

International trade in goods - selected topics

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in August 2026

Planned article update: September 2027

Highlights

The United States, the United Kingdom and Switzerland were the 3 largest destinations for EU exports of goods in 2025.

China, the United States and the United Kingdom and Switzerland were the 3 largest origins for EU imports of goods in 2025.

Maritime transport accounted for the largest share of both imports to and exports from the EU in 2025.

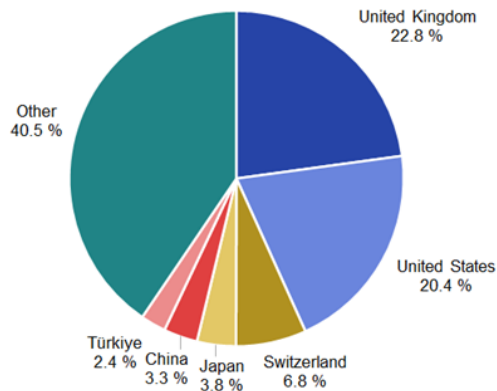
This article shows 4 aspects of international trade in goods. It starts with identifying the EU's main trading partners and the development of their imports from and exports to the EU. Subsequently, it analyses the various modes of transport used to transport goods, the tariffs applied to goods and the main currencies in which trade was invoiced.

Main partners for EU trade

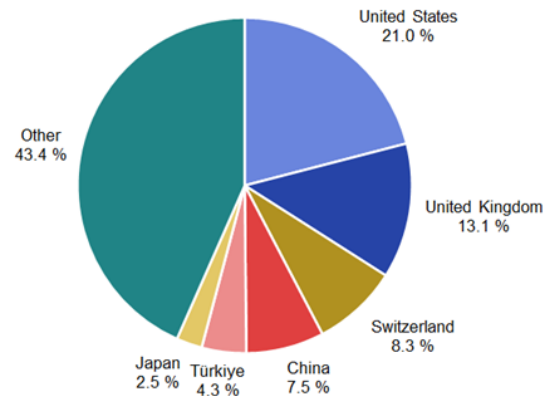
In 2025, almost half (49.8%) of the value of all the EU's exports of goods went to just 4 countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and China (see Figure 1). Among this grouping of countries, the relative share of exports to China rose most sharply between 2002 and 2025 (up 4.3 **percentage points (pp)**), increased slightly for Switzerland, decreased somewhat for the United States and decreased considerably for the United Kingdom (down 9.8 pp).

EU exports of goods, 2002 and 2025

(%)
2002



2025



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ds-059331)

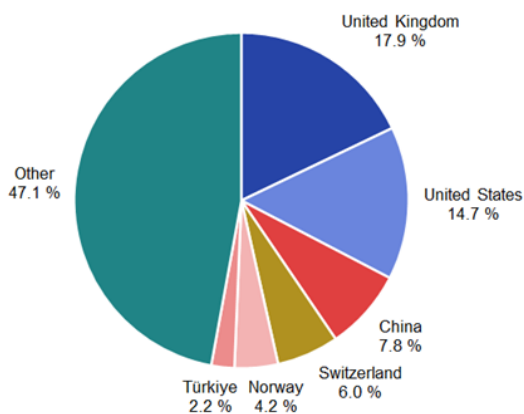
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Figure 1: EU exports of goods, 2002 and 2025 Source: Eurostat Comext DS-059331

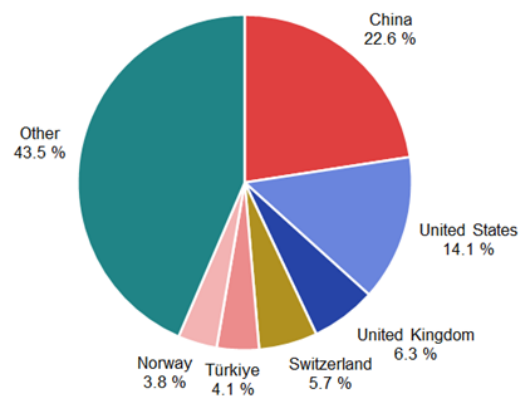
China accounted for 22.6% of the value of all goods imported by the EU in 2025. The United States, the United Kingdom and Switzerland were the next largest partners for goods imported (see Figure 2). The largest increase in the relative share of imports between 2002 and 2025 was for China (up 14.7 pp), with the steepest decline was for the United Kingdom (down 11.6 pp).

