



Fixed Income Special

NORD/LB Floor Research

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Marketing communication (see disclaimer on the last pages)

Table of content

ECB interest rate cut in the wake of Rambo-Zambo bond packages	3
Publication overview	7
Contacts at NORD/LB	8

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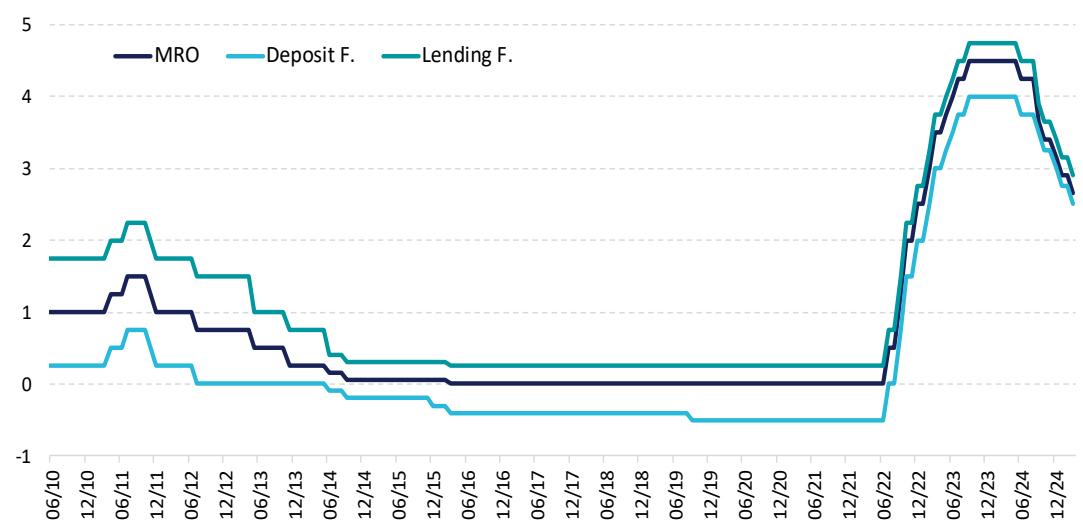
ECB interest rate cut in the wake of Rambo-Zambo bond packages

Authors: Dr Norman Rudschuck, CIAA // Lukas-Finn Frese

Introduction

What a week... It is not even a full seven days since the historic meeting between US President Donald Trump, US Vice President James David Vance and Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office on Friday. Failing to shake hands with Angela Merkel was already remarkable and disconcerting at the same time, but the consequences of such a verbal exchange in front of the cameras for Europe's future worth (hundreds of) billions has since become apparent. Ursula von der Leyen announced EUR 150bn via EU funding by the end of 2029. This would mean an additional EUR 33bn on average over the next 4.5 years from H2/2025. Germany is currently planning special funds for infrastructure and defence in order to at least formally comply with the debt brake, although this is of course about debt rather than assets. This means that the federal government will have to take on at least EUR 60-90bn in additional debt each year. In our view, Rambo bonds would be – for obvious reasons – ideal for defence spending, while Zambo bonds would be ideal for transport and energy networks, hospitals, education, care and science facilities as well as digitalisation. Why are we mentioning this today? Any new borrowing will hopefully generate sustainable growth, at least in Germany, but will also boost inflation. The same applies to EU spending across Europe as a whole. We addressed both key issues in our weekly publications on [05 March](#) and [26 February](#). Inflation and growth: The new *staff projections*, which deal precisely with these economic indicators and which we comment on below, were also presented today. Let us now spot the obvious: As expected, the ECB Governing Council has lowered the interest rate for the deposit facility by 25bp to 2.5%. Furthermore, the rate for the main refinancing operations falls from the current 2.9% to 2.65%, while the rate for the marginal lending facility will be lowered from 3.15% to 2.9%. However, at today's press conference, the monetary authorities did not give any further details about the upcoming meetings in 2025, but emphasised their usual meeting-by-meeting approach and the data-dependent nature of their decisions.

