



BANK ĊENTRALI TA' MALTA
EUROSISTEMA
CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA

EU TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

EU TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES¹

Lorraine Bonavia

Introduction

The European Union (EU) and the United States are each other's largest trading partners with €867.3 billion of goods and €817.0 billion of services traded in 2024, when compared to €434.8 billion and €304.1 billion in 2014, respectively.² The United States is the EU's top export market for goods and its second biggest import market for goods after China, with a trade surplus of €197.3 billion (1.1% of GDP) in 2024 and €97.1 billion (0.8% of GDP) in 2014.

In 2023, the United States was the EU's largest trading partner for exports and imports of services.^{3,4} EU exports and imports of services to the United States reached €334.5 billion and €482.5 billion in 2024, when compared to €138.6 billion and €165.5 billion in 2014, respectively.⁵ From 2014 to 2024, the EU recorded a continuous services trade deficit of €148.0 billion (0.8% of GDP) in 2024 and €26.9 billion (0.2% of GDP) in 2014. When considering both goods and services, the EU exported €866.8 billion and imported €817.5 billion in 2024 against €404.5 billion and €334.4 billion in 2014. Thus, the EU registered a trade surplus of €49.3 billion (0.3% of GDP) and of €70.1 billion (0.6% of GDP) in 2024 and 2014, respectively. The persistent total trade balance surplus of the EU vis-à-vis the United States could indicate higher public and private saving rates in the EU when compared to lower investment by the private and the public sectors.

The transatlantic relationship is the world's largest bilateral trade and investment one. It is the most integrated economic relationship in the world. Although it was characterised by a regular political dialogue and cooperation at multiple levels, nascent tensions with the incoming US administration in 2025 marked a turn in EU-US relations. After a period of intense trade talks, a legally nonbinding deal on tariffs and trade was finally reached in July 2025. The deal is more of an outline trade agreement with a 15% tariff on most EU imported goods by the United States – instead of an initial 30% rate – thus avoiding a larger trade dispute between two blocs which together represent almost a third of global trade.

This article analyses trade relations and developments between the EU and the United States with regards to trade in goods and services. It covers the 2014-2024 period and draws some conclusions regarding export and import markets, categories of main traded goods, and changes following geopolitical developments.

EU trade in goods with the United States⁶

Over the decade in review, from 2014 to 2024, the EU registered a continuous merchandise trade surplus with the United States (see Chart A1). Both exports to and imports from the United States

¹ Ms Bonavia is an International Relations Officer in the International Relations and Communications Department. The article was written in collaboration with Dr Kalina Koleva, Manager at the International Relations and Communications Department. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Central Bank of Malta.

² Goods, services and investment taken into consideration.

³ [International trade in services - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

⁴ International trade in services data for 2024 is provisional and/or unavailable.

