

Extra-EU trade in raw materials

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in April 2024.

Planned update: May 2025.

" Since 2013 the EU has had an ongoing trade deficit in raw materials including goods such as oilseeds, cork, wood, pulp, textile fibers, ores and other minerals as well as animal and vegetable oils . "

" Brazil and the United States were the largest partners for EU imports of raw materials in 2023. "

" China and the United Kingdom were the largest partners for EU exports of raw materials in 2023. "

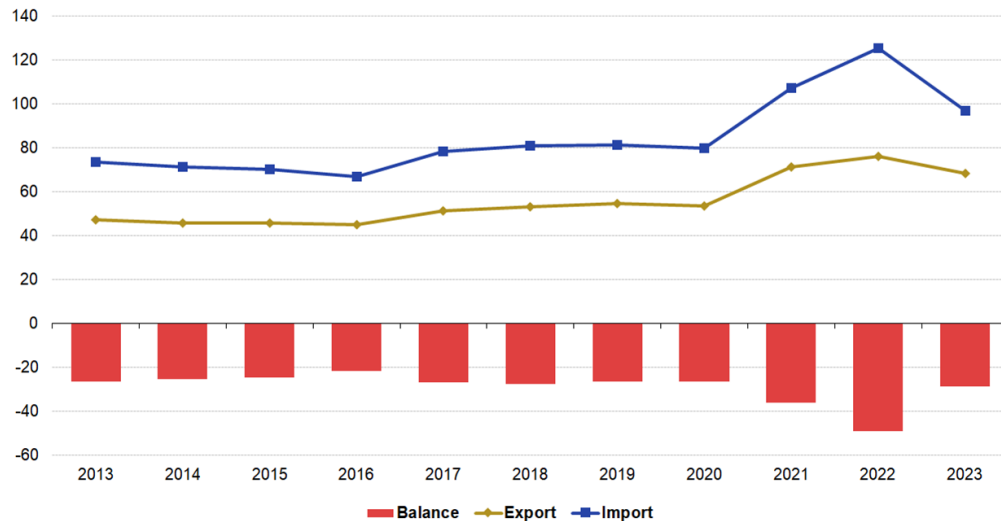
Trade in raw materials is extremely important for the sustainability of European countries and their economies. Construction, chemicals, the automotive and aerospace industries, machinery and equipment are some of the sectors that are most dependent on access to raw materials. This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main products traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

General view on EU trade in raw materials

In 2023, the value of total trade (import plus exports) of raw materials between the EU and the rest of the world was € 165 billion. Since exports (€ 68 billion) were lower than imports (€ 97 billion) there was trade deficit of € 29 billion. Between 2013 and 2023, EU trade in grew by 40 %, equivalent to an average annual growth of 3.2 %. In this period, exports (3.8 %) grew faster than imports (2.8 %), (see Figure 1).

EU trade in raw materials, 2013-2023

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

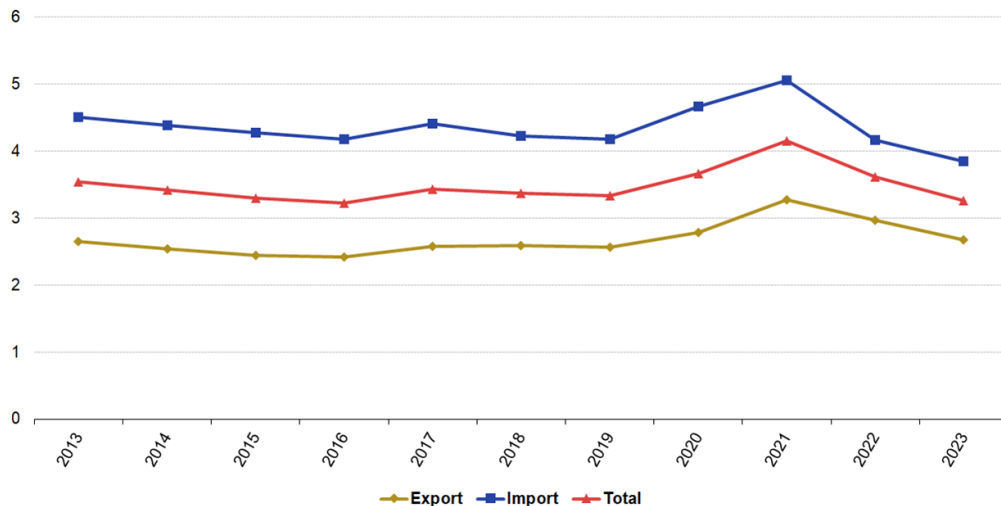
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Figure 1: EU trade in raw materials, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In 2023, the share of raw materials in total trade was 3.3 %. This was 0.2 % less than in 2013. In this period the share in exports grew by 0.1 % while in imports it fell by 0.7 %.

