

EU Overseas Trade Statistics - December 2011

Coverage:
United Kingdom

Theme:
Business and Energy

Released:
14 February 2012

Next Release:
13 March 2012

Frequency of release:
Monthly

Media contact:
HMRC Press Office
020 7147 0798/2328

Out-of-hours: 07860 359544

Statistical contacts:
Andrew Watson
Tel: 01702 367485
andy.watson@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

ECSM Trade Statistics
HM Revenue & Customs
21 Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
SS99 1AA

Website:
<http://www.uktradeinfo.com>

Summary

- The value of imports and exports both fell compared to November 2011. The value of imports fell more than the value of exports. Consequently there has been a decrease in the difference between imports and exports compared with November.
- UK's EU exports have decreased by £1.9 billion (13.5 per cent) compared to November 2011, to £12.0 billion. Compared to December 2010, exports have increased by £0.3 billion (2.6 per cent).
- UK's EU imports have decreased by £2.7 billion (15.0 per cent) compared to November 2011, to £15.5 billion. Compared to December 2010 imports have decreased by £0.3 billion (1.7 per cent).
- The UK remains a net importer (imports are greater than exports). The size of difference between imports and exports has decreased compared to November 2011 by 19.8 per cent and has decreased from December 2010 by 13.8 per cent.
- The first estimate of total exports for 2011 is £158.2 billion compared with £141.1 billion in 2010.
- The first estimate of total imports from 2011 is £201.9 billion compared with £186.6 billion in 2010.



HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are responsible for collecting the UK's international trade in goods data, which are published as two National Statistics series - the 'Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS)' and the 'Regional Trade Statistics (RTS)'. The OTS are published monthly, providing detailed data for over 9,000 commodities and 200 partner countries. The RTS are published quarterly showing trade at summary product and country level, split by UK regions.

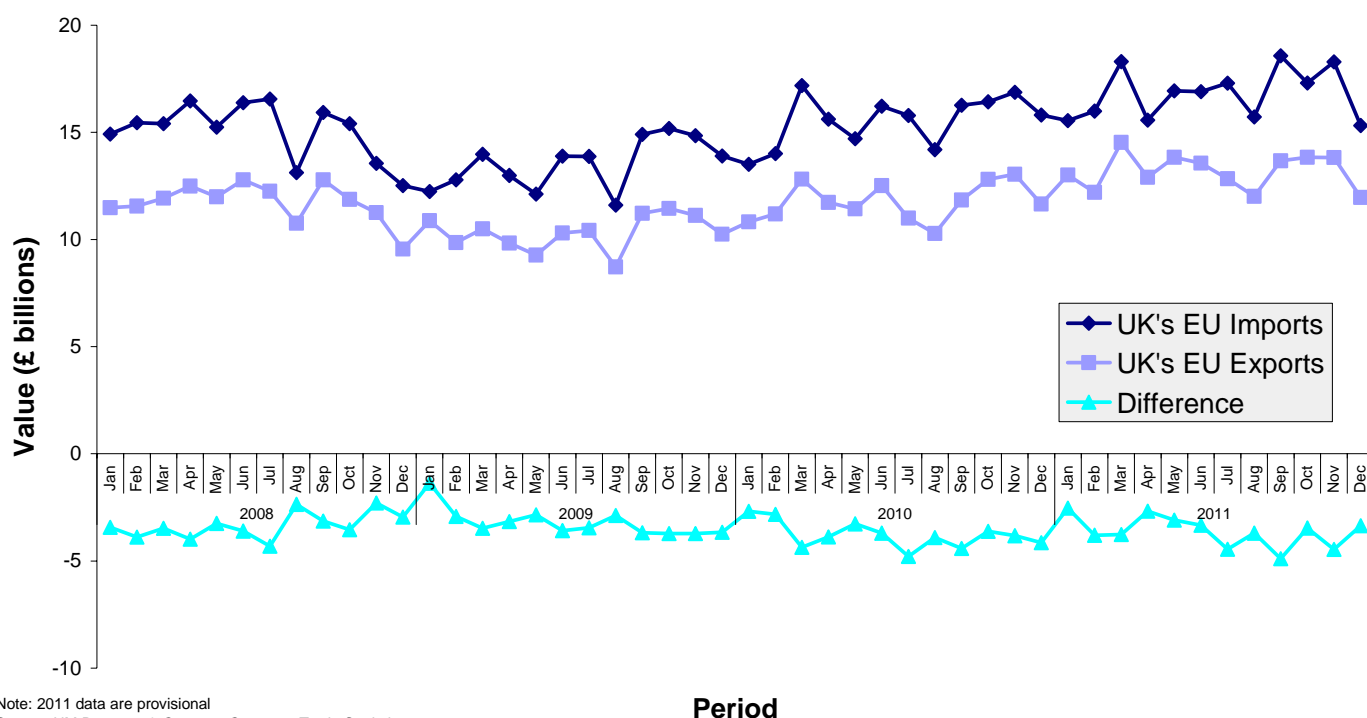
You can find details of how users interested in import and export markets for specific goods make use of the detailed OTS data in '[The Customer Story](#)'. You can also access the detailed data in our interactive database [here](#).

