

Inland waterways - statistics on container transport

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in September 2024.
Planned article update: 3 October 2025.*

Highlights

" Container transport represented 9.5% of total inland waterway transport in the EU in 2023. "

" 40-foot freight units accounted for 76.1% of inland waterway transport of loaded containers in the EU in 2023."

" Empty containers accounted for 30.7% of inland waterway container transport in the EU in 2023."

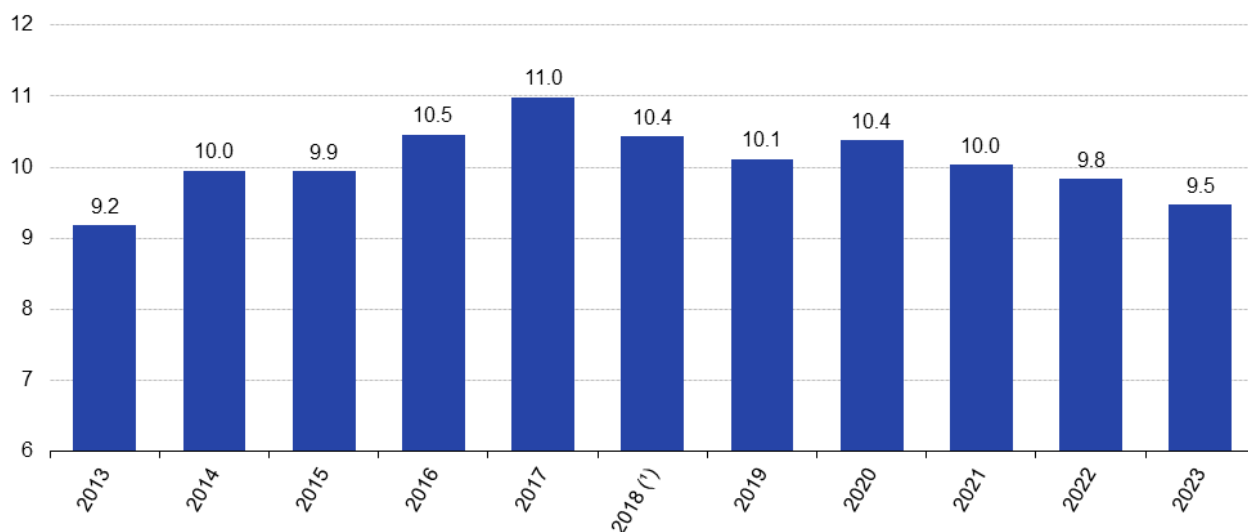
This article presents the latest statistical data on [inland waterway](#) transport of [containers](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and other countries connected to the EU inland waterway network. Sweden's compliance with mandatory reporting requirements since 2022 brings the total number of EU countries required to provide data for inland waterway transport, including containerised cargo, to 13. Eurostat disseminates data on container transport by type of goods (annual data) and on container transport by nationality of vessels (quarterly data). This article is based on annual data. For an overview of the total annual and quarterly inland waterway transport, please refer to the Statistics Explained article [Inland waterway freight transport - quarterly and annual data](#) .

Transport of containers by inland waterways decreased in 2023

In the EU, the share of container transport in total inland waterway transport performance (in [tonne-kilometres](#)) increased steadily between 2013 and 2017, attaining 10.0% (see Figure 1) in 2014, followed by a slight decrease in 2015, and then reaching its highest level of 11.0% in 2017. In 2018, this share lost 0.6 [percentage points \(pp\)](#) , and in 2019 another 0.3 pp, falling to 10.1%. The share rebounded in 2020, reaching 10.4%. Three consecutive drops immediately followed in 2021, 2022 and 2023, resulting in 9.5% in 2023.

Inland waterway transport of containers, EU, 2013-2023

(% share of total inland waterway freight transport, based on tonne-kilometres)



Note: data for Finland are not included in 2017 and 2018. Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not included.

(*) Break in time series in Belgium due to an improvement of the data collection system.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: iww_go_atygo and iww_go_acsize)

eurostat 

Figure 1: Inland waterway transport of containers, EU, 2013-2023 (% share of total inland waterway freight transport, based on tonne-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_atygo) and (iww_go_acsize)

