

EU Overseas Trade Statistics - April 2012

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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 April both decreased compared to March. This repeats the pattern seen in the previous three years where April values have been lower than seasonally high March values for both imports and exports. However the decreases this month are larger than those seen previously. Exports fell slightly more than imports. Consequently the difference between imports and exports has increased slightly compared with March.
- UK's EU exports have decreased by £2.9 billion (20.3 per cent) compared to March 2012, to £11.4 billion. Compared to April 2011 exports have decreased by £1.5 billion (11.8 per cent).
- UK's EU imports have decreased by £2.7 billion (14.1 per cent) compared to March 2012, to £16.4 billion. However, compared to April 2011 imports marginally increased by £0.8 billion (4.9 per cent).
- The UK remains a net importer (imports are greater than exports). The size of difference between imports and exports has increased by 4.7 per cent compared to March 2012, but when compared to April 2011 the gap has increased considerably, by 85.6 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](#).

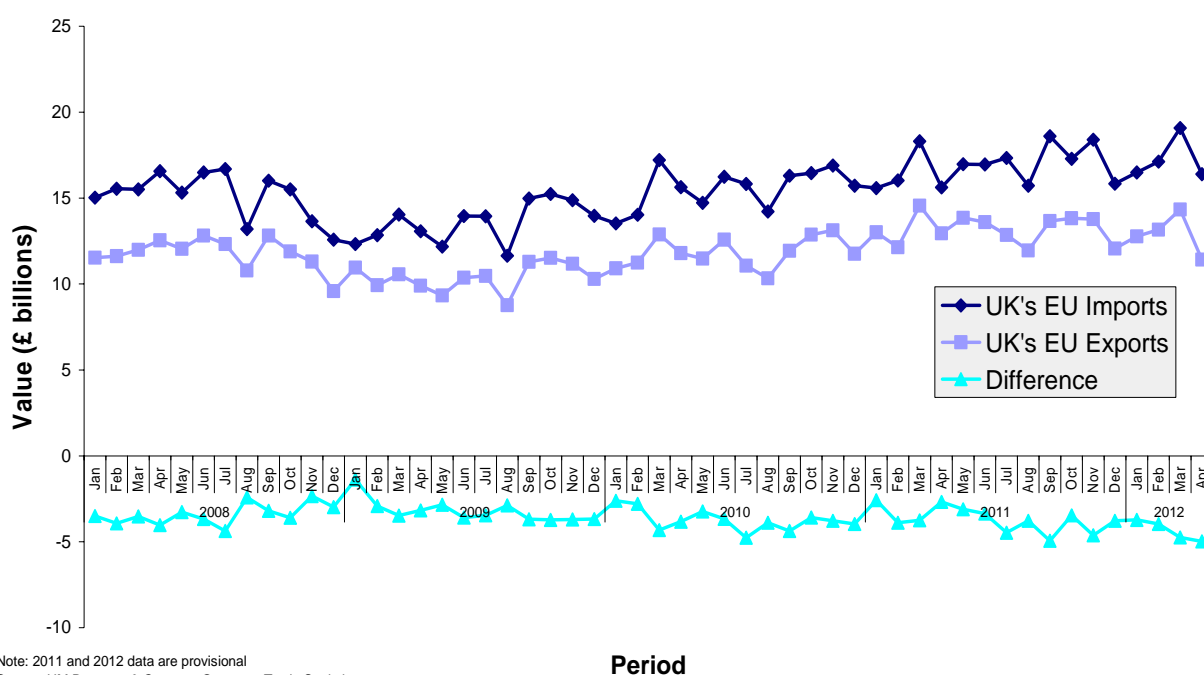
Key Points

For the month of April 2012:

The value of UK trade decreased in April 2012 compared to the previous month. This repeats the pattern seen in the previous three years where April values have been lower than seasonally high March values for both imports and exports. However the decreases this month are larger than those seen previously. The value of exports for April 2012 is the lowest figure recorded since August 2010. Both imports and exports showed a substantial fall compared with March 2012 – 14.1 and 20.3 per cent respectively. Exports also decreased in comparison with April 2011 (11.8 per cent), indicating that this decrease is more than seasonal fluctuation. On the other hand, the fall in imports was mitigated by the fact that value for March 2012 was the highest figure recorded in recent years and there was a marginal increase in comparison with April 2011 (4.9 per cent). This suggests that the decrease for imports is more likely to be related to seasonal variations and a return to normal levels of trade.