ECB key interest rates (in %; incl. current interest rate cut)



Source: ECB, Bloomberg, NORD/LB Floor Research

ECB statement and projections

The published [ECB statement](#) offered some small but essential changes to the central bankers' rhetoric. For example, it was now pointed out that monetary policy and consequently the financing conditions for companies and private households were "meaningfully less" restrictive. We interpret the new formulation of the monetary policy stance as a kind of compromise between the hawks and the doves in the Council and as an expression of a growing rift between the ECB's decision-makers. A consistent adherence to the original wording would have argued in favour of further successive interest rate cuts at the upcoming meetings. We would have understood the strict renunciation of this as an unmistakable sign of an imminent interest rate pause at the next meeting of the Council in April. With the middle course it has now adopted, the ECB is keeping both options open, but we nevertheless believe it is more likely that there will be a pause in April. However, we do not see this as an end to the cycle of interest rate cuts. In our opinion, the ECB will adjust its key interest rates downwards again at its next but one meeting in June. We expect a maximum of one further cut in the second half of the year. In addition to the adjusted statement, the ECB experts published their *staff projections* for 2025 for the first time at today's meeting: While the forecasts for the real GDP growth rate have been revised significantly downwards, the expectations for future inflation are at a higher level for this year than published at the December meeting. For the current year, the central bank's experts now expect an average inflation rate in the Eurozone of 2.3% (previously: 2.1%). However, 1.9% is still being pencilled in for 2026. The year 2027 is sufficiently far in the future and the outlook has now been revised slightly downwards to 2.0% (previously: 2.1%). With regard to the inflation rate excluding energy and food, the ECB is also forecasting selectively higher figures for 2025 (2.2%) and 2026 (2.0%) than in December (previously: 2.3% and 1.9% respectively). In 2027, it should still amount to 1.9%. The disinflationary tendencies clearly recognisable in the central bankers' previous projections therefore appear to have suffered a slight setback. Expectations for economic activity are also still not favourable: the experts have once again revised their growth projection for 2025 significantly downwards to 0.9% (previously: 1.1%). For the subsequent years 2026 and 2027, the ECB communicated an increase in real economic output in the single currency area of 1.2% and 1.3% respectively (2026 previously: 1.4%; 2027 previously: 1.3%). It should always be borne in mind that the ECB can only include policy measures in its projections once they have been formally approved. This applies in particular to any trade restrictions imposed by the US administration under Donald Trump. At the end of February, the US President announced that he would impose tariffs of 25% on cars from the European bloc, among other things. EU Commission Vice-President Stéphane Séjourné, responsible for industry and the European single market, then announced decisive countermeasures.

Latest ECB projections for euro area growth and inflation*

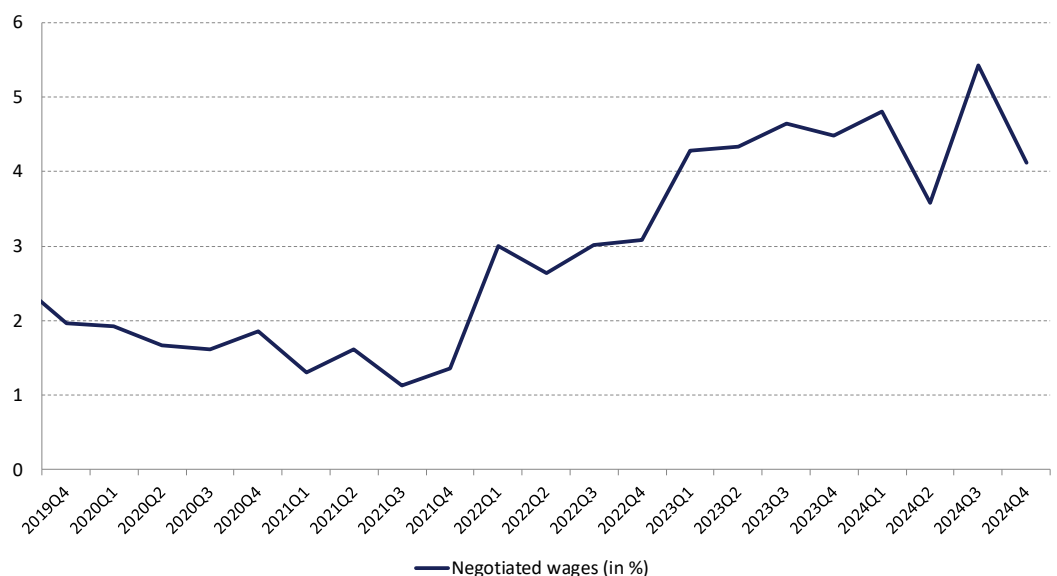
	<i>March 2025 projections</i>		
	2025	2026	2027
Real GDP	0.9	1.2	1.3
HICP inflation	2.3	1.9	2.0

