



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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Consumers remain confident in economy

Consumers' confidence in the Dutch economy remained at nearly the same level in March as in the previous two months. Following a sharp fall in September and October last year, the indicator has more or less stabilised at a level that is clearly lower than that of the last two years according to the consumer sentiment survey of Statistics Netherlands for March 1999.

Good time for buying luxury items

The consumer sentiment indicator is based on five questions which Dutch consumers are asked monthly. The overall indicator conceals a number of underlying differences in the separate questions. Although consumers have slightly more confidence in the economy in March than last month, answers to four of the five questions were negative. The slight pessimism however, is more than compensated by the answers to the question whether consumers thought it was a good time to buy large items. There were 34 per cent points more positive than negative replies, ten per cent points more than in February and the largest balance in the last seven months. The large amounts spent on durable goods show that consumers are indeed putting their money where their mouths are. The question on willingness to buy gives an indication of what consumers think of their own financial situation. Here they are more sombre than in previous months, for both the last twelve months and the coming twelve months.

Economic climate cool

Consumers were also pessimistic about economic developments in general in March. There were more negative than positive answers for the sixth month in succession. There is no question yet of a recovery following the sharp drop in September and October last year.

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