



EUROPÄISCHE
KOMMISSION

Brüssel, den 16.11.2016
COM(2016) 728 final

BERICHT DER KOMMISSION

**AN DAS EUROPÄISCHE PARLAMENT, DEN RAT, DIE EUROPÄISCHE
ZENTRALBANK UND DEN EUROPÄISCHEN WIRTSCHAFTS- UND
SOZIALAUSSCHUSS**

Warnmechanismusbericht 2017

**(gemäß den Artikeln 3 und 4 der Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011 über die Vermeidung
und Korrektur makroökonomischer Ungleichgewichte)**

{SWD(2016) 354 final}

Der Warnmechanismusbericht (WMB) bildet den Auftakt des jährlichen Verfahrens zur Überwachung makroökonomischer Ungleichgewichte (VMU), mit dem Ungleichgewichte, die einem reibungslosen Funktionieren der Wirtschaft der Mitgliedstaaten und der EU entgegenstehen und dem ordnungsgemäßen Funktionieren der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion abträglich sein können, ermittelt und behoben werden sollen.

Im WMB werden die Mitgliedstaaten anhand eines aus ausgewählten Indikatoren und einer größeren Zahl von Hilfsindikatoren bestehenden Scoreboards im Hinblick auf etwaige, zu korrigierende Ungleichgewichte überprüft. Die im WMB ermittelten Mitgliedstaaten werden dann im Rahmen einer eingehenden Überprüfung analysiert, bei der die Kommission bewertet, wie in den Mitgliedstaaten makroökonomische Risiken auflaufen oder abnehmen, und dann den Schluss zieht, ob Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte bestehen. Nach gängiger Praxis wird für Mitgliedstaaten, bei denen im Rahmen der letzten eingehenden Überprüfung Ungleichgewichte festgestellt worden sind, in jedem Fall eine neue eingehende Überprüfung vorgenommen.

Die Kommission wird unter Berücksichtigung der Diskussionen mit dem Europäischen Parlament und der Erörterungen in Rat und Eurogruppe Berichte über die eingehenden Überprüfungen der betreffenden Mitgliedstaaten erstellen. Die Ergebnisse werden in die länderspezifischen Empfehlungen einfließen, die im Rahmen des Europäischen Semesters der wirtschaftspolitischen Koordinierung abgegeben werden. Die Berichte über die eingehenden Überprüfungen werden voraussichtlich im Februar 2017 als Teil der Länderberichte vor Veröffentlichung der länderspezifischen Empfehlungen im Rahmen des Europäischen Semesters vorgelegt.

1. ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Bericht bildet den Auftakt der sechsten Runde der Durchführung des Verfahrens bei einem makroökonomischen Ungleichgewicht (VMU).¹ Bei diesem Verfahren sollen Ungleichgewichte, die einem reibungslosen Funktionieren der Wirtschaft der Mitgliedstaaten entgegenstehen, ermittelt und Anstöße für angemessene Korrekturmaßnahmen gegeben werden. Um die Kohärenz mit den im Rahmen anderer Instrumente der wirtschaftspolitischen Überwachung ausgegebenen Analysen und Empfehlungen sicherzustellen, wird das VMU im Rahmen des Europäischen Semesters der wirtschaftspolitischen Koordinierung durchgeführt. Gleichzeitig mit dem vorliegenden Bericht wird der Jahreswachstumsbericht (JWB) vorgelegt, der einen Überblick über die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage in Europa vermittelt und für die EU insgesamt die allgemeinen politischen Prioritäten für das kommende Jahr darlegt.

In diesem Bericht werden diejenigen Mitgliedstaaten ermittelt, die einer eingehenden Überprüfung unterzogen werden sollten², um zu bewerten, ob sie von Ungleichgewichten betroffen sind, die durch politische Maßnahmen korrigiert werden müssen. Der WMB dient der Erkennung wirtschaftlicher Ungleichgewichte und wird zu Beginn des jährlichen Zyklus der wirtschaftspolitischen Koordinierung veröffentlicht. Insbesondere stützt er sich auf eine wirtschaftliche Auslegung eines Scoreboards, das aus

¹ Dem Bericht ist ein *Statistischer Anhang* beigelegt, der eine Vielzahl an Statistiken enthält, die in den vorliegenden Bericht eingeflossen sind.

² Siehe Artikel 5 der Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011.

Indikatoren mit indikativen Schwellenwerten sowie aus verschiedenen Hilfsindikatoren besteht.

Der WMB ist insbesondere auf Aspekte ausgerichtet, die für das Euro-Währungsgebiet relevant sind. Im Einklang mit der Mitteilung der Kommission „Schritte zur Vollendung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion“ vom 21. Oktober 2015 soll der WMB außerdem eine systematische Analyse der Auswirkungen von in Ländern bestehenden Ungleichgewichten auf das Euro-Währungsgebiet bieten und erläutern, inwiefern diese Auswirkungen einen koordinierten Ansatz für politische Maßnahmen erfordern.

Die Bewertung in diesem Bericht erfolgt vor dem Hintergrund einer anhaltenden, aber noch immer fragilen wirtschaftlichen Erholung. In ihrer Herbstprognose 2016 geht die Europäische Kommission von einem Wachstum des realen BIP in der EU in Höhe von 1,8 % für 2016 aus, das 2017 angesichts der nachgebenden Binnennachfrage – insbesondere aufgrund des rückläufigen privaten Verbrauchs und geringerer Investitionen – auf 1,6 % zurückgehen wird. Den Prognosen zufolge dürfte das BIP im Euro-Währungsgebiet in den Jahren 2016 und 2017 bei 1,7 % bzw. 1,5 % liegen. Es wird davon ausgegangen, dass die Inflation 2016 und 2017 auf einem historisch niedrigen Niveau bleibt und die Kerninflation trotz der äußerst akkommodierenden Geldpolitik rund 1 % betragen wird. Die Bedingungen auf den Arbeitsmärkten werden sich voraussichtlich weiter verbessern, da den Prognosen zufolge die Arbeitslosenquote in der EU von schätzungsweise 8,6 % im Jahr 2016 auf 8,3 % im Jahr 2017 sinken dürfte. Der Effekt der Rahmenbedingungen, die bislang die Erholung unterstützt haben (fallende Erdölpreise, Kursverlust des Euro) lässt allmählich nach, und die Aussichten sind nach wie vor mit Risiken behaftet. Trotz der Erholung in einigen aufstrebenden Märkten bestehen weiterhin Unsicherheiten im Zusammenhang mit der Wiederherstellung des Gleichgewichts in China und den Auswirkungen der Normalisierung der US-Geldpolitik auf die weltweiten Kapitalströme. Die mit geopolitischen Spannungen verbundene Unsicherheit ist nach wie vor beträchtlich; gleichzeitig entstehen im Zuge des aufkeimenden Populismus, der sich in einigen Fällen aus sozialer Härte und Reformmüdigkeit speist und mit einer zunehmend protektionistischen Stimmung weltweit einhergeht, Risiken für die politischen Rahmenbedingungen.

Aus der im WMB dargelegten horizontalen Analyse ergeben sich mehrere Schlussfolgerungen:

- **Die Anpassung in Ländern mit Außenhandelsdefiziten oder Schulden ist weiter vorangekommen, doch es bestehen nach wie vor erhebliche Leistungsbilanzüberschüsse.** In den Netto-Schuldnerstaaten wurden signifikante Fortschritte bei der Korrektur der externen Ungleichgewichte erzielt. Fast allen Mitgliedstaaten ist es gelungen, die auf Dauer nicht tragfähigen Leistungsbilanzdefizite zu beseitigen, was auch den Anpassungen bei der Kostenwettbewerbsfähigkeit in den letzten Jahren geschuldet ist; die Nettoauslandsverbindlichkeiten bleiben jedoch hoch. Die Leistungsbilanzüberschüsse erfuhren hingegen nicht in allen Netto-Gläubigerländern eine Anpassung und wachsen in einigen Fällen weiter.
- **Der Schuldenabbau im privaten Sektor schreitet voran, wenn auch nur langsam und uneinheitlich, da er durch ein geringes nominales Wachstum gebremst wird.** In einigen Ländern sind nach wie vor Schwachstellen im Zusammenhang mit der hohen privaten Verschuldung auszumachen, zu der oftmals noch eine erhebliche Staatsverschuldung dazukommt. Der private Schuldenüberhang dämpft die Investitionen und schlägt sich in einigen Ländern in schwachen Bankbilanzen nieder. Der Schuldenabbau wird fortgesetzt, kommt in den meisten Fällen jedoch gemessen

an den Erfahrungen der Vergangenheit nur schleppend voran, insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund eines verhaltenen nominalen Wachstums.³ Darüber hinaus vollzieht sich der Schuldenabbau nicht unbedingt in den Ländern, in denen dies am dringendsten nötig wäre; so erzielten einige hoch verschuldete Länder langsamere Fortschritte beim Abbau von Verbindlichkeiten als Länder mit niedriger Verschuldung.

- **Der Bankensektor konnte seine Eigenkapitalposition verbessern, steht allerdings angesichts der rückläufigen Rentabilität und uneinbringlicher Altschulden vor Herausforderungen.** Während die Banken im Allgemeinen ihre Eigenkapitalquoten und die Widerstandsfähigkeit gegenüber Schocks steigern konnten, wird ihre Fähigkeit, auf dem Markt frisches Kapital zu beschaffen dadurch eingeschränkt, dass sich vor dem Hintergrund der neuen Eigenkapitalanforderungen die Rentabilitätsaussichten eingetrübt haben. In einigen Ländern sind die Banken noch immer durch notleidende Kredite belastet, sodass dort geringerer Spielraum für die Kreditvergabe und eine erhöhte Gefahr einer Fehlallokation von Kapital besteht.
- **Die Preisdynamik bei den Wohnimmobilien nimmt Fahrt auf und muss in einigen Ländern beobachtet werden.** Nachdem während der Rezession nach der Krise drastische Korrekturen erfolgten, klettern die Wohnimmobilienpreise gegenwärtig in den meisten Ländern nach oben. Trotz des niedrigen Zinsniveaus beschleunigt sich die Preisentwicklung bei Wohnimmobilien aber deutlich langsamer als Mitte der 2000er Jahre. In manchen Ländern, in denen die Wohnimmobilienpreise als zu hoch eingeschätzt werden und die Kreditvergabe an Privathaushalte steigt, legen die Preise allerdings weiter kräftig zu, was aufmerksam verfolgt werden muss.
- **Die Erholung auf den Arbeitsmärkten setzt sich fort, doch in einer Reihe von Ländern gibt es weiterhin soziale Not.** Die Arbeitsmärkte haben sich seit Mitte 2013 positiv entwickelt, und die Unterschiede zwischen den Arbeitslosenquoten in den Mitgliedstaaten haben sich verringert, nachdem in früheren Jahren ein deutliches Auseinanderdriften zu beobachten gewesen war. Dennoch ist in einer Reihe von EU-Ländern die Arbeitslosigkeit weiterhin sehr hoch, die Arbeitseinkommen stagnieren und nach wie vor gibt es soziale Not, vor allem in den Ländern, die am meisten unter der Finanz- und Schuldenkrise gelitten haben.

Aspekte im Zusammenhang mit der Wiederherstellung des Gleichgewichts im Euro-Währungsgebiet sollten weiterhin genau beobachtet werden. Der Leistungsbilanzüberschuss des Euro-Währungsgebiets hat sich 2015 weiter auf 3,3 % des BIP erhöht und soll den Projektionen zufolge im Jahr 2016 angesichts der aggregierten Nachfrage, die sich weniger dynamisch als die Produktion entwickelt, auf 3,7 % des BIP steigen. Die schwache Erholung der aggregierten Nachfrage im Euro-Währungsgebiet hat die niedrige Inflation und das Fortbestehen der Konjunkturlaute befördert. Um eine Verringerung der Nettoauslandsverbindlichkeiten sicherzustellen, müssen die bei den Leistungsbilanzpositionen der Netto-Schuldnerstaaten erzielten Verbesserungen aufrechterhalten werden. Demgegenüber wurde in einigen Netto-Gläubigerländern noch nicht damit begonnen, die externen Ungleichgewichte zu korrigieren.

Insgesamt betrachtet bestehen die im WMB 2016 ermittelten Risikoquellen trotz kontinuierlicher Verbesserungen fort. Beim Abbau externer Ungleichgewichte erzielen die

³ Siehe z. B. Fiscal Monitor, IWF, Oktober 2016.

Netto-Schuldnerländer weiter Verbesserungen, doch der Prozess der Wiederherstellung des Gleichgewichts verläuft nach wie vor uneinheitlich. Die Anpassung der internen Ungleichgewichte in Bestandsgrößen kommt angesichts des geringen nominalen Wachstums nur schleppend voran, und die Fortschritte fallen uneinheitlich aus. Im Bankensektor haben sich die Rentabilitätsaussichten eingetrübt, und in einigen Ländern muss der Sektor noch Altlasten abbauen, die durch notleidende Kredite verursacht wurden. In manchen Mitgliedstaaten machen sich Anzeichen für eine Überhitzung auf dem Wohnungs- oder Arbeitsmarkt bemerkbar, die eine Überwachung erfordern.

Im Rahmen der eingehenden Überprüfungen werden die im WMB ermittelten Mitgliedstaaten detaillierteren und umfassenderen Analysen unterzogen. Wie im vorangehenden Zyklus fließen die eingehenden Überprüfungen in die Länderberichte ein, in denen die Analyse der Kommissionsdienststellen hinsichtlich der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Herausforderungen in den Mitgliedstaaten enthalten ist. Diese Analyse geht dann in die länderspezifischen Empfehlungen im Rahmen des Europäischen Semesters ein. Bei den eingehenden Überprüfungen stützt die Kommission ihre Analyse auf umfassende Daten und Informationen; so werden alle relevanten Statistiken, alle einschlägigen Daten und alle wesentlichen Fakten berücksichtigt. Dem Basisrechtsakt entsprechend wird die Kommission auf der Grundlage dieser Prüfungen dann den Schluss ziehen, ob Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte bestehen, und für jeden Mitgliedstaat Politikempfehlungen abgeben.⁴ Alle Länder, bei denen im letzten VMU-Zyklus Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte festgestellt worden sind, werden nun einem spezifischen Monitoring unterzogen, dessen Intensität sich nach der Schwere der für die Ungleichgewichte verantwortlichen Probleme richtet (Kasten 1).⁵

Kasten 1: Anwendung des VMU: Wichtigste Entwicklungen seit 2015

Kategorisierung der makroökonomischen Ungleichgewichte

Im Einklang mit der Mitteilung der Kommission „Schritte zur Vollendung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion“ vom Oktober 2015 und wie in der Mitteilung der Kommission vom April 2016 über das Europäische Semester erläutert, hat die Kommission die Kategorisierung der makroökonomischen Ungleichgewichte im vorhergehenden Zyklus vereinfacht und konsolidiert. Im Zuge der Konsolidierung wurde die Anzahl der möglichen Kategorien von sechs auf vier reduziert (keine Ungleichgewichte; Ungleichgewichte; übermäßige Ungleichgewichte und Korrekturmaßnahmen erfordernde übermäßige Ungleichgewichte). Von den 19 Ländern, die im Jahr 2016 einer eingehenden Überprüfung unterzogen wurden, wiesen sechs keine Ungleichgewichte auf (Österreich, Belgien, Estland, Ungarn, Rumänien und das Vereinigte Königreich), in sieben Ländern wurden Ungleichgewichte festgestellt (Finnland, Deutschland, Irland, Niederlande, Slowenien, Spanien und Schweden), und in sechs Ländern bestanden übermäßige Ungleichgewichte (Bulgarien, Kroatien, Zypern, Frankreich, Italien und Portugal).

Spezifisches Monitoring

Das spezifische Monitoring zielt darauf ab, die laufende Überwachung der im Rahmen des VMU ergriffenen politischen Maßnahmen zu verbessern. Es soll nicht die umfassende Überwachung durch

⁴ Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011 (ABl. L 306 vom 23.11.2011, S. 25).

⁵ Siehe „Europäisches Semester 2016: Bewertung der Fortschritte bei den Strukturreformen und bei der Verhinderung und Korrektur makroökonomischer Ungleichgewichte sowie Ergebnisse der eingehenden Überprüfungen gemäß Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011 (COM(2016) 95 final/2) vom 7.4.2016.

die Kommission ersetzen, die sich auf die Umsetzung von Reformen konzentriert, die als Reaktion auf die länderspezifischen Empfehlungen ergriffen wurden, und die in die Länderberichte einfließt, sondern die Grundlage für eine solche Bewertung stärken.

Das spezifische Monitoring wurde erstmals im Jahr 2013 eingeführt, um die entschlossenen politischen Maßnahmen zu überwachen, die Spanien und Slowenien ergreifen sollten, nachdem übermäßige Ungleichgewichte festgestellt worden waren. Das Monitoring umfasste zwei Besuche vor Ort, über die im Herbst und Winter Berichte erstellt wurden, die in den mit der Vorbereitung von Sitzungen des Rates Wirtschaft und Finanzen befassten Ausschüssen des Rates (AWP/WFA) erörtert wurden. Angesichts der positiven Erfahrung mit diesen beiden Ländern weitete die Kommission 2014 das spezifische Monitoring auf alle Länder mit übermäßigen Ungleichgewichten und auf ausgewählte Länder des Euro-Währungsgebiets aus, in denen Ungleichgewichte von systemischer Bedeutung bestehen. Im Jahr 2016 wurde das spezifische Monitoring im Zuge der Konsolidierung der VMU-Kategorien auf sämtliche Länder ausgedehnt, in denen Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte bestehen; das Monitoring findet lediglich im Herbst statt und richtet sich nach dem Umfang der Herausforderungen und der Schwere der Ungleichgewichte. Auf der Grundlage der gesammelten Erfahrungen können bei Bedarf weitere Anpassungen an der Durchführung des spezifischen Monitoring vorgenommen werden.

Mitgliedstaaten, bei denen im vorhergehenden Zyklus bereits Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte festgestellt worden sind, müssen einer eingehenden Überprüfung unterzogen werden.⁶ Eine neue eingehende Überprüfung ist geboten, um zu bewerten, ob bestehende Ungleichgewichte oder übermäßige Ungleichgewichte abnehmen, fortbestehen oder zunehmen, wobei gebührend berücksichtigt wird, welchen Beitrag die von den betroffenen Mitgliedstaaten zur Überwindung der Ungleichgewichte durchgeführten Maßnahmen hierzu leisten. Bei den betroffenen Mitgliedstaaten handelt es sich um Bulgarien, Deutschland, Finnland, Frankreich, Irland, Italien, Kroatien, die Niederlande, Portugal, Slowenien, Schweden, Spanien und Zypern.

Ausgehend von der wirtschaftlichen Auslegung des Scoreboards wird die Kommission für die anderen Mitgliedstaaten im jetzigen Stadium keine weiteren Analysen im Rahmen des VMU vornehmen. Insbesondere die Länder, deren Überwachung im Rahmen des VMU 2016 beendet wurde (Belgien, Rumänien, Ungarn und das Vereinigte Königreich), weisen im Vergleich zum Vorjahr keinerlei Anzeichen für wesentliche zusätzliche Risiken auf, die eine eingehende Überprüfung im Jahr 2017 erfordern würden. In einigen Ländern, die in jüngster Zeit keiner eingehenden Überprüfung unterzogen worden sind, ist eine anhaltende Aufwärtsentwicklung bei den Wohnimmobilienpreisen (Dänemark, Luxemburg) und den Arbeitskosten (Estland, Lettland, Litauen) festzustellen, die genau beobachtet werden muss, aber kein Screening der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Schwachstellen und Risiken im Rahmen einer eingehenden Überprüfung notwendig macht. Im Falle Griechenlands erfolgen die Überwachung der Ungleichgewichte und das Monitoring der Korrekturmaßnahmen weiterhin im Kontext des Finanzhilfeprogramms. Insgesamt wird im Warnmechanismusbericht daher die Ausarbeitung von eingehenden Überprüfungen für 13 Mitgliedstaaten gefordert, während es im vorhergehenden Zyklus noch 19 waren. Die Länder, die im letzten Zyklus keiner

⁶ Siehe „Europäisches Semester 2016: Bewertung der Fortschritte bei den Strukturreformen und bei der Verhinderung und Korrektur makroökonomischer Ungleichgewichte sowie Ergebnisse der eingehenden Überprüfungen gemäß Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011 (COM(2016) 95 final/2) vom 7.4.2016. Alle länderspezifischen Empfehlungen des Rates, auch die für das VMU relevanten, sind im ABl. C 299 vom 18.8.2016 enthalten.

eingehenden Überprüfung unterzogen wurden, müssen auch im Jahr 2017 nicht eingehend überprüft werden.

