

EU Overseas Trade Statistics - May 2012

Coverage:
United Kingdom

Theme:
Business and Energy

Released:
17 July 2012

Next Release:
14 August 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 exports and imports with EU Member States in May 2012 both increased compared to April 2012. This follows large decreases seen in April. Exports rose slightly more than imports. Consequently the difference between imports and exports has decreased slightly compared with April.
- UK's EU exports have increased by £1.0 billion (8.6 per cent) compared to April 2012, to £12.7 billion. Compared to May 2011 exports have decreased by £1.2 billion (8.6 per cent).
- UK's EU imports have increased by £0.6 billion (3.6 per cent) compared to April 2012, to £17.1 billion. Compared to May 2011 imports marginally increased by £0.1 billion (0.7 per cent).
- The UK remains a net importer (imports are greater than exports). The size of difference between imports and exports has decreased by 8.7 per cent compared to April 2012, but when compared to May 2011 the gap has increased by 41.7 per cent.



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](#).

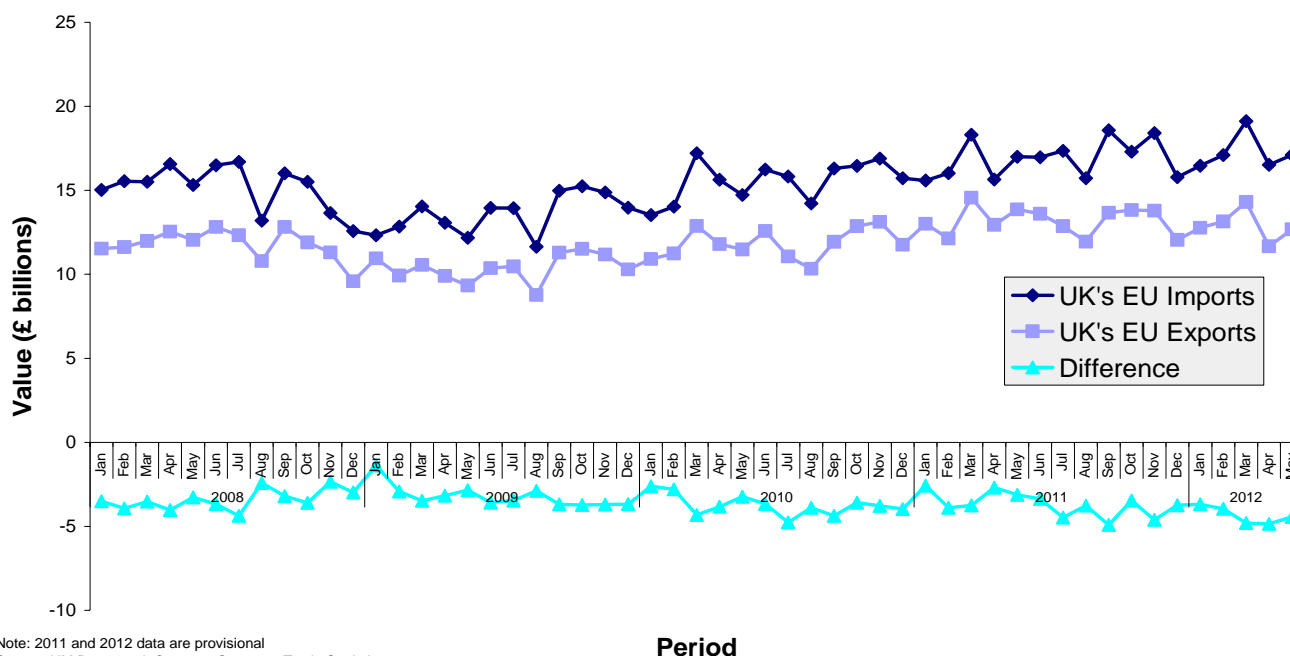
Key Points

For the month of May 2012:

The value of UK trade increased in May 2012 compared to the previous month. This is similar to the pattern of trade seen last year where April values were lower than high March values for both imports and exports, and then rose in May. However, export value decreased in comparison with May 2011 (8.6 per cent) and export trade is still behind last year's level.

