



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

Frankfurt am Main, 31 May 1999

PRESS RELEASE

EURO AREA BALANCE OF PAYMENTS KEY ITEMS (monthly developments March 1999)

The tables attached to this press release contain statistics produced by the Eurosystem in respect of the monthly balance of payments (b.o.p.) of the euro area. These statistics are compiled by the ECB on the basis of data on extra-euro area transactions reported by euro area countries. The results for March 1999 will also be published in the June issue of the ECB Monthly Bulletin. A further breakdown of some items for the first quarter of 1999, such as investment income as well as portfolio and other investment, will be published together with the European Commission (Eurostat) in a joint press release.

Main developments in the balance of payments of the euro area in March 1999

In March 1999 the current account surplus of the euro area was € 5.5 billion, i.e. € 1.6 billion lower than in the corresponding month in 1998. This was mainly due to the lower surplus in the goods balance and to the swing from surplus to deficit in the services balance which more than offset the reduction in the deficit in the current transfers balance. The cumulative current account surplus since the beginning of the year reached € 9.2 billion, i.e. € 1.6 billion higher than in the corresponding period in 1998.

In March 1999 the surplus of the goods balance of the euro area amounted to € 7.8 billion, i.e. € 2.2 billion lower than in the same period in 1998: compared with March 1998, the value of exports declined by 4.4% to € 66.8 billion; the value of euro area imports decreased to € 58.9 billion, i.e. 1.8% less than in the corresponding month a year ago. The balance of services was in deficit by € 1.3 billion in March 1999, compared with a surplus of € 0.3 billion in March 1998.

The net income account was in surplus by € 0.3 billion, i.e. € 0.1 billion lower than in the same period in 1998, with both incoming and outgoing flows lower. Net current transfers vis-à-vis non-residents – including European Union institutions - constituted the largest deficit item, which reached € 1.4 billion, i.e. € 2.2 billion less than in March 1998.

The capital account showed a deficit of € 0.2 billion in March. In the first quarter of 1999 it recorded net inflows of € 2.4 billion.

Turning to the financial account, direct investment and portfolio investment recorded net outflows of € 2.6 billion and € 33.2 billion, respectively, in March 1999. The latter resulted mainly from purchases by euro area residents of foreign bonds and notes and sales by non-residents of equities issued by euro area residents. Moreover, the “other investment account” showed net outflows, mainly in the short-term items of the MFI sector. Reserve assets decreased by € 1.8 billion, and inflows from transactions related to financial derivatives reached € 0.8 billion. In the first three months of 1999 cumulative net outflows, as recorded in the financial account of the euro area b.o.p., amounted to € 21.6 billion.

Errors and omissions reached +€ 34.9 billion in March. In the first quarter of 1999, they amounted to +€ 10.0 billion.

