International Transport Forum

Statistics Brief

July 2014

▶ Global Trade and Transport

Global freight data show diverging trends for developed and developing economies

The latest update of global freight data collected by the International Transport Forum at the OECD through March 2014 shows that:

- **USA and EU27 external trade by sea and by air, measured in tonnes of goods moved, remain stagnant below pre-crisis (June 2008) levels;**
- **BRICS and Asia are locomotives of growth. China's external trade by sea and air, measured in values, continues to grow since recovery in 2010;**
- **Inland freight transport in emerging economies outperforms developed economies.**

▶ Sea and air freight volumes stagnant below pre-crisis levels

The overall picture for global freight shows no change since the previous quarter. Total external trade by sea and air, in tonnes, remains stagnant below pre-crisis levels in EU27 and the USA. Imports and exports by sea continue to show diverging trends. While imports by sea stagnate below pre-crisis levels, exports by sea in EU27 and the USA reach 29% and 23% above pre-crisis peak albeit showing signs of slowing down for the latter. Total external trade by air for both EU27 and the USA remain -4% and -3% below pre-crisis levels respectively (Figures 1-5).

▶ China's imports from Europe and North America outpace exports

EU-27 and USA exports to Asia and BRICS show continuous growth and Asia remains the locomotive of growth. China's total external trade by sea and air, in values, was 55% and 59% above the pre-crisis peak. Imports to China from Europe and North America by sea outpace export growth and were 85% and 75% above pre-crisis peak. Imports by air also experience similar growth (Figures 6-8).

▶ Intra-Asia trade remains strong

Intra-Asian trade, which accounts for nearly half of China's total external trade in value, remains strong. China's external trade by sea with ASEAN and South Asian countries reached 126% and 39% above pre-crisis levels while external trade by air increased to 30% and 88% above pre-crisis peak. Freight by sea, air and road to China's neighbouring CIS countries and Russia grows strongly while rail cargo continues to stagnate below pre-crisis levels. The rail share of external trade has been decreasing since 2005 (Figures 9-10).

▶ Inland freight in EU area continue to stagnate

Inland freight transport reflects diverging trends between developed and emerging economies. Rail freight in the EU area remains below pre-crisis peak while stagnating at pre-crisis levels in the USA. Road freight in the EU area remains 11% below pre-crisis levels. Growth is stronger in emerging markets; Rail freight volumes in Russia and Turkey were 5% and in China 20% above pre-crisis levels. Road freight volume in Russia, in turn, reached 14% above the pre-crisis peak in 4Q/13 (Figures 11-12).

Figure 1. **External trade, percentage change from June 2008**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

