

## Morgan Stanley Investment Funds Short Maturity Euro Bond Fund

MARKETING COMMUNICATION | BROAD MARKETS FIXED INCOME TEAM | MONTHLY COMMENTARY | 30 APRIL 2023

### Performance Review

In the one month period ending 30 April 2023, the Fund's I shares returned 0.23% (net of fees)<sup>1</sup>, while the benchmark returned 0.12%.

Within credit, spreads tightened, with financials performing in line with industrials and outperforming utilities. Most of the outperformance in April came from the portfolio's overweight to investment grade credit, with most of the gains stemming from the exposure to financials (banking).

The long position in government-related securities contributed to the outperformance, particularly in developed markets.

The allocation to covered bonds was also positive.

There were no material detractors from relative performance in the month.

### Portfolio Activity

The Fund has 1.82 years versus the index's 1.99 years of interest rate duration.

During the month, the portfolio's underweight duration was reduced by 0.14 years to close at -0.16 years.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the change was implemented through government bonds, where we added duration in Germany, while increasing the underweight to France.

### Market Review and Outlook

Developed market rates were mixed in April, with yields largely moving sideways in most economies and U.S. yields falling slightly. As volatility declined slightly following March's banking sector stress, the market shifted to interpreting new economic data and predicting the prospect and significance of a credit crunch. In the U.S., while the labour market data, employment cost index (ECI) and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) inflation data came in stronger than expected, Institute for Supply Management manufacturing data and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey data came in weaker than expected. Elsewhere, in New Zealand, yields fell as consumer price index (CPI) data came in softer than expected, while in contrast, yields in the U.K. rose on the back of stronger inflation data. In terms of central bank meetings, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand surprised markets when it hiked by 50 basis points (bps) versus the 25 bps expected. The Reserve Bank of Australia and Bank of Canada kept rates the same, in line with expectations. The Riksbank raised rates by 50 bps, as anticipated. Finally, the Bank of Japan, in Ueda's first meeting as governor, kept the policy the same, including the yield curve control policy.

While the acute stress from the banking sector issues has lessened, the problems have not fully gone away and will continue to impact the economy. Despite the lack of clarity regarding the magnitude of the economic impact, credit conditions are likely to tighten even further. Therefore, we continue to monitor the situation and will be closely watching the upcoming quarterly Senior Loan Officer Opinion Survey (SLOOS) data in the U.S. The market is pricing scenarios where the Federal Reserve (Fed) goes much higher (i.e., taking rates to 5.75%-6%), as well as pricing in a greater likelihood of a recession. Unfortunately for the Fed, while the banking issues will likely be disinflationary, CPI, ECI and PCE data again confirmed that inflation and wages are still elevated and sticky. Given the uncertainty, it is difficult to concretely express an outright view on interest rates, and it may be wise to be patient for now, awaiting further clarification while taking advantage of more relative dislocations. In terms of foreign exchange, coming into this situation, we thought the U.S. dollar could weaken, which it has continued to do. We still believe that dollar weakness could continue.

European investment grade spreads outperformed U.S. investment grade spreads this month amid elevated credit market volatility driven by several aforementioned factors. Main themes included U.S. bank volatility and weaker U.S. economic data. European data remained more robust, reflecting the reduced impact of supply chain disruption and the continued support of fiscal programmes like

<sup>1</sup> Source: Morgan Stanley Investment Management Limited. Data as of 30 April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Due to rounding, figures may not sum exactly.

the European Recovery Fund. Similarly, global labour markets remain strong, supporting consumption and labour price inflation and leading to continued rate hike expectations/tighter monetary policy. First quarter reporting mostly outperformed expectations, with financials benefiting from higher net interest margins, while non-financials highlighted continued pricing power, the benefits of reopening (airlines) and the impact of prior cost-cutting (cyclicals).

Volatility in the U.S. and global high yield markets receded in April, and the demand for credit risk generally improved amid lacklustre secondary trading volume and renewed capital markets activity. Investors took advantage of still historically attractive yields, and the higher-beta segments of the high yield market generally outperformed.

Our base case view remains that we are compensated to own credit, as we view corporate fundamentals to be resilient and the macro backdrop to likely improve as monetary policy tightening pauses and China reopens. We view companies as having built liquidity in recent quarters and implemented cost-efficiencies under the COVID era. We expect profit margins to be pressured by increased costs (although first quarter reporting suggests companies are protecting margins in the short term) and top-line revenue to be challenging, but given the starting point we believe corporates will be able to manage a slowdown without significant downgrades or defaults (base case: low default and low growth). Supportive for the investment grade credit market is demand for high quality fixed income assets at absolute yields not seen for a number of years.

