Key Developments in BIS Banks’ External Positions and Domestic Credit

Western banks reduced their positions in CESEE in the second half of 2018, mostly by deleveraging their exposure to Turkey. Credit growth moderated in line with the slowing economic activity, mostly driven by developments in Turkey.

Portfolio flows to Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe (CESEE), notably bonds, have rebounded in recent months, after sustained outflow pressures in 2018. Data from the Emerging Portfolio Fund Research (EPFR) Global database show that cumulative portfolio outflows from the CESEE region (bond and equity funds) reached about US$7 billion between April and end-December 2018 (Figure 1). The U.S. Federal Reserve’s dovish shift in early 2019 provided a significant boost to emerging market assets, leading to a rebound in bond portfolio flows. Bond fund flows to CESEE have posted a strong recovery in 2019Q1 of almost US$4 billion. In contrast, equity fund flows remain subdued, despite a short-lived recovery in the first six weeks of 2019.

Western banks reduced their positions in CESEE in the second half of 2018, mostly by deleveraging their exposure to Turkey. External positions of BIS reporting banks\(^2\) vis-à-vis the

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\(^1\) Prepared by the staff of the international financial institutions participating in the Vienna Initiative’s Steering Committee. It is based on the BIS Locational Banking Statistics and the latest results of the EIB Bank Lending Survey for the CESEE region.

\(^2\) The sample includes banks in Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, Cayman Islands, Chile, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guernsey, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Korea, Luxembourg, Macao SAR, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan Province of China, Turkey, the
region declined to US$560 billion in 2018H2 from US$590 billion in 2018H1 (Figure 2 and Table 1). This exposure corresponded to 13 percent of the region’s GDP, down from 14 percent a year earlier. Turkey accounted for US$25 billion of the outflows. Excluding Russia and Turkey, exposure of BIS-reporting banks inched up in 2018Q3 but declined by almost US$4 billion in 2018Q4. It was the largest single-quarter decline since 2017Q4.

**Within CESEE, western banks are mostly exposed to Turkey.** Foreign bank funding to Turkey stood at US$155 billion in 2018Q4, or about 30 percent of the BIS-reporting banks’ exposure to CESEE (Figure 3 and Table 2). On consolidated basis, countries with the largest exposure to Turkey are Spain (US$62 billion), France (US$29 billion), and the United Kingdom (US$16 billion) (Figure 4). Funding from these three countries, which accounts for half of foreign bank funding to Turkey, declined almost 20 percent between 2018Q1 and 2018Q3 (more recent data on consolidated basis are not yet available). French banks have a somewhat sizeable exposure in Turkish lira, roughly a third of total exposures. After Turkey, BIS-reporting banks are most exposed to the Czech Republic, Poland, and Russia at about US$90 billion each.

**About half of CESEE countries experienced funding reductions in 2018H2** (Figure 5). Outflows were the largest in Turkey (US$25 billion), the Czech Republic (US$ 6.5 billion), Russia (US$ 2.6 billion), Croatia (US$1.6 billion), and Hungary (US$1.3 billion). Scaling by the size of receiving economy, five countries saw sizeable outflows of more than 1 percent of GDP: the Czech Republic, Croatia, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Turkey. Funding reductions were driven by claims on banks, except in Slovenia where claims on corporates account for the decline, and Croatia, where half of the decline is due to corporates (Figure 6). In some of these countries however, the reductions appear to be due to one-off factors. For example, in the Czech Republic, the outflows appear to be related to Western banks’ end-year internal asset management purposes, and the flows bounced back to upward trend in January and February 2019, based on the data from the Czech National Bank. Similar dynamics seem to be at play in Macedonia. In Croatia, the reduction is mostly due to a one-off write-off of claims on the indebted food group Agrokor, after its settlement with creditors was finalized in mid-2018. At the same time, foreign bank funding increased in half of CESEE economies, in particular in Montenegro and Slovakia which saw sizable inflows (about 3.5 percent of GDP each). In Montenegro, the inflows are mostly due to loan disbursements from the Export–Import Bank of China for the construction of the Bar-Boljare highway.

