

A Sub-Fund of Morgan Stanley Investment Funds

# European High Yield Bond

**HIGH YIELD TEAM**

**Investors should note that, relative to the expectations of the Autorité des Marchés Financiers, this UCITS presents disproportionate communication on the consideration of extra-financial criteria in its management.**

## Performance Review

In the one month period ending 31 December 2025, the Fund's Z shares returned 0.52% (net of fees)<sup>1</sup>, while the benchmark returned 0.38%.

Telecommunications and gaming were the Fund's top-performing sectors relative to the benchmark in December. Relative outperformance in telecommunications was driven by favourable credit selection and an underweight position. The primary individual contributor was selection within the capital structure of a multinational telecommunications and mass media company. The company moved assets to outside of the restricted group as a first step in a coercive liability management exercise. The issuer's secured bonds, which is the Fund's only exposure to the issuer, outperformed the unsecured bonds, which performed poorly after the news. In gaming, relative outperformance was driven by sound credit selection and was led by an overweight position in a Greek-based administrator of lottery and sports betting platforms. The company recently released its 2026 fiscal year guidance, which was better than expected.

Diversified financial services and homebuilders & real estate were the Fund's worst-performing sectors relative to the benchmark during the month. Relative underperformance in diversified financial services was driven by adverse credit selection and an underweight position in this outperforming sector. The primary individual detriment was an overweight position in an American payment processing company whose bonds fell modestly during the month. In homebuilders & real estate, relative underperformance was driven by challenging credit selection and was led by an underweight position and positioning in the capital structure of a landlord focused on commercial property primarily in the Czech Republic.

In terms of performance by ratings segment, credit selection and an overweight position in B-rated bonds contributed positively to relative performance. Sound credit selection and an underweight position in BB-rated bonds also added value. Conversely, challenging credit selection in bonds rated CCC or below detracted from relative returns. A modest allocation to cash also hurt in a positive month for the European high yield market.

Finally, credit selection in the United Kingdom and Greece aided relative returns. An allocation to U.S. dollar-denominated bonds also contributed positively. Conversely, positioning in Sweden and the Netherlands hurt relative performance during the month.

## Market Review

December was the strongest month in the fourth quarter for the European high yield markets, capping a strong year. Investors' risk appetite generally improved amid a supportive backdrop and limited negative macro news headlines. Spread tightening and coupon income offset modestly higher underlying government bond yields, as markets traded largely on technical factors, with modest demand and limited supply enough to drive bond prices marginally higher. In monetary policy, the European Central Bank (ECB) held interest rates steady at 2%, while the Federal Reserve (Fed) and Bank of England delivered December cuts.<sup>2</sup>

The ICE BofA European Currency High Yield 3% Constrained Excluding Subordinated Financials Index (EUR-Hedged) returned 0.38% in December. The spread-to-worst fell 16 basis points (bps) to end the month at 294 bps, while the yield-to-worst fell 6 bps to end the month at 5.34%.<sup>2</sup>

Metals & mining and paper were two of the best-performing sectors in the market during the month. Building materials and chemicals were two of the worst-performing sectors in the market.<sup>2</sup>

The lower quality segments of the high yield market generally underperformed in December. CCC-rated bonds performed worst, while B-rated bonds performed best. This rounded off a year that saw the lowest-rated segments of the European high yield market generally underperform.<sup>2</sup>

Technical conditions in the European high yield market were supportive in December. Just over €5 billion of new deals priced, bringing the year-to-date total to €136 billion, which makes 2025 the second-highest year for primary issuance in Europe. In line with the trend of the last few years, the majority of issuance came to market as senior secured structures during 2025. Further, the majority of issuance (55%) was once again BB-rated. Demand from investors continued its modestly positive pace. European high yield retail funds saw a net inflow of approximately €0.5 billion during the month, which pushed the full-year total to €9.5 billion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Morgan Stanley Investment Management Limited. Data as of 31 December 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Source: ICE Data Indices, Bloomberg L.P., Morgan Stanley Investment Management. Data as of 31 December 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Source: J.P. Morgan. Data as of 2 January 2026.

Default activity was limited during the month, and the trailing 12-month par-weighted default rate ended the year at 3.2%. We expect the default rate to remain in this range due to a large, distressed issuer that we believe will likely default in the coming months.<sup>3</sup>

## Strategy and Outlook

As we enter 2026, the high yield market finds itself on improved footing. In the year ahead, we anticipate an environment characterised by decent economic growth across much of Europe and North America, and evolving monetary policy complicated by political pressure on central banks. While 2026 will not be a year without volatility, we expect corporate balance sheets to largely remain resilient, with increasing dispersion in earnings, and valuations that adjust to more accurately reflect this reality. The average spread in high yield begins the year only marginally above post-Global Financial Crisis (GFC) lows, and we expect this to adjust modestly wider as risk premium appropriately continues to transition from a beta-led rally to reflect a range of idiosyncratic outcomes. At the same time, we think the quality and health of high yield issuers, coupled with a historically attractive yield, should continue to attract global institutional capital.<sup>4</sup> This outlook is informed by a thorough analysis of macroeconomic and fundamental factors, including the trajectory of global economic growth, evolving monetary and fiscal policy, consumer health, issuer fundamentals, technical conditions, and valuations.

