 564	4.5
Czech Republic	1 466	5.7
Ireland	1 417	2.4
Finland	1 328	5.4
Bulgaria	987	11.1
Hungary	811	4.3
Slovakia	466	4.4
Cyprus	412	23.0
Slovenia	402	4.9
Lithuania	394	3.6
Croatia	349	6.8
Latvia	237	5.7
Malta	191	18.6
Estonia	185	5.1
Luxembourg	179	8.1

Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-018995)

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**Figure 8: Exports of goods to Africa by Member State, 2017 (EUR million and %)**Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

The four largest exporters were also the largest importers of goods from Africa in 2017 (Figure 9). Spain (EUR 23.9 billion) led, followed by France (EUR 21.1 billion), Italy (EUR 18.5 billion) and Germany (EUR 17.3 billion). The highest shares of imports from Africa in total extra-EU imports were found in Spain (19 %), Portugal and France (both 13 %) and Italy (12 %).

### Imports of goods from Africa by Member State, 2017

(EUR million and %)

	EUR million	% of Africa in extra-EU
Spain	23 865	19.0
France	21 086	12.6
Italy	18 547	11.6
Germany	17 266	4.9
United Kingdom	14 686	5.4
Netherlands	12 942	4.7
Belgium	9 783	7.6
Portugal	2 060	12.6
Greece	1 919	7.9
Sweden	1 746	4.4
Austria	1 109	3.1
Poland	840	1.4
Bulgaria	789	7.3
Finland	599	3.4
Romania	547	3.0
Ireland	541	2.0
Slovenia	536	5.5
Czech Republic	439	1.4
Denmark	412	1.7
Hungary	294	1.3
Slovakia	216	1.5
Malta	167	8.6
Croatia	165	3.4
Cyprus	104	3.2
Lithuania	82	1.0
Luxembourg	66	1.9
Estonia	19	0.7
Latvia	12	0.4

Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-018995)

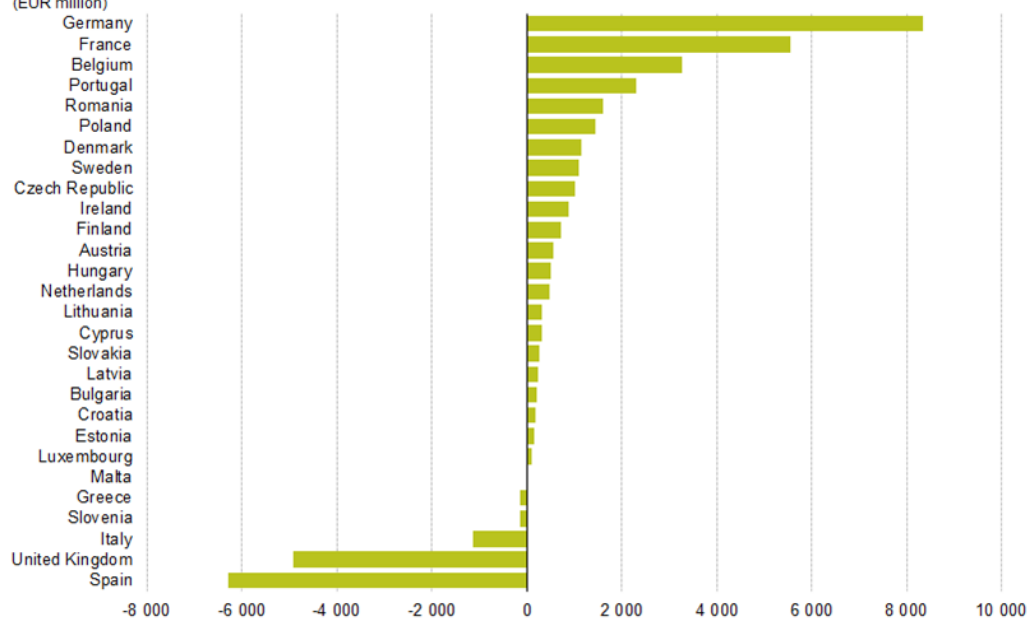
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Figure 9: Imports of goods from Africa by Member State, 2017 (EUR million and %)Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)

In 2017, 23 EU Member States had a trade in goods surplus with Africa. The highest two were found in Germany (EUR 8.3 billion) and France (EUR 5.6 billion). The five countries that had trade in goods deficits with Africa were Greece (EUR 130 million), Slovenia (EUR 134 million), Italy (EUR 1.1 billion), the United Kingdom (EUR 4.9 billion) and Spain (EUR 6.3 billion).

