



## ECONOMIC RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

### Summary

#### European Union

##### What future for Europe?

March 25 will mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The European Commission has tried to shed some light on future trends by examining five possible scenarios. The leaders of the biggest eurozone member states already seem to have opted for a multi-speed Europe.

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#### France

##### Supply and demand

France is suffering from both supply-side and demand-side problems. The big question is how to support the one and stimulate the other.

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#### A retrouver dans



### Looking at Germany's surpluses

#### ■ Germany's current account surpluses on the rise ■ ... except with the eurozone

Germany is frequently berated by the European Commission and other international organisations for its huge current account surpluses.

Last month, the US administration joined the chorus when Germany reported the surplus for 2016 at EUR 270 billion (or 8.5% of GDP), a new record.

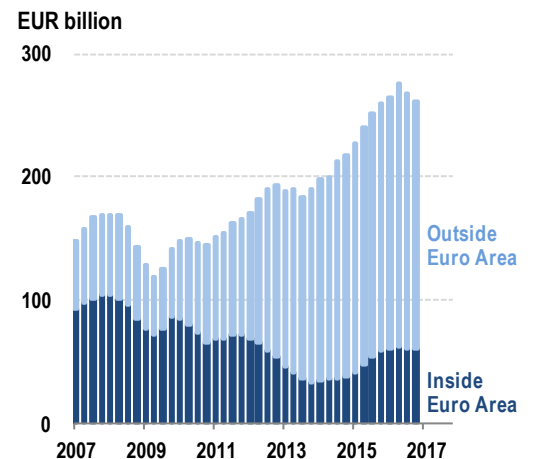
The widening surplus is partly related to Germany's weak public and private investment. Strengthening of the country's infrastructure and stimulating private capital spending - through deregulation and intensifying competition in services - are among the challenges for the next German government.

In purely arithmetical terms, the increase in Germany's surplus leads to lower current account balances in other countries.

However, contrary to popular belief, the rising surplus is not so much against the eurozone, but mainly against the US, the UK and the emerging economies including China (see chart).

In particular, the surplus with France tends to narrow. At the moment Germany decided to implement a minimum wage, France implemented supply-side measures. Over the last three years, Unit labour costs are rising faster in Germany than elsewhere in Europe, including France.

#### GERMANY, CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUSES



Source: Bundesbank

#### THE WEEK ON THE MARKETS

Week 17-3 17 > 23-3-17

↗ CAC 40	5 029	▶ 5 033	+0.1 %
↘ S&P 500	2 378	▶ 2 346	-1.4 %
↗ Volatility (VIX)	11.3	▶ 13.1	+1.8 %
↘ Euribor 3M (%)	-0.33	▶ -0.33	-0.1 bp
↗ Libor \$ 3M (%)	1.15	▶ 1.16	+0.5 bp
↘ OAT 10y (%)	1.10	▶ 1.04	-5.8 bp
↘ Bund 10y (%)	0.43	▶ 0.42	-0.8 bp
↘ US Tr. 10y (%)	2.50	▶ 2.42	-8.3 bp
↗ Euro vs dollar	1.07	▶ 1.08	+0.4 %
↗ Gold (ounce, \$)	1 229	▶ 1 244	+1.2 %
↘ Oil (Brent, \$)	51.8	▶ 50.7	-2.0 %

Source: Thomson Reuters

## European Union

### What future for Europe?

- March 25 will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. How can we celebrate this event without stopping to take stock of the obstacles now facing the European project?
- The European Commission has tried to shed some light on future trends by examining five possible scenarios.
- The leaders of the biggest eurozone member states already seem to have opted for a multi-speed Europe. Yet this is surely not the clearest choice for Europe's future, nor does it come without risks.
- The European Commission intends to fuel debate in the months ahead, in the hopes that by the end of 2017, European executive leaders will be in a stronger position to pick a scenario and push forward European construction.

The Treaty of Rome creating the European Economic Community celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> year this Saturday, 25 March. Yet it is hard to imagine this anniversary celebration without stopping to think about all the obstacles currently facing Europe, notably the rise of Euroscepticism in several member states; the questioning of the project by other world powers, notably the United States; the UK's decision to exit the EU; and the difficulties of removing the stigma left by a major economic crisis that revealed the single currency's dysfunctions.