As the value of exports fell more than the value of imports, this resulted in an increase 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 decreased by £2.9 billion (20.3 per cent) compared to March 2012, to £11.4 billion. Compared with April 2011, the value of exports also decreased by £1.5 billion (11.8 per cent). The April 2012 estimate is the lowest monthly EU export figure since August 2010 and the lowest value for exports in April since 2009.
- 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 April it contributed £2.1 billion, 18.7 per cent of the total value of the UK's EU export trade. This was also the HS2 chapter with the largest value decrease from the previous month, of £630.6 million (22.8 per cent).
- The largest value increase from the previous month, of £3.4 million, was in HS2 89 (Ships, boats and floating structures). The magnitude of this change is relatively small in comparison to the largest decrease.
- 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 21.1 per cent of the total value of UK's EU export trade. The largest decrease in exports compared to March 2012 was a £1.0 billion fall in the value of exports to Germany, a decrease of 30.3 per cent. In contrast, the only country to experience an increase in exports was Portugal, which saw a small rise of £4.0 million (3.1 per cent).
- The total 2012 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods exported to EU Member States excluding April 2012 was £40.3 billion, which has been upwardly revised by £175.5 million. This is an increase of 0.4 per cent.

Imports

- The value of the UK's EU imports has decreased by £2.7 billion (14.1 per cent) compared to March 2012, to £16.4 billion, after last month's record high. Compared to April 2011 imports have increased by £0.8 billion (4.9 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 £2.4 billion, 14.9 per cent, of the total value of UK's EU import trade. This was also the chapter with the largest value decrease compared to March, a fall of £762.0 million (23.8 per cent).
- The largest value increase from the previous month was in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) with an increase of £187.1 million, 34.0 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 25.9 per cent of the total value of UK's EU import trade. The Netherlands remains in second place, despite having the largest decrease by value compared to March, down by £548.5 million (19.4 per cent). Compared to March 2012 the largest increase in import trade was a rise of £16.7 million in imports from Estonia, an increase of 149.6 per cent.
- The total 2012 year to date value of UK's trade-in-goods imported from EU Member States excluding April 2012 was £52.7 billion, which has been upwardly revised by £176.5 million. This is an increase of 0.3 per cent.

Further Analysis: Exports

HS2	Description	April 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from March 2012	% Change from April 2011	% of Total April 2012 Exports	Rank March 2012	Rank April 2011
-	Total Exports	11,417.3	-20.3	-11.8	100.0	n/a	n/a
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	2,136.0	-22.8	-26.3	18.7	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,282.6	-11.9	-2.4	11.2	2	2
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	986.8	-25.1	-9.4	8.6	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	767.7	-13.8	-14.3	6.7	4	5
30	Pharmaceutical products	688.3	-33.6	-12.9	6.0	5	4

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The decrease in export value **compared to March 2012** reflects a decrease in just under 90 per cent of all HS2 chapters. All top five chapters experienced decreases of over £100 million. Only 13 chapters had increases in export trade, totalling £13.4 million, where as the remaining chapters saw decreases which amounted to £2.9 billion in total.

HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes) had the largest decrease, £0.6 billion (22.8 per cent). This decrease is consistent with the overall decrease in exports (20.3 per cent) and therefore this chapter remains the commodity group with the largest share of export trade with 18.7 per cent of the total EU exports.

