Italian Equity Strategy Monthly

Squeezed in the Middle

by Intermonte Research Team

Italian Equity Market

- **Market outlook.** March closed with a sharp correction in global equity markets (S&P and Nasdaq ~-5%; FTSEMIB -6%, EuroStoxx -9%), amid rising interest rates and expanding spreads (10-year BTP ~4%) and a sharp increase in energy costs, with Brent firmly above US$100/bl and TTF natural gas at around €55/MWh.
- **Investment strategy.** Uncertainty over the duration and outcome of the Middle East war remains the main focus for markets. The military phase could continue intermittently for much of April, while our base case rests on the expectation that some form of truce could be reached by May. The spike in energy costs is beginning to have a tangible impact on inflation (March data in Germany came in at +2.7%) and will subsequently feed through into growth expectations. Europe and Italy are more exposed than other regions given their dependence on energy imports and their sensitivity to ForEx movements. Nevertheless, in the event of a shorter conflict, we think the revisions to growth and earnings expectations could be manageable, while an extended critical situation linked to partial disruptions to production capacity and communication routes could lead to a Eurozone recession that is not reflected in our estimates/ consensus, nor in current stock market prices, despite recent corrections. We are lowering our 2026 GDP growth estimate for Italy to +0.3% (from +0.5%) and raising our risk-free rate assumption to 4.0% from 3.5%, to reflect the changed interest rate environment and the risk of a more restrictive shift in monetary policy. The ECB could raise rates in the event of a sharp increase in inflationary pressure, though any such decision would remain contingent on macroeconomic data, which in turn are heavily influenced by the scale of the conflict. Finally, as far as Italy is concerned, the adverse outcome to the justice referendum has weakened the government. Nevertheless, we do not expect any immediate repercussions, and think a snap election is unlikely, with the election deadline still set for spring 2027.
- **Corpotate newsflow.** FY25 results were mixed, with investors reacting negatively to the various disappointments that reflected weak trends in sectors such as automotive and consumer. indications on 1Q26 have generally been quite comforting considering the changed geopolitical and macro scenario. Expectations point to a downward revision in earnings estimates to reflect lower growth, partially offset by upward revisions for energy sector stocks. , with a total of €46bn in dividends due to be paid by stocks we cover, a figure that is currently expected to rise by a further 7% in 2027: these expectations could be at risk in the event of downward revisions to estimates, but on the whole sectors with higher dividend distributions, such as financials and utilities, remain well placed to continue recent trends in the absence of further external shocks. Deal activity remains buoyant, driven by a series of unexpected corporate developments: Poste's unsolicited bid for TIM, market rumours surrounding a potential delisting of Recordati, and the decision by TIM/Fastweb to exercise the termination clause on their MSAs with INWIT.
- **Portfolio selection.** Our stock selection remains focused on high-quality companies with a positioning that makes them resilient to complex situations, as well as some bets on stocks with particularly attractive valuations. The model portfolio performed in line with the market during the month, burdened by the underweight position on energy sector stocks
  <u>Large caps to overweight</u>: we are leaving the stock selection unchanged given ongoing uncertainty over the short-term outlook.
  <u>Mid/small caps to overweight</u>: among mid-caps, especially in light of recent results and conference indications, we confirm several names, including in the digital arena, despit current investor disaffection.
  <u>Stocks to underweight</u>: we are removing UniCredit following the recent correction and on expectations of solid 1Q results ahead of developments with the CBK offer, as well as Inwit after the stock has been routed, and adding Buzzi considering the challenging environment and weak guidance. *Our preferred list of stocks to over/underweight is on page 5.*

Italian Equity Market - Asset Allocation by Sector

Positive		Neutral	Negative
BANKS	▲	AM & INSURANCE	CONSUMERS
MEDIA		TELECOM	
UTILITIES		ENERGY	
		INDUSTRIALS	

Source: Intermonte SIM

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. Milan 20122 (Italy) - Galleria de Cristoforis, 7/8 - phone: +39-02-77115.1 - fax: +39-02-77115.300
New York (US) - Plural Securities - 950 Third Avenue, suite 1702, zip 10022, New York - USA - Phone 1 212 388-5600 **www.intermonte.it**

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

The reproduction of the information, recommendations and research produced by Intermonte SIM contained herein and of any its parts is strictly prohibited. None of the contents of this document may be shared with third parties without authorisation from Intermonte.

