

MONTHLY *investment* BRIEF

Small is beautiful

Recent underperformance of European small caps

It is well established by financial theory (Fama & French) and empirical observations that, over a long period, European small caps have consistently outperformed large ones. However, over the past two years, we have seen a reversal of this trend: at the end of May 2023, the MSCI Europe Small Cap NR recorded a cumulative 2-year performance of -13%, compared with +12% for the MSCI Europe Large Cap NR. Moreover, small caps currently show a 33% discount to large caps. Let's try to understand the reasons behind this underperformance:

Firstly, it's important to believe in favorable growth prospects when investing in small caps. Indeed, the earnings of these companies are highly sensitive to economic activity, with an estimated multiple of 4 times nominal growth. Secondly, any tightening of monetary policies has a negative impact on the financing capacity of these companies, as the cost of capital for small caps is rising much faster than for large caps, reducing their relative earnings growth. Finally, the relative performance of small caps is also linked to liquidity. Central banks have switched from injecting money and expanding their balance sheets to drying up this liquidity. It's also important to note that small-cap equities amplify market movements, both downwards and upwards. For example, European small caps rebounded by around +90% one year after the decline triggered by the subprime crisis, and European micro-caps recorded a +115% jump just one year after the COVID-19 crisis. Our point is not to say that in absolute terms, small-cap equities will rebound massively, but rather to emphasize that, compared with large caps, we see an attractive entry point for a significant return to the mean.

Return to attractive valuation levels

Firstly, over the past 5 years, the P/E ratio of European small caps has dropped considerably (16.7 in 2018 vs. 13.2 today), while that of European large caps has remained relatively stable (13.7 in 2018 vs. 12.5 today). Secondly, the analyst consensus for small caps is +27% for 2023 and +16% for 2024, compared with 0% and +7% respectively for large caps. The question now is whether the consensus is too optimistic. Our historical analysis shows that expectations are often overly generous, but uniform across large caps and small caps, since both are equally revised by almost -5% each year. Our conviction to reposition ourselves in small caps therefore remains entirely valid, given that in the present case, we're looking at convergence towards large caps as much as absolute performance. Thirdly, small caps have fully integrated the rise in the cost of capital, with EV/EBITDA multiple (enterprise value divided by EBITDA) at 8.0x, i.e. levels seen in 2009.

Our macro-economic scenario validates a very gradual repositioning towards European small caps

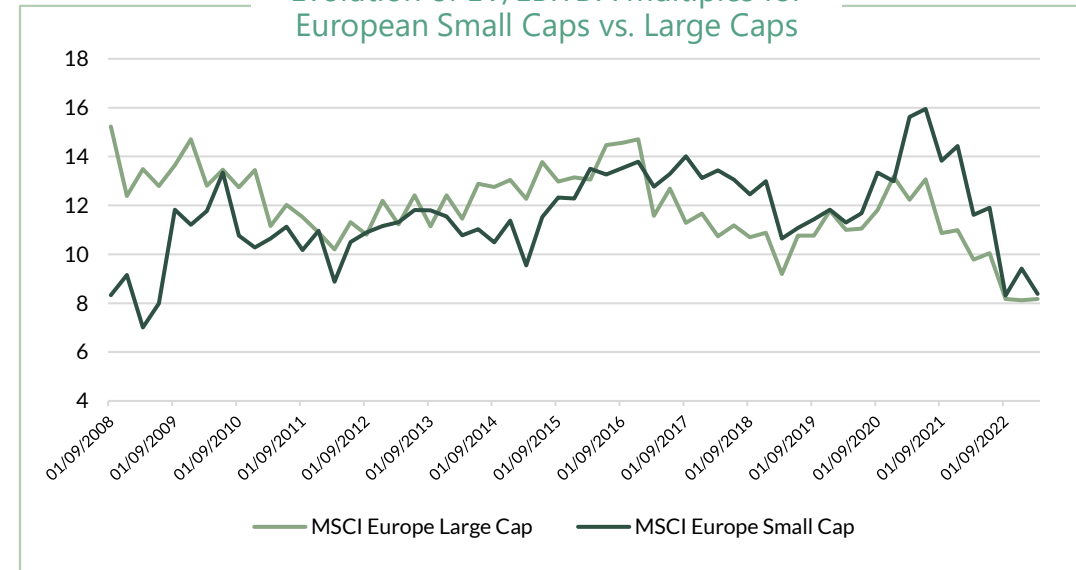
Despite the high volatility, small-caps represent an attractive opportunity today. As a reminder of our current positioning, we are slightly underweight equities due to the potential negative economic impact of tighter credit conditions. We recommend being highly selective when choosing equities to avoid excessive enthusiasm for certain parts of the market. We prefer stocks with reasonable valuation multiples, solid fundamentals and growth prospects above the market average.



This positioning reflects a particular market context, where the dichotomy between signals sent by companies (rather positive) and macro-economic signals (rather negative) could persist for a few months. Even if the current robustness of the labor market is contributing to business and consumer confidence, we believe this environment is likely to evolve less favorably in the next few months. However, in our macroeconomic scenario, it seems that the tightening of credit conditions in the eurozone has already been factored in, reducing the risk of negative surprises for investors in the event of a potential recession in the eurozone. Furthermore, we are approaching central bank terminal rates. Thus, a stabilization of financial conditions could boost the performance of small caps. What's more, we are currently seeing an improvement in market conditions for European small caps, with bank liquidity less tight in Europe than in the US. Finally, in a context where organic growth is becoming problematic, companies will seek growth through external operations. Recent deals such as Rovio, Dechra and Majorel are trading on average at a 30% to 50% premium to the closing price. Strategic players benefit from particularly attractive valuations and almost immediate accretive effect on their earnings. This is a strong incentive, despite the recent rise in borrowing costs. Marginal returns remain highly favourable to this type of merger.

To sum up, economic conditions could deteriorate over the next few months, which does not justify massive investment in small caps. However, the promise of a positive real return (net of inflation) is attractive, as are current valuation levels. This means that long-term investors can already consider realigning their positions, at the cost of high volatility and limited liquidity.

Evolution of EV/EBITDA multiples for European Small Caps vs. Large Caps



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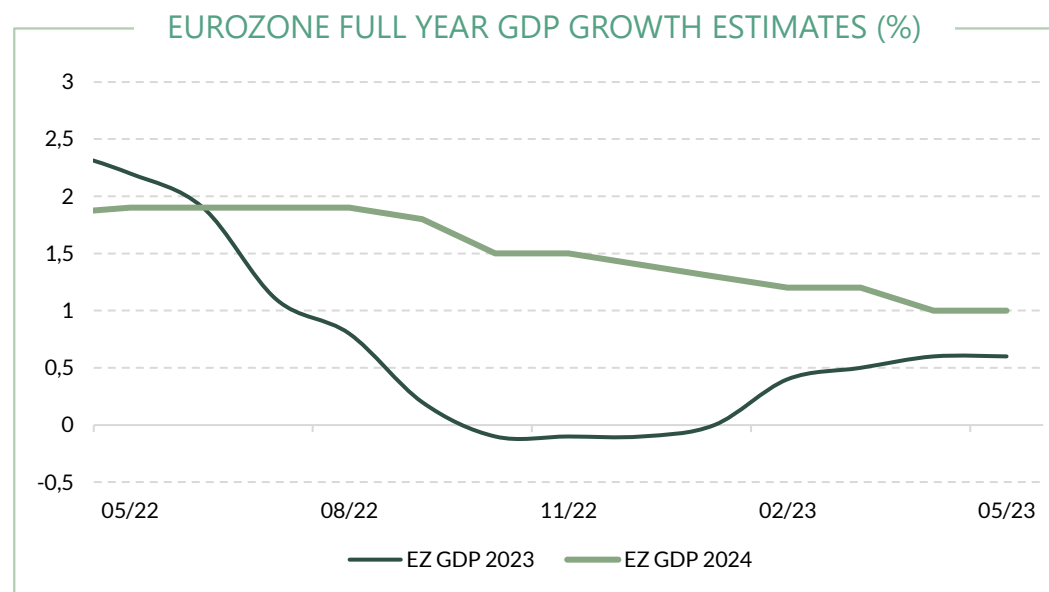
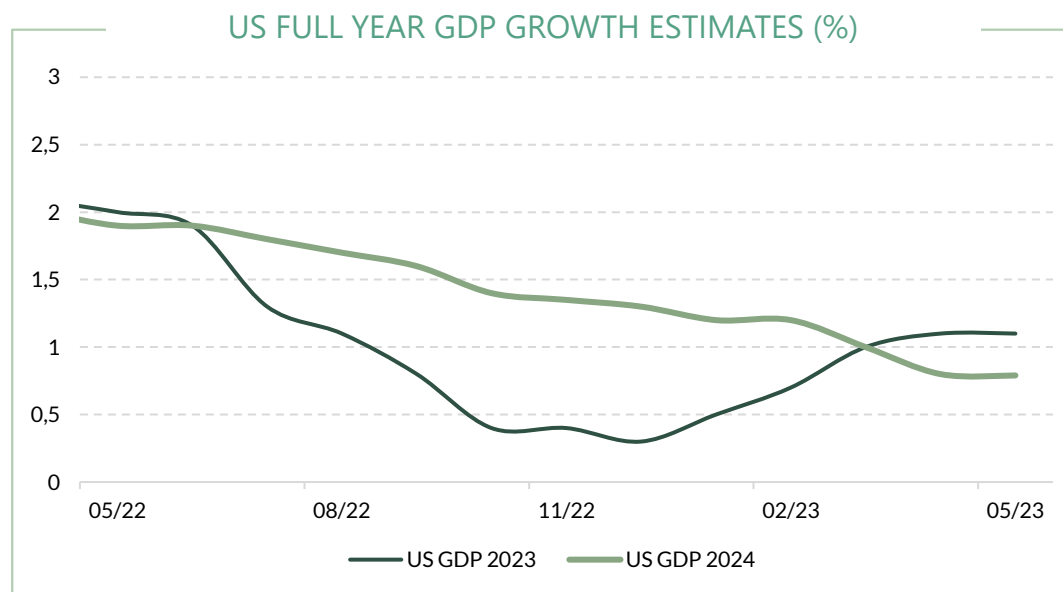
01

MACROECONOMIC
outlook



Growth outlook

NO GROWTH BUT STILL NO RECESSION

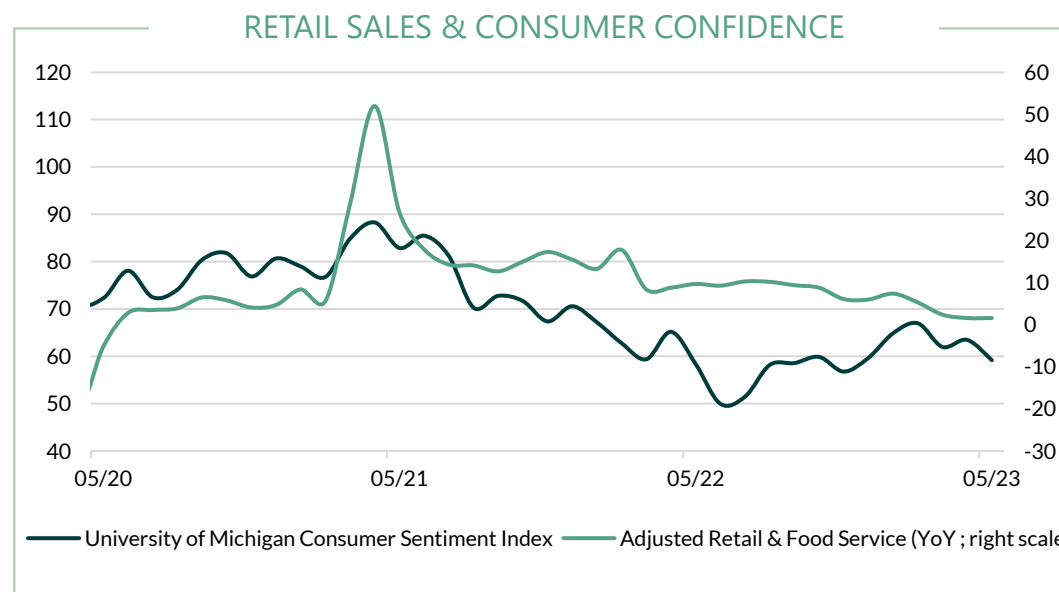
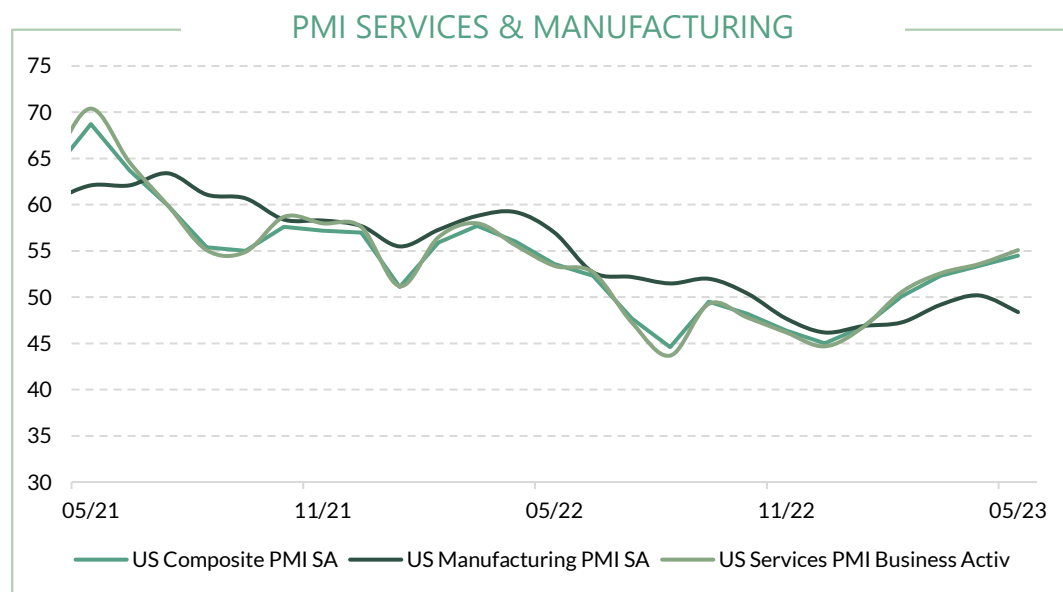


- As incoming data still shows an ambiguous picture, consensus growth expectations have been rather unchanged recently
- A mild recession for the US in the autumn and winter quarters is the central view, but the camp expecting a cycle extension/soft landing is growing
- China has been slightly downgraded to 4,9% in 2024, following the recent weaker data



USA

IS THE GAP BETWEEN MANUFACTURERS AND SERVICES SET TO NARROW?