The second largest decrease in export trade was for HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products) which dropped by £348.3 million to £688.3 million, a decrease of 33.6 per cent. The third largest decrease was for HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof), which fell by £329.9 million (25.1 per cent). , The fourth largest decrease was outside the top five chapters for HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) down by £300.6 million (36.9 per cent).

The largest HS2 increase compared to March 2012 was only £3.4 million (14.4. per cent) in HS2 89 (Ships, boats and floating structures).

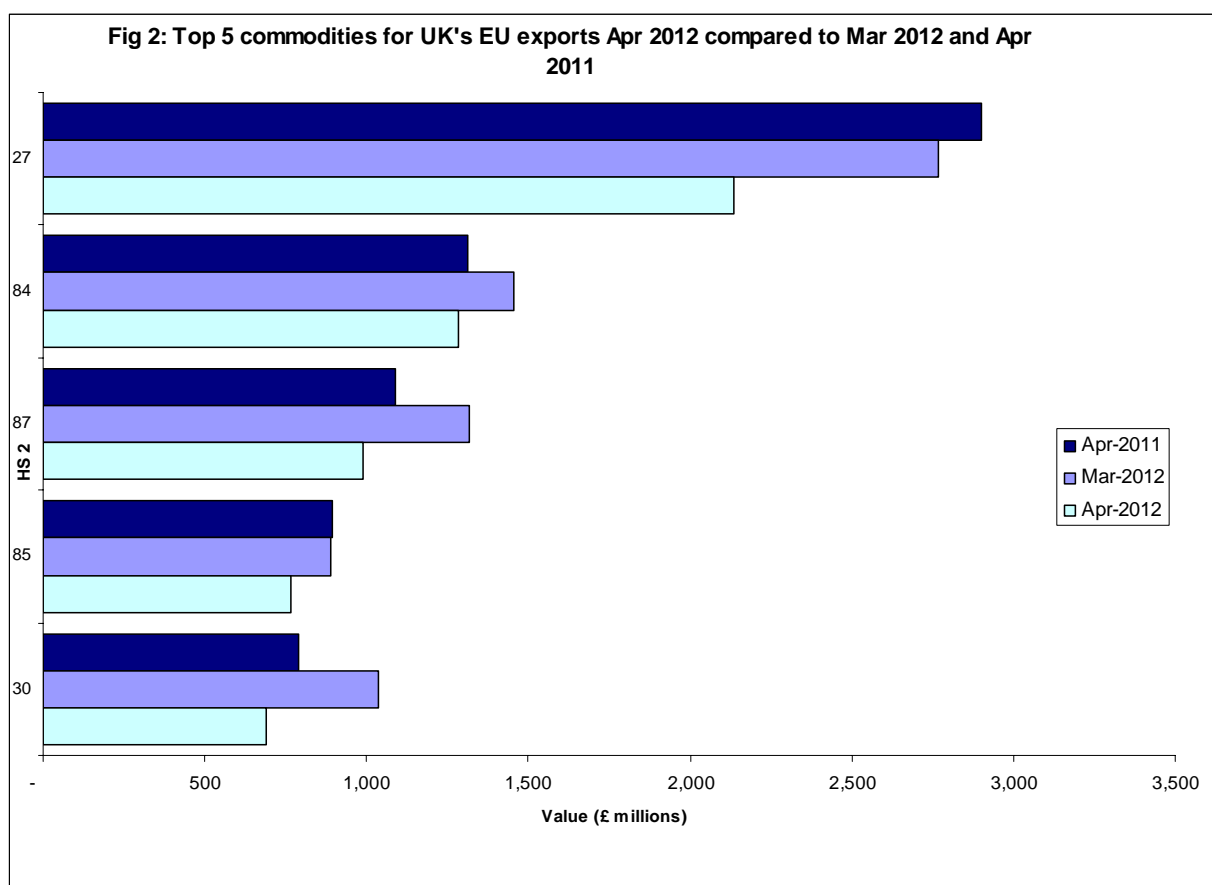
Compared to April 2011, the overall export trade to EU member states decreased by £1.5 billion, 11.8 per cent. All of the top five HS2 chapters experienced decreases. These decreases were four of the largest falls in exports and totalled £1.1 billion, accounting for just less than three quarters of the total net decrease.

