



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

23 May 2012

PRESS RELEASE

EURO AREA BALANCE OF PAYMENTS IN MARCH 2012

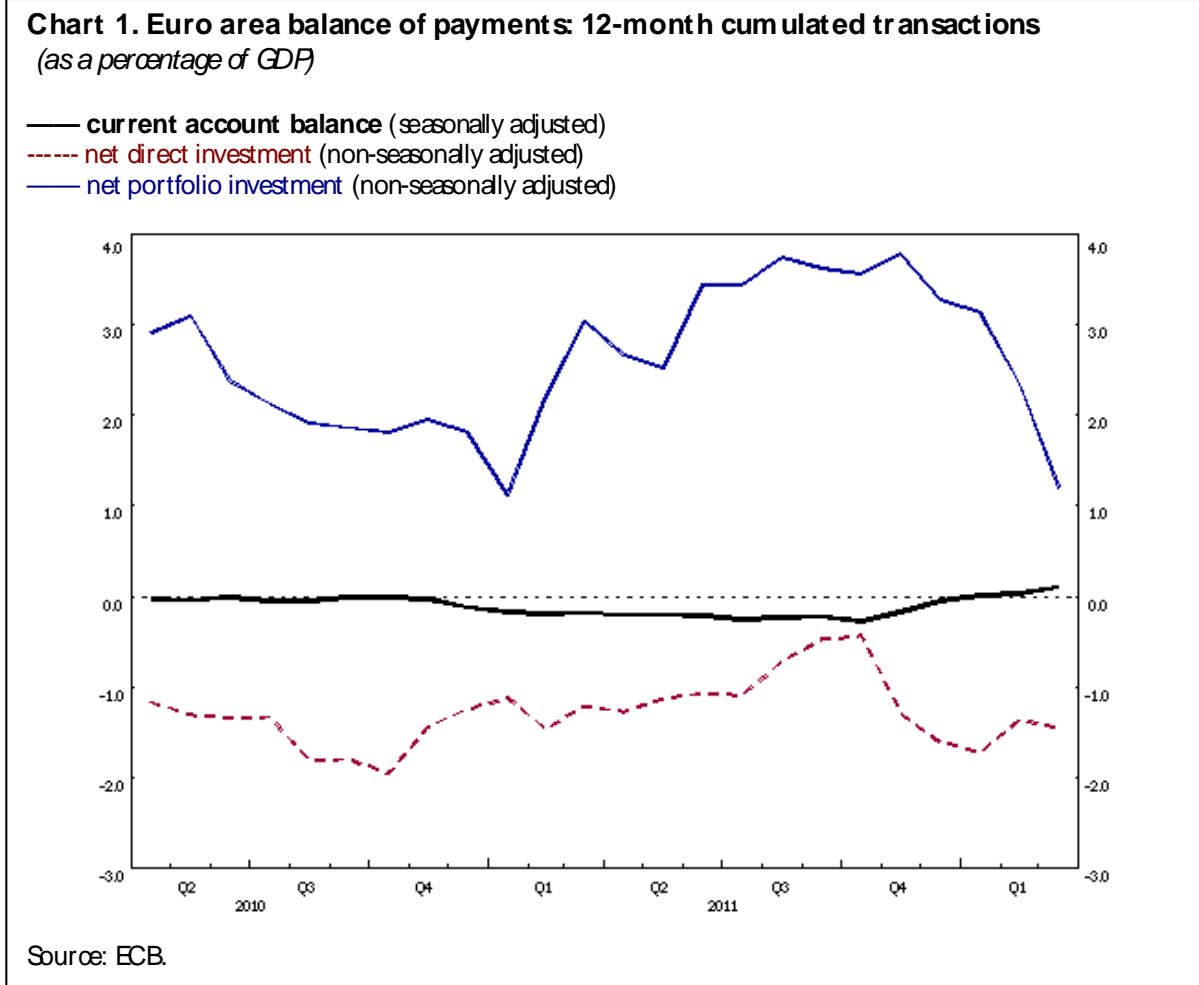
In March 2012 the seasonally adjusted current account of the euro area recorded a surplus of €9.1 billion. In the financial account, combined direct and portfolio investment recorded net outflows of €54 billion (non-seasonally adjusted).