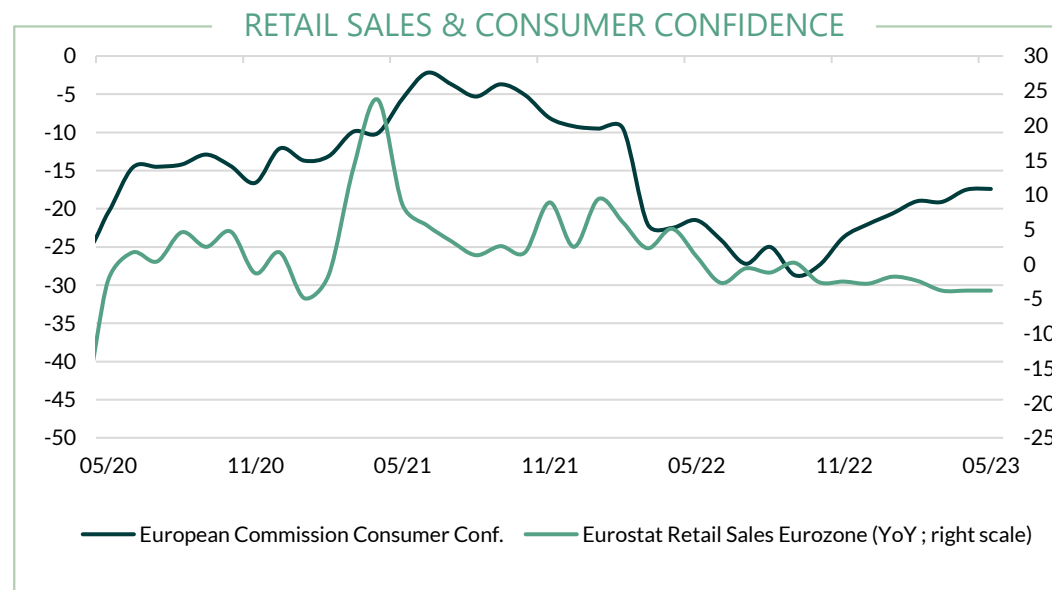
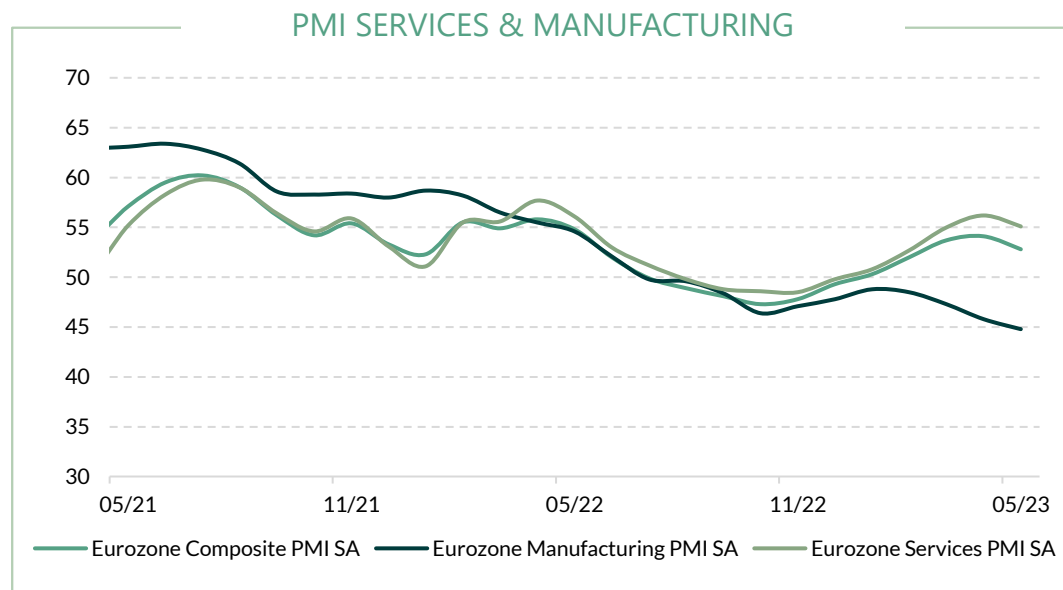


- Q1 GDP growth was revised slightly up to 1,3% and the Atlanta Fed GDP forecast for Q2 stands at 2%, a bit higher than most estimates
- While manufacturing is grinding lower steadily, services remain relatively upbeat
- The May ISM manufacturing index slid further to 46,9 with a worrisome drop of the new order subcomponent to 42,6, the lowest reading since May 2020
- The labor market remains a source of strength. Latest data points are even showing an acceleration in non-Farm payrolls and job openings. Only the unemployment rate edged up to 3,7% from a multi decade record low of 3,4%
- We look for a successive softening in US economic momentum, driven by the most aggressive hiking cycle in decades and its repercussions on real estate, the banking sector and finally demand



Europe

HEADWINDS ARE INCREASING



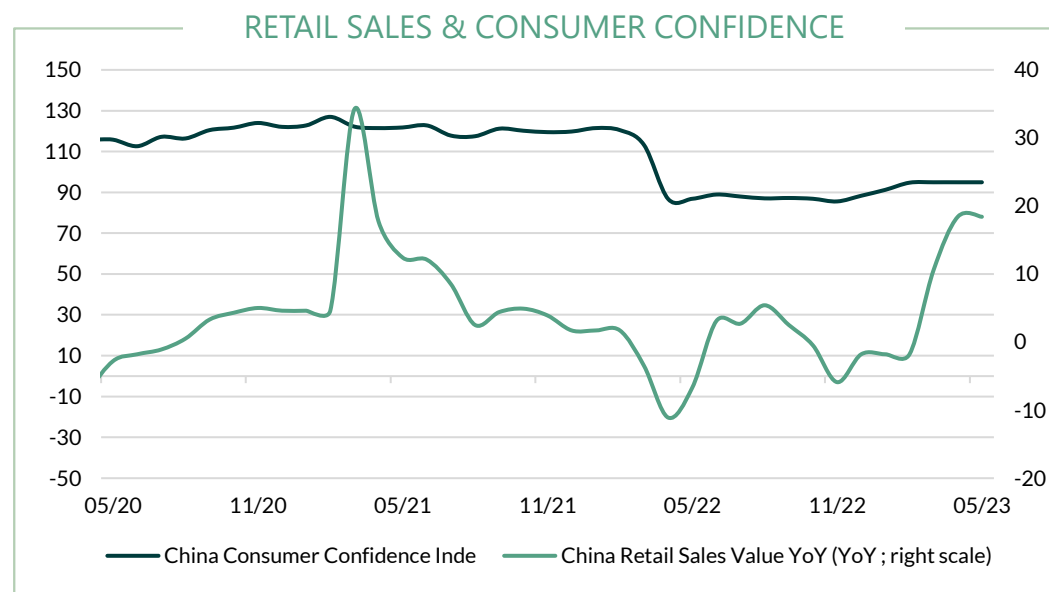
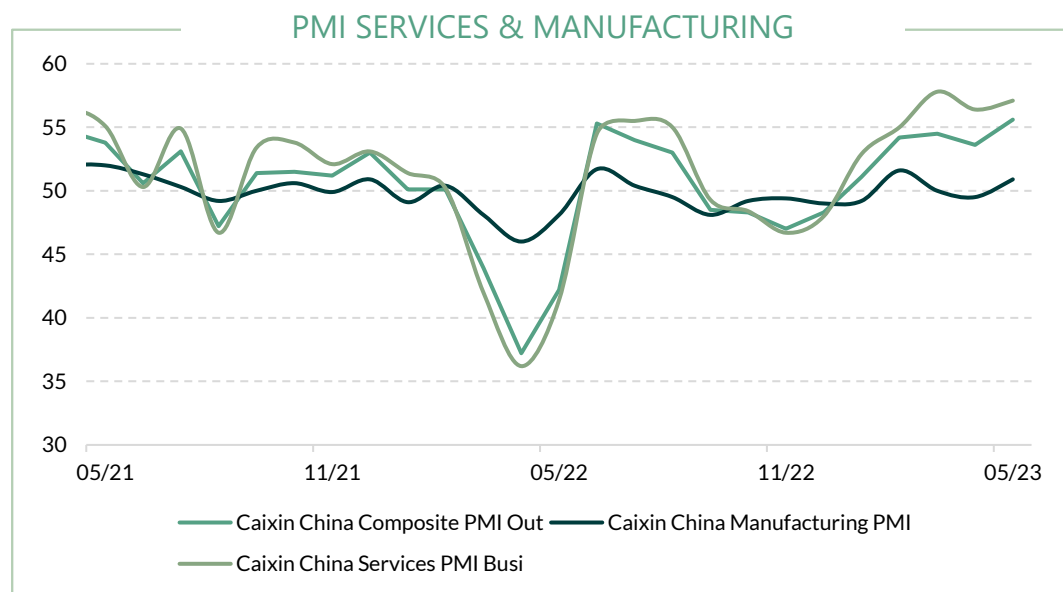
- PMIs are finally reversing. The composite indicator fell to 52,8 (54,1 in April), with manufacturing weakening further well within the contractionary range. However, the services side also turned with meaningful momentum loss for Italy and Spain
- After a significant drop in March industrial production, at least in France there appears to be a rebound for April
- While the economy seems still to be resilient overall, manufacturing continues to grind lower. On the positive side consumer spending is holding up well supported by tight labor markets, wage increases, saving reserves and improving real consumer incomes as inflation recedes
- We still see the risk for the economy tilted to the downside as the ECB hiking cycle works itself through the system and a likely US recession should impact the Eurozone in late 2023

Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Bloomberg | Data as of 31/05/2023



China

AFTER THE EUPHORIA, WEAK SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

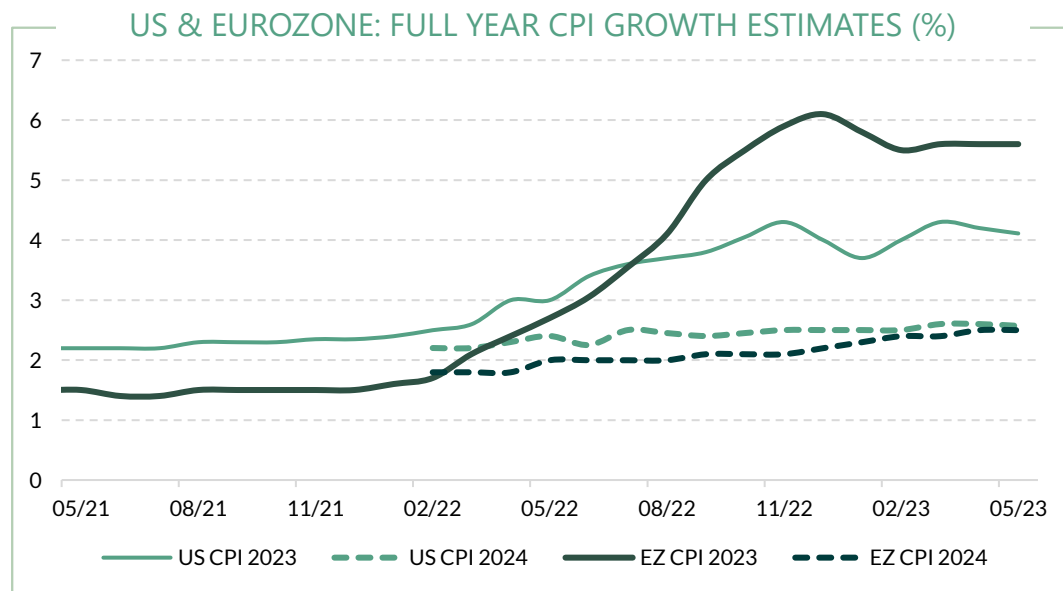


- PMIs sent a completely opposing message. While the Caixin index improved markedly by two points to 55.6, the official PMI edged down to 52.9 from 54.4
- The property market flags a bit of ongoing improvement with new home prices and residential property sales rising MoM again in April
- After having surprised to the upside in March, retail sales and industrial production had been decidedly weaker than expectations for April
- Judging from the reopening experiences in Western countries, the economic rebound could last another one to two quarters
- However, it is becoming increasingly evident that the economic momentum is mostly concentrated in consumer related sectors, while manufacturing remains depressed



