

# China-EU - international trade in goods statistics

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in February 2024  
Planned article update March 2025*

**" In 2023, China was the third largest partner for EU exports of goods (8.8 %) and the largest partner for EU imports of goods (20.5 %)."**

**" Among EU Member States, the Netherlands was the largest importer of goods from China and Germany was the largest exporter of goods to China in 2023."**

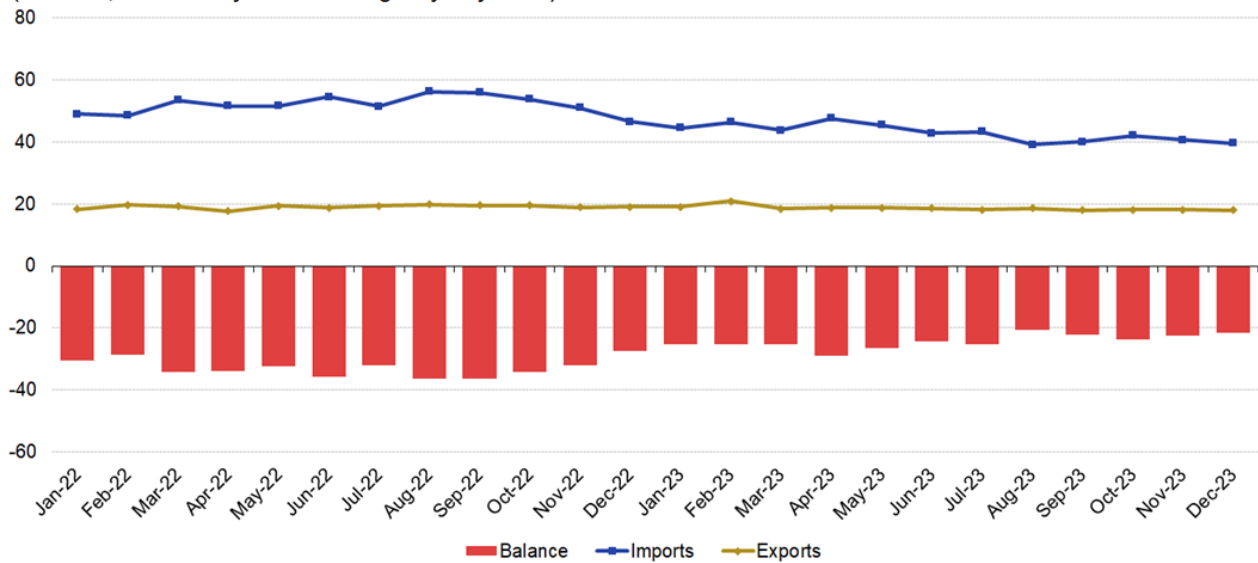
This article provides a picture of the international trade in goods between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and China. It analyses the type of goods exchanged between the two economies and the shares of each EU Member State in those exchanges. This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main goods traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

## Recent developments

EU exports to China did not change much between January 2022 (€ 18.3 billion ) and December 2023 (€ 18.1 billion) although they reached a low of € 17.7 billion in April 2022 and a high of € 20.9 billion in February 2023 (Figure 1). Imports from China dropped from € 48.9 billion in January 2022 to € 39.6 billion in December 2023. In this period they reached a high of € 56.2 billion in August 2022 and a low of € 39.2 billion in August 2023. In January 2022 the trade deficit was € 30.6 billion, it reached a high of € 36.5 billion in August 2022 before falling to € 21.6 billion in December 2022.

## EU trade in goods with China, 2022-2023

(€ billion, seasonally and working-day adjusted)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

