



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. CET, MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2009

The Conference Board®

Euro Area Business Cycle Indicators™

THE CONFERENCE BOARD LEADING ECONOMIC INDEX™ (LEI) FOR THE EURO AREA AND RELATED COMPOSITE ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR MARCH 2009

BRUSSELS, Apr. 27, 2009... The Conference Board Leading Economic Index™ (LEI) for the Euro Area increased 0.2 percent and The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index™ (CEI) for the Euro Area increased 0.1 percent in March.

- The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area increased in March, the second increase in the index in the past three months. Positive contributions from the interest rate spread and the business expectations index (services) more than offset a negative contribution from stock prices. Between September 2008 and March 2009, the leading economic index decreased by 6.0 percent (about a -11.6 percent annual rate), faster than the 4.7 percent decline (about a -9.1 percent annual rate) between March 2008 and September 2008. In addition, the weaknesses among the leading indicators have remained very widespread in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area, a measure of current economic activity, increased in March according to preliminary estimates, after declining for the previous six months. Between September 2008 and March 2009, the coincident economic index declined by 2.2 percent (about a -4.3 percent annual rate), sharply faster than the 0.4 percent decline (about a -0.8 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. Additionally, the weaknesses among the coincident indicators have remained very widespread, with none of the components increasing during the past six months. At the same time, real GDP declined at a 3.6 percent average annual rate during the second half of 2008 (including a decrease of 6.2 percent annual rate during the fourth quarter), its lowest two-quarter growth rate since 1975.
- The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area has stabilized in recent months, and the pace of its six-month decline has moderated substantially, although it remains near the levels last seen during the 1992-93 contraction. 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 during the index's 22-year history. Taken together, the recent behavior of the composite economic indexes suggests that the contraction in economic activity should continue in the near term but may become less deep in the months ahead.

LEADING INDICATORS. Five of the eight components in The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area increased in March. The positive contributors—in order from the largest positive contributor to the smallest—are interest rate spread, the business expectations index (services), real money supply*, the Purchasing Managers' Index (manufacturing) and residential building permits*. Negative contributors—in order from largest to smallest—are the stock price index and the Economic Sentiment Index. New orders of capital goods* remained unchanged in March.

The next release is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 10:00 A.M. (CET)

In New York – Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 4:00 A.M. (ET)

With the 0.2 percent increase in March, The Conference Board LEI for the Euro Area now stands at 92.4 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index declined 0.2 percent in February and increased 0.7 percent in January. During the six-month span through March, the index decreased 6.0 percent, with two of the eight components increasing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 25.0 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 March. The positive contributors were manufacturing turnover*, industrial production* and retail trade*. Employment* declined in March.

With the 0.1 percent increase in March, The Conference Board CEI for the Euro Area now stands at 103.0 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index decreased 0.5 percent in February and decreased 0.4 percent in January. During the six-month period through March, the index decreased 2.2 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 April 23, 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.

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For more information:

The Conference Board Europe: + 32 2 675 5405

Email: indicators@conference-board.org

Website: <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>

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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

Leading Economic Index

	<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

Coincident Economic Index

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 economic 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™ (LEI) for the Euro Area" news release is:

April 2009 Data.....	Thursday, May 28, 2009
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)

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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

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(Sample available at <http://www.conference-board.org/publications/describeBCI.cfm>)

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			
	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
Leading index	98.3	95.5 r	93.7 r	91.8 r	92.4 p	92.2 p	92.4 p
Percent change	-1.4	-2.8 r	-1.9 r	-2.0 r	0.7 p	-0.2 p	0.2 p
Diffusion index	18.8	12.5	25.0	25.0	62.5	43.8	62.5
Coincident index	105.3	104.8	104.4	103.8 p	103.4 p	102.9 p	103.0 p
Percent change	-0.3	-0.5	-0.4	-0.6 p	-0.4 p	-0.5 p	0.1 p
Diffusion index	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.0
	Mar to Sep	Apr to Oct	May to Nov	Jun to Dec	Jul to Jan	Aug to Feb	Sep to Mar
Leading index							
Percent change	-4.7	-7.0 r	-8.0 r	-9.1 r	-7.2 p	-7.5 p	-6.0 p
Diffusion index	25.0	12.5	18.8	12.5	25.0	25.0	25.0
Coincident index							
Percent change	-0.4	-1.0	-1.2	-1.7 p	-2.0 p	-2.6 p	-2.2 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.