Inflation expectations

ANCHORED WITH LITTLE CHANGES



YOY CPI ESTIMATES

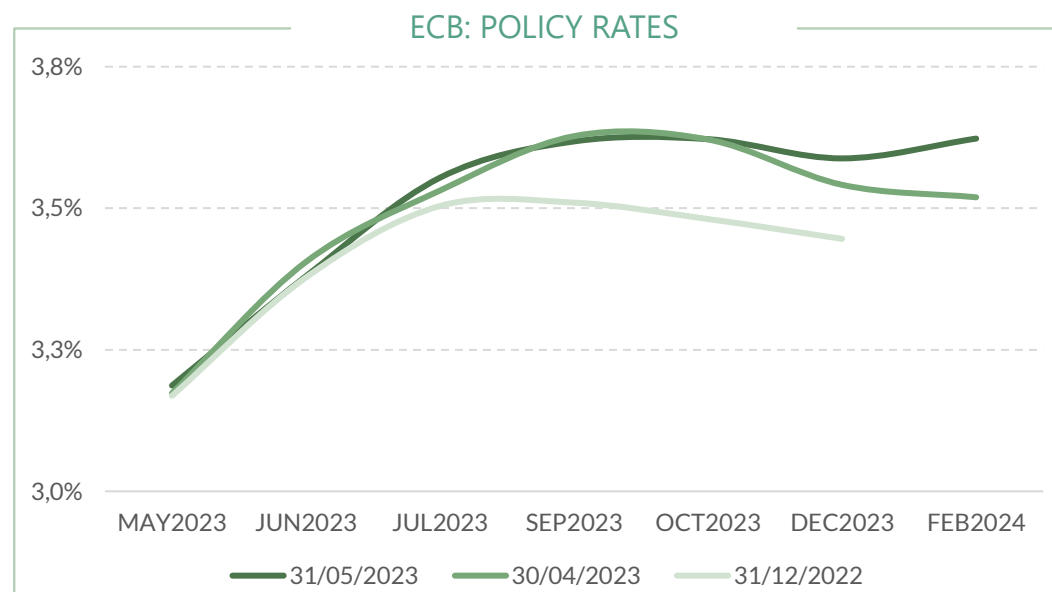
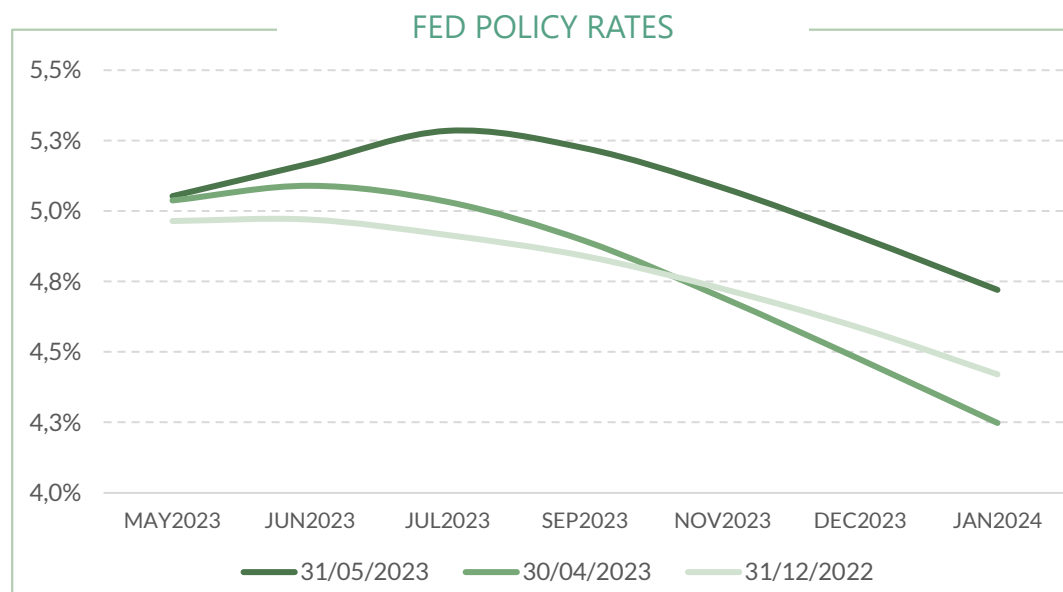
CPI YoY	May-23	Apr-23	1Y trend	5Y average	20Y average
Canada		4,4		3,2	2,7
U.S.		4,9		1,9	3,2
Brazil		4,2		3,0	7,9
Mexico		6,3		2,6	6,7
Chile		9,9		2,9	
Eurozone	6,1	7,0		1,8	2,6
Germany	6,1	7,2		1,8	2,3
France	5,1	5,9		1,3	2,0
Italy	7,6	8,2		1,6	2,5
Poland	13	14,7		3,6	
Sweden		10,5		2,0	2,2
Switzerland	2,2	2,6		0,5	0,8
U.K.		8,7		2,2	3,1
India		4,7		3,0	8,0
Indonesia	4,0	4,3		1,5	8,8
Malaysia		3,3		0,7	
Japan		3,5		0,6	0,3
South Korea	3,3	3,7		1,1	3,0
China		0,1		0,9	2,3
Hong Kong		2,1		0,9	1,5

- Surveys of long run inflation expectations remain fairly muted and barely unchanged
- Inflation break even rates are hovering in narrow ranges, reflecting inflation expectations around 2,25% to 2,5% on a 10-year horizon in the US and Eurozone



FED & ECB policies

ECB TIGHTENING THE SCREW TOO FAR?



- The upbeat reading of the May US employment report is unlikely to alter the indicated end of the FED tightening cycle
- Expectations for cuts in 2023 have meanwhile mostly been priced out, reflecting a more sober assessment
- The ECB has been quite vocal in order to keep hiking expectations alive. Markets price in 50bp more until September, which could already be overtightening given the speed and unprecedented amount of tightening



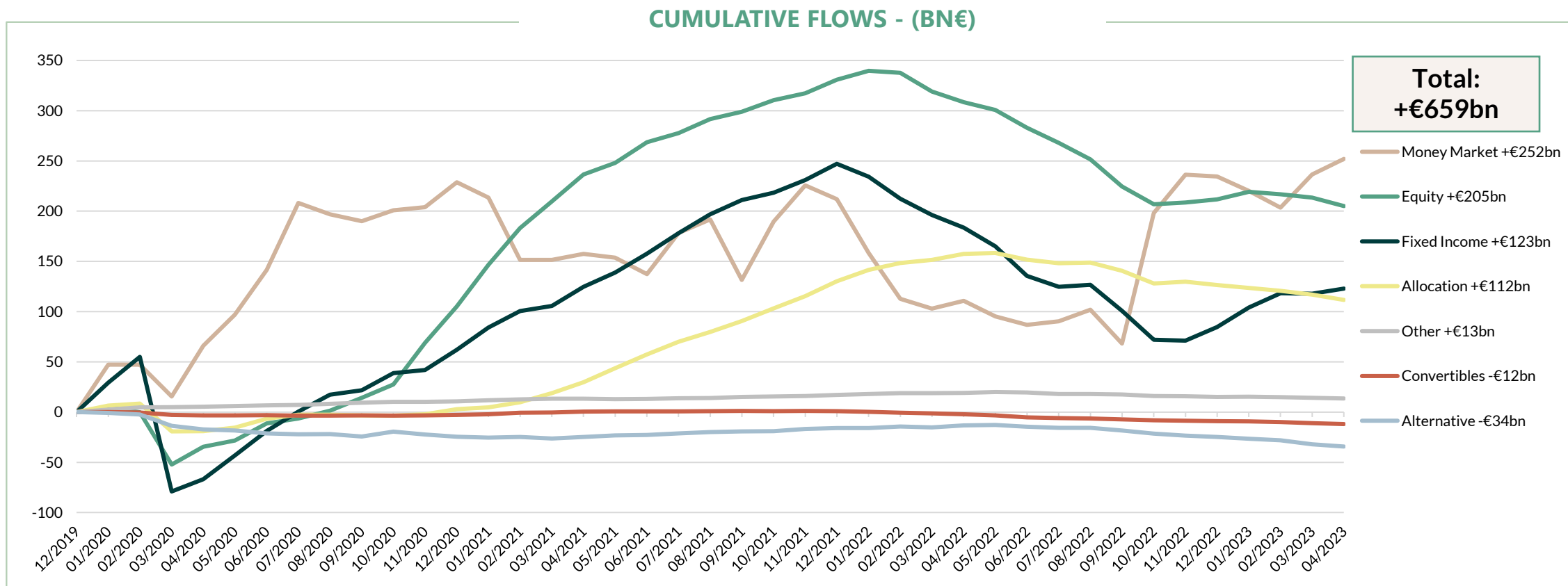
02

MARKET
analysis



3-year cumulative mutual fund flows (€bn)

SLIGHT REBOUND OF FLOWS TOWARDS FIXED INCOME

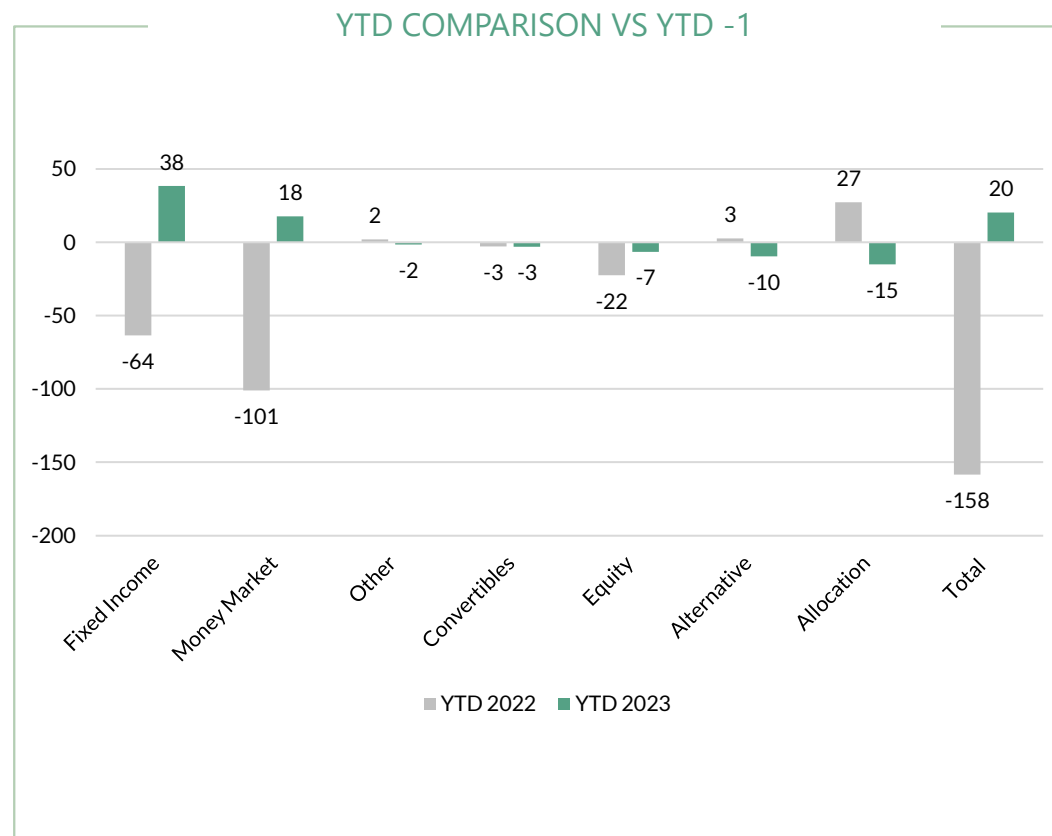
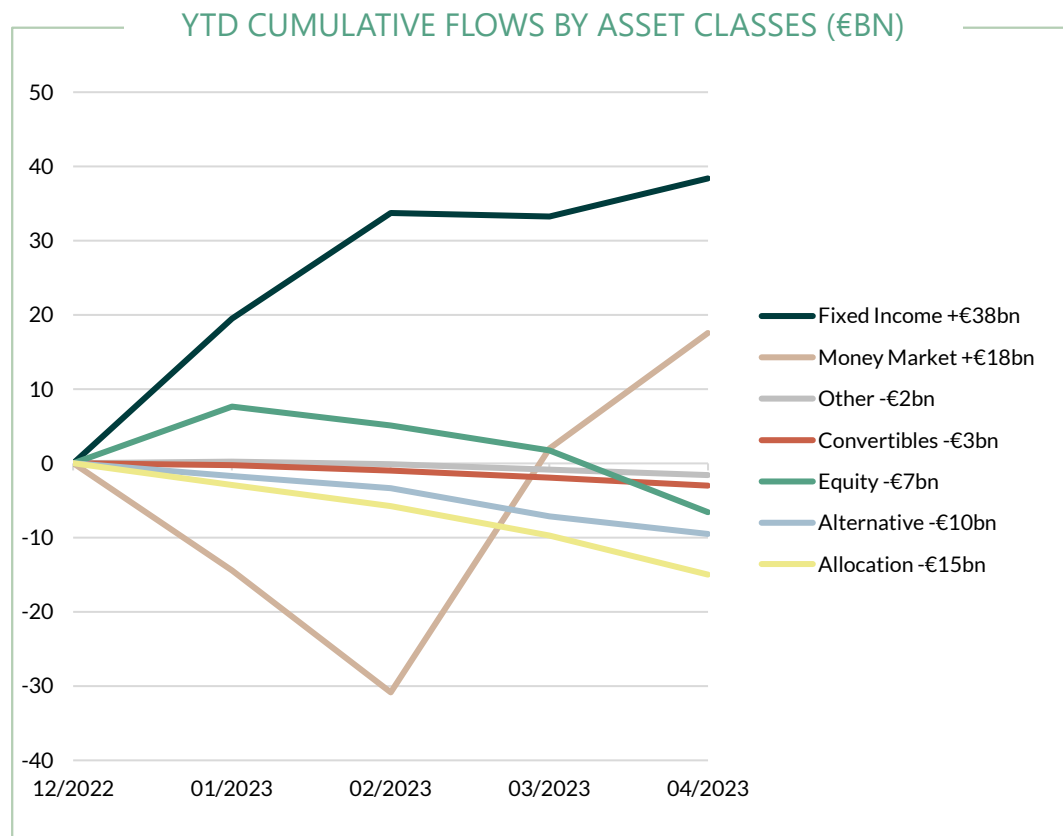