**The balance of payments (BoP) data paint a slightly more positive picture than the BIS data in 2018Q3.** Other investment flows in the BoP data, where cross-border bank financing is captured, declined by 0.1 percent of GDP in 2018Q3, while BIS banks’ positions declined by 0.4 percent of GDP (Figure 7). For several countries, the difference between BoP flows and BIS United Kingdom, and the United States. This note uses terms “BIS-reporting banks” and “Western banks” interchangeably, as CESEE financial linkages with non-European banks are negligible.
banks’ external exposure was sizeable, suggesting additional capital flows from sources other than BIS reporting banks. It is also worth noting that most deleveraging happened in 2018Q4, so the BoP data likely represent an outdated story.

**Credit growth has moderated in recent months, driven by developments in Turkey** (Figure 8). Total credit to private sector expanded at 6.6 percent year-on-year in January 2019, down from 8.3 percent in the first half of 2018, in line with the slowing economic activity in Turkey. Lending to both households and nonfinancial corporations increased at less brisk rates than in 2018H1, with corporate borrowing remaining sluggish in several countries. Except for Latvia and Turkey, all CESEE countries recorded positive credit growth in January 2019 (Figure 9). In Belarus, where household credit contracted substantially during the 2015–16 recession to less than 8 percent of GDP from 14 percent of GDP in 2010, lending to households continues to grow strongly at almost 30 percent year-on-year. Lending to households also accelerated in Moldova, where several banks previously under a temporary administration regime with credit activity restricted by the supervisor were sold to foreign investors and resumed lending from a low base. Lack of bankable corporates prevents these trends from being observed in the corporate sector credit.

**Overall, CESEE banks relied on domestic deposit growth to fund increased credit activity in 2018** (Figure 10). CESEE banks had tapped into foreign bank funding in 2017 after almost seven years of withdrawals. However, growth in domestic deposits became yet again the only source of higher bank funding in 2018. In 2018H2, foreign funding decreased by about 0.8 percent of GDP (year-on-year) in CESEE, mostly driven by outflows from Turkey (Figure 11). At the same time, domestic deposits grew about 3 percent of GDP (year-on-year). As a result, average domestic loan-to-domestic deposit ratio for the region declined further to 98 percent in January 2019 (Figure 12).
A. Banking Groups' views:
About 40 percent of banking groups continued some restructuring activities at global level and around 25-30 percent expects a decrease in their loan-to-deposit (LTD) ratio, whilst on balance around 20 percent of banking groups have been re-leveraging. More or less the same number of banking groups as the 2013-2018 average continued restructuring activities. Capital has been raised only through sales of assets and branches, whilst no state intervention to capital has been introduced and/or is expected. The share of banks expecting a deleveraging is similar to 2015 and 2016 levels (Figure 13) and less than 2013-2014. Around 25-30 percent of banking groups expect a decrease in their loan-to-deposit (LTD) ratio in the next six months - a slight deterioration compared to the 2017-2018 average. At the same time, around 20 percent of banking groups expects an increase in their LTD over the next six months, signaling an overall polarization in the (de)leveraging attitudes of banking groups.

An attitude of stability tilted toward expansion is prevalent across banking Groups operating in the region, whereby profitability (RoA) of CESEE operations is largely defined as higher than that of the overall group. On the other hand, roughly 20 percent of banking groups continued to report a combination of diminishing regional returns and intentions to reduce operations. Around 80 percent of international banking groups reported higher return on assets (RoA) of the CESEE operations than overall group operations over the last six months, reinforcing a positive trend that emerged in 2016. Nonetheless, around a fifth of groups report lower regional RoAs than their global RoAs. Cross-border banking groups signal an intention to expand operations selectively in the region (Figure 14). Nevertheless, they continue to discriminate in terms of countries of operation as they reassess their country-by-country strategies. Roughly 80 percent of banking groups have a medium- to long-term strategy either of selective expansion (35 percent) or of maintaining (45 percent) the same level of operations in the region.

