■ **TECHNOLOGY** A country's technology balance of payments is the difference between its exports of technology (such as international licensing contracts and technical assistance) and its imports (such as purchases of foreign patents, know-how and R&D). In most OECD countries, receipts and payments for technology have risen sharply in the 1990s. OECD countries had a technology surplus of $22.6 billion with the rest of the world in 1997. America's surplus was $24.3 billion, or 0.3% of GDP. But many rich countries are net importers: the EU's deficit was $4.4 billion, or 0.1% of GDP. Ireland is a huge net importer of technology (4.6% of GDP).