Source: Morningstar. Data as of 30/04/2023 (Europe OE ex ETF ex MM ex FoF ex Feeder (domiciled, most compr))



YTD European mutual fund flows

MONEY MARKET FUNDS KEEP ATTRACTING FLOWS

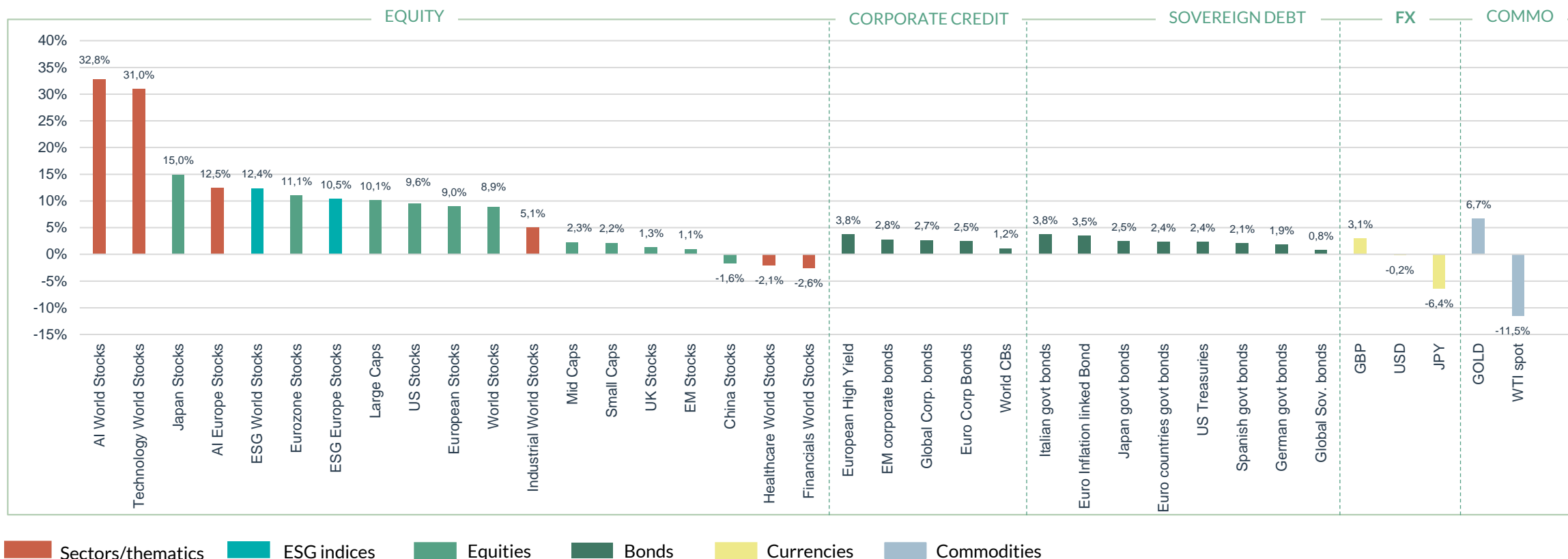


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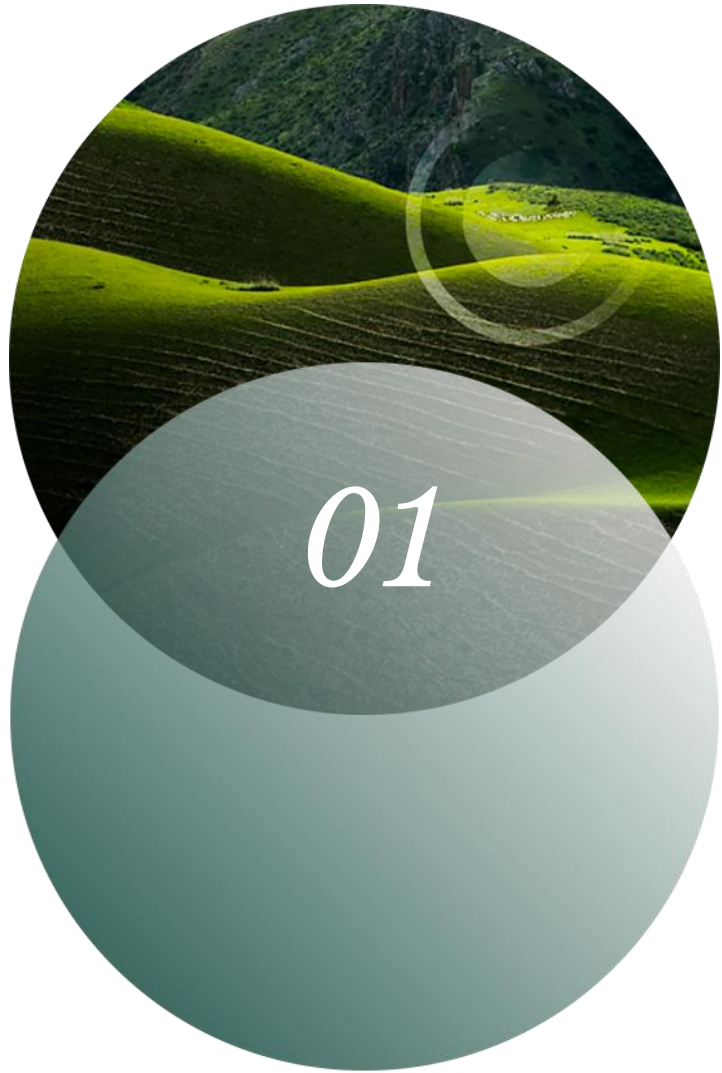


Year-to-date performances of asset classes

FEW CHOSEN ONES (TECH, LUXURY) ARE DRIVING THE MARKET UPWARDS



Past performances are not a reliable indicator of future performances and are not constant over time.
Sources: Bloomberg and BoA ML as of 31/05/2023; performances expressed in local currencies

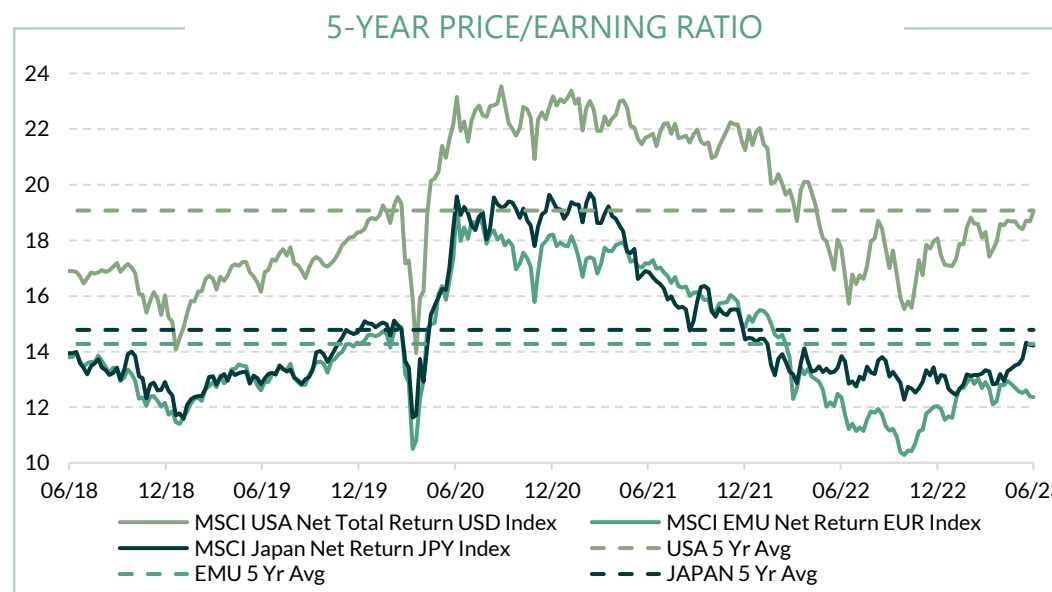
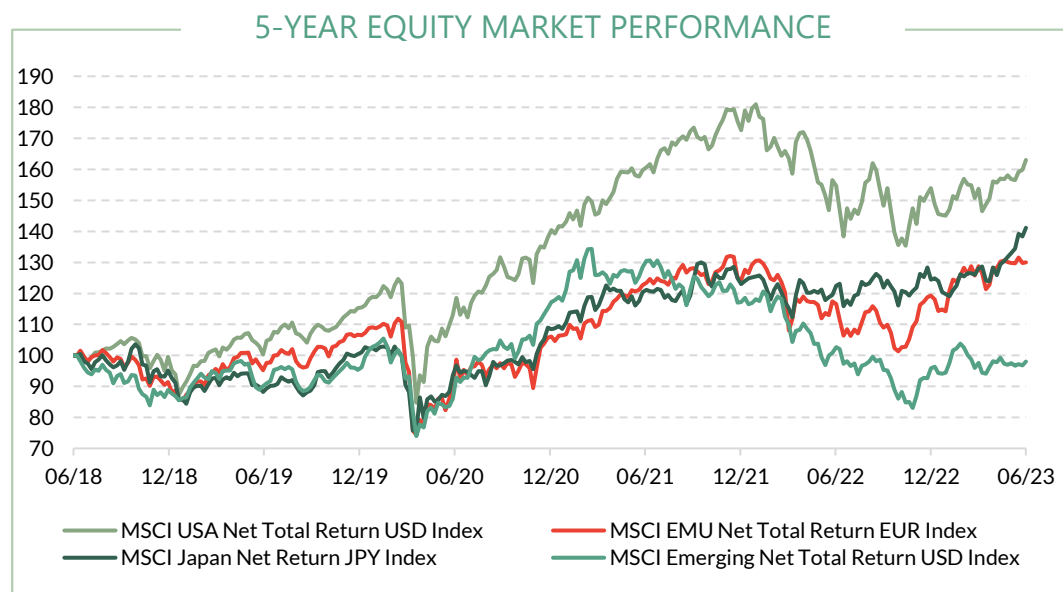


EQUITIES



Equities

JAPANESE EQUITIES BREAK RECORDS



- While the last decades made investors quite accustomed to frequent bouts of US overperformance, the recent surge in Japanese indexes is more peculiar in a global context of caution on cyclical.
- The underlying case for Japanese equities, which entered 2023 with very attractive valuations, still holds. The Topix still now trades at 14x forward PE, quite acceptable in a low yield environment. The timing and strength of the rally, at dawn of a possible eventual tightening by the BoJ, nevertheless raises more questions
- The Nikkei 225 strongly overperformed in May (7% vs 3% for the Topix), breaking recent highs and entering the vicinity of the peak of the late 1980s. Implied volatility moved up strongly in the meantime...

