Port of Antwerp-Bruges
Fact sheet cargo throughput first half of 2026

Total throughput

In the first 6 months of 2026, total maritime cargo handling at Port of Antwerp-Bruges was 133.9 million tonnes, a decline of 2.4% compared with the same period last year. The decline was mainly observed in the general cargo segment (-2.9%), specifically in container throughput. Conversely, RoRo recorded growth (+5.9%), while bulk remained more or less stable (-1.3%).

Containers

Expressed in TEU, container throughput fell by 1.5% during the first 6 months of 2026, compared with an exceptionally strong first half of 2025. Expressed in tons, the decline was 3.6%. Imports fell by 2.9%, while exports declined more sharply, by 4.1%. Exports of full containers remained under pressure and fell by 5.7%, reflecting the weak export position of the Western European economy. At the same time, throughput of empty containers rose by 13.7%, mainly due to a sharp increase in the exports of empty containers (+31%). This highlights the growing imbalance between imports of goods and available export cargo. Furthermore, container throughput in the first half of the year was significantly impacted by exceptional operational disruptions. The four-day strike in the nautical chain in March is estimated to have resulted in a loss of 100,000 TEU in container throughput. The oil spill in the Deurganck Dock in April, which prompted the temporary closure of the dock and the locks, resulted in an additional loss of around 85,000 TEU. The industrial action taken by pilots in June once again caused severe disruption and had an estimated impact of 75,000 TEU. As a result of these disruptions, ships were temporarily diverted or container shipping lines adjusted their rotations, putting the terminals under temporary operational pressure. Despite these exceptional circumstances, the port remained operational, and the backlogs were gradually cleared. Port of Antwerp-Bruges' market share in container handling in the Hamburg-Le Havre Range remained stable at 29.2% in the first quarter of 2026, following a loss of market share in 2025 due among other things to changes in alliances and operational disruptions.

Conventional general cargo

Throughput of conventional general cargo fell by 11.7% in the first half of 2026, to 4.2 million tons. Imports decreased by 6.1%, while exports were 19.6% lower. Iron and steel, which account for nearly three-quarters of the segment, fell by 11.3%. Steel prices remained under pressure due to weak European industrial demand, US import tariffs, high energy, bunker and transport costs, and uncertainty surrounding the CBAM and the stricter European import quotas. Steel imports from China—the leading source country in the first half of 2026—rose by 44.8%. Volumes from Indonesia also rose sharply, but this growth only partially offset the declines from other major source countries: India (-50%), Vietnam (-51%), and Turkey (-25.7%) supplied significantly lower volumes. On the exports side, volumes declined above all to the United States (-31%), Mexico (-27%), and Canada (-23.6%), with U.S. import tariffs having a particularly strong impact in the second quarter. Within other conventional cargo flows, throughput of fruits, vegetables, and other refrigerated cargo increased by 17.4%, thanks in part to higher volumes from Brazil and Cameroon. Paper and cellulose fell by 8.4%, and wood by 23%. Project cargo also remained under pressure due to disrupted sailing schedules and more difficult accessibility of certain destinations.

RoRo

RoRo throughput grew by 5.9% in the first half of 2026, driven by both imports (+4.6%) and exports (+6.9%). A total of 1,695,500 new vehicles were handled, an increase of 7.7% compared to the same period last year. The growth was mainly driven by higher volumes from China (+25.5%) and Japan (+5.5%), with China remaining the leading source country for new vehicles. Exports of new vehicles to the United States also increased by 4.8%, despite U.S. import tariffs. Throughput of high-and-heavy equipment remained more or less stable (+0.3%), while throughput of used vehicles fell by 4.8%. The number of trucks handled fell by 3.6% to approximately 43,000. Throughput of unaccompanied cargo onto trailers increased by 4.7%. Cargo flows with Ireland rose by 10.7%, and Scandinavia also saw strong growth (+29.6%). Conversely, there were declines on the Iberian Peninsula (-23%) and on the United Kingdom

(-3.9%). Long-distance RoRo short-sea cargo flows are still affected by the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which has applied to the shipping industry since 2024. At the same time, the sharp rise in diesel prices appears to be slowing the shift from short-sea to road transport.

Dry bulk

Dry bulk throughput grew by 2.2% in the first half of 2026, to 6.9 million tons. Imports rose by 3.9%, while exports remained more or less stable (-0.3%). Fertilizers, the largest product group within dry bulk, declined slightly by 1.3%. Imports from Morocco (-58%) and Canada (-14%) fell sharply, while higher volumes from Brazil, China, and Egypt, among others, offset part of the decline. Imports from the United States also saw strong growth (+52.8%). On the exports side, volumes fell above all to the United Kingdom (-27.8%) and the United States (-20.8%), while exports to Mexico nearly doubled. The fertilizer market is still volatile due to high energy and transport costs, geopolitical disruptions, and uncertainty surrounding the future implementation of CBAM. Within the remaining dry bulk cargo flows, the largest declines were observed in grains (-32.2%), kaolin (-37.4%), and coal (-99%), where throughput was virtually zero. Conversely, there were higher volumes of sand and gravel (+25.9%) and non-ferrous ores (+15.9%). Scrap remained more or less stable (-0.8%), with higher volumes to destinations such as Turkey and Egypt offsetting the declines to other destinations.

Liquid bulk

Following a weak start to the year, liquid bulk rebounded in March, but ultimately ended the first half of 2026 with a decline of 1.9%. Petroleum derivatives fell slightly (-1.2%), with significant differences among the product categories. Naphtha saw strong growth (+31.3%) compared with a weak 2025, driven by feedstock market price dynamics. Volumes, however, returned to the levels seen in 2023-2024, while fuel oil continued to grow (+47%). Diesel fell sharply (-25,7%) with exports falling as diesel was largely retained within the EU, while kerosene also fell (-26.4%). Chemical cargo flows fell by 5.5%, with above all basic chemicals coming under pressure (-7.7%) due to weak European industrial demand and shifts in international trade flows. Imports from the United States rose by 23.7%, while exports to the U.S. fell by 24.6%. Biofuels grew by 3%, and chemical gases by 2.9%. LNG throughput remained more or less stable (+1.3%), thanks to a strong first quarter that offset the decline in the second quarter. LNG imports from Qatar fell by 66.7% after the last tanker arrived in Zeebrugge on 23 March. Imports from the United States rose by 49.5% during the first half of the year, but as of May, U.S. volumes were increasingly diverted to Asia. LNG imports from Russia continued to rise (+12.5%) ahead of the European import ban which will come into force on 1 January 2027.

Seagoing and cruise vessels

9,773 seagoing vessels called at the port in the first half of 2026, a 4.4% decrease compared to the same period last year. The combined gross tonnage of these vessels fell by 3% to 315.8 million GT. Over the same period, Zeebrugge received 203,000 cruise passengers on 77 cruise ships, a 21.5% fall in passenger numbers compared to the first six months of 2025.