

Freight transported in containers - statistics on unitisation

*Data extracted in June 2019.
Planned article update: July 2020.*

Highlights

In 2017, the share of container transport in total rail transport performance in the EU was estimated at 17.9 %

In 2017, the share of container transport in total short sea shipping performed in EU ports was estimated at 15.4 %

In 2017, the share of container transport in total road transport performance in the EU was estimated at 6.2 %

Containers transport by mode of transport, 2007-2017

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 (% share on total freight transport in tonne-kilometres) 68 10 12 14 16 18 Short sea shipping ⁽³⁾ Rail freight ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾ Inland waterways freight ⁽¹⁾ Road freight

- *Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers.*
- *(¹) Gross weight estimated.*
- *(²) Containers and swap bodies.*
- *(³) Tonne-kilometres estimated.*

This article presents statistics on intermodal freight transport in the [European Union](#) and the [EFTA](#) countries. The statistics contain a set of indicators developed by Eurostat on goods transported in [containers](#) and other intermodal transport units (ITUs). Recent trends in the data clearly illustrate the importance and growing role of [intermodal transport](#) in Europe. The main focus is on the increasing share of **unitisation** in different [modes of transport](#), in other words the share of goods that are transported containers and other intermodal transport units (ITUs) such as swap bodies, trailers and semi-trailers. The article also covers the **modal shift potential** of long distance road transport of

containers, in line with the strategy to shift 30 % of transport over distances of 300 kilometres or more from road to transport modes with lower [CO₂emissions](#). These indicators study the share of such long distance transport in the total road transport of containers.

Full article

Unitisation of goods in the EU is growing

Unitisation of goods in the EU is growing

Intermodal transport is an increasingly important part of the logistics sector and freight unitisation is a pre-requisite for intermodality. 'Freight unitisation' is defined as the use of standardised packaging units that can easily be transferred from one mode of transport to another without handling the goods themselves. In simple terms, 'unitisation' describes how much of the total freight transport has been transported in containers.

The main types of standardised packaging units, called **intermodal transport units (ITUs)**, are:

- containers;
- swap bodies;
- trailers and semi-trailers.

The use of ITUs reduces the need for cargo handling and so improves security, reduces damage and loss and allows freight to be transported faster and more efficiently.

The share of unitisation in total freight transport has increased considerably in recent years. However, this growth in unitisation varies between the different modes of transport. [Rail](#) and maritime transport ([deep sea shipping](#) in particular, but also [short sea shipping](#)) have the highest shares of freight unitisation, both at EU level and in most Member States. By contrast, for [road transport](#) the unitisation rate at EU level has remained stable at slightly above 6 % over the last few years.

Comparing road, rail, maritime (deep sea shipping and short sea shipping) and [inland waterways](#) transport across all EU Member States, deep sea shipping or short sea shipping had the highest unitisation rate in 15 Member States (only 23 [Member States have a coastline](#)). Rail transport had the highest unitisation rates in 11 Member States. Due to data availability at national level, the

unitisation rate for maritime transport is calculated on the basis of tonnes of goods transported, whereas for the other transport modes it is based on [tonne-kilometres](#).

Differing trends in road container transport across Europe

From 2011 to 2017, the volume of freight transport in containers by road decreased in 7 Member States and in EFTA country Norway. Portugal stands out with a sharp increase in road transport of containers since 2011 over this period, mainly caused by an increase for large containers. This may reflect the significant increase in the share of containers recorded in Portuguese ports over this period, in particular for deep sea shipping.

