

Information on economic trends

May 2018

Summary

Monthly statistical indicators suggest a small increase in economic activity at the beginning of 2018, following a temporary stagnation at the end of 2017. Favourable trends in the labour market continued in the same period. The annual consumer price inflation rate accelerated to 1.1% in March, primarily due to unprocessed food products' prices. Foreign trade in goods recorded adverse trends in January 2018, as exports declined and the growth in imports accelerated compared with the previous month's average. The CNB continued to pursue an expansionary monetary policy, maintaining very high levels of liquidity in the domestic financial system in April. Bank lending to the corporate and household sectors grew, while interest rates on new loans edged down on average. The net external debt of domestic sectors decreased slightly during the first two months of 2018. The Excessive Deficit Procedure Report shows a general government surplus under ESA 2010 of HRK 2.8bn (0.8% of GDP) in 2017, which was the result of the strong fiscal adjustment continuing since 2015. According to available data, the central government deficit increased slightly in the first quarter of 2018 from the same quarter of 2017, while public debt decreased from the previous month.

The GDP nowcasting model¹ shows a mild economic growth in the first quarter of 2018, which followed an economic stagnation at the end of 2017. Industrial production fell from the last three quarters of 2017 (Figures 3 and 4). Broken down by main industrial groupings, this fall primarily reflected a decline in the manufacture of capital goods, the result, according to detailed NCA data, of a decrease in the manufacture of machinery and equipment and of fabricated metal products. Energy was another main industrial grouping that decreased on the quarterly level. In contrast, real retail trade turnover rose slightly in the first quarter of 2018 from the level attained late in the previous year (Figure 7). Construction also went up, growing 0.9% from the last quarter in the previous year, due to an increase in works on buildings, while civil engineering works continued to decline (Figures 5 and 6).

The Consumer Confidence Survey conducted in April 2018 shows that the consumer confidence index held steady from March 2018, decreasing, however, from its average value in the first three months of the year. Expectations for the economy in the following year compared with its current state deteriorated slightly from the previous month, while expectations regarding the state of finances somewhat improved. As for business expectations, confidence in construction continued to rise in April from early 2014. Expectations in trade and services, having deteriorated in March, also improved. However, expectations in industry continued to worsen for the second successive month, primarily due to the current level of orders, considered lower than usual by most of the businesses surveyed (Figure 8).

Favourable labour market developments continued in the first quarter of 2018, although at a slightly weaker pace than at the end of 2017. The dynamics of growth in the number of employed persons slowed down slightly from the end of 2017. Nevertheless, almost all NCA activities made a positive contribution to employment trends, with the leading contribution coming from construction (Figure 14). Unemployment continued to decrease in the first quarter of 2018, largely as a result of clearings from the records for reasons other than employment (non-compliance with legal provisions, registration cancellation and failure to report regularly). The registered unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) dropped to 10.5% in March (Figure 15) due to this decrease. Gross wages continued to grow in the first quarter of 2018, although at a slower rate than at the end of 2017 (Figure 16). Wages rose the most in trade and construction, whereas public sector wages remained almost unchanged. Real wages grew at lower rates in this period than did nominal wages, due to a slight increase in consumer prices.

Consumer prices were up by 0.6% from February in March, primarily because of a seasonal increase in clothing and footwear prices (Table 1). In contrast, the overall CPI monthly growth was mitigated, primarily due to a price decrease in refined petroleum products, resulting from global developments in crude oil prices in late February and in the first half of March (Figure 19). However, as a result of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and a drop in the US reserves and in Venezuelan production of crude oil, the price of Brent crude oil started to grow in mid March and, gaining USD 10, reached USD 74 per barrel in mid April. The annual consumer price inflation rate accelerated from 0.8% in February to 1.1% in March, primarily due to unprocessed food product prices (Figure 18). These prices were mainly influenced by a sharp acceleration in the annual growth in the prices of vegetables, caused by a base effect stemming from a steep decrease in these prices in March 2017. The annual core inflation rate remained at the February level of 0.7% in March.

Following a strong growth in exports and a small increase in imports in the last quarter of 2017, foreign trade in goods recorded adverse trends at the beginning of 2018. Total exports of goods shrank 4.7% in January and exports of the narrow aggregate, which excludes energy products, dropped by 5.4% from the previous month's average (Figure 10). The decrease in exports was recorded across various product categories, and was especially sharp, apart from in energy products, in medical and pharmaceutical products, food products, ships and capital goods, particularly power generating machinery and equipment. In contrast, total imports of goods grew by 2.9% in January (Figure 11), with a significant contribution coming from rising imports of energy products, primarily oil and refined petroleum products. Imports of the narrow aggregate, which excludes energy products, had a slightly lower growth rate of 2.2%. The growth in imports of other goods was strongly influenced by imports of capital goods (Figure 12), especially power generating machinery and equipment, as well as by imports of scientific and control instruments and other chemical products

The exchange rate of the kuna versus the euro strengthened slightly in April, standing at EUR/HRK 7.41 at the end of the month, down by 0.3% from the end of March (Figure 21). Appreciation pressures on the kuna exchange rate stemmed primarily from a foreign exchange inflow generated by foreign tourist arrivals during the Easter holidays and at the start of the tourist off-season. The kuna also appreciated against most other currencies in the effective exchange rate basket (with the

¹ For details, see Kunovac, D., and B. Špalat: Nowcasting GDP Using Available Monthly Indicators (WP-39, October 2014). The estimate for the first quarter of 2018 is based on available data on the industrial production, construction works, labour market, financial markets and consumer and business confidence indicators.

exception of the euro and yuan renminbi), with the result that the index of the nominal effective kuna exchange rate was 0.2% lower at the end of April than at the end of March.

