

# no. 1191

## Global Sector Outlook

# Now where did global demand go?



Euler Hermes Economic Research Department

# Economic Outlook

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### EH Americas

United States	Kevin McCann
Canada	Kevin McCann, Dorothy Verwey
Mexico	Roberto Córdova
Brazil	Marcelo Oliveira
Argentina	Federico Pronzati

### EH Asia-Pacific

Japan	Keisuke Moriyama
China	Anne Simpson, Cherry Xie
India	Anne Simpson, Joydeep Nondy
Indonesia	Nilanthi Withana
South Korea	Lena Lee

### EH France

France	Yves Lidome
--------	-------------

### EH DACH<sup>(\*)</sup>

Germany	Romeo Grill
Austria	Romeo Grill
Switzerland	Romeo Grill

### EH Mediterranean and Africa

Italy	Paolo Cioni
Spain	Jochen Wilmes
Portugal	Paulo Vilela
Greece	Kis Janos
Turkey	Ozlem Ozuner

### EH Northern Europe

United Kingdom	Mark Wyatt
Ireland	Mark Wyatt
Belgium	Hubert Leman
Netherlands	Valter Toemem
Norway	Paal Brantzeg
Czech Republic	Miroslav Ingeduld
Poland	Tomasz Starus
Sweden	Anders Björkman
Slovakia	Juraj Jančí
Finland	Tiina Björkqvist
Denmark	Hans Jørgen Knudsen
Russia	Slawomir Bak

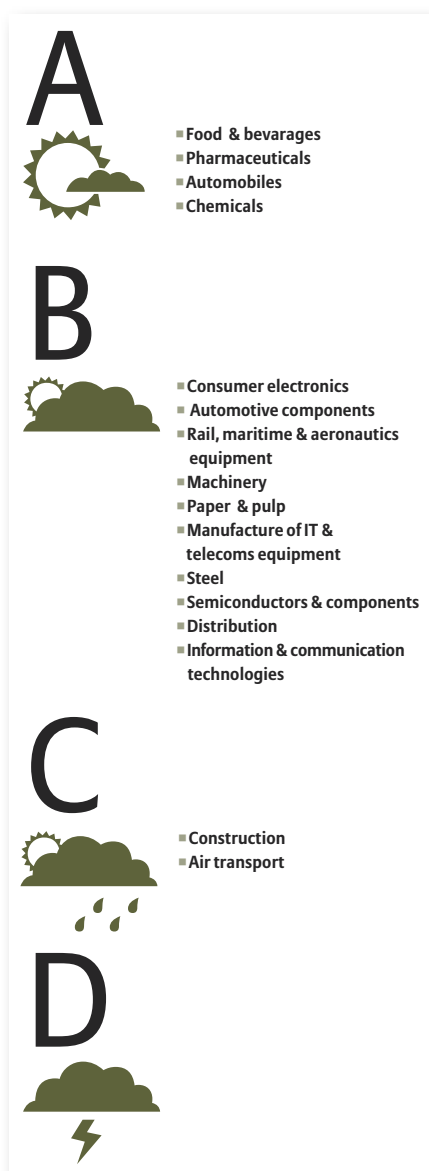
<sup>(\*)</sup> Germany - Austria - Switzerland