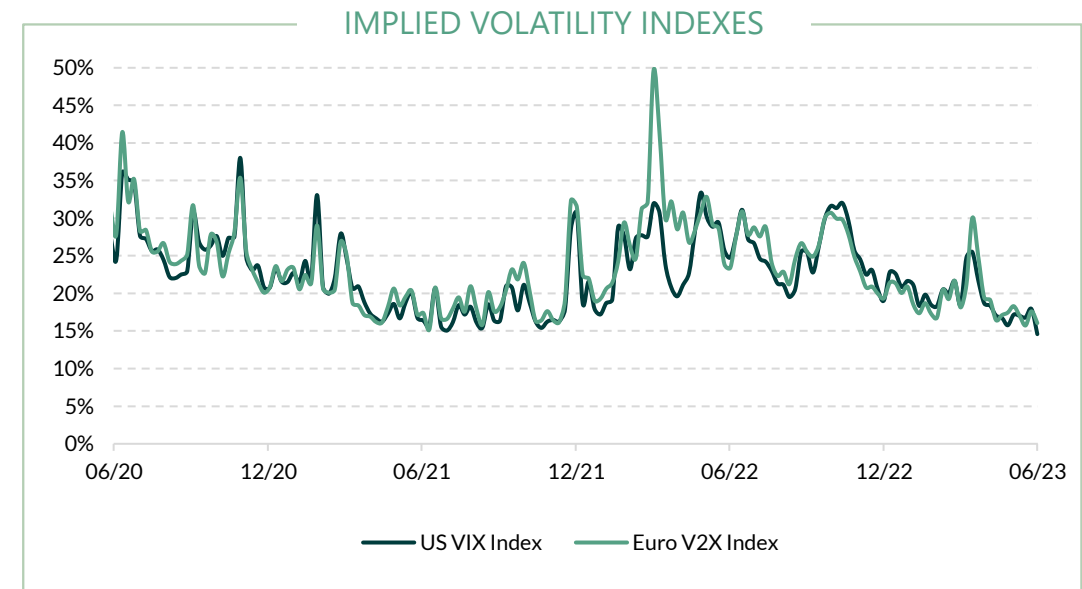
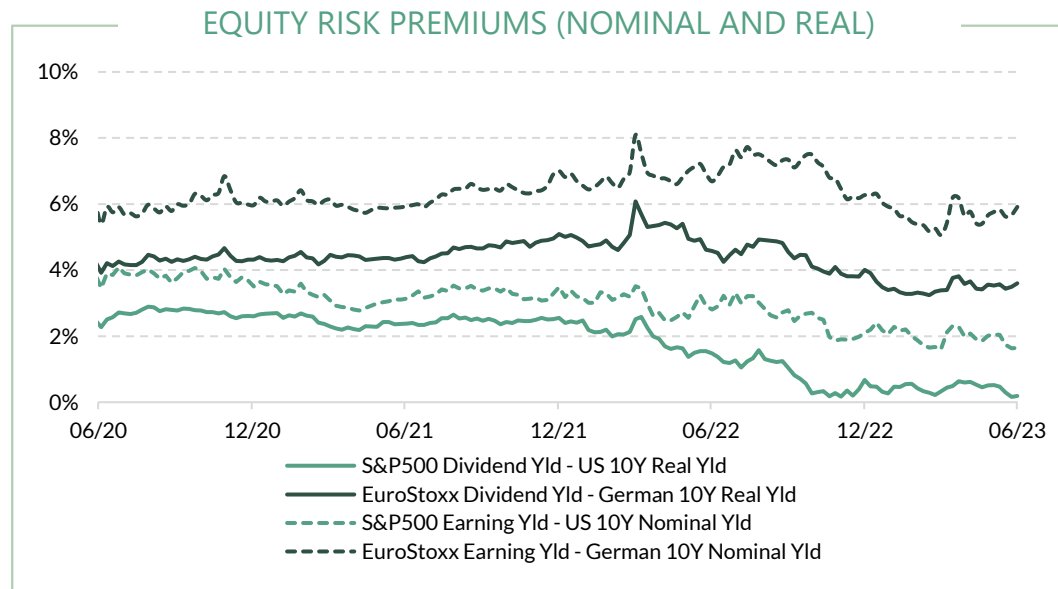
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Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Bloomberg | Data as of 02/06/2023



Risk premiums & volatility

A CERTAIN COMPLACENCY FROM INVESTORS' SIDE, ESPECIALLY IN THE US



- While rotations remain heavy inside most equity markets, indexes' implied volatilities (with the notable exception of Japan) are back to lowest levels since pre-Covid.
- In Europe and emerging markets, this did not materialize in any more risk-on positioning from investors, and valuations remained stable or slightly lower.
- In the US market, Energy (-10%) and Materials (-7%) suffered significantly, while Info&Tech (+9%) was buoyed by the semiconductors frenzy (NVidia +36%, Broadcom +29%, Applied Materials +18%...)

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Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Bloomberg | Data as of 02/06/2023



European equities – sectors overview

AN UNEXPECTED DROP IN VALUATIONS, EXCEPT FOR TECH

EUROPEAN SECTORS	WEIGHT %	PERFORMANCE		EPS GROWTH		VALUATION			
		1m %	YTD %	2022	2023	P/E 12m 12m	Div Yield 12m	EV/EBITDA 12m	Price/Book 12m
STOXX Europe 600		-3,2%	6%	3%	7%	12,6 x	3,7%	8,4 x	1,7 x
Commodities									
Energy	4,5%	-7,4%	-6%	-25%	-2%	6,7 x	5,2%	3,3 x	1,1 x
Basic Resources	2,5%	-6,4%	-16%	-33%	-5%	8,3 x	6,3%	4,5 x	1,1 x
Cyclicals									
Automobiles & Parts	2,7%	-1,7%	12%	-5%	4%	5,8 x	5,3%	5,0 x	0,7 x
Chemicals	2,7%	-5,6%	3%	-24%	13%	15,6 x	3,4%	8,6 x	1,8 x
Construction & Materials	3,8%	-3,2%	12%	-1%	10%	13,6 x	3,3%	7,9 x	1,8 x
Industrial Goods & Services	14,1%	-1,2%	11%	-4%	9%	16,4 x	2,6%	9,7 x	2,7 x
Media	1,7%	-6,6%	4%	7%	12%	15,5 x	3,0%	10,0 x	2,7 x
Technology	8,0%	6,5%	22%	47%	18%	22,6 x	1,3%	15,2 x	3,9 x
Travel & Leisure	1,6%	0,9%	25%	99%	30%	16,3 x	1,6%	7,8 x	2,7 x
Consumer Products and Services	6,7%	-5,7%	18%	9%	17%	23,9 x	2,0%	13,5 x	4,2 x
Financials									
Banks	8,2%	-2,9%	3%	24%	5%	6,0 x	7,6%		0,6 x
Insurance	5,1%	-5,0%	0%	40%	10%	9,3 x	5,8%	30,2 x	1,5 x
Financial Services	3,8%	-2,7%	4%	133%	8%	11,8 x	3,5%	8,2 x	1,1 x
Real Estate	1,7%	-8,6%	-8%	-2%	4%	11,4 x	5,2%	20,6 x	0,7 x
Defensives									
Health Care	15,9%	-1,6%	6%	9%	14%	17,4 x	2,5%	12,4 x	3,3 x
Food Beverage and Tobacco	6,6%	-6,8%	-1%	4%	9%	15,4 x	3,5%	11,2 x	2,5 x
Personal Care Drug and Grocery Stores	2,3%	-5,8%	6%	2%	11%	16,0 x	3,3%	8,8 x	2,7 x
Retail	1,1%	-4,3%	14%	4%	16%	15,8 x	3,5%	7,4 x	2,4 x
Telecommunications	2,9%	-6,2%	7%	7%	13%	12,9 x	5,0%	6,2 x	1,2 x
Utilities	4,1%	-3,5%	6%	-5%	3%	13,0 x	4,8%	7,8 x	1,5 x

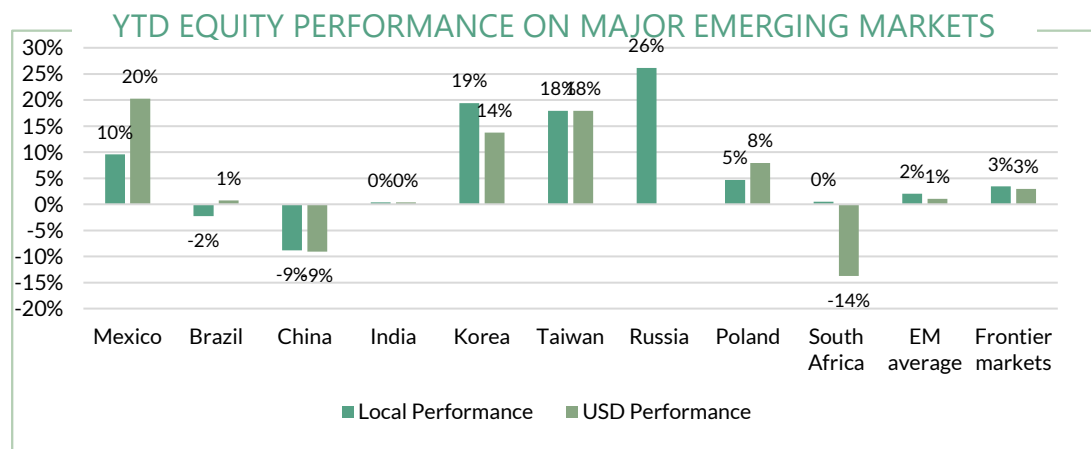
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Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Goldman Sachs, 06/06/2023



Emerging markets

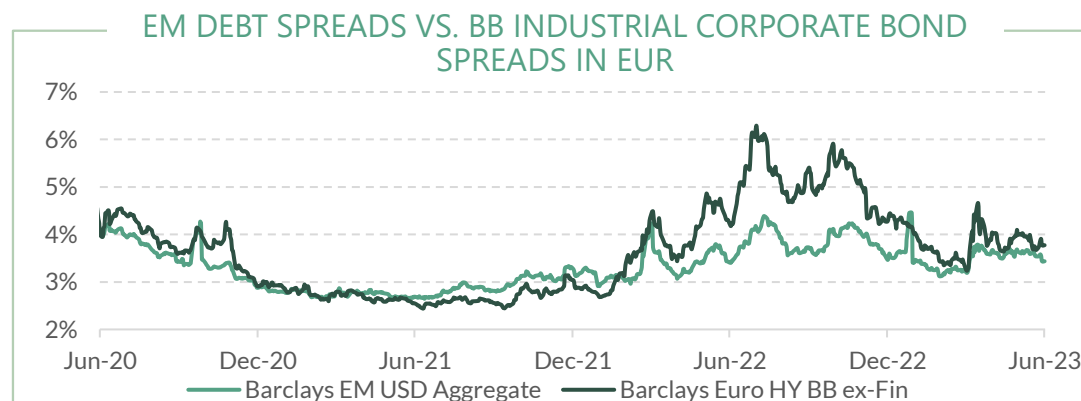
EMERGING MARKETS BACK IN FAVOR, AT THE COST OF HIGH VOLATILITY



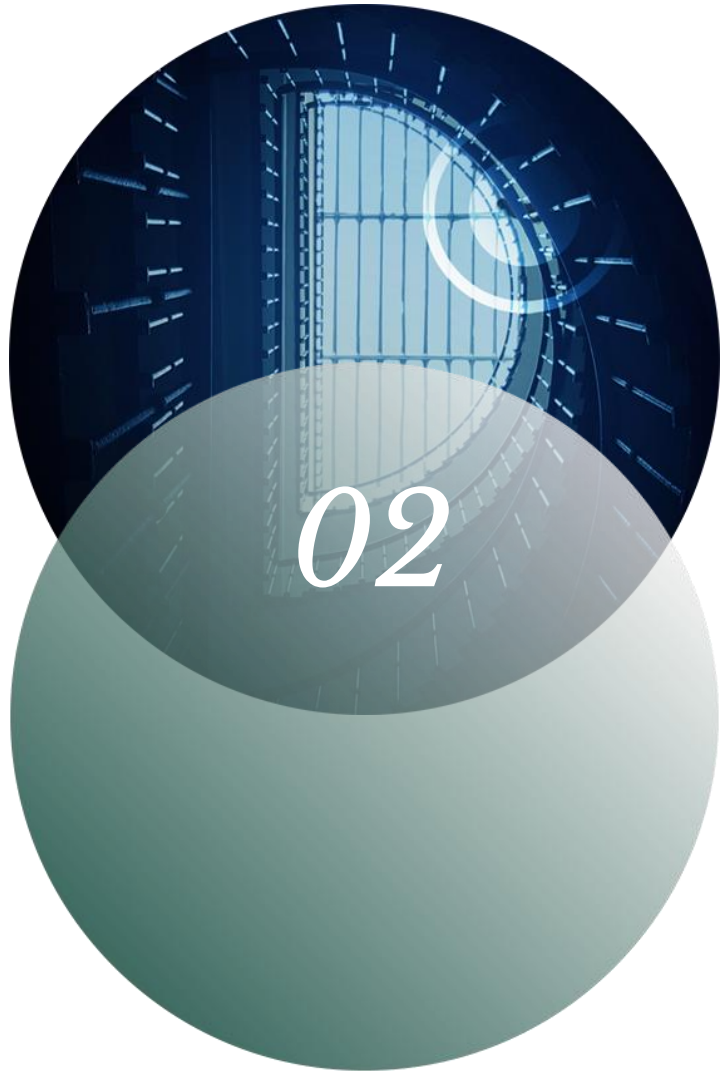
EPS (INCLUDING LOSSES) GROWTH & PE (LOCAL CURRENCY)

