

# BULGARIAN

# ECONOMY

## MONTHLY REPORT

Based on statistical data up to 17 July 2023

### Short-term Business Statistics

**In May, the short-term indicators had mixed performance.** Industrial production fell by 8.2% with the largest negative contribution from *manufacturing of energy goods* and *mining and quarrying*. Growth was registered in *manufacture of fabricated metal products, manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers and other transport equipment*. The decline in industrial turnover reached 26.1% and with domestic turnover accounting the most to the decrease. The construction production index went up by 2.9% on the back of *building construction*. Retail trade turnover increased by 1.8%.

**In June, the survey indicators remained almost unchanged compared to May.**

The expectations for the production tendency in industry and for sales in retail trade over the next three months were less favourable. At the same time, the expectations for demand in services were optimistic. Consumers' assessments for their financial situation worsened but their expectations for the general economic situation in the country were more positive.

### Labour market

**The number of registered unemployed reached 142 510 people at the end of June, up by 2.7% yoy.** In the first half of 2023, the indicator manifested its specific seasonal dynamics observed in the preceding years. The number of vacant jobs

announced by the Employment Agency remained relatively lower compared to their level in preceding years.

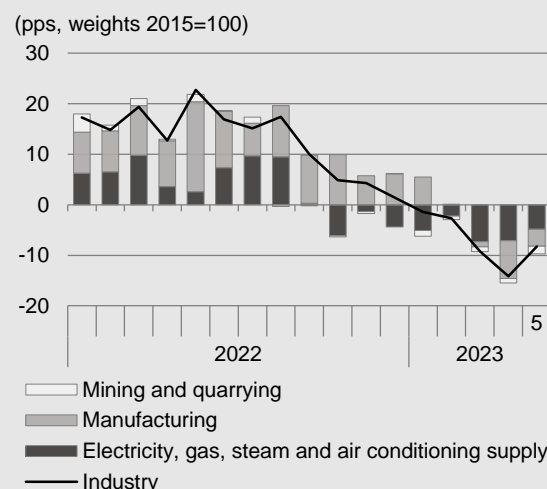
### Inflation

**In June, consumer prices in the country stepped up by a marginal 0.1% over the previous month, as measured by the HICP.** Core inflation and services in particular largely accounted for the increase in the headline rate (+0.29 pps), as rates for accommodation and airfares increased by 9.6% and 11.0%, respectively. Prices of non-energy industrial goods also went up by 0.3% mom, driven mainly by higher prices of consumer non-durables and particularly by pharmaceutical products, while consumer durables reported a slight price

decrease. On the other hand, prices of energy goods and food products declined during the month and offset almost entirely the contribution of the two main components mentioned above. The price of natural gas dropped 9.9% mom in line with the decision of the State regulator, while those for automotive fuels decreased by 1.5%, following prices dynamics of energy commodities. Food prices decreased by 0.7% on average due to the effect of seasonal factors on unprocessed food.

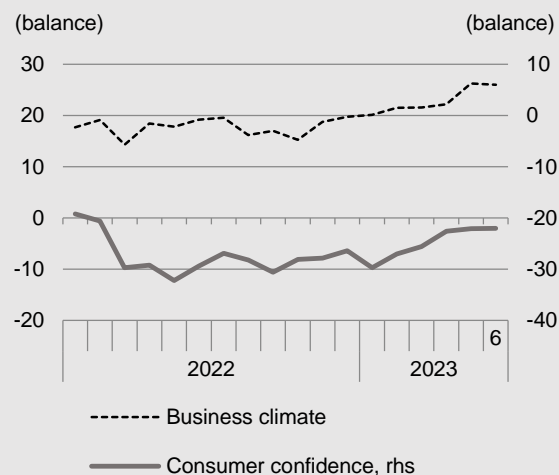
**The annual HICP inflation rate narrowed by 1.1 pps to 7.5% in June.** The decline in energy prices deepened to -9.6% yoy, while the price increase in the other HICP components continued to slow down. Core inflation decreased by 0.5 pps to 9.2% yoy, driven by both services and non-energy industrial goods.

