

economic trends

November 2017

Summary

Favourable economic developments continued in the third quarter of 2017, with available data indicating an acceleration in real growth. At the same time, positive labour market trends lost momentum. Consumer prices went up 1.5% and annual inflation picked up from 1.0% to 1.4% from August to September, largely due to an increase in electricity prices. The CNB continued its expansionary monetary policy, which was as of September supported by the newly-introduced possibility of collateral management by means of the pool of eligible assets for all credit operations of the CNB. Lending to households trended up steadily in September, particularly in the domestic currency, while the growth in corporate placements slowed down slightly on an annual basis. The net external debt of domestic sectors shrank noticeably in July and August, mostly thanks to the sustained improvement in the external position of credit institutions. The general government generated a surplus in the second quarter, although it was somewhat lower than in the same period a year ago, while the Ministry of Finance data on a cash basis suggest that favourable developments continued into the early third quarter.

The GDP nowcasting model shows that economic activity continued to pick up pace in the third quarter of 2017, mainly due to very favourable developments in tourism (Figure 1). The growth in real retail trade turnover accelerated from the second quarter this year, but dropped on a monthly basis in September (Figure 7). Having decreased for two consecutive quarters, industrial production increased in the same period – viewed by MIG components, production of intermediate goods, energy, and non-durable consumer goods grew on a quarterly basis (Figures 3 and 4). On the other hand, the real volume of construction works was lower in July and August 2017 than the average for the preceding three months, with a downturn in civil engineering works and stagnation in construction works on buildings.

The consumer confidence index has remained above its long-term average, although it was lower in October than in the third quarter this year because of lower expectations of households regarding the economic situation in the year ahead compared with the present situation. Confidence indices in industry and trade were also lower than the average for the preceding quarter. On the other hand, expectations in service activities held steady from the third quarter, while the upward trend in optimism in the construction activity, which has been noticeable since early 2014, continued (Figure 8).

Favourable developments in the labour market continued into the third quarter, but at a slower pace. The increase in employment figures slowed down in the third quarter as a whole as private sector results were poorer in July and August than the previous quarter's average (Figure 14). Due to a decline in both employment and clearings from the records for reasons other than employment (non-compliance with legal provisions, registration cancellation and failure to report), the fall in the unemployment rate slowed down in the third quarter of 2017, so that the rate averaged 12.00% (seasonally adjusted data) (Figure 15). As regards wages, the increase in the average nominal gross and net wage also slowed down in the third quarter (Figure 16).

Consumer prices were 1.5% higher in September than in the month before (Table 1), mostly on account of the seasonal increase in the prices of clothing and footwear. Electricity prices also grew significantly on a monthly basis (by 6.3%), owing to the rise in renewable energy sources tariffs. In addition, as September was the third month in a row that saw an increase in the global price of crude oil (Figure 19), this growth spilled over to the prices of refined petroleum products in the domestic market. The overall annual inflation rate picked up from 1.0% in August to 1.4% in September. This was attributable to all the main components of the consumer price index, energy in particular, due to the much slower decline in the annual rate of change in electricity prices (Figure 18). The annual core inflation rate was 1.4% in September, the same as in August.

As regards foreign trade, exports continued to decline in early third quarter 2017, albeit at a slower rate than in the second quarter, while imports held steady at the previous quarter's level. Total goods exports were 2.7% lower in July than the previous quarter's average (Figure 10) as a result of unfavourable trends in exports of other transport equipment (mostly ships). At the same time, exports of the narrow aggregate excluding ships and oil and refined petroleum products held steady. Among other things, exports of road vehicles, medical and pharmaceutical products and electricity went up, while exports of clothing and miscellaneous manufactured articles went down. The stagnation in total imports of goods (Figure 11) was the outcome of the decline in imports of oil and refined petroleum products and ships, while imports of the narrow aggregate increased by 2.7% compared with the previous quarter's average. An upturn was recorded in imports of capital goods (Figure 12), chemical products (excluding medical and pharmaceutical products), and metal industry products, while a decline was seen in imports of road vehicles.

The kuna/euro exchange rate was stable in October. At the end of the month it stood at EUR/HRK 7.51, 0.1% up on the end of September (Figure 21). Similarly, the index of the nominal effective kuna exchange rate at the end of October was almost equal to its value at the end of the previous month (Figure 22).

The ECB's sustained expansionary monetary policy and the high liquidity of the euro area banking sector helped maintain euro benchmark interest rates in negative territory. The overnight interest rate for the euro area, EONIA, ended October at –0.35%, while the six-month EURIBOR dropped to –0.28% (Figure 24). The risk premiums for European emerging market economies did not change much in October, with Croatia recording the sharpest decrease (of 118 basis points) from the beginning of the year. The spread between the risk premium for Croatia and peer countries dropped sharply, standing at 102 basis points at the end of October (Figure 25).