Key Points

For the month of December 2011:

As the graph below shows import and export values in December tend to be generally low. This is likely to be due to the Christmas holiday period. However the value of imports has shown the biggest monthly decrease in value since August 2008. The value of exports has also fallen after remaining at about the same level for the previous two months. It is the biggest monthly decrease in exports since July 2006. Because the decrease compared to last month is greater for imports than exports there has been a decrease in the difference between imports and exports compared with November.

Fig. 1: Total Monthly UK Trade with EU Member States



Exports

- The value of the UK's EU exports has decreased by £1.9 billion (13.5 per cent) compared to November 2011, to £12.0 billion. Export values in December tend to be generally low, probably because of the Christmas holiday period, but this is the largest monthly fall in value since July 2006. Compared to December 2010, exports have increased by £0.3 billion (2.6 per cent).
- The top five commodities are unchanged from the previous month. HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes) remains the top commodity exported by value, showing the largest increase of £76.0 million compared with November. In December it contributed £2.5 billion, 21.0 per cent of the total value of the UK's EU export trade.
- The largest value decrease from the previous month, of £366.7 million, was in HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof). In December it accounted for £1.0 billion of exports. This is one of the top five commodity types exported from the UK to EU Member States. This is a 27.8 per cent decrease compared to November 2011.
- The top five EU Member States to which the UK exports remain the same as the previous month. Germany remains the EU Member State to which the UK exports most, accounting for 18.9 per cent of the total value of UK's EU export trade. This is despite Germany having the largest decrease by value compared to November in exports from the UK, down by £849.4 million (27.3 per cent). Compared to November 2011 the largest increase in export trade was a £43.6 million increase in exports to France, an increase of 2.2 per cent.
- The first estimate of total exports for 2011 is £158.2 billion¹. This is an increase of £17.1 billion compared with 2010. This is the second year that the value of exports has increased since the fall in 2009.
- The total 2011 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods exported to EU Member States excluding November 2011 was £146.2 billion, which has been upwardly revised by 397.2 million. This is an increase of 0.3 per cent. This shows there is relatively little change between the first provisional estimate of this cumulative total published last month and the revised figure published here.

Imports

- The value of the UK's EU imports has decreased by £2.7 billion (15.0 per cent) compared to November 2011, to £15.5 billion. This is the largest monthly drop in value since August 2008. Compared to December 2010 imports have decreased by £0.3 billion (1.7 per cent).
- As with exports, the top five commodities remain the same as the previous month. The largest contributing commodity group is HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof). This contributed £2.2 billion, 14.0 per cent, of the total value of UK's EU import trade.
- The largest value decrease from the previous month was in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) with a £448.2 million reduction, a decrease of 53.0 per cent. Generally where there were increases at the HS2 chapter level these were comparatively small.

¹ The final figure for total exports for 2011 will be published in August when data is finalised in line with our revisions policy

- The top five EU Member States from which the UK imports remain similar to the previous month. Germany is still the EU Member State from which the UK imports most goods by value, accounting for 24.3 per cent of the total value of UK's EU import trade. This is despite Germany having the largest decrease by value compared to November in imports to the UK, down by £549.1 million (12.7 per cent). Compared to November 2011 the largest increase in export trade was a £36.6 million increase in imports to Lithuania, an increase of 85.4 per cent.
- The first estimate of total imports for 2011 is £201.9 billion². This is an increase of £15.3 billion compared with 2010. This is the second year that the value of imports has increased since the fall in 2009. It is the first time imports have exceeded £200 billion.
- The total 2011 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods imported from EU Member States excluding December 2011 was £ 186.4 billion, which has been upwardly revised by £250.5 million. This is an increase of 0.1 per cent. This shows there is relatively little change between the first provisional estimate of this cumulative total published last month and the revised figure published here.

² The final figure for total imports for 2011 will be published in August when data is finalised in line with our revisions policy.