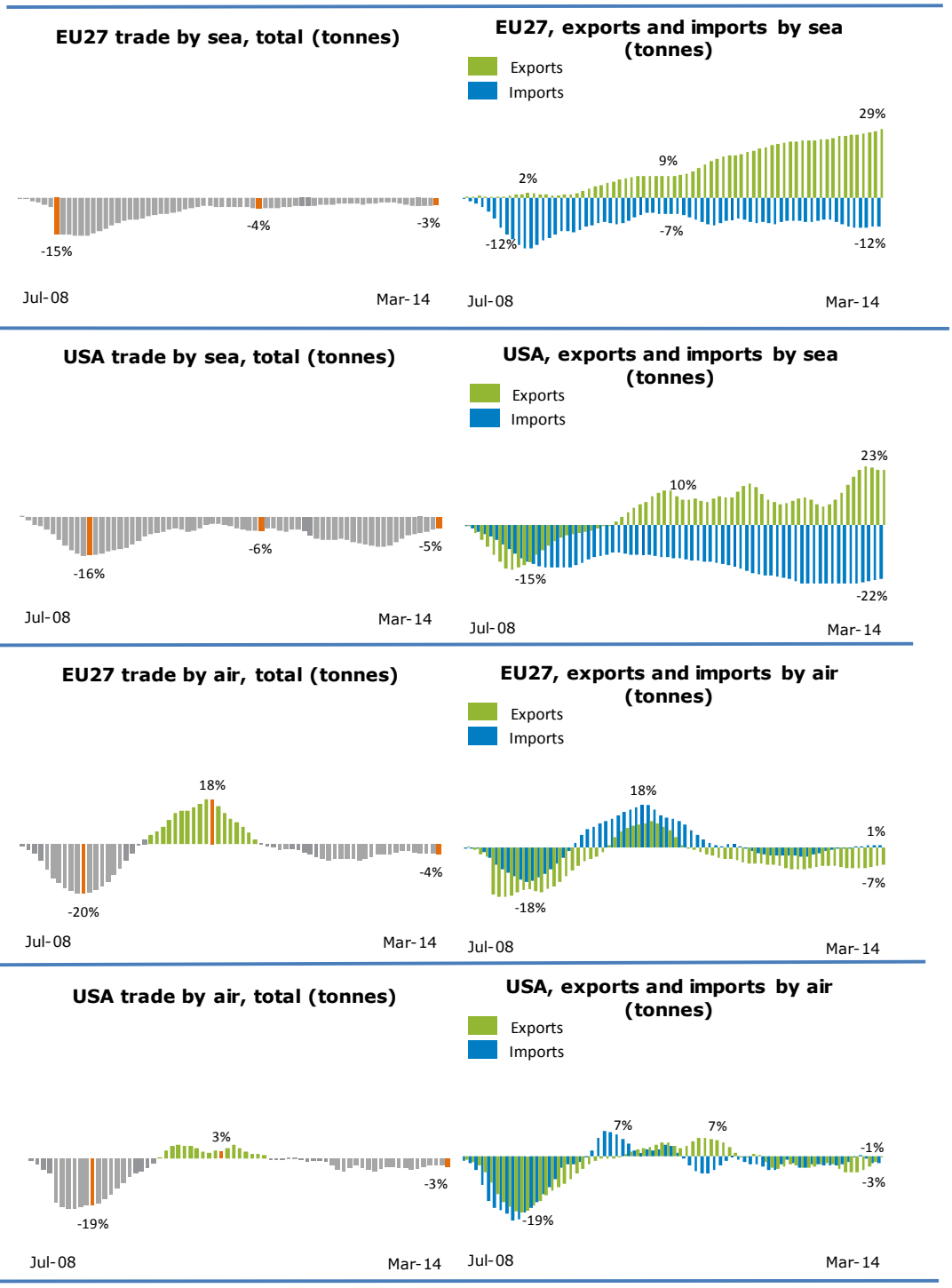


Figure 2. **EU external trade by sea, percentage change from June 2008**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

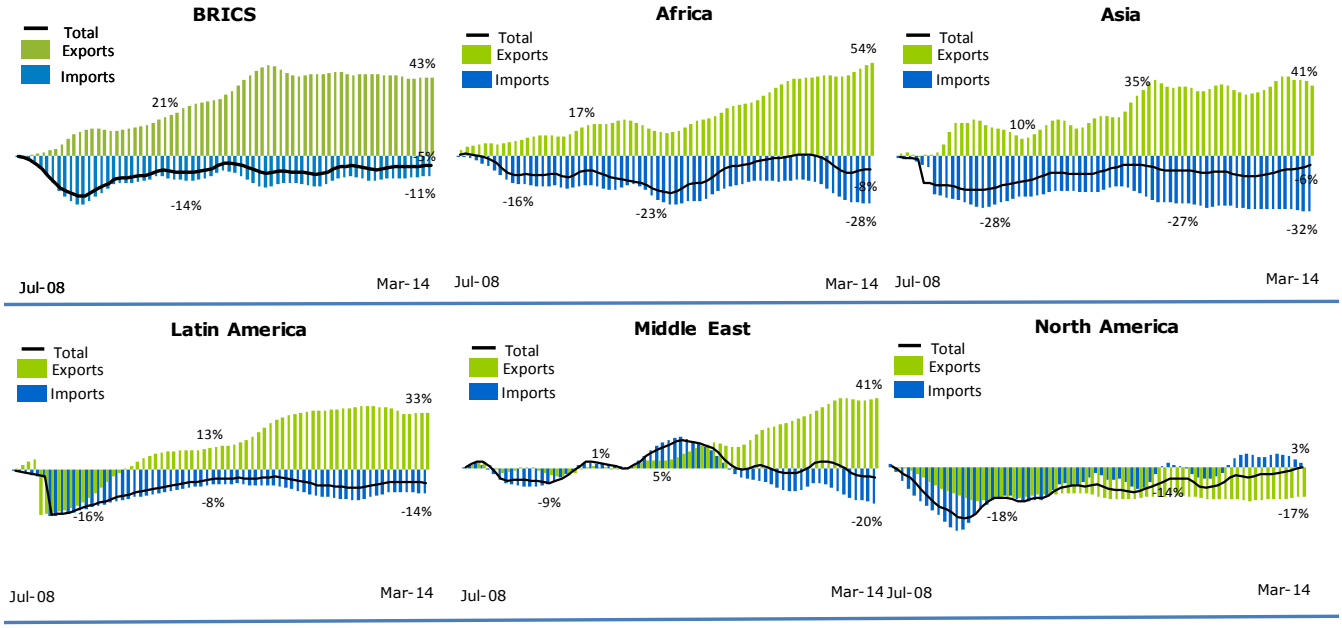


Figure 3. **EU external trade by air, percentage change from June 2008**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

