



Report

The annual results of the largest European
container ports in 2024

March 2025

port 
monitor

THE ANNUAL RESULTS OF THE TEN LARGEST EUROPEAN CONTAINER PORTS IN 2024

In 2024, European container ports experienced a notable recovery, rebounding from the declines observed in 2023. In 2024, the ten largest European container ports handled almost **65 million TEUs**, representing a **5.8% growth** compared to 2023. The increases in European container ports were driven by a combination of increased demand, strategic rerouting of shipping lanes, and significant investments in fleet and port infrastructure.

The **Port of Rotterdam**, the largest container port in Europe, handled **13,820,000 TEUs**, a **2.8% increase** compared to 2023. The turnover of containerized cargo also increased to 133.4 million tonnes (+2.5%). The growth in the container segment can be attributed to increased European consumption. Wage indexation and declining inflation led to higher disposable income and increased demand for consumer goods and food. Despite the global situation, the port has demonstrated good management adapted to the market to maintain its competitive position, and started investing. The major investments in 2024 included the continued development of quay walls for container terminal expansion in Prinses Amaliahaven (€42.5 million). Additionally, new agreements for the use of shore power have been signed with container terminals on the Maasvlakte.

The **Port of Antwerp-Bruges** experienced an **8.2% increase** in container handling, with tonnage rising by 8.9% more to 149 million tonnes. In 2024, the port handled **13,532,436 TEUs**, around 1 million more than in 2023. Temperature-controlled cargo (reefer containers) performed particularly well, with a 9.2% growth, accounting for 8.6% of total container traffic. The fourth quarter saw an impressive 12.5% increase in TEUs compared to the same period in 2023. Starting in January 2024, the port was ready to welcome the largest container ships with a draft of 16 m in the Deurganck dock. The first container giant – the Ever Greet- called at the port in July 2024 with a draft of 16.3 m, breaking the previous draft record. Before calling to the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the ship stopped in Zeebrugge to unload 400 TEUs in order to reduce the ship's draft.

The third largest port in Europe is the **Port of Hamburg**. In 2024, container turnover **increased** by **1.5%** to **7.8 million TEUs**. The positive trend in container traffic with the USA continued in 2024 (marking a 5% increase), while container throughput with China recovered (growing by 0.7%). Loaded containers, crucial to the value chain, made up approximately 87% of the 2024 volume, highlighting the port as a reliable partner and a strong link in the global logistics chain. The forecast for 2025 for this port is optimistic - February saw the launch of a North and South America service by shipping lines CMA CGM and ONE, along with an India service operated by the Gemini Alliance.

Overall, in 2024 the Spanish container ports noted an increase in the turnover. The biggest container port in Spain – the **Port of Valencia** – handled **5,475,773 TEUs**, representing a **14.2% growth** compared to 2023. In April 2024, the Board of Directors of the Port Authority of Valencia announced the offers for the tender for the execution of the works on the container dock in the northern extension of the Port of Valencia. The new container terminal at the Port of Valencia will integrate technology, eco-efficiency, intramodality, and sustainability, supporting Spain's economy and enhancing connectivity with global markets. Covering 137 hectares, it will have a capacity of five million containers and 1,970 meters of

quay. The terminal will feature a cutting-edge design and fully electrified systems, ensuring high efficiency in both maritime and land operations. This project will create jobs and boost economic activity in the surrounding area, reinforcing the status of Spanish ports in the Mediterranean.

In 2024, Spain's second-largest container port, the **Port of Algeciras**, handled **4,706,145 TEUs**, marking a **0.6% drop** in volume compared to 2023. Despite this decrease, the port maintained its position as one of the largest European container ports, driven by an increase in full containers destined for import and export, which rose by 2.46% and 5%, respectively. The outlook for next year remains uncertain, as Maersk has decided to remove the Port of Algeciras from its trade route between India and the United States, shifting the port of call to Tanger Med in Morocco to improve transit times.

