

UK Port Freight Statistics: 2011 final figures

The importance of shipping and trade to the economy of the UK, an island nation, has resulted in the establishment of a large number of ports around the coast, which are very diverse in terms of size and type of cargo handled. Around 95 per cent by volume of the UK's international trade is transported by sea, and at least until recently, the UK port sector handled a greater weight of goods than any other in Europe. The statistics in this release are collected to provide information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. It summarises the final 2011 figures on freight handled by UK sea ports, updating provisional figures which were published in July. Provisional quarterly summary statistics on freight handled by UK major ports are also updated quarterly in a separate release.



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The key findings:

- In 2011, total freight traffic through UK ports was 519 million tonnes (Mt), an increase of 1 per cent on 2010, but still 11 per cent below the 2005 level. The traffic handled by UK ports has generally grown fairly steadily over the long term. The first decade of the 21st century saw a levelling off of this trend, albeit with the highest ever traffic recorded in 2005. This was followed by a substantial drop of 11 per cent between 2008 and 2009 with the onset of the recession.
- Compared with 2010, inwards traffic increased by 5 per cent to 328 Mt, whilst outwards traffic decreased by 4 per cent to 192 Mt.
- Grimsby and Immingham remained the UK's leading port in 2011, handling 57 Mt (11 per cent of UK traffic). It was followed by London with 48.8 Mt (9 per cent), Milford Haven with 48.7 Mt (9 per cent) and Southampton with 38 Mt (7 per cent).
- In 2011, UK major ports handled 15.3 million freight units, almost unchanged compared with 2010. They also handled 6.0 million passenger vehicles, a decrease of 4 per cent on 2010.
- Dover, the top UK port for roll-on roll-off (ro-ro) freight, handled 2 million ro-ro main freight units (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers and shipborne port-to-port trailers).
- Felixstowe was the UK's largest container port handling 2 million containers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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1. Port Statistics: 2011 final figures

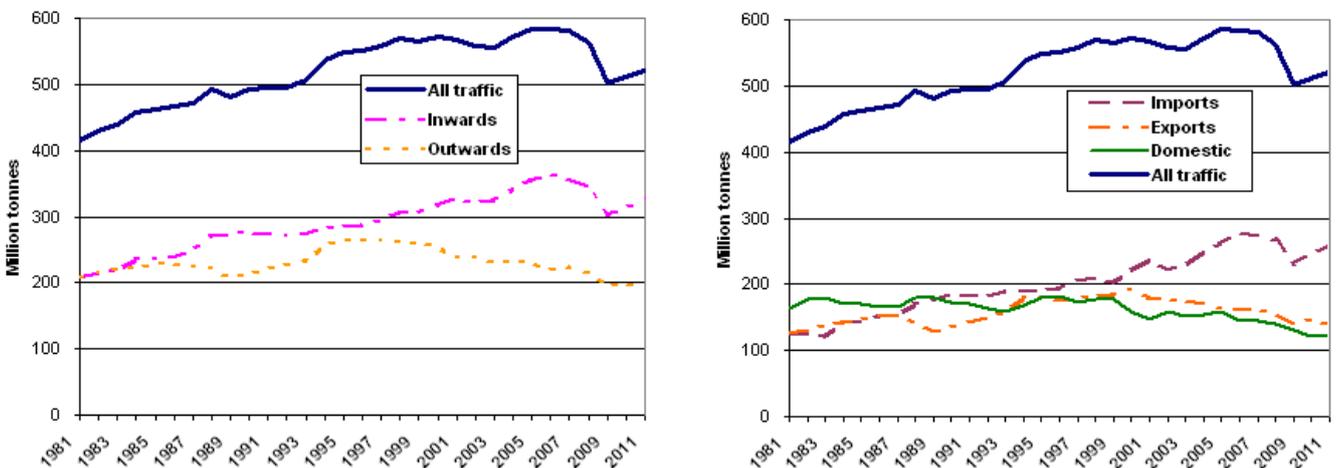
This annual release presents final statistics for freight traffic handled at UK ports in 2011. It includes both international and domestic traffic

All freight traffic

The figures show that in 2011:

- Total freight traffic through UK ports was 519 million tonnes (Mt), an increase of 1 per cent on 2010.
- The traffic handled by UK ports has generally grown fairly steadily over the long term. The first decade of the 21st century saw a levelling off of this trend, albeit with the highest ever traffic recorded in 2005. This was followed by a substantial drop of 11 per cent between 2008 and 2009 with the onset of the recession. Traffic in 2011 remained 11 per cent below the 2005 peak.
- Compared with 2010, inwards traffic increased by 5 per cent to 328 Mt, whilst outwards traffic decreased by 4 per cent to 192 Mt.
- Growth in imports has been much stronger than exports over the last twenty years, reflecting the changing structure of the economy from manufacturing to service industries (and particularly reductions in exports of crude oil by sea). Domestic traffic has declined over the same period.