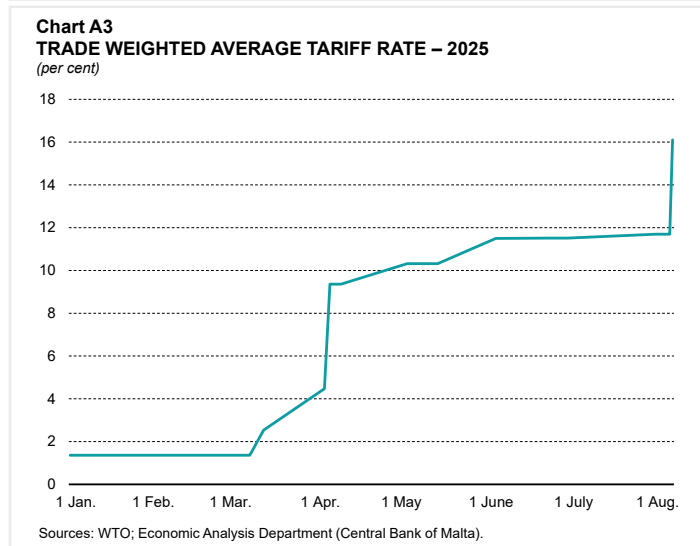
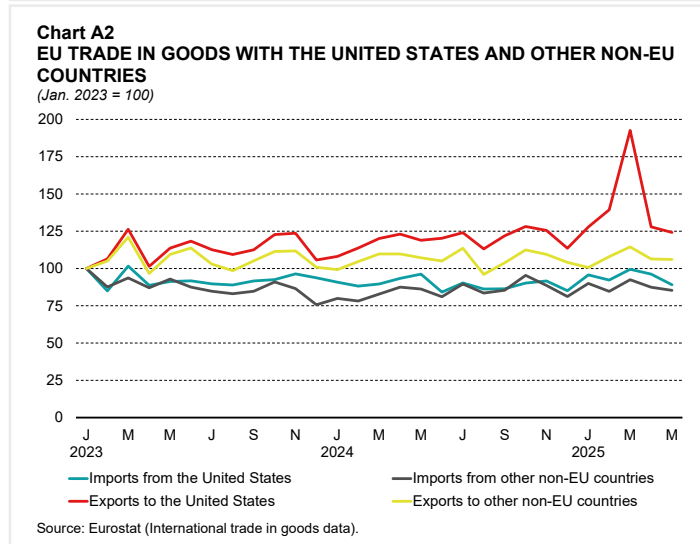
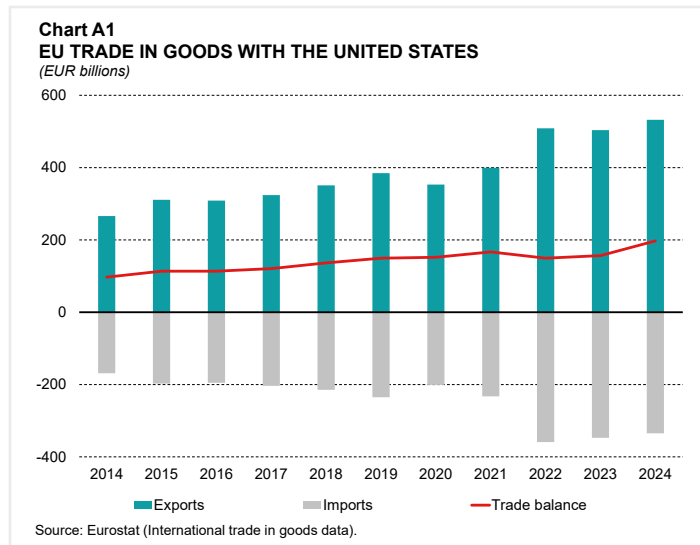
⁵ Data for 2024 is provisional.

⁶ For consistency purposes, the EU refers to the 27 EU countries throughout this article, which means that the United Kingdom is treated as a non-EU country and excluded from EU data, even in the years before Brexit.

increased considerably between 2014 and 2024. The highest surplus was recorded in 2024 at €197.3 billion, with EU exports to the United States amounting to €532.3 billion, while imports stood at €335.0 billion.

Chart A2 shows a monthly comparison between EU trade with the United States and EU trade with other non-EU countries. Between January 2023 and May 2025, EU imports from the United States decreased by 10.9%, while imports from other non-EU countries also decreased by 14.7%. In contrast, EU exports to the United States over the same period increased by 24.2%, while exports to other non-EU countries increased by 6.1%. In the first quarter of 2025, the risk of a trade war between the EU and the United States brought about a marked increase of 25.2% in EU exports to the United States and 7.7% in EU imports from the United States, when compared to the last quarter of 2024. As a result, the EU trade balance in goods with the United States rose to a surplus of €55 billion in the first quarter of 2025, the highest since the first quarter of 2021.⁷

Chart A3 depicts the increases in the effective tariff rate on US imports from the EU on all goods from 1 January to 7 August 2025, following extensive trade negotiations between these two blocs.⁸ On 12 March, the effective tariff rate rose to 2.5% as the United States applied additional duties



⁷ [EU international trade in goods - latest developments - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

