

Statistics Brief

► Global Trade and Transport

Global Freight Figures Suggest Weak Growth Ahead

The latest global freight data collected by the International Transport Forum at the OECD, through June 2011, highlight concerns over economic recovery:

- **Freight volumes indicate a marked macroeconomic slowdown. External trade by sea in the EU-27 and the USA stabilizes below pre-crisis levels (-3% and -4%) while trade by air declines in EU (falling from 15% to 9% above pre-crisis);**
- **The risks of dependence on Asia-led global growth are exposed. Both US and EU-27 exports by sea to Asia have declined since Feb-11, measured in tonnes of goods moved. Trade by air with China declined both for the USA and the EU-27, possibly indicating a slowdown in demand from the world's engine of recovery.**
- **Further slow growth in inland freight transport volumes continues to contribute to the sense of weak recovery in domestic demand.**

The overall picture for global freight is one of growth slowing down. Total external trade by sea (in tonnes) declined through the second quarter in the United States, while in the EU trade stagnated (USA -4% compared to pre-crisis levels; EU27 -3%) according to preliminary estimates of tonnes of goods carried. The air cargo recovery, noted in our previous brief, has faltered and volumes are now only 9% above pre-crisis levels in the EU area compared to 15% in Feb-11. External trade in tonnes of goods carried by air in the United States has shown practically no growth and total trade in tonnes is only 2% above the pre-crisis peak (Figure 1).

► **Slowdown in global freight volumes**

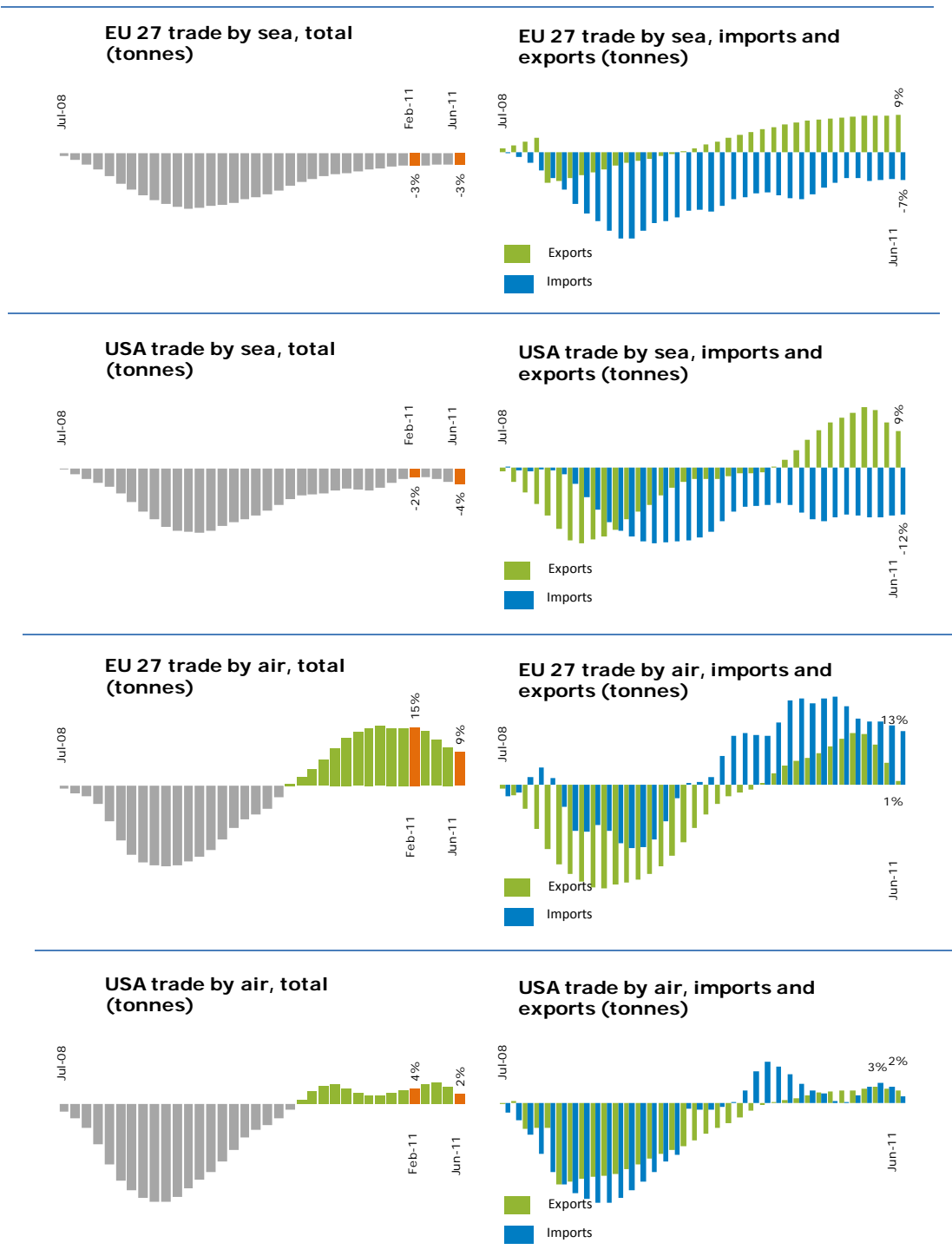
Recovery in the EU-27 and the USA has so far been led mainly by exports to Asia. However, the positive trend observed in our previous brief has reversed and tonnes exported by sea from the United States and the EU-27 to Asia decline in Q2 (Figures 2-3). Trade with China and ASEAN countries in particular shows evidence of an economic slowdown. Both sea and air exports from the USA to China declined between February 2011 and June 2011. EU-27 exports to China grew in Q2 but have been fairly flat for the first half of 2011 as a whole. Total trade with ASEAN countries by air and sea decline for both regions. Only trade with India seems to have resisted otherwise downward trend (Figures 4-5).

