

# EU Overseas Trade Statistics - March 2012

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## **Summary**

- In common with recent years, the value of imports and exports with EU countries in March both increased compared to February. Imports rose more than exports. Consequently the difference between imports and exports has increased compared with February. The difference for March 2012 is slightly less than the largest difference in recent years in September 2011.
- UK's EU exports have increased by £0.7 billion (5.6 per cent) compared to February 2012, to £14.0 billion. However, compared to March 2011 exports have decreased marginally by £0.6 billion (4.0 per cent), suggesting that the increase on February's estimate may be due to seasonal effects.
- UK's EU imports have increased by £1.7 billion (9.9 per cent) compared to February 2012, to £18.9 billion. Compared to March 2011 imports only marginally increased by £0.6 billion (3.0 per cent), again suggesting that the large increase compared to February may be due to seasonal effects.
- The UK remains a net importer (imports are greater than exports). The size of difference between imports and exports has increased considerably compared to both February 2012 and March 2011 by 24.1 and 30.1 per cent respectively.



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.

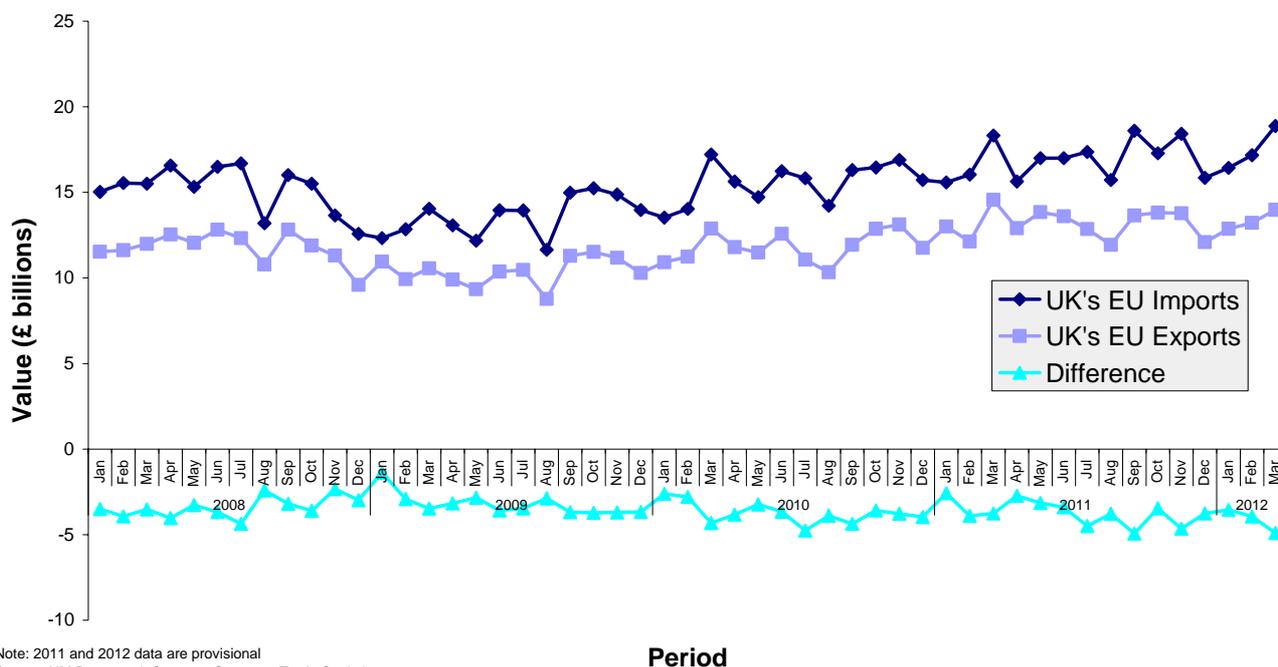
You can find details of how users interested in import and export markets for specific goods make use of the detailed OTS data in '[The Customer Story](#)'. You can also access the detailed data in our interactive database [here](#).