Fig 1: (a) UK port traffic by direction (b) UK port traffic – imports, exports and domestic: 1981-2011



All freight traffic by port

This traffic was handled at around 120 commercially active ports, over 97 per cent of it (507 Mt) was through the 52 major ports, for which more detailed statistical breakdowns are available in this release.

Grimsby & Immingham maintained its position as the UK's busiest port in terms of tonnage in 2011 with 57.2 Mt (up 3 Mt on 2010), followed by London with 48.8 Mt (up 0.7 Mt).

The table lists the top ten UK ports in 2011 in terms of tonnage, accounting for 69 per cent of goods handled in all UK ports.

Top ten busiest ports in 2011 compared with 2010

Million tonnes		
Port	2011	2010
Grimsby & Immingham	57.2	54.0
London	48.8	48.1
Milford Haven	48.7	42.8
Southampton	37.9	39.4
Tees and Hartlepool	35.2	35.7
Liverpool	32.7	30.0
Forth	27.9	34.3
Felixstowe	26.8	25.8
Dover	24.3	24.1
Medway	16.1	14.0

Freight traffic by cargo type

Today most seaborne freight is either bulk-handled (with the goods loaded directly into the ships holds or tanks by pipeline, conveyor or grab) or unitised (lifted or rolled onto the ship inside a container or vehicle from which it is not unpacked). Those types of cargo which are still individually handled are referred to as 'other general cargo', and for the most part consist of commodities for which specialised techniques are used (e.g. metal products, timber).

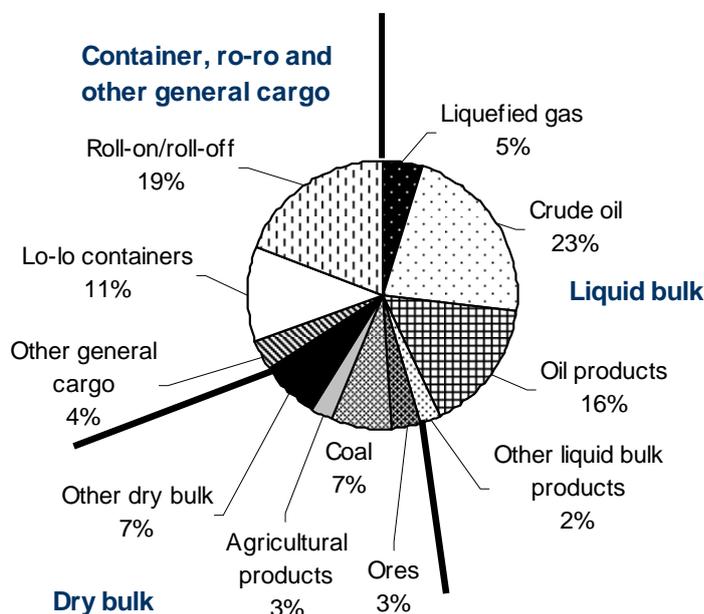
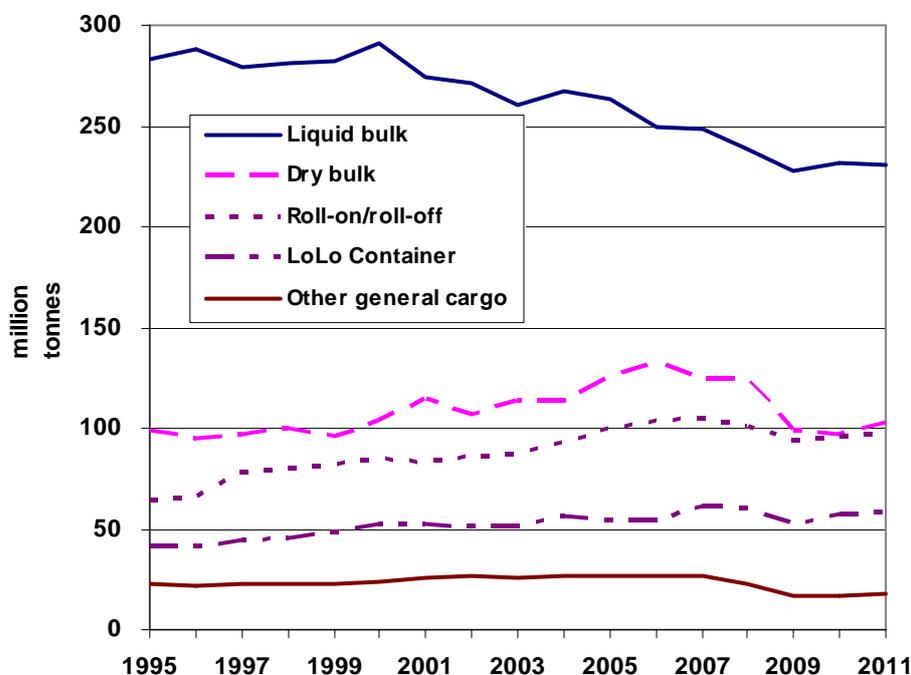