► **Exports to Asia decline**

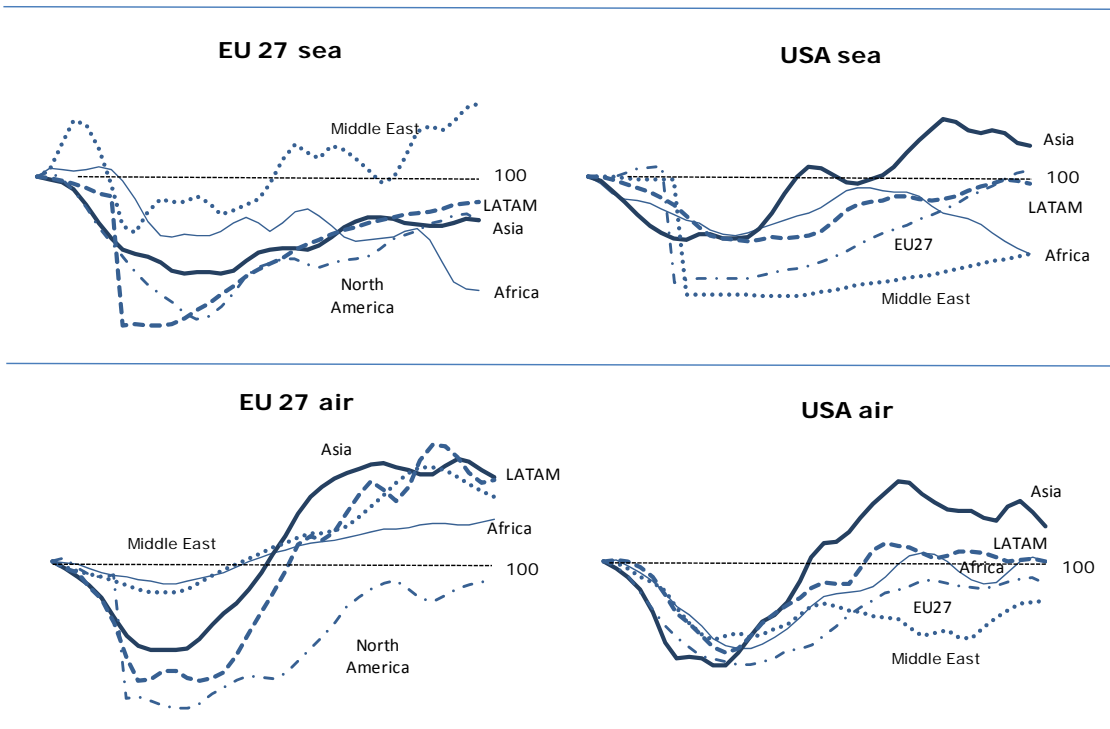
► **Inland freight still below pre-crisis levels**

Inland transport by rail and road continue to recover very slowly. In the EU area, volumes are still 9% and 13% respectively below pre-crisis levels, when measured in seasonally adjusted tonne-kilometers. The stronger growth trend in rail freight in the United States and Russia has also slowed down with volumes now 16% and 7% below 2008 peak levels (Figures 6-9).

