

Liquid Insight

Approaching the largest TLTRO maturity

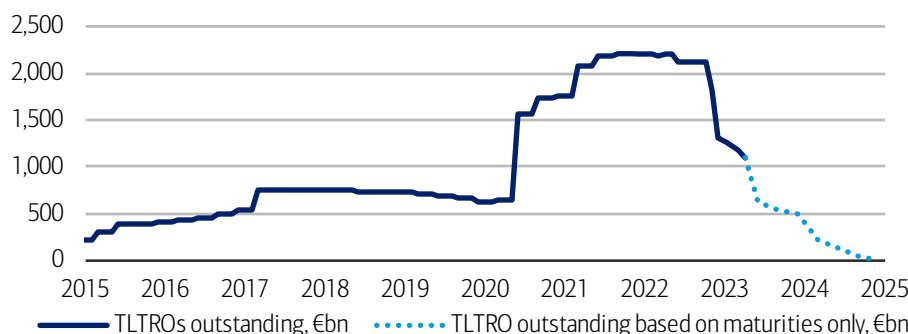
Key takeaways

- Liquidity in Euro area will fall by > €475bn in Jun23 as the largest TLTRO III matures
- TLTRO maturities are highly anticipated and may increase cash demand by some banks more than others
- Abrupt movements in front-end EUR rates from the Jun23 maturity may be limited but medium term path could be more volatile

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Chart of the day: TLTRO outstanding and projection based on maturity schedule only (*)

Outstanding TLTRO to fall by at least €477bn in Jun23 due to maturity of Jun20 operation



Source: ECB (*) without accounting for potential early repayments

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The anticipated involuntary drop

The largest targeted longer-term refinancing operation (TLTRO) will mature on 28 June 2023. That alone will reduce TLTRO outstanding by €477bn, that is 43% (Chart of the Day). Most of the TLTRO decline in June 2023 will be involuntary, yet widely anticipated. As TLTRO outstanding continues to decline, banks without enough cash at the central bank to cover all their TLTROs may eventually need to raise cash from other sources. Country level data suggest this would be the case for some banks in Italy (Exhibit 2), and we cannot rule out that some banks in other countries are also in that situation. Others may also want to maintain cash at the ECB even as their TLTRO borrowings mature.

To bridge the gap between cash at the central bank and TLTRO borrowings, banks may reduce their assets or find alternative borrowing sources. We distinguish two cases of asset sales and five types of alternatives to TLTRO fundings, along with their potential market implications.

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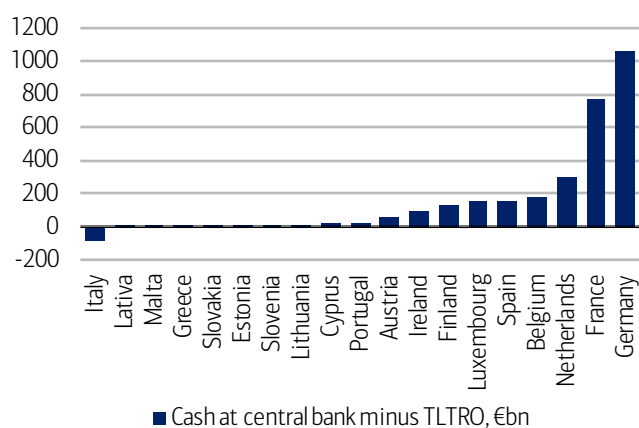
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The market is pricing in gradual widening of front-end spreads, which we believe reflects expectations of further declines in excess liquidity. But uncertainties over each individual bank cash levels and their potential expectations leave room for volatility and a bias for TLTRO-related widening in front-end spreads post June.

While the decline in TLTRO outstanding in Dec22 was larger, at €499bn, that was driven by voluntary early repayments. Most of the decline in June 2023 will very likely be due to the maturity of the Jun20 operation and therefore involuntary, yet widely anticipated.

Exhibit 1: Cash at central bank minus TLTRO

Banks in Italy have less cash at central bank than TLTRO borrowing

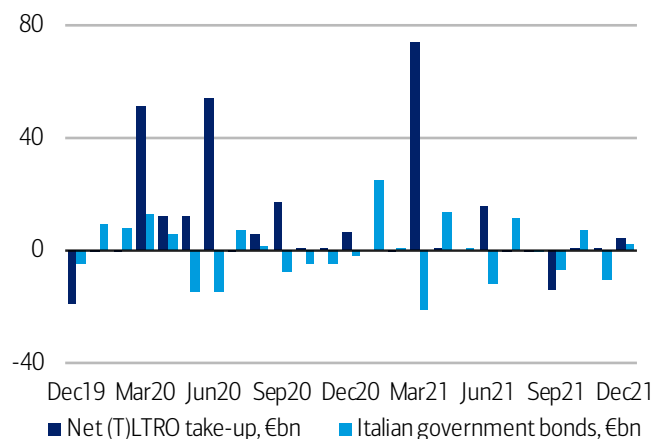


Source: ECB. Data as of March 2023.