The overall decrease is dominated by a fall of £763.0 million in exports of HS2 27 - a decrease of 26.3 per cent. There were also relatively large decreases in other top five commodity chapters: HS2 85 (down by £127.6 million), HS87 (down by £102.3 million) and HS2 30 (down by £102.0 million). Outside of the top five commodity types HS2 72 (Iron and steel) fell by £109.9 million (30.2 per cent).

In contrast, HS2 12 (Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medical plants; straw and fodder) was up £30.6 million to £45.0 million. This was over double the April 2011 export value of £14.4 million. All other increases in comparison with April 2011 were relatively small and less than £22.0 million.

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

The graph shows that all five commodities have decreased in comparison with both March 2012 and April 2011. These decreases are particularly noticeable for HS2 27.



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

Country	April 2012 Total £ millions	% change from March 2012	% change from April 2011	% of total April 2012 EU exports	Rank March 2012	Rank April 2011
Total Exports	11,417.3	-20.3	-11.8	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	2,412.3	-30.3	-5.5	21.1	1	1
Netherlands	1,776.4	-18.2	-15.3	15.6	2	2
France	1,668.9	-14.5	-14.8	14.6	3	3
Irish Republic	1,344.5	-12.1	-5.5	11.8	4	4
Belgium	1,091.2	-17.6	-11.8	9.6	5	5
Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics						

The top five EU export partner Member States remain unchanged **compared with March 2012**. Furthermore, Germany has been the largest export partner in the EU for the UK for a number of years, accounting for 21.1 per cent of the total value of exports this month.

The decrease in value of total export trade compared to March 2012 reflects decreases in all but one of the other 26 Member States in the EU. The five largest decreases were for exports to the top five export partners.

The largest decrease in the value of exports from the UK was to Germany, down £1.0 billion (30.3 per cent) from a high March value, which recorded the highest levels of exports to Germany in recent years. Nevertheless, the April figure is below the monthly average from January 2010 to date - £2.6 billion. This decrease accounts for 35.9 per cent of the total net decrease in exports to the EU. The next largest decrease was the value of exports to Netherlands, which fell by £394.0 million to £1.8 billion (down by 18.2 per cent).

The decrease in the value of exports to Germany was driven by decreases in three HS2 chapters in excess of £100 million. HS2 27 fell by £273.5 million (51.1 per cent), HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) by £265.9 million (65.2 per cent) and HS2 30 by £202.5 million (67.2 per cent).

The decrease in the value of exports to the Netherlands was driven by a decrease of £183.1 million (18.4 per cent) in exports of HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes).