Figure 1. **External trade, percentage change from pre-crisis peak of Jun-08**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)



**Figure 2. United States and EU 27 external trade by region
June 2008 – June 2011, (June 2008=100)
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)**



**Figure 3. United States and EU 27 external trade with Asia,
percentage change from pre-crisis peak Jun-08
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)**

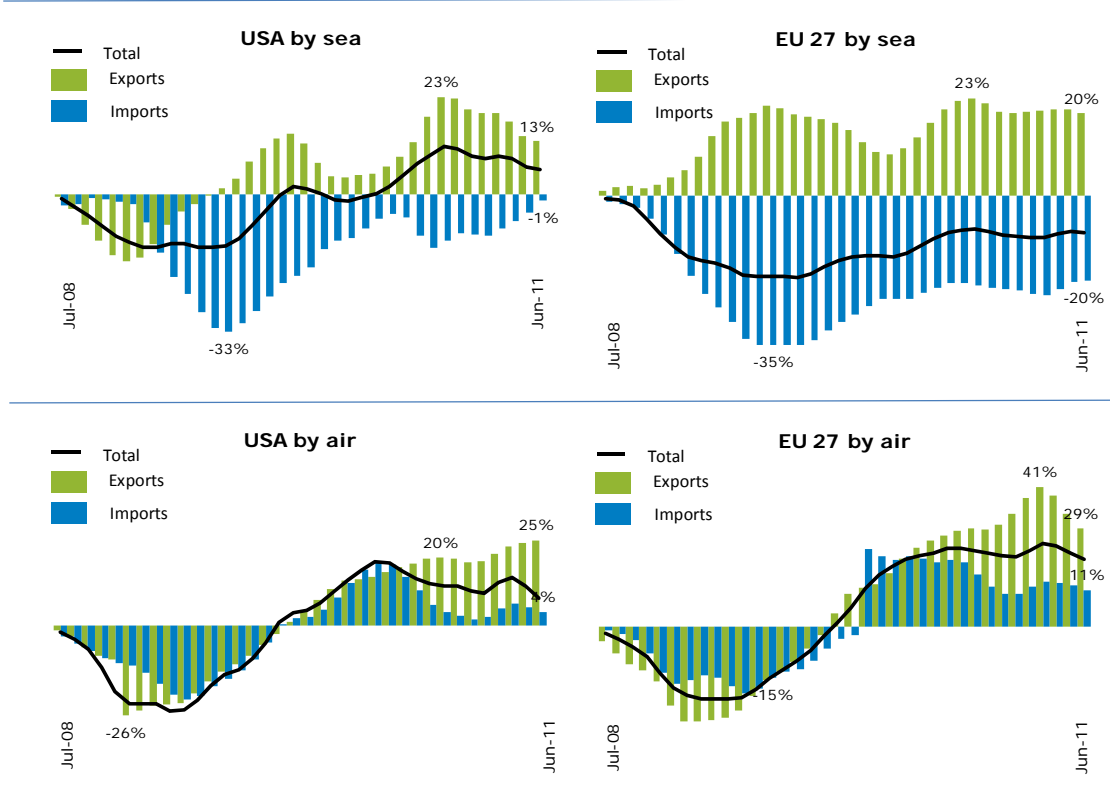


Figure 4. **United States and EU 27 external trade by sea, by country, percentage change from pre-crisis peak Jun-08**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

