

Explanatory notes

Introduction

Goods Exports and Imports statistics provide data on the movement of goods between countries. Trade in Goods statistics in this publication are a combination of Customs-based non-EU trade statistics and the Intrastat survey of Irish traders involved in trade with other EU member states.

The Intrastat data are subject to revision on foot of late Intrastat and VAT returns and corrections made by traders.

Sources

Since the completion of the EU Single Market at the end of 1992, trade statistics with EU member states and trade statistics with non-EU countries are compiled from two separate sources.

Customs declarations, the traditional source of almost all trade statistics, were no longer required for most movements of goods within the EU. A new EU-wide system for collecting intra-EU trade statistics, Intrastat, was introduced in January 1993. The Intrastat survey, which is conducted by the Revenue Commissioners (VIMA Office), is linked to VAT and applies to all EU member states.

The Intrastat system is based on two components. The first is the Intrastat survey itself, in which the larger traders make detailed monthly returns giving information on the quantity and value of all exports or imports with EU countries. This survey is carried out under Regulation (EC) No. 638/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹ and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 96/2010².

Traders whose exports to EU countries in the previous twelve months exceeded €635,000 must make a detailed export return each month; traders whose imports from EU countries in the previous twelve months exceeded €191,000 must make a detailed import return each month. Around 35,000 traders are involved in intra-EU trade, of which about 1,900 are required to make Intrastat export returns and 6,700 Intrastat import returns. The response rate in terms of number of traders is about 80%, covering about 97% of the total value of intra-EU trade for the current month.

The second component of the Intrastat system is the regular VAT return, on which all traders are required to record the total value of goods exported to and imported from other EU member states. The information provided on the VAT returns forms the basis for:

- determining total EU trade for those traders below the Intrastat thresholds;
- estimating trade for non-respondents above the thresholds;
- maintaining the VIMA trader register of EU traders; and
- identifying those exceeding the thresholds required to make the detailed Intrastat return.

Traders not registered for VAT and private individuals who move goods within the EU have no obligations under the Intrastat system, and their trade is therefore not included in the statistics.

Trade in Goods with non-EU countries are, as before, compiled mainly from the documents supplied by exporters and importers (or their agents) to the Customs authorities. The document is the *Single Administrative Document* (SAD) used for Customs clearance purposes. The information on the document is captured by the Customs AEP (Automated Entry Processing) system, either by feeding it in at the Customs Stations or by electronic transfer direct from the trader. The AEP records, with the statistical data, are transferred to VIMA and then to the CSO for processing and dissemination.

¹ Official Journal No L102, 07.04.2004, p.1.

² Official Journal No L43, 5.2.2012. p.1.

Responsibility for data collection, compilation and dissemination

The collection of trade data is the responsibility of VIMA (a branch of Revenue). The CSO is responsible for processing and disseminating the data. Data processing includes preparing estimates for traders who have not been included in the Intrastat survey (non-respondents and traders below the Intrastat thresholds) and for certain special categories of trade (parcel post). Along with the general processing and validation of the data, other work by the CSO includes unit value index number compilation and seasonal adjustment.

Intrastat estimation

The data include estimates for traders above the Intrastat thresholds who did not make Intrastat returns, and for traders below the thresholds who did not provide aggregate intra-EU trade figures on their VAT returns.

The 'Unclassified' categories in the tables also include certain miscellaneous adjustments.

Estimates for traders below the thresholds are assigned to partner country (by using the country profile of returns from traders just above the Intrastat thresholds) but are not assigned to commodity. Estimates for traders above the thresholds (non-respondents) are assigned to partner country and commodity where at least one return is available for the preceding twelve months.