Figure 2: UK major port traffic by cargo type (tonnage): 2011

The breakdown of major port traffic by cargo type (tonnage) in 2011 was: liquid bulk 46 per cent, dry bulk 20 per cent, other general cargo 4 per cent; lift-on lift-off (lo-lo) containers 11 per cent; and roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) cargo 19 per cent (see figure 2).

Figure 3 shows liquid bulk traffic through the major ports was 0.5 per cent lower than in 2010, and 16 per cent down on 2001. Dry bulk traffic was 6 per cent up on 2010, and 10 per cent down on 2001. Container and ro-ro freight traffic was 2 per cent up on 2010, and 15 per cent up on 2001.

Figure 3: UK major port traffic by cargo type (tonnes): 1995-2011



A steady reduction in crude oil exported by sea since 2000 is driving the decline in liquid bulk traffic, and also the decline in all outward traffic including exports. Increasing imports of coal were behind the increase in dry bulk traffic from 2002 until 2006. Coal imports were driven by the increasing demand from power stations. This gradually declined through 2007 and 2008 and then dropped considerably with the onset of the recession in 2009.

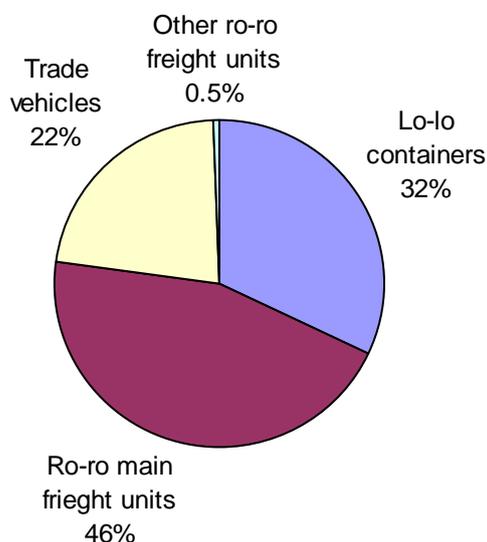
Busiest ports in 2011: oil & gas traffic and other traffic

Oil and gas traffic	Thousand tonnes	Percent	Non-oil and gas traffic	Thousand tonnes	Percent
Milford Haven	47,866	21.9	Grimsby & Immingham	36,913	12.8
Southampton	25,106	11.5	London	29,749	10.3
Forth	22,848	10.5	Felixstowe	26,812	9.3
Tees and Hartlepool	20,495	9.4	Dover	24,251	8.4
Grimsby & Immingham	20,314	9.3	Liverpool	20,759	7.2
London	19,047	8.7	Tees and Hartlepool	14,703	5.1
Liverpool	11,901	5.4	Southampton	12,772	4.4
Sullom Voe	10,134	4.6	Belfast	11,596	4.0
Rivers Hull and Humber	9,372	4.3	Hull	9,032	3.1
Medway	7,351	3.4	Medway	8,725	3.0
All above ports	194,435	89	All above ports	195,314	67.7
All major UK ports	218,547	100	All UK major ports	288,448	100

Unitised freight traffic

Unitised freight (lifted or rolled onto a ship inside a container or vehicle from which it is not unpacked) is measured in terms of the number of units, as well as the weight of the goods they contain.

