

Macroprudential policy and central bank communication

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May 2010

Abstract

In response to the financial crisis of 2007-2010, many central banks have been or will be assigned important tasks related to macroprudential supervision. Central bank communication will constitute a central policy tool for that purpose. The paper asks the question how such communication will affect financial markets, exploiting the fact that many central banks have had some financial stability role in the past, and have communicated extensively on this through the publication of Financial Stability Reports (FSRs) and financial stability-related statements by governors. Building a unique dataset, it provides an empirical assessment of the financial market reactions to more than 1000 releases of FSRs and speeches in 36 countries over the past 14 years. The findings suggest that FSRs have a significant and potentially long-lasting effect on stock market returns. Moreover, they tend to reduce market volatility, in particular if they contain an optimistic assessment. Speeches and interviews, in contrast, have little effect on market returns and tend to increase market volatility. The findings underline the importance of differentiating between communication tools and content when designing a communication strategy on financial stability issues.

JEL classification: E44, E58, G12.

Keywords: macroprudential supervision, central bank, financial stability, communication, economic policy.

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1. Introduction

The financial crisis of 2007-2010 has brought the topic of financial supervision and regulation to the forefront of the policy debate. While microprudential supervision had already undergone a reform process prior to the crisis, with a trend towards unified national supervisory bodies *outside* the central banks (Herring and Carmassi 2008, Masciandaro and Quintyn 2009), a major overhaul of microprudential and macroprudential regulation and supervision is on its way around the globe. Especially with regard to macroprudential supervision, this reform process often assigns central banks a prominent role. One example for this development is the planned European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB), which creates one macroprudential supervisory body for the entire European Union (i.e. covering 27 individual countries), in an attempt to oversee systemic risks not only within a country, but also across countries.¹

What is the objective of macroprudential policy by central banks? The aim of macroprudential supervision has been described as to “limit the risk of episodes of financial distress with significant losses in terms of the real output for the economy as a whole” (Borio 2003, p. 183). The involvement of central banks is based on the notion that combining financial supervision with monetary policy tasks can lead to synergies, e.g. through information gains, thereby possibly leading to a more effective conduct of monetary policy and/or to more effective crisis prevention and management (Borio 2009). As argued by Blinder (2010), central banks should monitor and regulate systemic risk not only because a financial stability objective is closely related to the objectives of monetary policy, but also because it is likely to require a lender of last resort function. Feldstein (2010) suggests that the Federal Reserve should systematically incorporate systemic risk considerations in its monetary policy process, arguing that its low interest rate policy in the early 2000’s did not appropriately consider the potential repercussions on asset prices and the risks of a bursting bubble.

At the same time, the assignment of macroprudential tasks might entail risks for central banks: A supervisory role might at times lead to conflicts among different goals, for instance if the central bank would need to tighten monetary policy, yet faces concerns about the solvency of financial intermediaries (Goodhart and Shoenmaker 1995, De Grauwe and Gros 2009). Furthermore, a macroprudential task could entail a risk for the reputation of a central bank, a point that has been raised in connection to microprudential supervision by Goodhart (2002), but equally applies in the macroprudential arena. *Failures* in financial supervision do typically attract a lot of media attention, with possibly adverse effects on the confidence that the central bank enjoys with the public. In contrast, *successful* supervisory roles normally go unnoticed, implying that the reputational risks for the central bank are asymmetric. A confidence loss, in turn, might adversely affect the effectiveness of the central bank’s monetary policy conduct.

Given the emerging role and responsibility of monetary authorities for macroprudential policy, central bank communication about financial stability issues is bound to play a much more central role as a policy instrument, also because in many cases, central banks are

¹ The ESRB envisages a strong involvement of central banks, with the chairman being the president of the European Central Bank (ECB), being hosted by the ECB, and having – among others – the heads of all European Union central banks as members. The legislative proposal by the European Commission states that the ESRB shall “monitor and assess risks to the stability of the financial system as a whole”, that it “will provide early warning of systemic risks that may be building up and, where necessary, recommendations for action to deal with these risks”; see <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1347&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> .

explicitly assigned to provide information, analysis and recommendations about systemic risks.

The aim of the current paper is to shed light on the potential effects of central bank communication about financial stability and macroprudential risks. The paper exploits the fact that many central banks have had some financial stability role in the past, and have communicated extensively on this through the publication of Financial Stability Reports (FSRs) and financial stability-related speeches and interviews by governors. While the effects of their communication might differ in the presence of an explicit macroprudential objective, the experience of the past clearly contains a useful benchmark – especially in the absence of observations under the new “regime”. The paper takes a financial market perspective and studies how financial sector stock indices react to the release of such communication, given that the financial sector is one of its main addressees. Doing so, it covers a large number of countries over nearly one and a half decades, and studies the effects of FSRs as well as of speeches and interviews by central bank governors.

An assessment of the effects of financial stability-related communication requires a view on its aims. In line with the aims put forward by Blinder et al. (2008), we focus on the potential of such communication to “create news” and to “reduce noise”. A number of central banks have specified the purpose of their FSRs. The Bank of England’s reports, for instance, aim “*to identify the major downside risks to the UK financial system and thereby help financial firms, authorities and the wider public in managing and preparing for these risks.*”² In light of these statements, we therefore define a central bank communication to be effective if the views that it contains get reflected in the markets. For instance, if the central bank expresses a rather pessimistic view about the prospects for financial stability, and this view gets heard in financial markets, we would expect that stock prices for the financial sector decline. In that sense, these communications “create news”. The other motive, to “reduce noise”, should then be reflected in market volatility, in the sense that a communication by the central bank should contribute to reducing uncertainty in financial markets, thereby reducing volatility.

But why, and through what channels should central bank communications have an effect on financial markets at all? A number of factors could come into play here. First, the central bank is obviously an important player in financial markets. For instance, if it is ready to change its policy rates, it can directly affect asset prices. Its communication can therefore be effective through what has been labeled the “signaling channel” in the literature on foreign exchange interventions (e.g., Kaminsky and Lewis 1996). Second, the analyses that feed into the communications are potentially of high quality, and there are few other institutions that are concerned with macroprudential tasks, such that a central bank publication might indeed contain news. Third, a co-ordination channel might be at play, whereby communication by the central bank works as a co-ordination device, thereby reducing heterogeneity in expectations and information, and thus inducing asset prices to more closely reflect the underlying fundamentals, a channel that has also been found to be important to explain the effect of foreign exchange interventions (Sarno and Taylor 2001, Fratzscher 2008). This channel would suggest that financial stability-related communication is particularly effective if asset prices deviate strongly from fundamentals, and might also imply that communications have longer-lasting effects, as they might change the dynamics in financial markets.

² See <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/fsr/index.htm>. In a similar vein, the Swedish Riksbank states that its FSRs present the “*overall assessment of risks and threats to the financial system and an evaluation of the capacity for coping with them. [...] By making the analysis available to financial market participants and other interested parties we can share our viewpoints and contribute to the debate on this subject.*” See http://www.riksbank.com/upload/Dokument_riksbank/Kat_publicerat/Rapporter/2009/FS_2009_2_en.pdf.

To conduct the empirical analysis, the paper constructs a unique and novel database on communication comprising more than 1000 releases of FSRs and speeches/interviews by central bank governors across 36 countries and over the past 14 years. We not only identify the precise timing of these communications, but we also determine their content. We employ a computerized textual-analysis software (called DICTION 5.0), which allows us to grade each of the central bank financial stability statements, based on different semantic features, according to the optimism and to the activity indication they contain.

A first striking finding from this classification is that the tone of FSRs had continuously become more positive after 2000, reaching a peak in early 2006 in terms of optimism. This stylized fact, together with formal tests conducted in the paper, suggests that FSRs comment on the current market environment, but also contain forward-looking assessments of risks and vulnerabilities. However, there is a large heterogeneity across countries in this pattern.

The paper's findings suggest that communication about financial stability has important repercussions for financial sector stock prices. Moreover, there are clear differences between FSRs, on the one hand, and speeches and interviews, on the other. FSRs clearly create news in the sense that the views expressed in FSRs move stock markets in the desired direction. This effect is quite sizeable as, on average, FSR releases move equity markets by 2% during the subsequent month. Another important finding is that FSRs also reduce noise, as market volatility tends to decline in response to FSRs. Both effects are particularly strong if the FSR contains an optimistic assessment of the risks to financial stability, when FSRs are found to succeed in moving equity markets upwards in up to two thirds of the cases.

Speeches and interviews, in contrast, are on average a far less effective instrument. In particular, while having only modest effects on stock market returns, they tend to *increase* rather than reduce market volatility. This is particularly the case if these communications use a relatively active language.

The paper also shows that while the release schedule of FSRs is pre-scheduled, speeches and interviews are a much more flexible communication tool. For instance, their number is clearly positively correlated with financial market volatility. Given their flexibility, speeches and interviews by definition carry some surprise element. Since it is mostly at the discretion of the central bank governors whether or not to make statements about financial stability, the fact that a governor feels compelled to raise financial stability issues in a speech or an interview can therefore be an important additional news component. In contrast, due to the fixed release schedule for Financial Stability Reports, financial markets expect statements about financial stability issues on the release days. There might be surprising elements in their content, but the mere fact that the FSR is released does not come as a surprise. This difference might be at the heart of the different effects of the two instruments on market volatility.

The empirical findings of the paper raise a number of policy issues. Communication on financial stability issues by a central bank with a macroprudential policy role will certainly be watched very closely by financial markets, and thus are potentially an important influence on financial markets. Does this imply that central banks should limit transparency and their communication on certain macroprudential risks, as argued by Cukierman (2009), or does this make the case for enhanced transparency and accountability, as argued by others? The findings of the paper underline that communication by monetary authorities on financial stability issues can indeed influence financial market developments. Yet the findings of the paper also show that such communication entails risks as they may unsettle markets. Hence central bank communication on macroprudential issues needs to be employed with utmost care, stressing the difficulty of designing a successful communication strategy on financial stability.

The paper proceeds in section 2 by outlining a more general motivation and discussing the debate in the academic and policy literature on macroprudential policy. Section 3 explains the dataset underlying the empirical analysis. In particular, it reports how the measures for central bank communication have been extracted and quantified. It also shows how the incidence and the content of the communications relate to the external environment, and presents the event study methodology that we employ. Section 4 discusses the empirical results and implications, and Section 5 concludes.

2. Motivation, background and literature

Given the emerging role and responsibility of monetary authorities for macroprudential policy, central bank communication about financial stability issues may also come to play a much more central role as a policy instrument, for mainly three reasons. First, in order to minimize the risk of a reputational loss, central banks that are entrusted with supervisory tasks will need to carefully design their respective communication policies. Second, financial markets are inherently characterized by asymmetric information and co-ordination problems, characteristics which lie at the heart of the potential risks to financial stability. To address these problems, transparency and communication are crucial. Finally, any body that is entrusted with macroprudential supervision will need to be accountable, which calls for a clear mandate, and a transparent conduct of the assigned task. Although Ossterloo and de Haan (2004) found that there is often a lack of accountability requirements for central banks' financial stability objectives, this is very likely to change in the future, once financial stability has become a more important and explicit objective of central banks.

These three aspects of communication for financial stability do therefore closely resemble the role of monetary policy-related communication, as established in the recent literature on central bank communication (see, e.g., Blinder et al. 2008) Also in the monetary policy sphere, communication serves i) to make central banks credible (mirroring the importance of financial stability communication for reputational purposes), ii) to enhance the effectiveness of monetary policy (just like good financial stability communication can contribute to financial stability), and iii) to make central banks accountable.

While being very similar along these three dimensions, there are also differences between monetary policy-related and financial stability-related communication. Central banks have become much more transparent about their conduct of monetary policy over the last decades, along with an increasing importance given to communication. There is a debate on possible limits to central bank transparency (e.g., Mishkin 2004, Morris and Shin 2002, Svensson 2006), but the arguments are much more contentious than in the case of financial stability-related communication. As demonstrated by Cukierman (2009), a clear case for limiting transparency can be made when the central bank has private information about problems within segments of the financial system. Release of such information may potentially be harmful, e.g. by triggering a run on the financial system. This suggests that policy makers need to be even more careful when designing their communication strategy with regard to their financial stability objectives.

