
FRESH CATALYSTS FOR EUROPE IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2019

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European equities had a strong start in the first half of 2019 (+16%).¹ WisdomTree views the recently announced slate of European Union (EU) leaders as a further positive catalyst for markets. Additionally, we believe the European Central Bank (ECB) is likely to provide additional stimulus to support the economy and markets, counteracting global growth fears and [Brexit](#)-related uncertainty. It is a good time to review exposures to European asset markets and options for implementation.

Madame President

Once touted as a leading candidate for the French presidency, Christine Lagarde is set to replace Mario Draghi as ECB president. Lagarde's appointment is expected to coincide with an acceleration in [accommodative monetary policy](#). As the former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Lagarde publicly endorsed Draghi's "do whatever it takes" policy stance.

Lagarde supports keeping interest rates low, especially when faced with low [inflation](#), for as long as needed to support domestic demand. Lagarde has also embraced the use of unconventional monetary policy tools, including negative interest rates, large-scale asset purchase programs and targeted long-term refinancing operations to stimulate [credit](#) and economic growth, as well as outright monetary transactions to preserve the integrity of the EU.

Lagarde emphasizes that easing monetary policy is most effective when implemented as a part of a three-pronged approach in conjunction with congruous structural and fiscal policies.

We anticipate a smooth transition in leadership from Draghi to Lagarde—both leaders appear open to taking policy actions necessary to stimulate economic conditions should they begin to worsen.

Given how low interest rates already are—and some uncertainty associated with negative rates—we see the ECB looking for unconventional policy measures, including the possible launch of a new [quantitative easing](#) program aimed at unorthodox asset classes, potentially even equities.

This potential for an expanded European policy toolbox is helpful for adding to European equity allocations over the next 12 to 18 months.

How Should Investors Position in Europe?

One sector has been battered by the low and negative rate policy of the ECB: European financials and the large-cap banks. While they could be tempting for those value investors chasing the downtrodden, banks still face a challenging operating environment.

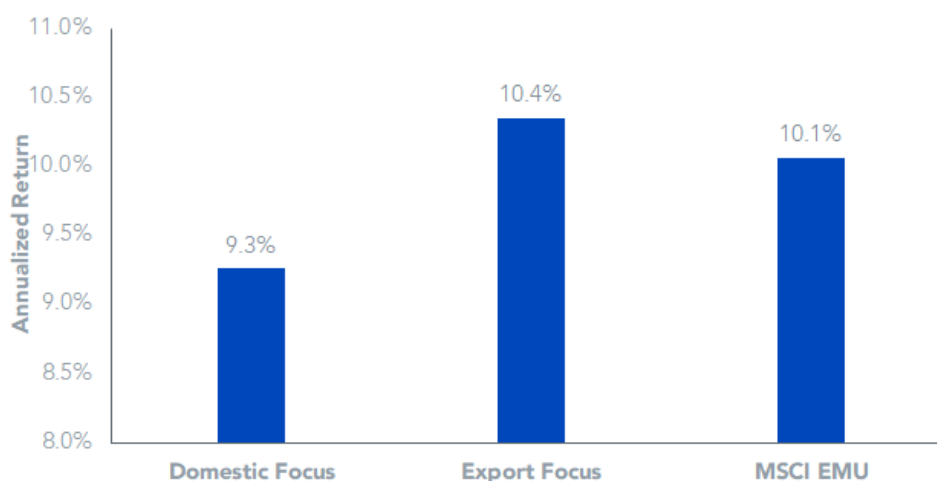
In 2019, despite fears of global growth, European multinationals (those with more than 50% revenue abroad) have beaten returns of the domestic economy-focused group by 480 [basis points \(bps\)](#).²

Weakness in banks and financials hurt the domestically focused segment of the market compared with the more globally tilted firms—as did real estate exposure.

Notably, the [MSCI EMU Index's](#) largest sector exposure is Financials (17%), and this exposure is heavily concentrated within domestically focused companies (12%).³

Multinationals within the MSCI EMU Index have not just performed well in 2019, they have also outperformed domestically focused EU companies by approximately 110 bps annually since July 2012.⁴

MSCI European Monetary Union Index (MSCI EMU) Local Currency: Domestic vs. Export Focused



Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet. You cannot invest directly in an index. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

Currency-Hedged European Equities

WisdomTree was the first firm to offer currency-hedged exchange-traded funds focused on the eurozone and particularly to a basket of multinational companies whose revenue tends to be from outside Europe.

We believe focusing on the stocks of European companies—where there is an equity risk premium potential to earn—makes more sense than betting on appreciation in the euro, and currency hedging with the [WisdomTree Europe Hedged Equity Fund \(HEDJ\)](#) helps mitigate any moves in the euro from affecting the performance of HEDJ.

The revenue screen and [dividend weighting](#) in HEDJ also results in an under-weight allocation to traditional banks relative to the MSCI EMU Index—something we like in this negative rate environment.

