



Wednesday, 24 May 2006

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PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE SPEAKS AT BRUSSELS ECONOMIC FORUM

The Brussels Economic Forum, which took place on 18 and 19 May, is an annual event organised by the Commission's DG ECFIN. It gathers high-level speakers from the political, academic or business world. Participating in a panel on innovation and competition, which was chaired by former Competition Commissioner Mario Monti, President Seillière pointed to the challenges globalisation is posing for Europe in terms of remaining a top location for innovation to happen. He also underlined the need to win the increased global competition for the best brains and talents, indispensable for achieving world-class results in research and innovation. [Read more](#) or contact: [Folker Franz](#)

COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL URGED TO TAKE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON BOARD

In a letter to the Austrian Federal Minister of Economics and Labour and President of the Competitiveness Council, Martin Bartenstein, ahead of the 29-30 May Competitiveness Council, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière raises two important issues: on the one hand the agreement on the Services Directive expected under the Austrian presidency (see article below). On the other hand, UNICE is concerned by the debate on the sustainable development strategy. It is important to recognise that sound economic growth is as indispensable for sustainable development as environmental protection, especially in the current situation of a falling growth potential in the EU. Finally, in an extensive annex, UNICE makes further comments on others items to be discussed at the Competitiveness Council: better regulation, credit agreement for consumers and the 7th Framework Programme. [Read more](#) or contact: [Folker Franz](#)

SERVICES DIRECTIVE: MORE LEGAL CERTAINTY YES, FURTHER WATERING-DOWN NO

In the above-mentioned letter, UNICE urges Members of the Council to save as much added value of the services directive as possible if this proposal is to contribute to the EU growth and jobs strategy. The scope of the directive should not be further reduced and the basis for national restrictions on the freedom to provide services should not be enlarged. In particular, UNICE is opposed to the exclusion of temporary work agencies. The exclusion of labour law and the fact that the posting of workers directive also covers these agencies give good reasons for the inclusion of this sector in the scope, and for it to benefit from provisions on administrative simplification and increased information and transparency. Moreover, the new provisions on applicable law in case of cross-border provision of services, namely articles 16 and 17, remain too vague and will necessitate abundant jurisprudence to clarify their meaning. In order to counterbalance the loss of legal certainty, and to increase transparency and information, UNICE proposes the introduction of a system of notification and a register of the national restrictions that Member States can impose on incoming foreign services in application of article 16. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)



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EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR CSR: WHAT IT IS ABOUT AND HOW TO JOIN

Together with members of the business community and support from business organisations such as UNICE, UEAPME and CSR Europe, the European Commission recently launched the European Alliance for CSR. The Alliance will contribute to the promotion of CSR throughout Europe. It will cast a light on innovative corporate CSR practices, stimulate new ones, further ease private initiatives in this area, and enable networking, the exchange of experience and knowledge and the development of joint projects between companies and their stakeholders. The Alliance is directly addressed to individual businesses. Any business, whatever its size, can become involved and more than fifty companies have so far expressed their support. Read more on [UNICE thematic webpage](#).

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: TRANSNATIONAL?

On 17 May, UNICE participated in a seminar organised by the EU Commission on transnational collective bargaining. For the companies and employer organisation representatives present, the claimed existence of a trend towards the development of transnational collective bargaining at EU level was not based on sound analysis. Beyond strong opposition from employers, the proposals for an EU framework for collective bargaining developed in a Commission-sponsored study were also met with scepticism or caution by many workers and national government representatives present on that day. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

HOW SHOULD IFRS FINANCIAL STATEMENTS BE PRESENTED?

IASB is currently debating how companies' financial statements should best be presented in order to be most useful for investors. UNICE disagrees with the view held by some stakeholders that fundamental reforms of the current reporting model are required, and has therefore expressed its views in a position paper reacting to a recent report by the "CFA Institute for Financial Market Integrity", which advocates substantial reforms to the current model. In addition, UNICE has set up a task force to further prepare the upcoming debate within IASB on the presentation of financial statements. [Read more](#) or contact: [Folker Franz](#)

A GLOBAL APPROACH IS NEEDED ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A UNICE delegation is attending the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Bonn 15-26 May, at which the international framework for combating climate change post-2012 is the main focus. Following the creation in Montreal of a twin-track approach, two separate sessions are being held to discuss the issues with and without non-Kyoto parties. During the discussions, developing countries indicated that they are not willing to accept absolute emission reduction targets during the next commitment period, while some developed countries expressed hesitation to continue with a Kyoto framework in which the main emitters do not take part. On 17 May, Miriam Munnich, UNICE Adviser, delivered a statement on behalf of business and industry stressing the need to develop a global approach to combating the risks of climate change that involves all countries and regions and underlined the importance of involving the business community in that approach. Contact: [Miriam Munnich](#)