Almost 30 percent of banking groups have reduced their total exposure to the CESEE region and an equal share have increased theirs. As a result, the aggregate net balance has been hovering around zero over the last six months. This scores a turnaround compared to the negative outcome recorded in the previous wave of the survey (Figure 15b). Nevertheless it is a subpar result compared to the positive trend initiated a year ago. It also suggests an increased volatility. Most of the enduring negative contributions to the CESEE exposures stemmed from reduced intra-group funding to subsidiaries. At the same time, only a small percentage of groups expanded their intra-group funding to CESEE subsidiaries. This process is expected to continue over the next six months at the same pace (Figure 15a). Most parent banks report that they have maintained their capital exposure to their subsidiaries and expect to continue to do so.
B. Local banks / subsidiaries views:

Demand for credit in the CESEE region recorded another robust increase whilst supply conditions did not ease at all. Most factors contributed to demand including investment and working capital.

- **Demand** for loans and credit lines continued to increase robustly in net balances (figure 16). These results mark the twelfth consecutive half-year of increased demand for credit. Contrary to the recent survey waves, this time there was no disconnect between expectations and actual realization. For the eighth time in a row all factors influencing demand made a positive contribution. Working capital accounted for a large share of the demand stemming from enterprises. Contributions to demand from investment exerted a significant positive impact, being among the highest positive contributors. This continues to indicate a strong economic cycle coupled with a macroeconomic and financial environment conducive to investment. Corporate and debt restructuring as well as M&A basically did not contribute to propelling demand, and all currently stand near zero.

- **Supply** conditions did not ease over the past six months. Across the client spectrum, credit standards eased somewhat on the enterprise segment including SME lending and less in the household segment. Only consumer credit recorded a small easing, whilst credit standards continued to tighten on mortgages. Supply conditions did not ease on short-term loans and tightened slightly on long-term loans, primarily in foreign currency. In the period ahead, aggregate supply conditions are expected to ease slightly. Optimism on the demand side continues to be partially frustrated by the protracted stagnation of supply-side conditions, leaving noticeable perceived gap between demand and supply.

The domestic regulatory environment is partially constraining supply conditions. Also, groups’ NPLs and the global market outlook play a slightly tightening role. On the other hand, most of the other domestic and international factors are not a limit to supply. The number of domestic and international factors limiting supply has decreased substantially over time and compared to the 2013 levels (figure 17). The latest survey release shows that volatility in the regulatory environment remained a limiting element at domestic level. Neither access to domestic funding nor the domestic outlook are considered a constraint, nor are other factors previously weighing negatively, including domestic NPLs. Nonetheless, group NPLs and the global market outlook are still mentioned as having a limited negative effect on credit supply conditions.

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3 A full report with country chapters of the Spring 2019H1 survey release will be published in May/June 2019 on the EIB dedicated webpage [http://www.eib.org/about/economic-research/surveys.htm](http://www.eib.org/about/economic-research/surveys.htm) as well as on the Vienna Initiative webpage.
Self-declared credit quality has continued to improve, albeit less than earlier on in the credit cycle. In 2015, the CESEE Bank Lending Survey indicated a turning point in the negative spiral of NPL flows. Over the past six months, and for the ninth time, aggregate regional NPL ratios recorded an improvement in net balance terms (figure 18).
Figure 1. CESEE: Cumulative Portfolio Flows
(Billions of US$; cumulative weekly flows since April 1, 2018)

Figure 2. CESEE: External Positions of BIS-reporting Banks, 2007Q1-2018Q4
(Billions of US$, exchange-rate adjusted, vis-à-vis all sectors)

Figure 3. CESEE: External Positions of BIS-reporting Banks, 2018Q2–Q4
(Billions of US$, exchange-rate adjusted, vis-à-vis all sectors)

Figure 4. BIS Reporting Banks: Consolidated Exposure to Turkey, 2018Q3
(Total claims on intermediate counterparty basis, vis-à-vis all sectors; billions of US$)

Sources: BIS, Locational and Consolidated Banking Statistics; EPFR Global; and IMF, World Economic Outlook, and staff calculations.