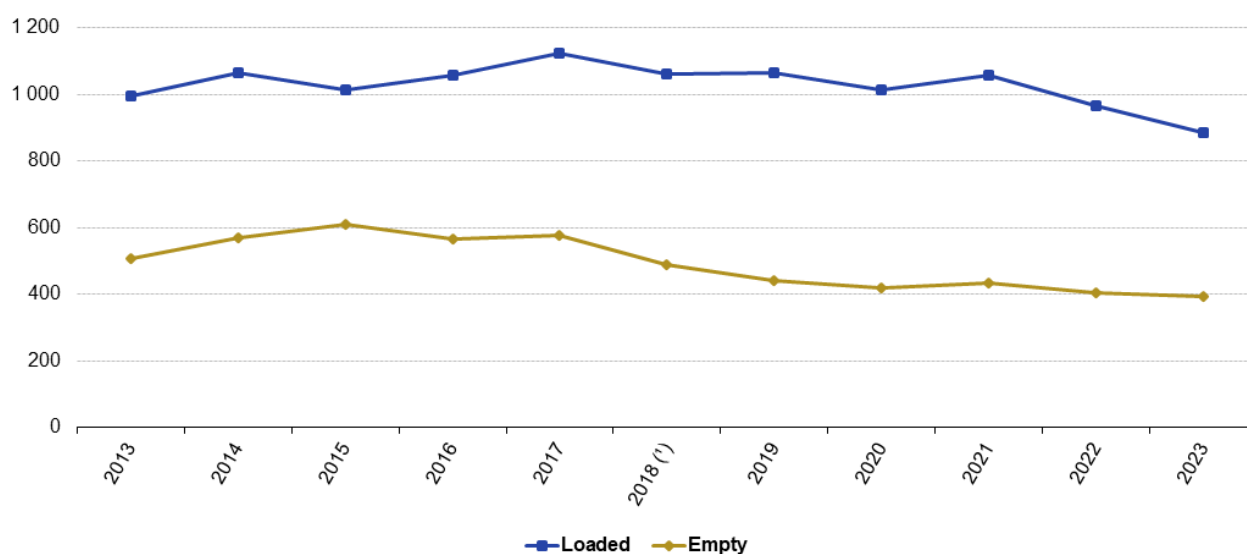
Movements of empty containers in the EU in terms of [twenty-foot equivalent unit kilometres \(TEU-km\)](#) increased continuously between 2013 and 2015, reaching a peak of 611 million TEU-km (see Figure 2). In 2016, a substantial fall by 7.6% was observed, immediately followed by a slight rebound in 2017 (+1.7%). In 2018, 2019 and 2020, 3 consecutive sharp declines were registered (-14.8%, -10.3% and -5.0%, respectively). A rebound of 3.7% in 2021 was followed by decreases of 6.5% in 2022 and 2.9% in 2023 down to 393 million TEU-km, the lowest level since 2009 (348 million TEU-km).

When looking at movements of loaded containers, the picture is slightly different (see Figure 2). Transport performance increased between 2013 and 2014 (+6.7%). In 2015, movements of loaded containers fell by 4.6%. Then, a positive trend was observed in 2016 and 2017, to reach a peak of 1.1 billion TEU-km in 2017. Similarly to empty containers, a downturn was registered in both 2018 and 2020 (-5.4% and -4.8%, respectively), while stable levels were registered in 2019 (+0.2%). In 2021, a growth of 4.4% was observed and declines of 8.9% and 8.1% were recorded in 2022 and 2023. The value for 2023, 886 million TEU-km, is the lowest registered since 2009 (784 million TEU-km). Altogether, the transport performance of loaded and empty containers in TEU-km decreased by 6.6% in 2023 compared with 2022, resulting in 1.3 billion TEU-km.

It should be noted that Sweden first reported data on containers in 2022. Therefore, 2022 data reported by Sweden have been excluded when calculating the change rates between 2021 and 2022 at EU level.

Inland waterway transport of containers by loading status, EU, 2013-2023

(million TEU-kilometres)



Note: data for Italy and Lithuania are not included. Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021.

(*) Break in time series in Belgium due to an improvement of the data collection system.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_acsize)

eurostat

Figure 2: Inland waterway transport of containers by loading status, EU, 2013-2023 (million TEU-kilometres)
Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

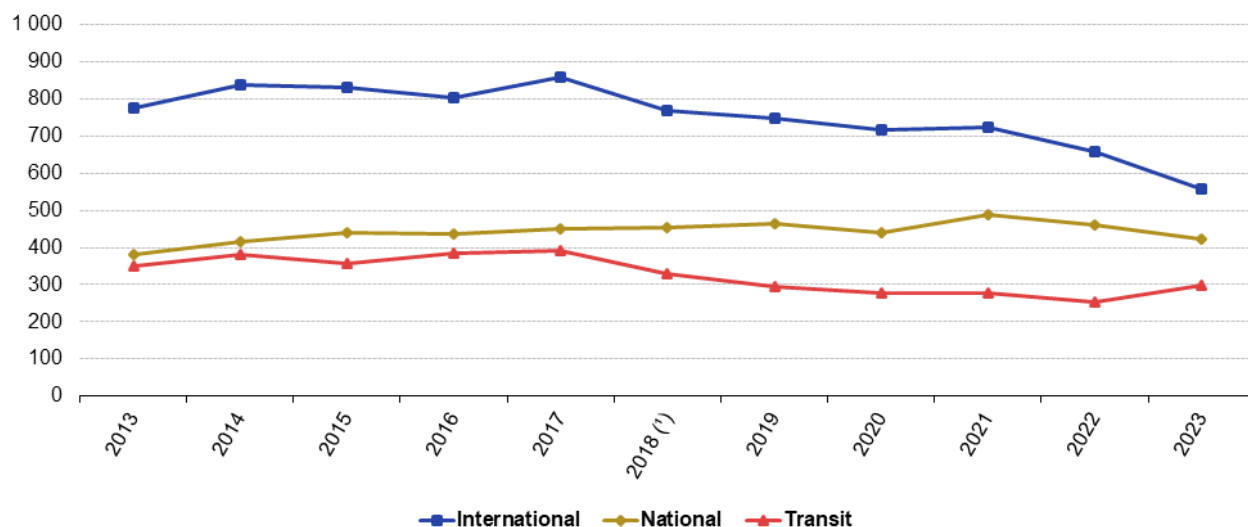
The international transport of containers dominates national or transit transport (see Figure 3). It accounted for over half of the container transport performance (in TEU-km), every year between 2013 and 2017, except in 2016 (49.4%). The highest share was observed in 2013, with 51.4%. International transport evolution was quite erratic, with several drops observed since 2013 when comparing with the previous year. The most noticeable decrease was registered in 2018, with a 10.5% decline compared with 2017. This downwards trend continued in 2019 (-2.8%) and 2020 (-4.2%). In 2021, a slight rebound was observed, with a 1.4% increase, followed by 2 sharp declines in 2022 (-9.3%) and 2023 (-15.1%). Thus, year 2023 marks the lowest international transport performance of containers since data are available (i.e. 2007).

