

Market evolution: Electrical control panels and cabinets (CN 8537) — 2015–2025

Introduction

The EU market for electrical control panels, cabinets and similar apparatus (CN 8537) underwent a period of intense growth and structural reshaping between 2015 and 2025. Extra-EU exports climbed from €10.3 billion to €18.5 billion (+79.6%), while imports more than doubled from €4.3 billion to €10.3 billion (+138.8%), leaving the EU firmly in surplus (General Overview – Trade). Beneath these aggregate figures, the story of CN 8537 is one of diverging price and volume dynamics, a dramatic reordering of trade partners, and a domestic production engine that increasingly turned outward.

Value leapfrogs volume: the rising price premium of EU exports

Extra-EU export value surged by almost 80 %, yet the tonnage shipped rose by less than a tenth

Between 2015 and 2025 the value of EU exports grew from €10.3 billion to €18.5 billion, while the quantity increased only modestly from 182 859 tonnes to 199 893 tonnes (General Overview – Trade). The resulting 64.3 % jump in the average export price (from €56 326 to €92 553 per tonne) shows that EU producers moved decisively up the value chain, selling more sophisticated and higher-priced equipment abroad.

Metric	2015	2025	Change
Export value (EUR)	10.3 bn	18.5 bn	+79.6 %
Export quantity (t)	182 859	199 893	+9.3 %
Average export price (€/t)	56 326	92 553	+64.3 %

Import volumes caught up with exports, but without significant price inflation

Imports told a very different story: their quantity soared by 135.7 % (from 74 280 t to 175 114 t), almost closing the volume gap with exports, while the average import price remained essentially flat (+1.3 %, from €58 056 to €58 811 per tonne). This points to a massive influx of competitively priced panels, mostly low- and medium-voltage units, while

the EU's own export price escalation reflected a stronger mix of high-value customised equipment.

A widening surplus anchored in a rapidly expanding production base

EU domestic production value more than doubled, from €15.6 billion (2015) to €25.6 billion (2024) (Production Volumes). The export propensity — the share of production sold outside the EU — jumped from 25.4 % to 68.0 % (Export Propensity). Thanks to this strong production growth, the EU's trade surplus rose from €6.0 billion to €8.2 billion (+37.0 %), and the EU became an ever larger net exporter of these goods.

Geopolitics redraws the trade map: China, Türkiye, and the Russia void

China consolidates as the dominant import supplier and a critical export market

China's share in EU imports of CN 8537 more than doubled in value, from €1.0 billion to €3.2 billion (+213.6 %), while EU exports to China rose from €2.0 billion to €3.7 billion (+85.6 %) (Top Partners). China thus became both the largest extra-EU supplier and the second-largest export destination, underlining the deep, two-way integration of the two markets in this product category.

The Russian market for EU panels evaporates after 2022

EU exports to Russia collapsed from a peak of €596 million (2019) to just €1.9 million in 2025, a drop of 99.6 % (Top Partners). The trade shock, triggered by sanctions, is the single most disruptive event in the series: the quantity shipped fell from an average of 8 923 t (2015-2022 baseline) to less than 200 t in 2023-2025, while the residual average unit price tripled to €112 000/t, reflecting an almost complete halt to ordinary trade (Supply Shocks).

Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States reinforce their roles

Beyond the headline giants, several other partners saw remarkable growth:

Partner	Flow	2015 (€ m)	2025 (€ m)	Change
Türkiye	Imports	59.2	412.8	+596.8 %
Türkiye	Exports	403.6	836.8	+107.3 %
United Kingdom	Imports	249.5	620.7	+148.8 %
United Kingdom	Exports	874.4	1 819.6	+108.1 %
United States	Imports	852.3	1 430.6	+67.9 %
United States	Exports	1 645.9	4 126.9	+150.7 %

Source: Top Partners

Türkiye's spectacular rise as a supplier reflects growing nearshoring in electrical equipment, while the UK remained a steady growth market despite Brexit. The US cemented its position as the EU's premier export destination, absorbing over €4 billion of panels in 2025.

Export concentration increases as a handful of markets dominate

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) for EU exports rose from 823 to 1 111 (+35.0 %), indicating a progressive concentration of shipments on a smaller number of large partners (Concentration HHI). The top three destinations — United States, China, and United Kingdom — alone accounted for more than half of extra-EU export value by 2025. Import concentration rose more modestly (HHI from 1 195 to 1 337, +11.8 %), with China and the United States dominating.

Inside the EU: production booms and a dual-track segment dynamic

Domestic production volume more than doubles while unit prices halve

EU-reported sold production (physical quantity) rose from 243 million units in 2015 to 483 million in 2024, a near-doubling. Over the same period production value increased from €15.6 billion to €25.6 billion (+64 %), and the implied unit price fell from €64.1 to €52.9 per unit (Production Volumes). This suggests massive capacity expansion, particularly in lower-voltage standardised products, while the high-priced, customised equipment continued to drive export values.

Low-voltage panels dominate exports, while high-voltage imports surge

The product-level breakdown highlights two distinct realities:

Exports

- Low-voltage ($\leq 1\,000$ V, CN 853710): value rose from €8.46 bn to €16.19 bn (+91.3 %); quantity rose from 105 712 t to 127 172 t (+20.3 %).
- High-voltage ($> 1\,000$ V, CN 853720): value rose from €1.84 bn to €2.55 bn (+38.8 %); quantity fell from 77 147 t to 72 727 t (-5.7 %).

Imports

- Low-voltage: value rose from €4.14 bn to €9.44 bn (+128 %); quantity rose from 66 436 t to 131 345 t (+97.8 %).
- High-voltage: value rose from €0.17 bn to €0.86 bn (+406 %); quantity surged from 7 844 t to 43 769 t (+459 %).

(Product Segment Breakdown)

Thus, while low-voltage panels remained the backbone of EU exports, high-voltage imports expanded nearly five-fold in volume, suggesting growing dependence on foreign suppliers for large-scale power distribution equipment.

Central and Eastern Europe emerge as specialised production hubs

The 2025 revealed comparative advantage (RSCA) scores show Romania (0.77), Hungary (0.59), Bulgaria (0.50) and Latvia (0.45) as the most specialised member states in CN 8537 production (Specialisation). Germany remains by far the largest producer (28 % of EU output) and the top extra-EU exporter (€9.5 billion in 2025), yet its specialisation is moderate (RSCA 0.15), reflecting a highly diversified industrial base. The shift of panel assembly towards Eastern member states illustrates the internal reorganisation of the EU's electrical equipment supply chain.

Conclusion

Between 2015 and 2025 the EU's external trade in electrical control panels evolved from a low-growth, balanced model into a high-value export engine. Export values soared thanks to strong price upscaling, even though exported tonnage barely increased, while imports flooded in at stable prices, especially in the high-voltage segment. Geopolitical forces redrew the trade map: China became the indispensable two-way partner, Russia vanished as a market, and Türkiye emerged as a fast-rising supplier. Simultaneously, EU production expanded massively, export propensity deepened, and the industry's centre of gravity shifted towards Central and Eastern Europe. Overall, the EU has reinforced its position as

a net exporter of premium control panels, but has also become more reliant on a concentrated set of foreign markets and a narrower range of key suppliers.

Generated on 2026-07-28 based on data from tradedashboard.eu

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