European Environment Agency

8th Environment Action Programme

Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport

8TH EAP HEADLINE INDICATOR, 2025

European Environment Agency

Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport in Europe

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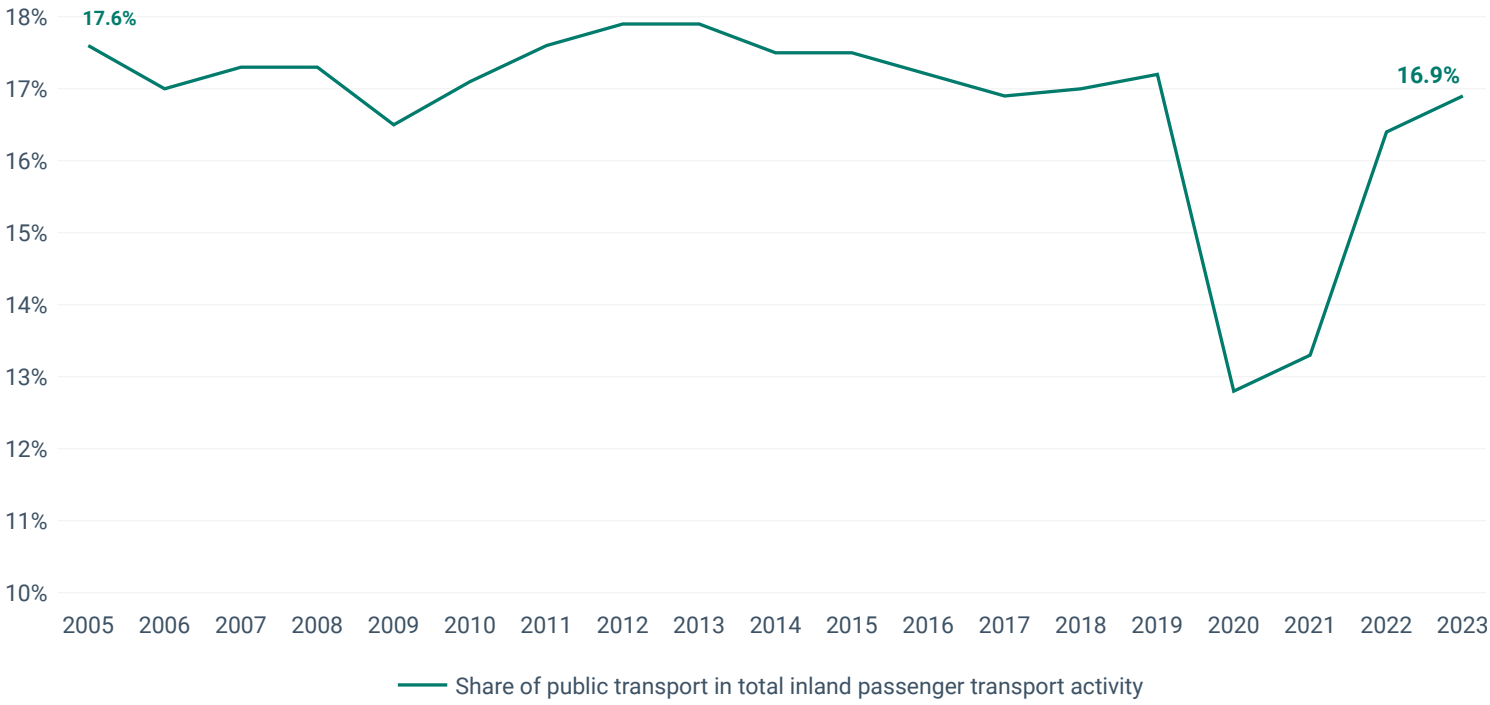
Promoting sustainable transport modes like public transport can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental pressures such as air pollution and noise. The EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy underlines the importance of public passenger transport in greater transport sustainability. The share of buses and trains in total passenger transport has changed very little since 2005, with some fluctuation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shifting more people to public transport still requires decisive action and a break from long-standing habits.

Figure 1. Share of bus and trains in total inland passenger transport activity in the EU-27



In 2020, under the scope of the European Green Deal, the European Commission (EC) adopted a Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy supporting, among others, the use of more **sustainable transport modes**. One objective of the strategy is to increase the number of passengers travelling by rail and commuting by public transport, instead of with a personal car. Achieving this objective could reduce greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions, and other environmental pressures. Changes to the EU's mobility system are vital to realise the green and digital transformation ambitions and become more resilient to future crises.

The EU share of total passenger transport **demand** met by buses and trains has remained relatively constant, at around 17%, except for the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. It had already bounced back to 16.9% in 2023.