While the new emphasis on macroprudential policy has triggered an active debate on its implementation (see, e.g., Bank of England 2009), communication issues have received considerably less attention. The few available references to the role of communication in macroprudential supervision have typically been made by policy makers (e.g., Bernanke 2008, Gjedrem 2005) rather than in the academic literature. Svensson (2003) argues that through the publication of indicators of financial stability in Financial Stability Reports (FSRs), central banks can issue early warnings to economic agents, thereby ideally preventing financial instability from materializing, and thereby ensuring that financial stability concerns

do not impose a constraint on monetary policy. Cihak (2006, 2007) provides a systematic overview of FSRs as the main communication channel that central banks use for this purpose. He documents, on the one hand, that the reports have become considerably more sophisticated over time, with substantial improvements in the underlying analytical tools, and on the other hand, that there has been a large increase in the number of central banks that publish FSRs. The frontrunners are the Bank of England, the Swedish Riksbank and Norges Bank (Norway's central bank), all of which started publication in 1996/1997. It is probably not a coincidence that these three central banks are typically also listed in the group of the most transparent central banks with regard to monetary policy issues (Eijffinger and Geraats 2006, Dincer and Eichengreen 2009). In the meantime, around 50 central banks have started to release FSRs.

A first empirical analysis of FSRs has been conducted by Oosterloo et al. (2007), with the aim to understand who publishes FSRs, for what motives, and with what content. Their results indicate that there are mainly three motives for publication, namely to increase transparency, to contribute to financial stability, and to strengthen co-operation between different authorities with financial stability tasks. They also find that the occurrence of a systemic banking crisis in the past is positively related to the likelihood that an FSR is published.

Even less work has been done with regard to the *effectiveness* of financial stability-related communication. To our knowledge, the only exception is Allen et al. (2004), who conducted an external evaluation of the Riksbank's work on financial stability issues, and came up with a number of recommendations, such as making the objective of the Riksbank's FSRs explicit, providing the underlying data, or expanding the scope of the FSR to, e.g., the insurance sector.

The present paper aims to fill this gap and analyses how central banks may come to fill the role of macroprudential supervisor. The likely evolution and rising importance of this role in the future makes it difficult to gauge how successful central banks will be in their new responsibility. Yet the analysis and extraction of lessons from past experience of central banks' communication on financial stability, as is the objective of this paper, may provide a valuable guide for designing their future policy tools and strategies.

3. Measuring communication and the effects on financial markets

This section introduces the dataset that is used to study the effectiveness of communication. We start by explaining the choice of data frequency, the sample of countries and time that we will use, and the choice of the financial sector stock market indices as our measure for financial markets. Subsequently, we describe the process for identifying the relevant communications, and how their content has been coded, and the econometric methodology.

3.1 Choice of data frequency, data sample and the relevant financial markets

We are interested in the effects of financial stability-related communication on financial markets. A first choice that is required relates to the frequency of the analysis. Given the speed of reactions in financial markets, it is necessary to identify the timing of the events as closely as possible. Identification of a precise time stamp will allow for an analysis in a very tight time window around the event, thereby ensuring that the market reaction is not distorted by other news. We opted for a daily frequency for two practical reasons. First, given the aim to provide a cross-country study over a relatively long horizon, financial market data are not consistently available at higher frequencies. Second, the identification of the precise days of the release of central bank communications has already not been trivial in many cases, whereas the identification of the time of the release within a day is largely impossible.

The sample of countries and the time period of the study have been determined on the basis of the release of FSRs. We tried to identify the release dates of the FSRs or relevant speeches or interviews by central bank governors for all those central banks listed in Cihak (2006, 2007), i.e. for all central banks which release FSRs. We succeeded to identify such release dates for 35 countries, 24 of which are advanced economies according to the IMF's country classification. Additionally, we included the United States as the only country that does not release an FSR, restricting ourselves to studying the effect of speeches and interviews in this case. In total, our sample therefore covers 36 countries (see Table 1). Our sample starts in 1996, i.e. the year when the first FSR was released by the Bank of England. The data were extracted in October 2009, such that the sample ends on September 30, 2009.

As to the selection of a financial market that shall be subject of this study, we opted for stock market indices relating to the financial sector, as we expect that empirical effects of financial stability communication should be mostly easily detectable for this sector. Such data are available from Datastream back to 1996, i.e. to the start of our sample period, for all the countries in our sample. This choice is partially owed to the large cross-country dimension and the need to get historical data for nearly one and a half decades, which limited the availability of less traditional market measures, such as implied volatilities or expected default frequencies (EDFs). While the link of these measures to financial stability would have been relatively direct, we hope that the *financial sector* stock indices provide a measure that is reasonably closely related to financial stability issues, too. All stock indices are expressed in local currency, given that we are interested in the response of national financial markets to national communication.

3.2 Choice and identification of communication events

At the core of this paper is a quantified measure of communication events. We focus on the two most important channels of communication about financial stability issues, namely FSRs and speeches and interviews. FSRs are typically relatively comprehensive documents that discuss various aspects of financial stability. They normally begin with an overall assessment of financial stability in the respective country, often including an international perspective. They usually contain an evaluation of current macroeconomic and financial market developments and the assessment of risks to banks and systemically relevant non-banking financial institutions. Cihak (2006) calls these sections the "core" part of an FSR and differentiates them from the "non-core" part that includes research articles on special issues, often written by outside experts. The weights attributed to these two parts vary considerably across central banks. The spectrum ranges from FSRs that only cover the core part (e.g. Norway) to FSRs which only consist of articles covering a special topic (e.g. France). Most central banks lie somewhere in between this range and are usually closer to the first type. Typically, FSRs are published twice a year, i.e. are relatively infrequent communications.

A second important channel for central banks to communicate about financial stability issues is to give speeches and interviews. By their very nature, these are much more flexible than FSRs. Their timing can be chosen flexibly (Ehrmann and Fratzscher (2007) have shown this for monetary policy-related speeches), and their content can be much more focused. Of course, this is also due to the fact that they are also much shorter than FSRs.

As we are interested in testing the response of financial markets to central bank communication, we need to identify the release dates as a first step (recall that we will conduct the analysis at a daily frequency, hence there is no need to identify the timing within a given day – as long as the release takes place before markets close) As to FSRs, we carefully ensured a proper identification of their release dates, mainly based on information provided on central banks' websites and by central bank press offices, and complemented with information from news reports about the release of FSRs as recorded in Factiva, a database that contains newspaper articles and newswire reports from 14,000 sources. As shown in Table 1, the dataset contains information on 357 FSRs. The increasing tendency of

central banks to publish FSRs is reflected in this database. Starting from less than 10 FSRs per annum in the 1990s, we could identify around 50 FSRs each year in the early 2000s (note that the drop in numbers in 2009 is entirely due to the fact that the sample ends in September, i.e. covers only three quarters of the year). As to the country coverage, the early publishers are obviously represented more frequently, with 20 and more reports, whereas “late movers” have far fewer observations, down to 1 for the case of the Bank of Greece, which published its first FSR in June 2009 (for Indonesia and the Philippines, we could not identify the release dates; note that dropping these two countries from the sample does not affect our results in any substantive way).

Table 1

To identify speeches and interviews is more difficult. Our objective is to extract all relevant public statements that relate to financial stability. For tractability reasons, we restricted our search to speeches by the central bank governor – even in cases where a central bank has a member of its governing body that has an explicit assignment regarding financial stability. We used Factiva and extracted all database entries containing the name of the policy maker together with some keywords that appear with a certain regularity in the editorials of the FSRs.³ From all hits obtained, we extracted those containing statements by the relevant policy maker with a reference to financial stability issues. Since newswire reports typically record the precise time stamp, we were in a position to allocate the speeches and interviews to the appropriate trading days. Communications during weekends were allocated to the subsequent Monday, communications in the evening – such as dinner speeches – to the subsequent trading day. Furthermore, we very carefully chose only the first report about a given statement, which typically originated from a newswire service. This choice has the advantage that the reporting is very timely, usually comes within minutes of each statement, and that it is mostly descriptive without providing much analysis or interpretation. To avoid double counting, we discarded all subsequent reports or analysis of the same statement.

A number of issues are worth noting about this data extraction exercise. First, the search was conducted only in English. We might therefore not have discovered all statements, if these were made and reported upon exclusively in other languages. However, due to the fact that Factiva contains also newswire reports, and due to the extensive coverage of this topic by newswires, this issue should not be very problematic.

Second, one can easily think of other keywords to use in the database search. We have experimented with larger sets, e.g. including also the terms “volatile”, “volatility”, “risk”, “adverse” or “pressures”. However, the additional hits typically related to monetary policy communications (such as central bank governors talking about inflationary “pressures”, “risks” to price stability, etc.), such that the resulting dataset on financial stability communications was basically unaltered.

Third, the news sources might be selective in their reporting, thus possibly not covering all relevant statements. However, given the sensitivity of the topic and the importance that it has for financial markets, we are confident that the coverage is close to complete. Furthermore, as we are interested in testing the market response to communication, it makes sense to focus only on those statements that actually reach market participants, and this is best achieved by looking at prominent newswire services.

³ To be precise, we used the following search terms: “financial stability or systemic or systemically or crisis or instability or instabilities or unstable or fragile or fragility or fragilities or banking system or disruptive or imbalances or vulnerable or strains”.

Fourth, our news sources may wrongly report or misinterpret a statement by policy makers. Again, our objective is to assess communication from the perspective of financial markets and therefore we analyze the information market participants actually receive.

The resulting dataset contains 720 communication events. The breakdown by year in Table 1 reveals large time variations, with a massive increase in the number of speeches in 1998, i.e. during the Asian and the Russian crisis, as well as during the financial crisis of 2007-2010. This is suggestive that the occurrence of speeches and interviews is responsive to the prevailing circumstances, which is in stark contrast to FSRs, which are typically released at pre-specified dates. Speeches and interviews do therefore provide the central bank with a very flexible instrument to communicate financial stability concerns, as their timing can be chosen flexibly.

Figure 1 provides a first graphical check of the relation between financial markets and the frequency of financial-stability related speeches and interviews, by plotting their total number in all countries in a given quarter on the right-hand axis, and the standard deviation of daily returns of the global financial stock index in each quarter on the left-hand axis. The evolution of the two lines is extremely close, clearly suggesting that communication intensifies in times of financial market turbulence.

Figure 1 and Table 2

The results of a more formal test are provided in Table 2. The table calculates the cumulated stock market returns and the standard deviation of daily stock market returns preceding the communication events, and compares them to equivalent figures for non-event days (with tests for statistically significant differences given in the columns denoted by “Diff”). The left part of the table contains the results for FSRs, the right part for speeches and interviews. The different rows of the table relate to different time windows prior to the event, with the first row measuring returns on the day prior to the event, the second row on the 2 days prior to the event, and so on. Standard deviations are calculated for time windows exceeding 3 days. The non-event comparison figures are calculated for a sample where no communication event has occurred in the preceding 60 business days, and no communication event follows in the subsequent 60 business days. The sample is furthermore restricted to non-overlapping observations.

The picture that resulted from Figure 1, i.e. that the occurrence of speeches and interviews is closely related to stock market volatility, is confirmed in the very last set of columns in Table 2: on days before an event (“event days”), volatility is substantially higher than on non-event days, with the difference being statistically significant at the 1% level throughout all time windows considered. This is in contrast to the results for the FSRs, the publication schedules of which, as we know, are pre-determined. Even though there are some time windows where the volatility is statistically significantly different, the results are far less consistent. Furthermore, if anything, market volatility tends to be lower on event days than on non-event days, a pattern which is most likely driven by the fact that most central banks started to release their FSRs in the early 2000s, when market volatility was comparatively low.

A similar comparison for the stock market returns also reveals that communication by central banks intensifies during periods of stock market declines. Whereas the average stock return prior to non-event days is typically positive, it is on average negative prior to speeches and interviews, and differences are statistically significant at the 1% level, regardless of the time window. No such pattern is visible for FSRs. The main conclusion from this analysis therefore is that while the release schedule of FSRs is pre-defined, speeches and interviews are a much more flexible communication tool, and react to the current market environment.

3.3 Measuring the content of communications

Once we have identified the communication events, it is necessary to measure their content in order to make the data amenable to econometric analysis. In other words, we want to capture those dimensions and elements of FSRs and speeches/interviews which are relevant for financial market participants and thus will be reflected in asset prices.