Emerging	PE 12mth fwd	Current Fiscal Year est EPS Growth	Next Fiscal Year est EPS Growth	Dividend Yield (trailing 12m)
MSCI EM	13,0	-5%	18%	3,1%
MSCI CHINA	10,7	13%	15%	2,5%
MSCI KOREA	17,4	-40%	65%	2,0%
MSCI INDIA	22,0	14%	18%	1,4%
MSCI INDONESIA	15,3	-7%	9%	4,4%
MSCI PHILIPPINES	13,0	13%	12%	2,2%
MSCI MALAYSIA	13,7	9%	9%	4,4%
MOEX Russia Index	3,5	-16%	45%	9,9%
WSE WIG INDEX	8,2	-25%	-1%	3,1%
MSCI TURKEY	4,6	3%	19%	3,3%
MSCI SOUTH AFRICA	9,8	9%	13%	4,5%
MSCI BRAZIL	7,5	-23%	2%	6,8%
MSCI COLOMBIA	5,1	-18%	0%	9,9%
MSCI MEXICO	12,2	8%	7%	3,0%

- Depreciation of the Turkish lira (-6.3%) before election. Nevertheless, the local stock market bounced up strongly after the second round with expectation of more pro-business policies from the incoming government
- Hong Kong and Shanghai stocks suffered (respectively -8% and -6%) amid concerns about China's growth, while Taiwan et Korea benefited from the semiconductors' frenzy
- Mexican stocks burdened by Peso appreciation. In the meantime, some fresh improvement from Latam macro data should be watched closely



Past performances are not a reliable indicator of future performance and are not constant over time. Sources: Bloomberg, ODDO BHF AM SAS | Data at 05/06/2023



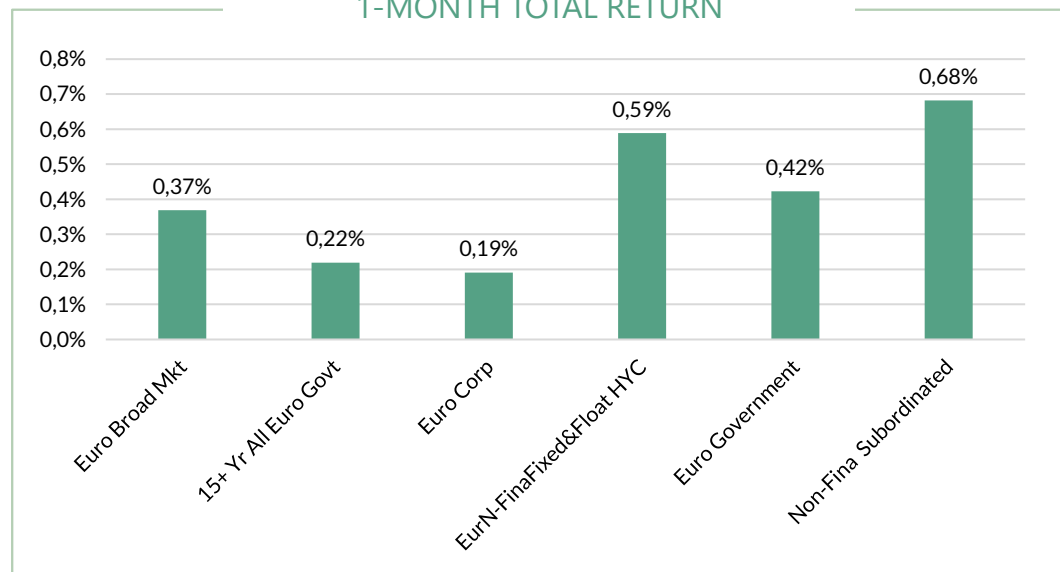
FIXED INCOME



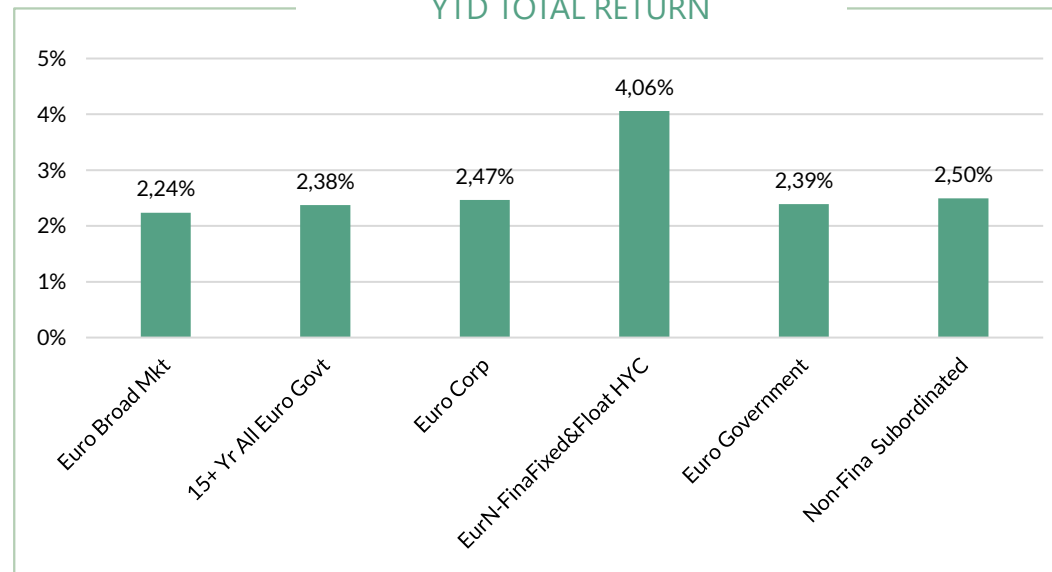
Performance fixed income segment

SOME INFLATION RELIEF DROVE POSITIVE RETURNS

1-MONTH TOTAL RETURN



YTD TOTAL RETURN



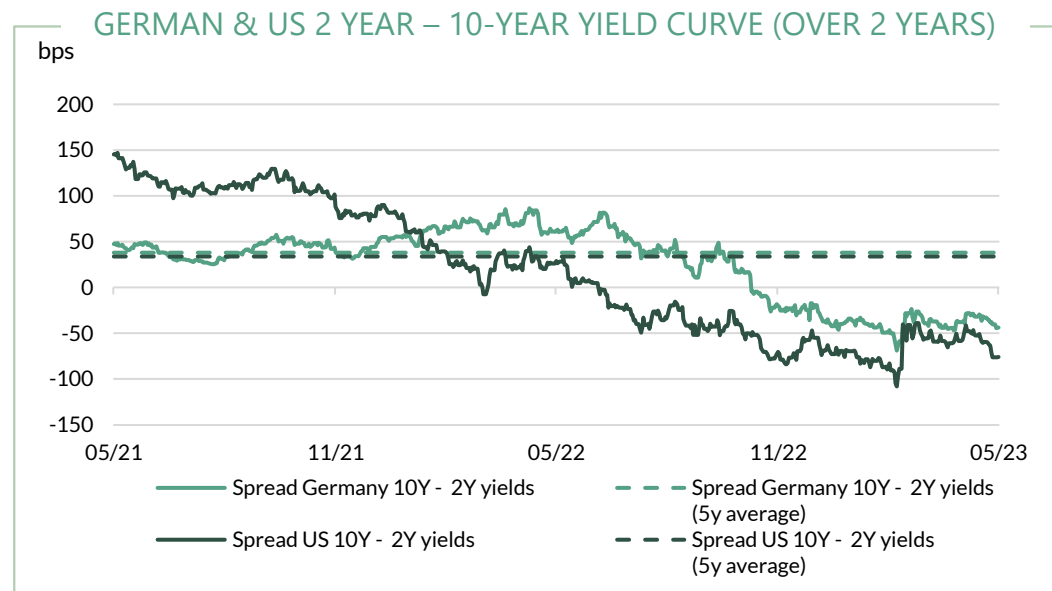
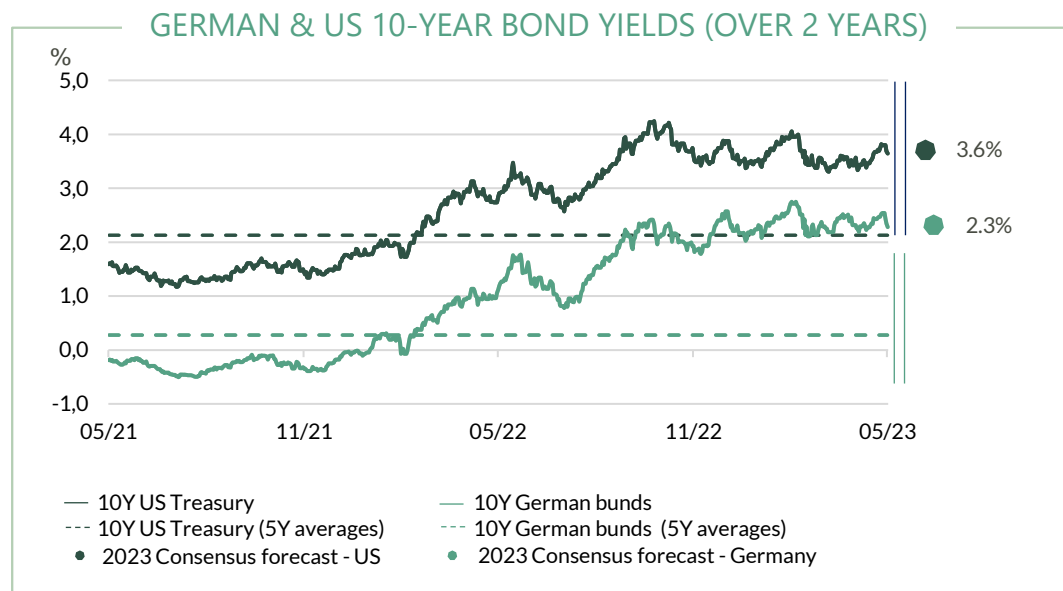
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Source: ODDO BHF AM, Bloomberg, data as of 31/05/2023



Rates

RECESSION OR CYCLE EXTENSION?



- Yields for US Treasuries and Bunds remain mired in ranges for now with a bit of reflattening recently as terminal rates have repriced higher or taken out early cuts
- Falling inflation prints, cooling activity data and Central Banks being at the end of the tightening phase or close to it, should lead to a cyclical yield decline
- Curve steepening positions are becoming attractive as the end of the hiking cycle approaches
- We actively underweight the 30-year sector vs 10-years, but stay neutral on 10-2 years for the time being in Eurozone rates
- 5-year tenor could be the sweet spot if history repeats, but still too early too overweight

