



COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL URGED TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE

On 3 March, in a [letter](#) to Martin Bartenstein, Austrian Federal Minister of Economy and Labour and President of the EU Competitiveness Council, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière urged the Competitiveness Council to play a leading role ahead of the Spring European Council and in the assessment of National Reform Programmes. The Spring Council must stress that implementation of reforms already committed to in the context of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs is indispensable, especially at national level and in particular in the large Member States Germany, Italy and France. [Read more](#) or contact: [Folker Franz](#)

UNICE WELCOMES PUBLICATION OF COMMISSION ENERGY GREEN PAPER

In a press release on 8 March, UNICE welcomes publication of the green paper on secure, competitive and sustainable energy for Europe, and asks for these three strategic dimensions of the issue to be better integrated in the work of all EU institutions. UNICE urges the Commission to take more initiatives for ensuring a secure energy supply; creating a truly open EU market for gas and electricity, on which progress is insufficient; designing environmental protection approaches more in line with the sustainable development concept. [Read more](#) or contact: [Daniel Cloquet](#)

PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE TO PRESENT UNICE SPRING 2006 ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The forthcoming Economic Outlook, to be presented at a press conference on 13 March, will provide the business community's assessment of economic prospects in Europe over the next two years, and its analysis of the current fiscal and monetary policy stance. The spring edition of the report also includes an investigation of the more fundamental factors restraining growth in Europe. Based on a survey of UNICE member federations, the report identifies key policy priorities to overcome these obstacles and presents recommendations for the EU Spring Summit on 23-24 March. Contact: [Marc Stocker](#)

UNICE URGES POLICY-MAKERS TO "THINK SMALL FIRST"

On 28 February at a meeting between SME stakeholders and Vice President Verheugen, President of the Competitiveness Council Minister Martin Bartenstein, and Françoise Le Bail, the newly appointed Commission SME Envoy, UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck took the opportunity to voice UNICE's support of the Commission's modern SME policy whilst providing three examples of where the "think small first" principle needs to be implemented urgently: the services directive after the vote in the European Parliament, REACH and international trade. [Read more](#) or contact: [David Coleman](#)



GLOBALISATION FUND: NO SUBSTITUTE FOR LABOUR MARKET REFORM

On 7 March, the Commission presented its proposal for a regulation establishing a European globalisation adjustment fund to the European social partners. During the discussion, UNICE highlighted that it was in favour of active labour market measures to re-integrate redundant workers into the labour market. However, many questions remained as to how the fund and its eligibility criteria would operate in practice. The real answer to globalisation lies in implementing the European growth and jobs strategy. The globalisation fund is no substitute to necessary reforms for labour markets in Member States. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

UNICE MAKES SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

The Commission's [air pollution](#) proposal, to be discussed by the Environment Council on 9 March, is not very clear on how Member States plan to achieve the ambitious health and environmental objectives. In a [letter](#) to President Pröll, UNICE has asked the Council to clarify how the strategy will be implemented in practice within industry and non-industry sectors. UNICE also welcomed the step taken by the European Commission to initiate a simplification of the current [waste](#) legislation. Finally, in the context of the review of the EU sustainable development strategy, UNICE submitted [ten key principles](#) that should guide EU environmental policy-making for sustainable development. Contact: [Nadine Toscani](#) or [Miriam Munnich](#)

UNICE MEETS INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS BOARD MEMBERS

The UNICE Accounting Working Group convened on 1 March in London and met IASB Members Jim Leisenring and Jan Engström. The prevailing discussion topic was the newly published roadmap on convergence between International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and US GAAP, which aims at abolishing the costly reconciliation requirement for EU companies listed in the US within the next few years. While supporting the convergence project in general, European business is wary that convergence does not introduce new burdensome standards which might put an excessive emphasis on fair value. EU-listed companies still need to digest the adoption of IFRS which the EU introduced only last year, and are first and foremost concerned to have a complete set of standards which is applied consistently. Contact: [Folker Franz](#)