* Change versus previous year in %
Source: ECB, NORD/LB Floor Research

Significant slowdown in negotiated wage growth

An important indicator for the growth of wages and salaries in the single currency area fell significantly in the fourth quarter of last year, as had been expected in advance. According to data published by the ECB on 25 February on the development of negotiated wages in the Eurozone, they grew by +4.1% in Q4/2024 compared to the same period of the previous year. In the previous quarter, growth was still at +5.4% compared to Q3/2023. The ECB's decision-makers are likely to have taken note of the latest data with favour, as it played into the hands of today's interest rate cut. The development of wages and salaries in the single currency area has played an increasingly important role in explaining the underlying inflation dynamics since the easing of inflationary price shocks. The ECB will therefore continue to keep an eye on wage growth in order to assess emerging risks to medium-term price stability. Given the absence of significant price shocks in the future, the increasing normalisation of wage growth should support the return of the inflation rate to the target value of 2%. In recent years, negotiated wage developments in particular have been characterised by one-off payments such as inflation compensation bonuses, which have had a noticeable impact on the volatility of this time series. According to the ECB, base effects will have a negative impact on the development of collectively agreed wages this year due to the influence of these one-off payments. As a result, at least from this direction, there should be less pressure on prices in the single currency area, supporting disinflationary tendencies.

Development of negotiated wages in the Eurozone (in %)



Source: ECB, NORD/LB Floor Research

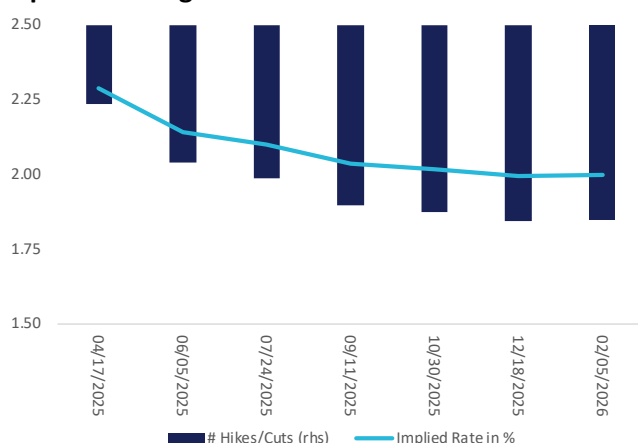
ECB press conference

Historic sell-offs on the European bond markets, the threat of US tariffs, increased government debt and a potential resurgence of inflation: rarely have the journalists' questions covered such a broad range of topics. ECB President Lagarde was not deterred by this, however, and instead reeled off her usual script in customary manner. As expected, the head of the central bank did not allow herself to be drawn into the future interest rate path, instead referring to the meeting-by-meeting approach and the data-dependent nature of the decision.

