



Report

Results of the TOP 10 European container ports
in the first half of 2021

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port 
monitor

TOP 10 European container ports in the first half of 2021

In most of the TOP 10 European container ports, an increase in container turnover can be seen in the first six months of 2021 compared to the same period last year. Many of them recorded also growth compared to the first half of 2019. In the first half of this year, the TOP 10 European container ports handled a total of over 33 million TEU, which is a result higher by 5.4% than in the first half of last year and by 0.5% higher than in the corresponding period of 2019. The increase in container turnover reflects the recovery of the economy after the difficult first half of 2020, due to outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Port of Rotterdam remains the largest European container port with container turnover of 7.6 million TEU. In the first half of 2021, compared to the first half of 2020, there was an increase in container throughput by 8.7%. Import grew by 9.2% to over 3.9 million TEU, while export by 8.1%, reaching 3.6 million TEU. Although container turnover in TEU increased by over 8.7%, in terms of tonnage the growth was lower (+4.4%), due to increased handling of empty containers. Compared to the first half of 2019, the number of handled containers increased by 1.1% in the first half of this year.

The Port of Antwerp also recorded growth in container turnover (+5.1%) compared to the same period in 2020, and handled 6.2 million TEU. The positive change in the first half of 2021 resulted from high demand for containerized goods in import. The result was also influenced by the expansion of short-sea connections with the UK in response to Brexit.

A positive trend in the first half of 2021 was also noticeable in the Port of Hamburg (+4.9%) compared to the same period of 2020. The result was influenced by two main factors: stronger consumer demand and restored stability of the liner connections in Hamburg. A large increase in container turnover took place especially in relation with China (+16%), but also with United States, Sweden and Poland. Despite the growth in the first six months of this year, the port handled fewer containers than before the pandemic. In comparison to the first half of 2019, the port handled 8.5% TEU less.

A growth in container turnover took place in the Port of Valencia (+12.2% in compare to the first half of 2020). This is about 2.5% more than in 2019. The result was mainly due to the increased handling of containers in import. This relation suffered significantly in 2020, when in the first half of 2020, container turnover in import decreased by nearly 14.0% compared to the same time in 2019.

Port of Bremerhaven also recorded a significant increase. Container turnover in the first half of 2021 was 11.1% higher than in the same period in 2020 and by 4.1% higher than in the first half of 2019.

The Port of Piraeus (where containers are handled by COSCO) recorded a reduction in container throughput in the first half of 2021 compared to the first half of 2020 (-1.6%). The decline is mainly due to economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Port of Algeciras recorded significant reduction in cargo handling in the first six months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 (-8.0%).

From January to June 2021, Port of Barcelona recorded a recovery after the extremely unfavourable year 2020. In the first six months of 2020, compared to the same period of 2019, the volume of handled

containers decreased by as much as 20.5%. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the reduction in the transport of chemical products in containers (-23.1% compared to the first half of 2019) and the collapse of transit traffic. Throughput in the past half of the year increased by as much as 31% compared to the same period of 2020, and was also 4.2% higher in compare to the first half of 2019.

In the first 6 months of 2021, a large decrease (-9.3%) was recorded in the Italian Port of Gioia Tauro compared to the first half of 2020. However, it is worth noting that despite the pandemic, 2020 was exceptionally good for the port in terms of container turnover. The port recorded an impressive increase (+ 25.0% yoy), which was the result of Mediterranean Shipping Company taking over the remaining 50% of shares in the Medcenter Container Terminal in mid-2019.

Table 1. Container turnover in Top 10 European container ports in the first half of 2019, 2020 and 2021 [TEU].

	H1 2019	H1 2020	H1 2021	Change H1 2021/ H1 2020	Change H1 2021 / H1 2019
Rotterdam	7 529 000	7 002 000	7 612 000	8.7%	1.1%
Antwerp	5 852 514	5 900 000	6 200 000	5.1%	5.9%
Hamburg	4 700 000	4 100 000	4 300 000	4.9%	-8.5%
Valencia	2 761 413	2 522 099	2 830 826	12.2%	2.5%
Bremerhaven	2 486 121	2 329 578	2 588 841	11.1%	4.1%
Piraeus	2 569 900	2 409 400	2 370 900	-1.6%	-7.7%
Algeciras	2 541 307	2 528 343	2 326 323	-8.0%	-8.5%
Felixstowe	1 889 000	1 889 000*	1 889 000*	0.0%	0.0%
Barcelona	1 716 971	1 366 208	1 789 471	31.0%	4.2%
Gioia Tauro	1 152 016	1 597 948	1 448 678	-9.3%	25.8%
Total	33 198 242	31 644 576	33 356 039	5.4%	0.5%

*Data for 2019, lack of data for 2020 and 2021.

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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.

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