A significant positive change was recorded in the **Port of Barcelona**. In 2024, the port handled **3,885,736 TEUs**, an **18.5% increase** compared to the previous year. The traffic of full containers, a key indicator of the hinterland economy, saw a significant 29.1% increase due to shipping route changes prompted by the Red Sea crisis. Imports rose by 11% and exports by 5.8%, maintaining a balanced volume between both types of traffic. In July 2024, the port officially opened its first OPS system for ships in a container terminal. The OPS has been designed specifically to be compatible with the operations of the BEST terminal and will allow up to two ships to connect simultaneously, adapting the electrical current to the needs of each vessel.

The **Port of Bremerhaven** also experienced a **6.3% increase**, handling **4,444,813 TEUs** in 2024. In July 2024, to modernize its operations, EUROGATE's Container Terminal Bremerhaven introduced the Navis N4 Terminal Operating System (TOS). This enhancement aims to improve customer service and optimize terminal performance, reinforcing the port's competitiveness in the European container market.

The **Port of Piraeus** recorded a **7.8% decrease** in container handling. In 2024, the port handled **4,228,500 TEUs**. This decline resulted in a two-position drop in the ranking, however, in reality, the Greek port may have handled more containers, as presented data is based on the COSCO operated terminals, excluding the Piraeus Port Authority's container terminal.

The **Port of Gioia Tauro** is another port that experienced a double-digit increase. In 2024, nearly **4 million TEUs** were handled, representing an **11% growth** and setting a new historical record in container handling. One factor that may have contributed to growing container handling is the strategic geographical location. Gioia Tauro serves as a key transshipment hub in the Mediterranean, benefiting from increasing trade flows between Asia, Europe, and Africa. Shipping companies may have redirected cargo to Mediterranean ports instead of northern European ports to avoid congestion or reduce costs. The implementation of the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) in 2024 increased costs for shipping in northern European ports, making Mediterranean ports more competitive.

In 2024, **HAROPA Port** handled over **3.1 million TEUs**, surpassing its previous record of 3 million TEUs set in 2022 and achieving an **18.7% year-on-year growth** in container handling. This upward trend in container traffic is also reflected in a robust level of inland flows (+7%), as well as the rise in number of ship calls at Le Havre. In 2025, a key development in the container sector will be the addition of seven new TiL MSC gantry cranes at Port 2000, following the arrival of the first two on November 11, 2024. These state-of-the-art cranes - the largest in the world to date - will be deployed at Port 2000 by TNMSC (Terminal de Normandie) and TPO (Terminal Porte Océane). Their introduction is expected to significantly enhance productivity and competitiveness at the Port of Le Havre and across HAROPA PORT.

Through its subsidiary TiL, MSC is thus completing the first phase of its planned €900 million investment in Le Havre.

Table 1. Container turnover in the largest European container ports in 2022 - 2024 [TEUs]

	2022	2023	2024	Change 2024/2023
Rotterdam	14 455 500	13 447 000	13 820 000	2.77%
Antwerp-Bruges	13 500 000	12 500 000	13 532 436	8.00%
Hamburg	8 254 000	7 685 000	7 800 000	1.50%
Valencia	5 052 272	4 796 985	5 475 773	14.15%
Algeciras	4 767 282	4 733 572	4 706 145	-0.58%
Bremerhaven	4 572 866	4 180 919	4 444 813	6.31%
Piraeus*	4 352 100	4 586 500	4 228 500	-7.81%
Gioia Tauro	3 400 000	3 548 827	3 940 447	11.04%
Barcelona	3 522 045	3 280 035	3 885 736	18.46%
HAROPA	3 100 000	2 630 000	3 122 000	18.71%
Total	64 978 565	61 388 841	64 955 850	5.81%

Source: ports' authorities, <https://www.lloydlist.com/one-hundred-container-ports-2024>, Spanish statistics

*estimated data based on turnover at the COSCO terminal

Analysing the PMI¹, it is evident that economic sentiment for both the Eurozone and the global economy remains mostly below the neutral level of 50 points. The beginning of 2025 presents a more optimistic forecast, with the Global PMI reaching 50.1 points in January 2025, suggesting that the global economy is slightly expanding, though at a very slow pace. If the PMI remains above 50 consistently, it indicates improving economic conditions, increased demand, and potential economic growth worldwide.

In January 2025, the Eurozone PMI stood at 45.4 points. This suggests weak demand, reduced production, or ongoing economic challenges such as high inflation, geopolitical tensions, or sluggish consumer spending.

