Maritime vessels statistics | Statistics Explained

Data extracted in January 2025.
Planned update: January 2026.

Highlights

" In 2023, 2.2 million vessels entered the main EU ports. "

" Greece recorded the largest number of vessel port calls in 2023. "

" The average size of vessels calling at main EU ports is estimated at 8 058 gross tonnage per vessel. "

This article presents the latest statistical data on vessels traffic in main ports in the European Union (EU) , the EFTA country Norway and the candidate countries Montenegro and Türkiye. This article contains data for 2023.

In 2023, 2.2 million vessels entered the main EU ports

In 2023, the number of vessels calling (handling freight or embarking and disembarking passengers) in main EU ports was estimated at 2.2 million, an increase of 1.5% from the previous year. Greece had the largest number of port calls in 2023 (477 115 vessels), followed by Italy (449 131 vessels), Denmark (322 230 vessels), Croatia (282 404 vessels), Spain (177 667 vessels) and Germany (115 531 vessels) (Table 1).

Vessels in main ports, in selected years, 2013-2023

(number)

	2013	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022 (%)	Change 2023/2013 (%)
EU	2 001 736	2 273 393	1 940 975	1 981 323	2 134 994	2 166 837	1.5	8.2
Belgium	23 226	24 476	22 501	23 633	21 750	21 058	-3.2	-9.3
Bulgaria	3 620	3 451	3 161	3 101	3 257	2 851	-12.5	-21.2
Denmark	344 186	322 427	323 819	328 192	313 607	322 230	2.7	-6.4
Germany	118 025	108 930	103 004	104 283	116 341	115 531	-0.7	-2.1
Estonia	30 504	30 774	28 730	31 335	32 091	31 605	-1.5	3.6
Ireland	11 021	12 222	11 299	11 833	11 868	11 495	-3.1	4.3
Greece	466 682	515 690	361 828	424 326	448 269	477 115	6.4	2.2
Spain	135 597	204 514	136 661	159 416	199 957	177 667	-11.1	31.0
France	46 444	62 103	41 183	50 199	57 791	52 527	-9.1	13.1
Croatia	201 219	283 841	197 006	245 079	272 971	282 404	3.5	40.3
Italy	406 488	468 596	503 062	378 140	425 293	449 131	5.6	10.5
Cyprus	2 177	1 848	1 678	1 735	1 945	2 090	7.5	-4.0
Latvia	6 638	6 428	5 824	5 629	5 740	5 025	-12.5	-24.3
Lithuania	4 405	5 017	5 008	5 065	4 441	4 338	-2.3	-1.5
Malta	22 882	30 202	31 676	39 611	43 569	45 949	5.5	100.8
Netherlands (¹)	34 527	41 333	38 337	39 815	40 187	38 538	-4.1	11.6
Poland	14 646	17 639	15 503	17 033	16 584	16 644	0.4	13.6
Portugal	11 982	14 171	11 989	12 140	12 708	12 904	1.5	7.7
Romania	4 593	4 123	4 100	5 228	5 351	5 210	-2.6	13.4
Slovenia	1 941	1 649	1 397	1 527	1 812	1 760	-2.9	-9.3
Finland	32 673	31 968	25 297	26 213	26 641	23 997	-9.9	-26.6
Sweden	78 260	81 991	67 912	67 790	72 821	66 768	-8.3	-14.7
Norway	59 218	50 418	51 270	54 592	60 360	62 140	2.9	4.9
Montenegro	:	606	509	589	977	902	-7.7	:
Türkiye	65 630	55 074	48 684	50 994	57 786	59 868	3.6	-8.8

(:) not available

Note: main ports are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or 200 000 passengers annually. Data are based on inward declarations.

(¹) Break in time series from 2015 due to methodological improvement in the data reported by the Netherlands.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: mar_mt_am_csvi)

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Table 2: Vessels in main ports, in selected years, 2013-2023 (number) Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

Eight countries recorded an increase in 2023 compared with 2022: Cyprus (+7.5%), Greece (+6.4%), Italy (+5.6%), Malta (+5.5%), Croatia (+3.5%), Denmark (+2.7%), Portugal (+1.5%) and Poland (+0.4%). Among the remaining EU countries, Bulgaria and Latvia registered the largest decrease (both -12.5%), followed by Spain (-11.1%). Germany recorded the least decline by 0.7% compared with 2022.