Note: In Figure 1, fund flows are net inflows into EM-dedicated investment funds, including mutual funds and ETFs, as reported by EPFR Global. Data labels in the figures use International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country codes.
**Figure 5. CESEE: External Positions of BIS-reporting Banks, 2018H2**
*(Cumulative change from 2018Q2; percent of 2018 GDP)*

**Figure 6. CESEE: External Positions of BIS-reporting Banks, 2018H2**
*(Cumulative change from 2018Q2; percent of 2018 GDP)*

**Figure 7. CESEE: Change in BIS External Positions and Other Investment Liabilities, 2018Q3**
*(Change from 2018Q2, percent of 2018 GDP)*

**Figure 8. CESEE: Credit to Private Sector, January 2013–January 2019**
*(Percent change, year-over-year, nominal, exchange-rate adjusted, GDP-weighted)*

Sources: BIS, Locational and Consolidated Banking Statistics; Haver Analytics; and IMF, World Economic Outlook, and staff calculations.

Note: Data labels in the figures use International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country codes.
Figure 9. CESEE: Growth of Credit to Households and Corporations, January 2019 (Percent, year-on-year, nominal, exchange-rate adjusted)

Figure 10. CESEE: Main Bank Funding Sources, 2007Q1–2018Q4 (Percent of GDP, year-on-year, exchange-rate adjusted)

Figure 11. CESEE: Main Bank Funding Sources, 2018Q4 (Percent of GDP, year-over-year, exchange-rate adjusted)

Figure 12. CESEE: Domestic Loan to Domestic Deposit Ratio, January 2007–January 2019 (Percent change, year-over-year, nominal, exchange-rate adjusted)

Sources: National authorities; BIS; ECB; EBRD; and IMF, Monetary and Financial Statistics, and staff calculations.

Note: Data labels in the figures use International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country codes.
Figure 13. Deleveraging: Loan-to-Deposit Ratio
(Percent of total, expectations over the next six months)

Figure 14. CESEE: Group-level Long-term Strategies
(Percent; beyond 12 months, triangles refer to average outcomes between 2013 and 2016)

Figure 15a. Groups’ Total Exposure to CESEE: Cross-border Operations Involving CESEE Countries

Source: EIB, CESEE Bank Lending Survey.
Figure 15b. Groups’ Total Exposure to CESEE: Cross-border Operations Involving CESEE Countries

(Net percentages; negative figures refer to decreasing total exposure to CESEE region)

Figure 16. Total Supply and Demand, Past and Expected Developments

(Net percentages, positive figures refer to increasing (easing) demand (supply), triangles refer to expectations derived from previous runs of the survey, lines report actual values, and the shaded area reflects expectations in the last run of the survey)

Source: EIB, CESEE Bank Lending Survey.
Figure 17. Factors Contributing to Supply Conditions (Credit Standards)
(Net percentages, positive figures refer to a positive contribution to supply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic Factors</th>
<th>International Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Mk. Outlook</td>
<td>Group outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bank Outlook</td>
<td>Global Mk. Outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bank funding</td>
<td>Group funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local bank capital constraints</td>
<td>EU regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in local regulation</td>
<td>Group capital constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NPLs figures</td>
<td>Group NPLs figures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Domestic
- 13% 6%
- 6% 5%
- 10% 6%
- 3% 21%
- 21% 3%
- 18% -13%
- 10% 4%
- 4% -1%
- 4% 4%
- 13% -18%
- 10% 4%
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### Table 1. CESEE: External Position of BIS-reporting Banks, 2017H1 – 2018H2

*(Vis-à-vis all sectors, based on the full sample of BIS-reporting banks, except for 2018Q4 which is based on the partial sample)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2018H2 stocks</th>
<th>Exchange-rate adjusted flows (US$m)</th>
<th>Exchange-rate adjusted flows (% change)</th>
<th>Exchange-rate adjusted flows (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
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<td>7.2</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>-7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
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<td>314,264</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: BIS; and IMF staff calculations.
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Sources: BIS, and IMF staff calculations.