

Sectors in focus

The Chemical Industry in Greece

July 2026

In a nutshell

- The chemical industry serves as a **strategic pillar** of both European and Greek manufacturing.
- Amid a turbulent global environment, the **Greek chemical industry** demonstrates **remarkable resilience** in comparison with other major European countries.
- The Greek chemical sector continues to show strong export growth and remains highly **internationalised**.
- Despite rising sales and exports, the industry remains **import-dependent**.
- Given its **capital and energy - intensive** nature, the sector is structurally vulnerable to energy price fluctuations.
- At the European level, the sector holds a leading position in global trade, although intensifying competition, especially from China, poses **competitiveness challenges**.
- The sector is actively committed to the "twin transition", striving for greater **sustainability** while accelerating its **digital transformation**.
- This progress occurs under an increasingly stringent regulatory framework and demanding compliance requirements that lead to **rising costs of transition**.

Sectoral overview

Blueprints

The chemical industry, often referred to as the “**industry of industries**”¹ is a cornerstone of the economy and **foundational building block** of manufacturing. It is a fundamental component of the manufacturing process, inextricably linked to the broader context of industrial production. It provides essential inputs to a wide range of **downstream sectors**, including pharmaceuticals, the automotive industry, agriculture, construction, and electronics, while also supplying products directly to **end users**. The sector is both **capital and energy-intensive**, exhibiting high sensitivity to energy price fluctuations. Demand for chemical products is primarily shaped by macroeconomic conditions and input costs – the latter being determined by the availability and prices of raw materials (Stochasis 2024).

At the EU27 level, chemicals retain their position as a **major industrial player**, comprising more than 31,400 **enterprises** (2024), 97% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Direct **employment** exceeded 1.2 million workers (2024), with substantial indirect employment supported by strong forward linkages with other industries. The sector ranks third among manufacturing industries in terms of **investment**, while its share in total manufacturing **gross value added** (GVA) reached 5.9% in 2023.

In 2024, the Greek chemical industry comprised over 1,000 **firms**, representing almost 2% of manufacturing enterprises. The majority of these are classified as small and medium-sized enterprises, with 0.8% of firms employing more than 250 people. As of 2023, the sector’s **GVA** accounted for 4.5% of manufacturing GVA in Greece, while its **output** represented 3.8% of total manufacturing output value, highlighting the sector’s economic significance. **Employment** reached approximately 13,500 people in 2024, accounting for 3.4% of manufacturing

workforce. Overall, each job position in the production and distribution of chemical products is associated with 5.7 jobs in the economy (IOBE 2018).

Segmentation

The **sectoral classification** applied by Eurostat (NACE Rev. 2 – Division 20), groups the manufacture of chemicals and chemical products into six subsectors².

- i. Basic chemicals, fertilisers and nitrogen compounds, and plastics and synthetic rubber in primary forms.
- ii. Pesticides and other agrochemical products.
- iii. Paints, varnishes and similar coatings, printing ink and mastics.
- iv. Soap and detergents, cleaning and polishing preparations, perfumes, and toilet preparations.
- v. Other chemical products such as explosives, glues, and essential oils and
- vi. Man-made fibres.

The European chemical industry

The European chemical industry remains a **key economic pillar** within a rapidly expanding global chemicals market, which, in terms of sales, is now 3.6 times larger than it was 20 years ago.

However, the EU27 chemical industry lacks strong domestic demand, and although it remains a leading player, its relative position has changed as the global landscape has evolved (CEFIC 2025).

The EU27 **share of total global sales** fell from 27.4% in 2004 to 12.6% in 2024, indicating that although European firms produce high-value goods, they function within a much more competitive international market. At the same time, **China** has come to dominate the global chemicals market, with a 46% share of sales, making it an international leader.

The largest EU27 sales portion (31%) goes directly into **manufacturing** and industrial sectors, followed by significant portions to

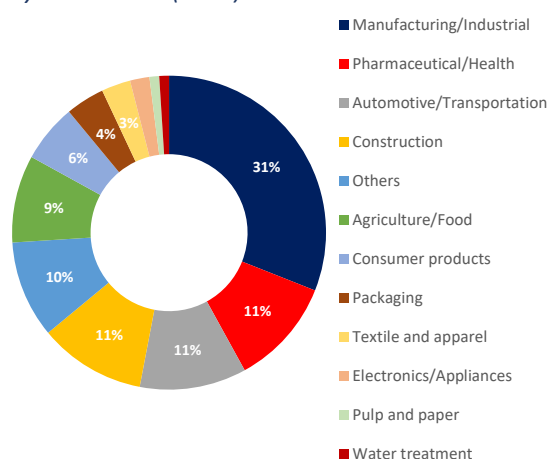
¹ [Chemicals Industry - European Commission](#)

