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og deres stedfortrædere

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16. marts 2005

Bilag
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Journalnummer
400.C.2-0

Kontor
EUK

Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges Finansministeriets redegørelse for rådsmøde (ECOFIN) den 8. marts 2005.

Bendt Bendtsen





14. marts 2005

12 CHM

Referat af rådsmødet (ECOFIN) den 8. marts 2005

Dagsordenspunkt: Stabilitets- og Vækstpagten – vurdering af opdaterede konvergens- og stabilitetsprogrammer for Cypern, Letland, Litauen, Slovenien, Spanien, Storbritannien og Ungarn

Rådet vedtog udtalelser vedrørende konvergensprogrammerne for Cypern, Letland, Litauen, Slovenien, Storbritannien og Ungarn samt stabilitetsprogrammet for Spanien.¹

Dagsordenspunkt: Stabilitets- og Vækstpagten – Proceduren for uforholdsmæssigt store underskud vedr. Ungarn

Rådet vedtog under Traktatens artikel 104.7 en ny henstilling til Ungarn i opfølgning på Rådets beslutning af 18. januar 2005 under artikel 104.8 om manglende efterlevelse af rådshenstillingen fra 5. juli 2005. Den nye henstilling anbefaler Ungarn at bringe situationen med et uforholdsmæssigt stort budgetunderskud til ophør hurtigst muligt og senest i 2008. De ungarske myndigheder bør senest den 8. juli 2005 iværksætte korrigerende tiltag af strukturel karakter med henblik på at opnå konvergensprogrammets målsætning for 2005.

Dagsordenspunkt: Forberedelse af Det Europæiske Råd den 22.-23. marts 2005 – 'Key Issues' papir vedr. de overordnede økonomisk-politiske retningslinier og Kommissionens rapport vedr. Lissabonstrategien.

Rådet godkendte 'Key Issues' papiret om de overordnede økonomisk-politiske retningslinier (BEPG), som ligeledes indeholder et afsnit om Lissabonstrategien.

Papiret lægger vægt på en fremtidig fokusering af Lissabonstrategien og BEPG'erne på vækst og beskæftigelse indenfor rammerne af social samhørighed og miljømæssig bæredygtighed. Papiret fremhæver flg. to prioriteter: 1) øge Europas muligheder for at skabe jobs og 2) forbedre betingelserne for øget produktivitet gennem investeringer i først og fremmest viden og innovation. Papiret påpeger, at der skal sikres konsistens mellem prioriteringerne vedrørende den overordnede makroøkonomiske ramme og strukturpolitikken. Desuden pointeres det, at en sund og konsistent

¹ Udtalelserne offentliggøres på Rådets hjemmeside.

makroøkonomisk situation er en forudsætning for vedvarende vækst og prisstabilitet. Endelig fremhæver papiret nødvendigheden af at effektivisere og rationalisere de årlige strukturpolitiske afrapporteringer således, at medlemsstaterne udarbejder ét nationalt handlingsprogram, der både inkluderer de strukturpolitiske initiativer, landet *har* taget, og dem det påtænker at tage i fremtiden.

'Key issues' papiret vil sammen med rådskonklusionerne fra rådsmødet (ECOFIN) den 17. februar 2005 vedrørende Kommissions implementeringsrapport om de overordnede økonomisk-politiske retningslinier indgå som en del af Rådet (ECOFIN)'s bidrag til Det Europæiske Råd den 22.-23. marts 2005.

Dagsordenspunkt: Forberedelse af Det Europæiske Råd den 22.-23. marts 2005: Styrkelse og bedre implementering af Stabilitets- og Vækstpagten

På møderne i eurogruppen den 7. marts og ECOFIN den 8. marts 2005 var der en drøftelse af formandskabets kompromisforslag til en styrket implementering af Stabilitets- og Vækstpagten. Det var imidlertid ikke muligt at opnå enighed om formandskabets forslag, hvorfor sagen blev udskudt. Formanden annoncerede et møde om sagen i 'den udvidede eurogruppe' med deltagelse af alle 25 medlemsstater den 20. marts 2005.

Dagsordenspunkt: Forberedelse af Det Europæiske Råd den 22.-23. marts 2005: Implementering af det europæiske vækstinitiativ

Rådet vedtog konklusioner (vedlagt) vedrørende Kommissionens statusrapport om nationale tiltag som led i gennemførelsen af det europæiske vækstinitiativ med henblik på forelæggelse for Det Europæiske Råd den 22.-23. marts 2005.

Rådskonklusionerne hilser Kommissionens rapport velkommen, og noterer, at flere medlemslande har gennemført nationale tiltag. Medlemslandene opfordres bl.a. til fortsat at forfølge tiltag, gennem budgetplanlægning og forbedring af ikke-finansielle betingelser for investeringer. Rådet understreger behovet for at disse bestræbelser sker med hensyntagen til sund finanspolitik samt stabilitets- og vækstorienteret makropolitik. Tiltagene skal ske i overensstemmelse med ECOFIN-konklusionerne af november 2003, således at kun økonomisk og finansielt levedygtige projekter prioriteres.

