



belgian  
foreign trade agency



# World trade

January -  
December  
2010





## 2010: record surge Belgium 9<sup>th</sup> exporter and 12<sup>th</sup> importer of goods worldwide

(Source: World Trade Organization – WTO)

### 1. Overview of trade developments in 2010 and prospects for 2011

In 2010, world merchandise exports recorded a 14.5% growth in volume terms. This rise was the largest annual figure in the present data series which began in 1950 and was buoyed by a 3.6% recovery in global output. It was a rebound from the 12% slump in 2009, returning trade to the 2008 peak level and to more normal rates of expansion. Nevertheless, the financial crisis and global recession continue to have an impact and high unemployment in developed economies and sharp-belt tightening in Europe will keep fuelling protectionist pressures. That is what Pascal Lamy, WTO Director General, said at a WTO press conference.

### 2. Review of 2010

Although the growth of world exports in 2010 was the fastest on record in a data series going back to 1950, it might have been even faster if trade had quickly reverted to its pre-crisis trend. This did not happen. The rebound was strong enough for world exports to recover their peak level of 2008, but it was not strong enough to bring about a return to the previous growth path. The negative impact of the financial crisis and global recession are likely to persist for some time. Moreover, the full impact of a number of recent events in Africa and in Asia is difficult to gauge and could seriously limit the short-term expansion of trade.

According to the WTO economists, the factors that contributed to the unusually large drop in world trade in 2009 may have also helped boost the size of the rebound in 2010. These include:

- *the spread of global supply chains and*
- *the product composition of trade compared to output.*





As goods cross national boundaries several times during the production process, world trade flows raise compared to earlier decades. The quantification of the cross border traffic would require data on trade in value added that are not currently available.

The goods that were most affected by the downturn (consumer durables, industrial machinery, etc.) have a larger share in world trade than in world GDP, which increased the magnitude of the trade slump relative to GDP in 2009, and which had a similar positive effect during the recovery of 2010.

## 2.1 Evolution of world merchandise trade in volume

### 2.1.1 Exports

In 2010 world merchandise exports rose **14.5% in volume** terms (price influences and exchange rate not taken into account). This increase results from:

- a 12.9% growth of developed economies' exports and
- a surge of 16.7% of combined shipments from developing economies and the CIS.

The growth rate was higher than average (14.5%):

#### → in Asia

Asia exhibited the fastest real export growth of any region in 2010 with a **jump of 23.1%**, led by China and Japan, whose shipments to the rest of the world each rose roughly 28%. China's trade performance is more impressive when one considers that the decline in the country's exports in 2009 was less than half that of Japan (11% compared to 25%).

#### → in North-America

Exports to the **United States** grew by 15.4%.

The growth rate was only slightly higher than average:

#### → in the European Union

Exports rose at a more moderate pace (+11.4%).

### The growth rate was lower than average:

- in South and Central America (+6.2%);
- in Europe (+10.8%);
- in the CIS (+10.1%);
- in Africa (+6.4%) and
- in the Middle East (+9.5%).

However, low volume growth in oil-exporting regions would be considered normal since demand for fuels tends to be unresponsive to price and income changes.

Regions that export significant quantities of natural resources (Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Middle East and South America) all experienced relatively low export volume growth in 2010, but very strong increases in the dollar value of their exports. For example, **Africa's** exports were up 6% in volume terms, and 28% in dollar terms.

### 2.1.2 Imports

Last year, world imports increased by **13.5% in volume**. Growth of imports:

- **of developed economies** equaled 10.7%, which was lower than the increase in exports: +12.9%
- **developing economies plus the CIS** was higher (+17.9%) than the growth of exports: +16.7%

### The growth rate was higher than average:

- in North America (+15.7%) → United States +14.8%;
- in South and Central America (+22.7%);
- in the CIS (+20.6%) and
- in Asia (+17.6%) → China +22.1%  
→ Japan +10%

### The growth rate was lower than average:

- in Europe (+9.4%) → EU +9.2%
- in the Middle East (+7.5%) and
- in Africa (+7.1%)

### The Brics (Brazil, Russia, India and China) have performed extremely well in 2010:

- +43% for Brazil
- +39% for China
- +30% for Russia
- +25% for India

### 2.2 Evolution of merchandises and commercial services' trade in value

World trade as measured by exports grew 4 times as fast as global GDP in 2010, whereas trade normally grows about twice as fast as GDP.

