

Liquid Insight

G10 FX during the fight against inflation amid a slowdown

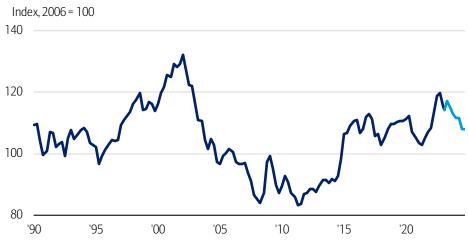
Key takeaways

- Our views on core G10 FX remain the same, as we continue to expect near-term USD upside but longer term weakening.
- In particular, we maintain our end-year EUR-USD forecast at 1.10, and also our other G4 and dollar bloc forecasts unchanged.
- Since last month, we do have direct forecast changes in our Scandies FX forecasts for both NOK and SEK.

By John Shin, Alex Cohen and Athanasios Vamvakidis

Chart of the day: We continue to expect broad medium-term USD softening

Our G10 FX forecasts continue to reflect our views of USD overvaluation



Source: Federal Reserve Board, Bloomberg and BofA Global Research

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G10 FX when fighting inflation amid slowdown

Despite recent declines in headline inflation measures, core underlying inflation pressures still remain elevated, giving central banks less room to maneuver if a harder landing is not avoidable. With the Federal Reserve nearing the end of its rate-hiking cycle, we continue to expect the global macro outlook to translate into an unwinding of previous USD overvaluation over the medium term (see Chart of the Day). But upside inflation surprises could wind up complicating policy plans, and thereby slowing USD downside. We ultimately continue to expect medium-term broad dollar softening (see our World at a Glance report), but with shorter term upside amid the likely stickiness of inflation pressures.

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USD drifting lower: softening US data and focus on the Fed

April has been a choppy month for the dollar, following the Q1 rollercoaster ride. While financial stability concerns have abated, the full impact of credit contraction remains unknown. Meanwhile, US economic data have started to trend lower, suggesting the US economy is cooling off from the hotter readings just a few months ago. This has broadly kept USD on the back foot recently (Exhibit 1).

As we approach the final stages of the Fed's hiking cycle, policy expectations should remain a key source of near-term USD oulook. While the market appears to be coalescing around one additional hike at the May FOMC meeting, the medium-term dollar outlook could depend more on how the rate path for H2 unfolds, and how hard or soft the economic landing will be. In this regard, the disconnect between the Fed's forward guidance for a terminal rate hold into next year and the market pricing for rate cuts in H2 remains in focus. This gap has narrowed somewhat since the peak financial stress last month, but still is evident.

Meanwhile, risk appetite has been resilient, despite recession fears and expectations for tighter monetary and credit conditions. The S&P 500 is approaching YTD highs, credit spreads have retraced to early March levels, and cross-asset implied volatility measures have declined notably.

Exhibit 1: USD & Econ SurprisesDollar lower amid softening economic data



Exhibit 2: Eurozone inflation

Eurozone headline inflation is falling, but core inflation has yet to peak



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EUR: choppy strength

Meanwhile, EUR has had a good year so far, performing the best in G10 after CHF and GBP. Eurozone data have surprised to the upside, the winter was mild, energy prices have dropped, China's recovery from reopening has been stronger than expected, the war in Ukraine continues but has not escalated, the ECB is hawkish and the banking turmoil in March is now behind and with what seems to be limited implications for the rest of the sector and the economy.

Headline inflation continues falling, together with energy prices, but core inflation has yet to peak (Exhibit 2). Our economists expect the ECB terminal rate between 3.75% and 4.00%, with market pricing at 3.75%. EUR remains below its long-term equilibrium of 1.25 vs USD, suggesting more appreciation potential.

However, we are concerned that the market may have run ahead of itself, as was the case early this year. While the Fed and most G10 central banks are about to reach their terminal rate, strong data, particularly employment, and sticky core inflation suggest we are not landing yet (see Still not landing 21 April 2023).

This has supported EUR so far, as markets see it as evidence of soft landing, but it is unsustainable, in our view. The economy needs to land to bring inflation down. We see soft landing as the least likely scenario. Hard landing because of sticky inflation and

hawkish central banks could push EUR down again, at least in short term, particularly in a stagflation scenario. We are also concerned about the implications of the increase in Italian yields this year, which the market seems to ignore simply because spreads have remained contained despite heavy supply.