Compared with 2013, 12 EU countries registered increases. The largest increases were recorded in Malta (+100.8%), followed by Croatia (+40.3%) and Spain (+31.0%). By contrast, the largest decreases were recorded by Finland (-26.6%), Latvia (-24.3%) and Bulgaria (-21.2%). The candidate country Türkiye also decreased by 8.8%.

The average size of vessels calling at main EU ports is estimated at 8 058 gross tonnage per vessel

In 2023, the estimated gross tonnage (GT) of the vessels calling in EU ports increased to 17.5 billion GT (+6.7% from the previous year). Italy recorded the largest gross tonnage of vessels calling at its main ports in 2023 with 3.7 billion GT, followed by Spain (2.7 billion GT) (Table 2).

Thirteen countries recorded an increase in 2023 compared with 2022. Italy registered the largest increase (+32.6%), followed by Greece (+14.1%), Romania (+11.5%), Portugal and Cyprus (10.8%). Among the remaining EU countries, Latvia recorded the largest decrease (-13.9%), followed by Finland (-3.9%), France (-2.8%), Ireland (-2.7%), Sweden (-2.2%) and Denmark (-1.1%), whereas Malta, Lithuania and Spain recorded a decrease of less than 1%.

Compared with 2013, all countries registered increases except Latvia and Finland (-24.8% and -9.6%, respectively). The largest increase was recorded by Poland (+71.0%), followed by Croatia (+59.1%) and Spain (+53.2%). Twelve EU countries registered increases between 20% and 50%. The EFTA country Norway and also the candidate country Türkiye registered substantial increases, (+37.2% and +30.9%, respectively).

Gross Tonnage of vessels in main ports, in selected years, 2013-2023
(thousand)

	2013	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022 (%)	Change 2023/2013 (%)
EU	13 654 084	16 385 584	13 364 960	14 254 180	16 358 848	17 461 237	6.7	27.9
Belgium	556 932	671 792	637 890	654 998	667 922	683 239	2.3	22.7
Bulgaria	31 726	33 707	28 663	28 195	33 677	34 008	1.0	7.2
Denmark	1 074 814	1 167 870	1 027 885	1 082 187	1 164 594	1 151 249	-1.1	7.1
Germany	1 149 769	1 205 309	953 514	984 928	1 114 442	1 151 706	3.3	0.2
Estonia	338 541	381 652	324 529	361 273	366 773	371 203	1.2	9.6
Ireland	204 193	268 165	252 199	268 931	287 063	279 225	-2.7	36.7
Greece	1 125 100	1 421 806	1 021 410	1 219 524	1 364 314	1 557 148	14.1	38.4
Spain	1 757 322	2 399 647	1 774 177	2 009 170	2 697 722	2 692 530	-0.2	53.2
France	1 247 257	1 507 501	1 144 387	1 280 378	1 576 694	1 532 372	-2.8	22.9
Croatia	272 190	379 983	287 349	347 156	401 513	432 945	7.8	59.1
Italy	2 461 366	2 859 964	2 415 323	2 383 056	2 757 879	3 657 434	32.6	48.6
Cyprus	31 720	33 446	27 833	33 136	34 686	38 424	10.8	21.1
Latvia	85 348	84 542	65 051	57 983	74 495	64 149	-13.9	-24.8
Lithuania	57 778	73 910	73 764	74 887	85 941	85 343	-0.7	47.7
Malta	215 998	268 415	266 702	291 814	280 380	277 662	-1.0	28.5
Netherlands (¹)	714 214	956 939	879 853	902 492	948 807	950 826	0.2	33.1
Poland	165 763	242 926	225 481	240 461	265 888	283 408	6.6	71.0
Portugal	197 733	253 345	189 635	189 292	236 771	262 347	10.8	32.7
Romania	51 899	56 825	52 036	76 882	69 439	77 448	11.5	49.2
Slovenia	38 943	50 517	40 999	42 734	49 398	52 057	5.4	33.7
Finland	740 747	781 577	588 068	618 974	696 916	669 485	-3.9	-9.6
Sweden	1 134 730	1 285 745	1 088 217	1 105 730	1 183 531	1 157 031	-2.2	2.0
Norway	339 754	284 938	288 150	299 175	471 605	465 987	-1.2	37.2
Montenegro	:	6 526	4 710	7 187	29 671	25 732	-13.3	:
Türkiye	682 378	794 185	789 947	828 706	871 840	893 547	2.5	30.9

