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Medlemmerne af Folketingets Europaudvalg
og deres stedfortrædere

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Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges Økonomiministeriets redegørelse for rådsmøde (økonomi- og finansministre) den 6. november 2001.

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Referat af Rådsmøde (Økonomi- og Finansministre) den 6. november 2001

Dagsordenspunkt: Rapport om alderens indvirkning på udgifterne på folkesundhedsområdet

Rapporten blev generelt positivt modtaget, og der var enighed om at fortsætte arbejdet, således at kvaliteten og sammenligneligheden mellem landene forbedres. Rådet vedtog vedlagte konklusioner.

Dagsordenspunkt: Drøftelse af rapport fra EPC om metoder til evaluering af budgetpolitik og variation i produktionen (output gaps)

De fleste lande lagde vægt på at anvende både den nuværende metode og den nye metode (produktionsfunktionsmetoden) til evaluering af budgetpolitik og variation i produktionen parallelt. Arbejdet med produktionsfunktionsmetoden vil fortsætte med henblik på forbedringer og inddragelse af den nye metode i gennemgangen af stabilitets- og konvergensprogrammerne fra 2002-03.

Dagsordenspunkt: Kommissionens meddelelse om handlingsplan for risikovillig kapital

Kommissionen præsenterede sin meddelelse, som medlemslandene generelt tog godt imod. Flere lande pegede på behovet for hurtigt at sikre et velfungerende fælles marked for risikovillig kapital.

Fra dansk side fandt man det vigtigt, at de analyser og sammenligninger, der foretages, hviler på et bedre statistisk grundlag. Kommissionen vil følge op her på.

Dagsordenspunkt: Rapport om ØMU-statistik

Uden videre debat vedtog Rådet vedlagte konklusioner. Og man besluttede at offentliggøre rapporten.

Dagsordenspunkt: Punktafgift på forarbejdet tobak

Rådet vedtog uden debat punktet.

Dagsordenspunkt: Meddelelse vedrørende selskabsbeskatning

Kommissionen præsenterede meddelelsen, der blev efterfulgt af en kort drøftelse.

Formanden konkluderede, at man ville lade COREPER, Fiskalgruppen og arbejdsgruppen på højt niveau se på meddelelsen og først derefter tage en egentlig drøftelse i Rådet.

Dagsordenspunkt: Revision af Rådsafgørelse vedr. makrofinansiell assistance til Bosnien-Herzegovina

Sagen vil blive behandlet på et senere Rådsmøde.

Dagsordenspunkt: Revision af Rådsafgørelse vedr. makrofinansiell assistance til den tidligere jugoslaviske republik Makedonien

Sagen vil blive behandlet på et senere Rådsmøde.

Dagsordenspunkt: Irland: Opfølgning på henstillingen fra den 12. februar 2001

Rådet vedtog uden debat vedlagte konklusioner.

Dagsordenspunkt: Beskatning af audiovisuelle- og musikprodukter

Kommissionen vil se på spørgsmålet om beskatning af audiovisuelle- og musikprodukter indenfor rammerne af arbejdet med reducerede momssatser.

Dagsordenspunkt: Eventuelt – afrapportering fra Det Europæiske Råds uformelle møde i Gent den 19. oktober 2001

Formanden gav en mundtlig afrapportering for Det Europæiske Råds uformelle møde i Gent den 19. oktober 2001.

Dagsordenspunkt: Forslag om at udvide garantirammen fra EU-budgettet til EIB for lån til ikke medlemslande til at omfatte Forbundsrepublikken Jugoslavien og om at foretage en forhøjelse med 350 mio. euro

Forslaget, som blev forelagt Folketingets Europaudvalg den 12. oktober 2001, blev vedtaget uden debat.

Dagsordenspunkt: Lån fra Den Europæiske Investeringsbank (EIB) til udvalgte miljøprojekter i Rusland

Forslaget, som blev forelagt Folketingets Europaudvalg den 22. marts 2001, blev vedtaget uden debat.

BILAG

(ECOFIN) Council conclusions

Report on budgetary challenges posed by ageing populations

The Council endorsed the report prepared by the Economic Policy Committee on budgetary challenges posed by ageing populations. The report, established at the request of the Council, reviews projections of the impact of ageing on public expenditure on pensions, health care and long-term care for the elderly up to the year 2050, and puts forward possible indicators to examine the overall long-term sustainability of public finances on the basis of these projections.