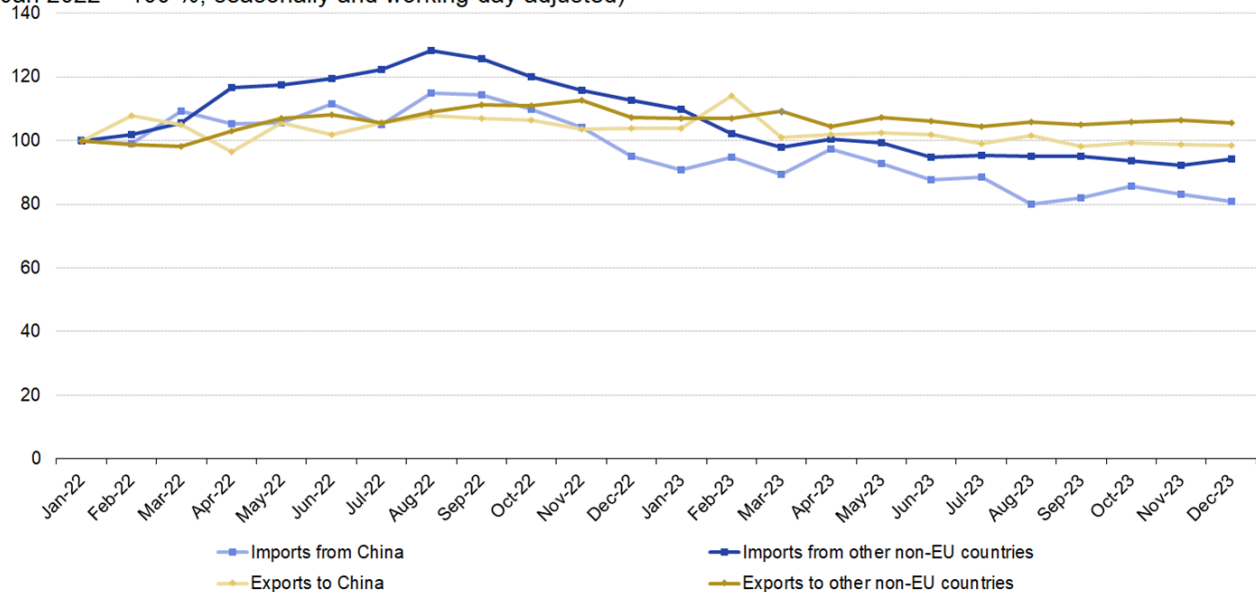
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**Figure 1: EU trade in goods with China, 2022-2023 (€ billion, seasonally and working-day adjusted) Source: Eurostat (ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)**

Figure 2 compares EU trade with China against EU trade with other non-EU countries. Between January 2022 and December 2023, EU imports from China decreased by 19.0 %. Imports from other non-EU countries (-5.9 %) dropped less strongly. EU exports to China decreased by 1.5 % while exports to other non-EU countries increased by 5.5 %.

## EU trade in goods with China and other non-EU countries, 2022-2023

(Jan 2022 = 100 %, seasonally and working-day adjusted)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

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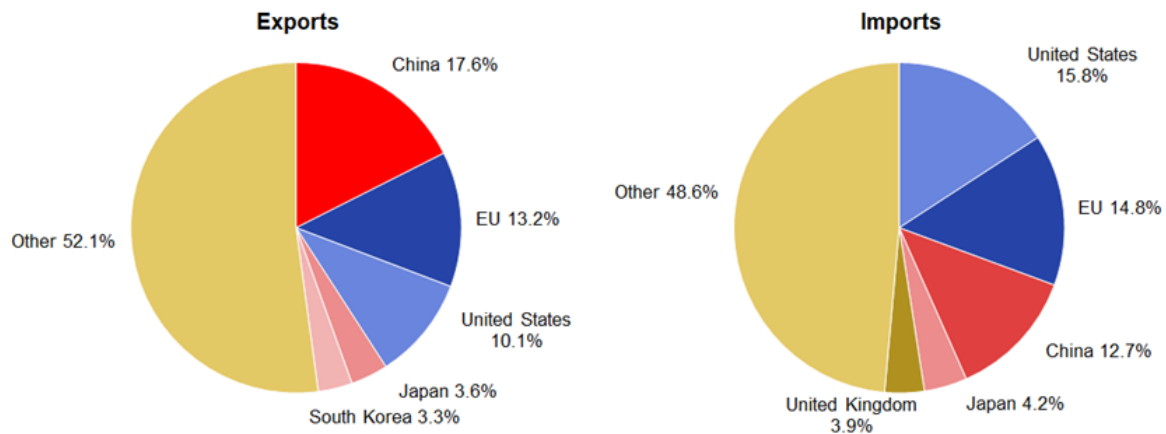
**Figure 2: EU trade in goods with China and other non-EU countries, 2022-2023 (Jan 2022 = 100 %, seasonally and working-day adjusted) Source: Eurostat (ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)**

## EU and China in world trade in goods

Figure 3 shows the world's largest traders of goods. China (€ 3 413 billion, 17.6 %) was the largest exporter in the world, followed by the EU (€ 2 572 billion, 13.2 %), the United States (€ 1 960 billion, 10.1 %), Japan (€ 709 billion, 3.6 %) and South Korea (€ 649 billion, 3.3 %). China (€ 2 579 billion, 12.7 %) was the third largest importer in the world, preceded by the United States (€ 3 206 billion, 15.8 %) and the EU (€ 3 007 billion, 14.8 %) and followed by Japan (€ 852 billion, 4.2 %) and the United Kingdom (€ 782 billion, 3.9 %).