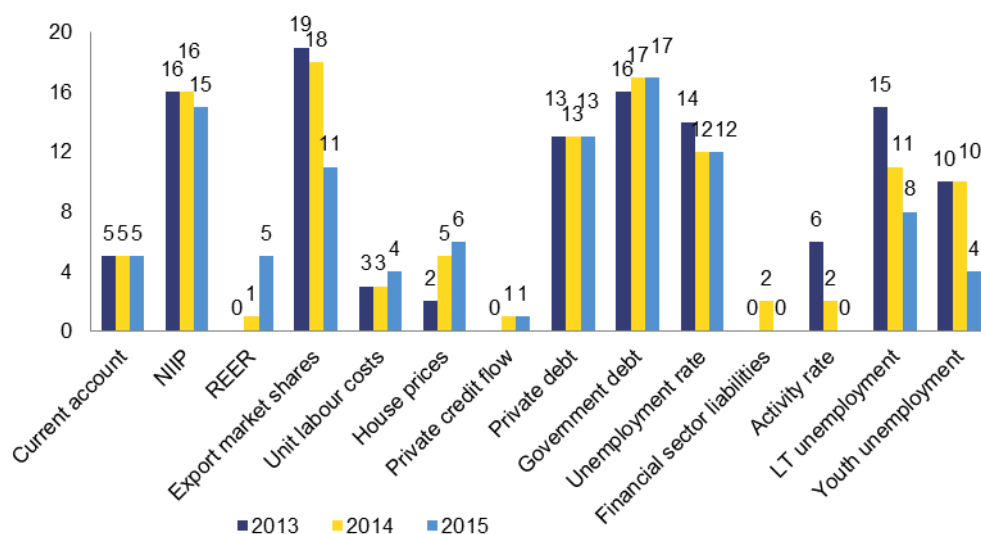
2. UNGLEICHGEWICHTE, RISIKEN UND ANPASSUNGEN: WICHTIGSTE ENTWICKLUNGEN IN DEN MITGLIEDSTAATEN

Der Warnmechanismusbericht stützt sich auf eine wirtschaftliche Auslegung eines Scoreboards mit unterschiedlichen Indikatoren. Das WMB-Scoreboard mit seinen verschiedenen Indikatoren und die indikativen Schwellenwerte dienen als Filter, anhand dessen Anscheinsbeweise zur Feststellung möglicher Risiken und Schwachstellen ermittelt werden, die eine weitergehende Untersuchung erfordern. Das Scoreboard umfasst Indikatoren und Referenzschwellenwerte für verschiedene Bereiche, u. a. für außenwirtschaftliche Positionen, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, private Verschuldung, Wohnungsmärkte, den Bankensektor und die Beschäftigung. Es stützt sich auf Ex-post-Daten, um die Datenstabilität und die Verwendung von länderübergreifend einheitlichen Daten zu gewährleisten. Für das Scoreboard, dessen Ergebnisse in diesen Bericht einfließen, werden folglich Daten bis zum Jahr 2015 verwendet. Gleichwohl werden bei der wirtschaftlichen Auslegung der Indikatoren zusätzlich zu verschiedenen Hilfsindikatoren auch neuere Daten geprüft. Die Scoreboard-Werte werden nicht mechanistisch, sondern nach wirtschaftlichen Gesichtspunkten ausgelegt, sodass länderspezifische und kontextuelle Aspekte berücksichtigt werden können.⁷

Die Entwicklung der Scoreboard-Indikatoren gibt Aufschluss darüber, wie die schrittweise Anpassung vorankommt und welche Ungleichgewichte und Schwachstellen weiter bestehen. Die Korrektur potenzieller Leistungsbilanzungleichgewichte lässt sich daran ablesen, wie sich die Anzahl der Werte entwickelt, die über dem Schwellenwert für die Variable der Leistungsbilanz im WMB-Scoreboard liegen (Abbildung 1). Während im Jahr 2009 noch 14 Länder aufgrund von Defiziten und zwei Länder aufgrund von Überschüssen den Schwellenwert für den Leistungsbilanzindikator überschritten, lagen 2015 lediglich fünf Länder über dem Schwellenwert, drei davon infolge von Überschüssen. Angesichts der Belebung der Produktion und des Exportwachstums in den meisten EU-Ländern ist die Anzahl der Messwerte, die den Schwellenwert für die Arbeitslosigkeit, für andere soziale Indikatoren und die Exportmarktanteile überschreiten, zurückgegangen. In einigen Ländern hat sich die Preisdynamik vor dem Hintergrund der generell niedrigen Inflation wieder beschleunigt, was dazu führt, dass eine wachsende, wenngleich auch noch beschränkte Anzahl von Werten nun über dem Schwellenwert für den realen effektiven Wechselkurs und die realen Wohnimmobilienpreise liegt. Zahlreiche Länder überschreiten weiterhin den Schwellenwert für die Ungleichgewichte in Bestandsgrößen. Im Zusammenhang mit dem Nettoauslandsvermögensstatus trifft dies im Jahr 2015 auf 15 Länder zu, eines weniger als im Vorjahr, und im Zusammenhang mit dem Indikator für den öffentlichen Schuldenstand auf 17 Länder, genauso viele wie im Vorjahr. Was die private Verschuldung anbelangt, liegt die Anzahl der Werte über dem Schwellenwert stabil bei 13.

⁷ Eine mechanistische Auslegung des Scoreboards wird durch die VMU-Verordnung ausgeschlossen (Verordnung (EU) Nr. 1176/2011). Näheres zu den zugrunde liegenden Überlegungen zum Aufbau des WMB-Scoreboards siehe „The Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure. *Rationale, process, application: a compendium*“ (Europäische Kommission, 2016).

Abbildung 1: Anzahl der Werte, die den Schwellenwert überschreiten, aufgeschlüsselt nach Scoreboard-Indikatoren (2013, 2014 und 2015)



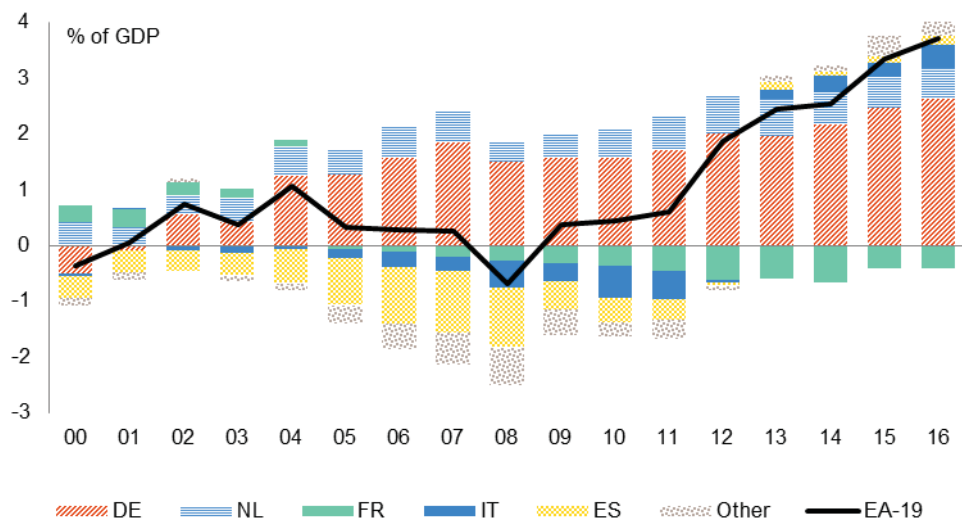
Quelle: Eurostat.

Wenngleich bisherige Leistungsbilanzdefizite meist in Überschüsse oder ausgeglichene Leistungsbilanzpositionen umgewandelt werden konnten, bestehen nach wie vor große Überschüsse. Die Netto-Schuldnerländer haben Anstrengungen unternommen, um unmittelbar nach der Krise die übermäßigen Leistungsbilanzdefizite zu korrigieren (Abbildung 2). Nach einer Unterbrechung im Jahr 2014 nahmen sie 2015 weitere Anpassungen an ihren Positionen vor, was vor allem dem Exportwachstum geschuldet, in wenigen Fällen jedoch auch auf die schwache Binnennachfrage zurückzuführen war (z. B. in Italien). In der Folge wiesen lediglich das Vereinigte Königreich und Zypern Defizite auf, die über dem Schwellenwert lagen. Im Gegensatz dazu überschreiten die Überschüsse Dänemarks, Deutschlands und der Niederlande nach wie vor den Schwellenwert. Der Leistungsbilanzüberschuss Deutschlands wuchs – ausgehend von einem hohen Niveau – nach einem signifikanten Anstieg 2014 weiter und lag im Jahr 2015 bei 8,5 % des BIP. In allen Sektoren der Wirtschaft setzte sich der Schuldenabbau fort, wodurch das in Deutschland vorhandene Ungleichgewicht zwischen Ersparnisbildung einerseits und Investitionen andererseits noch weiter zunahm.⁸ Darüber hinaus trugen die niedrigen Ölpreise und Terms-of-Trade-Effekte zu einer weiteren Erhöhung des Überschusses im Jahr 2015 bei. Auf konjunkturbereinigter Basis fällt Deutschlands Überschuss mit 9,4 % des BIP sogar noch höher aus; dieser Effekt lässt sich auch bei 15 anderen Mitgliedstaaten beobachten, deren tatsächlicher Leistungsbilanzsaldo unter der auf konjunkturbereinigter Grundlage bestimmten Position liegt. Auch die Niederlande weisen nach wie vor einen großen Leistungsbilanzüberschuss aus, der in den letzten beiden Jahren allerdings zurückgegangen ist. Unter den Netto-Gläubigerländern verzeichneten Dänemark, Deutschland, Malta und die Niederlande Überschüsse, die mehr als 5 BIP-Prozentpunkte über dem Wert lagen, den

⁸ Die hier genannten Zahlen für die Leistungsbilanzsalden basieren auf den Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesamtrechnungen.

fundamentale Faktoren wie die Demografie oder Herstellungsintensität nahelegen. Unter den Netto-Schuldnerländern ist lediglich im Vereinigte Königreich ein Defizit aufgelaufen, das die Fundamentaldaten in einer ähnlichen Größenordnung überstieg, während die Leistungsbilanzpositionen der Mehrheit der Netto-Schuldnerländer nach dem jüngsten Abbau außenwirtschaftlicher Ungleichgewichte hinter den Fundamentaldaten zurückblieben. Die Korrektur von Ungleichgewichten in den Netto-Schuldnerstaaten und die nach wie vor bestehenden Überschüsse in den wichtigsten Netto-Gläubigerländern hatten insgesamt zur Folge, dass der Leistungsbilanzüberschuss im Euro-Währungsgebiet im Jahr 2015 um weitere 0,8 Prozentpunkte des BIP auf 3,3 % des BIP gestiegen ist, während die Position im Zeitraum 2009-2010 noch nahezu ausgeglichen war (Kasten 2).

Abbildung 2: Leistungsbilanzsalden des Euro-Währungsgebiets und ausgewählter Mitgliedstaaten



Quelle: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen und Herbstprognose 2016 der Europäischen Kommission (AMECO).

Kasten 2: Makroökonomische Ungleichgewichte und die Dimension des Euro-Währungsgebiets

Die Auswirkungen makroökonomischer Ungleichgewichte auf das gesamte Euro-Währungsgebiet verdienen eine genaue Betrachtung. Im Einklang mit den Vorschlägen, die in dem Bericht „Die Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion Europas vollenden“ von Jean Claude Juncker, Donald Tusk, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, Mario Draghi und Martin Schulz vom 22. Juni 2015 veröffentlicht wurden, und im Einklang mit der Mitteilung der Kommission „Schritte zur Vollendung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion“ vom 21. Oktober 2015 werden ab diesem Jahr die Auswirkungen der in manchen Ländern bestehenden Ungleichgewichte auf das Euro-Währungsgebiet insgesamt im WMB systematisch analysiert, und es wird geprüft, inwieweit diese Auswirkungen einen koordinierten Ansatz für politische Maßnahmen erforderlich machen.

Der große Leistungsbilanzüberschuss im Euro-Währungsgebiet wächst weiter. Das Euro-

Währungsgebiet verzeichnet 2015 mit 349 Mrd. EUR oder 3,3 % des BIP die weltweit höchste Leistungsbilanz.⁹ Im Jahr 2008 wies das Euro-Währungsgebiet noch ein Defizit von 0,7 % aus, das sich in der Zeit nach der Krise zu einem Leistungsbilanzüberschuss entwickelte. Die Höhe des Leistungsbilanzüberschusses lässt sich eigentlich kaum anhand der wirtschaftlichen Fundamentaldaten erklären: nach empirischen Schätzungen für eine Leistungsbilanznorm für das Euro-Währungsgebiet deuten die Fundamentaldaten (einschließlich Alterung, relatives Pro-Kopf-Einkommen usw.) lediglich auf einen kleinen Überschuss von rund 0,3 % des BIP im Jahr 2015 hin.¹⁰ Obwohl die Ölpreise seit Anfang 2016 – ausgehend von einem niedrigen Niveau – wieder zugelegt haben und der Euro in effektiver Rechnung an Wert gewonnen hat, wird der Überschuss im Euro-Währungsgebiet 2016 voraussichtlich weiter um 0,4 Prozentpunkte steigen. Der hohe und weiter wachsende Leistungsbilanzüberschuss des Euro-Währungsgebiets könnte künftig dazu beitragen, den Aufwärtsdruck auf den Außenwert des Euro zu erhöhen.

Der Leistungsbilanzüberschuss des Euro-Währungsgebiets spiegelt die Korrektur der früheren Leistungsbilanzdefizite und den allgemeinen Schuldenabbau sowie die anhaltend hohen Überschüsse in einigen Mitgliedstaaten wider. Der Anstieg des Leistungsbilanzsaldos des Euro-Währungsgebiets unmittelbar nach der Krise fiel zeitlich mit einer drastischen Korrektur in Ländern mit hohen Zahlungsbilanzdefiziten zusammen, die durch die Richtungsänderung der privaten grenzüberschreitenden Finanzströme ausgelöst wurde. Danach blieb die Dynamik der Inlandsnachfrage und der Einfuhren in den Netto-Schuldnerländern gedämpft. In Ländern mit positiver Leistungsbilanz fand keine symmetrische Korrektur nach der Krise statt, sodass die Überschüsse in den Ländern mit den größten Überschüssen weiter stiegen, insbesondere in Deutschland und den Niederlanden. Im Jahr 2015 steuerten die Überschüsse Deutschlands und der Niederlande 257 Mrd. EUR bzw. 57 Mrd. EUR zum Leistungsbilanzüberschuss des Euro-Währungsgebiets bei. Der starke Anstieg des Leistungsbilanzüberschusses im Euro-Währungsgebiet ist auf einen Schuldenabbau in allen Sektoren der Wirtschaft seit 2009 zurückzuführen. Die Verbesserung bei den Finanzierungssalden war zunächst bei den privaten Haushalten und Unternehmen und angesichts der Notwendigkeit, eine erheblich verschlechterte Haushaltslage zu korrigieren, erst später im öffentlichen Sektor zu spüren.

Wenngleich die außenwirtschaftliche Position der meisten Länder des Euro-Währungsgebiets nahezu ausgeglichen ist oder einen Überschuss ausweist, muss der Abbau von Ungleichgewichten im Euro-Währungsgebiet fortgesetzt werden. Auch wenn nur noch in wenigen Ländern ein beträchtliches Leistungsbilanzdefizit besteht, bedeutet dies nicht, dass keine weiteren Fortschritte beim Abbau von Ungleichgewichten im Euro-Währungsgebiet erforderlich sind. Länder, die über einen langen Zeitraum hohe Defizite verzeichneten, weisen nach wie vor einen hohen negativen Nettoauslandsvermögensstatus auf, der auf Schwachstellen hindeutet. Für die Abwicklung umfangreicher Verbindlichkeiten muss die Leistungsbilanz im positiven Bereich bleiben oder darf nur geringe Defizite aufweisen; dies bedeutet wiederum, dass der Spielraum für eine Steigerung der Inlandsnachfrage in den Netto-Schuldnerstaaten begrenzt ist. Da ein hoher negativer Nettoauslandsvermögensstatus im Allgemeinen mit einer beträchtlichen privaten oder öffentlichen

⁹ Zahlen auf der Basis der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesamtrechnungen.

¹⁰ Die Benchmark leitet sich von den Reduced-Form-Regressionen ab, die die wichtigsten Determinanten für den Saldo aus Ersparnis und Investitionen erfassen, einschließlich fundamentaler Faktoren (z. B. Demografie, Ressourcen), politischer Faktoren und der globalen finanziellen Bedingungen. Die Methodik ist mit dem vom IWF entwickelten Ansatz zur Bewertung des Außenbeitrags (External Balance Assessment, EBA) verwandt (Phillips, S. et al., 2013, „The External Balance Assessment (EBA) Methodology“, IMF Working Paper, 13/272), wobei keine Wechselwirkungen im Zusammenhang mit der Variablen für Alterungseffekte und weiteren Variablen berücksichtigt wurden, die den Anteil des verarbeitenden Gewerbes an der Wertschöpfung erfassen.

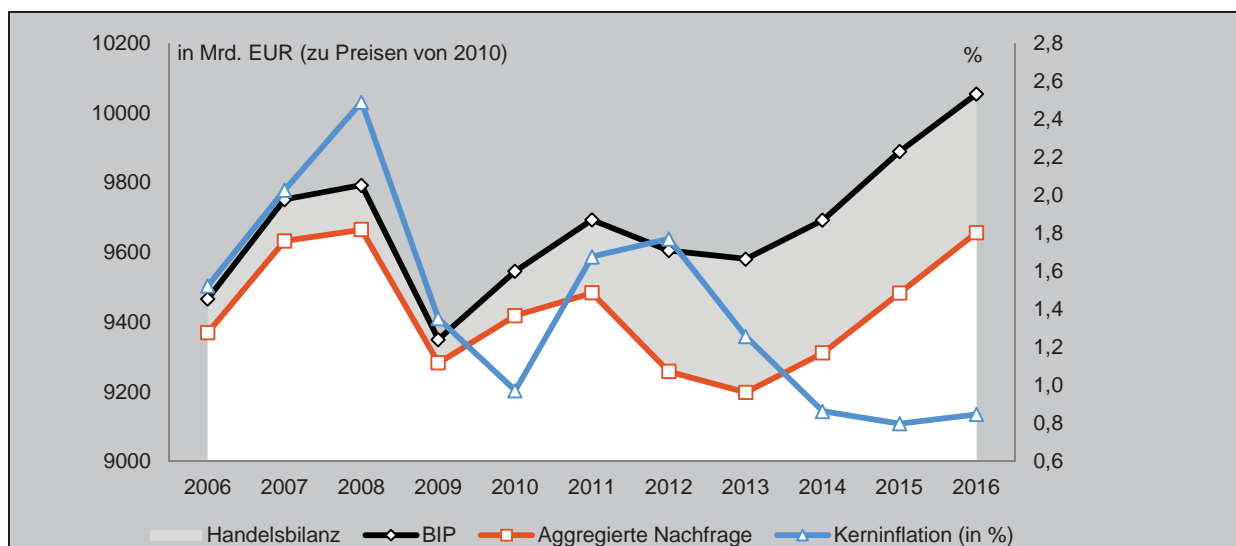
Verschuldung verbunden ist, stellt die Beibehaltung verantwortungsvoller Leistungsbilanzpositionen in den Netto-Schuldnerstaaten außerdem eine Voraussetzung für den gebotenen internen Verschuldungsabbau dar. Inwieweit der Verschuldungsabbau in Netto-Schuldnerländern zulasten ihrer Erholungsaussichten geht, hängt vor dem Hintergrund der rückläufigen Handelsintensität maßgeblich vom Wachstums- und Inflationsumfeld und von Verschuldungs-/Deflationsrisiken, dem Spielraum für eine weitere Steigerung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und der Nachfragedynamik in den Netto-Gläubigerländern mit Leistungsüberschüssen und den nicht dem Euro-Währungsgebiet angehörenden Ländern ab.