## Key Points

For the month of March 2012:

The value of UK trade increased in March 2012 compared to the previous month. The value of imports for March 2012 is the largest figure recorded in recent years. The value of imports rose more than the value of exports resulting 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 increased by £0.7 billion (5.6 per cent) compared to February 2012, to £14.0 billion. Compared with March 2011, however, the value of exports decreased by £0.6 billion (4.0 per cent). March 2011 was the highest monthly EU export figure in recent years.
- 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 March it contributed £2.5 billion, 18.0 per cent of the total value of the UK's EU export trade.
- The largest value increase from the previous month, of £195.6 million, was in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals). In March it accounted for £795.0 million of exports. This is a 32.6 per cent increase compared to February 2012
- The largest value decrease from the previous month, of £294.7 million (10.5 per cent), was in the top commodity, HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes).
- 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 23.8 per cent of the total value of UK's EU export trade. The largest increase in exports compared to February from the UK was to Germany with a rise of £644.8 million (24.1 per cent). The largest decrease in was a £389.3 million fall in the value of exports to the Netherlands, a decrease of 16.8 per cent.

## Imports

- The value of the UK's EU imports has increased by £1.7 billion (9.9 per cent) compared to February 2012, to £18.9 billion. This is the largest figure in recent years. Compared to March 2011 imports have increased by £0.6 billion (3.0 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 £3.2 billion, 16.9 per cent, of the total value of UK's EU import trade. This was also the chapter with the largest value increase compared to February, a rise of £235.0 million (8.0 per cent).
- The largest value decrease from the previous month was in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) with a £109.0 million reduction, a decrease of 16.3 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 25.0 per cent of the total value of UK's EU import trade. The value of imports from the Netherlands had the largest increase by value compared to February, up by £439.2 million (18.5 per cent). Compared to February 2012 the largest decrease in import trade was a fall of £50.1 million in imports from Austria, a drop of 16.6 per cent.

## Further Analysis: Exports

**Table 1: Top 5 commodities in UK's EU exports in March 2012 compared to February 2012 and March 2011**

HS 2	Description	Mar 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from February 2012	% Change from March 2011	% of Total March 2012 exports	Rank February 2012	Rank March 2011
-	Total Exports	13,975.7	5.6	-4.0	100.0	n/a	n/a
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	2,512.6	-10.5	-8.4	18.0	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	1,462.7	9.9	-8.2	10.5	2	2
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	1,320.2	10.0	-7.0	9.4	3	3
30	Pharmaceutical products	941.4	9.2	10.4	6.7	4	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	895.3	9.7	-14.4	6.4	5	4

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The increase in export value **compared to February 2012** reflects an increase in 80 per cent of all HS2 chapters, balanced mainly by a decrease of £294.7 million (10.5 per cent) in HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes). The decrease in value of exports in HS2 27 was the largest change across all chapters in UK's EU exports. This chapter is still the greatest exported product to EU Member States, and contributes 18.0 per cent of the total EU exports.

The second largest decrease in export trade was for HS2 72 (Iron and steel) which dropped by only £25.5 million to £286.1 million, a decrease of 8.2 per cent.

The largest HS2 increase compared to February 2012 was the increase of £195.6 million in HS2 29 (Organic chemicals). This is a rise of 32.6 per cent, and follows an increase of 30.0 per cent last month to reach the highest monthly export figure for this chapter in recent years, beating the previous highest, £691.9 million in October 2011, by over £100 million. The monthly value of exports of trade in this commodity type can be quite volatile and these increases follow a relatively large decrease in the value of exports between November and December. The second largest increase from February (up by £132.1 million, 10.0 per cent) was in HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) to reach the highest export value since October 2011. HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof) also had a large increase, of £120.2 million (10.0 per cent). This is usual for March, as production increases for the new vehicle registrations, and this feeds into exports too.

**Compared to March 2011**, the overall export trade to EU member states decreased by £581.5 million, 4.0 per cent. Four of the top five exports decreased. These decreases were four of the largest falls in exports accounting for over £612.5 million.

