



**EU - Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dialogue on Economic  
Diversification**

**EU – GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification  
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries**

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**Saudi Arabia Foreign Direct Investment with world partners and  
EU27**

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**EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification  
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries**

Contract Number PI/2017/393165

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## Introduction

This report provides the analysis on Saudi Arabia inward and outward foreign direct investment (FDI) flows and stocks with the world partners (2016-2021), with EU27 as a region and with individual Member States (2016-2021). The analysis of EU27 outward FDI flows and stocks with the GCC region is included. The analysis is based on Eurostat data last updated February 9, 2023, retrieved March 8, 2023 and UNCTAD data, retrieved January 23, 2023.

FDI refers to the flow of capital between countries. According to the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), FDI is 'investment made to acquire lasting interest in enterprises operating outside of the economy of the investor.' FDI statistics measure two different concepts – flows and stocks: Flows measure annual levels of investment on a net basis. Stocks record the total book value of all existing FDI, inward or outward. The outward FDI stock is the value of the resident investors' equity in and net loans to enterprises in foreign economies. The inward FDI stock is the value of foreign investors' equity in and net loans to enterprises resident in the reporting economy. FDI flows are transactions recorded during the reference period (typically year or quarter). FDI stocks are the accumulated value held at the end of the reference period (typically year or quarter).

In 2021, Saudi Arabia inward FDI flows from all world partners reached 16 billion EUR, while outward FDI flows were close to 20.2 billion EUR. FDI stocks in Saudi Arabia from all world partners reached close to 230.5 billion EUR and Saudi Arabia outward FDI stocks to all partners were close to 133.8 billion EUR.

In 2021, EU27 FDI flows to world partners reached 98.8 billion EUR and FDI flows to EU27 from world partners -219.2 billion EUR. EU27 FDI stocks to world partners were 16,642 billion EUR and world partners' FDI stocks into EU27 reached 14,051.4 billion EUR.

In 2021, EU27 FDI flows to Saudi Arabia decreased to -0.5 billion EUR from 1.4 billion EUR in 2020, while EU27 inward FDI flows from Saudi Arabia increased from -2.4 billion EUR to 11.6 billion EUR.

In 2021, FDI stocks from Saudi Arabia into the EU27 increased from 31.9 billion EUR in 2020 to 42.3 billion EUR. The FDI stocks from the EU27 into Saudi Arabia decreased from 19.9 billion EUR in 2020 to 13.4 billion EUR in 2021.

According to the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Investment (MISA), Saudi Arabia offers a number of incentives to foreign investors. Bilaterally, Saudi Arabia signed treaties for the avoidance of double taxation of income and capital (DTAs) with 29 countries as well as agreements aimed at promoting and protecting the investments of the enterprises of one contracting party in the territory of the other with 23 countries, including some of the EU Member States. Corporate income tax, applicable on foreign ownership of Saudi-based companies, with statutory corporate rate is set at 20%, the lowest in the G20.

The report is structured as follows. Section 1 provides the FDI between Saudi Arabia and the world partners for 2016-2021. Section 2 includes the trends in FDI between the EU27 and GCC region for 2016-2021 and details for 2021, the most current year for which data are available. Section 3 provides the details of EU27 and Saudi Arabia FDI at region level for 2016-2021. Section 4 includes details of FDI flows and stocks between Saudi Arabia and individual EU27 Member States for 2016-2021. Section 5 presents a brief overview of incentives offered by the country's investment authorities. The EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project has produced a number of policy papers and reports that assess Saudi Arabia current business and regulatory environments and provide

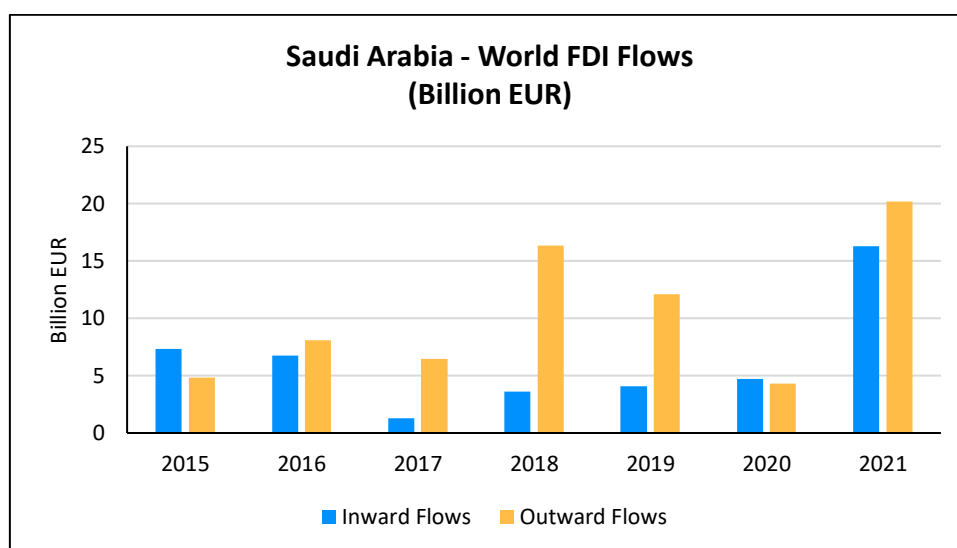


recommendations on areas where the EU expertise and knowledge can assist Saudi Arabia in increasing economic competitiveness.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Saudi Arabia – World FDI Flows and Stocks

Figure 1 provides Saudi Arabia inward FDI flows from all Saudi Arabia partners (inward flows) and outward FDI flows to all partners (outward flows).

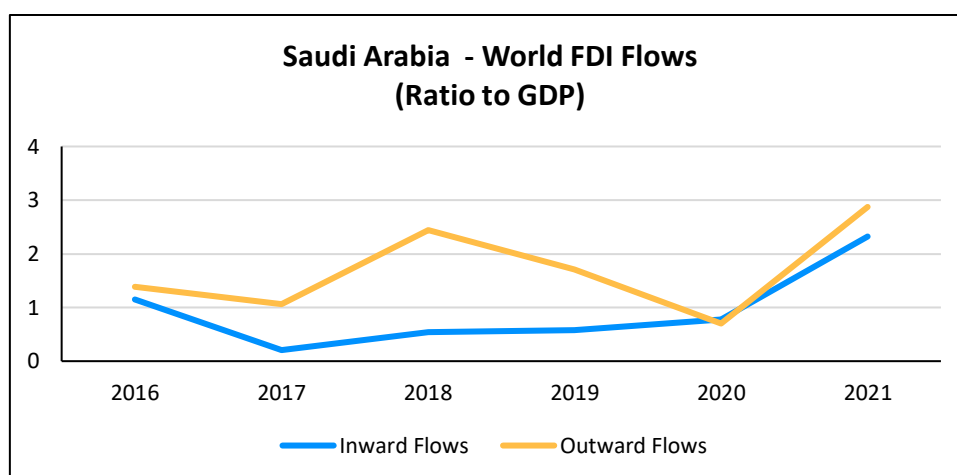
*Figure 1 Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Flows, 2016-2021*



Source: UNCTAD data

Figure 2 provides Saudi Arabia inward FDI flows from all Saudi Arabia partners (inward flows) and outward FDI flows to all partners (outward flows) as percentage of Saudi Arabia GDP.

*Figure 2 Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Flows, 2016-2021*



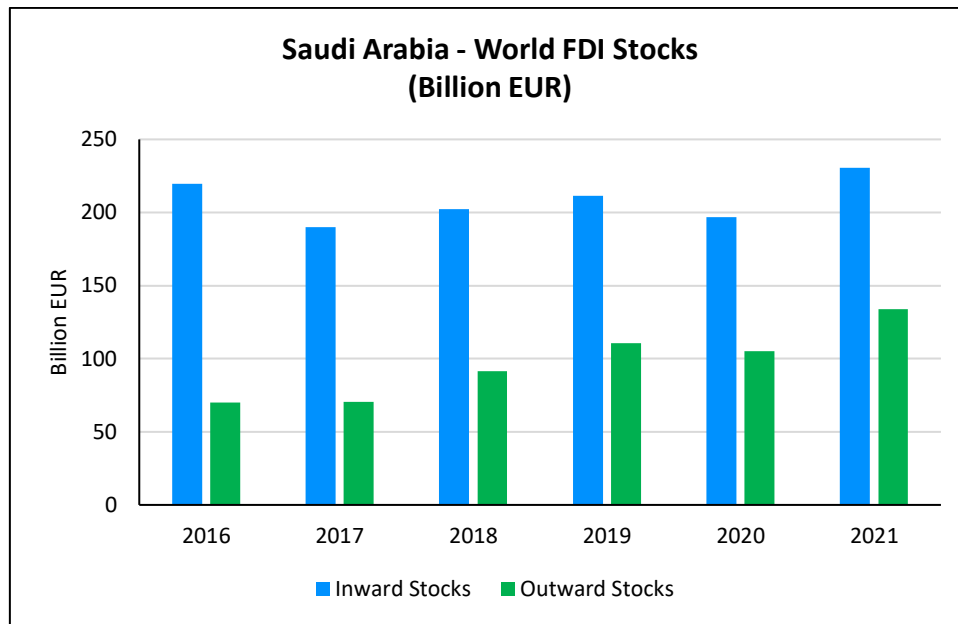
Source: UNCTAD data

Figure 3 provides Saudi Arabia inward FDI stocks from all Saudi Arabia partners (inward stocks) and outward FDI stocks in all partners' economies (outward stocks).

<sup>1</sup> A number of policy papers and reports have been published on the websites of the EU delegations to GCC, on the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project page. In addition, reports that are not for public disclosure are available to the project stakeholders by contacting the authors.



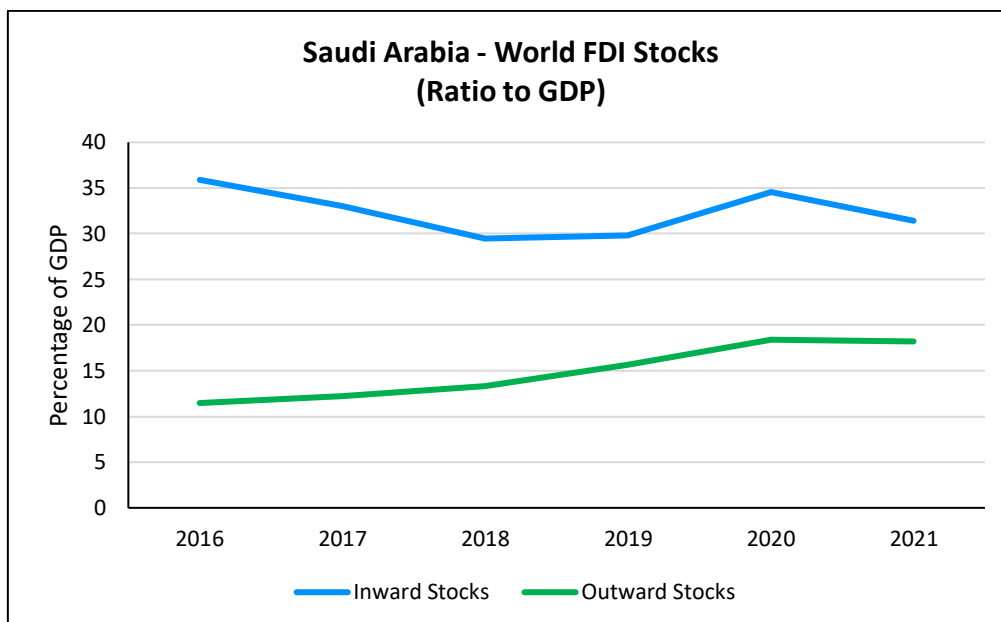
Figure 3 Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Stocks (Billion EUR), 2016-2021



Source: UNCTAD data

Figure 4 provides Saudi Arabia inward FDI stocks from all Saudi Arabia partners (inward stocks) and outward FDI stocks in all partners' economies (outward stocks) as percentage of Saudi Arabia GDP.