² See the Appendix for a crosswalk between NACE Rev. 2 and CEFIC groupings, with the latter being

industry-specific segments, organised by the trade association to represent its member companies ([Table 1](#)).

health, automotive, and construction. The data shows the deep integration of chemicals across major industrial markets and consumers (**Figure 1**). Among the EU27 countries, **Germany leads the chemical industry** (32% of sales and 33% of GVA), with France being the second largest contributor. The top four countries - Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands - represent 2/3 of the sales. Moreover, although the European chemical industry was the third-largest **Research and Innovation (R&I) investor** globally, with a share of 18% as of 2024, its global market R&I spending share has decreased by 28% since 2009 (CEFIC 2025).

Figure 1. Distribution of European chemicals sales by end market (2024)



Source: CEFIC Facts and figures 2025

The chemical industry in Greece

Trends

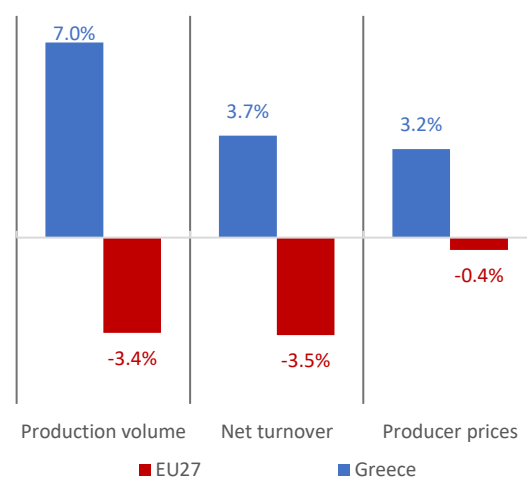
Since 2021, **sales** of chemicals in Greece have followed an upward trajectory. According to the CEFIC database, Greece's chemical sales reached nearly €4.2 bn in 2024, representing 0.7% of the EU27 sales, which stood at €635 bn. This positive trend is confirmed by the **net turnover index**, which increased by 3.7% y-o-y in 2025 and by 69% cumulatively since 2015.

Moreover, the Greek chemicals **producer price index** has also trended upward, rising by 3.2% y-o-y in 2025, in contrast to a mild decline in the EU27 (**Figure 2**). The latest data (Jan-Apr 2026 vs. Jan-Apr 2025) showed an annual increase in producer prices for the chemical

industry in Greece (4.7%), while remaining nearly stable in the EU27 (0.2%).

Regarding chemical production, recent data based on the **production volume index** also indicate notable resilience in Greece. Output increased by nearly 7% y-o-y in 2025 and shows a strong cumulative rise of 45% compared with 2015 (**Figure 3**). This contrasts sharply with the EU27 trend, where production declined by 3.4% in 2025 and cumulatively by 10% relative to 2015. The latest data (Jan-Apr 2026 vs. Jan-Apr 2025) further confirm this divergence, recording a mild increase in the Greek production volume index (1.2%) and a decline in the EU27 (-3.9%).

Figure 2. Annual change in key indicators, 2025 (2021=100)



Source: Eurostat

The Greek chemical sector also stands out for its **high labor productivity**. According to IOBE (2026), productivity in the industry reached €107.3 thousand per employee in 2024, being 2.7 times higher than the national average. Moreover, this strong productivity performance is further reinforced by the sector's positioning within the European market. Operating within the EU enables Greek firms to capitalise on the “European label” – widely recognised as a premium for quality and safety. This gives them a significant competitive advantage in the global markets.

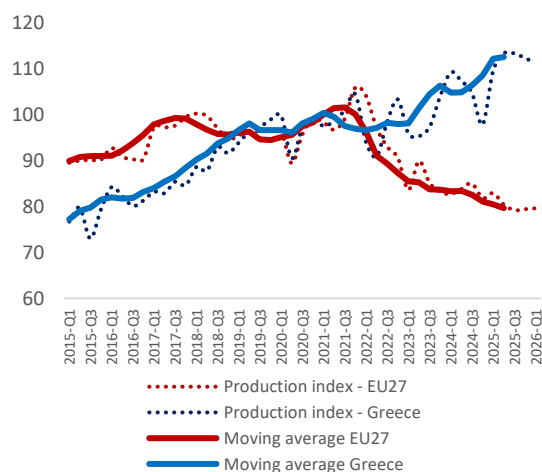
In Greece, the chemicals **Business Confidence Indicator (BCI)** has remained volatile, but since September 2025 it has been gradually recovering, reflecting signs of improvement in domestic industry conditions (**Figure 4**).

