

Market Comment | Financial markets were very anxious during the week

Global Financial Markets Unit
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- **Financial markets were very anxious during the week, with implied volatility escalating in developed equity, bond and currency markets, while top-rated bonds reached record lows.** The FOMC meeting and the UK's EU referendum were the main sources of concerns during the week. Despite the FOMC's keeping rates unchanged, in line with markets' expectations, Fed Chair Janet Yellen warned about the impact of the outcome of the UK referendum on EU membership, increasing market jitters about it (GBP/USD 1M implied volatility soared to 26%). Moreover, although the FOMC statement was not dovish - they revised downward slightly 2016-2017 GDP growth and inflation projections - US bond yields reached new lows after the FOMC statement as Ms Yellen signalled that persistent factors may be at work and are holding down the longer-run level of neutral rates.
- **In this context of uncertainties the 10Y bond yield in Germany, Japan and Switzerland went deeper into negative territory on Thursday** (Germany -0.02%, Japan -0.2%, Switzerland -0.52%), and even Swiss 30Y yields flirted with negative and zero levels. However, other factors might have accelerated the downward trend in the German 10Y yield (i) the deterioration in markets' euro zone inflation expectations (5Y5Y forward inflation swap declined sharply to 1.35% from 1.45% after May's weak US payroll figures) and ii) technical factors, such as the German sovereign yield curve standing below the ECB deposit rate (-0.4%) up to the 6Y tenor, so that the ECB purchases have to focus on the 7-31 tenors, pushing down yields of these tenors. Moreover, the 10Y US yield declined to 2012 levels (1.57%), while the market has eliminated any probability of a rate hike this year. Nonetheless, market sentiment improved at the end of the week, after the latest UK poll showed that voters supporting Leave were losing steam. At the end of the week, the 10Y yield increased in high-rated bonds, with the 10Y German yield returning to positive levels but close to zero. On the other hand, the risk-off mood that prevailed during the week weighed on peripheral risk premiums, which ended the week widening (+13 bps in Italy and Spain and +21 bps in Portugal), despite yields fell on Friday, underpinned by the improvement in market sentiment and ESM's authorisation of the first disbursement of the second tranche of €7.5 billion to Greece.
- **Despite the marked rebound on Friday, equity markets ended the week declining across the board**, especially in Europe, due to the uncertainty about Brexit and the context of negative or zero interest rates, while the yen's sharp appreciation weighed on Japanese stocks.
- **The FX market ended the week broadly flat, with the exception of the Japanese yen** which surged after attracting safe-haven flows (+2.52%). The British pound was very volatile during the week, but ended with a slight appreciation of 0.2%, while the euro was also flat in the week. Most EM currencies depreciated during the week, especially Latin American currencies with exposure to oil prices (Colombian -1.2%, Mexican peso -1.12%, Argentine peso (-0.73%), as oil prices declined (West Texas -2.9%, Brent -3.4%). Other cyclical commodities also decreased, while gold attracted fresh safe-haven flows (+1.3%).

Despite the rebound in all assets at the end of the week, this might be a lull ahead of the UK's EU referendum on 23 June. Judging by markets' risk measures, uncertainty remains high. Implied volatility is still high in developed markets (84% in the US bond Treasury, 91% in the 10Y Bund volatility, 38% in the Euro Stoxx50, 19% in the S&P500).

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Table 1

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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