29 October 2026

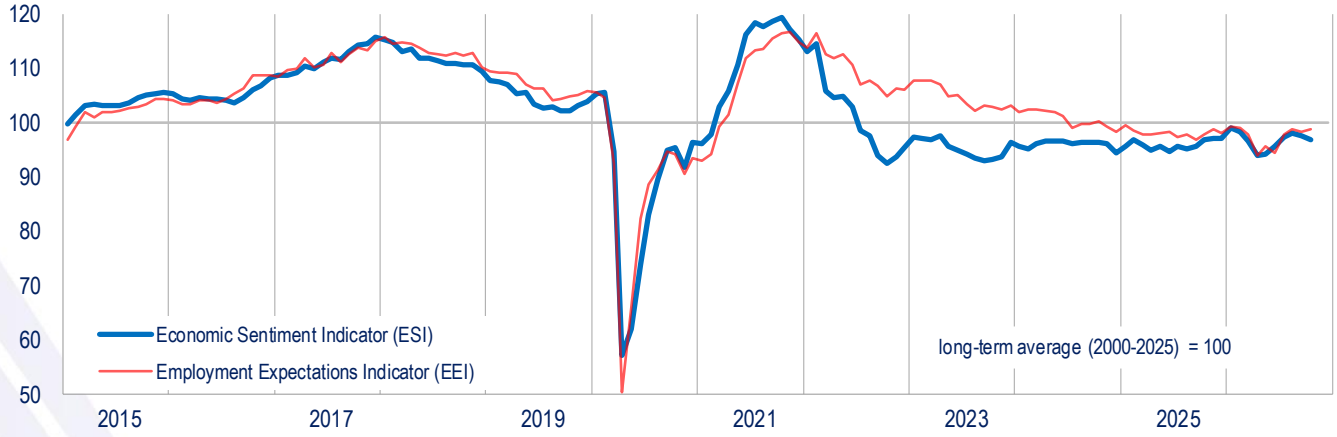
Business and consumer survey results for October 2026

Economic Sentiment down, Employment Expectations up in both the EU and the euro area

In October 2026, the *Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI)* declined for the second consecutive month in both the EU and the euro area, falling by 0.6 points to 96.9 in both areas.[1] By contrast, the *Employment Expectations Indicator* (EEI) picked up in both areas compared with September (EU: +0.6 points to 98.9, euro area: +0.7 points to 98.2).

EU developments

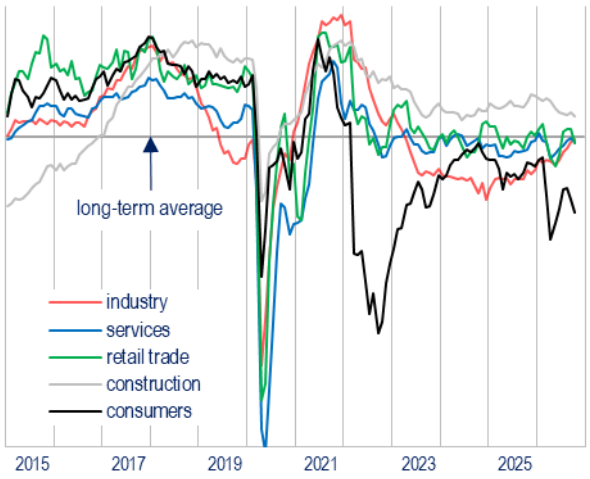
Graph 1: **EU Economic sentiment & Employment expectations**



source: European Commission services

The downturn in the ESI was driven by lower confidence in all sectors except industry, which saw a marginal improvement. Results are mixed among the largest economies: the ESI declined considerably in the Netherlands (-3.4), edged down in Germany (-0.7) and Spain (-0.5), increased moderately in Italy (+0.8) and remained broadly stable in Poland (+0.2) and France (+0.1).

