



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. CET, THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009

The Conference Board®
Euro Area Business Cycle IndicatorsSM
**THE CONFERENCE BOARD LEADING ECONOMIC INDEX™
(LEI) FOR THE EURO AREA
AND RELATED COMPOSITE ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR APRIL 2009**

BRUSSELS, May 28, 2009... The Conference Board Leading Economic Index™ (LEI) for the Euro Area increased 1.8 percent and The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index™ (CEI) remained unchanged in April.

- The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area experienced its largest monthly increase in April since June 1990, with all components making positive contributions. Nonetheless, between October 2008 and April 2009, the leading economic index decreased by 1.8 percent (about a -3.5 percent annual rate), slower than the 7.0 percent decrease (about a -13.5 percent annual rate) between April and October 2008. In addition, the weaknesses among the leading indicators have remained somewhat more widespread than the strengths in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area, a measure of current economic activity, remained unchanged in April according to preliminary estimates, after declining for the previous seven months. Between October 2008 and April 2009, the coincident economic index declined by 2.0 percent (about a -4.0 percent annual rate), faster than the 1.0 percent decrease (about a -2.1 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. Additionally, the weaknesses among the coincident indicators have remained very widespread, with all the components decreasing during the past six months. At the same time, real GDP declined at an 8.0 percent average annual rate during the fourth quarter of 2008 and first quarter of 2009 (including a decrease of 9.8 percent annual rate in the first quarter), its lowest two-quarter growth rate since 1963.
- The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area has increased since the beginning of 2009, after generally falling since the middle of 2007. As a result, its six-month decline has moderated substantially in recent months. Meanwhile, the decline in The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area over the last six months remains steeper than at any time prior to this downturn in the index's 22-year history. Taken together, the recent behavior of the composite indexes suggests that the contraction in economic activity should continue in the near term but will likely become less deep in the months ahead.

LEADING INDICATORS. All eight components in The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area increased in April. The positive contributors— in order from the largest positive contributor to the smallest—are the interest rate spread, the Purchasing Managers' Index, the business expectations index, stock price index, the Economic Sentiment Index, real money supply*, new orders of capital goods*, and residential building permits*. None of the components made negative contributions to the index in April.

The next release is scheduled for Monday, Jun 29, 2009 at 10:00 A.M. (CET)

In New York – Monday, June 29, 2009 at 4:00 A.M. (ET)

With the 1.8 percent increase in April, The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area now stands at 93.8 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index declined 0.1 percent in March and declined 0.2 percent in February. During the six-month span through April, the index decreased 1.8 percent, with three of the eight components increasing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 37.5 percent).

**See notes under data availability*

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. Three of the four components that make up The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area increased in April. The positive contributors were retail trade*, industrial production*, and manufacturing turnover*. Employment* declined in April.

After remaining unchanged in April, The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area now stands at 102.7 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index decreased 0.3 percent in March and decreased 0.3 percent in February. During the six-month period through April, the index decreased 2.0 percent, with none of the four components increasing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 0.0 percent).

** See notes under data availability.*

FOR TABLES AND CHARTS, SEE BELOW

DATA AVAILABILITY The data series used to compute **The Conference Board Leading Economic Index™** (LEI) for the Euro Area and **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index™** (CEI) for the Euro Area reported in this release are those available “as of” 10:00 A.M. ET May 26, 2009. Some series are estimated as noted below.

NOTES: Series in The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area that are based on our estimates are real money supply, residential building permits and new orders of capital goods. Series in The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area that are based on our estimates are employment, industrial production, retail trade and manufacturing turnover.

Effective with the March 26, 2009 release, the retail trade component of The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area changed slightly due to benchmark revisions by the source agency. As a result, “Volume of retail trade except for motor vehicles and motorcycles” replaced “volume of retail trade except for motor vehicles, motorcycles and repair of personal and household goods.” The difference between these component series is small and does not affect the cyclical characteristics of the coincident economic index.

The release of new data for the residential building permits has been delayed until July as a result of benchmark revisions. Therefore, estimates by The Conference Board are required for this series over a longer period than our usual procedure and we will return to the normal three months of estimates for the June 2009 release. In addition, the manufacturing turnover series is estimated for the past two months rather than for one month as the March data for this series is not yet available.

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THE CYCLICAL INDICATOR APPROACH. The composite economic indexes are the key elements in an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The leading and coincident economic indexes are essentially composite averages of several individual leading or coincident indicators. (See page 3 for details.) They are constructed to summarize and reveal common turning point patterns in economic data in a clearer and more convincing manner than any individual component—primarily because they smooth out some of the volatility of individual components.