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## Editorial

## In search of lost demand

## International business sector forecasts



With a genuine sigh of relief some would say that the crisis is over, that the Eurozone remains intact and that the markets are moving forward again. In short, that the worst is now behind us. The problem lies in the long-term impact of three successive and unrelenting crises (the raw materials crisis, the financial crisis and the sovereign debt crisis) on the dynamics of certain industry sectors and corporate balance sheets. Higher production costs, financing problems and dented confidence combined with greater public policy volatility have obviously all left their mark. The pace of investment by companies (particularly in the Eurozone but also in the United States, China and Brazil) has suffered from these economic fluctuations. When all is said and done, the overcapacity in China, the lacklustre profitability of European companies or the massive deleveraging underway just about everywhere around the globe will influence credit management risks in 2013. However, looking beyond these short-term trends, a real sea change has been underway over the last five years. This has gone unnoticed and even today is difficult to document as its analysis is limited by the available data, but this is a radical change in global demand, in the factors which determine it and in its regional variations. The cause for this lies in demographic and behavioural changes (Generation Y does not necessarily want to buy an apartment or a car, but instead to travel and communicate more!), extreme public policies which artificially boost purchasing power one day and decimate it the next, and the emergence of middle classes within more robust and less interconnected regional blocs. It should come as no surprise to learn that the *World Economic Forum* is interested in income inequality. If the giants of the private sector have gathered in Switzerland, this is because over and above the impact of these inequalities on world growth, in purely business terms the market potentials have changed. As we announced in a previous issue, the year 2013 will be a year of resilience for the private sector, particularly affected by adverse economic conditions, but will also be the year in which a necessary adaptation gets underway. Corporate strategies must be tailored to a newly structured competitive environment (characterised by the effects of attrition on struggling companies and the arrival of new players in the market), but also and above all to demand indicators which are more difficult to decipher. Where is demand today? Who is it? What is it looking for? This adaptation period will necessarily have an impact on companies' balance sheets. *Ludovic Subran*

## Overview

# Now where did global demand go ?

### A few clear patches but still cloudy

We are seeing some positive green shoots although these are still too few and far between. The contrast between the European and American situations is the most striking example, including a car market down by -8% in Europe but surging by 13% in the United States.

Similarly, although we are seeing some signs of a turnaround in the construction sector in the United States, albeit at a very low level, this is certainly not the case in Europe, in particular in some southern or eastern countries where the crisis persists. As an alternative growth centre, the emerging nations also began to show some signs of weakness before recovering a little towards the end of the year with the sharp slowdown in global steel production being a perfect illustration of this. In this continued lacklustre environment, the high levels of commodity prices have continued to eat into the profitability of certain sectors, with transport in the forefront.

### Europe is still trailing in far too many sectors

The recession raging in southern Europe fuelled by the austerity programmes is gradually spreading to the

whole economy due to the fall in demand from both households and companies. Consequently, unemployment continues to rise and is having a major negative impact upon consumer confidence, with consumers reining in their expenditure. The construction sector is a good example, with business levels continuing to fall back, particularly in Spain, Italy, France and Great Britain but also a number of eastern European countries. The effect is also striking in the distribution sector due to the fall in household consumption, or the car market with car sales in Europe down by -8% in 2012 and the scale of the restructuring programmes contributing to a general climate of apprehension for the future.


With the decline of its main sales outlets (the car making and construction markets), the steel industry is also weakening under the effect of significant production overcapacity. Transport is also struggling with the high levels of oil prices. Unlike companies which are dependent upon their national markets, the internationalised groups are taking advantage of world growth to offset the slowdown in Europe. As an example we should mention the healthy outlook for the chemi-

cal industry (which moreover is succeeding in imposing its own price levels) and the automotive equipment manufacturers. Aeronautics is another growing sector benefiting as it does from remarkable long-term visibility with orders scheduled for the next eight years. The pharmaceutical sector also remains highly profitable although two threats are now casting a shadow over its future, these being the expiry of patents and social deficits at a time of budgetary constraints aimed at limiting public deficits. Finally, some sectors find themselves at a crossroads, including the food industry whose volumes are holding up overall but which is suffering from commodity price volatility, packaging whose business levels tend to fluctuate in line with the economy of the country concerned, and electronics or capital goods due to the low level of investments.

