

The ECB's Dashboard: Taper auto pilot

Market volatility, Italian fiscal policies and low core inflation will do little to divert the ECB from its taper plans. The auto pilot, turned on in June, should stay on. The reduction in net QE purchases has been well telegraphed and should not surprise anyone. Look for a limited effect on both FX and bond markets



Source: Shutterstock

Scenario analysis: How to position for Draghi's alternatives

| | Inflation outlook | Growth outlook | Forward rate guidance | QE taper guidance | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| Current stance | "Underlying inflation is expected to pick up" | "The risks... to growth outlook are broadly balanced" | Rates to remain "at present levels at least through the summer of 2019" | QE reduced after September and ended in December 2018 | | | |
| | | | | | EUR/USD | 2-year Schatz | 10-year Bund |
| Dovish | Downward revision to (medium-term) 2020 CPI forecast | Downside risks stemming from trade wars | Rates can remain unchanged well passed the summer | Hints that QE could be extended beyond end of 2018 | 1.14 | -5 bp | -10bp |
| ING Base Case | No revision of CPI forecast | Risks remain broadly balanced | No change in the "through summer" guidance | Announcement to reduce QE to 15bn pm as signalled | 1.16 | +0 bp | +0 bp |
| Hawkish | Even greater confidence of CPI converging to target | Upward revision of 2019/20 growth forecasts | June/July deposit hike cannot be ruled out | Hints that QE could end before year-end | 1.18 | +5 bp | +10 bp |
| Very hawkish | Upside risks" to the inflation outlook | Risks to growth outlook are to the "upside" | Balance of risks point to hike before the summer | Signal that reinvestments could end in 1H 2019 | 1.22 | +10 bp | +15 bp |

Source: ING

ECB remains on auto pilot towards an end of QE by year-end

When does a central banker know that he has done an excellent job? When QE can be brought to an end and hardly anyone seems to care. This definition characterises the ECB's recent and next steps.

As market volatility on the back of trade tensions, Turkey and Italian fiscal policies has not left any significant marks on the Eurozone economy, the ECB will in our view announce the next step of its dovish tapering on Thursday: a reduction of the monthly QE purchases to EUR15bn from EUR30bn currently.

We don't expect the latest round of ECB staff projections to deliver any new insights on growth and inflation. Our main focus will be on the ECB's forecast for core inflation, which up to now has been subject to extreme optimism but has shown very little progress.

With a reduction of the QE purchases, the ECB remains on auto pilot towards an end of QE by year-end. Therefore, there is very little reason to change the communication or forward guidance.

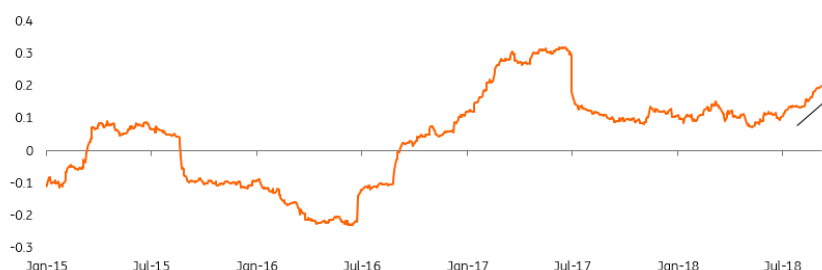
FX markets implications

EUR/USD should be largely unaffected by this week's ECB meeting as (a) the taper autopilot has been clearly and fully communicated (thus no surprise there vs market expectations); (b) the firm forward rate guidance on the ECB deposit rate makes any potential ECB interest rate re-pricing a story for 2019 rather than this year. As a result, the ECB is unlikely to provide a catalyst for meaningful EUR moves this week.

Rather than relative monetary policy outlook (on the USD side, the Fed outlook for 2018 is fairly priced), the main driver behind the EUR/USD price action remains the general risk environment and the spectre of trade wars. At this point (and despite the Eurozone current account surplus) this is a negative for EUR/USD given the pro-cyclicality of the EUR/USD (see chart below), the openness of the Eurozone (EZ) economy (vs the relatively closed US economy) as well as the threat of EZ specific tariffs coming from the US administration.

EUR/USD positively correlated with risk

12-month rolling EUR/USD correlation with risk (MSCI World equity index), daily data



Source: ING, Bloomberg

Bond markets implications

The reduction in net QE purchases has been well telegraphed and should not surprise anyone. If anything, some faint hopes that Draghi could adjust the anticipated path to the risk environment,

which would need to be priced out. In that regard trade, EM concerns and the Italian budget and should remain the main drivers for rates this coming week.

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