A discussion of the various possibilities of achieving this is provided in Blinder et al. (2008). The simplest option consists of assigning a dummy variable that is equal to one on event days, and to zero otherwise. While easily done, this approach limits the analysis severely, namely to a study whether communication affects volatility or absolute returns. If interested in the effect of the content of communication, a method for quantification of such content is required. The approach adopted in some part of the literature on monetary policy-related communication, namely to read the communications and code them on various scales, was not feasible for our purposes, given the amount of text that needed to be quantified. We have therefore opted for an automated approach for the current paper.⁴

We employed the computerized textual-analysis software DICTION 5.0,⁵ which searches text for different semantic features by using a corpus of several thousand words. We are mainly interested in two dimensions of the software, namely optimism and activity. Optimism may be important as it provides agents with information about the current state and the prospects of the financial system and underlying risks. Activity may be relevant to the extent that it signals to market participants the willingness and intentions of policy-makers to take corrective or supportive action, either through monetary policy, liquidity measures, or during the crisis other non-conventional policies.

The respective scores are computed by adding the standardized word frequencies of various subcategories labeled as optimistic, and by subtracting the corresponding frequencies of pessimistic subcategories. In broad terms, optimism refers to “language endorsing some person, group, concept or event, or highlighting their positive entailments”, whereas the notion of activity is based on “language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas and the avoidance of inertia”. Importantly, as shown by Hart (2001), the scoring of text along these dimensions is typically (and also in the current application) uncorrelated, i.e. the software develops orthogonal features of the text.

This software has been used extensively in communication sciences and in political sciences, e.g. to analyze speeches of politicians (Hart 2000, Hart and Jarvis 1997), but has also been applied in the context of central banks (Bligh and Hess 2007, Armesto et al. 2009). Furthermore, Davis et al. (2006) have used it to measure the reaction of financial markets to earnings announcements, and find a significant incremental market response to optimistic and pessimistic language usage in earnings press releases.

There are a number of advantages of this approach over human coding of the text. First, the software creates a coding that is more mechanical and thus objective, compared to human coding which tends to be more judgmental. While some subjectivity could arise due to the choice of the content of the dictionaries against which a text is assessed, it is important to note that the corpus has been defined based on linguistic theory and without an active participation by the authors of this paper. Another advantage is the replicability of the coding, which is in stark contrast to human coding, and also allows more text to be added without distorting the scoring process. Third, the automated approach allows a consistent coding of long passages of text, and across a large number of communications. Human coding of long texts with various points is rather difficult, as no part should in principle be given a larger weight in the

⁴ An alternative approach is used by Lucca and Trebbi (2009), where FOMC statements are cut down into small segments of text, the semantic orientation of which is then calculated by checking how often these text segments appear in conjunction with the words dovish or hawkish in a large body of text.

⁵ See <http://www.dictionsoftware.com>.

assessment. Given the breadth of FSRs, this issue is particularly severe in the current application. At the same time, a drawback of the automated approach is that it does not consider the context of the text, and thus cannot generate a “tailor-made” coding for financial stability-related communication.

Based on this computerized textual-analysis software, we computed a score for each individual speech or interview (note that, effectively, we are coding the content of the related news reports, rather than the original source text), and for the overview part of each FSR.⁶ Subsequently, we transformed the resulting scores into a discrete variable, which takes the value of -1 for the lowest third of the distribution, a value of 0 for the middle part of the distribution, and the value of +1 for the upper third of the distribution. That is, a value of +1 for the optimism score denotes a relatively optimistic text, a +1 along the activity dimension a text with relatively active language. The discretization of scores is required for the subsequent analysis, where we are interested in the market effects of optimistic vs. pessimistic, or active vs. passive communication, rather than the effect of an incremental change in the tone of the communication. This transformation was applied for the speeches as well as for the FSRs.

It is important to note that this implies a *relative* coding, i.e. a given communication is scored in a comparative fashion against the other texts in the sample. However, due to the large sample, both across countries and along the time dimension, our communications cover periods of relative stability and tranquility, as well as periods of financial market crises or turbulence. Accordingly, the overall sample of text should be relatively balanced, such that text which is coded with plus or minus one should indeed represent a corresponding opinion. We denote the resulting indicators by $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR}$, $I_{it}^{activity,FSR}$, $I_{it}^{optimism,speech}$ and $I_{it}^{activity,speech}$, respectively, where i denotes a given country, and t stands for time. In the appendix, we provide a number of examples of speeches and interviews, and how they were coded along the two dimensions.

3.4 The event study methodology

What are the effects of FSRs and speeches/interviews on financial markets? The natural econometric approach to test our hypotheses of interest is the event study methodology. We use this methodology because we are interested not only in the contemporaneous effect of financial stability statements, but we also want to know how persistent the effect is over time. We can define the release of an FSR, or the delivery of a speech or an interview as an event. The question we want to address is whether the event affects stock markets in a causal fashion. For that purpose, it is essential that we can compare the stock market evolution following the event to the counterfactual, i.e. a predicted value that we believe would have occurred had the event not happened. A crucial issue in any event study is therefore to find a benchmark model to calculate *expected* returns, which in turn allows calculation of *excess* returns.⁷ Most event studies look at the effect of events, such as earnings announcements or stock splits, on individual stocks, and use some variant of a factor model, such as the Fama–French (1993) three-factor model, or the Carhart (1997) four-factor model, which extends the previous model by a momentum factor.

Given that we are interested in the evolution of national stock market indices rather than of individual stocks, the book-to-market ratio and the size factor of the Fama–French model are not applicable. We use the following model to define normal returns:

⁶ While this overview carries different names across central banks, e.g. editorial, introductory chapter, executive summary, etc., it is rather similar in nature for all FSRs.

⁷ For overviews of the event study literature see, e.g., MacKinlay (1997) or Kothari and Warner (2007).

$$(1) \quad R_{it} = \gamma_{0i} + \gamma_{1i}R_{it-1} + \gamma_{2i}R_{mt-1} + \gamma_{3i}R_{mt} + \gamma_{4i}R_{mt+1} \\ + \gamma_{5i}D_t + \gamma_{6i}T_{it-1} + \gamma_{7i}S_{it-1} + \gamma_{8i}M_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where R_{it} is the daily local currency return on the financial sector stock market index for country i on day t , R_{mt} is the daily US dollar return on Datastream's global financial sector stock market index, and D_t denotes dummy variables for Monday through Thursday. T_{it-1} stands for the trend in stock markets over the 20 days prior to the event, S_{it-1} for the standard deviation of daily stock market returns over the 20 days prior to the event, and M_{it-1} for the "misalignment" of stock indices on the day preceding the event, measured as the percentage deviation of the stock indices from their national average over the entire sample period.

The first 5 factors follow Edmans et al. (2007). The lagged index return controls for possible first-order serial correlation. The global stock market index is meant to capture the effects of international stock market integration, and since some indices might be lagging or leading the world index, Edmans et al. (2007) not only include the contemporaneous global returns, but furthermore a lead and a lag. The last three terms are owed to earlier event studies on exchange rates such as Pojarliev and Levich (2007) or Fratzscher (2009). The trend factor attempts to allow for persistence in stock market movements, and is therefore closely related to the momentum factor in the Carhart four-factor model. The inclusion of the standard deviation is an attempt to capture the effect of market volatility. Finally, the misalignment factor is based on the idea that there might be booms or busts in stock markets, and that over a sufficiently long sample, there could be some mean reversion (albeit possibly allowing for a drift). We test for robustness to the exclusion of these last three terms, given that they are derived from the exchange rate literature rather than the stock market event studies, and find our results to be qualitatively unaltered.

Model (1) is estimated country by country, only including days that were neither preceding nor preceded by communication events for 60 days (in each direction). Based on the estimated parameters (denoted by hats), it is then possible to calculate excess returns on event days as

$$(2) \quad \hat{\varepsilon}_{it} = R_{it} - (\hat{\gamma}_{0i} + \hat{\gamma}_{1i}R_{it-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{2i}R_{mt-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{3i}R_{mt} + \hat{\gamma}_{4i}R_{mt+1} \\ + \hat{\gamma}_{5i}D_t + \hat{\gamma}_{6i}T_{it-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{7i}S_{it-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{8i}M_{it-1})$$

The hypothesis to be tested is then whether communication leads to excess returns in the desired direction, i.e. whether

$$(3) \quad \hat{\varepsilon}_{it} > 0 \text{ if } I_{it}^{optimism,c} = 1 \text{ or } \hat{\varepsilon}_{it} < 0 \text{ if } I_{it}^{optimism,c} = -1,$$

where the superscript c stands for the two communication types, FSR and speeches or interviews. A more complicated approach is required if we want to calculate the *longer-term* effectiveness of communication beyond the event day. While we assume that world markets are exogenous to a communication in an individual country also over extended time windows, this is obviously not the case for the own lag, the recent trend, standard deviation and misalignment: as of the second day, it is necessary to calculate predicted returns for the preceding day, and to plug these into equation (2), thus yielding

$$(4) \quad \hat{\varepsilon}_{it+k} = R_{it+k} - (\hat{\gamma}_{0i} + \hat{\gamma}_{1i}\hat{R}_{it+k-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{2i}R_{mt+k-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{3i}R_{mt+k} + \hat{\gamma}_{4i}R_{mt+k+1} \\ + \hat{\gamma}_{5i}D_{t+k} + \hat{\gamma}_{6i}\hat{T}_{it+k-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{7i}\hat{S}_{it+k-1} + \hat{\gamma}_{8i}\hat{M}_{it+k-1})$$

Note that compared to equation (2), R_{it-1} , T_{it-1} , S_{it-1} and M_{it-1} have all been replaced by their predicted value in the absence of a communication event. For $k=0$, the two coincide, whereas for all days $k>0$, it is important to calculate the appropriate predicted values. Tests for the effectiveness of communication over longer time horizons with a time window of K days then amount to asking whether

$$(5) \quad \sum_{k=0}^K \hat{\varepsilon}_{it+k} > 0 \text{ if } I_{it}^{optimism,c} = 1 \text{ or } \sum_{k=0}^K \hat{\varepsilon}_{it+k} < 0 \text{ if } I_{it}^{optimism,c} = -1.$$

Following common practice in the event study literature, we employ two types of tests for the effectiveness of communications (both described in detail in MacKinlay, 1997). First, we apply a non-parametric sign test to study whether the above conditions hold in more than 50% of all cases. The underlying idea is that by construction – if the factor model is correct – excess returns and cumulated excess returns are on average zero, and that it is equally probable that they are positive or negative. For the type of event to be effective, it should then move the probabilities in a significant fashion. The second test checks the average size of the (cumulated) excess returns, and tests these against the null hypothesis that they are zero.

In a similar vein, to test whether communications reduce noise, i.e. lower stock market volatility, we furthermore test whether

$$(6) \quad \sigma_{\hat{\varepsilon}_{i,t/t+k}} < \sigma_{\hat{\varepsilon}_{i,t-1/t-1-k}} \text{ if } D_{it}^c = 1$$

with $\sigma_{\hat{\varepsilon}_{i,t/t+k}}$ the standard deviation of daily excess returns in country i from time t to $t+k$, $\sigma_{\hat{\varepsilon}_{i,t-1/t-1-k}}$ their standard deviation over the k days prior to the event, and D_{it}^c a dummy variable that is equal to one on the days when a communication of type c is released in country i . Also here, we apply the non-parametric sign test whether the above conditions hold in more than 50% of all cases and the test whether the difference of the two standard deviations is equal to zero.

4. The effectiveness of financial stability-related communication

This section starts by providing some stylized facts of how the content of FSRs and speeches evolved over time – and to what extent it managed to be forward-looking and identify risks and vulnerabilities rather than reflect market developments (section 4.1). It then proceeds by identifying and testing for the effectiveness of communication in guiding financial markets (section 4.2). It concludes by analyzing what characteristics make central bank communication successful in guiding financial markets in the desired way (section 4.3).

4.1 Stylized facts about timing and content of communication

How did the content of FSRs and speeches evolve over time and across countries? And to what extent was such communication forward-looking rather than reflect market developments? Figure 2 provides an overview of how the optimism expressed in FSRs (upper panel) as well as speeches and interviews (lower panel) has evolved over time. It plots, for each year, the average and median optimism for the respective communication events, as well as the 25th and the 75th percentile. Note that the figure for FSRs starts only in 1999, given that in the years before, there were too few FSRs being published to provide a meaningful picture.

