

Executive Briefing

Markets cheer as recession and inflation risks abate

The new year kicked off with a strong rally in risky asset classes and EUR/USD. From an investor point of view, the latest news on the real economy could not have been much better. Headline inflation is coming down sharply in the US, while the euro area seems to have passed the peak. More importantly, it seems price pressures are waning without much damage to economic growth. Supported by China's reopening, lower commodity prices and looser financial conditions, we now expect a turnaround in the global manufacturing cycle already in Q1, see *Research Global – Global manufacturing PMI heading higher in H1*, 25 January. Both the US and euro area are now set for milder and shorter recessions than previously expected. We have lifted our growth outlook both for the US and the euro area, and now longer expect a double dip recession in Europe.

While disinflationary pressures in the US already seem broad-based, in euro area, the convergence of headline and core inflation continues. Headline inflation in EA (excl. Germany whose data is missing) declined to 8.5% in January (from 9.2%). Meanwhile, core inflation kept at 5.2%. Wage pressures, based on job ads, seem to be levelling off, but same time, core goods inflation remains elevated as companies continue to pass on rising input costs to consumer prices. This year, inflation forecasting will be even cumbersome than normally as country-specific fiscal measures such as support for households' energy bills distort consumer prices, see *Euro inflation notes – January surprises*, 25 January.

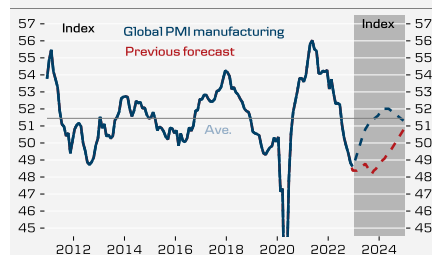
The more upbeat macroeconomic backdrop is a double-edged sword for central banks. US labour markets remain tight due to permanent damage to labour supply from the pandemic, and Europe continues to suffer from energy shortages as long as there is no permanent solution to replace energy imports from Russia. As supply side problems persist, both the Fed and the ECB have pursued demand destruction by hiking rates, hoping that cooling demand would eventually alleviate price pressures. Hence, while the improved economic outlook is positive news for businesses and households in short term, it jeopardizes central banks' strategy to tame underlying price pressures for good. Without sufficient demand adjustment and financial tightening, there is a risk that the current disinflationary period proves temporary and inflation spikes again at some point.

Major central banks delivered no surprises in the first meetings of this year. The Fed hiked rates by 25bp as widely expected. In the press conference, Chairman Powell either failed to appear hawkish or intentionally delivered a more dovish message than before. We still expect the Fed to hike rates by 25bp both in March and in May, and then pause. Powell has emphasized that policy has to remain restrictive for some time, and hence, we think markets are premature in pricing cuts later this year. That being said, should the ongoing trend in rising short real interest rates continue, Fed might opt to lower rates in order to avoid an unnecessary tightening in financial conditions. The ECB hiked by 50bps in line with expectations, and intends to hike by 50bp also in March. Markets were expecting a hawkish Lagarde, even to the extent that her pursuit to be hawkish was probably doomed to fail. We think markets may still underestimate ECB's determination, and risks remain tilted towards a peak policy rate closer to 4% rather than 3%.

Key points

- Markets have lowered expectations for interest rates at the same time as growth expectations have increased, leading to strong market rallies but also risks that expectations could be disappointed.
- Central banks are still hiking and signal that rates will not be cut this year, but markets disagree.

Global PMI outlook: earlier recovery



Source: Macronond Financial, Danske Bank

Denmark

Unemployment crept up in December and with some data revisions, it is now up by 8,300 persons since the bottom in April. It could be noise, but we expect this to be the expected turnaround slowly kicking in. Business sentiment improved slightly in January but remains at recessionary levels. The Danish central bank hiked interest rates by 35bp in response to the 50bp hike from ECB on February 2. The lower hike in Denmark reflects a persistent pressure for a stronger DKK driven by the strong economic fundamentals in Denmark relative to the euro area, not least the large current account surplus. Rates have now been hiked by 270bp in Denmark against 300bp in the euro area since the bottom. We expect this to be enough to stabilise the exchange rate without the need for further intervention from the central bank and hence to see Danish rate changes track the ECB going forward.