Das Fortbestehen der großen Leistungsbilanzüberschüsse im Euro-Währungsgebiet spiegelt die Entwicklung der aggregierten Nachfrage wider, die nach wie vor weniger dynamisch als die der Wirtschaftstätigkeit verläuft. Die reale Binnennachfrage im Euro-Währungsgebiet dürfte erst dieses Jahr wieder ihr Vorkrisenniveau erreichen (Abbildung 3). Der anhaltende Trend einer langsamer als das Produktivitätswachstum voranschreitenden Erholung der Binnennachfrage ist sowohl der Dynamik bei den Investitionen als auch beim Verbrauch zuzuschreiben und schlägt sich in der Produktionslücke nieder, die seit 2009 negativ ist und nach wie vor bei unter 1 % liegt. Die anhaltende Unterauslastung verfestigt das Niveau der Kerninflation, die sich derzeit auf einem historischen niedrigen Niveau befindet, unter dem Zielwert der Währungsbehörden bleibt und die Bedingungen für den Verschuldungsabbau und die Wiederherstellung eines Gleichgewichts im Euro-Währungsgebiet eintrübt. Darüber hinaus könnte auch der große und weiter wachsende Leistungsbilanzüberschuss im Euro-Währungsgebiet über den Wechselkurskanal dazu beitragen, dass die Inflation auf ihrem niedrigen Niveau verharrt.

Der Finanzsektor steht vor einer Reihe von Herausforderungen. Die Eigenkapitalausstattung der Banken im Euro-Währungsgebiet hat sich im Durchschnitt verbessert, wobei jedoch noch immer wesentliche Unterschiede bestehen. Die Rentabilität der Banken liegt unter dem Vorkrisenniveau und dürfte weiter sinken, da das Niedriginflationsumfeld seinen Niederschlag zunehmend in verringerten Margen und niedrigen Anlagerenditen findet und auch die Überversorgung im Bankensektor sowie veraltete Geschäftsmodelle die Rentabilität drücken. In einigen Ländern werden die rückläufigen Gewinnspannen durch den hohen Anteil notleidender Kredite noch weiter geschmälert, und durch die Abwicklung der großen Bestände an notleidenden Vermögenswerten könnte die jetzt schon dünne Eigenkapitaldecke einiger Banken weiter strapaziert werden. Die Kombination aus niedriger Inflation, hohen Beständen an notleidenden Krediten in einigen Ländern und der Notwendigkeit, die vorgeschriebenen Kapitalpuffer aufzubauen, könnte die Möglichkeiten für das Kreditwachstum einschränken

Abbildung 3: Produktion, Binnennachfrage, Handelsbilanz und Kerninflation des Euro-Währungsgebiets

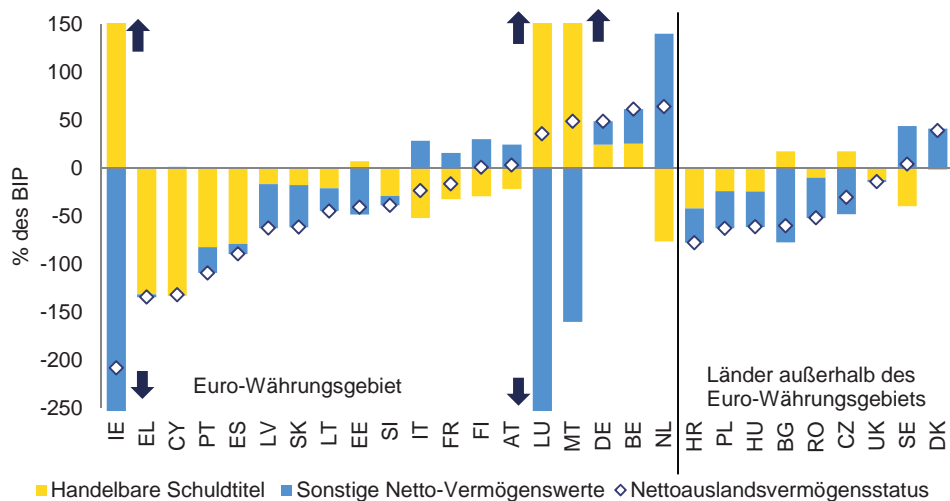
¹¹ IWF, World Economic Outlook, Oktober 2016, Kapitel 1.



Quelle: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen und Herbstprognose 2016 der Europäischen Kommission (AMECO).

Eine stärkere Nachfragedynamik und eine robustere Erholung des nominalen Wachstums würden dazu beitragen, den Abbau von Schulden und Ungleichgewichten zu beschleunigen. Die hinter dem Vorkrisenniveau zurückbleibenden Investitionsquoten können als Anzeichen für eine Eintrübung der Erwartungen in Bezug auf die künftigen realen Renditen auf Kapitalanlagen betrachtet werden (Hypothese der säkularen Stagnation). Die anhaltend schwache Investitionstätigkeit wiederum verheißt nichts Gutes für das Produktivitätswachstum. In einem solchen Kontext läuft das Euro-Währungsgebiet Gefahr, in eine sich selbst verstärkende Spirale aus verringerten Erwartungen, niedrigen Investitionen und geringem Produktivitätswachstum zu geraten.¹¹ Durch koordinierte Maßnahmen zur Mobilisierung von Ressourcen für öffentliche und private Investitionen und zur Nachfrageförderung ließe sich ein solcher Teufelskreis durchbrechen. Die Maßnahmen der Währungsbehörden könnten durch eine aktivere Unterstützung der Binnennachfrage in den Überschussländern ergänzt werden, was im Einklang mit dem Ziel der Wiederherstellung eines Gleichgewichts stünde. Die Schaffung struktureller Voraussetzungen, die insbesondere in den Netto-Schuldnerländern Investitionen, Produktivitätswachstum und Verbesserungen der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit begünstigen, würde eine dauerhafte Korrektur der Ungleichgewichte stützen und zur Verringerung der Schuldenlast beitragen..

Abbildung 4: Nettoauslandsvermögensstatus und Nettoauslandsverschuldung im Jahr 2015

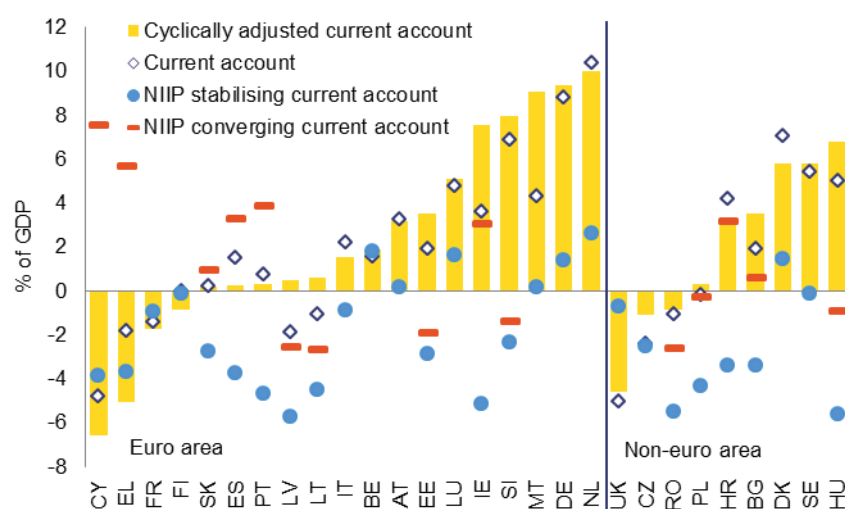


Quelle: Eurostat (BPM6, ESA10), Berechnungen der Kommissionsdienststellen.

Stocks of net external liabilities are generally falling, though in most cases at a slow pace. Many net debtor countries remain vulnerable on account of their negative net international investment positions, with scoreboard values beyond the threshold in 15 Member States in 2015, only one fewer than in 2014 (Czech Republic). Some progress has nevertheless been achieved recently, mainly as a result of positive current account balances, and through an often modest impact of nominal GDP growth. Negative net international investment positions are the largest in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, and significantly above the scoreboard threshold in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia (Graph 4). Risks and vulnerabilities linked to negative positions vary considerably, however, owing to the different composition of external assets and liabilities. In particular, liabilities linked to foreign direct investment (with high incidence e.g. in many Eastern European countries and in Ireland) and equity liabilities (proportionately very significant in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland and Romania) represent lower risks.¹² The current account balances needed for net international investment positions to converge rapidly (within 10 years) towards the threshold of 35% of GDP are above the 2015 balances for most net debtor countries (Graph 5). Most net creditor countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden) have further increased their positive net international investment position over the past few years. While risks associated with large and growing stocks of net foreign assets cannot be assimilated to external sustainability issues, the fast and persistent accumulation of net creditor risk should not be overlooked, mainly as a result of the valuation risks that such positions generate.

¹² Foreign direct investment flows and liabilities are less susceptible to sudden stops or outflows than other forms of financial flows or liabilities, and equity liabilities entail lower risks than debt obligations as a result of potentially large valuation changes at times of crises.

Graph 5: Cyclically-adjusted current account balances and balances required to stabilise or reduce external liabilities, 2015

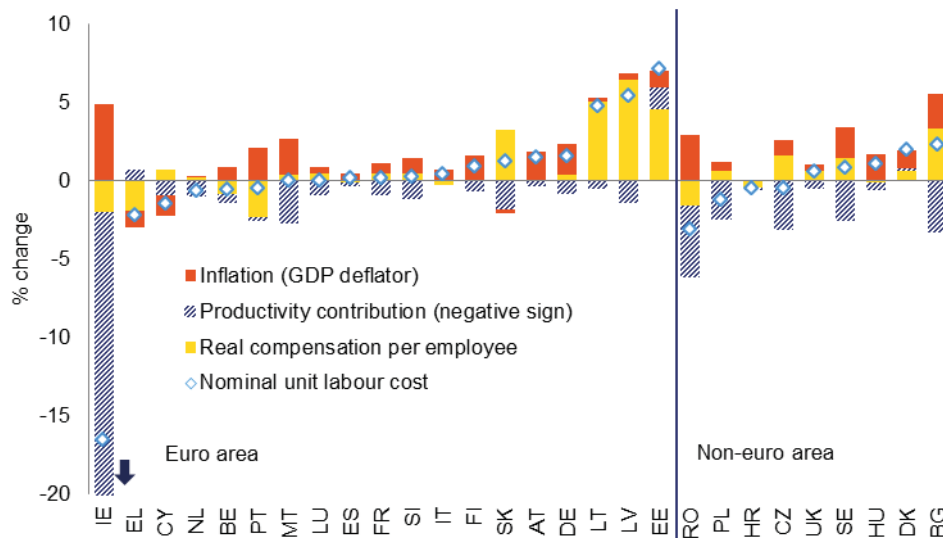


Source: Commission services calculations.

Note: cyclically-adjusted balances are calculated using the output gap estimates underlying the European Commission autumn forecast 2016. Current account balances required to stabilise or reduce net external liabilities rest on the following assumptions: nominal GDP projections stem from the European Commission autumn 2016 forecast (up to 2018), and the Commission T+10 methodology projections beyond that ; valuation effects are conventionally assumed to be zero in the projection period, which corresponds to an unbiased projection for asset prices; capital account balances are assumed to remain constant as a percentage of GDP, at a level that corresponds to the median over 2015 and projections for 2016-2018.

Cost competitiveness improvements in net debtor countries remain broadly supportive of rebalancing but have slowed down recently. The bulk of the adjustment in unit labour costs in countries that faced external imbalances and competitiveness issues occurred relatively early-on in the post crisis period. The current low-inflation environment, with limited dispersion in price developments across countries, limits the room for further adjustments in relative prices. Changes in unit labour costs have been muted in 2014 and 2015 and do not diverge much across countries, with a few exceptions (Graph 6). In 2015, the nominal unit labour cost indicator (changes over 3 years) exceeded the threshold only in the three Baltic countries and Bulgaria as wage growth outpaced productivity gains. Unit labour costs increased relatively faster in net creditor countries – including Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden – than in most other countries, though not significantly more so than in France and Italy. Among euro area Member States, the convergence in inflation towards low rates implies that real effective exchange rates are driven mainly by changes in the euro exchange rate and the relative importance of non-euro area countries as trading partners. Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain recorded the largest real effective exchange rate depreciations in 2015, with values beyond the threshold in Cyprus, Greece and Ireland. The indicator also exceeded the threshold on account of appreciations in Estonia, while appreciation pressures are also evident in Latvia and Lithuania. Outside the euro area, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Sweden recorded the largest depreciations, while appreciation pressures materialised in 2015 in Romania and the United Kingdom.

Graph 6: Growth in unit labour cost and decomposition of factors, 2015

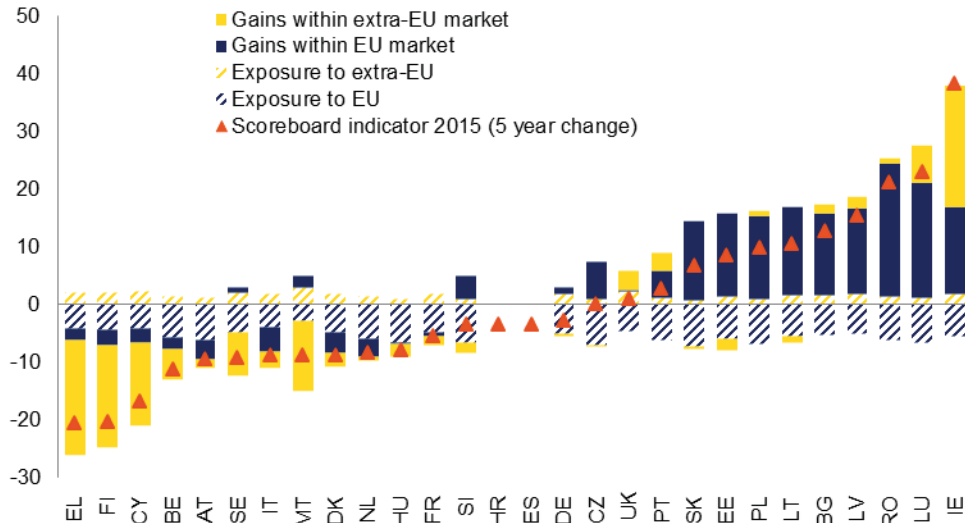


Source: AMECO and Eurostat. Commission services calculations

Note: The decomposition is based on the standard breakdown of unit labour cost growth into inflation, real hourly compensations and labour productivity, the latter being further broken down into the contribution of hours worked, total factor productivity and capital accumulation using a standard growth accounting framework.

Changes in export market shares indicate a mixed picture. In 2015, against the background of weak global trade dynamics, scoreboard values were no longer beyond the threshold in Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom, but remained so in 11 countries. In the majority of the latter cases, 5-year losses in market shares slowed down as well. However, much of the improvement across Member States is driven by a base effect. The scoreboard indicator currently includes the large losses of market shares that affected almost all Member States in 2010, thereby mechanically lowering cumulative losses in shares (Graph 7). On a year-on-year basis, the evolution of export market shares in 2013, 2014 and 2015 also reflects the differentiated trends in EU and non-EU trade. Intra-EU trade picked up faster than trade outside the EU in 2013 and 2014 when global trade slowed down, which explains the better performance in these two years. As trade outside the EU recovered in 2015, the year-on-year evolution in export market shares of Member States were negatively affected again.

Graph 7: 5-year change in export market shares, 2015

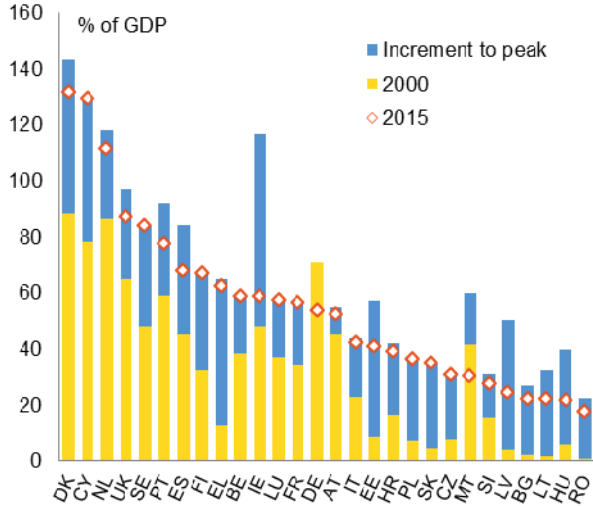


Source: Eurostat, Commission services calculations.

Note: The decomposition rests on the shift-share methodology. Shaded bars represent the contribution to market share dynamics stemming from changes in the exposure to a given market; solid bars measure the contribution to market share dynamics coming from market share changes within a given market. Calculations use BPM6 data except for BG and FI where exports to EU are derived from national accounts; data partly unavailable for ES and HR.

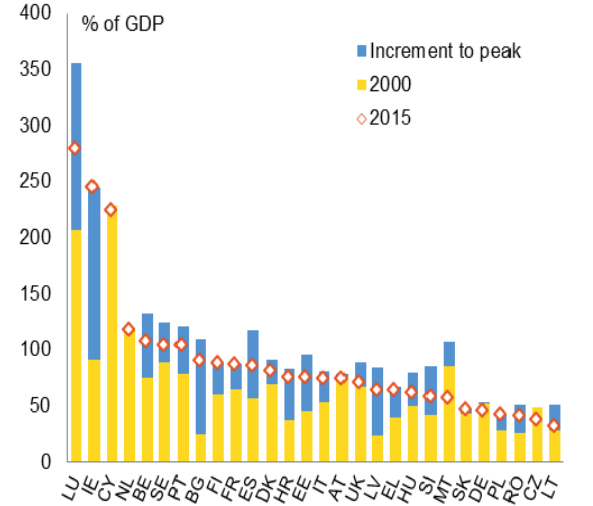
Private sector over-indebtedness continues to affect many countries. Scoreboard values exceeded the threshold in 13 countries in 2015, all of which were in that position in 2009 except France where this became the case in 2011. Cyprus, Ireland and Luxembourg have the highest level of private sector indebtedness, though special factors linked to multinational companies are at play. Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden have the next highest scoreboard indicator value. The factors underlying high private sector indebtedness vary significantly across countries. In Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, both households and non-financial corporations (NFCs) have levels of debt above the EU average due to a multiplicity of factors, including easy credit extension in the pre-crisis period for real estate transactions (Graphs 8a and 8b). In Denmark and the United Kingdom the high level of debt mainly derives from high household leverage. In France and Spain, high private debt levels stem from both households and NFCs, as neither sector's debt levels stand out strongly in comparison to EU averages. Variability in private debt levels across countries reflect to a large extent also differences in financial development, as manifested in large differences in the stock of financial assets held by the private sector, notably households. Large stocks of household assets are found especially in Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Elevated private sector indebtedness generates a number of vulnerabilities, especially in a low-growth, low-inflation environment, which makes deleveraging difficult. In particular, it increases the impact of potential shocks on households and/or NFCs, with possible repercussions on the banking sector. Risks are further amplified in those countries (including Croatia, Hungary, Poland and Romania) in which large shares of domestic debt are denominated in foreign currencies.

Graph 8a: Consolidated household debt



Source: Eurostat, Commission services calculations.

Graph 8b: Consolidated debt of NFCs

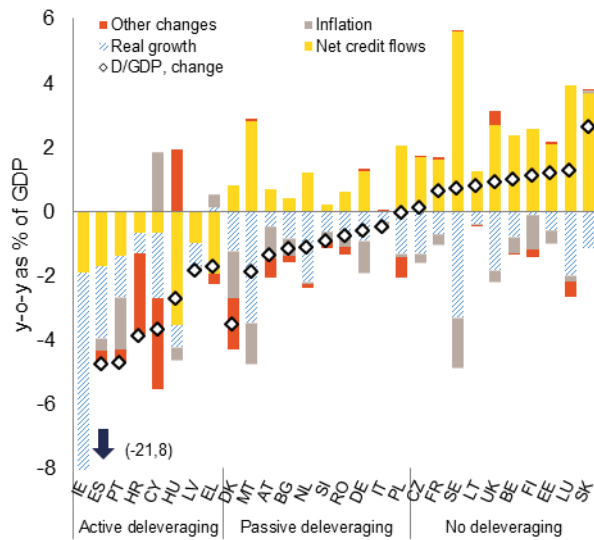


Source: Eurostat, Commission services calculations.