Figure 2 and Table 3

A number of interesting issues emerge from this figure. Most importantly, it is striking that the tone of FSRs had continuously become more positive after 2000, reaching a peak in early 2006. This suggests that FSRs contain commentaries on the current market environment, but that they are also forward-looking, with some anticipation of the 2007-2010 crisis. However, there is a relatively large heterogeneity across countries, as shown by the breadth of the scores encompassed by the 25th and the 75th percentiles. This is especially the case for speeches and interviews, which do not seem to follow any obvious pattern over time.

Table 3 looks further into this question to what extent the content of communications reflects previous financial market developments, and reports corresponding test results. Separately for FSRs and speeches and interviews, it reports the average return and standard deviation of financial sector stock indices over the usual time windows (from one day to 60 days prior to the event), separately for communications coded as -1, 0 and +1 on the optimism scale in columns (1), (2) and (3), respectively. The statistical significance of a test for equality is provided for each pair, i.e. (1) vs. (2), (1) vs. (3), and (2) vs. (3).

The results show that the content of FSRs reflects prior financial market developments. There is a monotonic relation between the tone of FSRs and the preceding stock market returns: the more optimistic the FSR, the larger have been the preceding returns. However, these differences are typically not statistically significant. At the same time, pessimistic FSRs (i.e. those coded with -1) have, on average, been preceded by considerably larger stock market volatility than neutral or positive FSRs, regardless of the length of the time window, with the differences being highly statistically significant.

Interestingly, no such relations are identifiable for speeches and interviews: there is not a single case where stock market volatility or returns would be related to the content of speeches in a statistically significant manner. If anything, it seems to be the case that there is quite some “leaning against the wind”: the returns preceding optimistic speeches are consistently *lower* than the returns preceding pessimist ones, suggesting that a positive picture is given especially in cases of bad stock market performance.

4.2 Effectiveness of FSRs and speeches/interviews

We now turn to the question to what extent central bank communication was effective in moving financial markets. A first test is provided in Figure 3, which compares the actual evolution of stock markets around communication events to the predicted evolution on the basis of the benchmark model (1). The upper panel reports the results for the FSRs, the lower panel those for speeches and interviews. The solid line plots the average actual cumulated returns starting from 60 days prior to the communication event to the 60 days following them. The dashed line, in contrast, shows the expected cumulated returns that would result from the benchmark model in the absence of a communication event. To combine pessimistic as well as optimistic communications in one chart, the cumulated returns are multiplied by -1 for pessimistic communications, whereas they are left unchanged for optimistic communications. Accordingly, we would expect the actual returns to lie above the predicted returns after statements if the markets follow the point of view expressed by the central bank (i.e. we observe negative excess returns in response to pessimistic statements, and positive ones in the case of optimistic communications).

Figure 3

The figure provides a striking picture about the effectiveness of central bank communication. The upper panel for FSRs shows that markets move in the direction of the central bank view, since the actual returns are substantially larger than the predicted returns. Moreover, the effect is quite sizeable economically: on average, FSR releases move equity markets by 2% over 25 days in the direction indicated by the FSRs.

Interestingly, expected cumulated returns in this case are close to zero, suggesting the predictions of the benchmark model are close to those of a random walk model. In other words, due to the fact that the release pattern of FSRs is not systematically related to the previous stock market performance, the benchmark model has a hard time in predicting the subsequent returns.

Looking at the lower panel of Figure 3, the findings are remarkably different for speeches and interviews. As we have seen above, speeches and interviews typically follow stock market declines, and the model clearly predicts further declines subsequently (the dashed line in the figure). As a matter of fact, actual returns do on average decline after a speech or an interview; however, comparing the expected with the actual evolution, it is also apparent that the stock markets decline by less than expected in the presence of central bank communications. The difference between predicted and actual cumulated returns is substantially smaller than for FSRs, however.

The figure also suggests that central bank communications are potentially effective in guiding financial markets even at very long horizons, given that the gap between predicted and actual cumulated returns is open for the entire horizon of time windows we look at.

Tables 4 and 5

The formal test results for the effectiveness of central bank communication are provided in Tables 4 and 5, covering FSRs and speeches and interviews, respectively. The first set of results relates to equation (5), i.e. tests whether optimistic statements yield positive excess returns, and pessimistic ones lead to negative excess returns. The first column shows the share of cases in which the condition was met, as well as the results of the non-parametric sign test. Shares above 0.5 would suggest that communication is effective. The statistical significance of the effectiveness is assessed by stars (***) for 1%, ** for 5%, and * for 10% significance) – whereas numbers that are significantly *smaller* than 0.5 would be characterized by apostrophes (’ for 1%, ’’ for 5%, and ’’ for 10% significance).

There is clear evidence for the effectiveness of FSRs, with around 60% of FSRs leading to the desired market reaction. In terms of magnitudes, which are reported in the second column, FSRs generate excess returns on the day of the release of 0.32% on average, and cumulated excess returns up to 2% in the longer run, with the largest effects found after 25 to 50 trading days, i.e. after 5 to 10 weeks. Such an effect is indeed sizeable and economically meaningful, in particular when considering that FSRs are generally released twice a year per country.

How are these effects generated? Table 4 also provides a breakdown according to the type of the FSR. Pessimistic FSRs are followed by negative excess returns in around 60% of all cases (note that the table reports a 40% share of cases where returns *increase*), with statistical significance especially at the short horizons. However, the magnitude of these effects is relatively small. Optimistic FSRs, in contrast, typically generate positive excess returns, which are furthermore large in magnitude, thus leading to statistically significant estimates. The cumulated excess returns are largest after 45 days, amounting to 2.9%. Neutral FSRs are somewhere in between. This suggest that an optimistic assessment provided in FSRs leads to an improvement in stock market sentiment over a fairly long horizon, in a way that is not matched by pessimistic FSRs leading to a deterioration in sentiment.

Table 4 also provides the results for tests whether the release of FSRs lowers stock market volatility, i.e. tests whether condition (6) holds, again using both the non-parametric sign test and the parametric test for effectiveness. There is some evidence that FSRs lead to a reduction in market volatility. While this is observed in more than 50% of cases for all time windows, and while the average change in volatility is also negative in all time windows, statistical

significance is in many cases not given. Looking at the breakdown according to FSR content, it appears that optimistic messages can potentially lower market volatility in the short run, whereas pessimistic messages do typically not affect it.

Moving on to the effect of speeches as reported in Table 5, a rather different picture emerges. The effect on returns is much less systematic than for FSRs. With some delay, optimistic speeches generate positive excess returns. The effect for pessimistic speeches on returns is, on average, non-existent, however. Of course, this is not to say that all speeches are ineffective – rather, *on average*, there seems to be very little effect. At the same time, speeches do affect stock markets in a significant fashion: they consistently *increase* stock market volatility, for all time windows, and equally so whether their tone is optimistic or pessimistic. This is clear evidence against the notion that central bank communications might be effective in reducing noise.

As we have coded the communications not only along the optimism dimension, but also along the activity that is expressed, another look at the effects of communications depending on their activity coding is of interest. The results are provided in Tables 6 and 7, and yield a number of interesting insights. First, passive language in FSRs tends to lead to positive excess returns, whereas active language has the opposite effect. Interestingly, while generating negative excess returns, FSRs with an active language tend to lower stock market volatility. This is exactly opposed to the results for speeches and interviews, where an active or even a neutral language increases volatility.

Tables 6 and 7

To summarize, these findings suggest, first, that communication about financial stability has the potential to affect financial markets. FSRs exert very different effects than speeches and interviews: The views expressed in FSRs get reflected in stock market returns, and in a long-lasting fashion. FSRs do also manage to reduce market volatility. Both effects are particularly strong if the FSR contains an optimistic assessment of the risks to financial stability. Speeches and interviews, in contrast, show only modest effectiveness in their ability to guide market directions, and they tend to *increase* rather than reduce market volatility. An assessment of the effectiveness of these tools therefore needs to clearly distinguish between the two.

4.3 Determinants of success

As a final step, we ask what factors make central bank communication on financial stability issues effective? The results above have shown very clearly that speeches and interviews are perceived very differently by financial markets than FSRs. The latter tend to reduce market volatility, whereas the former increase it. But what determines whether a communication event is effective in guiding markets? Potential characteristics could relate i) to the content of the communications, ii) to characteristics of the central banks, and iii) to the external conditions at the time of the events.

Tables 8 and 9 report results of probit regression models, which try to explain whether a communication event has been effective in guiding financial markets (i.e. condition (5) has been met) or in reducing market uncertainty (i.e. condition (6) has been met) or not. We define two dependent variables for that purpose. The first is defined as +1 if an optimistic communication triggers positive excess returns, or if a pessimistic communication triggers negative excess returns, and as 0 otherwise, and tests for the effectiveness in guiding stock markets. The second is defined as +1 if a communication event lowers market volatility, and as 0 otherwise, and thus tests for the effectiveness in reducing market uncertainty.

As potential explanatory factors, we include a variable testing whether optimistic statements are more effective than pessimistic ones (“Optimism score=1”), whether neutral statements along the activity dimension are more effective than passive ones (“Activity score=0”), and

how active contents compare to passive ones (“Activity score=1”), whether a communication attempts to “lean against the wind”, separately for the case of pessimistic communications in times of bullish markets (i.e. if the market trend over the last 20 days prior to the communication has been positive) and for optimistic communications in times of bearish markets. Finally, for the case of speeches, we also test whether they are more effective if they are clustered. We measure this by creating a dummy variable that is equal to one for a given speech if there have been other speeches by the same central bank governor during the k days before or after, and zero otherwise. Given the preset release schedule of FSRs, there is no clustering, such that this variable is not entered into the respective regression models.

As to central bank characteristics, we test whether it matters if the central bank has an explicit function as financial supervisory authority, by using the CBFA index developed in Masciandaro and Quintyn (2009).⁸ Furthermore, we make use of the index for the level of political transparency of a central bank as developed in Eijffinger and Geraats (2006) and provided in Dincer and Eichengreen (2009).⁹ Finally, we allow effectiveness to differ for central banks from advanced economies (following the IMF’s country classification).

For the third block of potential determinants, we test whether the effectiveness has changed during the financial crisis (by including a dummy variable that is equal to one starting in September 2007, i.e. with Northern Rock; defining the start of the crisis with Lehman does not affect our results). Furthermore, we enter three of the factors of our benchmark model (1), namely the absolute value of the misalignment factor (to test whether a large misalignment makes central bank communication more effective in the sense of the co-ordination channel), the absolute value of the trend factor (thus checking whether momentum matters), and the standard deviation of returns on the previous trading days (to identify a possible difference of the effectiveness depending on how volatile markets are, which can also be seen as a test for the co-ordination channel). Finally, for FSRs, we also test whether effects are stronger if the release of the FSR has been accompanied by a report on the standard newswires, by adding a dummy variable that is equal to one for all FSRs where we could identify such a report based on Factiva. Given that we have identified all speeches and interviews via Factiva reports in the first place, this variable is not meaningful for explaining their effectiveness, and is therefore not included in the respective regression models.

Tables 8 and 9

Table 8 presents the results for FSRs, for windows of 10 and 20 business days. The parameters are marginal effects, i.e. the change in the probability for an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable and the discrete change in the probability for dummy variables. The marginal effects are evaluated at the mean of the independent variables. The numbers in brackets denote standard errors, which have been calculated allowing for clustering across countries. The models clearly fail to find important characteristics as to which FSRs would generate excess returns in line with the central bank views. In contrast, the models are more successful in explaining which FSRs reduce market volatility. Important characteristics in that regard are optimistic reports, which have a 15% higher probability of being effective than pessimistic reports. Neutral reports along the

⁸ This index takes the value 1 if the central bank is not assigned the main responsibility for banking supervision; 2 if the central bank has the main (or sole) responsibility for banking supervision; 3 if the central bank has furthermore responsibility for either insurances or the securities markets; 4 if the central bank has responsibility in all three sectors. Results are robust to using a discrete version of the index, which does not differentiate between the cases where the central bank has a supervisory role, i.e. those coded as 2, 3 or 4.

