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6. kontor, MIJ

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Dagsordenspunkt: Stabilitets- og konvergensprogrammer

Rådet vedtog udtalelser om de opdaterede stabilitetsprogrammer for Finland, Frankrig, Luxembourg, Nederlandene, Italien og Tyskland samt om de opdaterede konvergensprogrammer for Rumænien, Slovakiet, Storbritannien, Sverige og Ungarn.

Rådet drøftede Kommissionens vurderinger af programmerne – særligt i relation til landenes mellemfristede mål for de offentlige finanser og opfyldelse heraf. Der var enighed om, at medlemslandene fortsat bør gennemføre strukturelle forbedringer og sikre den langsigtede holdbarhed af de offentlige finanser samt undgå procyklisk finanspolitik.

Dagsordenspunkt: Key Issues Paper

Rådet godkendte, som led i forberedelserne af Det Europæiske Råds (DER) forårstopmøde den 13.-14. marts, et Key Issues Paper.

I Key Issues papiret fremhæves bl.a. følgende emner: Den generelle økonomiske situation i lyset af den aktuelle turbulens på de finansielle markeder, strukturelle reformer for vækst og beskæftigelse – både implementering i medlemslandene og tiltag på fællesskabsniveau – offentlige finanser og deres potentiale til at bidrage til makroøkonomisk stabilitet, effciensen af og stabiliteten på de finansielle markeder samt den økonomiske og monetære union (ØMU) i EU.

Dagsordenspunkt: De økonomiske instrumenter til opnåelse af energi- og klimamålene

ECOFIN drøftede en rapport fra Den Økonomisk-Politiske Komité (EPC) om de økonomiske instrumenter til opnåelse af energi- og klimamålene og vedtog rådskonklusioner herom, *jf. vedlagte bilag*. I konklusionerne fokuseres bl.a. på omkostningseffektivitet i valget af policyinstrumenter i energi- og klimapolitikken.

Konklusionerne ventes at indgå som led i drøftelsen af emnet på DER i marts.

Dagsordenspunkt: Bedre regulering

ECOFIN havde en udveksling af synspunkter om Kommissionens meddelelse om den anden strategiske gennemgang af bedre regulering i EU. Meddelelsen indeholder

en status for det hidtidige arbejde med bedre regulering (forenkling af lovgivning og konsekvensvurderinger) samt en oversigt over de næste skridt i arbejdet. Nogle lande argumenterede for, at EU's mål om reduktion af de administrative byrder med 25 pct. bør opfattes som et nettomål.

Dagsordenspunkt: Revisionsrettens årsberetning for 2006

Rådet havde en drøftelse af Revisionsrettens årsberetning for 2006. Flere lande, herunder Danmark, fremhævede det utilfredsstillende i, at Revisionsretten endnu en gang må give en revisionserklæring med væsentlige forbehold, selvom der er betydelige fremskridt at spore. Rådet vedtog en henstilling til Europa-Parlamentet om meddelelse af decharge til Kommissionen for gennemførelse af budgettet for 2006.

Diverse:

I marginen af mødet drøftede ministrene den økonomiske og finansielle situation og formanden for eurogruppen orienterede ministrene om gruppens møde den 11. februar. Ministrene drøftede endvidere sager i relation til Den Europæiske Bank for Genopbygning og Udvikling (EBRD), herunder mulighederne for en eventuel udvidelse af bankens udlånsaktiviteter.

Bilag

Rådskonklusioner vedr. de økonomiske instrumenter til opnåelse af energi- og klimamålene:

"Tackling climate change is an economic as well as environmental issue. The macroeconomic impacts of unmitigated climate change are potentially significant and there are also substantial economic and fiscal implications from the implementation of policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, the costs of action at the global level – at up to 3 per cent of global GDP by 2030 – are estimated to be far lower than the costs of inaction, as long as both global solutions and cost-effective measures are implemented. A key challenge will be to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy is handled in a way that is consistent with EU competitiveness, sound and sustainable public finances and that contributes positively to broader growth objectives consistent with the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

The Council welcomes the Economic Policy Committee's report which reviews Member States' experience of policy instruments to address energy and climate policy objectives. The choice and design of mitigation and adaptation policies will substantially affect the overall costs of action. As contribution to the upcoming European Council discussions on energy and climate change policy, which will discuss the Commission's recently published Climate Action and Renewable Energy package, the Council:

- NOTES that there are a wide range of costs per tonne of CO₂ abated associated with different measures across EU countries. Typically, measures to improve energy efficiency come at least cost, while increasing the share of renewables is more expensive in the short term, even if the cost of renewables energies can be reduced in the longer term as new technology develops. Although a variety of instruments will be needed to achieve energy and climate change targets for 2020, their relative costs should be taken into account.
- UNDERLINES the importance of market based policy instruments such as the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and environment taxes to deliver least cost policy options for meeting energy and climate change targets. Given that policy instruments are often applied in combination, the Council EMPHASISES the need for careful consideration of the interaction between different instruments to avoid reduced efficiency and excessive costs and to deliver a consistent price on greenhouse gases – both at national and European level.
- RECOGNISES the need to fully consider the impacts of climate change measures on income distribution, fiscal policy, and public finances, including possible impacts of an increase in the use of auctioning of greenhouse

gas emission allowances (EUA) on revenue streams. The Council therefore EMPHASIZES that any policies that have significant budgetary implications should be considered by Finance Ministers. For reasons of subsidiarity and sustainable public finances, revenues from auctioning should be used in line with sound budgetary principles and, specifically, not be subject to mandatory earmarking or hypothecation at EU level. The use of such revenues by Member States should not be inconsistent with EU efforts to tackle climate change.

