

FORSKERKLUMMEN

The Danish EU Presidency – an Evaluation

Peter Nedergaard evaluates the current Danish presidency. Nedergaard argues that while there have not been any major issues to be solved, the Danish presidency has still been able to bring forward and close various legislative acts.

Af Professor Peter Nedergaard, Institut for Statskundskab, KU



Generally it is recognised that the Danish presidency has been professional and executed in the spirit of an honest broker. At the level of officials in particular, the Danish presidency has been viewed as well-organised and result oriented.

At the same time, the Danish presidency in 2012 has been “hit” by the fact that there has not been any single big issue to be solved during its half year reign, as there was in 2002 when the enlargement was the single biggest issue. Instead, a number of initiatives have been brought forward to the EU decision-making process.

Firstly, the Danish presidency has managed to bring Serbia into a position as a candidate country to the EU. Serbia is now on a direct road to becoming a member of the EU within the next three to four years, depending on further negotiations with the European Commission (the election of a probably rather pro-nationalist Serbian president might cause problems in this regard).

Secondly, the Danish presidency has closed the so-called roaming directive. This means that from the first of July a price cap will be put on the costs for mobile telephone calls between EU member states. Over the years, there has been much debate on this issue. Should the fixing of prices be left to the market, or should there be a politically-fixed price cap? However, in the end, even the market-liberal political parties in the member states as well as in the European Parliament have accepted a politically-fixed price cap on roaming charges.

Thirdly, the Danish presidency has been able to get a set of regulations on board concerning the financial sector. Thus, even though Denmark is not a member of the Eurozone, the Danish presidency has been in charge of finalising the negotiations in the ECOFIN (Council of Ministers for Economics and Finance) on the so-called “two-pack” regulations set up for surveillance of potential economic problems in the Eurozone member states.

The first regulation in the “two-pack” is on monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficits. The second regulation is on the enhanced surveillance of the Eurozone member states experiencing financial difficulties. Furthermore, the Eurozone countries have agreed on bailout funds to recapitalize banks directly and to buy bonds for “well-behaving” countries, which in particular will help Italy and Spain by lowering their borrowing costs.

Fourthly, the Danish presidency has also been involved in the negotiations on the new fiscal compact. Even though it has been the main responsibility of the Eurozone member states to finalise this, the Danish presidency has been a sort of a bridge-builder between the Eurozone and non-Eurozone EU member states. Among other things this has meant that all non-Eurozone EU member states except the UK and the Czech Republic have signed the fiscal compact. Moreover, with the purpose to stimulate growth and create jobs, an agreement on a growth pact was reached at the European Council meeting ending the Danish presidency.

Fifthly, the Danish presidency has come to an agreement with the European Parliament on the directive on energy efficiency. The aim has been to reduce energy consumption by about 20 percent and, thereby reduce the EU’s energy dependency. At the same time, according to informants, it is no secret that the directive is also to secure more labour for the local workforce due to the fact that investments in energy efficiency are also used as a way of securing that jobs cannot be outsourced.

Sixthly, the Danish presidency eventually succeeded in the adoption of a new EU patent regulation, which should guarantee the application for a patent in one EU member state automatically leads to a situation where the same patent is legally binding in all 27 EU member states.

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