Historically, the cyclical turning points in The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area have occurred before those in aggregate economic activity, while the cyclical turning points in The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area have occurred at about the same time as those in aggregate economic activity.

Further explanations of the cyclical indicator approach and the composite economic index methodology appear in The Conference Board's *Business Cycle Indicators* report and Web site: <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>.

Euro Area Composite Economic Indexes: Components and Standardization Factors

<u>Leading Economic Index</u>	<u>Factor</u>
1. Yield Spread cumulated, 10 year minus policy rate	0.2441
2. Economic Sentiment Index	0.1006
3. Purchasing Managers' Index (Manufacturing)	0.1504
4. Business Expectations Index (Services)	0.0696
5. Stock Prices	0.0298
6. Money Supply	0.3151
7. New Orders of Capital Goods	0.0413
8. Residential Building Permits	0.0491

<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1. Employment	0.7685
2. Industrial Production	0.0795
3. Retail trade	0.1114
4. Manufacturing turnover	0.0406

Notes:

The standardization factors are inversely related to the standard deviation of the month-to-month changes in each component. They are used to equalize the volatility of the contribution from each component and are "normalized" to sum to 1.

These factors were revised effective on the release for January 2009, and all historical values for the two composite indexes were revised at this time to reflect the changes. (Under normal circumstances, updates to the leading and coincident indexes only incorporate revisions to data over the past six months.) The factors above were calculated using 2000-2007 as the sample period for measuring volatility for The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area. Separate sets of factors for February 1987-December 1993, January 1994-January 1995, February 1995-January 1996, February 1996-June 1997, July 1997-July 1998, August 1998-July 2000 are available upon request. The factors above for The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area were calculated using 1995-2007. A separate set of factors is available for 1987- 1995. These multiple sample periods are the result of different starting dates for the component data. When one or more components are missing, the other factors are adjusted proportionately to ensure that the total continues to sum to 1. For additional information on the standardization factors and the index methodology visit our Web site: <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>.

The trend adjustment factors for The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area are -0.3001 calculated over 1987-1996 and -0.3701 calculated over 1997-2007.

To address the problem of lags in available data, those leading and coincident indicators that are not available at the time of publication are estimated using statistical imputation. An autoregressive model is used to estimate each component. The resulting indexes are constructed using real and estimated data, and will be revised as the data unavailable at the time of publication become available. Such revisions are part of the monthly data revisions, now a regular part of the U.S. Business Cycle Indicators program. The main advantage of this procedure is to utilize in the leading economic index the data, such as stock prices, that are available sooner than other data on "real" aspects of the economy, such as new orders and changes in inventory. Empirical research by The Conference Board suggests there are real gains in adopting this procedure to make all the indicator series as up-to-date as possible.

NOTICES

The 2009 schedule for “**The Conference Board Leading Economic Index**TM (LEI) for the Euro Area” news release is:

May 2009 Data.....	Monday, June 29, 2009
June 2009 Data.....	Monday, July 27, 2009
July 2009 Data.....	Thursday, August 27, 2009
August 2009 Data.....	Monday, September 28, 2009
September 2009 Data.....	Wednesday, October 28, 2009
October 2009 Data.....	Monday, November 30, 2009
November 2009 Data.....	Wednesday, December 30, 2009

All releases are at 10:00 AM (CET)

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE BOARD

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Euro Area Business Cycle Indicators Internet Subscription	\$ 635 per year (1 user)
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Individual Data Series	\$ 35 per series downloaded
Monthly BCI Report	\$ 275 per year
<i>(Sample available at http://www.conference-board.org/publications/describeBCI.cfm)</i>	
BCI Handbook (published 2001)	\$ 20
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The Conference Board Euro Area Business Cycle Indicators

Table 1.--Summary of Euro Area Composite Economic Indexes

	2008			2009			
	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Leading index	95.5	93.7	91.8	92.4 p	92.2 p	92.1 p	93.8 p
Percent change	-2.8	-1.9	-2.0	0.7 p	-0.2 p	-0.1 p	1.8 p
Diffusion index	12.5	25.0	25.0	62.5	43.8	43.8	100.0
Coincident index	104.8	104.4	103.8 p	103.3 p	103.0 p	102.7 p	102.7 p
Percent change	-0.5	-0.4	-0.6 p	-0.5 p	-0.3 p	-0.3 p	0.0 p
Diffusion index	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	75.0

	Apr to	May to	Jun to	Jul to	Aug to	Sep to	Oct to
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Leading index							
Percent change	-7.0	-8.0	-9.1	-7.2 p	-7.5 p	-6.3 p	-1.8 p
Diffusion index	12.5	18.8	12.5	25.0	25.0	25.0	37.5
Coincident index							
Percent change	-1.0	-1.2	-1.7 p	-2.1 p	-2.5 p	-2.5 p	-2.0 p
Diffusion index	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

p Preliminary. r Revised (both noted only for index levels and one-month percent changes).