There was very little overnight interbank trade on the domestic market in October, at the average interest rate of 0.10%. Liquidity levels across the domestic financial system remained strong and were additionally boosted in October by the purchase of foreign exchange from banks of EUR 80m, which created HRK 0.6bn. In addition, an auction of MoF T-bills was held in October, at which one-year kuna and euro T-bills were placed at the lowest interest rates thus far: totalling 0.30% for kuna and only 0.01% for euro T-bills.

In September, the interest rates on new bank loans to nonfinancial corporations grew marginally, which reflected the change in the structure of loans granted, while the interest rates on household loans continued to go down (Figures 28, 29 and 30). As regards corporate loans, an increase was seen in interest rates on renegotiated loans and original new kuna loans for working capital. The rates on original new investment loans dropped slightly (Figure 31). As regards household loans, interest rates on housing loans steadily decreased, particularly those on kuna loans (Figure 32). Interest rates on corporate time deposits grew mildly in September, while those on household deposits held steady, which may be attributed to extended maturity of deposits (Figures 34 and 35). As a result of the developments described above, the spread between interest rates on loans and deposits did not change much in September compared with the average for the first eight months of 2017. The spread between interest rates on new loans and deposits stood at 6.22 percentage points, while the gap between interest rate spreads on loans and deposits was 4.88 percentage points in September (Figure 37).

Monetary developments in September 2017 were marked by an upturn in the net foreign assets (NFA) of the monetary system, which exceeded the drop in net domestic assets (NDA), leading to an increase in total liquid assets (M4) of HRK 1.8bn or 0.6% (Figure 38). In September, M4 was largely influenced by the increase in the kuna equivalent of foreign currency deposits triggered by the weakening of the kuna against the euro. Total liquid assets grew by 3.8% from end-September 2016 to end-September 2017 (exchange rate changes excluded), accelerating from August (Figure 49). This was largely driven by the steady, strong annual increase in money (M1), of as much as 21.0% in September (Figure 48), which was accompanied by a 2.4% drop in quasi-money (excluding exchange rate effects).

Total placements of monetary institutions to domestic sectors (excluding the government) did not change much in September (transaction-based), and their annual growth rate held steady at 1.9% (Figure 40). Observed on an annual basis, the growth in household placements continued to accelerate, ending September at 2.6% (Figure 42), while the growth in placements to non-financial corporations slowed to 2.9% (Figure 41). Furthermore, it should be noted that the annual growth rate of total placements was reduced by the sharp annual decrease in placements to other financial institutions. The share of kuna placements in total household placements remained on an upward trajectory, reaching almost 47% at end-September (Figure 47), whereas the share of corporate placements has been decreasing since March. The nominal stock of placements was 0.7% lower at-end September 2017 than at end-September 2016, which was largely due to the sale of non-performing placements. As for lending to the government, bank placements to the central government registered an annual decrease of 1.3% at end-September 2017 (Figure 46).

Due mostly to foreign exchange purchases from banks, gross international reserves grew slightly in October 2017 (by 0.7%), standing at EUR 15.1bn at the end of the month (Figure 56). Net usable reserves also went up, by 1.1%, reaching EUR 13.0bn at the end of October.

In September the CNB Council adopted a new Decision on monetary policy implementation of the CNB, thereby introducing a system of collateral management by means of the pool of eligible assets for all credit operations of the CNB. Under the Decision, banks may set up an eligible assets pool comprising securities the maturity of which is not linked to the maturity of the liquidity obtained from the central bank. This is in contrast with the former decision under which maturity of collateral had

to be equal to or longer than the maturity of the funds obtained from the CNB. Also, banks may now replace, add to and withdraw the securities in the pool of eligible assets. Collateral management by means of the eligible assets pool has enabled the formation of a uniform List of eligible securities for all CNB credit operations and the use of short-term securities as collateral for long-term credit operations of the CNB, such as structural repo operations.

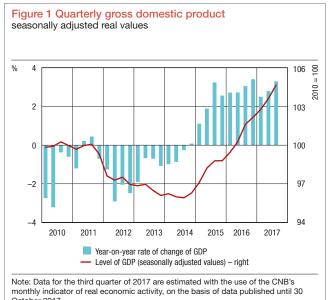
After having fallen in the second quarter (by EUR 1.4bn), net external debt (Figure 60) shrank even more in July and August 2017 (by EUR 2.7bn), largely as a result of the growth in foreign claims, while foreign liabilities decreased marginally (Figure 61). This was mainly due to credit institutions, which usually improve their net foreign position during the peak tourist season; their foreign assets exceeded their liabilities to foreign creditors by almost 5% of GDP at the end of August. In addition, the central bank's positive net foreign position improved as well, aided by interventions in the foreign exchange market and banks' funds in the TARGET2 account with the CNB, while the investment of reserves in repo agreements contributed to a pronounced, parallel growth in gross international reserves and foreign liabilities of the CNB. The external debt of the government sector also decreased marginally, owing to transactions in the secondary market (purchase of bonds issued in the foreign market by domestic investors) and interest payments falling due. The net external debt of other domestic sectors edged up slightly as private non-financial enterprises raised their debt, while public enterprises deleveraged against foreign creditors.