⁹ The index takes values from 0 to 3, depending on whether the central bank has a formal objective for monetary policy, a quantified target, and clearly defined institutional arrangements with the government.

activity dimension seem to be more successful in calming down markets than passive reports at the 20 day window (whereas the effect for active relative to passive FSRs is not statistically significant). FSRs issued by central banks in advanced economies have a nearly 20% higher probability of calming down financial markets

A number of external factors are also important. Media attention is one example, with FSRs that are accompanied by newswire reports being 10% more likely to trigger a reduction in volatility. While there is no difference at the 10 day window, the 20 day window suggests that FSRs seem to have been much less effective in calming markets during the financial crisis, with a 20% reduced success probability. At the same time, FSRs seem to be particularly beneficial in times of high market uncertainty. The coefficient on previous market volatility stands at 22%. With a standard deviation of around 1 for that variable over the current sample, this implies that FSRs have a roughly 20% larger probability to calm markets if the preceding market volatility has increased by one standard deviation. On the other hand, if markets show a clear trend over the last business days, the effectiveness of FSRs is much reduced. Given that the variable has a standard deviation of around 6, we are talking about a 12% reduced success probability in the presence of a one standard deviation increase in momentum. We take these findings as clear evidence for a co-ordination channel. In instances where there is a lot of uncertainty in financial markets, communication by the central bank works as a co-ordination device and reduces heterogeneity in expectations and information, which is reflected in reduced market volatility.

How do these results compare to the effect of speeches? The effects on volatility are very similar in many ways, as can be seen in Table 9. The coefficients on optimism, the financial crisis, previous trends and previous volatility are similarly significant, have the same sign, and are in most cases remarkably close to the magnitude of the effects for the FSRs. The main differences are that speeches and interviews by central bank governors in advanced economies are no different from those in emerging markets. Uttering a pessimistic note against a bullish stock market increases the probability for a volatility reduction by 20% compared to other pessimistic statements. At the same time, leaning against declining stock markets by making optimistic statements does not trigger reduced volatility compared to pessimistic statements (given that the relevant coefficient is equal to the sum of the coefficient on optimistic statements and those optimistic statements that lean against the stock market trend, i.s. 0.186-0.171, which is insignificantly different from zero). With regard to the effect on excess returns, the main determinant is a positive activity score, i.e. speeches with a highly activist language tend to achieve their goals in the most effective way.

The findings of this section show that there are a number of characteristics that shape the effectiveness of communication. Optimistic messages have the potential to reduce noise, i.e. to dampen volatility in financial markets – with the exception of optimistic speeches and interviews which try to lean against a bearish stock market. Speeches that lean against booming markets, on the other hand, are very effective in calming markets. Effectiveness in reducing noise is also more easily achieved in the presence of highly volatile stock markets. At the same time, it appears to be much harder to reduce noise if stock markets are characterized by a lot of momentum, which might also explain that communication during the financial crisis of 2001-2010 has been less effective in that regard. To summarize, the findings show that central bank communication is not always and everywhere equally effective. Rather, current market characteristics need to be taken into account, which adds to the difficulty of designing a successful communication strategy on financial stability.

5. Conclusions

The concept of macroprudential supervision has gained tremendously in importance with the financial crisis of 2007-2010. In several countries, it is envisaged to involve central banks in these tasks. While there are potential information gains that could lead to a more effective conduct of monetary policy and/or to more effective crisis prevention and management, and while central banks have a natural role in macroprudential supervision because of its lender of last resort function, there are also risks for central banks. There could be conflicts among different goals, implying that a clear hierarchy of goals is desirable. Importantly, there is also a risk for the reputation of a central bank, which might adversely affect the effectiveness of the central bank's monetary policy conduct.

This macroprudential policy role often explicitly assigns central banks to provide information, analysis and recommendations about systemic risks. Communication will therefore be a central policy tool on macroprudential supervision for central banks. Designing a communication strategy can shape a central bank's reputation, make it accountable, and make macroprudential supervision more effective. At the same time, there are clear limits to what can be communicated in the area of financial stability, such that the design of communication strategies needs to be done with utmost care.

In this context, this paper has provided an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of central bank communication about financial stability, a topic that has remained almost entirely unexplored in the literature to date. The paper has studied the reception of central bank statements in financial markets, arguably one of the most important target groups of this type of communication. In more detail, it has constructed a unique dataset and analyzed the reaction of financial sector stocks of 36 countries over a time period from 1996 to 2009, i.e. spanning nearly one and a half decades, to over 1000 communication events, a third of which being the release of FSRs, and two thirds being speeches and interviews by central bank governors. The emphasis of the paper has been to identify whether financial stability-related communication is effective in "creating news" and in "reducing noise".

The paper's findings suggest that communication about financial stability has important repercussions on financial sector stock prices. However, there are clear differences between FSRs on the one hand and speeches and interviews on the other. FSRs clearly create news in the sense that the views expressed in FSRs get reflected in stock market returns. These effects are furthermore long-lasting. They also reduce noise, as market volatility tends to decline in response to FSRs. These effects are particularly strong if FSRs contain optimistic assessments of the risks to financial stability. Speeches and interviews, in contrast, are on average a far less effective instrument. In particular, while having only modest effects on stock market returns, they tend to *increase* rather than reduce market volatility. This is particularly the case if these communications use a relatively active language.

The mechanism by which the central bank affects financial markets seems to be related to the notion of a co-ordination channel, whereby communication by the central bank works as a co-ordination device, thereby reducing heterogeneity in expectations and information, and thus inducing asset prices to more closely reflect the underlying fundamentals (Sarno and Taylor 2001). This conclusion is based on the finding that communications have longer-lasting effects, which seems to imply that they have the potential to change the dynamics in financial markets, and based on the result that central bank communication is particularly successful in reducing noise in situations of high market uncertainty.

The paper has also demonstrated how flexibly speeches and interviews are used as a communication tool, with a higher frequency in times of heightened financial market volatility. In contrast to FSRs with their pre-defined release schedules, the mere occurrence of a speech or an interview can constitute news to financial markets in itself, a fundamental difference that might explain why the two communication channels have so different effects on market volatility. The findings of the paper therefore underline that communication by

monetary authorities on financial stability issues can effectively influence financial market developments, but that it needs to be employed with utmost care, stressing the difficulty of designing a successful communication strategy on financial stability.

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Appendix: Examples of speeches and interviews and their coding

17 August 2007: “RBA's Stevens: subprime won't damage core banking”

“The sub-prime mortgage problems in the United States were unlikely to damage the core banking systems in any country, Australia's central bank Governor Glenn Stevens said on Friday. Objectively, it [...]” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =0, Activity =0

24 September 2008: “ECB Nowotny: Financial Sector Crisis Will Tighten Further”

“The crisis in the global financial sector will worsen further, and there is no quick reversal of the negative trend in sight, European Central Bank governing council member Ewald Nowotny said Wednesday.” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =-1

05 March 1996: “Brazil Central Bk President Denies Bank Sector Instability”

“Central bank President Gustavo Loyola Tuesday denied rumors of instability in Brazil's banking sector and said increasing bank investigations and encouragement for bank mergers have quelled any possibility of a crisis [...]” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =1

27 October 1997: “China c.banker sees more small bank bankruptcies..”

“Some smaller Chinese banks and credit cooperatives could sink into bankruptcy due to bad loans, although a banking crisis was unlikely, central bank governor Dai Xianglong has said.” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =0

08 January 2008: “BoF Noyer: Crisis Shows Persistent Financial Stability Risks”

“Bank of France Governor Christian Noyer Tuesday said that the current financial crisis showed the persistent nature of the risks to financial stability and suggested financial systems should improve their resilience.” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =-1

17 September 1998: “HKMA/Fund Outflow -2: Confidence Returning To System”

“A panicky outflow of HK\$9.33 billion from the Hong Kong banking system at the start of the week has been completely reversed and confidence in lending has been restored, Hong Kong Monetary Authority Chief Executive [...]” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =-1

16 September 2008: “BOJ Shirakawa: To Provide Ample Funds”

“Bank of Japan Gov. Masaaki Shirakawa said Tuesday that the central bank will work to ensure financial market stability by providing ample funds to the market and will closely watch the fallout from the U.S. financial [...]” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =0

10 September 1998: “Polish banking sector safe despite Russia - c.bank.”

“The National Bank of Poland's governor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz said on Thursday that Polish banks' exposure to Russian markets did not pose a danger to the country's banking system.” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =0, Activity =0

19 September 2002: “Mboweni Confident of Financial Stability.”

“SA's financial regulators are highly optimistic about the stability of the country's financial system, Tito Mboweni, the SA Reserve Bank governor, said yesterday [...]” Source: All Africa

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =-1

09 November 2000: “Korea markets unstable as worries linger-c.bank.”

“South Korea's financial markets continue to show signs of instability as the second phase of financial restructuring progresses, the governor of the central Bank of Korea said on Thursday.” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =0

09 October 2008: “ECB Ordonez: Spain Econ Has Accumulated Imbalances”

“European Central Bank Governing Council member Miguel Angel Fernandez Ordonez said Spanish banks must prepare themselves for economic slowdown and rising levels of bad debt.” Source: Dow Jones International News

Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =-1

24 September 2008: “Swedish c.bank head repeats financial system stable”

“Swedish Riksbank Governor Stefan Ingves said on Wednesday Sweden was now feeling the effects of the recent market turmoil more strongly, but repeated reassurances that the financial system was stable.” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =-1

18 September 1998: “Turkish cen bank says has tools to protect lira.”

“Turkish central bank governor Gazi Ercel said on Wednesday the bank had enough tools at its disposal to insulate the lira from Russia's financial crisis and worldwide emerging market turbulence in general.” Source: Reuters News

Coded: Optimism =1, Activity =1

16 August 2007: “BOE WATCH: Market Turmoil May Yet Tip U.K. Rates”

“Bank of England Governor Mervyn King has made it clear that the Monetary Policy Committee won't cut interest rates to bail out troubled financial institutions.” Source: Dow Jones International News

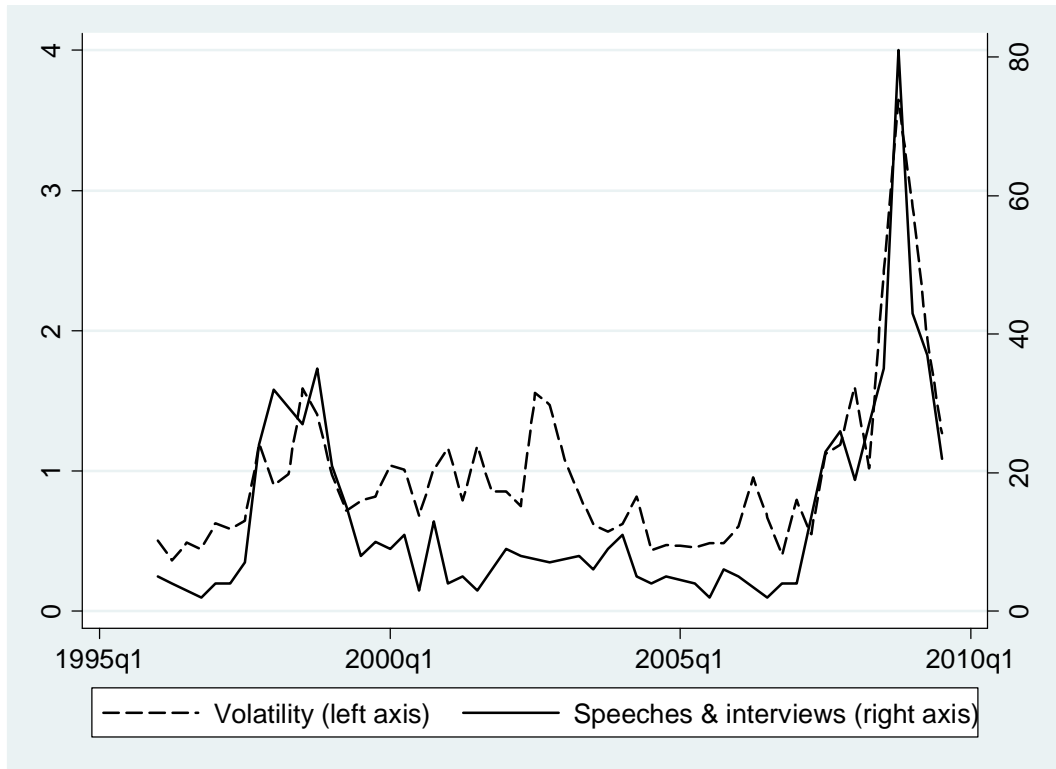
Coded: Optimism =-1, Activity =-1

13 January 2004: “Fed's Greenspan-Crisis from asset bubble unlikely.”

“Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said on Tuesday that a global financial crisis from asset bubbles appears very unlikely and that credit derivatives have worked well in defusing debt problems.” Source: Reuters News