Graph 2: **EU confidence indicators[2]**



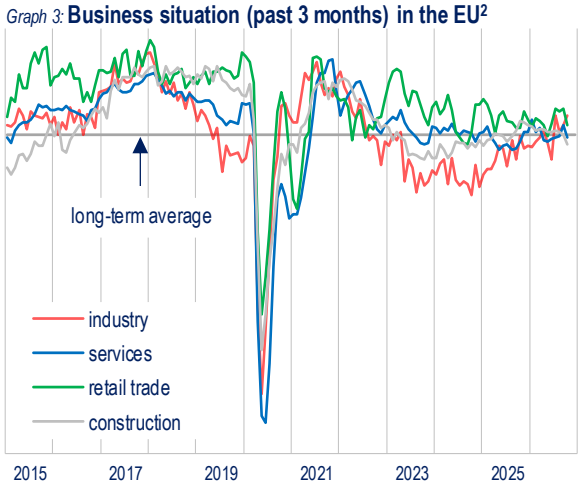
Industry confidence edged up further (+0.3), driven by an improvement in managers' assessments of the *stocks of finished products.* Managers' *production expectations* and assessments of the *current level of overall order books* remained broadly stable. Among the questions not entering the confidence indicator, managers' assessment of *production changes in recent months* and *export order books* improved markedly. **Confidence in services** declined (-0.7), reflecting managers' more negative views on both *demand* and the *business situation* over the past 3 months. By contrast, *demand expectations* for the next 3 months improved. **Consumer confidence** weakened for the second month in a row (-1.2), driven by a deterioration in consumers' assessments of their *household's past and expected financial situation*, as well as a decline in their *intentions to make major purchases*. Meanwhile, consumers' *expectations about the general economic situation in their country* remained largely unchanged. Similarly, **retail trade confidence** dropped markedly (-1.7), mainly reflecting retailers' more negative assessment of *the past business situation*. Assessments of the *future business situation* and the *volume*

[1] With this release, the September results have been revised following updated French business survey data and the re-inclusion of Italian consumer survey data in the calculation of the European aggregates. The Italian consumer data are subject to a structural break between August and September 2026.

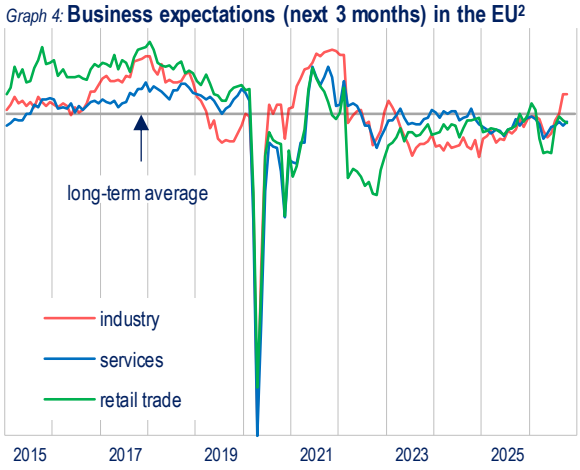
[2] The graph presents standardised series to correct for differences in means and standard deviations.

of stocks also deteriorated. **Construction confidence** also decreased (-0.9), as builders' *employment expectations* deteriorated significantly, despite an improvement in their assessments of *order book levels*.

Graph 3: **Business situation (past 3 months) in the EU²**



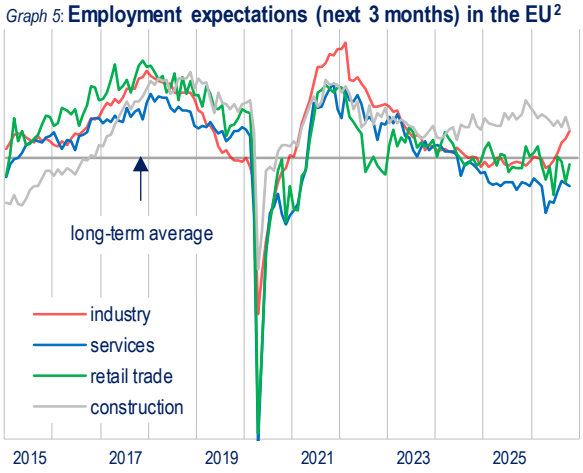
Graph 4: **Business expectations (next 3 months) in the EU²**