The ECB expansionary monetary policy and the high euro area banking system liquidity helped maintain short-term interest rates on the European money market in negative territory in April 2018. The overnight interest rate on the euro area banking market (EONIA) ended the month of April at –0.36%, and the six-month EURIBOR stood at –0.27% (Figure 24). Risk premiums for European emerging market economies did not change much in April, with the risk premium for Croatia amounting to 92 basis points at the end of the month (Figure 25).

The very small turnover in the domestic overnight interbank market in April was carried out at an average interest rate of 0.25%. In the same month, the MoF held one auction of one-year kuna T-bills without a currency clause, keeping the interest rate at 0.09%. Both the small turnover and the low interest rates in the domestic interbank market resulted from the domestic financial system's abundant surplus liquidity of HRK 27.5bn in April (Figure 54).

Interest rates on new bank loans granted to the household and corporate sectors slightly decreased on average in March 2018 (Figures 28 and 29), with those charged on some loans retaining their usual volatility. As regards original new corporate loans, a decline is noticeable in interest rates on foreign currency indexed kuna investment loans, while interest rates on kuna loans for working capital increased (Figure 31). As regards the household sector, average interest rates on original new housing loans dropped in March (Figure 32), while interest rates on consumer loans decreased (Figure 33). Interest rates on time deposits stayed very low. The average interest rate on household time deposits remained at 0.47% in March, whereas the interest rate on corporate time deposits went down from 0.70% in February to 0.37% in March (Figures 34 and 35). As a result of movements in interest rates on total new loans and deposits, their spread narrowed slightly in March to 5.45 percentage points, while the spread between interest rates on loans and deposits remained unchanged at 4.70 percentage points (Figure 37).

In March 2018 monetary developments were marked by a fall in net foreign assets (NFA) and an increase in net domestic assets (NDA) of the monetary system, which resulted in a slight decrease of HRK 0.7bn (0.2%) in total liquid assets (M4) (Figure 49). The fall in net foreign assets (NFA) was mainly due to a decrease in net foreign assets of monetary institutions, while the increase in net domestic assets (NDA) was mainly induced by an increase in credit institutions' net claims on the central government. If analysed on an annual basis, the growth in total liquid assets (M4) accelerated to 5.2% in March 2018, excluding the effects of exchange rate changes. Money (M1) grew annually by as much as 21.3% (Figure 48), while quasimoney decreased by 2.1% from the March of the previous year (excluding the effects of exchange rate changes).

Total placements of monetary institutions to domestic sectors (excluding the government) increased in March (transaction-based), with their annual growth rate up to 3.1% (Figure 40). The annual growth of placements to households and corporations continued to accelerate, reaching 4.6% for households (Figure 42) and 3.2% for corporations (Figure 41). In contrast, the annual growth dynamics of total placements remained under the negative effect of a sharp annual fall in placements to other financial institutions (–23.0% in March). The nominal stock of total placements was 0.9% lower at the end of March 2018 than at the end of the same month the year before, primarily as a result of the sale of non-performing placements.

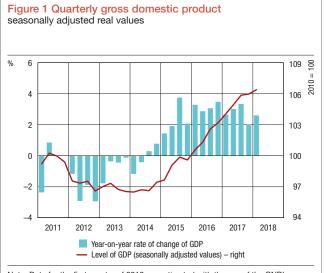
Gross international reserves, which went down in April, mostly as a result of a lower level of agreed repo transactions, amounted to EUR 15.9bn at the end of that month (Figure 56), increasing by EUR 0.2bn (1.4%) from the end of the previous year. The growth of gross reserves was mostly driven by foreign currency purchases from banks at the beginning of January. Net international reserves grew by EUR 0.5bn (3.3%) at the end of April from the end of the previous year, standing at EUR 14.2bn.

Croatia's net external debt, having edged up in the last quarter of 2017, decreased by only EUR 0.1bn in the first two months of 2018 (Figure 60). The stock of gross external debt also fell slightly in the first two months of 2018 (Figure 61).

The Excessive Deficit Procedure Report of April 2018 confirmed that the strong fiscal consolidation had continued in 2017. The general government surplus stood at 0.8% of GDP in 2017, up by 1.7 percentage points from 2016. This was because favourable economic conditions supported the increase on the revenue side of the budget, interest expenses decreased and a rein was kept on other expenditure categories. The revenue side was marked by favourable developments in almost all main revenue categories, with the total revenue to GDP ratio falling slightly to 46.0%. Total expenditures edged down, due primarily to a drop in capital expenditures, to some extent brought about by declining general government investments. As economic activity grew in the same period, the expenditure to GDP ratio declined by almost two percentage points from 2016, down to 45.3%. Due to a marked improvement in the general government balance, continuing economic recovery and the strengthening of the kuna exchange rate against the euro, the general government debt to GDP ratio fell by 2.6 percentage points from the end of 2016, standing at 78.0% of GDP