Current account

The seasonally adjusted *current account* of the euro area recorded a surplus of €9.1 billion in March 2012 (see Table 1). This reflected surpluses for *goods* (€8.6 billion), *services* (€6.2 billion) and *income* (€3.0 billion), which were partially offset by a deficit for *current transfers* (€8.8 billion).

Preliminary results based on monthly data for the first quarter of 2012 show a surplus of EUR 11.6 billion for the seasonally adjusted current account.

The 12-month cumulated seasonally adjusted *current account* recorded a surplus of €9.6 billion in March 2012 (around 0.1% of euro area GDP – see Table 1 and Chart 1), compared with a deficit of €16.7 billion a year earlier (around 0.2% of euro area GDP). This shift resulted from increases in the surpluses for *goods* (from €2.5 billion to €15.4 billion), *services* (from €51.1 billion to €62.5 billion) and *income* (from €31.5 billion to €32.4 billion), and from a decrease in the deficit for current transfers (from €101.7 billion to €100.6 billion).



Financial account

In the financial account (see Table 2), *combined direct and portfolio investment* recorded net outflows of €54 billion in March 2012, as a result of net outflows both for portfolio investment (€35 billion) and for direct investment (€18 billion).

The net outflows for direct investment resulted mainly from net outflows for *other capital (mostly inter-company loans)* (€20 billion).

Portfolio investment recorded net outflows for *debt instruments* (€49 billion), which were partly offset by net inflows for *equity* (€13 billion).

The net outflows for *debt instruments* resulted mainly from net purchases, by euro area residents, of both foreign *bonds and notes* (€26 billion) and foreign *money market instruments* (€25 billion).

The *financial derivatives* account recorded net outflows of €5 billion.

Other investment recorded net inflows of €39 billion, reflecting net inflows for *MFIs excluding the Eurosystem* (€85 billion) and *general government* (€3 billion), which were partly offset by net outflows for the *Eurosystem* (€34 billion) and *other sectors* (€15 billion).

The [Eurosystem's stock of reserve assets](#) decreased by €25 billion in March 2012 (from €696 billion to €671 billion), mainly on account of a decrease in the market price of gold (the net transactions contributed €1 billion to the overall decrease in reserve assets).

In the 12-month period to March 2012, *combined direct and portfolio investment* recorded cumulated net outflows of €24 billion, compared with net inflows of €169 billion in the preceding 12-month period. This shift was largely due to lower net inflows for *portfolio investment* (down from €281 billion to €113 billion), which mainly reflected lower net purchases of euro area securities, in particular equities, by non-residents investors (down from €241 billion to €49 billion).

Data revisions

This press release incorporates revisions to the data for February 2012. These revisions have not significantly changed the previously published data.

Additional information on the euro area balance of payments and international investment position

In this press release, the seasonally adjusted current account refers to working day and seasonally adjusted data. Data for the financial account are not working day or seasonally adjusted.

In line with the agreed allocation of responsibilities, the European Central Bank compiles and disseminates monthly and quarterly balance of payments statistics for the euro area, whereas the European Commission (Eurostat; see news releases for "Euro-indicators") focuses on quarterly and annual aggregates for the European Union. These data comply with international standards, particularly those set out in the IMF's Balance of Payments Manual (fifth edition). The aggregates for the euro area and the European Union are compiled consistently on the basis of transactions and positions vis-à-vis residents of countries outside the euro area and the European Union respectively.

A complete set of updated euro area balance of payments statistics (including a quarterly geographical breakdown for the main counterparts) and international investment position statistics is available in the "Statistics" section of the ECB's website

under the headings "[Data services](#)" / "[Latest monetary, financial markets and balance of payments statistics](#)". These data, as well as historical euro area balance of payments time series, can be downloaded from the [ECB's Statistical Data Warehouse \(SDW\)](#). Data up to March 2012 will also be published in the June 2012 issues of the ECB's Monthly Bulletin and Statistics Pocket Book. Detailed [methodological notes](#) are available on the ECB's website. The [next press release](#) on the euro area monthly balance of payments will be published on 21 June 2012.