Further Analysis: Exports

Table 1: Top 5 commodities in UK's EU exports in December 2011 compared to November 2011 and December 2010

HS 2	Description	December 2011 Total £ millions	% Change from November 2011	% Change from December 2010	% of Total December 2011 Trade	Rank November 2011	Rank December 2010
-	Total Exports	11,963.2	-13.5	2.6	100.0	n/a	n/a
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	2,512.0	3.1	9.4	21.0	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,282.7	-12.3	5.7	10.7	2	2
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	954.0	-27.8	-6.4	8.0	3	3
85	Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles	936.2	-14.2	-9.5	7.8	4	4
30	Pharmaceutical products	799.4	-14.9	4.7	6.7	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The decrease in export value compared to November 2011 reflects a decrease in more than three quarters of HS2 chapters. Four of the top five commodity types shown in the table above decreased by a total of £841.1 million.

The largest decrease compared to November 2011 is for HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof) with a decrease of £366.7 million, or 27.8 per cent. December often sees a decrease in this kind of trade because of businesses closing down for the Christmas period.

Outside the top five commodities listed, there was also a large decrease in export trade for HS2 29 (Organic Chemicals) which has decreased by £279.1 million to £318.7 million, a decrease of 46.7 per cent. This is the second successive fall since the record high of £690.5 million in October 2011. Because of the nature of the goods involved, trade in this chapter can be very volatile.

Increases at the HS2 chapter level were by comparison small. The largest increase compared to November 2011 of £76.0 million was in HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes). This is an increase of 3.1 per cent from November. It is also an increase from December 2010 of £216.5 million, or 9.4 per cent.

The next largest increase is for HS2 28 (Inorganic chemicals: organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals, of rare-earth metals, of radioactive elements or of isotopes), which saw an increase of £57.5 million (up by 47.3 per cent) to £179.1 million.

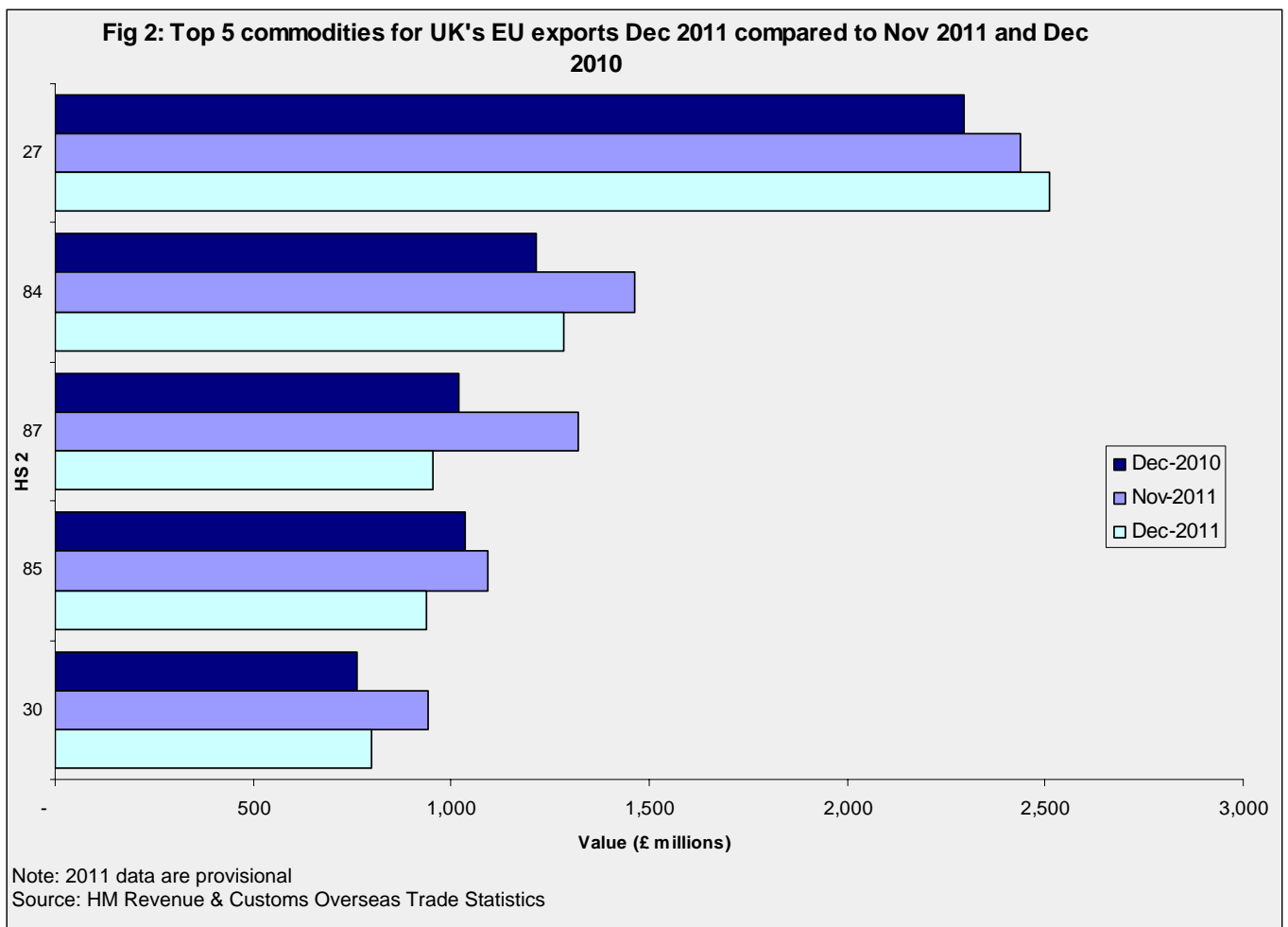
Compared to December 2010, the overall export trade to EU member states is up by 2.6 per cent. Three of the top five HS2 chapters show an increase accounting for

