Press release: 14 287-206/26

Low water levels slow down Danube goods transport in the summer of 2026

Transport volume declined by 56.6% in July and August

Vienna, 2026-10-05 – In the summer months of July and August 2026, a total of 414 227 tonnes (t) of goods were transported on the Austrian section of the Danube, as Statistics Austria reports. This represents a decrease of 56.6% compared to the summer of 2025. The drop was particularly prominent in August 2026, with a decline of 73.7% compared to August 2025.

"Persistent drought and low water levels have led to a sharp decline in freight traffic on the Austrian section of the Danube this summer. In July and August 2026, transport volumes fell by more than half compared to the same months in 2025. August 2026 was the month with the second-lowest transport volume since records began in the early 1990s. The only month with a lower tonnage was January 1997, due to an extreme cold wave with a risk of icing," says Manuela Lenk, Director General Statistics at Statistics Austria.

The **number of transports** of goods on the Danube also declined in the summer months of 2026 compared to the previous period. While 1 037 transports were carried out in July and August of the previous year, there were only 636 in 2026 (−38.7%). The **transport volume** decreased by 56.6% to 414 227 t. In August, only 124 903 t were transported, by 73.7% less than in August 2025.

If the tonnage carried is multiplied by the distances travelled both domestically and internationally, this results in a **total transport performance** of 0.24 billion tonnes kilometres (tkm). This is a drop of 70.6% or 0.58 billion tkm. With 0.04 billion tkm, August 2026 was the month with the lowest transport performance ever recorded.

The consequences of the low water levels were also reflected in a lower degree of vessel loading. The average **load factor** per transportation in the summer months was only 39.6% (2025: 55.1%). This explains why the transport volume declined more strongly than the number of transports.

Transit transport almost at a standstill in summer

Transit transport recorded the sharpest percentage downturn. The transport volume shrank by 85.2% to 20 740 t in July and August 2026. The decline was particularly large in August, when the quantity of goods transported fell by 94.0% to 4 401 t with 18 transports (August 2025: 93 transports).

In the – in terms of volume – more significant types of transport, international goods **receipt** (−54.6% or −199 027 t) and international goods **dispatch** (−61.0% or −226 853 t), the transport volume in July and August was more than half below that of the same period of the previous year. Only in **inland transport,** a slight increase of 4.9% (+3 862 t) in transported tonnage was recorded this summer.

Transport with Ukraine and Hungary collapsed

In the summer months, the largest absolute declines in international goods receipt were recorded in shipments from Ukraine (−57 128 t or −92.2%), from Hungary (−42 511 t or −68.7%) and from the Netherlands

(−39 958 t or −81.4%). In international goods dispatch, Hungary (−79 512 t or −61.6%), Romania (−45 295 t or −74.6%) and Belgium (−28 081 t or −79.6%) topped the list of losses.

2026 already trending downwards since the start of the year

A similar picture emerges when looking at the year to date in 2026: from January to August, a total of 2.9 million tonnes (million t) were transported on the Austrian section of the Danube, which corresponds to a decrease of 26.1% compared to the same period of the previous year. The transport performance amounted to 2.4 billion tkm, a reduction of 31.7%. The number of transports fell by 14.5% to 3 631.

Goods transport on the Danube in Summer 2026

Type of transport	July 2026	Comparison to July 2025 in percent	August 2026	Comparison to August 2025 in percent
Transport volume in tonnes				
Inland transport	41 540	−0.4	40 930	11.0
International goods receipt	128 464	−25.8	37 311	−80.5
International goods dispatch	102 981	−48.5	42 261	−75.5
Transit	16 340	−75.2	4 401	−94.0
Total	**289 324**	**−39.8**	**124 903**	**−73.7**
Transport performance in 1 000 tonne kilometres				
Inland transport	4 037	−1.2	4 463	26.7
International goods receipt	111 474	−23.2	13 595	−93.2
International goods dispatch	67 676	−56.3	12 437	−90.5
Transit	22 722	−76.0	5 445	−93.3
Total	**205 909**	**−48.4**	**35 940**	**−91.5**

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, inland waterways statistics. – Provisional values.
Data including the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal. – Rounding differences may occur.

For detailed results and further information on freight transport on inland waterways, please refer to our website.

Information on methodology, definitions:

Number of transports: For vessel convoys (e.g. pushed convoy with several pushed barges), each loaded vessel unit is counted separately as a single transportation.

Transport volume: Amount of transported goods in tonnes.

Transport performance: Product of transport volume and distance travelled in kilometres.

Values related to **transit transport** were checked for possible under-reporting on a monthly basis, based on the lockings reported by the lock Aschach minus the journeys in receipt downstream and dispatch upstream, and adjusted if necessary.

Who is Statistics Austria?

Statistics Austria is the central organisation for official data and statistics on society, the economy, the state and the environment in Austria. As a national statistical institute, it is committed to the statutory principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity. Statistics Austria is headed by Manuela Lenk, Director General Statistics, and Franz Haslauer, Director General Finance.

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