Growth in Europe and the U.K. appears to have stabilised in 2025 after a period of softness, with the expectation for slightly slower, still positive growth in 2026 and some level of reacceleration in 2027. Bloomberg's consensus economic forecast calls for real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the European Union (EU) of 1.6% in 2025 to slow slightly to 1.4% in 2026, before returning to 1.6% in 2027.<sup>5</sup> There is a similar trend in expectations for the U.K., where growth is expected to slow from 1.4% in 2025 to 1.1% next year, returning to 1.4% in 2027.<sup>5</sup> In early December, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development released its growth outlook for 2026, showing growth projections of 1.7%, 1.2%, and 1.2% in the U.S., U.K., and euro area, respectively.<sup>6</sup>

Global central banks continue to navigate a precarious period, with disparate and uncertain inflation backdrops across regions. In Europe, inflation appears lower relative to both the U.S. and the U.K., and current monetary policy reflects this. In November, core inflation in the EU was approximately 2.4%, unchanged from the prior month, with the expectation of softening to 1.9% in 2026.<sup>7</sup> The ECB maintained its key policy rate at 2.0% in December. In the U.K., the consumer prices index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) reportedly decreased from 3.8% in October to 3.5% in November.<sup>8</sup> Though moving in the right direction, this preferred measure of inflation remains historically high.<sup>8</sup> Consensus expectations are that inflation will continue to decline in 2026, toward the Bank of England's 2% target.<sup>5</sup> The Bank of England made the decision to reduce its key policy rate to 3.75% in December. While the paths of monetary policy for certain central banks has recently shown relative consistency, the risk of stickier inflation in certain regions, divergence in growth backdrops, and the possibility of political influence in an election year has the potential to cause some level of divergence in policy paths in 2026. In the U.S., the Fed's December median projections showed the core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index slowing from an expected 3.0% in 2025 to 2.5% in 2026.<sup>9</sup> This expected trajectory, coupled with a weakening U.S. labour market that is expected to stabilise in 2026, prompted the Fed to reduce its key policy rate by a quarter-point in December, and contributed to median Fed expectations of approximately one additional interest rate cut in 2026.<sup>9</sup>

Our strategy remains slightly under-risked relative to the Index, based on a duration-times-spread (DTS) ratio in non-distressed high yield credit moderately below 1. We modestly increased the DTS ratio in the "performing" segment of our market in the fourth quarter. Our DTS in the distressed segment of our market remained at approximately 0.3, reflecting minimal exposure relative to the benchmark. We think the slightly more conservative positioning should continue to benefit our investors in times of market turbulence, and complementing this core with sizable opportunistic positions in high conviction situations should provide attractive positive convexity as these idiosyncratic credit stories play out. Despite our expectation for additional spread widening, we remain encouraged by the fact that credit quality remains high, with nearly 70% of the high yield bond market rated BB and less than 5% rated CCC or lower.<sup>4</sup> We believe that our current risk positioning is justified, credit risk is marginally increasing, and complacency will likely continue to be penalised. We will focus our holdings in segments where we believe growth and free cash flow are most durable and convexity remains most attractive.

We begin 2026 with an average yield and spread lower than 2025 starting levels, after some significant early year volatility. At year-end 2025, the average spread was approximately 25 bps above post-GFC lows, reached in 2017, and the average yield was approximately in line with the 10-year historical average.<sup>4</sup> We believe valuations across several segments of the high yield market adjusted closer to fair value in the fourth quarter, more accurately reflecting the many risks facing our market. This decompression trade is likely to continue and, at the benchmark level, we expect to reach modestly wider peak spreads in 2026. The increase in dispersion in the high yield market in the final months of the year also created opportunity. We continue to identify idiosyncratic situations to capture spread compression, even in segments where we think valuations at the sector level are full. Additionally, we anticipate an increase in net issuance volume will likely lead to interesting relative value opportunities in the primary market and

<sup>3</sup> Source: J.P. Morgan. Data as of 2 January 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Source: ICE BofA European Currency Developed Markets High Yield Excluding Subordinated Financials Constrained Index, Morgan Stanley Investment Management. Data as of 31 December 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Bloomberg L.P.: Consensus Economic Forecast, Bloomberg World Interest Rate Pricing. Data as of 5 January 2026.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Data as of 2 December 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Source: European Central Bank Data Portal. Data as of 2 December 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Source: United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics. Data as of 17 December 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Federal Reserve Summary of Economic Projections. Data as of 10 December 2025.

also potentially lead to wider spreads in the secondary market, within select segments of the high yield market.