This report is directed exclusively at market professional and other institutional investors (Institutions) and is not for distribution to person other than "Institution" ("Non-Institution"), who should not rely on this material. Moreover, any investment or service to which this report may relate will not be made available to Non-Institution.

The information and data in this report have been obtained from sources which we believe to be reliable, although the accuracy of these cannot be guaranteed by Intermonte. In the event that there be any doubt as to their reliability, this will be clearly indicated. The main purpose of the report is to offer up-to-date and accurate information in accordance with regulations in force covering "recommendations" and is not intended nor should it be construed as a solicitation to buy or sell securities.

This disclaimer is constantly updated on Intermonte's website www.intermonte.it under LEGAL NOTICES. Valuations and recommendations can be found in the text of the most recent research and/or reports on the companies in question. For a list of all recommendations made by Intermonte on any financial instrument or issuer in the last twelve months consult the web page CUSTOMER AREA.

Intermonte distributes research and engages in other approved activities with respect to Major U.S. Institutional Investors ("Majors") and other Qualified Institutional Buyers ("QIBs"), in the United States, via Plural Securities LLC under SEC 15a-6 guidelines. Intermonte is not registered as a broker dealer in the United States under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), and is not a member of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation ("SIPC"). Plural Securities LLC is registered as a broker-dealer under the Exchange Act and is a member of SIPC.

ANALYST CERTIFICATION

For each company mentioned in this report the respective research analyst hereby certifies that all of the views expressed in this research report accurately reflect the analyst's personal views about any or all of the subject issuer (s) or securities. The analyst (s) also certify that no part of their compensation was, is or will be directly or indirectly related to the specific recommendation or view in this report.

The analyst (s) responsible for preparing this research report receive(s) compensation that is based upon various factors, including Intermonte's total profits, a portion of which is generated by Intermonte's corporate finance activities, although this is minimal in comparison to that generated by brokerage activities. Intermonte's internal procedures and codes of conduct are aimed to ensure the impartiality of its financial analysts. The exchange of information between the Corporate Finance sector and the Research Department is prohibited, as is the exchange of information between the latter and the proprietary equity desk in order to prevent conflicts of interest when recommendations are made.

The analyst responsible for the report is not a) a resident of US; b) an associated person of a U.S. broker-dealer; c) supervised by a supervisory principal of a U.S. broker-dealer. This Research Report is distributed in the U.S. through Plural Securities LLC, 950 3rd Avenue, Suite 1702, NY 10022, USA.

GUIDE TO FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH

The main methods used to evaluate financial instruments and set a target price for 12 months after the investment recommendation are as follows:

- Discounted cash flow (**DCF**) model or similar methods such as a dividend discount model (**DDM**)
- Comparison with market peers, using the most appropriate methods for the individual company analysed: among the main ratios used for industrial sectors are price/ earnings (P/E), EV/EBITDA, EV/EBIT, price /sales
- Return on capital and multiples of adjusted net book value are the main methods used for banking sector stocks, while for insurance sector stocks return on allocated capital and multiples on net book value and embedded portfolio value are used
- For the utilities sector comparisons are made between expected returns and the return on the regulatory asset base (RAB)

Some of the parameters used in evaluations, such as the risk-free rate and risk premium, are the same for all companies covered, and are updated to reflect market conditions. Currently a risk-free rate of 4.0% and a risk premium between 5.5% - 6.0% are being used.

Frequency of research: quarterly.

