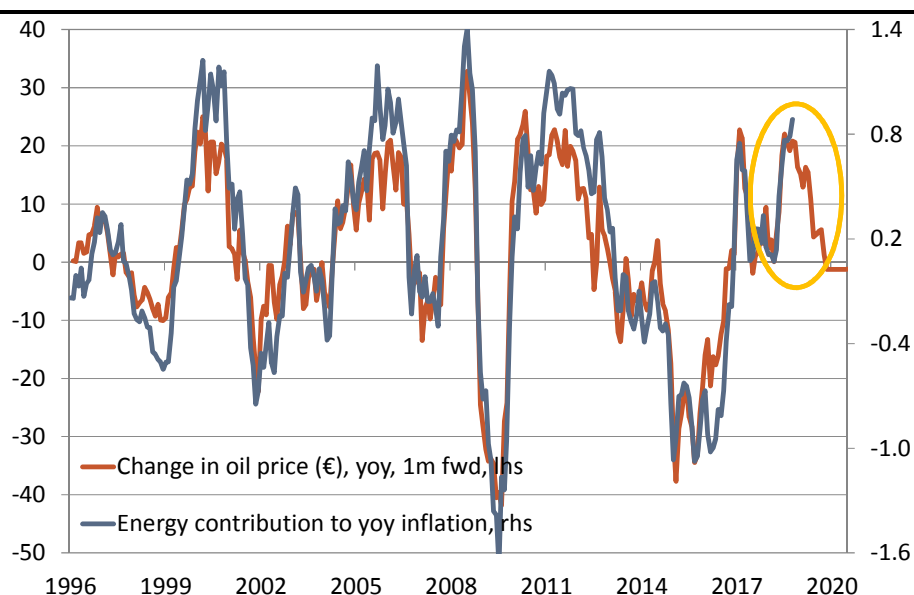


## Eurozone progress report: coping with the risks

- **Trade tensions, oil, Italy, Brexit and Turkey:** Since March 2018, a gush of headwinds has slowed down Eurozone growth from a pace well above trend to an annualised rate of around 1% now. Most survey data point to a further loss of momentum in late 2018 as the mostly external shocks are gradually seeping into more restrained domestic spending.
- **In this report, we look at the key risks:** On balance, we note some signs of hope on key issues that will shape the growth outlook for 2019. Chances are that, after some further weakening of data near-term, confidence surveys and demand will rebound over the course of next year. This should propel economic growth slightly above the annualised 1.5% trend rate again from Q2 2019 onwards.
- **Oil – the worst should be over soon:** The surge in oil prices has turned into the single biggest factor restraining the gains in real domestic demand. If oil prices stabilise, the drag will gradually fade over the course of next year (see Chart 1).
- **A potential Italian debt crisis** remains the most serious risk facing the Eurozone. The risk may materialise in 2019, but it seems more likely that Italy will continue to muddle through noisily until the next recession – due perhaps in 2021 – reveals the underlying weaknesses of the Italian economy.
- **A no-deal hard Brexit** would be a major shock for the Eurozone. Amid all the noise, the risk of such a dismal outcome, which we put at 20%, seems to be receding.
- **Turkey will be less of a drag in 2019:** A fall in exports to Turkey of up to 25% could subtract almost 0.2ppt from the Eurozone's annual growth rate in late 2018. However, once Turkey has hit bottom, probably in early 2019, this drag should fade.
- **China** has the tools to re-stimulate domestic demand if, when, and to the extent that its political leaders deem desirable. We look for exports to China to recover over the course of 2019 after some further weakness in late 2018 and early 2019.
- The risk of an escalating **US-Chinese trade war** remains a wild card. For our forecasts, we assume that the US and China will start serious negotiations and freeze their conflict no later than spring 2019.

Chart 1: Oil price impact on headline inflation – expect the shock to fade soon



Year-over-year change in price for barrel Brent crude, in €, adjusted for change in headline consumer prices (base year 2015); and energy contribution to Eurozone headline inflation, in ppt; oil price projection for November 2018 onwards based on constant oil prices at 7 November 2018 level. Sources: Haver, Eurostat, Berenberg calculations

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29 July 2011

#### Saving the euro: the case for an ECB yield cap

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## Assessing the key risks

### Oil: the worst should be over soon

The surge in oil prices has turned into the single biggest factor restraining the gains in real domestic demand this year. In October, energy prices added 0.9ppt to Eurozone headline inflation. Excluding the energy component, inflation would have stood at a mere 1.3% instead of 2.2% yoy. At €70 per barrel Brent crude, the oil price is €15 higher than we had expected at the start of the year. If the oil price stabilises, the drag should gradually fade over the course of next year as consumers adjust to the new level of energy costs. Due to base effects, the contribution of energy to headline inflation could fall substantially from December 2018 onwards, with particular strong dips in December or January and in May or June 2019. The recent small correction in the oil price bodes well for our assumption that oil will not become much more expensive again next year. If the oil price declines instead, which we consider possible but do not assume for our economic baseline scenario, real consumer spending in the Eurozone could surprise a little to the upside next year.

