

Paris, 7 December 2010

Statistics Brief: Recovery in Global Freight Uncertain

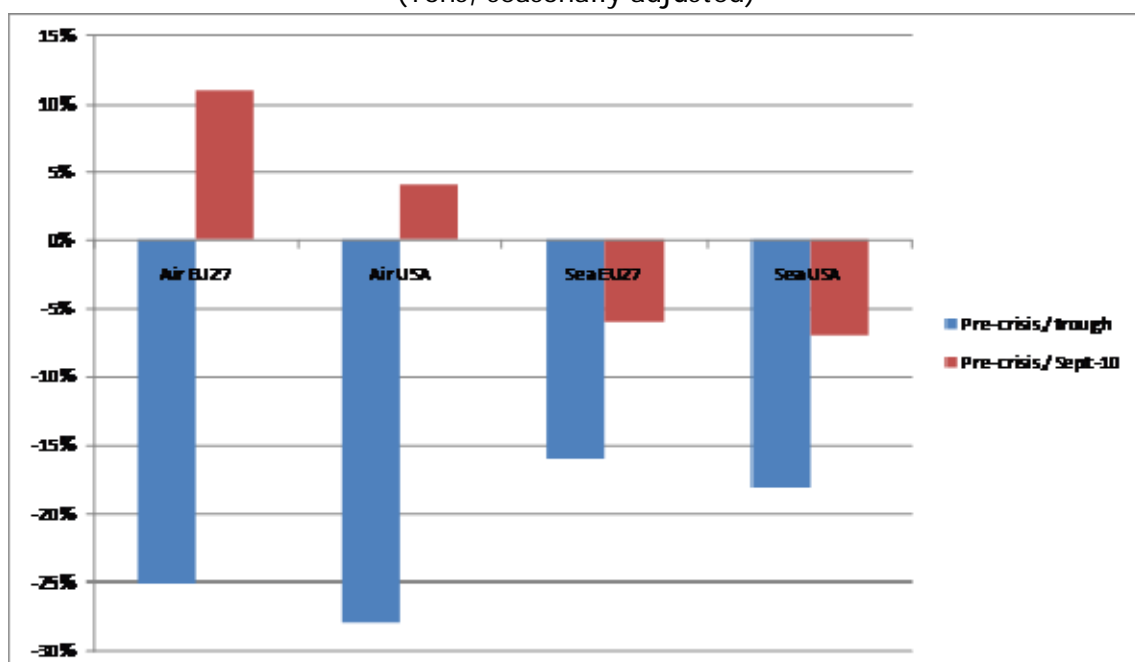
Latest transport data points to stagnating growth

According to latest data compiled by the International Transport Forum at the OECD on global freight flows since the financial crisis of 2008, recovery is uncertain and weak:

- In road, rail, and sea transport, current freight levels are below pre-crisis volumes by 5 to 10%;
- Only air cargo has recovered from the strong crisis-induced drop (-15 to -25%) that hit freight volumes in all modes;
- The recovery is uncertain in the sense that the rate of growth slows down and turns negative in some segments (e.g. US external trade by air and sea) in September of 2010.

Data on international air and sea cargo volumes for September 2010 shows that trade related air freight transport has recovered in both the EU and the United States. However, for total imports and exports by sea, recovery is still weak and volumes are still below their pre-crisis levels (EU27 -6%; USA -7%) measured in tons of goods carried, according to preliminary estimates (Figure 1).

