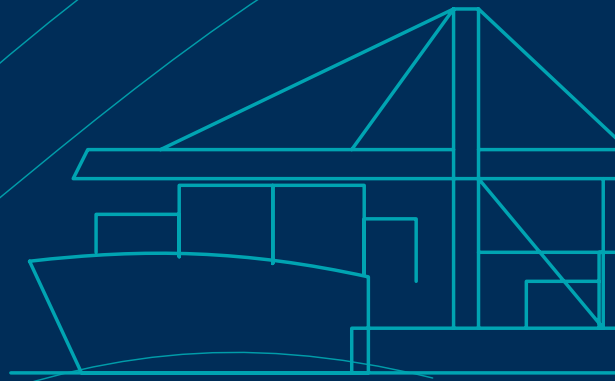
QUARTERLY PORT TRAFFIC

Unitised Traffic Report

Q3 2026

July to September 2026

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Irish Maritime Development Office

Foras na Mara Marine Institute

Quarter at a glance

July - September 2026 | Change versus Q3 2025

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

RoRo freight
307,335 units **+3%**

LoLo containers
342,533 TEUs **+5%**

Ferry passengers
960,246 passengers **−3%**

Passenger vehicles
297,208 vehicles **−5%**

Year-on-year comparison

Traffic	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change
RoRo units	297,350	**307,335**	+3%
LoLo TEUs	326,724	**342,533**	+5%
Passengers	989,690	**960,246**	−3%
Vehicles	312,173	**297,208**	−5%

Direct RoRo routes

ROI–EU
+9%
106,188 units

ROI–GB
+1%
201,147 units

Share of Republic of Ireland RoRo traffic



Source: IMDO port traffic returns. Route shares rounded to whole percentages.

Commentary

RoRo traffic at Republic of Ireland ports increased by 3% in the third quarter of 2026 to 307,335 units. Northern Ireland volumes rose by 1% to 232,722 units. On a seasonally adjusted basis, growth at ROI ports slowed to an estimated 0.5% in Q3, from 2.4% in Q2.

Direct RoRo services between ROI ports and mainland Europe accounted for most of the increase. Traffic on these routes rose by 9% to 106,188 units, compared with growth of 1% to 201,147 units on GB routes. EU traffic was 7% above its average Q3 level over 2022–2026, while GB volumes were approximately 1% higher. Direct EU services accounted for 35% of ROI RoRo traffic during the quarter.

Cork recorded particularly strong RoRo growth, with throughput increasing by 153% to 4,966 units. Hibernia Line's new service between Cork and Boulogne-sur-Mer was a major contributor to this increase. The route began operating in June, making Q3 its first full quarter of operation and adding further capacity for direct freight movements between Ireland and mainland Europe.

LoLo throughput at ROI ports increased by 5% to 342,533 TEUs, the strongest quarterly growth rate recorded so far in 2026. January - September volumes reached 1,001,602 TEUs, up 3% on 2025 and 11% on 2024. This was the first time that throughput for the first nine months exceeded one million TEUs in the IMDO series. Following a decline in 2023, LoLo traffic has performed strongly in recent years. Seasonally adjusted volumes rose by an estimated 3.5% in Q2 and remained broadly steady in Q3.

Waterford stood out within the ROI LoLo market, recording growth of 45% to 18,304 TEUs. This increase followed the addition of Eucon to the port's regular shipping services earlier in the year. The service introduced two weekly sailings between Waterford and Rotterdam, expanding the options available to importers and exporters in the South East. This additional activity supported the port's strong performance.

Both laden and empty container movements contributed to ROI growth. Laden traffic increased by 3% to 254,373 TEUs, while empty movements rose by 9% to 88,160 TEUs. In Northern Ireland, LoLo throughput increased by 7% to 62,024 TEUs. This increase came mainly from empty container movements at Belfast, which rose by 31% to 16,343 TEUs, driven by higher empty exports. Laden traffic was broadly unchanged, falling by 88 TEUs to 45,681 TEUs.

Passenger traffic remained weaker than a year earlier. ROI ports handled 960,246 passengers in Q3, a decline of 3%, while passenger vehicle traffic fell by 5% to 297,208 vehicles. Passenger numbers were also 3% below Q3 2024. In Northern Ireland, passenger numbers declined by 5% to 711,181, although vehicle traffic increased by 1% to 187,825.

The economic outlook points to continued support from domestic demand, alongside pressure from energy costs and modest European growth. The Central Bank of Ireland forecasts growth of 3.8% in modified domestic demand in 2026, supported by consumption and investment. This should help sustain demand for unitised freight services. The ECB expects euro area inflation to ease from 3.0% in 2026 to 2.5% in 2027, although energy prices remain a risk. Further growth in port traffic will depend partly on how these costs affect household spending and businesses trading with British and European markets.