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Exhibit 2: TLTRO and Italian government bond flows of banks in Italy

Large TLTRO III take-ups unlikely used to finance large new carry trades



Source: ECB

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To bridge the gap between cash at the central bank and TLTRO borrowings, banks may reduce their assets, or find alternative borrowing sources.

On the sale of assets, we would distinguish two cases:

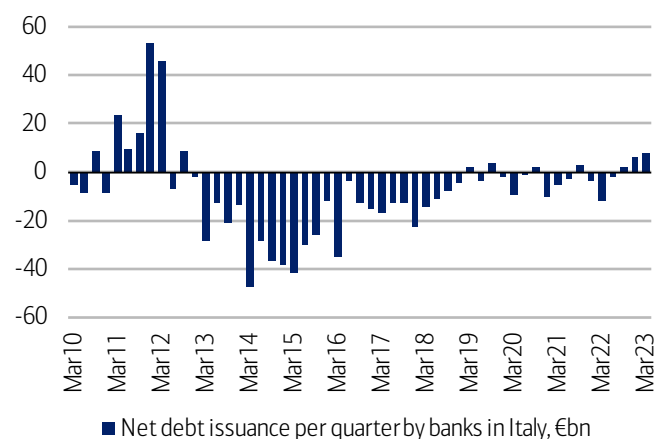
1. *Unwind of government bond carry trades.* To the extent banks used TLTROs to finance carry trades, such trades may be unwound, putting **upward pressure on government bond yields and widening pressure on peripheral spreads**. Focusing on the Italian case, we note that large net TLTRO III take-ups by banks at the aggregate level were not associated with large increases in Italian government bond purchases (Exhibit 3). That said, it is possible TLTRO III were used to roll over some carry trades funded by TLTRO II: prior to the large TLTRO III take-ups, banks in Italy borrowed c. €215bn via (T)LTROs.
2. *Reduce other assets.* This may include reduction in loans, which may tighten household and corporate loan terms. **The market may see this as reducing the need for further ECB policy tightening.** The central bank said its interest rate hikes are being transmitted via tighter credit standards and weaker loan growth in its May monetary policy meeting. Even tighter loan terms as a result of TLTRO maturities may reduce the need for the central bank to raise policy rates by much more in H2. The market is pricing in close to 50bp of hikes in total over June and July, consistent with our economists' baseline ([Euro Area Watch, 4 May 2023](#)). We see risks of another 25bp hike in September, as some hawks at the ECB are suggesting, but signs of a faster reduction in loan growth could prevent the market from pricing this and may indeed lead the ECB to stop at a terminal deposit facility (depo) rate of 3.75%.

We would differentiate between 5 types of alternatives to TLTRO funding. Banks could:

1. *Borrow cash from the repo market.* Collateral pledged to the central bank for TLTROs will be unencumbered when the TLTRO matures. Some of this collateral may be used to borrow cash from the repo market. This could put **upward pressure on general collateral (GC) repo rates**, in particular Italian GC repo, as we do not believe the €87bn gap would be easily absorbed by the repo market alone: daily Italy one-day GC volume has averaged €14bn year-to-date.
2. *Borrow short term cash from the wholesale market.* Bank borrowing from the wholesale market may **widen Euribor-euro short-term rate (€str) spreads**. We would emphasise that it is not necessarily the case that all banks in Italy face a shortfall of cash at the central bank vs their TLTRO borrowings. As a result, the impact on Euribor fixings may be dampened if it is not panel banks that face a shortfall between cash at the central banks and TLTRO borrowings.
3. *Borrow long term cash from the wholesale market.* Our Credit teams have noted a significant increase in bank bond issuance in January and February, across all type of bonds (e.g. senior unsecured, covered, etc). In Italy, ECB data show banks issued a total net amount of €17bn raised since 3Q22 (across short and long-term debt). This is the most significant net issuance since 2012 (Exhibit 4). If banks with a shortfall resort to term borrowing, i.e. greater than 12 months, then the impact on Euribor fixings may be further limited given Euribor's hybrid methodology.
4. *Borrow cash from the central bank.* Banks may pledge the collateral unencumbered from the TLTRO maturities to raise funds from the central bank via the 7-day Main Refinancing Operations (MRO) or the monthly 3-month Long Term Refinancing Operations (LTRO), both priced at the ECB refinancing (refi) rate. A 3m LTRO will be allotted on June 28th and settle on June 29th. The marginal cost of funding will increase by 50bp, from the depo rate to the refi rate. This may not be economical for all banks and, in our view, is a rather expensive source of funding at current market rates when compared with other money market options. Still, **potential use of the MRO means the refi rate would act as a backstop to a dramatic increase in money market rates**.
5. *Increase the deposit base.* Banks may try to attract more customer deposits, for example by raising their deposit rates, which have overall been quite sticky. In other words, bank deposit betas may increase.