Figure 1. External trade in the EU27 and the United States by sea and air, percentage change
(Tons, seasonally adjusted)



Pre-crisis month refers to June 2008 although actual peak differs somewhat by mode and region

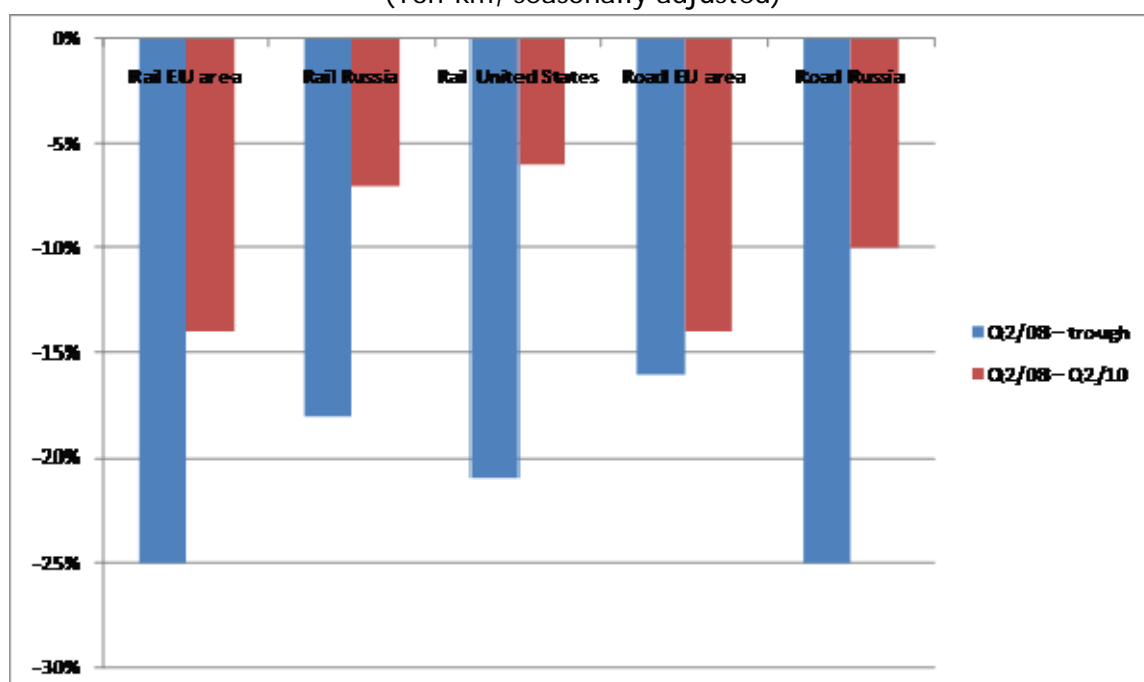
After 16 consecutive months of growth since the bottom of the economic crisis, the latest seasonally adjusted figures for external trade by air in the United States indicate that growth might be again stagnating. Trade by air has fallen two consecutive months when measured by seasonally adjusted data on tons carried (Figure 4).

The trend for US external trade by sea also turned downwards in September 2010 for the first time since the recovery started (Figure 3). Imports from China in particular have been falling in the United States both for air and sea. Data for EU27 are less gloomy, although the trend shows signs of slower growth, especially for goods carried by sea (see Figures 5 and 6).

As for more regionally directed freight transport, rail volume in the EU area fell by 25% during the crisis, measured by seasonally adjusted data on ton-kilometers performed. The impact of the crisis on rail freight in the United States and Russia was similar in magnitude; ton-km fell 21% and 18% respectively. The volume of rail freight in the second quarter of 2010 is still around 15% below the pre-crisis level in the EU area, while in the United States and Russia volumes are 8% and 9% respectively below pre-crisis levels (Figures 2, 7 and 8).

Recovery in road freight has been significantly slower than in other modes. The peak-to-trough fall in road freight volume was around 16% in the EU area. In the second quarter of 2010, the volume was still around 15% below the pre-crisis peak, according to seasonally adjusted data on ton-kilometers carried (Figures 2, 8 and 9).

Figure 2. National and international rail and road freight in EU area, USA and Russia, percentage change (Ton-km, seasonally adjusted)



Data on rail EU area exclude Greece and the Netherlands. Data on road EU area include Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain,

Sweden.