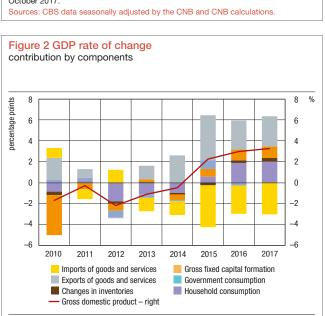
The consolidated general government deficit (ESA 2010) was only HRK 1.1bn in the first half of 2017, or 0.3% of GDP.1 The second quarter saw a surplus of HRK 0.1bn, which was HRK 0.3bn less than in the same period of 2016. The slight decrease in the budget surplus in the second quarter reflects a somewhat faster annual fall in revenues (of around HRK 1.6bn) relative to expenditures (around HRK 1.3bn). Broken down by category, the annual decrease in total revenues was a direct consequence of the drop in other current revenues, while most other categories grew mildly; a particularly strong positive contribution came from indirect taxes, supported by expanded personal consumption. The sharp reduction on the expenditure side of the budget reflected the fall in other current expenditures, and expenditures for subsidies and investments. By contrast, expenditures for intermediary consumption of the government, social benefits and employee compensation recorded a moderate annual growth in the same period, which was nevertheless insufficient to offset the decline in other categories.

According to the monthly MoF data for July and August 2017, it seems that favourable fiscal developments marked the third quarter as well. Revenue growth on an annual level was seen in all tax categories and social contributions. On the other hand, total expenditures held steady, with moderate growth being recorded only in some categories.

Following a short-lived increase at the end of the first quarter, triggered by the pre-financing of some liabilities, general government debt returned in the second quarter to the end-2016 level. It remained almost the same in July, standing at HRK 288.6bn. It is noteworthy that exchange rate developments in the observed period were conducive to a reduction in the nominal debt amount, while economic growth helped lower the debt-to-GDP ratio.

¹ Data series for previous periods were revised in October. The general government deficit was raised by 0.1 percentage point, to -0.9% in 2016. Also, the growth rate of VAT revenues went down in 2016, from 7.1% to 4.6%, while the growth rate of expenditures for employees went up from 2.5% to 3.4%.

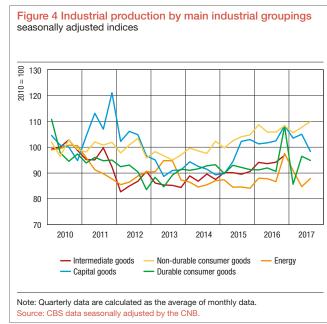


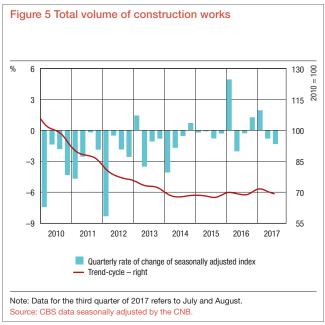


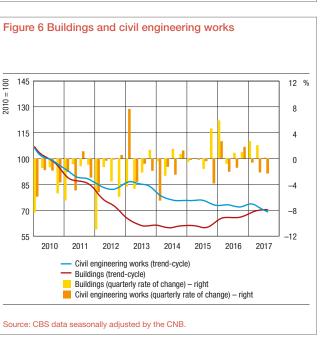
Note: The projection for 2017 refers to the official projection of the CNB from October

2017. Source: CBS.

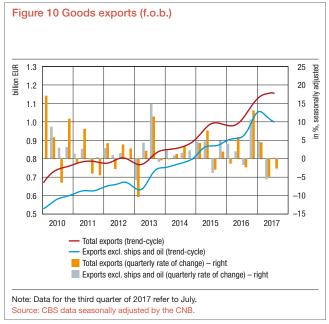
Figure 3 Industrial production 9 112 8 108 0 6 104 3 100 -3 96 -6 92 -9 88 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2017 Quarterly rate of change of seasonally adjusted index Trend-cycle – right Source: CBS data seasonally adjusted by the CNB.