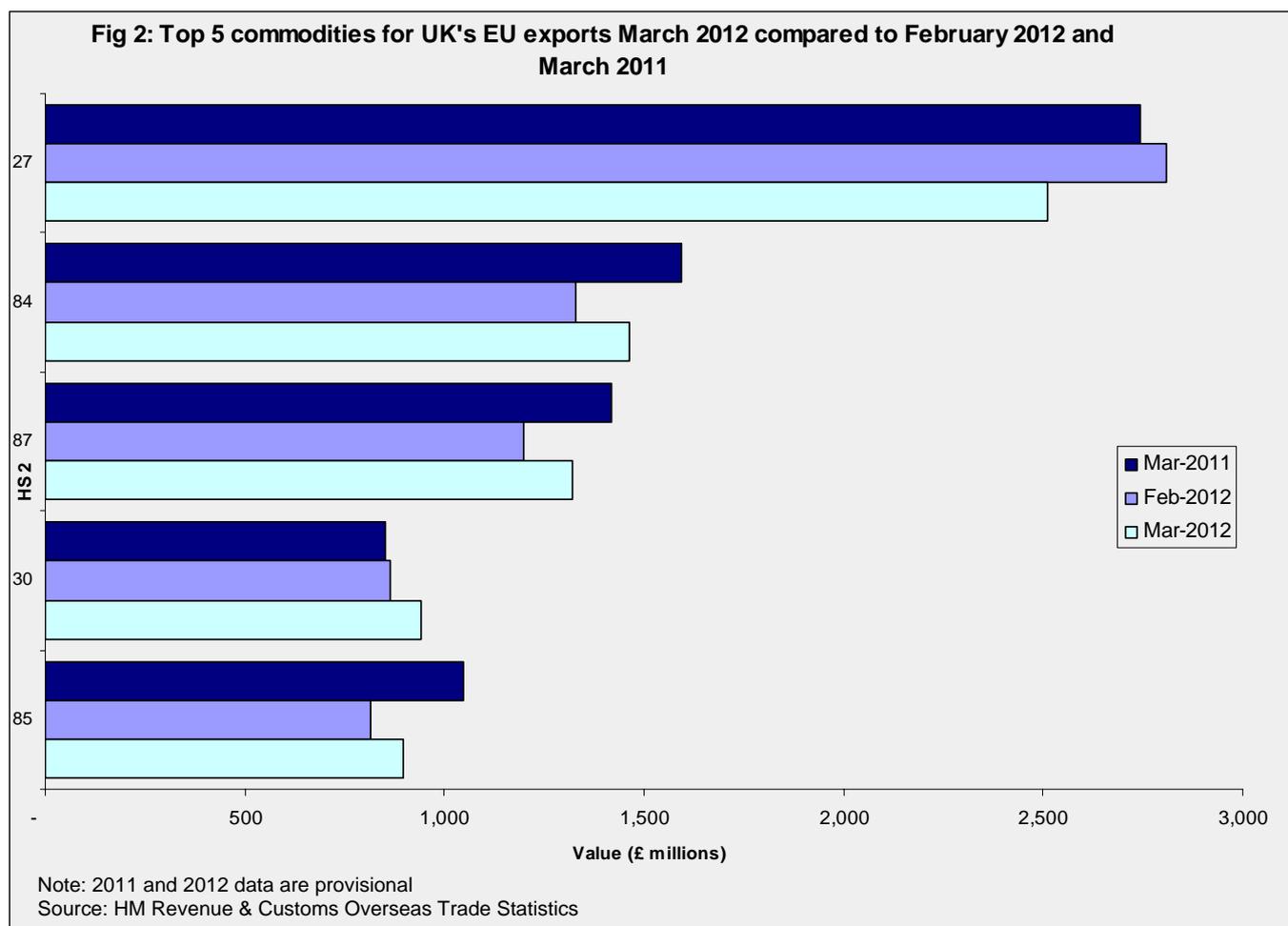
The largest change was a decrease of £231.6 million for HS2 27, a decrease of 8.4 per cent, but the next largest decrease was outside the top five, as HS2 72 (Iron and steel) fell by £172.5 million (37.6 per cent) compared to March 2011, which had been the highest monthly export figure since July 2008 for this product.

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) was down by £150.4 million (14.4 per cent) compared to March 2011, and HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) down by £130.9 million (8.2 per cent).

In contrast, HS2 29 is up £211.7 million (36.3 per cent) compared to March 2011, as explained earlier, this months figure is a record high.

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

The graph shows the large decrease in HS2 27 compared to February 2012 while the other four all increased, but four chapters showed decreases compared to last year.



<b>Country</b>	<b>March 2012 Total £ millions</b>	<b>% change from February 2012</b>	<b>% Change from March 2011</b>	<b>% of March 2012 total EU exports</b>	<b>Rank February 2012</b>	<b>Rank March 2011</b>
Total Trade	13,975.7	5.6	-4.0	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	3,322.1	24.1	9.2	23.8	1	1
France	1,989.5	-6.7	-5.5	14.2	2	2
Netherlands	1,929.5	-16.8	-0.8	13.8	3	3
Irish Republic	1,531.8	8.4	4.9	11.0	4	4
Belgium	1,331.8	13.4	5.4	9.5	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The top five EU export partner Member States remain unchanged **compared with February 2012**. Furthermore, Germany has been the largest export partner in the EU for the UK for a number of years, accounting for 23.8 per cent of the total value of exports this month.