EU imports of goods, 2002 and 2025

(%)
2002



2025



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ds-059331)

eurostat

Figure 2: EU imports of goods, 2002 and 2025 Source: Eurostat Comext DS-059331

The EU ran a trade deficit for goods with China (€ 372 billion) in 2025 and Norway (€ 32 billion) - see Figure 3. By contrast, the EU recorded trade surpluses with the United States (€ 198 billion), the United Kingdom (€ 186

billion), Switzerland (€ 76 billion) and Türkiye (€ 11 billion).

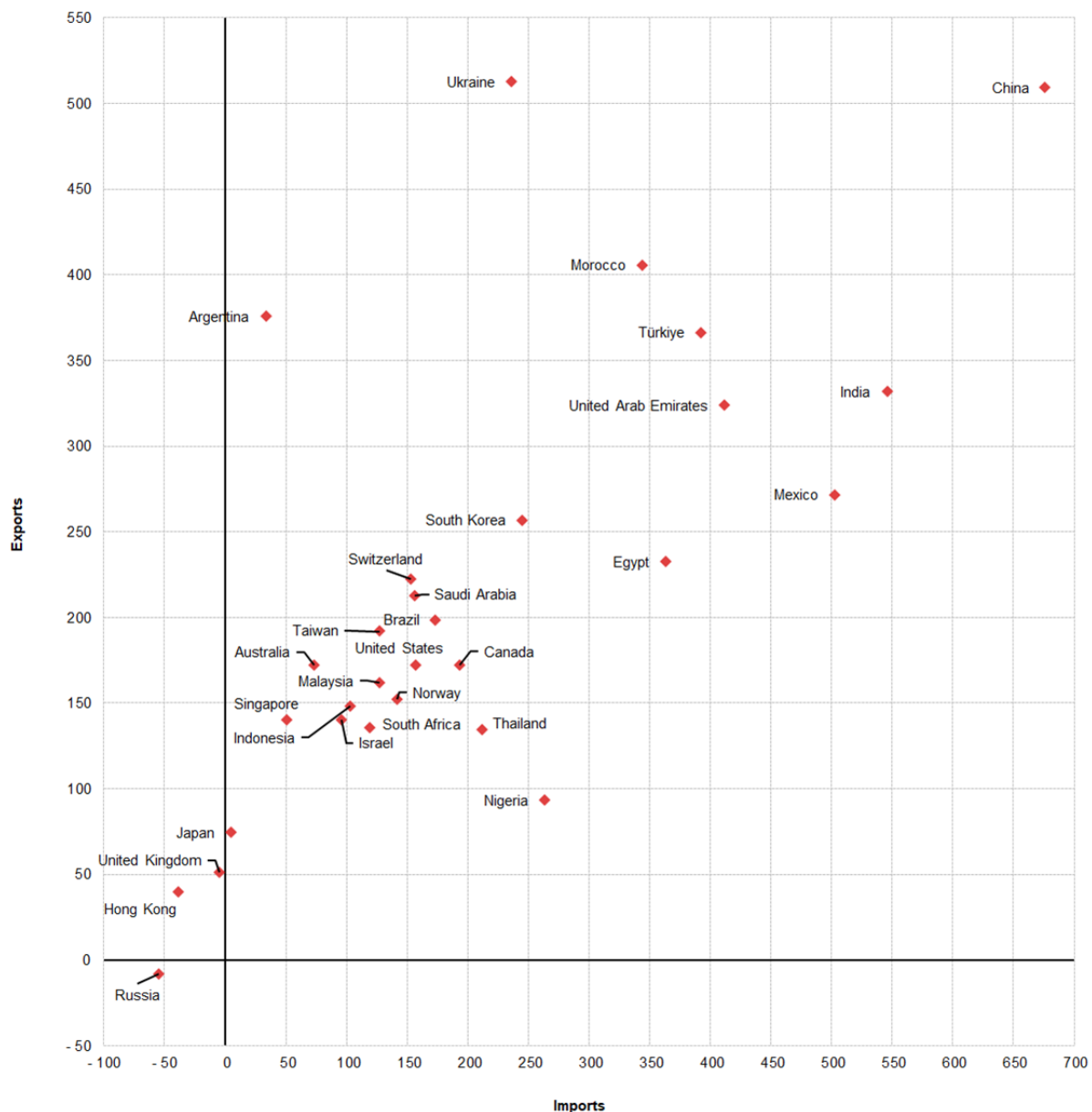
Figure 3 Realignment of the EU's principal partners for trade in goods towards emerging economies