*Drag from oil prices on real demand growth should fade as prices stabilise*

### Italy: a big risk that will probably not materialise (yet)

A potential Italian debt crisis remains the most serious risk facing the Eurozone. So far, however, this risk has not materialised in a major way. Reform reversals, a turn towards irresponsible fiscal policies and the wider BTP-Bund spread probably contributed slightly to Italy's unexpectedly weak economic performance in Q3, when GDP stagnated after a 0.2% qoq gain in Q2. However, the slowdown in growth is not more pronounced for Italy than for the Eurozone as a whole. From a lower starting level, Italy's economic sentiment as compiled by the European Commission has receded roughly in line with the concurrent drop in the Eurozone as a whole (see Chart 2). Beyond a modest divergence between tightening bank lending standards in Italy and still-easing bank lending standards in the remainder of the Eurozone, there is no clear evidence yet that Italy is succumbing to a major crisis already. More importantly, we find no sign that the Italian risk is already weighing significantly on the economic performance of the Eurozone outside Italy.

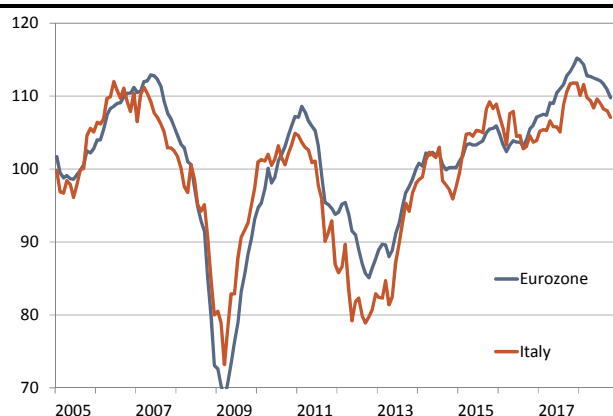
*Italy is the most serious risk facing the Eurozone*

Looking ahead, two major scenarios look plausible for late 2018 and 2019.

- 1) As the noisy clash between Italy and the EU escalates and Italian banks feel the pain from a rising spread, a modest credit crunch, higher financing costs and the risk of further rating agency downgrades towards the dividing line between investment grade and junk (see Chart 3) will force the Italian government to finally soften its fiscal plans somewhat. A small-scale crisis within the next three months will be followed by muddling through. This is our base case.
- 2) Italy continues to muddle through without a small-scale crisis in the near term. This looks possible but slightly less plausible than the first scenario.

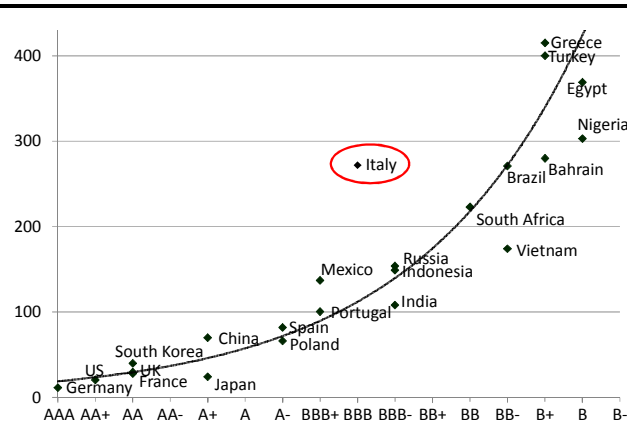
*For now, muddling through, with or without a small-scale crisis in the near term*

**Chart 2: Italy lagging behind**



Economic sentiment, Eurozone and Italy. 100= long-term average. Source: European Commission

**Chart 3: The odd one out – CDS levels versus S&P's credit rating**



5-year credit default swaps, in bp, as of 25 October 2018 and S&P credit rating for Italian sovereign bonds. Source: Bloomberg, S&P

In both cases, the damage to the Eurozone beyond Italy would remain very small, except for some short-term hit to sentiment in the case of a temporary Italian mini-crisis (scenario one). Of course, if the tail risk of a genuine Italian debt crisis coupled with a serious Italexit discussion materialised, the damage to the Eurozone would be substantial. We cannot rule out this risk for 2019. However, we do not expect this to happen while the external environment for Italy remains largely favourable, as we project for 2019. With a current account surplus of an estimated 2.7% of GDP for 2018, Italy can probably get away with some fiscal nonsense for now. Longer-term, the damage from reform reversals will add up, though. We think there is a high probability that Italy will eventually have to face such a reckoning once the next recession exposes the country's underlying weaknesses, perhaps in 2021.

*Genuine Italian debt crisis unlikely in 2019, but rather during next recession*

## Brexit: heading for a deal

Like a hypothetical Italian debt crisis, a no-deal hard Brexit would be a major shock for the Eurozone. It would be potent enough to cause an economic stagnation in the region for at least two quarters. Amid all the noise, the risk of such a dismal outcome, which we put at 20%, seems to be receding somewhat. Continuing a trend visible over the last 18 months, the UK position continues to become more realistic as to what it can and cannot achieve in negotiations with the much bigger EU27. We think there is a 60% chance that the EU27 and the UK will strike a semi-soft Brexit deal soon that will be passed by the UK parliament in December (or January) and a further 20% probability that the UK will accept such a deal, or an even softer version of Brexit, after some initial political turmoil just in time for Brexit day on 29 March 2019.