### China among the world's largest traders of goods, 2022

(% share of world exports/imports)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_lt\_introeu27\_2020) and UNCTAD

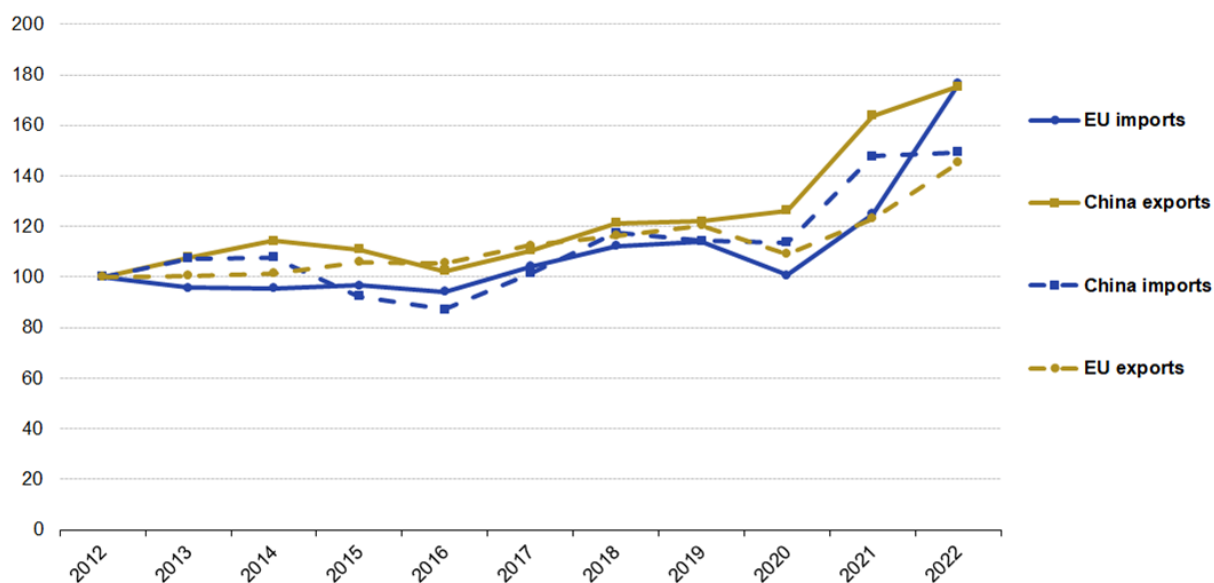
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**Figure 3: China among the world's largest traders of goods, 2022 (% share of world exports/imports) Source: Eurostat (ext\_lt\_introeu27\_2020) and UNCTAD**

The imports and exports of goods of the EU and China indexed at 100 in 2012 for the period to 2022 are shown in Figure 4. It also shows the cover ratio (exports / imports) for this period. Exports from the EU were lowest in 2012 (100) and highest in 2022 (145). Imports to the EU were lowest in 2016 (94) and highest in 2022 (177). The cover ratio for the EU was lowest in 2022 (86 %) and highest in 2016 (116 %). Exports from China were lowest in 2012 (100) and highest in 2022 (175). Imports to China were lowest in 2016 (87) and highest in 2022 (149).

## Trade in goods of the EU and China, 2012-2022

(exports and imports indexed at 100 in 2012)



Notes:

- While the trade balance provides information on the absolute value of trading positions, the cover ratio provides a relative measure that is based on the ratio (expressed in percentage terms) between the value of exports and the value of imports; if exports are higher than imports then the cover ratio will be above 100.

- Exports and imports are indexed at 100 in 2012

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_lt\_introeu27\_2020) and UNCTAD

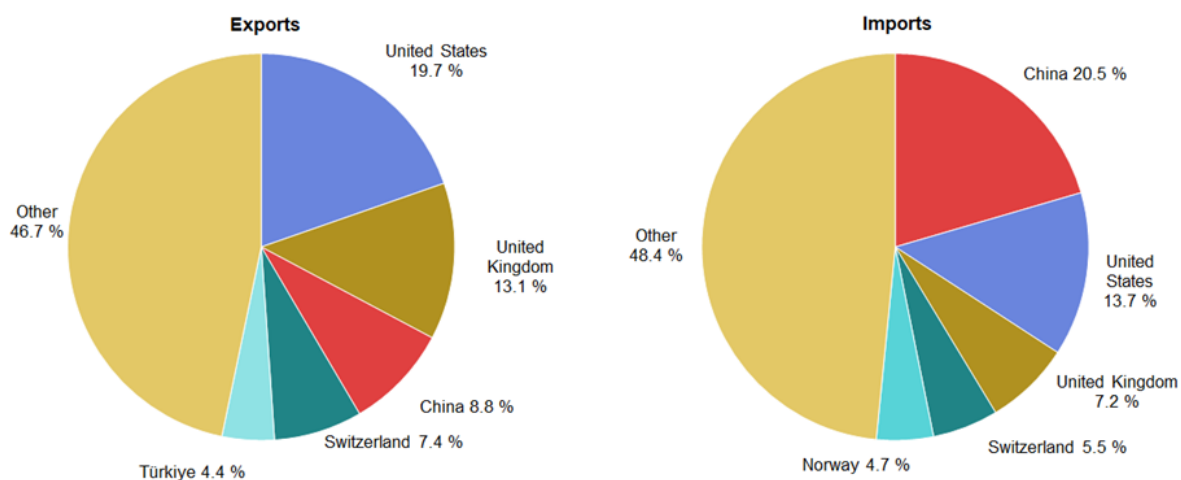
**Figure 4: Trade in goods of the EU and China, 2012-2022 (exports and imports indexed at 100 in 2012, cover ratio in %)** Source: Eurostat (ext\_lt\_introeu27\_2020) and UNCTAD