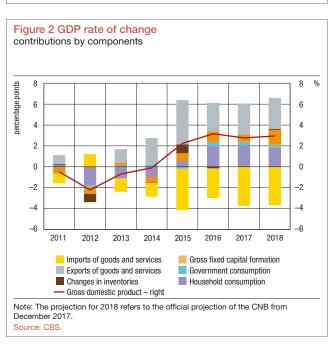
According to Ministry of Finance data², the central government deficit was HRK 2.9bn in the first three months of 2018, compared with HRK 2.7bn in the same period in 2017, the rise being due to expenditures growing slightly faster than revenues. At the end of January 2018, public debt stood at HRK 280.1bn, which is a reduction of HRK 2.7bn from the previous month, partly mirroring the appreciation of the kuna exchange rate versus the euro and US dollar.

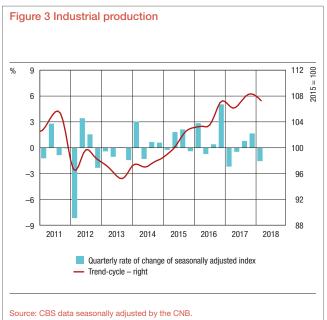
² Monthly data for central government, state government and social security sub-sectors which, pursuant to Council Directive 2011/85/EU, have to be published before the end of the following calendar month. The published data refer to general government units according to the scope of the ESA 2010 statistical methodology, except for data for the local government, which are published on a quarterly basis.

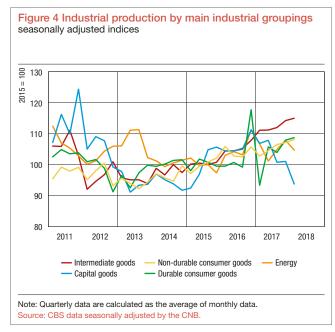


Note: Data for the first quarter of 2018 are estimated with the use of the CNB's monthly indicator of real economic activity, on the basis of data published until 27 April 2018.

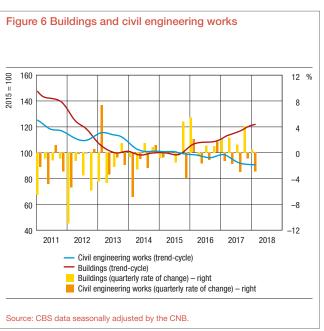
Sources: CBS data seasonally adjusted by the CNB and CNB calculations.