Road transport of containers, 2011-2017

(million tonne-kilometres)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Share in total road transport, 2017 (%)
EU-28 (*)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	6.2
Belgium	3 297	3 347	3 623	3 466	4 120	3 944	3 888	:
Bulgaria	1 304	1 041	:	:	1 461	:	:	:
Czechia	3 623	3 030	3 273	3 136	3 477	2 793	3 063	:
Denmark	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Germany	40 391	38 351	38 639	38 593	39 353	39 734	41 514	13.7
Estonia	221	197	:	:	286	:	241	:
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	:
Greece	410	666	:	:	628	:	1 247	:
Spain	5 826	5 279	6 442	6 616	6 878	8 381	9 003	3.9
France	7 571	6 384	6 116	5 594	5 360	5 911	5 958	3.6
Croatia	107	46	84	50	39	36	72	:
Italy	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Cyprus	229	289	180	86	89	114	127	:
Latvia	:	:	:	:	375	542	405	2.7
Lithuania	393	506	623	855	514	749	1 263	3.2
Luxembourg	547	730	795	993	705	644	619	8.5
Hungary	975	951	1 076	1 080	1 073	792	773	2.0
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	7 049	6 438	8 364	8 817	8 626	8 399	8 317	12.3
Austria	830	702	763	590	660	750	818	3.2
Poland	4 061	2 129	3 099	2 354	1 943	3 475	:	:
Portugal	933	5 219	5 563	6 300	6 900	6 699	7 830	22.8
Romania	3 881	4 436	2 377	1 932	1 789	403	:	:
Slovenia	526	450	507	599	779	932	802	3.9
Slovakia	873	634	566	969	992	1 067	1 258	:
Finland	967	1 435	:	1 369	:	:	1 668	6.0
Sweden	5 972	5 957	5 454	7 402	7 538	7 515	:	:
United Kingdom	8 843	8 405	7 993	7 196	6 862	6 659	8 217	:
Norway	1 902	2 155	2 058	2 067	2 192	2 010	1 753	9.1
Switzerland	867	1 084	816	1 044	629	711	:	:

Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers. (:) not available. (-) not applicable.

(*) Estimate.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_uroad)

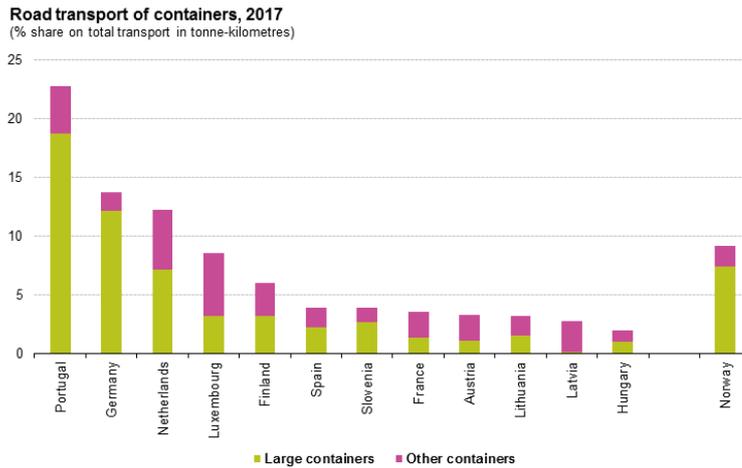
Table 1: Road transport of containers, 2011-2017
(million tonne-kilometres)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_uroad](#))

In 6 Member States the tonne-kilometres for container transport fell in 2017 from the previous year. This fall was most pronounced for Latvia (-25.3 %) and Slovenia (-13.9 %). Germany, with 42 billion tonne-kilometres, was by far the Member State with the highest level of container transport. From 2016 to 2017, this level grew by 4.5 %.

In 2017, the share of container transport in total road transport performance in the EU was estimated at 6 % (Table 1). Seven Member States had shares of freight unitisation in road transport higher than this estimated EU average in the period 2001-2017. These were: Portugal (22.8 % in 2017), Sweden (17.8 % in 2016), Cyprus (15.8 % in 2015), Germany (13.7 %), the Netherlands (12.3 %), Belgium (9.4 % in 2016) and Luxembourg (8.5 %). The EFTA country Norway (9.1 %) also had a unitisation rate for road higher than the EU average.

In Cyprus, Portugal, Sweden and Norway, maritime transport plays an important role. Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium all have [major container ports](#) serving as entry points for goods to the EU (Hamburg and Bremen/Bremerhaven in Germany, Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Antwerpen in Belgium). The fact that containers arriving or departing by sea tend to be forwarded by road, in particular to and from the direct hinterland of the [sea ports](#), might be one of the explanations for the high unitisation rates observed for road transport in these countries.



Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers. Only countries for which data are available are presented.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_uroad)

eurostat



Figure 1: Road transport of containers, 2017 (% of total tonne-kilometres)

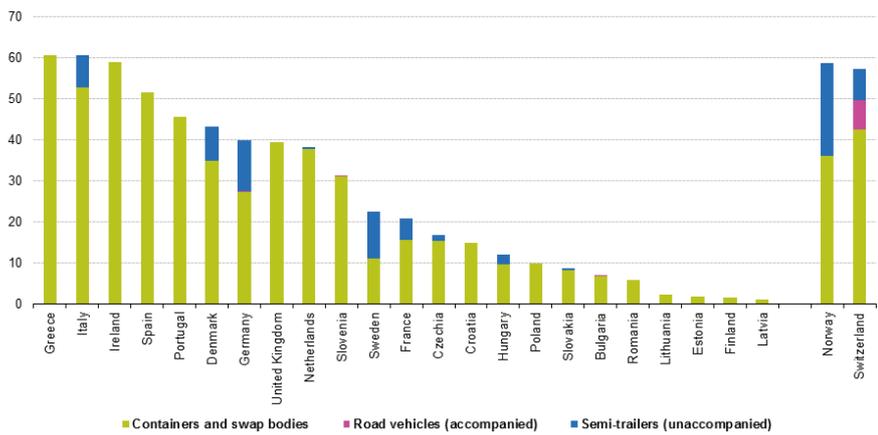
Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_uroad](#))

Large containers made up the main part of road freight unitisation in most EU Member States (Figure 1). Exceptions were Luxembourg, Latvia, France, Austria and Lithuania, where the largest part of container transport by road was carried out in other containers.

High unitisation rate in rail transport statistics

In 2017, the highest unitisation rates in rail transport were recorded in Greece (60.6 %), Italy (60.5 %), Ireland (59 %), Spain (51.9 %), Portugal (45.5 %), Denmark (43.3 %), and Germany (39.9 %) as well as in the EFTA countries Norway (58.6 %) and Switzerland (57.2 %). (Figure 2). The unitisation rate for rail freight covers not only containers and swap bodies, but also accompanied [road vehicles](#) (with driver) and unaccompanied semi-trailers (without driver). There are no railways in Cyprus, Malta and Iceland and there is no significant rail transport in Liechtenstein.

Rail transport of intermodal transport units, 2017
 (% share on total rail freight transport in tonne-kilometres)



Note: Based on gross-gross weight, including both the weight of packaging and the tare weight of the containers; Data for Belgium, Luxembourg and Austria are not available; Cyprus and Malta have no railways.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_urail)



Figure 2: Rail transport of intermodal transport units, 2017
 (% share of total rail freight transport in tonne-kilometres)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_urail](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?code=tran_im_urail))

In most of the countries, the unitisation rate is substantially higher for rail than for road. It should be noted that the unitisation rate for rail includes containers and swap bodies grouped together, as the data are reported without distinction between them, whereas the road unitisation rate covers only containers. This comparison should thus be treated with some care.

Increasing unitisation in inland waterways transport

Only half of the EU Member States have significant freight transport by inland waterways (navigable lakes, rivers and canals). In 2017, the unitisation rate in inland waterways was highest in the Netherlands (14.1 %), with Germany (11.3 %), France (8.3 %) and Belgium (4.6 %) following (Table 2).

Inland waterways transport of containers, 2011-2017

(% share of total inland waterways freight transport in tonne-kilometres)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU-28 (*)	8.5	8.9	8.9	9.5	8.9	9.2	9.7
Belgium	8.9	15.2	12.3	13.3	6.3	4.1	4.6
Bulgaria	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Czechia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	9.3	9.0	9.4	10.1	10.2	10.9	11.3
France	8.2	8.7	8.1	8.8	8.2	8.0	8.3
Croatia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italy	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Luxembourg	-	-	-	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.5
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	11.5	11.9	12.0	12.5	12.6	13.4	14.1
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Sweden	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
United Kingdom	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

(*) Estimates.