£321.1 million. Overall approximately two thirds of commodities showed an increase in value.

The largest change compared to last December is the increase of £216.5 million in exports of HS2 27, up by 9.4 per cent. This accounts for over 70 per cent of the overall net change in exports.

The next largest change was a decrease of £140.5 million for HS2 89 (Ships, boats and floating structures). Because of the nature of the goods involved trade in this chapter is very volatile and just a few items of trade can have a major impact on the statistics.

Figure 2 below shows the top five commodities for UK's EU exports in December 2011, compared to November 2011 and December 2010.



Country	Total December 2011 £ millions	% change from November 2011	% Change from December 2010	% of total EU trade
Total Exports	11,963.2	-13.5	2.6	100.0
Germany	2,263.9	-27.3	-5.2	18.9
France	2,071.6	2.2	10.0	17.3
Netherlands	1,695.2	-13.7	13.3	14.2
Irish Republic	1,595.9	1.1	5.6	13.3
Belgium	1,118.8	-11.9	23.6	9.4

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

Germany has been the largest export partner for the UK for a number of years, but falls below 20 per cent of the total value of exports this month. France accounts for over 17.3 per cent of exports.

The largest change in value of export trade compared with November 2011 is the decrease of £849.4 million to Germany, a decrease of 27.3 per cent. This decrease accounts for 45.6 per cent of the overall net decrease in exports of £1,864.2 million. This is the lowest value of exports to Germany since August 2010. There were decreases in the value of exports to Germany in just under three quarters of all commodity types led by a decrease of £255.2 million in HS2 29 (Organic Chemicals).

The next largest decrease is for the Netherlands, with a decrease of £270.2 million, or 13.7 per cent, to £1.7 billion. The decrease in value of exports to the Netherlands is led by a decrease of £118.6 million in HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products).

The largest increase in exports, of £43.6 million, was to France. This is an increase of 2.2 per cent.

The value of total export trade has decreased with 21 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with November 2011.

Table 3 shows the top five partner Member States for EU exports in December 2010, November 2011 and December 2011.

The increase in total export trade value compared to December 2010, noted above was in part driven by the increase in export value of goods to Belgium (up by £213.4 million), The Netherlands (up by £199.6 million) and France (up by £187.8 million) shown in table 2. These increases have been offset by decreases in exports to Germany (down by £125.3 million) and Italy (down by £116.1 million).

The value of total export trade has increased with 16 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with December 2010.

