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**National Accounts and Economic Statistics - International Trade Statistics**

**SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN RESULTS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS  
CONFIDENTIALITY IN EU TRADE STATISTICS**

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## SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN RESULTS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS CONFIDENTIALITY IN EU TRADE STATISTICS

1. The current process of confidentiality affects the quality of EU external trade statistics, according to several dimensions of quality, such as : data accuracy (EU totals may be biased for some products), data clarity (lack of information for users of Comext database), data comparability (possible effect on asymmetries), coherence (various treatment by Member States, possible inconsistencies between data transmitted to international organisations...).

2. In a first step, Eurostat has produced some results about the weight of confidential data in EU trade. In the future, other actions will be launched with the aim to improve the quality of data published by Eurostat, while preserving individual data from disclosure.

### Global results

3. Broadly speaking, the percentage of confidential data in quantity is two times higher that the percentage in value (table 1). This difference is approximately at the same level for intra and for extra-European Union trade. The difference between these two indicators is more striking for imports than for exports. For imports, the percentage of confidential data in quantity is three times higher that the percentage in value.

Years	INTRA-EU TRADE				EXTRA-EU TRADE			
	Arrivals		Dispatches		Import		Export	
	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons
1995	1.24%	3.84%	4.14%	5.34%	3.60%	7.29%	4.55%	4.74%
1996	1.27%	3.69%	3.80%	6.15%	3.22%	7.69%	4.48%	5.21%
1997	1.13%	3.09%	4.00%	5.63%	3.72%	7.32%	4.90%	5.66%
1998	0.82%	2.67%	3.59%	5.04%	3.49%	7.75%	4.12%	5.54%
1999	2.49%	3.15%	4.14%	4.76%	3.37%	7.59%	4.33%	5.42%
2000	0.82%	3.96%	3.18%	4.91%	3.06%	8.90%	3.00%	5.26%
2001	0.81%	4.34%	2.86%	4.77%	3.25%	9.21%	2.77%	5.60%
All years	1.21%	3.46%	3.63%	5.23%	3.32%	7.71%	3.92%	5.38%

Table 1: European confidential trade relatively to total European external trade by year

4. When analysing the data, it is obvious that there are great disparities between Member States (table 2). On one side, some countries almost never consider data as confidential (Portugal and Spain for instance). On the other side, there are countries which in some cases may consider an important proportion of their data as confidential. For example, 20.37% of the quantities in tons concerning extra-EU imports are confidential in Austria. In this country, there is a big gap between confidential data in value for arrivals and confidential data in quantity for importation.

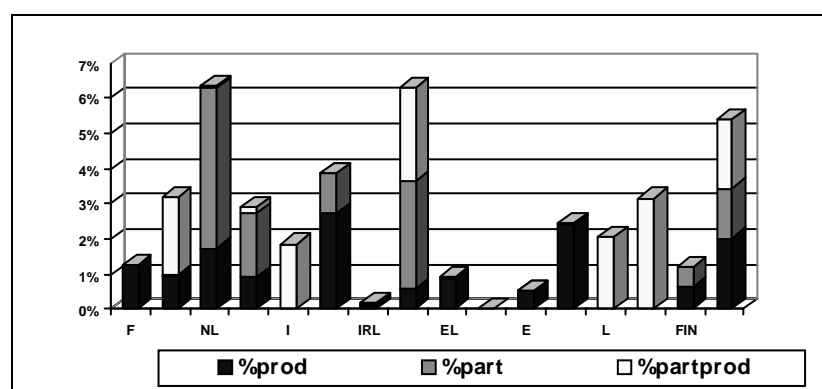
Declaring country	INTRA-EU TRADE				EXTRA-EU TRADE			
	Arrivals		Dispatches		Import		Export	
	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons	Euro	Tons
France	0.07%	1.53%	2.35%	5.44%	0.41%	5.13%	2.49%	5.29%
Belg. Lux	0.61%	0.61%	4.55%	6.01%	1.61%	1.12%	7.95%	8.24%
Netherlands	1.99%	3.01%	7.34%	3.77%	6.56%	1.94%	11.16%	8.27%
Germany	2.56%	7.75%	3.21%	8.35%	3.19%	14.88%	2.62%	8.39%
Italy	0.89%	4.10%	0.76%	1.44%	6.09%	13.24%	0.89%	1.30%
Utd. Kingdom	1.88%	3.03%	4.23%	4.61%	4.25%	4.82%	6.16%	2.96%
Ireland	0.07%	0.29%	0.20%	1.12%	0.24%	6.15%	0.15%	0.62%
Denmark	1.44%	3.46%	8.81%	6.71%	3.04%	1.62%	11.84%	15.63%
Greece	0.41%	1.09%	3.24%	1.48%	0.64%	0.40%	0.99%	0.24%
Portugal	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.13%	0.15%
Spain	0.20%	0.23%	0.49%	1.03%	0.46%	0.10%	1.83%	2.12%
Belgium	0.44%	0.33%	3.68%	6.55%	1.44%	1.29%	5.84%	6.60%
Luxembourg	2.93%	3.87%	1.40%	0.06%	0.83%	0.86%	1.34%	0.08%
Sweden	0.67%	2.94%	4.87%	2.51%	1.43%	1.83%	5.14%	3.33%
Finland	0.78%	4.90%	1.96%	10.75%	1.29%	10.02%	0.83%	9.60%
Austria	0.68%	2.40%	9.28%	11.76%	4.64%	20.37%	9.80%	11.81%
All MS	1.21%	3.46%	3.63%	5.23%	3.32%	7.71%	3.92%	5.38%