*80% chance that the UK will avoid a damaging no-deal hard Brexit*

Brexit uncertainty has retarded business investment in the UK significantly in 2018, for instance with qoq drops of 0.7% qoq in Q2 and 1.2% in Q3 2018. As a result, UK growth has been more subdued than it would have been otherwise. With the likely fading of Brexit uncertainty, UK growth can rebound to around 2% in 2019 after an estimated 1.3% in 2018 (see Chart 4). While Brexit uncertainty and softer UK demand has probably been a small negative for the Eurozone in the last two years, an end of this uncertainty followed by stronger UK demand could be a small positive for the Eurozone next year.

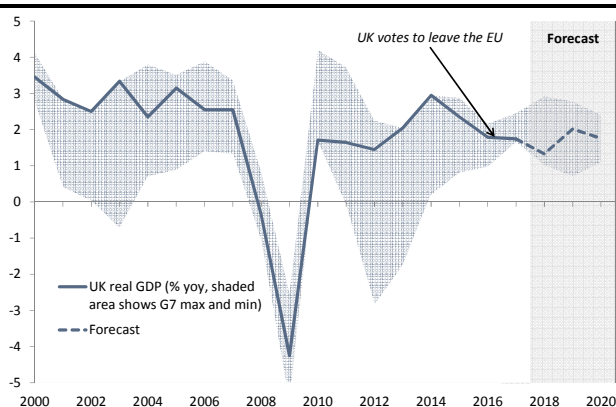
*End of Brexit uncertainty could be a small positive for the Eurozone next year*

## Turkey: likely to bottom out in early 2019

Turkey is no more than a medium-sized emerging market with limited relevance for the world economy. For the Eurozone, however, it is a close neighbour. In 2017, the Eurozone sold 1.6% of its exports to Turkey. The latest available data show a 33% yoy plunge in German exports in September and a 17.4% drop in Eurozone exports to Turkey for August 2018. For Q4, the rates of export decline could easily be 35% for Germany and 25% for the Eurozone as a whole. This would subtract 0.25ppt from the yoy rate of German and 0.18ppt from Eurozone growth – Chart 5.

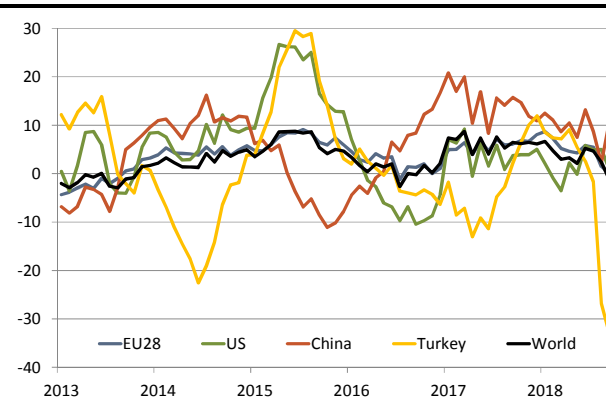
*Turkey is a close neighbour*

**Chart 4: Expect UK growth to rebound if a hard Brexit is avoided**



Annual data. Berenberg forecasts used for USA, Japan, UK, Germany, France and Italy. Bloomberg consensus (5/11/18) taken for Canada in 2018 (2.1%), 2019 (2.1%) and 2020 (1.7%). Sources: ONS, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Statistics Canada, Eurostat, Cabinet Office of Japan, Berenberg calculations

**Chart 5: Sources of pain – German goods exports by key regions**



Monthly data. Yoy change in %. 3-month average. Last value is yoy data for month of September 2018. Source: Destatis

Fortunately, the outlook for Turkey has become less dismal following its belated rate hike on 13 September and attempts to mend relations with the US and the EU. Despite the unsavoury antics of its maverick president, Turkey is not engulfed by major political chaos. The country looks set to suffer a standard emerging market recession to correct prior credit and current account excesses followed by a rebound thereafter. Once Eurozone exports to Turkey have plunged by, say, 25% yoy in late 2018 and early 2019, they are unlikely to fall again dramatically thereafter. If Turkey hits bottom early next year, as we expect, Turkey will cease to be a noticeable drag on Eurozone growth over the course of 2019. The turnaround in Turkey's current account to a surplus of \$0.8bn in September 2018 after average monthly deficits of \$5bn in the first half of the year shows that the painful adjustment in Turkey is under way. The recent stability in the Turkish exchange rate could be a first harbinger of a post-recession stabilisation or even upturn to come over the course of 2019.

*If Turkey hits bottom early next year, it will cease to be a drag on Eurozone growth*

By and large, the same pattern should hold for some other vulnerable emerging markets such as Brazil and Argentina. With the US Fed likely to switch into wait-and-see mode in mid-2019 (after four 25bp rate hikes in 2018, we look for two further such increases in H1 2019 and with no change in the funds rate until at least the end of 2020), the pressure on emerging markets with significant dollar debt should ease somewhat next year.

*Other emerging markets may benefit from the Fed slowing its rate-hiking pace*

## China has the tools to stimulate demand if need be

Parties cannot last forever. In 2017, a 17.3% surge in goods exports to China had contributed 0.2ppt to the Eurozone's stellar 2.5% growth rate. During 2018, however, some controlled deleveraging in China and fall-out from the US-Chinese trade war have exacerbated a slowdown in Chinese demand growth that may well be more pronounced than the country admits in its official GDP statistics. Annual growth in Eurozone exports to China has decelerated to a mere 1.7% yoy for the July/August 2018 average. It may even turn negative for a while once the recent Chinese rush to beat incoming US tariffs by stepping up exports to the US (and raising imports of components for these exports) beforehand has run its course.