As the value of exports rose more than the value of imports, this resulted in a decrease in the difference between UK imports from the EU and exports to the EU.

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



Note: 2011 and 2012 data are provisional
Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

Exports

- The value of the UK's EU exports has increased by £1.0 billion (8.6 per cent) compared to April 2012, to £12.7 billion. In contrast, compared with May 2011, the value of exports decreased by £1.2 billion (8.6 per cent). The April 2012 estimate of £11.7 billion is the lowest monthly EU export figure since August 2010, indicating that the increase from last month is largely a return to normal levels of trade.
- The top five commodities are similar to 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. In May it contributed £2.2 billion, 17.4 per cent of the total value of the UK's EU export trade. This is despite HS2 27 having the largest value decrease from the previous month, of £258.6 million (10.5 per cent).
- The largest value increase from the previous month, of £228.5 million, was in HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products). This HS2 chapter was also in the top five chapters.
- The top five EU Member States to which the UK exports remain the same as the previous month. Germany remains the UK's largest EU export partner country, accounting for 20.9 per cent of the total value of UK's EU export trade. The largest increase in exports compared to April 2012 was a £232.1 million (14.1 per cent) rise in the value of exports to France. In contrast, the country that experienced the largest decrease in exports was Portugal, which saw a drop of only £22.2 million (16.8 per cent).
- The total 2012 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods exported to EU Member States excluding May 2012 was £51.9 billion, which has been upwardly revised by £ 240.2 million. This is an increase of 0.5 per cent.

Imports

- The value of the UK's EU imports has increased by £0.6 billion (3.6 per cent) compared to April 2012, to £17.1 billion. Compared to May 2011 imports have increased by £0.1 billion (0.7 per cent).
- 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 £2.6 billion, 15.4 per cent, of the total value of UK's EU import trade. This was also the chapter with the largest value increase compared to April, a rise of £151.4 million (6.1 per cent).
- The largest value decrease from the previous month was in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) with a decrease of £187.4 million, 25.3 per cent.
- The top five EU Member States from which the UK imports are similar to the previous month. Germany is still the EU Member State from which the UK imports most goods by value, accounting for 25.3 per cent of the total value of UK's EU import trade. The Netherlands remains in second place, and also had the largest increase by value compared to April, up by £216.2 million (9.5 per cent). Compared to April 2012 the largest decrease in import trade was a fall of £72.5 million in imports from the Irish Republic, a decrease of 6.3 per cent.
- The total 2012 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods imported from EU Member States excluding May 2012 was £69.2 billion, which has been upwardly revised by £131.8 million. This is an increase of 0.2 per cent.

Further Analysis: Exports

HS 2	Description	May 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from April 2012	% Change from May 2011	% of Total May 2012 Exports	Rank April 2012	Rank May 2011
-	Total EU Exports	12,682.3	8.6	-8.6	100.0	n/a	n/a
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	2,206.8	-10.5	-25.3	17.4	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,302.6	3.3	-10.3	10.3	2	2
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	1,165.1	18.0	2.6	9.2	3	3
30	Pharmaceutical products	910.1	33.5	11.1	7.2	5	5
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	833.9	9.5	-15.0	6.6	4	4

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The increase in export value **compared to April 2012** reflects an increase in around two thirds of all HS2 chapters. Four out of five of the top chapters experienced increases. The only chapter in the top five that saw a drop in exports was the chapter with the largest share of the export trade, HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes). The decrease in this chapter, £258.6 million (10.5 per cent), was the largest for all chapters and accounted for 83.2 per cent of the total decrease from the 35 chapters that saw a drop in exports. None of the other chapters which decreased fell by more than £7 million.

The largest HS2 increase compared to April 2012 was £228.5 million (33.5 per cent) in HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products). This is a record increase in recent years. The impact of this increase was to move the chapter from fifth place in April 2012 to fourth place in this month. The second largest increase, which was outside the top five chapters, was for HS2 71 (Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad with precious metal, and articles thereof; imitation jewellery; coin), which rose by £211.9 million, almost doubling the April figure. There were also relatively large increases in HS2 87 (up by £177.4 million, 18.0 per cent) and HS2 88 (Aircraft, Spacecraft and parts thereof) which was up by £158.6 million.