Figure 4 Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Stocks (ratio to GDP), 2016-2021

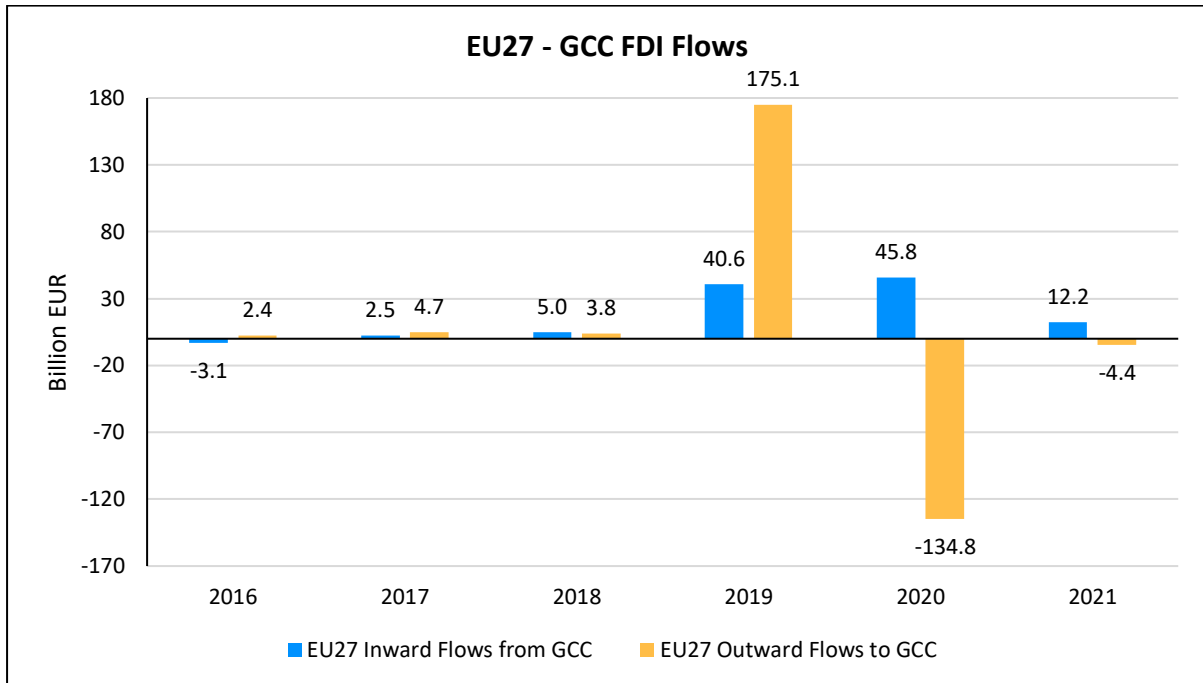


Source: UNCTAD data



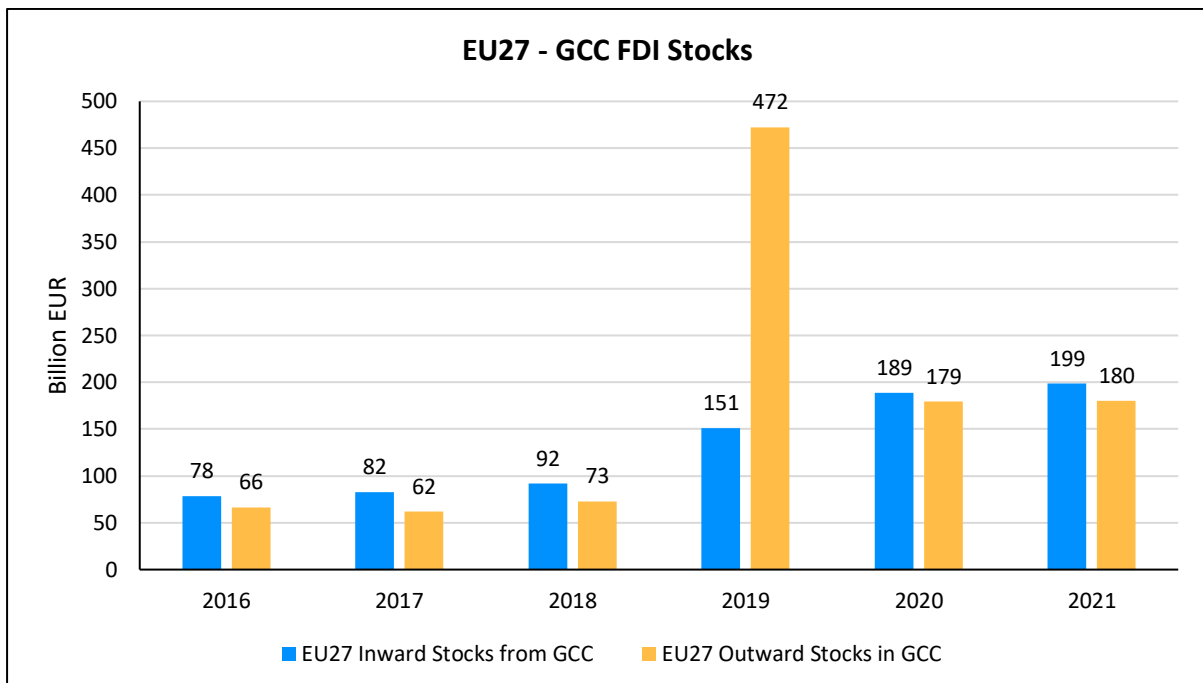
## 2 EU27 – GCC Foreign Direct investment

Figure 5 EU27 – GCC FDI Flows, 2016-2021



Source: Eurostat data

Figure 6 EU27 – GCC FDI Stocks, 2016-2021



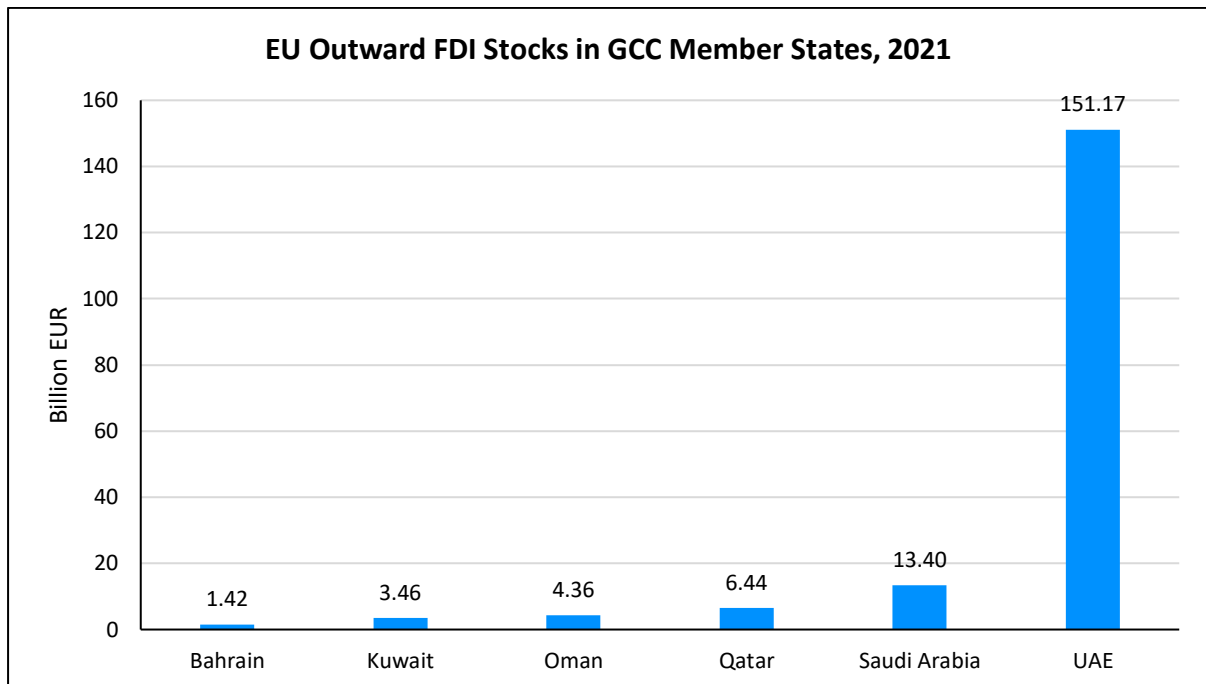
Source: Eurostat data





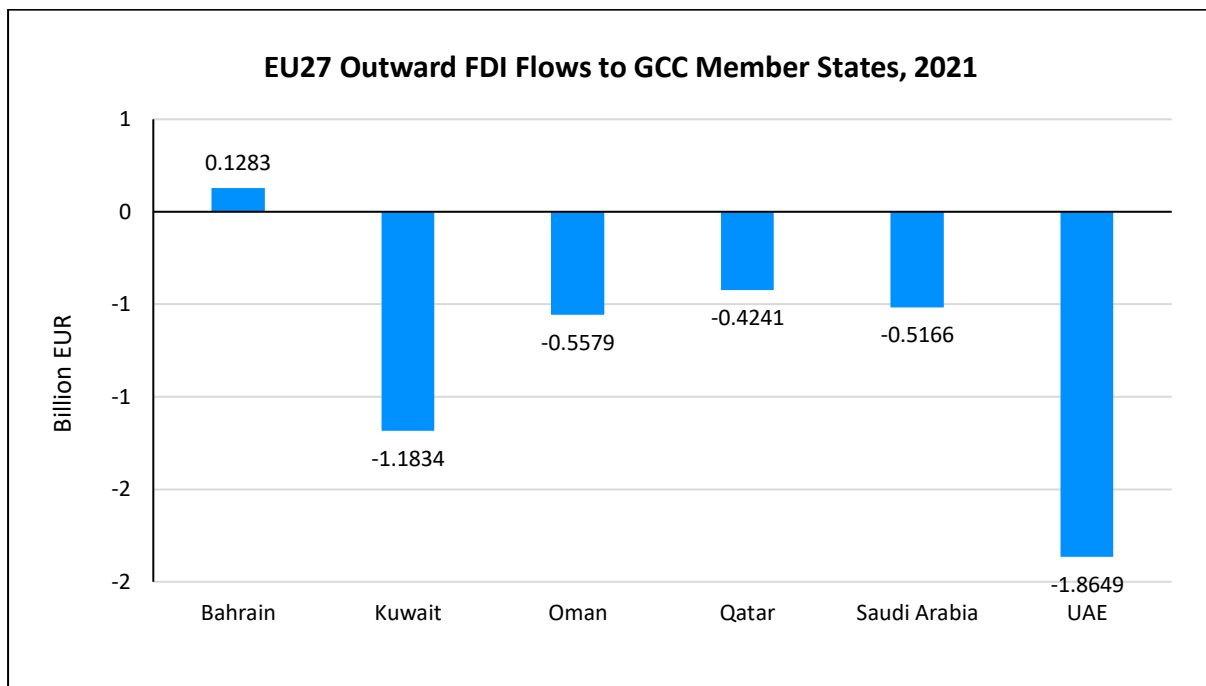
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Figure 7 EU27 Outward FDI Stocks in GCC Member States, 2021



Source: Eurostat data

Figure 8 EU27 Outward FDI Flows to GCC Member States, 2021



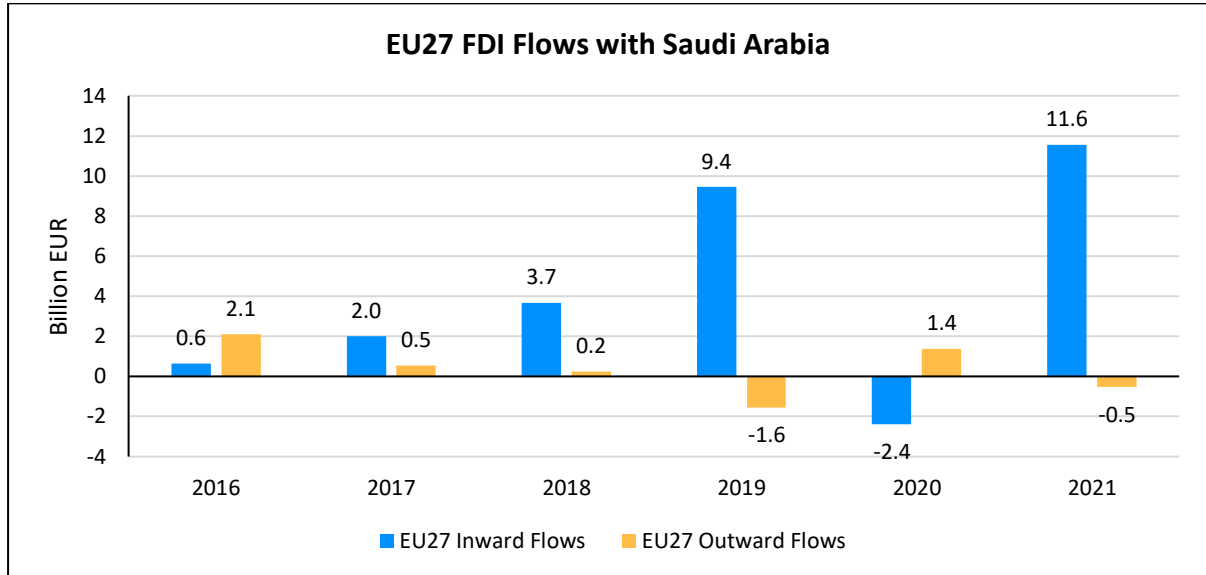
Source: Eurostat data



### 3 EU27 – Saudi Arabia Foreign Direct Investment

Figure 9 provides EU27 inward FDI flows from Saudi Arabia (inward flows) and outward FDI flows to Saudi Arabia (outward flows).

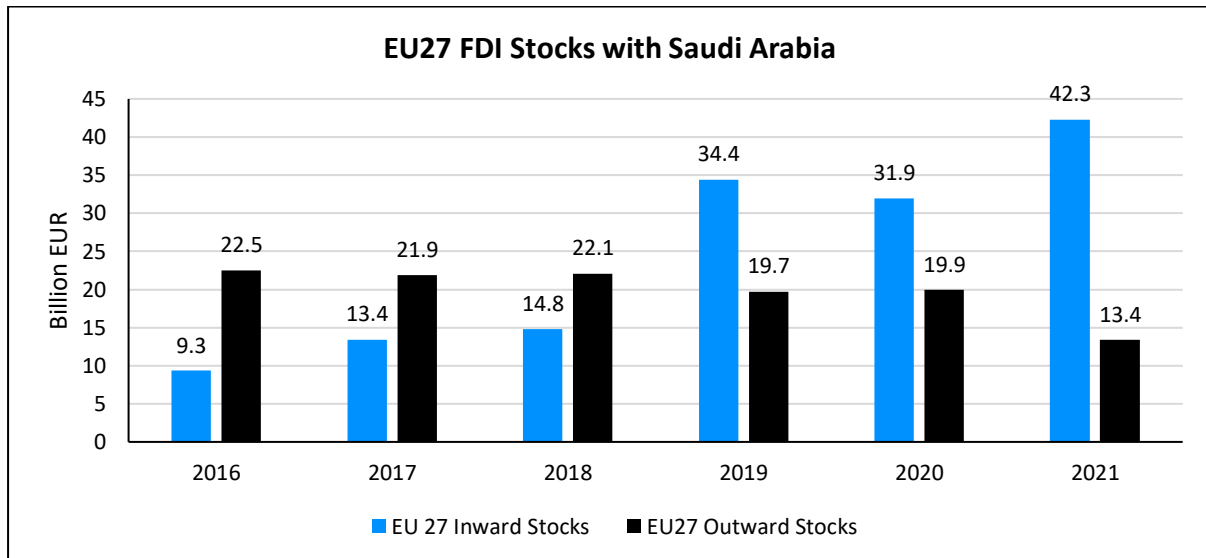
Figure 9 EU27 – Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Flows, 2016-2021



Source: Eurostat data

Figure 10 provides EU27 inward FDI stocks from Saudi Arabia (inward stocks) and outward FDI stocks in Saudi Arabia (outward stocks).