European Central Bank

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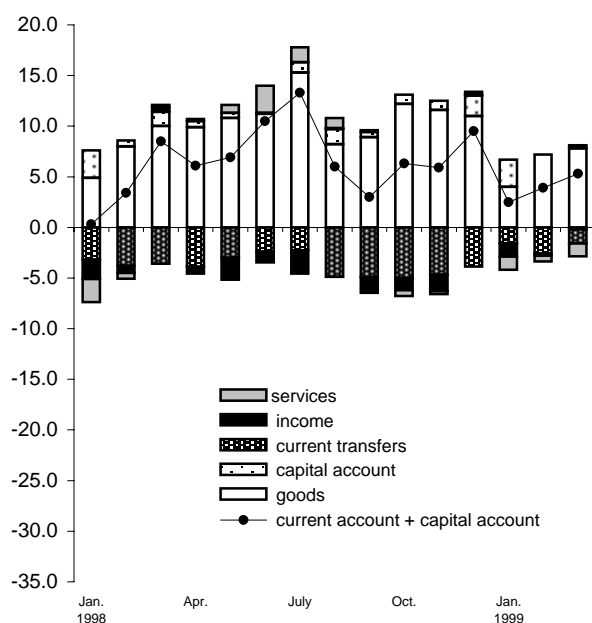
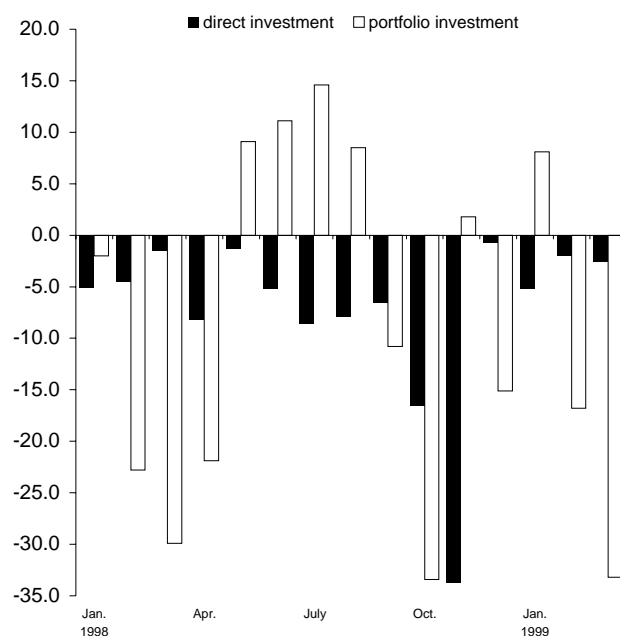
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Table 1**Summary balance of payments ¹⁾***(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); net flows)*

	Current account					Capital account	Financial account ²⁾						Errors and omissions ³⁾
	Total	Goods	Services	Income	Current transfers		Total ³⁾	Direct investment	Portfolio investment ³⁾	Financial derivatives ³⁾	Other investment ³⁾⁴⁾	Reserve assets ³⁾	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1998	67.0	122.1	3.1	-12.6	-45.5	12.6	7.9	-100.2	-90.8	-8.3	198.9	8.3	-87.6
1998 Q1	7.6	22.9	-2.6	-2.2	-10.5	4.7	-1.6	-11.2	-54.7	0.3	65.2	-1.3	-10.7
Q2	22.3	31.8	3.7	-4.0	-9.3	1.2	4.1	-14.8	-1.7	-4.1	24.6	0.0	-27.5
Q3	19.3	32.4	2.7	-3.8	-12.1	3.0	-3.3	-23.1	12.3	1.2	3.5	2.8	-19.0
Q4	17.9	34.9	-0.6	-2.8	-13.6	3.7	8.7	-51.1	-46.7	-5.6	105.5	6.7	-30.3
1999 Q1	9.2	19.1	-3.2	-1.2	-5.6	2.4	-21.6	-9.9	-41.9	-1.6	27.7	4.0	10.0
1998 Jan.	-2.4	4.9	-2.3	-1.9	-3.2	2.7	13.5	-5.1	-2.0	-1.8	20.0	2.5	-13.9
Feb.	2.8	8.0	-0.6	-0.7	-3.8	0.6	-17.6	-4.5	-22.8	0.7	12.9	-3.9	14.2
Mar.	7.1	10.0	0.3	0.4	-3.6	1.4	2.5	-1.5	-29.9	1.4	32.3	0.2	-11.0
Apr.	5.5	9.9	0.2	-0.7	-3.9	0.6	-29.0	-8.2	-21.9	-0.9	2.9	-0.9	22.9
May	6.4	10.8	0.8	-2.2	-3.0	0.5	19.5	-1.3	9.1	-1.5	12.3	0.9	-26.4
June	10.4	11.2	2.7	-1.1	-2.4	0.1	13.6	-5.2	11.1	-1.8	9.5	0.0	-24.1
July	12.3	15.3	1.5	-2.3	-2.3	1.0	23.8	-8.6	14.6	-1.4	17.8	1.3	-37.1
Aug.	4.5	8.2	1.0	0.1	-4.9	1.5	8.6	-7.9	8.5	2.3	8.3	-2.5	-14.6
Sep.	2.5	8.9	0.2	-1.6	-4.9	0.5	-35.7	-6.6	-10.8	0.3	-22.6	4.0	32.6
Oct.	5.4	12.2	-0.6	-1.2	-5.0	0.9	-12.3	-16.6	-33.4	-3.0	44.1	-3.3	6.0
Nov.	5.0	11.6	-0.3	-1.6	-4.7	0.9	4.7	-33.8	1.8	-2.4	45.1	-6.1	-10.5
Dec.	7.5	11.0	0.3	0.1	-3.9	2.0	16.3	-0.7	-15.1	-0.2	16.2	16.1	-25.8
1999 Jan.	-0.2	4.0	-1.3	-1.3	-1.6	2.7	11.8	-5.2	8.1	-2.1	13.6	-2.4	-14.3
Feb.	3.9	7.2	-0.6	-0.2	-2.6	0.0	6.7	-2.0	-16.8	-0.2	21.2	4.6	-10.6
Mar.	5.5	7.8	-1.3	0.3	-1.4	-0.2	-40.2	-2.6	-33.2	0.8	-7.0	1.8	34.9