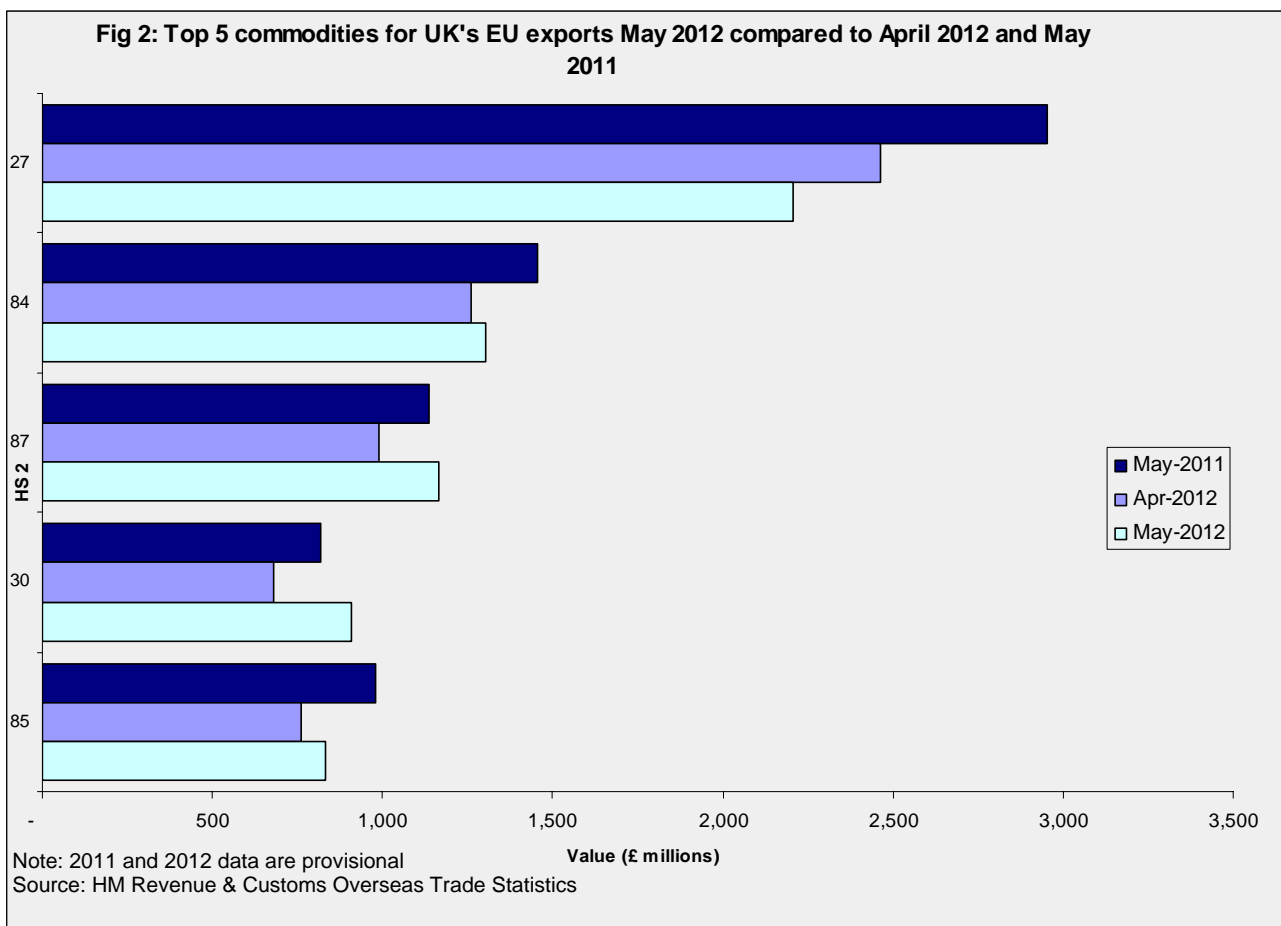
Compared to May 2011, the overall export trade to EU member states decreased by £1.2 billion, 8.6 per cent. Three of the top five HS2 chapters (27, 84 and 85) experienced decreases. These decreases were the three largest falls in exports and totalled £1.0 billion, accounting for 88 per cent of the total net decrease.