CALCULATION NOTE: The diffusion indexes measure the proportion of the components that are rising. Components that rise more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 1.0, components that change less than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.5, and components that fall more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.0.

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The Conference Board Euro Area Business Cycle Indicators

Table 2.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Euro Area Leading Economic Index

Component	2008			2009			
	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Euro Area Leading Economic Index component data							
Yield Spread, 10 year ECB Benchmark Rate minus ECB Minimum Bid Rate-----	0.17	0.45	0.64	1.61	2.20	2.15	2.59
Economic Sentiment Index (Index of five sentiment surveys) Average value 1990-2007 = 100-----	81.6	76.8	68.9	67.2	65.3	64.7 r	67.2
Purchasing Managers' Index, 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses-----	41.10	35.58	33.87	34.42	33.55	33.93	36.83
Business Expectations Index (Services) 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses-----	42.26	41.62	42.26	46.45	46.14	48.65	54.40
Stock Price (Average Closing Price) Dow Jones EURO STOXX(r) Index, 12/31/1991=100-----	241.54	225.03	219.01	215.50	200.36	184.63	209.29
Money Supply (M2) In Billions of 2005 Euros-----	7376.14 r	7463.13 r	7430.47 r	7556 r	7556.5 r	7514.25 r	7545.8 **
Capital Goods New Orders Index (2005=100)-----	92.98 r	83.51 r	77.22 r	74.88 r	77.31 r	75.75 r	76.49 **
Index of Residential Building Permits (Index, 2000 = 100) Square meters of usable floor area-----	76.36	75.77	72.55 r	73.36 **	73.66 **	74.01 **	74.35 **
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	95.5	93.7	91.8	92.4 p	92.2 p	92.1 p	93.8 p
Percent change from preceding month.....		-1.9	-2.0	0.7	-0.2	-0.1 p	1.8 p
Euro Area Leading Economic Index net contributions							
Yield Spread, 10 year ECB Benchmark Rate ECB Minimum Bid Rate	-----	0.11	0.16	0.39	0.54	0.52	0.63
Economic Sentiment Index (Index of five sentiment surveys) Average value 1990-2007 = 100	-----	-0.48	-0.79	-0.17	-0.19	-0.06 r	0.25
Purchasing Managers' Index, 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses	-----	-0.83	-0.26	0.08	-0.13	0.06	0.44
Business Expectations Index (Services) 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses	-----	-0.04	0.04	0.29	-0.02	0.17	0.40
Stock Price (Average Closing Price) Dow Jones EURO STOXX(r) Index, 12/31/1991=100	-----	-0.21	-0.08	-0.05	-0.22	-0.24	0.37
Money Supply (M2) In Billions of 2005 Euros	-----	0.37 r	-0.14 r	0.53 r	0.00 r	-0.18 r	0.13 **
Capital Goods New Orders Index (2005=100)	-----	-0.44 r	-0.32 r	-0.13 r	0.13 r	-0.08 r	0.04 **
Index of Residential Building Permits (Index, 2000 = 100) Square meters of usable floor area	-----	-0.04	-0.21	0.05 **	0.02 **	0.02 **	0.02 **

p Preliminary. r Revised. s.a. Seasonally Adjusted

* Inverted series; a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution to the index.

** Statistical Imputation (See page 2 for more details)

Q Quarterly series; these series are converted to monthly through a linear interpolation.

Data Sources: Eurostat, ECB, Reuters Thomson, Markit Economics, STOXX Limited

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CALCULATION NOTE--The percent change in the index does not always equal the sum of the net contributions

of the individual components (because of rounding effects and base value differences).

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The Conference Board Euro Area Business Cycle Indicators

Table 3.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Euro Area Coincident Economic Index