Figure 10 EU27 – Saudi Arabia Inward and Outward FDI Stocks, 2016-2021



Source: Eurostat data



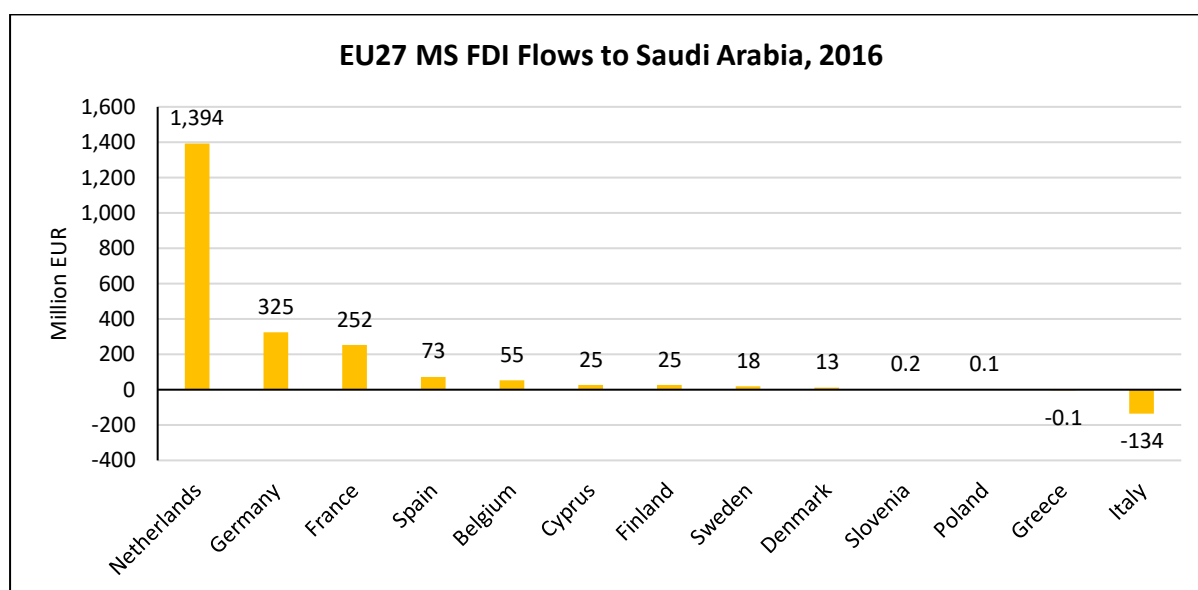
## 4 EU27 Member States – Saudi Arabia Foreign Direct investment 2016-2021

This section presents FDI Flows and Stocks for 2016-2021 for EU Member States to Saudi Arabia and from Saudi Arabia to EU Member States. The figures include all EU Member States for which Eurostat data is available and for the Member States who invested in Saudi Arabia the respective year. For each figure, it is specified which Member States did not report data.

### 4.1 EU27 Member States FDI to Saudi Arabia

#### 4.1.1 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia

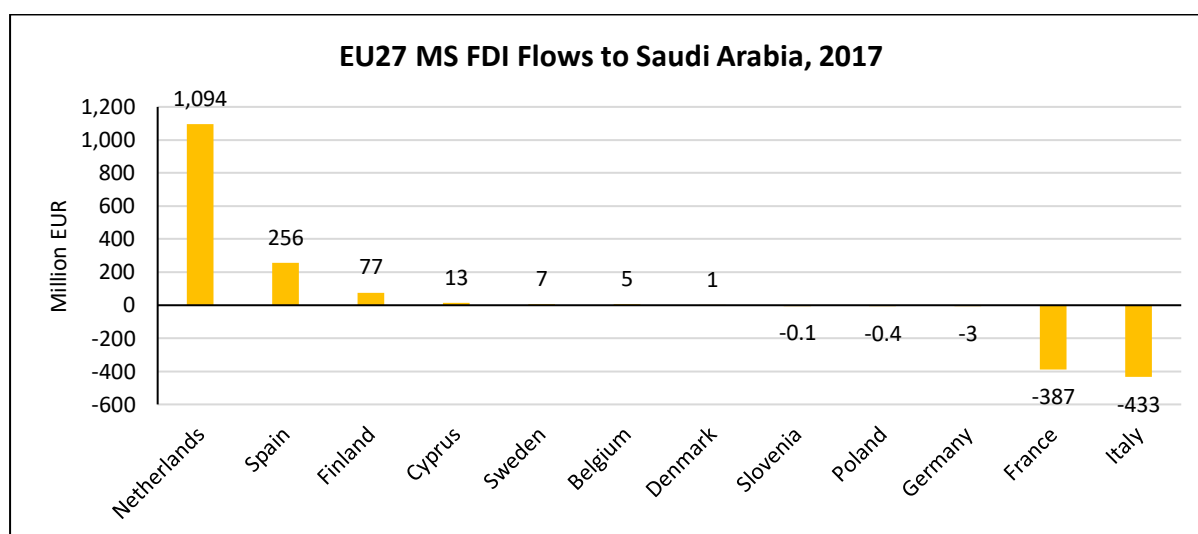
Figure 11 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2016



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Czechia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania.

Figure 12 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2017

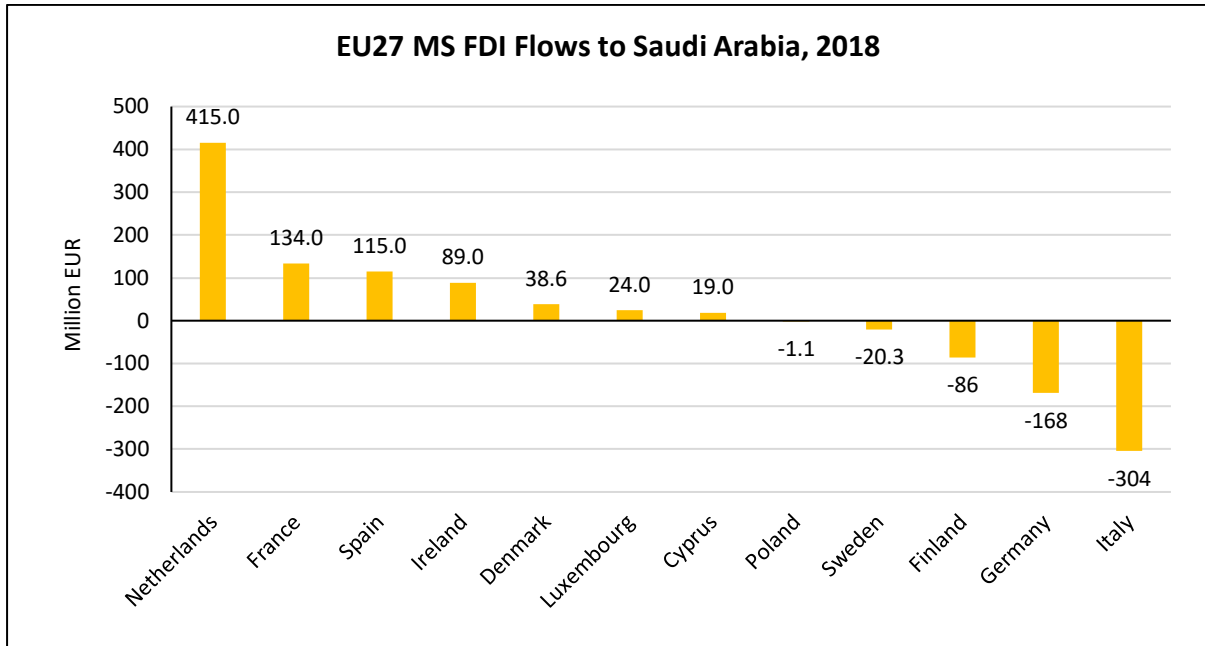


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal.



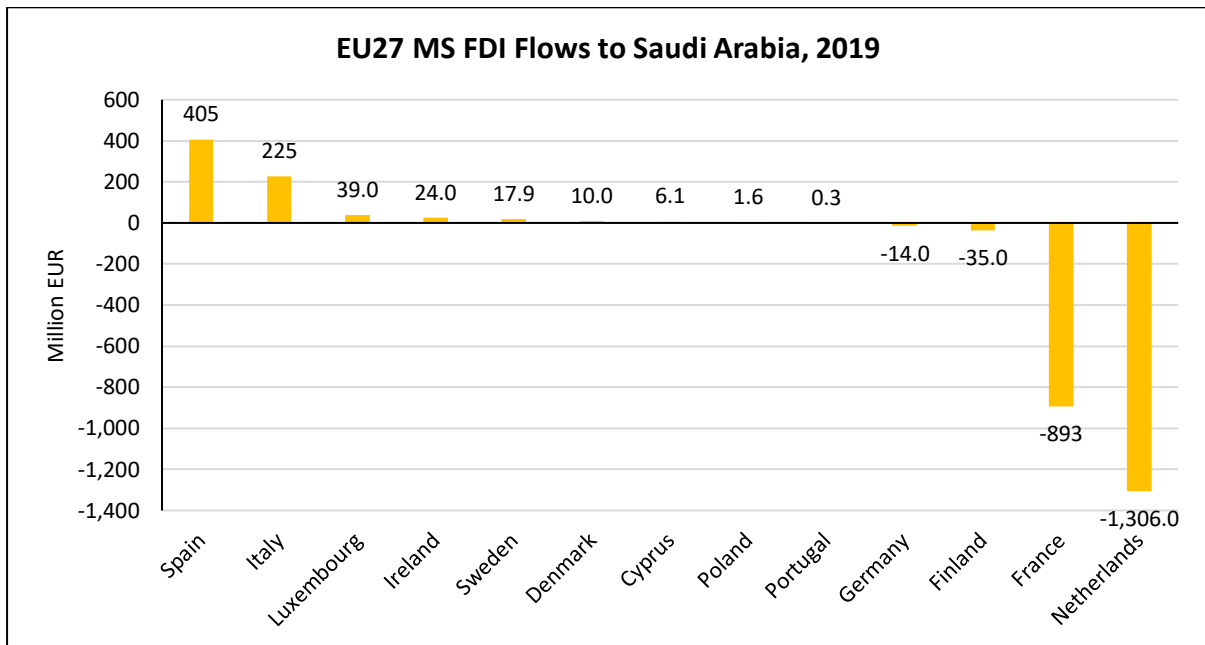
Figure 13 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2018



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Portugal.

Figure 14 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2019



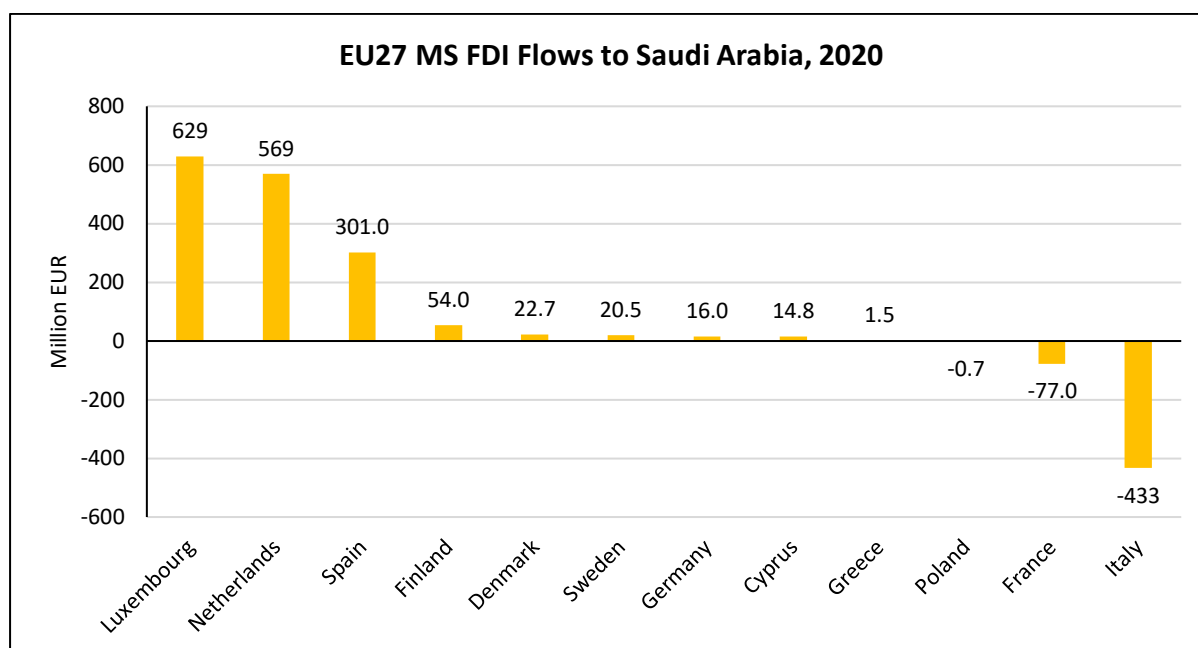
Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Malta.