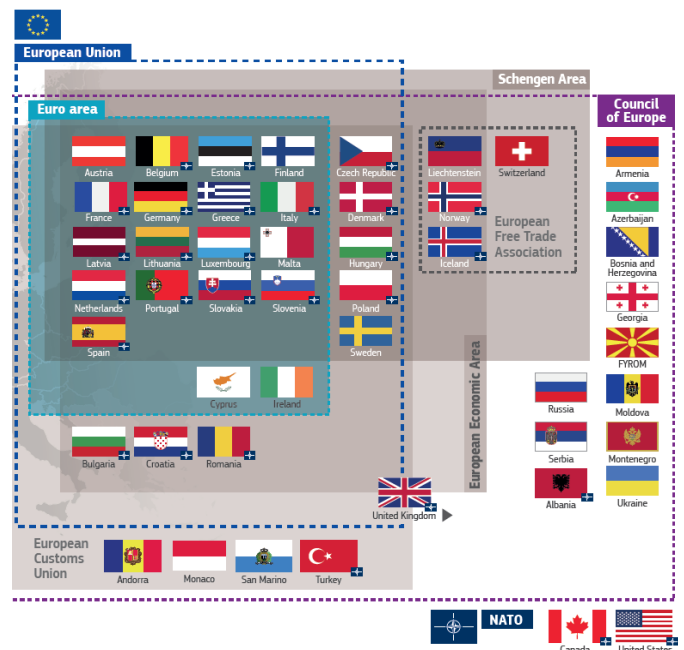
Today, how should we talk about Europe's future? The European Commission rose to the challenge with the recent publication of a white paper on the future of Europe. Its objective is to clarify the terms of the debate by demonstrating that we are not faced with a binary choice between more or less Europe, and to help citizens understand the concrete implications of future evolutions. According to the Commission, member states have several options to choose between.

#### Five scenarios for the future

The first scenario is to carry on the current path. Today, the European project boasts vast ambitions, in terms of social harmonisation and the convergence of living standards, with all EU countries striving to integrate the euro... But in practice, progress is only limited and gradual, since it is hard to get all 28 member states to agree on these issues. The problem is that the gap between expectations and realisations fuels public mistrust and the rise of Euroscepticism.

The second scenario is nothing but the single market (basically a programme that would have pleased the UK). It would mean renouncing other common policies like convergence, European structural funds and the common agricultural policy. It would also mean foregoing the ambition to harmonise social welfare and environmental standards between member states. Focusing on new

### Europe today



Chart

Source: European Commission

priorities for Europe would offer the advantage of adjusting European ambitions to its concrete realisations. Yet the major risk of this scenario is to trigger a race to the bottom in terms of fiscal, social and environmental standards, through competition between member countries. This non-cooperative strategy would obviously be harmful for the citizens of the EU as a whole. Moreover, under these conditions, what would be the euro's role and future?

The third scenario is to launch a multi-speed Europe, allowing one or more circles of countries that are willing to do more in specific areas of integration.

The fourth scenario is to do less but more efficiently. Member states would still advance altogether, but in fewer areas, with greater financial resources, and with a certain loss of sovereignty. To be more efficient, more restrictive decision-making procedures would be adopted, like those already set up for banking supervision and competition policy.

The fifth and last scenario is to do much more together, to strive for greater integration with the ultimate goal of creating a federal union.

#### A multi-speed Europe: the *de facto* choice without debate?

Of course, not all of these scenarios are real possibilities, but by presenting them, the Commission highlights the implicit choices hidden behind the big options. The Commission insists on the fact that preserving national sovereignty on fiscal, social and



environmental issues within a single market risks fuelling competition that could hinder progress on these fronts, and could even undermine the advances already made by member states. Inversely, harmonisation and integration cannot result in high standards and efficient policies without the transfer of sovereignty to the European level.