Component	2008	Nov.	Dec.	2009	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
	Oct.			Jan.			
Euro Area Coincident Economic Index Component Data							
Number of Employees Thous. Of Employees, S.A. Q	147753.7	147598.0	147449.3 **	147307.3 **	147171.7 **	147042.2 **	146918.5 **
Industrial Production, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	102.0 r	99.1 r	96.1 r	93.5 r	91.1 r	89.3 r	89.5 **
Retail Trade, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	102.3 r	102.1 r	101.8 r	101.4 r	101.2 r	100.6 r	100.9 **
Manufacturing Turnover, Index (2005=100). S.A.	102.6 r	100.8 r	95.5 r	91.7 r	91.0 r	91.7 **	92.1 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	104.8	104.4	103.8 p	103.3 p	103.0 p	102.7 p	102.7 p
Percent change from preceding month.....		-0.4	-0.6 p	-0.5 p	-0.3 p	-0.3 p	0.0 p
Euro Area Coincident Economic Index net contributions							
Number of Employees Thous. Of Employees, S.A. Q	-----	-0.08	-0.08 **	-0.07 **	-0.07 **	-0.07 **	-0.06 **
Industrial Production, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	-----	-0.23 r	-0.24	-0.22 r	-0.20 r	-0.16 r	0.03 **
Retail Trade, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	-----	-0.03	-0.03	-0.04 r	-0.03 r	-0.06 r	0.03 **
Manufacturing Turnover, Index (2005=100). S.A.	-----	-0.07	-0.22 r	-0.16 r	-0.03 r	0.03 **	0.02 **

p Preliminary. r Revised. s.a. Seasonally Adjusted

* Inverted series; a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution to the index.

** Statistical Imputation (See page 2 for more details)

Q Quarterly series; these series are converted to monthly through a linear interpolation.

Data Sources: Eurostat, ECB, Reuters Thomson

CALCULATION NOTE--The percent change in the index does not always equal the sum of the net contributions of the individual components (because of rounding effects and base value differences).

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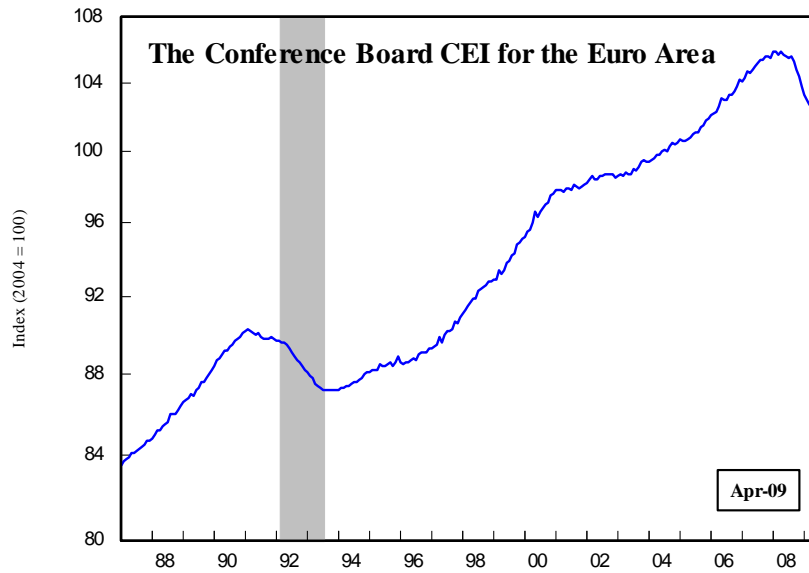
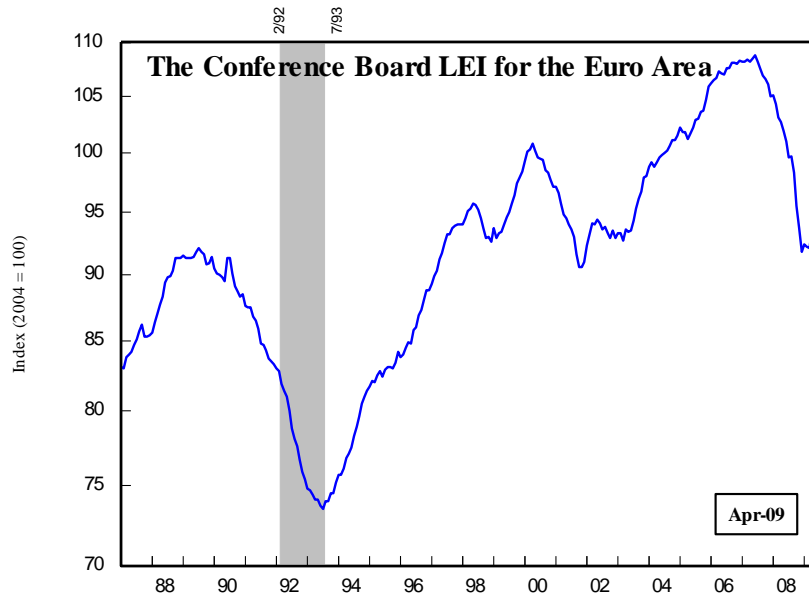
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Euro Area Composite Economic Indexes



Note: The shaded areas represent business cycle recessions.
The peaks and troughs are designated by The Conference Board based on the coincident index and real GDP.

Source: The Conference Board