Forecasts: still unchanged; bullish medium- to long-term, skeptical short-term

We maintain our current forecasts for USD (Exhibit 3) to be supported in the near term, as sticky inflation keeps Fed policy oriented towards price stability, implying a lesser likelihood of the kind of relatively quick cuts that the market has been looking for. Later in the year and into 2024, we expect the dollar to gradually begin depreciating back towards equilibrium.

More specifically, we continue to forecast EURUSD at 1.05 in H1, appreciating back to 1.10 by the year-end and to 1.15 by end-2024. The timing of this path is uncertain and depends on the stickiness of Eurozone inflation vs the rest of G10, and overall risk sentiment. We also did not make any changes to our USD-JPY profile, and continue to look for a mid- to high-130s type range, especially given our US Economics team's view of Fed rate hikes.

While we do not have any changes to most of our FX forecasts, including Dollar Bloc, GBP and CHF, since last month we do have <u>modest revisions to our EUR-NOK and EUR-SEK views (see World at a Glance report)</u>.

Risks: sticky inflation and emerging debt ceiling debate; uncertain landing

While inflation is clearly coming down, it should be a bumpy road back to the 2% target, keeping the Fed vigilant. There is a non-trivial risk that the consensus' soft landing is not realized, which could dampen sentiment, and evoke stagflation risks. Of specific focus, the US debt ceiling debate is only just beginning, which will increase uncertainty as we move into summer.

For EUR in particular, crucial risks are related to how the Eurozone and the global economy will land and how fast the so-far-particularly-sticky EZ inflation will decline. Italy also continues to remain vulnerable to a hawkish ECB, despite market complacency. Meanwhile, of course, the war in Ukraine is still a known-unknown and shows little signs of any near-term abatement.

Exhibit 3: G10 FX Forecasts

End-year EUR-USD forecast remains 1.10

| | Spot | Jun-23 | Sep-23 | Dec-23 | Mar-24 | Jun-24 | Sep-24 | Dec-24 |
|-------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| G3 | • | | • | | | • | • | |
| EUR-USD | 1.11 | 1.05 | 1.07 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.15 | 1.15 |
| USD-JPY | 133 | 135 | 138 | 137 | 135 | 132 | 125 | 125 |
| EUR-JPY | 147 | 142 | 148 | 151 | 149 | 145 | 144 | 144 |
| Dollar Bloc | | | | | | | | |
| USD-CAD | 1.36 | 1.34 | 1.30 | 1.28 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 1.25 |
| AUD-USD | 0.66 | 0.68 | 0.72 | 0.74 | 0.76 | 0.76 | 0.76 | 0.76 |
| NZD-USD | 0.61 | 0.62 | 0.64 | 0.66 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| Europe | | | | | | | | |
| EUR-GBP | 0.89 | 0.89 | 0.90 | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.91 |
| GBP-USD | 1.25 | 1.18 | 1.19 | 1.21 | 1.21 | 1.21 | 1.26 | 1.26 |
| EUR-CHF | 0.98 | 0.98 | 0.98 | 0.98 | 0.99 | 0.99 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| USD-CHF | 0.89 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.89 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.87 | 0.87 |
| EUR-SEK | 11.40 | 11.40 | 11.50 | 11.00 | 10.70 | 10.60 | 10.50 | 10.30 |
| USD-SEK | 10.32 | 10.86 | 10.75 | 10.00 | 9.73 | 9.64 | 9.13 | 8.96 |
| EUR-NOK | 11.75 | 11.20 | 10.90 | 10.60 | 10.40 | 10.40 | 10.20 | 10.00 |
| USD-NOK | 10.64 | 10.67 | 10.19 | 9.64 | 9.45 | 9.45 | 8.87 | 8.70 |

Forecast as of Apr-26-2023. Spot exchange rate as of Apr-26-2023. The left of the currency pair is the denominator of the exchange rate. Source: BofA Global Research

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Notable Rates and FX Research

- Global Rates, FX & EM Year Ahead 2023 Year Ahead 2023: Pivot ≠ Peak, 20 Nov 2022
- Still not landing, Global FX Weekly, 21 Apr 2023
- Pushing to the Limit, Global Rates Weekly, 21 Apr 2023
- Behind last week's USD roller-coaster, Liquid Cross Border Flows, 17 Apr 2023

Rates, FX & EM trades for 2023

For a complete list of our open trade recommendations, as well as our trade recommendations closed over the past 12 months, see the reports below:

Global FX Weekly: Still not landing 21 April 2023

Global Rates Weekly: Pushing to the Limit 21 April 2023



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