### China largest partner for EU imports of goods in 2023

The position of China among the largest trade partners of the EU in 2023 can be seen in Figure 5. In 2023, China was the third largest partner for EU exports of goods (8.8 %). It was preceded by the United States (19.7 %) and the United Kingdom (13.1 %) and followed by Switzerland (7.4 %) and Türkiye (4.4 %). In 2023, China was the largest partner for EU imports of goods (20.5 %), followed by the United States (13.7 %), the United Kingdom (7.2 %), Switzerland (5.5 %) and Norway (4.7 %).

## China among the EU's main partners for trade in goods, 2023

(% share of extra-EU exports/imports)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

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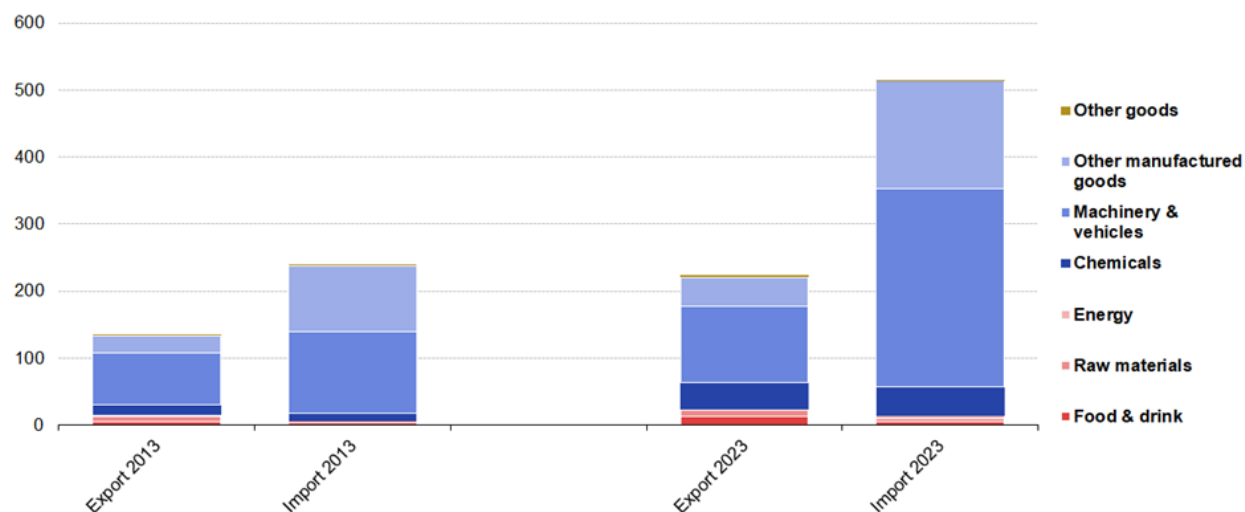
**Figure 5: China among the EU's main partners for trade in goods, 2023 (% share of extra-EU exports/imports)**  
Source: Eurostat (ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

## EU-China trade by type of goods

The breakdown of EU trade with China by SITC groups is shown in Figure 6. The red shades denote the primary goods: food & drink, raw materials and energy, while the blue shades show the manufactured goods: chemicals, machinery & vehicles and other manufactured goods. Finally, other goods are shown in green. In 2023, EU exports of manufactured goods (88 %) had a much higher share than primary goods (11 %). The most exported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (51 %), followed by other manufactured goods (19 %) and chemicals (18 %). In 2023, EU imports of manufactured goods (97 %) also had a much higher share than primary goods (3 %). The most imported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (57 %), followed by other manufactured goods (31 %) and chemicals (8 %).