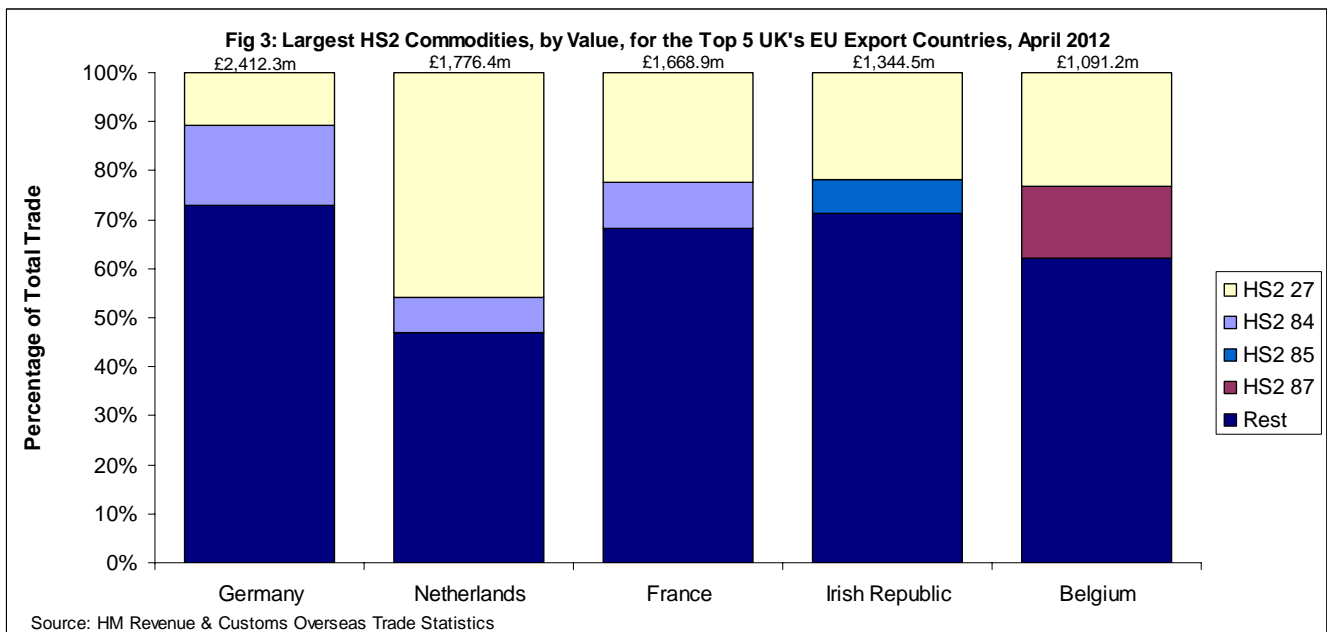
The only EU Member State to experience an increase in export trade from the UK was Portugal up by 4.0 million (3.1 per cent). This increase was driven by rises in HS2 27, up £12.5 million (81.4 per cent) and HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof), up £7.5 million (96.4 per cent) but offset by a fall in HS2 29, down 8.2 million (89.4 per cent).

The decrease in total export trade value **compared to April 2011**, noted above was due to decreases for 19 of the UK's EU export partner countries and increases for only seven of the remaining partner countries. The largest decrease was for the Netherlands down by £321.1 million (15.3 per cent) followed by France down £290.9 million (14.8 per cent).

The decrease for the Netherlands was driven by a drop in HS2 27 down £294.9 million (26.6 per cent). The decrease for France was led by two significant decreases in HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) down £99.8 million (58.0 per cent) and HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) down £81.3 million (59.6 per cent).

The largest increase was for Portugal (as was the case with the comparison with March 2012) up by £12.2 million (10.0 per cent). The increase was driven by a rise in HS2 27 up by £9.5 million (52.0 per cent) and in HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) up by 7.4 million (93.6 per cent).

Figure 3 below shows the two largest commodities by value exports 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 93.4 per cent of the total value of UK EU export trade under this heading. Furthermore, three 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 three countries account for 52.7 per cent of the export trade under this commodity.



Further Analysis: Imports

HS 2	Description	April 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from March 2012	% Change from April 2011	% of Total April 2012 Imports	Rank March 2012	Rank April 2011
-	Total Imports	16,389.7	-14.1	4.9	100.0	n/a	n/a
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	2,441.0	-23.8	-7.0	14.9	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,968.2	-14.5	2.1	12.0	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	1,347.0	-10.3	-3.8	8.2	3	3
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	1,089.5	-22.7	9.0	6.6	4	4
30	Pharmaceutical products	826.4	-15.5	16.0	5.0	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The large decrease **compared to March 2012** in imports is a reflection of the fact that there were decreases in over 75 per cent of the HS2 chapters. The five largest changes occurred in the top five HS2 commodity types. The decreases in these five chapters comprised 64.0 per cent of the total net decrease.