Sources: IMDO port returns; Central Bank of Ireland; ECB. Changes are year-on-year unless stated. Seasonal estimates are provisional.

RoRo traffic

Tables 1 and 2 show RoRo traffic handled at ports across the island of Ireland in the third quarter of 2025 and 2026. Total RoRo volume includes both accompanied and unaccompanied freight traffic.

Table 1. RoRo traffic by port (RoRo units)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Dublin	241,845	**246,264**	2%	4,419
Rosslare Europort	53,543	**56,105**	5%	2,562
Cork	1,962	**4,966**	153%	3,004
Republic of Ireland	**297,350**	**307,335**	**3%**	**9,985**
Belfast	159,721	**159,338**	0%	-383
Larne	44,712	**45,953**	3%	1,241
Warrenpoint	26,121	**27,431**	5%	1,310
Northern Ireland	**230,554**	**232,722**	**1%**	**2,168**
All island	**527,904**	**540,057**	**2%**	**12,153**

Table 2. Accompanied and unaccompanied traffic (RoRo units)

RoRo type	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Accompanied	84,616	**86,649**	2%	2,032
Unaccompanied	212,734	**220,687**	4%	7,953
Republic of Ireland	**297,350**	**307,335**	**3%**	**9,985**
Accompanied	77,519	**72,673**	-6%	-4,846
Unaccompanied	153,035	**160,049**	5%	7,014
Northern Ireland	**230,554**	**232,722**	**1%**	**2,168**
Accompanied	162,135	**159,322**	-2%	-2,814
Unaccompanied	365,769	**380,736**	4%	14,967
All island	**527,904**	**540,057**	**2%**	**12,153**

Great Britain routes

Table 3 shows RoRo traffic on ferry routes between Dublin and Rosslare Europort and ports in Great Britain, including Holyhead, Liverpool, Heysham, Pembroke and Fishguard.

Table 3. ROI–GB routes (RoRo units)

Route	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Dublin – GB	182,378	**183,783**	1%	1,405
Rosslare-GB	17,509	**17,364**	-1%	-144
ROI – GB	**199,887**	**201,147**	**1%**	**1,261**

Direct European Union routes

Table 4 shows RoRo traffic on direct ferry services between Dublin, Cork and Rosslare Europort and ports in mainland Europe within the European Union.

Table 4. ROI–EU routes (RoRo units)

Route	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Dublin – EU	59,467	**62,481**	5%	3,014
Rosslare-EU	36,035	**38,741**	8%	2,706
Cork – EU	1,962	**4,966**	153%	3,004
ROI – EU	**97,464**	**106,188**	**9%**	**8,724**

Source: IMDO port traffic returns. Figures are rounded; see reporting notes.

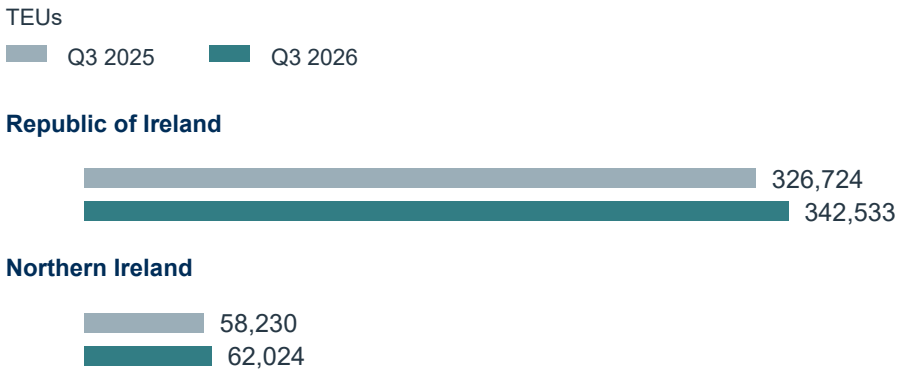
LoLo traffic

Table 5 shows total LoLo traffic at ports across the island of Ireland, measured in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). It includes both laden (full) and unladen (empty) containers. Tables 8 and 9 provide this breakdown.

Table 5. LoLo traffic by port (TEUs)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Cork	72,834	**76,024**	4%	3,189
Dublin	241,251	**248,205**	3%	6,955
Waterford	12,639	**18,304**	45%	5,665
Republic of Ireland	**326,724**	**342,533**	**5%**	**15,809**
Belfast	58,230	**62,024**	7%	3,794
Warrenpoint	0	**0**		0
Northern Ireland	**58,230**	**62,024**	**7%**	**3,794**
All island	**384,953**	**404,556**	**5%**	**19,603**

LoLo volume



Laden and unladen containers

Laden (full) and unladen (empty) LoLo volumes, measured in TEUs.

