FX Watch: Yet another special year

A much-awaited "week of diplomacy" in the East, strong appreciation pressure in Central Europe and a US dollar moving sideways in spite of a Fed changing course have been keeping markets busy at the start of 2022. The stage is set for yet another special year.



			Historic Performance						
	vs. EUR	Spot	2W	3M	YTD	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22
West	USD	1.14	0.6	-1.5	-6.5	1.12	1.13	1.15	1.15
	CHF	1.05	1.1	-2.1	-3.0	1.08	1.09	1.10	1.10
CE	CZK	24.4	-2.0	-3.7	-6.8	24.7	24.5	24.4	24.3
	PLN	4.53	-1.4	-0.9	-0.2	4.55	4.50	4.45	4.45
	HUF	356	-3.8	-1.2	-1.9	370	365	360	360
SEE	ron	4.94	-0.1	-0.1	1.7	4.97	4.97	4.98	5.00
	HRK	7.52	0.1	0.1	-0.3	7.53	7.53	7.53	7.53
	RSD	117.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	117.6	117.6	117.7	117.8
	ALL	121.7	1.2	0.2	-1.4	121.1	121.0	120.5	120.8
EE	RUB	85.1	1.5	2.0	-5.8	77.5	78.8	80.5	81.1
	UAH	31.6	2.6	1.7	-7.7	30.8	30.7	31.4	32.2
	BYN	2.92	2.0	1.8	-7.9	3.14	3.28	3.34	3.45
	vs. USD	Spot	2W	3M	YTD	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22
EE	RUB	74.6	1.3	3.7	1.1	69.2	69.7	70.0	70.5
	UAH	27.7	2.0	5.2	-2.0	27.5	27.2	27.3	28.0
	BYN	2.56	1.5	3.3	-1.5	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00

last update: 12/1/2022; * under revision; Source: Refinitiv, RBI/Raiffeisen Research

- A key top down market driver for FX in 2022 will be the monetary tightening by the Fed, which has turned towards a more hawkish outlook lately. While yields reacted strongly during the first days of January, the impact on the US dollar was rather muted signaling that a desynchronized approach between the Fed and ECB is, to a large extent, already reflected by the current EUR/USD range. Over the next few months, the environment should stay rather USD friendly.
- Central European currencies have been characterized by strong appreciation dynamics into the new year. This holds true particularly for the Czech koruna, which still benefits from the bold CNB move just before Christmas. But also the Hungarian forint made an advance to below 360 vs the euro. The positive sentiment might be rather fragile though with global monetary tightening as a potential headwind for EM FX in general.
- Against the backdrop of an ongoing active news-flow on the geopolitical front, it comes as no surprise that the currencies of Eastern Europe have failed to follow suit their Central European peers. The Russian risk-premium stays elevated and a sustainable



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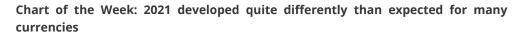
- Chart of the Week: 2021 **2** developed quite differently than expected for many currencies
- EUR/USD: Sideways in spite of a more hawkish Fed
- EUR/CZK: Strong appreciation **2** but slight correction likely ahead
 - EUR/HUF: Policy mix turns **3** more HUF friendly
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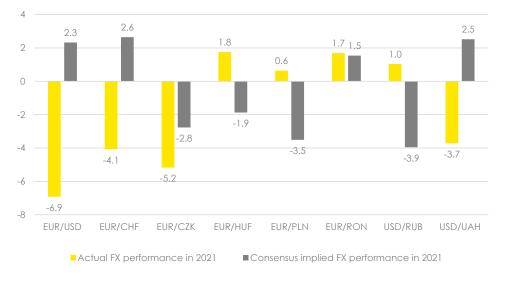
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Refinitiv, RBI/Raiffeisen Research

Consensus refers to Refinitiv FX Polls from early January 2021 for year-end 2021.

EUR/USD: Sideways in spite of a more hawkish Fed

The US Dollar has traded sideways since mid-November within a range of 1.12 and 1.14 versus the euro. This is rather striking, as the **recent environment** can be described as even more US Dollar friendly since the Fed meeting in mid-December. The Fed has changed course. Instead of emphasizing the incomplete recovery of labour supply (low labour force participation rate) it now emphasizes brisk wage growth and the threat from elevated inflation. Thus, the Fed decided to speed up tapering (QE to end in mid-March) and signal earlier and more rate hikes in 2022. The release of the Fed minutes in early January confirmed the hawkish stance and the market now prices 3-4 rate hikes (25bp each) for 2022, starting as early as March. Why the EUR/USD exchange rate has not reacted to this news can be seen as evidence that a more aggressive Fed has been driving the US Dollar stronger for most of H2'2021. The sharp appreciation after the inflation data for October, which indicated that price pressure has broadened, might have already heralded the Fed's turn-around. Speculative EUR/USD positions on futures markets also show that USD net long positions have not increased further over the past weeks, currently standing at 0.7% of open interest vs EUR. We share the view that current market pricing is already reflecting the relative hawkishness of the Fed vs the ECB. However, the next few months could see further surprises in this direction such that US Dollar strength should stay with us for some time. This is reflected by our EUR/USD target of 1.12 in Q1'22 and a balance of risk favouring USD.