Table 2: European confidential trade relatively to total European external trade by declaring country (mean on the period 1995-2001)

### Analysis about the different types of confidentiality

5. Confidentiality may be applied to products at detailed level (Combined Nomenclature) or to partner countries for a specific detailed product. Both partner country and detailed product can also be hidden.

measured in % of total trade Value



6. There are also important disparities between Member States in the proportion of the different kinds of confidentiality. Some Member States (i.e. Belgium, France and Spain) only use product confidentiality. Others like Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden always confidentialize product and partner country at the same time. Concerning the other Member states the proportion of each kind of confidentiality changes in different ways for each of them.

**“Partial product confidentiality” versus “total product confidentiality”**

7. A product may be partially hidden (at least the first two digits of the HS classification are identified) or totally hidden (the product is then classified within the chapter 99).

8. At a global European level, the analysis leads to conclude that the proportion of partial product confidentiality relatively to the whole product confidentiality (no disclosure of chapters) depends on the flow and also on the fact that the trade is quantified in Value or in quantity (table 3). Some Member States like Ireland, Italy or Denmark apply a “total product confidentiality”. The percentage of partial confidentiality relatively to the whole product confidentiality varies according to different Member States.

Declaring country	Euro			Ton		
	Arr./imp.	Disp./exp	Total	Arr./imp	Disp./exp	Total
France	61%	92%	90%	100%	100%	100%
Belg. Lux	48%	56%	54%	51%	57%	56%
Netherlands	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Germany	0%	76%	53%	100%	99%	99%
Italy	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Utd. Kingdom	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Ireland	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Denmark	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Greece	64%	42%	50%	98%	53%	81%
Portugal	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Spain	0%	9%	6%	0%	7%	6%
Belgium	74%	85%	83%	94%	88%	89%
Luxembourg	99%	5%	72%	100%	3%	99%
Sweden	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Finland	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Austria	10%	82%	72%	1%	84%	35%
All MS	42%	78%	68%	30%	84%	56%

Table 3: Proportion of partial confidentiality relatively to the whole product confidentiality

**Analysis by Chapter**

9. Summing all the trade from 1995 to 2001, it appears that 5 chapters of products bring almost 70% of product confidentiality in value and more than 80% in quantity. Chapter 99 includes data relative to all chapters which cannot be identified. 32% in value (and 44% in quantity) of product confidentiality is registered in this chapter. The top 5 of the chapters including the highest proportion of product confidentiality relatively to the trade of this chapter enables to notice which kind of products are the most biased due to confidentiality. For instance, 31.3% of the trade of arms and ammunition, parts and accessories thereof (chapter 93) in value are confidential. It means that when studying the value of the trade of a specific product in this chapter, the value provided can be much lower than the true value.