EU share of raw materials in total trade, 2013-2023

(%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

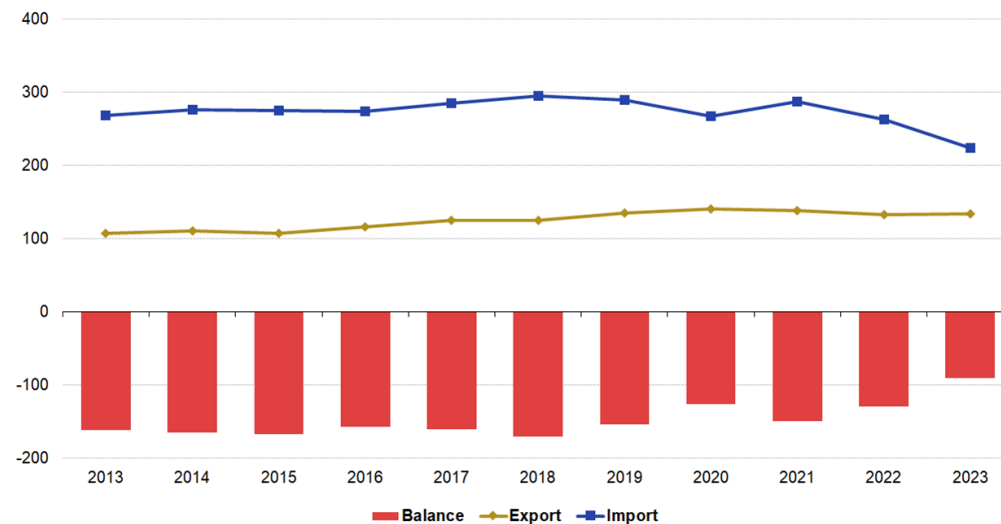
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Figure 1: EU share of raw materials in total trade, 2013-2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In 2023, the volume of total trade (import plus exports) of raw materials between the EU and the rest of the world was 358 million tonnes. Exports (134 million tonnes) were lower than imports (224 million tonnes). Between 2013 and 2023, EU trade in fell by 18 million tonnes, equivalent to an average annual growth of -0.5 %. In this period, exports (+2.2 %) grew while imports (-1.8 %) fell, (see Figure 3).

EU trade in raw materials, 2013-2023

(million tonnes)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

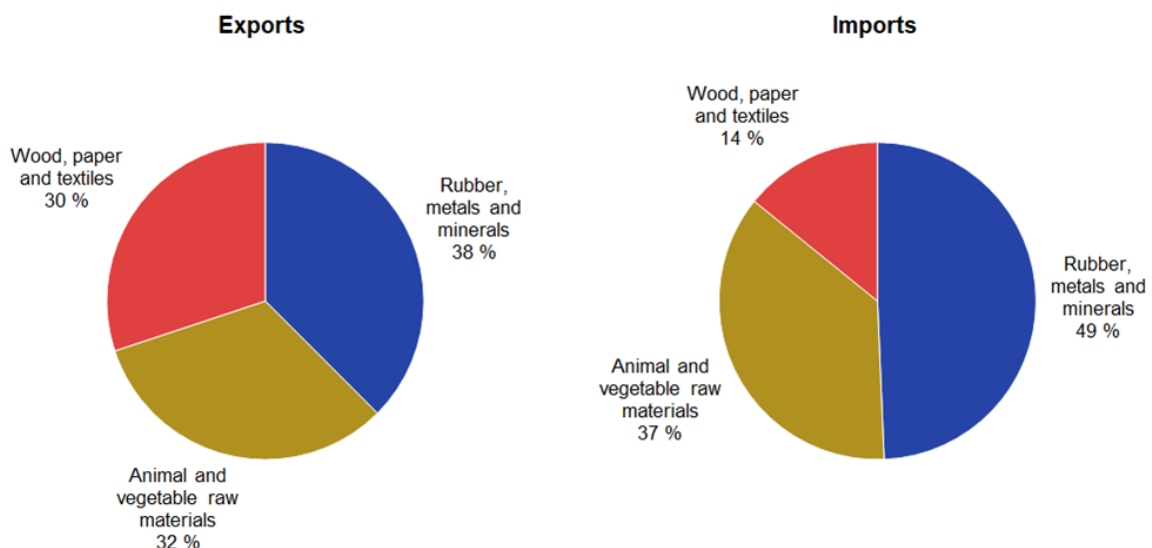
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Figure 3: EU trade in raw materials, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

Raw materials by product group

Raw materials can be subdivided in three main groups: animal and vegetable raw materials and wood, paper and textiles, metals, minerals and rubber (see Figure 4). In exports, the largest group was metals, minerals and rubber (38 %) followed by animal and vegetable raw materials (32 %) and wood, paper and textiles (30 %). In imports, the largest group also was metals, minerals and rubber (49 %) followed by animal and vegetable raw materials (37 %) and wood, paper and textiles (14 %).