As a result of rising commodity prices and a depreciating US currency (down 3.5% on average against major currencies in 2010 according to US Federal Reserve nominal effective exchange rate statistics), growth in the dollar value of world trade in 2010 was greater than the increase in volume terms. **World merchandise exports** were up **22%**, rising from \$12.5 trillion to \$15.2 trillion in a single year, while **world exports of commercial services** rose **8%**, from \$3.4 trillion to \$3.7 trillion.



World exports of merchandise and  
commercial services, 2005-10  
\$bn and annual % change

	Value		Annual % change		
	2010	2008	2009	2010	2005-10
Merchandise	15237.6	15	-22	22	8
Commercial services	3663.8	13	-12	8	8
Transport	728.8	16	-23	14	7
Travel	935.7	10	-9	8	6
Other commercial services	1945.3	13	-8	6	9

Source: WTO Secretariat

**The faster growth of merchandise trade compared to services** can be partly explained by the smaller decline in services in 2009 (just 12% compared to 22% for merchandise), which implies less need for faster-than-average growth to catch up to earlier trends. The average annual growth in the value of merchandise trade and commercial services trade between 2005 and 2010 was the same, at 8%.

Transportation was the fastest growing component of commercial services exports in 2010, with an increase of 14% to \$782.8 billion. That transport services grew faster than other types of services is not surprising since they are closely linked to trade in goods, which saw record growth last year. Travel grew in line with commercial services overall, whereas other commercial services (including financial services) recorded a slower growth.

### 2.2.1 Evolution of world merchandise exports

All regions experienced double-digit increases in the dollar value of both exports and imports in the latest year, thanks in part to rising prices for fuels and other commodities.

**North America's** exports were up 23% to \$1.96 trillion, or 13% of the world total. Meanwhile, the region's imports grew at the same rate as exports to \$2.68 trillion, or 18% of world total.

**South and Central America's** exports jumped 25% to \$575 billion (4% of world) while imports were up 30% to \$576 billion (4% of world).

**Europe's** exports totaled \$5.63 trillion (38% of world) and imports reached \$5.84 trillion (39% of world). Exports and imports were up 12% and 13%, respectively, over 2009.

Exports of the Commonwealth of Independent States (**CIS**) states rose 30% to \$588 billion, or 4% of the world total. CIS imports advanced 24% to \$484 billion, equal to 3% of world imports.

**Africa's** exports in 2010 were worth \$500 billion (3% of world), 28% above their 2009 level. The continent's imports increased at half the rate of exports (14%) to \$463 billion, or 3% of the world total.

**The Middle East's** exports rose 30% to \$916 billion (6% of the world total), but imports only increased by 13% to \$572 billion (4% of world).

**Asia's** exports of goods were worth \$4.69 trillion (32% of world) in 2010, a 31% increase over 2009. The region's imports totaled \$4.50 trillion (30% of world), up 32% from 2009.