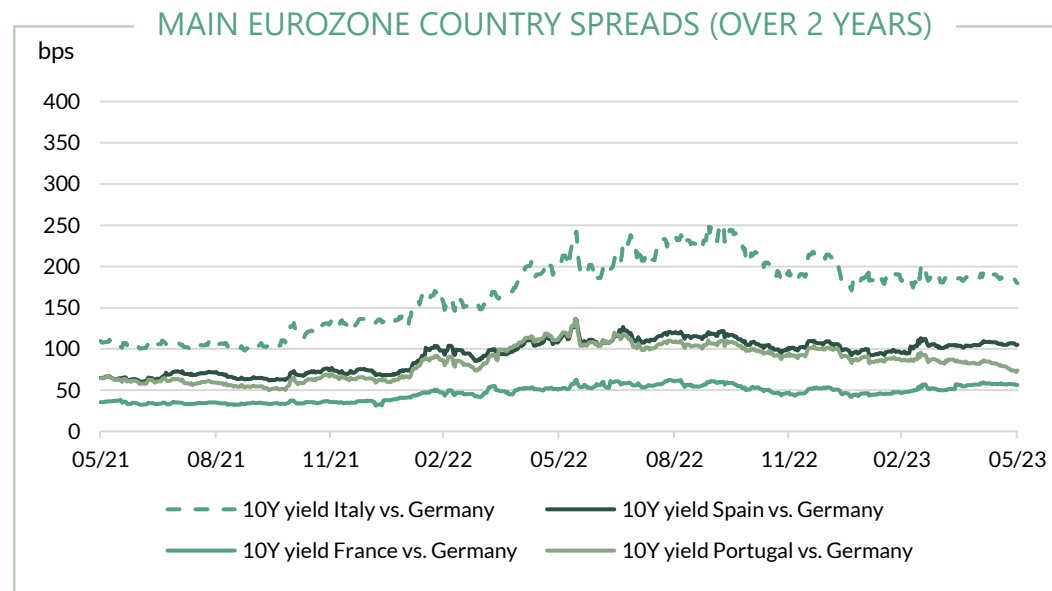
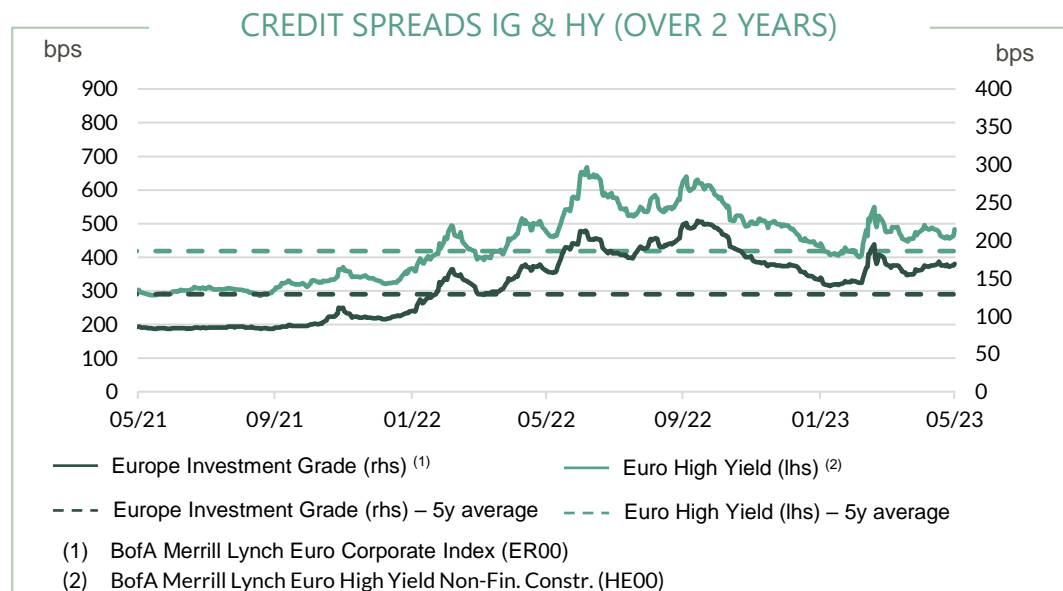
Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance and is not constant over time.

Bloomberg Economic Forecast | Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Bloomberg | LHS: Data as of 5/31/2023; RHS: Data as of 05/31/2023



Credit Spreads

CALM AND SERENITY ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY



- Credit spreads have barely moved in Investment Grade as new supply came to the market, but was well absorbed
- Current spread levels around 165bp for Investment Grade bonds are still attractive as long as the economic backdrop remains resilient
- High yield bonds are more challenged by the underlying banking issues and market liquidity problems
- Peripheral spreads have decoupled from risk sentiment, but been supported by better rating assessments for Portugal and Greece

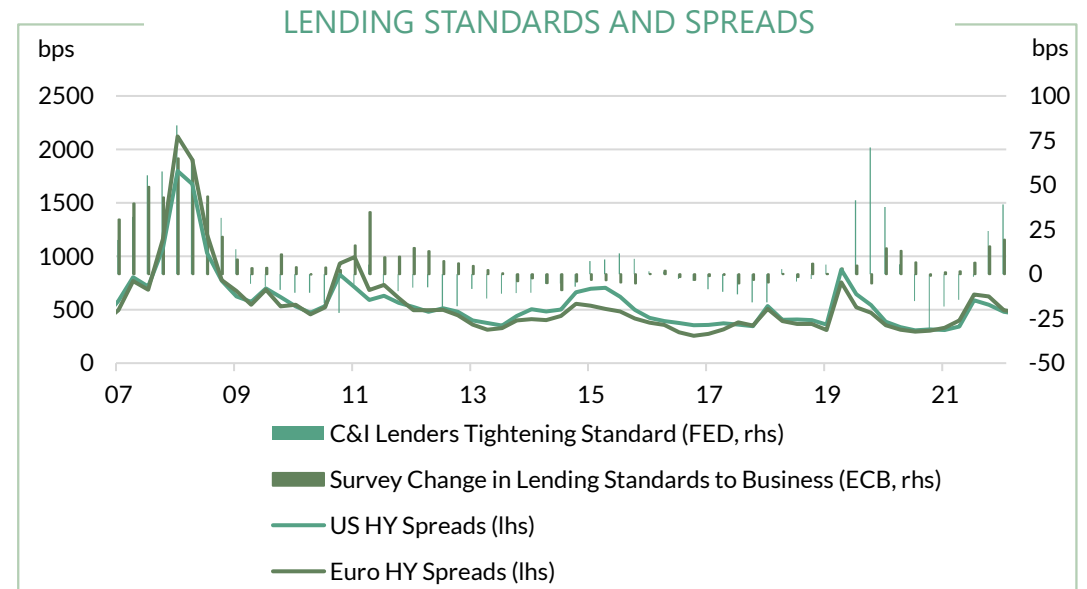
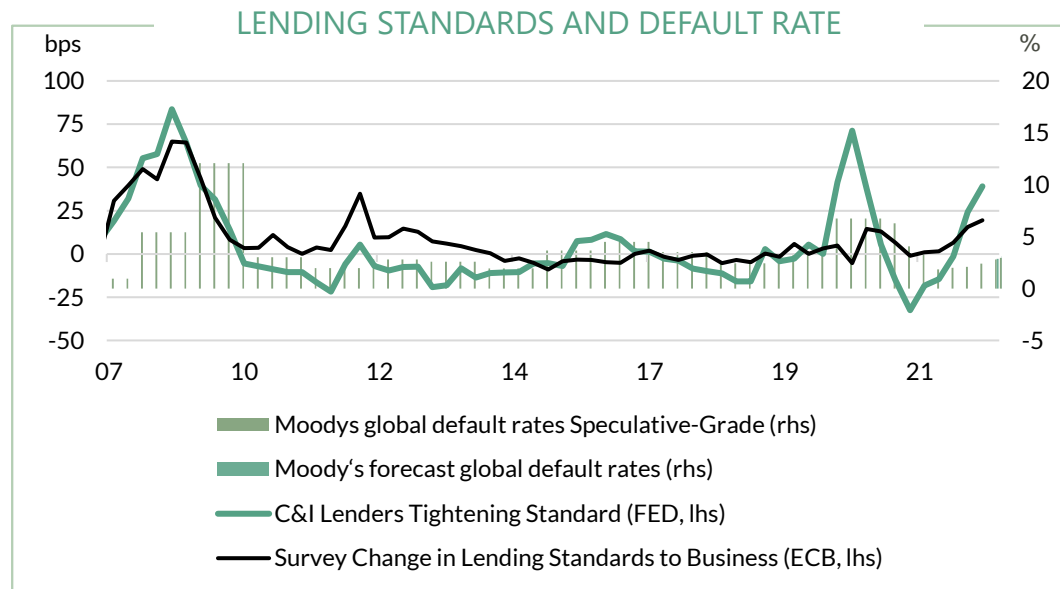
Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance and is not constant over time.

Sources: ODDO BHF AM SAS, Bloomberg | Data as of 05/31/2023



Financial conditions

AFTER THE TIGHTENING OF CREDIT CONDITIONS, COLLAPSE IN DEMAND



- The banking crisis in the US has morphed from acute to a “slow bleed” which should act as a drag on the economy
- The latest bank lending survey of the ECB also hinted to tightening of credit standards and a substantial drop in credit and loan demand for households and firms

Source: Fed, ECB, Bloomberg | Moody's as of 04/30/2023, Lending Standard & Survey Change as of 03/31/2022, Spreads as of 03/31/2023

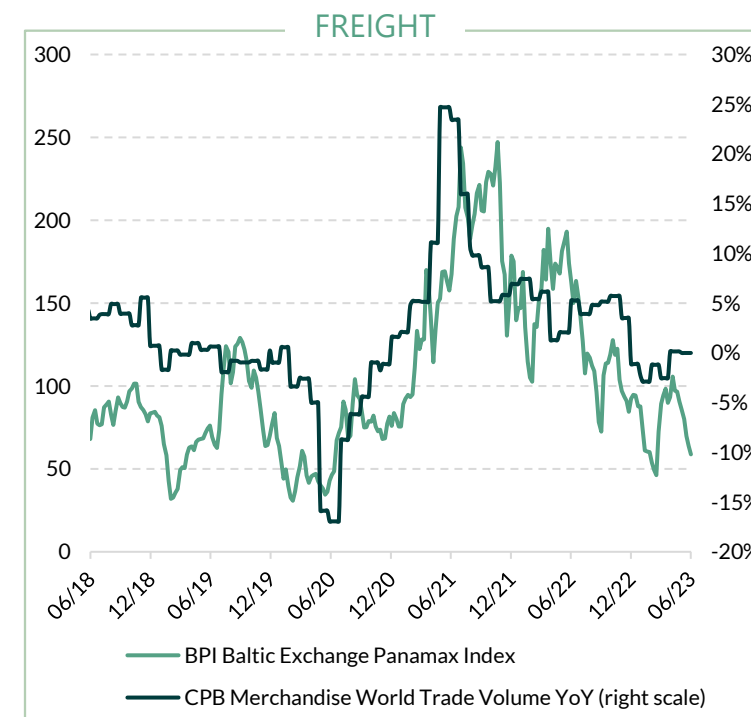
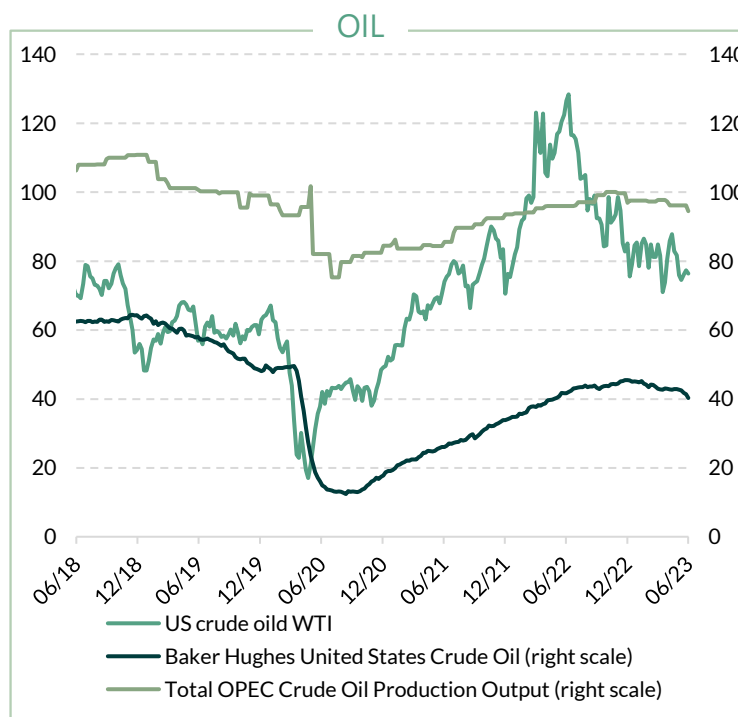
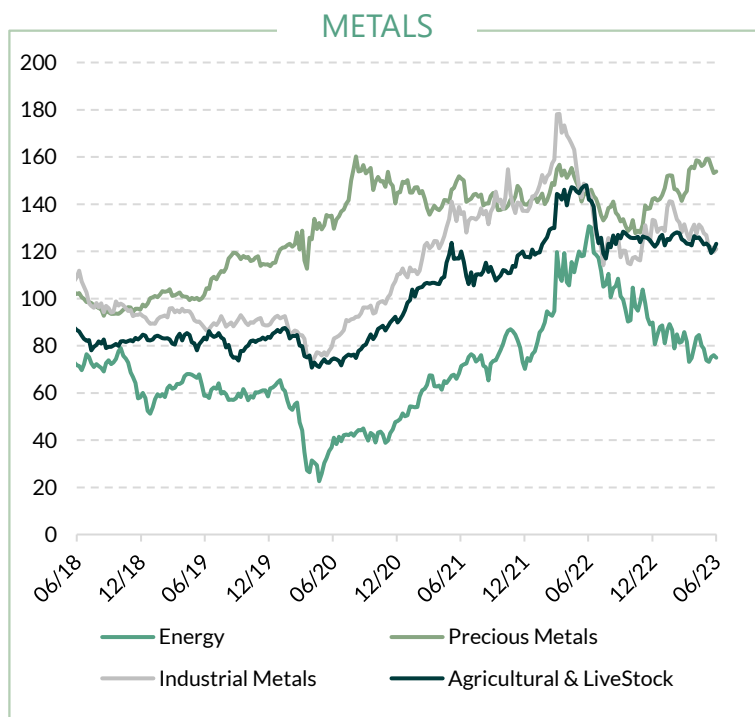


COMMODITIES & CURRENCIES



Commodities

COMMODITIES AFFECTED BY FALLING DEMAND



- International freight prices kept on moderating, after a temporary bounce in April. Trucks utilization rate also keep on moving down (now at 88% vs 99% one year ago).
- Industrial metals felt sharply (GSCI Industrial Metals -7%), as did GSCI Energy (-9%).
- While Agricultural products were more resilient (GSCI Agro&Livestock -2%), Soy, Wheat and Corn are now in severe YtD decline (between -10% and -20%)