Current and capital accounts*(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); net flows)***Direct and portfolio investment***(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); net flows)*

Source: ECB.

1) Discrepancies may arise from rounding.

2) Inflows (+); outflows (-).

3) Series for which data from January 1999 are not closely comparable with earlier observations.

4) Flows before January 1999 include estimations.

Table 2**Current and capital accounts ¹⁾***(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); gross flows)*

	Current account										Capital account	
	Total		Goods		Services		Income		Current transfers		Credit 11	Debit 12
	Credit 1	Debit 2	Credit 3	Debit 4	Credit 5	Debit 6	Credit 7	Debit 8	Credit 9	Debit 10		
1998	1,277.8	1,210.7	779.4	657.3	247.6	244.4	190.2	202.9	60.6	106.1	17.6	5.0
1998 Q1	317.6	310.1	190.8	167.9	56.3	58.9	47.0	49.2	23.5	34.1	5.9	1.2
Q2	325.7	303.5	199.0	167.2	64.1	60.4	50.3	54.2	12.3	21.6	2.4	1.2
Q3	316.0	296.7	190.8	158.3	67.4	64.7	45.5	49.3	12.2	24.3	4.1	1.1
Q4	318.4	300.5	198.8	163.9	59.7	60.4	47.4	50.1	12.5	26.1	5.2	1.5
1999 Q1	292.7	283.5	177.9	158.9	47.9	51.0	44.5	45.6	22.4	28.0	4.4	2.0
1998 Jan.	104.7	107.1	58.6	53.7	18.5	20.8	14.6	16.5	13.0	16.2	3.1	0.4
Feb.	101.0	98.1	62.3	54.3	17.6	18.2	15.1	15.8	6.0	9.8	0.9	0.4
Mar.	112.0	104.9	69.9	60.0	20.2	19.9	17.3	16.9	4.6	8.1	1.8	0.4
Apr.	106.4	101.0	66.5	56.6	20.2	20.0	16.2	16.9	3.5	7.4	1.0	0.4
May	104.4	98.0	64.3	53.5	20.7	19.9	15.2	17.3	4.2	7.2	0.9	0.4
June	114.9	104.5	68.2	57.1	23.2	20.5	18.9	20.0	4.6	7.0	0.5	0.4
July	116.0	103.7	70.6	55.3	24.1	22.6	16.2	18.5	5.0	7.3	1.4	0.4
Aug.	94.6	90.1	55.3	47.1	22.3	21.3	13.4	13.3	3.6	8.5	1.8	0.3
Sep.	105.4	102.9	64.8	55.9	21.0	20.9	15.9	17.5	3.6	8.5	0.9	0.4
Oct.	106.8	101.4	68.2	56.0	20.4	21.0	14.6	15.8	3.6	8.6	1.3	0.4
Nov.	101.5	96.5	65.2	53.5	18.1	18.4	14.2	15.8	4.1	8.8	1.3	0.5
Dec.	110.1	102.5	65.4	54.4	21.2	20.9	18.6	18.5	4.8	8.7	2.6	0.6
1999 Jan.	94.3	94.5	53.0	49.0	14.5	15.8	14.2	15.5	12.6	14.2	3.1	0.5
Feb.	93.7	89.8	58.1	50.9	16.0	16.6	14.3	14.4	5.3	7.9	0.5	0.5
Mar.	104.7	99.2	66.8	58.9	17.4	18.6	16.1	15.7	4.5	5.9	0.8	1.0

Source: ECB.