National transport of containers came second in terms of performance (in TEU-km) followed by transit transport. National transport has increased every year between 2013 and 2021, except in 2016 (-0.7%) and 2020 (-4.9%). In 2022 and 2023, national transport fell by 5.8% and 8.3%, respectively, compared with the previous year. The most noticeable increase was registered in 2021, with a 10.8% growth compared with 2020.

When looking at transit transport, there was an increase between 2013 and 2014, followed by a rather strong fall in 2015 (-6.4%). There was an observed rebound in the 2 years that followed. However, in 2018, 2019 and 2020, significant falls were registered (-15.3%, -10.8% and -6.4%, respectively). In 2021, there was a slight increase by 0.9%, followed by a sharp decline, down by 9.7% in 2022. In 2023, a substantial growth was recorded by 18.7%.

Inland waterway transport of containers by type of transport, EU, 2013-2023

(million TEU-kilometres)



Note: data for Italy and Lithuania are not included. Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021.

(*) Break in time series in Belgium due to an improvement of the data collection system.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_acsize)

eurostat

Figure 3: Inland waterway transport of containers by type of transport, EU, 2013-2023 (million TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

While the transport performance of loaded containers in the EU, in TEU-km, decreased by 8.1% in 2023 (see Table 1), there was a larger fall of 15.0% when looking at TEUs (see Table 2). The decrease in loaded container transport was mainly due to the fall of national and international transport. International transport recorded the largest decline for TEU-kilometres (-17.4%) and for TEUs (-17.7%). National transport also decreased in both units (-7.8% for TEU-km and -12.9% for TEUs). By contrast, transit transport in the EU, measured only in TEU-km, increased by 13.2%.

Inland waterway transport of loaded containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023

(thousand TEU-kilometres)

	2013	2019	2021	2022	2023			Change 2023/2022 (%)				
	Total	Total	Total	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total
EU (*)	996 761.9	1 064 847.7	1 058 261.3	964 925.5	267 440.3	391 096.0	227 873.7	886 410.0	-7.8	-17.4	+13.2	-8.1
Belgium	72 935.5	54 731.1	63 373.4	57 508.9	24 750.7	17 319.2	398.5	42 468.4	-26.9	-25.7	+13.9	-26.2
Bulgaria	133.5	0.9	5.2	207.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Czechia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Germany	446 273.5	429 300.8	395 219.0	361 478.4	20 872.2	232 655.9	111 635.1	365 163.3	-8.6	-15.3	+74.4	+1.0
France	75 555.2	73 620.2	83 180.9	64 009.1	65 853.3	4 666.4	14.9	70 534.7	+13.3	-20.7	+13 223.2	+10.2
Croatia	0.0	0.0	1.2	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Luxembourg	0.0	82.9	49.7	33.8	0.0	27.2	2.0	29.2	-	-17.9	+211.8	-13.6
Hungary	0.0	0.8	0.0	9.5	0.0	31.7	0.0	31.7	-	+233.2	-	+233.2
Netherlands	401 626.5	507 076.8	516 373.9	477 486.8	153 078.9	132 504.1	115 823.3	401 406.3	-11.6	-21.0	-15.3	-15.9
Austria	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Poland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Romania	237.7	34.2	57.9	3 230.3	1 354.7	3 891.4	0.0	5 246.1	+5.4	+100.1	-	+62.4
Slovakia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Finland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Sweden	-	-	-	954.6	1 530.4	0.0	0.0	1 530.4	+60.3	-	-	+60.3

(-) Not applicable

(.) Not available

Note: only countries for which data are available are presented.

(*) Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_acsize)

eurostat 

Table 1: Inland waterway transport of loaded containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023 (thousand TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

At country level, the Netherlands and Germany were by far the main contributors to the inland waterway transport performance of loaded containers (in TEU-km) in 2023, followed by France and Belgium (see Table 1). Altogether, these 4 countries represented more than 99% of the total movements of loaded containers in the EU, when expressed in TEU-km. Amongst these 4 countries, national transport was predominant in France and Belgium, at 93.4% and 58.3% of the total transport of loaded containers, respectively. In the Netherlands, the shares of national and international transport were 38.1% and 33.0%, respectively. In Germany, international transport dominated with 63.7%, while national transport represented 5.7%. In Germany and the Netherlands, transit transport was quite significant, with shares at 30.6% and 28.9%, respectively, whereas it was less than 1% in Belgium and France.