Annexes

Table 1: Current account of the euro area

Table 2: Monthly balance of payments of the euro area

European Central Bank

Directorate Communications, Press and Information Division

Kaiserstrasse 29, D-60311 Frankfurt am Main

Tel.: +49 69 1344 7455, Fax: +49 69 1344 7404

Internet: <http://www.ecb.europa.eu>

Reproduction is permitted provided that the source is acknowledged.

Table 1: Current account of the euro area

(EUR billions unless otherwise indicated; transactions; working day and seasonally adjusted data)

	Cumulated figures for the 12-month period ending		2011									2012		
	Mar. 2011	Mar. 2012	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
CURRENT ACCOUNT	-16.7	9.6	-3.4	-1.4	-1.3	-1.4	0.9	0.4	-3.0	4.2	3.0	3.7	-1.2	9.1
<i>Memo: as a percentage of GDP</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>0.1</i>												
Credit	2,741.1	2,967.8	240.4	242.2	240.4	242.9	245.6	246.7	245.9	250.8	250.4	253.2	251.5	257.9
Debit	2,757.8	2,958.2	243.8	243.6	241.6	244.3	244.7	246.3	248.9	246.5	247.4	249.5	252.6	248.8
Goods	2.5	15.4	-3.7	2.0	0.3	-0.0	0.9	0.3	-2.9	2.9	2.2	3.3	1.4	8.6
Credit (exports)	1,633.2	1,803.1	145.6	146.3	144.7	146.4	148.7	148.6	147.7	152.0	152.7	154.7	156.3	159.3
Debit (imports)	1,630.7	1,787.7	149.3	144.3	144.5	146.4	147.8	148.4	150.5	149.1	150.5	151.4	155.0	150.7
Services	51.1	62.5	4.3	5.3	4.7	5.0	4.9	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.4	4.1	5.2	6.2
Credit (exports)	532.2	551.3	44.7	45.1	45.0	46.1	45.7	46.7	47.2	46.4	46.4	44.6	46.7	46.7
Debit (imports)	481.1	488.8	40.3	39.9	40.3	41.1	40.8	41.0	41.3	40.7	41.0	40.5	41.6	40.5
Income	31.5	32.4	4.2	-0.1	2.6	2.1	3.0	2.4	2.2	3.9	3.8	4.2	1.0	3.0
Credit	486.4	518.6	42.4	43.4	43.3	42.7	43.2	43.4	43.2	44.3	43.5	45.7	40.7	42.7
Debit	454.9	486.2	38.2	43.4	40.7	40.7	40.2	41.0	41.0	40.4	39.8	41.5	39.7	39.7
Current transfers	-101.7	-100.6	-8.3	-8.6	-8.9	-8.5	-7.9	-8.1	-8.3	-8.2	-8.4	-7.9	-8.7	-8.8
Credit	89.3	95.0	7.7	7.4	7.3	7.7	8.0	7.9	7.9	8.1	7.9	8.2	7.7	9.2
Debit	191.0	195.6	16.0	16.0	16.2	16.2	15.9	16.0	16.2	16.3	16.3	16.2	16.4	17.9

Source: ECB.

Table 2: Monthly balance of payments of the euro area

(EUR billions; transactions; non-working day and non-seasonally adjusted data)