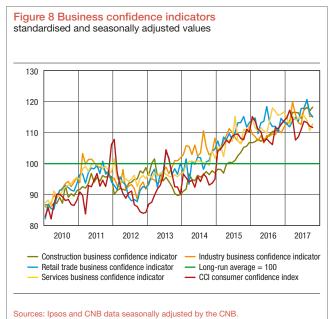


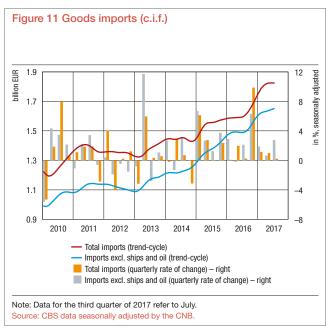


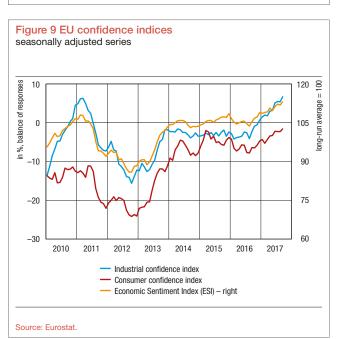


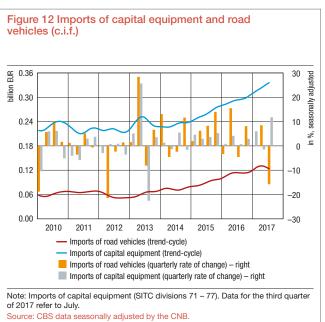


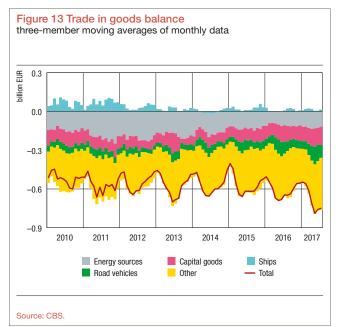


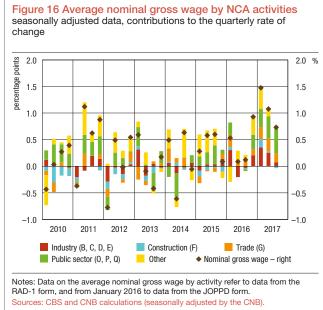


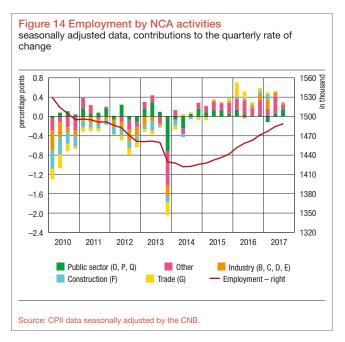


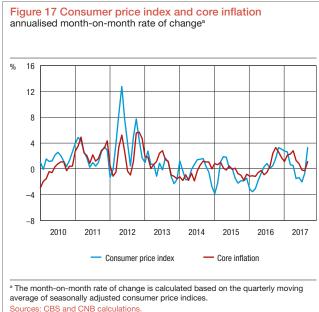


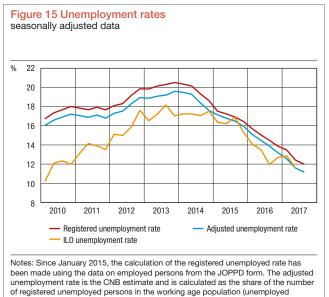










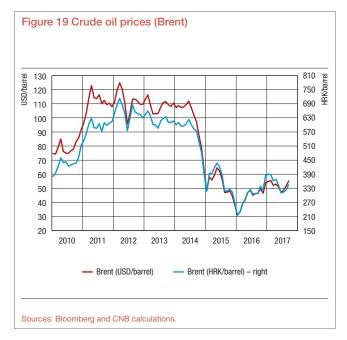


persons and persons insured with the CPII).

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

Figure 18 Year-on-year inflation rates and components' contribution to consumer price inflation 6 points 5 percentage 4 3 0 -1 -2 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 Energy Unprocessed food Processed food Non-food industrial goods without energy Services Core inflation (%)a Consumer price index (%)

^a Core inflation does not include agricultural product prices and administrative prices. Sources: CBS and CNB calculations.





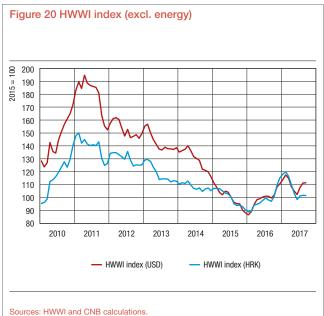


Figure 22 Nominal and real effective exchange rates of the kuna 100 140 ; 2010 = ¹ 130 ndex, 120 110 100 90 2015 2002 2010 2012 2013 2014 2003 2001 2004 2011 Real (PPI) Real (ULC total economy) Real (CPI) Real (ULC manufacturing) Notes: The real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by producer prices

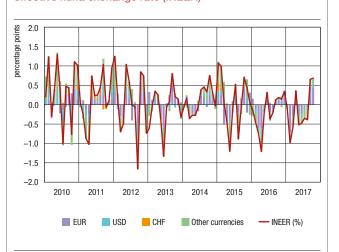
includes the Croatian index of industrial producer prices on the total market. The unit labour cost is calculated as the ratio between compensation per employee and labour productivity (defined as GDP per person employed), while the real effective exchange rate of the kuna deflated by unit labour costs is the result of the interpolation of quarterly values. A fall in the index indicates an effective appreciation of the kuna. Source: CNB.

