

The ECB is still worried about the weakness of inflation

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The President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, recently [announced](#) that the increase in the ECB's key interest rate would come "well past" the end of the massive purchases of bonds (scheduled for September 2018), mainly issued by the euro zone countries, and at a "measured pace". The increase in the key rate could therefore occur in mid-2019, a few weeks before the transfer of power between Mario Draghi and his successor.

In his quarterly hearing with MEPs, Mario Draghi proved to be cautious about the intensity and sustainability of the economic recovery [\[1\]](#). Listening to him, the euro zone has not necessarily closed its output gap (actual GDP would have remained below its potential) despite the recovery in recent quarters. This is not the time to change the direction of monetary policy at the risk of weakening the recovery. It is also undeniable that the effects of the recovery are only materializing slowly and gradually in wage increases, which partly explains why the euro zone inflation rate remains below its mid-term target.

The ECB President has also been confident that companies are gradually anchoring their price (and wage) expectations on the ECB's inflation target of 2% per year. Mario Draghi also appeared very confident in the effectiveness of monetary policy. He announced that the measures undertaken since 2014 would contribute to a (cumulative) increase of 2 percentage points, respectively in real growth and inflation between 2016 and 2019.

If the ECB's forecast of inflation back to its target in 2019 is contradicted by [Hasenzagl et al. \(2018\)](#), we find these same determinants of European inflation. In a [recent study](#), we also show that the two main determinants of inflation in the euro area are inflation expectations and wage growth. Without anchoring the former on the medium-term target of the ECB and without a second-round effect of monetary policy on wages, inflation will not return to its target in the short term. Structural reforms may have increased potential GDP, as argued by Mario Draghi, but they have so far more certainly weighed on wage and price developments.

[\[1\]](#) Once a quarter, a monetary dialogue is organized between the President of the ECB and the members of the Monetary Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. This dialogue allows the President of the ECB to explain the direction of monetary policy in the euro area and to express his point of view on topics defined upstream. Une fois par trimestre un dialogue monétaire est organisé entre le Président de la BCE et les membres de la Commission des Affaires monétaires du Parlement européen. Ce dialogue permet au Président de la BCE d'expliquer l'orientation de la politique monétaire dans la zone euro et d'exprimer son point de vue sur des sujets définis en amont.