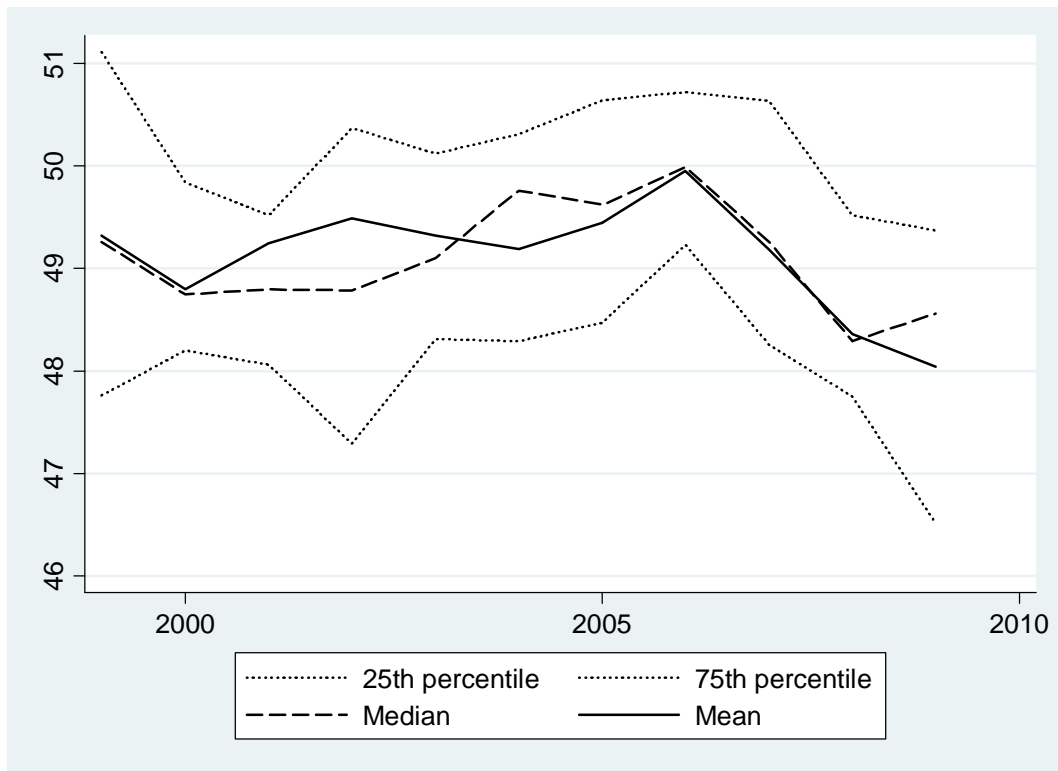
Coded: Optimism =0, Activity =0

Figure 1: Stock market volatility and the occurrence of speeches and interviews

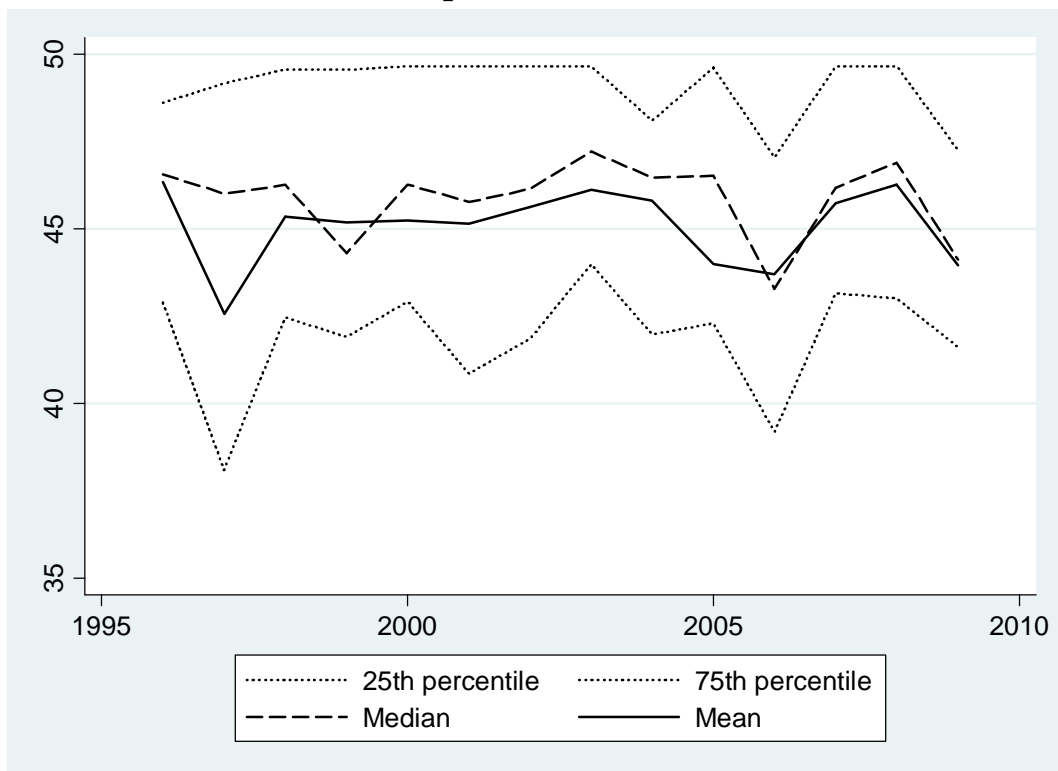


Notes: The figure shows the total number of speeches and interviews in all countries in a given quarter on the right-hand axis (solid line), and the standard deviation of daily returns of the global financial stock index in each quarter on the left-hand axis (dashed line).

Figure 2: The evolution of optimism over time
Panel A: FSRs

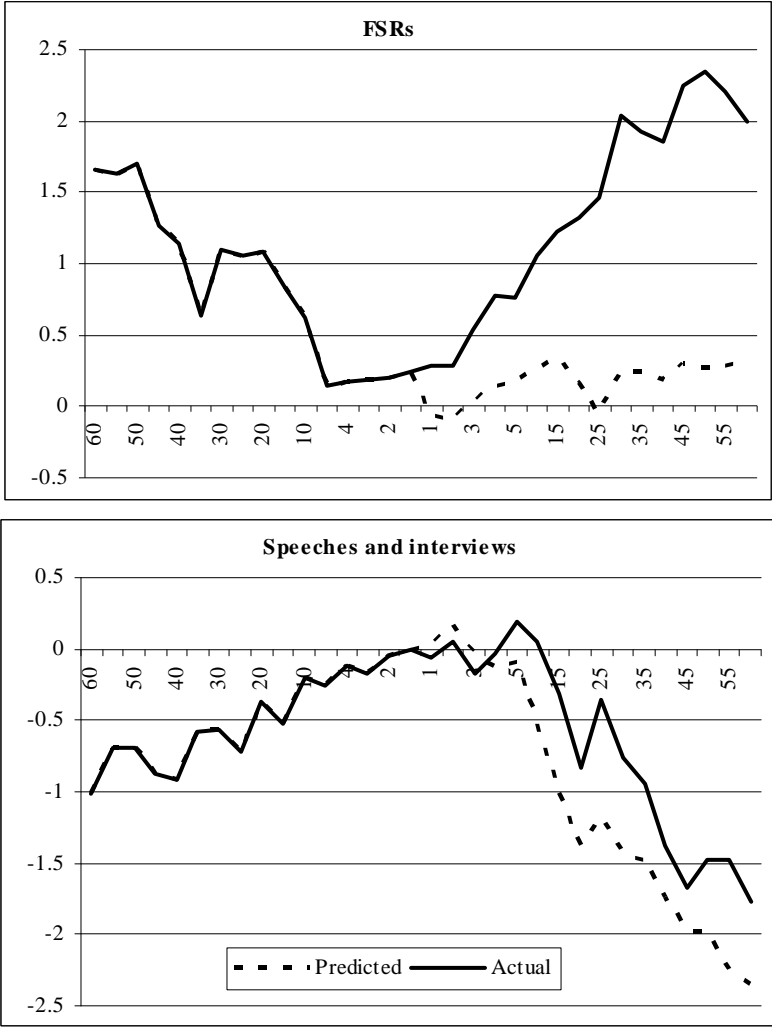


Panel B: Speeches and interviews



Notes: The figure plots the average, median, 25th and 75th percentile of the optimism scores for FSRs (Panel A) and speeches and interviews (Panel B) in any given year.

Figure 3: Predicted versus actual evolution of stock markets after communication events



Notes: The figure compares the actual evolution of cumulated stock market returns (in %) around communication events to the predicted evolution on the basis of the benchmark model (1). The upper panel reports the results for the FSRs, the lower panel those for speeches and interviews. The solid line plots the average actual cumulated returns starting from 60 days prior to the communication event to the 60 days following them. The dashed line shows the expected cumulated returns that would result from the benchmark model in the absence of a communication event. The cumulated returns are multiplied by -1 for pessimistic communications, whereas they are left unchanged for optimistic communications.

Table 1: Summary statistics for FSRs and speeches

		FSRs	Speeches & Interviews
<i>By country</i>	Argentina	12	13
	Australia	11	25
	Austria	17	11
	Belgium	7	3
	Brazil	14	9
	Canada	14	22
	Chile	11	15
	China	5	28
	Czech Republic	5	11
	Denmark	11	2
	Finland	23	12
	France	13	31
	Germany	5	58
	Greece	1	26
	Hong Kong	12	44
	Hungary	17	17
	Indonesia		6
	Ireland	4	2
	Israel	6	7
	Japan	8	32
	Netherlands	8	17
	New Zealand	10	18
	Norway	20	3
	Philippines		50
	Poland	10	13
	Portugal	5	8
	Singapore	7	1
	South Africa	11	20
	South Korea	9	14
	Spain	14	10
	Sri Lanka	3	2
	Sweden	24	18
	Switzerland	7	16
	Turkey	8	22
United Kingdom	25	23	
United States		111	
<i>By year</i>	1996	1	14
	1997	3	39
	1998	5	118
	1999	7	54
	2000	10	36
	2001	14	15
	2002	18	32
	2003	25	30
	2004	39	25
	2005	51	16
	2006	49	17
	2007	52	60
	2008	49	162
2009	34	102	
Overall		357	720

Note: The table shows the number of FSRs and speeches that are contained in the database, by country and by year.