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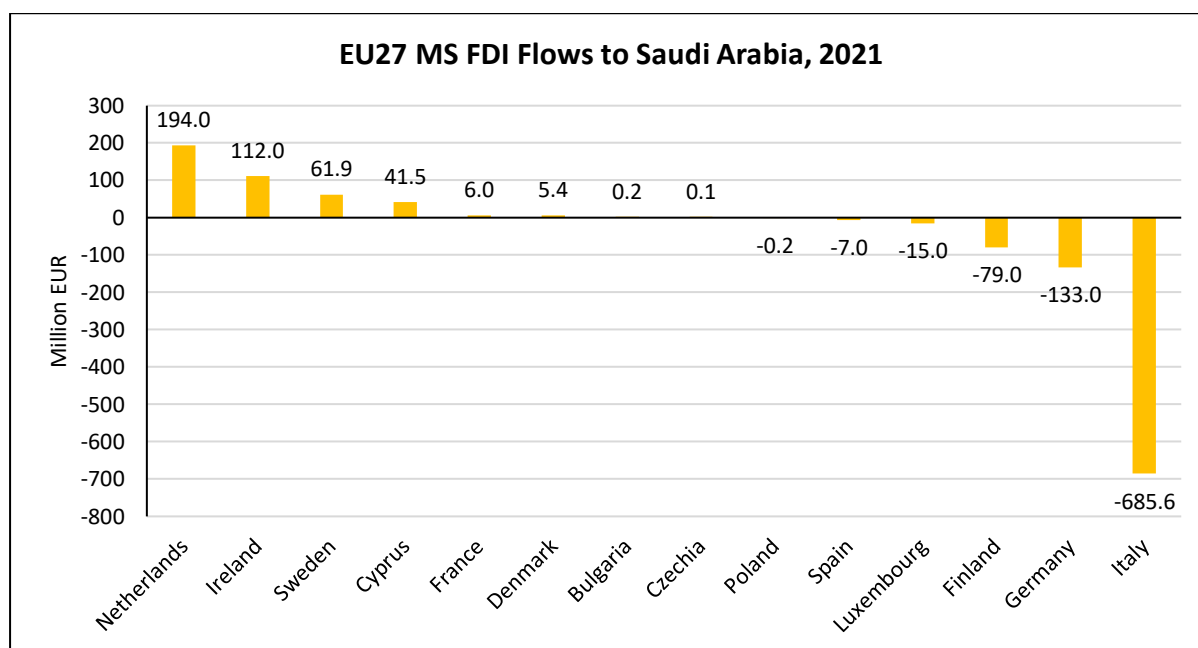
Figure 15 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2020



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania.

Figure 16 EU27 Member States FDI Flows to Saudi Arabia, 2021



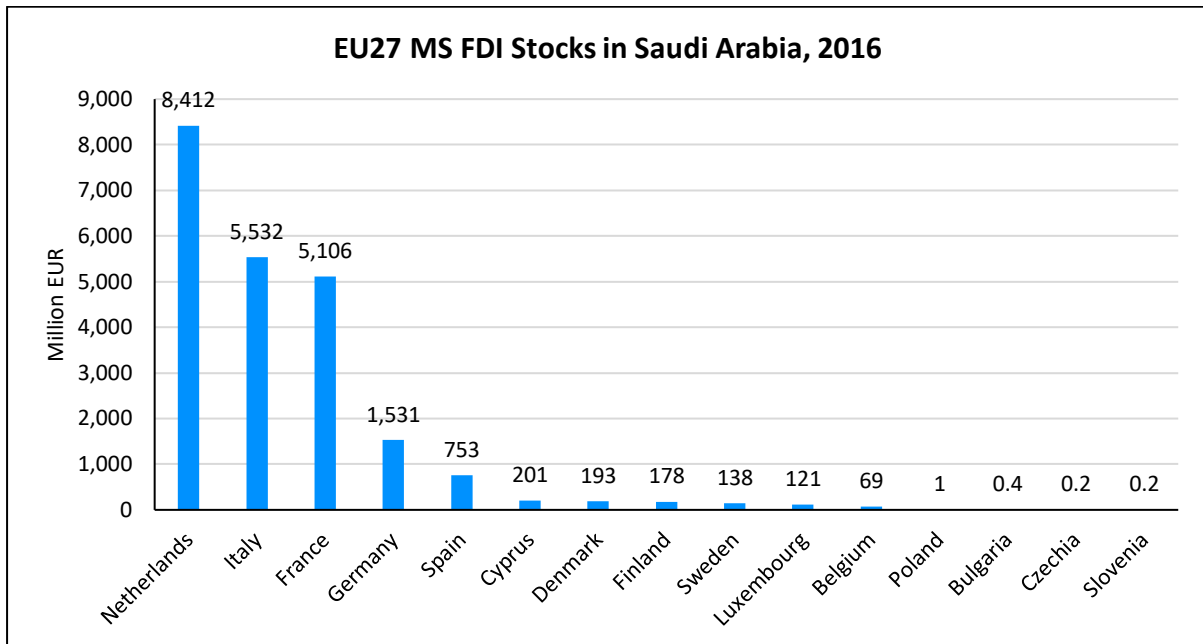
Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Romania.



### 4.1.2 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia

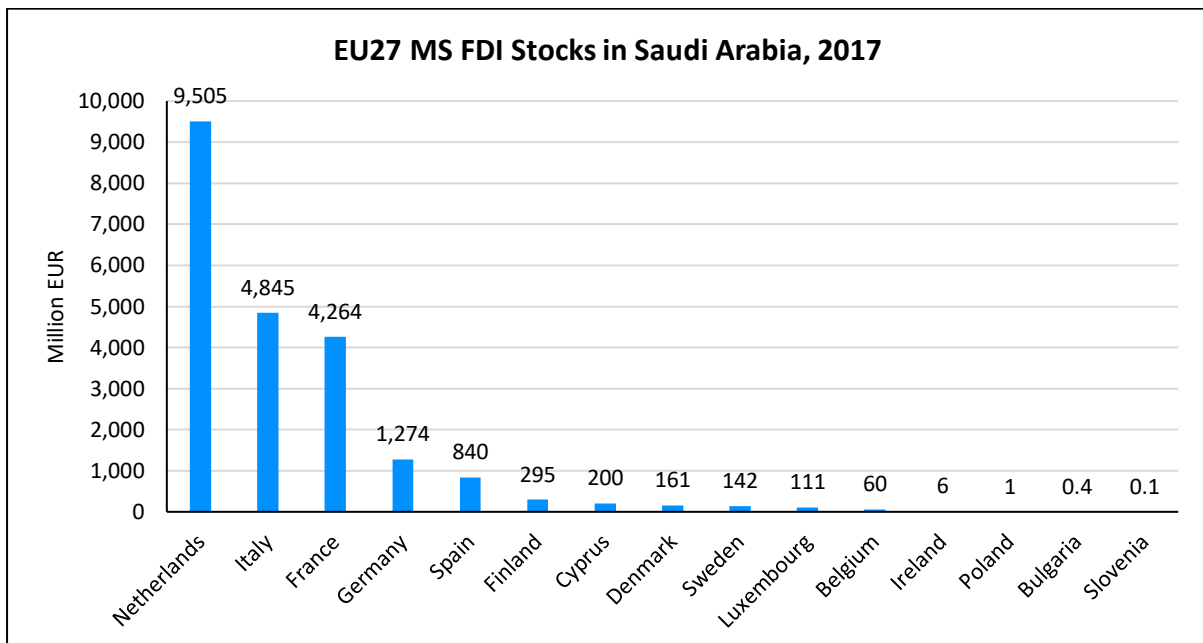
Figure 17 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2016



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Romania.

Figure 18 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2017

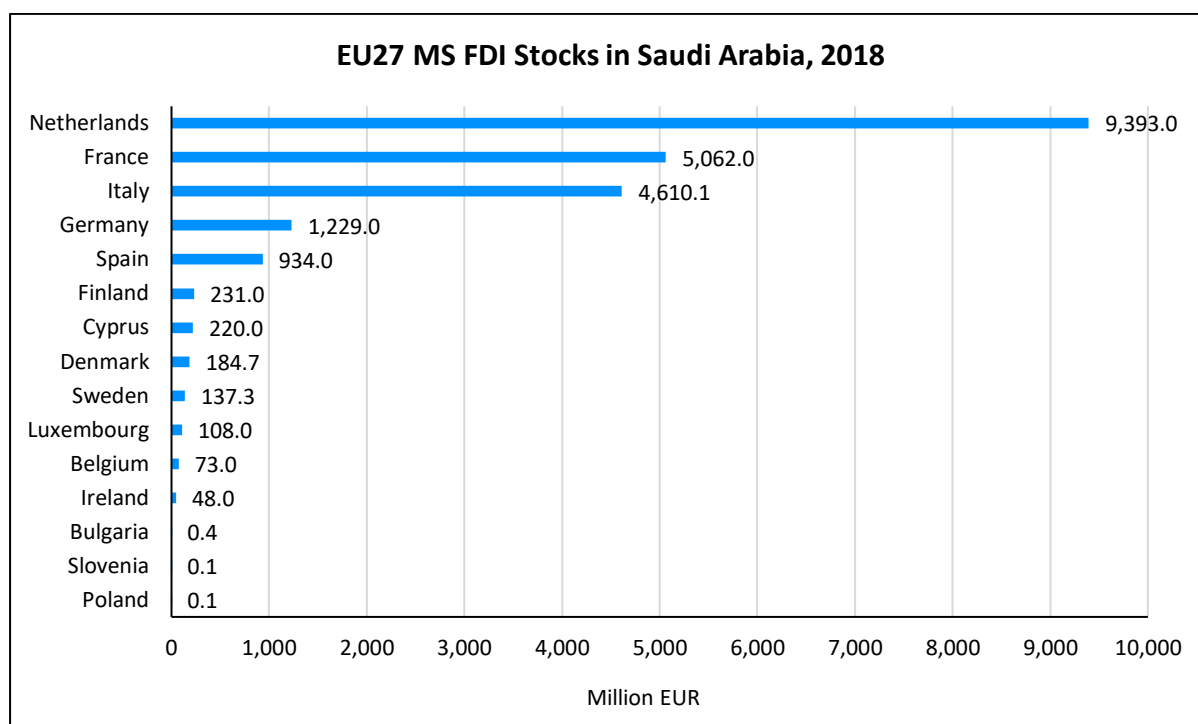


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Portugal.



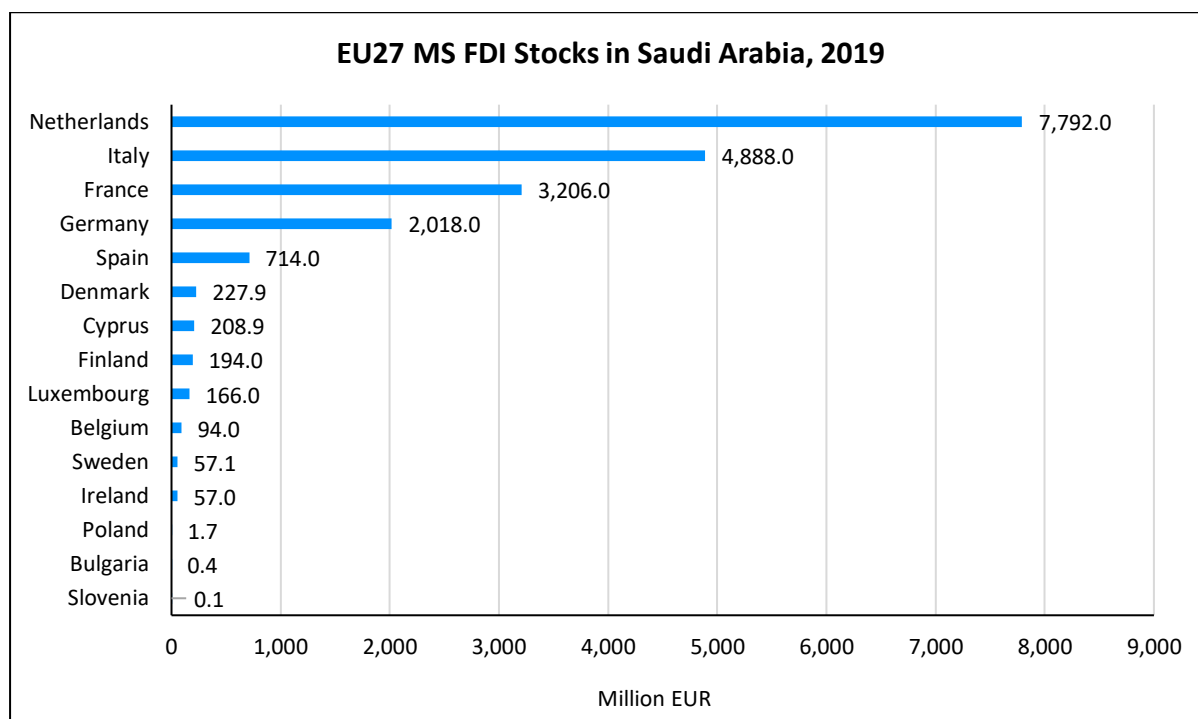
Figure 19 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2018



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Portugal.