## EU trade with China by product group, 2013 and 2023

(€ billion)



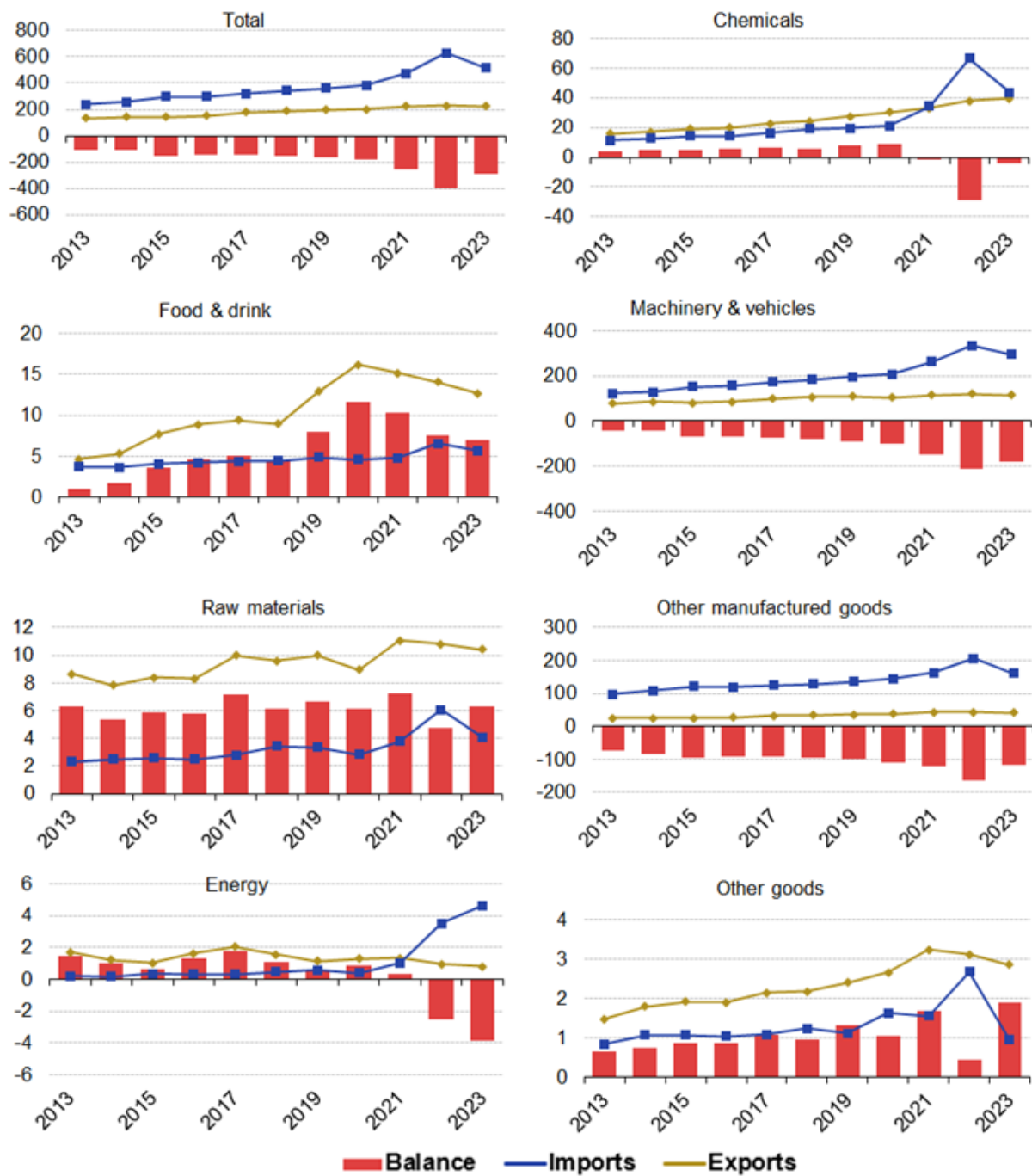
Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

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**Figure 6: EU trade with China by product group, 2013 and 2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)**

Figure 7 shows the evolution of EU imports and exports by SITC group since 2013. In 2023, the EU had trade surpluses in other goods (€ 1.9 billion), raw materials (€ 6.3 billion) and food & drink (€ 7.0 billion). By contrast, the EU had trade deficits in chemicals (€ 3.6 billion), energy (€ 3.8 billion), other manufactured goods (€ 118.3 billion) and machinery & vehicles (€ 180.4 billion).