Franz Zobl

	Spot	ST Forecast	Forecast Range	Balance of Risks
EUR/USD	1.14	1.12	1.10 - 1.15	stronger

Short-Term (ST) Forecast and Forecast Range refer to Q1'22

EUR/CZK: Strong appreciation but slight correction likely ahead

The Czech koruna has shown a strong entrance into the new year gaining around 2% against the euro. The **main impulse** for the strengthening **comes from the CNB**. Just before Christmas, it delivered another bold rate hike bringing the key rate to 3.75% while analysts predicted 3.5%. Presumably, due to the holiday season, investors have not fully absorbed CNB's steps before the end of the year and have been catching up in the first

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days of 2022. It was not just the rate hike itself but accompanying bullish statements that the **key rate will need to be raised markedly above 4% to tame inflation**. As a result, the interest differential vis-à-vis the euro area widened further providing tailwind for the currency. However, other factors are at play, too. For one, In January, the koruna usually appreciates unless there are some adverse news about economic outlook domestically or globally. Second, liquidity is low at the beginning of the year meaning that even relatively small reshuffling on the FX market can have a significant effect on the currency. Third, with the consensus view that koruna is going to appreciate this year, exporters likely hedge for this, thereby, supporting the koruna.

Despite the current rapid appreciation pace, we **keep our rather conservative outlook for the koruna**. The reason is that we expect some correction to weaker levels. One risk factor is domestic but also global outbreaks of **omicron**, which, if continued, might weigh on investor sentiment with a negative impact on risky assets, including the koruna. Another **risk factor** is the **Fed**. With information incoming that earlier than anticipated rate hikes are likely, the koruna will face headwinds. This could even be amplified should the ECB come under pressure as well if prices were to rise faster than expected. The effect of the interest rate differential will thus begin to fade. It should be, however, compensated for by renewed export growth in H2'22 as supply-chain shortages are expected to ease. The koruna is, in our view, **heading close to EUR/CZK 24.30 by the end of the year**.

David Vagenknecht

	Spot	ST Forecast	Forecast Range	Balance of Risks
EUR/CZK	24.4	24.7	24.3 - 24.8	weaker

Short-Term (ST) Forecast and Forecast Range refer to Q1'22

EUR/HUF: Policy mix turns more HUF friendly

The HUF strengthened significantly, by over 3% against the EUR in the beginning of the year. In the last weeks of 2021 the central bank accelerated its monetary policy tightening (terminated its QE programs and increased the reference interest rate to 4%) and the government announced some deficit cuts for 2022 (the deficit target is cut from 5.9% to 4.9% in % of GDP). These changes result in a **policy mix that is more supportive to the HUF** than previously. Further, rate hikes seen to come in Q1, we expect the terminal interest rate at 5.3%, while after the April elections, fiscal policy is likely to become more restrictive. In the same time, and unlike regional peers, **inflation has already peaked** in Hungary in November 2021 (at 7.4%) and going forward, we forecast a gradual deceleration throughout the year. This is expected to be supported by the next inflation release this week (we estimate the December CPI at 6.9%). However, global FX drivers are going to remain key when it comes to HUF dynamics. The **current positive sentiment is unlikely to last for long**, therefore in the short-term we expect EUR/HUF to move back above 360.

Zoltán Török				
	Spot	ST Forecast	Forecast Range	Balance of R
EUR/HUF	356	370	354 - 370	balanced

Short-Term (ST) Forecast and Forecast Range refer to Q1'22

EUR/RON: Depreciation factors might dominate in 2022

The EUR/RON exchange rate **remained roughly unchanged during Q4 2021** despite the materialization of several adverse developments: the collapse of the government, a severe fourth pandemic wave, a jump in inflation and a visible deceleration of economic growth. We think that pressures for leu depreciation haven't not been substantial and were easily **offset by the central bank**. However, **political risks have diminished substantially** at the turn of last year as a new ruling alliance was formed and a new cabinet was sworn in. Further, the European Commission has approved Romania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, a pre-founding of the plan amounting to EUR 1.85 bn being received by Romania in December. These developments should be beneficial for the leu exchange rate going forward. Still, we further expect the leu to continue on a gradual depreciation path against the euro during 2022. Both the current account deficit and the public budget deficit are foreseen to remain elevated in 2022 (at 7% of GDP and at around 6.1% of GDP according to our estimates), keeping the country's risk premium at an elevated level. Also, the large positive inflation rate differential between Romania and the euro area argues for a gradual depreciation trend of leu against the euro in our view. Among the factors that are expected to limit the leu depreciation there are the elevated levels of RON interest rates and RON T-bonds yields. Also, we expect the central bank to continue smoothing the dynamics of the leu exchange rate going forward. Large hard currency inflows generated by transfers and loans from the European Commission and by Eurobonds issuance should provide the central bank with enough ammunition to counteract the pressures for leu depreciation. At the monetary policy meeting on January 10, the NBR increased the monetary policy rate by 25bp, from 1.75% to 2.0%, less than our expectations of a 50bp hike. Going forward, we still think that the elevated inflation trajectory expected to materialize during this year is a solid argument for NBR to speed up the pace of monetary policy tightening. We expect the **monetary policy rate** to be increased each time at the upcoming meetings until reaching a level of 3.5% in July 2022. In our view, key rate hikes by 50bp still have good chances to materialize in the following period even though the NBR has favored a more gradual tightening of the monetary policy stance up to now (key rate was increased only by 25 bp at the recent three monetary policy meetings). Further, there is also a risk that the policy rate will rise above 3.5%.

