WHEN INTRA-EU TRADE FINDS A NEW BALANCE

Guillaume Derrien with the help of Maëlys Biot (intern)

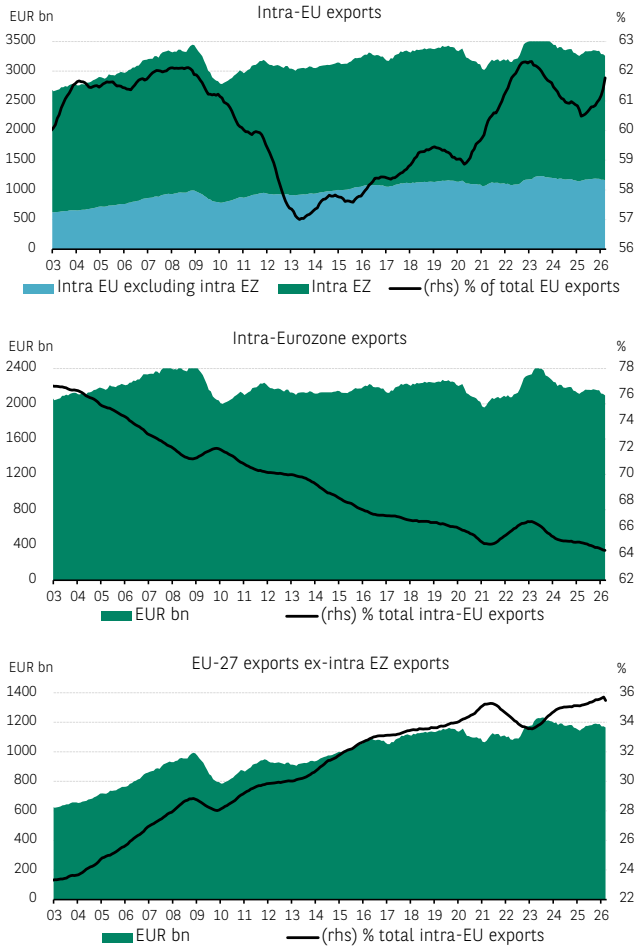
The share of intra-EU exports in total European exports currently stands at around 62%, a level comparable to that seen in the early 2000s. Behind this apparent stability, however, lies a deep reshuffling of the major blocs that make up the European Union. The share of trade within the Eurozone in total intra-EU exports has declined almost continuously. It fell from about 77% in the early 2000s to just over 64% today (April 2026). Conversely, the share of flows between the Eurozone and the rest of the European Union (31.5%), along with, to a lesser extent, trade among the six countries[1] outside the Eurozone (4.0%), has risen symmetrically. There is little doubt that the growth gaps expected between the Eurozone and the more dynamic economies of Central Europe and Scandinavia by the end of the decade, according to IMF projections[2], will fuel this trend.

This rebalancing stems first and foremost from EU enlargement. The Central European countries, whose EU integration began in 2004 (2007 for Romania), have gradually climbed up European industrial value chains. This is particularly true in machine tools, transport equipment, and, more recently, defense (Poland), a sector in which Sweden is also a major player. Foreign direct investment flows from the Eurozone and from outside Europe (China[3]) have accompanied this upgrading, anchoring these economies as central players in European value chains.[4]

The Eurozone remains by far the EU's main export market, and most of the industrial value added remains concentrated there. This gradual shift in trade patterns is nonetheless not politically neutral, and it is progressively redrawing the balance of power within the EU. The ongoing negotiations over the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034) are one of the current illustrations of this.

This reorientation is slow and uneven, but it remains an important signal. At a time when global trade tensions and Chinese competition are undermining opportunities outside the EU, this internal redeployment of trade acts as a buffer for European exports, which is positive for the continent's economic growth. It is also, and above all, one more argument—if one were needed—for strengthening the European single market, the only framework capable of turning these new synergies into lasting competitiveness gains for the whole continent. Hence the importance for European leaders of making the 'One Europe, One Market' plan a success.

In intra-EU trade, the eurozone is losing ground to the other member states



Note: Constant price, 2020. Data are deflated using unit value index of exports

CHARTS

SOURCE: EUROSTAT, BNP PARIBAS

1 Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Czech Republic.
2 According to April 2026 forecasts, average annual growth in the Eurozone is expected to be 1.2% over 2026-2030, versus 2.1% for the six non-Eurozone countries.
3 See Rhodium Group's latest report on this topic: Chinese Investment in Europe Rises to Seven-Year High: Chinese FDI in Europe 2025 Update – Rhodium Group
4 See C. Kalasopatan Antoine, Central Europe: Moving up the value chain, BNP Paribas, February 4, 2025.

GROUP ECONOMIC RESEARCH

ECOINSIGHT
Structural or thematic topics

ECOPERSPECTIVES
Analyses and forecasts with a focus on developed and emerging economies.