Table 2: Stock market conditions and the occurrence of communications

# days	Financial Stability Reports						Speeches & Interviews					
	Returns			Standard deviation			Returns			Standard deviation		
	Bench- mark	Event days	Diff	Bench- mark	Event days	Diff	Bench- mark	Event days	Diff	Bench- mark	Event days	Diff
1	0.047	-0.104		--	--	--	0.047	-0.136 **		--	--	--
2	0.078	-0.060		--	--	--	0.078	-0.270 ***		--	--	--
3	0.139	-0.084		--	--	--	0.139	-0.542 ***		--	--	--
4	0.145	-0.038		4.779	4.216 **		0.145	-0.548 ***		4.779	7.918 ***	
5	0.194	-0.047		4.919	4.369 **		0.194	-0.683 ***		4.919	7.946 ***	
10	0.517	-0.291 **		5.143	4.698 *		0.517	-1.325 ***		5.143	7.842 ***	
15	0.750	-0.193 **		5.272	4.886 *		0.750	-1.362 ***		5.272	7.835 ***	
20	1.142	0.180 *		5.287	4.998		1.142	-2.068 ***		5.287	7.813 ***	
25	1.514	0.609		5.364	5.036		1.514	-2.268 ***		5.364	7.860 ***	
30	1.779	1.320		5.486	5.130 *		1.779	-2.788 ***		5.486	7.867 ***	
35	1.490	1.849		5.479	5.236		1.490	-2.771 ***		5.479	7.883 ***	
40	2.677	2.314		5.466	5.310		2.677	-2.841 ***		5.466	7.864 ***	
45	2.327	2.404		5.552	5.372		2.327	-3.131 ***		5.552	7.814 ***	
50	2.847	2.860		5.615	5.395		2.847	-3.318 ***		5.615	7.812 ***	
55	2.622	2.905		5.571	5.408		2.622	-3.705 ***		5.571	7.791 ***	
60	3.916	3.463		5.514	5.419		3.916	-3.549 ***		5.514	7.791 ***	

Notes: The table shows cumulated stock market returns and the standard deviation of daily stock market returns preceding the communication events (in columns “Event days”) and for non-event days (in columns “Benchmark”). Results of mean comparison tests are given in the columns denoted by “Diff”. The different rows of the table relate to different time windows prior to the event, starting from a time window of 1 business day to a time window of 60 business days. Standard deviations are only calculated for time windows exceeding 3 business days. The non-event comparison figures are calculated for a sample where no communication event has occurred in the preceding 60 business days, and no communication event follows in the subsequent 60 business days. The sample is furthermore restricted to non-overlapping observations. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 3: Stock market conditions and the content of communications

# days	Financial Stability Reports											Speeches & Interviews									
	Returns			Standard deviation						Returns			Standard deviation								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(2)
	'-1'	'0'	'1'	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs	vs
1	-0.333	-0.189	0.174	**	*	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.159	-0.088	-0.162	--	--	--	--	--	--	
2	-0.202	-0.211	0.202			--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.322	-0.112	-0.374	--	--	--	--	--	--	
3	-0.190	-0.289	0.197			--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.507	-0.326	-0.780	--	--	--	--	--	--	
4	-0.202	-0.072	0.137			4.996	3.922	3.811	**	**		-0.562	-0.338	-0.735	8.420	7.760	7.611				
5	-0.169	-0.115	0.120			5.172	4.023	3.992	**	**		-0.614	-0.357	-1.058	8.373	7.845	7.654				
10	-1.127	-0.006	0.170	*		5.551	4.255	4.366	**	**		-1.382	-0.942	-1.638	7.816	8.041	7.676				
15	-1.036	-0.332	0.666			5.847	4.318	4.576	***	**		-1.045	-1.037	-1.961	7.856	8.085	7.577				
20	-0.923	0.087	1.224	*		5.932	4.457	4.687	***	**		-2.037	-1.580	-2.564	7.879	8.101	7.478				
25	-0.405	0.477	1.609			6.021	4.436	4.736	***	**		-1.555	-2.396	-2.795	7.900	8.145	7.551				
30	0.224	1.351	2.241			6.180	4.523	4.778	***	***		-2.502	-2.462	-3.360	7.872	8.175	7.566				
35	1.288	1.890	2.296			6.377	4.604	4.829	***	***		-2.262	-2.841	-3.168	7.875	8.194	7.594				
40	1.343	2.175	3.285			6.500	4.654	4.884	***	***		-2.189	-2.515	-3.747	7.845	8.189	7.570				
45	1.315	2.229	3.512			6.584	4.710	4.932	***	***		-2.476	-2.927	-3.924	7.818	8.118	7.517				
50	1.185	2.967	4.214			6.618	4.763	4.917	***	***		-2.924	-2.971	-4.011	7.847	8.086	7.518				
55	1.378	2.891	4.242			6.668	4.763	4.911	***	***		-3.310	-3.392	-4.370	7.787	8.081	7.515				
60	2.253	2.869	5.059			6.665	4.795	4.915	***	***		-2.675	-3.498	-4.400	7.785	8.062	7.537				

Notes: The table shows cumulated stock market returns and the standard deviation of daily stock market returns preceding pessimistic (columns (1)), neutral (columns (2)) and optimistic communications (columns (3)). Results of tests for statistically significant differences are given in the columns (1) vs (2), (1) vs (3) and (2) vs (3). The different rows of the table relate to different time windows prior to the event, starting from a time window of 1 business day to a time window of 60 business days. Standard deviations are only calculated for time windows exceeding 3 business days. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 4: Effectiveness of FSRs

# days	Joint model				Pessimistic FSRs				Neutral FSRs				Optimistic FSRs			
	Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation	
	% effective	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change
1	0.57 **	0.32 ***	-- --	-- --	0.41 "	-0.41	-- --	-- --	0.50	-0.02	-- --	-- --	0.54	0.24 **	-- --	-- --
2	0.56 **	0.38 **	-- --	-- --	0.42 "	-0.61	-- --	-- --	0.49	0.16	-- --	-- --	0.54	0.17	-- --	-- --
3	0.57 **	0.50 ***	-- --	-- --	0.41 "	-0.79	-- --	-- --	0.54	0.26	-- --	-- --	0.54	0.25	-- --	-- --
4	0.58 ***	0.63 ***	0.53	-0.09 *	0.39 ""	-0.84	0.54	-0.08	0.49	0.18	0.52	-0.13 *	0.56	0.44 **	0.54	-0.05
5	0.58 **	0.58 ***	0.55 **	-0.07	0.43 '	-0.63	0.50	-0.01	0.53	0.31	0.58 **	-0.12 *	0.58 **	0.54 **	0.57 *	-0.06
10	0.55 *	0.80 **	0.54 *	-0.06 *	0.47	-0.81	0.47	-0.01	0.45	-0.34	0.54	-0.07	0.57 *	0.79 ***	0.60 **	-0.10 **
15	0.57 **	0.90 ***	0.53	-0.04	0.43 '	-0.91	0.50	-0.04	0.49	0.03	0.51	-0.01	0.57 *	0.88 **	0.57 **	-0.06 *
20	0.58 ***	1.15 ***	0.53	-0.03	0.43 '	-0.68	0.53	-0.03	0.54	0.41	0.50	0.00	0.59 **	1.57 ***	0.55	-0.05
25	0.58 ***	1.50 ***	0.55 **	-0.04	0.44 '	-0.79	0.55	-0.08	0.59 **	0.55	0.55	-0.02	0.61 **	2.13 ***	0.54	-0.03
30	0.62 ***	1.79 ***	0.55 **	-0.02	0.44 '	-1.16	0.53	-0.06	0.59 **	0.72	0.57 *	0.00	0.67 ***	2.33 ***	0.55	-0.01
35	0.57 **	1.67 ***	0.54 *	-0.02	0.52	-0.68	0.51	-0.04	0.55	1.29 **	0.54	-0.02	0.65 ***	2.54 ***	0.55	0.01
40	0.54	1.67 ***	0.52	-0.01	0.54	-0.57	0.46	0.00	0.55	1.27 *	0.56 *	-0.01	0.61 **	2.63 ***	0.54	0.00
45	0.58 ***	1.94 ***	0.53	-0.02	0.48	-0.85	0.50	-0.05	0.59 **	1.31 *	0.53	-0.02	0.63 ***	2.90 ***	0.54	0.00
50	0.58 **	2.08 ***	0.54 *	-0.02	0.49	-1.20	0.54	-0.05	0.54	1.24 *	0.55	-0.03	0.63 ***	2.85 ***	0.54	0.00
55	0.60 ***	1.92 ***	0.52	-0.02	0.49	-0.93	0.51	-0.04	0.57 *	1.69 **	0.52	-0.02	0.67 ***	2.79 ***	0.53	0.01
60	0.60 ***	1.66 **	0.53	-0.02	0.45	-0.52	0.54	-0.04	0.55	2.18 **	0.52	-0.03	0.65 ***	2.65 ***	0.54	0.01

Notes: The table shows results of the test for effectiveness of communications. The first set of results (Returns, % effective) tests the share of cases in which $\sum_{t=0}^k \hat{\epsilon}_{it+k} > 0$ if $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR} = 1$ or $\sum_{t=0}^k \hat{\epsilon}_{it+k} < 0$ if $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR} = -1$, for different time windows k in the rows of the table. The second column (Returns, % change) shows the average size of the cumulated excess returns $\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^N \sum_{t=0}^k I_{nt}^{optimism,FSR} \hat{\epsilon}_{nt+k}$ and tests whether these are different from zero. The columns for “standard deviation” show the share of cases in which the standard deviation of excess returns over k days after the release of an FSR is smaller than the standard deviation during the k days prior to the release, i.e. $\sigma_{\hat{\epsilon}_{i,t/t+k}} < \sigma_{\hat{\epsilon}_{i,t-1/t-k}}$ if $D_{it}^c = 1$ (% effective), and their average difference (% change), and tests these against 0.5 and 0, respectively. The second to fourth panel of the table repeats the exercise for FSRs that have been coded as $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR} = -1$, $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR} = 0$ and $I_{it}^{optimism,FSR} = 1$, respectively. Standard deviations are only calculated for time windows exceeding 3 business days. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance against the null hypothesis at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. ’’, ’’, and ’ indicate statistical significance against the alternative hypothesis at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 5: Effectiveness of speeches and interviews

# days	Joint model				Pessimistic speeches and interviews				Neutral speeches and interviews				Optimistic speeches and interviews			
	Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation	
	% effective	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change
1	0.47 '	-0.11	-- --	-- --	0.51	0.12	-- --	-- --	0.46 '	-0.10	-- --	-- --	0.44 "	-0.09	-- --	-- --
2	0.49	-0.11	-- --	-- --	0.53	0.36 *	-- --	-- --	0.43 ""	-0.31	-- --	-- --	0.51	0.11	-- --	-- --
3	0.51	-0.13	-- --	-- --	0.47	0.21	-- --	-- --	0.44 "	-0.61	-- --	-- --	0.49	-0.05	-- --	-- --
4	0.52	0.10	0.45 ""	0.09	0.47	-0.08	0.48	-0.12	0.44 "	-0.51	0.42 ""	0.14	0.50	0.13	0.46	0.22 "
5	0.50	0.28	0.47 '	0.08	0.53	-0.22	0.51	-0.11	0.46	-0.41	0.43 "	0.15 '	0.52	0.34	0.47	0.18 '
10	0.55 **	0.57 **	0.46 "	0.07 '	0.46	-0.20	0.48	0.04	0.46 '	-0.30	0.48	0.09	0.57 **	0.91 **	0.43 "	0.08
15	0.52	0.69 **	0.45 ""	0.12 ""	0.49	-0.18	0.44 '	0.14 "	0.47	-0.51	0.47	0.12 '	0.52	1.16 **	0.45 '	0.09
20	0.52	0.55	0.45 ""	0.13 ""	0.47	-0.17	0.44 "	0.15 "	0.46 '	-0.78	0.51	0.11 '	0.52	0.90 *	0.42 ""	0.14 "
25	0.57 ***	0.83 *	0.47 "	0.14 ""	0.41 ""	-0.48	0.44 "	0.13 "	0.46	-0.58	0.51	0.08 '	0.55 *	1.14 *	0.45 '	0.19 ""
30	0.54 **	0.67	0.46 "	0.14 ""	0.48	0.19	0.44 "	0.13 "	0.47	-0.60	0.48	0.09 '	0.56 **	1.45 **	0.45 '	0.19 ""
35	0.55 **	0.54	0.46 "	0.13 ""	0.46	0.40	0.46	0.12 "	0.50	-0.76	0.46	0.08	0.56 **	1.39 *	0.47	0.18 ""
40	0.52	0.36	0.46 "	0.13 ""	0.50	0.53	0.45 '	0.11 "	0.48	-0.28	0.47	0.08 '	0.53	1.17	0.45 '	0.18 ""
45	0.53	0.29	0.47 "	0.12 ""	0.49	0.57	0.47	0.09 '	0.49	-0.58	0.48	0.08 '	0.55 *	1.07	0.45 '	0.18 ""
50	0.51	0.52	0.46 "	0.12 ""	0.50	0.43	0.48	0.09 '	0.46	-0.56	0.48	0.09 '	0.53	1.37	0.44 "	0.17 ""
55	0.53	0.77	0.46 "	0.11 ""	0.48	-0.02	0.46	0.09 '	0.48	-0.77	0.48	0.08 '	0.54	1.44	0.45 '	0.17 ""
60	0.53	0.62	0.46 "	0.10 ""	0.49	-0.27	0.45 '	0.08 '	0.47	-0.84	0.49	0.07	0.54	0.95	0.45 '	0.15 ""

Notes: See notes to Table 4, but all results relate to speeches and interviews rather than FSRs.