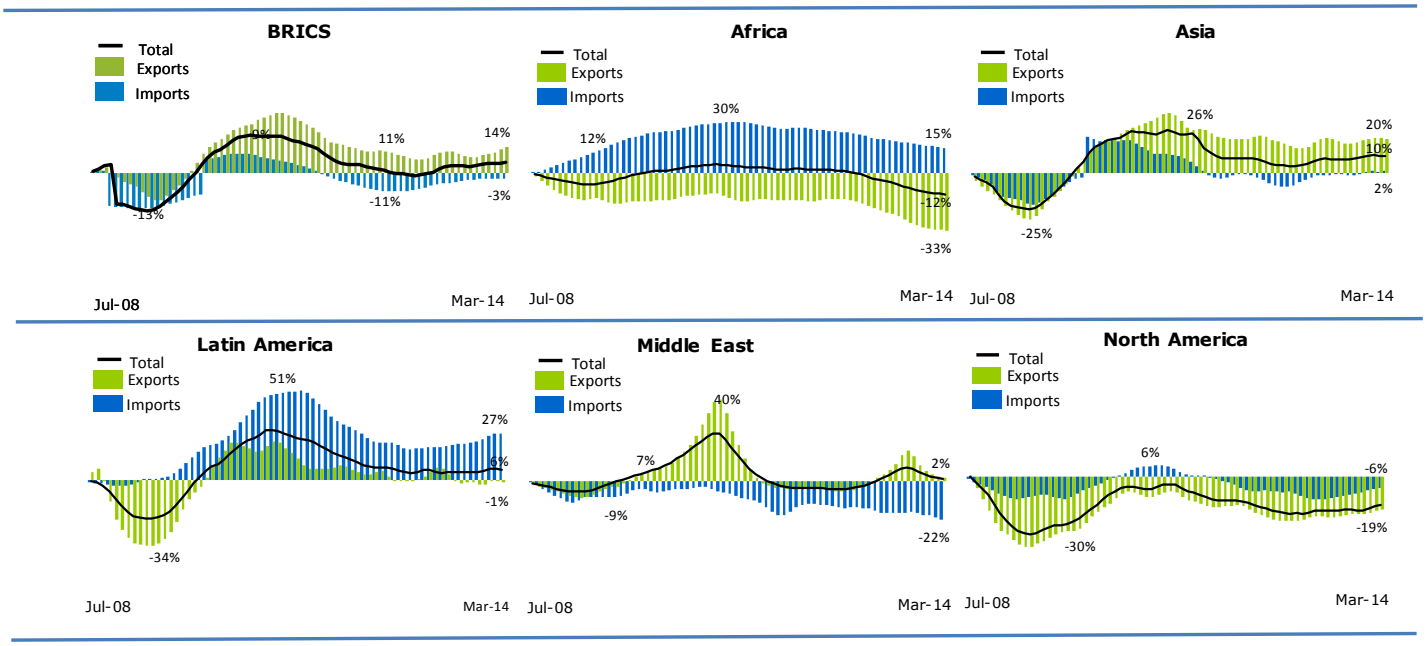


Figure 4. **USA external trade by sea, percentage change from June 2008**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

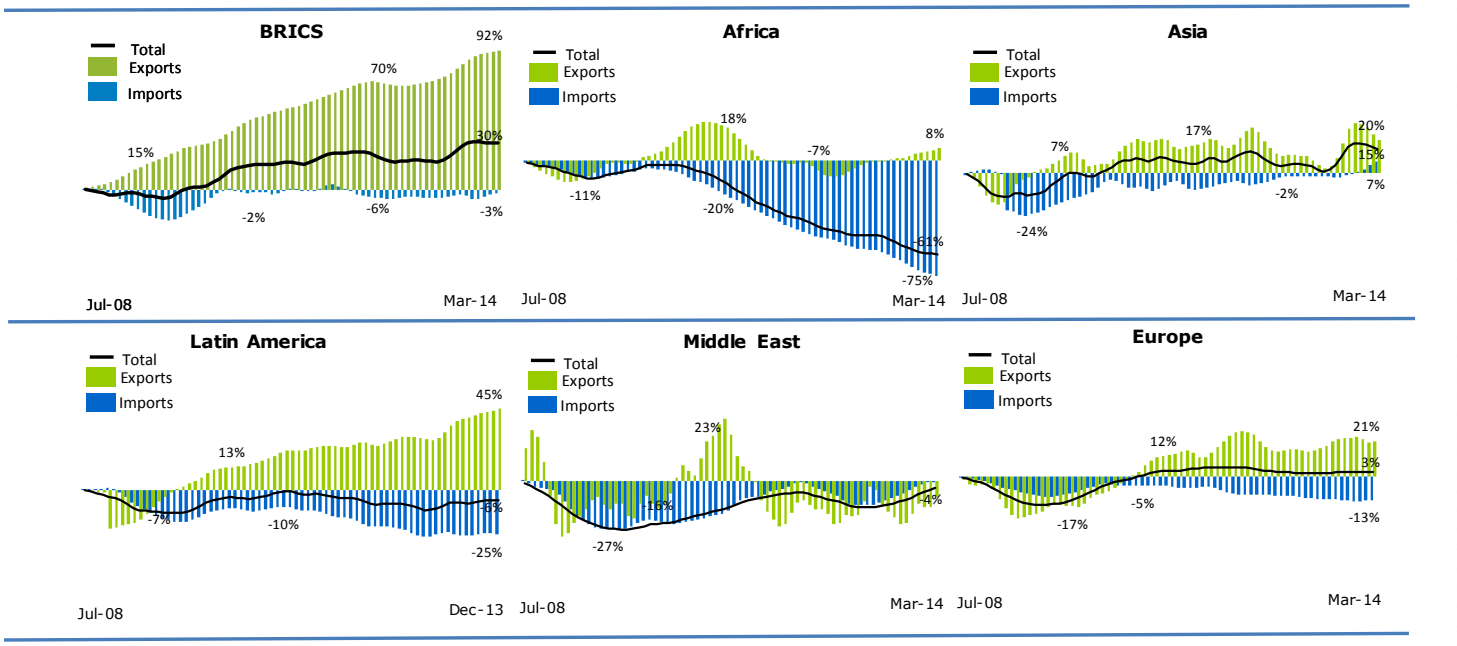


Figure 5. **USA external trade by air, percentage change from June 2008**
(Tonnes, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