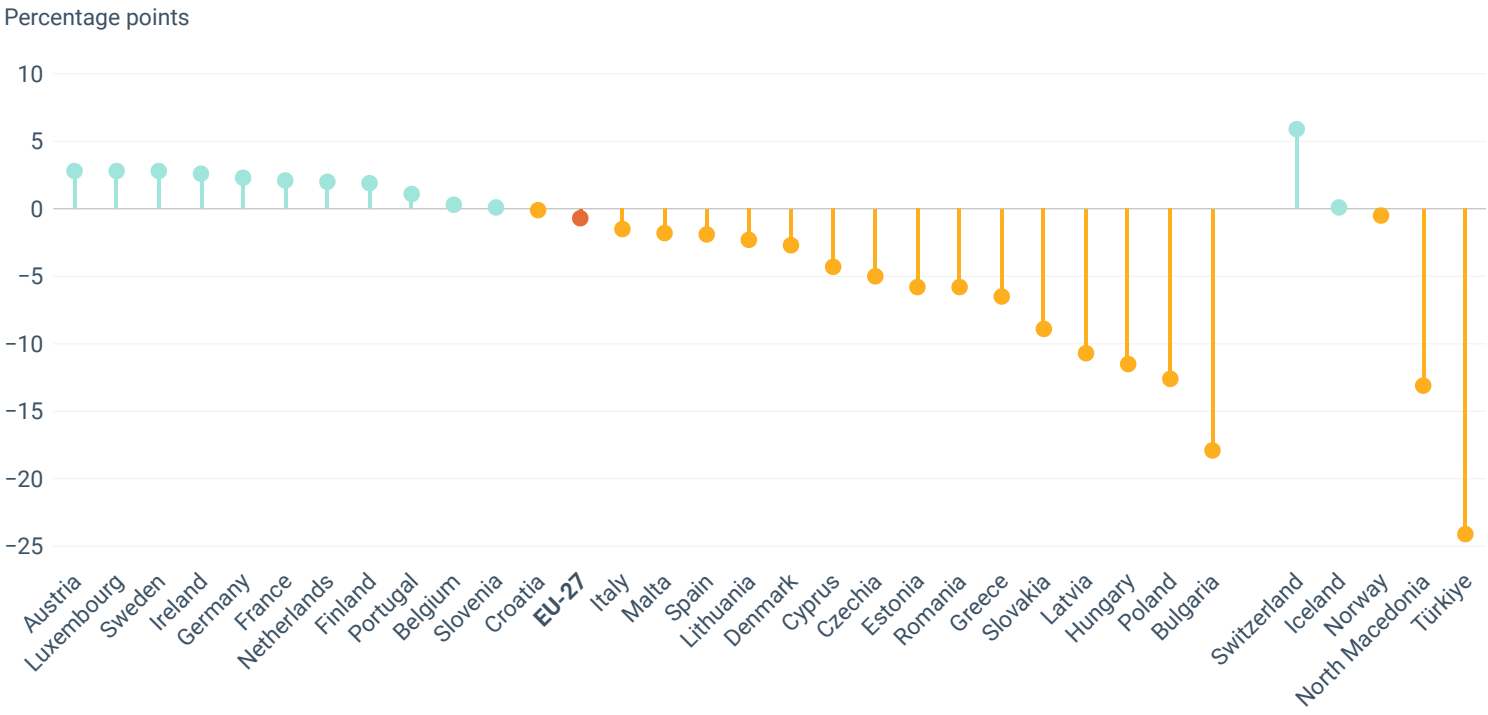
At the same time, total inland passenger transport activity increased by 8% between 2005 and 2023. The greatest increase in this period took place in aviation, with 61%. On the other hand, buses showed decreasing activity, with -14%. Overall, more effort is still required to increase the use of public transport and achieve a shift towards more sustainable modes. This would

require **changes** in the way Europeans commute and travel, and changes in city planning.

The EC launched important **initiatives** for the supply side, such as the revised TEN-T regulation and rail capacity regulation, which aim to increase the availability of public transport modes. National and multi-level policies could further contribute to a higher uptake of public transport, reducing public transport ticket prices and integrating fare and ticketing systems, supported by low emission zones and congestion charging[1].

Digitalisation, like real-time journey planners or integrated mobile ticketing, provides tools to internalise the external costs of transport and raise awareness of the pressures exerted by mobility needs. The EC is developing **frameworks** to support modal shifts and multimodal trips, as outlined in the EEA's TERM report. In this context, investments and funding are also required to finance safe, clean and modern infrastructure to ensure full accessibility to public transport.