	Cumulated figures for the 12-month period ending						February 2012 (revised)			March 2012		
	March 2011			March 2012								
	Net	Credit	Debit	Net	Credit	Debit	Net	Credit	Debit	Net	Credit	Debit
CURRENT ACCOUNT	-14.1	2,753.9	2,768.0	9.8	2,976.0	2,966.2	-5.6	244.0	249.6	7.5	263.7	256.2
Goods	4.5	1,643.8	1,639.3	16.6	1,810.4	1,793.8	2.3	153.2	150.9	8.7	168.3	159.5
Services	50.6	533.3	482.8	62.4	552.3	489.8	3.1	41.3	38.1	3.9	44.4	40.5
Income	32.1	486.5	454.3	31.4	518.5	487.1	4.9	38.3	33.5	5.5	45.1	39.5
Current transfers	-101.3	90.4	191.7	-100.6	94.9	195.4	-15.9	11.2	27.1	-10.6	5.9	16.6
CAPITAL ACCOUNT	6.2	21.0	14.8	10.5	25.5	15.0	1.6	2.4	0.8	0.3	1.6	1.3
	Balance	Assets	Liabilities	Balance	Assets	Liabilities	Balance	Assets	Liabilities	Balance	Assets	Liabilities
FINANCIAL ACCOUNT¹⁾	-15.0			-27.6			0.3			-19.0		
DIRECT INVESTMENT²⁾	-111.7	-339.9	228.1	-136.5	-290.4	153.9	-3.4	-14.5	11.1	-18.4	-25.6	7.2
Equity capital and reinvested earnings	-33.1	-235.5	202.9	-68.9	-247.5	178.5	-4.8	-13.7	8.9	1.2	-11.2	12.4
Other capital (mostly inter-company loans)	-79.1	-104.4	25.2	-67.6	-42.9	-24.7	1.4	-0.8	2.2	-19.5	-14.4	-5.2
PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT	280.7	-113.9	394.6	112.8	-47.6	160.4	19.4	-29.6	49.0	-35.4	-59.7	24.2
Equity	201.2	-39.3	240.5	98.2	49.1	49.1	-1.6	-2.8	1.2	13.4	-8.9	22.3
Debt instruments	79.5	-74.6	154.2	14.7	-96.7	111.3	21.0	-26.8	47.8	-48.8	-50.8	1.9
Bonds and notes	66.7	-71.2	137.9	99.5	-56.0	155.5	22.3	-23.1	45.5	-25.6	-26.2	0.5
Money market instruments	12.8	-3.4	16.3	-84.9	-40.7	-44.2	-1.3	-3.6	2.3	-23.2	-24.6	1.4
MEMO ITEM: COMBINED DIRECT AND PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT	168.9	-453.8	622.7	-23.6	-338.0	314.3	16.0	-44.1	60.1	-53.8	-85.2	31.4
FINANCIAL DERIVATIVES (NET)	17.5			-24.4			4.9			-4.8		
OTHER INVESTMENT	-183.9	-164.3	-19.6	20.1	-118.9	139.1	-18.9	-21.2	2.3	38.5	-7.7	46.1
Eurosystem	15.9	-7.8	23.8	59.5	5.8	53.7	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	-34.1	1.5	-35.6
General government	49.5	-39.0	88.5	51.8	0.1	51.7	6.2	8.3	-2.1	3.1	0.6	2.4
of which: currency and deposits	-4.3	-4.3		-8.4	-8.4		6.4	6.4		-0.0	-0.0	
MFIs (excluding the Eurosystem)	-194.4	-16.3	-178.2	-45.5	-4.7	-40.8	-18.3	-12.0	-6.2	84.9	-0.2	85.1
Long-term	76.7	34.0	42.7	-40.8	-17.9	-22.9	0.8	-0.5	1.3	-9.4	-8.2	-1.2
Short-term	-271.1	-50.3	-220.8	-4.7	13.2	-17.9	-19.0	-11.5	-7.5	94.3	8.0	86.3
Other sectors	-55.0	-101.3	46.3	-45.6	-120.1	74.5	-6.8	-17.3	10.5	-15.4	-9.6	-5.8
of which: currency and deposits	-45.7	-45.7		-54.2	-54.2		-4.6	-4.6		-4.8	-4.8	
RESERVE ASSETS	-17.5	-17.5		0.3	0.3		-1.8	-1.8		1.1	1.1	
Errors and omissions	22.9			7.2			3.8			11.1		

Source: ECB.

1) Financial account: inflows (+); outflows (-). Reserve assets: increase (-); decrease (+).

2) Direct investment: assets refer to direct investment abroad and liabilities to direct investment in the euro area.