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## First quarter 2025: Port of Antwerp-Bruges surpasses Rotterdam in Container Traffic

The Port of Antwerp-Bruges has overtaken the Port of Rotterdam in container throughput during the first quarter of 2025—a notable shift in Europe’s maritime logistics landscape. Antwerp handled **3.44 million TEUs** between January and March, marking a **4.5% year-on-year increase**. In comparison, Rotterdam moved 3.36 million TEUs, growing by 2.2%. **This is the first time Antwerp has led its Dutch counterpart in container volume, traditionally a key measure of port performance.**

Port of Antwerp-Bruges’s growth comes amid strong operational continuity such as effective adaptation to new shipping alliances. Its strategic inland connectivity and proactive infrastructure investments have also helped it absorb traffic during periods of regional congestion and industrial action.

The Port of Rotterdam remains the **largest port in Europe by total cargo tonnage in 2024**. It handled 435.8 million tonnes of cargo during the year, representing a slight **decrease of 0.7%** compared to 2023. This drop was primarily driven by reduced volumes in coal and crude oil, which continued during the first quarter of 2025. Indeed, in the first quarter of 2025, the Port of Rotterdam experienced a **5.8% decline in total throughput**, primarily still due to reduced volumes in crude oil and dry bulk commodities.

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Both ports are now facing **uncertainty due to rising concerns over new U.S. tariffs**. Transatlantic trade remains a crucial pillar for European ports, particularly for exports like chemicals, vehicles, and industrial machinery.

Any increase in tariffs from Washington could have ripple effects on volumes and port revenues, prompting calls for increased diversification of trade routes and cargo profiles.

This moment marks more than just a quarterly shift—it highlights the increasingly competitive and adaptive nature of European ports. As port of Antwerp-Bruges capitalizes on its agility and Rotterdam reassesses its strategy, both are entering a new phase shaped by geopolitics, supply chain realignment, and technological transformation.

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