

Market evolution: Computer parts (CN 8473) — 2015–2025

Introduction

Computer parts and accessories (CN 8473) are a strategically vital import for the European Union, dominated by components for automatic data-processing machines. The data window covers the full years 2015 to 2025. Over this period the EU's external trade in CN 8473 underwent a dramatic value expansion driven almost entirely by price inflation, a widening trade deficit, and a major reordering of supplier and customer countries. This report describes those dynamics in three parts: the growing imbalance between imports and exports, the role of surging unit prices, and the geopolitical and supply-chain shifts behind the changing partner landscape.

The EU's external deficit in computer parts deepened as imports soared while exports lagged

Import values grew by 84 % while export values rose by only 23 %

Between 2015 and 2025 the value of extra-EU imports of CN 8473 climbed from EUR 9.44 billion to EUR 17.40 billion (+84.2 %), whereas exports increased from EUR 5.18 billion to EUR 6.35 billion (+22.6 %) [trade overview].

Flow	2015 (EUR bn)	2025 (EUR bn)	Change (%)
Imports	9.44	17.40	+84.2
Exports	5.18	6.35	+22.6

The trade deficit expanded from EUR –4.3 billion to EUR –11.1 billion

The trade balance, already negative at the start of the period, worsened by 159 %, moving from a deficit of EUR –4.26 billion to EUR –11.05 billion [trade overview]. This deepening net import reliance reflects the EU's strong dependence on foreign-made computer parts, especially high-value semiconductors and memory modules.

Export growth, though modest, concealed a strong pivot toward the United States

While total exports rose only slowly, shipments to the United States surged by 185.7 % (from EUR 0.56 bn to EUR 1.61 bn), partially compensating for steep falls elsewhere [top partners by value].

Sharp price escalation masked declining physical trade volumes

Export volumes dropped by 37 % and import volumes by 11 %, but average unit prices nearly doubled

Despite the robust value growth, trade in physical terms declined. Export quantity fell from 48.2 thousand tonnes to 30.3 thousand tonnes (–37.1 %), while import quantity decreased from 171.9 thousand tonnes to 152.8 thousand tonnes (–11.1 %). Over the same horizon, the average export price rose from EUR 107.5 thousand/tonne to EUR 209.5 thousand/tonne (+94.9 %) and the import price from EUR 54.9 thousand/tonne to EUR 113.9 thousand/tonne (+107.3 %) [trade overview].

Indicator	2015	2025	Change (%)
Export quantity (t)	48 199	30 308	–37.1
Import quantity (t)	171 907	152 762	–11.1
Export unit price	EUR 107 489	EUR 209 484	+94.9
Import unit price	EUR 54 936	EUR 113 898	+107.3

The dominant sub-category 847330 saw import prices more than double even as tonnage declined

CN 8473 is overwhelmingly composed of parts for automatic data-processing machines (sub-code 847330). Import volume of 847330 went from 155.3 thousand tonnes to 138.1 thousand tonnes (–10.7 %), while the unit price jumped from EUR 56 968/tonne to EUR 122 696/tonne (+115.4 %) [product segment breakdown]. Export prices for 847330 rose even faster, from EUR 123 926/tonne to EUR 245 493/tonne (+98.1 %), confirming a sector-wide up-qualification of traded components.

A 2017 price shock in imports from China established a higher cost baseline

The steep price increase was not gradual. A sudden price shock hit imports from China in 2017, with the unit price jumping 44.5 % while volume contracted [top shock events]. This event—likely linked to global semiconductor shortages and a shift toward more expensive,

high-density components—pushed the average import price onto a permanently higher trajectory.

Geopolitical shocks and supply-chain diversification reordered the EU's key trade partners

Imports from Vietnam, Taiwan and Mexico skyrocketed, while the United Kingdom and Russia faded

The geography of EU computer-parts imports changed profoundly. The most striking jumps were recorded for Vietnam (+1 860.7 %), Taiwan (+448.2 %) and Mexico (+662.4 %). By contrast, imports from the United Kingdom collapsed by 90.9 % after Brexit, and from the United States by 56.8 % [top partners by value].

Import partner	2015 (EUR m)	2025 (EUR m)	Change (%)
China	4 648	5 282	+13.7
Vietnam	152	2 977	+1 860.7
Taiwan	556	3 048	+448.2
Mexico	92	701	+662.4
United Kingdom	1 467	133	−90.9
United States	853	368	−56.8

Exports to the United States surged, replacing the United Kingdom as the top destination

On the export side, the United States became the EU's number-one market, rising from EUR 0.56 bn to EUR 1.61 bn (+185.7 %). The United Kingdom dropped by 43.9 %, while exports to Russia practically disappeared (−99.9 %) due to sanctions imposed after 2022 [top partners by value].

Export partner	2015 (EUR m)	2025 (EUR m)	Change (%)
United States	563	1 609	+185.7
United Kingdom	1 085	609	−43.9
Russian Federation	249	0.1	−99.9

Supplier concentration fell, but export destinations became more concentrated

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index for imports declined from 2 814 to 1 807 (−35.8 %), reflecting a broader diversification of sourcing. In contrast, the HHI for exports rose from 842 to 1 119 (+33.0 %), signalling that export destinations became more focused, largely because of the growing weight of the United States [concentration HHI].

The Netherlands and Ireland consolidated their roles as dominant import hubs

Among EU member states, the Netherlands recorded a 169.3 % increase in imports of CN 8473 (to EUR 5.47 bn) and Ireland a 244.0 % rise (to EUR 3.42 bn) [top reporters by value]. These two countries alone accounted for half of all extra-EU imports of computer parts in 2025, highlighting their function as logistics and re-export platforms for high-value components. Their specialisation in exporting these parts is also among the highest in the EU, with revealed symmetric comparative advantage (RSCA) values of 0.53 (Netherlands) and 0.57 (Ireland) [most specialised reporters].

Conclusion

The EU's trade in computer parts (CN 8473) between 2015 and 2025 was defined by a powerful combination of import-driven deficit expansion, structural price increases, and geopolitical reorientation. Despite a 22.6 % rise in export value, imports more than doubled, deepening the trade deficit to EUR –11.1 billion. The growth was entirely price-led; physical volumes declined while unit prices doubled, especially after the 2017 cost shock on Chinese imports. On the partner front, the EU diversified its sourcing toward Southeast Asia and Mexico, while exports pivoted toward the United States and away from traditional markets such as the United Kingdom and Russia. Within the EU, the Netherlands and Ireland cemented their position as central hubs for the import and redistribution of high-value computer components. These trends underscore the EU's growing reliance on foreign semiconductor and IT-part suppliers, a strategic vulnerability that is likely to persist as digitalisation accelerates.

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If you need advice on European trade policy, or representation for your interests in Brussels, feel free to contact me at support@tradedashboard.eu. You can find my CV at [this address](#).