Sweden

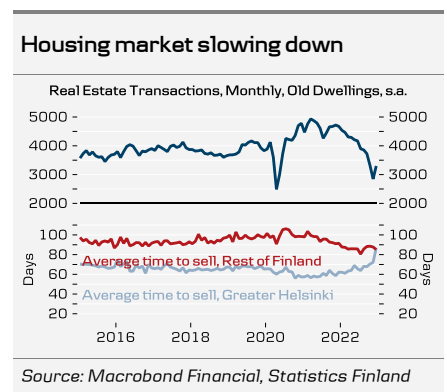
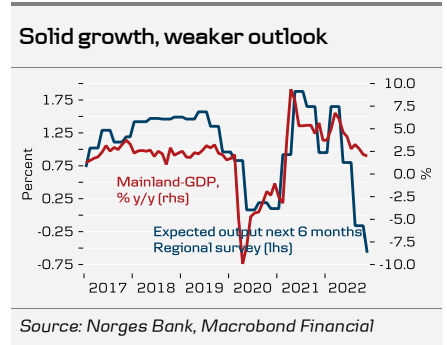
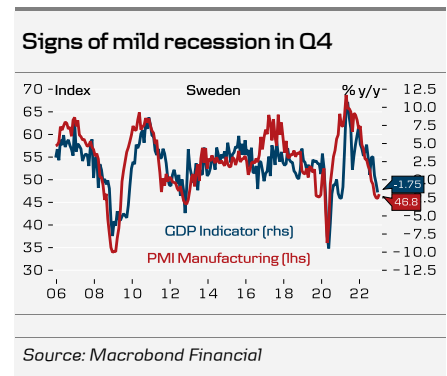
Recent data show Sweden entered a recession in Q4 as GDP dropped 0.6 % both q/q and y/y. Data suggest it is the retail and construction sectors that stand for most of the drag. This is seen in plunging retail sales and property prices. Mortgage credit growth came to a halt in the past 3 months. PMI new orders bottoming out and a resilient labour market suggest, however, that the recession might be mild. Core inflation reached a new high in December, which supposedly was the peak for now. That said, the actual data was slightly better than Riksbank forecast and core inflation was in line. Riksbank is expected to hike 50 bp in February and another 25 bp in April, which should mark the peak for rates for now.

Norway

Growth held up better than expected (and feared) towards the end of last year. However, this is partly because consumption is supported by spending of savings, and deposits are now back on long-term trend. The sharp drop in retail sales in December could be the first sign of a correction, but still early days. At the same time, activity in the construction sector is holding up from the order books. On the other hand, activity in oil-related sectors is clearly picking up. The labour market remains tight, as unemployment is low and demand for labour is solid. That said, there are some tentative signs of a weaker outlook and layoffs and bankruptcies are rising. Despite a positive surprise in December, we still expect the housing market to worsen further into 2023. There is currently a 50/50 probability for a final 25 bp. hike from Norges Bank in March.

Finland

In Finland, economic activity has cooled down at a moderate pace. Consumer and business confidence indicators are weak, although January brought some rebound. Open job vacancies are still plentiful in many industries, which gives a buffer against economic adversities. Inflation (9.1% in December) and rising interest rates worry consumers, but inflation fears have eased with lower energy prices. Demand for housing loans has decreased a lot. Housing prices have fallen over 5% from the peak in June. Prices are likely to fall slightly more, but there is no pressure for a large price movement. Housing construction activity is going to fall. Stock of unsold new apartments has risen. Trade with Russia has been reduced to a very low level, but companies have been able to divert most trade elsewhere. There will be additional investment into domestic energy and national security. Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor launch should increase electricity supply in March.



Currency markets

The first month of the year has generally been characterised by a resilient EUR as diminished growth fears and higher EUR-rates have driven the single currency higher against most peers. The CEE-currencies in HUF, CZK and PLN have all benefited from the decline in European natural gas prices while the reopening of China has benefitted AUD. NOK and SEK have had a weak start to the year attributable to both moves in relative rates, an underperforming energy complex (for NOK) and house price concerns (for SEK). Also, the USD has had a poor start to the year amid markets pricing in a lower peak in USD policy rates alongside improving growth prospects in the rest of the world. The DKK has remained in the strong end of the range vs EUR, which resulted in Danmarks Nationalbank only hiking policy rates by 35bp early February (compared to the ECB’s 50bp hike).