ECOFLASH
Data releases, major economic events

ECOWEEK
Recent economic and policy developments, data comments, economic calendar, forecasts

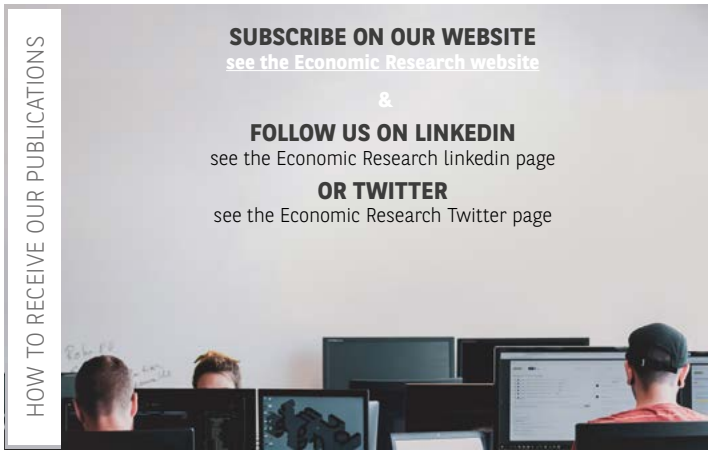
ECOCHARTS
Easy-to-read monthly overview of inflation dynamics

ECOATLAS
The key economic figures for France and major European economies

CHART OF THE WEEK
A weekly chart highlighting points of interest in the world economy

ECOTV
What is the key event of the month?
You will find the answer in our economy broadcast.

MACROWAVES
Our economic podcast



Published by BNP PARIBAS Economic Research
Head office: 16 boulevard des Italiens – 75009 Paris France / Phone : +33 (0) 1.42.98.12.34
Internet: www.group.bnpparibas - www.economic-research.bnpparibas.com
Head of publication : Jean Lemierre / Chief editor: Isabelle Mateos y Lago

The information and opinions contained in this document have been obtained from, or are based on, public sources believed to be reliable, but there is no guarantee of the accuracy, completeness or fitness for any particular purpose of such information and such information may not have been independently verified by BNPP or by any person. None of BNPP, any of its subsidiary undertakings or affiliates or its members, directors, officers, agents or employees accepts any responsibility or liability whatsoever or makes any representation or warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy and completeness of the information or any opinions based thereon and contained in this document and it should not be relied upon as such. This document does not constitute research, as defined under MIFID II, or form any part of any offer to sell or issue and is not a solicitation of any offer to purchase any financial instrument, nor shall it or any part of it nor the fact of its distribution form the basis of, or be relied on, in connection with any contract or investment decision. Information and opinions contained in this document are published for the information of recipients, but are not to be relied upon as authoritative or taken in substitution for the exercise of judgment by any recipient, are subject to change without notice. In providing this document, BNPP does not offer investment, financial, legal, tax or any other type of advice to, nor has any fiduciary duties towards, recipients. Any reference to past performance is not indicative of future performance, which may be better or worse than prior results. Any hypothetical, past performance simulations are the result of estimates made by BNPP, as of a given moment, on the basis of parameters, market conditions, and historical data selected by BNPP, and should not be used as guidance, in any way, of future performance. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no BNPP group company accepts any liability whatsoever (including in negligence) for any direct or consequential loss arising from any use of or reliance on material contained in this document even when advised of the possibility of such losses. All estimates and opinions included in this document are made as of the date of this document. Unless otherwise indicated in this document there is no intention to update this document. BNPP may make a market in, or may, as principal or agent, buy or sell securities of any issuer or person mentioned in this document or derivatives thereon. Prices, yields and other similar information included in this document are included for information purposes however numerous factors will affect market pricing at any particular time, such information may be subject to rapid change and there is no certainty that transactions could be executed at any specified price. BNPP may have a financial interest in any issuer or person mentioned in this document, including a long or short position in their securities and/or options, futures or other derivative instruments based thereon, or vice versa. BNPP, including its officers and employees may serve or have served as an officer, director or in an advisory capacity for any person mentioned in this document. BNPP may, from time to time, solicit, perform or have performed investment banking, underwriting or other services (including acting as adviser, manager, underwriter or lender) within the last 12 months for any person referred to in this document. BNPP may be a party to an agreement with any person relating to the production of this document. BNPP may to the extent permitted by law, have acted upon or used the information contained herein or in the document, or the analysis on which it was based, before the document was published. BNPP may receive or intend to seek compensation for investment banking services in the next three months from or in relation to any person mentioned in this document. Any person mentioned in this document may have been provided with relevant sections of this document prior to its publication in order to verify its factual accuracy.

This document was produced by a BNPP group company. This document is for the use of intended recipients and may not be reproduced (in whole or in part) or delivered or transmitted to any other person without the prior written consent of BNPP. By accepting or accessing this document you agree to this.

BNP Paribas is a société anonyme incorporated in France, licensed and supervised as a credit institution by the European Central Bank (ECB) and as an investment services provider by the Autorité de contrôle prudentiel et de résolution (ACPR) and Autorité des marches financiers (AMF), and having its registered office at 16, boulevard des Italiens, 75009 Paris, France.
Some or all of the information contained in this document may already have been published on https://globalmarkets.bnpparibas.com.

For country-specific disclaimers (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Brazil, Turkey, Israel, Bahrain, South Africa, Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam) please type the following URL to access the applicable legal notices: https://globalmarkets.bnpparibas.com/gm/home/Markets_360_Country_Specific_Notices.pdf

© BNP Paribas (2026). All rights reserved.

Subscribe to our publications:
ECONOMIC RESEARCH

BNP PARIBAS

La banque
d'un monde
qui change