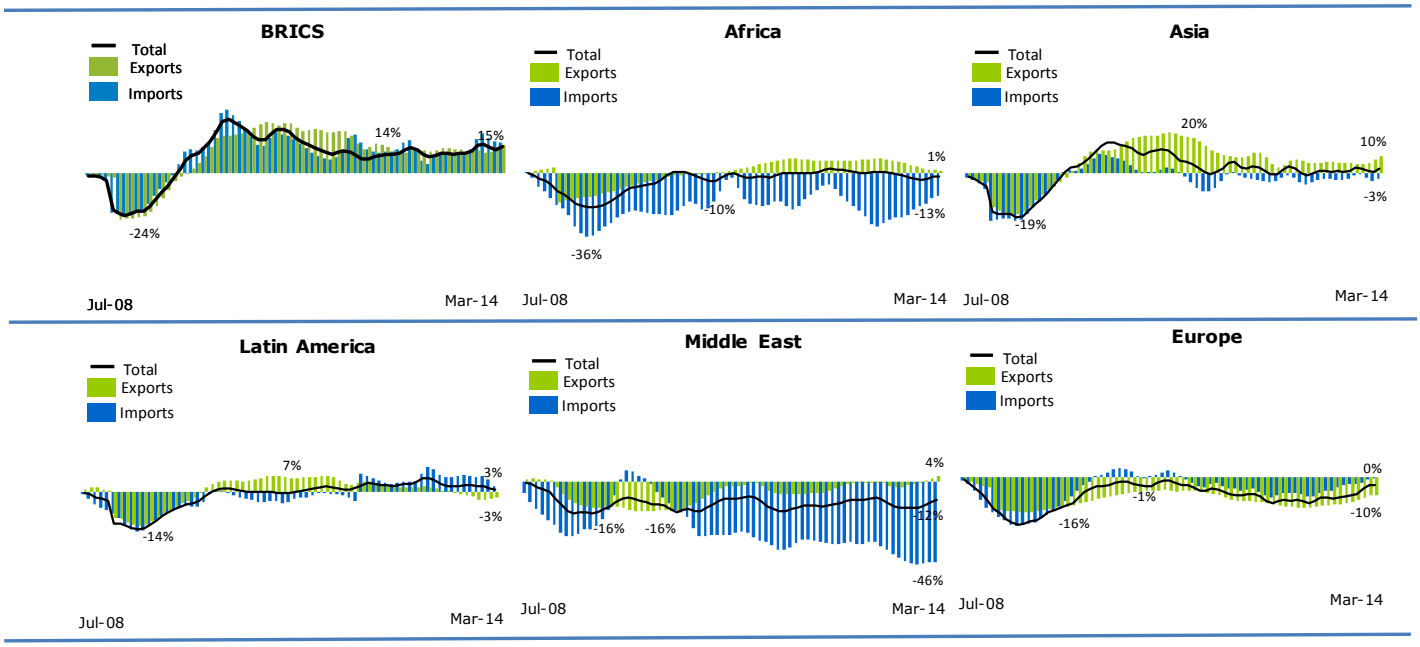


Figure 6. **China external trade, percentage change from June 2008**
(Current value in USD, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