Bond markets

The start of 2023 have again seen very volatile yields driven by central bank communication and lower headline (but not core) inflation figures that the market has interpret as ‘dovish’ and continued the push for lower yields and expectations for central banks to cut rates later in 2023. Overall, 10Y swap rates have dropped 30bp since start of the year and the yield curve has continued to flatten. The ECB hiked 2 Feb by 50bp and the Danish Nationalbank (DN) only hiked 35bp and thereby widened the interest rate spread to 40bp. The ‘aggressive’ move by DN surprised the market since only 4bp of widening was priced before the announcement. Danish callable bonds have widened in spread to swaps and DGBs, but performed outright closing both 30Y 6% and 5% bonds for new issuance. Mainly the 30Y 4% bonds have performed the most. Flex bonds are almost unchanged in spreads to swaps since start of the year and next week investors will focus on the refinancing auctions with DKK50bn 1Y bonds up for sale and just 13-10bn in 3Y and 5Y bonds.

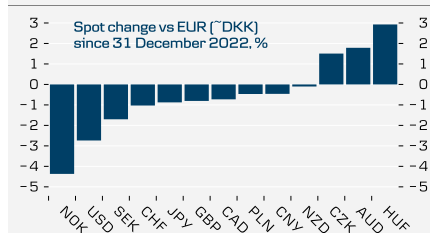
Credit markets

Credit has seen strong tailwinds during the first month of 2023 amidst heavy issuance activity in the primary market. Both cash bonds and CDS indices have tightened markedly – particularly during the first two weeks of the month – and after the ECB meeting, iTraxx Crossover crossed below 400bp. Issuance has been characterized by the usual high January activity, but this year has been very busy with January issuance almost 50% above the level from 2021 and 2022. The high issuance pace has been driven by elevated issuance from financials, which has also included several (well-received) capital transactions. For AT1 bank capital bonds, four EUR benchmark transactions have been priced, which almost takes supply to the level for the entire 2022.

Equities

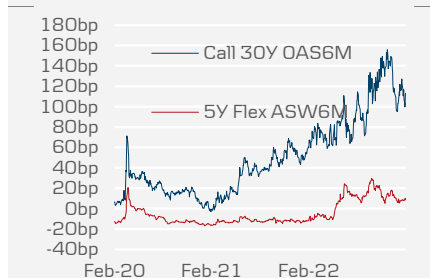
Equities have enjoyed massive risk appetite in January. Global equities are up 6% in a single month. This is almost in line with the average yearly return. Equities are driven higher by the successful reopening in China, which have sparked hopes of a trough in macro data and earnings. Earnings in itself have been a disappointment in Q4: Only six out of ten S&P 500 companies have beat consensus expectations and by less than usual (2% vs the average 4%). Due to bullish macro expectations, on top of rate cut expectations on Fed, investors are managing to look beyond these figures. However, equity valuation is indeed getting increasingly rich. In terms of sectors, January has also marked a trend shift with cyclical growth stocks outperforming massively, underlined by strong profits and Fed pivot hopes.

FX. Sorted spot returns vs EUR



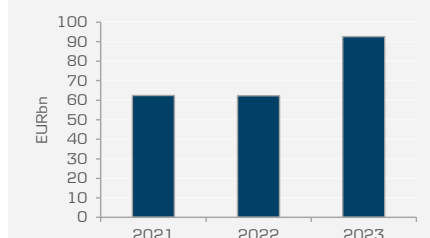
Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results. Source: Macrobond Financial

Spreads may have topped in Denmark



Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results. Source: Danske Bank

Financials (ex covered) + corporate January issuance



Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results. Source: Bloomberg

Winners and losers over the last year



Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results. Source: Refinity

Names and contact information of analysts

Editor:

Las Olsen, <i>Chief Economist</i>	Denmark	+45 45 14 14 94	laso@danskebank.com
Minna Emilia Kuusisto, <i>Chief Analyst</i>	Global	+358 44 260 9979	mkuus@danskebank.com
Michael Grahn, <i>Chief Economist</i>	Sweden	+46 8 568 807 00	mika@danskebank.com
Frank Jullum, <i>Chief Economist</i>	Norway	+47 85 40 65 40	fju@danskebank.com
Pasi Petteri Kuoppamäki, <i>Chief Economist</i>	Finland	+358 10 546 7715	paku@danskebank.com
Kristoffer Lomholt, <i>Chief Analyst</i>	FX Research	+45 45 12 85 29	klom@danskebank.com
Jan Weber Østergaard, <i>Chief Analyst</i>	Fixed Income Research	+45 45 13 07 89	jast@danskebank.com
Mark Thybo Naur, <i>Senior Analyst</i>	Credit Research	+45 45 12 84 30	mnau@danskebank.com
Bjarne Breinholt Thomsen, <i>Senior Equity Strategist</i>	Equities Research	+45 61 22 56 13	bt@danskebank.com