### 2.2.2 Evolution of trade in commercial services

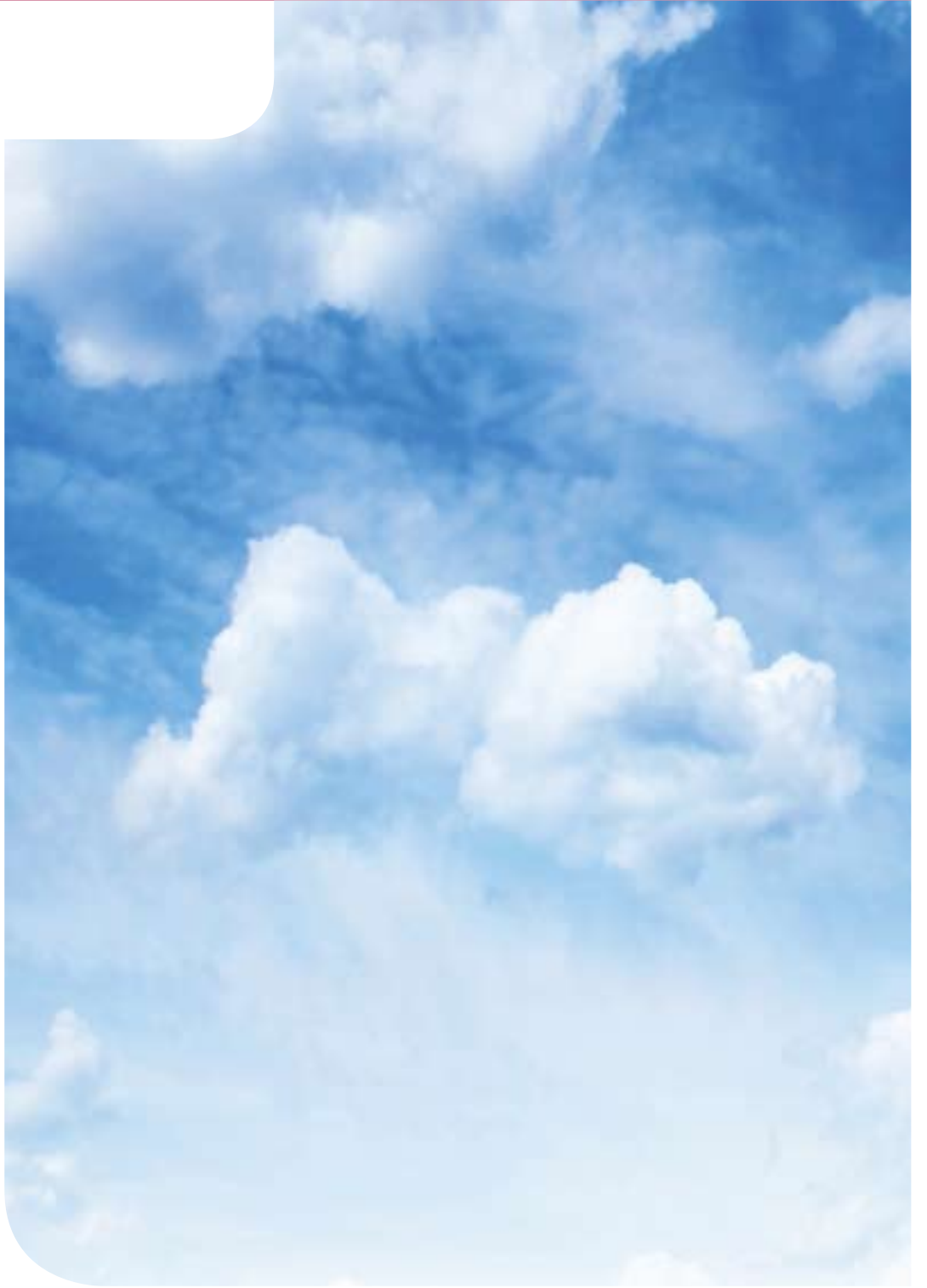
**World exports of commercial services increased 8%** to \$3.67 trillion in 2010 after dropping 12% in 2009. The growth rate in 2010 was equal to the average annual rate for the 2005-2010 period.

Europe's exports and imports were both larger than any other region's last year (\$1.72 trillion and \$1.5 trillion, respectively) but they were also the least dynamic, with growth of just 2% on the export side and 1% on the import side. The reason for the Europe's poor performance can be found in the weakness of travel services, which declined by 3% on the export side and 2% on the import side.