Andreea Elena Draghia

	Spot	ST Forecast	Forecast Range	Balance of Risks
EUR/RON	4.94	4.97	4.95 - 4.98	weaker

Short-Term (ST) Forecast and Forecast Range refer to Q1'22

USD/RUB: Geopolitical uncertainty holds up risk premium

The Russian rouble is currently trading at around 75 USD/RUB, near the level of yearend 2021. The political conflict in Kazakhstan at the start of January put additional temporary pressure on the rouble, which depreciated to 76-77 USD/RUB on January 5-6. In our view, the impact has faded amid the prompt deescalation, including the peacekeeping involvement of Russia and other countries from the Collective Security Treaty Organization. However, the **elevated risk-premium persists** (5Y Russia CDS exceeds 120bp from the mid-December), reflecting a lack of material change on the geopolitical front (mainly due to the fact that there has been no winding-down of the situation around Ukraine). The spiking interventions by the Ministry of Finance (7.8 USD bn in January mainly driven by the natural gas price rally) will also serve as a constraining factor for the local currency. We anticipate that appreciation potential remains in place backed by expectedly strong current account figures and ongoing political discussions. A sustainable solution, however, seems unlikely to be found in the short-term. Read more: **How much diplomatic progress feasible — short- & medium-term?**

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Grigory Chepkov

	Spot	ST Forecast	Forecast Range	Balance of Risks
USD/RUB	74.5	69.2	68.0 - 72.0	weaker

Short-Term (ST) Forecast and Forecast Range refer to Q1'22

FX Calendar

Date	Country	Indicator	Period	Cons.	Last
Wed, 12	CZ	CPI (% yoy)	Dec	6.6	6.0
Wed, 12	US	CPI (% yoy)	Dec	7.0	6.8
Thu, 13	RS	NBS Policy Rate (%)		n.a.	1.00
Fri, 14	HU	CPI (% yoy)	Dec	7.2	7.4
Fri, 14	RO	CPI (% yoy)	Dec	7.8	7.8
Mon, 17	HR	CPI (% yoy)	Dec	n.a.	4.8
Wed, 19	RU	Trade Balance (USD bn)	Nov	n.a.	19.78
Thu, 20	UA	NBU Policy Rate (%)		n.a.	9.00
Mon, 24	EA	PMI Manufacturing, prel.	Jan	n.a.	58.0
Mon, 24	EA	PMI Services, prel.	Jan	n.a.	53.1
Mon, 24	US	Markit PMI Manufacturing, prel.	Jan	n.a.	57.7
Mon, 24	US	Markit PMI Services, prel.	Jan	n.a.	57.6
Tue, 25	HU	MNB Policy Rate (%)		n.a.	2.40

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Cakendar covers the next 14 days.

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Raiffeisen RESEARCH

Peer Group Charts





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Index, 2-year window, starts at 100



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Index, 2-year window, starts at 100



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Index, 2-year window, starts at 100

FX Forwards and Interest Rates

Refinitiv, RBI/Raiffeisen Research Index, 2-year window, starts at 100

		FX For	wards	Money Market Rates		Sover	eign Yields
vs. EUR	Spot	3M	12M	3M	Spread*	10Y	Spread*
USD	1.14	1.14	1.15	0.24	0.81	1.75	1.78
CHF	1.05	1.05	1.05	0.00	0.57	0.04	0.07
CZK	24.4	24.7	25.6	4.14	4.71	3.34	3.37
PLN	4.54	4.58	4.75	2.72	3.29	4.01	4.04
HUF	357	361	375	4.25	4.82	4.73	4.76
RON	4.94	4.99	5.19	3.07	3.64	5.52	5.55
RSD	117.5	117.7	n.a.	0.94	1.51	4.29	4.33
RUB	84.6	86.6	93.1	9.49	10.06	8.70	8.73
vs. USD	Spot	3M	12M	3M	Spread*	10Y	Spread*
RUB	74.5	76.1	81.0	9.49	9.25	8.70	6.95

last update: 12/1/2022

* vs. base currency

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