Sector Exposures			
Sector	HEDJ	MSCI EMU	HEDJ Over/(Under) Weight
Consumer Staples	19.7%	10.9%	8.8%
Consumer Discretionary	19.4%	13.9%	5.5%
Materials	11.4%	7.2%	4.2%
Health Care	11.2%	7.5%	3.8%
Industrials	15.4%	15.3%	0.0%
Information Technology	8.2%	9.3%	(1.1%)
Real Estate	—	1.5%	(1.5%)
Energy	1.4%	5.5%	(4.1%)
Financials	12.6%	16.8%	(4.2%)
Communication Services	0.5%	5.4%	(5.0%)
Utilities	0.1%	6.5%	(6.4%)

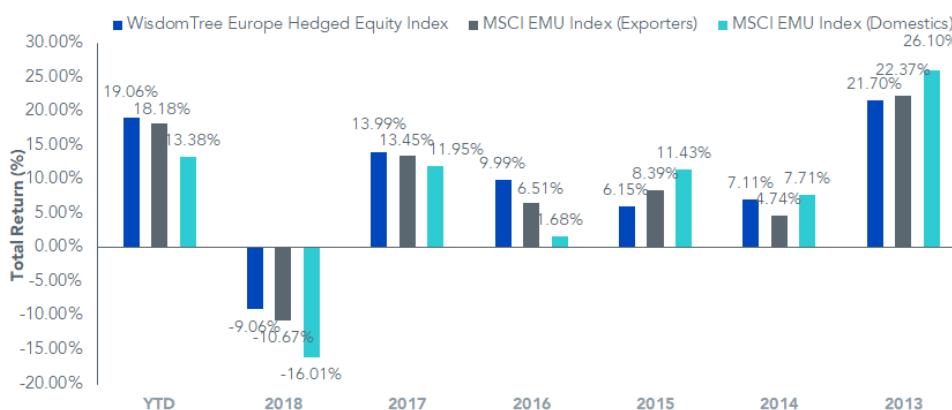
Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet as of 6/30/19. Weights subject to change

So far in 2019, HEDJ has returned +18.95%, outpacing the return of the benchmark MSCI EMU Index by around 250 bps.⁵ For standardized performance and characteristics of HEDJ, click [here](#).

Key aggregate characteristics of HEDJ include:⁶

- [Earnings yield](#) of 7.5% (above 6.9% of MSCI EMU Index).
- [Return on equity](#) of 12.9% (above 10.9% of the MSCI EMU Index).
- [Return on assets](#) of 2.0% (above 1.4% of MSCI EMU Index).
- [Dividend yield](#) of 3.1% (mostly consistent with 3.2% of MSCI EMU Index).
- The global orientation of HEDJ adds a growth and quality tilt compared with slower growth, local economy utilities and financials.

WisdomTree Europe Hedged Equity Index vs. MSCI EMU Index (Local Currency)



Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet. Past performance is not indicative of future results. You cannot invest directly in an index. Index performance does not represent actual fund or portfolio performance. A fund or portfolio may differ significantly from the securities included in the index. Index performance assumes reinvestment of dividends but does not reflect any management fees, transaction costs or other expenses that would be incurred by a portfolio or fund, or brokerage commissions on transactions in fund shares. Such fees, expenses and commissions could reduce returns.

Conclusion

In our view, the reshuffling of ECB and broader EU leadership could be a positive catalyst for European equities in 2019. We sense Lagarde is likely to embrace nonstandard measures to stimulate EU economic growth, laying the foundation for ongoing strength in European equity markets in the second half of 2019 and into 2020.

With its tilt toward quality stocks and attractive valuation metrics, we favor HEDJ for European exposure.

¹As measured by the MSCI EMU Local Currency Index for the period 12/31/18–6/30/19.

²As measured by the MSCI EMU Local Currency Index for the period 12/31/18–6/30/19.

³As of 6/30/19.

⁴As measured by the MSCI EMU Local Currency Index for the period 7/2/12–6/30/19.

⁵As measured by the WisdomTree Europe Hedged Equity Fund and the MSCI EMU Local Currency Index for the period 12/31/18–6/30/19.

⁶As of 6/30/19 for the WisdomTree Europe Hedged Equity Fund and the MSCI EMU Local Currency Index.

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For standardized performance and the most recent month-end performance click [here](#) NOTE, this material is intended for electronic use only. Individuals who intend to print and physically deliver to an investor must print the monthly performance report to accompany this blog.

For more investing insights, check out our [Economic & Market Outlook](#)

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You cannot invest directly in an index.

DEFINITIONS

Brexit : an abbreviation of “British exit” that mirrors the term Grexit. It refers to the possibility that Britain will withdraw from the European Union.

Monetary policy : Actions of a central bank or other regulatory committee that determine the size and rate of growth of the money supply, which in turn affects interest rates.

Inflation : Characterized by rising price levels.

Credit : A contractual agreement in which a borrower receives something of value now and agrees to repay the lender at some date in the future.

Quantitative Easing (QE) : A government monetary policy occasionally used to increase the money supply by buying government securities or other securities from the market. Quantitative easing increases the money supply by flooding financial institutions with capital, in an effort to promote increased lending and liquidity.

Basis point : 1/100th of 1 percent.

MSCI EMU Index : A free float-adjusted market capitalization-weighted index designed to measure the performance of the markets in the European Monetary Union.

Dividend weighted : Constituent securities represented within the Index in proportion to their contribution to the dividend stream of the Index.

Earnings yield : The earnings per share for the most recent 12-month period divided by the current market price per share. The earnings yield (which is the inverse of the P/E ratio) shows the percentage of each dollar invested in the stock that was earned by the company.

Return on Equity (ROE) : Measures a corporation’s profitability by revealing how much profit a company generates with the money shareholders have invested.

Return on assets (ROA) : Firm profits (after accounting for all expenses) divided by the firm’s total assets. Higher numbers indicate greater profits relative to the level of assets utilized to generate them.

Dividend yield : A financial ratio that shows how much a company pays out in dividends each year relative to its share price.