*Slowdown in Chinese growth dampens on Eurozone exports*

In early 2019, a Chinese weakness may continue to weigh on Eurozone growth. However, with its high savings rate, sufficient controls to prevent massive capital flight and subdued inflation, China has the tools to re-stimulate domestic demand if, when, and to the extent that its political leaders deem desirable. Following cuts in reserve requirements and an announced tax cut on cars, we look for China to add one modest stimulus to the next in coming months until it works, that is until growth stops decelerating for a while. As a result, we expect growth in exports to China to rebound over the course of next year.

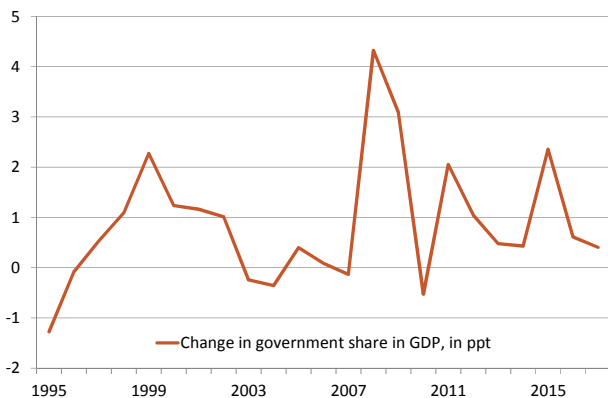
*China has tools to re-stimulate domestic demand*

## Trade war: the wild card

Since March 2018, European companies have cited trade tensions stoked by US President Donald Trump as one major factor – and often as the single most important factor – that is clouding the global outlook. In March 2018, right after Trump had announced his intention to impose steel and aluminium tariffs, the economic sentiment index for the Eurozone suffered its worst monthly decline since August 2014.

*Trade tensions stoked by President Trump weigh on Eurozone sentiment*

**Chart 6: China steers its business cycle very actively**



Change in government share in GDP, in ppt. Source: IMF

**Chart 7: Key US measures against China and the EU**

		Imposed			Threatened	Halted	
		Steel (25% tariff) / aluminium (10%)	Aerospace, ICT, robotics, machinery (25%)	as of 24 Sept (10%; rising to 25% in 2019)	tbd (if China retaliates, 10%)	Cars / car parts (20%)	
		China	EU	China	China	EU	
<b>US imports</b>	bn US dollar	2.9	7.7	50	200	267	62.5
	% of US imports from China/EU	0.6	1.2	9.5	38.2	51.0	9.9
	% of US GDP	0.0	0.0	0.3	1.0	1.4	0.3
<b>Potential direct damage</b>	bn US dollar	0.5	1.8	12.5	20	27	12
	% of US GDP	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.10	0.14	0.06

Based on 2017 annual data, table gives hypothetical tariff revenues at unchanged import values. Source: BEA, PIIE, USTR

The direct damage to the Eurozone is very limited so far – Chart 7. Thanks to the US-EU trade armistice brokered by EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker with Trump in July, few Eurozone exports to the US are affected by new import duties.

*The direct damage is very limited...*

However, the ongoing trade war between the US and China is hurting the EU in three ways.

*...but the indirect damage is hurting*

- 1) It contributes to softer growth in China, a major market for EU exports.
- 2) The uncertainty about future tariffs makes companies reluctant to invest in their current cross-border supply chains as they do not know how tariffs will affect these supply chains in the future. Less dynamic business investment reduces the demand for machine tools for which the Eurozone is a top global producer and exporter.
- 3) Fears that Trump is undermining the rules of the global trading system exacerbate the hesitancy to invest in export-oriented activities.

So far, the US and China have made no visible progress in their trade disputes. At this stage, we do not hazard a guess as to whether Trump and China's leader Xi Jinping will move closer to a truce if not yet to a deal upon a meeting at or around the time of the G20 summit in Argentina (30 November-1 December 2018). Regardless of the outcome of this meeting, the pressure on both sides to start serious negotiations instead of hurling one punitive tariff after the other will likely rise over time. China with its focus on its long-term development rather than short-term political gains seems ready to make concessions as long as it manages to save face in the process. In the US, where the fiscal stimulus is currently obscuring the damage from the trade war with China, the costs of the conflict will likely become more obvious over time as the fiscal stimulus fades over the course of next year.

*No visible progress so far, but pressure on both sides will likely rise over time...*

For our economic forecasts, we thus assume that the US-Chinese trade war will give way to serious negotiations at some point in the first half of next year. Unfortunately, the risk that the trade war continues to escalate instead remains potent. As a rough guess, an on-going US-Chinese trade war could depress the Eurozone growth rate by 0.2-0.3ppt in 2019. On its own, it would not make the difference between a rebound in growth and continued softness. Still, it would be a significant factor.

*...and will give way to serious negotiations at some point in H1 2019*

## Eurozone: encouraging fundamentals

While the Eurozone faces a cocktail of serious risks, domestic fundamentals remain mostly encouraging.

