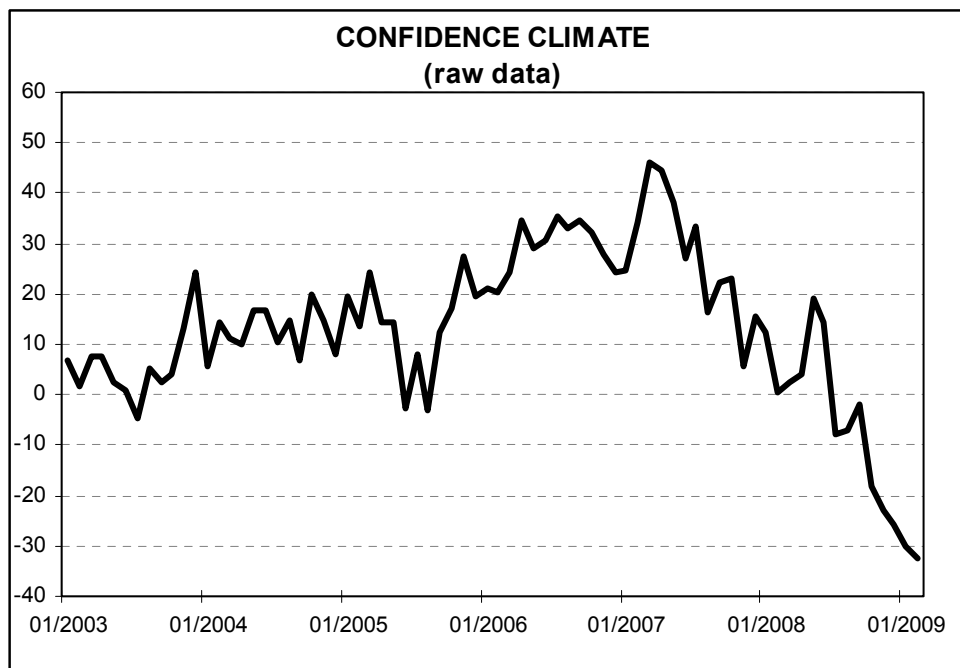




Date: February 27, 2009

IN FEBRUARY CONFIDENCE AMONG MARKET SERVICES FIRMS EXTENDS ITS DOWNWARD PATH

- The confidence climate declined to -32 (from -30 in January), due to the worsening in short-term prospects for orders and the general economic trend. Assessments on orders marginally recovered
- Confidence developments showed some differences at both sectoral and regional levels. The indicator decreased to -35 (from -31) in household services and to -30 (from -28) in business services, but recovered in financial services (to 2 from -1)
- At the regional level, confidence deteriorated only in the North West (to -38 from -27), while it recovered in the North East (to -17 from -19), the Centre (to -14 from -19) and the South (to -64 from -76)
- Among the variables excluded from the calculation of the indicator, also opinions and expectations on employment sent negative signals



Data on March shall be released on March 27, 2009

The next ISAE surveys are scheduled as follows:

March 10: ISAE International Comparison of Consumer and Business Surveys (reference period: February)

The full text of ISAE Surveys (either hardcopy or electronic format) is available for sale (for further information see the web site www.isae.it)

General results

The ISAE Survey, carried out on a panel of about 2,000 firms between February 2 and February 21, showed that confidence among market services firms continued to worsen in February. The index fell to -32 (from -30 in January) due to the deterioration in short-term forecasts for orders and the general economic trend. Conversely, assessments on orders marginally recovered.

Confidence developments recorded some differences at both sectoral and regional levels. The indicator decreased to -35 (from -31) in household services and to -30 (from -28) in business services, but recovered in financial services (to 2 from -1).