The leaders of EU member states could use this white paper to present their citizens with clear, coherent choices. But will they do it? A few days ahead of legislative elections in the Netherlands, France held a summit meeting of the leaders of the eurozone's four biggest countries, which are also the biggest of a post-Brexit EU-27. They are clearly heading towards a multi-speed Europe, in which those who want to can pursue deeper integration. In the current environment, defence and intelligence are presented as the most probable areas for advancement. In economics, there will ultimately be the question of fiscal and social harmonisation, or the creation of a fiscal capacity for the eurozone. For these leaders, this approach offers the advantage of being based on voluntary efforts and inter-governmental decision-making procedures, which they have tended to favour since the outbreak of the crisis. Assuming they can reach agreement, a multi-speed strategy should also enable the eurozone member states to deepen integration – which is absolutely necessary to anchor the single currency – without being hampered by the need to convince the entire EU-27.

Yet this is not necessarily the clearest choice, nor does it come without risks. First, it leaves no way of knowing in advance in what direction the EU intends to evolve in the years ahead, as this direction will be the result of the different circles of integration that the countries will decide, or not, to implement. There is no way of ensuring the coherence between the different domains in which progress is made, and whether they will form a stable body for both

the EU and the eurozone. Second, it should be hard to prevent a multi-speed Europe from creating new opportunities for a Europe “à la carte”, with member countries picking and choosing to opt in or out. Forming a powerful hard core group, the four member countries attending the summit are counting on their size and power to sway other members. But how can they prevent the smallest member states from adopting free-rider strategies? The third risk is division. Several member countries fear that a “multi-speed Europe” masks the determination of some eurozone countries to go it alone, and worry about what consequences that might have.

In the months ahead, the European Commission intends to continue fuelling debate by publishing a series of papers on developing the social dimension of Europe, deepening Economic and Monetary Union, harnessing globalisation, the future of Europe's defence, and the future of EU finances. Hopefully all of this will encourage the heads of state to take the initiative at the next European Summit in December 2017, provided that upcoming elections in several member states will give the future executive leaders the political capital necessary to develop proposals.



## France

### Supply and demand

- France is suffering from both supply-side and demand-side problems. This is the analysis made by most of the international institutions.
- This is not as contradictory as it might sound: an economy can experience structural problems that limit its potential growth while at a given time still be hit by a shortage of demand.
- The big question is how to reconcile supply-side improvements and demand stimulus. One response highlights the positive impact of structural reforms on demand in the short term through wealth effect. A second response underscores the key role of investment, which is both a component of demand and a source of productivity gains.

Today, most of the international institutions (foremost of which are the IMF, OECD, and European Commission) point out the structural imbalances of the French economy arising from its low potential growth, which is dependent on supply-side factors. The same institutions also agree that France has a negative output gap, i.e. that the actual level of production is below potential, a sign of a demand shortage. This raises the question of whether France's problem is one of supply or demand. In this article, we are not trying to settle the matter one way or the other, but rather to clarify the stakes and, to a certain degree, to question its pertinence.

#### Supply-side problems

The French economy's supply-side difficulties are well-documented. They formed the basis for revising down potential growth estimates in recent years. According to the OECD, France's potential growth rate has slipped from an average of 1.8% in 2000 to 2009, to 1.1% since 2010. Potential growth corresponds to the cruising speed at which an economy *at equilibrium* (i.e. when aggregate demand equals aggregate supply) can grow without overheating. In the long term, it depends on demographic factors and productivity gains, i.e. changes in the size of the working age population and their output. France is not the only economy hit by a decline in potential growth: slowdown in technical progress is global and a lot of advanced economies are affected by ageing population. But specific developments, such as high structural unemployment or lack of productive investment, can aggravate these trends. This is the case in France. Inversely, improving these factors can be a way of raising potential growth. This is why the international institutions have issued various recommendations to implement structural reforms in order to stimulate supply and, more specifically, to improve competitiveness.

#### Shortage of demand

At the same time, the IMF, OECD and European Commission all estimate that France has a negative output gap, even though their estimates vary significantly. The OECD estimates the negative output gap at 2.3% (of potential GDP) at year-end 2016, compared to 1.8% for the IMF and 1.3% for the European Commission. According to this analysis, France's sluggish growth in recent years is not due to supply-side constraints hindering production, but rather to a shortfall of demand. This assessment seems corroborated by the low level of core inflation, which averaged 0.4% year-on-year over the past three months, suggesting that the economy has some underemployed resources. Stimulating demand – via fiscal measures, for example – would generate more vigorous growth, lifting it above the potential growth rate (it being understood that GDP growth above potential is necessary to close the output gap). The impact on public finances would depend on the fiscal multiplier, that is to say GDP variation in response to a 1%-increase in public spending. A multiplier equal to or higher than 1 would stimulate demand without raising the debt-to-GDP ratio.

