



Wednesday, 25 October 2006

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PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE VISITS NORWAY

In a two-day visit to Oslo, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière was hosted by NHO President Mr Øverland and NHO Secretary General Mr Finn Bergesen jr. for a complete overview of the priorities of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises, mainly focusing on energy. President Seillière participated in a roundtable discussion with CEOs of Norwegian companies to share experiences on the challenges of doing business in Europe. Contacts with the Norwegian press were also arranged as well as a fruitful and interesting meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Mr Jens Stoltenberg, to whom Mr Seillière presented UNICE's main priorities and our position on energy policy. [Read more](#) or contact: [Philippe de Buck](#)

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT: FLEXICURITY AND REVISION OF THE WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

At the extraordinary meeting of the Tripartite Social Summit convened by the Finnish presidency on the eve of the informal European Council meeting in Lahti on 20 October 2006, discussions focused on the link between innovation and flexicurity. The President of UNICE's Finnish member federation EK, Mr Taxell, led the employers' delegation. Getting Europe out of the negative trade-off between employment creation and productivity growth is possible by introducing necessary reforms on labour markets. During a working lunch with the social partners on the same day, Minister Tarja Filatov presented the Finnish presidency compromise proposals on the revision of the working time directive. As a preliminary assessment, UNICE welcomed the fact that the inactive part of on-call time would not be considered as working time. The possibility of extending the reference period from 4 to 12 months by collective agreement or national legislation is also a step in the right direction. However, maintenance of the opt-out seemed to be more of an optical illusion rather than a reality. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

INNOVATION NEEDS CONCRETE ACTION AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT!

In advance of the informal summit in Lahti on 20 October, President Seillière communicated some UNICE views on innovation to Finnish Prime Minister and Council President, Matti Vanhanen. While welcoming the decision of the Finnish presidency to make innovation policy a Presidency priority issue, he highlighted a number of key issues that require political attention. President Seillière identified the need for a more open relationship between the public and private sectors on innovation. He supported the principle of involvement of the private sector in the organisation and setting of the strategy for the EIT, and the need for connection between this proposal and the European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives. And as a final point he, once again, pointed out the need for a clearly defined and consistent policy to protect intellectual property in order to boost innovation and competitiveness. [Read more](#) or contact: [Vincent McGovern](#)



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LIBERAL TRADE WINDS BLOWING FROM THE BALTIC STATES

Adrian van den Hoven, International Relations Director at UNICE, participated in a Commission/DG Trade sponsored [conference](#) on EU Trade Policy in Riga, Latvia on 20-21 October. The conference aimed to increase Baltic country business, trade union and NGO interest in trade policy-making and to exchange views with representatives of the Commission and civil society organisations in Brussels. The key issues raised by Baltic country civil society representatives concerned the WTO Doha Development Agenda and bilateral trade relations with Russia. UNICE presented the trade policy opportunities and challenges for the future with Russia – a key trade and investment partner for the Baltic countries. Baltic country understanding and commitment to a liberal EU trade policy was expressed by a distinct majority of the participants in the conference – regardless of the type of organisation they were representing. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DETERMINED TO WRAP UP THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE

On 23 October, the Parliament's Internal Market Committee (IMCO) endorsed the Council's common position with no amendments and issued its second reading opinion on the services directive. This will be followed by the parliament's final vote in the November plenary session where no further changes are expected. IMCO decided not to introduce any modifications to the Council's compromise text that was largely based on the first reading opinion by the Parliament. This is in line with UNICE's position that urged Members of the Parliament not to unravel the difficult compromises concluded in first reading. UNICE will follow closely the end of the legislative process and hopes its adoption will be finally completed by November. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)

UNICE DISCUSSES WITH TRUSTEES ON FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE OF IASB

On 19 October, the International Accounting Working Group of UNICE held a constructive meeting with high-level representatives of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), which sets the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) mandatory for EU-listed companies. The IASB delegation was led by Trustee Sir Bryan Nicholson. In the presence of Pierre Delsaux and other Commission officials from DG Internal Market, UNICE unambiguously voiced European companies' dissatisfaction with IASB governance. The Trustees promised to heed this call and respond to companies' specific concerns. The IASB is currently looking for a more stable financing solution for its organisation and asks for support from European companies. Contact: [Folker Franz](#)