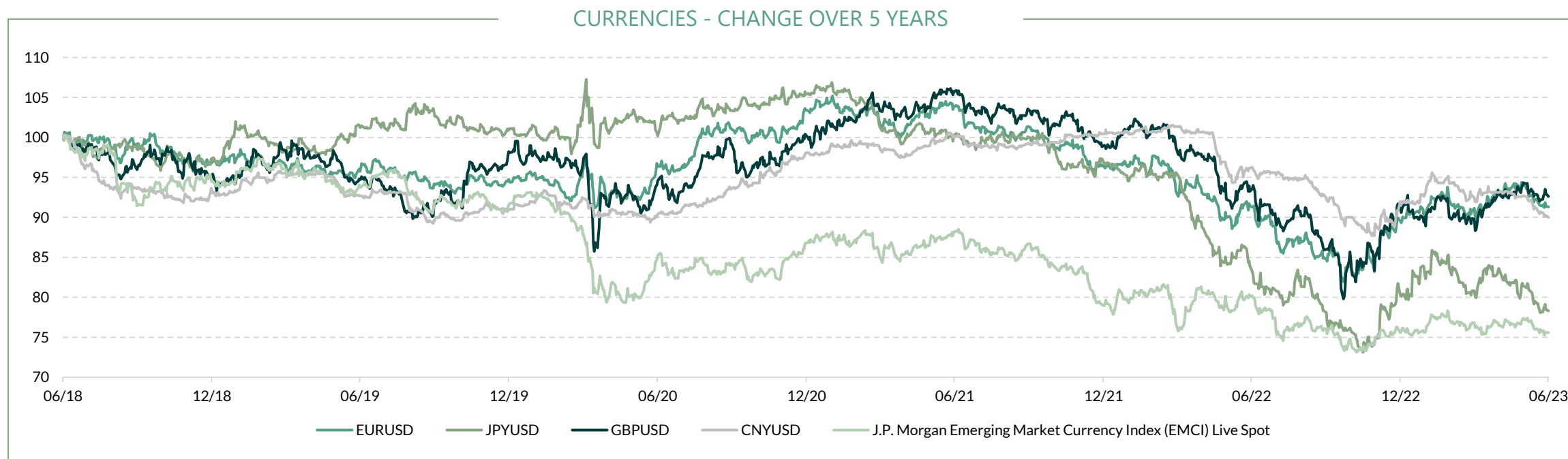
Past performances are not a reliable indicator of future performance and are not constant over time.

Sources: Bloomberg, ODDO BHF AM SAS | Data at 05/06/2023



Currencies

STRONG US JOB MARKETS SUPPORTS THE GREENBACK



- Data showing resilient US economy, despite manufacturing weakness, helped push higher expectations of FED terminal rate.
- With USD money market rates expected to peak at 5.25% during the summer, USD rebounded significantly against lower yielding currencies (EUR -3%, JPY -2%).
- Despite dwindling implied volatilities overall, dispersion remains large (SEK -5%, ZAR -7% over the month, while Mexican Peso kept appreciating, now at +11% YtD)

Past performances are not a reliable indicator of future performance and are not constant over time.
Sources: Bloomberg, ODDO BHF AM SAS | Data at 05/06/2023



03

CURRENT
Convictions





Scenarios

OUR 6-MONTH VIEW

01 Central scenario

Global GDP growth will slow down, but the outlook for the Eurozone has recently improved somewhat: A severe energy crisis was avoided for the time being. In addition, the Chinese exit from the zero-Covid policy should result in a positive impact for global growth and further disinflation. However, central banks remain hawkish, and the full impact of rate increases still has to be seen. In addition, the stress in the banking sector could lead to a more restrictive credit supply. On the positive side, corporate earnings are solid revealing economic resilience.

EUROPE

- Growth expectations slightly improved recently given China re-opening and less negative impact from energy prices
- Inflation has mostly like seen the peak, but stays highly elevated and core inflation is sticky
- ECB stays hawkish in order to bring inflation down
- Supply chains are less disrupted

US

- So far, corporate fundamentals and the labor market remain resilient, but economic sentiment is deteriorating
- While inflation has peaked already, the FED remains committed to the goal of price stability
- Massive issuance volumes of the US Treasury could absorb liquidity of bond markets.

STRATEGY

- Increased diversification
- Benefit from attractive valuations for short-term corporate bonds

OVERWEIGHT

- Short Duration Euro Credit (IG + HY)
- Money Market

UNDERWEIGHT

- Overall Equities
- Long duration High Yield and Emerging Markets

70%

02 Alternative scenario #1

Banking crisis, sticky inflation

- Stress in the financial sector leads to a more restrictive credit supply
- Inflation does not fall to the expected extent, stays sticky despite a weaker economic outlook and hawkish ECB
- Market volatility increases

OVERWEIGHT

- Alternative strategies
- Cash

UNDERWEIGHT

- Equities
- Credit

20%

03 Alternative scenario #2

Upside scenario

- Sustainable resolution of the stress in the financial system and no repercussions to the real economy
- China re-opening and less disrupted supply chains support global growth, a recession is avoided
- Central banks change their current very hawkish stance as there is substantial relief from inflation figures

OVERWEIGHT

- Equities, incl. Emerging Markets
- High Yield
- Sovereigns

UNDERWEIGHT

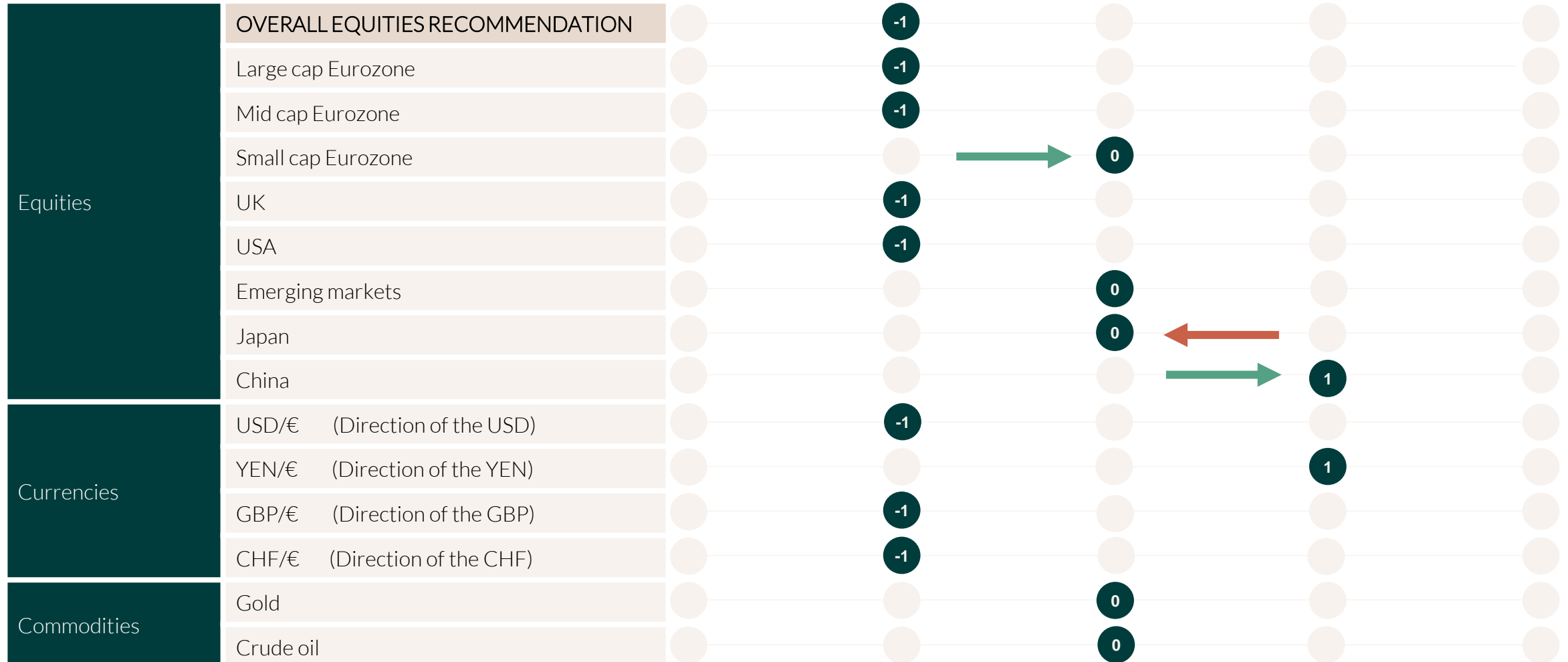
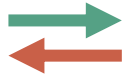
- Alternative Strategies
- Cash

10%



Our current convictions FOR EACH ASSET CLASS

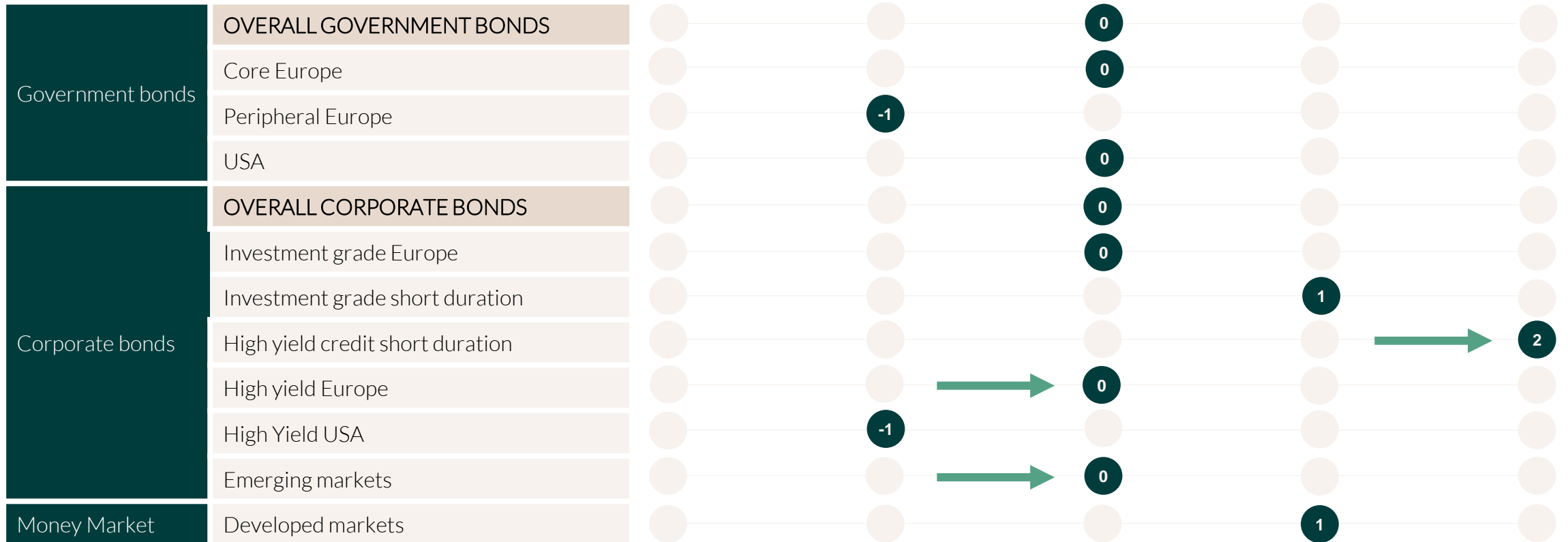
Change from the last
GIC meeting





Our current convictions FOR EACH ASSET CLASS

Change from the last
GIC meeting





HOW PERFORMANCE ARE CALCULATED

Cumulative fund performance is calculated based on dividends reinvested. Annualised performance is determined on an annual, 365-day actuarial basis. A fund's performance relative to its benchmark index is expressed as arithmetic difference. Static indicators are generally calculated on a weekly tick that is taken on Fridays, or failing that, on the day prior to valuation.

VOLATILITY

Volatility is a risk indicator measuring the level of fluctuations observed in a portfolio (or index) over a defined period. It is calculated as annualised standard deviation of absolute returns within a defined period of time.

CREDIT SPREAD (CREDIT PREMIUMS)

The credit spread is the risk premium or the difference between the yields of corporate bonds and that of sovereign bonds with the same characteristics.

INVESTMENT GRADE

Investment-grade bonds are bonds issued by issuers rated between AAA to BBB- by Standard & Poor's or the equivalent.

HIGH YIELD

High-yield bonds are speculative bonds rated lower than BBB- (Standard & Poor's) or the equivalent.

PE (PRICE-EARNINGS RATIO)

A stock's price-earnings ratio is equal to the stock's price divided by the issuing company's earnings per share. It is also called the "earnings multiple". It depends mainly on three factors: the company's forecast earnings growth, the risk associated with these forecasts, and the level of interest rates.



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- Sept. 22 • [Carry on](#)
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ODDO BHF Asset Management SAS (France)

A portfolio management firm certified by the French Financial Markets Authority (AMF) under n°GP 99011.

Established in the form of a simplified joint-stock company with authorised capital of €21,500,000.

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