



Wednesday, 12 July 2006

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THE NEXT STEP FORWARD FOR RUSSIA AND THE EU IN GREATER EUROPE

UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière visited St. Petersburg on 6-7 July to participate in the European Business Leaders' Conference. In his speech the President stressed UNICE's support for negotiations to conclude an EU-Russia Free Trade Agreement as a tool to achieve concrete economic integration between the EU and Russia. The agreement must cover as broad as possible a range of issues, including not only tariff and non-tariff barriers to industrial goods and services but also investment, trade facilitation, intellectual property rights, competition policy and energy. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

EU-CHINA: FOR A BALANCED BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

On 7 July, participating in a conference on trade and investment in China chaired by EU Commissioner Mandelson, UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck supported balanced trading relations between China and the EU as key for the economic development of both sides. It is crucial that competition in China is fair and based on the full implementation of economic and trade rules. UNICE welcomes progress in economic reforms in China and encourages it to pursue transformation. European companies are still facing trade barriers and legal uncertainties in China, and the European Commission is in a unique position to ensure that EU business can benefit from opportunities in China. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Gonzalez-Finat](#)

UNICE KEEPS ITS STRONG SUPPORT FOR AMBITIOUS RESULTS IN THE WTO

On 4 and 5 July UNICE met senior European Commission officials including Director General for Trade, Mr David O'Sullivan. The WTO DDA negotiations were at the heart of the discussions and UNICE urged for leadership to achieve successful and ambitious results in the negotiations by the agreed end-of-July deadline. Discussions also tackled the external competitiveness of EU business. UNICE supports the Commission's efforts to promote economic growth through improved market access and better coordination between EU internal and external policies. Contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS CITIZENS

Responding to the Commission White Paper on European communication policy, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière has underlined that it is more critical than ever that Europe better explains why reform measures for more competitiveness will eventually be in the interest of society as a whole. With Europe in a governance deadlock and facing serious difficulties in modernising, UNICE, the Confederation of European business, supports investing in a European-wide communication strategy. Focus must be on key policy priorities and the necessary solutions, and on positive achievements of the Union: peace, the single market, the euro, Erasmus programme, infrastructure networks, etc. Europe must not be the problem but part of the solution. [Read more](#) or contact: [Maria Fernanda Fau](#)

ACCESS TO GAS NETWORKS – CHARGING PRINCIPLES

UNICE has submitted comments to the Commission on conditions for the access to the natural gas transmission networks. This is UNICE's contribution to the work of the consultative Madrid Forum on implementation of liberalisation of the European gas market. [Read more](#) or contact: [Daniel Cloquet](#)



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REVERSING EUROPE'S PRODUCTIVITY DECLINE REQUIRES REFORMS ON PRODUCT AND LABOUR MARKETS

A meeting with the social partners was held in Helsinki on 6 July 2006 prior to the informal meeting of the Social Affairs Council. Discussions focussed on how to respond to the challenges of globalisation by improving productivity and developing quality in working life. The Secretary General of UNICE, Philippe de Buck, stressed that the productivity growth advantage experienced by some countries was closely connected to lower barriers to trade and competition which stimulate investment, innovation and technological catch-up. Hence the need to complete the internal market and introduce the necessary labour market reforms.

[Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

EUROPEAN BUSINESS EXPLAINS ITS PRIORITIES TO MARGARITIS SCHINAS

On 5 July, a UNICE delegation led by its Secretary General Philippe de Buck met Margaritis Schinas, Head of cabinet of Commissioner Kyprianou, to discuss EU consumer policy. Philippe de Buck explained UNICE's priorities concerning growth and jobs, governance and better regulation, further integration of the internal market, fight against protectionism and reaping the full benefits of enlargement. He also pointed out the urgency for the EU to move forward and break the institutional deadlock. Concrete dossiers such as EU contract law, the review of the consumer acquis and the revised EU Programme for Consumer policy were also discussed. Contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)

UNICE SUPPORTS COMMISSION IN EFFORTS TO PROVIDE OFFICIALS WITH INSIGHT INTO BUSINESS LIFE

DG Enterprise and Industry has launched an "Enterprise Experience Programme" aimed at providing its officials with the opportunity to gain some insight into business life and discover SME realities via a one-week traineeship in a company located in a reasonably accessible area in the EU-25 and employing fewer than 250 employees. UNICE is supportive of this initiative and, together with UEAPME and Eurochambres, will help to identify potential host companies. [Read more](#) or contact: [Natascha Waltke](#)

In a similar vein DG Energy and Transport have also begun thinking about a placement programme and have approached UNICE accordingly. DG TREN is looking to establish a programme of short-term placements of limited duration (7 to 10 days) for DG TREN personnel with European companies (large, small, public and/or private) which have transport and/or energy arms. Contact: [Vincent McGovern](#)

UNICE IN DISAGREEMENT WITH IASB ON THE FUTURE PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

On 6 July UNICE experts met Mr Jan Engström, member of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) to discuss a current IASB project to make significant changes to the presentation of financial statements, i.e. balance sheet and income statement that companies have to present to the public. European business believes that most of the proposed changes would lessen the value of financial statements for investors and other stakeholders. The meeting underlined UNICE's good working relations with IASB, and Mr Engström asked for further UNICE input on the issue of financial statements for the future. There will be follow-up meetings with IASB on the subject in autumn. Contact: [Folker Franz](#)