Table 1 Price indicators
year-on-year and month-on-month rates of change

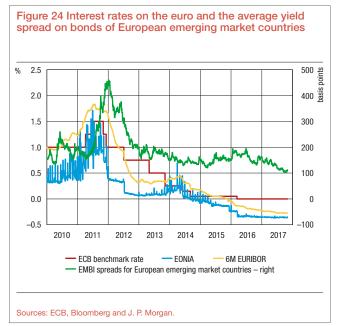
	Year-on-year rates		Month-on- month rates	
	8/17	9/17	9/16	9/17
Consumer price index and its compo	nents		·	
Total index	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.5
Energy	-0.7	0.5	1.3	2.5
Unprocessed food	4.1	4.5	-0.4	0.0
Processed food	2.5	2.8	0.3	0.5
Non-food industrial goods without energy	-0.2	0.1	3.9	4.3
Services	0.7	0.9	-0.4	-0.2
Other price indicators				
Core inflation	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4
Index of industrial producer prices on the domestic market	3.2	2.2	1.5	0.4
Brent crude oil price (USD)	11.3	19.4	0.1	7.4
HWWI index (excl. energy, USD)	10.3	11.8	-1.3	0.1

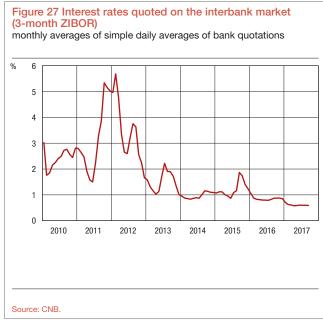
Note: Processed food includes alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Sources: CBS, Bloomberg and HWWI.

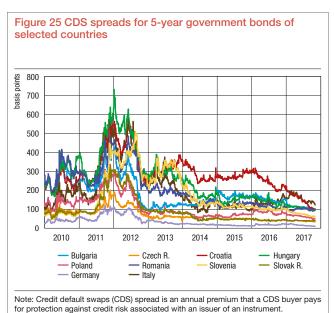
Figure 23 Contributions^a of individual currencies to the monthly rate of change of the average index of the nominal effective kuna exchange rate (INEER)



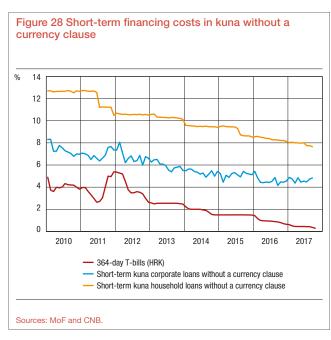
 $^{^{\}rm a}$ Negative values indicate contributions to the appreciation of the INEER. Source: CNB.

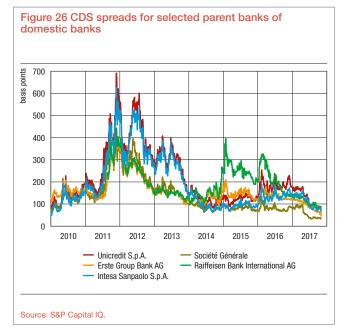


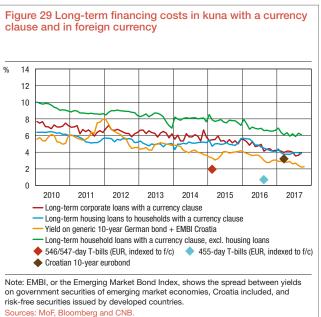


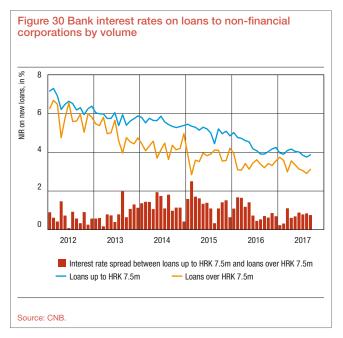


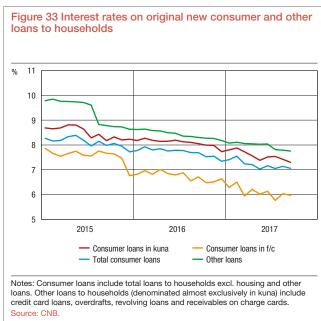
Source: S&P Capital IQ.