However, during March and April, the indicator fell in negative territory, largely due to escalating geopolitical tensions and the intensifying impact of the Iran conflict. These developments drove up oil and natural gas prices, as well as freight and insurance costs, disrupting key supply routes such as the Strait of Hormuz. However, in both May and June, the Greek chemicals BCI recorded a significant increase, returning to positive values.

At the EU27 level, the chemical industry's BCI improved in April relative to early 2026 and stabilized through May and June. However, it remains firmly negative – a trend since mid-2022 – as the sector continues to face high energy prices, weak demand, competitive pressures, and trade disruptions (CEFIC 2026).

Regarding **energy consumption**, the Greek chemical sector accounted for 9% of the industrial energy use in 2024, with natural gas being a major component. In contrast, the EU27 chemical sector contributed 21% of total industrial energy consumption in 2024, rendering it the largest consumer in the industrial sector.

Figure 3. Production volume index for the chemical sector in Greece and the EU27 (2021=100)



Source: EUROSTAT

Subsectors

The chemical industry is diverse, encompassing subsectors that vary in size, investment, employment and growth performance. It combines capital-intensive core activities, such as basic chemicals and fertilisers, with smaller,

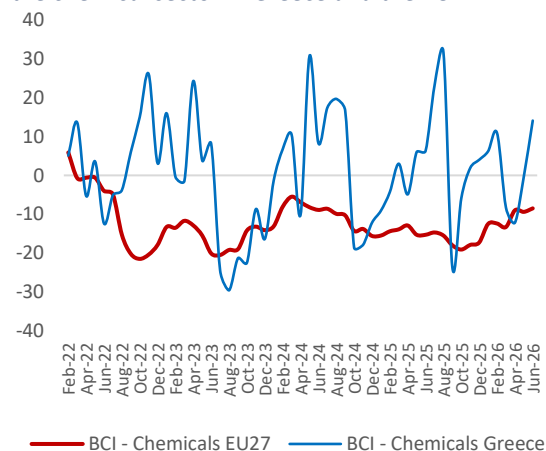
dynamic segments like pesticides, as well as consumer-oriented industries.

Consumer chemicals, which include the manufacture of soaps and detergents, cleaning and polishing preparations, and perfumes and toilet preparations, form the largest subsector in terms of value added (35% in 2023), employment (46% in 2024), number of enterprises (47% in 2024), and gross investment (55% in 2023), according to the latest available data (Figure 5).

Basic chemicals, fertilisers, and plastics in primary forms represent another major subsector of the Greek chemical industry, generating 40% of total net turnover. This subsector accounts for 26% of total GVA in chemical manufacturing and nearly one-fifth of firms, employment, and gross investment. Basic chemicals remain a key pillar of the industry, showing substantial expansion in production value, investment, and turnover, although growth is also influenced by energy-driven price fluctuations.

The **paints, varnishes, inks, and mastics** subsector also contributes significantly, accounting for 20% of employment, 21% of GVA, and 16% of net turnover. Paints and varnishes have demonstrated notable resilience following their contraction during the Greek financial crisis, recording strong gains in production value, turnover, and investment as construction activity and real estate markets recover.

Figure 4. Business Confidence Indicator (BCI) for the chemical sector in Greece and the EU27

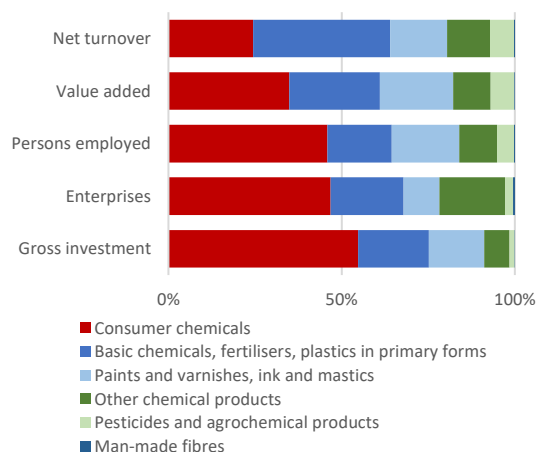


Source: EUROSTAT

Other chemical products, as well as **pesticides and agrochemicals** are important subsectors but hold smaller shares within the chemicals industry. The subsector of pesticides and agrochemical products has shown a decline in production volume after 2020. This could reflect a combination of factors, such as regulatory restrictions, increasing environmental pressures, and a gradual shift toward more sustainable agricultural practices.