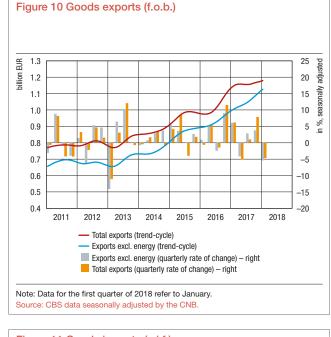


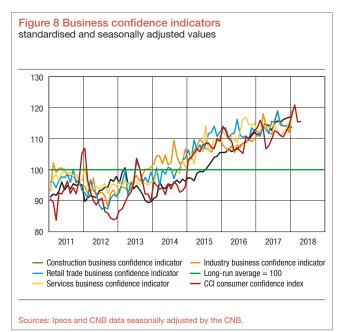


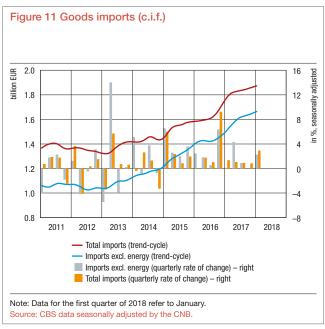


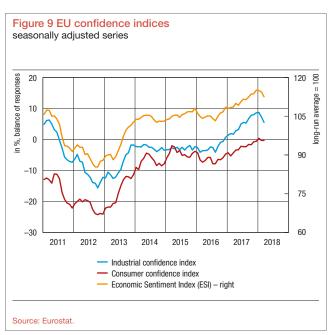


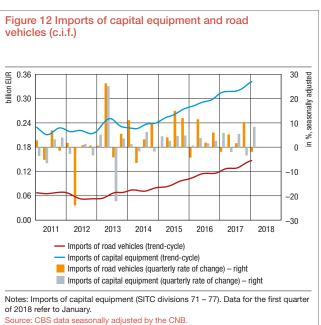


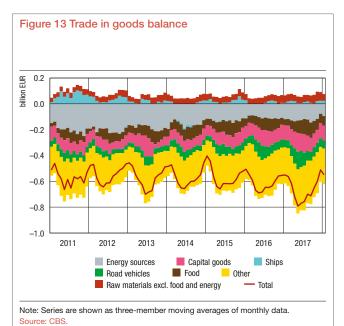


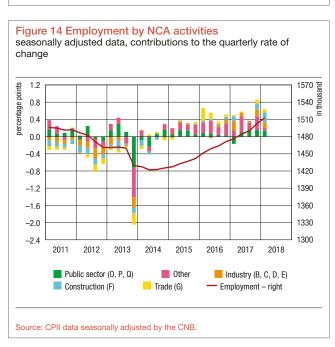


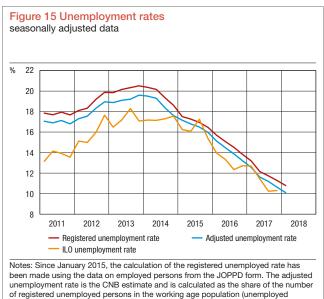






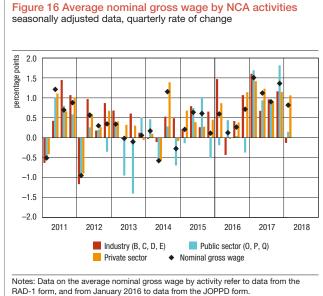




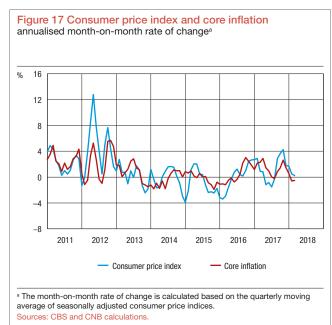


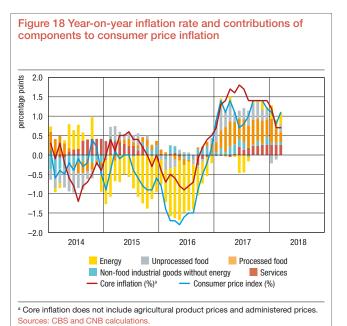
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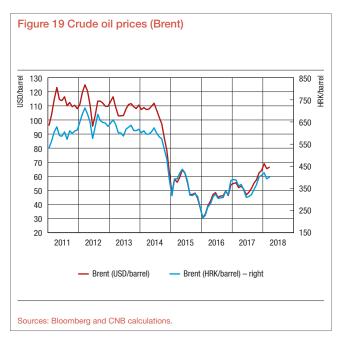
Sources: CBS and CNB calculations (seasonally adjusted by the CNB).



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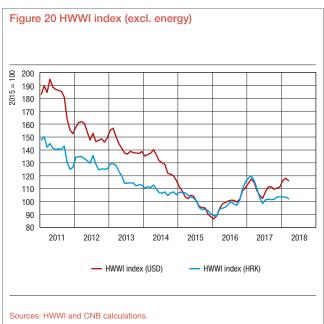


Figure 22 Nominal and real effective exchange rates of the kuna 160 2010 = 100150 140 130 120 110 100 90 2010 2012 2015 2009 2013 2002 2003 2005 2008 2011 2014 2001 2004 2007 Real (PPI) Real (ULC total economy) Real (CPI) Real (ULC manufacturing) Notes: The real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by producer prices includes the Croatian index of industrial producer prices on the total market. The unit labour cost is calculated as the ratio between compensation per employee and labour

Table 1 Price indicators

year-on-year and month-on-month rates of change

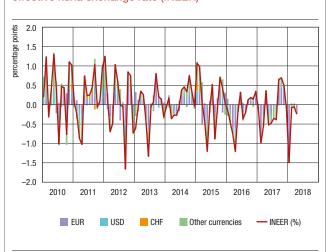
	Year-on-year rates		Month-on- month rates	
	2/18	3/18	3/17	3/18
Consumer price index and its compo	onents			
Total index	0.8	1.1	0.3	0.6
Energy	1.4	1.8	-0.9	-0.6
Unprocessed food	-1.3	2.1	-2.4	0.9
Processed food	1.6	1.1	0.1	-0.4
Non-food industrial goods without energy	0.2	0.3	3.0	3.1
Services	1.0	1.0	-0.1	-0.1
Other price indicators				
Core inflation	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.9
Index of industrial producer prices on the domestic market	1.0	1.2	-0.3	-0.1
Brent crude oil price (USD)	17.9	27.9	-6.4	1.6
HWWI index (excl. energy, USD)	0.4	1.0	-2.2	-1.6

Note: Processed food includes alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Sources: CBS, Bloomberg and HWWI.

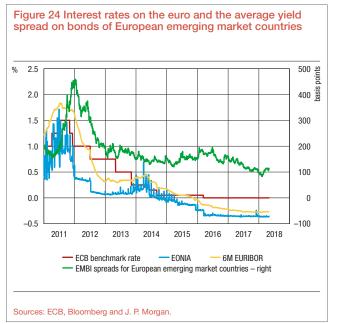
Figure 23 Contributions^a of individual currencies to the monthly rate of change of the average index of the nominal effective kuna exchange rate (INEER)

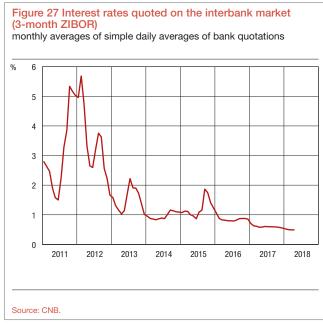
productivity (defined as GDP per person employed), while the real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by unit labour costs is the result of the interpolation of quarterly values. A fall in the index indicates an effective appreciation of the kuna.

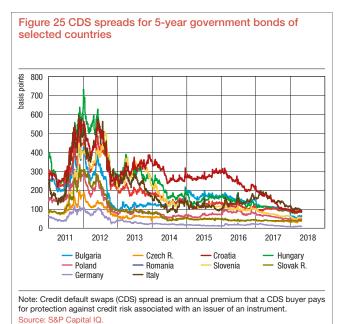
Source: CNB.