EU exports and imports of raw materials by product category, 2023



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 4: EU exports and imports of raw materials by product category, 2023 Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

Each of the categories discussed above can be subdivided into subgroups, (see Figure 5).

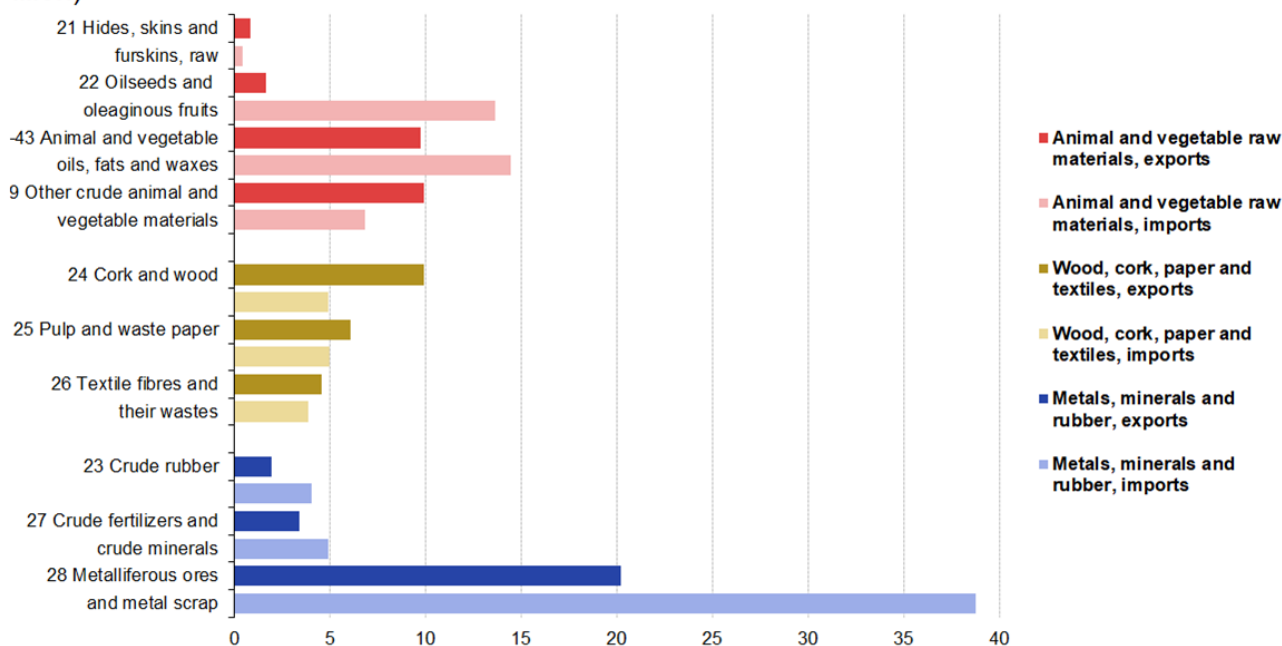
In 2023, the largest subgroup in imports of animal and vegetable raw materials was animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes with 41 % of imports. With 44 %, it was the second largest group in exports just behind other crude animal and vegetable materials which had a share of 45 %.

In wood, cork, paper and textiles, the largest subgroup was cork and wood with 48 % of exports. In imports this group shared first place with pulp and waste paper, both having a share of 36 %.

Metaliferous ores and metal scrap accounted for more than three quarters of the trade in the metals, minerals and rubber group. Its share in exports (79 %) was lower than in imports (81 %).