# EU trade with China by group, 2013-2023 (€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)



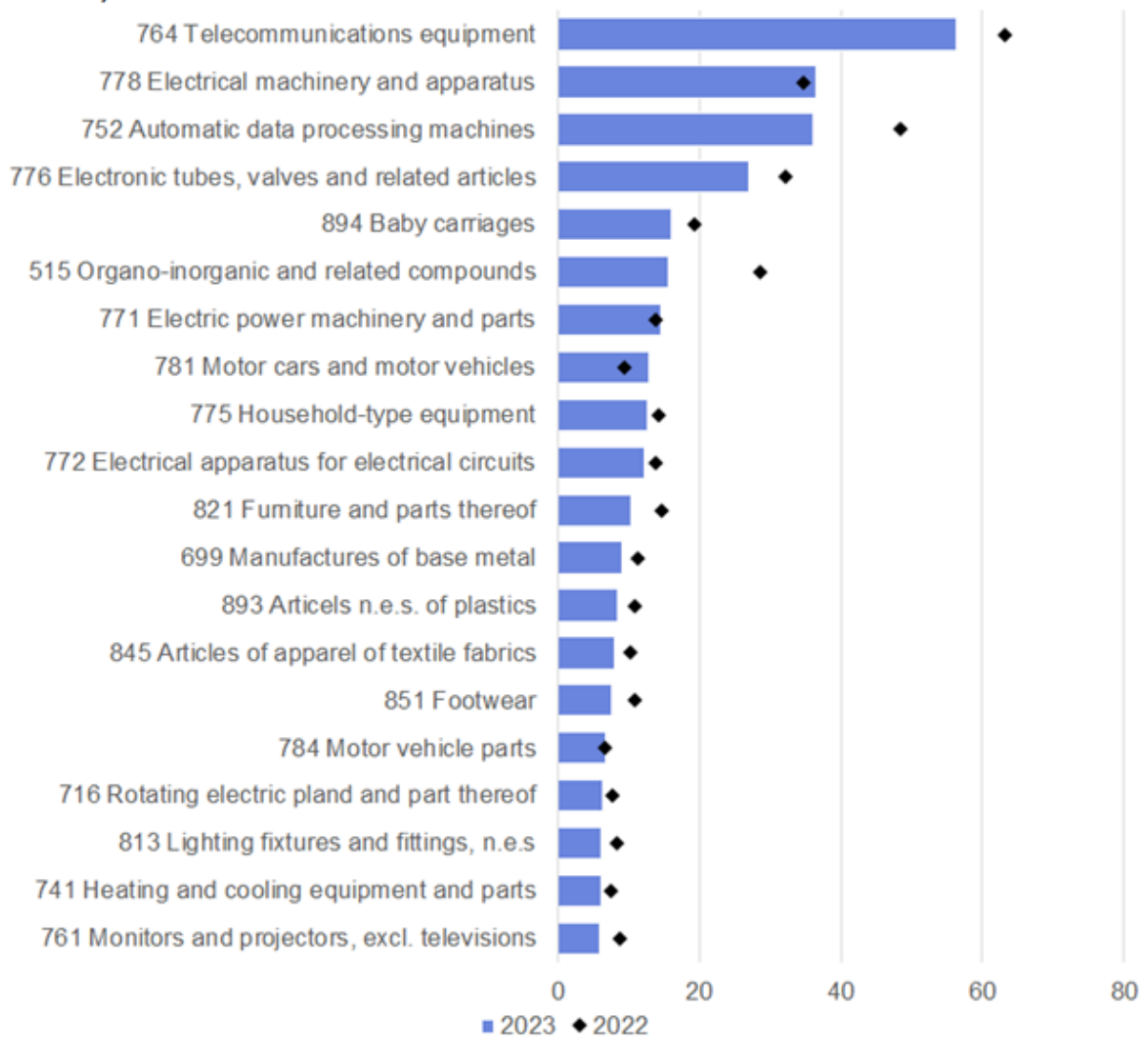
Figure 7: EU trade with China by group, 2013-2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext\_st\_eu27\_2020sitc)

## EU-China most traded goods

More detail about the goods imported by the EU from China is given in Figure 8, showing the 20 most imported goods at SITC-3 level. These top 20 goods covered 61 % of total imports from China in 2023. Twelve belonged to

machinery and vehicles, seven to other manufactured goods and one to chemicals. The most traded group of goods at this level was telecommunications equipment.