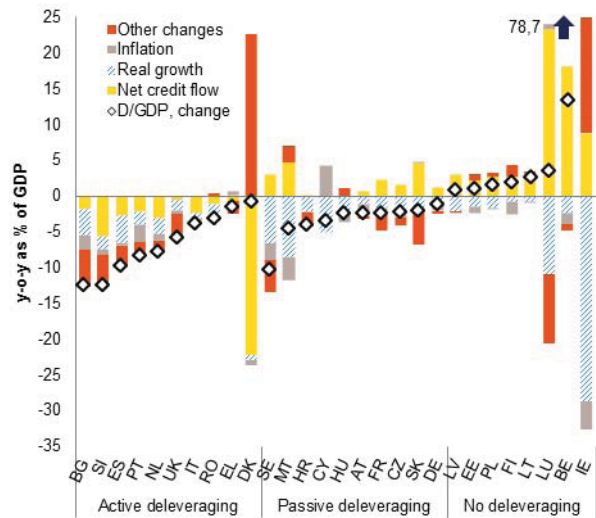
Deleveraging is ongoing but is slow and uneven. Among households, active or passive deleveraging – i.e. a reduction in debt ratios at least in part due to negative net credit flows or a reduction in debt ratios through increased GDP, but with positive net credit flows – continues in many countries, albeit at varying paces and with notable exceptions. The latest developments indicate that households in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal and Spain are deleveraging actively and reducing their net borrowing (Graph 9a).¹³ In Denmark and the Netherlands, deleveraging also advances further but under a passive form (via nominal GDP growth). In the latter, net credit flows have turned mildly positive after two years of contraction. In contrast, debt ratios continue to increase from already elevated levels in Sweden and the United Kingdom, where net credit flows to households are positive on the back of persistent strong house price dynamics. In turn, deleveraging further advanced in a number of countries where household indebtedness is least elevated (Graph 10a). This is the case in Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and some non-euro area Member States. The latest developments also indicate that NFCs in a number of countries, including Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom are deleveraging under an active form (Graph 9b). In other countries, mainly Austria and Germany, NFCs are not confronted with issues related to their indebtedness but are still deleveraging, including as a result of low investment and credit growth. In contrast, high-debt-level NFC sectors in some countries are increasing their leverage further, including in some cases as a result of positive credit flows. This is the case mainly in Belgium, Finland and Ireland (though in the latter case special factors are at play related to the operations of multinational companies).

¹³ The text refers to developments up to 2016Q1, which may differ somewhat from what is suggested on the basis of scoreboard indicators, which relate to 2015.

Graph 9a: Drivers of household deleveraging (2016Q1)



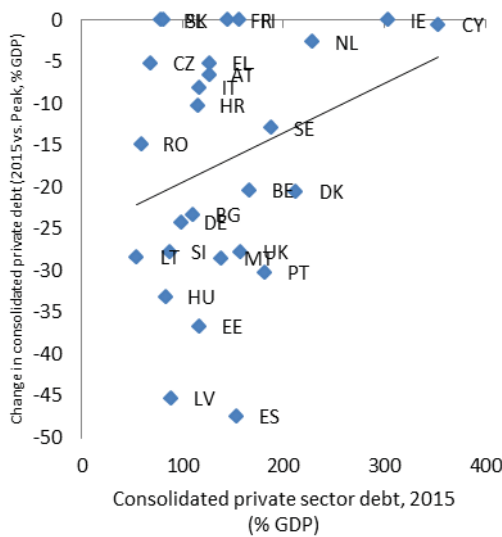
Graph 9b: Drivers of nonfinancial corporations deleveraging (2016Q1)



Sources: Eurostat, Commission services calculations.

Notes: the graphs present a breakdown of the evolution of the debt-to-GDP ratios into four components: credit flows, real GDP growth, inflation and other changes. A reduction of leverage can be achieved through different combinations of debt repayment, growth of the economy and other changes in the outstanding debt stock. Active deleveraging involves net repayment of debt (negative net credit flows), usually leading to a nominal contraction of the sector's balance sheet and having, ceteris paribus, adverse effects on economic activity and asset markets. Passive deleveraging, on the other hand, consists in positive net credit flows being outweighed by higher nominal GDP growth, leading to a gradual decrease in debt/GDP.

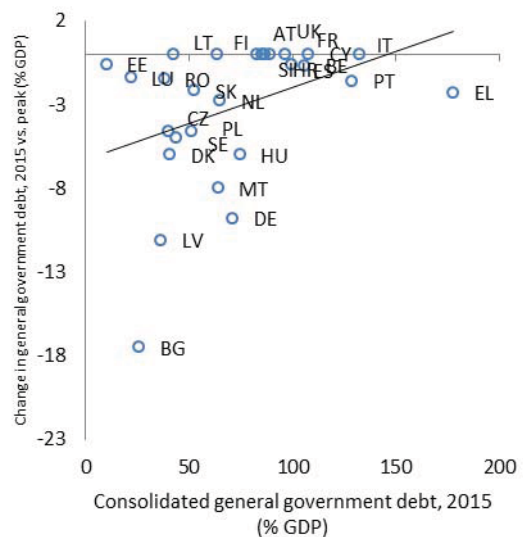
Graph 10a: Evolution of private sector debt-to-GDP (2015 vs. peak) and private debt levels (2015)



Source: Eurostat.

Note: Luxembourg is excluded from the chart as special factors related to the presence of multinational companies are behind a 59.2 percentage points fall in the private sector debt to GDP ratio between the peak and 2015.

Graph 10b: Evolution of government debt-to-GDP (2015 vs. peak) and government debt levels (2015)

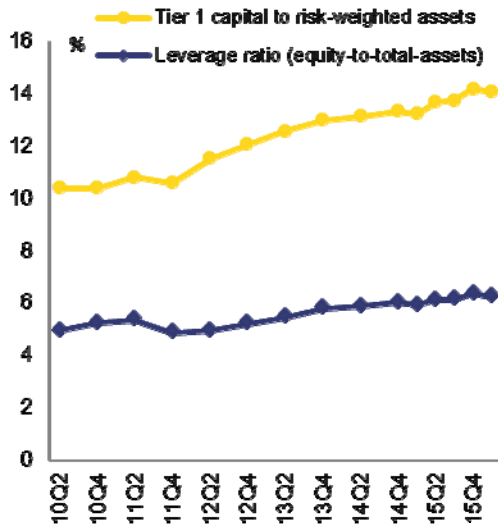


Source: Eurostat.

Note: Ireland is excluded from the chart as special factors related to the large GDP revision in 2015, mainly attributed to the activities of multinational companies, are behind a 40.9 percentage points fall in the general government debt to GDP ratio between the peak and 2015 (78.6% of GDP).

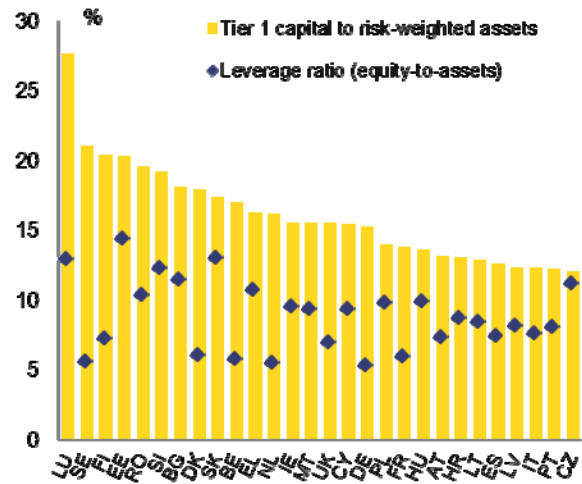
Banks have strengthened their capital ratios and their resilience is generally improving, but challenges remain. The phasing-in of new prudential requirements and banking sector deleveraging supported the increase in capital ratios in euro-area banks to 14.2% (Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets) at the end of 2015 from 10.4% at the end of 2011 (Graph 11a). The overall improvement in banks' capital positions contributes to enhance resilience and provided the basis for a recent recovery in credit against the backdrop of resuming output growth in most Member States. Capitalisation nevertheless continues to vary across Member States, with ratios (Tier 1) in excess of 17% in 10 countries (including Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden), but below 13% in 6 countries, including Italy, Portugal and Spain (Graph 11b). Net credit growth to the private sector was positive in 17 Member States in 2015 (and beyond threshold value only in Luxembourg), up from 16 in 2014, suggesting an incipient improvement in access to finance, confirmed by survey evidence. Financial sector liabilities are gradually starting to rise again on an annual basis, though increases are small in most Member States and below threshold values. Banking sector challenges are mostly linked to profitability prospects (Graph 11c), in addition to non-performing loans in a number of countries (Graph 11d). Retained earnings have been the main instrument to raise bank capital, but profitability remains low in most Member States and the build-up of low-yielding assets in a low-rate environment and the persistence of outdated business models is expected to further affect profitability going forward. Low profitability in turn impacts equity valuations and affects the ability of banks to raise new capital on the market, thereby limiting the room for credit expansion. In addition, legacy issues in the form of still high levels of non-performing loans continue to weigh on banks' balance sheets. A number of countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia) record high system-wide average but banks with high NPL ratios can be found also in other Member States. In Italy and Portugal, high levels of NPLs combine with low capitalisation ratios. Balance sheet clean-up is currently ongoing, but progress remains uneven, and loan-loss provisioning practices diverge across countries.

Graph 11a: Capital ratios in the euro area



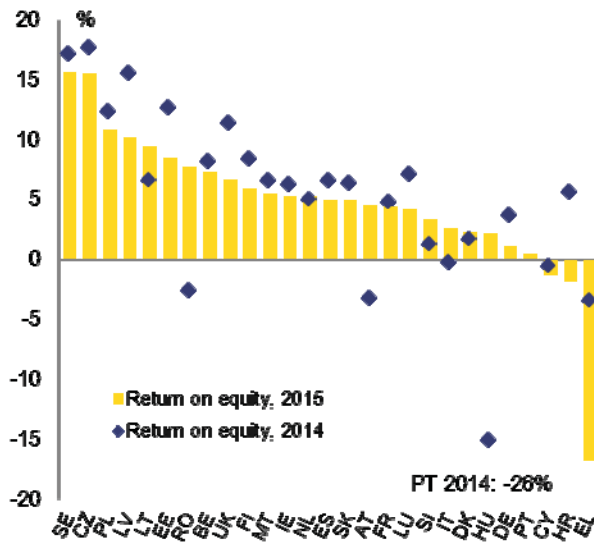
Source: European Central Bank.

Graph 11b: Capital ratios in Member States, 2015Q4



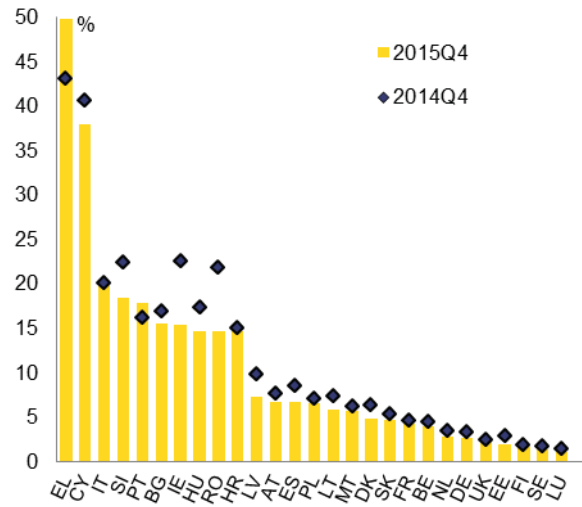
Source: European Central Bank.

Graph 11c: Banks' return on equity



Sources: European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund, European Commission calculations.

Graph 11d: Non-performing loans, percent of total loans and advances

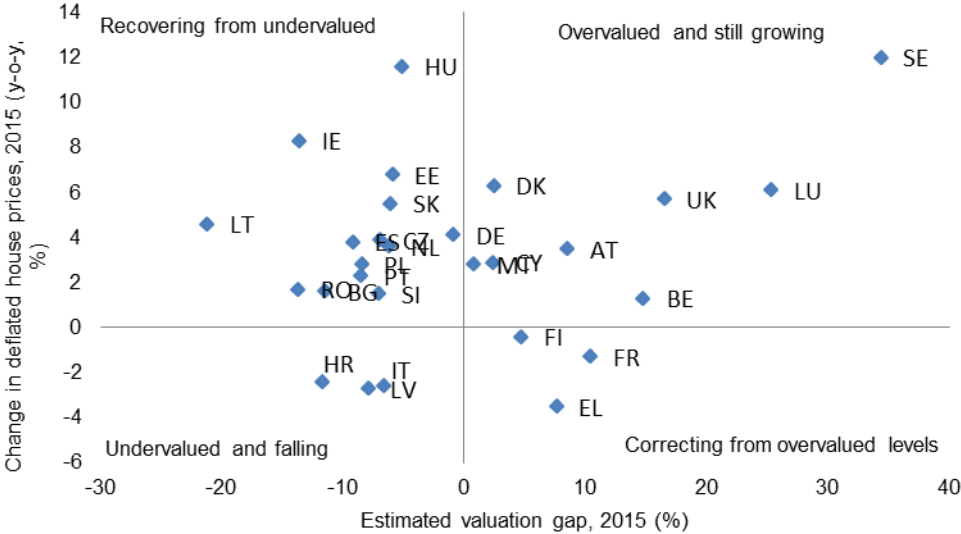


Source: European Central Bank.

Real house prices increased in the majority of Member States in 2015. The scoreboard indicator shows increases in prices in 22 Member States, with values exceeding the threshold in Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Hungary and Sweden. In Croatia, Italy and Latvia, house prices declined from levels that were already estimated to be under-valued, thereby further widening the negative valuation gap (Graph 12). In contrast, moderate decreases in real house prices in Finland, France and Greece contributed to reducing a persistent overvaluation. In a number of other Member States, the increase in real house

prices in 2015 added further pressure to already overvalued housing markets. Tensions are particularly visible in Sweden, where the increase in real house prices in 2015 came on top of a substantial overvaluation gap. In addition, the further price increases have been fuelled by rising net credit to households coming on top of already elevated debt levels. Denmark, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom are three other countries where price increases were significant in 2015 and coming on top of overvaluation gaps. In all three cases, this was also fuelled by rising net credit flows to households. These situations will therefore call for careful monitoring of future developments. In Estonia, Ireland, Hungary and Slovakia, prices are recovering from under-valued levels, while elsewhere prices rises are moderate and coming on top of limited overvaluation gaps or contributing to closing an under-valuation gap.

Graph 12: House prices valuation levels and variations in 2015



Source: Eurostat, ECB, BIS, OECD and Commission services calculations.
 Note: the overvaluation gap estimated as an average of the price/income, price/rent and fundamental model valuation gaps.

Government debt ratios declined somewhat in many Member States in 2015, but typically not in the most indebted countries. Scoreboard values exceeded the threshold in 17 Member States in 2015. For 10 of these, including Cyprus, France, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, it combined with private sector indebtedness also beyond threshold, generating economy-wide deleveraging pressures. The prevailing low-growth, low-inflation environment still does not support a robust decline in government debt ratios in spite of Member States’ efforts to cut budget deficits (which declined in structural terms in 21 countries in 2015) and generate primary surpluses (which were achieved in 19 countries). Declines in government debt ratios are taking place predominantly in Member States with lower levels of indebtedness (Graph 10b), with the most sustained drops occurring in Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Malta and the Netherlands. In contrast, none of the Member States with the highest general government debt-to-GDP ratios (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) has yet embarked on a sustainable decline in its debt ratio. Among countries with elevated debt levels, Ireland is the only one that has initiated a robust and sustained reduction in government indebtedness, driven by strong real and nominal GDP growth. Although the trend has been amplified by recent upward revisions in GDP figures led by the activities of multinationals, the underlying trend remains sustained.

Box 3: Employment and social developments

Labour markets conditions continued to improve in 2015 and the first half of 2016. Annual growth in employment in the euro area and the EU as a whole amounted to around 1% during most of 2015 and accelerated to around 1.6% in the first half of 2016. Employment growth in the euro area caught up with non-euro area countries growth, after lagging behind it between 2012 and 2015. Similarly, unemployment rates declined further in 2015 and the first half of 2016. Disparities in unemployment rates across the EU decreased from high levels, although they remain high in several countries, in particular Greece and Spain – where unemployment affects around 20% of the labour force – and in Croatia, Cyprus, Italy and Portugal where unemployment still exceeds 10%. Scoreboard values for the three-year average unemployment rate exceed the threshold for all these countries in 2015, in addition to Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia. Overall, in the second quarter of 2016, the unemployment rate remains 1.5 percentage points higher in the euro area than in the EU as whole, reflecting the significant extent of remaining adjustment needs in a number of euro area countries. In addition, while employment growth and the fall in unemployment has been relatively strong so far in view of the only modest increase in output growth in the past couple of years, it remains to be seen whether a sustained improvement in labour market conditions can be achieved with a subdued recovery.

Employment rates increased in almost all Member States. The employment rate (20-64 years old) reached 70% in 2015 for the EU as a whole and continued rising to 71% in the second quarter of 2016, surpassing the 2008 peak of just over 70% for the first time. Activity rates (15-64 years old) increased nearly everywhere, but declined in Cyprus, and receded marginally in Belgium and Germany. Activity rates in the EU and the euro area in 2015 were at 72.5% and 72.4%, respectively, about 3 and 2 percentage points above the pre-crisis levels. This may reflect entry in the labour market during the crisis to contribute to household income in a situation of increased uncertainty about jobs and labour income as well as higher labour market participation by older workers and women.

Job-finding rates for jobseekers with spells of unemployment longer than 12 months started to recover in 2015. In contrast, the decline in unemployment observed at the beginning of the recovery was linked mostly to reductions in the job separation rates. Consequently, the long-term unemployment rate declined in most of the EU in 2015 but still remained elevated. Eight countries recorded rates in excess of those of 3 years ago by 0.5 percentage points or more. The highest shares were observed in Croatia, Greece and Spain, with more than 10% of the active population being out of a job for more than a year.

Youth unemployment is falling. The youth unemployment rate fell in all Member States except Finland and, to a lesser extent, in Austria, France and Malta. Youth unemployment has fallen frequently faster than total unemployment, reflecting a higher cyclical response and the unused labour potential in countries with high unemployment. Values exceed the 3-year change scoreboard threshold in Belgium, Cyprus, Finland and Italy. In 2015, declines in the share of young people that are neither in employment, education nor training were also common, but less frequent than the ones on youth unemployment, in fact remaining above double-digit marks in two thirds of EU Member States.

Labour mobility and migration have helped mitigate labour market imbalances. Their size and relevance to smooth unemployment nevertheless remains limited in overall terms. In 2015, net inflows of population were the strongest in countries with the lowest unemployment rates in 2014 (notably Austria, Germany and Luxembourg); some of the highest net outflows happened in parallel with some of the highest declines in joblessness in 2015 (e.g. Croatia, Greece, Latvia and Lithuania). The apparent disconnection between rising inflows in receiving and outflows in sending EU countries may be driven by the rising importance of extra-EU migration, including refugees from Middle Eastern countries.

The social situation is slowly improving but remains difficult in a number of Member States. The share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) decreased from 24.4% in 2014 to 23.7% in 2015, with a decline in over three quarters of Member States in 2015 in comparison with

2014 and over half of the countries when compared with 3 years ago – the AMR scoreboard indicator.^{14 15} Declines over the past three years were the strongest in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Romania, while Cyprus, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain recorded the largest increases. Rates vary considerably from around 40% in Bulgaria and Romania to less than 20% in the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries. In comparison with the pre-crisis years, these risks receded for several Central and Eastern European countries (most notably Poland and Romania) and increased for most of the remainder (especially for Cyprus, Greece and Spain). The prolonged weak social situation can have a negative impact on potential GDP growth in a variety of ways and risks compounding macroeconomic imbalances.

Trends in risks of poverty or social exclusion stem from various factors. First, the share of people at risk of poverty (monetary poverty) has been increasing in most Member States in recent years – both in terms of 3-year changes and year-on-year changes. Second, severe material deprivation (SMD) has declined over a 3-year period in many Member States. Marked declines in SMD, an absolute measure of poverty, in the poorest Member States have been observed, reflecting the catching up of these countries to higher levels of income. An increase in SMD has been seen in countries with higher per capita GDP but more affected by the crisis, notably Greece, Italy and Spain. Finally, whereas there has been a recent decline or stabilisation in the share of people (under 60) living in households with very low work intensity, the 3-year change still points out that a majority of EU countries had increases or at best stabilisation compared with 2012.

Income inequality grew in most of the EU countries over the crisis period.¹⁶ However, income inequality stabilised or declined in 2015 in a considerable number of Member States. Yet, countries like Lithuania and Romania have recorded the sharpest increases in income inequality from already worse-than-average situations.

¹⁴ This indicator corresponds to the sum of persons who are: at risk of poverty (after social transfers) also called monetary poverty; or severely materially deprived; or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are only counted once even if they are present in several sub-indicators. At risk-of-poverty are persons with an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income. Severe material deprivation (SMD) covers indicators relate to a lack of resources, namely the share of people experiencing at least 4 out of 9 deprivations items. People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) work less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year. No 2015 data are available for Ireland, Croatia, Italy and Luxembourg.

¹⁵ There are breaks in the data series for Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania.

¹⁶ Inequality as measured by the S80/S20 income quintile share ratio and by the Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income. The former compares the income of those at the end of the top quintile with the one of those at the top of the bottom quintile of the income distribution. The latter is defined as the relationship between the cumulative shares of the population ordered according to their equivalised disposable income levels and the cumulative share of the equivalised total disposable income received by them: it is measured between 0, where income is distributed equally across the whole population and 1, where all of the country's income is earned by a single person. The data show somewhat different paths for the two measures: the S80/S20 has decline less frequently than the Gini coefficient in recent years, but the S80/S20 had also increased less over the crisis.