1) Discrepancies may arise from rounding.

Table 3**Direct and portfolio investment accounts**¹⁾²⁾*(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); net flows)*

	Direct investment		Portfolio investment									
			Total		Equity		Debt instruments					
	Abroad	In the euro area	Assets	Liabilities ³⁾	Assets	Liabilities ³⁾	Assets			Liabilities ³⁾		
							Total	Bonds and notes	Money market instruments	Total	Bonds and notes	Money market instruments
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1998	-177.9	77.7	-307.1	216.3	-82.4	68.5	-224.7	-206.9	-17.9	147.8	119.4	28.3
1998 Q1	-46.4	35.2	-114.1	59.4	-29.6	14.8	-84.5	-74.9	-9.5	44.6	39.9	4.6
Q2	-39.6	24.9	-83.3	81.6	-25.6	24.8	-57.6	-55.1	-2.5	56.7	44.3	12.4
Q3	-25.3	2.2	-55.0	67.3	-9.8	-0.4	-45.2	-42.5	-2.7	67.7	50.5	17.3
Q4	-66.6	15.4	-54.7	8.0	-17.3	29.2	-37.4	-34.3	-3.1	-21.2	-15.2	-6.0
1999 Q1	-28.1	18.3	-64.6	22.7	-15.2	-13.5	-49.4	-47.8	-1.6	36.2	33.2	3.0
1998 Jan.	-9.8	4.7	-20.8	18.7	-5.7	4.7	-15.1	-16.3	1.2	14.0	11.3	2.7
Feb.	-15.0	10.5	-51.1	28.3	-11.4	3.2	-39.7	-33.0	-6.7	25.1	26.0	-1.0
Mar.	-21.6	20.1	-42.3	12.4	-12.5	6.9	-29.7	-25.7	-4.0	5.5	2.6	2.9
Apr.	-20.7	12.5	-34.0	12.1	-8.0	1.2	-26.0	-30.9	4.9	10.9	10.6	0.3
May	-12.3	10.9	-19.6	28.7	-6.7	5.5	-12.9	-10.0	-2.9	23.2	15.8	7.5
June	-6.6	1.4	-29.7	40.8	-10.9	18.2	-18.7	-14.2	-4.6	22.6	17.9	4.7
July	-2.8	-5.8	-23.0	37.6	-3.2	9.1	-19.8	-20.9	1.1	28.6	17.0	11.6
Aug.	-4.0	-4.0	-14.5	23.0	0.5	-5.4	-15.0	-14.1	-0.9	28.4	22.4	6.0
Sep.	-18.6	12.0	-17.5	6.7	-7.1	-4.1	-10.4	-7.4	-2.9	10.8	11.1	-0.3
Oct.	-11.7	-5.0	-6.9	-26.6	-1.4	-6.1	-5.5	-8.0	2.5	-20.4	-24.8	4.3
Nov.	-41.1	7.3	-30.3	32.1	-9.0	33.0	-21.3	-15.7	-5.6	-0.9	1.1	-2.0
Dec.	-13.8	13.1	-17.6	2.5	-7.0	2.4	-10.6	-10.6	0.0	0.1	8.4	-8.3
1999 Jan.	-11.6	6.3	-17.2	25.3	-6.3	5.9	-10.9	-7.4	-3.5	19.3	23.5	-4.1
Feb.	-5.4	3.4	-19.8	3.0	-3.1	2.8	-16.7	-18.5	1.8	0.1	-5.8	5.9
Mar.	-11.1	8.5	-27.6	-5.6	-5.8	-22.3	-21.8	-21.9	0.1	16.7	15.5	1.3

Source: ECB.

1) Discrepancies may arise from rounding.