Reports on all companies listed on the FTSEMIB40 Index, most of those on the MIDEX Index and the main small caps (regular coverage) are published at least once per quarter to comment on results and important newsflow.

A draft copy of each report may be sent to the subject company for its information (without target price and/or recommendations), but unless expressly stated in the text of the report, no changes are made before it is published.

Explanation of our ratings system:

BUY: stock expected to outperform the market by over 25% over a 12 month period;

OUTPERFORM: stock expected to outperform the market by between 10% and 25% over a 12 month period;

NEUTRAL: stock performance expected at between +10% and - 10% compared to the market over a 12 month period;

UNDERPERFORM: stock expected to underperform the market by between -10% and -25% over a 12 month period;

SELL: stock expected to underperform the market by over 25% over a 12 month period.

Prices: The prices reported in the research refer to the price at the close of the previous day of trading

CURRENT INVESTMENT RESEARCH RATING DISTRIBUTIONS

Intermonte SIM is authorised by CONSOB to provide investment services and is listed at n° 246 in the register of brokerage firms.

As at 1 April 2026 Intermonte's Research Department covered 133 companies. Intermonte's distribution of stock ratings is as follows:

BUY:	32.33%
OUTPERFORM:	37.59%
NEUTRAL:	30.08%
UNDERPERFORM:	00.00%
SELL:	00.00%

The distribution of stock ratings for companies which have received corporate finance services from Intermonte in the last 12 months (78 in total) is as follows:

BUY:	53.85%
OUTPERFORM:	28.21%
NEUTRAL:	16.66%
UNDERPERFORM:	01.28%
SELL:	00.00%

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

In order to disclose its possible conflicts of interest Intermonte SIM states that:

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. operates or has operated in the last 12 months as the person in charge of carrying out the share buyback plan approved by the shareholders' meeting of AZIMUT, EL.EN., ELICA, INTERCOS, INTRED, PHARMANUTRA, SESA, STAR7, SYS-DAT, TMP GROUP, UNIDATA, VALSOIA, WEBUILD

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. provides or has provided corporate brokerage services to AEROPORTO GUGLIELMO MARCONI DI BOLOGNA, ALLCORE, ALMAWAVE, ANTARES VISION, AVIO, CASTA DIVA GROUP, CUBE LABS, CY4GATE, DOMINION HOSTING HOLDING, ELICA, ESPRINET, EVISO, EXECUS, FINE FOODS & PHARMACEUTICALS NTM, FNM, FRANCHI UMBERTO MARMI, GPI, GREEN OLEO, HIGH QUALITY FOOD, IGD, IKONISYS SA, INTRED, ISCC FINTECH, LEMON SISTEMI, LUVE, MAPS, MARE ENGINEERING GROUP, NEODECORTECH, NOTORIOUS PICTURES, PREATONI GROUP, REDELFI, REDFISH LONGTERM CAPITAL, REVO INSURANCE, REWAY GROUP, SERI INDUSTRIAL, SPINDOX, STAR7, TECNO, ULISSE BIOMED, WIIT, XENIA HOTELLERIE SOLUTION, Zest Group SpA **in the last 12 months**

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. operates or has operated in the last 12 months as Financial Content Provider on the company ALLCORE, ALMAWAVE, B&C SPEAKERS, BANCA SISTEMA, BIFIRE, CASTA DIVA GROUP, COFLE, COM.TEL, CUBE LABS, CY4GATE, DIGITOUCH, DOMINION HOSTING HOLDING, ECOSUNTEK, ELES, ELICA, ENERGY, EVISO, EXECUS, FIERA MILANO, FILA, FOPE, G.M. LEATHER, GREEN OLEO, HIGH QUALITY FOOD, IGD, IKONISYS SA, INTERCOS, INTRED, ISCC FINTECH, LEMON SISTEMI, MAPS, MARE ENGINEERING GROUP, MASI AGRICOLA, MATICA FINTEC, MISITANO & STRACUZZI SPA, NEODECORTECH, NOTORIOUS PICTURES, OLIDATA, PREATONI GROUP, RACING FORCE, REDELFI, REDFISH LONGTERM CAPITAL, SG COMPANY, SIMONE, SPINDOX, TAMBURI, TECNO, TMP GROUP, TPS, ULISSE BIOMED, XENIA HOTELLERIE SOLUTION, Zest Group SpA