exports and imports of raw materials by product categories, 2023

(billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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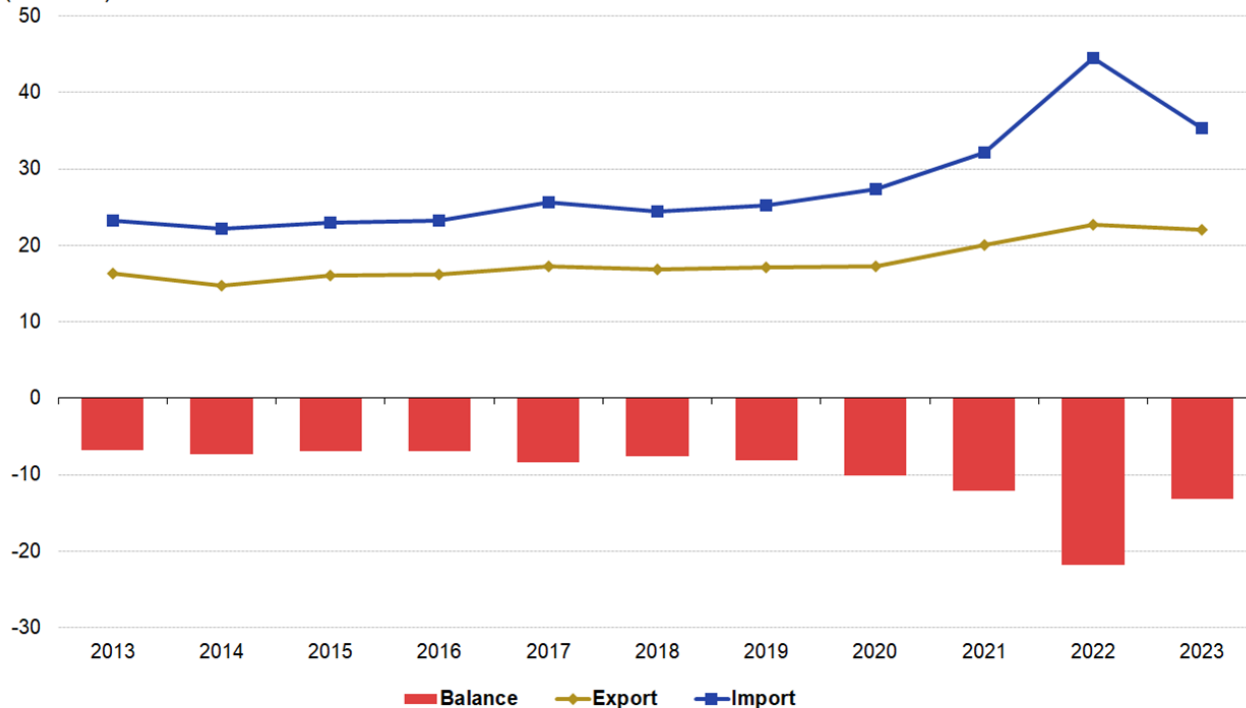
Figure 5: EU exports and imports of raw materials by product categories, 2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

Figures 6, 7 and 8 show the exports, imports and trade balance over time for the three product groups.

In 2023, the value of total trade (import plus exports) of animal and vegetable raw materials between the EU and the rest of the world was € 57.4 billion (see Figure 6). Since exports (€ 22.1 billion) were lower than imports (€ 35.3 billion) there was a trade deficit of € 13.2 billion. Between 2013 and 2023, EU trade in animal products grew by 40 %, equivalent to an average annual growth of 3.8 %. In this period, imports (4.3 %) grew faster than exports (3.0 %).

EU trade in animal and vegetable raw materials, 2002-2023

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

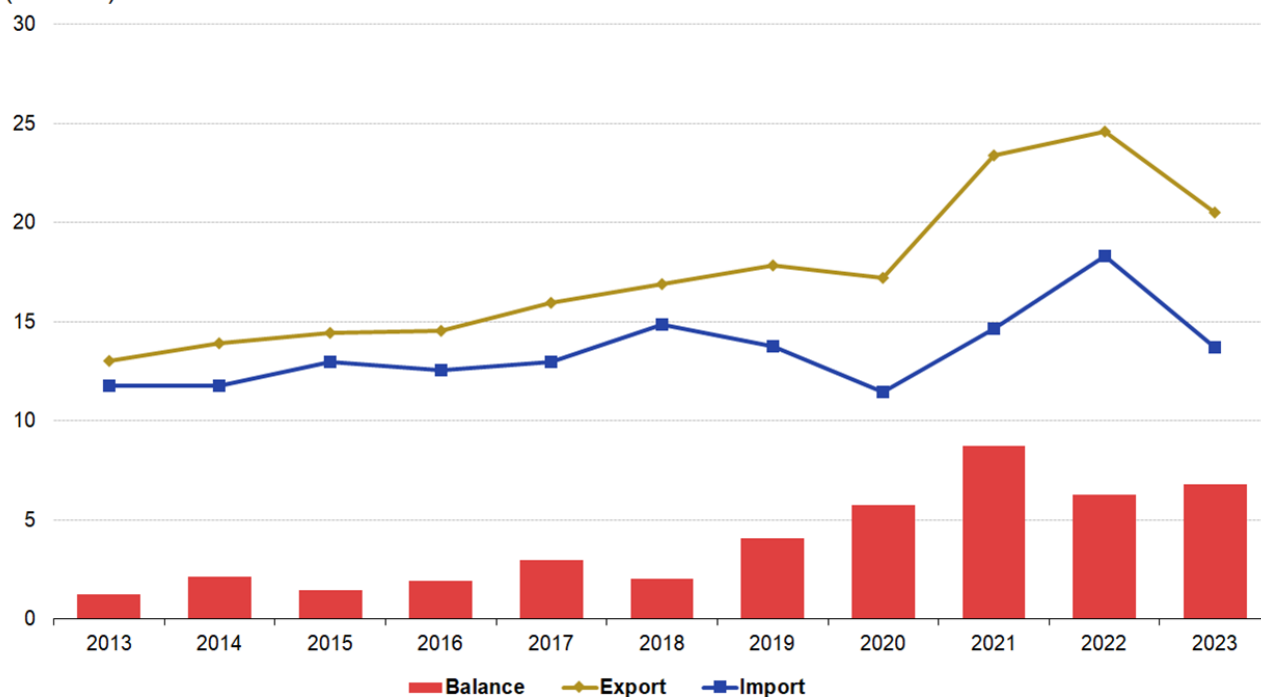
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Figure 6: EU trade in animal and vegetable raw materials, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In 2023, the value of total trade (import plus exports) of wood, cork, paper and textiles between the EU and the rest of the world was € 34.2 billion (see Figure 7). Exports (€ 20.5 billion) were higher than imports (€ 13.7 billion), resulting in a trade surplus of € 6.8 billion. Between 2013 and 2023, EU trade in wood, cork, paper and textiles grew by 40 %, equivalent to an average annual growth of 3.3 %. In this period, exports (4.7 %) grew much faster than imports (1.5 %).