(:) not available
Note: main ports are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or 200 000 passengers annually. Data are based on inward declarations.
(¹) Break in time series from 2015 due to methodological improvement in the data reported by the Netherlands.
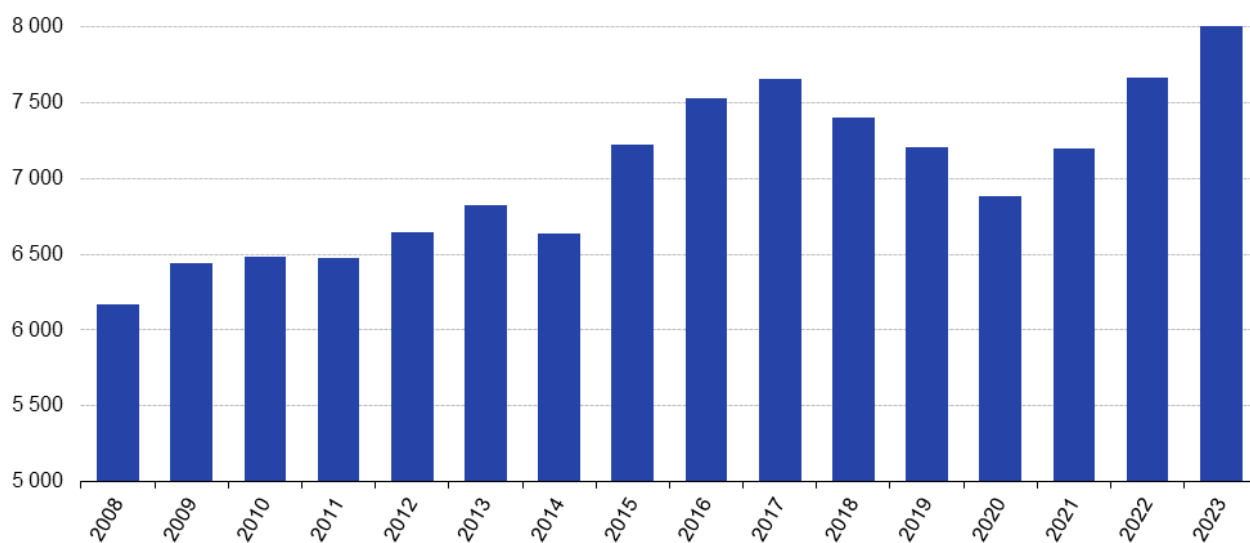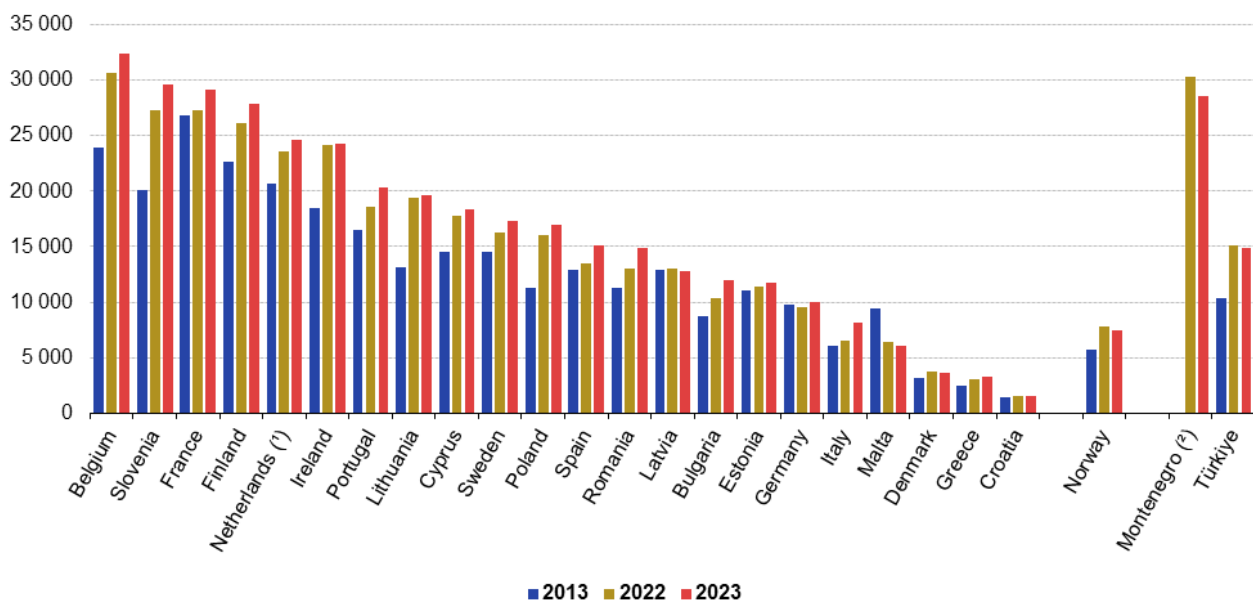*Source:* Eurostat (online data code: mar_mt_am_csvi)