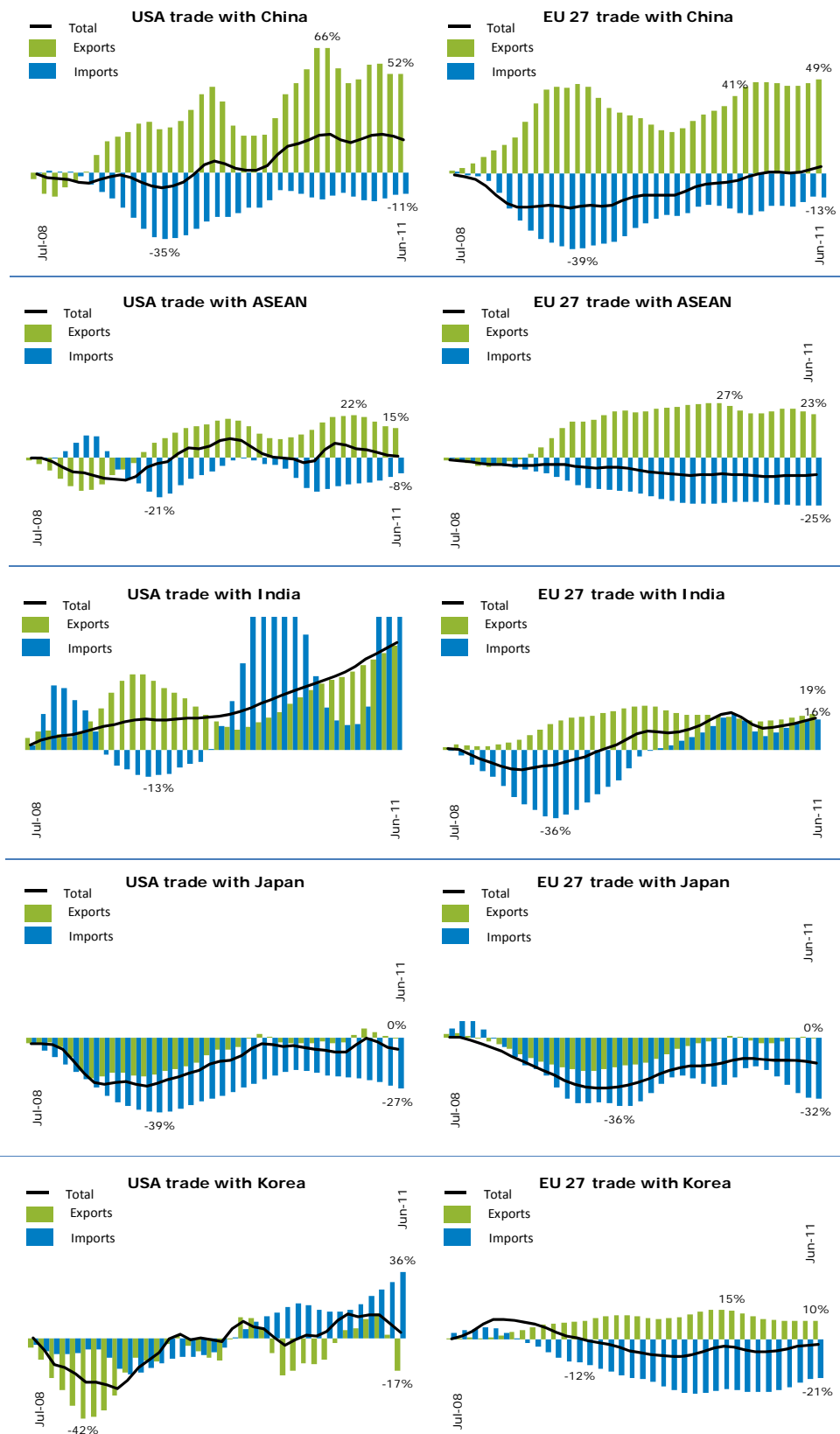


Figure 5. **United States and EU 27 external trade by air, by country, percentage change from pre-crisis peak Jun-08**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