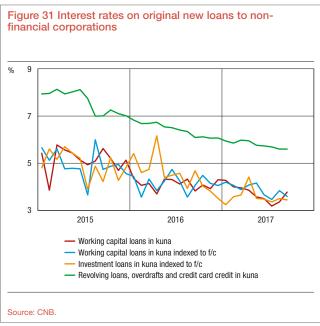


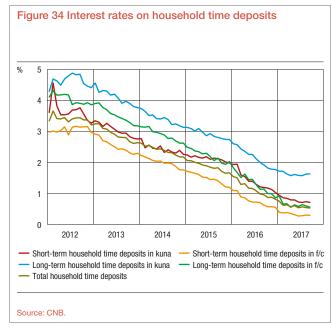


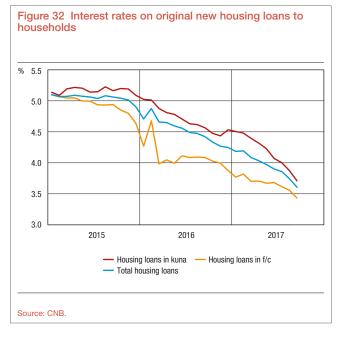


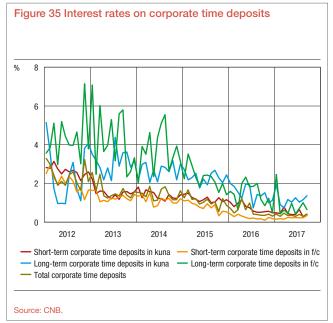


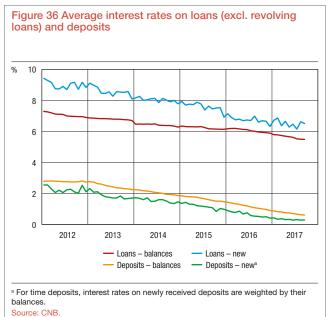


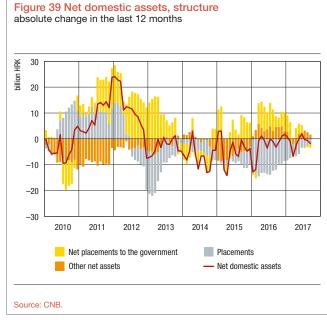


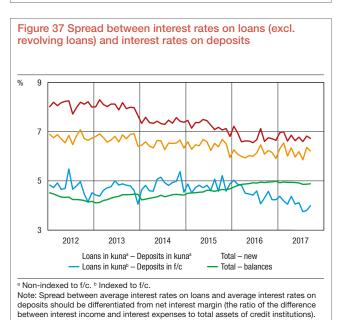




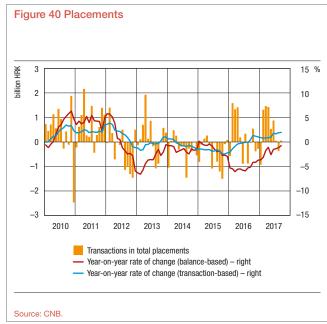


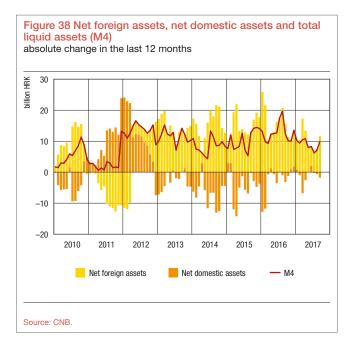


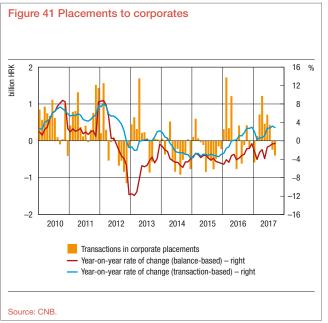


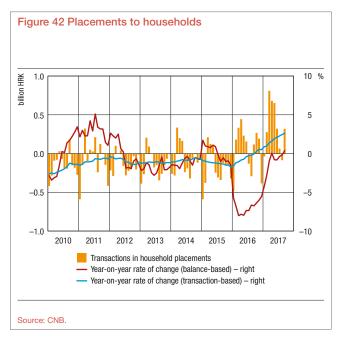


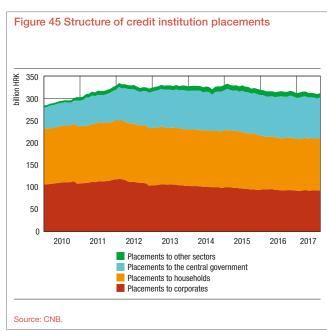
Source: CNB.

