

# Navigating Between Economic Dependency and Autonomy

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At present,

- 50% of steel
- 40% of chemicals
- 76% of lithium batteries
- 60% of EVs
- and overall 30% of the world's manufactured goods are made in China.

The latter figure is expected to rise to 40% in 2030 and to 45% in 2035.

Moreover, at comparable quality, China produces around 30% to 40% cheaper.

Over the medium term, on the domestic market, on average, up to 55% of European manufacturing output could be confronted with Chinese competition






- 70% in Germany
- 60% in Italy
- 50% in Spain
- 36% in France
- 29,5% in Belgium

(source: “The Chinese Steamroller: Quantifying the Systemic Threat to Europe’s Industrial Base”, Haut-Commissariat à la stratégie et au plan, 2026)











## European manufacturing output could be confronted with Chinese competition on third markets:

- 32% for Germany
- 26% for France
- 25% for Italy

(source: “The Chinese Steamroller: Quantifying the Systemic Threat to Europe’s Industrial Base”, Haut-Commissariat à la stratégie et au plan, 2026)

	X 1.000 EUR	IMPORTS		VAR. %	TOT. %
		2023	2024		
	NETHERLANDS	96.509.341,0	97.508.483,5	1,0	20,6
	GERMANY	61.322.943,5	58.100.546,7	-5,3	12,2
	FRANCE	52.031.381,3	47.763.409,7	-8,2	10,1
	CHINA	33.332.269,2	32.125.147,1	-3,6	6,8
	UNITED STATES	36.127.855,8	31.418.496,0	-13,0	6,6

*Belgium's top suppliers 2023-2024*

	X 1.000 EUR	EXPORTS		VAR. %	TOT. %
		2023	2024		
	GERMANY	97.182.727,4	89.200.147,8	-8,2	18,1
	FRANCE	70.322.773,5	65.058.635,3	-7,5	13,2
	NETHERLANDS	68.613.507,6	64.490.912,7	-6,0	13,1
	UNITED STATES	33.299.547,7	32.926.037,2	-1,1	6,7
	UNITED KINGDOM	29.356.620,3	29.205.634,3	-0,5	5,9
	ITALY	25.713.654,0	23.742.125,3	-7,7	4,8
	SPAIN	16.298.668,1	17.017.591,1	4,4	3,5
	POLAND	13.480.643,1	13.960.485,3	3,6	2,8
	SWEDEN	9.560.989,5	8.828.774,5	-7,7	1,8
	CHINA	8.190.851,1	7.880.200,4	-3,8	1,6

*Belgium's top customers 2023-2024*

Regarding trade in services, the EU continues to maintain a trade surplus with China, though it is decreasing. In 2025, it amounted to €21.3 billion. China is the EU's fourth-largest services trading partner, after the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland.

(source: [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china_en))

The EU's investment stock in China stood at €239.3 billion in 2024, with EU foreign invest direct investment (FDI) flow reaching €10.1 billion in 2023. EU investment in China in 2025 mostly centered on automotive, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, and basic materials.

China's investment stock in the EU stood at €79.8 billion in 2024, and Chinese FDI flow amounted to €10.6 billion in 2024 (versus €6.4 billion in 2023). The top three areas were the automotive sector, entertainment, media and education, and energy and basic materials.

As of the end of April 2024, the direct investment stock of Belgian companies in China was US\$2.65 billion

(source: [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china_en))

China's 15<sup>th</sup> 5-year-plan stipulates three key messages:

- Sustaining economic and energy self-sufficiency
- Building a stronger energy system
- Technology has to be an economic driver, not an economic cost

decarbonization vs. de-industrialization.