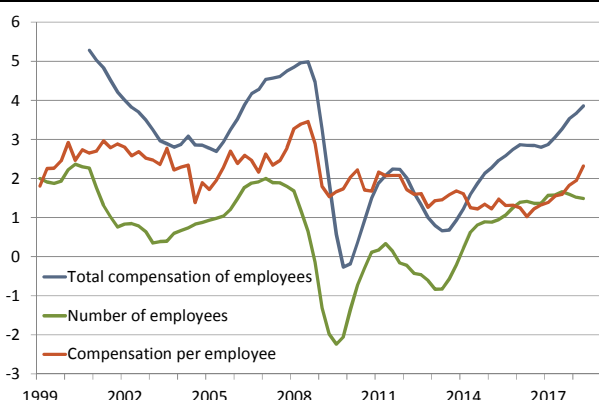
- Following the German reforms of 2004, a number of smaller Eurozone countries have also strengthened their supply side through pro-growth structural reforms in the wake of the 2011/2012 euro crisis. Big France is finally following suit under Emmanuel Macron. These reforms are turning major parts of the Eurozone into better places to invest and create jobs.
- A solid rise in Eurozone employment (+1.5% yoy in H1 2018 after 1.6% in 2017) and a modest pick-up in wage inflation (compensation per employee rose 2.1% yoy in H1 2018 after 1.6% in 2017) can underpin further gains in disposable incomes ahead (see Chart 8).
- Fiscal austerity ended three years ago. Monetary policy remains highly supportive of demand growth and the real effective exchange rate of the euro versus 38 key trading partners (up 5% in Q3 2018 versus the 2017 average but still in line with the 10-year average) poses only a modest obstacle to export growth.

*Most Eurozone countries have improved on the supply side*

*Healthy labour market underpins incomes gains*

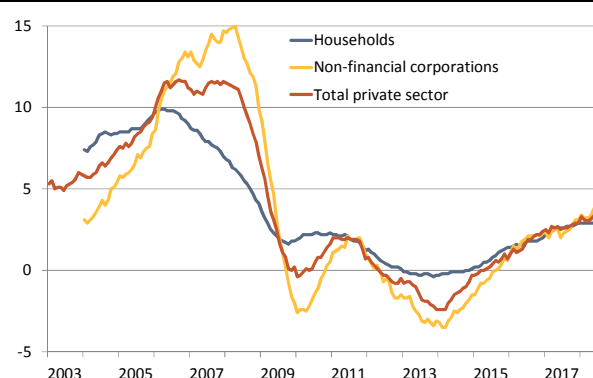
*Austerity is over, monetary policy supportive and euro competitive*

**Chart 8: Healthy gains in Eurozone employment and wages**



Quarterly data, yoy change in %. Sources: Eurostat, ECB

**Chart 9: Monetary policy at work – the credit cycle has turned up**



Bank loans to the non-bank private sector, adjusted for loan sales, securitisations and notional cash pooling, monthly data, yoy change in %. Source: ECB

- Labour shortages in some countries such as Germany (and reportedly even in some sectors of the French labour market), a still-high rate of capacity utilisation in industry (83.9% in Q4 after a 84.5% peak in Q1) and a sizeable backlog of industrial orders (enough to cover 3.8 months of production in Q4 2018, down only slightly from the record 4.1 months in H2 2017) all point to a need for more business investment.
- The rise of bank lending to non-financial corporations to a nine-year record of 4.1% yoy growth in September suggests that companies are gearing up for some extra investment spending.

*More business investment*

*Healthy loan growth*

Taken together, a fading of some political risks, stronger gains in real disposable incomes at stable rather than rising oil prices and a lesser drag from net exports should allow Eurozone GDP growth to rebound to a pace of roughly 1.7% annualised over the course of 2019 after annualised gains of around 1% in H2 2018.

*Eurozone growth to rebound over the course of 2019*

**Table 1: Eurozone economic forecasts**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	1Q18	2Q18	3Q18	4Q18	1Q19	2Q19	3Q19	4Q19	1Q20	2Q20	3Q20	4Q20
<b>GDP</b>																
% y/y	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	2.4	2.2	1.7	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
% q/q					0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
%q/q ann.					1.6	1.8	0.6	1.0	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Private Consumption	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	1.7	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
% y/y					0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
% q/q					1.1	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
Government Consumption	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
% y/y					0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
% q/q					2.9	2.8	3.8	2.9	3.5	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Investment	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	0.1	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
% y/y					1.9	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
% q/q					0.3	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Final Domestic Demand <sup>1</sup>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	0.6	0.6	0.1	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
% y/y					-0.2	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% q/q					0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Exports <sup>1</sup>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>-0.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% y/y					0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% q/q					106	94	86	100	106	94	83	97	106	94	80	94
Stockbuilding <sup>1</sup>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% y/y					3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0
% q/q					3.2	23	0.7	-0.1	1.0	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5
Current Account Balance	<b>353</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>373</b>	-0.7	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
EUR bn					8.5	8.3	8.1	8.0	7.9	7.8	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.2
% of GDP	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
% y/y					1.5	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
% q/q					-0.9	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7	-0.9	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7	-0.9	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7
Industrial Production <sup>2</sup>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	86.8	84.5	82.7	80.6								
% y/y																
% q/q																
Unemployment Rate <sup>2</sup>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.3</b>												
%																
CPI <sup>2</sup>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>												
% y/y																
General Govt. Balance	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>-0.8</b>	<b>-0.7</b>												
% of GDP																
General Govt. Debt	<b>86.8</b>	<b>84.5</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>80.6</b>												
% of GDP																
ECB main refinancing rate <sup>3</sup>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.75</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75
%																

