



ERNEST-ANTOINE SEILLIÈRE INVITED TO ADDRESS THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Invited along with ETUC President Candido Méndez and ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet by Chancellor Schüssel to speak at the opening session of the European Spring Summit on 23 March, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière presented the [message supported by the Presidents of all 39 UNICE member federations](#) that business expects a real commitment to implement the reforms for growth and jobs and update national reform programmes with more concrete targets and deadlines. The current wave of takeovers shows that the Internal Market is alive. But in view of recent interventions to limit market access and difficulties in pushing forward legislation to complete the Internal Market, President Seillière urged the European Council to resist national protectionism in order to avoid a negative domino effect, and recalled that Europe needs a meaningful services directive. He also called for a [European energy policy](#) which establishes competition on open and interconnected markets and for closer cooperation between Member States to ensure security of energy supply. He concluded that Member States must not miss the opportunity to take concrete steps to unlock business potential, especially for SMEs. [Read more](#) or contact: on Spring Summit, [Philippe de Buck](#) or [Folker Franz](#), and on energy [Daniel Cloquet](#)

EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS PRESENT THEIR NEW WORK PROGRAMME

On 23 March, during the Tripartite Social Summit held ahead of the Spring European Council, the European social partners presented the newly adopted EU [social dialogue work programme 2006-2008](#). The aim is to contribute to growth, jobs, and the modernisation of the EU social model. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

ERNEST-ANTOINE SEILLIÈRE MEETS CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO THE EU, MR GUAN CHENGYUAN

On 17 March, to exchange views on how to strengthen EU-China trade and investment relations, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière met Ambassador Guan Chengyuan in Brussels. They discussed economic issues such as the WTO negotiations and the future of bilateral relations. China is a key priority for UNICE and its increasing interdependence with the EU offers major opportunities for European companies. However, UNICE is concerned that the EU and China should avoid politicising the trade and investment relationship. Contact: [Carlos Gonzalez-Finat](#)

WTO NAMA NEGOTIATIONS: GLOBAL MANUFACTURERS' COALITION URGES FOR MORE AMBITION

UNICE participated in a joint delegation to the WTO on 14-16 March with business partners from the US, Japan, Brazil, New Zealand, Korea and Taiwan to push for more ambition in industrial market access negotiations. The business organisations were concerned about the low level of ambition in the DDA industrial market access negotiations after several meetings with ambassadors in Geneva. Against that background, the coalition urged all WTO members to ensure significant gains in market access for industrial goods in OECD and emerging countries or they risked losing the support of business for ratification of the DDA. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)



UNICE SUPPORTS THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Launched on 22 March, the European Alliance for CSR is meant to bring together companies that wish to contribute to advancing CSR through their own actions, and through concerted actions with others. CSR is a voluntary and business-driven practice that, if tailor-made, can enhance the innovative potential and competitiveness of companies. [Read more](#) or contact: [Natascha Waltke](#)

UNICE SHARES ITS PRIORITIES WITH EESC EMPLOYERS' GROUP

UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck had the pleasure on 15 March to attend the monthly meeting of Group I – Employers – of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). He outlined UNICE's priorities for 2006 as well as UNICE's views on some current European dossiers such as the services directive, energy policy or the strategy for growth and jobs. As the meeting took place on the eve of the European Business Summit and only one week before the Spring Council (see first article), Mr de Buck anticipated for EESC UNICE's message to the European Council. Contact: [María Soriano Sánchez](#)

UNICE DISCUSSES INTERPLAY BETWEEN LABOUR MARKET REFORMS AND MACROECONOMIC POLICIES

At a conference organised by ETUC on 21 March, UNICE General Adviser Jean-Paul Mingasson reaffirmed that Europe's labour market difficulties cannot reasonably be blamed on macroeconomic policies. Yet, fiscal and monetary policy can, under certain conditions, ease implementation of the reforms needed to tackle these difficulties and help overcome a certain status quo bias linked to political economy constraints. However, this raises a number of governance issues, including the need for greater coordination and surveillance of reform programmes at the euro area level. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marc Stocker](#)

UNICE STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

On 21 March, addressing the Constitutional Affairs Committee in the European Parliament with ETUC and CEEP on the future of the EU, UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck reiterated UNICE's support for the draft Constitutional Treaty. UNICE is concerned about the current lack of progress and supports efforts to move forward. UNICE and its member federations welcomed Commissioner Wallström's initiative on communicating better about Europe. As a social partner, UNICE will continue to be committed in any discussion on the future of Europe. [Read more](#) or contact: [Jérôme P. Chauvin](#)

BUSINESS SPEAKS OUT IN FAVOUR OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COMPANY STATUTE FOR SMEs

At a working breakfast on 21 March co-organised by the SME Union, SME Circle and the German Engineering Federation VDMA, David Coleman, UNICE Senior Adviser, pointed out that a specific statute for SMEs will increase their intra-community mobility, facilitate the opening of markets to dynamic SMEs, and in essence act as a vehicle to "Let SMEs Grow!", thereby creating growth and jobs. [Read more](#) or contact: [David Coleman](#)