Figure 4: UK major ports freight units by unitised cargo type: 2011



In 2011, UK major ports handled 15.3 million freight units, a very slight drop (44 thousand units) on 2010.

In 2011 a total of 11.8 million lo-lo containers and ro-ro main freight units were handled at UK major ports, down 1 per cent on 2010. The number of lo-lo containers and ro-ro main freight units rose steadily each year from 10.7 million in 2001 to a peak of 13.3 million in 2007; between 2007 and 2011 there was a drop of 11 per cent.

Felixstowe maintained its position as the UK's largest container port in 2011 with 2.0 million containers, down 5 per cent on 2010. The top ten container ports in 2011 were as follows:

Top ten busiest container ports in 2011 compared with 2010

Port	thousand containers / thousand TEU			
	2011		2010	
	Lolo containers	TEU	Lolo containers	TEU
Felixstowe	1,980	3,249	2,074	3,415
Southampton	965	1,590	945	1,564
London	429	736	425	733
Liverpool	404	664	400	662
Medway	240	402	263	440
Tees and Hartlepool	152	263	146	252
Forth	145	245	129	217
Belfast	128	219	125	214
Hull	116	220	105	203
Grimsby & Immingham	68	125	61	110

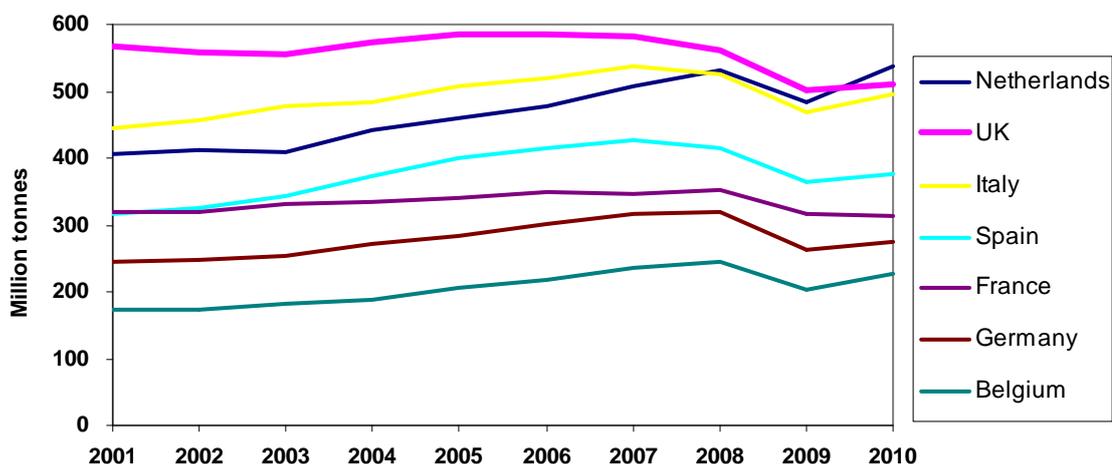
Dover was the top UK port for ro-ro freight with 2.0 million ro-ro main freight units (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers and shipborne port-to-port trailers), down 1 per cent on 2010. Grimsby & Immingham was the next biggest port for ro-ro main freight units at 0.7 million units, down 3 per cent on 2010.

UK major ports also handled 6.0 million passenger vehicles in 2011, a decrease of 4 per cent on 2010. Although passenger vehicles are another type of roll-on roll-off unit, they are not counted as freight units.

European port traffic

Historically, the UK ports industry has been the largest in Europe in terms of tonnage of freight handled. However, according to Eurostat statistics, the UK was overtaken by the Netherlands (dominated by the port of Rotterdam) during 2010. In 2010, five of the busiest 20 ports in Europe, in terms of tonnage handled, were in the UK.