When looking at the transport of loaded containers in TEUs, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France also accounted for more than 99% of the total movements of loaded containers in the EU. Amongst these 4 countries, national transport was predominant in France and the Netherlands, at 70.6% and 43.6% of total transport of loaded containers, respectively; whereas international transport in these 2 countries represented 29.3% and 34.5%, respectively. In Germany and Belgium, international transport dominated with 75.0% and 68.4%, respectively. Transit transport was significant only in the Netherlands and Germany, with shares at 21.8% and 14.0%, respectively; whereas it was less than 1% in Belgium and France. This reflects the significance of both the Netherlands and Germany as hosts for major transit ports or as a major source or destination for container movements (Rotterdam, Antwerp and Hamburg).

In 2023, Romania, Hungary and Sweden recorded significant growths in their inland waterway transport of loaded containers. It should be noted that the contribution of these countries to the total EU figures is still very low. The shares of the 3 countries combined were 0.8%, based on TEU-km, and 0.6% of the total movements of loaded containers in the EU, based on TEU. Bulgaria and Croatia did not report any transport of loaded containers in 2023, while they had some in 2022, but at very low levels. All in all, 8 countries reported transport of loaded containers in 2023.

Germany, France and Luxembourg registered very large growths in transit transport of containers in 2023 compared with 2022. In the case of France and Luxembourg, it should be noted that the levels observed for transit are low compared with the total transport of these countries. In France, transit transport of containers accounted for 15 000 TEU-km in 2023 while it was only 112 TEU-km in 2022.

Inland waterway transport of loaded containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023

(TEUs)

	2013	2019	2021	2022	2023			Change 2023/2022 (%)				
	Total	Total	Total	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total
EU (*)	3 752 550	4 239 360	4 572 594	4 319 854	2 134 411	1 538 650	-	3 673 061	-12.9	-17.7	-	-15.0
Belgium	1 942 151	1 681 432	1 740 885	1 662 069	406 314	900 355	10 362	1 317 031	-25.6	-18.4	-15.4	-20.8
Bulgaria	287	2	38	442	0	0	0	0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Czechia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Germany	1 517 432	1 562 834	1 550 342	1 413 209	138 114	942 893	176 254	1 257 260	-7.7	-18.5	+64.5	-11.0
France	387 472	390 256	420 112	380 851	262 152	108 724	237	371 113	+5.0	-17.0	+111.6	-2.6
Croatia	0	0	12	46	0	0	0	0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Luxembourg	0	6 615	7 874	5 525	-	5 755	53	5 808	-	+4.5	+211.8	+5.1
Hungary	0	2	0	46	0	184	0	184	-	+300.0	-	+300.0
Netherlands	2 744 732	3 588 610	3 779 010	3 557 935	1 309 311	1 037 132	656 032	3 002 475	-12.2	-20.1	-14.7	-15.6
Austria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Poland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Romania	287	143	292	12 443	6 983	16 355	0	23 338	+5.4	+181.3	-	+87.6
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Finland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Sweden	-	-	-	7 207	11 537	0	0	11 537	+60.1	-	-	+60.1

(-) Not applicable

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Note: only countries for which data are available are presented.

(*) To avoid double counting, the international transport for EU aggregates is calculated by adding the international unloadings plus the international loadings for which the unloading country is not in the EU. Then the total transport is the sum of the national and international transport. Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_acsize)

eurostat 

Table 2: Inland waterway transport of loaded containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023 (TEUs) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

In 2023, movements of empty containers declined by 2.9% (see Table 3) in terms of TEU-km but to a higher extent in TEUs, by 8.5% (see Table 4). The decrease in empty container transport was mainly a result of the fall of national (-9.2% for TEU-km and -9.6% for TEUs) and international transport (-9.1% for TEU-km and -6.3% for TEUs). By contrast, transit transport in the EU, measured only in TEU-km, increased by 40.7%. This increase was mostly due to Germany where transit transport of empty containers increased substantially (+138.8% for TEU-km).

At country level, the Netherlands and Germany were again by far the major contributors to the inland waterway transport performance of empty containers (in TEU-km) in 2023, followed by France and Belgium (see Table 3). Altogether, these 4 countries represented 99% of the total movements of empty containers in the EU, when expressed in TEU-km. Amongst these 4 countries, national transport was predominant in France (93.1% of the total transport of empty containers), Belgium (71.8%) and the Netherlands (52.6%). In Germany, international transport dominated, with 63.9%, while national and transit transport represented 12.2% and 23.9%, respectively. In the Netherlands, international transport represented 30.0%; in Belgium 27.1%; and in France 6.8%. At 17.5%, transit transport was significant in the Netherlands, whereas in Belgium, it was only 1.1% and in France it was less than 0.1%.