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. performs or has performed in the last 12 months the role of intermediary appointed in the public purchase and/or exchange offer transaction of ANTARES VISION, MARE ENGINEERING GROUP, TINEXTA

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. operates or has operated in the last 12 months as liquidity provider of BANCA SISTEMA, Zest Group SpA

Intermonte SIM has acted as counterparty to WIIT Fin S.r.l. in connection with call and put options having WIIT S.p.A. shares and dividends as reference underlying.

Intermonte SIM is acting as financial advisor to Banca CF+ in the context of the public tender offer promoted on Banca Sistema.

Intermonte SIM is acting as financial advisor to TIM in relation to the company's saving shares conversion.

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. performs or has performed in the last 12 months the role of financial advisor for BANCA GENERALI, BANCO BPM, MARE ENGINEERING GROUP, TELECOM ITALIA, TINEXTA

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. operates or has operated in the last 12 months as market maker on financial instruments with underlying shares issued by A2A, AMPLIFON, AZIMUT, BANCA GENERALI, BANCA IFIS, BANCA MEDIOLANUM, BANCO BPM, BCA MPS, BCA POP SONDRIO, BFF BANK, Bper Banca, BREMBO, BUZZI, CAMPARI, DANIELI & C, DIASORIN, ENEL, ENI, ERG, FERRARI, FINECOBANK, INDUSTRIE DE NORA, INTERPUMP GROUP, INTESA SANPAOLO, INWIT, IREN, ITALGAS, IVECO GROUP, LEONARDO, LOTTOMATICA GROUP, MEDIOBANCA, MFE B, MONCLER, MONDADORI EDIT., NEXI, OVS, PIRELLI & C, POSTE ITALIANE, PRYSMIAN, SAIPEM, SESA, SNAM S.p.A., STELLANTIS, STMICROELECTRONICS, TECHNOGYM, TECHNOPROBE, TELECOM ITALIA, TELECOM ITALIA R, TENARIS, TERNA, UNICREDIT, UNIPOL, WEBUILD

Intermonte Sim S.p.A. has or had in the last 12 months a marketing contract on instruments issued by BARCLAYS, BNP PARIBAS, GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP INC, LEONTEQ, MAREX FINANCIAL, MEDIOBANCA, MORGAN STANLEY, NATIXIS, SOCIETE GENERALE, UNICREDIT, VONTOBEL N

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. performs or has performed in the last 12 months the role of specialist on financial instruments issued by ABITARE IN, AQUAFIL, BANCA IFIS, BANCA SISTEMA, COFLE, COM.TEL, DIGITOUCH, ECOSUNTEK, EL.EN., EMAK, ENERGY, FNM, GEFRAN, GREEN OLEO, INTRED, MATICA FINTEC, MISITANO & STRACUZZI SPA, MONDADORI EDIT., OLIDATA, OMER, PHARMANUTRA, POWERSOFT, QF ALPHA IMM, REPLY, SESA, SG COMPANY, SOMEC, STAR7, SYS-DAT, TAMBURI, TESMEC, THE ITALIAN SEA GROUP, TINEXTA, TMP GROUP, TXT E-SOLUTIONS, UNIDATA **with the obligation to disseminate studies**

Intermonte SIM S.p.A. plays or has played in the last 12 months the role of sponsor for UNIDATA S.p.A.

INTERMONTE SIM is MIFID compliant - for our Best Execution Policy please check our Website https://www.intermonte.it/it/avvertenze-legali/mifid-ii.html

Further information is available.