Weekly Update

Uncertainty Italian-style

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So, it is somewhat surprising that, despite the recent sell-off, Italian equities have outperformed all other developed markets year-to-date. And that the widening of the spread in yields between Italian and German government bonds has been pretty modest. The gap has increased from 114 basis points (bp) to 148 in recent weeks but – despite the mooted coalition plan to write off up to EUR 300 billion in government debt – it is still below the 160bp we saw at end December and the 171bp average last year.

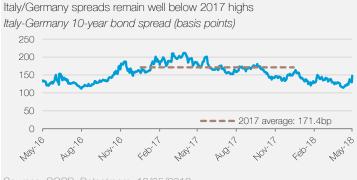
So why have investors been relatively sanguine? And is that justified?

The parties forming the coalition are a study in contrasts, as indeed are their programmes. In a comparative study commissioned by M5S, the only real point of convergence was their keenness to implement change. But as they have very different conceptions of what those changes might be, it'll be difficult to reach common policy goals. And those policies that were sketched out in the two manifestos (universal basic income for those in need, flat corporate tax rate at 15%, rolling back pension reforms) could cost up to EUR 100bn, around 5.5% of GDP.

However, recent decades have shown just how difficult the Italian political system makes it to implement reforms. In addition, European rules on budget discipline represent a major constraint. As do the bond markets – a sharp rise in Italian bond yields would make it increasingly difficult to service government debt, which is among the largest in Europe at 132% of GDP.

Furthermore, the two parties have been accustomed to protest rather than to wielding power, and had great difficulty in finding common ground. Indeed, if their agreement fails to be approved by their members, it would fall to President Matterella to appoint a "technocratic" government, or failing that to call new elections this summer.

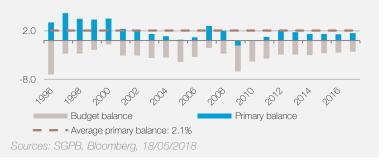
Bottom line. Italy's well-known problems have not changed – political gridlock, overhanging government debt, weak banks, demographic decline, low growth potential. Nonetheless, the recovery in the euro zone has boosted the Italian economy and helped reduce unemployment. And the ECB should continue its bond purchase programme throughout 2018, helping keep rates low across the zone. Of course, the policies actually implemented by the new Italian government warrant close scrutiny, but our core scenario remains one of continued above-potential growth, both in the euro zone and in Italy, both this year and next.



Sources: SGPB, Datastream, 18/05/2018



A sharp rise in Italian yields would make it difficult to service government debt Italian budget and primary balance (% YoY)



This week and next



Sources: Datastream, Bloomberg, 18 May 2018, Note: YoY = year-on-year; QoQ = quarter-on-quarter; MoM = month-on-month, P = preliminary figure, A = advanced figure, F = adjusted, ECB = European Central Bank

Our 6-month targets for currencies and commodities

	Thursday close	6mth target
EUR/USD	1.18	1.25
GBP/USD	1.35	1.40
EUR/CHF	1.18	1.18
USD/JPY	111	110
Brent	\$80.5	\$65
Gold	\$1288	\$1275

Forecast figures are not a reliable indicator of future performance



Question time

Past performance should not been seen as a guarantee of future returns.

No Q&A this week.

Market performance

Past performance should not been seen as a guarantee of future returns.