EU trade in wood, paper and textiles, 2002-2023

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

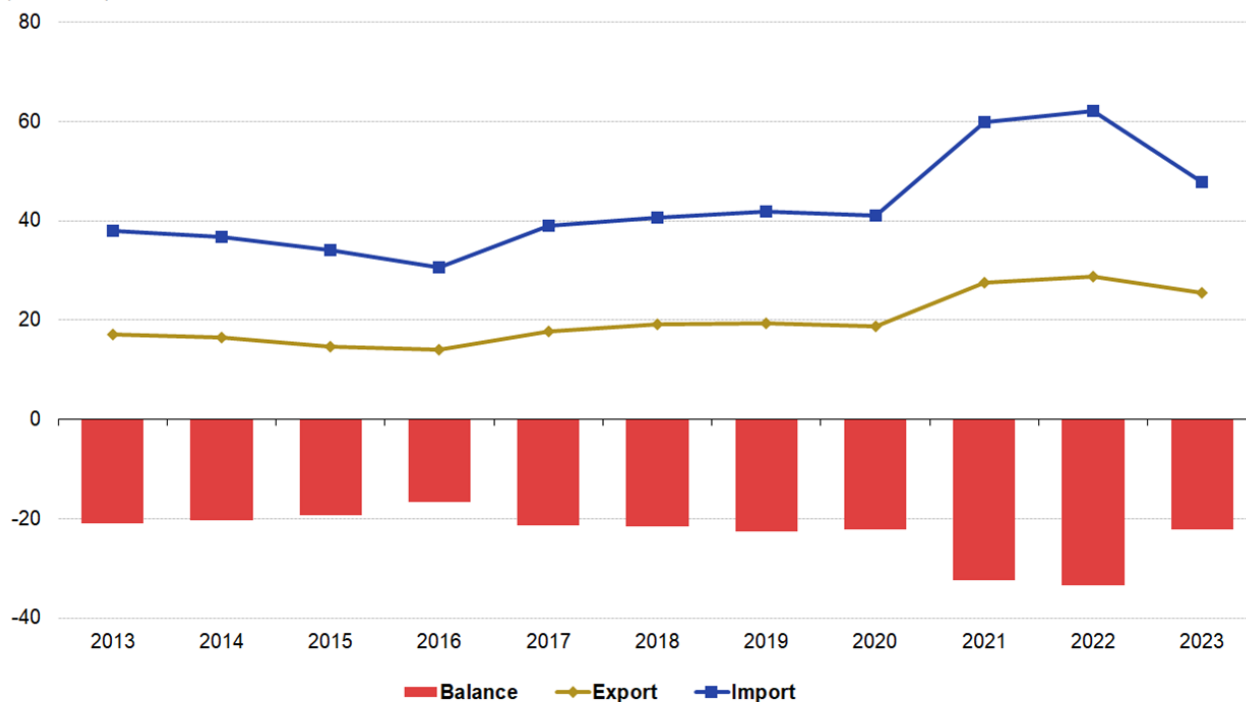
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Figure 7: EU trade in wood, paper and textiles, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In 2023, the value of total trade (import plus exports) of metals, minerals and rubber between the EU and the rest of the world was € 73.3 billion (see Figure 8). Since exports (€ 25.6 billion) were smaller than imports (€ 47.7 billion) there was a trade deficit of € 22.1 billion. Between 2013 and 2023, EU trade in metals, minerals and grew by 30 %, equivalent to an average annual growth of 2.9 %. In this period, exports (4.1 %) grew faster than imports (2.3 %).

