



COMMERZBANK

Economic Research

Economic Briefing

Fed more cautious as regards rate cuts

1 May 2024

Dr. Christoph Balz

Table of contents

The decisions: slower reduction of the securities portfolio	1
Press conference: Inflation postpones interest rate cuts	1
Conclusion: First step not before December	2

At its meeting, the US Federal Reserve expressed more caution than previously with regard to possible interest rate cuts, as inflation has been surprisingly high in recent months. In our view, the inflation problem will not be so easy to solve if the economy continues to perform well. We therefore expect the first rate cut only in December. The central bank has also announced that it will now reduce its bond portfolio more slowly.

The decisions: slower reduction of the securities portfolio

As expected, the Fed has not changed its key interest rates. The target range for the Fed funds rate thus remains at 5.25%-5.50%. This and all other decisions were unanimous.

In the **statement**, the central bank pointed out that no progress has been made in reducing inflation in recent months. In addition, the previous wording that the risks with regard to achieving the employment and inflation goals "are moving into better balance" has been toned down somewhat. In the new wording, this is described as a past rather than an ongoing development.

As before, the central bank states that it not expect, it will be appropriate to cut rates until it has gained greater confidence that inflation will move sustainably towards the 2% target. There were no new projections this time, an update will follow at the next meeting in June.

As expected, the central bank plans to change its balance sheet policy. Since 2022, the central bank has reduced its securities portfolio, which had become bloated due to the pandemic-related stimulus measures, by not reinvesting some of the proceeds from maturing securities ("quantitative tightening", QT). The portfolio of government bonds fell by up to \$60 billion per month and the volume of agency and agency mortgage securities by up to \$35 billion. Following a considerable reduction in the balance sheet, the pace is now being slowed. Beginning in June, the Committee will slow the pace of decline of its securities holdings by reducing the monthly redemption cap on Treasury securities from \$60 billion to \$25 billion. The Committee will maintain the monthly redemption cap on agency debt and agency mortgage-backed securities at \$35 billion and will reinvest any principal payments in excess of this cap into Treasury securities.

Press conference: Inflation postpones interest rate cuts

At the press conference, Fed Chair Powell explicitly pointed out that the progress on inflation has stalled recently. It would therefore probably take longer than previously

Important disclosure Information at the end of the document



thought before the central bank had the confidence that inflation would fall to 2%. According to the statement, this is a prerequisite for interest rate cuts.

Powell continued to classify monetary policy as restrictive, especially as the labor market is cooling, as evidenced by today’s data on job vacancies. In the view of the central bank, this suggests that inflation should calm down. Policy makers will wait and see how the data develops and then decide accordingly.

Under the impression of the recent unsatisfactory inflation data, Powell was also asked about possible interest rate hikes, Powell said that an interest rate hike as the next move was “unlikely”. However, he did not repeat his earlier statement that the interest rate peak had likely been reached.

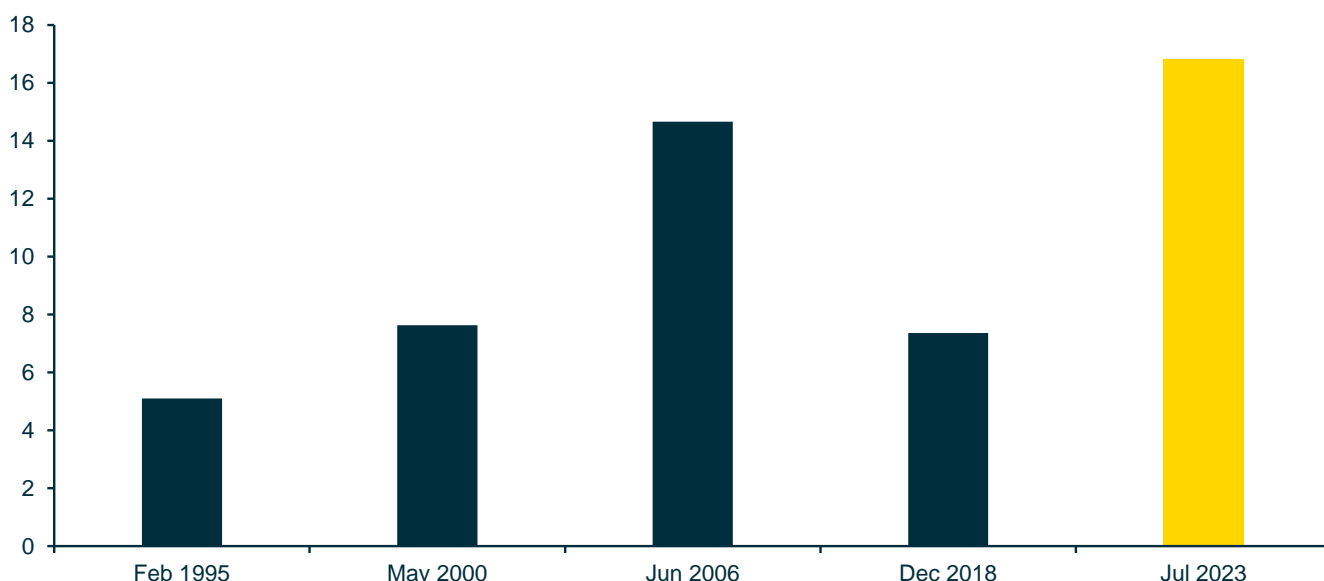
Conclusion: First step not before December