<b>Declaring country</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
France	<b>99</b> (35.4%)	<b>79</b> (19.9%)	<b>13</b> (18.7%)	<b>81</b> (16.3%)	<b>36</b> (14.5%)
Belg. Lux	<b>99</b> (98.6%)	<b>93</b> (44.1%)	<b>81</b> (28.7%)	<b>28</b> (27.7%)	<b>29</b> (15.2%)
Netherlands	<b>54</b> (36.2%)	<b>37</b> (23%)	<b>59</b> (21.4%)	<b>75</b> (20.8%)	<b>28</b> (17.4%)
Germany	<b>31</b> (15.5%)	<b>55</b> (14.9%)	<b>99</b> (10.7%)	<b>79</b> (6.5%)	<b>54</b> (4.8%)
Italy	<b>99</b> (95.2%)	<b>49</b> (0.10%)			
Utd. Kingdom	<b>88</b> (76%)	<b>93</b> (61%)	<b>36</b> (53%)	<b>54</b> (17.2%)	<b>55</b> (17.1%)
Ireland	<b>99</b> (1.25%)	<b>49</b> (0.07%)			
Denmark	<b>99</b> (76.1%)	<b>49</b> (0.1%)			
Greece	<b>99</b> (92.5%)	<b>93</b> (42.2%)	<b>72</b> (11.9%)	<b>82</b> (8.1%)	<b>26</b> (5.6%)
Portugal	<b>99</b> (49.4%)	<b>49</b> (0.01%)			
Spain	<b>99</b> (76.9%)	<b>55</b> (1.6%)	<b>28</b> (0.5%)	<b>29</b> (0.5%)	<b>38</b> (0.5%)
Belgium	<b>99</b> (97%)	<b>93</b> (64.9%)	<b>81</b> (48.6%)	<b>28</b> (21.6%)	<b>29</b> (11%)
Luxembourg	<b>99</b> (55.7%)	<b>27</b> (30.8%)	<b>28</b> (18.2%)	<b>69</b> (12.9%)	<b>38</b> (2.3%)
Sweden	<b>93</b> (79%)	<b>36</b> (43.7%)	<b>31</b> (31.5%)	<b>35</b> (17.8%)	<b>29</b> (16.6%)
Finland	<b>99</b> (44.1%)	<b>49</b> (0.1%)			
Austria	<b>99</b> (91%)	<b>93</b> (64.8%)	<b>31</b> (59.1%)	<b>36</b> (33.1%)	<b>55</b> (33%)
All MS	<b>93</b> (31.3%)	<b>99</b> (24%)	<b>36</b> (14.8%)	<b>28</b> (10.5%)	<b>81</b> (7.6%)

**Table 4:** Top 5 of the chapters including the highest proportion of product confidentiality relatively to the trade of this chapter (in Euro globally and by Member state)

#### Analysis by Partner

10. At intra-EU level, it is possible to analyse the part of confidential information with each partner. It enables to quantify the share of trade which is not identified for each partner (table 4). On the whole, within the European Union, 14% of the dispatches in quantity with the partner country Luxembourg are confidential and 9% of the arrivals with the Netherlands. In value, the proportion of confidential information with each partner is generally lower than in quantity. As a whole, the proportion of confidential information with each partner is also lower for the arrivals than for the dispatches.

