

# Santander GO Global Equity ESG

8 / 2023

## Fund commentary

#### Market developments:

A rapid shift from high-five mood to wall of worry and cautious comeback essentially sums up global equity markets in August, ending the month in slight negative territory (-1% in EUR, -2% in USD). As higher US rates and a worsening dataflow from both Europe and China challenged the prevailing Goldilocks scenario, defensive sectors and Quality performed well. The crowded Tech space, in particular, was hurt in the first half of the month as US real yields kept pushing higher. Erratic trading got exacerbated by thin summer liquidity, though markets calmed down at the end of the month as softer US data eased the rates market. Also, China stepping up its stimulus measures helped sentiment and the broader equity market managing losses, ultimately. Big picture, a key driver behind market strength thus far this year is that earnings have held up much better than expected. We are still cautious that this can sustain, nor do we think data signals around unemployment, inflation, and PMIs, for example, are supportive to stage a genuine broadening out of the market.

#### Largest holdings:

Alphabet is the largest active position in the portfolio, with the shares still very reasonably valued. The company also reported very good results, as the company has returned to growth again. Visa is now our second largest active position, as we do not think that there will be significant impact from the renewed discussion on interchange fees. We still like the name as it also benefits quite significantly from the rebound in cross-border transactions. We also have high conviction in publishing and data analytics firm RELX, which completes our top-3 active positions. We do not share the concerns of the market about the impact of Artificial Intelligence. In fact, we do believe that the company can be an important beneficiary of Al.

#### Performance:

The portfolio had a flat absolute, but positive relative performance. After a strong start of the month, we were able to consolidate our excess performance relative to the benchmark. From a sector perspective, our defensive positioning in Healthcare, Financials and Materials helped most. Standouts in Healthcare included pharma names Eli Lilly and Novo

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### Santander Asset Management

Nordisk, after very positive data readouts on obesity opens the door for significant growth potential. Both companies enjoy a superior position in this market to capitalize on, especially as it becomes more likely payers are encouraged to reimburse obesity medications. Alphabet had a good month as well, as its counteroffensive to AI is taking shape with its Gemini language model and its new TPU chips for AI applications. Visa also contributed well during the month, providing an upbeat business update but also benefiting from intra-sector rotation out of balance sheet financials in favor of capital light models such as the card networks. On the flipside, we saw some profit taking in Sony Group, after an unexciting set of results, indicating a slowdown across most divisions and particular weakness in its image sensor business. We also saw weakness in other semi-related names such as Infineon and STMicro where the "peak margin" narrative is outweighing otherwise solid business trends.

#### Portfolio changes:

During the month of August, we took some further profits in some of the high-flyers in the portfolio, where we think that valuations are now stretched. We took some weight out of favorite names like Eli Lilly, RELX and Nvidia, and have redistributed the weight across relatively new names such as Adobe and Fortinet to build up our position. The latter, Fortinet, is a new addition to the portfolio, a cyber security name that we always liked and where the recent drop in share price after a rare weak

earnings report, provided a great entry point for long-term investors like ourselves. Another addition to the portfolio has been Schlumberger, a high quality US energy field services operator. Even though Schlumberger caters mainly to the oil and gas industry, most notably to strong growing non-US markets, its product range is increasingly being sold into so-called 'new energy' areas too, such as carbon capture and storage, geothermal and lithium mining. Not only is the company an attractively valued story bottom-up, it also makes the portfolio better insulated against a higher rates-for-longer scenario.

#### Management expectations:

August trading has been indicative for how the year has progressed so far: a search for new narratives to offset a looming recession. Initially, a China rebound supposed to be the engine of hope, then Artificial Intelligence (AI), followed by the 'soft landing' narrative. Interestingly, where hopes for the latter initially acted as a driver for higher returns, the flipside of it are revived fears that rates would have to go higher than the market actually hopes, stymying further upside. In that scenario, expensive and long duration parts of the market will suffer, just like in 2022, and early August

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seemed to be a good reminder of that. A case in point was that Nvidia was not able to fuel sentiment higher, despite another giant earnings beat. In fact, ironically, it wasn't until we saw some slightly softer data around US consumer sentiment and the labor market being seen as a relief to the market as it reinstated the 'peak rate' narrative. All in all, we can debate the macro backdrop extensively, in the end it is about stock picking, where we obviously feel most comfortable with our Quality focused portfolio to navigate different scenarios.

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