The overall decrease is dominated by a fall of £748.0 million in exports of HS2 27 - a decrease of 25.3 per cent. This takes exports of HS2 27 to their lowest level since August 2011. The next two largest decreases, both in other top five commodity chapters, were HS2 84 (down by £150.3 million) and HS85 (down by £146.7 million). Outside of the top five commodity types, HS2 72 (Iron and steel) fell by £102.0 million (25.8 per cent).

In contrast, HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products), one of the top five chapters, experienced the largest increase up £90.8 million (11.1 per cent) to £910.1 million. None of the other chapters which decreased fell by more than £58 million.

Figure 2 below shows the top five commodities for UK's EU exports in May 2012, compared to April 2012 and May 2011.

The graph shows that all commodities except HS27 increased in comparison with April 2012. In comparison with May 2011, three of the top five chapters experienced decreases, where as HS 87 and 30 saw marginal increases.



Country	May 2012 Total £ millions	% change from April 2012	% Change from May 2011	% of total May 2012 EU exports	Rank April 2012	Rank May 2011
Total EU Exports	12,682.3	8.6	-8.6	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	2,650.4	4.3	-10.3	20.9	1	1
Netherlands	1,920.9	-0.7	1.7	15.1	2	3
France	1,883.3	14.1	-11.6	14.8	3	2
Irish Republic	1,357.3	1.3	-5.5	10.7	4	5
Belgium	1,292.7	19.0	-12.8	10.2	5	4

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The top five EU export partner Member States remain unchanged **compared with April 2012**. Furthermore, Germany has been the largest export partner in the EU for the UK for a number of years, accounting for 20.9 per cent of the total value of exports this month. The value of exports to Germany in May was greatest in the top five exported commodities from the UK shown in table 1 above. These commodity types account for over half of the UK exports to Germany.

The increase in value of total export trade compared to April 2012 reflects increases to 20 of the other 26 Member States in the EU.

The largest increase in the value of exports from the UK was to France, up £232.1 million (14.1 per cent). The next largest increase was the value of exports to Belgium, which rose by £206.3 million to £1.3 billion (up by 18.2 per cent). The combined increase of these two partner countries accounts for 43.5 per cent of the total net increase in EU exports.

The rise in exports to France was led by an increase of £125.3 million (173.7 per cent) in HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) whereas the rise for Belgium was led by an increase of £175.3 million (195.4 per cent) in HS2 71 (Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad with precious metal, and articles thereof; imitation jewellery; coin).

There were also large increases in exports to Spain (up by £121.4 million, 18.3 per cent), Italy (£117.2 million, 18.5 per cent) and Germany (up by £108.3 million, 4.3 per cent).

In contrast, the largest decrease was for Portugal down by only £22.2 million (16.8 per cent).