The increase in value of total export trade compared to February 2012 reflects increases in 21 of the other 26 Member States in the EU.

The largest change in the value of exports was an increase of £644.8 million to Germany. This is a rise of 24.1 per cent to £3.3 billion. This is the largest increase since March 2006, and is a new high for exports to Germany. This increase accounts for 86.4 per cent of the total net increase in exports to the EU. The next largest increase was the value of exports to Belgium, which rose by £157.1 million to £1.3 billion (up by 13.4 per cent).

The increase in the value of exports to Germany was driven by an increase of £165.8 million (75.5 per cent) in exports of HS2 29 (Organic chemicals). There was also a large increase in HS2 30 (Pharmaceutical products), of £151.4 million, double February's export value.

The increase in the value of exports to Belgium was driven by an increase of £59.2 million (31.4 per cent) in exports of HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes).

The largest decrease in the value of export trade compared with February 2012 is £389.3 million to the Netherlands, a drop of 16.8 per cent to £1.9 billion.

The next largest decrease is for France, with a drop of £142.9 million, or 6.7 per cent, to £2.0 billion.

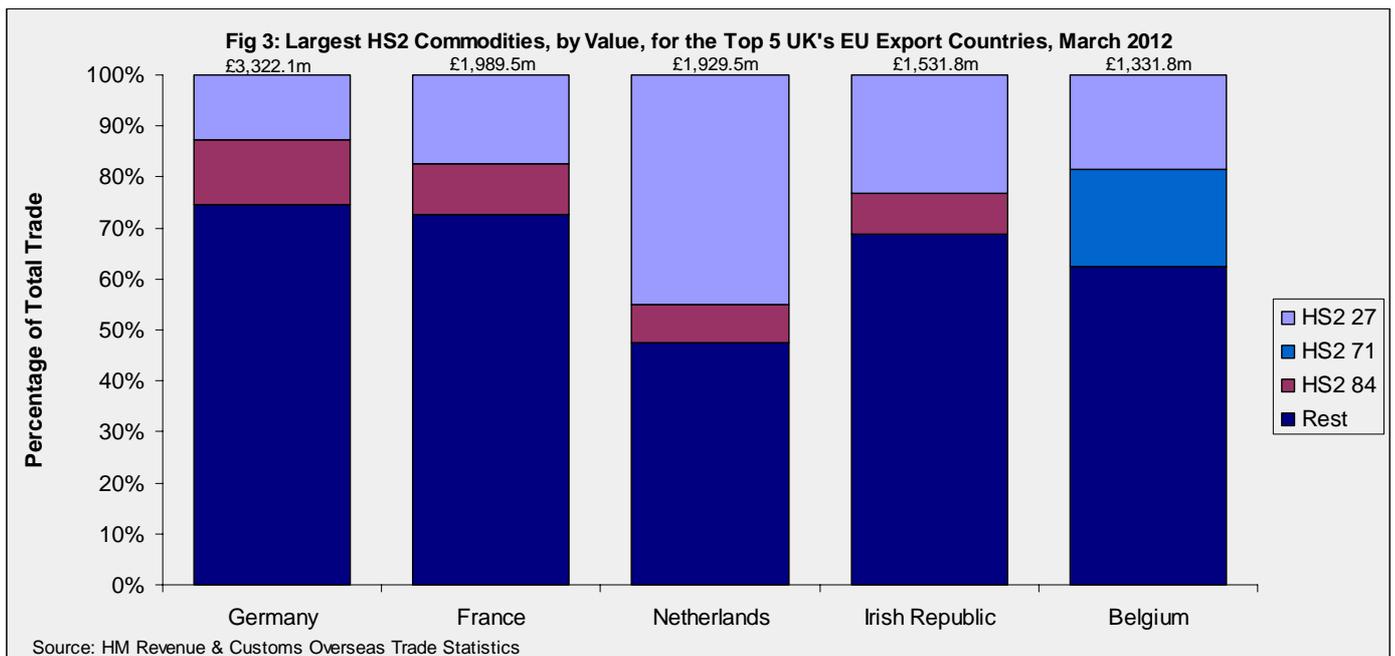
The decrease in the value of exports to both the Netherlands and France was driven by decreases in exports of HS2 27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes). The Netherlands had a decrease of £347.0 million (28.5 per cent) while France decreased by £212.7 million (38.1 per cent).