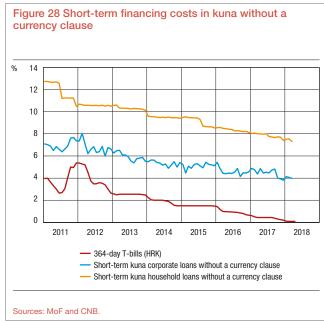


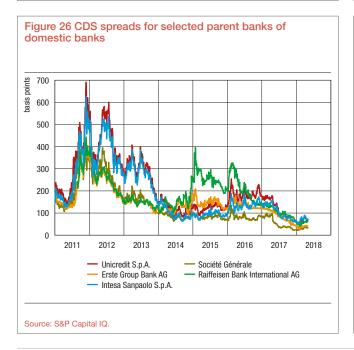
^a Negative values indicate contributions to the appreciation of the INEER. Source: CNB.

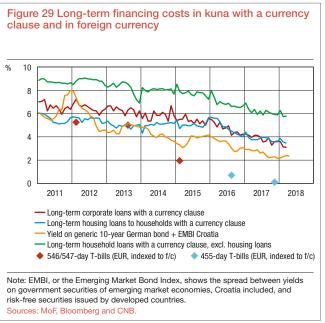


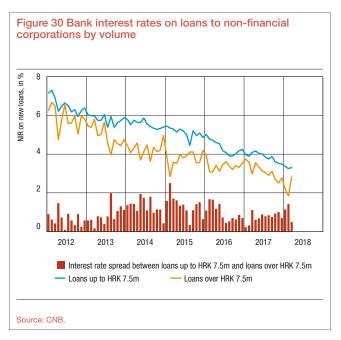


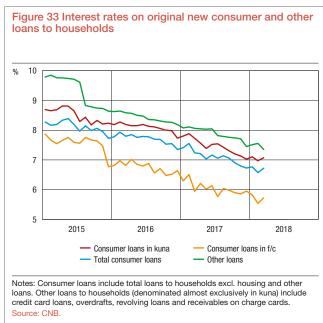


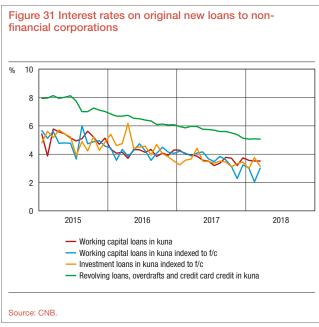


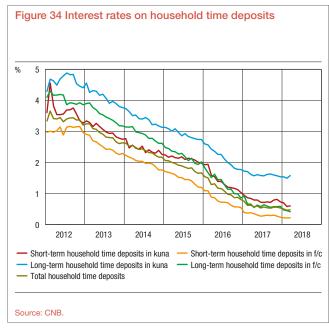


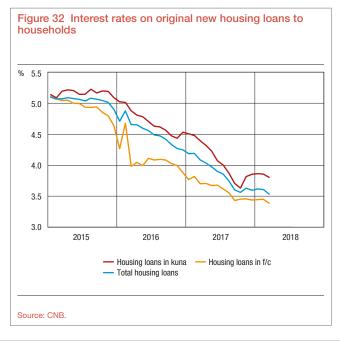


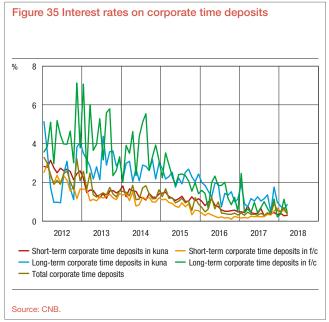


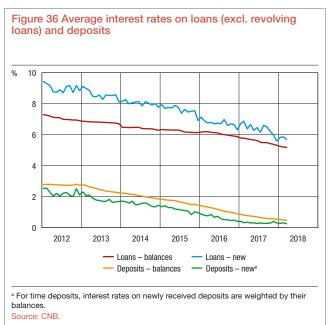


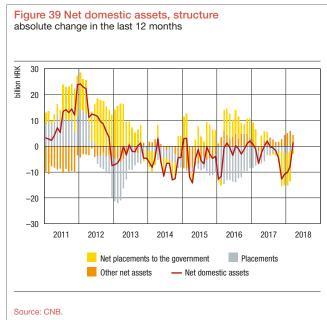


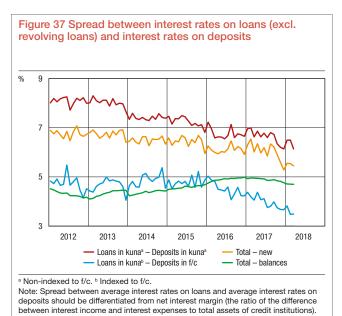




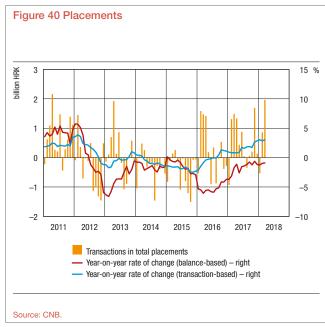


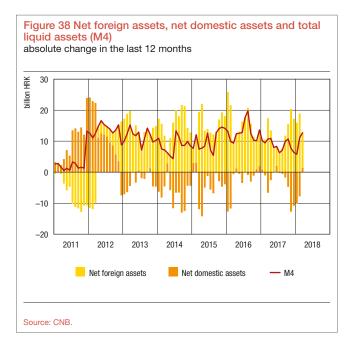


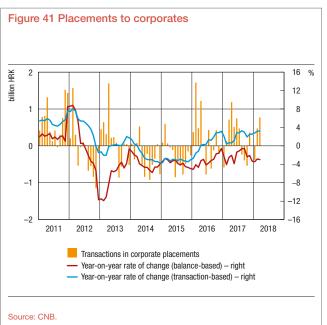


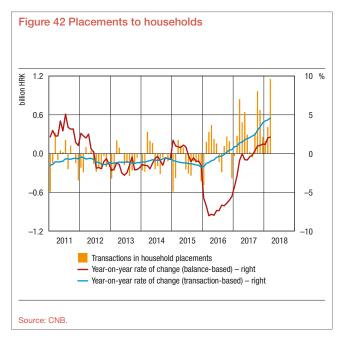


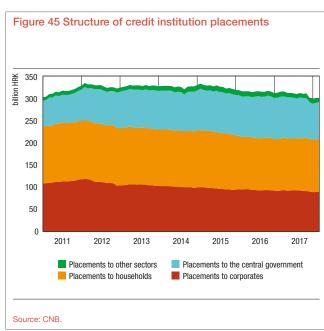