<sup>1</sup> Contribution to GDP growth <sup>2</sup> Period averages <sup>3</sup> End of period

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JOH. BERENBERG, GOSSLER & CO. KG

Internet [www.berenberg.com](http://www.berenberg.com)

E-mail: [firstname.lastname@berenberg.com](mailto:firstname.lastname@berenberg.com)

### EQUITY RESEARCH

#### AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

Ryan Booker +44 20 3753 3074  
Andrew Gollan +44 20 3207 7891  
Ross Law +44 20 3465 2692

#### AUTOMOTIVES

Cristian Dirpes +44 20 3465 2721  
Alexander Haissi +44 20 3465 2749  
Viktoria Oushatova +44 20 3207 7890  
Fei Teng +44 20 3753 3049

#### BANKS

Adam Barras +44 20 3207 7923  
Stephanie Carter +44 20 3207 3106  
Michael Christodoulou +44 20 3207 7920  
Andrew Lowe +44 20 3465 2743  
Alex Medhurst +44 20 3753 3047  
Eoin Mullany +44 20 3207 7854  
Peter Richardson +44 20 3465 2681

#### BEVERAGES

Javier Gonzalez Lastra +44 20 3465 2719  
Matt Reid +44 20 3753 3075

#### BUSINESS SERVICES, LEISURE & TRANSPORT

Zaim Beekawa +44 20 3207 7855  
Tom Burfion +44 20 3207 7852  
Roberta Ciaccia +44 20 3207 7805  
Najet El Kassir +44 20 3207 7836  
William Fitzalan Howard +44 20 3465 2640  
Stuart Gordon +44 20 3207 7858  
Annabel Hay-Jahans +44 20 3465 2720  
Joel Spungin +44 20 3207 7867  
Adrian Yanoshik +44 20 3753 3073

#### CAPITAL GOODS

Nicholas Housden +44 20 3753 3050  
Sebastian Kuenne +44 20 3207 7856  
Philippe Lorrain +44 20 3207 7823  
Rizk Maldi +44 20 3207 7806  
Jaroslav Pominkiewicz +44 20 3753 3035  
Simon Toennesen +44 20 3207 7819  
Ethan Zhang +44 20 3465 2634

### EQUITY SALES

#### SPECIALIST SALES

#### AEROSPACE & DEFENCE & CAPITAL GOODS

Caru Luciano +44 20 3753 3146

#### AUTOS & TECHNOLOGY

Edward Wales +44 20 3207 7815

#### BANKS, DIVERSIFIED FINANCIALS & INSURANCE

Calum Marris +44 20 3753 3040

#### BUSINESS SERVICES, LEISURE & TRANSPORT

Rebecca Langley +44 20 3207 7930

#### CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY

Victoria Maigrot +44 20 3753 3010

#### CONSUMER STAPLES

Rammique Sroa +44 20 3753 3064

#### MEDIA & TELECOMS

Jonathan Smith +44 20 3207 7842

#### HEALTHCARE

David Hogg +44 20 3465 2628

#### THEMATICS

Chris Armstrong +44 20 3207 7809

#### SALES

##### BENELUX

Miel Bakker +44 20 3207 7808  
Bram van Hijfte +44 20 3753 3000

##### FRANCE

Alexandre Chevassus +33 1 5844 9512

### SALES TRADING

#### LONDON

Charles Beddow +44 20 3465 2691  
Mike Berry +44 20 3465 2755  
Joseph Chappell +44 20 3207 7885  
Stewart Cook +44 20 3465 2752  
Mark Edwards +44 20 3753 3004  
Tom Floyd +44 20 3753 3136  
Tristan Hedley +44 20 3753 3006  
Peter King +44 20 3753 3139  
Simon Messman +44 20 3465 2754  
AJ Pulleyn +44 20 3465 2756  
Michael Schumacher +44 20 3753 3006  
Paul Somers +44 20 3465 2753

#### CHEMICALS

Sebastian Bray +44 20 3753 3011  
Anthony Manning +44 20 3753 3092  
Rikin Patel +44 20 3753 3080

#### DIVERSIFIED FINANCIALS

Chris Turner +44 20 3753 3019

#### FOOD MANUFACTURING AND H&PC

Rosie Edwards +44 20 3207 7880  
Fintan Ryan +44 20 3465 2748  
James Targett +44 20 3207 7873

#### FOOD RETAIL

Dusan Milosavljevic +44 20 3753 3123

#### GENERAL MID CAP - DACH

Saravana Bala +44 20 3753 3043  
Martin Comtesse +44 20 3207 7878  
Charlotte Friedrichs +44 20 3753 3077  
Gustav Fröberg +44 20 3465 2655  
James Letten +44 20 3753 3176  
Alexander O'Donoghue +44 20 3207 7804  
Gerhard Orgonas +44 20 3465 2635  
Henrik Paganetty +44 20 3207 7863  
Benjamin Pfannes-Varrow +44 20 3465 2620

#### GENERAL MID CAP - EU core

Bestrice Allen +44 20 3465 2662  
Christoph Greulich +44 20 3753 3119  
Andreas Markou +44 20 3753 3022  
Anna Patrice +44 20 3207 7863  
Trion Reid +44 20 3753 3113

