



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SHOULD STAND FIRM FOR CREATION OF A SERVICES MARKET IN EUROPE

In view of the decisive vote by the European Parliament on 16 February on the draft services directive, UNICE continues its active campaign to advocate the message of European business. Jean-Paul Mingasson, UNICE General Adviser, accompanied by Carlos Almaraz and Christian Feustel, UNICE Senior Advisers, has met key Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from different political groups and noted that negotiations, which are heavily influenced by the intense media coverage and strong union pressure, are translating into additional weakening of the draft directive with a view to finding adequate support for the plenary vote. This is a very worrying scenario for EU companies. UNICE acknowledges the highly political nature of this debate but has urged MEPs to defend the internal market objectives of the directive against undercover protectionism and the overstated accusation of social dumping. The plenary vote should not depart from the compromises agreed in the EP Internal Market Committee (IMCO) if this directive is to bring about significant added value to Europe. UNICE is particularly worried about the attempts to dilute IMCO's compromise on article 16 and to add new exclusions from the scope of the directive. [Read more](#) or contact: [Jean-Paul Mingasson](#) or [Carlos Almaraz](#)

UNICE IN MOSCOW: FOSTER GROWTH AND JOBS IN GREATER EUROPE

Philippe de Buck, UNICE Secretary General, and Adrian van den Hoven, Director of UNICE International Relations Department, heading a small UNICE delegation, visited Moscow on 6-8 February. During the visit, they had the opportunity to discuss how to strengthen EU-Russian relations with business partners and Russian officials. In a joint statement with Russian business, UNICE called for concrete results in EU-Russia economic integration, further integrating EU and Russian business in this process. Russia's WTO accession is vital to that aim. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

ECB READY TO HIKE IN MARCH

The ECB governing council left interest rates unchanged after its 2 February meeting, but prepared the ground for a rise probably as early as March. UNICE trusts that the analysis of inflation risks leading to this pre-announced decision has been carefully balanced. But the path that the ECB has engaged on is narrow and treacherous. The recovery is expected to remain modest and it would not withstand an aggressive cycle of monetary tightening. In our view, future tightening of monetary conditions can only go hand in hand with a significant acceleration in domestic demand, a still remote prospect at this juncture. Contact: [Marc Stocker](#)



PLEASE ALSO MIND THE EU'S EXTERNAL COMPETITIVENESS

In a meeting of UNICE's International Relations Committee with David O'Sullivan, Director General of Trade in the European Commission on 2 February, UNICE members called on the Commission to look at competitiveness from a trade perspective to help companies compete in global markets. To that aim, it is vital that the EU acts more offensively in the WTO DDA negotiations to improve market access in the major EU trading partners and emerging markets. Contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION: UNICE SUPPORTS AN EU-WIDE PROGRAMME

In reaction to a Commission Green Paper, UNICE supports the launch of a European Programme on Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP). Such programme should be based on a common EU horizontal framework and a sector-by-sector approach. EPCIP should minimise any negative impact that increased security would have on business competitiveness, and should target all hazards including natural disasters. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Gonzalez-Finat](#)

NEGOTIATIONS ON HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE HAVE STARTED

Negotiations between UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC in view of concluding a voluntary agreement on harassment and violence started on 7 February 2006. This first meeting was devoted to an initial exchange of positions. UNICE highlighted that it aimed at a practical agreement helping employers to deal with harassment and violence problems where they occur, i.e. at workplace level. The objective is to try and conclude negotiations by the end of 2006. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#) or [Natascha Waltke](#)

BUILDING A EUROPE OF EXCELLENCE: TURNING KNOWLEDGE INTO GROWTH

The European Business Summit will be organised for the fourth time by the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium FEB-VBO with the support of UNICE, the European Commission and the EU Presidency on 16 and 17 March 2006. The summit will be an opportunity to discuss the National Reform Programmes of all 25 EU member states. At a press conference organised on 3 February to launch the European Business Summit, UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck explained: "The Commission progress report is a step forward in implementing the EU Growth and Jobs strategy. It is now time to move from diagnosis to therapy".

[Read more](#) or contact: info@ebsummit.org

