

Flash Note

Europe chart of the week – Hard versus soft data

Hard data proves soft

Pictet Wealth Management - Asset Allocation & Macro Research | 13 April 2018

Euro area hard and soft data have disappointed so far this year, with the former pointing to a sharp slowdown in growth in Q1.

However, the weakness is to a large degree due to special factors (bad weather, supply chain delays, a severe flu epidemic, particularly in Germany) and will likely prove transitory, with some of the damage potentially compensated by higher production in the coming months.

That said, the fall in forward-looking indices is consistent with our forecast of a gradual slowdown in the pace of growth in the euro area in the second half of 2018. We forecast euro area GDP growth of 2.3% in 2018, after 2.5% in 2017.

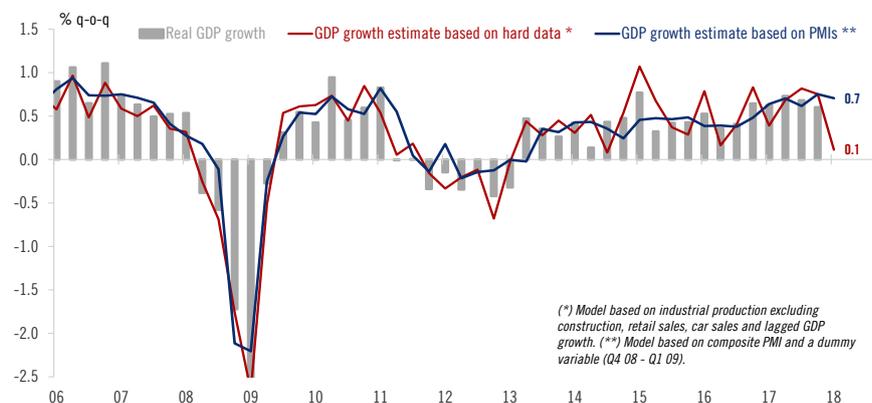
The weakness in hard and soft data in Q1 may well fuel additional ECB dovishness in the near term, but not to the point of compromising the upcoming policy normalisation, in our view.

Euro area industrial production (excluding construction) was weak in February (-0.8% m-o-m) and follows the recent release of other disappointing pieces of hard data such as retail sales, German factory orders and trade. Based on available 'hard' data, real GDP growth rate in the euro area is projected to be 0.1-0.2% q-o-q in Q1 2018 (see chart below), a sharp slowdown from 0.6% q-o-q in Q4 2017. However, 'soft' data, such as [PMI surveys](#), while also down in February and March, point to much stronger growth of 0.6-0.7% q-o-q. There is therefore a very wide gap between hard and soft data.

Several factors could explain the weakness in hard and soft data for the early months of 2018. Business surveys overstated the pace of growth in Q4 2017 – hence the subsequent correction. Supply-side constraints (delivery times, backlogs, inventories) and labour bottlenecks have also restrained output growth. The rebasing of several 'hard' series data to year 2015 has likely added to the noise. Markit noted "an unusually high prevalence of staff sickness affecting activity" due to a severe flu wave in its [latest press release](#). Harsh weather conditions and snow caused disruptions in a number of countries and sectors.

While the balance of risks could indeed shift to the downside if the correction in data were to be sustained, anecdotal evidence of supply chain delays and other temporary factors suggest that the underlying pace of activity expansion remains healthy. That said, the fall in forward-looking indices is consistent with our forecast of a gradual slowdown in the pace of growth in the euro area in the second half of 2018.

'Nowcast' models for euro area GDP growth using hard and soft data



Source: Pictet WM – AA&MR, Eurostat, IHS Markit.

AUTHOR

Nadia GHARBI
ngharbi@pictet.com
+41 58 323 3543

Pictet Wealth Management
Route des Acacias 60
CH - 1211 Geneva 73
www.group.pictet

DISCLAIMER

Distributors: Banque Pictet & Cie SA, Route des Acacias 60, 1211 Geneva 73, Switzerland and Pictet & Cie (Europe) SA, 15A, avenue J. F. Kennedy, L-1855 Luxembourg/B.P. 687 L-2016 Luxembourg.

Banque Pictet & Cie SA is established in Switzerland, exclusively licensed under Swiss Law and therefore subject to the supervision of the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA).

Pictet & Cie (Europe) SA is established in Luxembourg, authorized and regulated by the Luxembourg Financial Authority, Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier.

This marketing communication is not intended for persons who are citizens of, domiciled or resident in, or entities registered in a country or a jurisdiction in which its distribution, publication, provision or use would violate current laws and regulations.