For more information, visit our Web site at www.conference-board.org/economics/bci

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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							
	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Euro Area Leading Economic Index component data							
Yield Spread, 10 year ECB Benchmark Rate minus ECB Minimum Bid Rate															
ECB Minimum Bid Rate-----	0.25	0.17	0.45	0.64	1.61	2.20	2.15								
Economic Sentiment Index (Index of five sentiment surveys)															
Average value 1990-2007 = 100-----	88.9	81.6	76.8	68.9	67.2	65.3 r	64.6								
Purchasing Managers' Index, 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses															
Business Expectations Index (Services) 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses-----	44.97	41.10	35.58	33.87	34.42	33.55	33.93								
Stock Price (Average Closing Price)															
Dow Jones EURO STOXX(r) Index, 12/31/1991=100-----	49.58	42.26	41.62	42.26	46.45	46.14	48.65								
Money Supply (M2)															
In Billions of 2005 Euros-----	301.31	241.54	225.03	219.01	215.50	200.36	184.63								
Capital Goods New Orders Index (2005=100)															
Index of Residential Building Permits (Index, 2000 = 100) Square meters of usable floor area-----	7244.33 r	7351.61 r	7441.11 r	7405.8 r	7534.3 r	7531.62 r	7559.2 **								
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	98.3	95.5 r	93.7 r	91.8 r	92.4 p	92.2 p	92.4 p								
Percent change from preceding month.....	-2.8 r	-1.9 r	-2.0 r	0.7 r	-0.2 p	0.2 p									
Euro Area Leading Economic Index net contributions															
Yield Spread, 10 year ECB Benchmark Rate															
ECB Minimum Bid Rate-----	----	0.04	0.11	0.16	0.39	0.54	0.52								
Economic Sentiment Index (Index of five sentiment surveys)															
Average value 1990-2007 = 100-----	----	-0.73	-0.48	-0.79	-0.17	-0.19 r	-0.07								
Purchasing Managers' Index, 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses															
Business Expectations Index (Services) 50 = Balanced Positive and Negative Responses-----	----	-0.58	-0.83	-0.26	0.08	-0.13	0.06								
Stock Price (Average Closing Price)															
Dow Jones EURO STOXX(r) Index, 12/31/1991=100-----	----	-0.66	-0.21	-0.08	-0.05	-0.22	-0.24								
Money Supply (M2)															
In Billions of 2005 Euros-----	----	0.46	0.38	-0.15	0.54 r	-0.01 r	0.12 **								
Capital Goods New Orders Index (2005=100)															
Index of Residential Building Permits (Index, 2000 = 100) Square meters of usable floor area-----	----	-0.43 r	-0.45 r	-0.34 r	-0.11 r	0.11 r	0.00 **								

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	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	2009	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
	Euro Area Coincident Economic Index Component Data							
Number of Employees								
Thous. Of Employees, S.A. Q	147909.3 r	147753.7 r	147598.0 r	147449.3 **	147307.3 **	147171.7 **	147042.2 **	
Industrial Production, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	104.5	102.3	99.5 r	96.6 r	94.3 r	92.0 r	92.5 **	
Retail Trade, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	103.3 r	102.5 r	102.3 r	102.0 r	101.8 r	101.3 r	101.5 **	
Manufacturing Turnover, Index (2005=100). S.A.	103.9 r	102.5 r	100.7 r	95.2 r	91.9 r	88.8 r	90.2 **	
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	105.3	104.8	104.4	103.8 p	103.4 p	102.9 p	103.0 p	
Percent change from preceding month.....	-0.5	-0.4	-0.6 p	-0.4 p	-0.5 p	-0.5 p	0.1 p	
Euro Area Coincident Economic Index net contributions								
Number of Employees								
Thous. Of Employees, S.A. Q	----	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08 **	-0.07 **	-0.07 **	-0.07 **	
Industrial Production, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	----	-0.17	-0.22	-0.24 r	-0.19 r	-0.19 r	0.04 **	
Retail Trade, Volume Index (2005=100). S.A.	----	-0.08 r	-0.03 r	-0.03 r	-0.02 r	-0.06 r	0.03 **	
Manufacturing Turnover, Index (2005=100). S.A.	----	-0.06	-0.07	-0.23 r	-0.14 r	-0.14 r	0.06 **	

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).

