

European ports face continued congestion; Asia gateways saw mixed results in Q2: analysis



Congestion at European ports has been a growing problem for shippers, as the disparity between available capacity and demand leaves deep-sea container terminals facing the potential of years-long bottlenecks. Photo credit: Aerovista Luchtfotografie / Shutterstock.com.

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A new port performance analysis underscores the extent of congestion in European ports in the second quarter, flow challenges for Asian ports and how US ports were able to handle elevated, tariff-driven volumes.

S&P Global Market Intelligence's Global Port Congestion Analysis shows that half of Northern Europe's ports reported year-over-year declines in port moves per hour in the second quarter, while Asian ports faced higher arrival process times and mixed efficiency results.

Meanwhile, most North American ports maintained average call sizes year over year while improving their arrival process time.

The analysis, released Friday, examines the year-over-year shifts in global port congestion metrics in the second quarter, including number of calls, average call size, arrival process time, berth hours, port moves per hour and container dwell times.

Global congestion hurdles

Congestion hurdles in Northern Europe and the Mediterranean include efficiency declines and increased average port hours, or hours spent between arrival or anchorage until vessel departure.

Congestion at European ports has been a growing problem for shippers, as the disparity between available capacity and demand leaves deep-sea container terminals facing the potential of years-long bottlenecks. Meanwhile, Mediterranean ports faced decreased productivity and increased average port hours.

The report showed that Northeast Asian ports exhibited higher arrival process times and lower berth productivity year over year in the second quarter.

Southeast Asian ports faced mixed results, with Singapore, Tanjung Pelepas, Manila and Port Klang improving their port moves per hour, while others, such as Laem Chabang, Cai Mep and Chattogram, worsened.

Consistency in North America

The performance of North American ports mostly remained steady, with the Port of Long Beach experiencing a notable drop in average call sizes but an increase in recorded vessel calls in the second quarter year over year. Long Beach will be able to accommodate larger vessels through a \$365 million upgrade allowing International Transportation Service (ITS) to berth two 18,000-TEU ships simultaneously when the project is completed in early 2029.

The project involves filling in a 19-acre slip that will convert the terminal into a larger, square-shaped facility that will enable more efficient container handling. ITS at present is, in effect, two separate terminals separated by the slip, which hinders operational efficiency.

While most North American ports reviewed saw an increase in port moves per hour in the second quarter, Charleston showed the largest on-year gains. The port began to regain services from major carriers at its new Leatherman terminal after the South Carolina State Ports Authority and the International Longshoremen's Association settled a legal dispute.

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