

## Report

# Top European container ports on the rise in the first half of 2024

September 2024

**port**   
monitor

## Results of the TOP 10 European container ports in the first half of 2024

In the first six months of the year 2024, the ten largest European container ports handled in total 31.96 million TEUs, which is by 5.4% more than in a previous year. Majority of them experienced an increase in the volume, which the situation on the global market may have impacted on.

The **Port of Rotterdam** remains the largest European container port with container turnover on the level of 6,839 thousand TEUs in the first half of the year. The throughput in TEUs increased by 2.4% compared to the same period of 2023, and by 4.2% in tonnage. The first quarter already saw a slight recovery in container throughput. This trend continued in the second quarter. This is a direct consequence of an increase in demand for consumer goods. Additionally, there is an early peak season as importers order their products earlier than usual due to longer sailing times and fluctuating sailing schedules. Longer sailing times are connected with route changing – container operators choose routes via the Cape of Good Hope instead of Suez Canal since late 2023, due to turmoil in the Red Sea.

The **Port of Antwerp-Bruges** also recorded a rise in the container turnover. In H1 2024 port handled 6,665 thousand TEUs, which shows a grow by 3.9% compared to the same period of a year before. After a global slowdown due to economic uncertainty and inflation, this port started to recover since the beginning of 2024 (results for Q1 2024 started a positive trend), continuing it in Q2. For Port of Antwerp-Bruges ensuring sustainable growth is essential for maintaining a future-ready port. In the first quarter, a container ship with a draught of 16 meters entered the Deurganck Dock for the first time. In the second quarter, four more ships of similar draught were allowed to enter. This policy has now been extended to include other container terminals, reflecting the port's commitment to accommodating larger vessels and supporting sustainable development.

At Germany's largest container seaport – the **Port of Hamburg** in total, 3.8 million TEUs were handled during the first six months of this year, this is by 2% more than a year before. After a weak start to the year, the first half of 2024 finished with positive figures. The positive volume trend in overseas traffic was mainly driven by shipping regions in North, South, and Central America, with a significant increase in cargo volumes to the United States. Additionally, cargo volumes with European seaports saw a positive trend due to temporary route adjustments prompted by the military conflict in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, handling volumes in the Far and Middle East regions slightly declined. Feeder traffic volumes showed a moderate increase from the previous year, with the share of seaborne handling by feeders rising to 18.7%, up from 18.4% the previous year.

A double-digit increase in container throughput was recorded by the Spanish **Port of Valencia**, which handled 2.7 million TEUs in H1 2024. This is 14.6% more than in the same period of 2023 (2.4 million TEUs). In this port, the container sector remains the major force, which is responsible for around 78% of total cargo. From January to June, container volume increased significantly in the port, with a 65% rise in traffic to and from Red Sea ports, a 43% increase with Baltic countries, and a 25% growth with Australia.

In the **Port of Algeciras**, the growth of the container turnover was 2.7% to the level of almost 2.4 million TEUs, while the containerized volumes amounted to 28.7 million tonnes (+2.6%). APM Terminals Algeciras is currently one of the top ten most efficient container terminals globally, according to the

Container Port Performance Index 2023 by the World Bank and S&P Global Market Intelligence. This ranking reflects ongoing investments and improvements in operational efficiency at the port.

**The Port of Barcelona**, the last out of three Spanish ports presented on the Top 10 list, handled almost 2 million TEUs in the period January-June 2024. It represents a growth of 23.6% compared to the same period of 2023, which is the highest dynamic in this period among the top 10 European Ports. June, for this port, was a record month in terms of container traffic (355 thousand TEUs, an increase of 26.3% or 7 thousand TEUs). To this growth, mostly have impacted increased handling of chemical products (+23.3%) and paper and pulp (+10.3%).

The data for the **Port of Bremerhaven** presents an increase in the container volume in the first six months of 2024. Compared to the same period of 2023, this port handled 12% more containers (2.22 million TEUs in 2024 and 1.98 million TEUs in 2023). The new EU project "Innovative Waterway Transportation" may help with growing numbers of containers, as it is a real innovation project that aims to strengthen climate-friendly inland shipping by moving containers from the road to the water. This is a collaboration between the port authorities and partners from Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Sweden.

The only one port, which recorded a drop in the container handling in the first half of 2024 was the **Port of Piraeus**. In the analyzed period this port handled almost 2 million TEUs (a drop by 13%, or by 292 thousand TEUs).