The largest decrease 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 down by £762.0 million (23.8 per cent), after the peak in March, when cars with new registration numbers are sold in the UK.

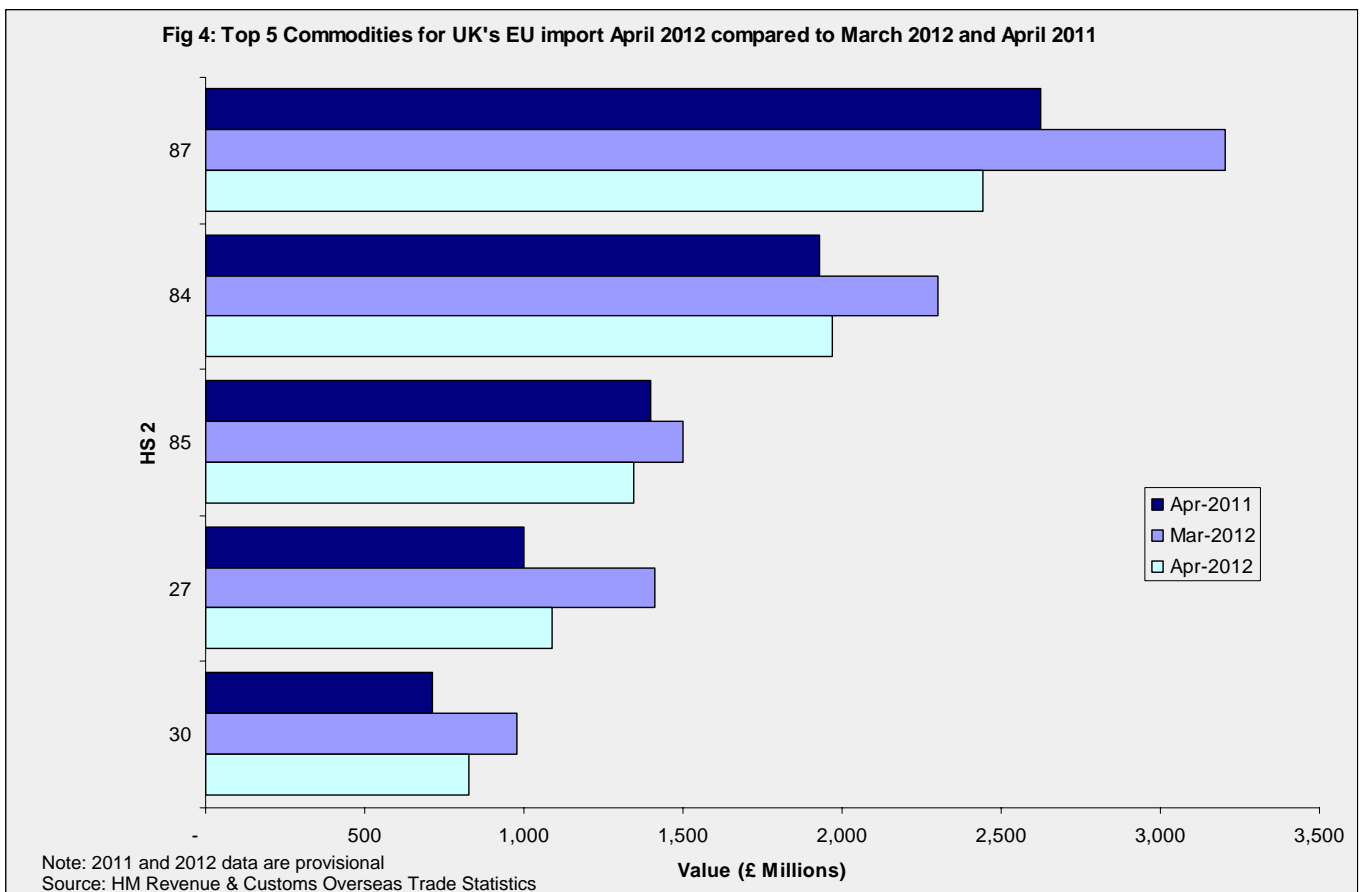
There were also large decreases in HS2 84 (down by £334.5 million), and HS2 27 (down by £320.0 million). Both of these chapters are returning to values seen in the last few months after a particularly high value in March.