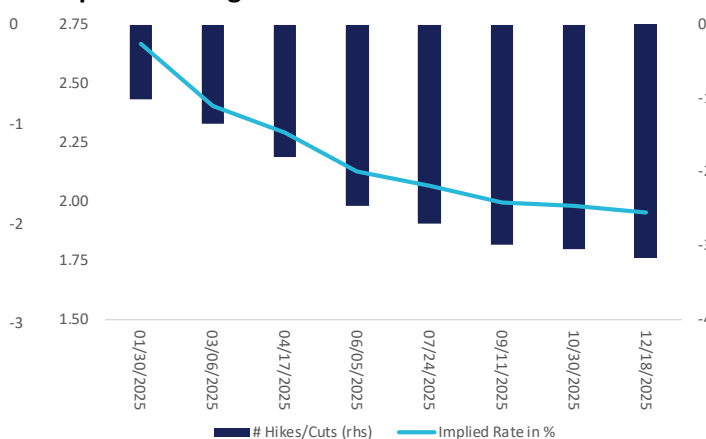
Market expectations point to a sustained cycle of interest rate cuts

Let's take a look below at the implied interest rate probabilities that can be derived from traded interest rate products in order to categorise the market's expectations regarding the upcoming Council meetings. Following the publication of the statement, market participants already had sufficient time to position themselves with regard to the future interest rate path. At the end of January, a cut at the April meeting was already considered almost a foregone conclusion. While expectations had cooled down considerably in the meantime, immediately after the announcement of the monetary policy decisions, interest rate cut fantasies once again prevailed. Accordingly, the market is currently pricing in a probability of about 80% that we will see the next downward adjustment in April. Obviously, the adjusted rhetoric of the statement is still being interpreted as "dovish". We are much more cautious in our assessment and still consider a pause at the next meeting to be the most probable scenario.

Implied Overnight Rate 06.03.2025¹



Implied Overnight Rate 30.01.2025



Source: Bloomberg, NORD/LB Floor Research

¹ Data last retrieved on 06 March 2025, 14:45h

Conclusion

The glory of predictability in European monetary policy is likely to end today: The ECB Governing Council decided to cut all three key interest rates by -25 basis points. This was the sixth cut since mid-2024 and the fifth in a row. The downward trend in interest rates thus continues. In this context, we are forecasting that the ECB will pause at the upcoming Council meeting on 17 April. This would leave room for a further cut for June and a prospective cut in H2/2025. Nevertheless, in its usual manner, the ECB did not reveal its future monetary policy course today. However, the amended statement shows that the Council might take the matter into consideration (soon). In today's edition of this special, for once we took the time and space to comment not only on the ECB's reminiscing about interest rates falling again. But also the political "hully gally" from the US and above all the "hustle and bustle" of the expected new German coalition parties. The planned "Rambo Zambo" bonds of the German special funds for defence (Rambo) and against the investment backlog (Zambo) are likely to have an upward impact on growth prospects and the inflation forecast over the period under review. In the spirit of the interest rate pause we expect, which is exactly what we want to be understood as.

Appendix

Publication overview

Covered Bonds:

[Issuer Guide – Covered Bonds 2024](#)

[Risk weights and LCR levels of covered bonds](#) (updated semi-annually)

[Transparency requirements §28 PfandBG Q4/2024](#) (quarterly update)

[Transparency requirements §28 PfandBG Q4/2024 Sparkassen](#) (quarterly update)

SSA/Public Issuers:

[Issuer Guide – German Laender 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Canadian Provinces & Territories 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Down Under 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – European Supranationals 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Non-European Supranationals \(MDBs\) 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – German Agencies 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – French Agencies 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Nordic Agencies 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Dutch Agencies 2024](#)

[Issuer Guide – Austrian Agencies 2024](#)

[Beyond Bundeslaender: Belgium](#)

[Beyond Bundeslaender: Greater Paris \(IDF/VDP\)](#)

[Beyond Bundeslaender: Spanish regions](#)

Fixed Income Specials:

[ESG-Update 2024](#)

[ECB preview: Sleepwalking can be a real danger](#)

Appendix

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