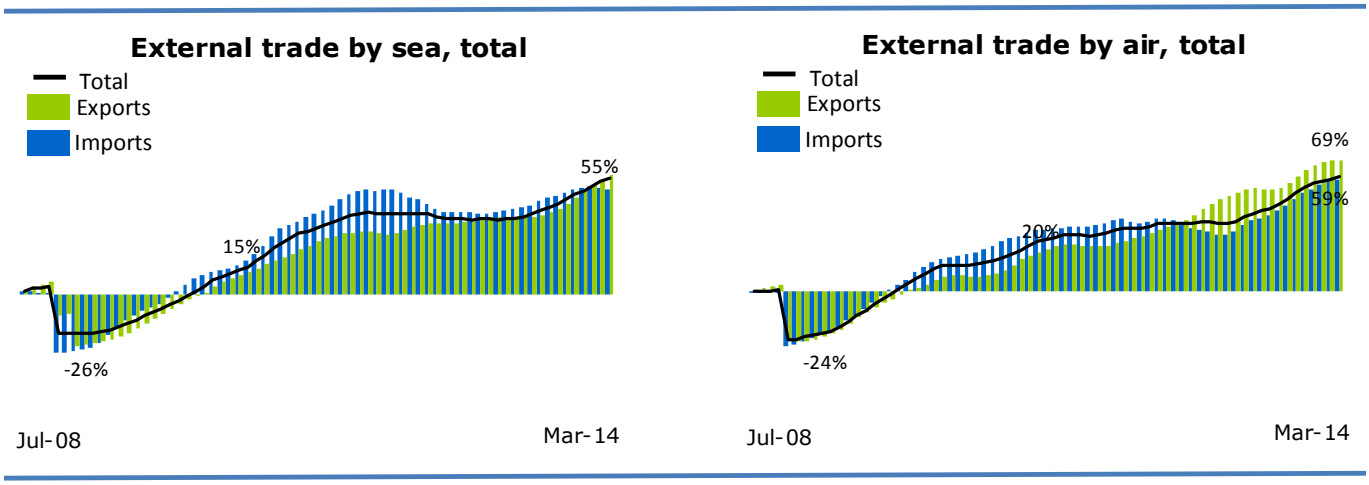


Figure 7. **China external trade by sea, percentage change from June 2008**
(Current value in USD, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

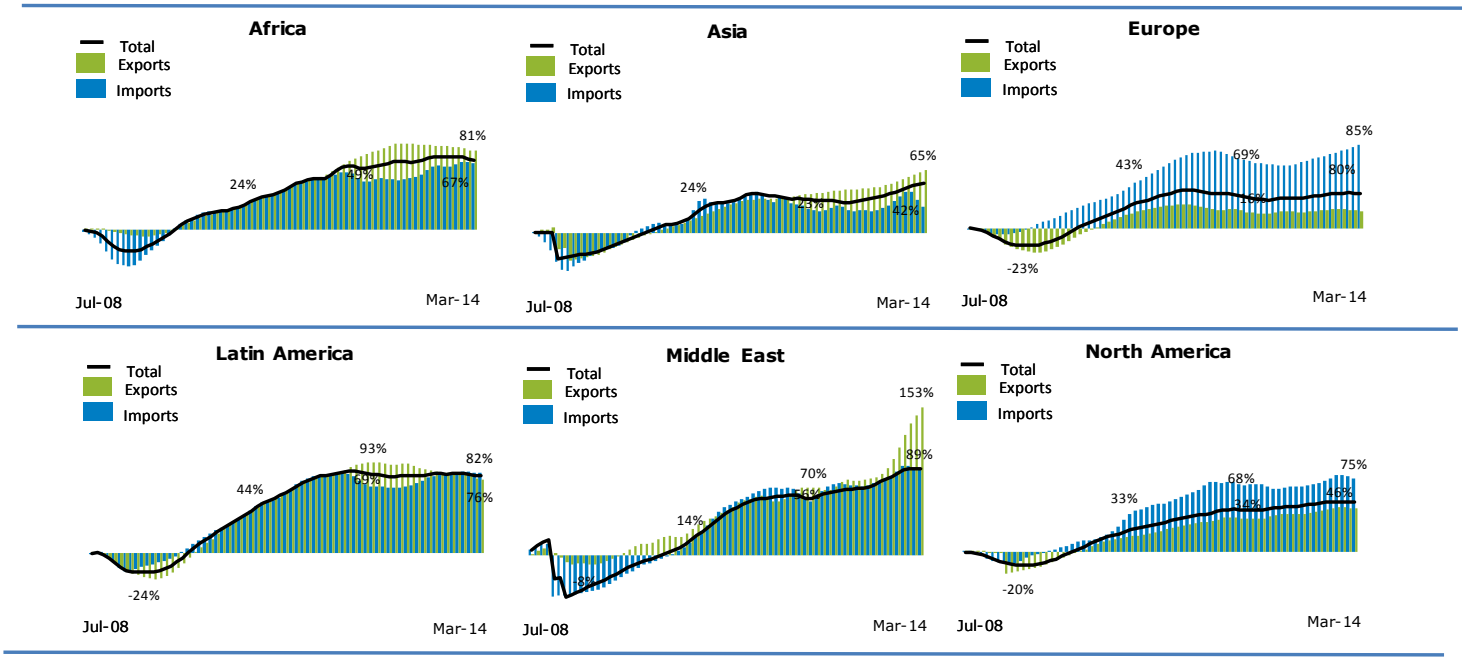


Figure 8. **China external trade by air, percentage change from June 2008**
(Current value in USD, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

