

Port of Antwerp-Bruges

Factsheet Cargo Throughput Q1 2026

Total throughput

In the first quarter of 2026, Port of Antwerp Bruges handled a total of **65.5 million tons of maritime cargo**, representing a **decline of 3.2%** compared to the same period last year. This decrease is mainly attributable to lower **general cargo volumes (-4.4%)** – particularly containers and conventional general cargo – which were only partially offset by **growth in RoRo cargo (+5.3%)** and **stable bulk throughput (-0.5%)**.

Containers

Compared with the relatively strong first quarter of 2025, container throughput was **5.5% lower in tonnage and 2.6% lower in TEU**, while remaining broadly in line with levels recorded in 2022 and 2024. Both **imports (-2.1%)** and **exports (-3.1%)** declined, with a particularly sharp drop in **outbound full containers (-8%)**, reflecting the weak export position of Western Europe. Port of Antwerp Bruges' market share in the Hamburg–Le Havre Range fell by **1.5 percentage points to 29.1% in 2025**, driven by congestion, capacity constraints, social action and changes in container alliances.

Conventional general cargo

Conventional general cargo throughput was **7.9% lower** year on year in the first quarter, with a limited decline in imports (-2.4%) and a more pronounced drop in exports (-15.3%). After a weak start, steel volumes recovered in March, limiting the overall decline to **3.9%**. Imports remained stable (+0.4%), with strong growth from China as well as from Taiwan, South Korea and Turkey. Exports fell by **9.8%** due to lower volumes to the United States, Mexico and Canada. Within other segments, reefer cargo rose by **17%**, while paper and pulp decreased slightly (-2.7%) and other breakbulk saw a sharp decline (-34%).

RoRo

RoRo throughput **increased by 5.3%** in the first quarter, with growth in both **imports (+4.3%)** and **exports (+6%)**, bringing volumes in line with 2022 and 2023 levels. New vehicle handlings rose by **9.8%** to **833,000 units**, with exports (+11.2%) in line with the last quarter of 2025. High & heavy equipment also increased (+8.4%), while second hand cars (-14.1%) and trucks (-11.3%) declined, the latter reaching its lowest level in ten years. Unaccompanied cargo on trailers increased slightly (+1.5%), with decreases for the United Kingdom (-5.3%) and the Iberian Peninsula (-26.8%), and growth for Ireland (+14.9%) and Scandinavia (+17.2%).

Dry bulk

Dry bulk throughput totalled **3.3 million tons** in the first quarter (-4.9%), with a decrease in imports (-9%) and stable exports (+0.9%). Fertilizers, the largest product category, declined by **1.9%**. Notably, imports from Canada, Morocco and Russia fell sharply, while imports from the United States tripled. Export volumes declined towards the United States, Spain and the United Kingdom, but increased fivefold towards Mexico. Among other dry bulk products, sand and gravel (+16.7%), other construction materials (+24.6%) and non ferrous ores (+8.5%) increased. Scrap volumes fell by **5%**, and no coal was handled.

Liquid bulk

Following a weak start to the year, March was the strongest month for liquid bulk since May 2025, resulting in **slight growth of 0.2%** over the first quarter. Within petroleum derivatives (-1.1%), performance varied widely between product groups. Gasoline (+10.1%), naphtha (+40.8%) and fuel oil (+30.8%) recorded strong growth, while diesel (-33.3%) and kerosene (-33.8%) declined. Biofuel throughput remained broadly stable (-2%), with higher exports of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) partly offsetting lower biodiesel volumes. Chemical gases increased (+4.7%) and LNG rose sharply (+21.7%), driven by a doubling of imports from the United States and continued high volumes from Russia. Chemical cargo declined by **8.6%**, in line with pressures on the sector. Basic chemicals in particular fell (-9.6%), possibly reflecting shifts in trade with the United States following the introduction of US import tariffs.

Seagoing and cruise vessels

In the first quarter of 2026, **4,738 seagoing vessels** called at the port (-4.9%), while their combined gross tonnage declined slightly (-0.8%). Over the same period, Zeebrugge welcomed **19 cruise ships**, seven fewer than in 2025, carrying **73,520 passengers (-34.4%)**.

Middle East

In 2025, maritime volumes between Port of Antwerp Bruges and the countries around the Persian Gulf past the Strait of Hormuz totaled **7.5 million tons** (2.8% of total throughput), comprising **4.1 million tons of liquid bulk** (mainly imports of fuels, LNG and chemical products) and **3.1 million tons of containers** (75% exports). Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates were the main trading partners.

In early 2026, the trend reversed. Imports declined by **12%** in the first quarter, initially due to weather conditions and, from the end of March onwards, as a result of geopolitical tensions. LNG imports shifted in part from Qatar (-37%) to Russia (+30%) and Nigeria (doubling), while exports to the region dropped sharply (-49%) as container shipping lines suspended bookings and diverted to alternative ports. At the same time, plans to resume sailing via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal were abruptly halted, meaning vessels on the Asia-Europe route continue to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope, resulting in higher costs.