Note: Based on gross-gross weight, including both weight of packaging and tare weight of containers. (:) not available. (-) not applicable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_uiww)

eurostat 



Table 2: Inland waterways transport of containers, 2011-2017
(% share of total inland waterways freight transport in tonne-kilometres)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_uiww](#))

From 2011 to 2017, the increase in the inland waterways unitisation rate was highest in the Netherlands and Germany, by 2.6 and 2.0 percentage points respectively. In Belgium, the unitisation rate fell by 4.4 percentage points from 2011 to 2017, mainly due to a big drop in 2015

Unitisation rates in short sea shipping and deep sea shipping

The unitisation rates for maritime transport are calculated on the basis of tonnes transported, as data on maritime tonnes-kilometres at country level are not available. Maritime transport is only relevant for the 23 Member States that have a coastline.

The unitisation rate for maritime transport varies considerably between Member States and between short sea shipping and deep sea shipping. In Slovenia, goods transported in containers made up 39.8 % of the transport volume (in tonnes) in short sea shipping in 2017 (Table 3). High shares of

unitisation in short sea shipping were also recorded in Cyprus (31.5 %), Portugal (29.5 %), Belgium (28.6 %), Germany (26.8 %), Spain (25.4 %) and Greece (24.9 %). Several of these countries have major container ports serving as [transshipment](#) points for containers. In these countries, the high unitisation rates in short sea shipping reflect a large volume of [feeder services](#) to and from these hub ports.

Transport of containers in short sea shipping, 2011-2017

(% share of total short sea shipping in tonnes)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	12.8	13.4	14.0	14.8	14.6	15.0	14.5
Belgium	34.4	33.3	33.0	34.1	33.2	35.0	28.6
Bulgaria	6.3	8.2	7.8	9.5	10.5	9.7	9.3
Czechia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Denmark	6.7	6.6	6.8	7.3	6.2	6.0	6.4
Germany	27.4	28.1	28.6	28.8	28.3	27.6	26.8
Estonia	4.9	6.4	6.3	6.6	7.4	7.8	8.3
Ireland	16.9	17.6	16.4	17.4	17.1	17.3	16.8
Greece	16.9	22.2	23.9	25.5	22.9	23.5	24.9
Spain	21.7	22.2	21.4	22.7	23.6	24.5	25.4
France	4.9	5.3	5.5	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.6
Croatia	6.5	6.4	6.2	8.8	8.3	7.3	8.4
Italy	11.8	13.1	14.4	16.3	18.4	18.2	16.3
Cyprus	36.8	31.7	24.8	25.8	27.0	28.8	31.5
Latvia	5.8	6.0	7.0	7.1	6.9	7.0	8.2
Lithuania	10.7	11.0	11.8	15.2	11.5	13.3	13.3
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malta	21.8	19.7	22.3	18.4	14.2	17.5	18.1
Netherlands	12.1	12.4	12.0	12.1	11.4	11.4	13.5
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	15.5	17.2	19.7	22.0	18.3	19.7	21.8
Portugal	26.5	25.1	26.9	26.3	26.4	26.8	29.5
Romania	7.0	7.7	7.0	10.9	11.0	12.8	10.2
Slovenia	33.9	30.3	36.8	40.0	41.9	43.1	39.8
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	10.2	11.3	11.3	11.2	11.5	11.2	11.7
Sweden	8.3	7.9	7.4	7.8	6.7	6.8	7.0
United Kingdom	7.0	7.3	7.8	8.2	8.9	9.1	9.4
Norway	3.3	3.4	3.4	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.7
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers.

(-) not applicable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_umar)

eurostat 



Table 3: Transport of containers in short sea shipping, 2011-2017
(% share of total short sea shipping in tonnes)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_umar](#))

The Member States with high unitisation rates in deep sea shipping are generally those with major container ports, handling high levels of intercontinental transport (Table 4). In particular, these countries are Germany (64.4 %) with the ports of Hamburg and Bremen/Bremerhaven, Malta (52.4 %), which serves as a transshipment point for containers in the Mediterranean, Belgium (51.8 %) with the port of Antwerpen, Spain with the ports of Valencia and Algeciras (46.7%) and Greece (also 43 %) with the port of Piraeus.