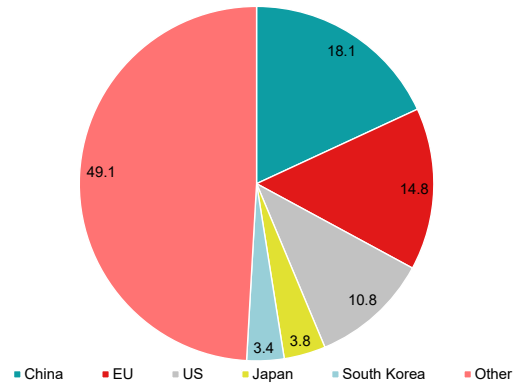
⁸ [WTO Tariff & Trade Data | Analysis / Tariff actions](#)

on steel and aluminium imports. On 3 and 5 April, the rate rose to 4.5% and 9.4%, respectively, due to new tariffs on vehicle imports, as well as a baseline additional 10% tariff on all imports. The effective rate increased further to 10.3% on 3 May and then to 11.5% on 4 June, following new tariffs on vehicle parts imports and a further tariff increase on steel and aluminium, respectively. On 1 August, the effective rate rose slightly to 11.7% due to additional duties on copper derivatives, while on 7 August, it increased to 16.1% following the implementation of the trade deal between the United States and the EU.

In 2023, the United States was the third largest exporter of goods in the world (10.8%), preceded by China (18.1%) and the EU (14.8%), and followed by Japan (3.8%) and South Korea (3.4%), as shown in Chart A4. The United States was also the world's largest importer of goods (16.4%) in 2023, followed by the EU (14.1%), China (13.2%), the United Kingdom (4.1%) and Japan (3.9%), as depicted in Chart A5.

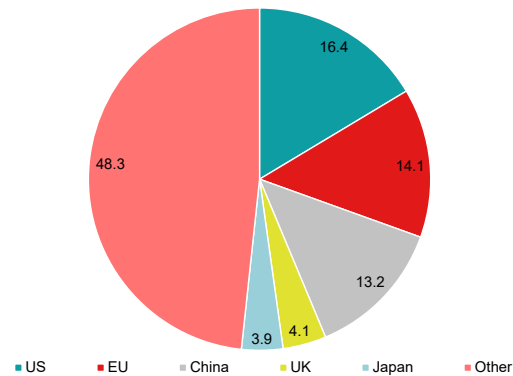
Over the years, the United States has been among the main trading partners of the EU for both exports and imports of goods. In 2014, the United States was the EU's second largest trading partner for exports of goods (see Chart A6), accounting for 14.8% of extra-EU exports, preceded by the United Kingdom with 16.2%, and followed by China (8.1%), Switzerland (6.4%), and Russia (5.5%).

Chart A4
WORLD'S LARGEST EXPORTERS OF GOODS – 2023⁽¹⁾
(percentage share of world exports)



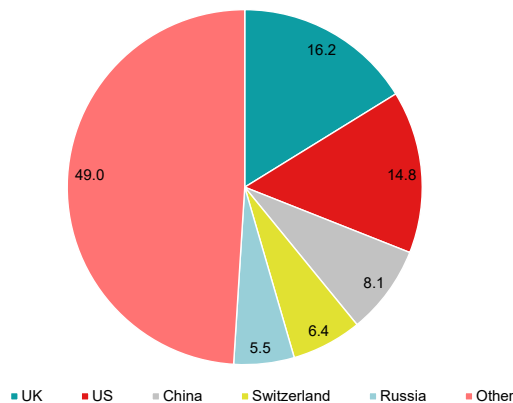
Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data – Share of EU 27 (from 2020) in the World Trade).
⁽¹⁾ Data for Russia not available.

Chart A5
WORLD'S LARGEST IMPORTERS OF GOODS – 2023⁽¹⁾
(percentage share of world imports)



Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data – Share of EU 27 (from 2020) in the World Trade).
⁽¹⁾ Data for Russia not available.

