

Central Bank Sees Big Surplus

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Central Bank forecasts a current account surplus of \$100 billion in 2012, First Deputy Chairman Alexei Ulyukayev said.

Commenting on the indicator, which reflects the country's overall net income, Ulyukayev said, "We anticipate a very positive current account. It will have a surplus of more than \$100 billion." The statements were made in an interview with the Rossiiskaya Gazeta daily published Wednesday.

The current account surplus in 2011, according to preliminary figures, grew 43.8 percent to \$101.1 billion compared with \$70.3 billion in 2010.

The current account surplus in February 2012 was about \$12 billion, Ulyukayev said. It was \$12.2 billion in February 2011, Central Bank statistics show.

The first deputy chairman did not make any predictions for this year's capital account — which reflects inbound flows based on borrowings or sales of assets. "As for the capital

account, it is still too early to give a forecast. But new positions against the national currency are unlikely to be opened, enabling the investor amid other equal conditions to choose to return assets to ruble form," he said.

The balance of payments will influence the exchange rate as will the state of the economy, he said. "If your GDP develops more quickly than the average around the world, it means your currency will appreciate faster. Russia currently has normal expectations for economic growth. GDP growth in 2012 will be a little lower than in 2011 (4.3 percent according to preliminary figures), but higher than average around the world," he said.

The impact of external events on the exchange rate cannot be ignored, according to Ulyukayev. "Overall the potential for some ruble appreciation really exists," he said.

Seasonal factors also need to be considered, Ulyukayev added. Export revenue is usually high in the first quarter and import spending low so the current account surplus is very high. In the third and fourth quarters the account comes down. "This does not mean the ruble will definitely weaken. So during the current year the chances for appreciation and depreciation are equal," he said.

The Central Bank last reviewed its current account surplus forecasts for 2012-14 in November 2011 for all three versions of monetary-financing policy terms. The surplus did not reach \$100 billion in any of the three versions that took into account different oil prices.

Meanwhile, in the same article Ulyukayev predicted that the "worst is over" for the euro zone's economy, which will probably return to "slow but stable growth" in the second half of this year.

Still, the continent's common currency will continue to be volatile for "a very extended time" because of an inflexible and time-consuming decision-making process, Ulyukayev said.

(Bloomberg, Interfax)

The Central Bank provided the most one-day funds since Dec. 29 in its repurchase auction Wednesday, Bloomberg reported, meeting lenders' bids for 101.8 billion rubles (\$3.5 billion), according to a statement on the bank's website.

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