Inland waterway transport of empty containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023
(thousand TEU-kilometres)

	2013	2019	2021	2022	2023				Change 2023/2022 (%)			
	Total	Total	Total	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total
EU (*)	506 994.7	439 238.3	432 646.5	404 551.9	154 767.9	166 997.8	70 965.1	392 730.9	-9.2	-9.1	+40.7	-2.9
Belgium	9 116.5	24 850.0	27 044.9	22 300.6	14 137.3	5 331.2	216.4	19 684.9	-12.1	-12.2	+56.6	-11.7
Bulgaria	378.3	732.3	41.9	1 275.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Czechia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Germany	205 438.5	181 736.4	171 829.5	144 033.6	19 471.2	101 966.8	38 193.9	159 631.8	+3.6	-6.7	+138.8	+10.8
France	24 527.1	27 108.5	24 666.1	35 736.5	21 539.3	1 578.9	11.3	23 129.5	-35.5	-32.1	+101.2	-35.3
Croatia	103.5	151.8	145.3	364.6	0.0	0.0	8.3	8.3	-	-	-97.7	-97.7
Luxembourg	0.0	169.6	206.3	155.4	0.0	170.0	0.0	170.0	-	+9.5	-100.0	+9.4
Hungary	155.2	788.0	1 300.1	989.3	0.0	581.9	0.0	581.9	-	-10.2	-100.0	-41.2
Netherlands	265 657.1	201 552.1	205 672.9	195 576.7	97 990.4	55 914.3	32 535.2	186 440.0	-2.7	-10.6	+0.6	-4.7
Austria	922.4	839.5	1 059.8	208.7	0.0	418.0	0.0	418.0	-	+100.3	-	+100.3
Poland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Romania	681.3	1 310.2	673.2	3 804.0	1 359.2	1 036.8	0.0	2 395.9	+5.6	-58.8	-	-37.0
Slovakia	14.9	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Finland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Sweden	:	:	:	106.9	270.6	0.0	0.0	270.6	+153.0	-	-	+153.0

(-) Not applicable

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Note: only countries for which data are available are presented.

(*) Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_acsize)

eurostat 

Table 3: Inland waterway transport of empty containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023 (thousand TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

When analysing the transport of empty containers in TEUs (see Table 4), the Netherlands contributed 54.2% to the EU total, and Germany accounted for 21.2%. Belgium also had a predominant role with 17.4% contribution to the total EU values. France followed with 6.3%. Again, altogether, these 4 countries represented more than 99% of the total movements of empty containers in the EU, when expressed in TEUs. Amongst these 4 countries, national transport was predominant in France and the Netherlands, at 71.5% and 53.3% of the total transport of empty containers, respectively; while international transport represented 28.5% and 32.8%, respectively. In Germany, international transport dominated, with 68.3%, while in Belgium, the shares of national and international types of transport were 46.8% and 51.7%, respectively. Transit transport was significant only in the Netherlands and Germany, with shares at 13.9% and 10.9%, respectively. On the contrary, it was 1.5% in Belgium and less than 0.1% in France.

In 2023, Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden registered substantial increases in the transport of empty containers. The summed share of these countries made up 0.4% of the total empty container transport (in TEU-km) in the EU, while their share accounted for 0.2% of TEU-km.

Inland waterway transport of empty containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023

	2013	2019	2021	2022	2023				Change 2023/2022 (%)			
	Total	Total	Total	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total	National	Inter-national	Transit	Total
EU (*)	2 176 530	2 181 440	2 102 824	2 001 170	1 229 009	601 459	-	1 830 468	-9.6	-6.3	-	-8.5
Belgium	537 810	675 554	651 898	526 072	216 515	238 799	6 946	462 260	-16.2	-7.8	-20.4	-12.1
Bulgaria	790	1 558	116	2 714	0	0	0	0	-	-	-100.0	-100.0
Czechia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Germany	689 463	707 819	670 824	557 240	117 012	383 931	61 150	562 092	+2.1	-7.7	+128.3	+0.9
France	164 309	178 550	163 306	224 621	119 693	47 664	73	167 430	-28.3	-17.3	+102.8	-25.5
Croatia	750	1 100	1 053	2 642	0	0	60	60	-	-	-97.7	-97.7
Luxembourg	0	4 894	6 259	4 470	0	4 942	0	4 942	-	+10.6	-100.0	+10.5
Hungary	750	4 352	7 297	4 314	0	3 366	0	3 366	-	-1.4	-100.0	-22.0
Netherlands	2 027 716	1 482 060	1 531 975	1 520 451	766 728	470 857	199 834	1 437 419	-5.6	-7.8	+1.3	-5.5
Austria	5 127	3 967	5 226	1 168	0	2 497	0	2 497	-	+113.8	-	+113.8
Poland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Romania	868	1 678	1 422	10 232	7 006	4 250	0	11 256	+5.6	+18.2	-	+10.0
Slovakia	1 120	0	480	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Finland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Sweden	-	-	-	804	2 055	0	0	2 055	+155.6	-	-	+155.6

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Note: only countries for which data are available are presented.

(*) To avoid double counting, the international transport for EU aggregates is calculated by adding the international unloadings plus the international loadings for which the unloading country is not in the EU. Then the total transport is the sum of the national and international transport. Data for Sweden are not included in period 2013-2021. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_accsize)

