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UNICE IN MADRID

On 30 May and 1 June 2006, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière and Secretary General Philippe de Buck paid a visit to the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE) in Madrid. After an interesting dinner to conclude the Spain-US Round Table, in the presence of Spanish Minister for Economy, Mr Pedro Solbes, UNICE President and Secretary General met the CEOE Board for a deep discussion on current European dossiers. The visit also included a series of interviews with Spanish business publications. Contact: [Philippe de Buck](#)

COMPETITIVENESS, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICIES TO BE MORE INTEGRATED

At its meeting on 2 June, at the end of a process in which 120 experts were involved, the High Level Group adopted a structured list of clear and detailed recommendations regarding the actions to be taken to integrate competitiveness, energy and environment policies more effectively. In particular, the document clearly highlights the urgent need to deepen the internal electricity and gas markets – important in itself but also essential for the smooth functioning of the European Emissions Trading Scheme. The High Level Group also encourages the Commission to facilitate long-term agreements and partnerships between energy producers and consumers in a manner compatible with competition rules. UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière emphasised the following points: unbundling of production and transport; impact of competition conditions on energy markets from the angle of good operation of ETS; possibility of auctioning emission allowances in the framework of ETS. Contact: [Daniel Cloquet](#)

EUROPEAN BUSINESS MEETS CHINESE AUTHORITY ON TRADEMARK PROTECTION

On 6 June, UNICE met Vice-Minister Li Dongsheng of the Chinese State Administration for Industry and Commerce. The meeting provided a good opportunity for European business participants to understand the progress made by Chinese authorities in trademark protection enforcement and to express the concerns of European companies in that field. UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck stressed the readiness of European business to contribute constructively with the Chinese authorities to working together in the interest of European business but also for Chinese economic development. Contact: [Carlos Gonzalez-Finat](#) or [Ilias Konteas](#)

IS THERE YET A EUROPEAN SHAREHOLDER?

On 6 June, Philippe de Buck, UNICE's Secretary General, participated in a conference organised by EUROFI, taking part in a panel entitled "Is there yet a *European Shareholder*?". He reiterated UNICE's view that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the challenges enterprises are faced with. Flexibility is necessary for companies because they need to take into account their size, stage of development, shareholding structure, the complexity of the risks associated with their activities and their management practices. Contact: [Jérôme P. Chauvin](#)



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UNICE INVITES CONTRACTING AUTHORITIES TO FACILITATE SME ACCESS TO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Recent estimates show that public procurement accounts for around 16% of the EU's GDP, thus equalling 1,500 billion euros. However, SMEs, more than larger companies, face barriers that prevent them from fully participating in public procurement markets. UNICE therefore invites contracting authorities to facilitate SME access to public procurement and in this context recommends, for example: advertise all small public procurement contracts on a centralised national website; split the contract into smaller lots, thus encouraging participation of small and specialised organisations; encourage SMEs to form consortia and working groups for the participation in larger contracts; standardise documents; pay on time; refrain from making the availability of electronic catalogues a precondition for participation in electronic procurement. [Read more](#) or contact: [Vincent McGovern](#) on public procurement or [Natascha Waltke](#) on SME issues.

WORKING TIME: UNICE STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE OPT-OUT

Despite intensive discussions around a compromise proposal prepared by the Austrian presidency, the Social Affairs Council did not reach agreement on how to revise the working time directive at its meeting on 1 June 2006. In their contacts with employment and social affairs ministries during the days preceding the Council meeting, UNICE and its member federations recalled the importance of maintaining the opt-out. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

UNICE AND ETUC PRESENT SOCIAL DIALOGUE WORK PROGRAMME IN PARIS

UNICE and ETUC presented the work programme of the EU social dialogue 2006-2008 during a seminar organised by the French foundation "Europe et Sociétés" in Paris on 31 May 2006. They emphasised that the role of the European social dialogue is to accompany key European projects and deal with pan-European issues. It is not a substitute for social-partner actions in Member States on national issues. The new work programme aims at supporting the European growth and jobs strategy. "Improving the functioning of labour markets is essential to get Europe out of its present crisis", recalled Thérèse de Liedekerke, Director of UNICE Social Affairs Department. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

SOCIAL PARTNERS EXCHANGE EXPERIENCES ON PROJECTS FUNDED BY EQUAL

On 30 May UNICE participated in a seminar organised by the European Commission to exchange views on the results of projects funded by EQUAL – a community initiative of the European Social Fund. The projects, which in their vast majority are initiated or supported by social partners, seek concrete solutions to respond to the challenges of restructuring, ageing of the workforce, equal opportunities for women and men, lifelong learning and integration of disadvantaged groups on labour markets. UNICE recalled the urgency of taking actions to achieve better functioning labour markets in Europe and explained in detail how it intends to work on all these issues, in cooperation with the European trade unions. Contact: [Jeanne Schmitt](#)