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Schroder ISF* EURO Equity

Fund Manager: Martin Skanberg | Fund update: Q2 2024

Performance overview

 Eurozone equities fell in the quarter. The fund outperformed the MSCI EMU index.

Drivers of fund performance

- The fund posted a positive absolute return, outperforming the index due to positive stock selection across several sectors.
- Medical equipment firm **Philips** was the leading individual contributor. Shares surged on news that the group has reached a settlement over litigation in the US related to its sleep apnoea machines. The US\$1.1 billion deal is less than the market had expected. The settlement removes a significant overhang from the stock and highlights the value of the medical technology franchise when compared to peers.
- Also within the healthcare sector, generics and biosimilars producer Sandoz was a leading contributor. Demand for Sandoz's biosimilar Hymiroz jumped after pharmacy benefit manager CVS Caremark removed the branded version, Abbvie's Humira, from its listings. We anticipate more deals like this to come, especially given the imperative for governments to cut healthcare costs.
- Among industrials, Siemens Energy supported relative performance. The stock is bouncing back from the quality issues that have affected its offshore wind turbine business. Demand for its grid infrastructure continues to be robust. The break-up of rival GE into three parts – energy, healthcare and aerospace – highlights how a business like Siemens Energy is valued in the US.
- In the consumer discretionary sector, not owning LVMH was advantageous. The luxury sector is facing tough year-on-year comparisons in the US and China although this will ease later in the year.
- Our semiconductor equipment holdings ASML
 Holding and ASM International added value. Both
 companies are enablers of the artificial intelligence
 revolution offering advanced solutions for the
 manufacture of memory chips. Momentum looks set to
 accelerate into 2025 and 2026.
- Henkel was another positive contributor. The adhesives side of its business is performing better as inventory destocking eases and group margins have been guided higher.

- Among financials, our holdings in Intesa Sanpaolo and Bank of Ireland both performed well. The European Central Bank has cut interest rates but it remains unclear when or whether there will be further cuts. Shareholder returns remain a key attraction for investors in banks.
- On the negative side, **Airbus** was the main individual detractor. Airbus had to cut its forecast for 2024 aircraft deliveries because of supply chain bottlenecks affecting interiors and landing gear. This also resulted in a downgrade to earnings guidance.
- Defence electronics specialist Hensoldt also weighed on relative returns amid some profittaking.

Portfolio activity

- We initiated a new position in Norwegian bank DNB. Core eurozone banks have performed well, while DNB has lagged partly due to the weak krone. Nordic central banks have already cut interest rates and so the position in DNB adds exposure to this "higher for longer" trend in the Nordics.
- We have initiated a new position in diversified financial group **Deutsche Boerse**, owner of the equity and derivatives exchanges as well as offering trading and clearing services. The shares had derated following the acquisition of SimCorp last year, in a deal that is dilutive to earnings in the nearterm. Low market volatility has also meant less demand for hedging. However, we think Deutsche Boerse offers good secular growth and should benefit from any rise in volatility that may be generated by upcoming elections this year, as well as a supportive rate environment.
- Another new position in **Iveco** which makes both light commercial vehicles and heavy goods trucks. It also has a defence business making armoured vehicles. Of the European truckmakers, we see Iveco as the most attractively valued and strategically well placed, with the greatest potential to improve margins from current low levels.
- We exited the remaining small position in Carrefour.

Outlook/positioning

- The news of the French parliamentary elections took markets by surprise. Some French domestic stocks in particular saw weak performance in June amid uncertainty over the business agenda of the Rassemblement National who look likely to gain seats. We do not invest on a country basis but instead focus on stock specifics. The portfolio is underweight France. The question will be whether any further selling of French equities results in opportunities that look attractively undervalued.
- Elsewhere, the Q1 reporting season came to a close in June. This was largely positive outside the energy

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- and materials sectors. There is recognition that Q1 was the trough for earnings and sales and profits should pick up from here.
- While the European Central Bank has cut interest rates (as of early June), it is unclear how many more cuts may be coming. A shallow cutting cycle could mean rate support for sectors like financials remains intact.
- Our Blend strategy draws the best ideas from both value and growth parts of the market. We continue to maintain our diversified approach, with limited tilts to any particular investment style.

Calendar year performance (%)

	Fund	Target	Comparator
2023	6.3	18.8	17.0
2022	-14.3	-12.5	-13.4
2021	22.3	22.2	22.0
2020	-0.7	-1.0	-1.7
2019	24.7	25.5	23.8
2018	-17.0	-12.7	-13.9
2017	16.2	12.5	11.8
2016	2.3	4.4	3.3
2015	14.7	9.8	11.4
2014	7.2	4.3	3.1

Source: Schroders, as at 31 December 2023. Fund performance is net of fees, NAV to NAV with net income reinvested, EUR C Acc. Please see factsheet for other share classes.

The fund's performance should be assessed against its target benchmark being to exceed the MSCI European Monetary Union (Net TR) index and compared against the Morningstar Eurozone Large Cap Equity Category. The fund's investment universe is expected to overlap materially with the components of the target benchmark. The comparator benchmark is only included for performance comparison purposes and does not have any bearing on how the investment manager invests the fund's assets.

Risk considerations

Counterparty risk: The fund may have contractual agreements with counterparties. If a counterparty is unable to fulfil their obligations, the sum that they owe to the fund may be lost in part or in whole. **Currency risk:** The fund may lose value as a result of

movements in foreign exchange rates.

Currency risk / hedged share classes: The hedging of the share class may not be fully effective and residual currency exposure may remain. The cost associated with hedging may impact performance and potential gains may be more limited than for unhedged share classes. Derivatives risk: Derivatives may be used to manage the portfolio efficiently. A derivative may not perform as expected, may create losses greater than the cost of the derivative and may result in losses to the fund. Higher volatility risk: The price of this fund may be volatile as it may take higher risks in search of higher rewards.

IBOR Risk: The transition of the financial markets away from the use of interbank offered rates (IBORs) to alternative reference rates may impact the valuation of certain holdings and disrupt liquidity in certain instruments. This may impact the investment performance of the fund.

Liquidity risk: In difficult market conditions, the fund may not be able to sell a security for full value or at all. This could affect performance and could cause the fund to defer or suspend redemptions of its shares. **Market Risk:** The value of investments can go up and down and an investor may not get back the amount initially invested.

Operational risk: Failures at service providers could lead to disruptions of fund operations or losses. Performance risk: Investment objectives express an intended result but there is no guarantee that such a result will be achieved. Depending on market conditions and the macro economic environment, investment objectives may become more difficult to achieve. Sustainability risk: The fund has environmental and/or social characteristics. This means it may have limited exposure to some companies, industries or sectors and may forego certain investment opportunities, or dispose of certain holdings, that do not align with its sustainability criteria. Therefore, the fund may underperform other funds that do not apply similar criteria. The fund may invest in companies that do not reflect the beliefs and values of any particular investor.

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