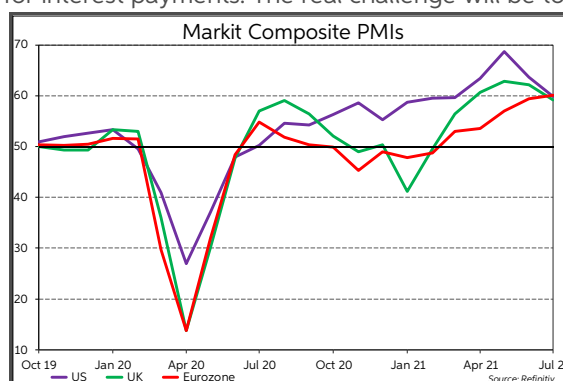


Hard to Resist

- The ESRI, in its Quarterly Economic Commentary published in June, argued the case for increased government capital spending in the present very low interest rate environment.** It acknowledged the need for prudent management of current spending to bring the budget deficit down and put the public finances back on a sustainable footing after the sharp rise in government borrowing in 2020-21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it believes that government borrowing is a viable option for funding “critical capital” projects given the expected strong growth rate of the economy over the coming years and likely continuing very low cost of sovereign debt financing. Increasing public capital spending can help address bottlenecks and infrastructure deficits in areas such as climate change, healthcare provision, technology and, in particular, argues the ESRI, housing, which would positively impact the long-term productivity and competitiveness of the economy.
- The government appears to have taken this advice on board in its latest projections for the public finances.** In its update on the fiscal outlook in April, the Department of Finance (DoF) projected a sharp fall in the budget deficit to 1.2% of GDP by 2023, with the public finances moving close to a balanced budget by 2025. In its July update, though, the DoF recalibrated the government’s medium-term fiscal framework to provide for additional spending to “increase the supply of housing and other critical infrastructure”. The government now plans to run significantly higher budget deficits over the next five years. The projected budget deficits for 2024 and 2025 now stand at circa €7.5bn or 1.5% of GDP. This is well above the deficits of €3bn in 2024 and under €1bn in 2025 set out in April’s update.
- Obviously, there are some concerns that this will increase the high level of government debt even further and add to annual interest payments.** However, with strong growth anticipated in the coming years, the government debt ratios are still projected to decline. Annual debt interest payments are also expected to remain very low, helped by the fact that maturing debt with higher annual coupon payments is being replaced with new debt with much lower interest rates. Governments are also able to lock into very low interest rates for a long time period. Indeed, the Irish authorities can issue ten year bonds at negative interest rates, while 30 year bonds carry a yield of +0.6%. These very low funding costs are a direct result of the ECB’s loose monetary policy. Official ECB rates are pitched at -0.5%, while it is also engaged in large scale purchases of government debt or Quantitative Easing (QE).
- These accommodative policies are expected to remain in place over the next number of years.** Markets do not expect the ECB to begin to raise rates until well into 2024, with rates remaining negative out to 2027. Meanwhile, the ECB’s bond purchases are also set to continue over the next number of years. Thus, there is an opportunity for the Irish government to raise long term debt at very low interest rates for productive capital investment purposes in the period ahead. The long duration and low interest rates are key to the sustainability of the debt, as well as the strong growth rate of the economy. It means that the government will not face a wall of maturing debt that might be challenging to refinance in a short timeframe, or large annual bills for interest payments. The real challenge will be to ensure the borrowed funds are invested wisely.
- Turning to the week ahead, the flash PMIs for the key advanced economies will feature.** In August, both the manufacturing and services PMIs are forecast to edge lower, but remain well in expansion mode in the US and the UK. Meantime, the Eurozone services PMI is projected to be unchanged. The manufacturing PMI though, is set to fall (but stay above 50), in line with sector readings from elsewhere, as supply chains remain stretched.
- In the US, the latest reading of core-PCE inflation is due.** The monthly reading of core-PCE is expected to be stable at +0.4% in July, lifting the year-on-year rate slightly higher to +3.6% from +3.5%. However, the minutes from the July FOMC meeting note that the Fed still believes the spike in inflation will prove to be transitory. Meanwhile, the Jackson Hole Economic Symposium hosted by the Fed this week will warrant close attention. The market will be looking for signs as to whether the Fed may announce in September a plan to taper asset purchases, which could see this process commence by the end of this year or early next year.
- Elsewhere, in the Eurozone it is anticipated that consumer confidence inched lower in August.** A slew of national surveys from the big Eurozone economies are also due, including the German Ifo, French INSEE and Italian ISTAT.