When EU intra-trade is excluded, the European Union (27) becomes the leading global exporter, with services exports to the rest of the world totaling at \$684 billion in 2010, or 25% of global trade. It is followed by the United States (with 18% of the reduced world total), China (with 6%), Japan (with 5%) and Singapore (with \$112 billion, or 4% of world).



The European Union is also the top importer when EU intra-trade is left out. Its imports from non-EU countries in 2010 came to \$598 billion, or 22% of world trade. The top 5 is rounded out by the United States (13% of world), China (7%), Japan (6%) and India (4%).










### 3. Ranking of major exporters and importers

The 5 leading merchandise exporters in 2010 were:

-  → *China (\$1.58 trillion, or 10% of world exports);*
-  → *the United States (\$1.28 trillion, 8% of world);*
-  → *Germany (\$1.27 trillion, 8% of world);*
-  → *Japan (\$770 billion, 5% of world) and*
-  → *the Netherlands (\$572 billion, 3.8% of world).*

The top 5 merchandise importers were:

-  → *the United States (\$1.97 trillion, 13% of world imports);*
-  → *China (\$1.40 trillion, 9% of world);*
-  → *Germany (\$1.07 trillion, 7% of world);*
-  → *Japan (\$693 billion, 4.5% of world) and*
-  → *France (\$606 billion, 4% of world).*

With a share of almost 10.4% of world exports, **China** was the leading world merchandise exporter before the **United States** and **Germany**. As for the imports, China was in second place (9.1%) after the United States (12.8%) but before Germany (see table in attachment).

In 2010 **Belgium** lost one spot on the list of **world merchandise exporters**, ranking in **9<sup>th</sup>** place with USD 411 trillion (2.7% of world as against 3.0% in 2009). Belgium was the **12<sup>th</sup> world merchandise importer** (2.8% in 2009 against 2.5% in 2010), down from 10<sup>th</sup> place. It ranked after South Korea and Canada.

As for the **services**, Belgium was down 2 places as **exporter** and ranked **15<sup>th</sup>**. Its exports reached USD 81 billion (2.2% of total world exports in services). With 2.2% of world imports or USD 76 billion, Belgium held on to its 15<sup>th</sup> place.





#### 4. Trade prospects for 2011

WTO economists' baseline projections for world merchandise trade in 2011 would see exports grow by 6.5%, with shipments from developed countries increasing by around 4.5% and those from developing economies and the CIS advancing 9.5%. If achieved, this would be higher than the 6.0% average yearly increase between 1990 and 2008. The sharp rise in trade volumes last year enabled world trade to recover to its pre-crisis level but not its long-term trend and WTO economists believe the recent series of important events around the world lend a greater degree of uncertainty to any forecast.

The prospect of sharply higher oil prices probably poses a greater threat to the world economy and trade than the Japanese earthquake. Fears of a prolonged conflict in Libya and spreading unrest in the Middle East have lifted oil prices above \$100/barrel. An interruption of supplies from any other major producer would raise prices higher still, with potentially significant implications for the global economy. In such an event, the WTO would have to revisit its trade projections.

**World merchandise exports and GDP, 2008-2011<sup>(a)</sup> Annual % change**

	2008	2009	2010	2011 <sup>(a)</sup>
<b>Volume of merchandise exports</b>				
World	2.2	-12.0	14.5	6.5
Developed economies	0.8	-15.1	12.9	4.5
Developing economies and CIS	4.2	-7.8	16.7	9.5
<b>Real GDP at market exchange rates (2005)</b>				
World	1.4	-2.4	3.6	3.1
Developed economies	0.2	-3.7	2.6	2.2
Developing economies and CIS	5.7	2.1	7.0	5.8

<sup>(a)</sup> Figures for 2011 are projections

Source: WTO Secretariat for exports, consensus estimates for GDP.

