

Well, European factories continue to struggle. French industrial production decreased slightly during August, after falling by 1.8% in the previous 12 months. German industrial production also declined in the year to August, by 1.9%. But Italy's figures were more encouraging, although forecasts expected industrial output to decrease, it actually rose in August by 0.1%, following an increase of 1.7% in the previous 12 months. And in Sweden, industrial production rose by 3% in the year to August. Austria's economy grew by 0.7% in the year to the second quarter, compared with 0.8% in the year to the first quarter. And in Switzerland, retail sales plummeted by 3.2% in the year to August, while in Denmark they went up by the same rate. In Britain, the number of people claiming unemployment benefit fell in September to its lowest level since the mid-1970s, at 929,800 claimants. And wage growth rose to 3.4% in the 12 months to August, thanks mostly to higher public-sector wages, which increased by 5.6%.