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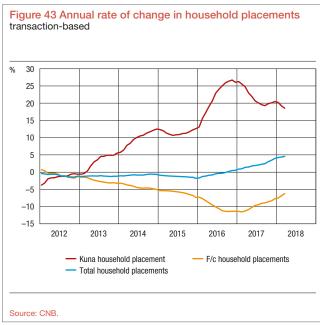


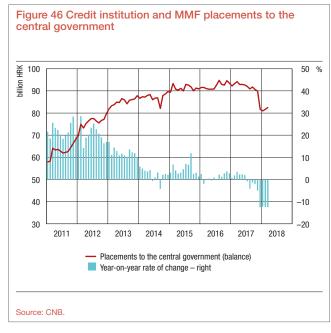


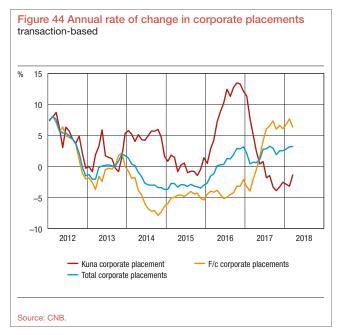


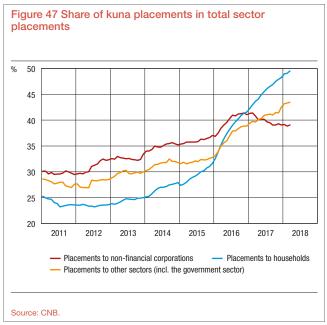


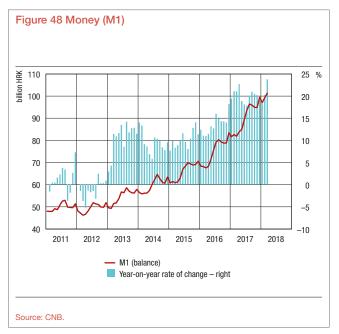


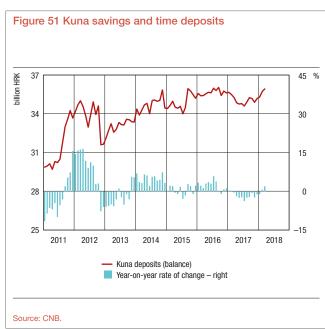


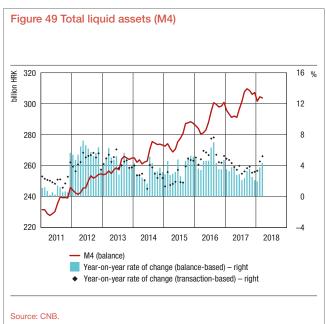


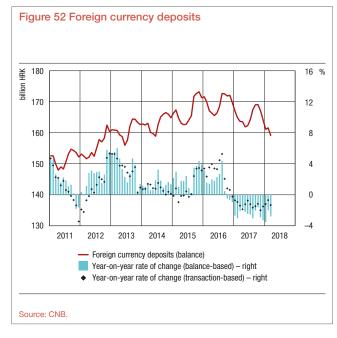


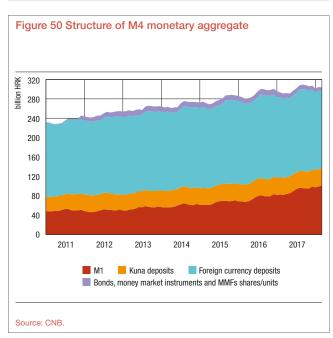












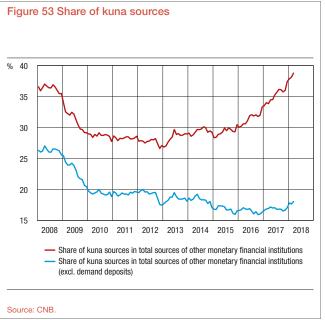
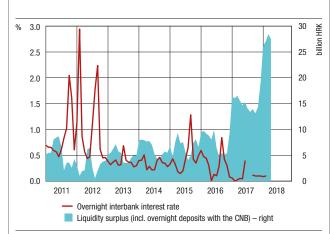


Figure 54 Bank liquidity and overnight interbank interest rate



Note: Liquidity surplus is the difference between the balance in bank settlement accounts with the CNB and the amount that banks are required to hold in their accounts after the calculation of reserve requirements.

