



EUROPEAN BUSINESS BACKS REHN ON EU ENLARGEMENT

On 2 May, a UNICE delegation headed by Secretary General Philippe de Buck met Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn to discuss next steps in enlarging the EU. The Commissioner was pleased with progress made in Bulgaria and Romania although efforts remain to be made in some policy areas. The Commission will present its final report on 16 May, to be decided on by the June Council. Philippe de Buck expressed UNICE's full support for the enlargement process, on the condition that the set criteria are met. Contact: [Philippe de Buck](#)

EU ENERGY POLICY: UNICE SHARES ITS EXPECTATIONS WITH COMMISSIONER PIEBALGS

Philippe de Buck, UNICE Secretary General, and Paul Hatry, Chairman of UNICE's Energy Working Group, met Commissioner Piebalgs on 2 May for an exchange of views on the work programme the Commission is developing in the wake of the March 2006 European summit's discussions on energy. UNICE set out its expectations in the following areas: external dimension of the common energy policy; more competitive gas and electricity markets; solutions for dealing with the impact of the Emissions Trading Scheme on energy-intensive consumers due to insufficient market liberalisation; long-term contracts; renewables; energy efficiency. [Read more](#) or contact: [Daniel Cloquet](#)

UNICE WILL ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSULTATION ON THE EU TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

In a press release published on 3 May, UNICE supports the transparency initiative by Commissioner Kallas, which acknowledges interest representation to be a legitimate, essential and indispensable source of information for EU policy-making. However, UNICE also urges that unnecessary administrative burden is avoided when this initiative is being shaped. [Read more](#) or contact: [Christian Feustel](#)

EU-AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM TO BE DEVELOPED

UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck participated in a joint brainstorming meeting with EU and African business leaders and Development Commissioner Louis Michel on 2 May in Brussels. UNICE believes that business from both continents need to work together more closely to face up to key development challenges – especially under-investment in Africa. Commissioner Michel agrees and will work closely with UNICE to develop a new EU-African business forum. Contact: [Eoin O'Malley](#)





EUROPEAN INVENTOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Thierry Sueur, Vice-Chairman of UNICE's Patents Working Group, urged for a policy to protect intellectual property as a vital need for Europe in a conference jointly organised by the EPO and the European Commission on 03-04 May 2006 in Brussels. The two-day event focused on the key issues and challenges to develop a competitive patent system for Europe. A special day was dedicated to the patent system in China. The event was accompanied by the European Inventor of the Year awards ceremony to honour the most creative minds on the continent. [Read more](#) or contact: [Ilias Konteas](#)

UNICE SUPPORTS 25% REDUCTION OF BUREAUCRATIC COSTS

UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière has written to Commission President Barroso to warmly support the idea launched by Commission Vice-President Verheugen at the European Conference on Subsidiarity in St. Pölten, Austria, to strive for a 25% reduction of bureaucratic costs for entrepreneurs. This would be another important next step in the process of rendering Community legislation cost-effective by effectively reducing burdens, said Mr Seillière. Information about the size of existing bureaucratic burdens and a quantified goal for the reduction of these burdens will not only greatly help businesses to compete more effectively but it will also raise awareness about the need for cost reductions and generate support for concrete proposals. [Read more](#) or contact: [Erik Berggren](#)

SOCIAL SERVICES DO NOT CONSTITUTE A DISTINCT LEGAL CATEGORY

On 26 April, the Commission published a communication on social services of general interest. UNICE underlines that social services do not constitute a distinct legal category of services of general interest. National governments are free to decide how to organise them but must comply with fundamental EU treaty freedoms, public procurement and state aid rules when delegating tasks to external providers. There is no need for a separate EU legal framework on social services. The non-profit character of such activities can be taken into account within existing EU rules but the publication of a report on social services in 2007 could help clarify the debate. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

UNICE OUTLINES ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND POLICY CHALLENGES IN EUROPE FOR CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

On 28 April, at a conference organised by Chemical Week, Marc Stocker, UNICE Senior Adviser, was invited to present the general economic outlook in Europe. He confirmed that there were burgeoning signs of recovery in the EU, which was currently benefiting from a strong upturn in global manufacturing activity. However, a lack of competitiveness and barriers to more domestically oriented growth continued to hamper prospects in Europe. In this context, it was difficult to imagine that GDP growth could significantly exceed 2%, even during the current recovery phase. He concluded by presenting UNICE's recommendations to overcome the main obstacles to more growth and better jobs in Europe. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marc Stocker](#)