Macroeconomic forecast

Macro forecast. Scandinavia

	Year	GDP ¹	Private cons. ¹	Public cons. ¹	Fixed inv. ¹	Ex-ports ¹	Im-ports ¹	Infla-tion ¹	Wage growth ¹	Unem-ploym ³	Public budget ⁴	Public debt ⁴	Current acc. ⁴
Denmark	2022	2.9	-2.6	-1.1	4.4	7.4	3.2	7.7	3.5	2.6	1.2	29.7	11.8
	2023	-1.0	-2.3	0.0	-3.3	1.3	-0.7	4.9	4.1	3.1	1.0	28.1	9.5
	2024	1.0	1.8	0.9	-2.1	1.2	0.4	2.0	4.2	3.4	0.8	27.0	9.5
Sweden	2022	2.6	2.6	-0.2	5.6	4.6	7.9	8.4	2.5	7.5	0.7	31.0	3.9
	2023	-1.2	-1.3	1.1	-3.0	1.3	0.2	8.5	3.2	8.2	-0.9	29.0	4.4
	2024	1.2	2.0	1.2	1.8	2.8	2.6	1.3	2.7	8.1	-0.4	29.0	4.5
Norway	2022	3.7	6.6	0.3	4.0	3.0	12.1	5.8	3.9	1.8	-	-	-
	2023	0.6	-0.5	1.3	0.5	3.5	2.5	4.8	4.3	2.2	-	-	-
	2024	1.5	0.9	1.5	4.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	3.8	2.4	-	-	-

Macro forecast. Euroland

	Year	GDP ¹	Private cons. ¹	Public cons. ¹	Fixed inv. ¹	Ex-ports ¹	Im-ports ¹	Infla-tion ¹	Wage growth ¹	Unem-ploym ³	Public budget ⁴	Public debt ⁴	Current acc. ⁴
Euro area	2022	3.5	4.0	1.2	4.4	7.5	8.6	8.4	4.2	6.7	-3.9	93.7	1.5
	2023	0.1	-0.3	0.8	1.7	3.5	5.2	5.6	4.9	6.9	-4.0	92.5	1.9
	2024	0.3	0.9	1.0	0.0	3.6	4.6	2.5	3.6	7.0	-3.5	91.6	2.4
Germany	2022	1.9	4.6	1.6	0.4	3.2	6.7	8.7	4.1	3.0	-2.3	67.4	3.7
	2023	-0.4	-0.6	0.9	-0.7	3.3	4.4	6.6	5.4	3.3	-2.7	65.5	4.6
	2024	0.1	0.8	1.2	0.0	3.2	4.6	2.6	4.3	3.5	-1.9	66.2	4.9
Finland	2022	1.8	2.3	2.5	4.5	1.5	7.0	7.1	2.6	6.8	-1.8	70.7	-3.3
	2023	-0.7	-0.3	1.5	-1.0	-1.5	-2.0	4.8	4.0	7.3	-2.5	71.0	-2.7
	2024	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.5	1.5	1.0	2.2	3.5	7.2	-2.0	71.7	-2.1

Macro forecast. Global

	Year	GDP ¹	Private cons. ¹	Public cons. ¹	Fixed inv. ¹	Ex-ports ¹	Im-ports ¹	Infla-tion ¹	Wage growth ¹	Unem-ploym ³	Public budget ⁴	Public debt ⁴	Current acc. ⁴
USA	2022	2.1	2.8	-0.6	-0.3	7.2	8.1	8.0	5.2	3.6	-4.2	124.0	-3.9
	2023	0.3	0.3	1.5	-5.2	1.0	-5.7	3.1	4.0	4.0	-3.8	121.0	-3.1
	2024	0.9	0.8	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.7	1.7	2.1	5.6	-3.9	120.5	-2.8
China	2022	3	2.8	-	4.5	-	-	2.0	3.0	-	-8.9	76.9	1.6
	2023	5.5	5.1	-	5.2	-	-	2.2	5.0	-	-7.2	84.1	1.0
	2024	5.2	5.5	-	5.5	-	-	2.5	5.5	-	-7.5	89.8	0.8
UK	2022	4.2	-	-	-	-	-	8.9	-	3.8	-	-	-
	2023	-0.7	-	-	-	-	-	6.2	-	4.4	-	-	-
	2024	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	-	5.0	-	-	-
Japan	2022	1.4	3.0	1.6	-0.8	4.7	8.0	2.2	-	2.6	-	-	-
	2023	0.7	0.9	0.6	1.3	2.5	3.2	2.4	-	2.8	-	-	-
	2024	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.6	1.5	0.5	1.4	-	2.8	-	-	-

Source: OECD and Danske Bank. 1) % y/y. 2) % contribution to GDP growth. 3) % of labour force. 4) % of GDP.

