

After almost three years, freight levels at ports across the EU are slowly returning to their pre-pandemic state. [Port Strategy](#) reports that total weight of goods handled has recovered by 4% to 3.5 billion tons in 2021.

During 2020, EU ports saw a decline of 7% in cargo compared to the previous year. While volumes still haven't reached pre-Covid 19 levels, figures for both goods and passengers seem to be rebounding.

The Netherlands remain the largest maritime freight transport member state in 2021. Dutch ports handled 590 million tons of goods, showing an increase of 32 million tonnes compared with the previous year.

This presents 17% of the total volume of seaborne goods handled last year in the EU.

The Netherlands was followed by Italy and Spain, each with a share of 14%.

In terms of volume and gross weight of goods, Rotterdam (435 million ton), Antwerpen (216 million ton) and Hamburg (111 million ton), all maintained their positions as EU's top three ports in 2021.

Passenger volumes are also slowly increasing. Following a 45% fall in the number of passengers embarking and disembarking in EU ports in 2020, numbers have increased by 16% in 2021 to 268 million.

However, as is the case with exports, this is still considerably below the levels observed before the pandemic when EU ports registered 418 million passengers.