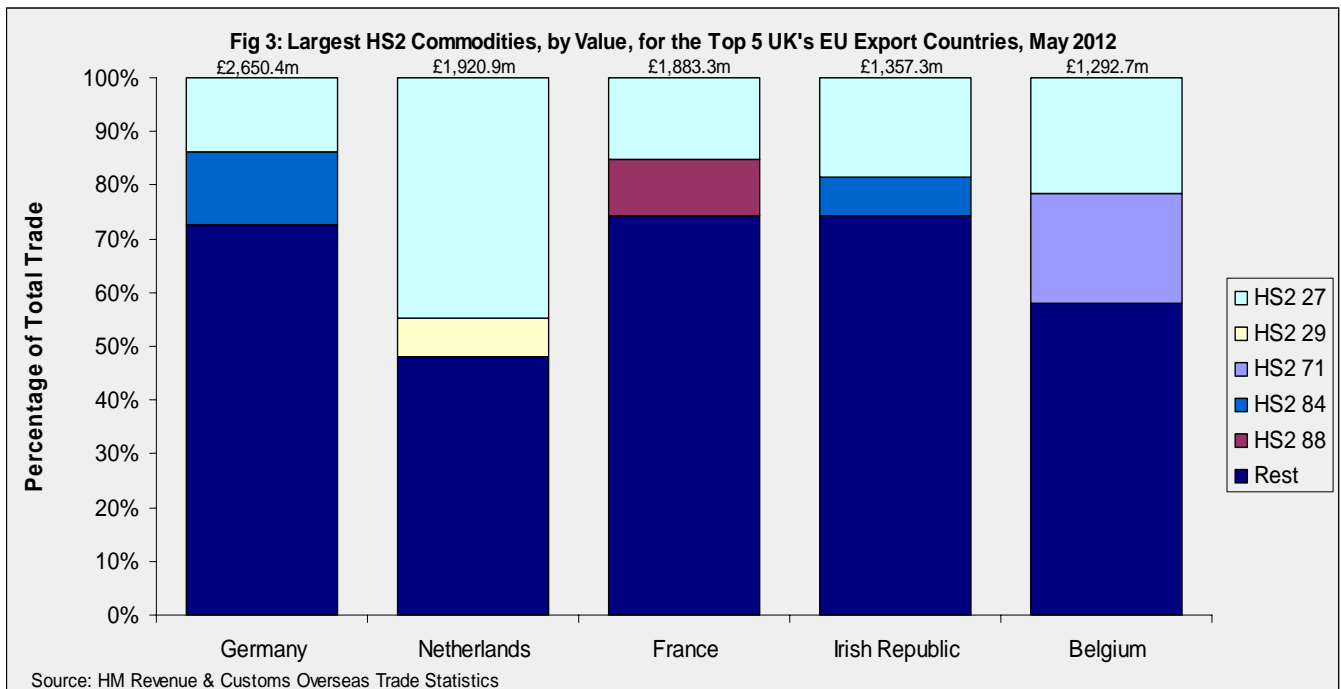
The decrease in total export trade value **compared to May 2011**, noted in table 2 was due to decreases for 18 of the UK's EU export partner countries and increases for only eight of the remaining partner countries. The largest decrease was for Germany, down by £303.5 million (10.3 per cent), followed by France, down £248.0 million (11.6 per cent).

The decrease for Germany was driven by a drop in HS2 84 down £109.3 million (23.3 per cent). The decrease for France was led by a decrease in HS2 27 of £265.4 million (48.2 per cent).

There were also relatively large decreases in exports to Belgium (down by 189.6 million, 12.8 per cent) and Italy (£102.7 million, 12.0 per cent).

The largest increase was for the Netherlands up by £32.3 million (1.7 per cent). The increase was driven by a rise in HS2 30 up by £72.1 million (126.2 per cent).

Figure 3 below shows the two largest commodities by value exported from the UK to each of the UK's top five EU export trading partners. 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 92.4 per cent of the total value of UK EU export trade under this heading. Furthermore, two of the top five countries have HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) in their top two commodity types by value exported to them from the UK. These two countries account for 35.3 per cent of the export trade under this commodity.



Further Analysis: Imports

HS 2	Description	May 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from April 2012	% Change from May 2011	% of Total May 2012 Imports	Rank April 2012	Rank May 2011
-	Total EU Imports	17,111.4	3.6	0.7	100.0	n/a	n/a
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	2,637.9	6.1	-8.0	15.4	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,991.6	0.1	0.0	11.6	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	1,506.3	10.6	5.8	8.8	3	3
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	1,238.4	10.2	13.3	7.2	4	4
30	Pharmaceutical products	898.2	8.6	10.9	5.2	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The increase **compared to April 2012** in imports is a reflection of the fact that there were increases in over 70 per cent of the HS2 chapters. All of the top five HS2 commodity types experienced increases and four of them had rises that were in the top five largest increases. The increases in these top five chapters comprised 82.3 per cent of the total net increase.

The largest increase in value of imports was in the commodity type that has the largest share of the trade, HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof). This was up by £151.4 million (6.1 percent), after falling by £718.0 million last month, from March's record high of £3.2 billion.