The decrease in total export trade value **compared to March 2011**, noted above was a mix of decreases in the value of the exports from the UK to other Member States. The value of exports compared to last month was lower with 14 Member States and

higher for the other 12. The largest increase was for Germany up by £279.5 million, while the largest decreases in exports were outside the top five, with Poland down by £328.7 million (51.0 per cent) and Italy down by £318.1 million (29.5 per cent).

Germany's increase was driven by HS2 29, as explained above, while Poland and Italy's decreases are both due to exports in HS2 27. Exports to Poland have decreased by 95.6 per cent and to Italy by 95.5 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 89.3 per cent of the total value of UK EU export trade under this heading. Furthermore, four of the top five countries have HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) as their second commodity by value exported to them from the UK. These four countries account for 60.6 per cent of the export trade under this commodity. The HS2 71 (Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals) exports to Belgium accounted for 61.7 per cent of the total EU exports in this category.



## Further Analysis: Imports

HS 2	Description	March 2012 Total £ millions	% Change from February 2012	% Change from March 2011	% of Total March 2012 Trade	Rank February 2012	Rank March 2011
-	Total Imports	18,873.2	9.9	3.0	100.0	n/a	n/a
87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof	3,189.4	8.0	3.6	16.9	1	1
84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	2,259.3	10.7	-0.7	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	1,461.9	-5.5	-11.2	7.7	3	3
27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes	1,313.6	21.3	30.6	7.0	4	4
30	Pharmaceutical products	979.3	24.2	14.4	5.2	5	5

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade Statistics

The large increase **compared to February 2012** in imports is a reflection of the fact that there were increases in over 75 per cent of the HS2 chapters. The four largest changes occurred in four of the top five HS2 commodity types.

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), up by £235.0 million (8.0 percent). March is a month when cars with new registration numbers are sold in the UK, which may have contributed to the increase in imports of this commodity.

There were also large increases in HS2 27 (up by £230.9 million), HS2 84 (up by £217.5 million) and HS2 30 (up by £190.7 million).

By comparison the largest decrease in value of imports was for HS2 29 (Organic chemicals) down by £109.0 million (16.3 per cent). The next largest decrease was £85.3 million (5.5 per cent) in one of the top five HS2 chapters, HS2 85 (Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof).

In contrast the smaller increase in imports **compared with March 2011** (3.0 per cent) reflects the fact that there were just over half of all chapters increasing in value. The chapter with the largest change in comparison with March 2011 was HS2 27 up £307.6 million (30.6 per cent). There were also relatively large increases in the value of imports for two other top five commodity types, HS 30 (up by £123.1 million) and HS2 87 (up by (£110.2 million). The largest decrease was for another of

the top five commodity types, HS2 85, which saw a fall of £184.6 million (11.2 per cent).