Figure 5: Total sea port freight traffic in top seven European countries: 2001 – 2011



2. Index to More Detailed Port Freight Traffic Statistics

Many more detailed tables of results are published on the DfT web site. They are organised as follows:

Table reference	Contents
port0101-port0117	Tables showing traffic by weight for all cargo types. Some tables cover all ports where estimates are available, others cover all major ports or all minor ports
port0201-port0212	Tables showing numbers of units and, where applicable, weight of goods carried, for various unitised cargo types only. Most tables cover major ports only.
port0301-port0307	Summary tables mainly showing the top ports for various traffic types, plus maps and some European comparisons
port0401-port0452	Detailed tables showing full detail for each major port individually
port0498 & port0499	Detailed data files allowing the user to produce their own analyses for almost all combinations of data for major ports from 2005 onwards
port0501-port0509	Quarterly summary results (provisional results for the most recent year). Total weight and total units by port.
port0601-port0603	Vessel movement statistics for UK ports.

A full index of the port freight traffic and all other maritime statistics tables is available on the web site, along with a Technical Note providing more information about the data.

3. Background to the UK Ports Sector

The importance of shipping and trade to the economy of the UK, an island nation, has resulted in the establishment of a large number of ports around the coast, which are very diverse in terms of size and type of cargo handled. Of the hundreds of ports in the UK for which statutory harbour authority powers have been granted, around 120 are commercially active.

Around 95 per cent by volume of the UK's international trade is transported by sea, and at least until recently, the UK port sector handled a greater weight of goods than any other in Europe. In addition to the freight traffic discussed in this release, around 45 million people a year use UK ports to travel internationally and domestically. In 2011 there were 23 million international ferry and cruise passenger journeys to and from the UK, a further 3.7 million domestic passengers on sea crossings and 19 million on island services such as to the Isle of Wight and Scottish Islands (see Sea Passenger statistics).

Ports are owned and managed by private companies, by trust ports and by municipal authorities. With the exception of naval dockyards (which are outside the scope of these statistics), UK ports operate independently of Government. The role of the UK Government in relation to the ports industry since the majority of the industry was privatised has generally been to ensure that IMO¹ standards and EU² laws are appropriately transposed, to keep applicable domestic legislation under review and to promote voluntary compliance with guidance such as the Port Marine Safety

¹ International Maritime Organization

² European Union

Code. The Government also has some powers of appointment to the boards of five trust ports³, a number which has reduced significantly in recent years.

The various business activities going on within ports, such as cargo handling, may be carried out by several different bodies. At some ports, the port authority is responsible for all the port's business activities within its jurisdiction, while at others a harbour authority may only be responsible for some functions such as conservancy (the function of conserving, maintaining or improving the navigation of tidal waters) and pilotage (services provided to secure the safety of ships navigating in, or in the approaches, to the harbour). DfT port freight statistics cover all freight handled at ports, whether this activity is managed directly by the port conservancy authority or not.

The private sector operates all but six of the largest 20 ports by tonnage and handles around two thirds of UK port traffic. Some company ports, such as Felixstowe and Manchester, have always been in private hands. A group of ports formerly operated by the British Transport Docks Board was privatised in the 1980s, becoming Associated British Ports (ABP). ABP currently owns 21 ports, accounting for around one quarter of UK traffic. Several large former trust ports were sold into company ownership between 1992 and 1997 under the Ports Act 1991, and proposals were put forward, originally in 2010, by the Dover Harbour Board for the sale of Dover.

Trust ports are independent statutory bodies governed by independent boards of trustees acting in the interests of all stakeholders. Any surplus revenue from operations is normally invested in improving facilities. While some trust port authorities operate terminal facilities, others act as conservancy and pilotage authorities, or focus on fishing or leisure activities, or have income derived solely from non-port related activities. Trust ports are mainly small to medium sized enterprises, but some are large ports – e.g. Aberdeen, Belfast, Dover and Milford Haven.

Many municipal ports concentrate on leisure and fishing activities, but several have significant volumes of port traffic, including Sullom Voe (Shetland), Flotta (Orkney), Portsmouth, Ramsgate and Sunderland.

4. Glossary

- Ports: The 'ports' for which statistics are presented generally correspond to ports for which statutory harbour authority powers have been granted, of which around 120 are commercially active in the cargo handling field. They range from authorities such as the Port of London, which extends 95 miles from Teddington to the North Sea, and encompasses many separate wharves and terminals (with freight traffic mainly in the lower reaches nearer the sea), to small harbour trusts responsible for quays, piers and other facilities which are of only local significance. Some port authorities are responsible for all the port's business activities, while others — including the Port of London Authority — may only be responsible for certain

³ Multiple board members at Dover, Tyne, Harwich Haven and the Port of London Authority, and chairman only at Milford Haven.

functions such as conservancy (the power to conserve, maintain or improve the navigation of tidal waters) and pilotage (services need to be provided to secure the safety of ships navigating in, or in the approaches to, the harbour), leaving operations to other parties. These statistics cover all freight traffic handled at ports, regardless of the organisational arrangements. A full list of the undertakings reporting statistics is included in the [Technical Notes](#).

