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PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE IN MADRID

At a conference organised by The Economist in Madrid on 22 November, UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière drew a parallel between the Spanish and the EU-wide innovation challenge. He recalled that weak productivity growth in Europe is the main factor hampering growth prospects and our capacity to face the challenges ahead, including demographic ageing. He drew attention to four specific areas of improvement to make Europe more innovative and productive: reinforced competition, stronger technological infrastructures, better education and more flexible labour markets. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marc Stocker](#)

INVEST IN AFRICA STRATEGY: EU-AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM

On 16-17 November, UNICE participated in the EU-Africa Business Forum which brought together business and company representatives from the EU and Africa, Commission representatives and Development Commissioner Louis Michel to debate how to improve the investment climate in Africa. The Forum highlighted positive examples of investment, corporate responsibility and infrastructure public-private partnerships in Africa. UNICE Secretary General Philippe de Buck and Director for International Relations Adrian van den Hoven co-chaired the Economic Partnership Agreement panel with their African counterpart Azad Jeetun of the Pan-African Confederation of Employers. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

REFORM OF LABOUR MARKETS NEEDS FLEXIBILITY AND NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

On 22 November the Commission published a Green Paper on labour law, aimed at stimulating an EU-wide debate on how to adapt labour law to ensure flexibility as well as security. For UNICE, the competence to modernise labour law rests primarily with national players. This is the reason why UNICE strongly opposes suggestions of an EU-wide definition of "worker". Flexibility on the labour market is the only way to create more jobs in the European Union. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

INTERNAL MARKET: COMPLETION, EFFICIENCY, ENFORCEMENT, AWARENESS

On 17 November, a UNICE delegation led by Philippe de Buck met Thierry Stoll, Deputy Director-General of DG Internal Market, and members of his team. The discussion focused on the recently adopted directive on services, the ongoing review of the Internal Market policy and related-issues such as public procurement, intellectual property rights, financial services or company law. UNICE highlighted the importance of the current thinking on the future Internal Market policy, and asked to be able to participate in the hearing on the Internal Market on 29 November. Contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)

INDUSTRY TRILATERAL HOLDS DISCUSSIONS IN JAPAN

The Industry Trilateral, which brings together UNICE with US (IPO/AIPLA) and Japanese (JIPA) intellectual property organisations, held its 7th meeting in Japan on 14 November 2006. UNICE was represented by Jérôme Chauvin together with a European business delegation. The Industry Trilateral had also a separate meeting with the Trilateral Patent Offices (EPO, USPTO and JPO) on 16 November 2006. Progress was achieved in discussions regarding a common patent application format with the adoption of a joint report. Jérôme Chauvin also met representatives of the European Commission and Japanese business organisations. Contact: [Jérôme Chauvin](#)



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IMPROVED COMMITMENT TO MUTUAL RECOGNITION WOULD FACILITATE CROSS-BORDER BUSINESS

The principle of mutual recognition is enshrined in the Treaty and confirmed by case law. It implies that a product which is marketed legally in one Internal Market Member State can freely be sold in another. However, the principle does not function as well as it could in practice. The Commission is considering a directive to clarify its implications. UNICE supports this initiative and has developed a position stressing the areas that need to be dealt with and improved. For example the lack of awareness on the side of public authorities and business operators, uncertainty with regard to content and interpretation of the principle and the lack of efficient dispute avoidance mechanisms. [Read more](#) or contact: [Vincent McGovern](#)

IS EUROPE EQUIPPED WITH EFFICIENT AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS?

On the eve of the Education Council meeting on 14 November, the Finnish presidency met the social partners to discuss the status of education in Europe. The recently published 2006 report "Employment in Europe" confirms that the skills level of the European working population is rising. However, many people still remain unemployed because they do not have the competences required on the labour market. Moreover, with only 20% of the population having completed tertiary education, compared with 39% in the USA, Europe continues to lag behind its main competitors. While agreeing that all levels of education and training needed to be improved, UNICE pleaded for all the necessary attention to be paid to the modernisation of universities. Contact: [Matthew Higham](#)

UNICE UPDATES EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE WORK PROGRAMME

On 14 November, the Employment Committee (EMCO) met the European social partners for an exchange of views on the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, flexicurity and people at the margins of the labour markets. EMCO members were also updated by the social partners on the implementation of the Social Dialogue Work Programme. Constituting the groundwork for further initiatives in 2006-2008, UNICE highlighted the importance of the social partners' joint analysis of the key challenges facing Europe's labour markets. Improving the functioning of European labour markets is essential and flexicurity can play a key role in this respect. European social partners would make a real difference if they were able to make a joint description of the key components of a genuine flexicurity approach ahead of the Spring European Council in March 2007. Contact: [Steven D'Haeseleer](#)

COHESION POLICY PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS

In view of the informal meeting of regional policy Ministers in Brussels on 21 November, Philippe de Buck has sent a [letter](#) to Mr Manninen, Finnish Minister for regional and municipal policy and Chairman of the meeting. In his letter, UNICE's Secretary General highlighted that the priority should be to make the Community cohesion policy more supportive of competitiveness-enhancing processes. In their national strategic reference frameworks, now in the drafting process, member states should clearly demonstrate that a large proportion of funding will be spent on research, innovation and human capital and that this will outperform previous achievements. Involvement of business in the drafting process could generate more competitive outcomes. [Read more](#) or contact: [Eva Maria Revilla](#)