Source: CNB.

Table 2 Balance of payments

preliminary data, in million EUR

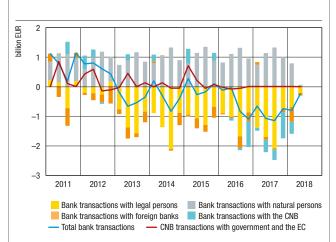
				Indices	
	2016	2017	2016/ 2015	2017/ 2016	
Current account	1,208.7	1,903.8	59.9	157.5	
Capital account	597.5	236.8	186.3	39.6	
Financial account (excl. reserves)	1,584.7	-925.8	142.4	-58.4	
International reserves	-264.7	2593.1	-	-	
Net errors and omissions	-486.2	-473.2	101.0	97.3	

a Sum of the last four quarters.

Note: In line with the 6th edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6).

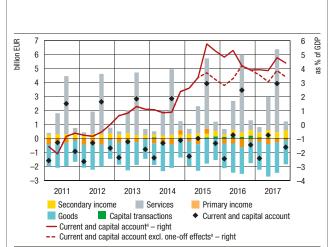
Source: CNB.

Figure 55 Spot transactions in the foreign exchange market (net turnover)



Notes: Positive values indicate net purchases and negative values indicate net sales Legal persons include the government. Data for the second quarter of 2018 refer to April. Source: CNB.

Figure 57 Current and capital account flows

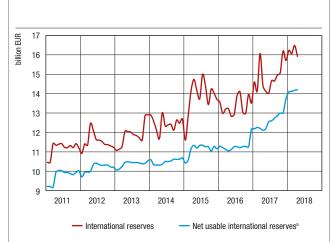


 $^{\rm a}$ Sum of the last four quarters. Note: One-off effects include conversion of CHF-linked loans in 2015 and bank provisions for loans to the Agrokor Group in 2017.

Source: CNB

Figure 56 International reserves of the CNB

at current rate of exchange

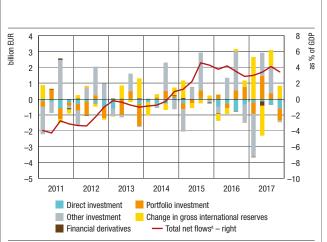


^a NUIR = international reserves - foreign liabilities - reserve requirements in f/c

- foreign currency government deposits.

Source: CNB

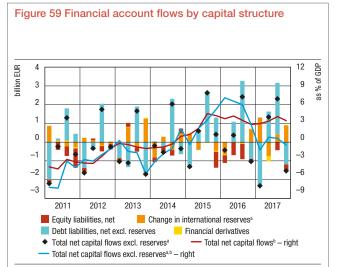
Figure 58 Financial account flows by type of investment



^a Sum of the last four quarters.

Note: A positive value indicates net outflow of equity abroad (including on the basis of the growth in international reserves).

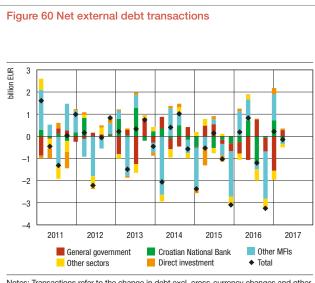
Source: CNB.



 $^{^{\}rm a} \text{The change}$ in gross international reserves is reported net of foreign liabilities of the CNB. $^{\rm b} \text{Sum}$ of the last four quarters.

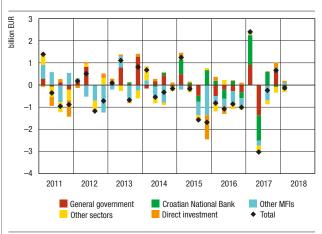
Notes: A positive value indicates net outflow of equity abroad. Net flows represent the difference between the change in assets and the change in liabilities.

Source: CNB.



Notes: Transactions refer to the change in debt excl. cross-currency changes and other adjustments. Net external debt is calculated as the gross external debt stock net of foreign debt claims. Data for the first quarter of 2018 refer to January and February. Source: CNB.





Notes: Transactions refer to the change in debt excl. cross-currency changes and other adjustments. Data for the first quarter of 2018 refer to January and February.

Figure 62 Gross external debt end of period 50 billion EUR 40 30 20 10 0 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 General government Croatian National Bank Other MFIs Direct investment Source: CNB.