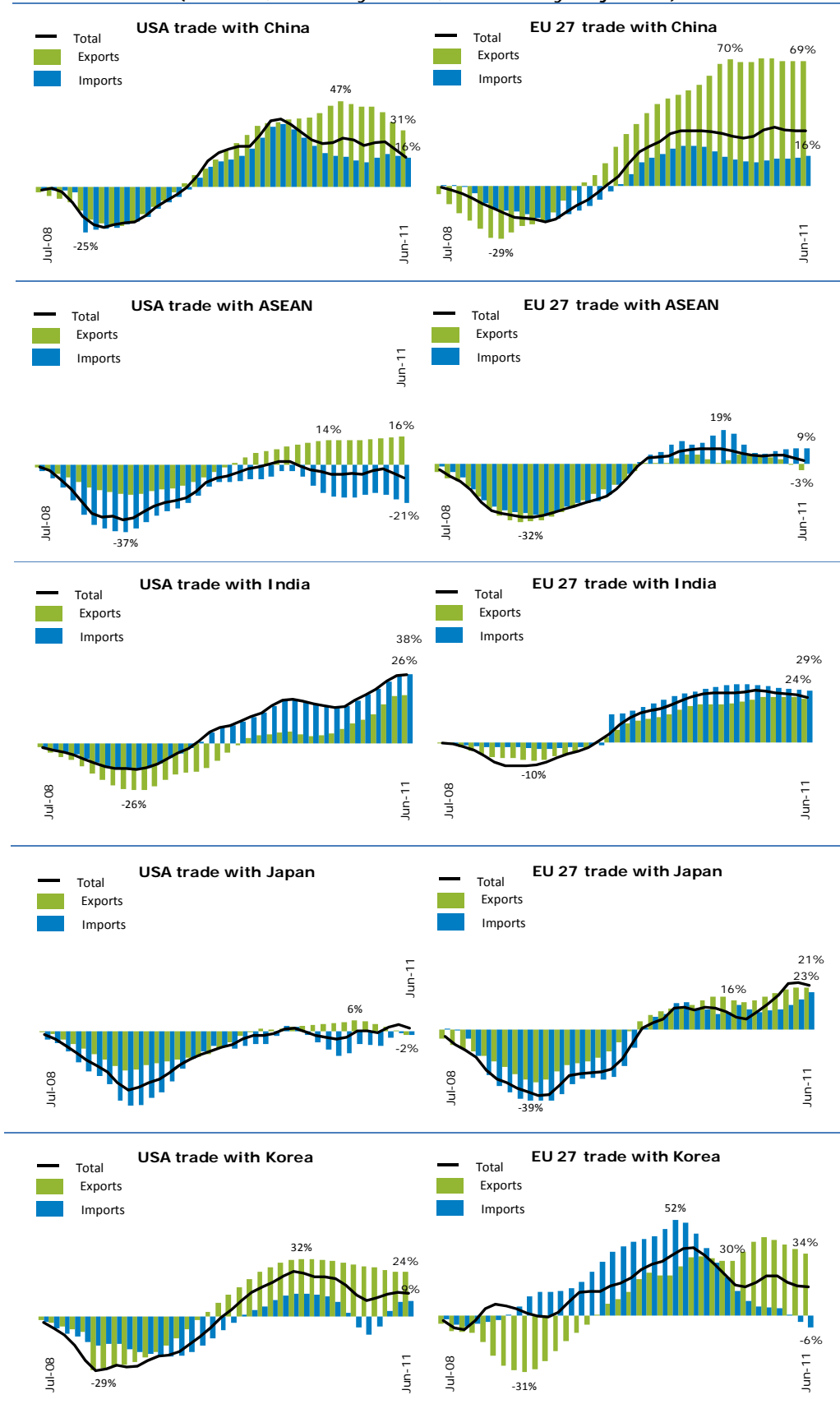
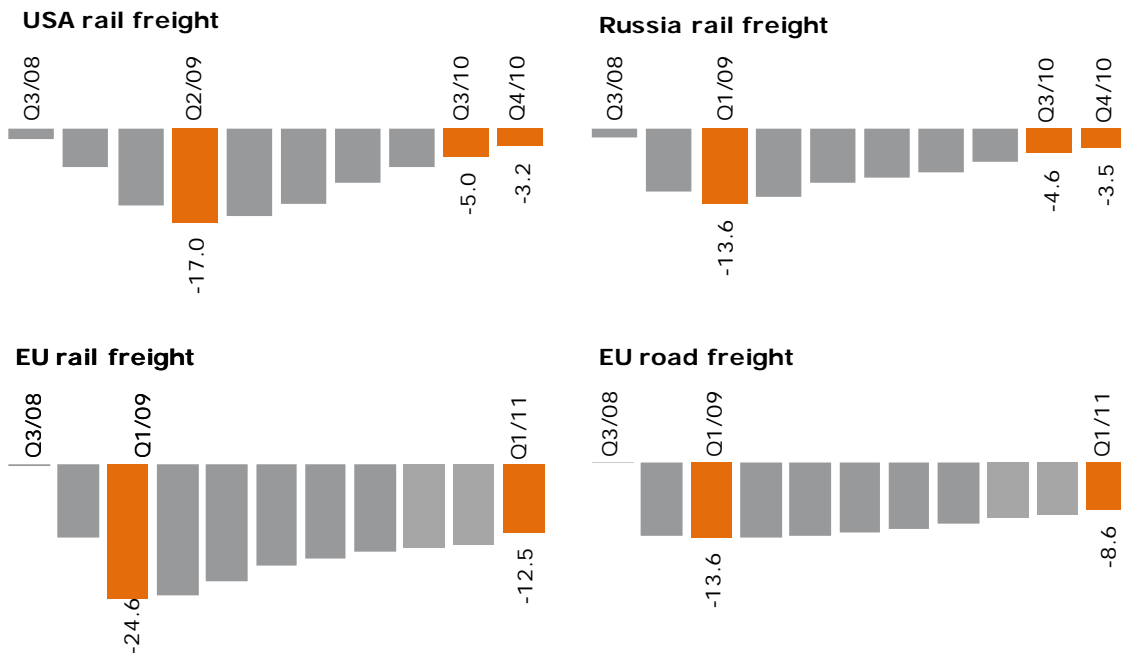
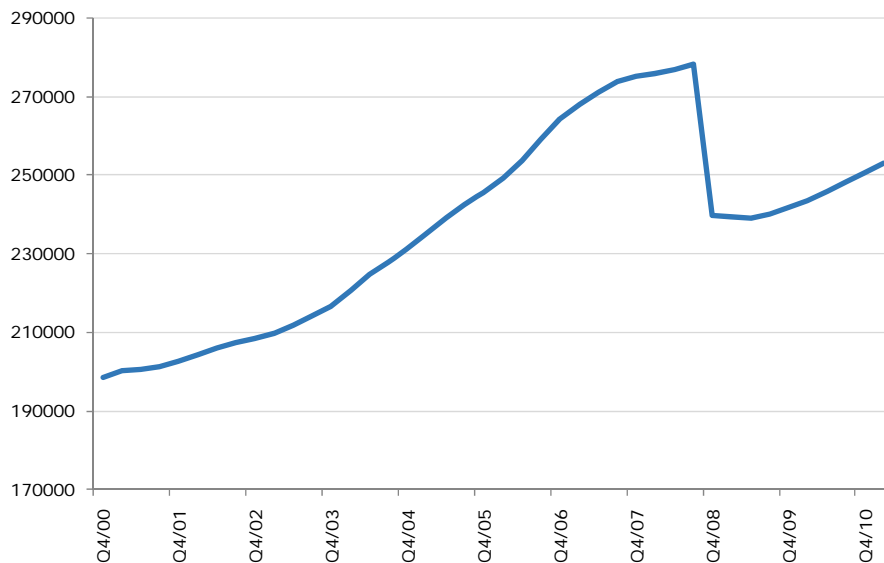