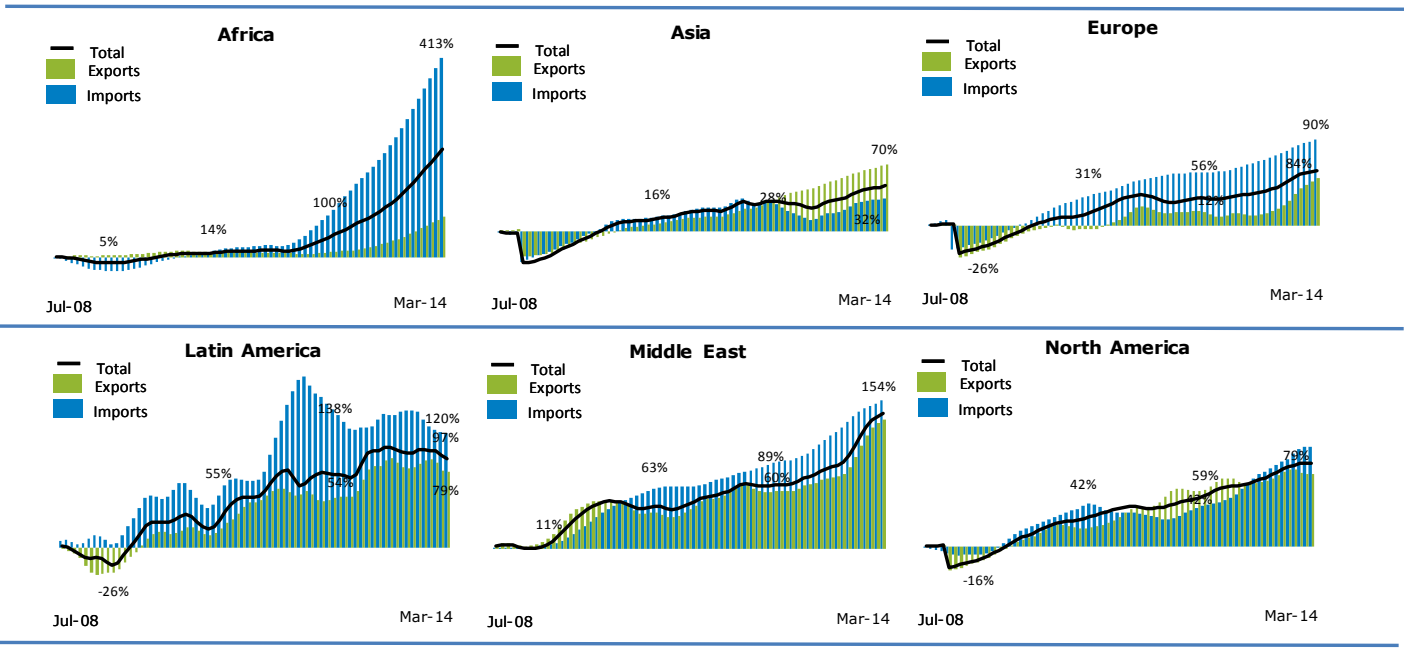


Figure 9. **China external intra-Asia trade, percentage change from June 2008**
(Current value in USD, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)