Chart A6
EU MAIN TRADING PARTNERS FOR EXPORTS OF GOODS – 2014
(percentage share of extra-EU exports)



Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data).

and Russia (5.5%). By 2024, the United States became the top trading partner for EU exports of goods, with a higher share of 20.6%, followed by the United Kingdom (13.2%), China (8.3%), Switzerland (7.5%) and Turkey (4.3%), as shown in Chart A7.

With regard to imports of goods, the United States was the EU's fourth largest partner in 2014 with 10.4% (see Chart A8), preceded by China (15.8%), the United Kingdom (11.2%) and Russia (10.7%), and followed by Switzerland (5.4%). In 2024, the United States was the second largest partner for imports of goods by the EU with an increased share of 13.7%, preceded by China (21.3%), and followed by the United Kingdom (6.7%), Switzerland (5.5%) and Turkey (4.0%), as illustrated in Chart A9.

Chart A10 shows EU trade with the United States broken down by product groups.⁹ In 2024, the most exported products by the EU to the United States were machinery and transport equipment (39.2%), chemicals (32.2%), other manufactured goods (19.9%), and food, drinks and tobacco (4.9%). The increase in EU exports to the United States between 2014 and 2024 is mainly related to a significant rise in exports of chemicals, as well as an increase in exports of machinery and transport equipment, and other manufactured goods. The most

Chart A7
EU MAIN TRADING PARTNERS FOR EXPORTS OF GOODS – 2024
(percentage share of extra-EU exports)

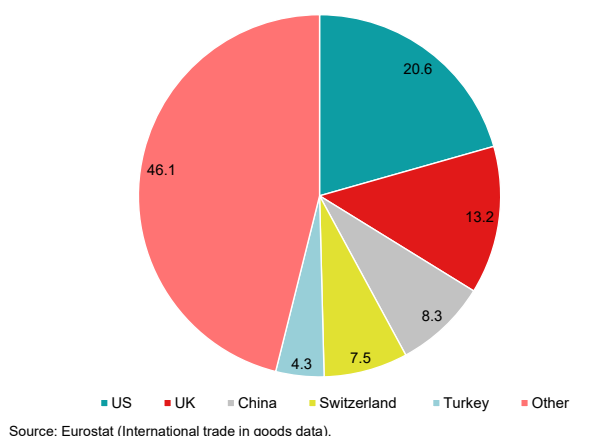


Chart A8
EU MAIN TRADING PARTNERS FOR IMPORTS OF GOODS – 2014
(percentage share of extra-EU imports)

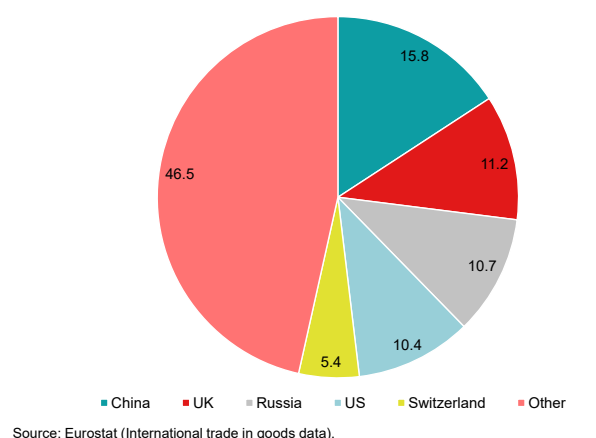
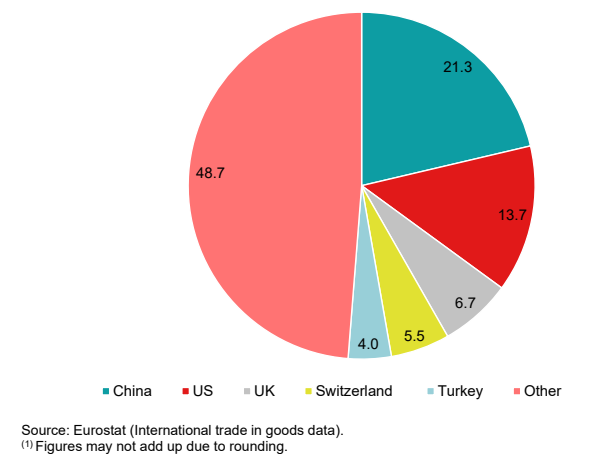