Graph 13: Evolution of the unemployment rate (20-64 years old), 2014Q1 vs. 2016Q2



Source: Eurostat.

Overall, risks and vulnerabilities stemming from legacy issues and/or recent trends are present in a majority of Member States. The degree of severity and the urgency in bringing forth adequate policy responses vary significantly across Member States depending on the nature of the vulnerabilities or trends, as well as their confinement to one or several sectors of the economy:

- A number of Member States are affected by *multiple and interconnected stock and/or flow vulnerabilities*. This is the case of countries that were hit most severely by boom-bust credit cycles – frequently associated with liquidity and solvency issues in their banking sectors – and the sharpest reversals of current account positions. In a number of cases (Cyprus, Croatia, Portugal), elevated private indebtedness combines with high levels of public debt, large negative net international investment positions and remaining issues within the banking system. These countries still confront the issue of addressing significant deleveraging needs in the context of limited fiscal space, high unemployment, low inflation and low real GDP growth. In Bulgaria, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain, vulnerabilities are also multiple and interconnected but faster progress in addressing them has been achieved than in the countries above.
- In a few Member States, vulnerabilities are driven mainly by *large stocks of general government debt* and concerns relating to *potential output growth* and *competitiveness*. This is particularly the case of Italy, where vulnerabilities are also linked to the banking sector, in particular the large stock of non-performing loans. Belgium and France also face general government debt and potential growth issues, but are not confronted with similar potential risks stemming from vulnerable banks.
- Some Member States are characterised by *large and persistent current account surpluses* that reflect subdued private consumption and investment. This is the case notably of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In the case of Germany, this is combined with deleveraging in all sectors of the economy, even though debt levels are not comparatively high. The large and persistent surpluses may imply forgone growth opportunities and growing creditor risks. In addition, the shortfalls in

aggregate demand bear consequences for the rest of the euro area in a context of low growth and low inflation.

- In some Member States, *developments in price or cost variables show potential signs of overheating*. In Sweden, as well as in Denmark, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, price pressures relate mainly to the housing sector in combination with significant levels of household debt. In Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, unit labour costs continue to grow at a relatively strong pace.
- In some Member States, vulnerabilities and possibly unsustainable trends are concentrated mainly on a *particular sector of the economy*. In the Netherlands, vulnerabilities persist linked to household indebtedness and the housing market, in combination with the large current account surplus. In Finland, vulnerabilities relate mainly to competitiveness arising from a structural shift in the economy.

Overall, in-depth reviews are warranted for 13 countries.¹⁷ All of these countries were subject to an IDR in the previous cycle, during which IDRs were prepared for 19 countries overall. While the reduction in the number of IDRs reflects the recent progress made in addressing imbalances, vulnerabilities remain even in countries for which IDRs are not warranted at this stage, and developments will continue to be monitored, as indicated in section 3. Relative to the AMR 2016, progress has been most notable in addressing external imbalances among net debtor countries, and labour markets have continued to improve in general. Internal and external stock imbalances nevertheless only adjust slowly and remain a source of risks and vulnerabilities in many Member States, in addition to weighing on investment prospects and the economic recovery. In turn, the incipient building-up of price pressures warrant close monitoring in some countries.

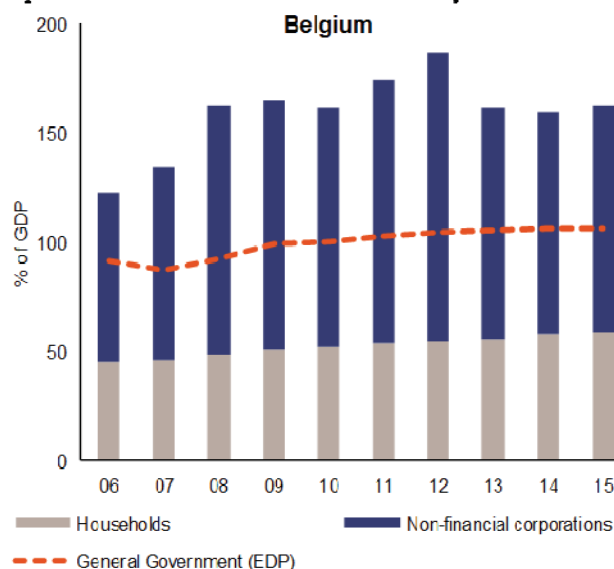
¹⁷ These countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

3. IMBALANCES, RISKS AND ADJUSTMENT: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COMMENTARIES

Belgium: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Belgium. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the change in export market shares and indebtedness, both private and government, as well as the change in the rates of long-term and youth unemployment.

External sustainability is underpinned by the balanced current account position and the very favourable net international investment position. Accumulated export market share losses remain large but have stemmed in recent years despite losses in 2015. This trend is expected to continue in conjunction with the notable slowdown in unit labour cost growth. Private debt remains relatively high, in particular for non-financial corporates, though widespread intra-group lending inflates debt figures. Risks related to household debt originate predominantly from the housing market. Real house prices have been relatively flat in recent years but no correction has taken place for the fast increase prior to 2008. Government debt is stable but at a high

Graph A1: Debt across sectors in the economy



Source: Eurostat

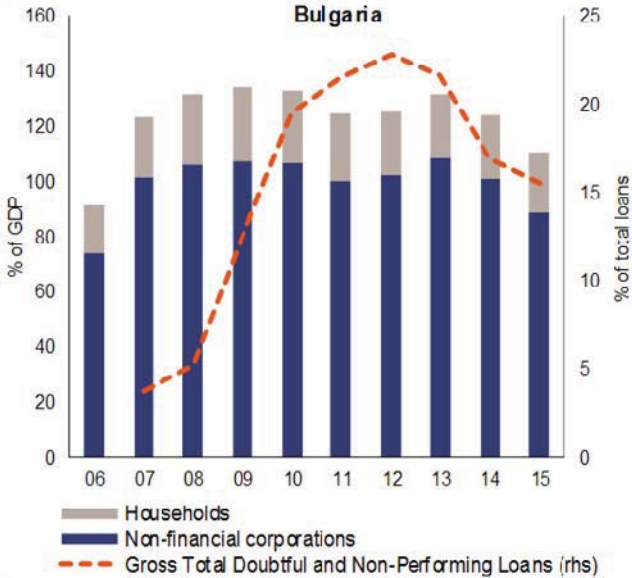
level and continues to represent a major challenge for the long-term sustainability of public finances. Recent data suggest that the increase in long-term unemployment is cyclical in nature, while the high and persistent youth unemployment is a more structural feature. The number of persons living in households with very low work intensity is one of the highest of all Member States, highlighting the increasingly polarised state of the Belgian labour market.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to competitiveness, public indebtedness, house prices and labour market functioning, though the risks linked to these issues remain contained. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Bulgaria: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Bulgaria was *experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances*, due to remaining fragilities in the financial sector and high corporate indebtedness in a context of high unemployment. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), the nominal unit labour cost (ULC) growth and the unemployment rate.

The negative NIIP remains beyond the scoreboard threshold but has continued to improve against the background of a positive current account. The export market share increased over the last five years despite losses in 2015. ULC growth is steadily decelerating, even if the three-year average remains beyond the indicative threshold. Private sector indebtedness remains of concern, in particular for non-financial corporates, with recent data indicating an orderly but slow deleveraging process. Vulnerabilities are still present in the financial sector and fragilities remain in the insolvency framework. The level of non-performing loans has decreased but remains high. Asset quality review and stress tests in the banking sector have been completed and did not identify a significant need for additional capital across the sector. They will nevertheless require strict implementation of the follow-up action, including via the recommendations that the BNB has issued to individual banks. Similar reviews in the insurance and pension fund sectors are ongoing. The unemployment rate is beyond the indicative threshold, albeit on a decreasing trend due to the recent strengthening of GDP growth, while the growth of long-term unemployment rate is no longer beyond its indicative threshold. Persistent structural issues on the labour market, such as low participation as well as skills and qualification mismatches remain a concern.

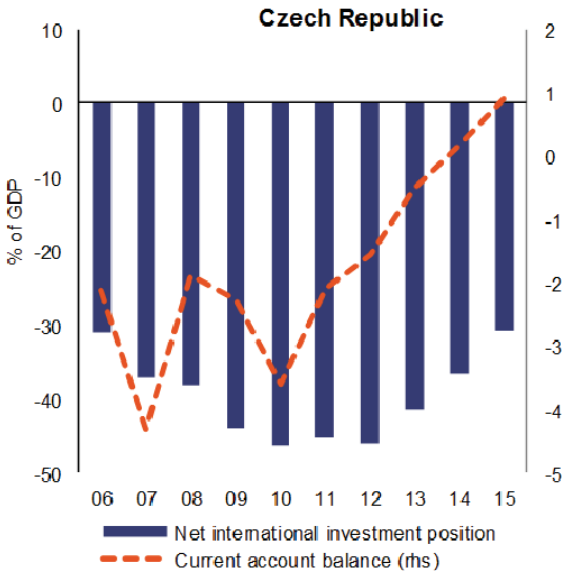
Graph A2: Private Debt and Non-Performing Loans



Source: Eurostat and ECB

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues related to external and internal vulnerabilities, including in the financial sector. Therefore the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an excessive imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of excessive imbalances.

Graph A3: NIIP and CA balance



Source: Eurostat

Czech Republic: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in the Czech Republic. In the updated scoreboard no indicators are beyond the indicative thresholds.

The current account balance has improved considerably in recent years, with the three year average turning positive in 2015. The net international investment position has been gradually falling and moved within the threshold in 2015, partly due to the ongoing accumulation of foreign-denominated assets by the Czech National Bank as part of an exchange rate

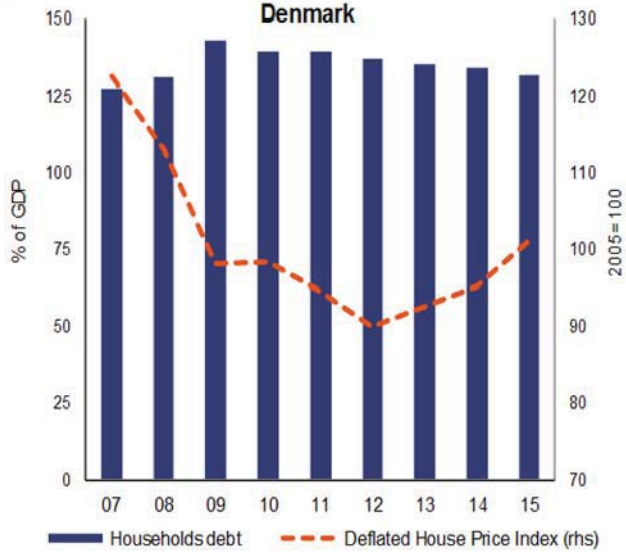
floor in operation vis-à-vis the euro. Risks related to the external position remain overall limited as much of the foreign liabilities are accounted for by foreign direct investment and, consequently, net external debt is very low. There were further competitiveness gains in 2015, with a small increase in export market shares and a slight decrease in nominal unit labour costs. Accelerating wage growth and possible exchange rate appreciation, following the removal of the exchange rate floor, could partly reverse these recent gains. Risks of internal imbalances appear low. Despite higher confidence of households to enter the housing market, the private sector debt level slightly decreased in 2015 and remains within the threshold. Real house price growth also accelerated somewhat in 2015. The largely foreign-owned banking sector remains stable, with total financial sector liabilities increasing only marginally in 2015. Government debt has declined and is expected to continue to fall and remains within the threshold. Unemployment is low.

Overall, the economic reading points to contained external risks and low internal risks. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Denmark: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Denmark. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the current account balance, the change in export market shares, real house prices and private sector debt.

The current account balance continues to show large surpluses. This reflects strong private and public savings, high revenues from investment abroad as well as compressed corporate investment. The net international investment position is positive and high, although decreasing in 2015 due to negative valuation effects. The accumulated losses in export market shares decreased in 2015, although on an annual basis there were additional losses, and are expected to be limited in the coming years. The recent relative weakness of export can also be partly attributed to the decline of oil and gas extraction and the sea freight sector. Cost competitiveness indicators have

Graph A-1: Households' debt and House Price Index



Source: Eurostat

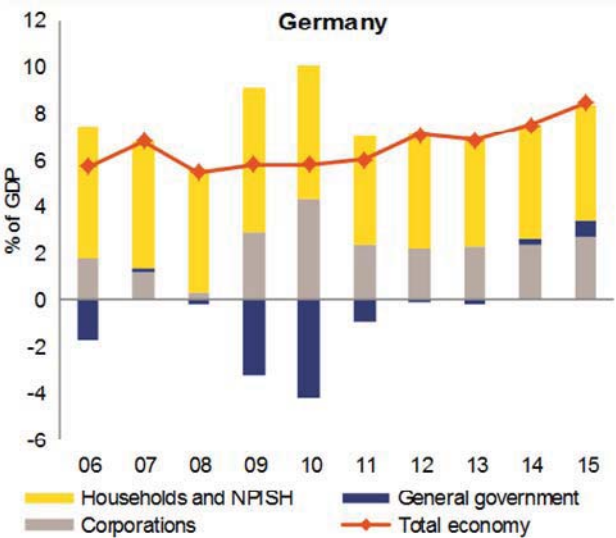
remained rather stable. Private sector debt declined marginally in 2015 but remains very high. The comparatively high household debt reflects also a specific mortgage bank funding model and an advanced pension system. Deleveraging is slow as incentives to pay down debt is low, while they are high for building housing equity. Real house prices growth accelerated beyond the threshold in 2015 against the background of very low interest rates, which warrants close monitoring. However, the banking sector remains sound and credit developments contained. Regulatory and supervisory measures to increase the financial sector's stability and to reduce the debt incentive for households are taking effect gradually. Unemployment remains low.

Overall, the economic reading points to possible issues related to private debt and the housing sector, but risks still appear contained. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Germany: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Germany was *experiencing macroeconomic imbalances*, in particular involving risks stemming from excess savings and subdued private and public investment. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the current account surplus and government debt.

In 2015, the current account surplus continued to increase from already very high levels, further boosted by stronger positive terms of trade due to lower oil prices and a favourable exchange rate. This surplus is expected to remain high in coming years. Investment is forecast to remain subdued and as a share of GDP has remained broadly at the same low level since 2011. The very large net international investment position continued to grow rapidly. Unit labour costs increased above the euro area average, gradually closing the negative gap to euro area. Private sector credit flows picked up, while private sector deleveraging continued amid strengthening business and household savings. The rise in real house prices accelerated, but the indicator remains within the threshold. The government debt ratio continued to decrease. The financial sector remains under pressure from low profitability. Very low and declining unemployment rates reflect the robust labour market in Germany.

Graph A5: Net lending/borrowing by sector



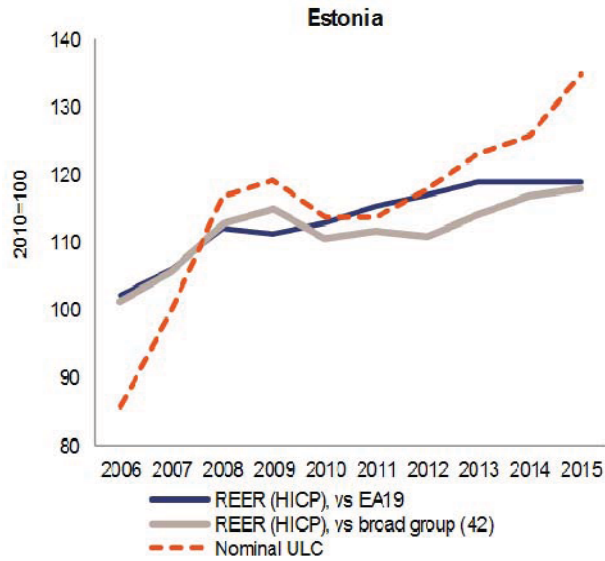
Source: Commission services. NPISH stands for non-profit institutions serving households

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to the very large and increasing external surplus and strong reliance on external demand, which expose growth risks and underline the need for continued rebalancing towards domestic sources. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

Estonia: In the previous rounds of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Estonia. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative thresholds, namely the negative net international investment position (NIIP), the real effective exchange rate (REER), unit labour costs and real house prices.

The negative NIIP remains beyond the threshold but it has further improved. More than half of the external liabilities consist of foreign direct investments which reduces risks. The current account has been in surplus since 2014, supported by strong and stable exports of services. While there are still large accumulated gains in export market shares, there was substantial losses in 2015. The real effective exchange rate indicator slightly exceeds the threshold but is expected to decline. The increase in nominal unit labour costs reflects the continuous decline in working-age population pulling up wage growth. Furthermore, the fall in oil prices and the depreciation of the rouble curtailed Estonia’s exports, including of its relatively large oil shale industry. The increase in real house prices is decelerating as housing supply is catching up with demand. Private sector debt is within threshold but bottoming out as lending, especially to enterprises, is gradually rising. In contrast, government debt is stable and at the lowest level in the EU. Long-term and youth unemployment and the severe material deprivation rate have further declined.

Graph A6: Real effective exchange rate and ULC

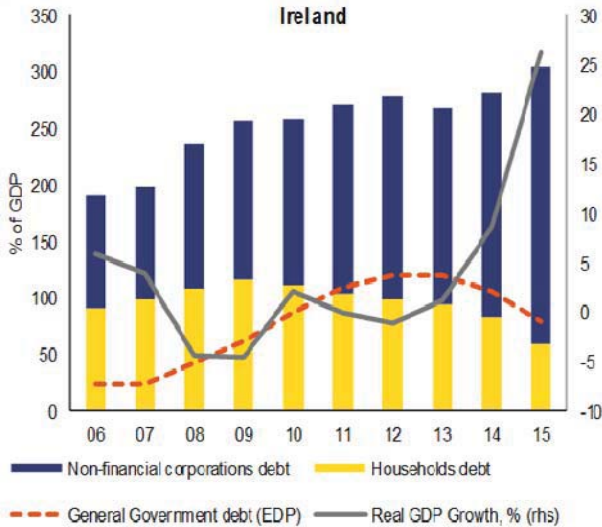


Source: Eurostat, Commission services

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues related to pressures in the domestic economy but risks remain contained. Overall, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Ireland: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Ireland was *experiencing macroeconomic imbalances*, related to large stocks of external liabilities and vulnerabilities from private and public debt. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), the real effective exchange rate (REER), private debt, real house prices, government debt and unemployment.

Graph A7: Debt across sectors in the economy and real GDP growth



Source: Eurostat

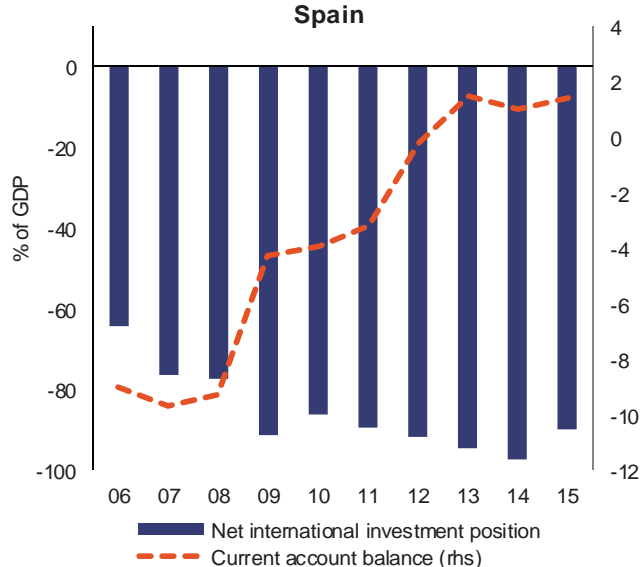
rebalancing of the economy and improved competitiveness with supportive REER developments. However, the underlying current account and external position are difficult to assess due to the size and impact of the activities of multinationals. The private debt-to-GDP ratio remains high and households have continued to deleverage actively but the situation of domestic non-financial companies is more difficult to interpret given the weight of multinationals on total corporate debt. The non-performing loans ratio is high but at a declining trend with long-term mortgage arrears a concern. Real house price increases have moderated, although with substantial regional variation, mainly driven by insufficient housing supply. In relation to peak levels, property prices remain well below while rents are now above. Government debt is on a downward trend and also fell substantially in 2015 due to the exceptional upward level-shift in GDP. The 3-year average unemployment rate is close to the threshold as it has continued to fall thanks to strong employment creation. Long-term and youth unemployment have also fallen substantially.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to external sustainability, financial sector, private and public debt. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

Spain: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Spain was *experiencing macroeconomic imbalances*, in particular involving risks related to the high levels of external and internal debt, both private and public and in a context of high unemployment. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), private and government debt and the unemployment rate.

