This article takes a look at recent annual and quarterly statistics on rail passenger transport in the European Union (EU). The article is based on data collected on the basis of Regulation Regulation (EU) No 2018/643 recast of Regulation (EU) No 2016/2032. After a period of sustained growth, rail transport performance in passenger-kilometres started to feel the effects of the economic crisis at the beginning of 2009. Rail passenger transport nevertheless remained less affected than rail freight transport, and registered a recovery from 2010 onwards.

Rail passengers transport performance continued to increase in 2017

Estimated at 465 billion passenger-kilometres in 2017, rail passenger transport performance at EU-28 level continued its increase by 3% compared with 2016. A steady growth was observed between 2013 and 2017, with a growth in each quarter of these five years compared with the same quarter of the previous year.

Figure 1: Rail passenger transport performance, EU-28, 2013-2017 (billion passenger-kilometres)
Source: Eurostat (rail_pa_typepas)
This increase was mainly influenced by the second quarter of 2017 (\(+4.5\%\) compared to the same quarter of the previous year). The first and fourth quarters showed a positive trend of both 3.8\% when comparing with the corresponding quarters of the previous year, as well as the third quarter (\(+3.5\%\)).

A seasonal pattern can be observed with drops in the first and fourth quarters and increases in the second and third quarters when comparing with the previous quarter. However, in 2016 and 2017, the fourth quarter showed a slight increases of 0.1\% and 0.3\%, respectively, compared with the first quarter. (See figure 2).

In 2017, national transport represented more than 90\% of total transport in all countries

Focusing on the share between national and international transport, national transport is always predominant, representing more than 90\% of the total transport for all countries in 2017 with the exception of Luxembourg and Czechia. International transport represented 30\% of the total passenger transport by rail in Luxembourg and 15\% in Czechia. (Figure 3)
Although rail passenger transport performance (in tonne-kilometres) at EU-28 level recorded an increase in 2017 compared with 2016, eight Member States showed a decrease over the same period. The highest decrease among the EU-28 countries can be observed in Croatia (-11.0 %), followed by Latvia (-8.8 %), Greece (-6.8 %) and Slovenia (-6.7 %). In contrast, rail passenger transport performance in Romania, Estonia and Finland increased by 17.4 %, 16.0 % and 10.4 %, respectively. Outside the EU-28, Norway, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia recorded a decrease in rail passenger transport performance in 2017. The highest fall was observed for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with -28.7 %, followed closely by Montenegro (-28.6 %). In contrast, Turkey registered an increase of 5.6 %. (See table 1)
Concerning the evolution of international transport performance between 2016 and 2017, the largest increases were reported by Spain (+299.1 %), Bulgaria (+27.6 %), Sweden (+26.6 %), Finland (+21. %), Czechia (+16.9 %) and Italy (+12.0 %). In contrast, the largest decrease was reported by Croatia (-16.4 %). Regarding the evolution of national transport performance, Croatia also registered the largest drop with -10.8 % while Romania reported the largest increase with +17.6 %, followed by Estonia (+16.7 %) and Finland (+10.1 %).

All in all, fifteen of the EU-28 Member states reported increases in passenger transport (in number of passengers) between 2016 and 2017. The largest increases were recorded in Romania (+14.4 %), Slovakia (+8.3 %) and Luxembourg (+8.1 %). In contrast, the transport of passengers decreased by 10.6 % in Latvia. Outside the EU-28, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia registered a large drop in rail passenger transport (both -24.5 %).

Table 2: Rail passenger transport by type of transport, 2016-2017 (thousand passengers) Source: Eurostat (rail_pa_typepas) and (rail_pa_quartal)

Concerning the evolution of international transport performance between 2016 and 2017, the largest increases were reported by Spain (+299.1 %), Bulgaria (+27.6 %), Sweden (+26.6 %), Finland (+21. %), Czechia (+16.9 %) and Italy (+12.0 %). In contrast, the largest decrease was reported by Croatia (-16.4 %). Regarding the evolution of national transport performance, Croatia also registered the largest drop with -10.8 % while Romania reported the largest increase with +17.6 %, followed by Estonia (+16.7 %) and Finland (+10.1 %).

Number of passengers transported by rail increased in 2017

All in all, fifteen of the EU-28 Member states reported increases in passenger transport (in number of passengers) between 2016 and 2017. The largest increases were recorded in Romania (+14.4 %), Slovakia (+8.3 %) and Luxembourg (+8.1 %). In contrast, the transport of passengers decreased by 10.6 % in Latvia. Outside the EU-28, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia registered a large drop in rail passenger transport (both -24.5 %).
When looking at the evolution of international transport between 2016 and 2017, the largest increases were reported by Bulgaria (+52.3 %), Poland (+35.5 %), Spain (+24.0 %) and Finland (+21.0 %). In contrast, the largest decreases were reported by Italy (-10.0 %) followed by Romania (-7.6 %). Finally, concerning the evolution of national transport, Romania registered the largest increase with +14.5 %, followed by Luxembourg (+11.4 %) while Latvia reported the largest decrease with -10.8 %.

Source data for tables and graphs

- Rail passenger transport statistics: tables and figures

Data sources

The figures presented in this article have been extracted from the Eurostat rail transport database. They include data on national, international and transit transport of the Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, collected according to the Regulation (EU) No 2018/643 recast of Regulation (EU) No 2016/2032. The transport of passengers by metro, tram and/or light rail is excluded. The data presented are included in Eurostat’s dissemination database (reference tables are provided under each table and graph). There is no railway in Cyprus and Malta. The various elements present data collected under the detailed reporting system, meaning that data include only main undertakings which are defined as follows:

- Until 2015: undertakings with a total transport performance greater than 500 million tonne-km or 200 million passenger-km.
- From 2016: undertakings with a total volume of goods transport of at least 200 million tonne-km or at least 500 000 tonnes or a total volume of passengers transport of at least 100 million passenger-km.

Railway undertakings which are below the thresholds may be included for some countries. 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. **Symbols**

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**Context**

The content of this statistical article is based on data collected within the framework of Regulation (EU) No 2018/643 recast of Regulation (EU) No 2016/2032.

**Other articles**

- Freight transport statistics - modal split
- Passenger transport statistics
- Railway freight transport statistics

**Tables**

- Transport, see:
  - Railway transport (t_rail)
    - Rail transport of passengers (ttr00015)

**Database**

- Transport, see:
  - Railway transport (rail)
    - Railway transport measurement - passengers (rail_pa)

**Dedicated section**

- Transport

**Publications**

Methodology

- Railway transport measurement (ESMS metadata file — rail_pa_esms)

Legislation