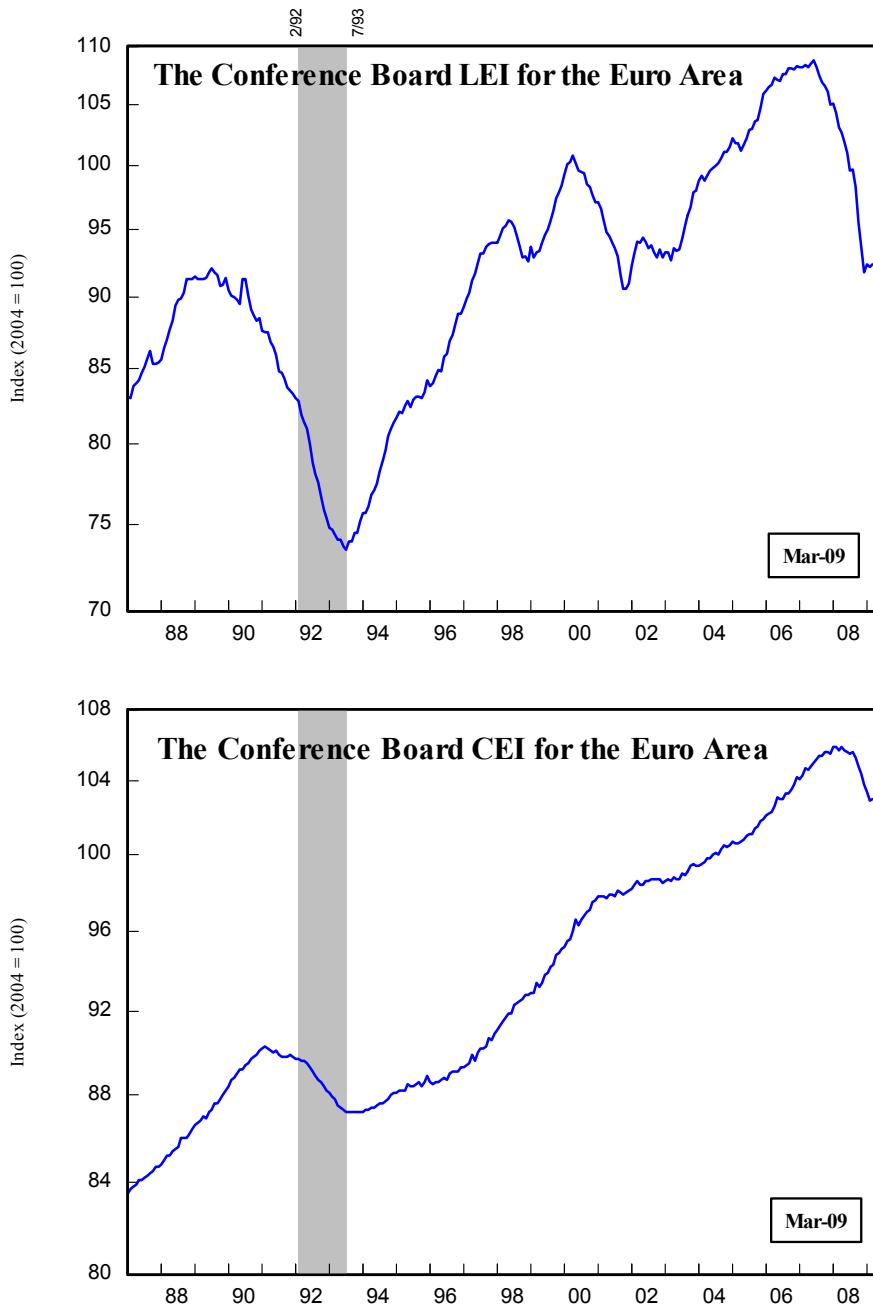
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Euro Area Composite Economic Indexes



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