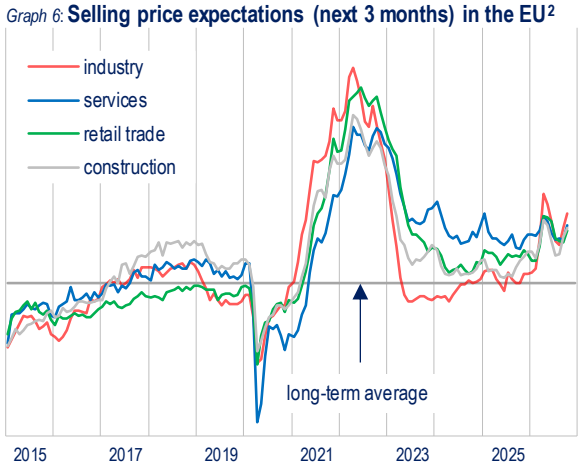
The EU ***Employment Expectations Indicator*** improved in October compared with September (+0.6 points to 98.9), reflecting significant increases of employment plans in retail trade and industry. By contrast, employment plans in services and, in particular, in construction deteriorated. Consumers' unemployment expectations, which are not included in the headline indicator, remained broadly stable. The EU ***Labour Hoarding Indicator*** stayed broadly unchanged (-0.1 points to 9.0), below its long-term average of 9.6.

Managers' ***selling price expectations*** increased considerably in all four business sectors: industry (+3.4), retail trade (+2.8), construction (+2.4) and services (+2.1), rising further above their long-term averages in all sectors. Consumers' price perceptions over the past twelve months also rose markedly (+3.9), while their inflation expectations for the next twelve months remained unchanged at a high level.

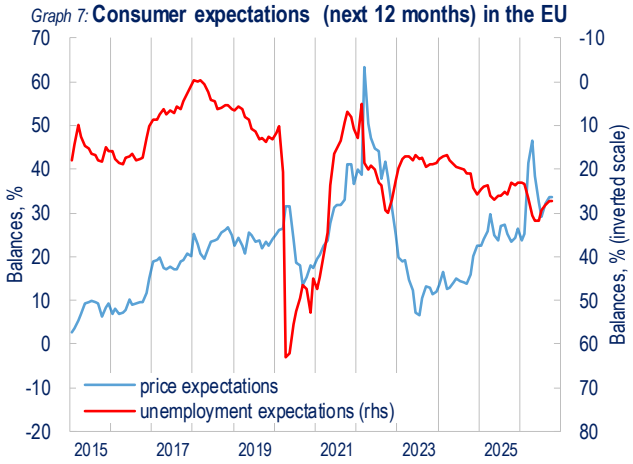
Graph 5: **Employment expectations (next 3 months) in the EU²**



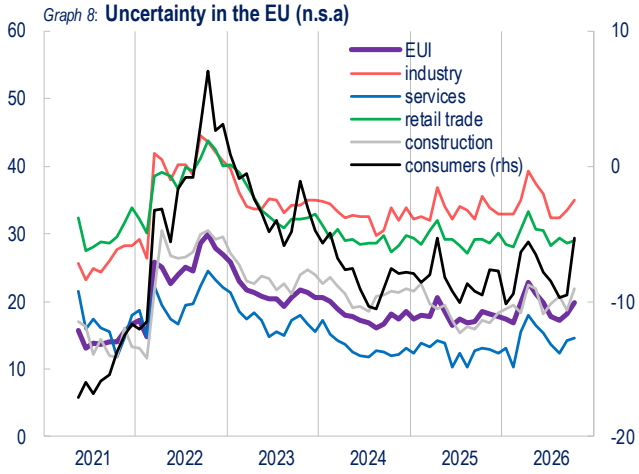
Graph 6: **Selling price expectations (next 3 months) in the EU²**



Graph 7: **Consumer expectations (next 12 months) in the EU**



Graph 8: **Uncertainty in the EU (n.s.a)**



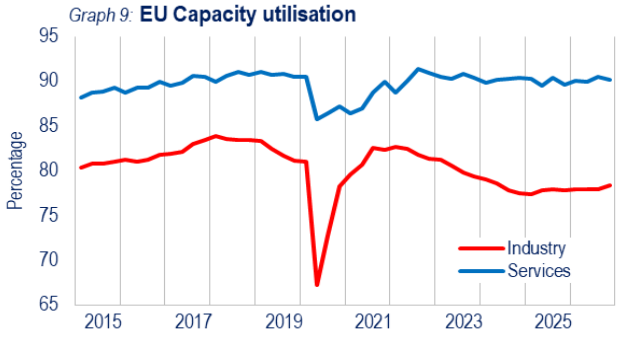
The **Economic Uncertainty Indicator (EUI)** picked up strongly (+1.7 points to 19.8), following a smaller increase in September. Uncertainty about the future business situation increased among managers in all sectors—industry, services, retail trade and construction. Consumers' uncertainty about their future financial situation also increased strongly, to the highest level since April 2025.