Coverage

The following classes of goods are **excluded** from the trade in goods statistics:

- monetary gold;
- means of payment which are legal tender and securities, including means which are payments for services such as postage, taxes, user fees;
- goods for or following temporary use (e.g. hire, loan, operational leasing), provided all the following conditions are met:
 - no processing is or was planned or carried out,
 - the expected duration of the temporary use was or is not intended to be longer than 24 months,
 - the dispatch/arrival has not to be declared as a supply/acquisition for VAT purposes;
- goods moving between:
 - a Member State and its territorial enclaves in other Member States, and
 - the host Member State and territorial enclaves of other Member States or international organisations. Territorial enclaves include embassies and national armed forces stationed outside the territory of the mother country;
- goods used as carriers of customised information, including software;
- software downloaded from the Internet;
- goods supplied free of charge which are themselves not the subject of a commercial transaction, provided that the movement is with the sole intention of preparing or supporting an intended subsequent trade transaction by demonstrating the characteristics of goods or services such as advertising material, commercial samples;
- goods for and after repair and replacement parts that are incorporated in the framework of the repair and replaced defective parts;
- means of transport travelling in the course of their work, including spacecraft launchers at the time of launching.

In addition, intra-EU trade statistics exclude:

- Trade by traders not registered for VAT;

- Trade by private individuals who move goods within the EU;
- Goods dispatched under distance selling arrangements that are below the special VAT distance selling threshold operating in the Member State of destination.

Recording system

Trade in Goods statistics are compiled in accordance with the ‘general’ system of recording international trade. Under this system exports and imports are recorded at the time the goods are moved across the boundary of the State.

In particular this means that goods imported into a Custom bonded warehouse are recorded at the time of entry into the country and not at the time of their release from the warehouse.

Also, agricultural products or other goods exported for storage abroad are included in the value of exports at the time of their departure from the country.

Goods in transit are excluded.

Valuation

For exports the free on board (*fob*) value is used. This is the cost of goods to the purchaser abroad, including packing, transport in the State, loading charges, insurance and all other charges accruing up to the point where the goods are put on board the exporting vessel or aircraft or are conveyed to the land frontier.

The value excludes:

- any sums receivable by the exporter by way of export refund, drawback, subsidy or other bounty;
- any foreign customs duties or freight charges beyond the port or point of exportation.

In particular, for goods on which export refunds are payable to the exporter under the Common Agriculture Policy, the export value does not include the amount of the refund. For goods subject to export charges or levies the export value includes the amount of the charge or levy.

Valuation is in euro. For transactions in which the value is expressed in a foreign currency, conversion to euro is done using the current exchange rate.

For imports the value inclusive of cost, insurance and freight (*cif*) to the point of entry to the State is used. Normally, for goods imported under a commercial contract of sale, the value taken is the transaction value i.e. the *cif* price paid or payable for the goods when sold for export to Ireland. If there is no transaction value or if the transaction value is not acceptable, the value is determined under the specific rules laid down in EU legislation.

Reference period

The calendar month is the basic period for compiling the data. Export and import transactions to non-EU countries are classified to the month in which the relevant customs entry is registered. The data for the Parcel Post trade relate to the month of shipment into or out of the country.

Parcel post

Non-EU trade in goods that are exported or imported by parcel post, and which are not the subject of customs entries, is estimated each month.

The resulting estimates for exports and imports are included in the overall trade totals. In commodity analyses the data are classified under Section 9 ‘Commodities and Transactions not classified elsewhere’ with SITC code 911.00.

In country and area analyses of trade, the parcel post estimates are classified to the appropriate partner country or area only for USA and Canada. The value of such trade with all other countries is included in the residual heading of the analyses in question.

Data on trade in goods that are exported or imported by parcel post but which are the subject of customs entries are included in all tables in the appropriate commodity and country category.

Confidential trade

It is sometimes necessary to take steps to ensure that the business of identifiable traders is not disclosed by publication of full data under the appropriate commodity item or partner country. The value of such confidential

trade is included in the overall total value of exports or imports. The value or the quantity may be concealed at the detailed level.

Units of quantity

Net weight is the usual unit of quantity shown. The weight of containers, cases, jars and packing materials is, therefore, excluded.