By contrast, the **man-made fibres** subsector constitutes a very small portion of the Greek chemicals industry, with negligible figures across all metrics.

Figure 5. Special aggregates distribution across chemical subsectors in Greece (2024)



Source: EUROSTAT

Geopolitical risks and impact

The **current geopolitical landscape**, particularly regarding the Iran-Israel conflict and the broader USA-Iran confrontation, has increased volatility in the global energy and petrochemical markets and can, therefore, impact both demand and supply. The region is a major supplier of crude oil, natural gas, LNG, and basic chemical feedstocks. Consequently, even short production or transport disruptions can affect global supply conditions.

Within the global chemical industry, the **geopolitical risk** arising from the USA-Iran war constitutes a systemic shock amplifier rather than a localised threat. Its effects span energy, feedstocks, logistics, price volatility, operational resilience, and supply chain delays.

Key chemical products, such as petrochemicals and fertilisers, are particularly vulnerable in terms of availability and pricing, as higher energy and feedstock costs drive production costs upwards.

However, the duration and precise impact of the USA-Iran conflict on the chemical industry remain uncertain, with effects extending to both producers and the downstream industries. Nevertheless, companies with diversified supply chains, robust risk-management frameworks, and proactive sourcing strategies are far better positioned to withstand ongoing volatility (cen.acs.org/chemicalmarketanalytics.com).

International trade flows

The **European chemical industry** is a global export leader, and a major contributor to the EU's trade balance. By 2025, the **European chemicals industry's trade surplus** stood at €37 bn, down from €47.4 bn in 2024, largely due to a 5% contraction in exports, which was partly offset by a 1% decline in imports. From January to April 2026, exports dropped by nearly 11% compared with the last four months of 2025, closely mirroring the decline in EU27 imports (-10.4%).

Specialty chemicals dominate exports, while petrochemicals account for the largest share of imports. The USA is the main export destination, followed by the United Kingdom, while China is the primary source of chemical imports for the EU27. China's export performance has also been supported by the depreciation of the yuan against the euro (Rhodium Group, 2025).

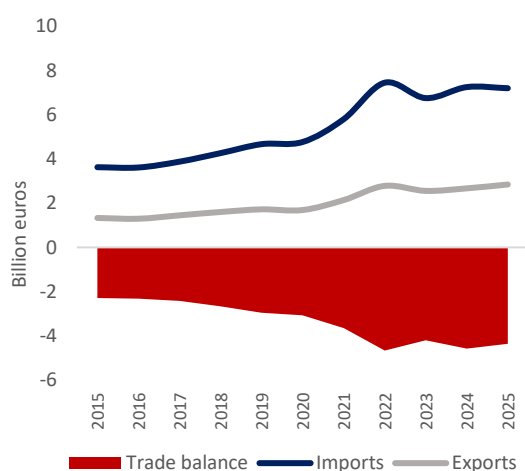
In **Greece**, the value of chemical **exports** increased 7.2% y-o-y in 2025, reaching €2.8 billion, more than doubling (+115%) compared with 2015, and accounting for 6% of the country's total exports. **Imports** of chemical products declined marginally by 0.1% y-o-y to €7.2 billion, though they have nearly doubled since 2015 (**Figure 6**). As a result, the sector's trade deficit stood at €4.4 billion in 2025. Despite a 5% y-o-y contraction, the deficit has widened significantly compared with 2015, reflecting the surge in imports. Moreover, in

the **first four months of 2026** (Jan–Apr), the Greek chemical exports rose compared to both the last four months of 2025 (5%) and the same period in 2025 (1%), while imports declined, reducing the trade deficit by 13% y-o-y.

The **EU27 constitutes Greece's major trade partner**, comprising 66% of total exports of chemicals and 75% of imports (2025). The top 10 export destinations in 2025 were Bulgaria (10%), Cyprus (9%), Romania (8%), Italy (7.5%), France (7.5%), Turkey (4.5%), Germany (4.5%), Spain (3.5%), Poland (3.5%) and Albania (3.5%).