### In the United States, the strong growth in the car market contrasts with the weary recovery of the construction sector

The sharp continued upturn in the car market (with automotive production up 13% in 2012) contrasts with the timid recovery in the construction sec- ►

## Keys to symbols

Note **A**  **Positive fundamentals & outlook**

Note **B**  **Signs of weaknesses**

Note **C**  **Structural weaknesses**

Note **D**  **Imminent or recognised crisis**

 **Not available**

► Our business sector forecasts are a rating system founded upon the microeconomic expertise of Euler Hermes group underwriters and analysts, who closely monitor risk in companies worldwide through our network of more than 50 local subsidiaries. This results in a qualitative assessment of the health and outlook of a sector. Generally, although not in every case, this assessment includes growth forecasts for a given sector. We focus more on the health of businesses (in terms of margins and solvency) than on their growth in turnover.

► Starting this year, the forecasts cover a large number of countries — 32 in total — spread across the six major zones as defined by Euler Hermes. The number of modalities under the ratings has been cut to 4, compared to 5 previously, to avoid arriving at an average level that is little representative of the realities. The category 'Not available' indicates a sector that is not present in a country or an aggregate that cannot be calculated. The sector forecast for a given zone is the weighted sum (by GDP) of the forecasts of the countries concerned. \_

# International Business sector forecasts

	Food products & beverages	Consumer electronics	Pharmaceuticals	Automobiles	Automotive components	Rail, maritime & aeronautics equipment	Machinery	IT & telecom equipment	Paper & pulp	Chemicals	Steel	Semiconductors & components	Construction	Distribution	Air transport	IT & telecom services
<b>EH Americas</b>																
United States																
Canada																
Mexico																
Brazil																
Argentina																
<b>EH Asia-Pacific</b>																
Japan																
China																
India																
Indonesia																
South Korea																
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United Kingdom																
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Netherlands																
Romania																
Norway																
Czech Republic																
Poland																
Sweden																
Slovakia																
Finland																
Denmark																
Russia																
<b>World</b>																

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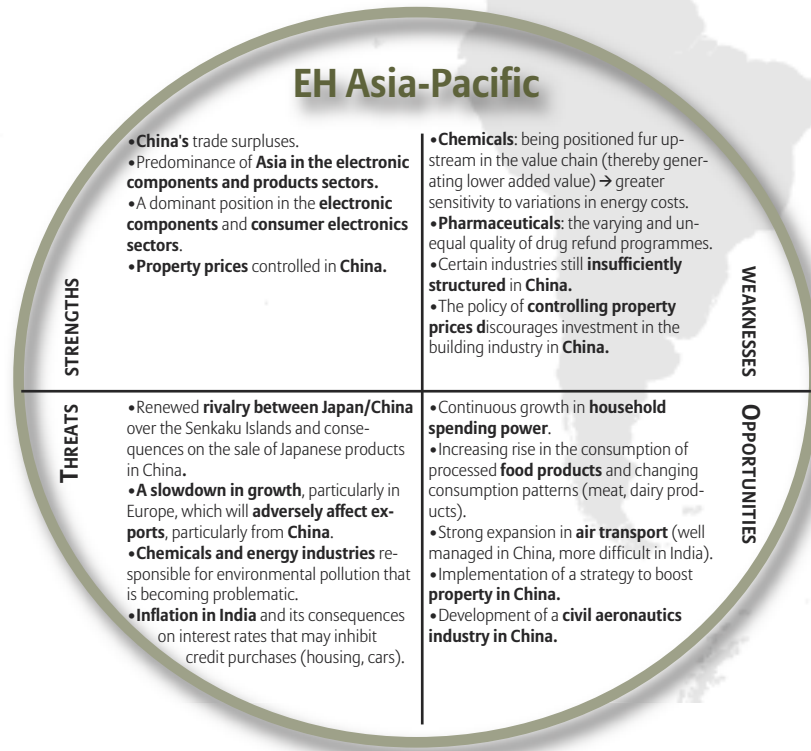
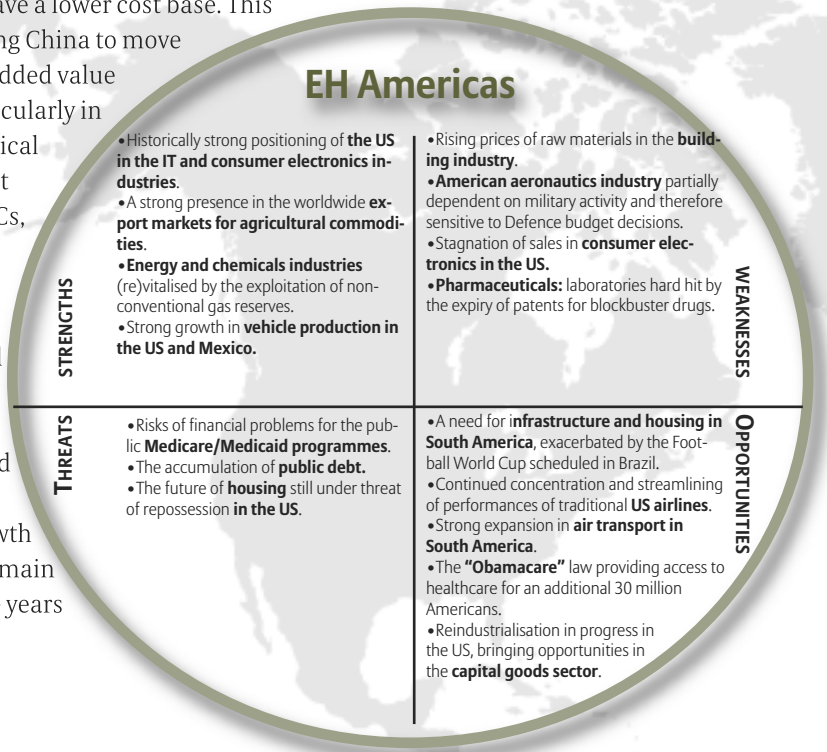
Source: Euler Hermes