Chart A9
EU MAIN TRADING PARTNERS FOR IMPORTS OF GOODS – 2024
(percentage share of extra-EU imports)⁽¹⁾



⁹ Data is categorised according to the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

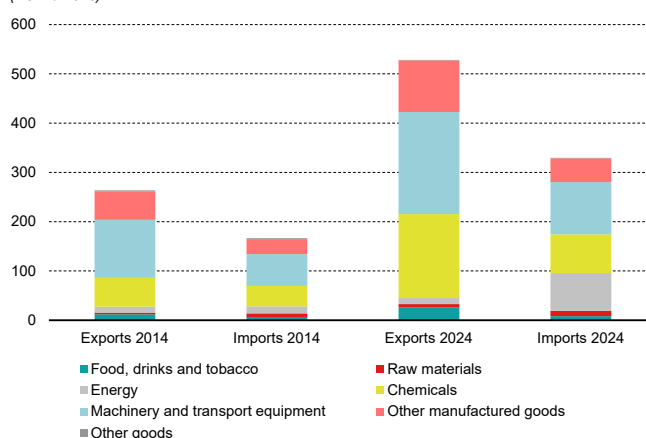
imported products by the EU from the United States in 2024 were machinery and transport equipment (32.2%), chemicals (23.8%), energy (23.3%), and other manufactured goods (14.6%). The increase in EU imports from the United States between 2014 and 2024 is primarily due to a substantial increase in imports of energy products, as well as an increase in machinery and transport equipment, and chemicals.

Imports

On a more granular level (three-digit trade data), the most imported goods by the EU from the United States in 2014 were aircraft and associated equipment, spacecraft (including satellites) and spacecraft launch vehicles, and parts thereof (9.3%), medicaments including veterinary medicaments (7.6%), non-electric engines and motors and parts of these engines and motors (6.5%), and petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals, other than crude (5.9%), as shown in Chart A11.

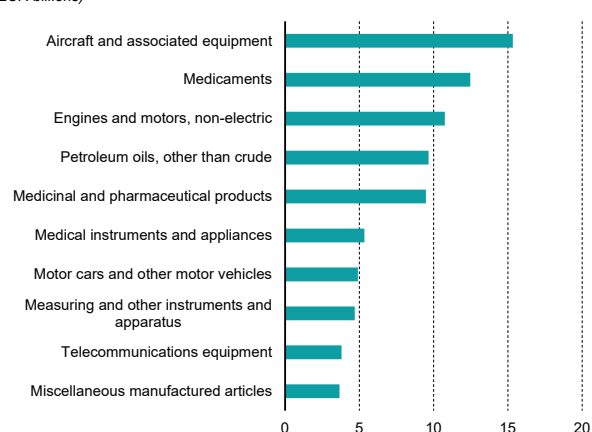
On the other hand, Chart A12 shows the most imported goods by the EU from the United States in 2024. Petroleum oils were the top imported good in 2024 as Russian oil was partly substituted by oil imports from the United States (12.8%), followed by medicinal and pharmaceutical products (10.0%), non-electric engines and motors and parts of these engines and motors (8.1%), and aircraft and associated equipment, spacecraft

Chart A10
EU TRADE WITH THE UNITED STATES BY PRODUCT GROUP
(EUR billions)



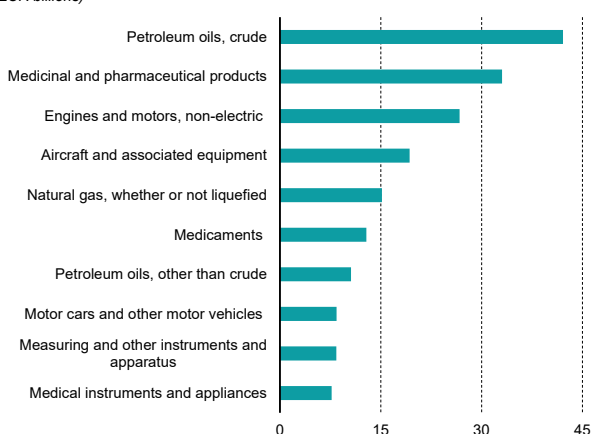
Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data).