The dominant **exporting subsector** is basic chemicals, fertilisers and nitrogen compounds, plastics and synthetic rubber in primary forms, comprising 43% of total exports of the sector. Within this subsector, plastics in primary forms (19%) and fertilisers and nitrogen compounds (11%) constitute the largest export categories. Consumer chemicals also represent a significant share (28%), with perfumes and toilet preparations accounting for 18% of total exports of the sector.

Figure 6. Greece's trade in chemicals



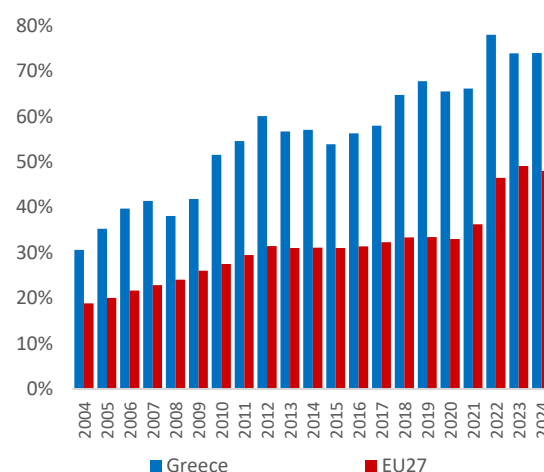
Source: Eurostat-CPA trade

The Greek chemical industry is characterised by a **strong export orientation** and a high degree of **internationalisation**, which have helped the sector remain resilient during periods of economic downturn. While export performance has improved over the past decade, this shift can be traced back to the 2009–2019 financial crisis, when chemical companies increasingly turned to foreign markets to compensate for low domestic demand. Consequently, the **export-to-sales**

ratio exhibited a consistent upward trajectory, rising from 42% in 2009 to 68% in 2019. This trend has persisted in recent years, reaching 74% in 2025, reflecting the sector's integration into international markets (**Figure 7**).

Despite the growth in exports, the sector continues to face a persistent trade deficit, underscoring its **reliance on imported raw materials**. This dependency increases production costs and exposes the industry to supply chain disruptions. Addressing this challenge will require closer integration with **upstream sectors** to secure a greater supply of domestically produced inputs and reduce import dependence. Developing more **integrated domestic value chains** could further enhance the sector's competitiveness and resilience and create additional economic value within Greece.

Figure 7. Exports over sales ratio



Source: CEFIC database

Notably, the Greek chemical industry exhibits lower direct exposure than the EU27 to USA trade tariffs, as the sector's exports to the USA represent only a small share of Greece's total export activity (2.5%). In addition, the direct pressure from the Chinese dumping of cheaper chemical products in Greece is also lower than the EU27, as its import share from China is only 3.7% as of 2025.

Looking ahead

Strengths and opportunities

The Greek chemical industry displays notable comparative advantages and resilience, driven

by **high labour productivity, strong export orientation**, and a high degree of **adaptability**.

Compared to the Greek manufacturing average, where micro-firms (up to 9 people) account for 89% of the sector, the chemical industry features a lower share of very small enterprises (82%) and a higher concentration of small, medium, and large companies (18% as of 2024). This **structural composition** supports the sector's export orientation and strengthens its competitive position in a highly globalised environment.

The sector also benefits from **Greece's geostrategic location** at the south-eastern frontier of Europe, in proximity to fast-growing emerging markets. The country's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, the country offers unique advantages in reducing transportation time and logistics costs for both raw materials and finished products. In particular, the country's oil refining capacity, natural gas infrastructure, and ports could provide a solid foundation for supporting the chemical industry's production value chain.

At the firm level, sustained investment in capital equipment, technological capabilities, and digital transformation has enabled the **development of differentiated, high value-added products**.

These products play a critical role in supporting key downstream sectors, such as construction, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture – while being underpinned by a **highly skilled scientific workforce** and a growing strategic focus on **environmentally sustainable solutions**.

Additionally, Greece is well positioned to **capitalise on emerging opportunities** arising from capacity constraints in Western Europe, and heightened security challenges in the Middle East.

By leveraging its comparative advantages, Greece has the potential to strengthen its position as an **attractive destination for foreign direct investment** in the chemical sector.

On the **sustainability** front, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the chemical industry have declined substantially, indicating significant progress in environmental

performance. At the EU27 level, **GHG emissions** decreased by 37% between 2008 and 2023, with a more pronounced reduction of 43% in Greece. Moreover, **industrial waste** of the sector shows a similar trend, having decreased by 61% in Greece from 2008 to 2022.

Safe and sustainable chemicals and energy efficiency are among the key sustainability practices for the industry. The European Commission, and stakeholders such as CEFIC, introduced the **"Transition Pathway for the Chemical Industry"**, a roadmap outlining the European chemical sector's transformation by 2050.