By comparison the largest increase in value of imports was for HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) up by £187.1 million (33.9 per cent) to £739.0 million. This is the second highest import value for this chapter in recent years.

The next largest increase was £126.7 million (67.7 per cent) in HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) to £313.7 million. This is the largest import value for this commodity type in recent years, an increase of almost two thirds of the previous high of £189.5 million in December 2008.

In contrast the increase of 4.9 per cent in imports **compared with April 2011** reflects the fact that there were just over half of all chapters increasing in value. The chapter with the largest change in comparison with April 2011 was HS2 29 (Organic chemicals), up £291.1 million (65.0 per cent). There was also a relatively large increase in the value of imports for HS 88, up by £244.8 million. The largest decrease was for the top commodity type, HS2 87, which saw a fall of £185.0 million (7.0 per cent).

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



This shows the changes between April 2012 and April 2011 are relatively smaller than the changes between April 2012 and March 2012.

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

Country	April 2012 Total £ millions	% change from March 2012	% change from April 2011	% of total April 2012 EU imports	Rank March 2012	Rank April 2011
Total Imports	16,389.7	-14.1	4.9	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	4,249.9	-9.6	9.4	25.9	1	1
Netherlands	2,273.7	-19.4	2.9	13.9	2	2
France	1,824.8	-15.1	2.7	11.1	3	3
Belgium	1,350.5	-23.7	-12.4	8.2	4	4
Irish Republic	1,151.3	-1.0	25.4	7.0	6	6

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

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 to the UK from the EU. Table 4 shows that for all three periods, Germany was the UK's largest EU import partner country.

The largest change in value of import trade **compared with March 2012** is the decrease of £548.5 million from the Netherlands. This is a fall of 19.4 per cent. There were also relatively large decreases for the value of imports from Germany, down by £452.6 million (9.6 per cent), Belgium, down by £419.9 million (23.7 per cent), and France, down by £325.5 million (15.1 per cent).

The value of total import trade decreased for 20 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with March 2012.

There were decreases in imports from the Netherlands in a number of commodity types the largest being a fall of £109.8 million in HS2 97 (Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques). This follows an increase of £112.6 million last month. Because of the nature of the goods involved in this commodity type the value of trade can be volatile.

The decreases from Germany and Belgium are both led by decreases in HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof), with falls of £318.8 million (21.9 per cent) and £223.7 million (41.7 per cent) respectively. These two countries make up over 70 per cent of the total decrease in this chapter.