There were also large increases in HS2 85 (up by £144.5 million), HS2 71 (Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad with precious metal, and articles thereof; imitation jewellery; coin), up by £140.8 million, and HS2 27 (up by £114.8 million). All of these chapters are increasing after falling in value in April. HS2 71 is at its second highest import value in recent years, with the highest being £495.7 million in September 2011.

The largest decrease in value of imports was for HS2 29 (Organic chemicals), down by £187.4 million (25.3 per cent) to £552.3 million. This is a return to previous levels after the second highest import value for this chapter in recent years.

The next largest decrease was £118.6 million (37.0 per cent) in HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) to £202.2 million. This is still the third highest import level, after March and April 2012's imports of £219.2 million and £320.7 million respectively.

In contrast the slight increase of 0.7 per cent in imports **compared with May 2011** reflects the fact that half of all chapters increased in value, and half decreased. The chapter with the largest increase in comparison with May 2011 was HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes), up £145.3 million (13.3 per cent). There was also a large increase in the value of imports for HS2 71, up by £123.6 million (45.0 per cent). The largest decrease was for the top commodity type, HS2 87, which saw a fall of £230.0 million (8.0 per cent).

Figure 4 below shows the top five HS2 commodity groups for UK's EU imports in May 2012, compared to April 2012 and May 2011.