In conclusion, we expect 2026 will likely be a competitive period for high yield, where starting yield ultimately generates attractive return, while average spreads move modestly wider. Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and South America remain elevated, and the evolving situation in Venezuela presents the possibility for deterioration or successful conclusion. Amid an uncertain and potentially volatile backdrop, we will continue to spend our time concentrating on what we do best — focusing on bottom-up fundamental credit analysis with a discerning eye on relative value, as we seek to generate positive risk-adjusted alpha for our clients.

**For further information, please contact your Morgan Stanley Investment Management representative.**

## Fund Facts

Launch date	01 December 1998
Base currency	Euro
Benchmark	ICE BofA European Currency High Yield 3% Constrained Ex-Sub Financials Index

## Calendar Year Returns (%)

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.

	YTD	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Class Z Shares	4.60	4.60	8.36	12.17	-10.97	3.41	2.22	10.54	-4.46	6.36	9.84
Blended Benchmark	5.25	5.25	8.56	12.14	-11.75	3.25	2.82	10.95	-3.34	6.22	10.07

All performance data is calculated NAV to NAV, net of fees, and does not take account of commissions and costs incurred on the issue and redemption of shares. The sources for all performance and index data is Morgan Stanley Investment Management ('MSIM Ltd'). **Please visit our website [www.morganstanley.com/im](http://www.morganstanley.com/im) to see the latest performance returns for the fund's other share classes.**

## Share Class Z Risk and Reward Profile

- The fund may be impacted by movements in the exchange rates between the fund's currency and the currencies of the fund's investments.
- The value of bonds are likely to decrease if interest rates rise and vice versa.
- The value of financial derivative instruments are highly sensitive and may result in losses in excess of the amount invested by the Sub-Fund.
- Issuers may not be able to repay their debts, if this happens the value of your investment will decrease. This risk is higher where the fund invests in a bond with a lower credit rating.
- The fund relies on other parties to fulfill certain services, investments or transactions. If these parties become insolvent, it may expose the fund to financial loss.
- Sustainability factors can pose risks to investments, for example: impact asset values, increased operational costs.
- There may be an insufficient number of buyers or sellers which may affect the funds ability to buy or sell securities.
- Investment in Fixed Income Securities via the China Interbank Bond Market may also entail additional risks, such as counterparty and liquidity risk.

- Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and investors may lose all or a substantial portion of his or her investment.
- The value of the investments and the income from them will vary and there can be no assurance that the Fund will achieve its investment objectives.
- Investments may be in a variety of currencies and therefore changes in rates of exchange between currencies may cause the value of investments to decrease or increase. Furthermore, the value of investments may be adversely affected by fluctuations in exchange rates between the investor's reference currency and the base currency of the investments.

Please refer to the Prospectus for full risk disclosures, available at [www.morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com](http://www.morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com). All data as of 31.12.2025 and subject to change daily.

Applications for shares in the Sub-Fund should not be made without first consulting the current Prospectus and the Key Information Document ("KID") or Key Investor Information Document ("KIID"), which are available in English and in the language of countries authorized for fund distribution and is available online at [Morgan Stanley Investment Funds Webpages](http://Morgan Stanley Investment Funds Webpages) or free of charge from the Registered Office at European Bank and Business Centre, 6B route de Trèves, L-2633 Senningerberg, R.C.S. Luxembourg B 29 192.

The summary of investor rights is available in the

aforementioned languages and website location under the General Literature section.

Information in relation to sustainability aspects of the Fund is available from the Prospectus of the Fund.

If the management company of the relevant Fund decides to terminate its arrangement for marketing that Fund in any EEA country where it is registered for sale, it will do so in accordance with the UCITS rules..

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## INDEX INFORMATION

The Blended Index performance shown is calculated using the **ICE BofA European Issuers High Yield Index** from inception through 31 July 2002, the **ICE BofA European Currency Constrained High Yield Index** to 31 March 2009 and the **ICE BofA**

## European Currency High Yield 3% Constrained Ex-Sub Financials Index

 thereafter.

The **ICE BofA European Currency Constrained high yield index**: The index is designed to track the performance of euro- and British pound sterling-denominated below investment grade corporate debt publicly issued in the eurobond, sterling domestic or euro domestic markets by issuers around the world.

The **ICE BofA European Currency High Yield 3% Constrained Ex-Sub Financials Index**: contains all non-Sub Financial securities in the ICE BofA European Currency High Yield Index but caps issuer exposure at 3%. Index constituents are capitalization-weighted, based on their current amount outstanding, provided the total allocation to an individual issuer does not exceed 3%.

The **ICE BofA European Issuers High Yield Index**: The index is designed to track the performance of USD, EUR and GBP denominated below investment grade corporate debt publicly issued by European corporations in the US, sterling or euro domestic or the eurobond markets.

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A blended benchmark has been used because there has been a change in benchmark during the reporting period shown.

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