We remain cautious on the high yield market as we progress through the second quarter of 2023. Episodic weakness accompanied by volatile spread movement seems to be the most likely path forward due to several factors, starting with clear evidence of existing cracks in the U.S. economy and what we view as the increasing likelihood of a hard economic landing.

After the volatility and spread widening in March, the securitised markets stabilised in April, although spreads remain materially wider over the past two months. We continue to believe that the fundamental credit conditions of residential housing loan markets remain sound, but we also believe that higher risk premiums are warranted across all credit assets given projected economic weakness. We remain concerned about global economic conditions, and we expect employment rates to decline and households to experience greater stress. We expect home prices to fall another 5%-10% for the remainder of 2023. U.S. residential credit remains our favourite sector, and we remain more cautious of commercial real estate, especially office, which continues to be negatively impacted in the post-pandemic world.

Emerging markets debt delivered positive returns for the month. Many emerging markets currencies strengthened during the month. Spreads tightened in emerging markets corporates and were flat in hard currency sovereign, but the rally in U.S. Treasury yields contributed to performance.

The volatility stemming from banking stresses in developed markets has put a damper on the macro picture to some degree. That said, we remain constructive on the emerging markets asset class. Growth, inflation and policy are quite differentiated among countries and credits within the emerging markets universe, so bottom-up analysis is critical to uncover value.

**For further information, please contact your Morgan Stanley Investment Management representative.**

#### FUND FACTS

##### Launch date

01 August 1994

##### Base currency

Euro

##### Index

Custom - Blended Benchmark

#### Calendar Year Returns (%)

**Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.**

	YTD	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Class I Shares	0.89	-3.77	0.32	-0.31	1.04	-1.39	0.54	0.45	0.27	1.05	1.53
Blended Benchmark	0.87	-4.82	-0.70	0.02	0.28	-0.09	-0.34	0.38	0.68	1.68	1.83

All performance data is calculated NAV to NAV, net of fees, and does not take account of commissions and costs incurred on the issue and redemption of units. The sources for all performance and Index data is Morgan Stanley Investment Management. **Please visit our website [www.morganstanley.com/im](http://www.morganstanley.com/im) to see the latest performance returns for the fund's other share classes.**

## Share Class I Risk and Reward Profile

The risk and reward category shown is based on historic data.

- Historic figures are only a guide and may not be a reliable indicator of what may happen in the future.
- As such this category may change in the future.
- The higher the category, the greater the potential reward, but also the greater the risk of losing the investment. Category 1 does not indicate a risk free investment.
- The fund is in this category because it invests in fixed income securities and the fund's simulated and/or realised return has experienced low rises and falls historically.
- The fund may be impacted by movements in the exchange rates between the fund's currency and the currencies of the fund's investments.

This rating does not take into account other risk factors which should be considered before investing, these include:

- The value of bonds are likely to decrease if interest rates rise and vice versa.
- The value of financial derivative instruments are highly sensitive and may result in losses in excess of the amount invested by the Sub-Fund.
- Issuers may not be able to repay their debts, if this happens the value of your investment will decrease. This risk is higher where the fund invests in a bond with a lower credit rating.

- The fund relies on other parties to fulfill certain services, investments or transactions. If these parties become insolvent, it may expose the fund to financial loss.
- Sustainability factors can pose risks to investments, for example: impact asset values, increased operational costs.
- There may be an insufficient number of buyers or sellers which may affect the fund's ability to buy or sell securities.
- Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and investors may lose all or a substantial portion of his or her investment.
- The value of the investments and the income from them will vary and there can be no assurance that the Fund will achieve its investment objectives.
- Investments may be in a variety of currencies and therefore changes in rates of exchange between currencies may cause the value of investments to decrease or increase. Furthermore, the value of investments may be adversely affected by fluctuations in exchange rates between the investor's reference currency and the base currency of the investments.

Please refer to the Prospectus for full risk disclosures. All data as of 30 April 2023 and subject to change daily.

Applications for shares in the Fund should not be made without first consulting the current Prospectus and the Key Information Document ("KID") or Key Investor Information Document ("KIID"), which are available in English and in the official language of your local jurisdiction at [morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com](http://morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com) or free of charge from the Registered Office of Morgan Stanley Investment Funds, European Bank and Business Centre, 6B route de Trèves, L-2633 Senningerberg, R.C.S. Luxembourg B 29 192.

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The **Bloomberg Euro Aggregate Treasury 1-3 Years Index** is a benchmark that measures the 1-3 year maturity Treasury euro-denominated issues. Inclusion is based on currency denomination of a bond and not country of risk of the issuer.

**MSCI EMU Sovereign Debt 1-3 Yrs Index** is a benchmark for sovereign fixed rate debt denominated in the euro, or the various Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) currencies, are rated investment grade and have a maturity of 1-3 years.

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