# In a nutshell

tor where volumes are still at extremely low levels. Certainly, stocks have continued to decrease, returning to an acceptable level of 1.6 million units, whereas they were more than double this at the peak of the crisis and property prices have increased moderately, but we should not lose sight of the fact that the default rate on property loans, although down, is well above its pre-crisis level, demonstrating that the shake-out of the property market is still not totally complete. Despite this, excluding transport due to the high oil prices and household equipment which is tied to the construction sector, American industry has turned the corner. The steelmakers and automotive equipment manufacturers have been buoyed by the strong recovery in the car market. Electronics are benefiting from the capacity for innovation of the American IT and telecommunications companies. With unemployment no longer rising, distribution is also doing well. Despite the current problems with the 787, the American aeronautics sector (just like its European competitor) is enjoying an extremely favourable outlook thanks to strong global demand. Finally, we should also note the rise of shale gas extraction, which offers American industry the perspective of an inexpensive energy supply which will further enhance its competitiveness.

After a breather, the emerging nations are moving forward once again. The emerging nations have the means to finance their growth, through internal demand in China, through reduced interest rates in India or through the financing of infrastructure programmes in Brazil in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. Several key facts are worth mentioning, especially compared to the developed nations, including the promising outlook for the construction industry in almost all of the emerging economies, whether this concerns housing (with rapid urbanisation) or infrastructure spending. This also holds true for distribution,

with improvements in purchasing power and the emergence of a middle-class. However, although the growth in purchasing power, particularly in China, is boosting domestic demand, it also poses new threats. This is particularly the case for textiles, which was once a major growth driver for exports to Europe and the United States, and which is today suffering from competition from other emerging countries which still have a lower cost base. This is encouraging China to move into higher added value sectors, particularly in the aeronautical market. Apart from the BRICs, other Asian countries (Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) are now emerging and stimulating regional growth which will remain high over the years to come. \_YL



### EH DACH(\*)

STRENGTHS

- An **image of quality** that facilitates worldwide exports.
- A flourishing **vehicle industry**, gaining market share on all the continents.
- **High-end positioning in chemicals supply** related to the strong German companies (BASF, Bayer, Lanxess and Evonik).
- Growth maintained in the **construction industry**.
- Certain branches of the **food industry** (including pig farming) very competitive in exports.