#### Supply and demand

Should we conclude then that France is suffering from a shortage of both supply and demand? It is conceptually possible to imagine an economy experiencing structural problems that hinder potential growth while at the same time recording a level of production lower than it should be (i.e. lower than potential GDP). This brings us to the big question of how to reconcile supply-side improvements and support for demand. The stakes are high: numerous studies show that an extended period of a demand shortfall can have a significant, lasting impact on supply.

Faced with this challenge, several institutions highlight the positive impact of structural reforms on demand. This is notably the case for the ECB. By raising productivity expectations, and thus expectations of future revenues, supply-side policies act as a wealth effect that stimulates spending in the short term. But a certain number of conditions must also come together: economic agents must make rational expectations and not be squeezed by liquidity constraints; and the credibility of the reforms must be strong.

Another response underscores the key role investment plays, as both a source of demand and productivity gains. In this respect, the priority is often placed on investment in infrastructure and human capital. This kind of public investment is esteemed to have a high multiplier effect because of its stronger knock-on effect on private investment, notably when the output gap is negative. This explains the debate about introducing a "golden rule" that excludes certain public investments from European fiscal criteria.



**Markets overview**

**The essentials**

Week 17-3-17 > 23-3-17

➔ CAC 40	5 029	▶ 5 033	+0.1 %
➔ S&P 500	2 378	▶ 2 346	-1.4 %
➔ Volatility (VIX)	11.3	▶ 13.1	+1.8 %
➔ Euribor 3M (%)	-0.33	▶ -0.33	-0.1 bp
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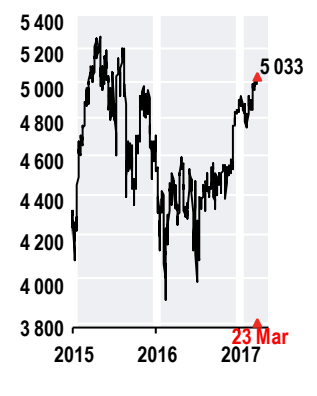
10 y bond yield, OAT vs Bund



Euro-dollar



CAC 40



**Money & Bond Markets**

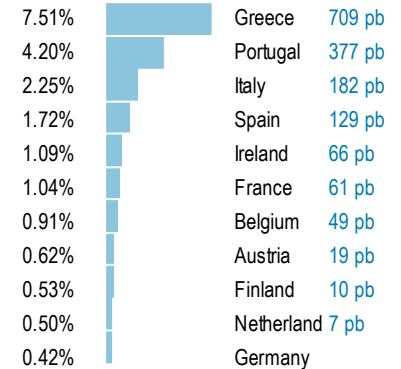
Interest Rates	highest' 17	lowest' 17
€ ECB	0.00 at 02/01	0.00 at 02/01
Eonia	-0.36 at 04/01	-0.36 at 22/02
Euribor 3M	-0.33 at 02/01	-0.33 at 22/02
Euribor 12M	-0.11 at 02/01	-0.11 at 28/02
\$ FED	1.00 at 16/03	0.75 at 02/01
Libor 3M	1.16 at 22/03	1.00 at 02/01
Libor 12M	1.81 at 15/03	1.68 at 06/01
£ BoE	0.25 at 02/01	0.25 at 02/01
Libor 3M	0.34 at 05/01	0.34 at 20/03
Libor 12M	0.74 at 09/01	0.72 at 13/03

At 23-3-17

Yield (%)	highest' 17	lowest' 17
€ AVG 5-7y	0.56 at 17/03	0.23 at 02/01
Bund 2y	-0.76 at 25/01	-0.96 at 24/02
Bund 10y	0.42 at 10/03	0.09 at 02/01
OAT 10y	1.04 at 06/02	0.67 at 02/01
Corp. BBB	1.57 at 01/02	1.41 at 24/02
\$ Treas. 2y	1.25 at 14/03	1.14 at 24/02
Treas. 10y	2.42 at 13/03	2.32 at 24/02
Corp. BBB	3.73 at 14/03	3.62 at 24/02
£ Treas. 2y	0.11 at 06/01	0.01 at 28/02
Treas. 10y	1.16 at 26/01	1.07 at 28/02

