Market Comment | Economic indicators and central banks as main drivers this week

Global Financial Markets Unit 05 Aug 2016

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- Better-than-expected employment data in the US during July, with the Nonfarm Payrolls (Jul) pointing to the addition of 255,000 jobs to the US economy (255K, consensus 180K, previous 292K), reinforcing expectations that the Federal Reserve could raise interest rates before year-end, according to market reaction: the US 10Y Government bond yield jumped and the US Dollar surged. The unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.9%, slightly above expectations.
- Sluggish economic indicators dragged down risk assets during the first part of the week. In□ China, the services PMI went down in July, this being one of the main drivers, undermining confidence in economic growth and suggesting slow progress with China's rebalancing process to a services economy. These fears were partly offset by today's release of better-than-expected US Payrolls. Meanwhile, economic indicators from Europe showed a mixed performance: no big surprise in EZ's confidence data, while the UK's Composite PMI July data pointed towards recession. This evidence could support the ambitious measures announced by BoE in its last meeting and its assurance that it had scope to do more if needed.
- BoE measures included (i) interest rate cut to 0.25% for the first time since 2009 (unanimously), (ii) increasing the Asset Purchase Programme to GBP 435bn (with 3 members against), (iii) launching corporate bond purchases up to 10bn (with only 1 member against). Additionally they included a new Term Funding Scheme to offset the hit to banks' margins from the cut and to facilitate the flow of credit to the real economy. This scheme would provide up to GBP 100bn to banks from central reserves. The whole package of measures approved was above expectations according to financial markets' reaction: the GBP fell sharply against its main peers (EUR -1.4%, USD -1.55% and during the week EUR -1.41%, USD -1.35%), as did the UK's 10Y Government bond, which reached an all-time low.
- The Government of Japan also showed a strong commitment to sustainable growth, and approved the expected fiscal stimulus package. The total amount was JPY 28tn, although the current new government spending is 6.2tn of which 4.6tn (0.9% of GDP) will fall in the current fiscal year, expecting to boost the weak indicators of Japanese economy, leading the JPY to appreciate during the week (JPY +0.24%) against the USD.
- High volatility in bond markets during the week due to central banks' decisions. Bond prices recovered from the sell-off early in the week triggered by the perceived shift from monetary policy to fiscal stimulus in Japan. In the last part of the week, the dovish approach of the BoE's meeting turned down yields globally and also contributed to sending sterling corporate bond yields to their historically lowest levels. Nonetheless, during the week the yields of 10Y Government bonds signally rose in core countries (US +11 bps, GER +6 bps, FRA +5 bps), with the exception of the UK and European periphery (UK, -7 bps, ITA -3 bps, PORT -6 bps).

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- In equity markets there were two different trends within the week. The release of stress test results coupled with the increasing yields hampered the equity indices globally early this week, led by the European banking sector. Nonetheless the announcement of BoE measures gave some breathing space to developed countries' equity markets and partly offset previous losses, although they still ended the week down (Euro Stoxx -0.7%, Ibex35 -0.7%, Nikkei -1.9%) with the exception of UK equities (FTSE 100, +1.1%).
- Oil prices recovered some of the ground lost earlier in the week (+3.2%), driven by the sharp drop in gasoline inventories in this week, partly dissipating underlying concerns on oversupply. Despite the rebound in oil prices, EM currencies showed mixed performances (CLP -0.2%, COP +0.3%, MXN -0.8%, PLN +0.8%, TRY -0.9%).

Update 16.30 CET 05 August, 2016 Table 1

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(Current level and changes at daily, weekly, monthly and annual frequencies)
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CDS, EMBI & MSCI indices with one day delay **Credit spread (BAA) with two days delay ***S&P GSCI with one day delay

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