Market evolution: Aluminium sheets (CN 7606) — 2015–2025

Introduction

The EU's trade in aluminium plates, sheets and strip thicker than 0.2 mm (CN 7606, excluding expanded products) is tracked from 2015 to 2025. The analysis covers total value, volume and unit price for extra-EU exports and imports, shifts among the top-7 non-EU partners, production and specialisation across member states, price and supply shocks, and key vulnerability indicators. All data are drawn from the product dashboard.

Value surges on price tailwinds: The decoupling of euros and tonnes in EU aluminium sheet trade

Export earnings rise 14.7 % as unit prices jump 29.9 %, masking an 11.7 % volume drop

The headline trade totals reveal a strong price-driven dynamic. Between 2015 and 2025 extra-EU exports climbed from €3.92 billion to €4.50 billion, but this 14.7 % increase in value was entirely due to a 29.9 % rise in average export prices, while the exported quantity fell by 11.7 % (from 1.18 million to 1.04 million tonnes). The trend is particularly visible in 2022, when export prices peaked at €4 776 per tonne, up from €3 009–3 323 in earlier years.

Import bill swells 29.8 %, driven by price hikes rather than volume expansion

Extra-EU imports displayed an even sharper price effect. Import value grew from €3.03 billion to €3.93 billion, a 29.8 % increase, whereas the imported quantity rose only 5.9 % (from 1.02 million to 1.08 million tonnes). Consequently, average import prices advanced 22.5 %, from €2 959 per tonne to €3 626 per tonne, peaking at €4 317 per tonne in 2022. The widening gap between import values and volumes compressed the EU's trade surplus from €895 million (2015) to €571 million (2025), a decline of 36.2 %.

Production value leaps 58.6 %, far outpacing the 9.9 % volume increase

On the production side, the EU's own output of aluminium sheets registered a 9.9 % rise in quantity (from 4 949 million kg to 5 440 million kg), but the value of production surged 58.6 %, from €10.2 billion to €16.1 billion. The steep price escalation across global aluminium markets, especially in 2021-2022, lifted both trade and production values simultaneously.

Indicator	2015	2025	Change (%)
Exports (€ bn)	3.92	4.50	+14.7
Exports (kt)	1 180	1 042	–11.7
Export price (€/t)	3 323	4 317	+29.9
Imports (€ bn)	3.03	3.93	+29.8
Imports (kt)	1 023	1 083	+5.9
Import price (€/t)	2 959	3 626	+22.5
Balance (€ m)	895	571	–36.2
Production quantity (kt)	4 949	5 440	+9.9
Production value (€ bn)	10.2	16.1	+58.6

Sources: General trade overview, production volumes

The product-segment breakdown confirms that **aluminium alloy sheets (CN 760612)** dominate both flows. In 2025 they accounted for 71 % of import volume and 88 % of export volume, and their price evolution (e.g. export price +35.8 % to €4 291/t) drove the aggregate numbers.

Geopolitical pivots and partner reconfiguration: From Russia to Turkey, Norway and beyond

Imports: Turkey, Norway and Egypt fill the gap left by Russia's exit

The partner landscape for extra-EU imports was fundamentally reshaped after 2022. Imports from the Russian Federation, worth €159 million in 2015, had already begun declining but collapsed to just €1 214 in 2025, a near-total exit detected as a supply shock with a quantity drop of 99.8 % (supply shock events). Other suppliers expanded rapidly:

- **Türkiye** – value more than doubled (+136.8 %, from €313 m to €741 m), becoming the second-largest import source.
- **Norway** – value rose 79.4 % (€263 m to €472 m), supported by stable volumes and a price shock of +62 % centred in 2022.

- **Egypt** – value climbed 92.9 % (€92 m to €177 m), aided by a price spike of 71.3 % in 2022.
- **United Kingdom** – growth of 25.3 % (€335 m to €419 m), despite post-Brexit adjustments.

China, while remaining a large supplier, exhibited extreme volatility (coefficient of variation 0.43) and saw its 2025 value edge 9 % below 2015 levels.