Chart A11
EU TOP 10 MOST IMPORTED GOODS FROM THE UNITED STATES – 2014
(EUR billions)



Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data).

Chart A12
EU TOP 10 MOST IMPORTED GOODS FROM THE UNITED STATES – 2024
(EUR billions)



Source: Eurostat (International trade in goods data).

(including satellites) and spacecraft launch vehicles, and parts thereof (5.9%).

Back in 2014, Russia was the EU's main supplier of crude petroleum oils (27.5%), followed by Nigeria (8.0%), Norway (7.5%), Kazakhstan (7.4%) and Saudi Arabia (7.1%), as illustrated in Chart A13. However, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the EU imposed sanctions on Russia and began to seek out alternative sources to reduce its dependence on Russia.¹⁰ In fact, Chart A14 shows that in 2024, Russia was no longer among the EU's main trade partners for imports of crude petroleum oils. The largest partner was in fact the United States (14.4%), followed by Norway (12.1%), Kazakhstan (10.3%), Libya (6.7%) and Saudi Arabia (6.3%).

Exports

On a more granular level (three-digit trade data), the most exported goods by the EU to the United States in 2014 were motor cars and other motor vehicles principally designed for the transport of persons (other than motor vehicles for the transport of ten or more persons, including the driver), including station-wagons and racing cars (9.8%), medicaments including veterinary medicaments (7.7%), petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals, other than crude (4.4%), and aircraft and associated equipment, spacecraft (including satellites) and spacecraft launch vehicles, and parts thereof (4.0%), as depicted in Chart A15.

Chart A13
EU IMPORTS OF PETROLEUM OILS BY MAIN TRADE PARTNERS – 2014
(percentage share of trade value)

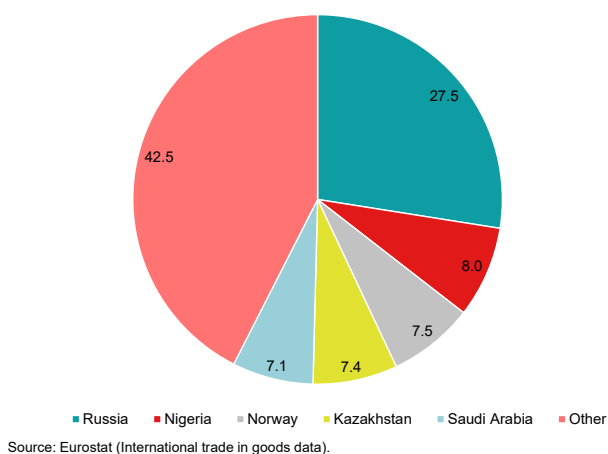


Chart A14
EU IMPORTS OF PETROLEUM OILS BY MAIN TRADE PARTNERS – 2024
(percentage share of trade value)⁽¹⁾