Exhibit 3: Net debt issuance by banks in Italy

Net issuance has picked up but cash at central bank-TLTRO gap remains

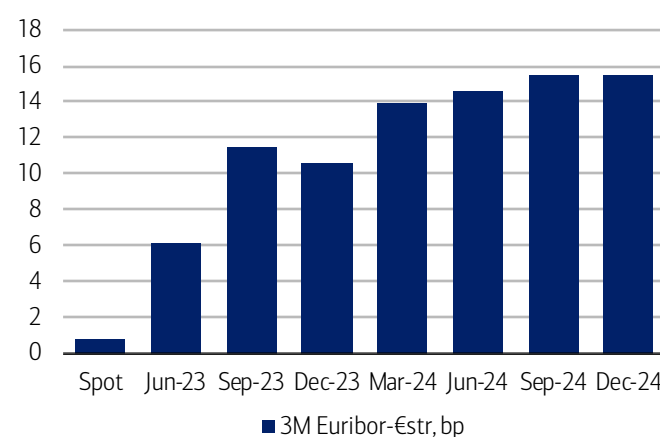


Source: ECB

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Exhibit 4: 3M Euribor-€str spread

Medium term widening of spread could be more volatile than expected



Source: BofA Global Research. IMM dates used.

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The market is pricing in c. 5bp of widening in the 3M Euribor-€str spread in Jun23, followed by gradual widening that we believe reflects expectations of further decline in excess liquidity (Exhibit 5). This implies the market assigns a low likelihood of an abrupt shock to front-end EUR rates from the Jun23 TLTRO maturity.

- We tend to agree with the market that large pressures on front-end EUR rates in Jun23 may be limited given the Jun23 TLTRO maturity is a highly anticipated event, and it is unclear whether any gap between cash at the central bank and total TLTRO borrowing would already be an issue for the Jun23 repayment. Also, if front-end overnight indexed swap (OIS) rates rise/short positioning increases in the front-end with the ECB surprising on the hawkish side, Jun23 and Sep23 Euribor-€str may come under tightening pressure.
- However, we see greater risks of abrupt moves beyond Jun23. It is unknown to us, and quite possibly the market, the exact TLTRO III maturity schedule by operation for banks in Italy. If the gap between cash at the central bank and TLTRO for banks in Italy impacts TLTROs maturing after Jun23, then risks of abrupt pressures on front-end rates post June may be present and not fully accounted for by the market. This suggests the medium-term widening of Euribor-€str spreads may be more volatile than expected.

Widening risks in FRA-€str spreads could also come from the following:

- The uncertainty around whether banks are indeed prepared for the Jun23 TLTRO maturity. If they are not prepared and adjust their balance sheet close to the Jun23 maturity date, then the associated flows could put stronger and more sudden upward pressures on rates.
- The fact that some investors of even banks may be expecting the ECB to provide new (T)LTRO-style operations, priced at a lower rate than the refi rate, to help roll over the TLTRO borrowings. New ECB operations could be on the cards for when the ECB concludes its [operational framework review \(see the 1 March 2023 Liquid Insight\)](#); however, this could take some time, with the operations being considered for the medium term when excess liquidity will be much lower rather than as a way to roll over TLTRO borrowings. The details of these operations (term and pricing) will also be important considerations to determine the market impact.
- The possibility (albeit remote) that excess liquidity in the system after the Jun23 TLTRO maturity may already be insufficient to meet banks' reserve demand.

Notable Rates and FX Research

- **Global Rates, FX & EM Year Ahead 2023 – [Year Ahead 2023: Pivot ≠ Peak](#)**, 20 Nov 2022
- [What to expect when pausing](#), **Global FX Weekly**, 12 May 2023
- [The long and short of it](#), **Global Rates Weekly**, 12 May 2023
- [Corporates buying USD/Asia FX](#), **Liquid Cross Border Flows**, 9 May 2023

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