Since the war in Ukraine began, causing geopolitical tension, declines in PMI have been observed. In 2024, small increases were recorded compared to 2023, having a slight impact on the market, including container handling. Overall, it suggests that business conditions are neither improving nor deteriorating, but indicate the global economy is stabilizing, with weak but positive momentum. This may signal a continued recovery in the European container market in 2025.

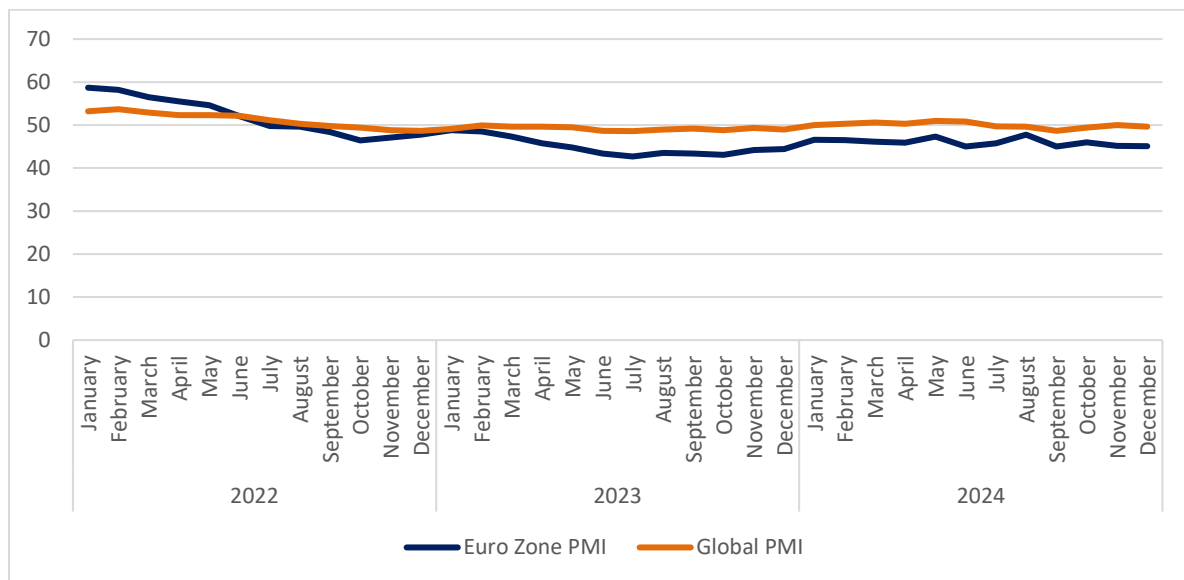


Figure 1. PMI in the world and in the Eurozone in 2022-2024.

Source: Actia Forum based on data from IHS Markit.

¹The Purchasing Managers' Index™ (PMI™) is a survey-based indicator of economic activity that includes sub-indices of: Production, New Orders, Employment, Costs, Selling Prices, Exports, Purchasing Activity, Supplier Performance, Order Backlog and Inventory. In surveys, respondents are asked to report changes in each variable compared to the previous month, noting whether each variable increased/improved, decreased/worsened, or remained unchanged. These objective questions are accompanied by one subjective "sentiment" question, which is asking companies whether they forecast higher, same or lower production during the year. PMI is widely used to predict changing economic trends. The PMI is compiled globally by IHS Markit, although a small number of trade associations also compile local PMIs in certain markets, such as the ISM in the United States. The indicator was originally developed for manufacturing, but IHS Markit pioneered the extension to other sectors in the 1990s, including services, construction and retail.

Authors:

Joanna Szymikowska

Market Analyst

joanna@actiaforum.pl

+48 797 609 727

Monika Rozmarynowska-Mrozek

Head of Consulting

monika@actiaforum.pl

+48 798 645 201

The Port Monitor is a series of periodic reports regarding the sea-ports markets and trades in Poland, the Baltic Sea Region, and Europe. This report has been prepared by the Consulting Department at the Actia Forum.

Actia Forum sp. z o.o.

al. Zwycięstwa 96/98, 81-451 Gdynia, Poland, +48 58 627 24 67, www.actiaforum.pl

port 
monitor

actia
FORUM