



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

PR99-050
4 March 1999
10.00 hrs

Moderate increase in foreign trade in 1998

International goods trade in the Netherlands grew moderately in 1998. Like the overall development in the economy last year, the increase in the second half of the year was smaller than in the first half, partly caused by lower prices.

Statistics Netherlands figures show that the value of imported goods rose by an average 5% on 1997 to 364 billion guilders (the increase in the first half of the year was 9%; in the second half 2%). The Netherlands exported 393 billion guilders worth of goods last year, 4% more than in 1997. This growth was realised completely in the first six months. The balance of trade for 1998 was 28 billion guilders .

Balance of trade with EU 7 billion higher

In 1998 the Netherlands imported 221 billion guilders worth of goods from the countries of the European Union (EU), 3% more than in 1997. This 3% was realised completely in the first half of the year; in the second half there was a slight fall in imports.

Exports to EU countries rose by 4% to 308 billion guilders. Here too there was a notable difference between the first and the second half of the year: 8% and 1% respectively.

The balance of trade with EU member countries in 1998 was 86 billion guilders, 7 billion more than in 1997.

Quite a notable development in the trade with EU countries was that trade with a number of relatively minor trade partners (Ireland, Sweden, Spain) increased by rates of over 8%. Of the traditionally more important partners, only Belgium and Luxembourg showed an above-average improvement, and even then only in import figures (4%). Imports from the United Kingdom even showed a decrease.

For exports the situation is similar; relatively small trade partners such as Finland, Portugal and Spain showed the strongest increases while only France (8%) and the UK (5%) rose by more than average.

Imports from non-EU countries up sharply

Statistics Netherlands estimates imports from countries outside the EU at 144 billion guilders in 1998, some 10% more than in 1997. The rise was 15% in the first half of the year and 5% in the second half.

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Exports to non-EU countries rose by 3% to nearly 86 billion guilders. Part of the increase in the first half of the year (8%) was cancelled out by the fall of 2% in the second half of the year.

The trade gap with countries outside the EU was 58 billion guilders in 1998.

Crisis affects trade with East Asia

Dutch trade with the main partners in the Far East has been greatly affected by the financial crisis in the region. Exports to these countries were down by 16%, compared with a 16% rise in 1997. However, imports from East Asia rose by 26% (1997: +19%).

The Netherlands' main partners in the Far East are Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, China, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. Nearly 15% of Dutch imports come from these countries, mainly cars, computers and computer components. Dutch exports to these countries account for only 4% of total Dutch exports, here too computer components are one of the main goods exported.

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