## World merchandise trade by region and selected economies, 2010

(\$bn and %)

10

	Exports					Imports				
	Value	Annual % change				Value	Annual % change			
	2010	2005-10	2008	2009	2010	2010	2005-10	2008	2009	2010
World	14855	8	15	-23	22	15050	7	16	-23	21
North America	1964	6	11	-21	23	2681	3	8	-25	23
United States	1278	7	12	-18	21	1968	3	7	-26	23
Canada <sup>(a)</sup>	387	1	9	-31	22	402	4	7	-21	22
Mexico	298	7	7	-21	30	311	6	10	-24	29
South and Central America <sup>(b)</sup>	575	10	21	-24	25	576	14	30	-26	30
Brazil	202	11	23	-23	32	191	20	44	-27	43
Other South and Central America <sup>(b)</sup>	373	9	20	-25	22	385	12	25	-25	24
Europe	5626	5	12	-22	12	5841	5	13	-25	13
European Union (27)	5147	5	11	-22	12	5337	5	12	-25	12
Germany	1269	5	9	-23	13	1067	7	12	-22	15
France	521	2	10	-21	7	606	4	13	-22	8
Netherlands	572	7	16	-22	15	517	7	18	-24	17
United Kingdom	405	1	5	-23	15	558	2	2	-24	15
Italy	448	4	9	-25	10	484	5	10	-26	17
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	588	11	35	-36	30	414	14	32	-33	24
Russian Federation <sup>(a)</sup>	400	10	33	-36	32	248	15	31	-34	30
Africa	500	10	29	-30	28	463	13	28	-15	14
South Africa	82	10	16	-24	33	94	9	14	-27	29
Africa less South Africa	418	10	31	-31	28	369	14	33	-12	11
Oil exporters <sup>(c)</sup>	277	9	34	-38	31	138	14	39	-9	4
Non oil exporters	141	12	24	-14	21	231	13	29	-14	15
Middle East	916	11	34	-31	30	572	11	28	-15	13
Asia	4685	11	15	-18	31	4503	11	21	-20	32
China	1578	16	17	-16	31	1395	16	18	-11	39
Japan	770	5	9	-26	33	693	6	23	-28	25
India	216	17	30	-15	31	323	18	40	-20	25
Singapore	112	15	17	-6	20	96	12	17	-9	21
New industrialized economies <sup>(d)</sup>	1111	9	10	-17	30	1103	9	17	-24	33
Memorandum items:										
MERCOSUR <sup>(e)</sup>	282	11	24	-22	30	267	19	41	-28	43
ASEAN <sup>(f)</sup>	1052	10	14	-18	29	950	10	21	-23	31
EU (27) extra-trade	1787	6	13	-21	17	1977	6	17	-27	18
Least Developed Countries (LDCs)	164	15	32	-24	28	174	15	30	-5	13

<sup>(a)</sup> Imports are valued f.o.b.

<sup>(b)</sup> Includes the Caribbean. For composition of groups see the Technical Notes of WTO, International Trade Statistics, 2010.

<sup>(c)</sup> Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan.

<sup>(d)</sup> Hong Kong, China; Republic of Korea; Singapore and Chinese Taipei.

<sup>(e)</sup> Common Market of the Southern Cone: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay.

<sup>(f)</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam.

Source: WTO Secretariat.


**Merchandise trade: leading exporters and importers, 2010**

(\$bn and %)