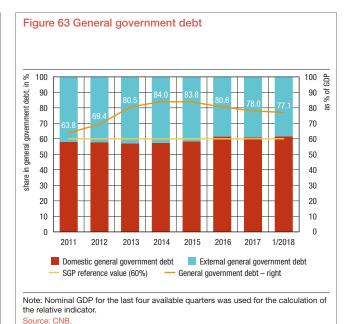


Table 3 Consolidated general government balance

ESA 2010, in million HRK

	Jan Dec. 2016	Jan Dec. 2017
Total revenue	161,645	167,202
Direct taxes	22,912	22,955
Indirect taxes	67,896	71,602
Social contributions	41,645	43,339
Other	29,192	29,307
Total expenditure	164,920	164,448
Social benefits	56,026	57,188
Subsidies	5,344	6,208
Interest	10,817	9,769
Compensation of employees	39,740	41,440
Intermediate consumption	28,006	28,808
Investment	11,303	9,821
Other	13,684	11,213
Net lending (+)/borrowing (-)	-3,275	2,754
Sources: Eurostat and CBS.		

Table 4 Consolidated central government net borrowing

GFS 2001, in million HRK

	JanNov. 2016	JanNov. 2017	
1 Revenue	124,046	129,113	
2 Disposal of non-financial assets	375	592	
3 Expenditure	121,269	122,632	
4 Acquisition of non-financial assets	3,552	2,814	
5 Net borrowing (1+2-3-4)	-400	4,259	
Sources: MoF and CNB calculations.			

Table 5 General government debt

in million HRK

	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	
Change in total debt stock	-2,750	-3,448	
Change in domestic debt stock	-1,381	-174	
- Securities other than shares, short-term	152	971	
- Securities other than shares, long-term	-320	157	
- Loans	-1,221	-1,302	
Change in external debt stock	-1,369	-3,274	
- Securities other than shares, short-term	100	-100	
- Securities other than shares, long-term	-1,089	-2,341	
- Loans	-380	-833	
Memo item:			
Change in total guarantees issued	3	37	
Source: CNB.			

Abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviations		n.e.c.	- not elsewhere classified
DIC		OECD	- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and De-
BIS	– Bank for International Settlements	0.0	velopment
bn	- billion	OG	- Official Gazette
b.p.	- basis points	R	- Republic
BOP	- balance of payments	o/w	– of which
c.i.f.	– cost, insurance and freight	PPI	– producer price index
CBRD	 Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development 	RTGS	 Real-Time Gross Settlement
CBS	 Croatian Bureau of Statistics 	Q	– quarterly
CCI	 consumer confidence index 	RR	 reserve requirement
CDCC	 Central Depository and Clearing Company Inc. 	SDR	 special drawing rights
CDS	 credit default swap 	SITC	 Standard International Trade Classification
CEE	 Central and Eastern European 	SGP	 Stability and Growth Pact
CEFTA	 Central European Free Trade Agreement 	VAT	value added tax
CEI	 consumer expectations index 	WTO	 World Trade Organization
CES	 Croatian Employment Service 	ZMM	 Zagreb Money Market
CHIF	 Croatian Health Insurance Fund 	ZSE	- Zagreb Stock Exchange
CLVPS	 Croatian Large Value Payment System 		
CM	 Croatian Motorways 	Three-le	etter currency codes
CNB	– Croatian National Bank		•
CPF	 Croatian Privatisation Fund 	ATS	– Austrian schilling
CPI	 consumer price index 	CHF	– Swiss franc
CPII	- Croatian Pension Insurance Institute	CNY	– Yuan Renminbi
CR	- Croatian Roads	DEM	– German mark
CSI	- consumer sentiment index	EUR	– euro
DAB	- State Agency for Deposit Insurance and Bank Reso-	FRF	- French franc
Ditb	lution	GBP	pound sterling
don	- deposit	HRK	Croatian kuna
dep. DVP	•	ITL	– Italian lira
EC EC	- delivery versus payment		
	- European Commission	JPY	– Japanese yen
ECB	- European Central Bank	USD	– US dollar
EFTA	- European Free Trade Association	T 1-4	
EMU	- Economic and Monetary Union	Iwo-let	ter country codes
ESI	– economic sentiment index	D.C.	D 1 '
EU	– European Union	BG	- Bulgaria
excl.	- excluding	CZ	- Czech R.
f/c	– foreign currency	EE	– Estonia
FDI	 foreign direct investment 	HR	– Croatia
Fed	– Federal Reserve System	HU	– Hungary
FINA	- Financial Agency	LV	– Latvia
FISIM	- financial intermediation services indirectly measured	LT	– Lithuania
f.o.b.	free on board	PL	– Poland
GDP	 gross domestic product 	RO	– Romania
GVA	 gross value added 	SK	– Slovak R.
HANFA	 Croatian Financial Services Supervisory Agency 	SI	- Slovenia
HICP	 harmonised index of consumer prices 		
ILO	 International Labour Organization 	Symbol	s
IMF	 International Monetary Fund 	•	
incl.	- including	_	– no entry
IPO	- initial public offering		data not available
m	– million	0	 value is less than 0.5 of the unit of measure being
MIGs	main industrial groupings	Ü	used
MM	main industrial groupingsmonthly maturity	Ø	– average
MoF	Ministry of Finance		- indicates a note beneath the table and figure
NCA	 National Classification of Activities 	a, D, C,	- corrected data
NCB	 national central bank 		 incomplete or insufficiently verified data
NCS		()	- meomplete of insumolently verified data
INCO	 National Clearing System 		