

Market Monthly

February 2019

Highlights

- **Economics:** In the US, the third estimate of 3Q18 GDP came in just below expectations (3.4% vs 3.5%). US unemployment figures for January were very strong with 340k new jobs created (165k expected) with unemployment at 4.0% vs 3.9% expected. The Eurozone released their first 4Q18 GDP figures as expected. The December unemployment rate in the Eurozone remained at 7.9% as expected.
- **Inflation:** US core YoY personal consumption expenditure reported for December came in as expected at 1.9%. Expectations for US inflation for 2019 are at 1.4%. The final Eurozone YoY CPI reading for December came in as expected at 1.6% while the 2019 forecast is at 1.3%. The CPI's forecasts for 2019 are: Russia 5.5%; for China 2.0%, Brazil 4.0% and the world at 2.9%.
- **Central bank interest rates:** The Fed funds rates took a breather at the beginning of 2019 with the Fed indicating that they can wait until they raise rates again. At the end of last year the expectations for 2019 were two further rate hikes. The ECB's tapered asset purchase program has ended at the end of 2018 leaving the markets to anticipate their first rate hike. EM: China RRRⁱ at 13.50%, 12M lending rate at 4.35% and 12M deposit rate at 1.5%. India's repo rate cut by 25bps to 6.25%; Russia at 7.75% and Brazil SELIC at 6.50%.
- **Capital market rates:** 10yr US treasury yields has been range bound between 2.6% and 2.8% after a short dip at the beginning of the year. The 10yr Bund has moved downwards and broke out of its 0.2% - 0.3% range at the end of the month. We see EUR bond prices as remaining supported over the longer term although tapered asset purchase program by the ECB has halted.

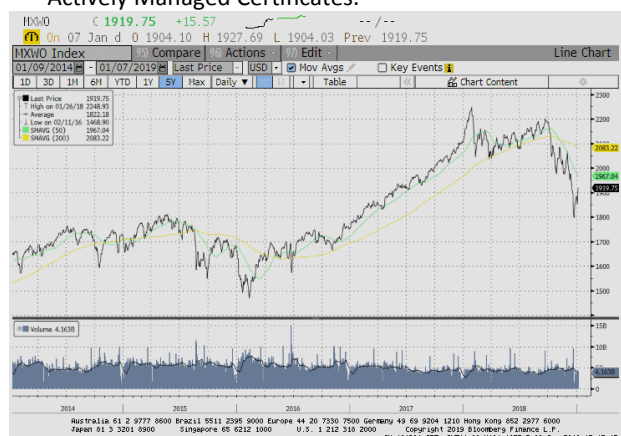
Tactical Asset Allocation

- **Forex:** EURUSD remained sideways with the EUR slightly gaining strength against the USD up to 1.15. The median EURUSD forecast now predicts USD at 1.20 for the end of 2019ⁱⁱ and then up to 1.27 for the end of 2020.
- **Bonds incl. High Yields (Nⁱⁱⁱ):** Since near-zero/negative policy rates and negative real rates are seen persisting in Europe for several years, we continue investing in up to 2025 maturities of European DM bonds to improve yield and look for USD bonds with shorter maturities ahead of future rate hikes.

- **Equities (N):** Equity markets have experienced a major rebound after they sold off in December. Markets remain uncertain due to geopolitical trade tensions, fears on further market slowdowns especially in relation to China and revised company forecasts as a result of that. We believe that markets were oversold and that this rebound will continue in Q1.
- **Commodities (N):** Crude Oil (WTI) started the month around 45\$/bbl before OPEC action started coming into effect. Since then the oil price has moved as high as 55\$/bbl.

Investment Ideas^{iv}

- In alternatives we are reviewing real estate funds.
- We remain positioned for a market rebound within our Actively Managed Certificates.



ⁱ Required Deposit Reserve Ratio, or the minimum capital Chinese banks must hold with the PBoC. Currently at 14.5%, cut in from 20% at the beginning of 2015
ⁱⁱSource: Bloomberg 14.02.2019 (98 bank contributors)

ⁱⁱⁱ How to read: (U) underweight; (N) neutral; (O) overweight
^{iv} See rationales on our web page www.aspermontcapital.ch
^v Return from beginning of the year till current date

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