External rebalancing has continued and the current account balance is expected to remain in moderate surplus over the medium term. However, this adjustment is only slowly translating in a reduction of Spain’s external liabilities. The NIIP has improved since 2014, but remains very negative and is mainly composed of debt, which exposes the country to risks stemming from shifts in market sentiment. Furthermore, low productivity growth makes competitiveness gains hinge upon cost advantages, also affecting working conditions and social cohesion. Private sector deleveraging continued throughout 2015, also supported by robust real growth. Government debt was generally stable, despite a sizeable though improving deficit. Although unemployment has been declining rapidly, it remains very high, especially among young people, and a high share of the unemployed has been without a job for more than one year. The improvement in the labour market is only slowly translating in a reduction of poverty, with poverty metrics remaining among the highest in the EU.

Graph A8: NIIP and CA balance



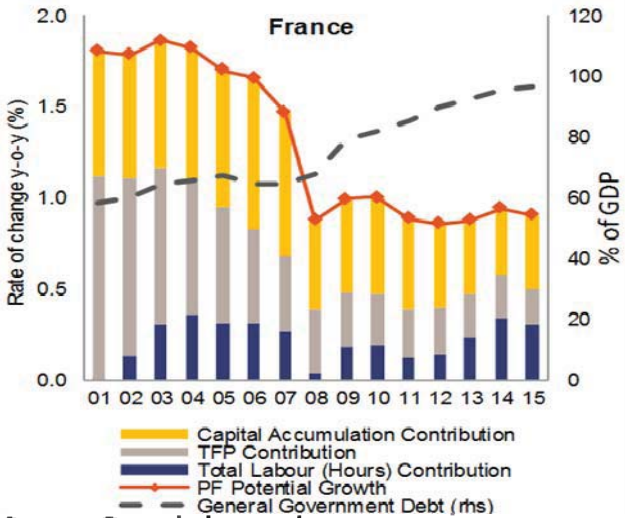
Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to external sustainability, private and public debt, and labour market adjustment, in the context of weak productivity growth. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of imbalances in March and their cross-border relevance, to examine further the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

France: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that France experienced excessive macroeconomic imbalances, in particular involving a high and increasing public debt coupled with weak productivity growth and deteriorated competitiveness. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are still beyond the indicative threshold, namely government debt, private sector debt, unemployment as well as the change in long-term unemployment.

Indicators of external imbalances and competitiveness broadly stabilised in 2015, as reflected in a current account close to balance, the slowdown in accumulated export market share losses, which is now within the threshold, and the contained unit labour costs' growth. However, weak labour productivity growth is a risk factor for the evolution of unit labour costs. The high and increasing government debt remains a major source of vulnerability and is forecast to increase in the coming years. Low potential growth and low inflation compound the risks associated with the high government debt by making deleveraging more difficult. Private sector debt is beyond the threshold but deleveraging pressures appear contained. Real house prices are slowly correcting, and private sector credit has stabilised at quite moderate positive levels. Unemployment increased further in 2015 against a background of low growth. Similarly, the long-term unemployment kept on rising.

Graph A9: Potential Growth and Public Debt



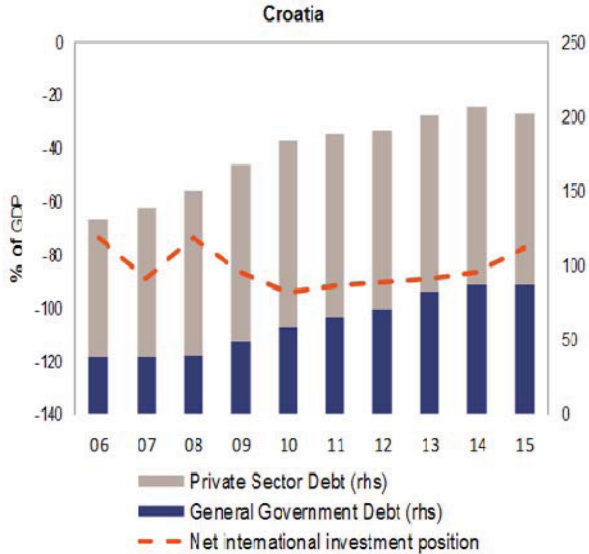
Source: Commission services

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating mainly to internal imbalances, especially public indebtedness in the context of low productivity growth and weak competitiveness. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an excessive imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of excessive imbalances.

Croatia: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Croatia was experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances, in particular involving risks related to high levels of public, corporate and external debt in a context of high unemployment. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), government debt and the unemployment rate.

The NIIP remains strongly negative but has improved with the current account position showing an increasing surplus in 2015. Annual gains in export market shares have continued, thus broadly reversing the losses accumulated in the pre-accession years. Both public and private debt levels, in particular corporate debt, are high. Following five years of rapid increase, government debt has stabilised at a very high level and is now set to decrease as a share of GDP over the forecast horizon. Private sector debt has also started to decline and, although within the threshold, it remains high in comparison to peer countries. Moreover, a high share of domestic debt is denominated in EUR,

Graph A10: NIIP, Private Debt and Government Debt, % of GDP



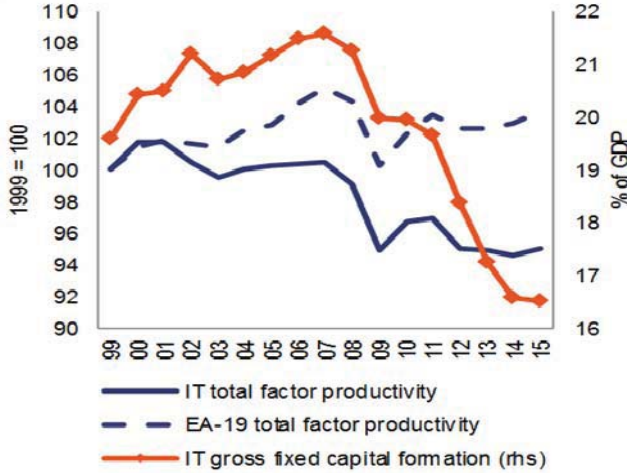
Source: Eurostat

which adds to the currency risks stemming from the high external liabilities. Despite being well-capitalised, the financial sector remains exposed to high rates of non-performing loans. Acceleration of writing-off and sell-off of loan has recently brought about a reduction in non-performing loans, signalling an easing of credit conditions. The high unemployment rate is also falling, partly due to the rapidly shrinking labour force from an already low basis. With low employment and activity rates, a relatively large share of the population continues to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to the external position, public debt sustainability and labour market adjustment. Therefore the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an excessive imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of excessive imbalances.

Italy: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Italy was *experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances*, particularly very high public debt and weak external competitiveness in a context of low economic growth and lacklustre productivity dynamics. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the loss of export market shares, government debt, the unemployment rate as well as the change in long-term and youth unemployment rates.

Graph A11: Total Factor Productivity and Gross Fixed Capital Formation



Source: Commission services

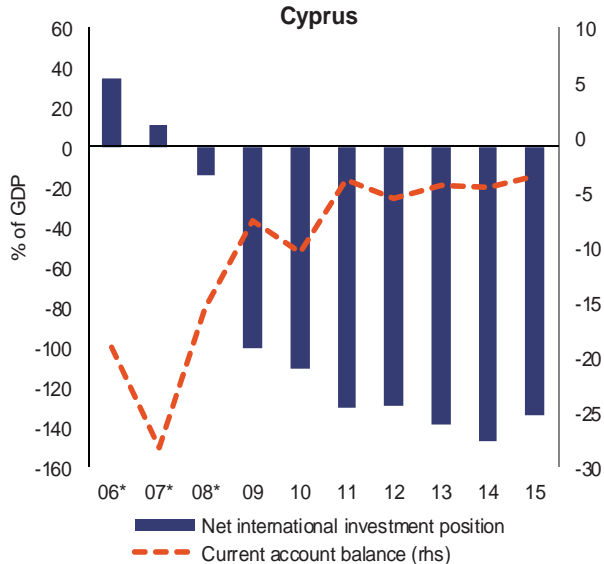
of the net international investment position. Yet, this surplus also mirrors continued weak domestic demand, as reflected in the historically low ratio of fixed investment of GDP. Losses in export market share remain substantial. The external performance and the cost competitiveness suffer from subdued labour productivity growth, despite contained wage growth and the depreciation of the real effective exchange rate. The weak economic recovery, low inflation and expansionary fiscal policy are delaying the reduction of the very high government debt ratio and related risks. The low profitability and the high stock of non-performing loans make the banking system increasingly vulnerable and hamper banks' capacity to support the economy. In particular, the capital misallocation associated with the high stock of non-performing loans also contributes to low productivity growth, and the low lending volumes are associated with a subdued level of investment. Improving labour market conditions are gradually reducing the unemployment rate, which nevertheless remains far above pre-crisis levels, similarly to the long-term and youth unemployment rates.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to high public indebtedness and the banking system in a context of weak productivity growth. Therefore the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of excessive imbalances in March, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of the excessive imbalances.

Cyprus: In April 2016, the Commission concluded that Cyprus was *experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances*, particularly involving large stocks of private, public and external debt and the high ratio of non-performing loans in the banking system. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators remain beyond the indicative threshold, namely the current account deficit, the net international investment position (NIIP), the real effective exchange rate (REER), losses in export market shares, private sector debt, government debt, unemployment as well as the change in long-term and youth unemployment rates.

The current account deficit and the negative NIIP remains substantial even if there were some improvement in 2015. The good performance of services exports, particularly tourism have contributed to this outcome. The significant depreciation of the REER mainly reflects the negative inflation experienced since 2015. The level of private indebtedness remains amongst the highest in the EU. Although real GDP growth resumed in 2015 and is expected to strengthen over the forecast horizon, falling prices reduce nominal GDP growth and make the deleveraging process more difficult. The very high level of non-performing loans suggests that severe risks remain for the restoration of a healthy flow of credit to the economy, which is required for supporting growth in the medium term. The very high government debt-to-GDP ratio is stable and is expected to have peaked in

Graph A12: NIIP and CA balance



Source: Eurostat. Note: * indicates BMP5 and ESA95

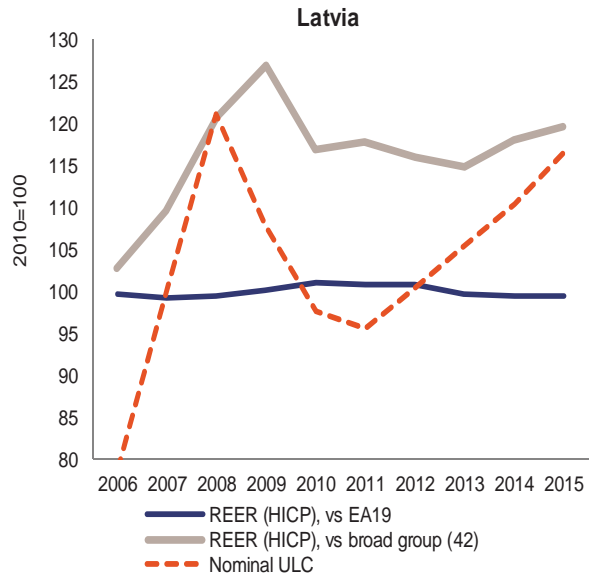
2015. Unemployment is high but declining while long-term and youth unemployment remains relatively high.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to external sustainability, public and private debt, vulnerabilities in the financial sector and labour market adjustment. Therefore the Commission finds it useful in the case of Cyprus, also taking into account the identification of an excessive imbalance in April, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of excessive imbalances.

Latvia: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified in Latvia.* In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), unit labour costs and unemployment.

The current account deficit is narrowing and the negative NIIP ratio remains significantly beyond the threshold but is steadily improving and the outlook is also favourable. A very large share of the external exposure reflects foreign direct investment stocks. Cumulated gains in export market shares remains substantial despite losses in 2015. Cost competitiveness indicators points to some losses. The real effective exchange rate appreciated in 2015. Unit labour costs have increased further beyond the indicative threshold posing some risks to external cost competitiveness. However, the pace of increase is projected to slow down in the light of the latest wage developments. Public and private debt ratios are clearly within the thresholds.

Graph A13: Real effective exchange rate and ULC



Source: Eurostat, Commission services

The financial sector remains robust. Lending, in particular to corporates, is growing again after a long period of deleveraging. Real house price growth has abated. The three-year indicator for unemployment is marginally beyond the threshold but is on a declining trend.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to the external sector of the economy and the labour market amid continuous rebalancing. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Lithuania: In previous rounds of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Lithuania. In the updated scoreboard a number of indicators are beyond indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), nominal unit labour costs (ULC), and the unemployment rate.

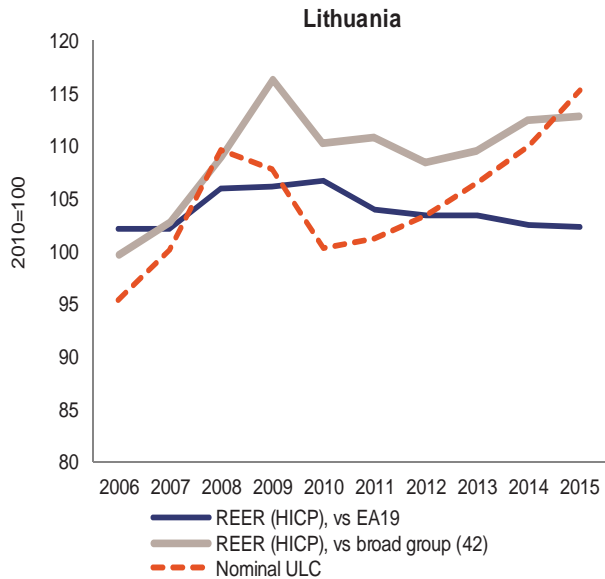
While still beyond the indicative threshold, the NIIP is on an improving trend. The government and the private sector contribute equally to the total negative net position and private sector liabilities consist almost entirely of foreign direct investment implying a lower risk. There are still cumulated export market share gains but there were large losses in 2015. Cost competitiveness indicators points to some losses. The real effective exchange rate appreciated in 2015. Weak productivity and strong wage growth implied strong ULC growth in 2015 moving the indicator beyond the threshold, but over the forecast horizon a deceleration is foreseen. Public and private debt levels are relatively low. Real house prices continue to increase but at a lower growth rate and from a relatively low level. The unemployment indicator is beyond the threshold but is on a steadily decreasing trend.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to external competitiveness but risks remain contained. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Luxembourg: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Luxembourg. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely real house prices, private sector credit flow and indebtedness.

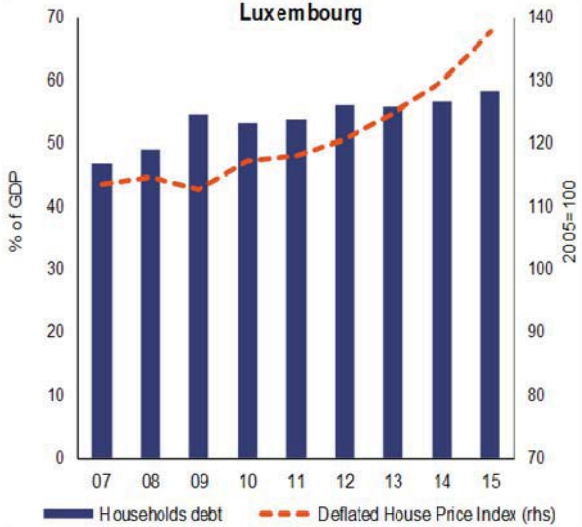
The structurally high current account surplus was stable in 2015 and is narrowly within the threshold. The positive net international investment position increased, mostly reflecting the dominance of the financial sector, while only a limited share of the flows is related to domestic economic activity. Wages growth is low contributing to the recent labour costs moderation. Combined with the improvement in

Graph A14: Real effective exchange rate and ULC



Source: Eurostat, Commission services

Graph A15: Households' debt and House Price Index



Source: Eurostat

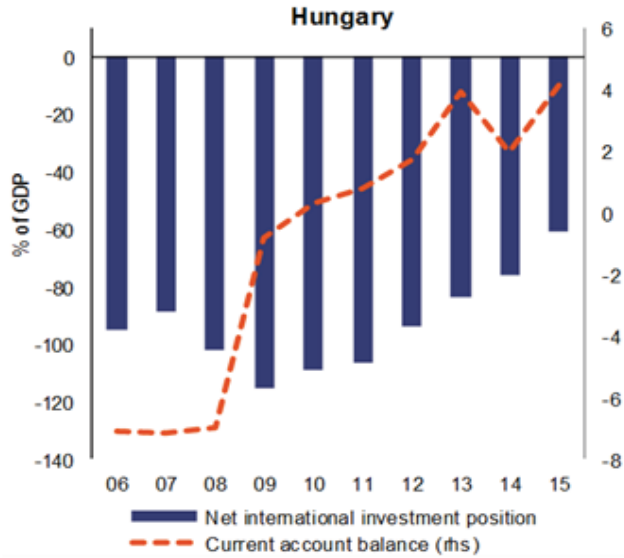
productivity recorded over the recent years, it helps to explain the recovery of export market shares. The low government debt further declined. Credit growth remained dynamic and buoyant growth of loans for housing acquisition has pushed up the level of household debt close to the euro area average, while deleveraging pressures on households' and corporations' balance sheets appear contained. Housing prices are accelerating from already high levels, which warrants close monitoring. Several factors, such as sizeable net migration flows, a dynamic labour market and low financing costs concur to sustain housing demand, while supply remains relatively constraint as also reflected in a low growth of building permits. Loan to value ratios have decreased as has housing affordability. Unemployment increased but from a low level.

Overall, the economic reading points mainly to issues related to the increasing housing prices although overall risks still appear relatively contained. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Hungary: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Hungary. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), losses in export market shares, real house prices and government debt.

The continued strengthening of the current account has implied a very rapid and sustained improvement in the negative NIIP. Export market shares recorded gains in 2015 and cumulated losses are only narrowly beyond the threshold. This is supported by a growing car industry and by improvements in cost competitiveness as reflected in a depreciating real effective exchange rate and contained growth in unit labour costs. Corporate lending by domestic banks continues to contract but new household lending picked up in 2015. The overall pace of deleveraging has slowed down, supported by sustained economic growth. The previous decline in real house prices reversed sharply and house prices surged in 2015, exceeding the threshold, however still from undervalued levels. The subsequently introduced debt cap rules will limit the risks of market overheating. Government debt has continued to decline gradually, although it still remains relatively high for a middle income economy. The banking sector improved its profitability and its shock-absorbing capacity. The recovery in the housing market may contribute to reduce the problem of the still high non-performing mortgage loans of households. The unemployment indicator remained within the threshold in 2015, while employment has increased further in 2015 and 2016.

Graph A16: NIIP and CA balance



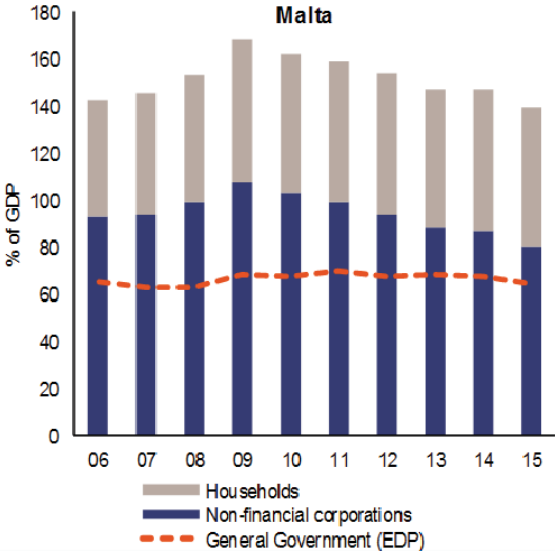
Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights the improving external position and issues relating to the housing market although risks appear contained. The Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Malta: In the previous round of the MIP, no macroeconomic imbalances were identified in Malta. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the losses in export market shares, private debt and government debt.

The current account surplus decreased somewhat in 2015, reflecting also the impact of a strong increase in import-intensive investment. The positive NIIP strengthened. Export market shares have been on a persistent downward trend since 2009, in particular due to exports of goods. However, cost competitiveness developments have been favourable as rising productivity and moderate wage developments have kept unit labour costs in check and the real effective exchange rate mildly depreciating. The private debt-to-GDP ratio is on a firmly downward trend on the back of orderly deleveraging among non-financial corporations and robust economic growth. House-price dynamics remained subdued in 2015, but growing demand is expected to result in an upward pressure on prices in the coming years. Government debt continued to decrease, approaching the indicative threshold. Labour-market conditions remained favourable and unemployment low.