The Pathway focuses on the **"twin transition"** of the sector towards a green and **climate-neutral future** by integrating circular economy principles throughout the entire process, from production to waste management and resource recovery, utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data to optimize production and transparency (CEFIC 2023, EC 2023).

Digitalisation will enhance operational excellence in the chemical industry, while also driving change in end-users and will facilitate new business models (McKinsey & Company 2017). AI, Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced data systems will enable real-time monitoring and data collection, improving reporting, efficiency, productivity and innovation (Deloitte 2025). Digital transformation ranks as the second most profound capital issue, impacting more than 2/3 of chemical businesses, with 40% of the industry's CEOs leveraging digitalisation to achieve sustainability goals (EY 2022).

In Greece, the **Chemical Industry Transition Roadmap** aligns with the EU's Transition Pathway, while also reflecting national specificities. It aims to strengthen cooperation between authorities, industry, and stakeholders, ensuring a predictable and well-supported transition (IOBE 2024).

The sector's competitiveness could be further enhanced by accelerating the implementation of the **National Strategy for Industry**, which offers incentives and support to help Greek

SMEs scale up and expand into international markets.

In July 2025, the European Commission launched the **European Chemicals Industry Action Plan** to support the chemical sector and address issues like global competition, high energy costs, sustainability, and regulatory complexity. The initiative is expected to reduce administrative burdens and promote innovation and investment. A significant part of the Action Plan is the **Critical Chemicals Alliance (CCA)**, which brings together all stakeholders to tackle issues of plant closures, trade disruptions, and underinvestment in production capacities ([CCA - EC](#)). The CCA serves as the primary industry-Commission channel for key policy areas, including energy (CISAF), investment (Modernisation Fund), trade relations (Mercosur, India), and the circular economy (HACI, 2026).

Threats and challenges

The chemical sector in Greece, as in the EU27, faces fierce **global competition**, **elevated energy prices** and **high raw materials costs**. The sector is characterised by high energy intensity, which makes it particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil and gas prices. Furthermore, it faces unfair competition from third-country imports of certain products that do not meet the safety and sustainability standards of goods manufactured within the EU27. These factors can hinder the competitiveness of the Greek chemical industry.

The **cost of the transition to sustainability** is another pressing issue. The need for investments in decarbonisation along with stricter regulations aimed at reducing environmental impact and improving safety standards may weigh on businesses, as they try to adapt, while maintaining profitability.

Lastly, the **rising geopolitical tensions** and **higher trade protectionism** can cause disruptions to the supply chains. Since the chemicals industry is highly dependent on raw materials sourced globally, supply chain bottlenecks remain a significant downside risk. Finally, the geopolitical tensions in Middle East and Ukraine could halt business plans and investment activity.

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Databases

CEFIC: <https://cefic.org/>

Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Links

[CCA -European Commission](#)

cen.acs.org

[Chemicals Industry - European Commission](#)

chemicalmarketanalytics.com

Appendix

Table 1. Correspondence between NACE and CEFIC groupings.

CEFIC sub-group	CEFIC segment	NACE Rev.2 class	NACE description
Industrial gases	Basic inorganics	20.11	Manufacture of industrial gases
Other inorganic basic chemicals		20.13	Manufacture of other inorganic basic chemicals
Fertilisers and nitrogen compounds		20.15	Manufacture of fertilisers and nitrogen compounds
Other organic basic chemicals	Petrochemicals	20.14	Manufacture of other organic basic chemicals
Plastics in primary forms	Polymers	20.16	Manufacture of plastics in primary forms
Synthetic rubber in primary forms		20.17	Manufacture of synthetic rubber in primary forms
Man-made fibres		20.6	Manufacture of man-made fibres
Dyes and pigments	Specialty chemicals	20.12	Manufacture of dyes and pigments
Pesticides and agrochemical products		20.2	Manufacture of pesticides and other agrochemical products
Paints, coatings, printing ink and mastics		20.3	Manufacture of paints, varnishes and similar coatings, printing ink and mastics
Other specialty chemicals		20.51, 20.52, 20.53, 20.59	Manufacture of explosives, glues, essential oils, other chemical products n.e.c.
Soap, detergents and cleaning preparations	Consumer chemicals	20.41	Manufacture of soap and detergents, cleaning and polishing preparations
Perfumes and toilet preparations		20.42	Manufacture of perfumes and toilet preparations

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