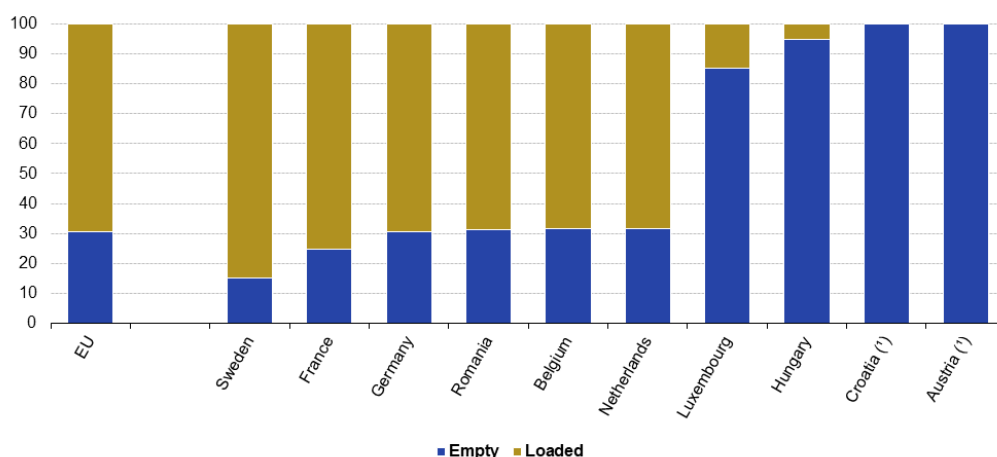


Table 4: Inland waterway transport of empty containers by type of transport, in selected years, 2013-2023 (TEUs) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_accsize)

At EU level, 69.3% of TEU-km accounted for the shipment of loaded containers in 2023 (see Figure 4). Sweden (85.0%), France (75.3%) and Germany (69.6%) exceeded the EU level in 2023. Romania (68.6%), Belgium and the Netherlands (both 68.3%) reported just below the EU level, while the remaining countries had much lower shares; Luxembourg: 14.6%, and Hungary 5.2%. Croatia and Austria only reported empty containers. Countries with exclusively or very high levels of empty containers transported on inland waterways reported methodological clarifications related to the structure of their transport: the empty containers are transported on inland waterways from one port to another where they are loaded and then taken further by road or rail. In some cases, for instance in Austria, the empty containers themselves are considered as goods.

Inland waterway transport of containers by loading status, 2023

(%, based on TEU-kilometres)



Note: there is no transport of containers in Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland, Slovakia and Finland. Data for Italy and Lithuania are not available.

(*) No transport of loaded containers.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_accsize)



Figure 4: Inland EU waterway transport of containers by loading status, 2023 (% based on TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_accsize)

40-foot containers are predominant on EU inland waterways

In terms of the size of loaded containers being transported, 40-foot freight units were dominant at EU level, accounting for 76.1% of all loaded containers (see Figure 5). The next most commonly-used type was the 20-foot container with 19.9%, while intermediate containers (>20 feet and <40 feet) made up 2.8% of the total, and containers over 40 feet accounted for 1.2%. Only Netherlands, Germany and Sweden reported movements 40-feet. 40-foot freight unit is most popular in all reporting countries (with a share higher than 50%), except Luxembourg, where 20-foot was category (80.9%).«

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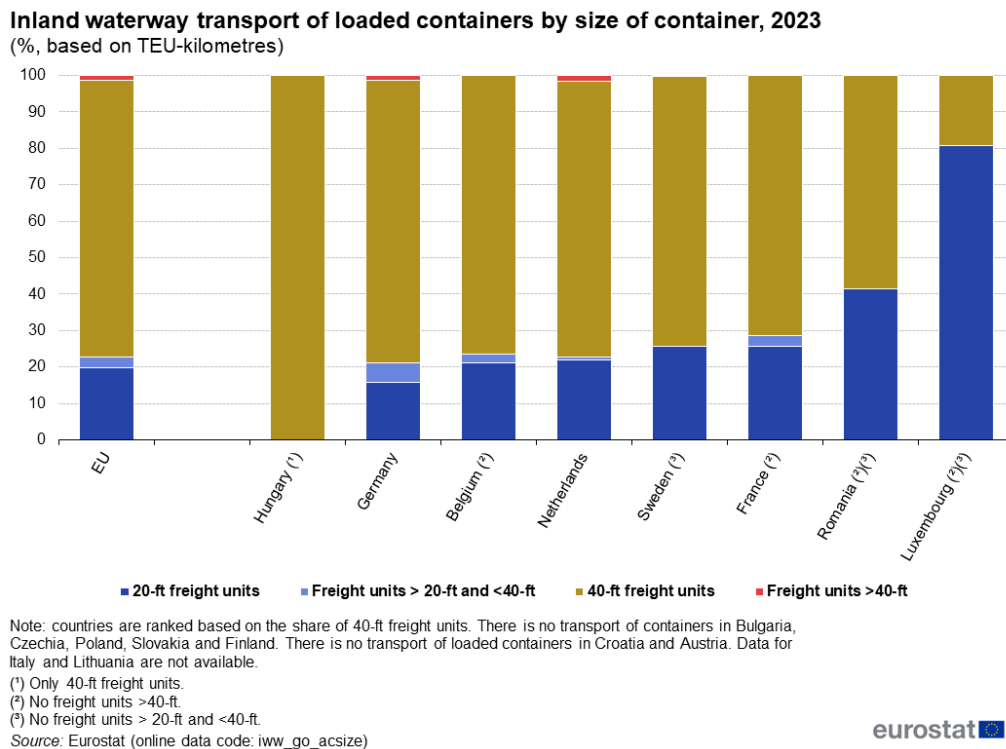


Figure 5: Inland waterway transport of loaded containers by size of container, 2023 (% , based on TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

For empty containers at EU level, the picture looked very similar, with intermediate (freight units >20-ft and <40-ft) and very large containers (freight units >40) accounting for 1.9% and 1.1%, respectively, of the total transport performance of empty containers in TEU-km (see Figure 6). The most commonly reported category in all countries was 40-foot containers, except in Austria, where containers over 40 feet dominated (93.9%). The other exception was Luxembourg, which recorded a high percentage of 20-foot containers (84.9%).

