Sparinvest

Global Investment Grade

FIXED INCOME

Positive tone continued

Slightly lover American yields

Markets. In May, slightly lover American government yields and credit spreads supported a 0.39% benchmark return, whereas European government yields and credit spreads rose somewhat. Year to date benchmark return remains in the red (-2.43%). Chemicals, Industrial Goods & Services and Personal & Household Goods outperformed the market in May, whereas Food & Beverage, Telecommunications and Oil & Gas lagged behind.

The corona vaccines rollout continued to support optimism. However, we see a mounting risk of negative surprises related to the vaccines, due to four big unknowns: The immunity towards new variations of the virus, the long-term side effects, the duration of the immunity, and non-specific effects on other diseases.

The technical support remains very strong, in terms of gigantic fiscal recovery packages across the board, very low interest rates and central banks directly buying financial assets in the market, including corporate bonds. However, the EU stimulus packages and slump in the economies pushes the Southern European countries into even higher debt levels, combined with a tourist industry melt down, low growth, high unemployment and an overvalued currency. This adds to a lack of structural reforms as well as the negative impact of Brexit completion and mounting demographic challenges.

The U.S. is also facing challenges. However, the U.S. starting point in terms of economic activity, interest rate levels and demographics is comparatively robust. In addition, the dollar serves as the world's reserve currency. In the longer term, the U.S. economy may also benefit from a repatriation of American manufacturing jobs. Thus, we continue to view U.S. fundamentals as more appealing than that of the Eurozone.

ESG: Tobacco holdings divested

The Portfolio. May's return of 0.15% was 0.24 percentage points behind benchmark (0.39%). Year to date, the fund's return of minus 1.92% was 0.51 percentage points better than benchmark (minus 2.43%). The year-to-date outperformance was mainly attributable to the portfolio's defensive qualities. Volatility in monthly return has been lower than the benchmark over the past year, three years and five years.

Gross trading amounted to 5% of AUM in May and 7% in April. The lion's share relates to the divestment of all tobacco holdings (4%) due to our updated ESG-policy, and the subsequent reinvesting in eight other issuers of similar credit quality. Direct trading costs of this maneuver amounted to 4-5 bps, which is included in the reported performance numbers. In addition, the average spread of the new holdings is 39 bps lower than the average spread of the divested tobacco holdings. All things being equal, this imply an annual opportunity cost of 1-2 bps. Regional exposures were stable throughout April and May.

The fund remains underweight of the Eurozone for the above-mentioned reasons. In addition, ECB's massive purchase program is essentially crowding out traditional corporate credit risk from the Eurozone credit space replacing it with concentrated political risk. Over the past three quarters, the fund has gradually moved towards having a moderate capital preservation tilt.

Return is calculated gross of fees and excluding swing.

See performance and fund data Click here ›

Strategy

Global Investment Grade invests in global corporate bonds, cf. the fund's prospectus. Bond selection is based on the value approach, meaning that the team focuses on bonds issued by companies with healthy long-term earnings power and strong balance sheets as well as an expected ability to service outstanding debt. The portfolio is diversified across sectors, regions and credit ratings. At least 2/3 of the portfolio are invested in Investment Grade bonds.