

MSC set to stretch lead at the top of the liner rankings

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Mediterranean Shipping Co's (MSC) lead at the top of the liner rankings is set to stretch to record levels, according to new analysis by Danish consultancy Sea-Intelligence.

It was at the start of 2022 that MSC became the world's largest liner by operated container vessel capacity, surpassing 2M partner Maersk, which had been at the top

of the rankings for more than a quarter of a century. Since then, MSC has been on a massive fleet expansion charge, hoovering up secondhand tonnage and taking deliveries of record numbers of newbuilds, whereby its lead over Maersk today stands at 1.55m slots.

Sea-Intelligence has projected what the top 10 liner rankings will look like two years from now (see chart below), taking many aspects into account, including orderbooks, the carriers' typical approach related to redelivery of charter vessels and the sale of secondhand tonnage.

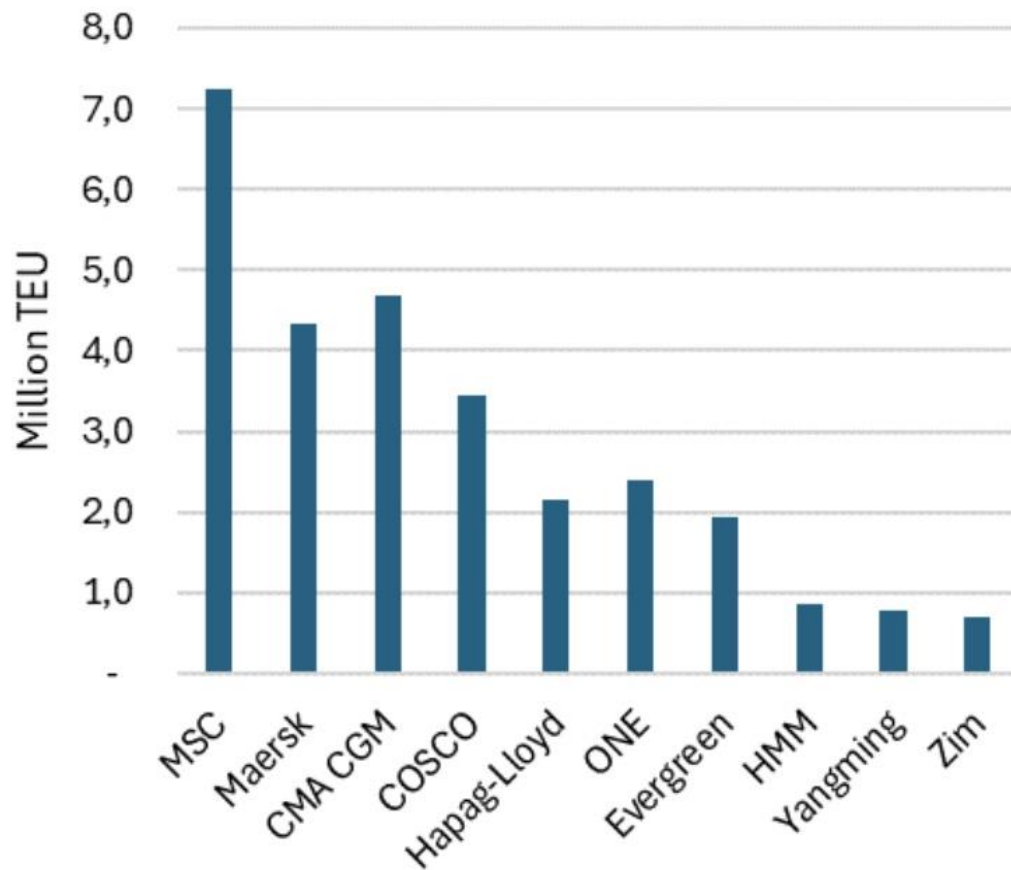
"MSC will grow their size advantage substantially compared to the second largest carrier – which incidentally will be CMA CGM, relegating Maersk to be the world's third largest carrier," Sea-Intelligence stated in its latest weekly report looking at projected fleet sizes in April 2026.

MSC became the first carrier in the world to have a fleet in excess of 5m teu last May. By April 2026, it is projected to have a fleet with more than 7m slots. From next year, it will be going it alone on the main east-west trades, ditching its partnership with Maersk in the 2M alliance.

Cash-rich MSC has invested in many industries outside of its core businesses of cruise and containers in the last couple of years including in aviation, rail, media and logistics. Last week it made a \$700m bid for Gram Car Carriers.

Analysts at Sea-Intelligence also pointed out that Germany's Hapag-Lloyd will have a lot to do if it is to fend off Japan's Ocean Network Express (ONE) in the coming couple of years. Hapag-Lloyd's recently unveiled 2030 strategy lays out a plan to retain a position among the top five carriers.

Fleet size April 2026, adjusted



Source: Sea-Intelligence