Transport of containers in deep sea shipping, 2011-2017

(% share of total deep sea shipping in tonnes)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	33.3	33.5	32.8	33.4	33.3	34.3	35.3
Belgium	49.9	52.0	49.3	49.8	49.7	48.9	51.8
Bulgaria	9.6	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.7	1.4
Czechia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Denmark	8.7	13.5	12.1	11.6	13.1	15.1	17.8
Germany	66.8	66.4	65.4	66.2	63.3	67.0	64.4
Estonia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ireland	0.2	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8
Greece	43.0	51.1	55.4	46.3	42.5	40.3	43.0
Spain	43.6	41.8	41.0	40.3	43.0	45.8	46.7
France	22.1	22.1	22.9	23.4	23.0	23.8	25.6
Croatia	11.1	14.8	19.1	13.1	15.5	27.4	23.8
Italy	33.2	33.0	33.3	34.4	33.0	26.4	28.0
Cyprus	43.6	18.2	22.0	36.7	27.6	12.9	35.3
Latvia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Lithuania	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malta	49.8	74.4	72.2	48.9	84.1	70.7	52.4
Netherlands	22.7	22.6	22.1	22.6	21.9	22.7	25.1
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	22.1	26.1	24.9	26.5	26.8	24.3	23.9
Portugal	20.2	23.9	29.2	33.5	31.8	39.4	34.3
Romania	10.8	9.5	10.0	17.8	17.3	9.8	13.7
Slovenia	22.8	21.7	20.5	24.9	27.9	25.9	35.2
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Sweden	14.7	22.3	18.6	13.3	18.0	22.1	17.9
United Kingdom	26.7	24.8	22.9	26.3	28.2	31.8	28.9
Norway	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers.

(-) not applicable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_umar)

eurostat 



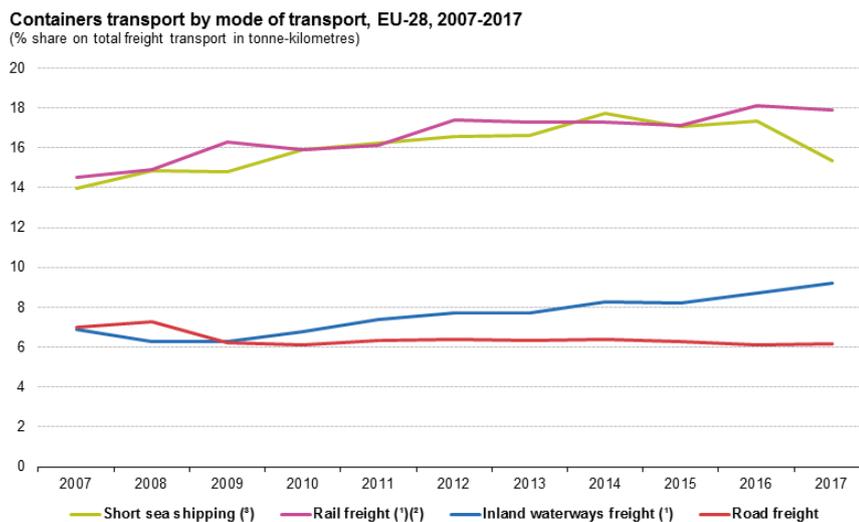
Table 4: Transport of containers in deep sea shipping, 2011-2017
(% share of total deep sea shipping in tonnes)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_umar](#))

Trends in unitisation across modes

To enable comparison of unitisation rates across the different modes of transport, Eurostat has estimated unitisation rates for short sea shipping in terms of tonne-kilometres. For comparability, the data for rail and inland have also been estimated in [gross weight](#), by subtracting the weight of containers typically used from the original [gross-gross weight](#) data. Deep sea shipping mainly concerns intercontinental transport and is thus not included in this comparison of transport within Europe.