Figure 20 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2019

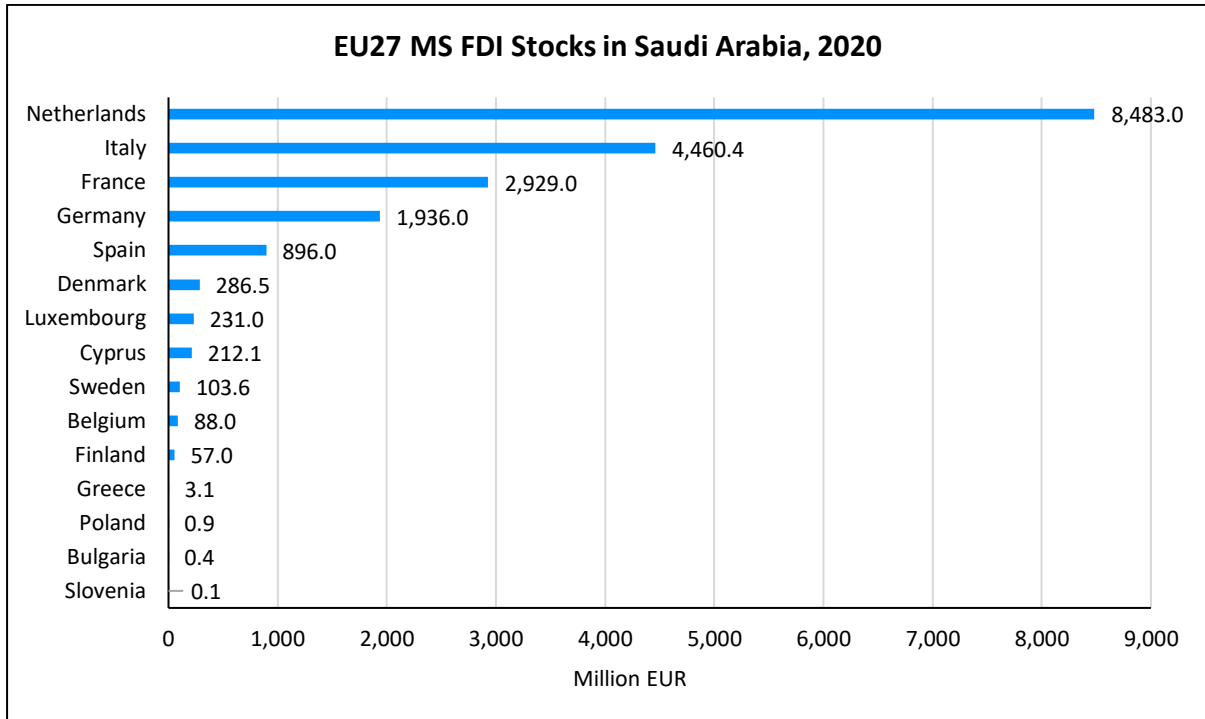


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Czechia, Greece, Malta, Portugal.



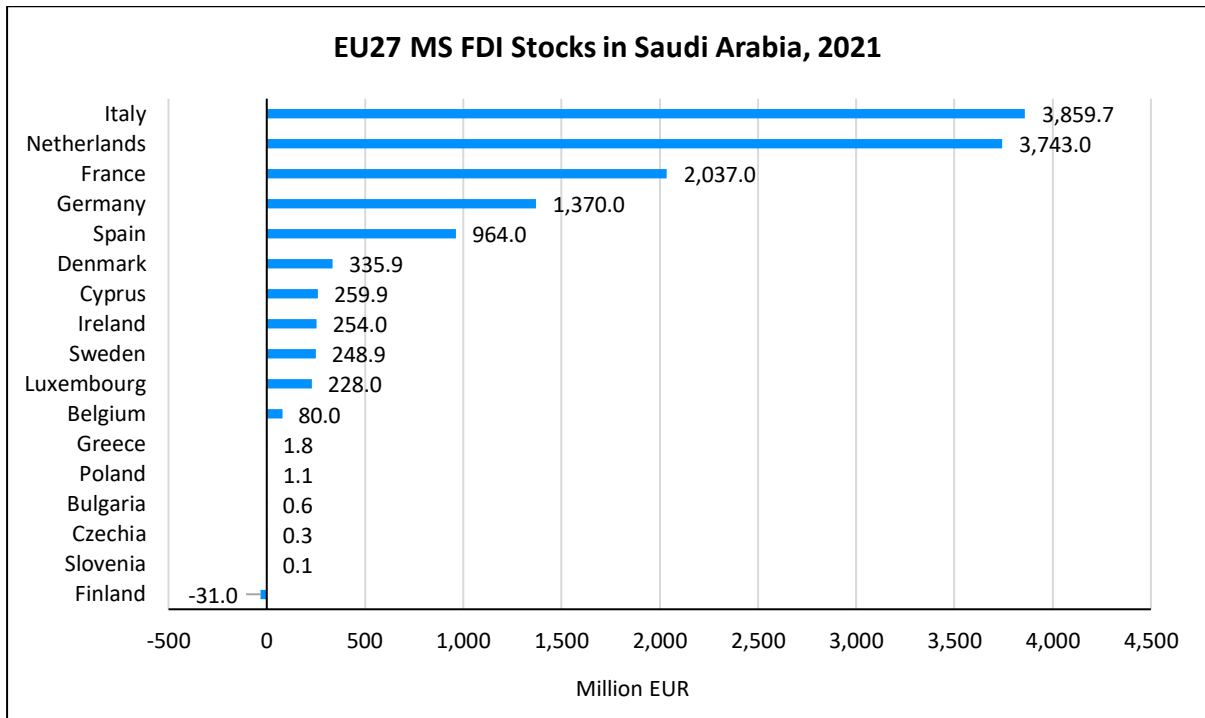
Figure 21 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2020



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania.

Figure 22 EU27 Member States FDI Stocks in Saudi Arabia, 2021



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Portugal, Romania.

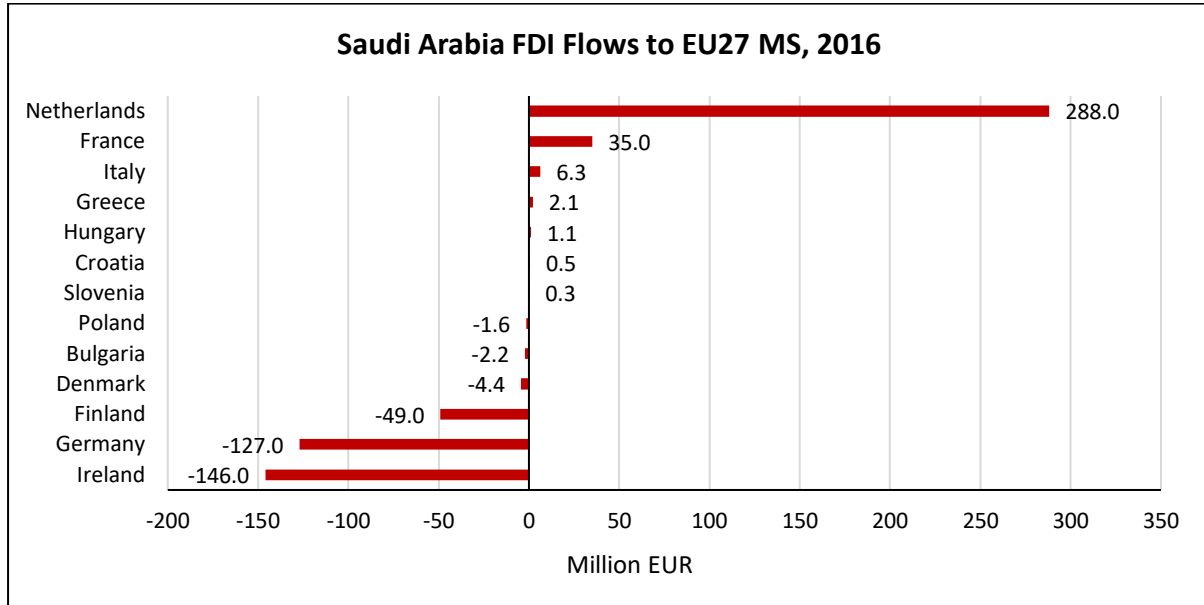




## 4.2 Saudi Arabia FDI to EU Member States

### 4.2.1 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU Member States

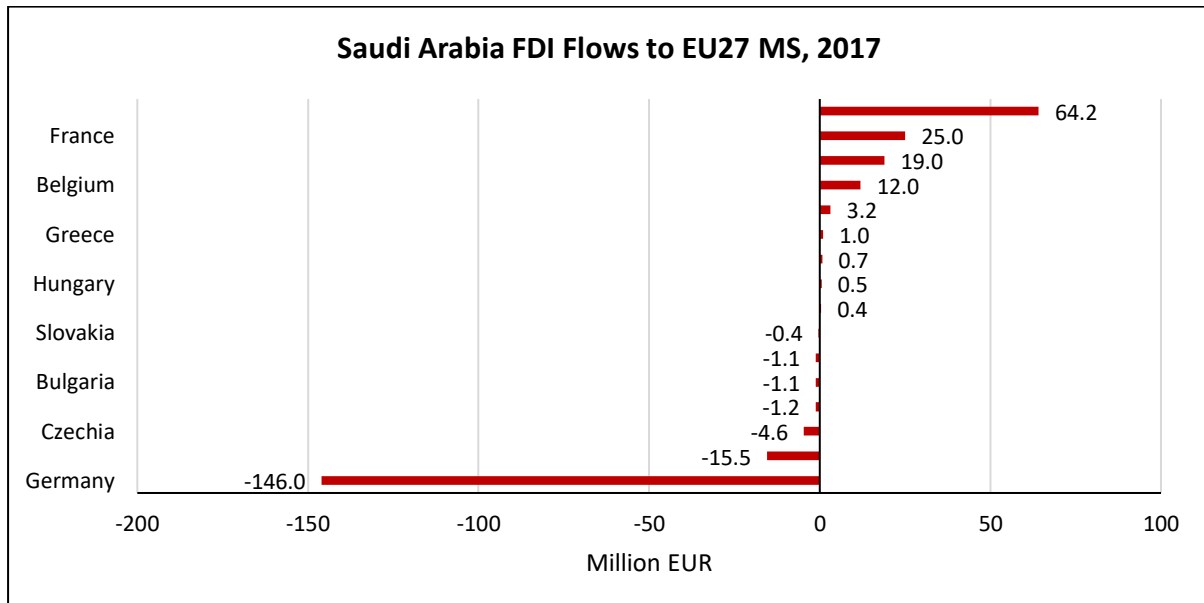
Figure 23 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2016



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.

Figure 24 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2017

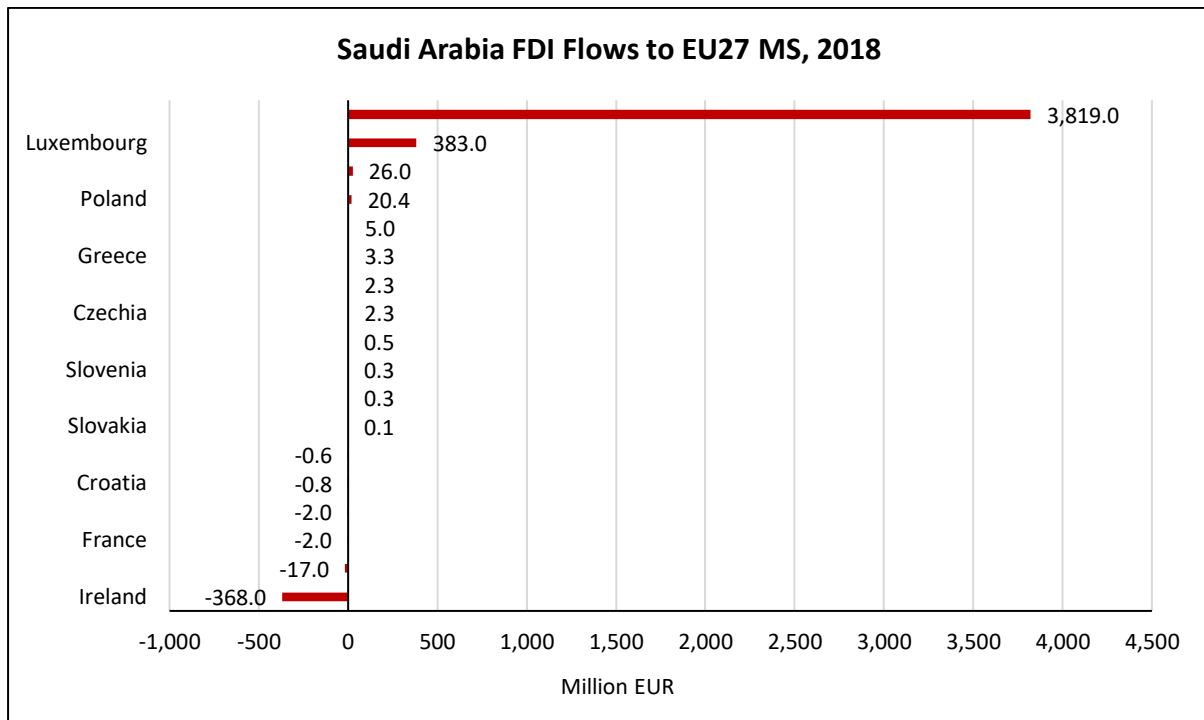


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden.