Graph A17: Debt across sectors in the economy



Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights the robust external position and ongoing deleveraging in a context of relatively strong growth. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Netherlands: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that the Netherlands was experiencing macroeconomic imbalances, in particular involving risks stemming from the large and persistent current account surplus and the very large stock of household debt. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely current account surplus, loss of export market shares, private sector debt, government debt as well as the change in long-term unemployment.

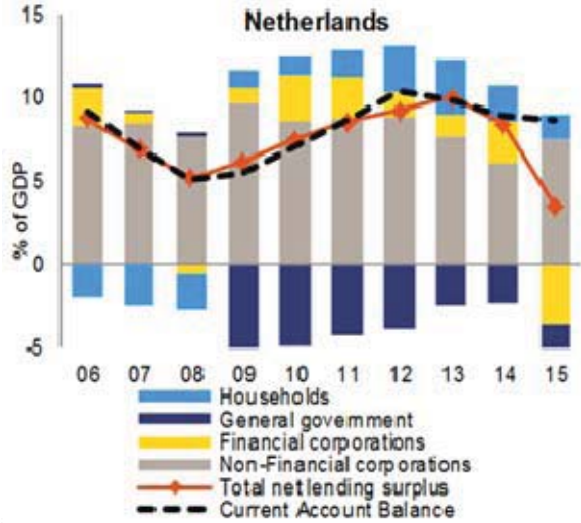
The current account surplus remains at a level far beyond the indicative threshold. Structural features partially contribute to the high level, including high re-export activities and the presence of multinational companies. Also, the surplus reflects high savings of non-financial corporations, in a context of low investment and contained corporate profit distribution. Nevertheless, investment is forecast to grow more strongly in line with robust domestic demand which may result in a moderate decline in the current account surplus. Cumulated

export market share losses remained beyond the threshold on the back on annual losses in 2015. Cost competitiveness indicators point to small gains in 2015.

Private sector debt is very high but private deleveraging continues, leading to a marginal reduction in debt level. Policy measures such as the lowering of mortgage interest deductibility and loan-to-value ratios are expected to support the reduction of household debt. Real house prices started to grow in 2015 after previous years correction phase. Government debt is moderately beyond the threshold and slightly declining. While the labour market is showing strong employment growth, leading to a steady reduction in the unemployment rate, the share of long-term unemployed remains elevated.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to the persistent savings and investment imbalances, and the high private debt level, in particular mortgage debt. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

Graph A18: Net Lending/Borrowing by Sector and current account

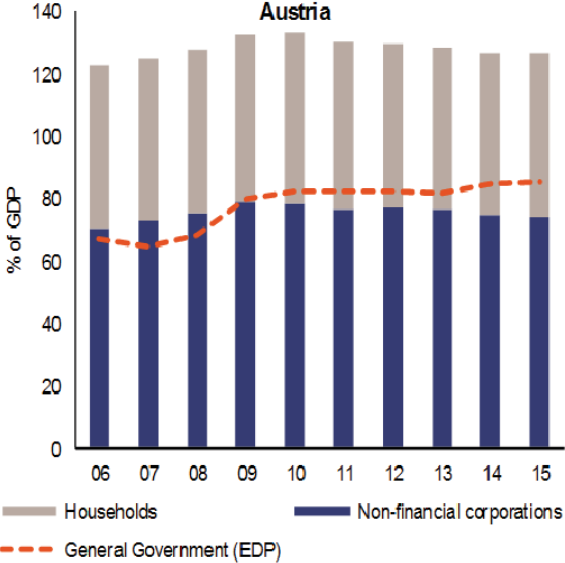


Source: Eurostat

Austria: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Austria was *experiencing no macroeconomic imbalances*. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely losses in export market shares, government debt as well as the change in long-term unemployment.

The current account shows a moderate surplus that increased slightly in 2015, while the net international investment position is slightly positive. Cumulated losses in export market shares remain beyond the threshold and there were some additional losses in 2015. The real effective exchange rate depreciated on a yearly basis. Also, labour productivity growth was positive after three years of losses, contributing to a reduction in nominal unit labour cost growth. Private sector indebtedness remains within but close to the threshold, and continues its decline relative to GDP due to non-financial corporations deleveraging in spite of the low interest rate environment. The growth rate of real house prices accelerated from already relatively high levels and, although the indicator

Graph A19: Debt across sectors in the economy



Source: Eurostat

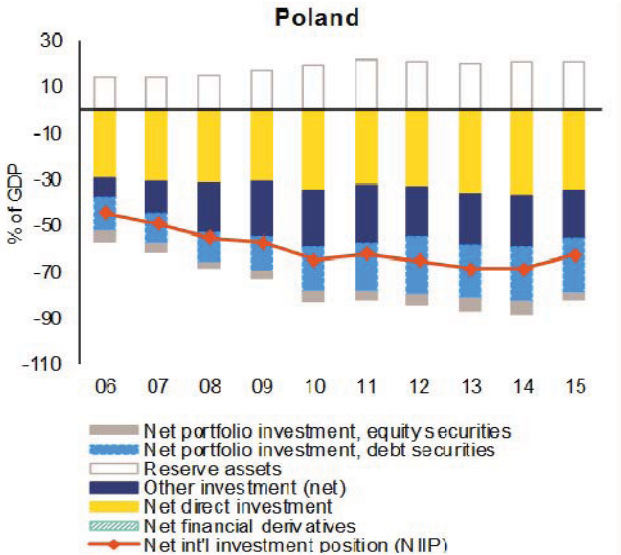
remains within the threshold, this warrants close monitoring. Government debt increased, also due to the protracted restructuring of distressed banks which still may pose some risks to public finances. Financial sector liabilities have remained broadly stable as Austrian banks cut their foreign exposures also due to the relatively lower asset quality in Central and Eastern Europe, requiring monitoring as to potential spillovers to the domestic and partner economies. The unemployment rate continues to increase mainly as an effect of the growing labour supply, but remains among the lowest in the EU even if long-term and youth unemployment have increased.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to the external performance and the banking sector, but risks appear contained. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Poland: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in Poland. In the updated scoreboard, the net international investment position (NIIP) is beyond the indicative threshold.

The current account 3 year average deficit has continued to narrow towards balance. The NIIP however still remains highly negative but improved substantially in 2015. External vulnerability is contained by that foreign direct investments account for a major part of foreign liabilities. In 2015, the cumulated gains in export market shares progressed while cost competitiveness indicators point to some gains. Both private sector debt and government debt are relatively low and stable. The stability of the banking sector was maintained but profitability was reduced. Real house prices showed limited positive growth in 2014 and 2015 after a number of years with corrections. The unemployment rate kept falling further within the indicative threshold.

Graph A20: Net International Investment Position



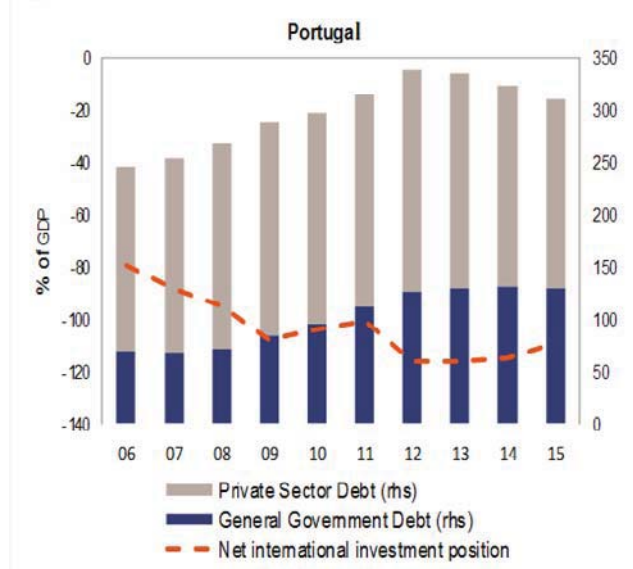
Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues in the external position where overall risks however remain limited. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Portugal: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Portugal was *experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances* relating to large stocks of external liabilities, private and public debt, a large share of non-performing loans (NPL) and elevated unemployment. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP), private sector debt, government debt and unemployment.

The current account position recorded a small surplus in 2015 and the negative NIIP position improved slightly but remains very large. Substantial current account surpluses will be needed for a long time to reach a more sustainable external position. Previously cumulated losses in export market shares have been partially regained also against a background of supportive cost competitiveness developments. The still elevated private debt ratio implies that further deleveraging needs remain. The high level of government debt, in a context of low potential growth, implies risks to medium-term sustainability, vulnerabilities to adverse shocks and increases financing costs. The high stock of corporate NPLs, together with low profitability, is putting pressure on the banking sector impeding the productive allocation of credit and investment. The adjustment in the labour market is gradually progressing, also as regards youth and long-term unemployment even if they remain among the highest in the EU, which increases risks of human capital deterioration.

Graph A21: NIIP, Private Debt and Government Debt, % of GDP

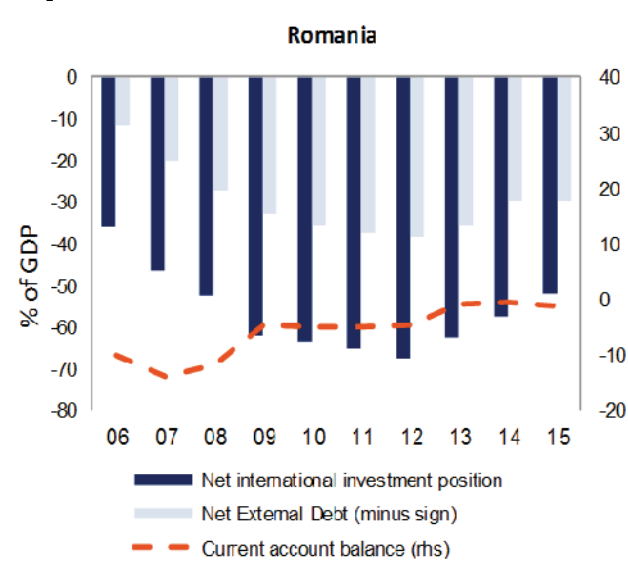


Source: Eurostat

Overall the economic reading highlights issues relating to external sustainability, public and private debt, banking sector vulnerability and the labour market adjustment process, in the context of low productivity growth. Therefore the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an excessive imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of macroeconomic risks and to monitor progress in the unwinding of the excessive imbalances.

Romania: In the previous round of the MIP, no macroeconomic imbalances were identified in Romania. In the updated scoreboard the net international investment position (NIIP) is beyond the indicative threshold.

Graph A22: NIIP and CA balance



Source: Commission services

The current account showed a small deficit in 2015 but is expected to gradually widen, sustained by strong domestic demand. The negative NIIP continued to improve in 2015 on the back of relatively strong GDP growth. Almost half of the NIIP consists of foreign direct investments while net external debt continued to decline. Cumulated export market gains remains substantial despite small losses in 2015. Cost

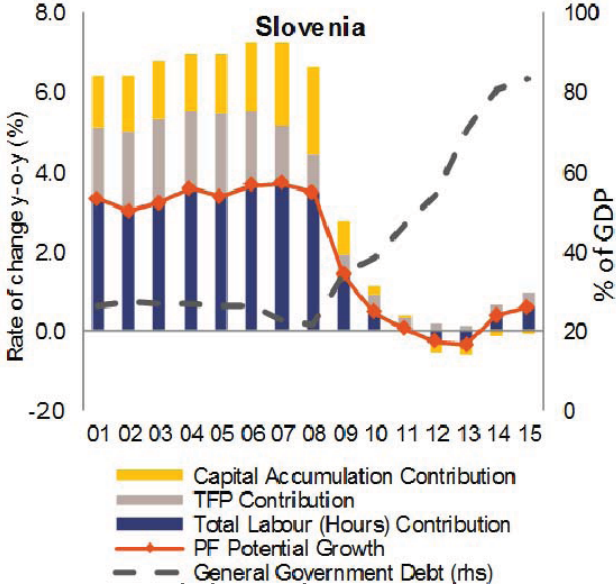
competitiveness indicators improved moderately in 2015 with a small decrease in nominal unit labour costs, associated with an increase in labour productivity, and a depreciation of the real effective exchange rate. However, competitiveness may worsen if the current pace of wage increases is sustained ahead of productivity gains. The overall health of the banking sector has improved and the sector remains well capitalized and liquid. In addition, private sector credit stopped contracting. Although on a declining path, non-performing loans ratios remain high, while recurrent domestic legal initiatives impact legal predictability and could negatively affect the stability of banking institutions. Government debt remains relatively low and on a declining path. However, fiscal measures and ad hoc wage increases for some categories of public employees point toward a fiscal relaxation and pro-cyclical fiscal policy in 2016-2017 which could deteriorate debt dynamics. The unemployment rate remained unchanged in 2015, partially reflecting structural challenges in the labour market, and the activity rate increased somewhat in a context of strong economic growth.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues related to the external position and to fiscal relaxation. Risks currently seem contained but could increase as a result of policy initiatives, including in the financial sector. The Commission will, at this stage, not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP, but will closely monitor initiatives that could adversely affect financial stability.

Slovenia: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Slovenia was *experiencing macroeconomic imbalances*, in particular involving fiscal risks and vulnerabilities stemming from the banking sector and corporate indebtedness. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position and government debt.

The current account surplus remained highly positive in 2015 and expanded as investment remained weak. The negative net international investment position improved substantially and is approaching the threshold. Export growth has remained strong and 5-year cumulated losses in export market shares substantially declined. Unit labour costs growth was low and the real effective exchange rate depreciated supporting competitiveness. Credit growth was negative and corporate deleveraging continued in 2015, but the pressures are easing. Government debt is high but expected to have peaked in 2015. The situation in the banking sector has further stabilised. Non-performing loans continued to decline, but still remain relatively high, while bank profitability is under pressure. Following the solid GDP and export growth since 2014, the labour market improved in 2015. On the back of recovered demand for labour in the private sector, the unemployment rate decreased further in 2015 as did the long-term and the youth unemployment rates.

Graph A23: Potential Growth and Public Debt



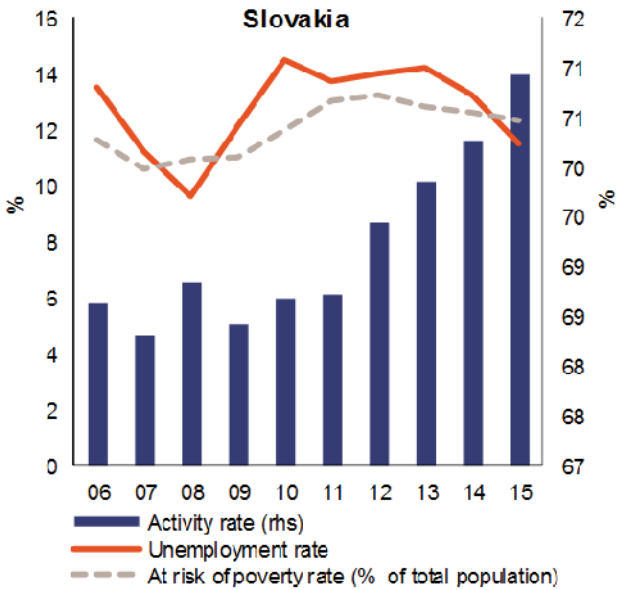
Source: Commission services

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues relating to high corporate and public debt and banking sector performance. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the risks involved in the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

Slovakia: In the previous round of the MIP, no macroeconomic imbalances were identified in Slovakia. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators remain beyond the indicative threshold, namely the net international investment position (NIIP) and unemployment.

The current account balance has improved significantly in recent years with the three year average showing a small surplus in 2015. However, the NIIP is only slowly improving, with the ongoing inflow of foreign direct investment which largely relates to the expanding automotive industry. The recent weakening in the real effective exchange rate including only moderate growth in nominal unit labour costs underpinned cost competitiveness while there have been cumulative gains in export market shares. However, a tightening labour market and increasing pressure on nominal wage growth could put cost competitiveness under pressure in the coming years. Private sector credit flow was strong in recent years, contributing to the upward path of the private sector debt ratio, which nevertheless still remains well within the indicative threshold. Real house prices bottomed out in 2013, and in 2015 there was significant positive growth although from a low level. Further acceleration in credit for house purchases in a low-rate environment could imply faster growth of house prices in the coming years. The government debt ratio decreased marginally in 2015. The largely foreign-owned banking sector is well-capitalised. The unemployment rate is improving. Although activity rates have gradually improved since 2012, structural unemployment represents a key challenge.

Graph A24: Labour market and social indicators



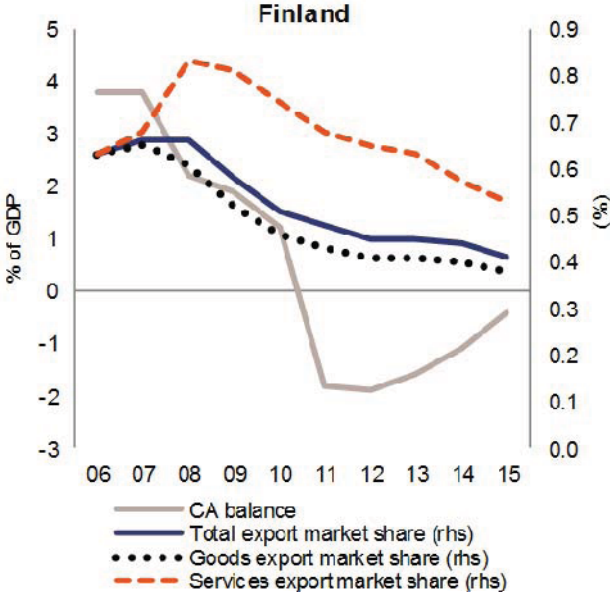
Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading points to issues relating to external aspects but with limited risks while structural unemployment remains a challenge. Therefore, the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Finland: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Finland was experiencing macroeconomic imbalances, in particular related to competitiveness and external performance. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the loss in export market shares, the level of private sector debt and government debt, as well as the increase in youth and in long-term unemployment.

The current account deficit narrowed further in 2015 and is expected to remain at similar levels in the coming years. The net-international investment position has deteriorated over time but remains close to balance. The cumulative loss of export market shares since the economic and financial crises remains substantial despite the recent improvement in cost competitiveness indicators. In 2015 the market share loss accelerated again and was one of the weakest in the EU, related to the on-going structural change in the economy and the sensitivity of exports to the recession in Russia. In 2016 the social partners agreed on a Competitiveness Pact which is expected to improve cost-competitiveness as of 2017. After being broadly stable since 2009, in 2015 private sector debt increased substantially while favourable credit conditions, low interest rates and moderately decreasing real house prices supported the strong credit growth. The financial sector remains well capitalised limiting risks to financial stability. Government debt is now beyond the 60% of GDP threshold. Unemployment continued to increase in 2015 but is expected to be reduced looking forward. The growth in youth unemployment has recently begun to recede but long-term unemployment continues to increase.

Graph A25: Export market shares and CA balance



Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights challenges related to both price- and non-price competitiveness in a context of sectoral restructuring. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of imbalances and their unwinding.

Graph A26: Households' debt and House Price Index

Sweden: In March 2016, the Commission concluded that Sweden experienced macroeconomic imbalances, particularly involving high and increasing household debt associated with high and growing house prices. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative thresholds, namely loss of export market shares, private sector debt and real house price growth.



Source: Eurostat

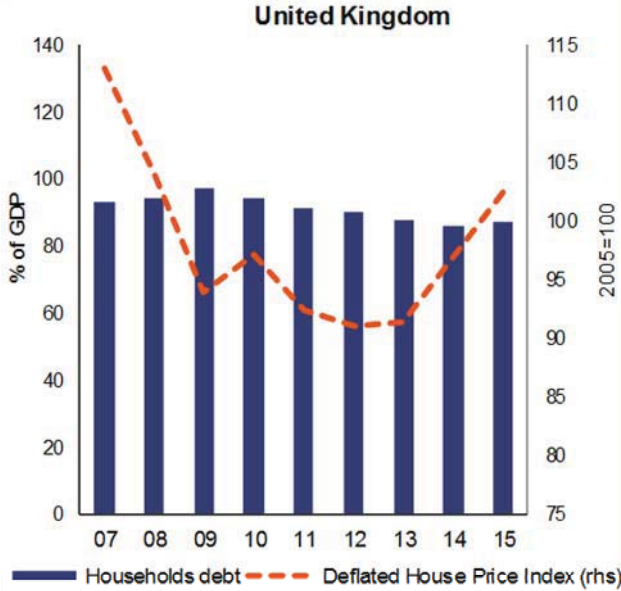
continued to improve gradually and has turned positive in 2015. Cumulative losses in export market shares are beyond the threshold and there were additional limited losses in 2015. Cost competitiveness indicators developed favourably in 2015, with contained unit labour cost growth and a depreciation of the real effective exchange rate (REER). Overall losses in export market shares are driven by weak external demand rather than by competitiveness issues. Private sector debt is broadly stable at a level among the highest in the EU where risks relate mainly to high household debt. Credit growth increased in 2015 and real house price growth accelerated further from already high levels. House prices and household indebtedness are pushed up by the favourable tax treatment of debt-financed home-ownership, specific aspects of the mortgage market and low mortgage interest rates. On the supply side, constraints on new construction remain an issue. In spite of the high level of household debt, bank risks currently appear contained as asset quality and profitability remain high and household finances are generally strong. Unemployment edged down in 2015 and is on a slowly declining trend, aided by the improvement of growth conditions.