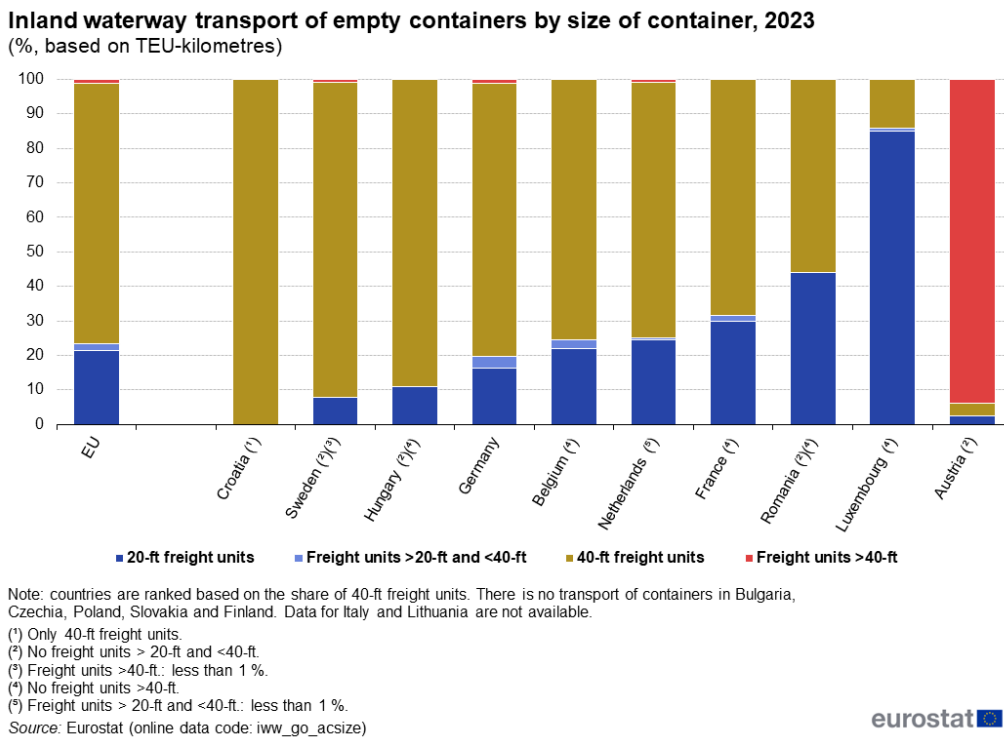


Figure 6: Inland waterway transport of empty containers by size of container, 2023 (% , based on TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_acsize)

Country-to-country flows dominated by the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium

Country-to-country flows in 2023 illustrated the dominance of the 3 main inland waterway countries: the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. The top 5 flows and the 8th flow were between these 3 countries accounting for 75.6% of the total flows in TEU-km (see Table 5). When looking at TEUs, the situation is similar, with the top 6 flows involving these 3 countries and accounting for 91.4% of the total flows in TEUs (see Table 6). However, the ranking of these flows varied, depending on whether transport is measured in TEUs or in TEU-km. For example, the Netherlands to Belgium flow moves in ranking from position 2 in country-to-country flows by TEUs (see Table 6) to position 5 when measured by TEU-km (see Table 5). This is due to the proximity of the 2 countries and the short distances transported between them.

Top 10 international country flows for inland waterway transport of containers, 2023

(thousand TEU-kilometres)

Loading country	Unloading country	Total	Share on total (%)
Germany	Belgium	174 098	20.3
Netherlands	Germany	146 706	17.1
Germany	Netherlands	132 940	15.5
Belgium	Germany	114 792	13.4
Netherlands	Belgium	49 283	5.8
Switzerland	Belgium	38 851	4.5
Netherlands	Switzerland	32 747	3.8
Belgium	Netherlands	30 287	3.5
France	Belgium	28 249	3.3
Belgium	Switzerland	21 513	2.5
Other routes		87 465	10.2

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_actygofl)



Table 5: Top 10 international country flows for inland waterway transport of containers, 2023 (thousand TEU-kilometres) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_actygofl)

Switzerland is also present in the top 10 flows, with 3 appearances in positions 6, 7 and 10 when looking at TEU-km; the main flow being Switzerland to Belgium, followed by the Netherlands to Switzerland flow and the Belgium to Switzerland flow (see Table 5). When looking at TEUs, Switzerland appeared only once in the top 10 flows with the Netherlands to Switzerland flow in the 8th position (see Table 6).

France was another country appearing in the top 10 flows in 2023. When looking at TEU-km, the France to Belgium flow was in 9th position (see Table 5), while for TEUs, France appeared 3 times in the top 10 flows with the France to Belgium flow in 7th position, the Netherlands to France flow in 9th position and the France to the Netherlands flow in 10th position (see Table 6).