The information, data and analysis furnished in this document are disclosed for information purposes only. They do not amount to any type of recommendation, either general or tailored to the personal circumstances of any person. Unless specifically stated otherwise, all price information is indicative only. No entity of the Pictet Group may be held liable for them, nor do they constitute an offer or an invitation to buy, sell or subscribe to securities or other financial instruments. The information contained herein is the result neither of financial analysis within the meaning of the Swiss Bankers Association's Directives on the Independence of Financial Research, nor of investment research for the purposes of the relevant EU MiFID provisions. All information and opinions expressed in this document were obtained from sources believed to be reliable and in good faith, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness.

Except for any obligations that any entity of the Pictet Group might have towards the addressee, the addressee should consider the suitability of the transaction to individual objectives and independently assess, with a professional advisor, the specific financial risks as well as legal, regulatory, credit, tax and accounting consequences.

Furthermore, the information, opinions and estimates in this document reflect an evaluation as of the date of initial publication and may be changed without notice. The Pictet Group is not under any obligation to update or keep current the information contained herein. In case this document refers to the value and income of one or more securities or financial instruments, it is based on rates from the customary sources of financial information that may fluctuate. The market value of financial instruments may vary on the basis of economic, financial or political changes, currency fluctuations, the remaining term, market conditions, the volatility and solvency of the issuer or the benchmark issuer. Some investments may not be readily realizable since the market in the securities can be illiquid. Moreover, exchange rates may have a positive or negative effect on the value, the price or the income of the securities or the related investments mentioned in this document. When investing in emerging countries, please note that the political and economic situation in those countries is significantly less stable than in industrialized countries. They are much more exposed to the risks of rapid political change and economic setbacks.

Past performance must not be considered an indicator or guarantee of future performance, and the addressees of this document are fully responsible for any investments they make. No express or implied warranty is given as to future performance. Moreover, forecasts are not a reliable indicator of future performance. The content of this document can only be read and/or used by its addressee. The Pictet Group is not liable for the use, transmission or exploitation of the content of this document. Therefore, any form of reproduction, copying, disclosure, modification and/or publication of the content is under the sole liability of the addressee of this document, and no liability whatsoever will be incurred by the Pictet Group. The addressee of this document agrees to comply with the applicable laws and regulations in the jurisdictions where they use the information reproduced in this document.

This document is issued by Banque Pictet & Cie SA. This publication and its content may be cited provided that the source is indicated. All rights reserved. Copyright 2018.

Distributors: Bank Pictet & Cie (Asia) Ltd ("BPCAL") in Singapore, 10 Marina Blvd #22-01 Tower 2, Marina Bay Financial Centre, Singapore 018983 and Pictet & Cie (Europe) S.A., Hong Kong branch ("Pictet HK branch") in Hong Kong. The registered address of Pictet HK branch is 9/F, Chater House, 8 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong.

The information, tools and material presented in this document are provided for information purposes only and are not to be used or considered as an offer, an invitation to offer or solicitation to buy, sell or subscribe for any securities, commodities, derivatives, (in respect of Singapore only) futures, or other financial instruments (collectively referred to as "Investments") or to enter into any legal relations, nor as advice or recommendation with respect to any Investments. This document is intended for general circulation and it is not directed at any particular person. This document does not have regard to the specific investment objectives, financial situation and/or the particular needs of any recipient of this document. Investors should seek independent financial advice regarding the appropriateness of investing in any Investments or adopting any strategies discussed in this document, taking into account the specific investment objectives, financial situation or particular needs of the investor, before making a commitment to invest.

BPCAL/Pictet HK branch has not taken any steps to ensure that the Investments referred to in this document are suitable for any particular investor, and accepts no fiduciary duties to any investor in this regard. Furthermore, BPCAL/Pictet HK branch makes no representations and gives no advice concerning the appropriate accounting treatment or possible tax consequences of any Investment. Any investor interested in buying or making any Investment should conduct its own investigation and analysis of the Investment and consult with its own professional adviser(s) as to any Investment including the risks involved with transactions on such Investment.

This document is not to be relied upon in substitution for the exercise of independent judgment. The value and income of any Investment mentioned in this document may fall as well rise. The market value may be affected by, amongst other things, changes in economic, financial, political factors, time to maturity, market conditions and volatility, and the credit quality of any issuer or reference issuer. Furthermore, foreign currency rates of exchange may have a positive or adverse effect on the value, price or income of any Investment mentioned in this document. Accordingly, investors must be willing and able to, and effectively assume all risks and may receive back less than originally invested.

Past performance should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of future performance and no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is made by BPCAL/Pictet HK branch regarding future performance.

This document does not constitute the investment policy of BPCAL/Pictet HK branch, or an investment recommendation, and merely contains the different assumptions, views and analytical methods of the analysts who prepared them. Furthermore, the information, opinions and estimates expressed herein reflect a judgment at its original date of publication and are subject to change without notice and without any obligation on BPCAL/Pictet HK branch to update any of them.