Table 8. Laden LoLo traffic (TEUs)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Cork	56,932	**58,272**	2%	1,340
Dublin	180,193	**183,511**	2%	3,318
Waterford	8,722	**12,590**	44%	3,868
Republic of Ireland	**245,847**	**254,373**	**3%**	**8,526**
Belfast	45,770	**45,681**	0%	-88
Warrenpoint	0	**0**		0
Northern Ireland	**45,770**	**45,681**	**0%**	**-88**
All island	**291,616**	**300,054**	**3%**	**8,438**

Table 9. Unladen LoLo traffic (TEUs)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Cork	15,902	**17,751**	12%	1,849
Dublin	61,058	**64,695**	6%	3,637
Waterford	3,917	**5,714**	46%	1,797
Republic of Ireland	**80,877**	**88,160**	**9%**	**7,283**
Belfast	12,460	**16,343**	31%	3,883
Warrenpoint	0	**0**		0
Northern Ireland	**12,460**	**16,343**	**31%**	**3,883**
All island	**93,337**	**104,502**	**12%**	**11,166**

Source: IMDO port traffic returns. Figures are rounded; see reporting notes.

Passenger market

Ferry passengers

Table 6 shows the number of RoRo ferry passengers travelling through Irish and Northern Irish ports. Many ferry operators use a RoPax model, carrying freight, passengers and passenger vehicles on the same vessel.

Passenger vehicles

Table 7 shows passenger vehicles carried on RoRo ferries through Irish and Northern Irish ports. These include cars, coaches, trailers, caravans, motorcycles and similar vehicles. Passenger vehicles share vessel capacity with freight traffic, including HGVs and unaccompanied trailers. Monitoring these volumes helps track seasonal demand for ferry capacity.

Table 6. Ferry passengers by port (Passengers)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Cork	55,728	**62,746**	13%	7,018
Dublin	667,190	**665,134**	0%	-2,056
Rosslare Europort	266,772	**232,366**	-13%	-34,406
Republic of Ireland	**989,690**	**960,246**	**-3%**	**-29,444**
Belfast	602,090	**563,822**	-6%	-38,268
Larne	147,656	**147,359**	0%	-297
Northern Ireland	**749,746**	**711,181**	**-5%**	**-38,565**
All island	**1,739,436**	**1,671,427**	**-4%**	**-68,009**

Table 7. Passenger vehicles by port (Vehicles)

Port	Q3 2025	Q3 2026	Change %	Difference
Cork	18,911	**20,994**	11%	2,083
Dublin	194,406	**190,925**	-2%	-3,481
Rosslare Europort	98,856	**85,289**	-14%	-13,567
Republic of Ireland	**312,173**	**297,208**	**-5%**	**-14,965**
Belfast	141,754	**135,027**	-5%	-6,727
Larne	44,864	**52,798**	18%	7,934
Northern Ireland	**186,618**	**187,825**	**1%**	**1,207**
All island	**498,791**	**485,033**	**-3%**	**-13,758**

Source: IMDO port traffic returns. Figures are rounded; see reporting notes.

Reporting notes

Scope, definitions and rounding

1. **Reporting period:** July to September 2026, compared with July to September 2025. Data are supplied by the ports and may be revised in later returns.

2. **Rounding:** totals, differences and percentage changes use the unrounded data. Figures are displayed as whole numbers, so displayed components may not add exactly to displayed totals. A blank percentage indicates a zero comparison base.

3. **RoRo (roll-on/roll-off):** wheeled cargo that is driven on and off a vessel. Accompanied freight travels with its driver; unaccompanied freight travels without its driver.

4. **LoLo (lift-on/lift-off):** container freight loaded and unloaded by cranes. Laden containers are full; unladen containers are empty.

5. **TEU:** twenty-foot equivalent unit, the standard measure used for container volumes.

6. **RoPax:** vessels carrying passengers, passenger vehicles and RoRo freight. Pax refers to ferry passengers.

7. **ROI:** Republic of Ireland. NI: Northern Ireland. GB: Great Britain. EU: European Union.

8. **ROI–EU and ROI–GB:** direct RoRo services between Republic of Ireland ports and ports in the EU or Great Britain respectively. The Quarter at a glance page reports Republic of Ireland traffic; route shares use total Republic of Ireland RoRo traffic.

9. For data requests, please contact the IMDO team.

About the IMDO

Our role and contact details

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) operates within, and is part of, the Marine Institute. The IMDO provides development, promotional and marketing support to the shipping and shipping services sector. It aims to be the focal point for national and international maritime businesses in Ireland. The IMDO provides government and industry with information and reporting across the sector and works with international businesses to help them set up or expand in Ireland.

The IMDO Economics team provides quarterly economic analysis, academic research and policy advice to the Department of Transport relating to the Irish shipping market, ports and Irish trade. The IMDO produces an annual statistical bulletin, *The Irish Maritime Transport Economist*, covering Ireland's maritime traffic. Past editions are available on the IMDO website.

For further information

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