Figure 6. **National and international rail and road freight, percentage change from pre-crisis peak Q2/08**
(Tonne-km, quarterly trend, seasonally adjusted)



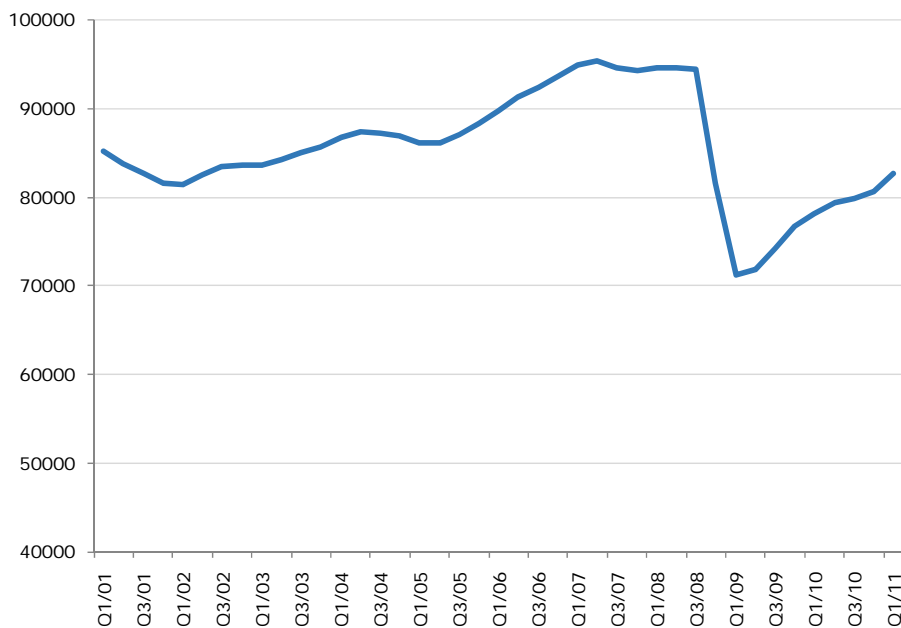
Note: Data on road freight in the EU area include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden. These cover around 65% of total road freight in the EU. Data on rail freight in the EU area exclude Austria, Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands. Data coverage around 95% of total rail freight in the EU.