## EU most imported goods from China, 2023 (€ billion)



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



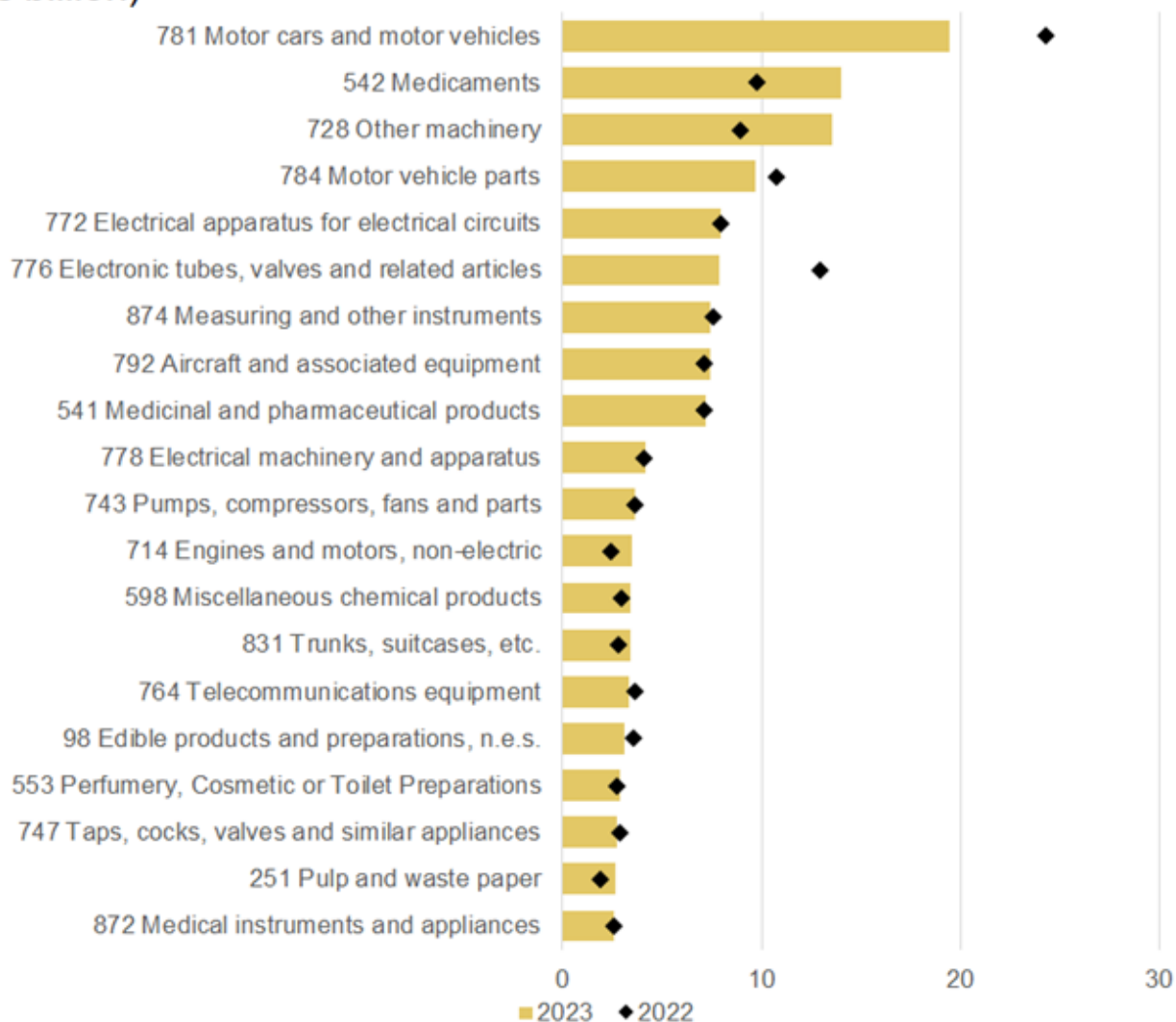
Figure 8: EU most imported goods from China, 2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat DS-018995

Figure 9 shows the 20 most exported goods at SITC-3 level. These top 20 goods covered 58 % of total exports to China in 2023. Motor cars and motor vehicles remained the top exported product to China in 2023, even though exports decreased by € 4.8 billion compared with 2022. Medicaments growing by € 4.3 billion and other machinery growing by € 4.6 billion were the second and third largest exported products to China by the EU, respectively.



## EU most exported goods to China, 2023

(€ billion)



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




























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Figure 9: EU most exported goods to China, 2023 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat DS-018995

### Trade with China by EU Member State

Table 1a shows the imports of goods from China by EU Member State. The three largest importers from China in the EU were the Netherlands (€ 117 billion), Germany (€ 95 billion) and Italy (€ 48 billion). Czechia (43.7 %) had the highest share for China in its extra-EU imports.