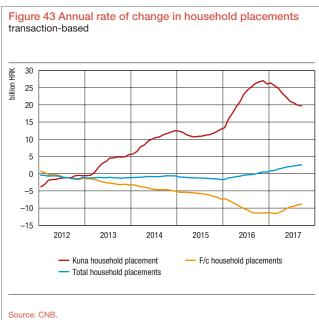


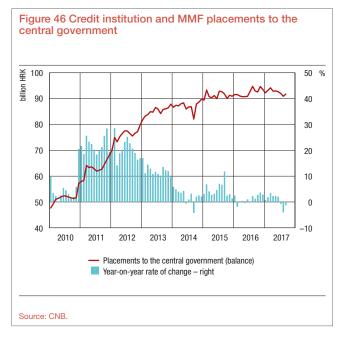


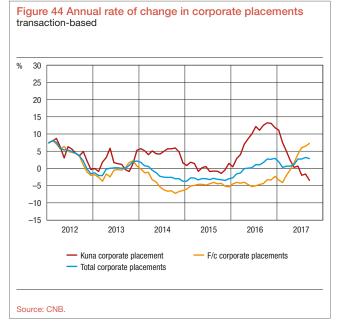


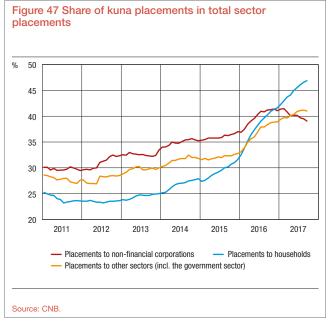


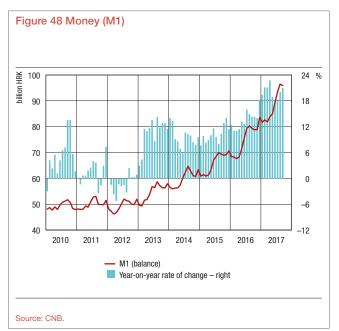


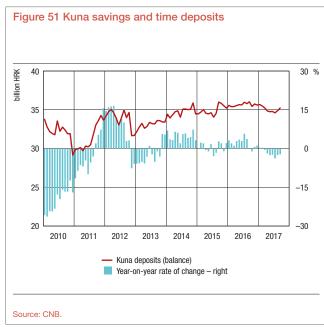


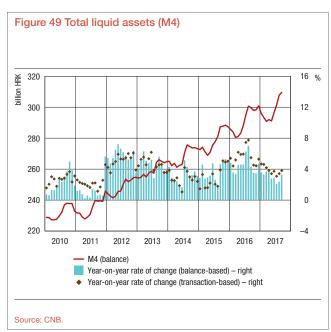


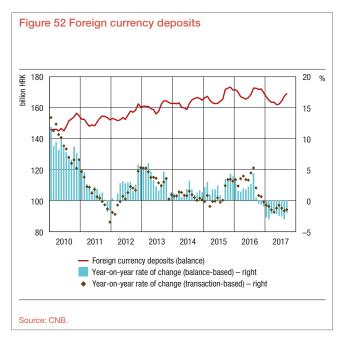


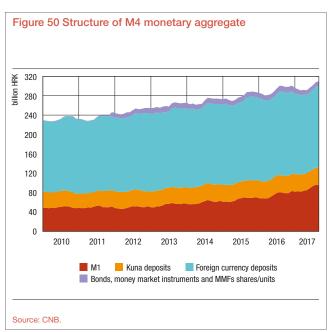












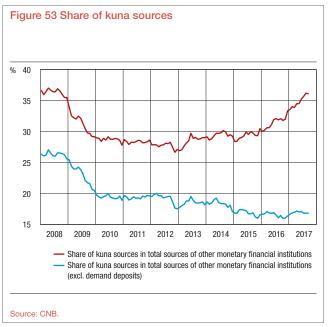
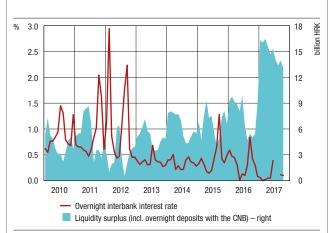


Figure 54 Bank liquidity and overnight interbank interest rate



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

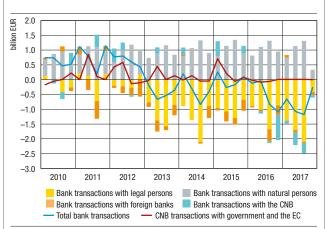
			Indices		
	2016	Q2/2017ª	2016/ 2015	Q2/2017ª/ 2016	
Current account	2,018.8	1,158.5	57.4	106.9	
Capital account	320.7	597.5	186.3	75.1	
Financial account (excl. reserves)	1,112.8	1,385.6	124.5	-	
International reserves	745.3	-264.7	-	-	
Net errors and omissions	-481.5	-635.2	131.9	73.8	

^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

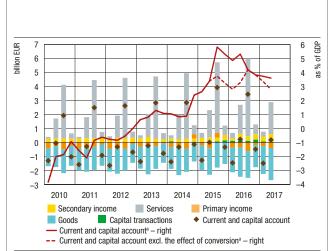
Figure 55 Spot transactions in the foreign exchange market (net turnover)



Notes: Positive values indicate net purchases and negative values indicate net sales. Legal persons include the government. Data for the fourth quarter of 2017 refer to October.

Source: CNB

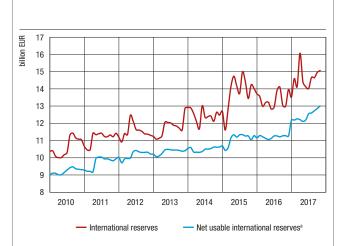
Figure 57 Current and capital account flows



 $^{\rm a}$ 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.