Figure 7. **National and international road freight in the EU**
(Million tonne-km, trend, seasonally adjusted)



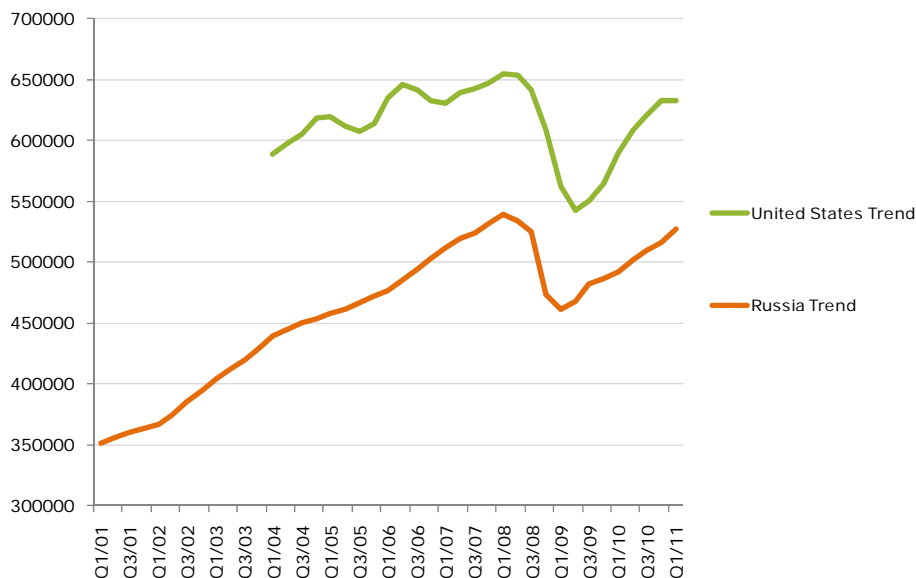
Note: See note in Figure 6 for data coverage.

Figure 8. **National and international rail freight in the EU**
(Million tonne-km, trend, seasonally adjusted)



Note: See note in Figure 6 for data coverage.

Figure 9. **National and international rail freight in the United States and Russian Federation**
(Million tonne-km, trend, seasonally adjusted)



Methodological note

The International Transport Forum Statistics Brief on Global Trade and Transport presents the latest global freight transport trends based on the Global Trade and Transport Database and the ITF Quarterly Transport Statistics. These data are collected by the Secretariat through a questionnaire and from external sources, including Eurostat, US Census and Japan Customs. National data are seasonally adjusted by the International Transport Forum Secretariat for analytical purposes.

Short-term data is normally compiled to allow timely identification of changes in any indicator and especially to identify possible turning points. However, monthly or quarterly transport statistics are often characterized by seasonal patterns. Seasonal adjustment filters out usual seasonal fluctuations that recur with similar intensity in the same season every year. Trend, in turn, excludes also other irregular factors (such as strikes and impact of weather) from a time series. A time series from which the seasonal variations have been eliminated basically allows for the comparison of data between two quarters for which seasonal patterns are different, also helping to identify turning points and the underlying direction of the change.

Seasonal adjustment is carried out with the Demetra program using the TRAMO/SEATS adjustment method. Seasonally adjusted estimates may differ from those produced by national authorities due to differences in the adjustment methodology.

For more detailed description of methodology, [click here](#).

The next brief is scheduled for release the first week of December 2011.

If you would like to receive further issues of the Statistics Brief or more information, please contact: Mr Jari Kauppila (jari.kauppila@oecd.org).

For additional information on our transport statistics, go to www.internationaltransportforum.org/statistics/shortterm/index.html.