### Trade in goods balance with Africa by Member State, 2017

(EUR million)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-018995)

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Figure 10: Trade in goods balance with Africa by Member State, 2017 (EUR million)Source: Eurostat - Comext (DS-018995)



## Source data for tables and graphs

- [EU-28 trade with African countries](#)

### Data sources

EU data is taken from [Eurostat's COMEXT](#) database. COMEXT is the reference database for international trade in goods. It provides access not only to both recent and historical data from the EU Member States but also to statistics of a significant number of third countries. International trade aggregated and detailed statistics disseminated via the Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process.

Data are collected by the competent national authorities of the Member States and compiled according to a harmonised methodology established by EU regulations before transmission to Eurostat. For extra-EU trade, the statistical information is mainly provided by the traders on the basis of customs declarations.

EU data are compiled according to Community guidelines and may, therefore, differ from national data published by the Member States. Statistics on extra-EU trade are calculated as the sum of trade of each of the 28 EU Member States with countries outside the EU. In other words, the EU is considered as a single trading entity and trade flows are measured into and out of the area, but not within it.

Data from the perspective of Africa (as used in figure 1) is based on statistics from UNCTAD, combining data from UN Comtrade, IMF, Eurostat, UNCTADstat and UNCTAD secretariat calculations.

**Methodology** According to the EU concepts and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU Member States and non-EU countries) do not record exchanges involving goods in transit, placed in a customs warehouse or given temporary admission (for trade fairs, temporary exhibitions, tests, etc.). This is known as 'special trade'. The partner is the country of final destination of the goods for exports and the country of origin for imports.

**Product classification** Information on commodities exported and imported is presented according to the [Standard international trade classification \(SITC\)](#) . A full description is available from Eurostat's classification server [RAMON](#) .

**Unit of measure** Trade values are expressed in millions or billions (109) of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in case of sale or purchase at the national border of the reporting country. It is called a [FOB](#) value (free on board) for exports and a [CIF](#) value (cost, insurance, freight) for imports.

### Context

Trade is an important indicator of Europe's prosperity and place in the world. The block is deeply integrated into global markets both for the products it sources and the exports it sells. The EU trade policy is an important element of the external dimension of the 'Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' and is one of the main pillars of the EU's relations with the rest of the world.

Because the 28 EU Member States share a single market and a single external border, they also have a single trade policy. EU Member States speak and negotiate collectively, both in the [World Trade Organization](#) , where the rules of international trade are agreed and enforced, and with individual trading partners. This common policy enables them to speak with one voice in trade negotiations, maximising their impact in such negotiations. This is even more important in a globalised world in which economies tend to cluster together in regional groups.

The openness of the EU's trade regime has meant that the EU is the biggest player on the global trading scene and remains a good region to do business with. Thanks to the ease of modern transport and communications, it is now easier to produce, buy and sell goods around the world which gives European companies of every size the potential to trade outside Europe.

## Other articles

- [International trade in goods](#)
- [Extra-EU trade in goods](#)

## Main tables

- [International trade in goods](#) (t\_ext\_go), see:

International trade in goods - long-term indicators (t\_ext\_go\_lti)

International trade in goods - short-term indicators (t\_ext\_go\_sti)

## Database

- [International trade in goods](#) (ext\_go), see:

International trade in goods - aggregated data (ext\_go\_agg)

International trade in goods - long-term indicators (ext\_go\_lti)

International trade in goods - short-term indicators (ext\_go\_sti)

International trade in goods - detailed data (detail)

- [Full access to detailed statistics on international trade in goods \(Comext\)](#) , see:

EU trade since 1988 by SITC (DS-018995)

## Dedicated section

- [International trade in goods](#)

## Data visualisations

- [Top 5 partners in trade in goods](#)
- [My Country in a bubble](#)

## Methodology

- [International trade in goods statistics - background](#)
- [International trade in goods](#) (ESMS metadata file — ext\_go\_esms)
- [User guide on European statistics on international trade in goods](#)

## External links

- [European Commission](#)
- [Globalisation](#)
  - [Trade](#)