The report identifies some key challenges stemming from the large changes in the size and composition of the population in all the Member States in the coming decades. The Council notes that, whilst caution needs to be exercised in interpreting all long-term projections, the impact of ageing on public finances would be large in terms of expenditure for pensions, health care and long term care for the elderly.

Regarding pensions, the projections made by the Economic Policy Committee show that notwithstanding reforms during the 1990s, ageing populations could lead to a substantial increase in public expenditures of between 3 and 5 percentage points of GDP up to 2050 in most Member States, and even larger increases are projected for several. The design of public pension systems plays a crucial role in determining the scale of the budgetary impact of ageing. The Council notes that higher employment rates, especially amongst women and older workers, can help mitigate the pressure for increased spending on pensions due to ageing, but on their own cannot prevent an increase in expenditure levels.

Regarding health care, the Council notes that ageing populations could lead to an increase in public spending of around 1 to 2 percentage points of GDP over the long-term up to 2050. Whilst it should be noted that the projections for public expenditure on health care and long-term care for the elderly depend to an important extent on the methodology and the assumptions used, those Member States for which projections on both health care and long-term care are available could face increases in expenditure levels over the fifty years of around 2 to 4 percentage points of GDP.

The Council underlines that in view of the expected budgetary pressures posed by ageing populations during the next decades, ensuring sustainable public finances, including by public debt reductions, is a crucial challenge that Member States must address as soon as possible. The report demonstrates that the budgetary impact of ageing will be substantial in almost all Member States.

The Council therefore notes with interest the indicators put forward by the Economic Policy Committee to assess the overall impact of ageing populations on the sustainability of public finances. These indicators first aim at verifying whether current budgetary policies are likely to ensure sustainable public finances and respect of the Stability and Growth Pact in the longer run, and secondly specify the degree of budgetary adjustment required to ensure that this goal is met. These indicators could be usefully complemented by indicators reflecting pension liabilities. The Council also acknowledges, however, that an evaluation of overall fiscal sustainability needs to take into account all types of public expenditure as well as changes in the revenue from the taxation of pensions.

On the basis of the report, the Council:

1. concludes that this report provides a valuable input for the reports to be examined by the Laeken and Barcelona European Councils on pensions, health care and long-term care for the elderly. Taking due account of the principle of subsidiarity, the projections on pensions could also be used in the context of the open method of co-ordination in the field of pensions.
2. considers that the indicators developed by the EPC to measure the sustainability of public finances in view of ageing are a valuable first step, to be developed further, and invites the EFC and the Commission in collaboration with the EPC to examine how they could be used in future assessments of stability and convergence programmes. In line with the agreement of the European Council in Gothenborg, Member States' comprehensive strategies for addressing the economic and budgetary enges posed by ageing populations should be presented in conjunction with stability and convergence programmes and be examined in the context of multilateral surveillance. The results of the work should be integrated into the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines.
3. invites the EPC to repeat its common projection exercise at EU level at an interval of 3 - 5 years, and to take the necessary steps to further improve the quality and comparability of projections. The Council also invites the EPC to continue with its work programme on the economic and budgetary consequences of ageing populations.

BILAG

OBLIGATIONS STATISTIQUES DANS LE CADRE DE L'UEM - CONCLUSIONS

Le Conseil a approuvé le quatrième rapport du Comité économique et financier sur les progrès réalisés en ce qui concerne les obligations d'information dans le cadre de l'UEM. Ce rapport examine les progrès réalisés pour ce qui est, d'une part, de la mise en œuvre du Plan d'action sur les besoins statistiques de l'UEM (plan d'action de l'UEM), adopté par le Conseil ECOFIN en septembre 2000, et, d'autre part, pport initial du Comité monétaire sur les obligations d'information dans le cadre de l'UEM, adopté par le Conseil ECOFIN en janvier 1999. Les ministres ont décidé que le quatrième rapport serait rendu public.

Le Conseil a noté que des progrès avaient encore été accomplis dans le cadre du plan d'action de l'UEM (qui a porté sur la comptabilité nationale trimestrielle, la comptabilité trimestrielle du secteur public, les statistiques relatives aux marchés du travail, les statistiques conjoncturelles sur les entreprises et les statistiques relatives au commerce extérieur). Il est indiqué que les ressources sont désormais suffisantes pour que ce plan soit mis en œuvre. Le Conseil a également noté qu'il restait beaucoup à faire en France, en Italie et en Espagne pour atteindre l'objectif dans les délais recommandés, à savoir une couverture de 80% des données permettant d'obtenir des agrégats relatifs à la zone euro. Pour satisfaire aux besoins de l'analyse par pays, plusieurs autres pays, notamment la Grèce, l'Irlande, le Luxembourg et le Portugal, do dépenser plus d'efforts.