At 23-3-17

10y bond yield & spreads



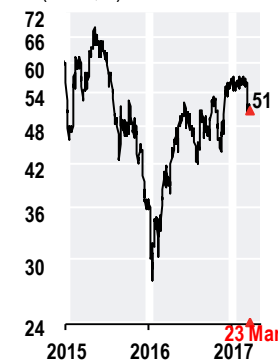
**Commodities**

Spot price in dollars	lowest' 17	2017(€)
Oil, Brent	51 at 22/03	-12.5%
Gold (ounce)	1 244 at 03/01	+5.1%
Metals, LME	2 854 at 03/01	+4.9%
Copper (ton)	5 798 at 03/01	+2.6%
CRB Foods	340 at 02/01	-1.7%
wheat (ton)	151 at 02/01	+1.0%
Corn (ton)	130 at 23/03	-4.0%

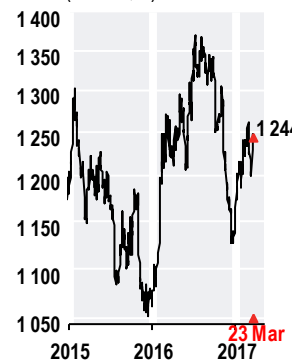
At 23-3-17

Variations

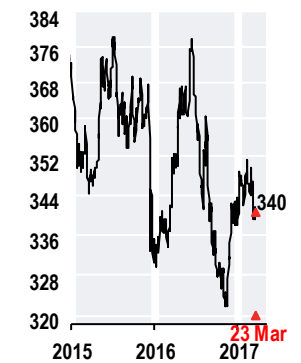
Oil (Brent, \$)



Gold (Ounce, \$)



CRB Foods



**Exchange Rates**

€ =	highest' 17	lowest' 17	2017
USD	1.08 at 21/03	1.04 at 03/01	+2.3%
GBP	0.86 at 16/01	0.84 at 23/02	+0.9%
CHF	1.07 at 10/03	1.06 at 08/02	-0.1%
JPY	119.89 at 06/01	118.74 at 24/02	-2.5%
AUD	1.41 at 02/01	1.37 at 23/02	-3.1%
CNY	7.43 at 21/03	7.22 at 03/01	+1.4%
BRL	3.38 at 18/01	3.24 at 15/02	-1.5%
RUB	61.93 at 31/01	60.60 at 15/02	-3.8%
INR	70.70 at 31/01	69.84 at 15/03	-1.2%

At 23-3-17

Variations

**Equity indices**

Index	highest' 17	lowest' 17	2017	2017(€)
CAC 40	5 033 at 23/03	4 749 at 31/01	+3.5%	+3.5%
S&P500	2 346 at 01/03	2 239 at 02/01	+4.8%	+2.5%
DAX	12 040 at 17/03	11 510 at 06/02	+4.9%	+4.9%
Nikkei	19 085 at 13/03	18 788 at 24/01	-0.2%	+2.5%
China*	67 at 20/03	59 at 02/01	+14.5%	+11.8%
India*	512 at 16/03	445 at 03/01	+10.8%	+12.2%
Brazil*	1 817 at 22/02	1 654 at 02/01	+4.7%	+6.3%
Russia*	580 at 03/01	537 at 09/03	-8.5%	-5.9%