Figure 3. EU27 and United States external trade by sea
(1000 tons, seasonally adjusted)

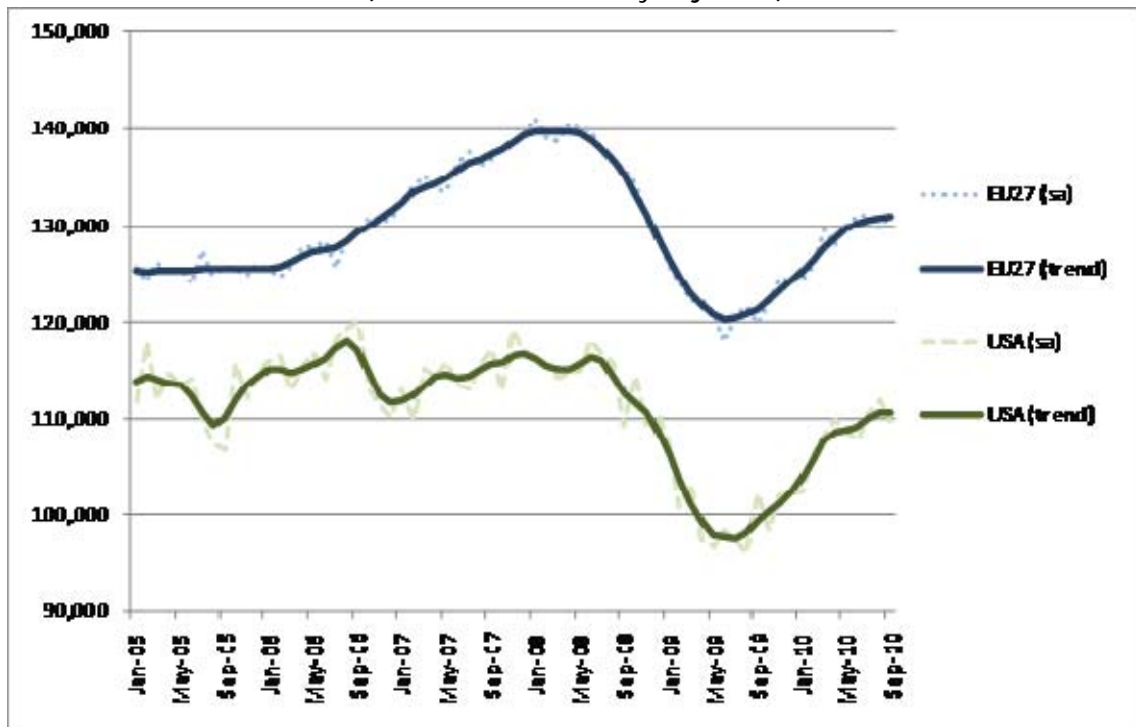


Figure 4. EU27 and United States external trade by air
(1000 tons, seasonally adjusted)