2) Inflows (+); outflows (-).

3) Series for which data from January 1999 are not closely comparable with earlier observations.

Table 4**Other investment account** ^{1) 2) 3)}

(EUR billions (ECU billions to end-1998); net flows)

	Total		Eurosysteem		General government		MFIs (excluding the Eurosysteem)						Other sectors	
	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Total		Long-term		Short-term		Assets	Liabilities
							Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1998	-37.0	235.8	-0.7	2.5	-1.4	-8.2	-18.1	211.0	-38.3	36.6	20.3	174.4	-16.8	30.5
1998 Q1	-31.2	96.4	0.4	-0.1	-1.9	-2.4	-9.6	88.7	-7.6	11.1	-1.9	77.6	-20.1	10.2
Q2	-1.5	26.2	-1.0	0.5	-2.9	-1.0	-1.8	20.7	-13.7	7.7	11.9	13.1	4.2	5.9
Q3	-79.3	82.8	0.4	-0.6	0.4	-1.9	-73.6	78.7	-14.7	1.4	-58.8	77.3	-6.5	6.6
Q4	75.0	30.4	-0.5	2.7	3.1	-2.8	66.9	22.8	-2.3	16.4	69.1	6.4	5.6	7.8
1999 Q1	-52.8	80.5	-2.4	0.0	-3.3	-5.0	-32.1	71.0	-19.9	21.1	-12.2	49.9	-14.9	14.5
1998 Jan.	-14.4	34.3	0.1	0.2	-2.4	-1.6	3.1	32.8	-4.4	3.6	7.5	29.2	-15.2	2.9
Feb.	-14.1	27.0	0.3	-0.3	-0.8	-1.3	-6.6	24.6	-4.3	7.3	-2.3	17.4	-7.0	4.0
Mar.	-2.7	35.0	0.0	0.1	1.2	0.5	-6.0	31.3	1.1	0.2	-7.1	31.1	2.1	3.3
Apr.	6.7	-3.8	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.2	12.9	-7.2	-4.1	4.0	17.0	-11.3	-6.6	2.9
May	-0.7	12.9	0.0	-0.3	-1.2	-0.6	-5.9	13.5	-3.9	0.8	-1.9	12.7	6.4	0.4
June	-7.6	17.0	-0.9	0.6	-2.2	-0.6	-8.8	14.5	-5.6	2.9	-3.2	11.6	4.4	2.6
July	-3.2	20.9	0.2	-0.1	0.3	-3.4	6.4	21.9	-3.3	0.9	9.7	21.1	-10.0	2.5
Aug.	-10.2	18.5	0.1	-0.1	0.5	0.5	-22.8	17.4	-6.1	-1.6	-16.7	19.0	12.0	0.7
Sep.	-65.9	43.3	0.1	-0.4	-0.3	0.9	-57.1	39.4	-5.3	2.1	-51.9	37.3	-8.5	3.4
Oct.	5.5	38.7	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.4	14.8	33.6	-1.0	4.6	15.7	29.0	-9.5	4.3
Nov.	10.2	34.9	-0.1	-2.7	1.1	1.5	2.5	33.1	0.5	2.3	2.1	30.9	6.7	3.0
Dec.	59.4	-43.2	-0.4	5.0	1.8	-4.7	49.6	-43.9	-1.8	9.6	51.4	-53.5	8.4	0.5
1999 Jan.	-59.2	72.8	2.7	0.0	-0.5	-5.6	-58.5	75.1	-13.2	8.2	-45.3	67.0	-3.0	3.2
Feb.	20.4	0.7	-4.9	0.0	-2.1	-0.7	39.4	-3.2	-0.7	-3.0	40.2	-0.2	-12.0	4.6
Mar.	-14.0	7.0	-0.3	0.0	-0.8	1.3	-13.0	-1.0	-5.9	15.9	-7.1	-16.8	0.1	6.7

Source: ECB.

1) Discrepancies may arise from rounding.

2) Inflows (+); outflows (-).

3) Series for which data from January 1999 are not closely comparable with earlier observations. Flows before January 1999 include estimations.