EU trade in rubber, metal and minerals, 2002-2023

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 8: EU trade in rubber, metal and minerals, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

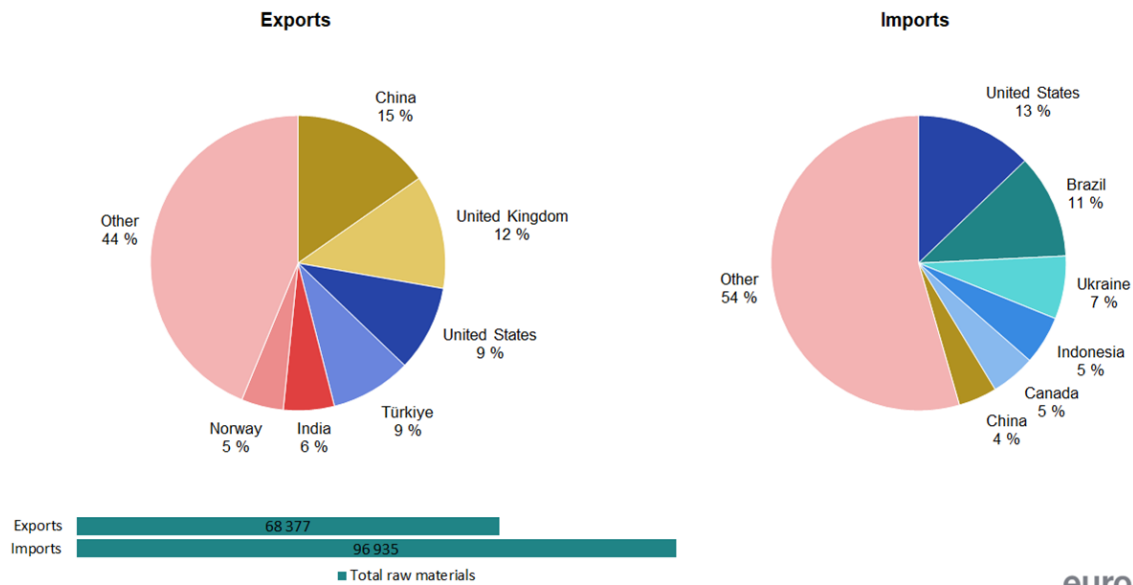
EU trade partners for raw materials

Figures 9 to 12 show the main partners of the EU for trade in raw materials in total and separately for the three product groups. Each figure shows the shares of the six main partners and is accompanied at the bottom by two bars showing the exports and imports in absolute values. The United States appears in all these figures as a top six partner for both exports and imports.

China was the main export destination of raw materials (Figure 9) with 15 % all exports in 2023, followed by the United Kingdom (12 %), Türkiye and the United States (both 9 %). The top six export partners accounted for 56 % of all exports. The United States (13 %) and Brazil (11 %) were the largest partners for imports. The top six combined, made up 46 % of all imports.