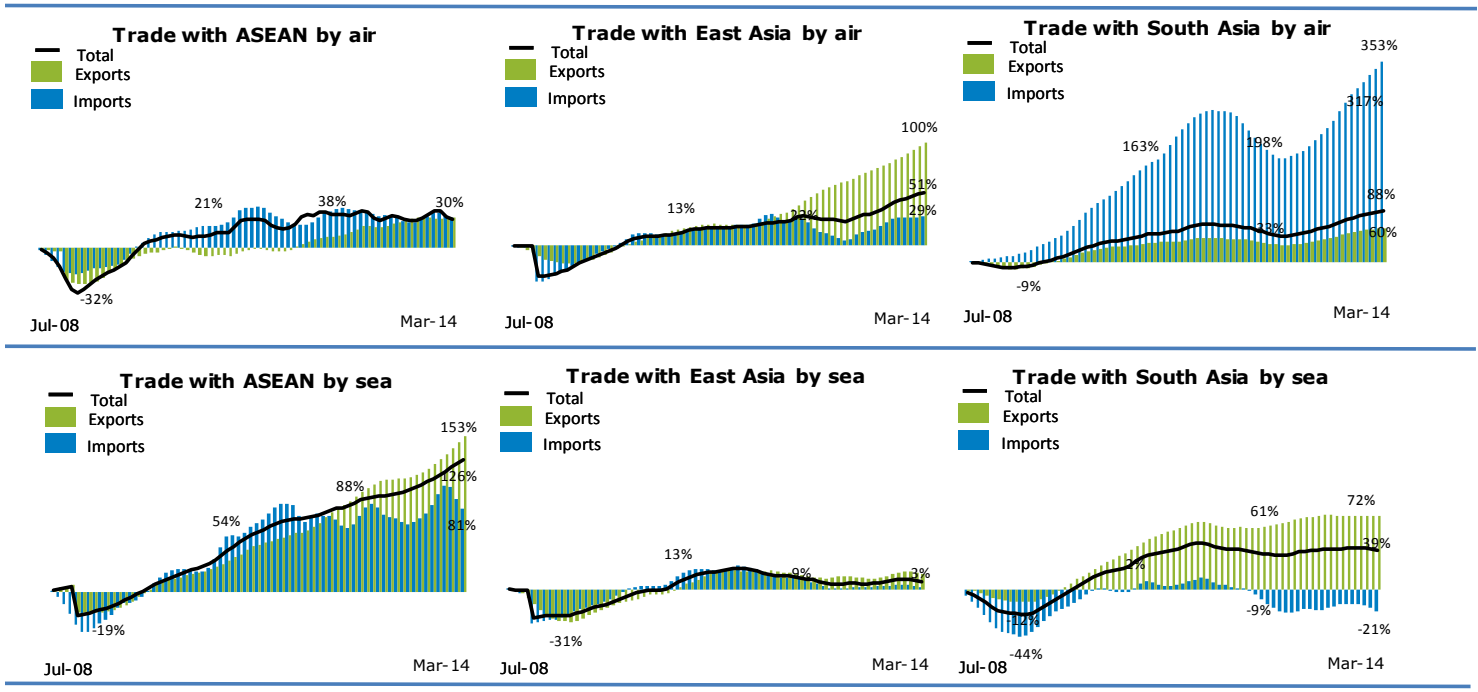
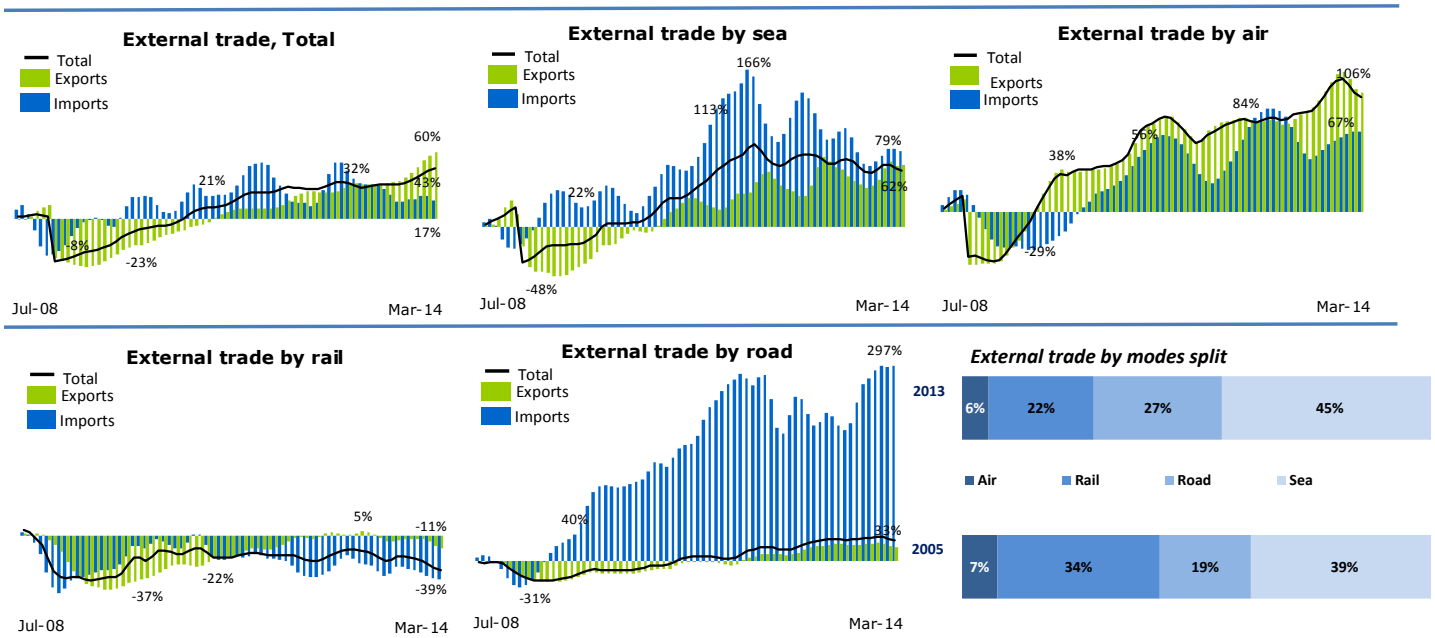
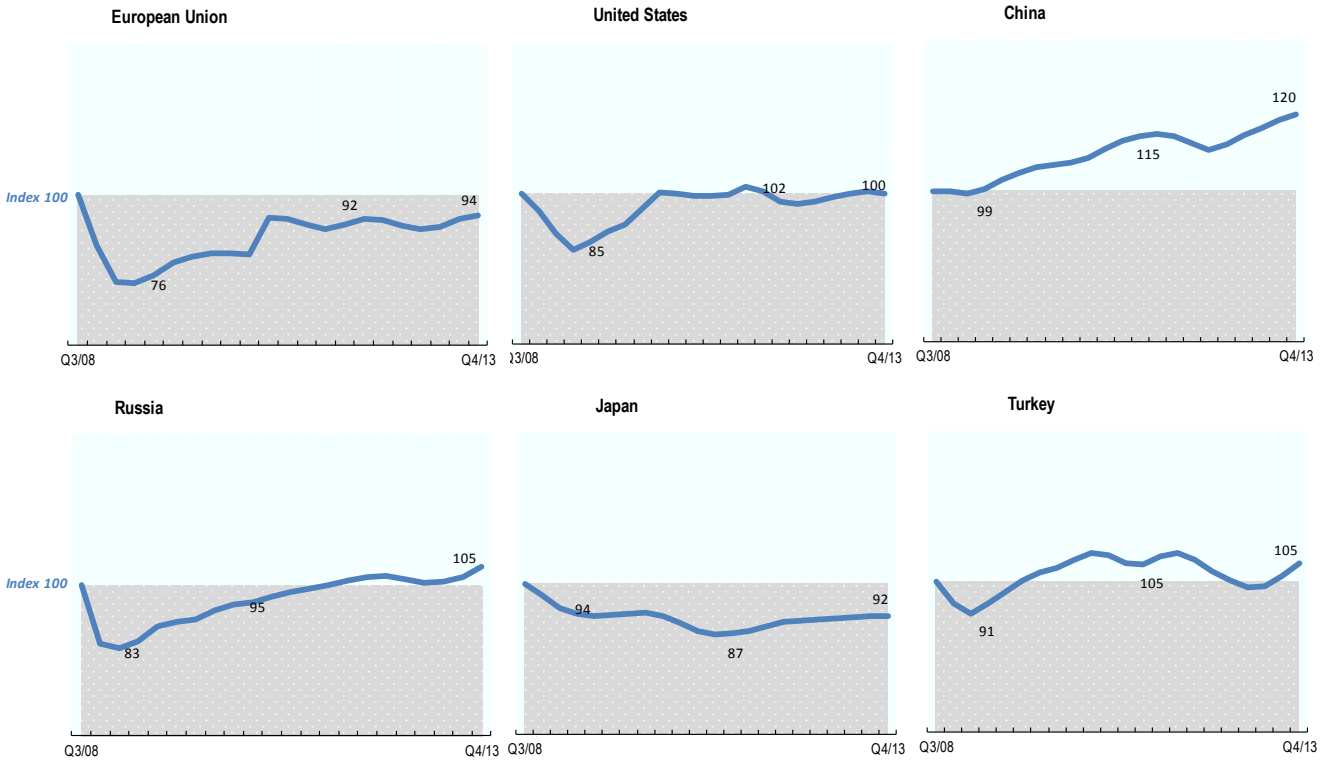