Quarterly survey results *(conducted in October)*

The quarterly questions in the industry and services surveys are asked in January, April, July, and October of each year.

In EU industry, the estimated rate of *capacity utilisation* increased by 0.5 points between July and October, reaching 78.4%, remaining below its long-term average of 80.3%. In line with the higher capacity utilisation rate, the balance of managers assessing their *current production capacity* as 'more than sufficient' rather than 'not sufficient' (given current order books and demand expectations) decreased (-3.9 points). On the external side, managers' assessments of their *competitive position* on non-EU markets over the past three months deteriorated (-1.1 points). In addition, their evaluation of *order developments* over the past three months worsened (-1.6 points).

Graph 9: **EU Capacity utilisation**



The shares of industry managers citing insufficient demand and labour shortages as factors limiting production (33.9% and 17.0%, respectively) remained broadly unchanged compared with July. The percentages of managers citing shortages of materials and/or equipment (+2.1 points to 14.7%) and financial constraints (+0.4 points to 5.6%) as limiting factors increased.

Turning to services, the EU *capacity utilisation rate* decreased by 0.3 percentage points to 90.2%, while remaining above its long-term average of 89.4%.

Euro area developments were qualitatively in line with those in the EU. In manufacturing, the estimated rate of capacity utilisation increased by 0.4 points compared with July (from 78.2% to 78.6%). In services, it decreased by 0.4 points to 90.0%.

Data collection period: 1 to 22 October.

Annex tables displaying results for the ESI, EEI, confidence indicators and individual survey questions for the past 12 months (as well as historical min, max and averages) are available here.

Methods and definitions

The Commission's harmonised Business and Consumer Survey (BCS) programme, managed by the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), was set up in 1961, and its scope has since expanded considerably in terms of both countries and sectors covered. Five surveys are conducted on a monthly basis in the following areas: manufacturing industry, construction, consumers, retail trade, and services. Some additional questions are asked on a quarterly basis in the January, April, July and October surveys in industry, services, and among consumers. In addition, questions on manufacturing and services companies' investment plans are included twice a year (April and November). The surveys are conducted by national institutes in the Member States and the candidate countries based on harmonized questionnaires and a common timetable.

The Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys is managed by the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, Unit A3: Economic situation, forecasts, business and consumer surveys.

The **confidence indicators** reflect overall perceptions and expectations at the individual sector level. For each of the five surveyed sectors, they are composite indicators calculated as simple arithmetic averages of the (seasonally adjusted) balances of answers to specific questions chosen from the full set of questions in each individual survey.

The **Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI)** is a composite indicator combining assessments of business managers (in industry, construction, retail trade, services) and consumers by means of a weighted aggregation of standardised input series.

The **Employment Expectations Indicator** is constructed as a weighted average of the employment expectations of managers in four surveyed business sectors (i.e. industry, services, retail trade and construction).

The **Labour Hoarding Indicator (LHI)** is constructed from the survey questions capturing managers' employment expectations and their output expectations. It measures the percentage of managers expecting their firm's output to decrease, but employment to remain stable or increase.

The **Economic Uncertainty Indicator (EUI)** summarises managers'/consumers' assessments about how difficult it is to make predictions about their future business/financial situation.

Unless otherwise specified, all data is seasonally adjusted, meaning past values may be slightly revised in future releases. More information on methods and definitions can be found in the methodological guidelines section of the BCS website. All press releases can be found here. Detailed data results of all surveys are freely available for download in the BCS time series section of the website or the new data browser.

You can also contact DG ECFIN at the following address: ECFIN-BCS-MAIL@ec.europa.eu

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Upcoming releases:	Flash Consumer Confidence Indicator	20 November 2026
	Full Business and Consumer Survey Results (incl. ESI, EEI, sectoral CIs)	27 November 2026