Figure 5. EU27 and United States trade with China by sea

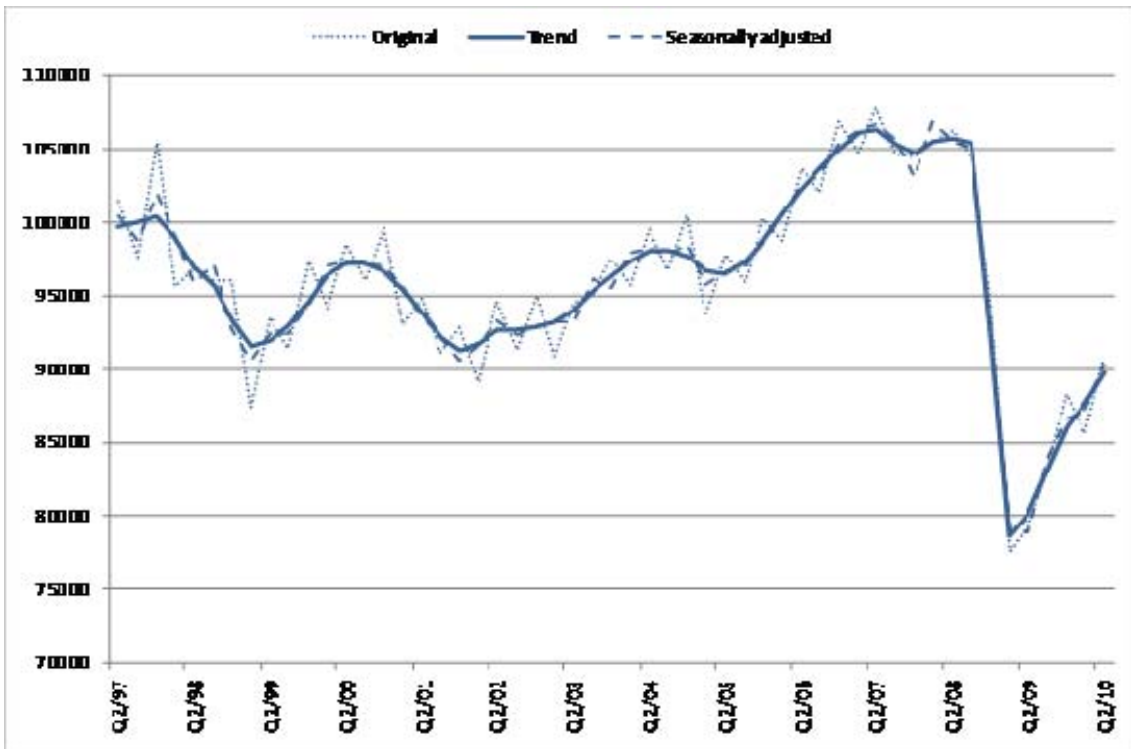
(1000 tons, seasonally adjusted)



Figure 6. EU27 and United States trade with China by air (1000 tons, seasonally adjusted)



Figure 7. National and international rail freight in the EU (Million ton-km)



Data on rail EU area exclude Greece and the Netherlands.

Figure 8. National and international rail freight in the United States and Russian Federation (Million ton-km)