BPCAL/Pictet HK branch may have issued or distributed other reports or documents that are inconsistent with, and reach different conclusions from, the information presented in this document.

While the information and opinions presented herein are believed to be from sources believed to be reliable, BPCAL/Pictet HK branch is not able to, and do not make any representation or warranty as to its accuracy or completeness. Accordingly, BPCAL/Pictet HK branch accepts no liability for loss arising from the use of or reliance on this document presented for information purposes only. BPCAL/Pictet HK branch reserves the right to act upon or use any of the information in this document at any time, including before its publication herein.

BPCAL/Pictet HK branch and its affiliates (or employees thereof) may or may not have long or short positions in, and buy or sell, or otherwise have interest in, any of the Investments mentioned herein, and may or may not have relationships with the issuers of or entities connected with Investments mentioned in this document. BPCAL/Pictet HK branch and their affiliates (or employees thereof) may act inconsistently with the information and/or opinions presented in this document. The information used to prepare this document and/or any part of such information, may have been provided or circulated to employees and/or one or more clients of BPCAL/Pictet HK branch before this document was received by you and such information may have been acted upon by such recipients or by BPCAL/Pictet HK branch.

This document is provided solely for the information of the intended recipient only and should not be reproduced, published, circulated or disclosed in whole or in part to any other person without the prior written consent of BPCAL/Pictet HK branch.

Singapore

This document is not directed to, or intended for distribution, publication to or use by, persons who are not accredited investors, expert investors or institutional investors as defined in section 4A of the Securities and Futures Act (Cap. 289 of Singapore) ("SFA") or any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or other jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation or would subject BPCAL and any of its affiliates or related corporations to any prospectus or registration requirements.

BPCAL has obtained an exemption from the Monetary Authority of Singapore ("MAS") under section 100(2) of the Financial Advisers Act ("FAA") for the provision of financial advisory services to High Net Worth Individuals (as defined in the MAS Guidelines on Exemption for Specialised Units Serving High Net Worth Individuals FAA-G07) (the "Exemption") and is exempted from the requirements of sections 25, 27, 28 and 36 of the FAA, the MAS Notice on Recommendations on Investment Products (FAA-N16), MAS Notice on Appointment and Use of Introducers by Financial Advisers (FAA-N02), MAS Notice on Information to Clients and Product Information Disclosure (FAA-N03) and MAS Notice on Minimum Entry and Examination Requirements for Representatives of Licensed Financial Advisers and Exempt Financial Advisers (FAA-N13).

Please contact BPCAL in Singapore in respect of any matters arising from, or in connection with this document.

Hong Kong

This document is not directed to, or intended for distribution, publication to or use by, persons who are not "professional investors" within the meaning of the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Chapter 571 of the Laws of Hong Kong) and any rules made thereunder (the "SFO") or any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or other jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation or would subject Pictet HK branch and any of its affiliates or related corporations to any prospectus or registration requirements.

Pictet & Cie (Europe) S.A. is incorporated in Luxembourg with limited liability. It is an authorized institution within the meaning of the Banking Ordinance and a registered institution (CE No.: AQ515) under the SFO carrying on Type 1 (dealing in securities), Type 4 (advising on securities) and Type 9 (asset management) regulated activities.

Warning: The contents of this document have not been reviewed by any regulatory authority in Hong Kong. You are advised to exercise caution in relation to the offer. If you are in any doubt about any of the contents of this document, you should obtain independent professional advice. Please contact Pictet HK branch in Hong Kong in respect of any matters arising from, or in connection with this document.

Distributor: Pictet Bank & Trust Limited, where registered office is located at Building 1, Bayside Executive Park, West Bay Street & Blake Road, Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas.

The document is not directed to, or intended for distribution or publication to or use by persons who are not Accredited Investors (as defined in the Securities Industry Regulations, 2012) and subject to the conditions set forth in the Securities Industry Regulations, 2012 or to any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or other jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation or would subject Pictet Bank & Trust Limited to any prospectus or registration requirements. Pictet Bank & Trust Limited is incorporated in The Bahamas with limited liability. It is a bank and trust company that is licensed in accordance with the Banks and Trust Companies' Regulation Act and is regulated by the Central Bank of The Bahamas. Additionally, Pictet Bank & Trust Limited is registered with the Securities Commission of The Bahamas as a Broker Dealer II and is approved to (i) Deal in Securities 1.(a) & (c); (ii) Arrange Deals in securities; (iii) Manage Securities; (iv) Advise on Securities.

Warning: The content of this document has not been reviewed by any regulatory authority in The Bahamas. You are, therefore, advised to exercise caution when processing the information contained herein. If you are in any doubt about any of the content of this document, you should obtain independent professional advice.