After the last three inflation prints surprised to the upside, the timing of possible interest rate cuts has been postponed to the future, especially as the economy continues to perform quite well. Inflationary pressure is likely to ease only slightly, at least in the coming months. Our first provisional estimate for April is 0.4% month-on-month, excluding energy and food 0.3%. Extrapolated to an annual rate, this would be around 4%, which is still far too high. It is therefore unlikely that the central bank will have sufficient confidence already in summer that it will achieve its inflation target. It will probably also want to see a series of favorable monthly data after the recent disappointments.

In our view, all this suggests that the first rate cut of 25 basis points is unlikely until December. This would mean that the interest rate peak of 5.50% would last for 17 months, longer than in recent cycles (Chart 1). At that time, however, there was no inflation problem. In any case, we only see a relatively limited potential for interest rate cuts of 75 basis points in total to 4.75% in spring 2025, as inflation is likely to remain above target in the longer term due to the tight labor market and structural factors such as demographics and protectionism.

Chart 1 - The Fed is likely to keep rates at peak level rather long

Time elapsed between last rate hike (designation of columns) and first rate cut in respective cycle, in months. Current cycle: first cut expected in December 2024.



Source: Fed, Commerzbank Research



Analysts

Dr. Christoph Balz

Senior Economist

+49 69 9353 45592

christoph.balz@commerzbank.com

In accordance with ESMA MAR requirements this report was completed 1/5/2024 21:50 CEST and disseminated 1/5/2024 21:50 CEST.

This document has been created and published by the Group Research department (GM-R) within the Group Management division of Commerzbank AG, Frankfurt/Main or Commerzbank's non-US branch offices mentioned in the document.

Please note that the author(s) certify that (a) the views expressed in this report accurately reflect their personal view about the subject securities and issuers; and (b) no part of their compensation was, is, or will be directly or indirectly related to the specific recommendation(s) or views expressed by them contained in this document.

It has not been determined in advance whether and in what intervals this document will be updated. Unless otherwise stated current prices refer to the most recent trading day's closing price or spread which may fluctuate.

Conflicts of interest

Disclosures of potential conflicts of interest relating to Commerzbank AG, its affiliates, subsidiaries (together "Commerzbank") and its relevant employees with respect to the issuers, financial instruments and/or securities forming the subject of this document valid as of the end of the month prior to publication of this document*:

Please refer to the following link for disclosures on companies included in compendium reports or disclosures on any company covered by Commerzbank analysts: <https://commerzbank.bluematrix.com/sellside/Disclosures.action>*

*Updating this information may take up to ten days after month end.

Disclaimer

This document is for information purposes only and has been prepared for recipients who, like professional clients according to MiFID II, have the experience, knowledge and expertise to understand information related to the financial markets. The document does not take into account specific circumstances of any recipient and the information contained herein does not constitute the provision of investment advice. It is not intended to be and should not be construed as a recommendation, offer or solicitation to acquire, or dispose of, any of the financial instruments and/or securities mentioned in this document and will not form the basis or a part of any contract or commitment whatsoever. Investors should seek independent professional advice and draw their own conclusions regarding suitability of any transaction including the economic benefits, risks, legal, regulatory, credit, accounting and tax implications.