#### GENERAL MID CAP - UK

Joseph Barron +44 20 3207 7828  
Calum Battersby +44 20 3753 3118  
Robert Chantry +44 20 3207 7861  
Sam Cullen +44 20 3753 3183  
Ned Hammond +44 20 3753 3017  
Omar Ismail +44 20 3753 3102  
Anthony Plom +44 20 3207 7908  
Edward James +44 20 3207 7811  
Lush Mahendrarajah +44 20 3207 7896  
Benjamin May +44 20 3465 2667

#### FRANCE (cont'd)

Dalila Farigoule +33 1 5844 9510  
Kevin Nor +33 1 5844 9505  
Guillaume Viret +33 1 5844 9507

#### SCANDINAVIA

Mikko Vanhala +44 20 3207 7818  
Marco Weiss +49 40 350 60 719

#### UK

James Burt +44 20 3207 7807  
Fabian De Smet +44 20 3207 7810  
Marta De-Sousa Fialho +44 20 3753 3098  
Jules Emmet +44 20 3753 3260  
Katie Ferry +44 20 3753 3041  
Robert Floyd +44 20 3753 3018  
David Franklin +44 20 3465 2747  
Karl Hancock +44 20 3207 7803  
Sean Heath +44 20 3465 2742  
Stuart Holt +44 20 3465 2646  
James Hunt +44 20 3753 3007  
James McRae +44 20 3753 3036  
David Mortlock +44 20 3207 7850  
Eleni Papoula +44 20 3465 2741  
Bhavin Patel +44 20 3207 7926  
Kushal Patel +44 20 3753 3038  
Richard Payman +44 20 3207 7825

#### PARIS

Vincent Klein +33 1 58 44 95 09  
Antonio Scutoito +33 1 58 44 95 03

#### GENERAL MID CAP - UK (cont'd)

Eoghan Reid +44 20 3753 3055  
Owen Shirley +44 20 3465 2731  
Donald Tait +44 20 3753 3031  
Sean Thapar +44 20 3465 2657

#### GENERAL RETAIL

Thomas Davies +44 20 3753 3104  
Michelle Wilson +44 20 3465 2663

#### HEALTHCARE

Scott Bardo +44 20 3207 7869  
Alistair Campbell +44 20 3207 7876  
Klara Fernandes +44 20 3465 2718  
Tom Jones +44 20 3207 7877  
Samantha Osborne +44 20 3207 7882  
Michael Ruzic-Gauthier +44 20 3753 3128  
Laura Sutcliffe +44 20 3465 2669  
Charles Weston +44 20 3465 2746

#### INSURANCE

Charles Bendit +44 20 3465 2729  
Trevor Moss +44 20 3207 7893  
Emanuele Musio +44 20 3207 7916  
Iain Pearce +44 20 3465 2665  
Philip Ross +44 20 3465 2726

#### LUXURY GOODS

Mariana Horn +44 20 3753 3044  
Lauren Molyneux +44 20 3207 7892  
Zuzanna Puszc +44 20 3207 7812

#### MEDIA

Robert Berg +44 20 3465 2680  
Keisi Hysa +44 20 3207 7817  
Laura Janssens +44 20 3465 2639  
Alastair Reid +44 20 3207 7841  
Sarah Simon +44 20 3207 7830

#### METALS & MINING

Charles Clark +44 20 3207 3133  
Richard Hatch +44 20 3753 3070  
Laurent Kimman +44 20 3465 2675  
Michael Stoner +44 20 3465 2643

#### UK (cont'd)

Christopher Pyle +44 20 3753 3076  
Adam Robertson +44 20 3753 3095  
Joanna Sanders +44 20 3207 7925  
Mark Sheridan +44 20 3207 7802  
George Simbert +44 20 3207 7911  
Alexander Wace +44 20 3465 2670  
Paul Walker +44 20 3465 2632

#### GERMANY

Michael Brauburger +49 69 91 30 90 741  
Nina Buechs +49 69 91 30 90 735  
André Grosskurth +49 69 91 30 90 734  
Joerg Wenzel +49 69 91 30 90 743

#### SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA & ITALY

Duncan Downes +41 22 317 1062  
Andrea Ferrari +41 44 283 2020  
Gianni Lavigna +41 44 283 2038  
Jamie Nettleton +41 44 283 2026  
Yeannie Rath +41 44 283 2029  
Mirco Tieppo +41 44 293 2024

#### COO Office

Greg Swallow +44 20 3207 7833  
Fenella Neill +44 20 3207 7868

### EQUITY TRADING

#### HAMBURG

David Hohn +49 40 350 60 761  
Gregor Labahn +49 40 350 60 571  
Lennart Pleus +49 40 350 60 596  
Marvin Schweden +49 40 350 60 576  
Omar Sharif +49 40 350 60 563  
Philipp Wichmann +49 40 350 60 346  
Christoffer Winter +49 40 350 60 559

#### LONDON

Christopher Brown +44 20 3753 3085  
Edward Burlison-Rush +44 20 3753 3005  
Richard Kenny +44 20 3753 3083  
Chris McKeand +44 20 3207 7938  
Ben Tappin +44 20 3753 3382

#### OIL & GAS

Henry Tarr +44 20 3207 7827  
John Gleeson +44 20 3465 2716  
Ilkin Karimli +44 20 3465 2684