Declaring country	Flow	1	2	3	4	5
France	Arriv.	NL (9.31%)	B (1.91%)	UK (0.48%)	D (0.07%)	
	Disp.	L (25.77%)	A (21.81%)	DK (8.75%)	UEBL (8.64%)	FIN (8.58%)
Belg. Lux	Arriv.	EL (1.91%)	D (0.84%)	IRL (0.78%)	I (0.65%)	UK (0.52%)
	Disp.	EL (22%)	DK (7.17%)	A (6.58%)	I (6.28%)	E (5.29%)
Netherlands	Arriv.	UK (7.15%)	B (5.20%)	A (4.77%)	DK (3.01%)	S (2.28%)
	Disp.	S (17%)	FIN (11.82%)	E (9.48%)	IRL (8.47%)	L (7.77%)
Germany	Arriv.	DK (20.10%)	NL (16.39%)	A (4.06%)	UK (2.50%)	UEBL (1.36%)
	Disp.	IRL (19.25%)	F (12.69%)	B (11.53%)	UEBL (11.47%)	A (9.86%)
Italy	Arriv.	NL (32.99%)	A (0.26%)	B (0.22%)	E (0.16%)	UK (0.12%)
	Disp.	B (5.47%)	DK (2.45%)	UEBL (2.38%)	E (1.34%)	P (1.26%)
Utd. Kingdom	Arriv.	EL (28.60%)	IRL (9.94%)	DK (3.91%)	NL (3.78%)	D (2.43%)
	Disp.	I (16.89%)	UEBL (9.45%)	A (8.10%)	DK (7.34%)	IRL (6.52%)
Ireland	Arriv.	D (2.43%)	UEBL (0.75%)	I (0.29%)	NL (0.09%)	A (0.03%)
	Disp.	A (29.96%)	I (4.19%)	D (3.13%)	EL (1.96%)	E (1.80%)
Denmark	Arriv.	EL (60.43%)	E (22.45%)	UK (4.72%)	D (3.87%)	F (2.31%)
	Disp.	IRL (14.59%)	UEBL (11.96%)	B (10.12%)	EL (10.12%)	UK (9.66%)
Greece	Arriv.	I (2.89%)	F (0.90%)	P (0.56%)	UEBL (0.53%)	NL (0.29%)
	Disp.	FIN (38.79%)	S (5.58%)	B (4.80%)	UEBL (3.68%)	D (2.21%)
Portugal	Arriv.					
	Disp.	I (0.29%)	EL (0.11%)	E (0.04%)	UK (0.02%)	A (0.02%)
Spain	Arriv.	B (1.56%)	FIN (0.82%)	I (0.33%)	D (0.28%)	S (0.21%)
	Disp.	I (1.89%)	FIN (1.63%)	EL (1.52%)	L (1.35%)	UK (1.34%)
Belgium	Arriv.	P (1.29%)	I (0.74%)	D (0.61%)	FIN (0.52%)	S (0.39%)
	Disp.	EL (21.28%)	L (12.35%)	I (10.35%)	A (8.02%)	DK (7.97%)
Luxembourg	Arriv.	B (8.96%)	D (1.43%)	F (0.49%)	UK (0.07%)	A (0.01%)
	Disp.	D (0.18%)	FIN (0.15%)	E (0.11%)	A (0.11%)	UK (0.09%)
Sweden	Arriv.	IRL (7.47%)	UEBL (5.58%)	NL (3.20%)	DK (3.03%)	D (2.59%)
	Disp.	P (5.68%)	UEBL (3.87%)	A (3.49%)	UK (3.14%)	E (3.12%)
Finland	Arriv.	F (10.02%)	S (9.55%)	A (8.67%)	NL (6.35%)	D (2.74%)
	Disp.	NL (20.99%)	DK (18.90%)	P (18.61%)	B (15.98%)	EL (13.63%)
Austria	Arriv.	D (2.90%)	B (2.02%)	DK (1.82%)	F (1.29%)	IRL (1.26%)
	Disp.	L (25.07%)	FIN (22.25%)	IRL (18.33%)	DK (18.27%)	P (16.78%)
All MS	Arriv.	NL (9.27%)	DK (7.81%)	IRL (6.17%)	EL (4.70%)	B (2.71%)
	Disp.	L (14.36%)	A (8.47%)	S (6.59%)	IRL (6.58%)	UEBL (6.36%)

Table 5: Top 5 of the partners for which the proportion of confidential data in Ton is the highest separately for the two flows and each Member State

### Next steps

11. In the future, Eurostat would like to reduce as much as possible the negative effect of confidentiality on data quality. Several actions will be launched:

- Analysis of data at the most detailed level of classification (Combined Nomenclature).
- Work on Eurostat databases to inform users of shortcomings due to confidentiality (for instance, flag EU aggregates when at least one declaring country is affected by confidentiality treatment).
- Work on methods which could be applied to EU aggregates to allow disclosure without breaking confidentiality at Member States level.

A guide of best practices will be proposed to Member States and Acceding countries.

- Discussions within the Quality Working Group to improve the coherence of data disclosure practises by Member States.