Other units of quantity are used for some commodities, notably live animals, motor vehicles, office machines, domestic appliances, watches and clocks, and clothing (where number is used as the unit of quantity), footwear (where the number of pairs is used), floor coverings (where square metres are used), and beverages (where volume is used).

Partner country

In this publication, exports of goods are classified *by country of final destination*. The last country to which the goods are specifically directed on their outward movement from the State is regarded as their final destination. This is not necessarily the country in which the goods will be unshipped or that in which they will be finally consumed.

Imports are recorded *by country of origin* (as opposed to country of consignment or dispatch). Goods obtained or produced in one country originated in that country. A product, in the production of which two or more countries were concerned, is considered as originating in the country in which the last substantial manufacturing process was done. Packing, repacking, sorting and blending are not regarded as manufacturing processes.

In interpreting analyses by partner country, users should be conscious of the treatment (as outlined in these notes) of Intrastat estimates, Parcel Post trade, Statistical threshold and Confidential trade.

Country classification

The classification of countries is the country nomenclature (Geonomenclature) as set out annually in the Official Journal of the European Communities. From January 1999, this follows the United Nations' ISO alpha-2 coding system, in which each country is identified by a two letter code. The full list of countries is given in an essentially geographical order in Table 9.

Commodity classification

Statistics are collected using the 8-digit Combined Nomenclature (CN) – the EU's tariff and statistical nomenclature. This nomenclature is managed and updated annually by the Commission in co-operation with the member states. The CN is aligned with the 6-digit Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) – the nomenclature of the Customs Co-operation Council that is used throughout the world for applying customs tariffs and compiling external trade statistics. The 2012 CN contains 9,300 8-digit subheadings, the first six digits of which correspond to the HS code.

However, in this publication, exports and imports are classified according to the United Nations' Standard Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev 4)³. The SITC has been developed by the United Nations for the advancement of the international comparability of statistics on external trade.

SITC Rev 4 contains about 2,970 basic headings (5-digit). These are combined into 261 Groups (3-digit), 67 Divisions (2-digit) and 10 Sections (1-digit). For example, Section 6 (Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material) consists of 9 Divisions, 61 to 69. Division 64 (Paper, paperboard and articles thereof) consists of two groups, 641 and 642, which together consist of 72 basic headings, such as 642.94 (Paper handkerchiefs, towels, tablecloths, garments, etc).

SITC follows the structure of the HS. Each of the categories in the SITC (including all the basic headings) is equivalent to a combination of HS headings (and therefore to a combination of CN headings).

Abbreviated commodity descriptions are used in the tables. These are intended as a guide only, the precise coverage being determined by the SITC number preceding the descriptions. The full descriptions of the items and their content are contained in the relevant UN publication. Apart from the classification itself, the UN publications include the correlation tables between SITC and HS.

³ United Nations. 2006. Standard Industrial Trade Classification Revision. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, Statistical papers, Series M, No 34, Rev 4. United Nations, New York.

The index at the end of this volume contains an alphabetical list of the principal commodities and the associated 3-digit SITC Groups.

In interpreting analyses by commodity, users should be conscious of the treatment (as outlined in these notes) of Intrastat estimates, Parcel Post trade, Statistical threshold and Confidential trade.

Quality of detailed data

Every reasonable effort is made to identify and correct errors received in the data. Despite this, errors occasionally arise in the published data at the detailed level.

With 9,300 commodities (at the most detailed level) and over 200 countries distinguished, it is inevitable that transactions will occasionally be misclassified.

Given the level of detail for commodities (in Tables 13 and 14) the quality of the quantity data is rather variable. Due to the very large number of Intrastat transactions, it is not practicable to query all cases with traders, and resources are concentrated on identifying and rectifying the more serious errors that arise in the data collected. Any queries should be directed to the Trade Help Desk.