Figure 2. Percentage point variation in the share of bus and trains (collective modes) in total inland passenger transport activity by country



The use of buses and trains in passenger transport activity **differs** vastly across countries, both in terms of share values and time evolution. From 2005 to 2023, the share of buses and trains in total inland passenger transport increased in 11 EU Member States. Austria, Luxembourg and Sweden experienced the greatest growth, by 2.8 percentage points each. Yet, the share declined by more than five percentage points in 8 countries: Romania, Estonia, Greece, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria.

For other EEA member and cooperating countries for which data are available in the same period, changes in the share ranged from -24 percentage points in Türkiye to 6 percentage points in Switzerland. Note that Serbia and Montenegro passenger transport data are available only from year 2010[2].

To **fully transition** to a more sustainable and fair transportation system a mix of solutions is needed, including a more efficient, connected and inclusive public network serving both urban and rural communities. Active and shared transport options like walking and cycling, along with improved accessibility, are essential parts of a multimodal mobility system, supporting EU's green and digital goals. However, as data are not currently available for these modes, they are not presented as part of this indicator for the time being.

Supporting information

Definition

Share of collective modes in total inland passenger transport. Collective modes refer to passenger transport via buses, coaches, and trains. Total inland passenger transport performance includes transport by passenger cars, buses and coaches, and trains. All data are based on movements within national territories, regardless of the vehicle's nationality.

Methodology

Figure 1: raw data for the EU-27 share (in %) of collective modes in total inland passenger transport performance were retrieved from Eurostat. Raw data for the increase in total inland passenger transport demand were retrieved from the 2025 version of the EU transport in figures statistical pocketbook published by DG MOVE. EU-27 aggregate data were used. No additional gap filling was applied to the data. Information on data set uncertainties can be found directly in the metadata and explanatory notes provided by Eurostat. Only official Eurostat data sets have been used.

Figure 2: raw data by country of variation (2005-2023) in the share of collective modes in total inland passenger transport performance were retrieved from Eurostat. Data are displayed at country level and are expressed in percentage points. To provide the broadest possible picture of European countries, geographical coverage was extended to the 32 EEA member countries and the Western Balkan cooperating countries when data were available. No additional gap filling was applied to the data. Information on data set uncertainties can be found directly in the metadata and explanatory notes provided by Eurostat. Only official Eurostat data sets have been used.

Additional information on the methodology used for data collection can be found here: Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport (sdg_09_50) (europa.eu)

Policy/environmental relevance

This indicator is one of a set of indicators that track the EU's progress towards meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 related targets which are at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The indicator monitors trends in the shift towards environmentally friendly transport modes and the progress towards building a resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation (SDG 9) and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11). These targets are embedded in the following European Commission priorities: 'a European Green Deal', 'a Europe fit for the digital age' and 'an economy that works for people'. The indicator is also relevant in the context of the Commission's 'Sustainable and Smart Mobility strategy', adopted in 2020. This strategy lays the foundation for the EU transport system's green and digital transformation and for making it more resilient to future crises.

The share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport is a headline indicator for monitoring progress towards the 8th Environment Action Programme (8th EAP). It contributes mainly to monitoring mobility aspects of the 8th EAP priority objective Article 2.(2)(f) that shall be met by 2030: *'promoting environmental aspects of sustainability and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption, in particular in the areas of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system.'* For the purposes of the 8th EAP monitoring framework this indicator assesses specifically whether the EU will increase the share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport expressed in passenger-kilometres.

Accuracy and uncertainties

The accuracy of the is currently limited due to the voluntary collection of road passenger data. As a result, the transport performance data are based on a large variety of statistical sources and some data gaps are filled with estimates. Additional information can be found here: Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport (sdg_09_50) (europa.eu)

Data sources and providers

- Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport [SDG_09_50], Eurostat - European statistics

- Statistical pocketbook 2025 - Part 2 Section 3: Performance of Passenger Transport expressed in passenger-kilometres, European Commission - Mobility and Transport

Metadata

DPSIR

Pressure

Topics

Transport and mobility # Urban sustainability

Tags

mobility # Buses # modal shift # 8th EAP # TERM046 # Passenger transport # Trains # Transport

Temporal coverage

2005-2023

Geographic coverage

Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Türkiye

Typology

Descriptive indicator (Type A - What is happening to the environment and to humans?)

UN SDGs

SDG9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG11: Sustainable cities and communities

Unit of measure

Percentage

Frequency of dissemination

Once a year

References and footnotes

1. Recently, updated targets were established in Regulation (EU) 2024/1610, requiring 90% of new city buses to be zero-emission by 2030 and fully zero-emission by 2035, accelerating the transition towards cleaner and more sustainable urban mobility.
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2. For additional details on the methodology, see the supporting information. In particular, the limited accuracy of passenger data could impact data comparability between countries and the reported trends.
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