The unitisation rates for short sea shipping and for rail transport are roughly at the same level and followed a similar development path from 2007 to 2017. The unitisation rate for rail freight was 14.5 % in 2007 and fluctuated up and down over the years, with a peak of 18.1 % in 2016. Only containers and swap bodies are considered for rail transport in order to better compare with the other modes of transport. For short sea shipping, the growth in the unitisation rate followed a smoother path, growing relatively steadily from 14 % in 2007 to 17.7 % in 2014, before falling to 15.4 % in 2017.



Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers.

(*) Gross weight estimated.

(†) Containers and swap bodies.

(‡) Tonne-kilometres estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_umod)

eurostat



Figure 3: Containers transport by mode of transport, EU-28, 2007-2017 (% share of total freight transport in tonne-kilometres)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_umod](#))

The unitisation rates for freight transport by road and by inland waterways are substantially below the rates for short sea shipping and rail transport. For freight transport by inland waterways there was relatively steady growth in the years from 2009 to 2017, when the unitisation rate reached a peak at 9.2%, an increase of 0.5 percentage points compared to the previous year. Only four Member States have significant inland waterways transport of containers. For road freight transport, the unitisation rate was 7.0 % in 2007, about the same as for inland waterways, peaked in 2008 at 7.3 % and has remained slightly above 6 % since 2009. The EU unitisation rates for each mode of transport in Figure 3 are Eurostat estimates, based on the data currently available from the Member States.

Modal shift potential from road to rail and inland waterways

A key target of European transport policy is to achieve a 60 % reduction in [greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions from transport](#) by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. One of the strategies to achieve this is to shift 30 % of transport over distances of 300 kilometres and longer from road to transport modes with lower CO₂ emissions, including shifting containers and other ITUs from road to rail and inland waterways.

The indicator 'modal shift potential' provides information on the share of container transport by road that is transported over distances of 300 kilometres or more. This container transport could be shifted to rail or inland waterways transport, thus contributing to the reduction of CO₂ from the transport sector. An overview of the development in the volumes of long-distance container transport by road from 2015 to 2017 is given in Table 5 (in tonne-kilometres) and Table 6 (in tonnes).

Measured in percentage of tonne-kilometres, the share of such long distance container transport by road was 41.2% in 2017.

Modal shift potential of long-distance road transport of containers, 2015-2017

(million tonne-kilometres)

	Million tonne-kilometres			Share in total road transport of container (%)		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	41 672	42 421	45 041	·	·	41.2
Belgium	1 569	1 216	1 360	38.1	30.8	35.0
Bulgaria	1 134	·	·	77.6	·	·
Czechia	2 081	1 299	1 316	59.9	46.5	43.0
Denmark	·	·	·	·	·	·
Germany	15 597	15 616	15 989	39.6	39.3	38.5
Estonia	214	·	·	74.8	·	·
Ireland	·	·	·	·	·	·
Greece	·	·	·	·	·	·
Spain	3 256	4 416	4 594	47.3	52.7	51.0
France	2 483	2 996	3 108	46.3	50.7	52.2
Croatia	·	·	·	·	·	·
Italy	·	·	·	·	·	·
Cyprus	·	·	·	·	·	·
Latvia	·	·	·	·	·	·
Lithuania	360	591	1 057	70.0	78.9	83.7
Luxembourg	387	319	282	54.9	49.5	45.6
Hungary	688	474	481	64.1	59.8	62.2
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	1 750	1 596	1 636	20.3	19.0	19.7
Austria	135	138	182	20.5	18.4	22.2
Poland	·	·	·	·	·	·
Portugal	2 650	2 822	3 504	38.4	42.1	44.8
Romania	1 424	301	268	79.6	74.7	·
Slovenia	612	685	518	78.6	73.5	64.6
Slovakia	659	698	848	66.4	65.4	67.4
Finland	·	·	834	·	·	50.0
Sweden	·	·	·	·	·	·
United Kingdom	2 141	1 597	2 443	31.2	24.0	29.7
Norway	802	817	650	36.6	40.6	37.1
Switzerland	·	·	·	·	·	·

Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers. Long distance means 300 km or more. (·) not available. (-) not applicable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_mosp)

eurostat 



Table 5: Modal shift potential of long-distance road transport of containers, 2015-2017
(million tonne-kilometres)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_mosp](#))

The most long-distance transport of containers was transported by German trucks. In 2017, they performed 16.0 billion tonne-kilometres, corresponding to 35.5 % of the estimated EU total for that year. Long-distance container transport by road increased for Germany, by 2.5 % from 2015 to 2017. Far behind Germany followed Spain (4.6 billion tonne-kilometres), Portugal (3.5 billion tonne-kilometres), France (3.1 billion tonne-kilometres), the United Kingdom (2.4 billion tonne-kilometres), the Netherlands (1.6 billion tonne-kilometres) and Lithuania (1.1 billion tonne-kilometres).

Modal shift potential of long-distance road transport of containers, 2015-2017

(thousand tonnes)

	Thousand tonnes			Share in total road transport of container (%)		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	84 036	85 975	91 184	·	·	8.2
Belgium	3 743	2 991	3 393	12.6	10.7	12.2
Bulgaria	1 725	·	·	34.5	·	·
Czechia	2 947	2 087	2 092	11.0	7.4	5.8
Denmark	·	·	·	·	·	·
Germany	34 248	34 332	35 014	8.4	8.4	8.2
Estonia	284	·	·	29.0	·	·
Ireland	·	·	·	0.0	0.0	0.0
Greece	·	·	·	·	·	·
Spain	5 731	7 310	8 043	8.1	9.4	9.4
France	7 120	8 817	9 047	13.7	17.9	17.2
Croatia	·	·	·	·	·	·
Italy	·	·	·	·	·	·
Cyprus	·	·	·	·	·	·
Latvia	·	·	·	·	·	·
Lithuania	610	792	1 342	26.0	31.1	36.7
Luxembourg	824	681	559	10.8	8.2	7.0
Hungary	969	927	892	16.8	22.1	22.9
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	3 398	3 190	3 111	3.5	3.3	3.3
Austria	255	312	388	2.1	1.8	2.7
Poland	·	·	·	·	·	·
Portugal	3 801	3 898	4 620	5.3	6.0	5.8
Romania	1 793	490	413	32.8	35.5	·
Slovenia	875	1 114	846	30.1	29.1	21.0
Slovakia	952	849	843	22.0	13.9	11.9
Finland	·	·	2 072	·	·	15.2
Sweden	·	·	·	·	·	·
United Kingdom	5 452	4 834	6 837	9.5	8.9	11.4
Norway	1 341	1 599	1 307	6.2	8.9	8.9
Switzerland	·	·	·	·	·	·

Note: Based on gross weight, including weight of packaging but without tare weight of containers. Long distance means 300 km or more. (·) not available. (-) not applicable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tran_im_mospt)

eurostat 



Table 5: Modal shift potential of long-distance road transport of containers, 2015-2017 (thousand tonnes)

Source: Eurostat, ([tran_im_mospt](#))

Of the 15 Member States for which comparable data for both 2015 and 2017 are available, 7 recorded a reduction in long-distance container transport in terms of tonne-kilometres. Particularly strong decreases in long-distance container transport were observed between 2015 and 2017 for Romania (-81.2 % to 268 million tonne-kilometres, Czechia (-36.6 % to 1 316 million tonne-kilometres), Hungary (-30.1 % to 481 million tonne-kilometres) and Luxembourg (-27.1 % to 282 million tonne-kilometres). The countries where such long-distance container transport increased the most from 2015 to 2017 were Lithuania (+193.6 %), Spain (+41.1 %), Austria (+34.8 %), Portugal (+32.2 %) and Slovakia (+28.7 %). Measured in percentage of tonnes, the share of long distance transport in the EU in 2017 was at 8.2 %.

Germany dominated also in terms of tonnes, with 35.0 million tonnes in 2017. All other Member States followed far behind, France being closest with 9.0 million tonnes. Of the 15 Member States with data for both 2015 and 2017, 8 recorded a reduction in long-distance container transport in terms of tonnes over this period.