WEAKNESSES

- Signs of **property bubble** in several regions in Switzerland.
- The recession in the Eurozone is hitting **German exports**.
- **Chemicals industry** subjected to rising costs of power supply (electricity).

THREATS

- **Air transport** currently undergoing strategic reconfiguration and restructuring, still in the grip of adverse economic conditions.
- **Pharmaceuticals**: measures to reduce the deficits of the health insurance programme.
- **The electronics industry** is dependent on investments from other countries in the Eurozone.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strong demand for aircraft** (increase in production throughput and consistently healthy order levels).
- **Success in worldwide exports**, benefiting from the growth of the emerging nations.
- **International positioning on the Algerian market** (building of sports infrastructure and roads).

(\*) Germany, Austria, Switzerland

### EH Northern Europe

STRENGTHS

- The financial might of the **City of London**.
- The recovery of the **British automotive industry** with large-scale foreign investments.
- Dynamism of **food producers on the worldwide export markets**.
- **The United Kingdom's monetary autonomy** in comparison to the Eurozone.

WEAKNESSES

- Slowing down of the catch-up effect in the **building industry** in Eastern European countries.
- Persistent difficulties for **manufacturers of high-tech products**, such as the Finnish Nokia.

THREATS

- Slow down in the growth of the still very volatile **Russian vehicle market**.
- **2013 will be a year of multiple dangers for certain historical domestic air transporters**, facing serious financial difficulties and weakened government shareholders.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Requirement for **renovation work in Russia**, and implementation of the new European Structural Fund programme for the 2014-2020 period.
- **Aeronautical construction**: strong demand for aircraft (increase in production throughput and consistently healthy order levels).
- Changes in **food consumption patterns** for the industrialists in the sector.

### EH France

STRENGTHS

- **Pharmaceuticals industry** that remains competitive.
- The global notoriety of the **luxury goods industry** in textiles, leather goods and spirits.
- A thriving **aeronautics industry**.
- **Construction groups** among the world leaders in the industry.

WEAKNESSES

- Sharp deterioration in **construction industry**.
- Continuing decline in **car production** and major restructuring operations underway.
- Overcapacity in the **steel industry**, with a downturn in demand.
- Impoverishment of local industrial infrastructure in the **electronics industry**.
- Production infrastructure of the **food industry** still fragmented.

THREATS

- **Air transport** currently undergoing strategic reconfiguration and restructuring, still in the grip of adverse economic conditions.
- The effectiveness of **new measures in favour of construction**.
- Government measures to reduce the deficits of the **health insurance** that weighs heavily on drug prices.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strong demand for aircraft** (increase in production throughput and consistently healthy order levels).
- **Chemicals industry** positioned in high added value markets.
- **Chronic deficit of more than 500,000 homes** and potential importance of the renovation market to comply with environmental standards.

### EH Mediterranean

STRENGTHS

- **Very low production costs in the countries of north Africa**, facilitating the expansion of local industry.
- A strong **luxury goods industry in Italy** for clothing, footwear and vehicles.

WEAKNESSES

- **The construction industry in Spain** is being adversely affected by stocks of existing housing available for sale.
- Lacklustre **consumption and investment**, with austerity plans in **Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece**.
- The sharp deterioration in the **building industry in Italy** in 2012.
- **Pharmaceuticals industry** affected by late payments of several health insurance programmes (**Greece**).