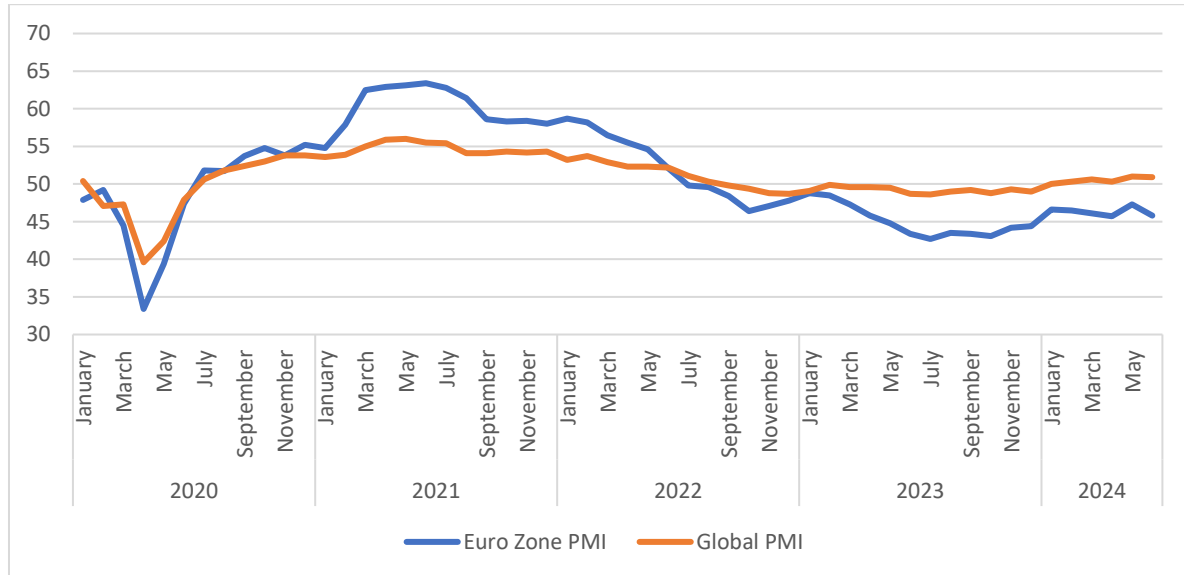
**Table 1. Container turnover in the Top 10 European container ports in the first half of 2022, 2023 and 2024 [TEUs]**

	H1 2022	H1 2023	H1 2024	Change H1 2024/H1 2023
<b>Rotterdam</b>	7 279 000	6 681 000	6 839 000	2.36%
<b>Antwerp-Bruges</b>	6 770 000	6 417 960	6 665 000	3.85%
<b>Hamburg</b>	4 300 000	3 695 000	3 773 000	2.11%
<b>Valencia</b>	2 659 860	2 366 847	2 712 000	14.58%
<b>Algeciras</b>	2 344 348	2 333 820	2 397 228	2.72%
<b>Bremerhaven</b>	2 336 743	1 984 232	2 222 233	11.99%
<b>Barcelona</b>	1 806 080	1 608 723	1 988 502	23.61%
<b>Piraeus</b>	2 144 000	2 248 200	1 956 500	-12.97%
<b>Gioia Tauro</b>	1 705 541	1 740 513	1 947 600	11.9%
<b>HAROPA</b>	1 485 000	1 250 000	1 460 000	16.80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32 830 572</b>	<b>30 326 295</b>	<b>31 961 097</b>	<b>5.39%</b>

Source: ports authorities

The Italian **Port Gioia Tauro** had a positive trend in turnover, an yoy increase of 11.9% up to 1.95 million TEUs. This port ended 2023 with a record volume of container traffic (+5%), since the previous record achieved in 2008. This increase in volume and positive trends may be thanks to the shipowner company MSC, whose vessels generate the largest share of the traffic handled by the Calabrian port, with Medcenter Container Terminal.

The ranking is closed by the **HAROPA Ports**, which consists of three ports: Le Havre, Rouen and Paris. The container throughput in these ports increased by 16.8% compared to the H1 2023. In H1 2024 HAROPA Ports handled 1.46 million TEUs. The market continues to recover after two years of negative trend. The recent increase in freight rates and the rerouting of ships via the Cape of Good Hope have led to high capacity utilization as demand has surged since May. Hinterland traffic has risen by 6% to exceed 1 million TEUs, with container traffic specifically to and from the hinterland growing by 11%.



**Graph 1. The Global Manufacturing PMI and Euro-zone Manufacturing PMI index in 2020-2024.**

Analyzing the PMI index for the Euro zone, it can be seen that while in the last quarter of 2022 and in the first months of 2023 this index was growing, it started declining at the end of February 2023. In July 2023 it reached the lowest value within three years (42.7 p.), afterwards it was slowly increasing. The PMI Index for the Eurozone presents that the economic sentiments are still staying below neutral level of 50 points (45.8 in June 2024). This situation is related to inflation, price increases and general uncertainty on the market and the geopolitical situation. The Global PMI Index started this year with a neutral 50 points and continue to slowly grow.

The continuing difficult economic and geopolitical conditions do not allow for concrete forecasts of turnover development in European ports. It depends directly on the economic sentiment in Europe and in the world, however the situation in ports are becoming more positive starting this year.

**Authors:**

**Joanna Szymikowska**

Market Analyst

joanna@actiaforum.pl

**Monika Rozmarynowska-Mrozek**

Consulting Projects Leader

monika@actiaforum.pl

Phone: +48 798 645 201

**Port Monitor** is a series of periodic reports regarding the seaports markets in the Baltic Sea, as well as on European and global scale. This reports has been prepared by the Consulting Department at Actia Forum, specializing in market surveys in transport, tourism and environment as well as European projects and business counselling.

**Actia Forum sp. z o.o.**

al. Zwycięstwa 96/98, 81-451 Gdynia, Poland, +48 797 609 727, [www.actiaforum.pl/en](http://www.actiaforum.pl/en)

port   
monitor

actia  
FORUM