The information in this document is based on public data obtained from sources believed by Commerzbank to be reliable and in good faith, but no representations, guarantees or warranties are made by Commerzbank with regard to accuracy, completeness or suitability of the data. Commerzbank has not performed any independent review or due diligence of publicly available information regarding an unaffiliated reference asset or index. The opinions and estimates contained herein reflect the current judgement of the author(s) on the date of this document and are subject to change without notice. The opinions do not necessarily correspond to the opinions of Commerzbank. Commerzbank does not have an obligation to update, modify or amend this document or to otherwise notify a reader thereof in the event that any matter stated herein, or any opinion, projection, forecast or estimate set forth herein, changes or subsequently becomes inaccurate.

In order to address potential conflicts of interest Commerzbank's Research department operates independently of other business units of the bank. This is achieved by way of physical and administrative information barriers and separate reporting lines as well as by written internal policies and procedures.

This communication may contain trading ideas where Commerzbank may trade in such financial instruments with customers or other counterparties. Any prices provided herein (other than those that are identified as being historical) are indicative only, and do not represent firm quotes as to either size or price. The past performance of financial instruments is not indicative of future results. No assurance can be given that any financial instrument or issuer described herein would yield favourable investment results. Any forecasts or price targets shown for companies and/or securities discussed in this document may not be achieved due to multiple risk factors including without limitation market volatility, sector volatility, corporate actions, the unavailability of complete and accurate information and/or the subsequent transpiration that underlying assumptions made by Commerzbank or by other sources relied upon in the document were inapposite.

Commerzbank and or its affiliates may act as a market maker in the instrument(s) and or its derivative that has been mentioned in our research reports. Employees of Commerzbank and or its affiliates may provide written or oral commentary, including trading strategies, to our clients and business units that may be contrary to the opinions conveyed in this research report. Commerzbank may perform or seek to perform investment banking services for issuers mentioned in research reports.



Neither Commerzbank nor any of its respective directors, officers or employees accepts any responsibility or liability whatsoever for any expense, loss or damages arising out of or in any way connected with the use of all or any part of this document.

Commerzbank may provide hyperlinks to websites of entities mentioned in this document, however the inclusion of a link does not imply that Commerzbank endorses, recommends or approves any material on the linked page or accessible from it. Commerzbank does not accept responsibility whatsoever for any such material, nor for any consequences of its use.

This document is for the use of the addressees only and may not be reproduced, redistributed or passed on to any other person or published, in whole or in part, for any purpose, without the prior, written consent of Commerzbank. The manner of distributing this document may be restricted by law or regulation in certain countries, including the United States. Persons into whose possession this document may come are required to inform themselves about and to observe such restrictions. By accepting this document, a recipient hereof agrees to be bound by the foregoing limitations.

Additional notes to readers in the following countries:

Germany: Commerzbank AG is registered in the Commercial Register at Amtsgericht Frankfurt under the number HRB 32000. Commerzbank AG is supervised by both the German regulator, Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht (BaFin), Graurheindorfer Strasse 108, 53117 Bonn, Marie-Curie-Strasse 24-28, 60439 Frankfurt am Main and the European Central Bank, Sonnemannstrasse 20, 60314 Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

United Kingdom: This document is not for distribution to retail customers and has been issued or approved for issue in the United Kingdom by Commerzbank AG, London Branch, which is authorised and regulated by Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht (BaFin) and the European Central Bank. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Details about the extent of our regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority are available from us on request.

United States: To the extent this report is distributed to U.S. investors, it is restricted from being sent to U.S. retail investors. Commerz Markets LLC ("CMLLC") is a U.S. registered broker-dealer and wholly owned subsidiary of Commerzbank AG. For securities purposes, Commerzbank AG provides this report as a third-party report, therefore the involved research analysts may not be registered with FINRA and the reports are not subject to the full provisions of FINRA Rule 2242. Any securities transactions by US investors resulting from this report must be effected with CMLLC. CMLLC is a member of FINRA and SIPC. Banking and swap services in the U.S. will be provided by Commerzbank AG in accordance with the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Commerzbank AG is not a member of SIPC and is a provisionally registered swap dealer with the CFTC.