Interest rates	Last	1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth	Government bonds*		1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth
EONIA (EUR)	-37 bp	0 bp		0 bp	-2 bp	-1 bp	United States (3-7yr)		-0.4 %	Ļ	-0.6 %	-2.2 %	-2.6 %
3mth Euribor (EUR)	-33 bp	0 bp	-	0 bp	0 bp	1 bp	United Kingdom (3-7yr)		-0.5 %	F	0.0 %	-1.3 %	-2.0 %
3mth Libor (USD)	233 bp	-2 bp	ŧ	45 bp	64 bp	115 bp	Germany (3-7yr)		-0.3 %		0.4 %	-0.5 %	-0.9 %
3mth Libor (GBP)	62 bp	-5 bp	ŧ	8 bp	10 bp	31 bp	Japan (3-7yr)		0.0 %	→	0.0 %	0.0 %	-0.1 %
10-year US Treasury bond	311 bp	13 bp	•	21 bp	70 bp	89 bp							
10-year German bond	64 bp	8 bp	•	-2 bp	21 bp	26 bp	Equities*	Last	1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth
10-year French bond	88 bp	9 bp	•	3 bp	21 bp	4 bp	MSCI AC World	517	0.1 %	→	-0.2 %	1.9 %	15.7 %
10-year UK bond	160 bp	14 bp	•	1 bp	37 bp	59 bp	Eurostoxx 50	3 592	0.8 %		6.5 %	4.4 %	3.3 %
							DAX	13 115	0.7 %		5.3 %	1.5 %	3.8 %
Credit		1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth	CAC 40	5 622	1.8 %		8.0 %	7.4 %	9.0 %
BAML EURO Corp. IG		-0.4%	ŧ	-0.3 %	-0.8 %	0.8 %	S&P 500	2 720	0.0 %	→	0.0 %	2.5 %	17.7 %
BAML EURO Corp HY		-0.1%	₽	0.2 %	-0.1 %	3.2 %	FTSE 100	7 788	1.2 %		8.4 %	3.3 %	8.3 %
BAML GBP Corp IG		-0.8%	ŧ	-0.3 %	-2.4 %	-0.8 %	SMI	8 988	0.2 %		3.4 %	-1.0 %	3.3 %
BAML US IG		-0.6%	ŧ	-1.6 %	-4.0 %	-1.1 %	Торіх	1 808	1.7 %		5.1 %	0.5 %	17.2 %
BAML US HY		-0.1%	ŧ	0.2 %	-0.2 %	2.9 %	IBOV Brazil	83 622	-2.6 %	F	-1.1 %	9.5 %	23.8 %
JPM Global EM Sov. Plus		-0.6%	₽	-3.5 %	-5.0 %	-0.4 %	MICEX Russia *	2 324	0.5 %		3.0 %	10.1 %	16.5 %
							MSCI EM	1 144	-1.0 %	F	-4.2 %	-0.6 %	16.4 %
Exchange rates	Last	1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth	SENSEX 30 India	35 149	-0.3 %	F	3.5 %	4.2 %	16.1 %
EUR/USD	1.18	-1.0 %	ŧ	-4.9 %	-1.8 %	5.7%	Hang Seng (H-K)	30 942	0.7 %		0.2 %	4.2 %	27.0 %
EUR/CHF	1.18	-1.2 %	ŧ	2.6 %	0.9 %	8.1%	Shanghaï Composite	3 154	-0.6 %	F	-1.4 %	-4.6 %	1.6 %
GBP/USD	1.35	0.0 %		-3.7 %	0.1 %	4.2%							
USD/JPY	111	1.3 %	•	4.2 %	-1.7 %	0.0%	Commodities	Last	1wk		3mth	YTD	12mth
USD/BRL	3.70	4.1 %	•	14.4 %	11.6 %	17.8%	Brent	\$80	4.2 %		24.0 %	20.8 %	53.3 %
USD/CNY	6.37	0.3 %	1	0.3 %	-2.1 %	-7.5%	Gold	\$1 288	-2.2 %	F	-5.0 %	-1.2 %	2.4 %
USD/RUB	62.2	0.8 %	•	10.2 %	7.8 %	8.9%	Silver	\$16.5	-1.5 %	F	-1.6 %	-3.1 %	-2.4 %

Source: Datastream, on 17 May 2018. 1wk = 1-week change, 3mth = 3-month change, 12mth = 12-month change, YTD = year-to-date change, YoY = year-on-year change, BAML = Bank of America Merrill Lynch, JPM = JP Morgan, IG = Investment Grade, EM = emerging markets. * Price return for MICEX equity index. Equities; total return in local currency. Government bonds = 3-7 year returns. Figures are rounded.



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