Table 6: Effectiveness of FSRs along the activity dimension

# days	Joint model				Passive FSRs				Neutral FSRs				Active FSRs			
	Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation	
	% effective	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change
1	0.40 ^{***}	-0.34	--	--	0.58 *	0.21 *	--	--	0.51	0.12	--	--	0.38 ^{***}	-0.45	--	--
2	0.44 ^{**}	-0.30	--	--	0.55	0.09	--	--	0.48	0.18	--	--	0.44 [']	-0.49	--	--
3	0.49	-0.26	--	--	0.52	0.05	--	--	0.49	0.19	--	--	0.49	-0.45	--	--
4	0.46 [']	-0.23	0.53	-0.09 *	0.53	0.03	0.54	-0.11	0.48	0.25	0.50	-0.08	0.44 [']	-0.41	0.56 *	-0.07
5	0.44 ["]	-0.39	0.55 ^{**}	-0.07	0.55	0.26	0.57 *	-0.09	0.57 *	0.57 ^{**}	0.52	-0.05	0.44 [']	-0.52	0.55	-0.07
10	0.39 ^{***}	-0.69	0.54 *	-0.06 *	0.63 ^{***}	0.54 *	0.52	-0.01	0.45	0.08	0.52	-0.07	0.42 ["]	-0.82	0.58 ^{**}	-0.10 *
15	0.41 ^{***}	-0.79	0.53	-0.04	0.61 ^{**}	0.87 ^{**}	0.46	0.05	0.48	0.04	0.57 *	-0.07	0.43 ["]	-0.72	0.57 *	-0.09
20	0.42 ^{***}	-0.93	0.53	-0.03	0.59 ^{**}	1.49 ^{***}	0.46	0.06	0.55	0.45	0.54	-0.07	0.44 [']	-0.41	0.57 ^{**}	-0.07
25	0.43 ["]	-1.47	0.55 ^{**}	-0.04	0.64 ^{***}	2.30 ^{***}	0.47	0.03	0.52	0.64	0.56 *	-0.05	0.49	-0.72	0.61 ^{***}	-0.11 *
30	0.46	-1.27	0.55 ^{**}	-0.02	0.64 ^{***}	2.08 ^{***}	0.46	0.04	0.53	0.68	0.53	-0.02	0.55	-0.53	0.65 ^{***}	-0.09 *
35	0.50	-1.44	0.54 *	-0.02	0.58 *	2.76 ^{***}	0.45	0.05	0.57 *	0.97	0.55	-0.02	0.58 *	-0.23	0.61 ^{***}	-0.08
40	0.49	-0.93	0.52	-0.01	0.60 ^{**}	2.64 ^{***}	0.45	0.06	0.53	0.40	0.51	0.00	0.57 *	0.64	0.60 ^{**}	-0.08
45	0.48	-0.95	0.53	-0.02	0.61 ^{**}	2.59 ^{***}	0.45	0.06	0.52	0.58	0.55	-0.03	0.57 *	0.56	0.58 ^{**}	-0.09 *
50	0.48	-1.06	0.54 *	-0.02	0.62 ^{***}	2.67 ^{***}	0.46	0.05	0.48	0.21	0.55	-0.03	0.57 *	0.42	0.61 ^{***}	-0.08
55	0.49	-0.97	0.52	-0.02	0.61 ^{**}	2.77 ^{***}	0.42 [']	0.05	0.55	0.49	0.55	-0.02	0.58 *	0.67	0.58 ^{**}	-0.07
60	0.49	-1.04	0.53	-0.02	0.59 ^{**}	3.09 ^{***}	0.44	0.04	0.50	0.71	0.54	-0.01	0.57 *	0.84	0.61 ^{***}	-0.07

Notes: See notes to Table 4, but all results relate to the effect of FSRs depending on the activity content rather than to the optimism content.

Table 7: Effectiveness of speeches and interviews along the activity dimension

# days	Joint model				Passive speeches and interviews				Neutral speeches and interviews				Active speeches and interviews			
	Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation		Returns		Standard deviation	
	% effective	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change	% increase	% change	% effective	% change
1	0.47 '	-0.15	-- --	-- --	0.51	0.15	-- --	-- --	0.45 "	-0.08	-- --	-- --	0.45 '	-0.15	-- --	-- --
2	0.50	-0.10	-- --	-- --	0.50	0.16	-- --	-- --	0.48	0.03	-- --	-- --	0.49	-0.04	-- --	-- --
3	0.47 '	-0.25	-- --	-- --	0.52	0.20	-- --	-- --	0.43 "	-0.36	-- --	-- --	0.45 '	-0.31	-- --	-- --
4	0.49	-0.28	0.45 ""	0.09	0.48	0.20	0.48	-0.07	0.48	-0.30	0.42 ""	0.15 '	0.45 '	-0.36	0.45 '	0.18 '
5	0.48	-0.45	0.47 '	0.08	0.51	0.44	0.49	-0.08	0.51	-0.24	0.44 ""	0.15 '	0.48	-0.46	0.47	0.17 '
10	0.50	0.06	0.46 ""	0.07 '	0.49	0.18	0.46	-0.08	0.53	-0.04	0.44 ""	0.17 ""	0.48	0.31	0.49	0.14 '
15	0.51	0.33	0.45 ""	0.12 ""	0.47	-0.28	0.48	0.02	0.54	0.45	0.43 ""	0.18 ""	0.48	0.38	0.45 '	0.16 ""
20	0.49	0.20	0.45 ""	0.13 ""	0.48	-0.39	0.45 '	0.07	0.50	0.38	0.43 ""	0.19 ""	0.47	0.01	0.48	0.14 ""
25	0.49	0.22	0.47 ""	0.14 ""	0.48	-0.41	0.48	0.08	0.49	0.57	0.45 '	0.19 ""	0.46 '	0.03	0.47	0.14 ""
30	0.50	0.22	0.46 ""	0.14 ""	0.49	-0.01	0.47	0.08	0.53	0.69	0.42 ""	0.17 ""	0.49	0.44	0.48	0.15 ""
35	0.50	0.26	0.46 ""	0.13 ""	0.49	-0.18	0.48	0.08	0.55 *	0.95	0.43 ""	0.17 ""	0.49	0.34	0.48	0.14 ""
40	0.50	0.35	0.46 ""	0.13 ""	0.48	-0.48	0.47	0.09	0.57 **	1.75 **	0.42 ""	0.16 ""	0.47	0.23	0.48	0.13 ""
45	0.49	0.48	0.47 ""	0.12 ""	0.49	-0.77	0.48	0.07	0.57 **	1.72 *	0.42 ""	0.14 ""	0.47	0.19	0.49	0.15 ""
50	0.49	0.62	0.46 ""	0.12 ""	0.49	-0.67	0.50	0.07	0.55 *	1.43	0.42 ""	0.15 ""	0.46	0.57	0.48	0.13 ""
55	0.49	0.35	0.46 ""	0.11 ""	0.50	-0.50	0.48	0.08	0.53	1.03	0.42 ""	0.15 ""	0.47	0.21	0.48	0.12 ""
60	0.49	0.36	0.46 ""	0.10 ""	0.48	-0.86	0.49	0.07	0.56 *	0.93	0.42 ""	0.12 ""	0.47	-0.13	0.47	0.11 ""

Notes: See notes to Table 4, but all results relate to speeches and interviews rather than FSRs, and to the activity content rather than to the optimism content.

Table 8: Determinants of effectiveness: FSRs

	Returns				Standard deviation			
	10 day window		20 day window		10 day window		20 day window	
A. Communication content								
Optimism Score = 1	0.038	-0.056	0.021	-0.028	0.133**	0.246***	0.04	0.158*
	[0.084]	[0.117]	[0.074]	[0.097]	[0.062]	[0.076]	[0.061]	[0.091]
Activity Score = 0	0.02	0.022	-0.019	-0.002	0.025	0.016	0.153*	0.149*
	[0.100]	[0.102]	[0.082]	[0.085]	[0.081]	[0.089]	[0.084]	[0.089]
Activity Score = 1	0.015	0.021	0.071	0.068	0.038	-0.009	0.112	0.059
	[0.071]	[0.073]	[0.072]	[0.078]	[0.077]	[0.084]	[0.077]	[0.082]
Leaning against boom		-0.160*		-0.087		0.111		0.129
		[0.097]		[0.095]		[0.094]		[0.103]
Leaning against bust		-0.02		0.015		-0.05		-0.015
		[0.074]		[0.070]		[0.099]		[0.097]
B. Central bank characteristics								
Financial authority index		0.039		-0.05		0.009		0.018
		[0.037]		[0.037]		[0.043]		[0.042]
Central bank transparency		0.055		-0.09		-0.08		-0.05
		[0.064]		[0.079]		[0.084]		[0.072]
Advanced economy		-0.06		-0.086		0.09		0.192***
		[0.071]		[0.071]		[0.084]		[0.066]
C. External conditions								
Newsreport on FSR		0.045		0.045		0.005		0.104*
		[0.061]		[0.062]		[0.058]		[0.063]
Financial crisis		-0.099		-0.112		-0.003		-0.210**
		[0.087]		[0.075]		[0.103]		[0.083]
Stock market misalignment		0		0		0.003***		0.001
		[0.001]		[0.001]		[0.001]		[0.001]
Market trend		0.005		-0.001		-0.023***		-0.020***
		[0.007]		[0.006]		[0.006]		[0.007]
Volatility		-0.003		0.031		0.170***		0.216***
		[0.037]		[0.034]		[0.050]		[0.058]
Observations	238	238	238	238	238	238	238	238
McKelvey and Zavoina's R2:	0.002	0.041	0.028	0.075	0.028	0.21	0.004	0.157

Notes: The table reports results of probit models. Dependent variables are defined as +1 if an optimistic communication triggers positive excess returns, or if a pessimistic communication triggers negative excess returns, and as 0 otherwise (Column "Returns"), and as +1 if a communication event lowers market volatility, and as 0 otherwise (Column "Standard deviation"). Each dependent variable is calculated twice, namely for a 10 and for a 20 day window. Explanatory variables are as defined in the text. The parameters are marginal effects, i.e. the change in the probability for an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable and the discrete change in the probability for dummy variables. The marginal effects are evaluated at the mean of the independent variables. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. Numbers in brackets denote standard errors, and allow for clustering across countries.

Table 9: Determinants of effectiveness: Speeches and interviews

	Returns				Standard deviation			
	10 day window		20 day window		10 day window		20 day window	
A. Communication content								
Optimism Score = 1	0.035	0.004	-0.017	-0.038	-0.041	0.169***	-0.015	0.186***
	[0.067]	[0.079]	[0.065]	[0.079]	[0.043]	[0.056]	[0.038]	[0.057]
Activity Score = 0	0.077	0.096*	0.087	0.096*	0.009	0.007	0.037	0.032
	[0.050]	[0.052]	[0.056]	[0.057]	[0.061]	[0.063]	[0.052]	[0.056]
Activity Score = 1	0.151***	0.175***	0.088*	0.106**	0.039	0.048	0.047	0.053
	[0.039]	[0.038]	[0.053]	[0.050]	[0.050]	[0.051]	[0.053]	[0.057]
Leaning against boom		-0.105**		-0.083		0.194**		0.207**
		[0.049]		[0.060]		[0.088]		[0.081]
Leaning against bust		-0.028		-0.025		-0.202***		-0.171**
		[0.067]		[0.079]		[0.064]		[0.072]
Part of cluster		-0.031		0.049		0.042		0.018
		[0.047]		[0.054]		[0.048]		[0.049]
B. Central bank characteristics								
Financial authority index		-0.036*		-0.023		0.001		0.033
		[0.021]		[0.032]		[0.027]		[0.028]
Central bank transparency		0.038		0.068***		0.049*		0.035
		[0.026]		[0.020]		[0.028]		[0.025]
Advanced economy		0.001		0.02		-0.043		-0.039
		[0.055]		[0.036]		[0.054]		[0.063]
C. External conditions								
Financial crisis		0.069		0.008		-0.134***		-0.191***
		[0.049]		[0.049]		[0.049]		[0.065]
Stock market misalignment		-0.002**		-0.001		0.001		0.001
		[0.001]		[0.001]		[0.001]		[0.001]
Market trend		0.004*		0		-0.011***		-0.006*
		[0.002]		[0.002]		[0.003]		[0.004]
Volatility		-0.006		-0.01		0.106***		0.102***
		[0.014]		[0.016]		[0.022]		[0.022]
Observations	478	478	478	478	478	478	478	478
McKelvey and Zavoina's R2:	0.01	0.062	0.012	0.046	0.028	0.224	0.003	0.158

Notes: See Table 8.