Canada: The information contained herein is not, and under no circumstances is to be construed as, a prospectus, an advertisement, a public offering, an offer to sell securities described herein, solicitation of an offer to buy securities described herein, in Canada or any province or territory thereof. Any offer or sale of the securities described herein in Canada will be made only under an exemption from the requirements to file a prospectus with the relevant Canadian securities regulators and only by a dealer properly registered under applicable securities laws or, alternatively, pursuant to an exemption from the dealer registration requirement in the relevant province or territory of Canada in which such offer or sale is made. Under no circumstances is the information contained herein to be construed as investment advice in any province or territory of Canada and is not tailored to the needs of the recipient. In Canada, the information contained herein is intended solely for distribution to Permitted Clients (as such term is defined in National Instrument 31-103) with whom Commerzbank AG and/or Commerz Markets LLC deals pursuant to the international dealer exemption. The information contained herein is not permitted to reference securities of an issuer incorporated, formed or created under the laws of Canada or a province or territory of Canada, as Commerzbank AG and Commerz Markets LLC operates under the international dealer exemption pursuant to National Instrument 31-103. No securities commission or similar regulatory authority in Canada has reviewed or in any way passed upon these materials, the information contained herein or the merits of the securities described herein and any representation to the contrary is an offence.

European Economic Area: Where this document has been produced by a legal entity outside of the EEA, the document has been re-issued by Commerzbank AG, London Branch for distribution into the EEA. Commerzbank AG, London Branch is authorised and regulated by Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht (BaFin) and the European Central Bank. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Details about the extent of our regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority are available from us on request.

Switzerland: Neither this research report nor the information contained herein should be regarded as personal recommendations for transactions in financial instruments within the meaning of the Financial Services Act.

Singapore: This document is furnished in Singapore by Commerzbank AG, Singapore branch. It may only be received in Singapore by an institutional investor, an accredited investor or an expert investor as respectively defined in section 4A of the Securities and Futures Act, Chapter 289 of Singapore ("SFA") pursuant to section 274 or section 275 (as applicable) of the SFA. Nothing in this document constitutes accounting, legal, regulatory, tax, financial or other advice and/or recommendations to the recipient of this communication. Further, the communication/information provided herein does not constitute a "financial advisory service" within the meaning of the Financial Advisers Act, Chapter 110 of Singapore ("FAA") and therefore, the regulatory requirements and duties that may be owed to a client pursuant to or in connection with the FAA are not applicable to the recipient in connection with this communication. Recipients are advised to seek independent advice from their own professional advisers about the information contained discussed herein.

Japan: This information and its distribution do not constitute and should not be construed as a "solicitation" under the Financial Instrument Exchange Act (FIEA) of Japan. This information may be distributed from Commerzbank international branches outside Japan solely to "professional investors" as defined in Section 2(31) of the FIEA and Section 23 of the Cabinet Ordinance Regarding Definition of Section 2 of the FIEA. Please note that Commerzbank AG, Tokyo Branch has not participated in its preparation. Any instruments referred in this report cannot be introduced by the Branch. You should contact the Corporate Clients division of Commerzbank AG for inquiries on availability of such instruments.

Australia: Commerzbank AG does not hold an Australian financial services licence. This document is being distributed in Australia to wholesale customers pursuant to an Australian financial services licence exemption for Commerzbank AG under Class Order O4/1313.



Commerzbank AG is regulated by Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht (BaFin) under the laws of Germany which differ from Australian laws.

People's Republic of China (PRC): This document is furnished by Commerzbank AG and is only intended for eligible entities in the PRC. No-one else may rely on any information contained within this document. The products and services in this document only apply to entities in the PRC where such products and services are permitted to be provided by PRC laws and regulations. For any person who receives this document, the information in this document shall neither be regarded as promotion or solicitation of the business nor accounting, legal, regulatory, tax, financial or other advice and/or recommendations to the recipient of this communication, and the recipient is advised to seek independent advice from its own professional advisers about the information contained herein and shall understand and abide by PRC laws and regulations while conducting any related transactions.

© Commerzbank AG 2024. All rights reserved. Version 24.02

Commerzbank Offices

Frankfurt

Commerzbank AG
DLZ - Gebäude 2,
Händlerhaus
Mainzer Landstraße 153
60327 Frankfurt
Tel: + 49 69 136 21200

London

Commerzbank AG
PO BOX 52715
30 Gresham Street
London, EC2P 2XY
Tel: + 44 207 623 8000

New York

Commerz Markets LLC
225 Liberty Street, 32nd
floor,
New York,
NY 10281-1050
Tel: + 1 212 703 4000

Singapore

Commerzbank AG
128 Beach Road
#17-01 Guoco Midtown
Singapore 189773
Tel: +65 631 10000