Figure 10. **China external trade with neighboring CIS countries and Russia, percentage change from June 2008**
(Current value in USD, monthly trend, seasonally adjusted)



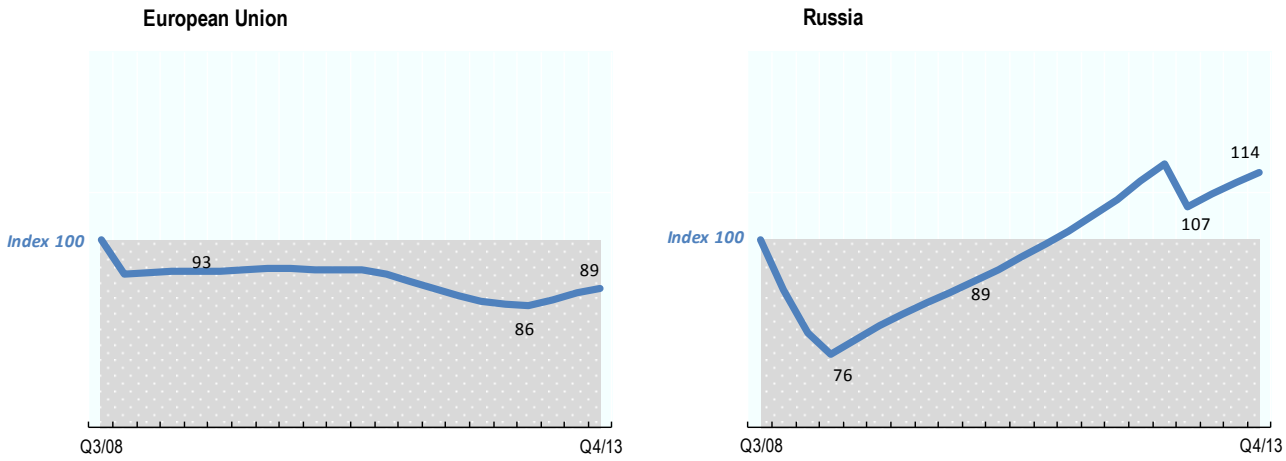
Note: Neighbouring CIS countries constitute members of the Shanghai Cooperation Group (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) and Mongolia.

Figure 11. **National and international rail freight, percentage change from 2008Q3**
(Tonne-km, quarterly trend, seasonally adjusted)



Note: China data is sourced from National Bureau of Statistics of China. EU rail freight data includes: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. These cover around 90% of total rail freight in the EU.

Fiigure 12. **National and international road freight**
(Million tonne-km, trend, seasonally adjusted)



Note:
Data on road freight in the EU area include Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. These cover around 75% of total road freight in the EU.

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 characterised 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.

If you would like to receive further issues of the Statistics Brief or more information, please contact: Mr Edouard Chong (edouard.chong@oecd.org).

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