EU TRADE EXPLORER

Market evolution: Motor vehicles and parts (CN 87) — 2015–2025

Introduction

This report examines the evolution of European Union external trade in **motor vehicles and parts** (Customs Code 87) between 2015 and 2025. The analysis draws exclusively on data from the OEC / Trade Data Monitor dashboard, covering trade with non-EU partners. Over this decade, the sector has undergone deep structural changes: a sharp contraction in the traditional trade surplus, a dramatic reorientation of partner countries, and a steady rise in unit prices across nearly all product segments. The three sections that follow detail these dynamics and their underlying drivers.

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1. The narrowing surplus: surging imports outpace export growth

Export values increased only modestly while volumes fell, pushing unit prices significantly higher

The EU's exports of motor vehicles and parts reached **€253.2 billion** in 2025, a rise of only **6.9 %** compared with 2015 (€236.8 bn) Aggregate trade flows. However, the exported quantity dropped from **21.4 million units to 18.5 million** (–13.5 %). This divergence signals a strong upward pressure on unit prices: the average export price rose from roughly **€11 058 to €13 668** (+23.6 %).

Import values and volumes expanded sharply, especially from a handful of key suppliers

Imports grew much faster. The value of EU vehicle imports nearly doubled, from **€81.6 bn in 2015 to €140.7 bn in 2025** (+72.4 %). Import volumes rose from **9.6 million to 13.2 million units** (+38.1 %), and the average import price climbed from **€8 539 to €10 661** (+24.8 %).

Indicator	2015	2025	Change
Exports (€ bn)	236.8	253.2	+6.9 %
Export quantity (mn units)	21.4	18.5	–13.5 %
Imports (€ bn)	81.6	140.7	+72.4 %
Import quantity (mn units)	9.6	13.2	+38.1 %
Trade balance (€ bn)	155.2	112.6	–27.5 %

Source: Aggregate trade flows

The EU's trade surplus in the sector is under pressure

The combination of stagnant export volumes and booming imports caused the trade surplus to shrink from **€155.2 bn to €112.6 bn**, a decline of **27.5 %** over the period. The economic shock of 2020 (COVID-19) temporarily depressed both flows, but the post-2021 recovery saw imports accelerate more strongly than exports, permanently eroding the surplus.

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2. Geopolitical reordering and partner realignments

Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered the most extreme trade disruption in the series

The EU's exports to the Russian Federation collapsed from **€6.5 bn in 2015 to just €0.15 bn in 2025** (–97.6 %). In volume terms, the drop was equally dramatic (from **747 049 units to 13 677**). Meanwhile, exports to Ukraine surged **365.8 %**, reaching **€4.0 bn**, as the country became a priority destination for vehicles and parts Top trading partners.

China has displaced the United Kingdom as the EU's leading source of imports

Imports from China grew from **€5.3 bn to €30.0 bn** (+464.6 %), making it the top import partner by value by 2025. The United Kingdom, the historic leader, saw its imports fall from **€21.1 bn to €15.1 bn** (–28.4 %), reflecting post-Brexit trade friction and changing supply chains. Türkiye also recorded extraordinary growth, with imports rising **125.6 %** to **€24.5 bn**, while Korea (+129.3 %) and Morocco (+280.7 %) more than doubled their shipments to the EU.

Export destinations are diversifying, lowering concentration risk

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) for exports fell from **1 228 to 1 012** (–17.6 %), indicating a more balanced distribution of export partners Market concentration. While the

United Kingdom and the United States remain the two largest destinations, their combined share has diminished. Exports to the UK declined by **8.1 %** (to **€55.7 bn**) and to the US by **5.7 %** (to **€42.5 bn**). At the same time, exports to Türkiye more than doubled (+105.2 %), and shipments to Switzerland (+31.7 %) and Ukraine (+365.8 %) offered new growth.

Volatility and shock events underline the disruptive environment

Quantity flows to Russia exhibit extreme volatility (coefficient of variation 0.72), while imports from China (0.42) and Morocco (0.38) also show considerable instability. Two price-shock events are particularly noteworthy: a **34.8 % price jump** in EU exports to Egypt centred on 2023, and a **32.8 % increase** in exports to the United Arab Emirates in 2017, both followed by adjustments Price-shock events.

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3. Product-segment dynamics: passenger vehicles drive value while parts gain weight

Passenger cars (8703) dominate both sides of trade, with strongly rising unit prices

Motor cars for fewer than 10 persons (CN 8703) remain the central pillar. Exports of these vehicles brought in **€156.7 bn in 2025** (up from €149.5 bn) despite a volume decrease from **10.6 million to 9.0 million units**; the average export price therefore climbed from **€14 062 to €17 431**. Imports of passenger cars rose from **€43.6 bn to €75.1 bn**, with quantities expanding from **4.0 million to 5.8 million units** Product segment breakdown.

Parts and accessories (8708) highlight the integration of global supply chains

Imports of parts and accessories grew from **€19.6 bn to €30.2 bn**, while quantities increased from **3.3 million to 4.5 million units**. Export values of parts rose from **€47.0 bn to €50.1 bn**, but volumes declined slightly, indicating a shift toward higher-value components. The steady rise in unit prices for parts (imports from **€6 031 to €6 753**, exports from **€8 992 to €11 901**) mirrors the broader trend of premiumisation.

Other commercial and specialised vehicles add to the price upsurge

Goods vehicles (CN 8704), tractors (8701), and trailers (8716) all recorded double-digit price increases. The average export price of special-purpose vehicles (8705) reached **€12 759 per unit** in 2025, up from **€9 027** in 2015. On the import side, motorcycle and bicycle parts (8714) displayed the most volatile price behaviour, peaking at **€28 135** in 2023 before retreating.

Segment (CN)	Exp. value 2025 (€ bn)	Imp. value 2025 (€ bn)	Exp. unit price change (2015-25)
8703 (Cars)	156.7	75.1	+24.0 %
8708 (Parts)	50.1	30.2	+32.3 %
8704 (Goods vehicles)	16.8	8.9	+25.4 %

Conclusion

Between 2015 and 2025, EU external trade in motor vehicles and parts experienced a fundamental transformation. While the Union remains a net exporter, its traditional surplus has been substantially reduced by the rapid growth of imports, particularly from China, Türkiye, and Korea. Export volumes did not keep pace with value growth, as higher unit prices across virtually all categories reflect a shift toward more sophisticated, higher-value products. Geopolitically, the severing of ties with Russia, the rerouting of trade to Ukraine, and the diminishing share of the United Kingdom reshaped the partner landscape. At the same time, the concentration of export destinations fell, indicating a successful diversification strategy. The EU's vehicle industry has proved resilient, but it now faces a more competitive and multipolar global market, where managing supply-chain volatility and maintaining price competitiveness will be crucial.