THREATS

- **2013 will be a year of multiple dangers for certain historical domestic air transporters**, facing serious financial difficulties and weakened government shareholders.
- Continuous decline in **vehicle production in Italy** and consequences for the sector.
- **Mutation in consumption patterns accelerated** by economic difficulties (dynamism of supermarket own-brand products to the detriment of equivalent branded products).

OPPORTUNITIES

- **The economic expansion of the countries of northern Africa** (motorway projects in Algeria).
- The creation of a **car industry in Morocco** and planned in **Algeria**.
- **The lowering of labour costs in Spain** to encourage growth in industrial sector.

# Implantations

Registered office: Euler Hermes Group — 1, place des saisons — 92078 Paris La Défense — France  
Tel. : + 33 (0) 1 84 11 53 77 — Fax : + 33 (0) 1 84 11 50 17 — www.eulerhermes.com

## ► Argentina

Euler Hermes Argentina S.A.  
Av. Corrientes 299 - 2° Piso  
C1043AAC CABA Buenos Aires  
Tel.: +54 11 4320 7157/77

## ► Australia

Euler Hermes Australia Pty Ltd.  
Level 9, Forecourt Building  
2 Market Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000  
Tel.: + 612 8258 5108

## ► Austria

Prisma Kreditversicherungs-AG  
Himmelfortgasse 29  
1010 Vienna  
Tel.: + 43(0) 5 01 02-0

Euler Hermes Collections GmbH,  
Zweigniederlassung Österreich  
Handelskai 388  
1020 Vienna  
Tel.: + 43 1 90 81 771

## ► Bahrain

Please contact United Arab Emirates

## ► Belgium

Euler Hermes Europe S.A. (NV)  
Avenue des Arts - Kunstlaan 56  
1000 Brussels  
Tel.: + 32 2 289 3111

## ► Brazil

Euler Hermes Seguros de Crédito SA  
Avenida paulista, 2.421 - 3° andar  
Jardim Paulista  
São Paulo /SP 01311-300  
Tel.: + 55 11 3065 2260

## ► Canada

Euler Hermes Services Canada Inc.  
1155 René-Lévesque Blvd West  
Suite 1702  
Montréal (Québec) H3B 3Z7  
Tel.: + 1 514 876 9656

## ► Chile

Euler Hermes Seguro de  
Crédito SA  
Ave. Presidente Kennedy 5735  
Of.801, Torre Poniente  
Las Condes  
Santiago  
Tel.: + 56 2 246 1786

## ► China

Euler Hermes Consulting  
(Shanghai) Co., Ltd  
Unit 2103, Taiping Finance Tower,  
N°488 Middle Yincheng Road, Pudong  
New Area, Shanghai, 200120  
Tel.: + 86 21 6030 5900

## ► Colombia

Euler Hermes Colombia  
Calle 72 6-44 Piso 3  
Edificio APA  
Bogota  
Tel.: + 571 326 4640

## ► Czech Republic

Euler Hermes Europe SA  
organizacni slozka  
Molákova 576/11  
186 00 Prague 8  
Tel.: + 420 266 109 511

## ► Denmark

Euler Hermes Denmark  
filial of Euler Hermes Europe SA, Belgien  
Amerika Plads 19  
2100 Copenhagen O  
Tel.: + 45 88 33 3388

## ► Estonia

Please contact Finland

## ► Finland

Euler Hermes Europe SA  
Suomen sivuliike  
Mannerheimintie 105  
00280 Helsinki  
Tel.: + 358 10 8 50 8500

## ► France

Euler Hermes France SA  
Euler Hermes Collection  
Euler Hermes World Agency  
1, place des Saisons  
F-92048 Paris la Défense Cedex  
Tel.: + 33 1 84 11 50 50

## ► Germany

Euler Hermes Deutschland AG  
Friedensallee 254  
22763 Hamburg  
Tel.: + 49 40 8834 400