EU exports and imports of raw materials by main partner, 2023

(% and € billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

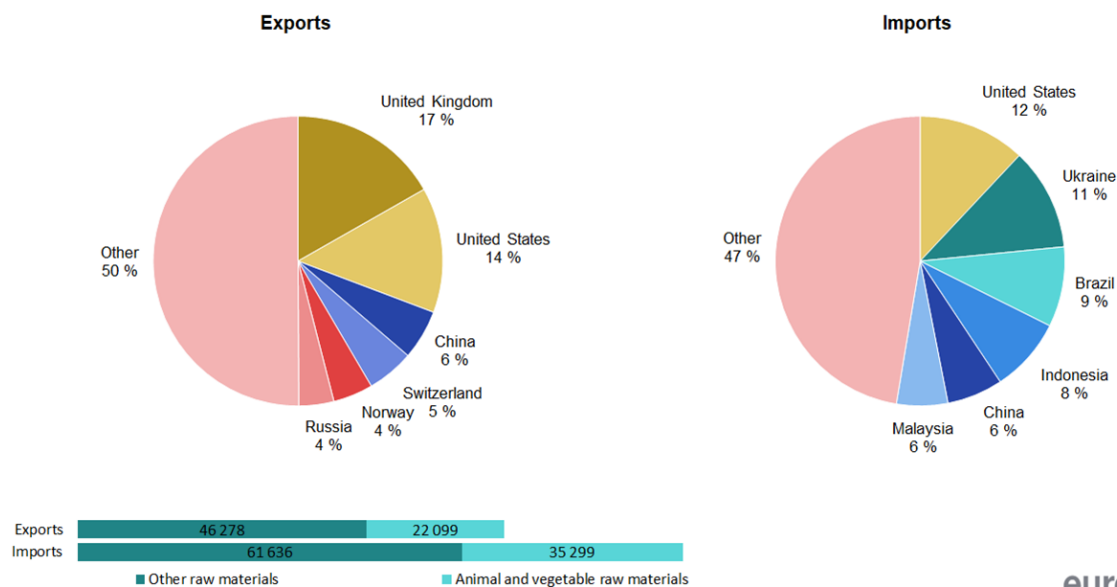
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Figure 9: EU exports and imports of raw materials by main partner, 2023 (shares and € million) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In animal and vegetable raw materials (Figure 10) the top two export partners in 2023 were the United Kingdom (17 %) and the United States (14 %). The total of the top six export partners was 50 %. The United States (12 %) and Ukraine (11 %) were the top import partners. The total of the top six import partners was 53 %.

EU exports and imports of animal and vegetable raw material by main partner, 2023

(% and € billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 10: EU exports and imports of animal and vegetable raw material by main partner, 2023 (shares and € million) Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

In exports of wood, cork, paper and textiles (Figure 11), China (26 %) and the United Kingdom (14 %) were the largest export partners. The top 6 accounted for 62 % of all exports. On the imports side Brazil (20 %) and the United States (18 %) were the main partners. Here the top 6 had a combined share of 63 %.

EU exports and imports of wood, paper and textiles by main partner, 2023 (% and € billion)

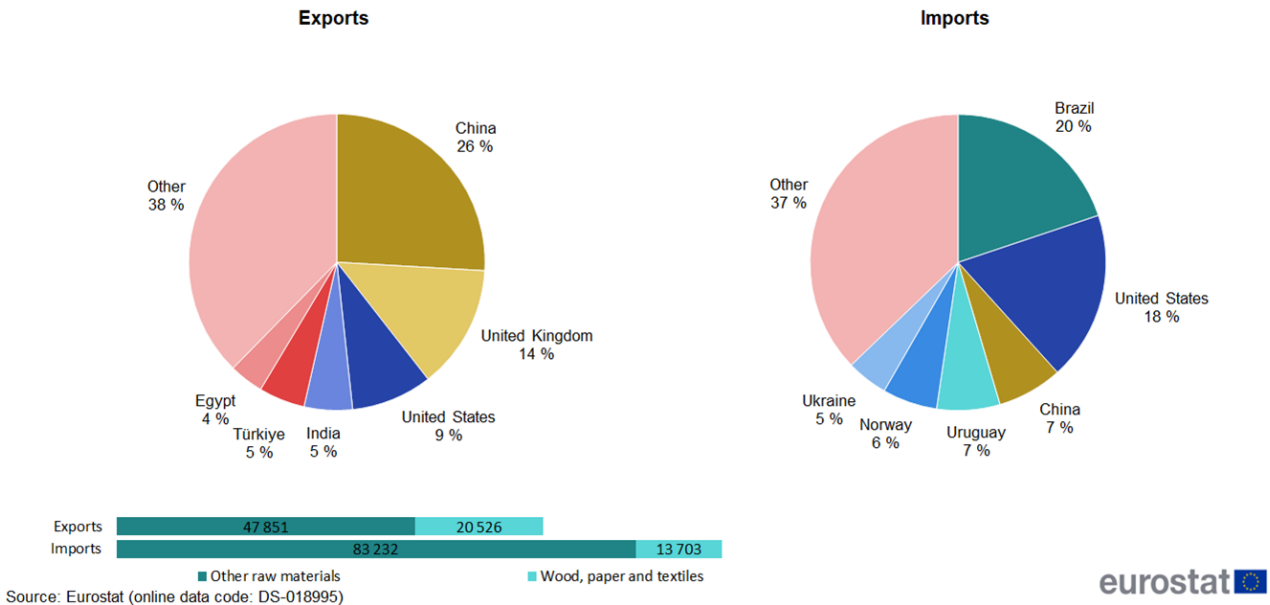


Figure 11: EU exports and imports of wood, paper and textiles by main partner, 2023 (shares and € million)
Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

A third of all exports of metals, minerals and rubber (Figure 12) was destined for Türkiye (18 %) and China (15 %). The top 6 had a combined share of 63 %. Imports, led by the United States (9 %) and Brazil (8 %) were much less concentrated with the top 6 accounting for only 39 % of all imports.