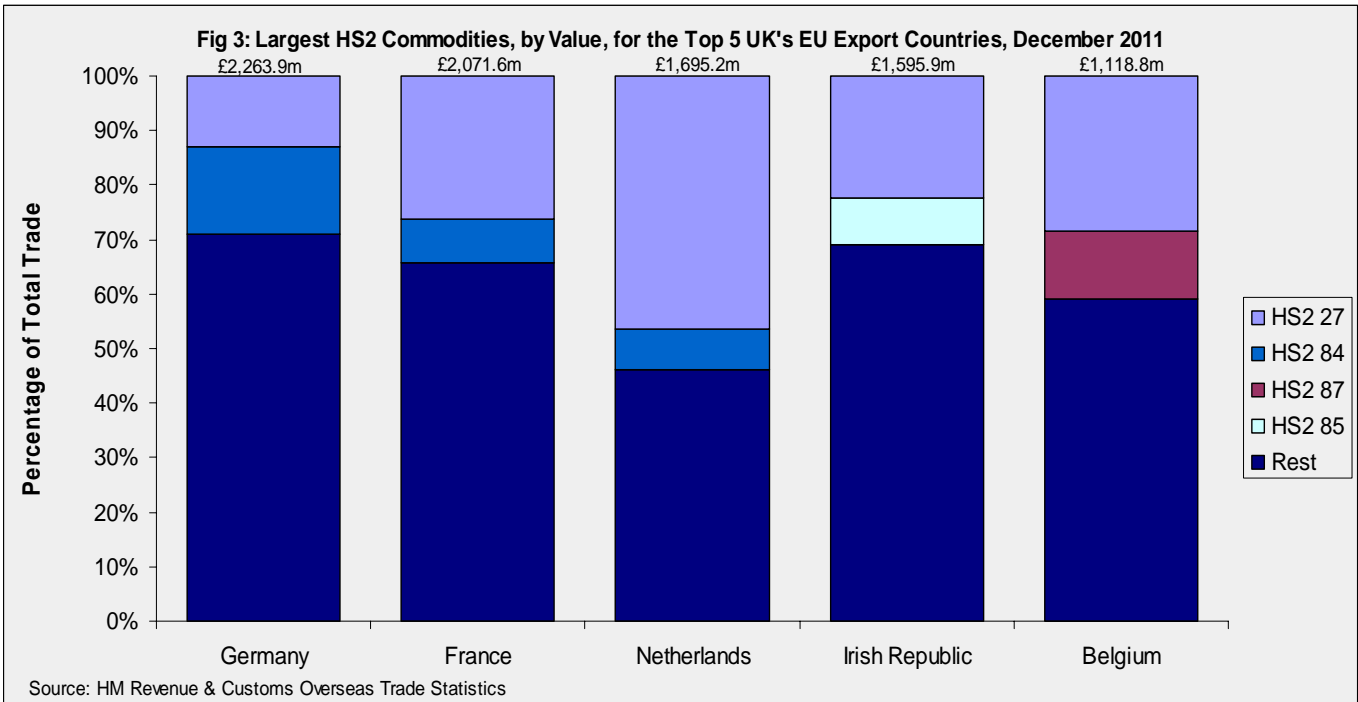
Table 3: Top 5 EU export partner Member States in December 2010, November 2011 and December 2011

Rank	December 2011	November 2011	December 2010
1	Germany	Germany	Germany
2	France	France	France
3	Netherlands	Netherlands	Irish Republic
4	Irish Republic	Irish Republic	Netherlands
5	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

For all three periods, Germany was the UK's largest EU export partner country.

Figure 3 below shows the two largest commodities by value for each of the top five EU Member States that the UK exports to. All of the top five Member States have HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes) as the largest commodity by value exported to them from the UK. The trade with the top five Member States accounts for 91.4 per cent of the total value of UK EU export trade under this heading. Furthermore, 46.5 per cent of the UK's exports to the Netherlands were in chapter 27.



Further Analysis: Imports

Table 4: Top 5 commodities in UK's EU imports in December 2011 compared to November 2011 and December 2010

HS 2	Description	December 2011 Total £ millions	% Change from November 2011	% Change from December 2010	% of Total December 2011 Trade	Rank November 2011	Rank December 2010
-	Total Trade	15,541.1	-15.0	-1.7	100.0	n/a	n/a
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	2,176.8	-15.4	6.4	14.0	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	2,003.0	-5.9	7.0	12.9	2	2
85	Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles	1,514.1	-18.6	-5.6	9.7	3	3
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	1,000.0	-17.1	-22.4	6.4	4	4
30	Pharmaceutical products	778.9	-18.0	-5.9	5.0	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The overall decrease of £2.7 billion compared to November 2011 in the value of imports to the UK reflects a decrease in eighty per cent of all HS2 chapters. Table 4 shows the value of import trade for all of the top five commodities is lower than in November, accounting for a total decrease of £1.2 billion. However the largest decrease in value of imports was outside the top five. HS2 29 (Organic Chemicals) showed a decrease of £448.2 million to £396.9 million, its lowest level since August 2009. This follows an increase of £424.3 million in November to a high of £845.1 million.

In comparison, there were no sizeable increases in imports at the HS2 level.