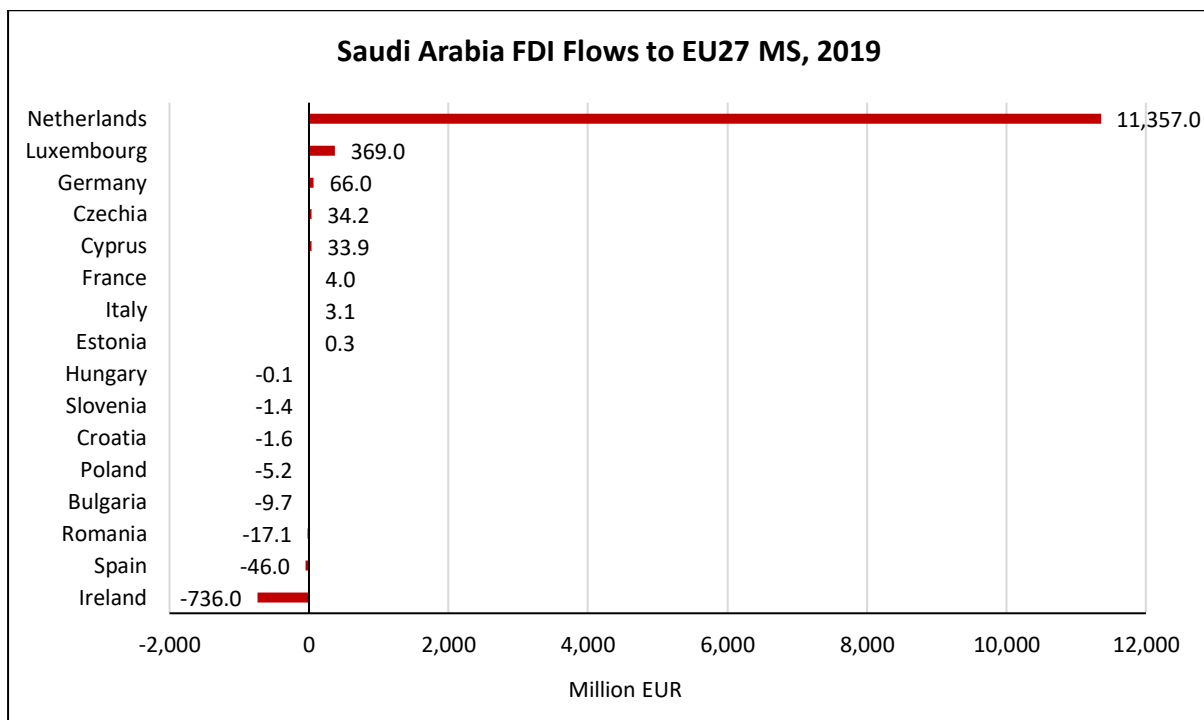
Figure 25 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2018



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Malta, Romania, Sweden.

Figure 26 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2019

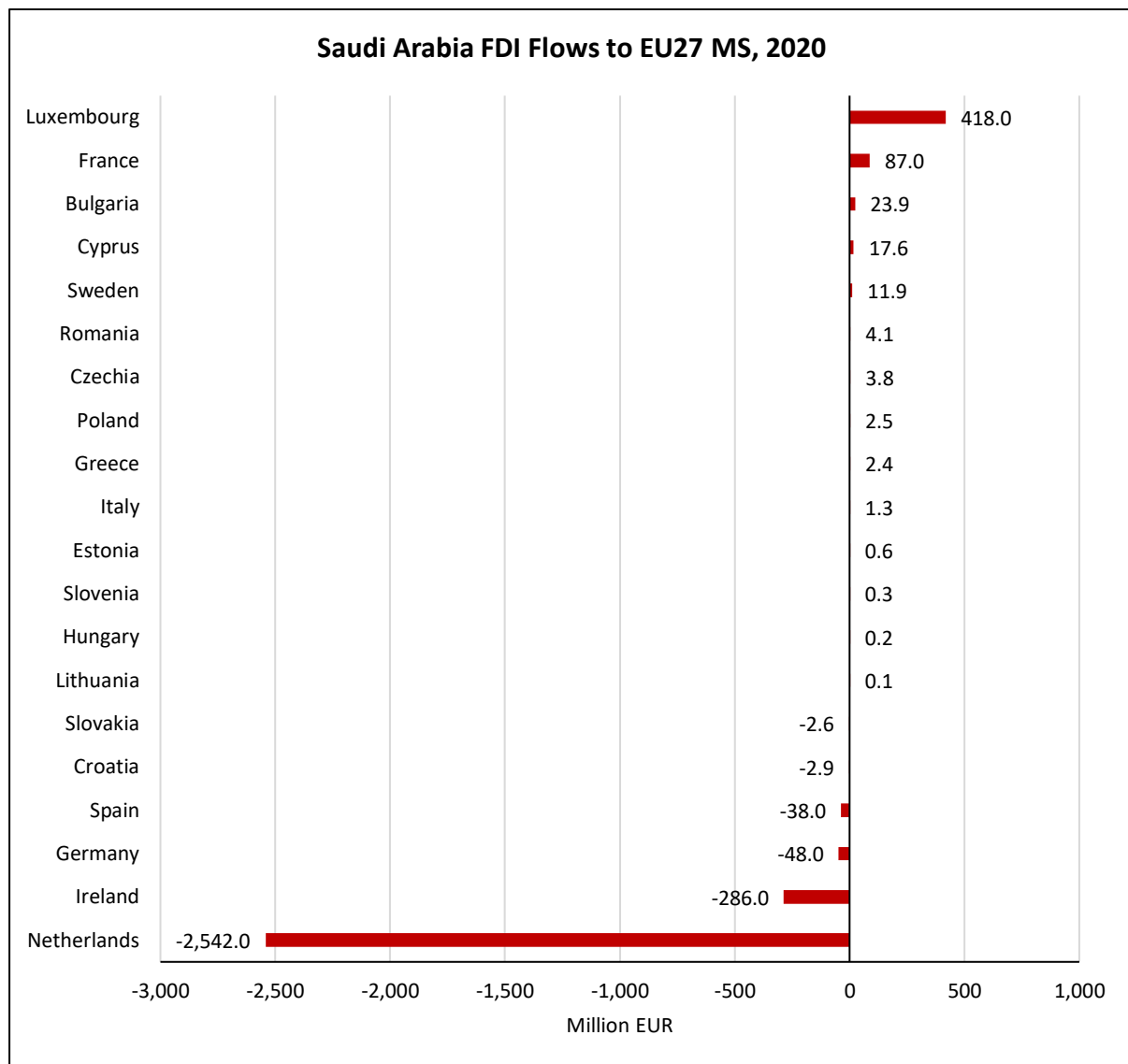


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Sweden.



Figure 27 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2020

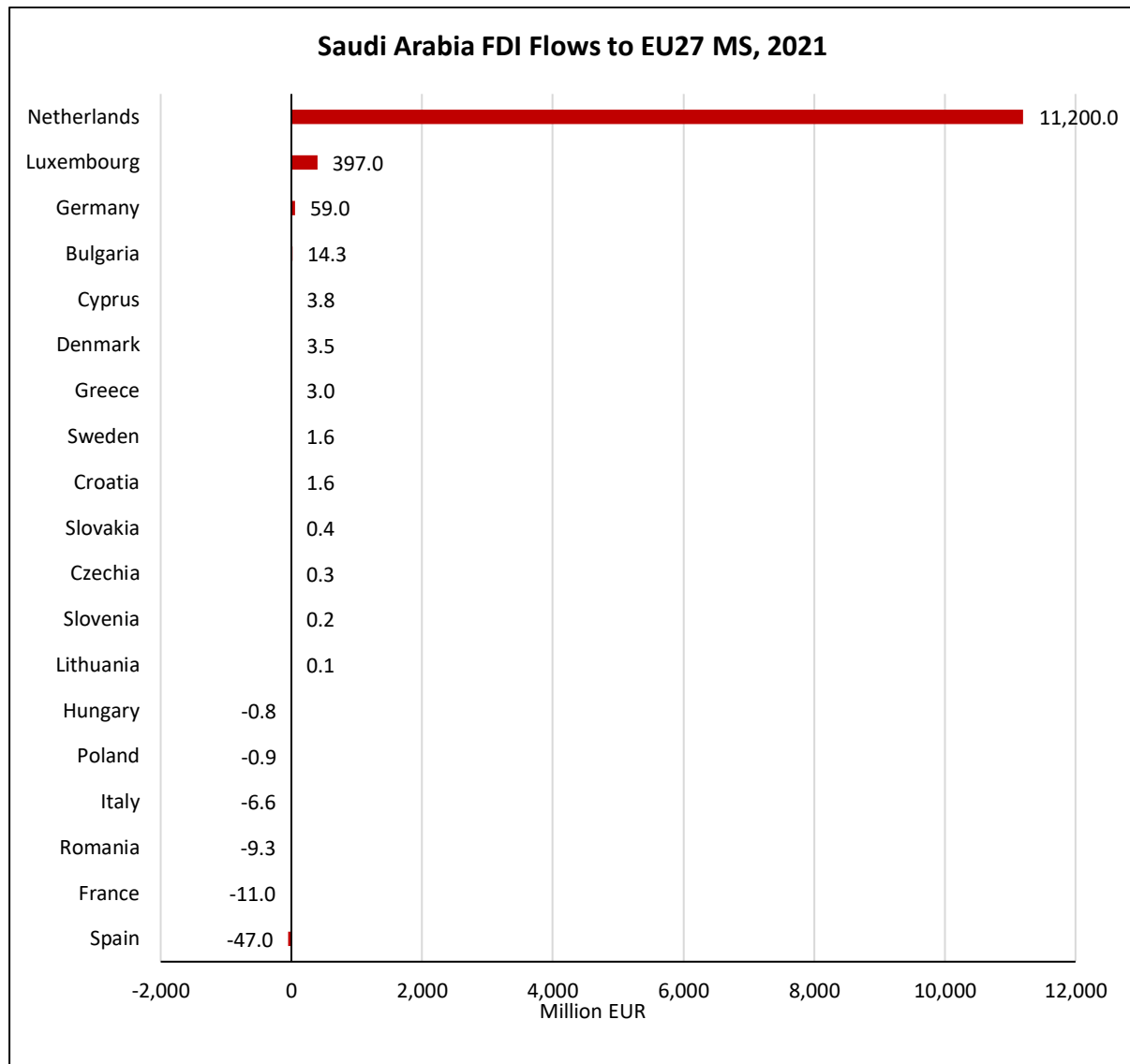


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Finland, Malta, Portugal.



Figure 28 Saudi Arabia FDI Flows to EU27 Member States, 2021



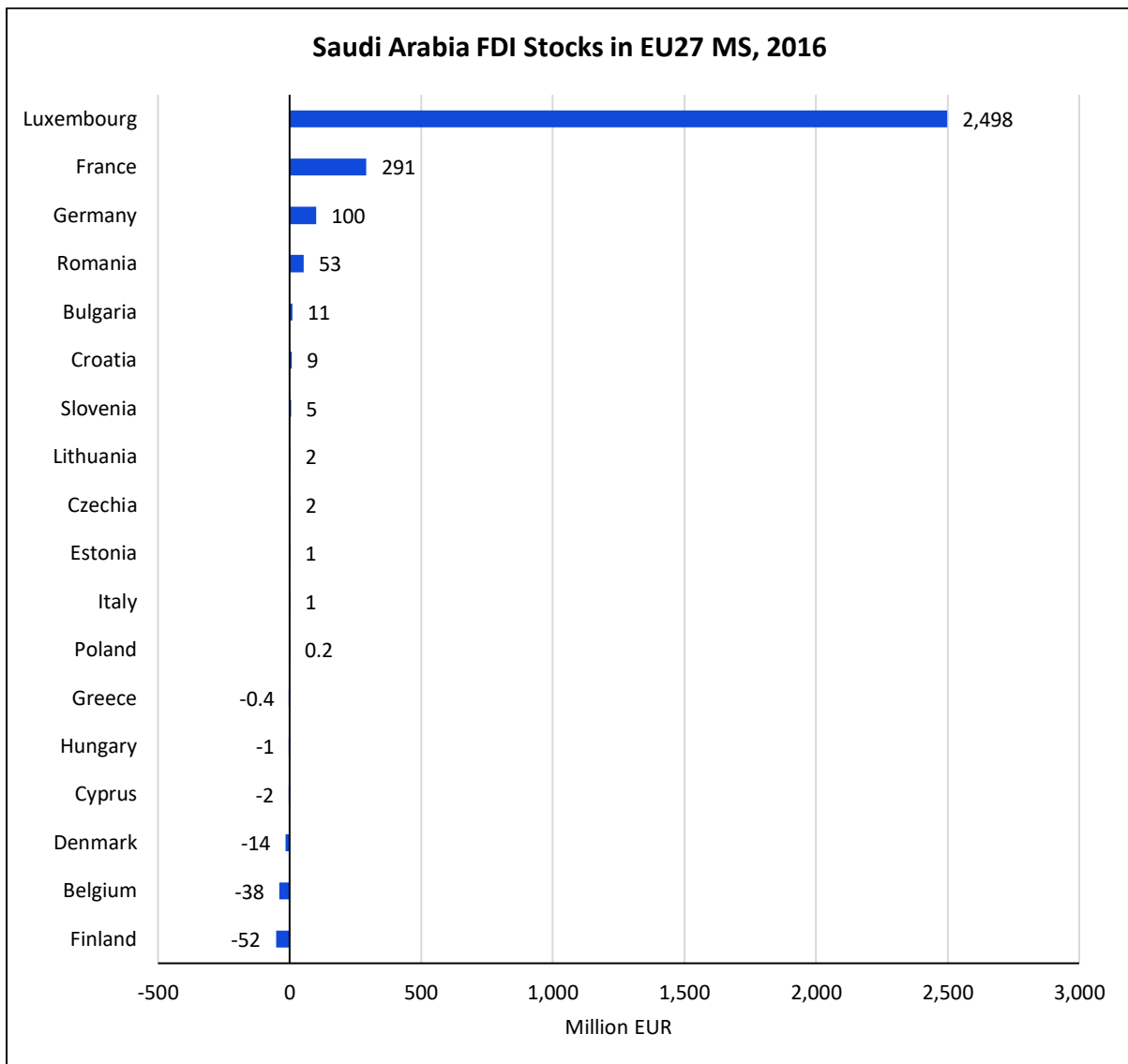
Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Malta, Portugal.