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Table 2: Gross tonnage of vessels in main ports, in selected years, 2013-2023 (thousand) Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

In 2023, the average size of vessels calling at the main EU ports increased by 5.2%, to slightly more than 8 000 GT, compared with the previous year (Figure 1).

Average size of vessels calling at main ports, EU, 2008-2023
(gross tonnage per vessel)

Note: main ports are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or 200 000 passengers annually. Data are based on inward declarations. Break in time series from 2015 due to methodological improvement in the data reported by the Netherlands.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: mar_mt_am_csvi)

Figure 1: Average size of vessels calling at main ports, EU, 2008-2023 (gross tonnage per vessel) Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

In 2023, Belgium remained the EU country which registered the largest average size of vessels at the main ports, followed by Slovenia and France. The candidate country Montenegro also recorded a high than average size of vessel, compared with that of the top 3 EU countries (Figure 2).

Compared with 2022, the largest increase was registered by Italy (+25.6%), whereas the largest decrease was recorded by Malta (-6.1%). Among the EU countries, 19 saw increases compared with 2022, while 20 EU countries decreased compared with 2013.

Average size of vessels calling at main ports, 2013, 2022 and 2023
(gross tonnage per vessel)

Note: main ports are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or 200 000 passengers annually. Data are based on inward declarations.
(¹) Break in time series from 2015 due to methodological improvement in the data reported by the Netherlands.
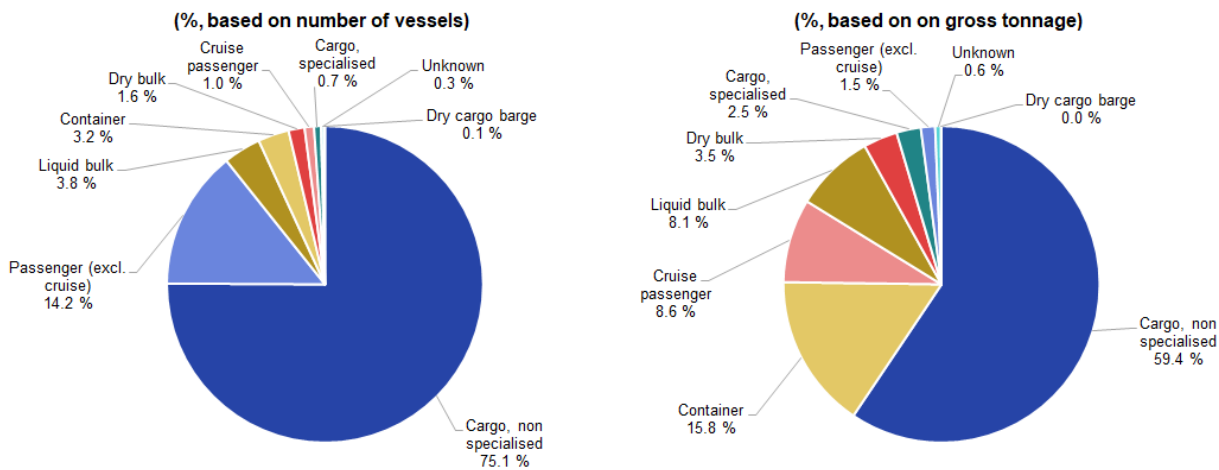(²) 2013 data not available
Source: Eurostat (online data code: mar_mt_am_csvi)

Figure 2: Average size of vessels calling at main ports, 2013, 2022 and 2023 (gross tonnage per vessel) Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