**Graph 1** Contribution to industrial turnover yoy growth



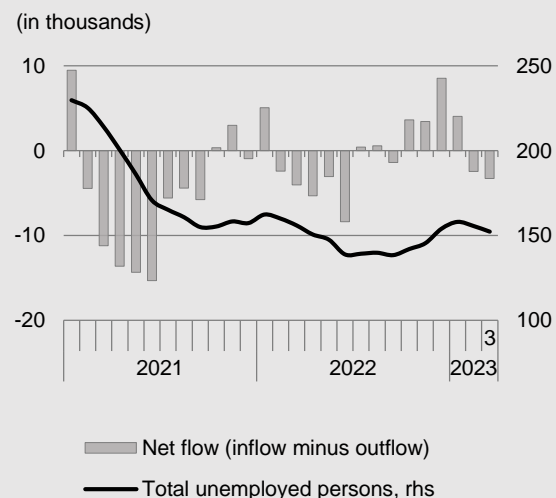
Source: NSI

**Graph 2** Business climate and consumer confidence



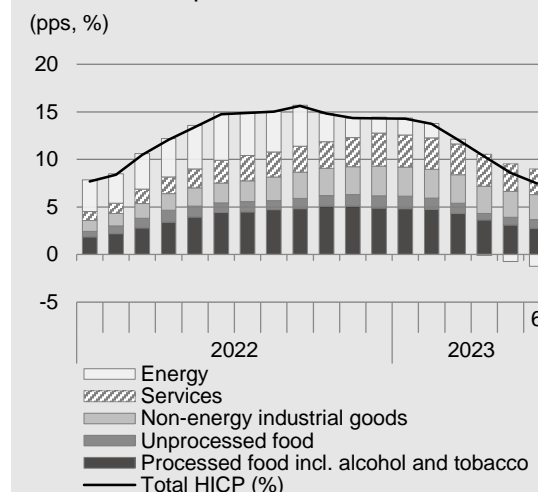
Source: NSI, Eurostat

**Graph 3** Net flow and stock of unemployment



Source: EA

**Graph 4** Contributions by main HICP components



Source: Eurostat, own calc.

## External sector

**In April, the current account surplus reached EUR 320.5 mln and more than doubled compared to a year ago.** The decline in international prices pushed down the nominal trade in goods. The decrease in import of goods outpaced the one in export (down by 8.1% yoy and 7.1% yoy, respectively) which led to an improvement in the trade deficit. The surplus on services increased on the back of export growth of 2.9% yoy and a decline in import of 6.5% yoy. The export was supported by the higher tourist receipts and export of ICT, while the decline of the import was due to a decrease in transport and insurance services. The surplus on the secondary income decreased by 24.7% and reached EUR 119.5 mln. The deterioration was mainly due to a lower inflow of EU funds. For the first four months of the year, the current account balance came on a surplus of 0.1% of projected GDP compared with a deficit of 0.7% of GDP for the same period in 2022. This improvement was mainly due to the decrease in the trade deficit by 0.7 pps.

**Gross external debt stood at 47.1% of projected GDP at end-April or 1.7 pps**

**lower compared to a year ago.** Net external debt reached -28.3% of projected GDP, as external assets continued to surpass liabilities.

## Financial Sector

**Credit to the private sector recorded marginal acceleration in May and grew by 12.1% yoy as compared to 11.9% at end-April.** Higher private credit growth came on the back of faster increase in loans to non-financial corporations, which grew by 8.3% yoy up from 7.9% yoy a month earlier. Like in the previous few months, overdraft continued to slow down, while long term corporate loans accelerated and were the main driver for the growth of loans to NFCs. Credits to households kept their pace from the previous month at 14.3% yoy. Consumer loans decelerated marginally from 11.7% to 11.6% yoy, which was compensated by a slightly faster increase in loans for house purchase (17.8% vs. 17.6% yoy in April). House prices in Q1 2023 registered an increase of 1.6% compared to the previous period, but their annual growth rate continued to slow to 9.8% given the high growth

of the indicator a year earlier. The slowdown was most significant in Sofia, while in Plovdiv and Burgas there was even an acceleration, which was due to the existing housing. The increase in construction costs also continued to slow to 52.8% yoy.

**Weighted average interest rates on loans climbed in May for both non-financial corporations and households.**

The price of consumer loans increased the most – up by 18 bps to 8.63%. The average rates on corporate loans and on loans for house purchase did the same by 9 bps to 4.56% and by 4 bps to 2.62%, respectively. Weighted average return on time deposits also increased by 16 bps to reach 1.52%.

