

Revision policy for the balance of payments and the international investment position

Extract from the Statistical Supplement 3, balance of payments statistics

When publishing the preliminary balance of payments data for a given reporting month, the corresponding data for the previous month are revised (prior-month revision). These revisions contain new foreign trade data from the Federal Statistical Office, late and correction reports from reporting parties on external transactions, and other information subsequently made available. The Federal Statistical Office initially revises foreign trade figures together with the preparation of the data for two months later. Overall, six consecutive monthly revisions are carried out for each reporting month. An additional annual revision is made in November of the following year. These revised results are integrated into the balance of payments every time new balance of payments data are published.

Further revisions to the balance of payments are carried out in connection with the regular revisions to the quarterly IIP. Thus the revisions to data from preceding quarters have an impact on the corresponding financial account transactions, if, for example, new data from secondary sources are included (these are generally BIS data on deposits of German non-banks at banks abroad and data on German external liabilities arising from euro banknote issuance).

Annual revisions for the previous reporting year and the three preceding years are made in the March issue of the Monthly Report. This annual revision generally incorporates new information stemming from secondary sources and late reports, and provisional estimates are revised or replaced. Methodological changes, including those for earlier periods, are also generally carried out at this point.

Regional shifts in balance of payments data can arise in July's "Balance of payments by region" publication. In addition, new data from secondary sources may be included (these are generally data on foreign travel expenditure from the previous year).

In addition to the specified revision dates, unscheduled revisions to the balance of payments can also occur. In the event of extensive revisions or the discovery of serious errors, an assessment is made on a case-by-case basis as to whether the analysis of the balance of payments is impaired as a result of the errors and therefore whether a correction is necessary in the next publication or whether it will suffice to make a correction at the next regular revision date.

In the case of Germany's IIP, the data for the previous quarter are normally revised when the data for the current quarter are published. (In exceptional cases, data for earlier periods may also be revised). Each September, all quarterly figures for the four preceding years are revised owing to the availability of more detailed data sources. (In exceptional cases, data for earlier periods may also be revised). In this context, the revised data on the IIP are reconciled with the balance of payments figures. Consequently, further revisions to the balance of payments data may be necessary.