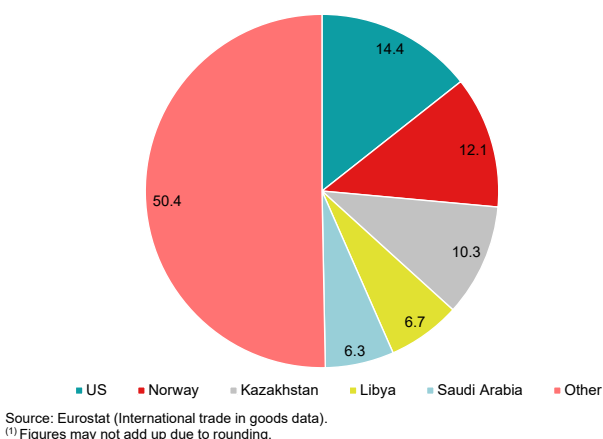
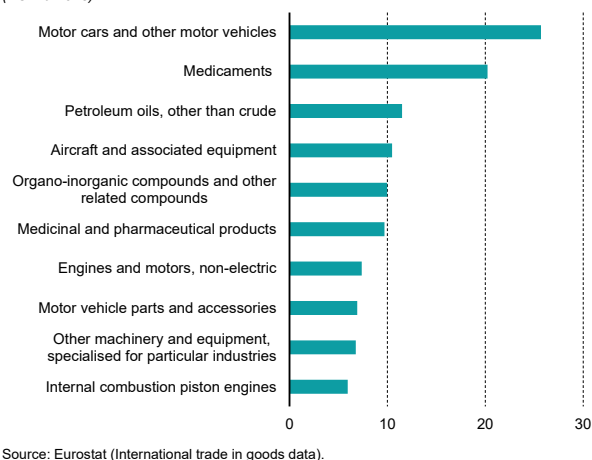


Chart A15
EU TOP 10 MOST EXPORTED GOODS TO THE UNITED STATES – 2014
(EUR billions)



¹⁰ [EU imports of energy products - latest developments - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

In 2024, the most exported goods by the EU to the United States consisted of medicinal and pharmaceutical products (14.7%), medicaments including veterinary medicaments (8.0%), motor cars and other motor vehicles principally designed for the transport of persons (other than motor vehicles for the transport of ten or more persons, including station-wagons and racing cars (7.4%), and other machinery and equipment specialised for particular industries and parts thereof (2.7%), as shown in Chart A16.

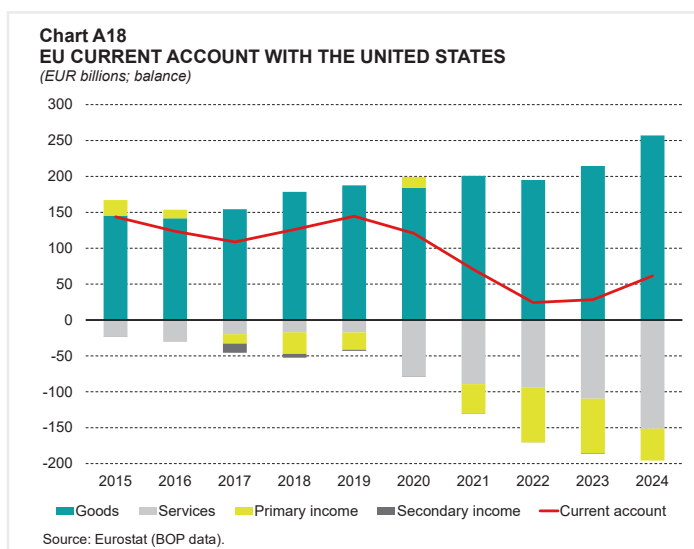
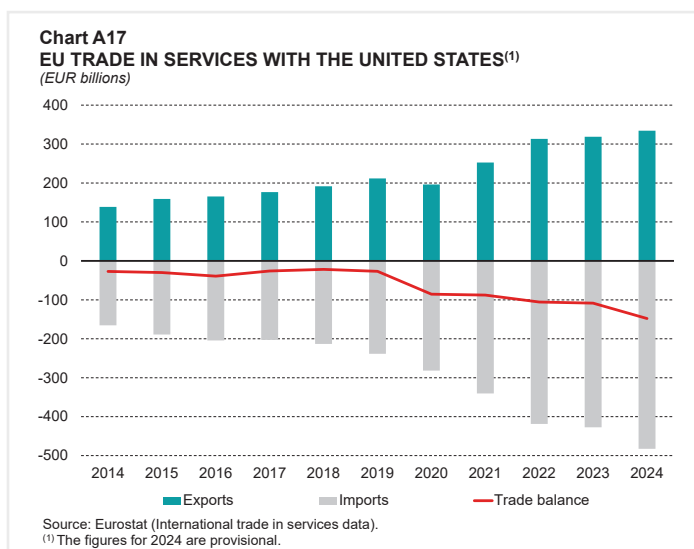
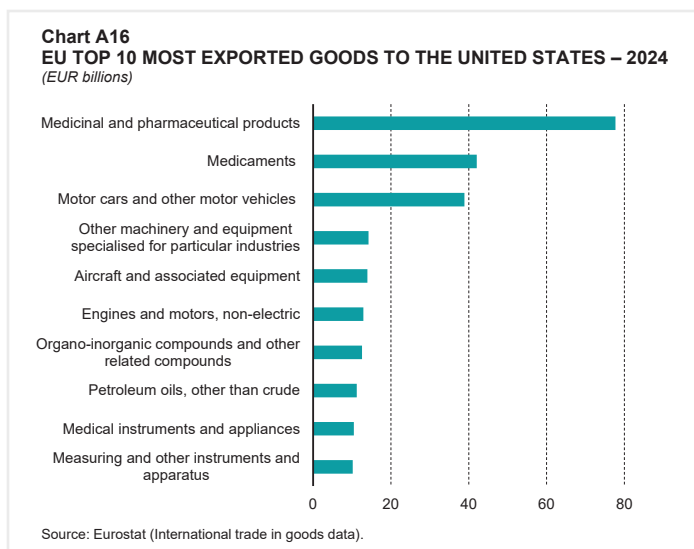
EU trade in services with the United States