Rank	Exporters	Annual %			Rank	Importers	Annual %		
		Value	Share	Change			Value	Share	Change
1	China	1578	10.4	31	1	United States	1968	12.8	23
2	United States	1278	8.4	21	2	China	1395	9.1	39
3	Germany	1269	8.3	13	3	Germany	1067	6.9	15
4	Japan	770	5.1	33	4	Japan	693	4.5	25
5	Netherlands	572	3.8	15	5	France	606	3.9	8
6	France	521	3.4	7	6	United Kingdom	558	3.6	15
7	Korea, Republic of	466	3.1	28	7	Netherlands	517	3.4	17
8	Italy	448	2.9	10	8	Italy	484	3.1	17
9	Belgium	411	2.7	11	9	Hong Kong, China	442	2.9	25
						- retained imports <sup>(a)</sup>	116	0.8	31
10	United Kingdom	405	2.7	15	10	Korea, Republic of	425	2.8	32
11	Hong Kong, China	401	2.6	22	11	Canada <sup>(b)</sup>	402	2.6	22
	- domestic exports <sup>(a)</sup>	18	0.1	7					
	- re-exports	383	2.5	23					
12	Russian Federation	400	2.6	32	12	Belgium	390	2.5	11
13	Canada	387	2.5	22	13	India	323	2.1	25
14	Singapore	352	2.3	30	14	Spain	312	2.0	6
	- domestic exports	183	1.2	32					
	- re-exports <sup>(a)</sup>	169	1.1	28					
15	Mexico	298	2.0	30	15	Singapore	311	2.0	26
						- retained imports <sup>(c)</sup>	142	0.9	24
16	Taipei, Chinese	275	1.8	35	16	Mexico	311	2.0	29
17	Saudi Arabia <sup>(a)</sup>	254	1.7	32	17	Taipei, Chinese	251	1.6	44
18	Spain	245	1.6	8	18	Russian Federation <sup>(b)</sup>	248	1.6	30
19	United Arab Emirates <sup>(a)</sup>	235	1.5	27	19	Australia	202	1.3	22
20	India	216	1.4	31	20	Brazil	191	1.2	43
21	Australia	212	1.4	38	21	Turkey	185	1.2	32
22	Brazil	202	1.3	32	22	Thailand	182	1.2	36
23	Malaysia	199	1.3	26	23	Switzerland	176	1.1	13
24	Switzerland	195	1.3	13	24	Poland	174	1.1	16
25	Thailand	195	1.3	28	25	United Arab Emirates <sup>(a)</sup>	170	1.1	13
26	Sweden	158	1.0	21	26	Malaysia	165	1.1	33
27	Indonesia	158	1.0	32	27	Austria	159	1.0	11
28	Poland	156	1.0	14	28	Sweden	148	1.0	23
29	Austria	152	1.0	11	29	Indonesia	132	0.9	46
30	Czech Republic	133	0.9	18	30	Czech Republic	126	0.8	20
<b>Total of above <sup>(d)</sup></b>		<b>12 541</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>-</b>		<b>Total of above <sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>12 712</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>World <sup>(d)</sup></b>		<b>15 238</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>World <sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>15 376</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>21</b>

<sup>(a)</sup> Secretariat estimates / <sup>(b)</sup> Imports are valued f.o.b. / <sup>(c)</sup> Singapore's retained imports are defined as imports less re-exports / <sup>(d)</sup> Includes significant re-exports or imports for re-export

Source: WTO Secretariat.

## Leading exporters and importers in world trade in commercial services, 2010

(\$bn and %)

