

Port of Antwerp-Bruges

Fact sheet: Throughput data Q1-Q3 2026



Total maritime cargo handling

Total maritime cargo throughput reached 200.9 million tonnes for the first nine months of 2026, representing a 0.8% decline year-on-year. Both bulk cargo (-0.9%) and general cargo (-0.8%) experienced a downturn, resulting from declines in liquid bulk and conventional general cargo respectively. The first half of 2025, which was stronger than the second half for bulk cargo and containers also sets a high benchmark for comparison. In addition, trade volatility and a series of operational disruptions exerted downward pressure on throughput. Container volumes began to recover in August.



Containers

Supported by a strong third-quarter performance, the highest since Q4 2020, container throughput increased by 1.2% in TEU terms during the first nine months. In weight terms, throughput lagged behind the previous year's level by 0.6%. Growth was concentrated in empty containers (+11.7% in TEU terms), whereas laden container throughput declined by 1.3%. During the first half of 2026, Port of Antwerp-Bruges maintained a stable 29% market share within the Hamburg-Le Havre Range, representing a minor shift of -0.1 percentage points compared to 2025.



Conventional general cargo

Conventional general cargo handling contracted by 16.6% over the first nine months, driven by an accelerated downturn in Q3, which lagged behind the third quarter of the previous year by nearly 27%. This contraction is primarily driven by iron and steel, representing more than 70% of the segment's total volume. Over the first nine months, steel throughput fell by 17.5%, experiencing a 30.1% downturn in Q3 that was driven primarily by a severe contraction in import volumes (-43.8%) during the third quarter. Effective 1 July, further reduced European steel safeguard quotas restrict duty-free import volumes, subjecting imports beyond quota limits to a 50% tariff. In addition, iron and steel imports have fallen under CBAM since the beginning of 2026, making carbon intensity a more significant factor in overall costs. Weak European demand, high energy costs, and global overcapacity are also weighing on the market. On the export side, outbound shipments fell to destinations including the United States (-22.7%), where the 50% Section 232 tariff continues to weigh on European steel. Performance across other conventional cargo categories presents a mixed picture. Fruit and vegetables were up 7.6%, while timber dropped by 39.8%.



RoRo

RoRo throughput recorded a growth of 5.5% in the first nine months, with increases in both inbound (+5.2%) and outbound (+5.8%) traffic. In total, 2,561,000 new cars were handled (+9.3%). Inbound volumes expressed in units (+13.7%) grew more strongly than outbound flows (+5.3%), mainly driven by higher volumes from China (+38.1%) and Japan (+10%). The number of high & heavy units handled rose (+6.2%), whereas second-hand vehicles (-6.9%) and trucks (-3.3%) declined. Throughput of unaccompanied cargo grew by 5.1% in the first nine months. Cargo flows with Ireland (+9.1%) and Scandinavia (+25.9%) expanded, whereas trade with the United Kingdom (-4%), the primary market for Port of Antwerp-Bruges, and the Iberian Peninsula (-25.1%) contracted.



Dry bulk

Dry bulk throughput grew by 13% in the first nine months. In the third quarter, growth accelerated to 35%, mainly driven by higher inbound volumes (+47%) during that quarter. New iron ore flows from Liberia, Canada, and Venezuela contributed to this growth. Higher throughput was likewise posted across other ores (+15.8%), rapeseed (+80% in Q3), as well as cement and lime. Grain volumes recovered in the third quarter, but cumulatively remained below last year's levels. Fertilisers, the largest product category within dry bulk, moved in the opposite direction: volumes slipped by approximately 0.7% in the third quarter and were down about 1.1% over the first nine months. The market remains volatile due to fluctuating energy prices, geopolitical disruptions, and shifts in European trade policy (CBAM, import

duties on Russian and Belarusian fertilisers). Among other bulk cargo, sand, gravel, and clay remained slightly above last year's level. Scrap metal contracted, while coal recovered from an exceptionally low baseline but cumulatively remained well below last year's level.

Liquid bulk

Following a recovery from March onwards, liquid bulk throughput decreased again from June. This resulted in a decrease of 3.4% over the first nine months. Petroleum products contracted by 2.3%: higher volumes of fuel oil (+42.1%) and naphtha (+19.3%) could not offset the decline in diesel (-28.8%), kerosene (-39.9%), and LPG (-23%). Middle East imports of diesel and kerosene halted, with more volumes kept inside Europe. Gasoline grew by 6%, mainly thanks to higher inbound shipments from Europe for blending and further distribution. Chemical throughput fell by 1.1%, with the exception of biofuels (+10.8%). The recovery of European industry has yet to materialise, and high European energy prices continue to weigh on competitiveness against the United States and China. LNG throughput also fell by 12.2%. Third-quarter LNG deliveries to Zeebrugge dropped by 52.1% year-on-year. Inbound shipments from Qatar were 71% lower over the first nine months and came to a complete standstill in March. Inbound shipments from the United States, which grew strongly in the first half of the year, also declined in the third quarter (-79.2%) since these flows are diverted towards Asia.

Inland navigation

Due to persistent drought and low water levels, inland waterway volume in the third quarter was 8.3% lower than in the second quarter. Corridors along the Middle Rhine, Upper Rhine, Moselle, and Danube were most severely impacted, recording volume drops between 60% and 70%. Compared to the third quarter of 2025, total volumes remained virtually stable.

Seagoing vessels and cruise ships

In the first nine months, 14,879 seagoing vessels called at the port, 3.6% fewer than in the same period last year. Aggregate gross tonnage decreased by 1.8%, reaching 479.6 million GT. Zeebrugge welcomed 136 cruise ships, 2.1% fewer than in the third quarter of 2025, carrying 342,441 passengers (-13.3%).