The much smaller net decrease of £264.0 million compared to December 2010, noted above, reflects a mixture of increases and decreases across all of the HS2 chapters. The decreases are led by falls in HS2 27 (down by £288.6 million) and HS2 29 (down by £168.9 million). The latter, a decrease of 29.9 per cent, is due to this month's value being particularly low as noted above. These are offset by

increases in HS2 87 and HS2 84 up by £130.4 million and £131.7 million respectively.

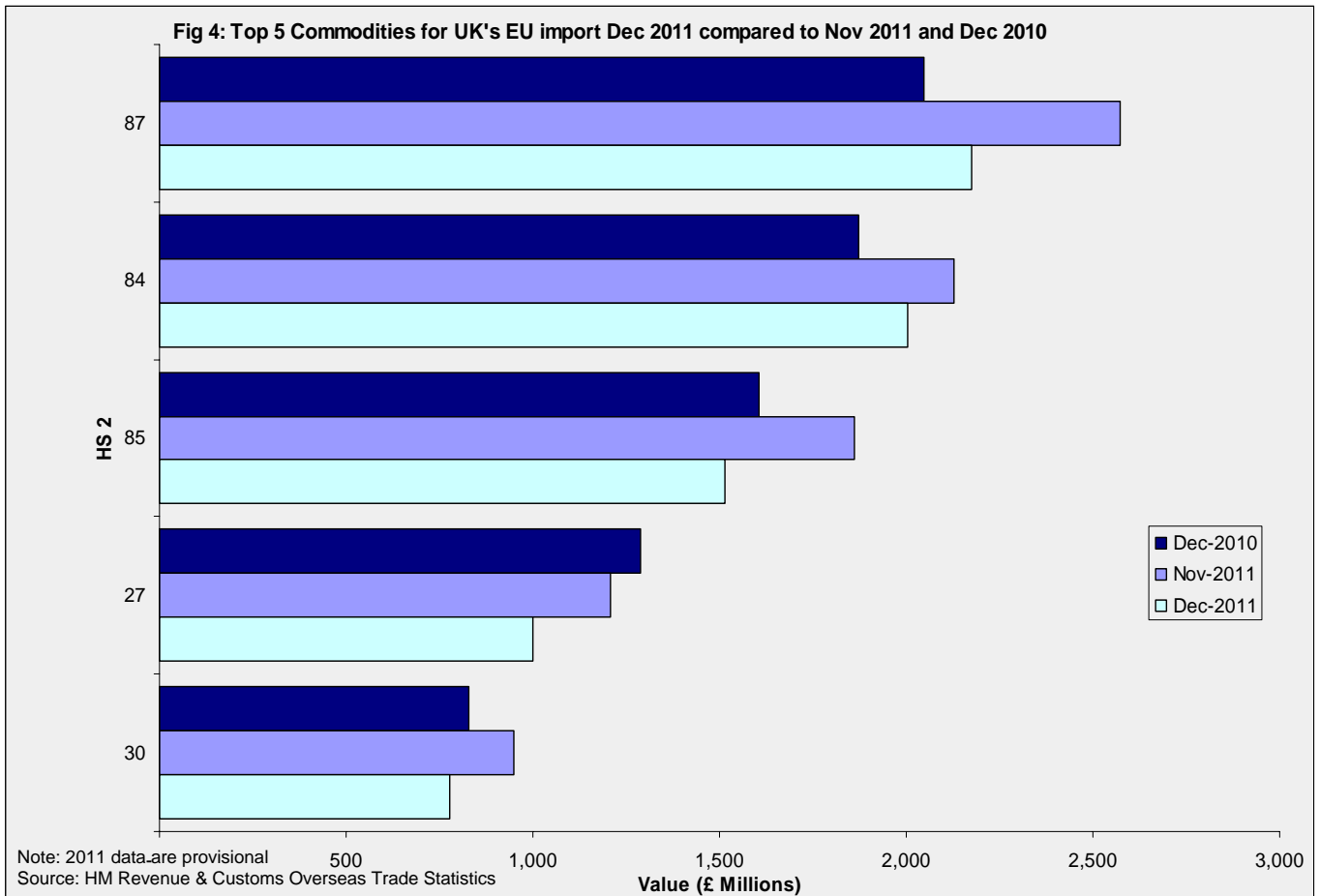


Figure 4 shows the top five HS2 commodity groups for UK's EU imports in December 2011, compared to November 2011 and December 2010.

In comparison with November 2011, there were decreases in import trade for all of these top five commodities, but compared to December 2010, two of these groups showed increases as described above.

