

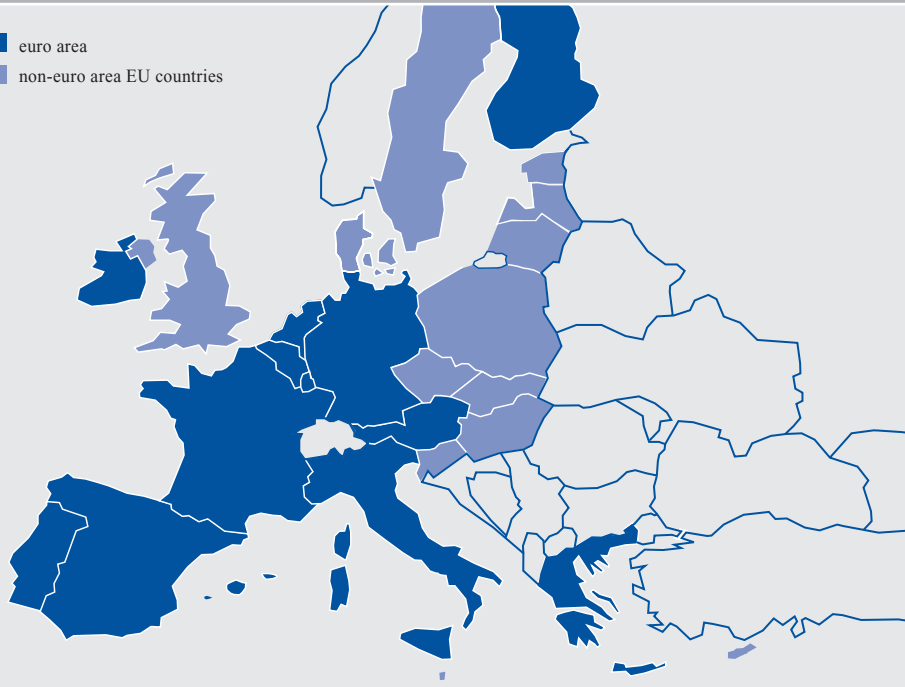
THE EURO AREA AT A GLANCE

Key characteristics (2004)	Euro area (12 countries)	EU (25 countries)	US	Japan
Population (millions)	311.1	459.0	294.0	127.6
GDP (calculated at purchasing power parity, EUR trillions)	7.6	10.3	10.2	3.3
Share of world GDP (calculated at purchasing power parity, %)	15.3	21.1	20.9	6.9
Exports (goods & services, % of GDP)	19.5	12.8	9.8	13.6
Imports (goods & services, % of GDP)	17.8	12.6	15.1	11.6

The euro area currently comprises 12 of the 25 Member States of the European Union. Monetary policy in the euro area is the responsibility of the Eurosystem, which comprises the European Central Bank (ECB) and the 12 national central banks of the euro area countries. Issuing euro banknotes and promoting the smooth operation of payment and settlement systems are also among the tasks of the Eurosystem.

Map

- euro area
- non-euro area EU countries



The euro area is currently composed of the following countries (see map):

- Belgium (BE)
- Germany (DE)
- Greece (GR)
- Spain (ES)
- France (FR)
- Ireland (IE)
- Italy (IT)
- Luxembourg (LU)
- Netherlands (NL)
- Austria (AT)
- Portugal (PT)
- Finland (FI)

THE EUROSYSTEM

The Eurosystem is the central bank system of the euro area. It is composed of the ECB and the national central banks of the countries that have adopted the euro.

The primary objective of the Eurosystem is to maintain price stability in the euro area, thus protecting the purchasing power of the euro. Without prejudice to its primary objective, the Eurosystem also supports the general economic policies of the European Community.

In the field of payments, the Eurosystem has the statutory task of promoting the smooth operation of payment systems and systems for the settlement of securities transactions. This is laid down in the Treaty establishing the European Community.

THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK (ECB)

The ECB was established on 1 June 1998 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and assumed responsibility for the single monetary policy in the euro area as of 1 January 1999. The supreme decision-making body of the ECB is the Governing Council, composed of the six members of the ECB's Executive Board and the central bank governors of the countries that have adopted the euro as their currency. Governing Council decisions are implemented by the ECB and by each national central bank in its respective country.

THE EUROPEAN SYSTEM OF CENTRAL BANKS (ESCB)

The Treaty establishing the European Community provides the legal basis for the ECB and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB).



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty, the ESCB is composed of the ECB and the national central banks of the Member States of the European Union (currently 25¹).

Since some EU Member States have yet to adopt the euro, the Governing Council of the ECB has chosen the term Eurosystem to describe the arrangements whereby the ESCB carries out its tasks related to the management of the single currency, the euro. The distinction between the ESCB and the Eurosystem will need to be made for as long as there are EU Member States that have not yet adopted the euro as their currency.

¹ Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the ECB's website at: <http://www.ecb.int>
or contact us at:

European Central Bank
Press and Information Division
Kaiserstrasse 29
60311 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Tel.: +49 69 13 44 74 55

Fax: +49 69 13 44 74 04

E-mail: info@ecb.int