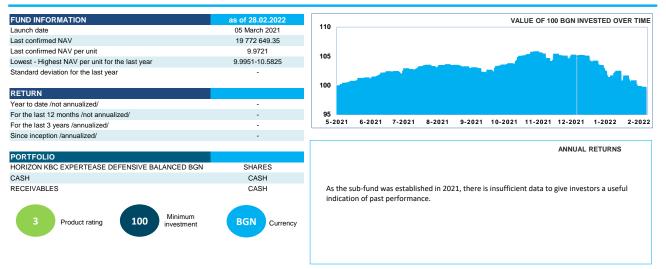
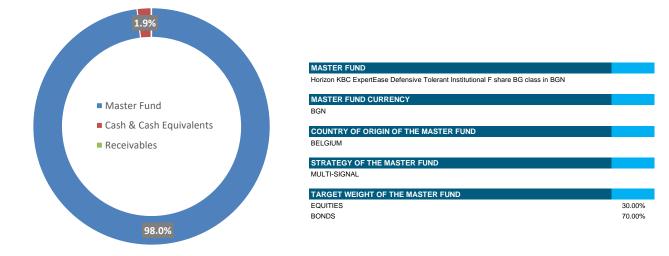
## **UBB ExpertEase Defensive Tolerant (LEVA)**

UBB ExpertEase Defensive Tolerant (BGN) is a global mixed "balanced" investment sub-fund of the umbrella mutual fund UBB ExpertEase, which is a feeder collective investment scheme within the meaning of Article 67 of the Law on the Activity of Collective Investment Schemes and Other Collective Investment Enterprises (LACISOCIE). The investment objective of the sub-fund is to invest at least 85% of its assets in the main sub-fund and up to 15% of its assets in cash and derivatives. The main sub-fund **Horizon ExpertEase Defensive Tolerant** follow a multi-signal strategy which investment objective is to generate the highest possible return for its shareholders in accordance with its investment policy. The main sub-fund Horizon KBC ExpertEase Defensive Tolerant folows multi-signal strategy in which the target allocation is **30% equities and 70% bonds**.







## COMMENT

In February financial markets were hit hard by the military invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The month started with investors mainly being concerned with the prospects of higher inflation and pondering the possibilities of accelerated rate hikes by the main central banks (the Fed, BoE, ECB) – fears were that too fast rate hikes will stifle growth. However, in the second half of the month, the shocking news of the invasion in Ukraine overshadowed all financial market activity. The immediate effect were a sell-off of risky assets (stocks sank) and skyrocketing food and energy prices. Russia is a significant exporter of commodities, accounting for about a sixth of global crude oil production, 17% of natural gas production and nearly a tenth of global wheat supplies (both, Russia and Ukraine account for around 30% of global wheat exports). Brent oil ended the month at \$100 per barrel, and the price has increased by over 40% in the last three months.

Compared to other global markets, European shares fell particularly badly. Europe has a significant reliance on Russian energy, especially gas, and the invasion saw energy prices spike sharply – European natural gas prices rose 15% in February. Higher energy prices could fuel higher or at least more persistent inflation, eating into household incomes. The Consumer Discretionary and Financials sectors were the worst performing shares, reflecting expectations for pressure on consumer spending and economic activity as energy prices rise. American stocks also lost ground during the month, as investors tried to process the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The United States have imposed a broad range of severe sanctions on Russia after the invasion. Transactions with the Russian central bank were banned, and access to its foreign reserves was limited. Restrictions have been placed on the nation's key financial institutions – including its biggest banks, Sberbank and VTB - as well as its wealthiest individuals and families. The heaviest penalty was also triggered – Russia

Western sanctions sent the ruble plummeting, with the currency dropping 30% to an all-time low versus the dollar. In response, Russia's central bank more than doubled its key interest rate to 20%, freed local bank reserves to boost liquidity and banned Russian residents and companies from transferring foreign currency abroad. The Moscow Exchange also remained closed for a week to shield stocks from a brutal selloff.

Now what remains unknown is whether central banks react to higher energy prices by increasing the magnitude or speed of interest rate rises in order to combat inflation, or reduce their pace of tightening in order to support the economy. The answer will depend on the extent to which higher energy prices dampen growth or cause strong wage rises as workers try to protect their purchasing power amid a tight labor market. However, towards the end of the month bond markets scaled back rate hike expectations for 2022, leaving them barely changed for the month.

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