#### 4.2.2 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks in EU Member States

Figure 29 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks in EU27 Member States, 2016

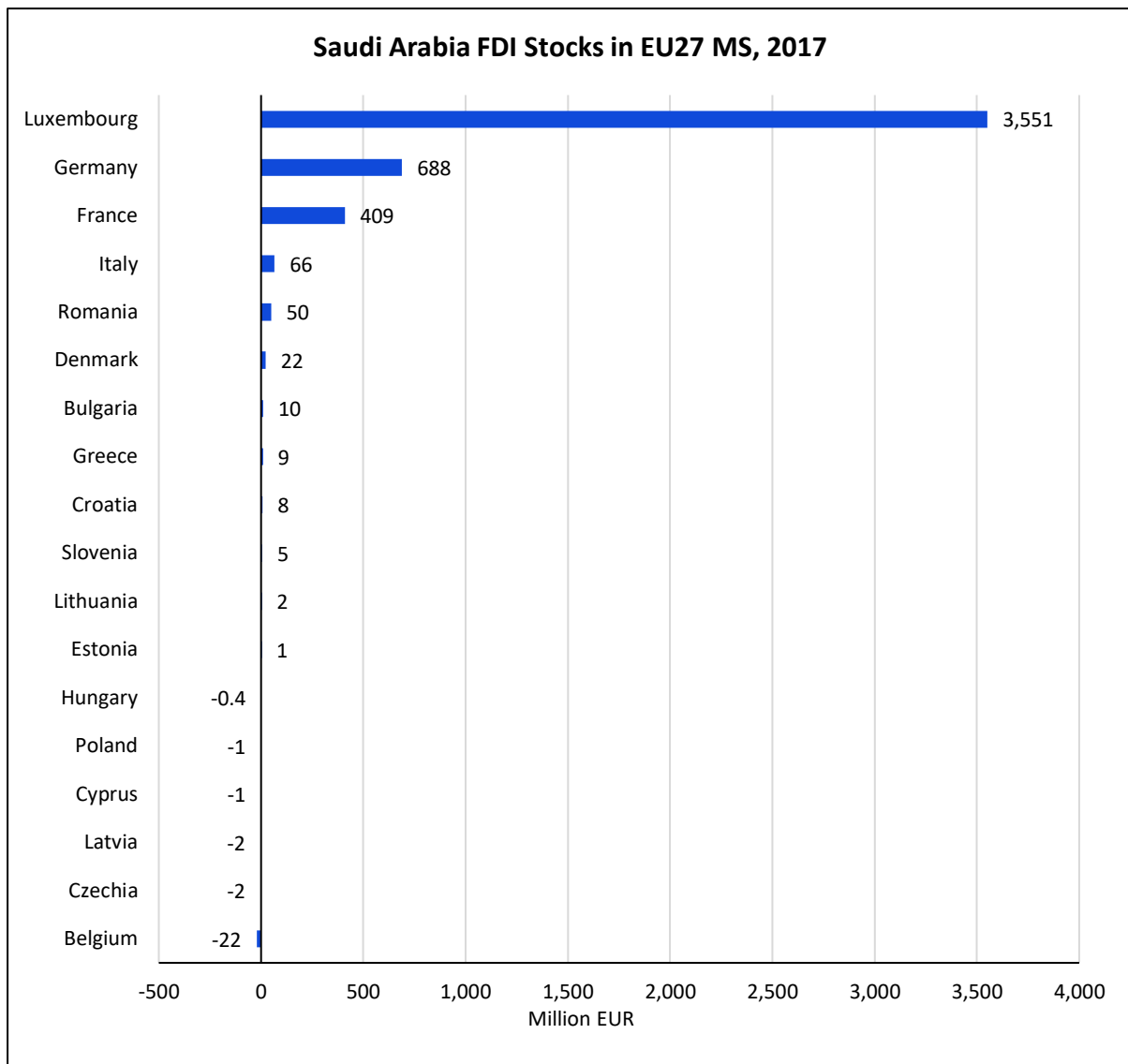


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.



Figure 30 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks in EU27 Member States, 2017

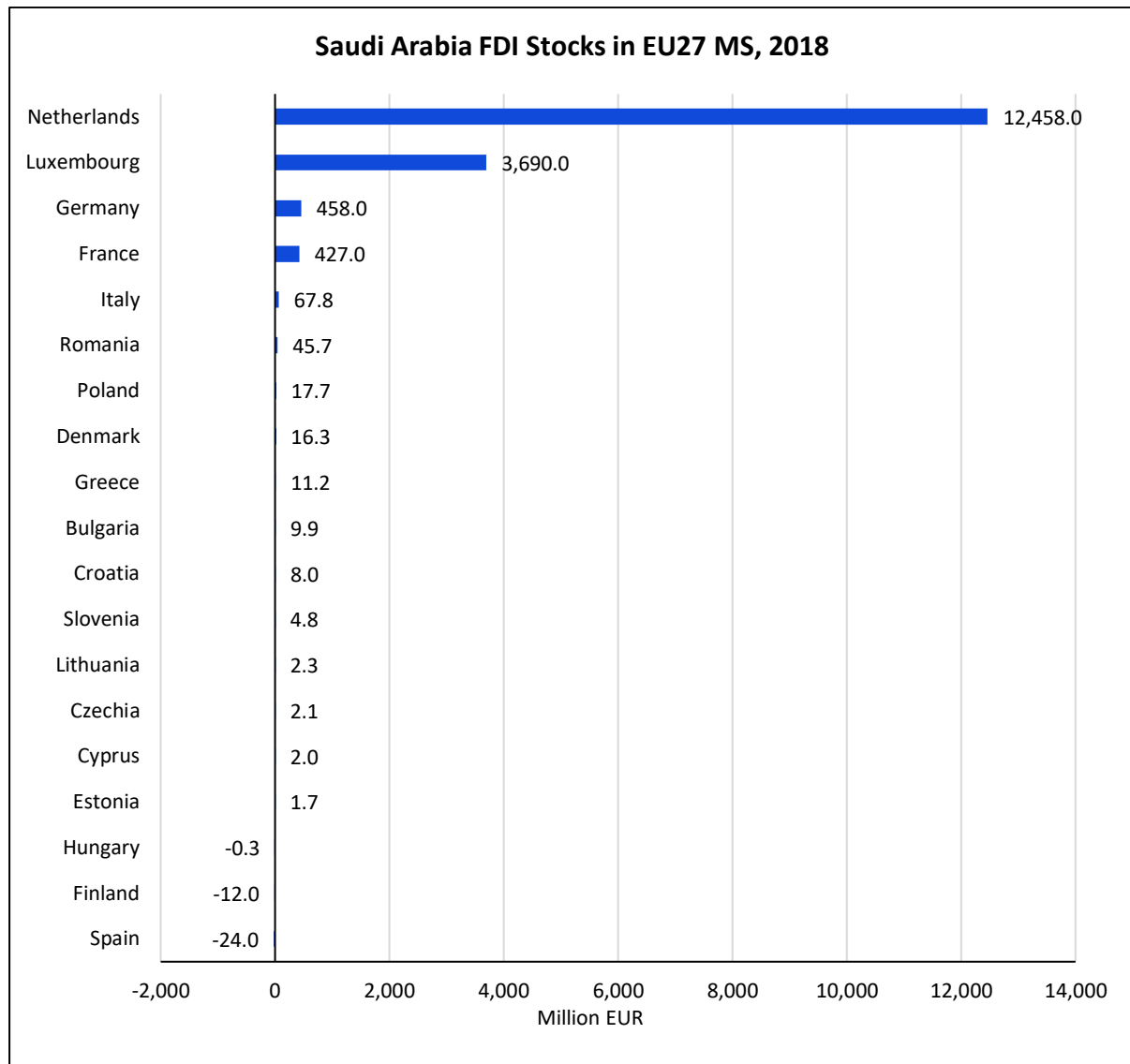


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.



Figure 31 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks in EU27 Member States, 2018

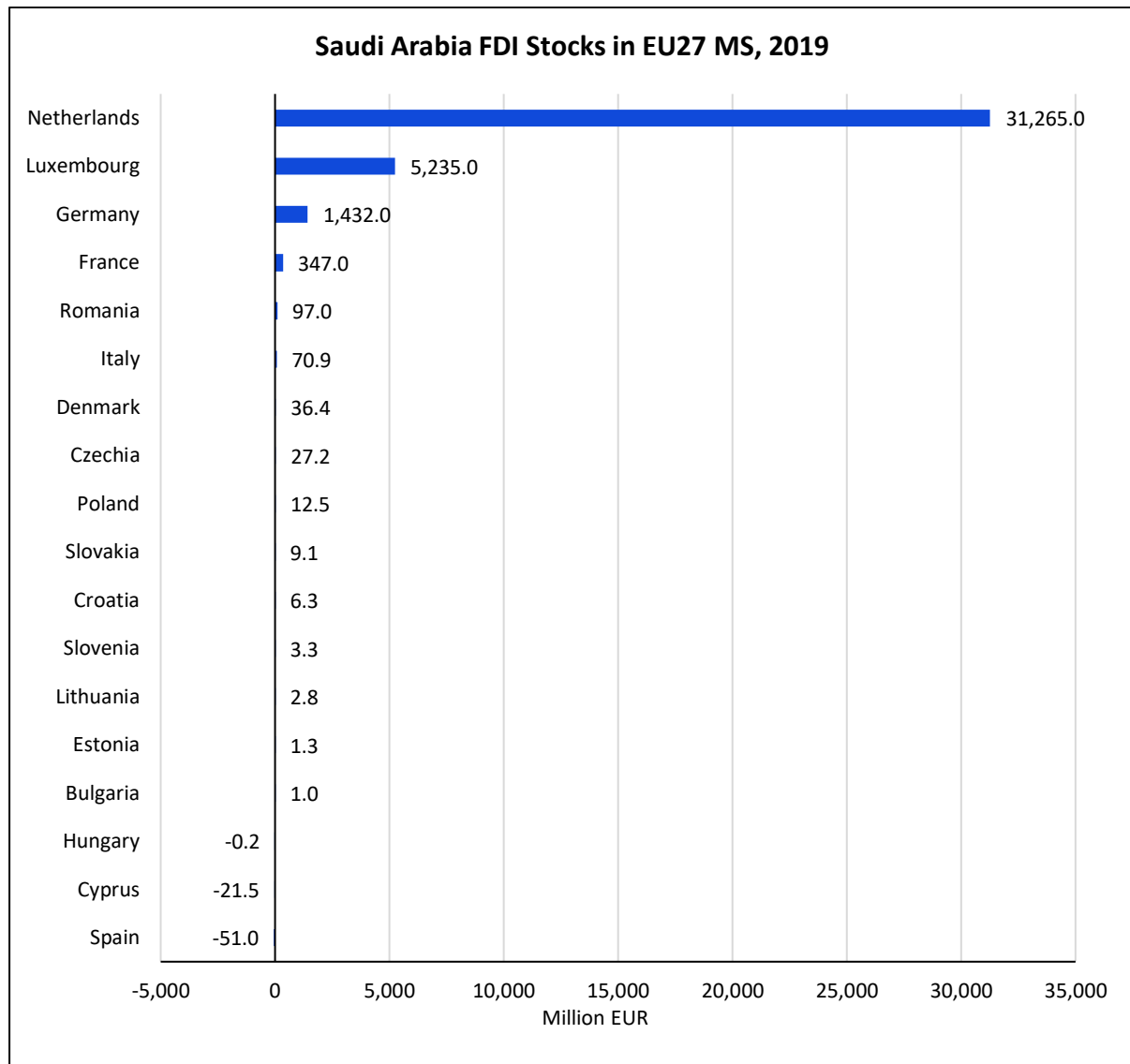


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden.