Absolute figures show that EU trade in goods is relatively concentrated with respect to its principal partners. However, there has been a considerable realignment of the EU's trading relationships in recent years, with a shift in bilateral trading relationships towards emerging economies. In contrast, trade flows with traditional partners tended to develop at a much slower pace. Emerging economies have captured an increasing share of global trade.

Regarding EU exports between 2002 and 2025, the value of goods destined for Ukraine (+513%) and China (+509%) rose most sharply among the main partners (see Figure 4). For EU imports, the value of goods from China rose most sharply among the partners (+676%) between 2002 and 2025, followed by India (+546%), and Mexico (+503%).

The pace of growth was much slower for some of the EU's more traditional trading partners and developed world economies. For example, there were low growth rates for both imports from and exports to the United Kingdom, Japan and Hong Kong. Due to trade restrictions, imports from and exports to Russia declined between 2002 and 2025.

EU trade developments for goods, selected partners, 2002-2025 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ds-059331)

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Figure 4: EU trade developments for goods, selected partners, 2002-2025 Source: Eurostat Comext DS-059331

EU trade by mode of transport

A wide range of factors can influence an enterprise's choice of transport mode when trading goods. These include the destination country, the size and weight of the goods, the required speed of delivery (for example, perishable goods), rules and regulations (for example, concerning the transport of animals), and environmental or safety considerations (for example, hazardous goods).

In 2025, around half (50.2%) of the value of goods imported into the EU arrived by sea, while 40.4% of goods exported from the EU travelled by maritime transport (see Figure 5). A further 20.7% of the EU's imports of goods and 29.1% of its exports travelled by air. The other main mode of transport was road vehicles: 19.5% of the value of goods imported into the EU came by road, as well as 24.9% of the EU's exports. Other modes of transport,

including railways and pipelines accounted for relatively minor shares.

Figure 5Figure 6 presents a similar overview but based on the weight (tonnes) of goods rather than their value. It highlights that maritime transport held even greater relative importance in these terms, accounting for 73.3% of EU imports and 72.6% of EU exports in 2025.

Air transport accounted for just 0.3% of the weight of the EU's imported goods and 2.9% of exported goods in 2025. The stark contrast between these shares and air transport's much higher shares in value terms underscores the high unit value of goods typically transported by air.

Figure 6

EU imports by tariff regime

Trade agreements help European enterprises compete more effectively and increase their exports to countries and regions outside the EU. They also improve access for EU importers to raw materials and essential components, while offering consumers a wider range of products. Such agreements can include commitments from partner governments to uphold human rights, labour rights, and environment protections - for example, by addressing workplace safety or promoting gender equality.

The EU benefits from being one of the most open economies in the world, with approximately 70% of its imports entering at zero tariff – whether under Most Favoured Nation (MFN) or preferential trade agreements).

Figure 7 presents information for 2025 on the share of goods imported into the EU from selected partners according to the different tariff rates applied. Among selected partners, Argentina had the lowest share of zero-tariff imports (at 22%) and Nigeria the highest (at 96%). The share of zero-tariff imports from the United States was 72% and from China was 42%.

Figure 7Between 2002 and 2012, the share of imports subject to zero tariffs fluctuated but, overall, rose from 67% to 72%. Over the subsequent 12 years, this share continued to fluctuate, standing again at 70% in 2025 – despite having dropped as low as 63% in 2020. Since many energy products are imported duty-free, the share of zero tariff imports is strongly influenced by fluctuations in the prices of petroleum oil and natural gas.