- Major ports: Ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounting for over 97% of UK port traffic. More detailed statistics are collected from these ports.
- Minor ports: All other ports handling freight traffic. Only total weight of goods loaded and unloaded is collected from these ports.
- Tonnage: The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of any shipping containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment where these are used.
- Units: Includes all roll-on roll-off (ro-ro) units whether carrying freight or not (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, shipborne port-to-port trailers, passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other ro-ro units), as well as lift-on lift-off (lo-lo) containers. In most port statistics outputs, freight-carrying roll-on roll-off units are normally reported separately from others, but this detail is not available at the time of publication of the quarterly statistics, in which combined totals are given.
- Main freight units: all lo-lo containers and those ro-ro units intended mainly for carrying freight - road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, rail wagons, shipborne port to port trailers and shipborne barges.
- Lo-lo (lift-on lift-off) containers: standard shipping containers that are lifted on or off ships. Containers can also be carried on ro-ro (roll-on roll-off) services, usually on port-to-port trailers, road goods vehicles or unaccompanied trailers, in which case they will be treated as ro-ro traffic.

5. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- The port freight statistics relate to traffic to and from ports in United Kingdom, unless otherwise stated, and do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.
- Provisional annual results are published approximately 6 months after the end of the calendar year to which they relate ([Provisional 2011 port freight statistics](#)). A subset of the port freight statistics tables is provisionally updated at this stage (PORT0101, PORT0102, PORT0201 and PORT0202). These statistics are based on the annual returns from major ports (MSD2X – tonnage and number of units by cargo category and direction) and minor ports (MSD5 – inwards and outwards tonnage only) provided at the end of the year. A split into broad cargo type is available for each major port. Some additional quality checks will have been possible,

compared with the earlier quarterly data (MSD2 – from major ports only giving tonnage and number of units, of all types, by direction). However, full checks of MSD2/2X data from ports against MSD1 data from shipping agents, and grossing of the final data will not have been completed, so the data remain provisional at this stage. However, past experience is that the figures for the vast majority of ports do not change between the publication of provisional and final annual results.

- Final detailed port freight statistics are published about 9 months after the year end. At this stage a full reconciliation of port and shipping agent data will have been carried out, and the grossing procedures described in the [Technical Note](#) are completed and checked. The detailed results are based on this grossed data and the full range of analyses, including those by route and vessel type are then available. This stage has been reached for 2011 data with this release.

6. Users and uses of the data

These statistics are collected to provide information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. Users of the data include central government, the devolved administrations and local government, the maritime industry, transport consultants and academics, and international organisations. Uses, both inside and outside government, include:

- To provide general background to sector trends, and to inform the development and evaluation of policy, and to inform decision making
- In the development or testing of transport and environmental models and forecasts
- In market analysis by transport consultants and businesses.
- To respond to requests for information from Parliament, members of the public and international organisations, including Eurostat's compilation of maritime statistics for the EU

We continuously review the content of these statistics to ensure that they provide the most useful information whilst minimising burdens on data providers. We welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

7. Background notes

1. The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics?post_type=table&series=ports-parent-series
2. An [Index](#) to all maritime statistics tables is also available. This gives cross-references to the former Maritime Statistics printed compendium, and other superseded printed publication.

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3. The Technical Note giving full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found here: <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/ports/portstattechnote.pdf>
 4. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>.
 5. These statistics were assessed by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) to determine their compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. An assessment report was published in June 2012 (Report 221). <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/>
 6. Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/ports/portstatsprerelease.pdf>
 7. The next update in this series will be published in June 2013. It will contain provisional figures on freight through UK sea ports for 2012.
 8. Provisional summary quarterly statistics on freight handled by UK major ports are also updated quarterly. The latest update can be found here: http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics?post_type=release&topic=ports
 9. Statistics on freight handled at European sea ports are published by Eurostat. Eurostat publications, data tables and databases can be found at [Eurostat Publications](#)