Revisions to trade data

Corrections to trade data mainly arise from queries sent to VIMA as a result of CSO processing checks. VIMA consult with the relevant traders and where necessary relevant revised data will be submitted by the traders.

Trade in goods, Exports and Imports, are subject to revision on the incorporation of late Intrastat and VAT returns and corrections made by traders. When the results for the most recent month are published in the *Goods Exports and Imports* monthly release, the results for months -1, -4 and -8 are also revised.

The data for the same month a year ago may be considered final – revisions would be applied only in exceptional circumstances. Revisions are applied also to the volume indices and to the seasonally adjusted data.

Seasonally adjusted series are recalculated once a year when the December data become available. The data for the most recent years are shown in this publication; results for earlier periods are available on the CSO data bank *StatBank* (link below).

EU Trade statistics published by Eurostat

Under Regulation (EC) No. 638/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 96/2010, each member state is obliged to compile statistics of its foreign trade and forward them to the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat).

These data, for all member states, are published by Eurostat. There are some conceptual differences between the data for Ireland published by Eurostat and the data published nationally.

The data published by Eurostat for non-EU trade are compiled under the ‘special’ trade system as opposed to the nationally published data which are compiled under the ‘general’ trade system (as outlined in these notes). While the general system records exports and imports at the time the goods are moved across the physical boundary of the State, the special system records transactions across the Customs boundary of the State. For example, in the special system, goods imported into a Customs bonded warehouse are recorded only at the time of release from the warehouse.

In the data published by Eurostat for imports of goods (a) originating in the EU, (b) in free circulation in the EU or (c) after inward processing in the EU, the country of consignment rather than the country of origin is shown. For other goods originating in non-EU countries that are not in free circulation in the EU, the country of origin is shown. In the nationally published results the country of origin is shown in all cases.

Sources of additional information

Trade in Goods statistics are issued each month in the *Goods Exports and Imports* statistical release.

More detailed tables are available from the CSO data bank *Statbank* - link below. Any analyses not available on the *Statbank* can be requested (on a fee basis) to the Trade helpdesk (details below).

Specific details can also be obtained by email, telephone or post to:

Trade Help Desk
Central Statistics Office
Ardee Road

Rathmines
Dublin 6

Phone Dublin (01) 498 4200,
Cork (021) 453 5000, ext. 4200
LoCall 1890 313 414, ext 4200

E-mail trade@csso.ie

Direct link to Trade in Goods statistics

http://www.csso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Trade/Trade_statbank.asp?SP=Trade&Planguage=0

CSO on the Web: <http://www.csso.ie>

Notes on the tables

Table 1: Goods Exports and Imports summary analysis

This gives the total value of exports, imports and the trade surplus (exports less imports), volume and unit value indices for exports and imports together with the terms of trade indices.

Changes in the values of exports and imports are separated for analytical purposes into their volume and unit value components. Unit values are calculated by dividing the value data by the corresponding quantity data for detailed commodity groupings. The value changes are deflated by the resultant price trends to provide estimates of volume change. Monthly and annual volume and unit value indices are published.

The monthly unit value index measures monthly price trends relative to the annual price level in the preceding year using value weights relating to that year's trade (Laspeyres index). The annual index is compiled using value weights for both the current and previous years (Fisher index) to allow for change in the structure of external trade. The monthly series should be regarded as interim measures suitable for month-to-month comparisons within a given year. However, when the annual unit value index is compiled, the monthly unit value indices are rescaled to make their average equal to the annual index.

The terms of trade index number is the export unit value index number as a percentage of the import unit value index number.

Table 2: Goods Exports and Imports seasonally adjusted series

Monthly exports, imports, trade surplus, and the volume series for exports and imports have been seasonally adjusted using the US Bureau of the Census X-11 Variant of the Census Method 11 Seasonal Adjustment Program.

The series are affected by irregular movements. The seasonal adjustment process does not remove the irregularities, and so isolated extreme values should not be given too much weight.