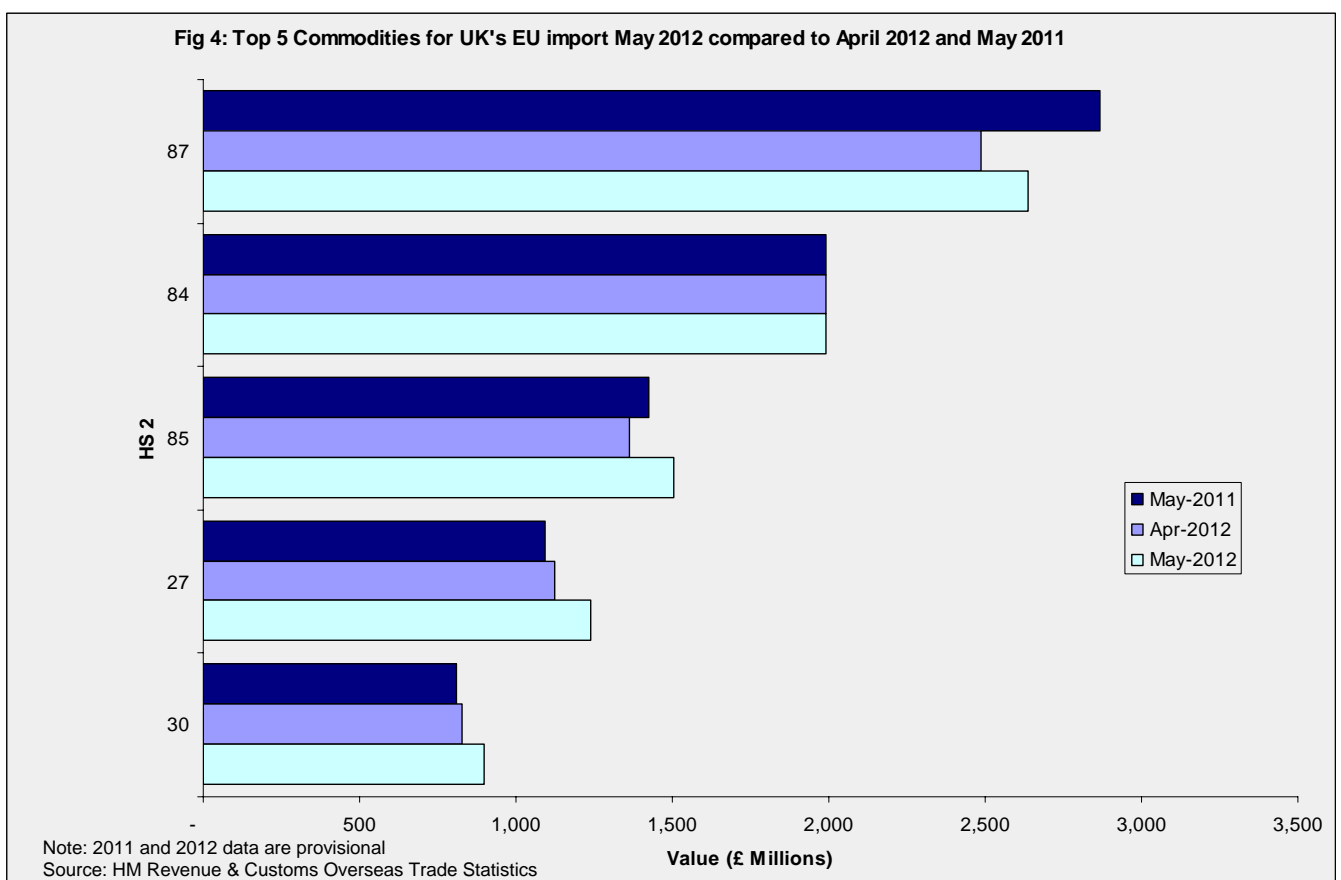


Figure 4 shows the large increases between April 2012 and May 2012 for four chapters, while HS2 84 is relatively unchanged. Compared to May 2011, HS2 87 saw a decrease, but the other four chapters saw relatively small increases.

Table 4 shows comparisons of the value of UK import trade with our top five EU import trading partners for May 2012, April 2012 and May 2011.

Table 4: Top 5 EU import partner Member States in May 2012 compared to April 2012 and May 2011

Country	May 2012 Total £ millions	% change from April 2012	% Change from May 2011	% of total May 2012 Exports	Rank April 2012	Rank May 2011
Total EU Imports	17,111.4	3.6	0.7	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	4,335.0	1.0	2.3	25.3	1	1
Netherlands	2,487.3	9.5	12.5	14.5	2	2
France	1,880.2	2.7	1.0	11.0	3	3
Belgium	1,497.4	10.9	-12.2	8.8	4	4
Italy	1,198.5	8.1	-0.4	7.0	6	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

Germany remains the top member state for imports to the UK, accounting for over 25 per cent of the total imports to the UK from the EU. This is led by imports of £1.2 billion in HS2 87. This is up by £57.2 million, 5.0 per cent. The next largest chapter is HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof), with £0.6 billion of imports to the UK.

The largest change in value of import trade **compared with April 2012** is the increase of £216.2 million from the Netherlands. This is an increase of 9.5 per cent, after a fall of £554.6 million last month. The next largest increase for the value of imports was from Belgium, up by £147.4 million (10.9 per cent). No other member state had an increase over £100 million.

The largest decrease was from the Irish Republic, down £72.5 million, 6.3 per cent to £1.0 billion. This takes the Irish Republic out of the top five for import value for May 2012, behind Italy.

The value of total import trade increased for 15 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with April 2012.

The increase in imports from the Netherlands is led by an increase of £131.1 million (53.6 per cent) in HS2 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). This covers 90 per cent of the overall increase in imports in this chapter.