EU exports and imports of rubber, metal and minerals by main partner, 2023 (% and € billion)

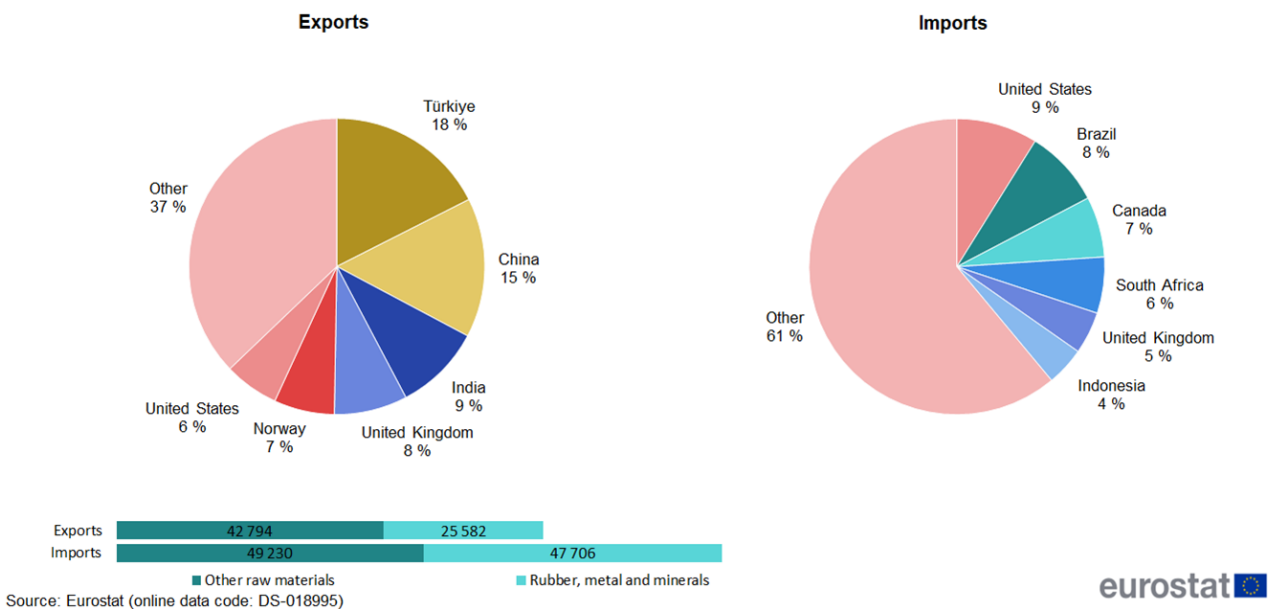


Figure 12: EU exports and imports of rubber, metal and minerals by main partner, 2023 (shares and € million)
Source: Eurostat (ds-018995)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Raw materials graphs](#)

Data sources

EU data comes from [Eurostat](#)'s [COMEXT](#) database.

COMEXT is the Eurostat 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 from Eurostat's website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process. Because COMEXT is updated on a daily basis, data published on the website may differ from data stored in COMEXT in case of recent revisions.

European statistics on international trade in goods are compiled according to the EU concepts and definitions and may, therefore, differ from national data published by Member States.

As of January 2022 onwards, data on trade with the United Kingdom is based on a mixed concept. In application of the Withdrawal Agreement Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, for trade with Northern Ireland the statistical concepts applicable are the same as those for trade between Member States while for trade with the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland) the same statistical concepts are applicable as for trade with any other extra-EU partner country. For these reasons, data on trade with the United Kingdom are not fully comparable with data on trade with other extra-EU trade partners, and for reference periods before and after the end of 2020.

Product classification

Raw materials are defined according to the fourth revision of the [Standard international trade classification](#). They include sections *2Crude materials, inedible, except fuels* and *4Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes*.

Unit of measure Trade values are expressed in millions (106) or billions (109) of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in case 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

In terms of percentage, the EU is highly dependent on imports of raw materials. For this reason, raw materials security and related strategies have become one of the key priorities in the EU's external actions and form an integral component of the EU's interior policy making. The foundations of these strategies were laid in three key documents:

- [COM\(2008\) 699 final](#) 'The Raw Materials Initiative';
- [COM\(2011\) 25 final](#) tackling the challenges in commodity markets and on raw materials);
- [COM\(2014\) 297 final](#) on the review of the list of critical raw materials for the EU and the implementation of the raw materials initiative, based in the global economic situation and the EU's high dependence on imports of certain raw materials.

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- [European Commission - DG Trade](#)

Notes