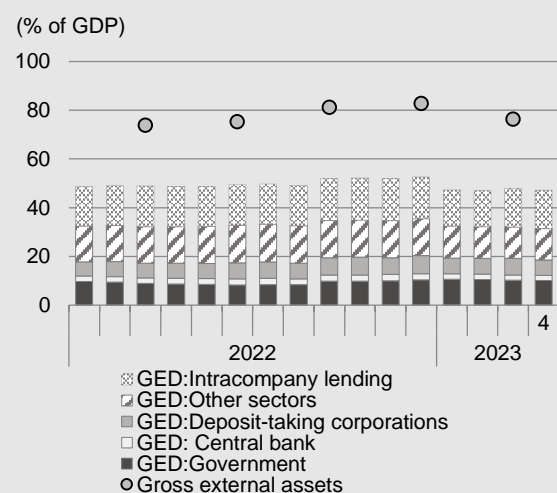
## Fiscal sector

**At end-May, the budget balance under the CFP was at a deficit of 0.6% of projected GDP.** Total revenue increased by 9.1% yoy, as tax revenue continued to contribute the most, up by 11.4% yoy. Direct tax revenue went up by 13.8% yoy, due to higher personal income tax revenue growth, up by 14.6%, and higher corporate income tax revenue, up by 12% yoy. The

driving factors for the former were the significant nominal wage growth in both private and public sector, improvement of other labour market indicators and better tax compliance. Indirect tax revenue decreased by 0.2%, due to lower VAT from import receipts. Excise revenue, up by 8%, was driven by the introduced gradual increase in excise rates on tobacco products from the beginning of March. Social and health contributions went up by 16.3%, due to higher wages and employment. *Other tax* revenues increased significantly reflecting companies' contributions related to measures to address high energy prices. In Jan-May, total expenditures, up by 17.3% yoy, were led by social and personnel spending, while the growth in subsidies slowed down as electricity prices eased and therefore also the need for payment of subsidies to electricity end-users on the non-regulated market.

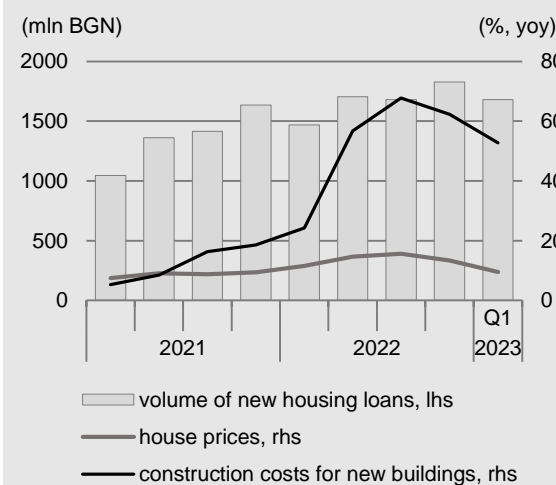
**The ratio of government (incl. government guaranteed) debt to GDP stood at 20.8% at end-May,** remaining virtually unchanged from the previous month. Compared to a year earlier, the increase of 18.7% yoy was mainly driven by higher external indebtedness.

**Graph 5** Gross external debt and gross external assets



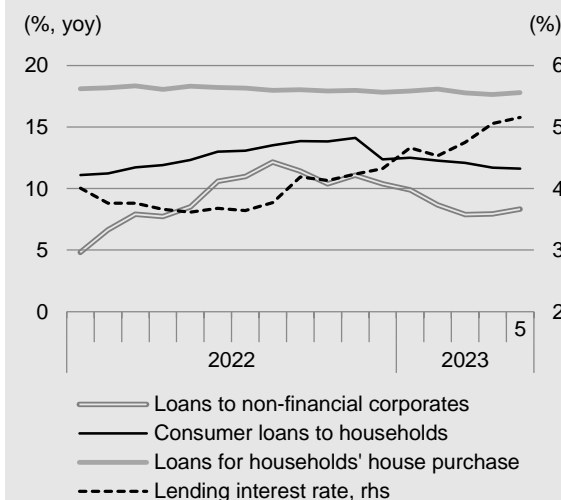
Source: BNB, NSI, MF

**Graph 6** House Price Index, construction costs and new housing loans



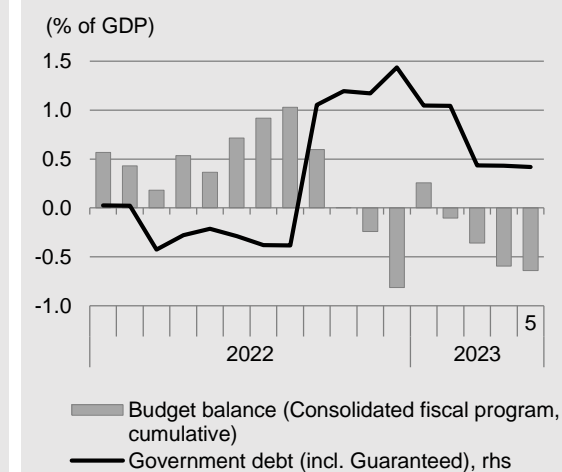
Source: BNB, Eurostat

**Graph 7** Private sector credit



Source: BNB, own calculations

**Graph 8** Budget balance and Government debt



Source: MF