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

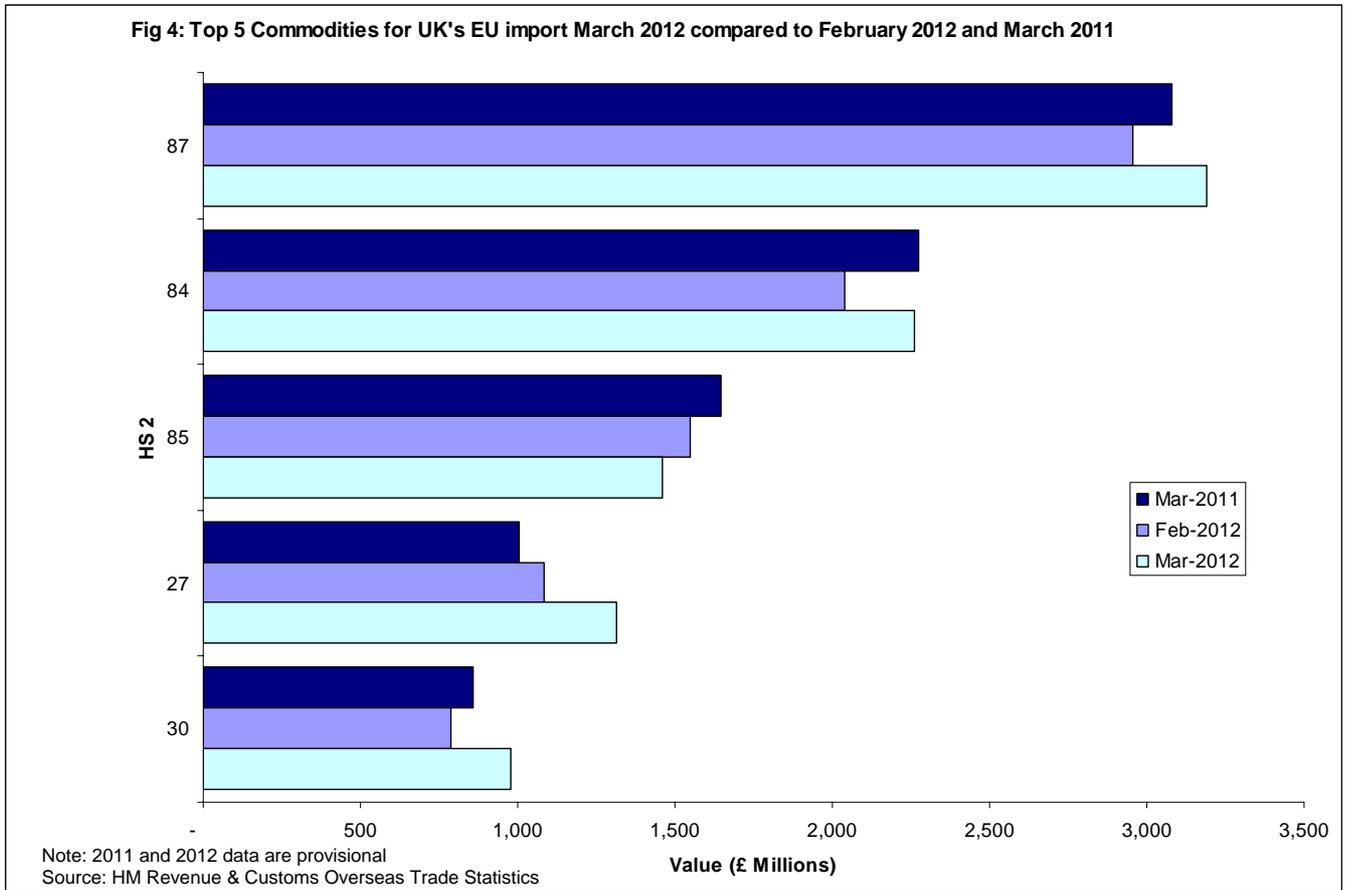


Table 4 shows comparisons of the value of UK import trade with our top five EU import trading partners for March 2012, February 2012 and March 2011.

**Table 4: Top 5 EU import countries in March 2012 compared to February 2012 and March 2011**

Country	March 2012 Total £ millions	% change from February 2012	% Change from March 2011	% of March 2012 total EU imports	Rank February 2012	Rank March 2011
Total Imports	18,873.2	9.9	3.0	100.0	n/a	n/a
Germany	4,710.8	5.9	7.3	25.0	1	1
Netherlands	2,812.7	18.5	10.0	14.9	2	2
France	2,147.8	17.3	4.1	11.4	3	3
Belgium	1,769.2	16.5	-1.9	9.4	4	4
Italy	1,270.8	10.2	-2.0	6.7	6	5

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 February 2012 is the increase of £439.2 million from the Netherlands. This is a rise of 18.5 per cent. There were also relatively large increases for the value of imports from France, up by £316.9 million (17.3 per cent), Germany, up by £264.2 million (5.9 per cent), and Belgium, up by £250.8 million (16.5 per cent). The value of total import trade increased for 20 of the other 26 Member States in the EU compared with February 2012.

The increase in imports from the Netherlands is led by an increase of £112.6 million in HS2 97 (Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques). Because of the nature of the goods involved in this commodity type the value of trade can be volatile.

The increase from France is spread over a number of chapters, with HS2 88 (Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof) increasing by £69.3 million, while nine other chapters had increases between £10 million and £38 million.