The series are recalculated at the end of each year using up-to-date seasonal patterns available at the time.

Table 3: Goods Exports by industrial origin

In this table, exports are classified by the sector of origin categories:

- Agriculture produce
- Forestry and fishing produce
- Industrial produce.

Table 4: Goods Exports by industrial origin and area of destination

This gives exports classified by industrial origin for the areas:

- Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Other EU member states
- Rest of the world.

Table 5: Goods Imports by main use

In this table, imports are classified into the main use categories:

- Producers' capital goods ready for use
- Consumption goods ready for use
- Materials for further production.

These categories provide a reclassification of imports in terms of national accounts aggregates. 'Consumption goods ready for use' is further broken down to distinguish 'Food, drink and tobacco goods'. 'Materials for further production' is further broken down to distinguish 'Materials for further production in Agriculture'.

Table 6: Goods Imports by main use and area of origin

This gives imports classified by main use for the areas:

- Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Other EU member states
- Rest of the world.

Tables 7 - 8: Goods Exports and Imports by area

Exports and imports are classified by area of origin and area of destination respectively.

The area groupings are shown in the footnotes to the table. In this table, APEC represents 'Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation' and NAFTA represents 'North American Free Trade Agreement'.

Table 9: Goods Exports and Imports by country

This gives the complete list of countries for which trade data are compiled. Some country names are abbreviated because of space constraints. The order in which the countries appear is essentially a geographic one. Note that "unclassified" countries are not included in this table.

Table 10: Goods Exports and Imports by SITC section and division

This table classifies exports and imports according to the 1-digit (Section) and 2-digit (Division) levels of SITC Rev 4.

Table 11: Goods Exports and Imports by SITC division and country

This table gives trade for each Division (2-digit level) of the SITC. For a particular Division, country details are given when the value of exports to or imports from that country exceeds €1,300,000 for the month in question or an average of €900,000 per month for the year to date. The total for EU countries is also shown.

Section 9 in this table includes Parcel Post and Statistical Threshold trade; these categories of trade are not broken down by commodity.

The category 'Non-EU, unknown' used in this (and the following) table includes SAD exports with an unknown country of destination.

Table 12: Goods Exports and Imports by country and SITC division

This gives trade for each country, and for the total of EU countries. For a particular country, Division (2-digit) details are given when the value of exports or imports for that Division exceeds €1,300,000 for the month in question or an average of €900,000 per month for the year to date.

Table 13: Goods Exports by SITC heading and country

This contains the detailed quantity and value data classified by commodity (SITC Rev 4) and by country, as well as EU and non-EU subtotals. The unit of quantity used for each item is indicated in brackets after the SITC code.

Country data are given under each commodity heading (except in Section 9) subject to the value of trade with that country being above €1,300,000 in the month in question or an average of €900,000 per month for the year to date.

The figures in this table relate to returned trade only: Intrastat estimates are excluded because they are not broken down by commodity.

Table 14: Goods Imports by SITC heading and country

The corresponding table for imports.

Symbols and abbreviations

Symbols used in the tables

..	not available or not applicable
-	nil

0	value less than half the unit shown
EUR	Euro

Abbreviations used for quantity units in Tables 13–14

g	gram
hkg	100 kg
t	tonne
kl	kilolitre (1,000 litres)
kIPA	1,000 litres of pure alcohol
MwH	megawatt hour
M2	square metre
pa	pairs
th	thousand
thP	thousand pairs
no	Number

Abbreviations used for commodity descriptions in Tables 13–14

AC	alternating current
DC	direct current
cg	centigram
excl	excluding
incl	including
mach	machine/machinery
mech	mechanically
MPa	megapascal
nc	numerically controlled
nes	not elsewhere specified or included
nfw	not further worked
phos	phosphorus
prep	prepared/preparation
preps	preparations
sg	specific gravity
syn	synthetic
thick	thickness
t/m	turns per metre
veg	vegetable
v	volt
w	watt