	Interest Rate Forecasts			
	Current	End Q3 2021	End Q4 2021	End Q1 2022
Fed Funds	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125
ECB Deposit	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
BoE Repo	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
BoJ OCR	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10

Current Rates Reuters, Forecasts AIB's ERU

	Exchange Rate Forecasts (Mid-Point of Range)			
	Current	End Q3 2021	End Q4 2021	End Q1 2022
EUR/USD	1.1675	1.17	1.16	1.16
EUR/GBP	0.8566	0.85	0.84	0.84
EUR/JPY	128.26	128	128	128
GBP/USD	1.3626	1.38	1.38	1.38
USD/JPY	109.83	109	110	110

Current Rates Reuters, Forecasts AIB's ERU

Date	UK & Irish Time	Release	Previous	Forecast
This Week:	ECB Speakers:	Schnabel (Tue); de Guindos (Wed); Schnabel (Thu)		
	BoE Speakers:			
	Fed Speakers:	Powell (Fri)		
	US:	Jackson Hole Economic Symposium (26-28th August)		
Mon 23th	JPN:	01:30 Flash Jibun Manufacturing PMI (August)	53.0	
	FRA:	08:15 Flash Markit Composite PMI (August)	56.6	56.5
	GER:	08:30 Flash Markit Composite PMI (August)	62.4	62.2
	EU-19:	09:00 Flash Markit Composite PMI (August)	60.2	59.7
		- Manufacturing / Services	62.8 / 59.8	62.0 / 59.8
	UK:	09:30 Flash Markit / CIPS Composite PMI (August)	59.2	58.4
		- Manufacturing / Services	60.4 / 59.6	59.5 / 59.0
	UK:	11:00 CBI Trend Orders (August)	17	16
	US:	14:45 Flash Markit Composite PMI (August)	59.9	59.5
		- Manufacturing / Services	63.4 / 59.9	63.0 / 59.5
	US:	15:00 Existing Home Sales (July)	+5.86m / +1.4%	+5.83m / -0.5%
	EU-19:	15:00 Flash Consumer Confidence (August)	-4.4	-5.0
Tue 24th	GER:	07:00 GDP (Q2: Second Reading)	+1.5% (+9.2%)	+1.5% (+9.2%)
	US:	15:00 New Home Sales (July)	+0.68m / -6.6%	+0.70m / +3.5%
Wed 25th	GER:	09:00 German Ifo (August)	100.8	100.4
	UK:	11:00 CBI Distributive Trades (August)	23	
	US:	13:30 Durable Goods (July)	+0.9%	-0.2%
		- Ex-Transport	+0.5%	+0.5%
Thu 26th	US:	07:00 Gfk Consumer Sentiment (September)	-0.3	-1.0
	FRA:	07:45 INSEE Business Climate (August)	113	
	EU-19:	09:00 M3 Annual Money Growth (July)	(+8.3%)	(+7.6%)
	EU-19:	12:30 ECB Meeting Minutes (21-22nd July)		
	US:	13:30 GDP (Q2: Second Reading)	+6.5% s.a.a.r.	+6.7% s.a.a.r.
	US:	13:30 Core PCE Prices (Q2: Second Reading)	+6.1% s.a.a.r.	+6.1% s.a.a.r.
	US:	13:30 Initial Jobless Claims (w/e 16th August)	+348,000	
Fri 27th	JPN:	00:30 CPI (August)	(-0.1%)	
		- Ex-Food & Energy	(+0.1%)	(-0.2%)
	FRA:	07:45 Consumer Confidence (August)	101	100
	ITA:	09:00 Consumer Confidence (August)	116.6	116.0
	IRL:	11:00 Retail Sales (July)	+3.3% (+10.6%)	+3.0% (+11.0%)
	US:	13:30 Personal Income / Consumption (July)	+0.1% / +1.0%	+0.2% / +0.3%
		- Core PCE Prices	+0.4% (+3.5%)	+0.4% (+3.6%)
	US:	15:00 Final Michigan Consumer Sentiment (August)	70.2	70.9

◆ Month-on-month changes (year-on-year shown in brackets)

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