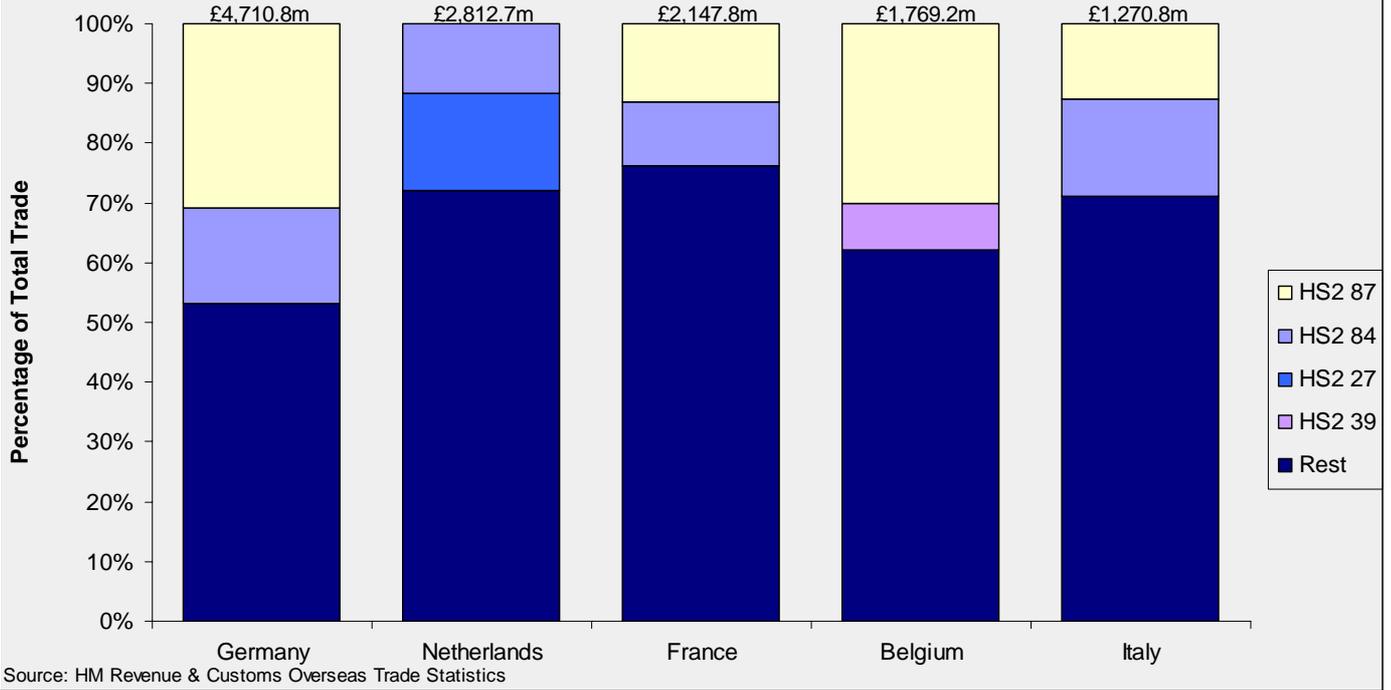
The increase from Germany is led by an increase of £95.2 million (14.6 per cent) in HS2 84 (Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof) while the increase from Belgium is led by an increase of £192.7 million (56.7 per cent) in HS2 87 (Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling-stock, and parts and accessories thereof).

By comparison, the largest decrease in the value of imports compared to last month was from Austria with a decrease of £50.1 million (down 16.6 per cent). The second largest decrease was for Hungary whose imports fell by £44.7 million (18.0 per cent). These decreases were both driven by decreases in HS2 85 (Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof) with Austria down by £65.7 million (70.3 per cent) and Hungary down by £30.3 million (28.3 per cent).

The more modest increase in total import trade value compared to March 2011, noted above, is reflected in the fact that there were only increases in 14 of the other 26 Member States in the EU. The country with the largest increase is Germany, up by £318.9 million (7.3 per cent). The second largest increase is £255.6 billion (10.0 per cent) for the Netherlands. The country with the largest decrease in value of imports into the UK is Denmark, down £90.3 million (16.5 per cent). The second largest decrease of £86.8 million (8.2 per cent) is from Spain.

Figure 5 shows the two largest imported commodities by value from each of the UK's top five EU Member State import partner countries. 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, and 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 76.2 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 imports in these commodities.

**Fig 5: Largest HS2 Commodities, by Value, for the Top 5 UK's EU Import Countries, March 2012**



Notes:

1. HM Revenue & Customs released these latest statistics on Overseas Trade with Member States of the European Union (EU) on 15 May 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 March 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 March 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 March.
  - 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.

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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: 19 June 2012 9:30am

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