



MORE GROWTH AND JOBS FOR EUROPE: MOVING FROM DIAGNOSIS TO THERAPY

Ahead of the Spring European Council, the Commission's progress report on the European Growth and Jobs Strategy presented on 25 January offers a good basis for policy-makers throughout Europe to deliver on the Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Lack of growth is the root of Europe's problems, said UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière. "The reform programmes are a step forward, but many of them lack ambition when it comes to concrete implementation of the announced reforms. We must go beyond a mere diagnosis of Europe's problems and start the therapy, with a clear governance process. European social partners are invited to play a role. UNICE is ready to participate on the condition that it focuses on the real issues." [Read more](#) or contact: [Philippe de Buck](#)

SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS ON EU SOCIAL DIALOGUE PROGRAMME 2006-2008

The negotiations between UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC on the EU social dialogue work programme 2006-2008 were successfully concluded on 25 January. The aim of this second EU social dialogue work programme 2006-2008 is to contribute to and promote growth, jobs and modernisation of the EU social model. The text will now be sent to each organisation's decision-making body for final adoption before the Tripartite Social Summit on 23 March 2006. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#) or [Jeanne Schmitt](#)

UNICE PRESIDENT AS GUEST SPEAKER OF THE EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE

At the EPC breakfast meeting on 26 January and in front of more than 180 participants, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière presented European business perspectives for European competitiveness. The day after the publication of the Commission Annual Progress Report, he asked policy-makers to take the renewed Lisbon Strategy seriously and to put competitiveness at the top of European and national agendas. From a European business point of view, policy priorities must be research and innovation, unlocking business potential, especially for SMEs, achieving an efficient energy market and finding an agreement on the services directive in a way that creates a genuine internal market for services. UNICE, representing more than 20 million small, medium and large companies in Europe, together with its national members, will continue to make the case for economic reform, in order for Europe to provide its people with what they need most: growth and jobs. He underlined how much European business is affected by the institutional and economical crisis the EU is going through. [Read more](#) or contact: [Philippe de Buck](#)

WTO NEGOTIATIONS: NEED FOR A MORE OFFENSIVE AGENDA

UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck met Simon Fraser, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Mandelson, and David O'Sullivan, Director General of DG Trade, respectively on 20 and 23 January to express concern over the limited results achieved in market access for goods and services during the WTO Hong Kong Conference. In a letter to Commissioner Mandelson, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière urged EU negotiators to adopt a more offensive agenda in the WTO negotiations on all market access issues in close cooperation with the business community. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)



UNICE IN DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES 2007-13

Jean-Paul Mingasson, UNICE's General Adviser, met rapporteur Reimer Böge to discuss the EP position on the next EU budget. Mr Böge said that parliament was ready to engage in constructive negotiations, provided that Council was ready to move on issues such as financial flexibility, budgetary governance and spending caps for some specific programmes, notably under the heading 1.a: "competitiveness for growth and jobs". UNICE took note of the EP position but insisted that an agreement had to be found before the Spring Summit in March, as other crucial dossiers were pending. Contact: [Marc Stocker](#)

UNICE PLEADS TO IMPROVE LABOUR MARKET FLEXIBILITY

On 19 January 2006, UNICE attended a meeting between the social partners and representatives of the Social Affairs Council in Villach (Austria). The main issues for discussion were flexicurity and the open method of coordination on social protection. UNICE stressed that flexibility was in the interest of both employers and workers and that it was about moving towards a job creation mindset. The Austrian Presidency also explained that it wished to work closely with the social partners on pending dossiers such as the services directive and working time and announced that it would hold a working dinner with them on 9 March 2006. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

EUROPEAN SERVICES PLATFORM MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The first meeting of the European Services Platform was held on 17 January. The platform is co-sponsored by UNICE and the European Services Forum (ESF), which joined forces to collaborate for their membership mutual benefit on issues related to internal market services issues. Indeed, more comprehensive information is becoming indispensable among all business participants on these issues. Mr Michner, Chair of the Council "Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth" during the Austrian Presidency, briefed the Platform on the progress on the proposal for a Directive on services in the internal market. Contact: [Pascal Kerneis](#)

PATENTS IN EUROPE: WAYS FORWARD FROM THE CURRENT STAND-OFF?

The Commission has launched a consultation of the future policy for patents in Europe covering the Community patent, improving the current system and possible areas of harmonisation. UNICE has already voiced the need for improvements regarding a common litigation system and reducing translation costs. It also supports a Community Patent that meets the needs of users in terms of quality, affordability and legal certainty and has consistently recommended the single-language solution (English only). UNICE "Patents" Working Group will meet on 16 February to discuss this with the Commission and prepare a response. Contact: [Ilias Konteas](#)