## Federal Export Credit Guarantees

Friedensallee 254  
22763 Hamburg  
Tel.: + 49 40 8834 9000

## Euler Hermes Collections GmbH

Zeppelinstr. 48  
14471 Postdam  
Tel.: + 49 331 27890-000

## ► Greece

Euler Hermes Emporiki SA  
16 Laodikias Street &  
1-3 Nymfeou Street  
115 28 Athens  
Tel.: + 30 210 69 00 000

## ► Hong Kong

Euler Hermes Hong Kong Services Ltd.  
Suites 403-11, 4/F  
Cityplaza 4  
12 Taikoo Wan Road  
Island East  
Hong-Kong  
Tel.: + 852 2867 0061

## ► Hungary

Euler Hermes Europe SA  
Magyarorszagi Fióktelepe  
Kiscelli u. 104  
1037 Budapest  
Tel.: + 36 1 453 9000

## ► India

Euler Hermes India Pvt. Ltd.  
4th Floor, Voltas House  
23, J N Heredia Marg  
Ballard Estate  
Mumbai 400 001  
Tel.: + 91 22 6623 2525

## ► Indonesia

PT Assuransi Allianz Utama Indonesia  
Summitmas II. Building, 9th floor  
Jl. Jenderal Sudirman Kav 61-62  
Jakarta 12190  
Tel.: + 62 21 252 2470 ext 6100

## ► Ireland

Euler Hermes Ireland  
Allianz House  
Elm Park  
Merrion Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel.: +353 (0)1 518 7900

## ► Israel

ICIC,  
2, Shenkar street  
68010 Tel Aviv  
Tel.: + 97 23 796 2444

## ► Italy

Euler Hermes Europe S.A.  
Rappresentanza per l'Italia  
Via Raffaello Matarazzo, 19  
00139 Rome  
Tel.: + 39 06 87001

## ► Japan

Euler Hermes Deutschland AG  
Japan Branch  
Kyobashi Nishshoku Bldg. 7F  
8-7 Kyobashi, 1-chome,  
Chuo-Ku  
Tokyo 104 0031  
Tel.: + 81 3 3538 5403

## ► Kuwait

Please contact United Arab Emirates

## ► Latvia

Please contact Poland

## ► Lithuania

Please contact Poland

## ► Malaysia

Euler Hermes Singapore Services Pte Ltd.  
Malaysia Branch  
Suite 3A\_13A Level 13A, Block 3A  
Plaza Sentral, Jalan Sentral  
Jalan Stesen Sentral 5  
50470 Kuala Lumpur  
Tél. : +603 2264 8556 (or 8599)

## ► Mexico

Euler Hermes Seguro de Crédito S.A.  
Blvd. Manuel Avila Camacho #164,  
8° piso  
Col. Lomas de Barrilaco  
Deleg. Miguel Hidalgo  
Mexico DF CP 11010  
Tel.: + 52 55 5201 7900



## Implantations

Registered office: Euler Hermes Group — 1, place des saisons — 92078 Paris La Défense — France  
Tel. : + 33 (0) 1 84 11 53 77 — Fax : + 33 (0) 1 84 11 50 17 — www.eulerhermes.com

### ►Morocco

Euler Hermes Acmar  
37, bd Abdelattif Ben Kaddour  
20050 Casablanca  
Tel.: + 212 5 2279 0330

### ►The Netherlands

Euler Hermes Nederland NV  
Pettelaarpark 20  
5216 PD's-Hertogenbosch  
Tel.: + 31 73 688 9999

### ►New Zealand

Euler Hermes New Zealand Ltd  
Level 1, 152 Fanshawe Street  
Auckland 1010  
Tel.: + 64 9 354 2995

### ►Norway

Euler Hermes Norge  
Holbergsgate 21  
P.O. Box 6875  
St. Olavs Plass  
0130 Oslo  
Tel.: + 47 23 25 6000