12

Rank	Exporters	Annual %			Rank	Importers	Annual %		
		Value	Share	Change			Value	Share	Change
1	United States	515	14.1	8	1	United States	358	10.2	7
2	Germany	230	6.3	2	2	Germany	256	7.3	1
3	United Kingdom	227	6.2	0	3	China <sup>(a)</sup>	192	5.5	22
4	China <sup>(a)</sup>	170	4.6	32	4	United Kingdom	156	4.5	-1
5	France	140	3.8	-1	5	Japan	155	4.4	6
6	Japan	138	3.8	9	6	France	126	3.6	0
7	Spain	121	3.3	-1	7	India	117	3.3	...
8	Singapore	112	3.0	20	8	Netherlands	109	3.1	1
9	Netherlands	111	3.0	0	9	Italy	108	3.1	1
10	India	110	3.0	...	10	Ireland	106	3.0	2
11	Hong Kong, China	108	2.9	25	11	Singapore	96	2.7	21
12	Italy	97	2.6	3	12	Korea, Republic of	93	2.7	17
13	Ireland	95	2.6	3	13	Canada	89	2.6	15
14	Korea, Republic of	82	2.2	13	14	Spain	86	2.4	-1
15	Belgium	81	2.2	2	15	Belgium	76	2.2	4
16	Switzerland	76	2.1	6	16	Russian Federation	70	2.0	18
17	Luxembourg	68	1.9	13	17	Brazil	60	1.7	35
18	Canada	66	1.8	15	18	Hong Kong, China	51	1.5	15
19	Sweden	64	1.7	9	19	Australia	50	1.4	22
20	Denmark	58	1.6	7	20	Saudi Arabia <sup>(b)</sup>	49	1.4	...
21	Austria	53	1.5	-1	21	Denmark	49	1.4	-1
22	Australia	48	1.3	17	22	Sweden	48	1.4	6
23	Russian Federation	44	1.2	6	23	Thailand	45	1.3	21
24	Taipei, Chinese	41	1.1	29	24	United Arab Emirates <sup>(b)</sup>	42	1.2	...
25	Norway	40	1.1	5	25	Norway	41	1.2	12
26	Greece	37	1.0	-1	26	Switzerland	38	1.1	-1
27	Thailand	34	0.9	15	27	Luxembourg	38	1.1	8
28	Turkey	33	0.9	0	28	Taipei, Chinese	37	1.1	28
29	Malaysia	33	0.9	13	29	Austria	36	1.0	-2
30	Poland	32	0.9	11	30	Indonesia	33	0.9	18
31	Brazil	30	0.8	15	31	Malaysia	32	0.9	18
32	Macao, China	28	0.8	51	32	Poland	27	0.8	16
33	Finland	25	0.7	-10	33	Czech Republic	24	0.7	28
34	Israel	24	0.7	11	34	Mexico	23	0.7	8
35	Egypt	24	0.6	12	35	Finland	23	0.7	-11
36	Portugal	23	0.6	2	36	Nigeria <sup>(b)</sup>	20	0.6	...
37	Czech Republic	22	0.6	10	37	Greece	20	0.6	2
38	Hungary	18	0.5	1	38	Iran, Islamic Rep of <sup>(b)</sup>	19	0.5	...
39	Lebanon <sup>(b)</sup>	18	0.5	...	39	Angola <sup>(b)</sup>	18	0.5	...
40	Indonesia	17	0.5	25	40	Turkey	18	0.5	17
<b>Total of above</b>		<b>3290</b>	<b>89.8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Total of above</b>		<b>3035</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>World</b>		<b>3665</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>World</b>		<b>3505</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>

<sup>(a)</sup> Preliminary estimate / <sup>(b)</sup> Secretariat estimate

Note: Figures for a number of countries and territories have been estimated by the Secretariat. Annual percentage changes and rankings are affected by continuity breaks in the series for a large number of economies, and by limitations in cross-country comparability. See the Metadata.

Source: WTO Secretariat



## Further information

### **Belgian Foreign Trade Agency**

Rue Montoyer 3  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

### **Nadia Verlent**

Head of the statistics department  
Phone +32 2 206 35 23  
nadia.verlent@abh-ace.be

### **Dennis Gijsbrechts**

Attaché  
Phone +32 2 206 35 73  
dennis.gijsbrechts@abh-ace.be

### **Cathy Marquegnies**

Assistant  
Phone +32 2 206 35 64  
cathy.marquegnies@abh-ace.be

Editor: F. L'Hoost

**COPYRIGHT ©** Reproduction of the  
text is authorized provided the source  
is acknowledged.

Date of publication: July 2011

Printed on FSC-labeled paper

This publication is also available  
on the website of the Belgian  
Foreign Trade Agency: [www.abh-ace.be](http://www.abh-ace.be)