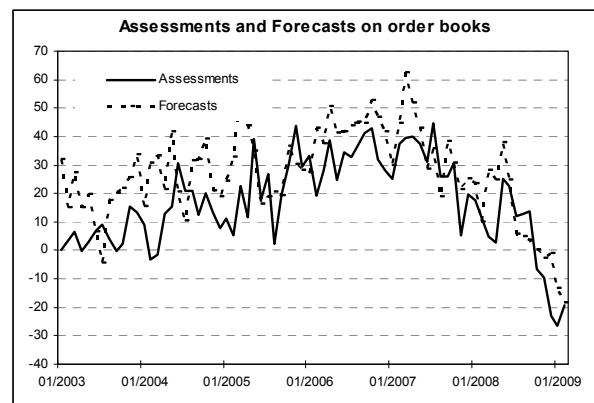
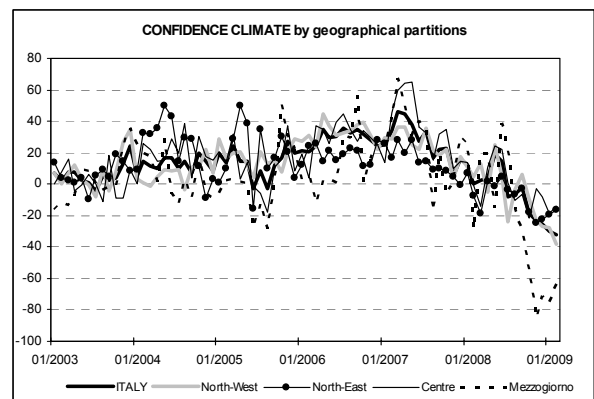
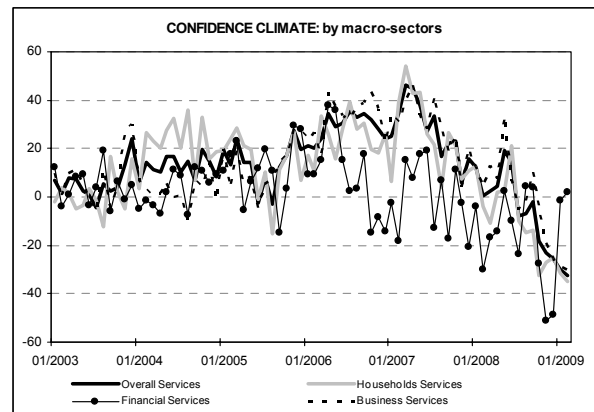
At the regional level, confidence deteriorated only in the North West (to -38 from -27), while it picked up in the North East (to -17 from -19), the Centre (to -14 from -19) and the South (to -64 from -76).

Situation in the reference period

Opinions on orders recuperated slightly in February. The related raw balance moved to -19 from -27. The employment's current situation worsened instead (the balance changed to -25 from -3).

The balances for orders and employment showed diverging trends across main macro sectors. In household services, the balance for orders remained clearly negative while the one for employment recovered weakly. In financial services, the balance for orders clearly dropped; the one for current employment conditions bettered instead three percentage points. Finally, in business services the balance for orders improved noticeably, whereas the one for employment posted a new sharp decline.

The regional breakdown showed a mixed situation only with regard to the opinions on employment. The balance actually recovered in the North East and the South and worsened in the North West and the Centre. The balance for demand improved instead in all areas.



Outlook for the next three months

In February, expectations for orders, employment and the economic trend continued to send negative signals. In detail, the related raw balance declined to -19 (from -13) for orders, to -16 (from -10) for employment, and to -59 (from -50) for the overall economy. As for prices, 80% of operators stated they intended to keep selling prices unchanged, 9% said that they would raise them, while 7% asserted they were going to cut them down. Consequently the balance increased to 2 from -10.

The sectoral situation was heterogeneous also with regard to forecasts. Specifically, in household services, operators were pessimistic about all surveyed variables. In financial services, the balance for orders and the economy recovered, whereas the one for employment fell. Lastly, operators in business services were more pessimistic than in January about orders and the overall economy, but the balance for employment picked up.

At the regional level, in the North West and the Centre, expectations for orders and the economic trend worsened and those for employment marginally recovered. On the contrary, in the North East operators were more optimistic about orders. The balances for employment and the economy deteriorated instead. In the Centre, expectations for orders improved, those for employment recuperated, and prospects for the economy further deteriorated. Lastly, in the South, the balance for orders remained sharply negative, forecasts for employment worsened and those for the general economic trend recovered.