Figure 8

Trade by invoicing currency

Goods imported and exported by the [European Union \(EU\)](#) can be invoiced in a range of currencies. The following analysis focuses on the trade in goods by invoicing currency (TIC) of the EU with countries outside the EU in 2025. It provides information on the share of trade declared in euros, US dollars, EU countries' currencies other than the euro and other currencies of countries outside the EU (further denoted as other currencies) for imports and exports. The TIC data collection is only mandatory in even reference years.

US dollar most used for EU imports, euro most used for EU exports in 2025

Figure 9 shows that the US dollar was the most used currency for imports into the EU in 2025, with a share of 51%. The euro was the second most used currency with a share of 40%. The share of EU countries' currencies other than the euro was 2%. Other currencies had a share of 7%.

Compared with imports, the positions of the euro and the US dollar are reversed for EU exports. The share for the euro in 2025 was 51%, ahead of the US dollar with 33%. EU countries' currencies other than the euro had a share

of 2% and other currencies had a share of 14%.

Figure 9 Looking at imports based on the [Standard International Trade Classification \(SITC\)](#) sections (see Figure 10), the US dollar stands out as the main currency used for imports of petroleum products (SITC 33) with a share of 87% in 2025. In manufactured goods (SITC 5-8) the US dollar (46%) was also the main currency just ahead of the euro (43%). In primary goods (SITC 0-4) excluding petroleum, the euro (47%) had the highest share ahead of the US dollar (45%).

Figure 10 In EU exports of petroleum products, the US dollar (70%) is also the most used currency in 2025, although somewhat less dominant than in imports. With 62% the euro is the most used currency in primary goods ahead of the US dollar with 23%. In manufactured goods the euro has a share of 50%, the US dollar followed with 32% (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file](#)

Data sources

EU data is taken from [Eurostat's COMEXT](#) database. COMEXT is the reference database for international trade in goods. It provides access not only to both recent and historical data from the EU countries but also to statistics of a significant number of non-EU countries. International trade aggregated and detailed statistics disseminated via the Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process.

Data are collected by the competent national authorities of the EU countries and compiled according to a harmonised methodology established by EU regulations before transmission to Eurostat. For extra-EU trade, the statistical information is mainly provided by the traders on the basis of customs declarations.

EU data are compiled according to EU guidelines and may, therefore, differ from national data published by the EU countries. Statistics on extra-EU trade are calculated as the sum of trade of each of the 27 EU countries with countries outside the EU. In other words, the EU is considered as a single trading entity and trade flows are measured into and out of the area, but not within it.

The United Kingdom is considered as an extra-EU partner country for the EU for the whole period covered by this article. However, the United Kingdom was still part of the internal market until the end of the transitory period (31 December 2020), meaning that data on trade with the United Kingdom were still based on statistical concepts applicable to trade between the EU countries. Consequently, while imports from any other extra-EU trade partner are grouped by country of origin, the United Kingdom data reflected the country of consignment.

Methodology

According to the EU concepts and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU countries and non-EU countries) do not record exchanges involving goods in transit, placed in a customs warehouse or given temporary admission (for trade fairs, temporary exhibitions, tests, etc.). This is known as 'special trade'. The partner is the country of final destination of the goods for exports and the country of origin for imports.

Unit of measure

Trade values are expressed in millions or billions (1 000 millions) of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in the event of sale or purchase at the national border of the reporting country. It is called a [FOB](#) value (free on board) for exports and a [CIF](#) value (cost, insurance, freight) for imports.

Context

Trade is an important indicator of Europe's prosperity and place in the world. The bloc is deeply integrated into global markets both for the products it sources and the exports it sells. The EU trade policy is one of the main pillars of the EU's relations with the rest of the world.

Because the 27 EU countries share a single market and a single external border, they also have a single trade policy. EU countries speak and negotiate collectively, both in the [World Trade Organisation](#), where the rules of international trade are agreed and enforced, and with individual trading partners. This common policy enables them to speak with one voice in trade negotiations, maximising their impact in such negotiations. This is even more important in a globalised world in which economies tend to cluster together in regional groups.

The openness of the EU's trade regime has meant that the EU is the biggest player on the global trading scene and remains a good region to do business with. Thanks to the ease of modern transport and communications, it is now easier to produce, buy and sell goods around the world which gives European companies of every size the potential to trade outside Europe.

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