Dagsordenspunkt: Bedre regulering

Formandskabet orienterede kort om status for arbejdet med bedre regulering, herunder udviklingen af metode til måling af administrative bryder. Kommissionens meddelelse om en fælles europæisk målemetode ventes at blive fremlagt og drøftet på rådsmødet (ECOFIN) den 12. april 2005.

Dagsordenspunkt: EU's budget – Decharge-procedure vedr. gennemførelse af budgettet for 2003.

Rådet vedtog henstilling til Europa-Parlamentet om meddelelse af decharge til Kommissionen for gennemførelsen af regnskabsåret 2003.

Henstillingen udtrykker bl.a. skuffelse over, at Revisionsretten heller ikke vedrørende årsberetningen for 2003 har kunnet afgive en positiv revisionserklæring for budgetgennemførelsen som helhed. Endvidere henstilles det til Kommissionen, at den som ansvarlig institution for gennemførelse af budgettet, øger sine bestræbelser på at anvende kontrol- og overvågningssystemerne på en effektiv måde i nært samarbejde med medlemsstaterne.

Kommissionen erkendte problemet og tilkendegav, at den vil fremlægge en handlingsplan med konkrete forslag til, hvordan der indenfor en overskuelig årrække kan opnås en positiv revisionserklæring. Fra dansk side hilste man en sådan handlingsplan velkommen.

Dagsordenspunkt: EU's budget – Rådets prioriteter for budgettet 2006

Rådet vedtog konklusioner (vedlagt) vedrørende Rådets prioriteter for budgettet for 2006.

I rådskonklusionerne understreges en række grundlæggende principper for EU's budgetlægningsproces, bl.a. at der i overensstemmelse med den inter-institutionelle aftale af 6. maj 1999 skal sikres budgetdisciplin, herunder at der afsættes tilstrækkelig margen i hver udgiftskategori til uforudsete udgifter. Der skal endvidere foretages en retvisende og realistisk budgettering inden for rammerne af de finansielle perspektiver.

Kommissionen ventes at fremlægge sit budgetforslag for 2006 i maj 2005. Rådet (ECOFIN)'s første læsning af Kommissionens budgetforslag ventes at finde sted i juli 2005.

Diverse

Ministrene havde under frokosten en drøftelse af Kommissionens repræsentation i G20. Der var støtte til, at EU skal repræsenteres af formandskabet, ECB og Kommissionen i G20-sammenhæng.

Bilag

Rådskonklusioner vedrørende implementering af det europæiske vækstinitiativ

"In March 2004, the Council invited the Commission to report to the European Council (through Ecofin), on the implementation of initiatives at national level, to increase growth and growth potential and which could enhance the positive impact of the European Initiative for Growth.

The (Ecofin) Council welcomes the second reports by Member States on their contributions to the European Initiative for Growth and notes that a number of Member States have taken steps to reinforce the Initiative by national actions, some of them with the financial support of the EIB. The Council welcomes these contributions.

The Council would like to draw the attention of the European Council to the issues below, and in this context, notes that the expected impact of the Initiative on public investment differs according to transport infrastructure, telecommunications, and R&D and innovation investment:

- The improvement of transport infrastructure is part of current national economic strategies in a majority of Member States. Some countries have redirected public expenditures to accelerate investment in key transport infrastructure projects. In other countries the Initiative did not significantly affect investment plans for 2004 and 2005.
- While investments in telecommunications infrastructure are principally market-driven, a number of countries provide direct or indirect support to the development of high-capacity networks, notably in sparsely populated and remote areas.
- With regard to R&D and innovation investment, a number of Member States have taken steps to promote private sector participation or associate public aid and private capital in innovative programmes. In several key technological areas identified in the Quick-start Programme, strategic research agendas have been or are being defined by public and private stakeholders, and are expected to lead to the launch of projects and the development of research infrastructures.
- Many countries have made efforts to develop the mobilisation of private resources in infrastructure financing, notably through improving the framework conditions for PPPs.

In line with the request by the European Council, the Commission and the European Investment Bank will provide a mid-term evaluation of the Initiative by the end of 2007. To this effect, the Commission and the Member States will have to ensure that the relevant information on the national measures taken in support of the Initiative, will be made available.

The Council invites the Member States to pursue efforts, through budgetary planning and the improvement of the non-financial conditions to investment, to ensure the implementation of the Quick-start cross-border infrastructure projects as well as innovation and R&D projects, thereby enhancing the overall impact of the Initiative.

Moreover, in the context of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon Strategy, the Council points out the role of the initiative as an instrument for enhancing potential growth, in particular, by expanding and improving European infrastructures within the internal market, as well as by increasing and improving investment in Research and Development, according to the Commission's identified priority areas.