#### REAL ESTATE

Kai Klose +44 20 3207 7888

#### TECHNOLOGY

Josep Bori +44 20 3753 3058  
Georgios Kertzos +44 20 3465 2715  
Tej Sthankiya +44 20 3753 3099  
Tammy Qiu +44 20 3465 2673

#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

David Burns +44 20 3753 3059  
Nicolas Didio +44 20 3753 3091  
Usman Ghazi +44 20 3207 7824  
Laura Janssens +44 20 3465 2639  
Carl Murdock-Smith +44 20 3207 7918

#### THEMATIC RESEARCH

Nick Anderson +44 20 3207 7838  
Oyvind Bjerke +44 20 3753 3082  
Steven Bowen +44 20 3753 3057  
Asad Farid +44 20 3207 7932  
Robert Lamb +44 20 3465 2623  
Paul Marsch +44 20 3207 7857  
Saliha Shariff +44 20 3753 3097

#### TOBACCO

Jonathan Leinster +44 20 3465 2645

#### UTILITIES

Oliver Brown +44 20 3207 7922  
Andrew Fisher +44 20 3207 7937  
Lawson Steele +44 20 3207 7887

### ECONOMICS

Florian Hense +44 20 3207 7859  
Carsten Hesse +44 20 3753 3001  
Kallum Pickering +44 20 3465 2672  
Holger Schmieding +44 20 3207 7889

#### CRM

Laura Cooper +44 20 3753 3065  
Jessica Jarzyn +44 20 3465 2696  
Madeleine Lockwood +44 20 3753 3110  
Vikram Nayar +44 20 3465 2737  
Rita Pilar +44 20 3753 3066

#### CORPORATE ACCESS

Lindsay Arnold +44 20 3207 7821  
Maz Gentile +44 20 3465 2668  
Robyn Gowers +44 20 3753 3109  
Dipti Jethwani +44 20 3207 7936  
Ross Mackay +44 20 3207 7866  
Stella Siggins +44 20 3465 2630  
Lucy Stevens +44 20 3753 3068  
Abbie Stewart +44 20 3753 3054

#### EVENTS

Charlotte David +44 20 3207 7832  
Suzy Khan +44 20 3207 7915  
Natalie Meech +44 20 3207 7831  
Eleanor Metcalfe +44 20 3207 7834  
Rebecca Mikowski +44 20 3207 7822  
Sarah Weyman +44 20 3207 7801

#### LONDON (cont'd)

Ross Tobias +44 20 3753 3137  
Robert Towers +44 20 3753 3262

### ELECTRONIC TRADING

Jonas Doehler +44 40 350 60 391  
Matthias Führer +49 40 350 60 597  
Sven Kramer +49 40 350 60 347  
Matthias Schuster +44 40 350 60 463



BERENBERG CAPITAL MARKETS LLC

Member FINRA & SIPC

Internet [www.berenberg-us.com](http://www.berenberg-us.com)

E-mail: [firstname.lastname@berenberg-us.com](mailto:firstname.lastname@berenberg-us.com)

### EQUITY RESEARCH

#### GENERAL MID CAP - US

Samuel England +1 646 949 9035

#### HEALTHCARE - MED. TECH/SERVICES

Ravi Misra +1 646 949 9028

#### HEALTHCARE - SPECIALTY PHARMACEUTICALS

Patrick R. Trucchio +1 646 949 9027

#### LEISURE

Brennan Matthews +1 646 949 9024

#### INDUSTRIAL MATERIALS

Paretoosh Misra +1 646 949 9031

#### SHIPPING & TRANSPORTATION

Donald McLee +1 646 949 9026

#### SOFTWARE & IT SERVICES

Alexander Frankiewicz +1 646 949 9029

Gal Munda +1 646 949 9021

### EQUITY SALES

#### SALES

Albert Aguiar +1 646 949 9218

Enrico DeMatt +1 646 949 9230

Kelleigh Faldi +1 617 292 8288

Ted Franchetti +1 646 949 9231

Shawna Giust +1 646 949 7216

Rich Harb +1 617 292 8228

Zubin Hubner +1 646 949 9202

Michael Kaye +1 646 949 9216

Jessica London +1 646 949 9203

Anthony Masucci +1 646 949 9217

Ryan McDonnell +1 646 949 9214

Emily Mouret +1 415 802 2525

Peter Nichols +1 646 949 9201

Kieran O'Sullivan +1 617 292 8292

Rodrigo Ortigao +1 646 949 9205

### CORPORATE ACCESS

Adriane Klein +1 617 292 8202

Olivia Lee +1 646 949 9207

Robert Meyers +1 646 949 9215

Panthea O'Connell +1 646 949 9208

### CRM

LaJada Gonzales +1 646 949 9213

Monika Kwok +1 646 949 9212

Stephanie Rieben +1 646 949 9240

### EVENTS

Laura Hawes +1 646 949 9209

### ECONOMICS

Mickey Levy +1 646 949 9099

Roiana Reid +1 646 949 9098

### SALES TRADING

Ronald Cestra +1 646 949 9104

Mark Corcoran +1 646 949 9105

Michael Haughey +1 646 949 9106

Christopher Kanian +1 646 949 9103

Lars Schwartau +1 646 949 9101

Bob Spillane +1 646 949 9102