At 23-3-17

Variations

\* MSCI index



## Economic forecasts

En %	GDP Growth			Inflation			Curr. account / GDP			Fiscal balances / GDP		
	2016 e	2017 e	2018 e	2016 e	2017 e	2018 e	2016 e	2017 e	2018 e	2016 e	2017 e	2018 e
<b>Advanced</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>						
<b>United States</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>-2.4</b>	<b>-2.4</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	<b>-4.2</b>	<b>-5.0</b>
Japan	1.0	1.2	0.9	-0.1	0.7	1.0	3.8	4.2	4.6	-4.7	-4.4	-4.1
United Kingdom	1.8	1.8	1.1	0.6	2.7	2.6	-4.7	-4.1	-3.2	-3.0	-2.7	-3.1
<b>Euro Area</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>-1.7</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>-1.2</b>
Germany	1.8	1.8	2.0	0.4	2.0	1.6	8.8	8.3	8.5	0.6	0.7	0.6
France	1.1	1.3	1.5	0.3	1.4	1.0	-1.2	-0.9	-1.1	-3.3	-3.0	-2.7
Italy	0.9	0.6	0.6	-0.1	1.6	0.9	2.1	2.2	2.1	-2.4	-2.4	-2.5
Spain	3.3	2.6	2.0	-0.3	2.3	1.5	1.8	2.1	2.1	-4.6	-3.6	-3.0
Netherlands	2.1	2.1	1.6	0.1	1.2	1.4	8.7	8.7	8.3	-0.5	0.0	0.3
Belgium	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.8	2.1	1.9	0.7	0.5	0.5	-3.0	-2.3	-2.2
<b>Emerging</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>						
China	6.7	6.2	6.4	2.0	2.7	2.5	1.9	1.6	1.4	-2.9	-3.5	-3.3
India	7.5	7.3	7.8	4.9	4.9	5.2	-1.1	-0.8	-1.5	-3.8	-3.5	-3.2
Brazil	-3.5	1.0	3.0	8.8	4.1	4.3	-1.2	-1.4	-2.1	-8.9	-9.6	-8.3
Russia	-0.6	1.2	2.0	7.1	4.2	4.3	1.7	2.4	2.0	-3.5	-3.1	-2.8
<b>World</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>						

Source : BNP Paribas Group Economic Research (e: Estimates & forecasts)

## Financial forecasts

Interest rates		2016				2017				2016	2017e	2018e
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1e	Q2e	Q3e	Q4e			
<b>US</b>	Fed Funds	0.25-0.5	0.25-0.5	0.25-0.5	0.5-0.75	0.50-0.75	0.75-1.00	1.00-1.25	1.25-1.50	0.5-0.75	1.25-1.50	2.25-2.50
	3-month Libor \$	0.63	0.65	0.85	1.00	1.05	1.25	1.50	1.75	1.00	1.75	2.50
	10-year T-notes	1.79	1.49	1.61	2.45	2.60	3.00	3.25	3.50	2.45	3.50	4.00
<b>EMU</b>	Refinancing rate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
	3-month Euribor	-0.24	-0.29	-0.30	-0.32	-0.33	-0.33	-0.30	-0.30	-0.32	-0.30	-0.05
	10-year Bund	0.16	-0.13	-0.19	0.11	0.30	0.50	0.75	1.00	0.11	1.00	1.60
	10-year OAT	0.41	0.20	0.12	0.69	0.95	0.95	1.15	1.45	0.69	1.45	2.00
	10-year BTP	1.23	1.35	1.19	1.84	2.10	2.20	2.60	3.00	1.84	3.00	3.40
<b>UK</b>	Base rate	0.50	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	3-month Libor £	0.59	0.56	0.38	0.37	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.37	0.40	0.40
	10-year Gilt	1.42	1.02	0.76	1.24	1.25	1.55	1.75	1.90	1.24	1.90	2.50
<b>Japan</b>	Overnight call rate	-0.00	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.06	-0.10	-0.10
	3-month JPY Libor	0.10	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.05
	10-year JGB	-0.04	-0.23	-0.08	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.30	0.05	0.30	0.40

Exchange rates		2016				2017				2016	2017e	2018e
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1e	Q2e	Q3e	Q4e			
<b>USD</b>	EUR / USD	1.14	1.11	1.12	1.05	1.04	1.02	1.02	1.00	1.05	1.00	1.06
	USD / JPY	112	103	101	117	118	121	124	128	117	128	130
<b>EUR</b>	EUR / GBP	0.79	0.83	0.87	0.85	0.83	0.82	0.82	0.80	0.85	0.80	0.82
	EUR / CHF	1.09	1.08	1.09	1.07	1.08	1.10	1.12	1.12	1.07	1.12	1.15
	EUR / JPY	128	114	114	123	123	123	126	128	123	128	138

Source : BNP Paribas Group Economic Research / GlobalMarkets (e: Estimates & forecasts)



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