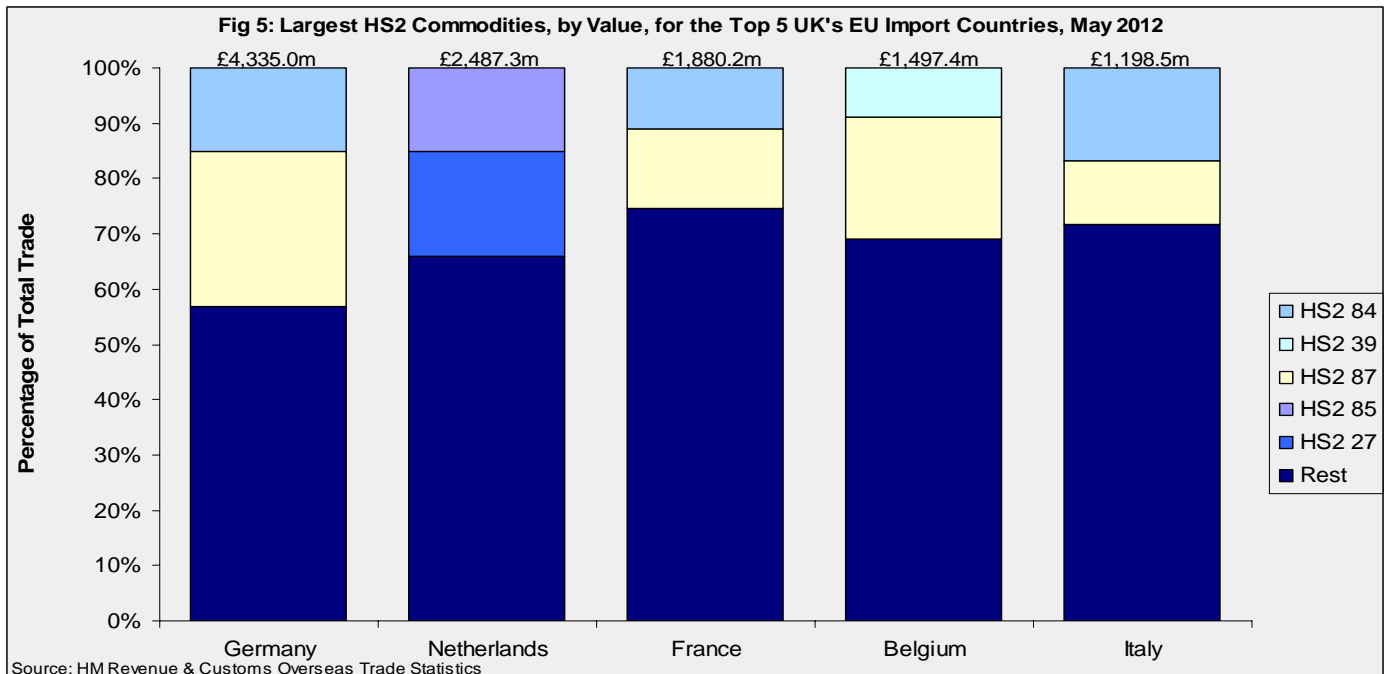
The increase from Belgium is spread over a number of chapters, with HS2 27 increasing by £40.0 million, while five other chapters had increases between £10 million and £18 million, and only one decrease in this range, HS2 84 decreasing by £11.1 million.

The slight increase in total import trade value **compared to May 2011**, noted in table 4, is composed of decreases from 14 of the other 26 Member States in the EU, with larger increases from the remaining 12. The country with the largest increase is the Netherlands, up by £276.6 million (12.5 per cent). The second largest increase is £171.5 million (26.1 per cent) for Sweden, to take it to the highest import value in recent years. The country with the largest decrease in value of imports into the UK is Belgium, down £207.9 million (12.2 per cent).

The increase for the Netherlands was driven by rises in HS2 85 up £149.0 million, an increase of 65.7 per cent on May 2011, and in HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes) up by £141.1 million, 42.6 per cent. The increase for Sweden was also driven by a rise in HS2 27, up by £130.4 million, 74.8 per cent. In contrast, the decrease for Belgium was driven by a drop in HS2 27, down by £102.4 million (55.3 per cent).

Figure 5 shows the two largest imported commodities by value from each of the UK's top five import partner EU Member States. Four of the top five Member States have HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof) in their top two largest commodities exported to the UK. The trade in HS2 87 from these Member States accounts for 73.7 per cent of the total EU import trade under this heading. It also makes up 27.9 per cent of the UK's imports from Germany.

Another three Member States have HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof). The trade in HS2 84 accounts for 53.7 per cent of the EU total imports in these commodities.



Notes:

1. HM Revenue & Customs released these latest statistics on Overseas Trade with Member States of the European Union (EU) on 17 July 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 May 2012. At the same time revisions for all previously published EU data for 2011 and 2012 are also being released in line with the [Overseas Trade Statistics Policy on Revisions](#).
3. The figures provided in this publication of the May 2012 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 May.
 - 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.

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>

9. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and

signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

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](#).

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: 14 August 2012 9:30am

© **Crown copyright 2012.**

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