Overall, the economic reading highlights issues related to high private debt and the developments in the housing sector. Therefore, the Commission finds it useful, also taking into account the identification of an imbalance in March, to examine further the persistence of imbalances or their unwinding.

United Kingdom: In the previous round of the MIP, *no macroeconomic imbalances were identified* in the United Kingdom. In the updated scoreboard, a number of indicators are beyond the indicative threshold, namely the current account deficit, real effective exchange rate, private sector debt and government debt.

The current account deficit continued to increase in 2015, driven by a widening primary income deficit and the indicator remains beyond the threshold. The net international investment position is negative but improved slightly. The cumulated change in export market share improved significantly and now shows gains. While unit labour cost growth has been moderate, in 2015 the real effective change rate indicator appreciated and moved marginally beyond the threshold. This reflected the strength of sterling until late 2015, since which sterling has weakened significantly. Private sector debt-to-GDP continued to decrease slightly overall, even though it remains high and household indebtedness started increasing again. Real house prices continue to rise from already high levels. Although the growth rate eased somewhat, this warrants close monitoring. Government debt was close to stable in 2015 but the high level remains a concern. Strong employment growth continued to be accompanied by falling long term and youth unemployment.

Graph A27: Households' debt and House Price Index



Source: Eurostat

Overall, the economic reading highlights some issues relating to the housing market and the external side of the economy although risks to stability in the short term appear limited. However the outcome of the EU referendum has raised economic and political uncertainty looking forward. Overall the Commission will at this stage not carry out further in-depth analysis in the context of the MIP.

Table 1.1: MIP Scoreboard 2015

Year 2015	External imbalances and competitiveness										Internal imbalances				Employment indicators ¹		
	Current account balance - % of GDP (3 year average)	Net international investment position (% of GDP)	Real effective exchange rate - 42 trading partners, HICP deflator (3 year % change)	Export market share - % of world exports (5 year % change)	Nominal unit labour cost index (2010=100) (3 year % change)	House price index (2010=100), deflated (1 year % change)	Private sector credit flow, consolidated (% of GDP)	Private sector debt, consolidated (% of GDP)	General government gross debt (% of GDP)	Unemployment rate (3 year average)	Total financial liabilities, non-consolidated (1 year % change)	Activity rate - % of total population aged 15-64 (3 year change in pp)	Long-term unemployment rate - % of active population aged 15-74 (3 year change in pp)	Youth unemployment rate - % of active population aged 15-24 (3 year change in pp)			
Thresholds	-4/6%	-35%	±5% (EA) ±11% (Non-EA)	-6%	9% (EA) 12% (Non-EA)	6%	14%	133%	60%	10%	-0.2 pp	0.5 pp	2 pp				
BE	-0.2	61.3	-1.2	-11.3	1.5	1.3p	4.5	166.3	105.8	8.5	0.7	1.0	2.3				
BG	0.6	-60.0	-4.1	12.8	14.9p	1.6bp	-0.3	110.5	26.0	11.2	2.2	-1.2	-6.5				
CZ	0.2	-30.7	-8.0	0.1	0.5	3.9p	0.9	68.6	40.3	6.1	2.4	-0.6	-6.9				
DK	8.8	39.0	-1.5	-8.8	4.9	6.3	-3.3	212.8	40.4	6.6	-0.1	-0.4	-3.3				
DE	7.5	48.7	-1.4	-2.8	5.7	4.1	3.0	98.9	71.2	4.9	0.4	-0.4	-0.8				
EE	0.9	-40.9	6.4	8.5	14.4	6.8	3.3	116.6	10.1	7.4	1.9	-3.1	-7.8				
IE	4.7*	-208.0*	-5.9	38.3*	-18.1	8.3	-6.7	303.4	78.6	11.3	0.8	-3.7	-9.5				
EL	-1.2	-134.6	-5.5	-20.6	-11.1p	-3.5e	-3.1	126.4	177.4	26.3	0.3	3.7	-5.5				
ES	1.3	-89.9	-2.9	-3.5	-0.7p	3.8	-2.7	154.0	99.8	24.2	0.0	0.4	-4.6				
FR	-0.7	-16.4	-2.7	-5.4	2.5p	-1.3	4.4	144.3	96.2	10.3	0.8	0.6	0.3				
HR	2.7	-77.7	0.1	-3.5	-5.0	-2.4	-1.3	115.0	86.7	17.0	2.9	0.1	0.9				
IT	1.5	-23.6	-2.2	-8.9	1.5	-2.6p	-1.7	117.0	132.3	12.2	0.5	1.3	5.0				
CY	-4.1	-130.3	-6.2	-16.8	-10.5p	2.9pp	4.4	353.7	107.5	15.7	0.4	3.2	5.1				
LV	-1.8	-62.5	3.1	10.5	16.0	-2.7	0.7	88.8	36.3	10.9	1.3	-3.3	-12.2				
LT	0.9	-44.7	4.0	15.5	11.6	4.6	2.2	55.0	42.7	10.5	2.3	-2.7	-10.4				
LU	5.3	35.8	-0.5	22.9	0.6	6.1	24.2	343.1	22.1	6.1	1.5b	0.3	-1.4				
HU	3.0	-60.8	-6.9	-8.0	3.9	11.6	-3.1	83.9	74.7	8.2	4.9	-1.9	-10.9				
MT	4.3	48.5	-0.2	-8.8	3.9	2.8p	5.4	139.1	64.0	5.9	4.5	-0.7	-2.3				
NL	9.1	63.9	-0.6	-8.3	0.2p	3.6	-1.6p	228.8p	65.1	7.2	0.6	1.1	-0.4				
AT	2.1	2.9	1.8	-9.6	6.1	3.5	2.1	126.4	85.5	5.6	0.4	0.5	1.2				
PL	-1.3	-62.8	-1.0	9.7	-0.4p	2.8	3.2	79.0	51.1	8.9	1.6	-1.1	-5.7				
PT	0.7	-109.3	-2.8	2.8	0.0e	2.3	-2.3	181.5	129.0	14.4	0.0	-0.5	-6.0				
RO	-1.0	-51.9	2.7	21.1	0.5p	1.7	0.2	59.1	37.9	6.9	1.3	0.0	-0.9				
SI	5.4	-38.7	0.6	-3.6	-0.6	1.5	-5.1	87.3	83.1	9.6	1.4	0.4	-4.3				
SK	1.1	-61.0	-0.7	6.7	2.2	5.5	8.2	81.4	52.5	13.0	1.5	-1.8	-7.5				
FI	-1.0	0.6	2.3	-20.5	3.6	-0.4	9.5	155.7	63.6	8.8	0.6	0.7	3.4				
SE	5.0	4.1	-7.9	-9.3	3.6	12.0	6.5	188.6	43.9	7.8	1.4	0.0	-3.3				
UK	-4.8	-14.4	11.3	1.0	1.7	5.7	2.5	157.8	89.1	6.3	0.8	-1.1	-6.6				

Flags: b: break in time series, e: estimated, p: provisional.

Note: * The level shift is due to relocation to Ireland of balance sheets of large multi-national enterprises and inclusion of corresponding transactions in the Irish BoP and IP statistics. † See page 2 of the AMR 2016.2) House price index = source NCB of EL. 3) The level of TFSL in Greece is higher than would otherwise have been recorded, due to the improved treatment of banks' holdings of short-term debt securities issued by banks.

Source: European Commission, Eurostat and Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (for Real Effective Exchange Rate), and International Monetary Fund

Table 2.1: Auxiliary indicators, 2015

Year	Real GDP (1 year % change)	Gross fixed capital formation (% of GDP)	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (% of GDP)	Current plus capital account (Net lending- borrowing) (% of GDP)	Net external debt (% of GDP)	Foreign direct investment in the reporting economy - flows	Foreign direct investment in the reporting economy - stocks	Net trade balance of energy products (% of GDP)	Real effective exchange rate - Euro Area trading partners (3 years % change)	Export performance against advanced economies (5 years % change)	Terms of trade (5 years % change)	Export market share in volume (1 year % change)	Labour productivity (1 year % change)	Nominal unit labour cost index (2010=100) (10 years % change)	Unit labour cost performance relative to EA (10 years % change)	House price index (2010=100 - nominal 3 years % change)	Residential construction (% of GDP)	Private sector debt, non-consolidated (% of GDP)	Financial sector leverage, non-consolidated (% debt-to-equity)
BE	1.5	23.0	na	0.5	-67.7	-4.7	213.6	-2.8	0.2	-9.4	0.1	1.6	0.6	20.5	4.0	2.30p	5.8	218.8	176.5
BG	3.6	21.0	1.0p	3.5	3.4	3.7	88.9	-3.8	-3.9	15.2	3.5	3.0	3.3p	78.4p	51.2	2.00bp	1.4	121.5	494.3
CZ	4.5	26.3	na	3.2	-9.8	1.3	74.2	-2.5	-8.0	2.3	0.7	5.0	3.1	14.1	-2.8	6.60p	3.4	77.0	516.4
DK	1.0	19.0	na	9.0	3.6	0.7	49.8	0.1	-1.3	-6.8	0.7	-2.4	-0.1	26.0	7.4	15.3	4.0	218.9	159.9
DE	1.7	19.9	2.9ep	8.4	-10.2	1.4	41.0	-2.0	0.5	-0.7	2.0	2.5	0.8	15.1	-1.6	11.4	5.9	106.1	368.0
EE	1.4	23.7	1.5p	4.3	-10.3	-2.9	99.9	-1.4	1.6	10.8	2.8	-3.3	-1.4	72.0	42.1	34.5	4.4	130.9	366.1
IE	26.3	21.2	na	9.7*	-289.0*	72.3*	495.9*	-1.6	-1.3	41.2*	3.6	31.7	23.2	-14.9	-22.7	30.7	1.9	323.6	80.6
EL	-0.2p	11.5p	1.0p	1.2	138.1	0.6	14.5	-2.2p	-5.2	-18.9	5.8p	0.7p	-0.7p	-0.2p	-12.6	-21.70e	0.7p	126.4	1359.6
ES	3.2p	19.7p	na	2.0	93.1	2.1	59.8	-2.1p	-1.3	-1.5	-4.7p	2.2p	0.7p	8.9p	-6.2	-5.6	4.4p	173.1	468.4
FR	1.3p	21.5p	na	-0.1	37.3	1.5	43.3	-1.8p	-0.4	-3.4	2.1p	3.4p	0.8p	17.9p	1.9	-4.9	5.8p	183.3	356.6
HR	1.6	19.5	0.85	5.6	52.7	0.4	55.0	-3.5	-1.1	-1.5	0.6	7.3	0.1	23.3	-4.1	-8.2	na	140.2	427.0
IT	0.7	16.6	na	1.8	59.7	0.7	25.6	-2.0	-0.5	-7.0	2.1	1.6	0.2	17.6	3.0	-12.20p	4.4	120.1	657.3
CY	1.7p	13.3p	na	-2.6	133.4	41.0	911.2	-4.2p	-2.4	-15.0	-0.8p	-2.7	0.9p	5.4p	-4.1	-4.60bp	4.3p	354.9	85.0
LV	2.7	22.6	0.6p	2.0	28.6	2.8	60.1	-2.9	-2.0	12.8	0.2	-0.1	1.4	71.7	39.1	9.5	1.8	97.6	625.4
LT	1.8	19.3	1.0p	0.7	26.4	2.3	40.0	-3.5	-1.4	17.9	2.2	-3.1	0.5	35.3	10.0	11.7	2.8	57.5	467.9
LU	3.5	19.0	na	4.1	-2220.9	766.4	8616.9	-3.1	0.3	25.5	0.0	10.1	0.9	29.8	11.1	15.5	3.9	425.1	53.9
HU	3.1	21.7	1.38	7.8	23.0	-2.2	222.1	-4.2	-7.1	-6.0	-0.2	5.0	0.5	24.4	8.8	13.0	1.9	99.1	114.1
MT	6.2	25.4	0.8p	4.9	-262.7	25.8	1867.3	-9.8	1.0	-6.8	0.8	-0.6	2.7	29.8	10.7	6.20p	3.4	204.7	37.1
NL	2.0p	19.4p	na	3.6	40.0	13.4	580.5	-1.0p	1.0	-6.4	-0.9p	2.3p	1.0p	15.3p	1.5	-1.9	3.7p	236.3p	129.7p
AT	1.0	22.6	3.1ep	1.4	20.1	1.1	80.9	-2.3	2.3	-7.7	-0.2	0.9	0.3	23.3	5.7	14.2	4.3	145.1	186.7
PL	3.9	20.1	1.01	1.7	35.7	3.0	48.6	-1.6	-1.9	12.1	2.8	5.0	2.5p	17.0p	2.5	-2.0	3.1	83.4	305.9
PT	1.6e	15.3e	na	1.7	100.8	0.3	71.7	-2.3e	-1.0	5.0	4.8e	3.4e	0.2e	0.6e	-12.4	5.4	2.5e	195.9	372.0
RO	3.7p	24.7p	na	1.2	24.5	2.4	42.6	-0.9p	2.4	23.7	6.1p	2.8p	4.6p	43.9p	23.6	0.5	na	61.2	391.5
SI	2.3	19.5	na	6.1	31.2	3.9	34.5	-2.9	-0.7	-1.5	0.7	2.9	1.2	19.9	1.1	-10.8	2.3	96.0	402.6
SK	3.8	23.0	1.18	3.8	27.3	1.3	60.5	-3.5	-1.2	8.9	-3.2	4.3	1.8	16.1	-1.2	7.8	2.3	83.7	831.7
FI	0.2	20.4	2.9p	-0.3	43.9	7.3	58.0	-1.5	1.1	-18.8	2.7	-2.9	0.6	28.1	8.8	0.8	5.5	182.8	299.4
SE	4.1	23.7	na	5.0	46.3	3.4	78.0	-0.9	-7.8	-7.4	0.6	2.9	2.6	25.1	6.8	30.5	4.5	234.9	184.5
UK	2.2	16.9	na	-5.4	na	1.8	74.3	-0.6	14.0	3.1	3.5	1.8	0.5	21.9	3.6	17.4	3.7	161.1	628.3

Figures in time series; e: estimated; p: provisional; na: not available.

Note: *The level shift is due to relocation into Ireland of balance sheets of large multi-national enterprises and inclusion of corresponding transactions in the Irish BoP and IP; statistics. †House price index e = source NCB for EL; 2) Official transmission deadline for 2015 data on Gross domestic expenditure on R&D is 31 October 2016; data as transmitted to Eurostat by the 24 October 2016 were used for this document.

Source: Eurostat, Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (for Real Effective Exchange Rate) and International Monetary Fund data, WEO (for world exports series)

Table 2.1 (continued): Auxiliary indicators, 2015

Year 2015	Employment rate (1 year % change)	Activity rate - % of total population aged 15-64 (%)	Long-term unemployment rate - % of active population aged 15-74 (%)	Youth unemployment rate - % of active population aged 15-24 (%)	Young people neither in employment nor in education and training - aged 15-24		People at risk of poverty or social exclusion - % of total population		People at risk of poverty after social transfers - % of total population		Severely materially deprived people - % of total population		People living in households with very low work intensity - % of total population aged 0-59	
					%	3 years change in p.p	%	3 years change in p.p	%	3 years change in p.p	%	3 years change in p.p	%	3 years change in p.p
BE	0.9	67.6	4.4	22.1	12.2	-0.1	21.1	-0.5	14.9	-0.4	5.8p	-0.5p	14.9	1.0
BG	0.4p	69.3	5.6	21.6	19.3	-2.2	41.3	-8.0	22.0	0.8	34.2	-9.9	11.6	-0.9
CZ	1.4	74.0	2.4	12.6	7.5	-1.4	14.0	-1.4	9.7	0.1	5.6	-1.0	6.8	0.0
DK	1.1	78.5	1.7	10.8	6.2	-0.4	17.7	0.2	12.2	0.2	3.7	1.0	11.6	1.4
DE	0.9	77.6	2.0	7.2	6.2	-0.9	20.0	0.4	16.7	0.6	4.4	-0.5	9.8	-0.1
EE	2.9	76.7	2.4	13.1	10.8	-1.4	24.2	0.8	21.6	4.1	4.5	-4.9	6.6	-2.5
IE	2.5	70.0	5.3	20.9	14.3	-4.4	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
EL	0.5p	67.8	18.2	49.8	17.2	-3.0	35.7	1.1	21.4	-1.7	22.2p	2.7p	16.8	2.6
ES	2.5p	74.3	11.4	48.3	15.6	-3.0	28.6	1.4	22.1	1.3	6.4p	0.6p	15.4	1.1
FR	0.5p	71.5	4.3	24.7	12.0	-0.5	17.7	-1.4	13.6	-0.5	4.5	-0.8	8.6	0.2
HR	1.5	66.8	10.3	43.0	18.5	1.9	29.1	-3.5	20.0	-0.4	13.7	-2.2	14.4	-2.3
IT	0.6	64.0	6.9	40.3	21.4	0.4	28.7	-1.2	19.9	0.4	11.5	-3.0	11.7	1.1
CY	0.8p	73.9	6.8	32.8	15.3	-0.7	28.9	1.8	16.2	1.5	15.4	0.4	10.9	4.4
LV	1.3	75.7	4.5	16.3	10.5	-4.4	30.9	-5.3	22.5	3.3	16.4	-9.2	7.8	-3.9
LT	1.3	74.1	3.9	16.3	9.2	-2.0	29.3	-3.2	22.2	3.6	13.9	-5.9	9.2	-2.2
LU	2.6	70.9b	1.9	16.6	6.2b	0.3b	18.5	0.1	15.3	0.2	2.0	0.7	5.7	-0.4
HU	2.6	68.6	3.1	17.3	11.6b	-3.2b	28.2	-5.3	14.9	0.6	19.4	-6.9	9.4	-4.1
MT	3.4	67.6	2.4	11.8	10.4	-0.2	22.4	-0.7	16.3	1.2	8.1	-1.1	9.2	0.2
NL	0.9p	79.6	3.0	11.3	4.7	-0.2	16.8p	1.8p	12.1p	2.0p	2.5p	0.2p	10.2	1.3
AT	0.6	75.5	1.7	10.6	7.5	0.7	18.3	-0.2	13.9	-0.5	3.6	-0.4	8.2	0.5
PL	1.4p	68.1	3.0	20.8	11.0	-0.8	23.4	-3.3	17.6	0.5	8.1	-5.4	6.9	0.0
PT	1.4e	73.4	7.2	32.0	11.3	-2.6	26.6	1.3	19.5	1.6	9.6p	1.0p	10.9	0.8
RO	-0.9p	66.1	3.0	21.7	18.1	1.3	37.3	-5.9	25.4	2.5	22.7	-8.4	7.9	0.0
SI	1.1	71.8	4.7	16.3	9.5	0.2	19.2	-0.4	14.3	0.8	5.8	-0.8	7.4	-0.1
SK	2.0	70.9	7.6	26.5	13.7	-0.1	18.4	-2.1	12.3	-0.9	9.0	-1.5	7.1	-0.1
FI	-0.4	75.8	2.3	22.4	10.6	2.0	16.8	-0.4	12.4	-0.8	2.2p	-0.7p	10.8	1.5
SE	1.5	81.7	1.5	20.4	6.7	-1.1	16.0	0.4	14.5	0.4	0.7	-0.6	5.8	0.1
UK	1.8	76.9	1.6	14.6	11.1	-2.8	23.5	-0.6	16.7	0.7	6.1	-1.7	11.9	-1.1

Flags: b: break in time series; e: estimated; p: provisional; na: not available.

Note: *) IE: Official transmission deadline for 2015 data on People at risk of poverty or social exclusion is 30 November 2016, while data were extracted on 24 October 2016.

Source: European Commission, Eurostat