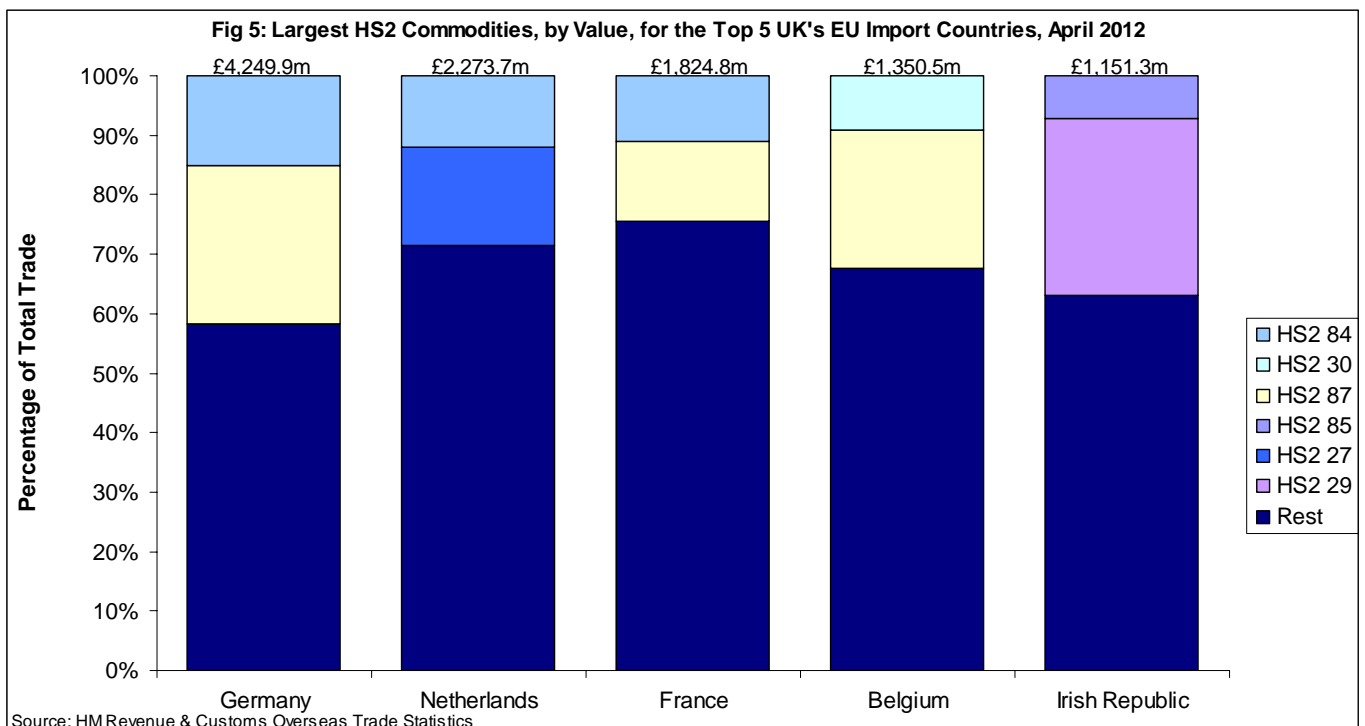
The decrease from France is spread over a number of chapters, with HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) decreasing by £78.3 million, while seven other chapters had decreases between £10 million and £36 million. Although there was a relatively large decrease in imports under HS2 88 from France overall HS2 88 experienced the second largest chapter increase because imports from Germany for this chapter increased by £207.7 million.

By comparison, the largest increase in the value of imports compared to last month was from Estonia with an increase of £16.7 million (up 149.6 per cent). This increase is almost entirely due to an increase of £18.0 million in HS2 15 (Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes). There was no import trade from Estonia in this commodity type in March.

The increase in total import trade value **compared to April 2011**, noted above, is driven by increases in 17 of the other 26 Member States in the EU. The country with the largest increase is Germany, up by £365.8 million (9.4 per cent). The second largest increase is £233.1 billion (25.4 per cent) for the Republic of Ireland . The country with the largest decrease in value of imports into the UK is Belgium, down £191.1 million (12.4 per cent).

The increase for Germany was driven by rises in HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) up £230.5 million, an over ten fold increase on April 2011 and in HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products) up by £175.9 million, an increase of nearly three times the April 2011 figure. The increase for Irish Republic was driven by a rise in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) up by £ 270.7 million, making it almost five times the April 2011 figure. In contrast, the decrease for Belgium was driven by a drop in HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes) down by £135.3 million (75.4 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. Three 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, and another three 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 69.4 per cent of the total EU import trade under this heading, and the trade in HS2 84 accounts for 56.5 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 19 June 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 April 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 April 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 April.
 - 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: 17 July 2012 9:30am

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