Vessels in the category 'Cargo, non-specialised' (which includes Ro-Ro vessels) made the highest share of calls to the main EU ports in 2023 (75.1% of the vessels and 59.4% of the gross tonnage). When based on the number of vessels, the next category was passenger vessels (14.2%), which excluded cruise passengers, followed by liquid bulk vessels (3.8%) and container vessels (3.2%) (Figure 3). When looking at the shares based on gross tonnage, container vessels came second, with 15.8%, followed by cruise passenger vessels (8.6%), liquid bulk vessels (8.1%) and dry bulk vessels (3.5%). Passenger vessels represented only 1.5% based on gross tonnage, indicating their lower size compared with the other types of vessels.

Vessels in main ports by type of vessel, EU, 2023

(%, based on number of vessels)

Dry bulk 1.6 %
Cruise passenger 1.0 %
Cargo, specialised 0.7 %
Unknown 0.3 %
Container 3.2 %
Dry cargo barge 0.1 %
Liquid bulk 3.8 %
Passenger (excl. cruise) 14.2 %
Cargo, non specialised 75.1 %

(%, based on on gross tonnage)

Passenger (excl. cruise) 1.5 %
Unknown 0.6 %
Cargo, specialised 2.5 %
Dry cargo barge 0.0 %
Dry bulk 3.5 %
Liquid bulk 8.1 %
Cruise passenger 8.6 %
Container 15.8 %
Cargo, non specialised 59.4 %

Note: main ports are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or 200 000 passengers annually. Data are based on inward declarations.
*Source*: Eurostat (online data code: mar_mt_am_csvi)

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Figure 3: Vessels in main ports by type of vessel, EU, 2023 Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

Messina remained the largest EU port in terms of number of vessels

The top 20 ports accounted for 30.1% of the total number of vessels in the reporting countries in 2023. The port of Messina remained the largest EU port in 2023, with almost 66 000 vessels (Figure 4). Sixteen ports out of the top 20 increased, compared with 2022. Among the top 20 ports in 2023, Algeciras recorded the largest increase in 2023 compared with the previous year (+21.9%), followed by Napoli (+16.0%), Reggio Di Calabria (+15.9%) and Piraeus (+15.4%). By contrast, Sibenik (-3.2%), Helsingborg (-2.6%), Rotterdam (-2.5%) and Helsingor (Elsinore) (-0.2%) recorded falls in 2023 compared with 2022, dropping three, one, one and two positions in the ranking, respectively. Compared with 2022, only one port entered the top 20: Procida replaced Mġarr-Gozo.