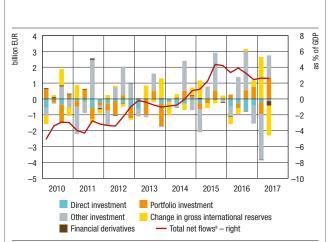
Figure 56 International reserves of the CNB at current rate of exchange



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

Source: CNB

Figure 58 Financial account flows by type of investment

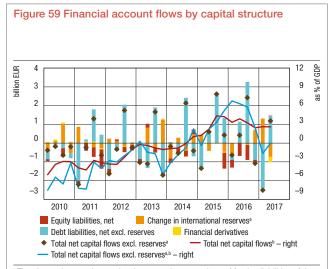


^a Sum of the last four quarters.

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

Source: CNB.

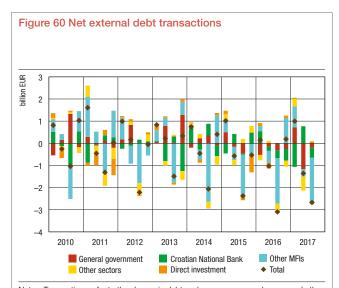
⁻ foreign currency government deposits.



^aThe change in gross international reserves is reported net of foreign liabilities of the CNB. ^bSum 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.

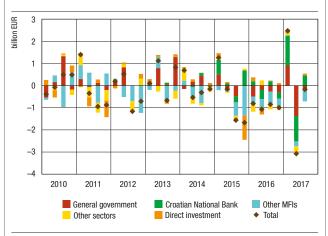
Source: CNB.



Notes: Transactions refer to the change in debt excl. cross-currency changes and other adjustments. Net external debt is calculated as gross external debt stock net of foreign debt claims. Data for the third quarter of 2017 refer to July and August.

Source: CNB.





Note: Transactions refer to the change in debt excl. cross-currency changes and other adjustments. Data for the third quarter of 2017 refer to July and August.

Figure 62 Gross external debt end of period 50 billion EUR 40 30 20 10 0 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 General government Croatian National Bank Other MFIs Other sectors Direct investment Source: CNB.

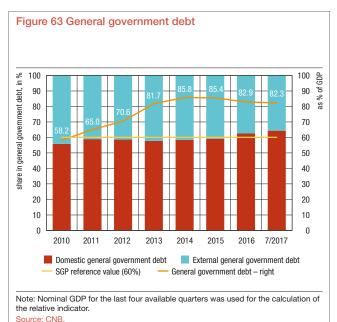


Table 3 Consolidated general government balance

ESA 2010, in million HRK

77,740 11,227	77,561
11,227	
	11,454
31,920	32,614
20,038	20,773
14,555	12,720
81,572	78,708
27,709	28,046
2,883	1,517
5,690	5,566
19,386	19,793
14,104	14,838
5,448	4,199
6,352	4,748
-3,833	-1,148
	20,038 14,555 81,572 27,709 2,883 5,690 19,386 14,104 5,448 6,352

Table 4 Consolidated central government net borrowing

GFS 2001, in million HRK

	JanJul. 2016	Jan. – Jul 2017
1 Revenue	76,510	80,147
2 Disposal of non-financial assets	208	371
3 Expenditure	78,203	78,901
4 Acquisition of non-financial assets	2,237	1,782
5 Net borrowing (1+2-3-4)	-3,723	-165

Sources: MoF and CNB calculations.

Table 5 General government debt

in million HRK

	JanJul. 2016	Jan. – Jul 2017
Change in total debt stock	-552	-435
Change in domestic debt stock	5,779	5,221
- Securities other than shares, short-term	-1,032	1,206
- Securities other than shares, long-term	9,323	6,149
- Loans	-2,500	-2,083
Change in external debt stock	-6,331	-5,656
- Securities other than shares, short-term	-52	144
- Securities other than shares, long-term	-5,991	-4,898
- Loans	-288	-903
Memo item:		
Change in total guarantees issued	127	-104
Source: CNB.		

Abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviations		n.e.c.	- not elsewhere classified
D. C.		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
	- 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
	lution	GBP	pound sterling
dep.	– deposit	HRK	– Croatian kuna
DVP	 delivery versus payment 	ITL	– Italian lira
EC	 European Commission 	JPY	 Japanese yen
ECB	 European Central Bank 	USD	– US dollar
EFTA	 European Free Trade Association 		
EMU	 Economic and Monetary Union 	Two-let	ter country codes
ESI	 economic sentiment index 		
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	ls
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		used
MM	- monthly maturity	Ø	– average
MoF	- Ministry of Finance		. – indicates a note beneath the table and figure
NCA	 National Classification of Activities 	*	- corrected data
NCB	 national central bank 	()	 incomplete or insufficiently verified data
NCS	National Clearing System	` /	1
	6 - 1		