Source data for tables and graphs

-  [Statistics on unitisation: tables and figures](#)

Data sources

All figures presented in this article are available in the [Eurostat](#) online database. All data used are collected under the relevant EU legal acts for individual transport modes (road transport, rail transport, inland waterways transport and maritime transport).

Data coverage

Generally, the data cover all 28 EU Member States and the 2 EFTA countries Norway and Switzerland.

However, please note the following for individual modes of transport:

- **Rail transport:** Cyprus, Malta and Iceland have no railways, while Liechtenstein only has a 9.5 km railway line passing through it.
- **Inland waterways transport:** 14 Member States are obliged to deliver data: Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (reduced dataset). Italy, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden provide a reduced dataset on a voluntary basis.
- **Maritime (sea) transport:** Czechia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and Switzerland are landlocked countries and so have no maritime transport.

Definitions

Except for the definitions below, all definitions and concepts in this article are described in the Eurostat/ITF/UNECE Illustrated Glossary for Transport Statistics, 4th edition. This glossary can be found [here](#) on the Eurostat website:

Unitisation in freight transport: 'Unitisation' expresses the share of goods that are transported in intermodal transport units (ITUs), i.e. standardised transport units suitable for being transported by different modes of transport. ITUs comprise containers, swap bodies and other standardised (in terms of size) packaging, which can be moved with simple equipment (e.g. cranes). In the case of rail freight transport, ITU covers 'containers and swap bodies, road vehicles (accompanied) and semi-trailers (unaccompanied)', while for other modes of transport only 'containers' are covered. The unitisation shares in this article are calculated based on tonne-kilometres for all modes. The unitisation shares are calculated as the share of goods transported in ITUs in relation to the total goods transport of the respective mode of transport.

Unitisation indicators: Eurostat currently compiles a set of five indicators on the unitisation rate of the different modes of transport, i.e. transport in containers and other 'intermodal transport units' as a share of the total freight transport performance by the respective mode of transport. Common to these indicators is the fact that they use data already available from existing statistics and so do not create any additional response burden for the Member States. These logistics indicators are:

- freight unitisation as share of total road transport performance
- freight unitisation as share of total rail transport performance
- freight unitisation as share of total inland waterways transport performance
- freight unitisation as share of total short sea shipping freight transport performance
- freight unitisation as share of total deep sea shipping freight transport performance

Short sea shipping: Maritime transport of freight between ports within Europe, on the Mediterranean and on the Black Sea, including ferry and feeder traffic.

Deep sea shipping: Maritime freight transport other than short sea shipping, including intercontinental sea transport.

Rail and inland waterway transport data are based on the gross-gross weight of the goods, including both the weight of packaging and of the ITU [tare weight](#).

Maritime and road data are based on the gross weight of the goods, including packaging but without the ITU tare weight.

Symbols

- ‘:’ not available
- ‘-’ not applicable or real zero
- ‘0’ less than half of the unit used and thus rounded to zero
- *Italics*: estimated value

Context

The article is based on a set of unitisation indicators developed to improve the statistical coverage and analysis of intermodal freight transport in the EU. The data used to compute these indicators are collected under the relevant [European legal acts on compilation of statistics for the individual modes of transport](#).

The European Commission White Paper ‘[Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system](#)’ (2011) is a cornerstone of European transport policy. Key aims of the White Paper include the consumption of less energy and the use of cleaner energy in transport. It sets out the target of achieving a 60 % reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transport by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. This has strongly increased the interest in and the need for statistics on the transport sector in Europe.

One important strategy to reduce the energy consumption and CO₂ and GHG emissions of freight transport is to move freight from transport modes with high consumption and emissions to other modes of transport with higher energy efficiency and lower CO₂ and GHG emissions. Transporting goods in standardised containers and other ITUs, which can easily be moved from one mode of transport to another (e.g. from road to rail transport), makes it much easier to create efficient ‘intermodal transport chains’ with lower energy consumption and emissions. Intermodal transport also facilitates the establishment of efficient transport corridors.