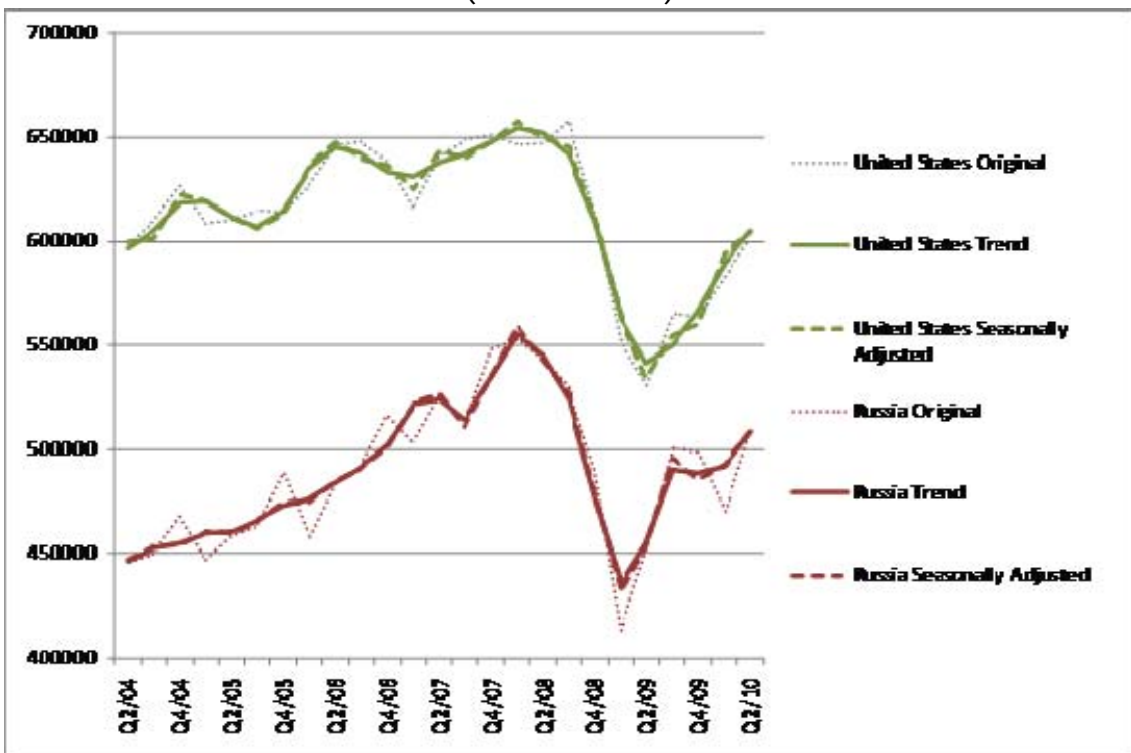
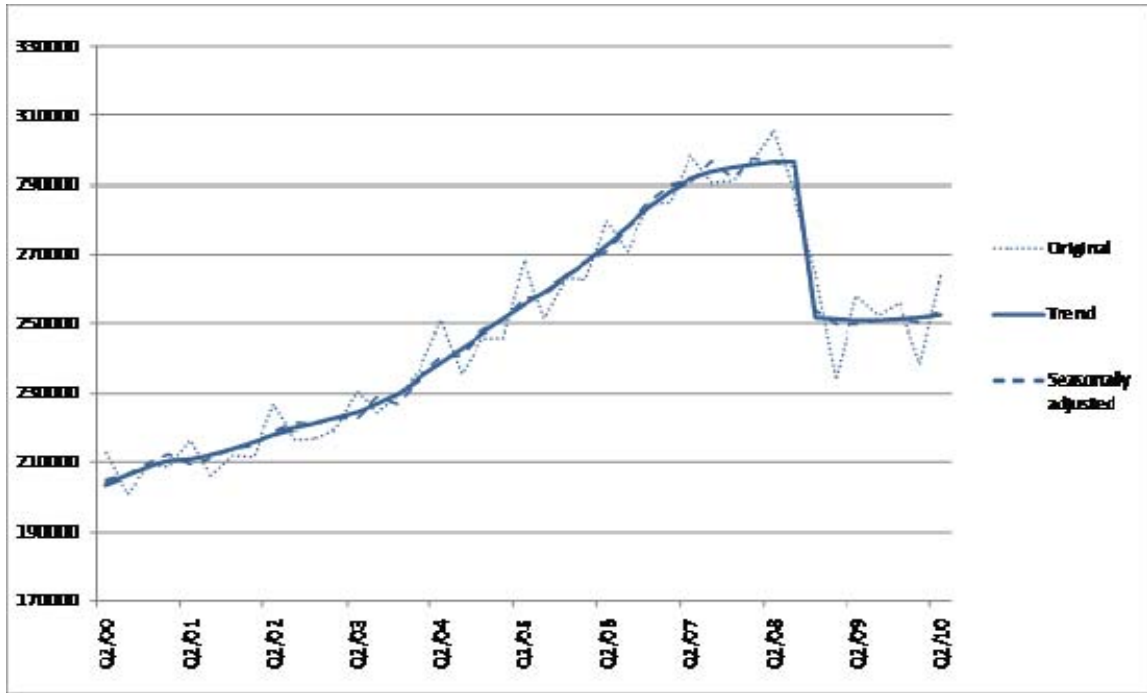


Figure 9. National and international road freight in the EU area (Million ton-km)



Data on road EU area include Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.

If you have any questions regarding this press release, or if you would like to receive our Statistics Brief on a regular basis, please contact Jari Kauppila at jari.kauppila@oecd.org or Mario Barreto at mario.barreto@oecd.org.

The International Transport Forum is a strategic think tank for the transport sector. Each year, it brings together Ministers from over 50 countries, along with leading decision-makers and actors from the private sector, civil society and research, to address transport issues of strategic importance. An intergovernmental organisation linked to the OECD, the Forum's goal is to help shape the transport policy agenda, and ensure that it contributes to economic growth, environmental protection, social inclusion and the preservation of human life and wellbeing. The 2011 International Transport Forum, to be held on 25-27 May in Leipzig, Germany, will focus on Transport for Society.