Top 20 EU maritime ports in terms of number vessels, 2013, 2022 and 2023
(thousand)
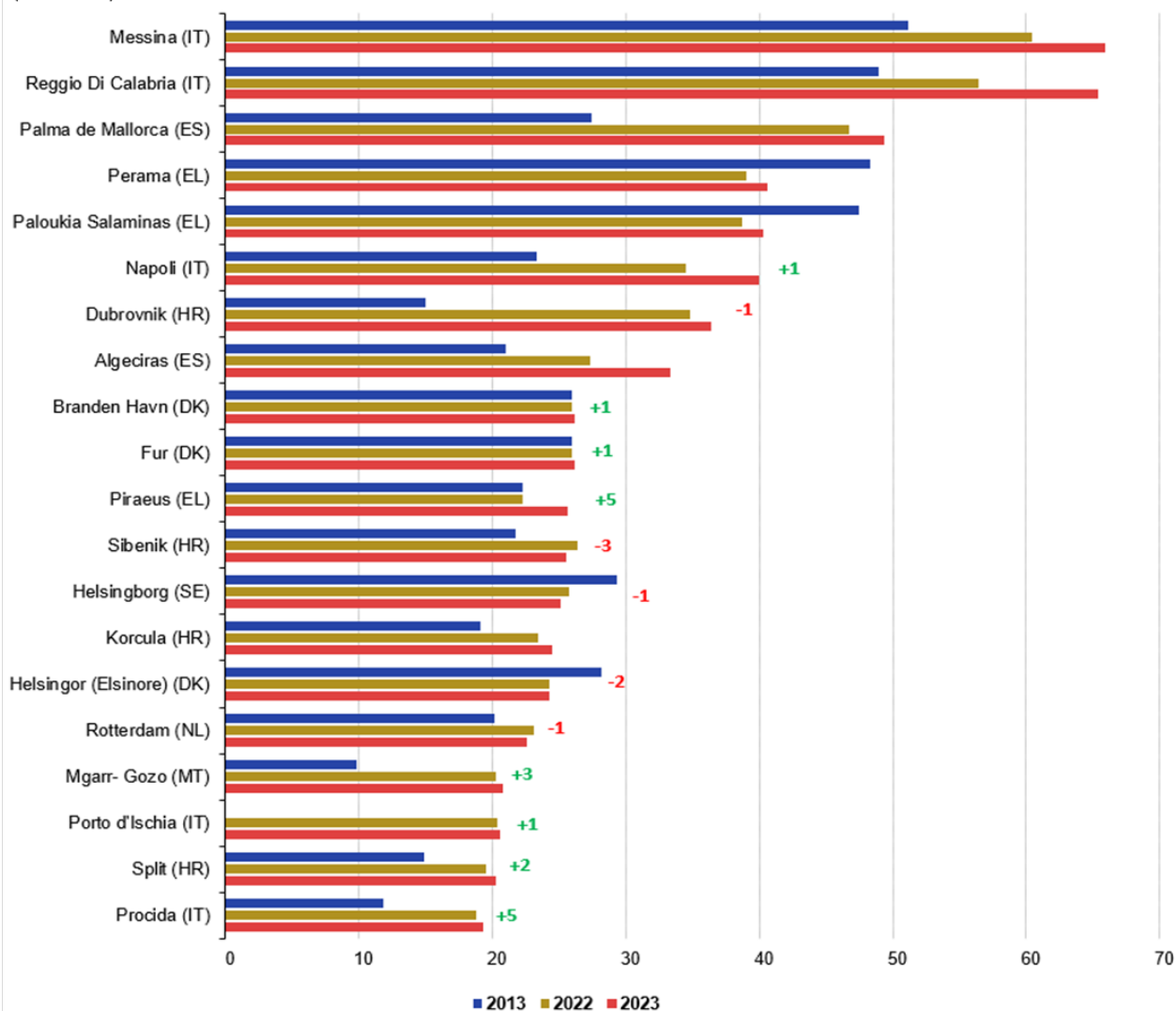
Note: ports are ranked based on number of vessels in main ports in 2023. Data are based on inward declarations. The number presented indicates the number of positions lost or gained compared to 2022. When no number is displayed, it means that the port maintained the same position compared to 2022.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: mar_tf_qm)

Figure 4: Top 20 EU maritime ports in terms of number vessels, 2013, 2022 and 2023 (thousand) Source: Eurostat (mar_mt_am_csvi)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Maritime ports vessel statistics: tables and figures

Data sources

This article presents the trends in vessel traffic in the main European Union (EU) ports and also includes figures for Norway, Montenegro and Türkiye. The content is based on data collected within the legal framework for EU maritime transport statistics, i.e. Directive 2009/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 on statistical returns in respect of carriage of goods and passengers by sea and later amendments. Directive 2009/42/EC is a recast of the original Council Directive 95/64/EC of 8 December 1995.