Tables 5 and 6 show comparisons of the value of UK import trade with our top five EU import trading partners for December 2011, November 2011 and December 2010.

Germany and The Netherlands have been the largest EU import partners for the UK for a number of years, accounting for between 30 and 40 per cent of the total imports from the EU.

The largest change in value of import trade compared with November 2011 is the decrease of £549.1 million from Germany. This is a decrease of 12.7 per cent. The overall fall reflects decreases across most chapters with the largest being in HS2 87 (down by £126.8 million) and HS2 85 (down by £125.9 million).

The largest increase in imports was from Lithuania, with an increase of £36.6 million, 85.4 per cent to £79.5 million. This is primarily due to an increase of £38.4 million in HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes), nearly four times the figure in November.

The value of total import trade has decreased with 20 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with November 2011.

The decrease in total import trade value compared to December 2010, noted above, is driven by a decrease of £164.6 in imports from Belgium. This is 62.4 per cent of the total net decrease, and takes Belgium to its lowest import total since May 2010. There was also a decrease for the Irish Republic (down by £83.4 million). The largest increase was for imports from Italy (up by £68.6 million).

The value of total import trade has increased with 13 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with December 2010.

Country	Total December 2011 £ millions	% Change from November 2011	% Change from December 2010	% of Total EU Trade
Total Imports	15,541.1	-15.0	-1.7	100.0
Germany	3,773.0	-12.7	0.3	24.3
Netherlands	2,310.1	-14.8	-2.4	14.9
France	1,803.5	-15.7	-0.5	11.6
Belgium	1,323.7	-16.2	-11.1	8.5
Italy	1,137.0	-10.6	6.4	7.3

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

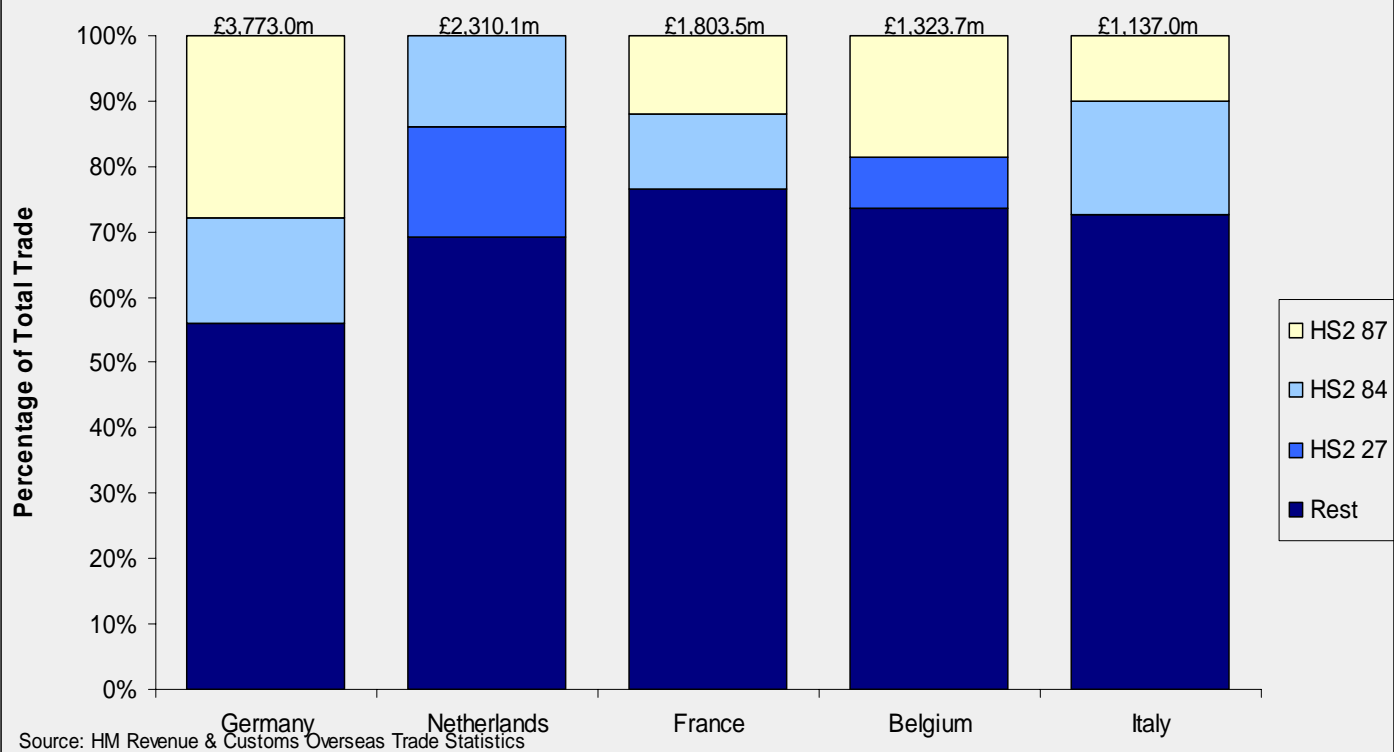
Rank	Dec 2011	Nov 2011	Dec 2010
1	Germany	Germany	Germany
2	Netherlands	Netherlands	Netherlands
3	France	France	France
4	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium
5	Italy	Irish Republic	Irish Republic