Figure 32 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks to EU27 Member States, 2019



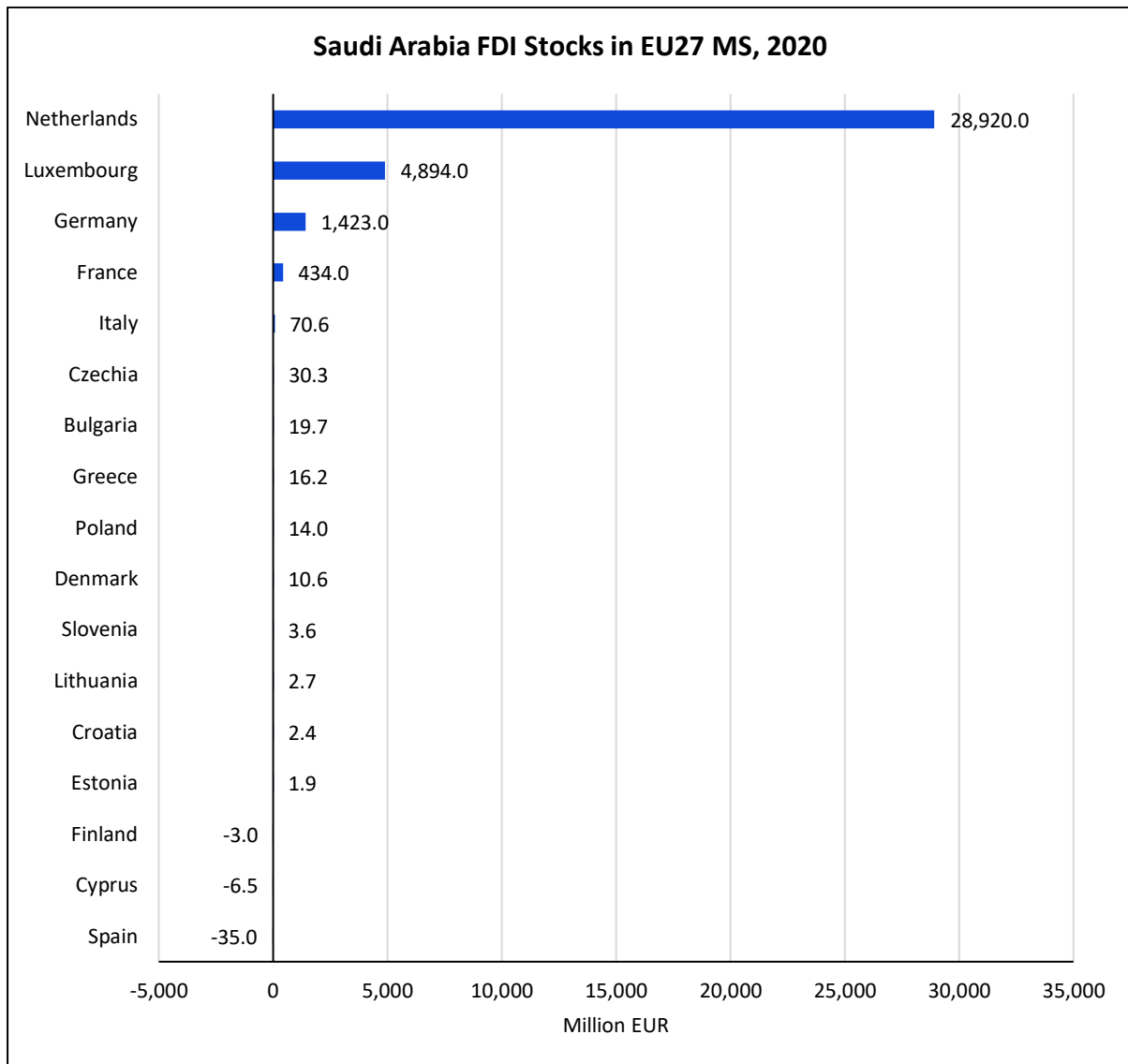
Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Sweden.





Figure 33 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks to EU27 Member States, 2020

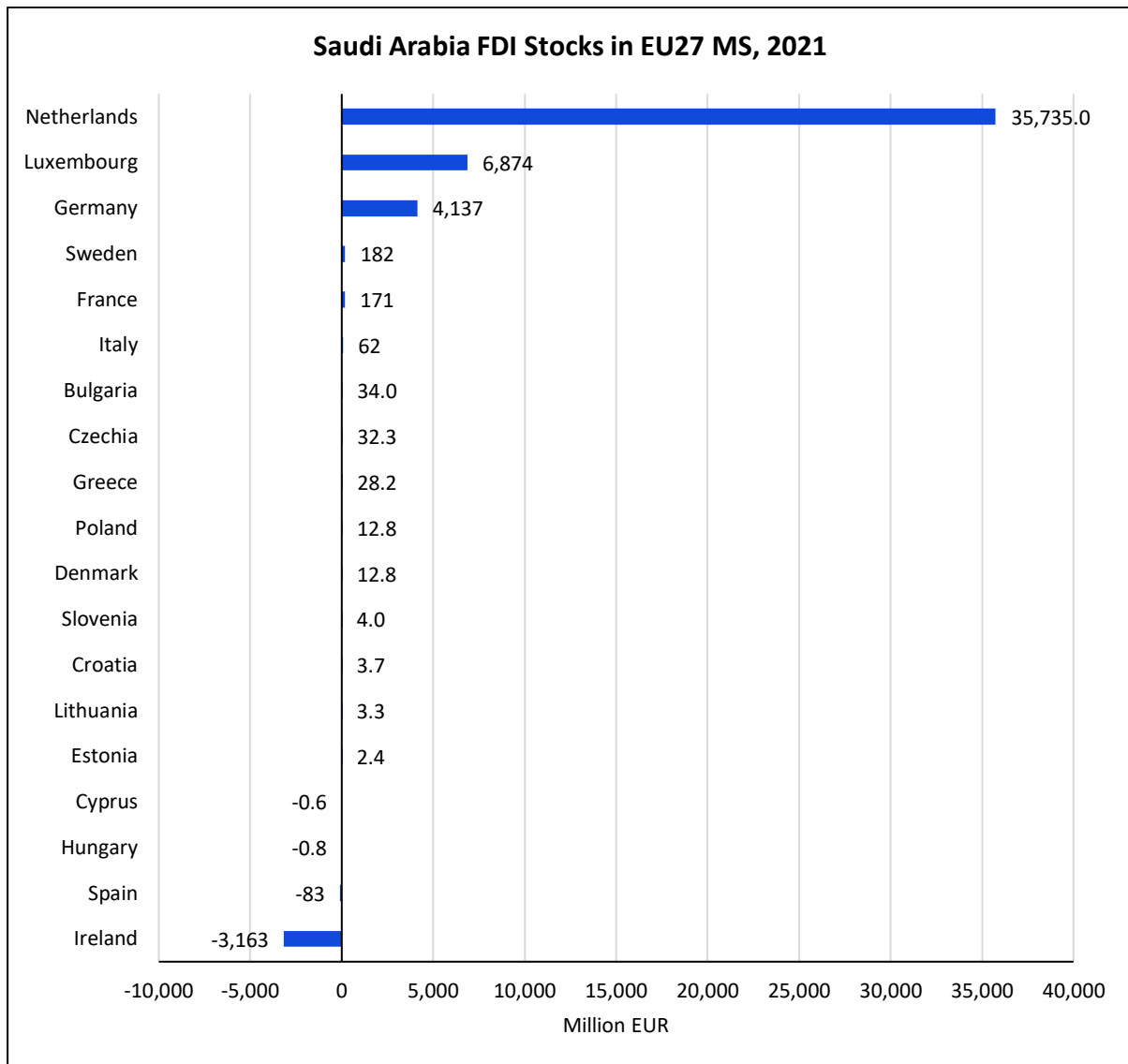


Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden.



Figure 34 Saudi Arabia FDI Stocks to EU27 Member States, 2021



Source: Eurostat data

Note: Data not available for Austria, Belgium, Finland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia.



## 5 Investing in Saudi Arabia

According to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Investment (MISA), Saudi Arabia offers a number of incentives to foreign investors:

- Different types of investment licenses are available, each with its own requirements, such as minimum acceptable capital and a cap on foreign capital
- Prospective investors can apply for a license online on MISA portal
- Bilaterally, Saudi Arabia signed treaties for the avoidance of double taxation of income and capital (DTAs) with 29 countries<sup>2</sup> as well as agreements aimed at promoting and protecting the investments of the enterprises of one contracting party in the territory of the other with 23 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam Azerbaijan, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, and Ukraine
- Corporate income tax, applicable on foreign ownership of Saudi-based companies, with statutory corporate rate set at 20%, the lowest in the G20
- Zakat, applicable on local ownership of Saudi-based companies; set at 2.5% of the Zakat base

*Note: The scope of this report does not include the laws and regulations that govern the country's foreign investment.*



## Annex 1 – USD to EUR exchange rates

For the analysis conducted in this study, the Eurostat and UNCTAD data have been used. The currency used to provide analysis is EUR.

Data are reported in the UNCTAD databases in USD. For the analysis in this report, data were converted using the exchange rates provided by the [European Central Bank](#).

FDI flows for each year have been converted using the average exchange rate for the year.

FDI stocks have been converted using the end of year exchange rate.

*Table A 1 USD to EUR exchange rates*

Year	USD to EUR End of year rate	USD to EUR Year average
2016	0.9487	0.9039
2017	0.8358	0.8870
2018	0.8731	0.8475
2019	0.8937	0.8933
2020	0.8149	0.8768
2021	0.8829	0.8460

*Source: European Central Bank data*



## Annex 2 - Eurostat data collection and processing

### Direct investment

Direct investment category encompasses all kind of cross-border investment made by an entity resident in one economy (direct investor) to acquire a lasting interest in an enterprise operating in another economy (direct investment enterprise). In practise, the lasting interest is deemed to exist through either immediate or indirect relationships. Once a direct investment relationship is established, most flows and positions between the entities, including loans and trade credit, are classified as direct investment. The only financial flows and positions excluded from FDI statistics are:

- Debt between selected affiliated financial corporations.
- Financial derivatives.

A **direct investor** is an entity or group of related entities that is able to exercise control or a significant degree of influence over another entity that is resident of a different economy. A direct investor can be an individual, a group of related individuals, an enterprise (incorporated or unincorporated, private or public), a group of related enterprises, a government body, an estate, trust or other societal organisations, or any of the combination above.

A **direct investment** enterprise is an entity subject to control or a significant degree of influence by a direct investor. A direct investment enterprise may be an incorporated enterprise (subsidiary or associate) or an unincorporated enterprise (branch).

Direct investment flows and positions data can be presented either according to the asset/liability or directional principle.

**Directional principle:** Organises the FDI data according to the direction of the direct investment relationship (or according to the status of the resident entity), either abroad or in the reporting economy. FDI data are classified under:

- Direct investment abroad (DIA) when the resident entity is the direct investor, and the non-resident entity is the direct investment enterprise.
- Direct investment in the reporting economy (DIRE) when the resident entity is the direct investment enterprise, and the non-resident entity is the direct investor.

Eurostat uses the directional principle for the compilation and dissemination of EU FDI aggregates.

### FDI positions - stocks

FDI positions provide information on the total stock of investment (abroad and in the reporting economy) for a given reference date which is generally the end of the year. FDI positions data are useful for structural analysis of investment in the host economy, or investment in the investing (home) country, especially to establish the relative "FDI" importance/presence of an economy in another one. FDI positions data can be broken down by type of instrument, either equity or debt.

Equity positions cover all components of shareholders' funds, proportionate to the percentage of shares held. They include equity, contributed surplus, reinvestment of earnings,



revaluations as well as any reserve accounts. Reinvestment of earnings apply only between a direct investor and a direct investment enterprise, therefore fellow enterprises are not concerned by this type of instrument. The recommended principle for the valuation of equity positions is the market valuation. Listed equity provides a good basis for the valuation of equity positions at market prices. For unlisted equity an approximation to market prices will be necessary and the international guidelines (OECD BD4 and IMF BPM6) offer some flexibility for national compilers in the choice of the valuation method, most widespread ones being the "Own fund at book value", "Recent transaction price" or "Net asset value" methods. The latter is recommended especially for the valuation of equity in branches (unincorporated DIE).

Debt positions cover all payables and receivables between enterprises in a direct investment relationship arising from loans, deposits, debt securities, trade credits, financial leases and non-participating preferred shares. As a reminder, It should be pointed out that:

- Financial derivatives are excluded from direct investment statistics.
- All debts between selected types of affiliated financial corporations are excluded from direct investment statistics.

FDI positions between the beginning and the end of a given year (n) may change either due to transactions that occurred during year n, or due to other valuation changes (exchange rate changes or price valuation changes occurring when trying to value at market prices), or due to other volume changes. A common issue impacting the latter is, for a given economic entity, the reclassification of its portfolio positions (ownership < 10%) to direct investment statistics if, during the year, this entity acquires additional shares "pushing" its ownership above the 10% thresholds.

The reconciliation exercise on annual FDI data is not operated (and not asked) by Eurostat, therefore FDI financial transactions and FDI positions are shown separately without the other valuation changes components.

### FDI flows - financial transactions components

FDI flows relate to direct investment transaction made during the period in the form of equity capital acquisitions, debt transactions (in most cases loans or trade credits between affiliated enterprises) or reinvestment of earnings.

Equity capital comprises equity in branches, all shares in subsidiaries and associates (except non-participating, preferred shares that are treated as debt securities and are included under other FDI capital).

Reinvestment of earnings consists of the direct investor's share (in proportion to equity participation) of earnings not distributed by the direct investment enterprise. Reinvestment of earnings is an imputed transaction of the financial section of the Balance of Payment recorded simultaneously (same amount) with the reinvested earnings transaction recorded in the primary income section of the Balance of Payment (see below). The logic underlying this simultaneous recording of two fictive transactions is that one describes the allocation of the whole profits in the company's reserves (reinvestment of earnings in the equity capital of the direct investment enterprises), the other one being the remaining part of profits not distributed



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to shareholders in the form of dividends, and which stays in the accounts of the direct investment enterprise.

Debt transactions cover all transactions between enterprises in a direct investment relationship arising from loans, deposits, debt securities, trade credits, financial leases and non-participating preferred shares. As a reminder, financial derivatives and all debts between selected types of affiliated financial corporations are excluded from direct investment statistics, as are transactions between affiliates in financial assets issued by an unrelated party. The official expression covering all debt transactions between enterprises in a direct investment relationship is "inter-company lending".

### Data received from Member States

- FDI flows and income datasets (year n) that are not transmitted to Eurostat in millions of euros are converted using the yearly average exchange rates (year n) between the euro and corresponding national currencies.
- FDI positions datasets at end of year n that are not transmitted to Eurostat in millions of euros are converted using the exchange rates between the euro and corresponding national currencies observed at end of year n.

Time series on FDI flows, income and positions are reported according to the directional principle and under the new methodology from 2013 onwards.

FDI stocks refer to the end of the recording period; flows and income refer to the recording period. All FDI data are annual.

Aggregate data for the European Union are in general obtained as the sum of the respective Member States data. Member States data are in some cases confidential and therefore are not shown in datasets or tables published on Eurostat website.