Import partner	2015 (€ m)	2025 (€ m)	Change (%)
Switzerland	681	776	+14.0
China	424	385	–9.0
Türkiye	313	741	+136.8
Norway	263	472	+79.4
United Kingdom	335	419	+25.3
Egypt	92	177	+92.9
Russian Federation	160	0.0012	≈–100

Source: Top partners (imports)

Exports: Diversification towards the Americas and Serbia, while China retreats

On the export side, the United Kingdom remained the largest destination (€1.52 billion in 2025, +16.9 %), but the fastest growth came from non-European markets:

- **United States** – +59.3 % (€493 m to €786 m), despite a price shock of +54.4 % in 2022.
- **Switzerland** – +111.3 % (€229 m to €483 m).
- **Mexico** – +125.6 % (€75 m to €170 m).
- **Serbia** – +147.0 % (€60 m to €148 m).

Exports to China, by contrast, contracted by 37.1 % (from €146 m to €92 m). Export market concentration, measured by the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, rose by 15.4 %, reflecting a tighter cluster of destinations (concentration HHI).

Price shock events concentrate in 2022, reshaping bilateral trade flows

The volatility bars and detected shocks highlight how the global aluminium price spike of 2022 fed through to multiple bilateral relationships. On the import side, price shocks of +39.9 % (Türkiye, 2021), +62.0 % (Norway, 2022) and +71.3 % (Egypt, 2022) were recorded. Export flows to Canada (+43.4 %), the United States (+54.4 %) and the United Kingdom (+41.2 %) also experienced sharp price jumps in the same year, compressing volumes temporarily but leaving elevated price levels in the post-shock period.

Internal specialisation and external vulnerability: The EU's production landscape and trade dependence

Member states' revealed comparative advantage reveals a specialised core

In 2025, five countries exhibited strong export specialisation in aluminium sheets, measured by the revealed symmetric comparative advantage (RSCA) index (specialisation map):

- Greece: RSCA 0.85 (RCA 12.1, highest among all members)
- Croatia: RSCA 0.71
- Slovenia: RSCA 0.44
- Austria: RSCA 0.29
- Germany: RSCA 0.22

Germany remains the largest exporter by value (€1.76 billion in 2025), but its exports have fallen 24 % compared with 2015, whereas France (+72 %), Austria (+62.5 %) and Greece (+112.5 %) expanded strongly. On the import side, Germany and France are the biggest intra-EU buyers, but Poland (+152.5 %), Spain (+155.7 %) and Sweden (+128.2 %) recorded the fastest growth, pointing to a broader distribution of processing capacity.

Export propensity falls by a fifth, signalling a tilt towards domestic or intra-EU consumption

The share of EU production sent to non-EU markets (export propensity) declined from 32.3 % in 2015 to 25.7 % in 2024, a drop of 20.5 % (export propensity). Overall trade intensity (the sum of extra-EU exports and imports relative to production value) also fell by 12.3 %, from 44.4 % to 38.9 %. These trends indicate that a growing share of EU aluminium sheet output is absorbed within the single market or used in domestic downstream manufacturing, reducing exposure to extra-EU trade shocks.

Net import reliance briefly turns positive in 2022, then returns to net exporter territory

The EU's net import reliance (the percentage of domestic consumption covered by net imports) improved from –11.8 % (net export surplus) in 2015 to –4.2 % in 2024, a 64.8 % reduction in the net-surplus ratio (net import reliance). In 2022 the metric even swung to a small positive value (+4.7 %), making the EU a temporary net importer as import prices peaked. By 2024 the balance had moved back to a net export position, but the overall trend shows a thinner cushion between exports and imports, primarily because import values have risen faster than export values.

Conclusion

The decade from 2015 to 2025 transformed EU trade in aluminium sheets from a volume-driven, Russia-dependent pattern into a high-price, geopolitically reoriented market. Surging unit prices – amplified by the 2022 energy crisis – pushed trade values upward while volumes stagnated or declined. Import sources shifted dramatically away from Russia towards Turkey, Norway and Egypt; export destinations diversified towards the Americas and Serbia. Within the EU, highly specialised producers such as Greece, Croatia, Slovenia and Germany maintained comparative advantage, but a falling export propensity and a shrinking trade surplus point to a market that is increasingly looking inward. The EU remains a net exporter of aluminium sheets, but the diminished surplus and the still-elevated price environment keep the sector sensitive to global cost dynamics and partner-side disruptions.

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