

## January 2018-Euro area international trade in goods surplus €3.3 bn-€20.3 bn deficit for EU28

The first estimate for **euro area** (EA19) exports of goods to the rest of the world in January 2018 was €178.6 billion, an increase of 9.1% compared with January 2017 (€163.7 bn). Imports from the rest of the world stood at €175.4 bn, a rise of 6.3% compared with January 2017 (€165.0 bn). As a result, the **euro area** recorded a €3.3 bn surplus in trade in goods with the rest of the world in January 2018, compared with a deficit of €1.4 bn in January 2017. **Intra-euro area** trade rose to €159.8 bn in January 2018, up by 8.8% compared with January 2017.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

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## January 2018 compared with December 2017-Production in construction down by 2.2% in euro area -Down by 2.1% in EU28

In January 2018 compared with December 2017, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector decreased by 2.2% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 2.1% in the **EU28**, according to first estimates from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In December 2017, production in construction grew by 0.7% in the **euro area** and by 1.0% in the **EU28**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

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## Antitrust: Commission opens investigation into German grid

# operator TenneT for limiting cross border electricity capacity with Denmark

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Energy should flow freely in Europe so that the electricity produced by a wind mill in one country can reach the consumers in another. Our investigation into TenneT is part of our efforts to ensure that electricity grid operators do not unjustifiably restrict the free flow of electricity between Member States, to the detriment of European energy consumers. Ensuring that electricity interconnectors remain fully open to cross-border trade is essential to achieve our overall objective of an efficient, sustainable and competitive energy market “.*

TenneT TSO GmbH (TenneT) is the largest of the four German transmission system operators that manage the high-voltage electricity network in Germany. Transmission system operators transport electricity from generation plants to large industrial electricity consumers and to regional or local electricity distribution operators, which in turn deliver electricity to households and other smaller industrial consumers.

The Commission’s antitrust investigation will focus on indications that TenneT may be reducing the amount of transmission capacity available on the electricity interconnector at the border between Western Denmark and Germany.

If proven, this behaviour may breach EU antitrust rules, specifically on the abuse of a dominant market position ([Article 102](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), as it would amount to discrimination against non-German electricity producers and to a segmentation of the Single Market for energy.

The Commission has today also sent to TenneT its preliminary assessment setting out in further detail its competition concerns. The Commission and TenneT are in constructive discussions to design a set of commitments that could address these concerns. Any potential commitments would need to ensure that the maximum capacity of the interconnector between Western Denmark and Germany would be made available to the market, while preserving the security of the German high-voltage electricity network.

An opening by the Commission of a formal investigation does not prejudge its outcome.

## **Background**

TenneT TSO GmbH’s high-voltage transmission network stretches across Germany, from Schleswig-Holstein in the North to Bavaria in the South-East. TenneT TSO GmbH is a fully-owned subsidiary of the Dutch company TenneT Holding B.V. which fully controls TenneT TSO B.V., the company managing the high-voltage

transmission network in the Netherlands.

Electricity transported on the transmission network is supplied to the distribution networks as well as to large industrial customers directly connected to the transmission network. Electricity transmission networks are interconnected, and therefore electricity transmission system operators also manage interconnections with other networks.

The Commission already addressed the issue of compatibility with EU antitrust rules of limits on cross-border capacity (import/export) in the [Swedish Interconnectors](#) case, where it adopted a decision in April 2010 rendering legally binding commitments offered by Svenska Kraftnät.

The investigation into TenneT complements the Commission's effort to address the systematic limitation of cross border capacity on electricity interconnectors across the EU. The Commission has proposed to update the Electricity Regulation as part of the '[Clean Energy for All Europeans](#)' package which is currently being discussed in Council and Parliament. Among other things, it aims at improving the rules on cross-border capacity in order to maximise the capacity made available and to ensure that transmission system operators do not unnecessarily limit the volume of cross-border capacity.

### **Procedural background**

[Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) prohibits the abuse of a dominant market position which may affect trade between Member States. The implementation of this provision is defined in the [Antitrust Regulation](#) ([Council Regulation No 1/2003](#)), which can be applied by the Commission and by the national competition authorities of EU Member States.

Article 11(6) of the Antitrust Regulation provides that the initiation of proceedings by the Commission relieves the competition authorities of the Member States of their competence to also apply EU competition rules to the practices concerned. Article 16(1) of the same Regulation provides that national courts must avoid giving decisions which would conflict with a decision contemplated by the Commission in proceedings it has initiated.

There is no legal deadline for bringing an antitrust investigation to an end. The duration of an investigation depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of the case, the cooperation of the undertakings with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.

More information on the investigation will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [AT.40461](#).

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## **News story: Coal Authority Public Board Meeting – 23 March 2018**

Our next public board meeting will take place at the Coal Authority offices at 200 Lichfield Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG18 4RG, starting at 09.45 on Friday 23 March 2018.

The board continues to conduct its business in public, as part of its ongoing commitment to giving stakeholders greater access to information on the activities undertaken by the Coal Authority.

[View the board meeting agenda for 23 March 2018](#)

Exceptional items of a commercially confidential nature will continue to be dealt with by the board in closed session.

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## **Press release: Humane trapping standards: Consultation starts**

The Government has today (19 March) launched a public consultation on the introduction of new and improved international humane trapping standards.

Views are being sought on the implementation proposals for the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards and to gather information on the supply, use and marking of traps to better inform impact assessment.

These measures will ensure gamekeepers, country estates and pest control companies are trapping certain species of animals in a humane fashion. Depending on the responses to the consultation, Government wants to implement the new standards on 1 January 2019.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We are committed to supporting a strong rural economy and upholding countryside traditions and we want to do this in a way that respects wildlife and the environment.

I would therefore encourage people with an interest in this area to contribute their views.

Today's consultation is asking for views from the gamekeeping sector, trap retailers, manufacturers and importers, pest control companies, country estates/farms, and importers of products derived from trapped animals.

People can respond using the [Citizen Space survey](#).

The Government will respond to the consultation shortly after the six-week consultation ends.