- CONSIDERS that the full cost of the Commission's energy and climate change proposals must be evaluated and taken into account, AGREES ON the need for appropriate ex-ante cost-benefit analysis and post-implementation evaluation of policy instruments and sub-targets and CALLS FOR reporting on the budgetary, microeconomic and macroeconomic costs of compliance. The reporting requirements should be in line with the efforts to reduce administrative burden. This information should be collated and presented to ECOFIN on a regular basis.
- UNDERLINES the importance of flexibility mechanisms in order to meet the targets in a cost-effective manner. For example, this could include flexibilities in the design and implementation of renewable targets, the use of Kyoto project based credits and the possibility of virtual or physical renewable trading within and outside the Union, while taking into account interactions with existing effective national support schemes. The Council NOTES that adding sub-targets could create additional costs and should not unnecessarily restrict the flexibility of implementation.
- REITERATES that the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) is the centrepiece of the EU's long-term efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet its international climate change commitments and CALLS FOR further work on market related issues linked to the ongoing development of the EU-ETS such as the conditions under which different emission trading schemes may be effectively and efficiently linked, expansion to include other sectors, market monitoring, regulatory supervision and the provision of information.
- CONSIDERS that within the EU-ETS, auctioning appears to be, in principle, the most efficient allocation method. The Council RECOGNISES the need to take into account competitiveness considerations and to manage the risk of carbon leakage to countries with lower environmental standards outside the EU. Any necessary measures will be considered to this end. Existing evidence suggests that risks will be concentrated in energy sectors and energy-intensive sectors of the EU economy, which vary across Member States.

- STRESSES the importance of clear and credible long-term signals for investors and the need for overall policy frameworks to be designed to support and generate private-sector investment in energy infrastructure and safe and new clean technologies. The Council EMPHASISES the importance of ensuring that policy proposals for 2020 and beyond provide the private sector with a clear view of the level of carbon constraint, including the conditions under which those constraints may be liable to change in the future.
- RECALLS that well functioning energy markets may help to improve price signals and reduce the costs of policies used to reach energy and climate changes objectives, as well as security of energy supply, based on diversified energy supply networks, including the external dimension. In this context, more efforts are needed to achieve a truly competitive, interconnected and single Europe-wide internal market for electricity and gas.
- HIGHLIGHTS the importance of co-ordinated international action for achieving economically-efficient and environmentally-effective action and REAFFIRMS the importance of a new comprehensive international agreement on climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change no later than 2009. The Council UNDERLINES the importance of achieving cost-effective abatement through building a global carbon market and continuing to use existing flexible international mechanisms. In this context, there is a need to find solutions, create new instruments and funnel private sector investment to incentivise cost-effective abatement in developing countries (e. g. through the abolition of energy subsidies) and enhanced national measures, with the aim of reaching a global climate agreement.

The Council INVITES the EPC to continue its work on the economic dimension of energy and climate change and the EFC to consider the international financing aspects of global action, with a view to receiving an update on both streams of work by Autumn 2008."

Rådskonklusioner vedr. det fælles eurobetalingsområde, SEPA

“The Council

- EMPHASISES its support for the aim of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA): to achieve an integrated market for payment services in euro which is subject to effective competition and where there is no distinction between cross-border and national payments in euro within the EU;
- WELCOMES the substantial progress achieved by industry to achieve the SEPA;
- RECOGNISES that the SEPA project has now moved from the preparatory to the operational stage and therefore calls upon industry to redouble its efforts and complete work, in particular in relation to the outstanding standards required in the cards market and in the customer to bank and bank to customer space;
- ENCOURAGES industry to develop attractive SEPA payment products and market them actively so that there is a natural momentum for customers to migrate from existing payment instruments to the new SEPA payment products in a market driven process;
- CALLS for rapid and smooth SEPA migration so that dual payment processing costs are kept to the minimum; and highlights the need for timely and complete transposition and implementation of the Payment Services Directive at national level to facilitate the migration process;
- RECOGNISES the importance of finding a workable solution to ensure the continued legal validity of existing direct debit mandates, where needed;
- ACKNOWLEDGES the important catalytic role that can be played by public authorities in helping drive forward the migration process;
- ENCOURAGES public authorities to be early adopters of SEPA payment instruments subject to the principle that there should be no deterioration as compared to the existing national characteristics for product performance and price, given the positive contribution SEPA can make to the modernisation of public administration and the e-Government Action Plan as well as the substantial benefits of SEPA to the wider European economy, including through value-added-services such as e-invoicing;
- INVITES Finance Ministries of Member States in cooperation with national Central Banks to continue monitoring progress on SEPA at national level, in particular, as regards the adoption of SEPA by public authorities; and INVITES the Commission in cooperation with the ECB to provide an annual progress report on the state of migration, including where relevant the pricing of SEPA instru-

ments and the enhancement of competition within the SEPA area as well as other SEPA related developments at the end of each year until the successful migration of a critical mass of payment instruments has been achieved and at the end 2008, 2009 and 2010 in any event.”