In 2023, the United States was the EU's largest trading partner for exports and imports of services. Throughout the reviewed period, from 2014 to 2024, the EU recorded a continuous services trade deficit with the United States (see Chart A17). The largest deficit was registered in 2024 at €148.0 billion, with EU exports of services to the United States amounting to €334.5 billion, while imports stood at €482.5 billion. When considering both goods and services, the EU had a trade surplus of €49.3 billion with the United States in 2024.

EU current account with the United States

From 2015¹¹ to 2024, the EU's current account with the United States registered a continuous surplus, with the highest surplus recorded in 2019 at €144.5 billion, as shown in Chart A18. Subsequently, the current account surplus fell significantly, with the

¹¹ No data available for 2014.



lowest surplus registered in 2022 at €24.3 billion. This was mainly due to a substantial increase in the deficit of the services account and to a lesser extent, an increase in the deficit of the primary income account, while the surplus of the goods account remained almost unchanged. The current account surplus rose to €61.4 billion by 2024, as, although the deficit of the services account continued to increase, there was also an increase in the surplus of the goods account.

Conclusion

During the period under review, the United States has been among the main trading partners of the EU. In 2014, the United States was the second largest EU export partner and the fourth largest EU import partner. In 2024, the United States became the largest EU export partner and the second largest EU import partner. Both exports to and imports from the United States increased considerably between 2014 and 2024. The EU maintained a consistent merchandise trade surplus with the United States, with the highest surplus recorded in 2024 at €197.2 billion. On the other hand, the EU registered a continuous services trade deficit with the United States, with the largest deficit recorded in 2024 at €148.0 billion.

A monthly comparison between EU merchandise trade with the United States and EU merchandise trade with other non-EU countries shows that in the first quarter of 2025, the risk of a trade war between the EU and the United States resulted in front-loading activity in anticipation of higher effective tariff rates, with a significant increase in EU exports to the United States and in EU imports from the United States, when compared to the last quarter of 2024.

The increase in EU exports to the United States between 2014 and 2024 is mainly related to a significant rise in exports of chemicals, as well as an increase in exports of machinery and transport equipment, and other manufactured goods. In 2014, the EU's main exports to the United States included motor vehicles and medicaments. By 2024, medicinal and pharmaceutical products had become the primary exports. The increase in EU imports from the United States over the same period is primarily due to a substantial increase in imports of energy products, as well as an increase in machinery and transport equipment, and chemicals. The EU's main imports from the United States were aircraft and related equipment in 2014, whereas petroleum became the leading import by 2024 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.