### ►Oman

Please contact Poland Arab Emirates

### ►Philippines

Please contact Singapore

### ►Poland

Towarzystwo Ubezpieczen Euler Hermes S.A.  
ul. Domaniewska 50 B  
02-672 Warsaw  
Tel.: + 48 22 363 6363

### ►Portugal

COSEC - Companhia de Seguro  
de Créditos, S.A.  
Av. da República, nº 58  
1069-057 Lisbon  
Tel.: + 351 21 791 3700

### ►Qatar

Please contact United Arab Emirates

### ►Romania

Euler Hermes Europe S.A.Bruxelles  
Sucursala Bucuresti  
Str. Petru Maior, nr.6,  
Sector 1  
011264, Bucarest  
Tel.: + 40 21 302 03 00

### ►Russia

Euler Hermes Credit Management OOO  
Office C08, 4-th Dobryninskiy per.,8  
Moscow, 119049  
Tel.: + 7 495 98128 33 ext 4000

### ►Saudi Arabia

Please contact United Arab Emirates

### ►Singapore

Euler Hermes Singapore Services Pte Ltd  
3 Temasek Avenue  
# 03-02 Centennial Tower  
Singapore 039190  
Tel.: + 65 6297 8802

### ►Slovakia

Euler Hermes Europe S.A, pobočka  
poist'ovne z ineho clenскеho statu  
Plynárenská 7/A  
821 09 Bratislava  
Tel. : + 421 2 582 80 911

### ►South Africa

Please contact Italy

### ►South Korea

Euler Hermes Hong Kong Services  
Korea Liaison Office  
Room 1411, 14th Floor, Sayong  
Platinum Building  
156, Cheokseon-dong  
Chongro-ku  
Seoul 110 052  
Tel.: + 82 2 733 8813

### ►Spain

Euler Hermes Crédito,  
Sucursal en España  
de Euler Hermes France-S.A.  
Paseo de la Castellana, 95  
Planta 14  
Edificio Torre Europa  
28046 Madrid  
Tel.: + 34 91 417 77 67

### ►Sri Lanka

Please contact Singapore

### ►Sweden

Euler Hermes Sverige filial  
KlaraBergsviadukten 90  
P.O. Box 729  
101 64 Stockholm  
Tel.: + 46 8 55 51 36 00

### ►Switzerland

Euler Hermes Deutschland AG,  
Zweigniederlassung Zürich  
Tödistrasse 65  
8002 Zürich  
Tel.: + 41 44 283 6 5 65

### Euler Hermes Reinsurance

Tödistrasse 65  
8002 Zürich  
Tel.: + 41 44 283 65 85

### ►Taiwan

Please contact Hong Kong

### ►Thailand

Allianz C.P. General Insurance Co, Ltd  
323 United Center Building  
30th Floor  
Silom Road  
Bangracker, Bangkok 10500  
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### ►Tunisia

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### ►Turkey

Euler Hermes Sigorta A.s  
Maya Akar enter  
Buyukdere Cad. No:100k:7,  
34394, Esentepe/Istanbul  
Tel. : + 90 212 290 76 10

### ►United Arab Emirates

Euler Hermes  
c/o Alliance Insurance (PSC)  
Warba Center, 4th Floor  
Office 405  
PO Box 183957  
Dubai  
Tel.: + 971 4 211 6005

### ►United Kingdom

Euler Hermes UK  
1 Canada Square  
London E14 5DX  
Tel.: + 44 20 7512 9333

### ►United States

Euler Hermes North America  
Insurance Company  
800 Red Brook Boulevard  
Owings Mills, MD 21117  
Tel.: + 1 410 753 0753

### Euler Hermes UMA Inc.

(trade debt collection)  
600 South 7th Street  
Louisville, KY 40201-1672  
Tel.: + 1 800 237 9386

### ►Vietnam

Please contact Singapore

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E-mail: [research@eulerhermes.com](mailto:research@eulerhermes.com) – Tel.: +33 (0) 1 84 11 50 46

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