## EU imports of goods from China, 2023

	€ million	% of China in extra EU imports	
Netherlands	116 942	25.7	
Germany	94 525	20.0	
Italy	47 589	18.7	
France	42 023	16.3	
Spain	36 677	18.9	
Poland	31 684	28.5	
Belgium	30 826	16.1	
Czechia	25 401	43.7	
Hungary	11 043	25.0	
Slovenia	9 867	29.1	
Sweden	9 580	16.5	
Ireland	8 591	10.4	
Denmark	7 413	17.6	
Austria	7 107	13.9	
Greece	6 901	17.0	
Romania	6 754	20.8	
Portugal	5 221	19.5	
Slovakia	4 311	20.0	
Finland	3 140	14.0	
Bulgaria	2 663	13.4	
Lithuania	1 710	12.8	
Croatia	1 298	13.4	
Estonia	948	30.2	
Latvia	869	18.1	
Cyprus	758	13.2	
Malta	356	12.4	
Luxembourg	213	9.1	

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



**Table 1a: EU imports of goods from China, 2023 Source: Eurostat DS-018995**

Table 1b shows the exports of goods to China by EU Member State. The three largest exporters to China in the EU were Germany (€ 97 billion), France (€ 25 billion) and the Netherlands (€ 22 billion). Germany (13.6 %) had the highest share for China in its extra-EU exports.

## EU exports of goods to China, 2023

	€ million	% of China in extra EU exports
Germany	97 303	13.6
France	25 017	9.3
Netherlands	22 299	8.5
Italy	19 172	6.3
Ireland	8 875	7.9
Belgium	8 259	4.8
Spain	7 579	5.3
Sweden	6 697	8.1
Denmark	5 337	10.0
Austria	5 060	8.0
Finland	3 554	10.8
Poland	3 078	3.4
Slovakia	2 874	11.7
Czechia	2 438	5.6
Hungary	1 543	4.9
Bulgaria	1 017	6.3
Romania	856	3.4
Portugal	769	3.3
Slovenia	394	1.4
Greece	385	1.8
Estonia	253	5.3
Luxembourg	228	7.0
Latvia	185	2.5
Lithuania	146	0.9
Croatia	79	1.0
Malta	37	2.5
Cyprus	26	0.8

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



**Table 1b: EU exports of goods to China, 2023 Source: Eurostat DS-018995**

The trade in goods balance between the EU Member States and China is shown in Table 1c. It shows that only Germany, Finland Ireland and Luxembourg had trade surpluses with China. The other 23 EU Member States all had trade deficits with China. The largest deficit was held by the Netherlands (€ 95 billion).

## EU trade balance of goods with China, 2023

(€ million)

	€ million
Germany	2 778
Finland	414
Ireland	284
Luxembourg	14
Malta	-319
Latvia	-683
Estonia	-695
Cyprus	-733
Croatia	-1 219
Slovakia	-1 437
Lithuania	-1 564
Bulgaria	-1 646
Austria	-2 047
Denmark	-2 076
Sweden	-2 883
Portugal	-4 452
Romania	-5 898
Greece	-6 516
Slovenia	-9 472
Hungary	-9 500
France	-17 006
Belgium	-22 567
Czechia	-22 963
Italy	-28 417
Poland	-28 606
Spain	-29 098
Netherlands	-94 644

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



Table 1c: EU trade balance of goods with China, 2023 Source: Eurostat DS-018995

### Source data for tables and graphs

- [EU - China international trade in goods statistics - graphs and tables](#)

### 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 Member States 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 Member States 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 Member States. Statistics on extra-EU trade are calculated as the sum of trade of each of the 27 EU Member States 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.

Dutch trade flows are over-estimated because of the so-called ' [Rotterdam effect](#) ' (or quasi-transit trade): goods bound for other EU countries arrive in Dutch ports and, according to EU rules, are recorded as extra-EU imports by the Netherlands (the country where goods are released for free circulation). This in turn increases the intra-EU flows from the Netherlands to those Member States to which the goods are re-exported.

Data for the non-EU countries used in Figures 3 and 4 are taken from the UNCTAD database of the United Nations. For the calculation of shares, the world trade is defined as the sum of EU trade with non-EU countries (source: Eurostat) plus the international trade of non-EU countries (source: UNCTAD).

## Methodology

According to the EU concepts and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU Member States 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.

## Product classification

Information on commodities exported and imported is presented according to the [Standard international trade classification \(SITC\)](#) . A full description is available from Eurostat's classification server [RAMON](#) .

## Unit of measure

Trade values are expressed in millions or billions (10<sup>9</sup>) 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 Member States share a single market and a single external border, they also have a single trade policy. EU Member States 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.

## Other articles

- [International trade in goods - other articles](#)

## Dedicated section

[International trade in goods - dedicated section](#)

## Database

[International trade in goods - database](#)

## **Data visualisations**

- [International trade in goods - visualisations](#)

## **Methodology**

[International trade in goods - methodology](#)

## **Legislation**

- [International trade in goods - legislation](#)

## **External links**

- [European Commission - DG Trade](#)