Pour ce qui est du rapport initial du Comité monétaire, un certain nombre de mesures sont encore nécessaires. En particulier, d'autres améliorations doivent être réalisées en ce qui concerne le respect des délais dans lesquels sont fournis les indicateurs clés de sorte que les statistiques de l'UEM se rapprochent des normes américaines en matière de disponibilité et de respect des délais dans les cin q prochaines années. Le rapport souligne également qu'il est nécessaire de disposer d'une base statistique plus large pour ce qui est des activités de services, de parvenir à un meilleur équilibre entre les éléments prioritaires que sont la rapidité, la précision et la qualité des statistiques, et de collecter des données en vue d'une production rapide d'agrégats européens.

Le Conseil souligne que la qualité des données relatives aux paiements transfrontaliers doit être maintenue. Il est instamment demandé aux États membres concernés d'adapter leurs systèmes de collecte des données relatives à la balance des paiements pour satisfaire à l'obligation d'élévation des seuils de déclaration et tenir compte du fait que la déclaration n'incombe plus aux banques mais aux entreprises.

En conclusion, le Conseil estime que, pour améliorer la base statistique aux fins de la politique économique et monétaire dans le cadre de l'UEM/UE, un certain nombre d'États membres doivent encore accroître leurs efforts pour remplir leurs obligations dans le cadre du plan d'action de l'UEM. Une attention particulière doit être accordée au domaine des statistiques relatives au marché de l'emploi. En outre, le Conseil estime que , afin de remédier aux carences relevées dans le rapport initial du Comité monétaire, les États membres doivent encore prendre un certain nombre de mesures coordonnées. Les ministres invitent les offices statistiques des États membres à prendre les mesures nécessaires en priorité. Ils demandent également qu'un rapport de suivi soit établi pour l'automne 2002.

BILAG

Ireland's compliance with the Recommendation of 12 February 2001 with a view to ending the inconsistency with the broad guidelines of economic policy

The ECOFIN Council examined today a report from the Commission on economic and budgetary developments in Ireland in 2001. The Report was submitted by the Commission in response to an invitation contained in the Recommendation addressed by the Council to Ireland on 12 February 2001. The Recommendation, which aimed at ending the inconsistency with the broad guidelines of economic policy engendered by the Irish budget plans for 2001, urged the Irish government to take countervailing budgetary measures during the current fiscal year.

The Commission Report concludes that the implementation of the budget in 2001 reflected some of the concerns underlying the Recommendation. Expenditure has been kept under control, including by decisions to offset unforeseen expenses with spending cuts elsewhere in the budget. Moreover, two measures introduced after the Recommendation, a tax-preferred savings scheme and a tax recovery scheme, go in the direction of a short-term easing of demand pressures, as requested in the Recommendation. Above all, in the assessment of the Commission, unexpected developments, which are slowing down the economy and thereby reducing inflationary pressures, mean that the inconsistency addressed in the Recommendation between the Irish budgetary plans and the goal of economic stability has lost part of its force for this year. Such developments include the agricultural crises (especially foot-and-mouth-disease), the slowdown in the United States and world economy and now the aftermath of the recent tragic events in the US. However, the Commission argues that the experience of overheating in the Irish economy justifies continued vigilance regarding the evolution of the fiscal stance. After the large decline in the general government surplus expected for this year, in both actual and structural terms, the Report concludes that further reduction in Ireland's structural fiscal surplus in 2002 should be avoided.

The ECOFIN Council takes note of the Report of the Commission and shares its main conclusions. While agreeing on the importance of taking into account the changing economic situation, the Council stresses the need for continued vigilance on the fiscal stance in Ireland given the experience of overheating. In this connection the Council notes that its recommendations have been to some extent adhered to. Taking note of the need to plan for a broadly neutral fiscal stance in Ireland, the Council considers that a budget for 2002 along these lines would provide further evidence that fiscal policy in Ireland is being directed toward stability and therefore in compliance with the Council Recommendation. The Council will assess the budgetary stance for 2002 when the forthcoming update of the Irish stability programme will be discussed.