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

Table 6 shows that for all three periods, Germany was the UK's largest EU import partner country. The top 4 import partner Member States have remained the same.

Figure 5 shows the two largest imported commodities by value from each of the top five EU Member States. Four of the top five Member States have HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) in their top two largest commodities exported to the UK, another four have HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof). The trade in HS2 87 from these Member States accounts for 74.5 per cent of the total EU import trade under this heading, and the trade in HS2 84 accounts for 67.0 per cent of the EU total in these commodities.

Fig 5: Largest HS2 Commodities, by Value, for the Top 5 UK's EU Import Countries, December 2011



Notes:

1. HM Revenue & Customs released these latest statistics on Overseas Trade with Member States of the European Union (EU) on 14 February 2012 under arrangements set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).
2. This release includes the first provisional estimates of trade-in-goods between the UK and Member States of the EU for December 2011. At the same time revisions for all previously published EU data for 2011 are also being released in line with the [Overseas Trade Statistics Policy on Revisions](#).
3. The figures provided in this publication of the December 2011 EU Overseas Trade Statistics will include
 - a. Estimates for businesses who have yet to submit detailed data on the trade they had with other EU Member States in December.
 - b. Estimates for businesses who do not have to submit detailed data on the trade they have with other EU Member States
 - c. An adjustment for trade associated with Missing Trader Intra Community fraud. More detail of this can be found [here](#).

Estimates are included in all high level totals including HS2 and country totals but not for aggregated totals below this level.

Not all of these estimates are included in the lower level aggregations of data found in our interactive database. Therefore it is possible that some of the data in this publication will differ slightly from high level aggregates produced using the interactive database.

4. Detailed trade information is presented according to the [Harmonised System \(HS\)](#) nomenclature.
5. The aggregate estimates here will differ slightly from those that are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as part of the Balance of Payments (BoP), as the two sets of data are compiled to different sets of rules. The ONS web site provides an overview of BoP at the [Guide to UK Trade](#) as well as the detailed monthly [UK Trade Releases](#). The BoP publication shows a high level picture of UK trade-in-goods, whereas the OTS publication shows a detailed picture of the UK's trade-in-goods by commodity and partner country. More detail about the differences between the BoP and OTS publications can be found [here](#).
6. The aggregate estimates here will differ from the Eurostat publication [Euro area external trade](#). The OTS is published as 'general trade' based upon goods recorded as they enter or leave the UK. This will include goods imported into and exported from a freezone or customs warehouse, regardless of their future use. The Eurostat EU external trade data are published as 'special trade' where goods are recorded as trade only when they enter free circulation or are accepted into [Inwards Processing Relief](#) (IPR).
7. Information to help support users of the EU Overseas Trade Statistics can be found [here](#). This includes links to our policies on revision and suppression of data, descriptions of the methodology used to compile the Overseas Trade Statistics and information on the quality of the data published.
8. The OTS has recently been reviewed as part of an assessment made of Overseas Trade Statistics by the [UK Statistics Authority](#). The report of that assessment can be found at

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-93---uk-trade-in-goods.pdf>

Statistical contact:

Andrew Watson 01702 367485

e-mail uktradeinfo@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

To access the detailed 8-digit data in our interactive database please log in [here](#). If you have not yet registered for this **free** area click [here](#).

Please note: there may be a delay between the availability of this release and the detailed data in our interactive database. This is because of the time required to upload such a large dataset. Subscribers to our email [Alert Service](#) will be sent an alert when the interactive database has been updated. The OTS non EU publication occurs one week prior to the publication of the OTS EU equivalent, to allow for additional processing of the Intrastat survey.

Next release: 13 March 2012 9:30am

© **Crown copyright 2012.**

If using specific facts contained in this release please check the information is still current.