The Council underlines the need to pursue these efforts in a context of sound budgetary policies as well as stability and growth oriented macro policies, and, in accordance with the ECOFIN conclusions of November 2003, to only prioritise projects that are assessed to be economically and financially viable."

Rådskonklusioner vedr. prioriteter for EU's budget 2006

1. The Council reaffirms that the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999 (IIA) constitutes its basis for work and that it will apply it to the full in 2006. It notes with satisfaction that the 2000-2006 Financial Perspective has proved to be a useful instrument for the yearly budgetary procedure. It expects that it will be the same for the budgetary procedure for 2006 which will be the last one included in the current Financial Perspective.

In this context, the Council reiterates the importance of compliance with the existing Financial Perspective which requires that the Community expenditure remains within the limits set therein. Sufficient margins must be maintained below all the ceilings of the various Headings with the exception of Heading 2, for the purpose of sound financial management and to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

2. The Council recalls the excellent spirit of co-operation, in the framework of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999, that governed work on the preparation of the budgets of the previous financial years and is convinced of the importance of continuing the good collaboration between the two arms of the budgetary authority and the Commission. The Council looks forward to continuing such an effective spirit of co-operation for the 2006 budgetary procedure.
3. The Council considers that the Community budget should provide, within the framework of the Financial Perspective, sufficient resources to implement the various policies of the Union effectively. It stresses the need to maintain overall budgetary discipline. It emphasises that this includes applying the same degree of budgetary constraint as exercised by the Member States of the Union for their own national budgets.
4. The Council recalls the great importance of keeping a tight grip on payment appropriations. The level of payment appropriations entered into the budget should be sufficient to fulfill the different commitments undertaken by the EU, taking into account past implementation and the genuine requirements for 2006.

The Council considers that improvements of forecasts established by the Commission and Member states together should be continued.

5. The Council emphasises that the commitment appropriations should reflect real and well-defined needs taking into account absorption capacities, and be compatible with the Financial Perspective.

Consequently, in order to better identify the commitment appropriations and to allow the Council to establish and confirm priorities, it wishes to highlight the importance of having sufficient activity and financial information on spending proposals in good time.

6. The Council reiterates its support for the presentation of the budget on the basis of the "Activity Based Budgeting" method, in particular the implementation of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely objectives, appropriate performance indicators and full evaluation procedures in all Community programmes with implications for the Community budget, as specified in the Financial Regulation.

In this respect, the Council, while recognising the substantial progress achieved in previous years, calls on the Commission to take full account of its comments following its detailed examination of a set of activities statements in 2005, in order to improve them on the basis of this experience.

The Council intends to make due use of the "Activity Based Budgeting" information provided together with the Preliminary Draft Budget during the discussions of the whole budgetary procedure for 2006.

7. The Council stresses the importance of taking into account in an appropriate way, at the stage of the 2006 Preliminary Draft Budget, the financial conclusions drawn by the European Council of Copenhagen in December 2002.
8. As regards certain specific Headings of the Financial Perspective, the Council identifies the following elements as important in preparing the 2006 budget:
 - 8.1 concerning Heading 1, the Commission is invited to present realistic forecasts regarding CAP expenditure in its Preliminary Draft Budget. Particular attention should be given to ensure that the payment appropriations for expenditure related to rural development are accurate.
 - 8.2 As far as Heading 2 on structural actions is concerned, the Council considers that while fully respecting the commitments undertaken by the European Councils of Copenhagen and Berlin, an accurate level of payment appropriations for structural funds should be established. It invites the Commission to provide for updated estimates in due time. Furthermore, the

Council stresses the importance of further simplification of procedures aimed at facilitating implementation.

- 8.3 As regards Heading 3 on internal policies, the Council highlights the importance of an adequate financing of the measures relating to the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council while preserving a sufficient margin under the ceiling of this Heading.
- 8.4 In relation to Heading 4 on external actions, the Council is of the opinion that all the programmes and actions should be financed within the ceiling of the existing Financial Perspective. It recalls that allocations for the CFSP budget should be sufficient to meet present and future needs. In view of the fact that some expenditure has been transferred to other relevant Headings, the Council believes that, after reprioritisation and reallocation of appropriations, there is room to finance the new additional needs within the ceiling of this Heading. The Council recalls that the IIA requires that the institutions will ensure as far as possible that sufficient margins are left available for unforeseen circumstances.
- 8.5 As regards Heading 5 on administrative expenditure, the Council calls on all institutions to establish rigorous draft estimates reflecting genuine needs and ensuring an adequate margin under this Heading. Moreover, it encourages savings resulting from development of interinstitutional co-operation.
9. The Council underlines the great importance that it attaches to these guidelines in the forthcoming budget procedure and invites the Commission to duly take them into account in its Preliminary Draft Budget for 2006.