Top 10 international country flows for inland waterway transport of containers, 2023 (TEUs)

Loading country	Unloading country	Total	Share on total (%)
Netherlands	Germany	456 087	22.0
Netherlands	Belgium	358 140	17.2
Germany	Netherlands	352 222	17.0
Germany	Belgium	326 987	15.7
Belgium	Netherlands	255 694	12.3
Belgium	Germany	150 642	7.3
France	Belgium	60 018	2.9
Netherlands	Switzerland	36 820	1.8
Netherlands	France	22 991	1.1
France	Netherlands	12 677	0.6
Other routes		45 465	2.2

Notes: Transit transport reported by countries is not taken into account. The unloading country is also the reporting country.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: iww_go_actygo1)



Table 6: Top 10 international country flows for inland waterway transport of containers, 2023 (TEUs) Source: Eurostat (iww_go_actygo1)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Inland waterway - statistics on container transport: tables and figures](#)

Data sources

All figures presented in this article have been extracted from the [Eurostat](#) online inland waterways transport database. The related datasets are collected according to [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/974](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways. Regulation (EU) 2018/974 consolidated the initial [Regulation \(EC\) No 1365/2006](#) on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways and all its implementing and amending legal acts: [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 425/2007](#) (implementing regulation), [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1304/2007](#) (amending regulation) and [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1954](#) (amending regulation).

Regulation (EU) 2018/974 states that data must be supplied by all Member States for which the total volume of goods transported annually by inland waterways exceeds 1 million tonnes. Currently, 17 Member States provide data on a mandatory or voluntary basis: Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czechia (CZ), Germany (DE), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), the Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI) and Sweden (SE). Thirteen Member States (previously 12, but since 2022 also Sweden fulfils the requirements for mandatory reporting) have a legal obligation to provide data for inland waterway transport, where transport of goods by containers is one category of cargo classification. The legal act requires only the provision of a reduced annual dataset for countries exceeding the 1 million tonnes threshold but where no international or transit traffic exists. **Definitions**

National inland waterway transport : Inland waterway transport between two ports of a national territory irrespective of the nationality of the vessel.

International inland waterway transport : Inland waterway transport between two ports located in different national territories.

Transit inland waterway transport : Inland waterway transport through a national territory between two ports both located in another national territory or national territories provided that in the total journey within the national territory there is no [transshipment](#) .

TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) is a statistical unit based on an ISO container measuring 20 feet (6.10 m) to provide a standardised measure for counting containers of various capacities and for describing the capacity of container ships or terminals. One 20-foot ISO container equals 1 TEU.

EU includes data for all Member States that provide data.

Calculation of EU aggregates : In Tables 2 and 4, the EU international and total goods transport in TEUs is calculated excluding double counting. In order to achieve that, the EU's total international transport is calculated by adding the international unloadings declared by the EU countries plus the international loadings for which the unloading country is not in the EU. Then, the EU total transport is calculated by adding the national transport and the total international transport.

For transit transport measured in TEUs, an EU aggregate equal to the sum of the country figures is not valid because volumes of freight transported are reported by all transit countries through which the transport takes place before reaching the unloading destination. Therefore, the same volume may be reported two, three, or more times without the possibility to eliminate multiple counting. At the same time, figures for transit transport are included in the EU national or international transport as they are reported not only by the transit countries but also by the loading and unloading countries. So, for the EU total volume, it is enough to sum the total national and international figures.

Country specific notes

Belgium: a break in time series can be observed in 2018 due to an improvement in the data collection system.

Italy: No data on inland waterway transport of containers available.

Lithuania: No data on inland waterway transport of containers available.

Finland: There is no inland waterway transport of containers.

Sweden: Data were delivered on a voluntary basis until 2021. Only a simplified annual dataset was provided until 2021. Data on containers are available only from 2022.

Symbols

- ":" not available
- "-" not applicable
- "0" real zero

Context

The content of this statistical article is based on data collected within the framework of [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/974](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways.

Explore further

Other articles

- [Inland waterway transport statistics by product category](#)
- [Inland waterway freight transport - quarterly and annual data](#)
- [Freight transport statistics - modal split](#)
- [Inland transport infrastructure at regional level](#)

Database

- [Transport](#) , see detailed datasets under the following categories:

Inland waterways transport (iww)

Inland waterways transport infrastructure (iww_if)

Inland waterways transport equipment (iww_eq)

Inland waterways transport - Enterprises, economic performances and employment (iww_ec)

Inland waterways transport measurement - goods (iww_go)

Inland waterways - accidents (iww_ac)

Thematic section

- [Transport](#)

Publications

- [All transport publications on line](#)
- [Key figures on European transport - 2023 edition](#)

Selected datasets

- [Transport](#) , see selected datasets under 'Inland waterways transport':

Inland waterways transport (t_iww)

Goods transport by inland waterways (ttr00007)

Methodology

- [Inland waterway transport](#) (ESMS metadata file)
- [Reference Manual on Inland Waterways Transport Statistics](#)
- [Glossary for transport statistics - 5th edition - 2019](#)

Legislation

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/974](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways
- [Summaries of EU legislation: EU statistics of goods transport by inland waterways](#)
- [Regulation \(EC\) No 1365/2006](#) on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways
- [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 425/2007](#) (implementing regulation)
- [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1304/2007](#) (amending regulation)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1954](#) (amending regulation)