Financial forecast

Bond and money markets										
		Key interest rate	3m interest rate	2-yr swap yield	10-yr swap yield	Currency vs EUR	Currency vs USD	Currency vs DKK	Currency vs NOK	Currency vs SEK
USD	03-Feb	4.75	4.80	4.37	3.38	109.3	-	681.1	1004.5	1036.2
	+3m	5.25	5.40	5.20	4.05	107.0	-	695.3	972.0	1056.1
	+6m	5.25	5.40	5.10	4.05	105.0	-	709.0	971.4	1085.7
	+12m	5.25	5.24	4.80	3.65	103.0	-	723.3	980.6	1068.0
EUR	03-Feb	2.50	2.55	3.18	2.72	-	109.3	744.5	1097.9	1132.6
	+3m	3.00	3.36	3.35	3.00	-	107.0	744.0	1040.0	1130.0
	+6m	3.25	3.41	3.20	2.85	-	105.0	744.5	1020.0	1140.0
	+12m	3.25	3.39	2.90	2.55	-	103.0	745.0	1010.0	1100.0
JPY	03-Feb	-0.10	-0.03	-	-	120.5	128.4	6.18	9.11	9.40
	+3m	-0.10	-	-	-	133.8	125.0	5.56	7.78	8.45
	+6m	-0.10	-	-	-	131.3	125.0	5.67	7.77	8.69
	+12m	-0.10	-	-	-	128.8	125.0	5.79	7.84	8.54
GBP*	03-Feb	4.00	-	3.79	3.11	89.1	122.6	835.1	1231.7	1270.5
	+3m	4.25	-	4.20	3.50	87.0	123.0	855.2	1195.4	1298.9
	+6m	4.25	-	4.20	3.50	85.0	123.5	875.9	1200.0	1341.2
	+12m	4.25	-	4.00	3.30	85.0	121.2	876.5	1188.2	1294.1
CHF*	03-Feb	1.00	-	1.37	1.63	99.8	91.3	745.6	1099.7	1134.4
	+3m	1.25	-	-	-	100.0	93.5	744.0	1040.0	1130.0
	+6m	1.25	-	-	-	99.0	94.3	752.0	1030.3	1151.5
	+12m	1.25	-	-	-	99.0	96.1	752.5	1020.2	1111.1
DKK	03-Feb	2.10	2.75	3.27	2.80	744.45	681.11	-	147.48	152.14
	+3m	2.60	3.45	3.50	3.15	744.00	695.33	-	139.78	151.88
	+6m	2.85	3.50	3.35	3.00	744.50	709.05	-	137.00	153.12
	+12m	2.85	3.50	3.05	2.70	745.00	723.30	-	135.57	147.65
SEK	03-Feb	2.50	2.97	2.97	2.53	1132.6	1036.2	65.7	96.9	100.0
	+3m	3.25	3.05	3.35	2.95	1130.0	1056.1	65.8	92.0	-
	+6m	3.25	3.10	3.15	2.85	1140.0	1085.7	65.3	89.5	-
	+12m	3.25	3.10	2.85	2.55	1100.0	1068.0	67.7	91.8	-
NOK	03-Feb	2.75	3.19	3.25	2.90	1097.9	1004.5	67.8	100.0	103.2
	+3m	2.75	2.95	3.45	3.15	1040.0	972.0	71.5	-	108.7
	+6m	2.75	2.95	3.20	2.80	1020.0	971.4	73.0	-	111.8
	+12m	2.50	2.95	3.05	2.70	1010.0	980.6	73.8	-	108.9

*Notes: GBP swaps are SONIA and CHF swaps are SHARON.

We have updated our Norges Bank forecasts after yesterday's Norges Bank meeting but not yet our Norwegian yield outlook

Commodities												
	03-Feb	2022				2023				Average		
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	
ICE Brent	82	98	112	105	100	95	95	95	95	104	95	

Source Danske Bank

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