The EU aggregates in the statistics refer to the total of 22 maritime Member States . Czechia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia have no maritime ports. Norway provides Eurostat with data as members of the

European Economic Area (EEA) . The EEA country Liechtenstein has no maritime ports. Data for Iceland are not available as the country does not have detailed reporting of data sets and does not report data on vessels. Montenegro and Türkiye provide data as candidate countries .

'Main ports' are ports handling more than one million tonnes of goods or more than 200 000 passengers annually (however, data for some smaller ports may be included in the published results). Data are presented at level of ' statistical ports '. A statistical port consists of one or more ports, normally controlled by a single port authority, able to record ship and cargo movements.

Explanatory notes:

Please note that data can be subject to revision and latest data are available in Eurostat's online database.

Basic results and derived indicators (such as growth rates and shares in % of total) in the tables are rounded. However, the figures are based on the non-rounded original data. As a result, the sum of shares in % of total, as shown in the tables, is not necessarily equal to 100%.

Explanatory notes for countries are available in the metadata on the Eurostat website .

Starting from 2011, the figures for Spain include data for a number of minor regional ports outside the state-controlled port system. There is a break in time series from 2015 due to methodological improvement in the data reported by the Netherlands. Montenegro started to report data on vessel traffic in 2018. Detailed data on main ports are not available for Iceland, as the country has not provided detailed reporting.

Type of vessel (Figure 3):

- Liquid bulk: oil tanker, chemical tanker, LG tanker, tanker barge, other tanker.

- Dry bulk: bulk/oil carrier, bulk carrier.

- Container: full container.

- Cargo, specialised: barge carrier, chemical carrier, irradiated fuel, livestock carrier, vehicle carrier, other specialised.

- Cargo, non-specialised: reefer, Ro-Ro passenger, Ro-Ro container, other Ro-Ro cargo, combination carrier general cargo/passenger, combination carrier general cargo/container, single-decker, multi-decker.

- Passenger: passenger (excluding cruise passenger vessels).

- Unknown type of vessel.

Special symbols used in the tables

':' not available

Context

The content of this statistical article is based on data collected within the framework of the EU maritime transport statistics Directive, i.e. Directive 2009/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 on statistical returns in respect of carriage of goods and passengers by sea (OJ L141 of 6.6.2009, page 29), which is a recast of the original Council Directive 95/64 (EC) of 8 December 1995.

The basic legal act (Directive 2009/42/EC) was amended by:

- Commission Decision 2010/216/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 April 2010, OJ L 94, 15.4.2010, p. 33-40

- Regulation (EU) No 1090/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010, OJ L 325, 9.12.2010, p. 1-3

- Commission Delegated Decision 2012/186/EU of 3 February 2012 OJ L 101 of 11.4.2012 pp. 5-14.

The following legal acts include respectively the last official version of the list of ports and some dissemination aspects:

- Commission Decision 2001/423/EC of 22 May 2001 (on dissemination) OJ L 151 of 07.06.2001 p. 41

- Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2018/1007 of 25 April 2018 supplementing Directive 2009/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the list of ports and repealing Commission Decision 2008/861/EC (Text with EEA relevance.) OJ L 180, 17.7.2018, p. 29–71

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- Energy, transport and environment statistics - 2020 edition

Methodology

- Maritime transport (ESMS metadata file — mar_esms)

- Reference Manual on Maritime Transport Statistics

- Glossary for transport statistics - 5th edition - 2019