

Market evolution: Machine tool parts (CN 8466) — 2015–2025

Introduction

This report examines the European Union's external trade in machine-tool parts and accessories (CN 8466) between 2015 and 2025. The product group covers tool holders, work holders, dividing heads, and other specialised attachments, as well as parts for machines that cut, form, or otherwise shape metal, wood, stone, and similar materials. The analysis draws solely on the data provided by the EU Trade Dashboard, using annual figures for extra-EU flows. It identifies the principal volume–value dynamics, the reconfiguration of partner-country relationships, and the structural shifts in domestic production and export orientation.

1. From volume to value: the intensifying quality-price shift in EU exports

Export volumes plummet while unit prices surge, pointing to a decisive move toward high-end components

According to the General Overview, the EU's export value of 8466 parts rose by 6.2 %, from EUR 3,521.7 million in 2015 to EUR 3,738.6 million in 2025. Over the same interval, however, exported tonnage contracted by 37.3 %, from 122.1 thousand tonnes to 76.5 thousand tonnes. The implied average export price consequently climbed by 69.4 %, from EUR 28.9 per kg to EUR 48.9 per kg. This divergence is visible in every major sub-category (see Product Segment Breakdown): for instance, the export unit price of tool holders (846610) jumped from EUR 77.0 per kg to EUR 112.6 per kg, while the volume of exported parts for stone-working machinery (846691) shrank by more than 70 %. Such patterns indicate that EU manufacturers are increasingly supplying sophisticated, high-value components rather than commodity parts.

Import growth is volume-driven, with stable unit prices signalling cost-conscious sourcing from abroad

Imports of 8466 products grew by 7.6 % in value (from EUR 1,742.9 million to EUR 1,876.1 million) and by 8.2 % in quantity (from 95.0 thousand tonnes to 102.8 thousand tonnes). The average import price remained virtually unchanged (–0.5 %), hovering

around EUR 18.3 per kg. Consequently, the import bill expanded because the EU bought more tonnes, not because it paid higher unit prices, suggesting a procurement strategy anchored in competitively priced, standardised parts.

A rising trade surplus underscores the EU's capacity to extract value from high-tech machinery accessories

The EU's trade balance in 8466 items, already firmly positive, widened from EUR 1,778.9 million to EUR 1,862.5 million (a 4.7 % increase). Because the export price multiplied while import prices stagnated, the terms-of-trade shifted substantially in the EU's favour, strengthening the bloc's position as a net provider of precision machine-tool parts.

2. Geopolitical realignments and the diversification of supplier–customer ties

The disappearance of the Russian market forces a swift and almost total reorientation of exports

The most dramatic partner-level change recorded by the Top Partners overview is the collapse of exports to the Russian Federation: from EUR 189.2 million in 2015 to less than EUR 1 thousand in 2025. The supply-shock detection identifies this as a –99.3 % supply shock concentrated after 2022, directly linked to sanctions. The lost volume was largely absorbed by other destinations, above all the United States and India.

Imports pivot toward China and near-shore suppliers, reducing reliance on traditional Swiss deliveries

On the import side, the most salient trend is the doubling of Chinese shipments, which climbed by 90.8 % from EUR 208.0 million to EUR 396.9 million. Supplies from other emerging manufacturing economies also grew rapidly: those from Bosnia and Herzegovina rose 169.1 %, and those from Türkiye rose 62.7 %. Meanwhile, imports from Switzerland, the historical leader, contracted by 18.4 % (from EUR 530.5 million to EUR 432.9 million). The import concentration index (HHI) declined by 9.7 % over the period, confirming a gradual but steady diversification of sourcing away from a handful of high-cost suppliers (see Concentration & Specialisation).

Export destinations become more focused, with the United States asserting clear dominance

While the import portfolio broadened, the export portfolio became more concentrated; the export HHI rose by 27.4 %. The United States alone saw its purchases swell by 35.1 %, reaching EUR 1,116.5 million in 2025, which represents nearly 30 % of total extra-EU

exports of 8466. Exports to India also posted strong growth, surging by 77.7 % to EUR 189.6 million. By contrast, shipments to China edged down slightly (–3.5 %), suggesting a decoupling of the Chinese market from EU-origin high-end parts.

Table 1: Value evolution of the main extra-EU partners (EUR million)

Partner (exports)	2015	2025	Change (%)	Partner (imports)	2015	2025	Change (%)
United States	826.7	1,116.5	+35.1	China	208.0	396.9	+90.8
Switzerland	365.6	373.9	+2.3	Switzerland	530.5	432.9	–18.4
China	520.6	502.3	–3.5	Bosnia & Herzegovina	17.0	45.8	+169.1
United Kingdom	235.1	240.5	+2.3	Türkiye	42.9	69.7	+62.7
India	106.7	189.6	+77.7	India	56.0	84.0	+50.1
Russian Federation	189.2	~0	–100	Japan	179.8	166.8	–7.2

Source: Top Partners. Values rounded to one decimal.

3. An increasingly self-sufficient and export-oriented industrial base

Domestic production doubles, strengthening the foundation for the EU’s trade surplus

The production volume data reveals that EU-level output value of 8466 products expanded markedly, from EUR 2,794.8 million in 2015 to EUR 4,810.6 million in 2024 (the latest available year), a 72 % increase. This expansion far outpaced the growth of imports, enabling a deep negative net-import-reliance ratio that fell from –1.7 % to –30.1 % over the period (see Net Import Reliance). The bloc has therefore become much more self-reliant in machine-tool parts.

Export propensity leaps, reflecting a deliberate integration into global machinery value chains

The export propensity of EU-made 8466 parts rose from 35.8 % in 2015 to 45.9 % in 2024, a 28.1 % relative increase. Combined with a trade-intensity ratio that climbed from 52.2 % to 56.0 %, this indicates that a growing share of domestic output is destined for foreign customers, embedding the sector ever more deeply in international supply chains.

Specialisation is confined to a core of Member States, mirroring the technology-intensive nature of the product

In 2025, the specialisation analysis identifies Germany, Italy, Austria, Croatia, and Sweden as the most specialised exporters (RSCA values ranging from 0.13 to 0.30). Germany and Italy alone accounted for roughly 48 % of total EU exports in 2015, a share that has largely persisted. At the other end, countries such as Malta, Cyprus, and Greece show almost no revealed comparative advantage. The sustained concentration of production within a few highly industrialised economies underlines the capital- and knowledge-intensive character of the machine-tool parts sector.

Conclusion

Over the 2015–2025 period, EU trade in machine-tool parts has undergone a profound transformation. Exports have shifted decisively toward high-value, high-technology components, as evidenced by sharply rising unit prices against falling volumes. The trade surplus has deepened, and the sector's import dependence has fallen markedly thanks to a near-doubling of domestic output. The partner map has been redrawn by the vanishing of the Russian market, the rise of the United States as the dominant customer, and a broad-based diversification of import sources, with China and near-shore suppliers gaining ground at the expense of traditional partners like Switzerland. While export destinations have become more concentrated, the overall picture is one of a resilient, high-skill European industry that has increased its global footprint and strengthened its strategic autonomy in a critical capital-goods segment.

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