



Wednesday, 29 November 2006

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PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE OUTLINES POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE RECOVERY

The political meeting of the Macro-Economic Dialogue between social partners, the Commission, ECOFIN Council, Eurogroup and the European Central Bank took place on 27 November in Brussels. UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière said that the current recovery should not be taken for granted and emphasised four priorities to sustain it over the years ahead: (1) the ECB and Eurogroup should play attention to exchange rate risks; (2) no sustained recovery is achievable without a productivity revival; (3) the upturn must be used to its full extent to make progress with fiscal consolidation; and (4) wage developments have to remain consistent with productivity trends and price stability objectives. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marc Stocker](#)

EU-RUSSIA: TOWARDS A STRATEGIC ECONOMIC AGREEMENT

On 22-23 November, Philippe de Buck represented UNICE at the EU-Russia Industrialists Round Table in Helsinki, Finland. At the meeting, UNICE and its Russian partner – RSPP, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs – presented a [joint paper](#) calling for the launch of new bilateral negotiations to create a common economic area based on free trade and national treatment of investment between the EU and Russia. The paper served as the basis for the IRT Conclusions and was presented to the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the President of the Russian Federation on 24 November. Philippe de Buck explained the UNICE-RSPP objectives for a future agreement to EU and Russian companies during the Business Panel session. [Read more](#) or contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

RESTART THE WTO DDA STRATEGY: UNICE MEETS FISCHER-BOEL CABINET

As part of its strategy to press for the resumption of WTO DDA negotiations, UNICE Director for International Relations, Adrian van den Hoven, and UNICE Chairman for WTO Agriculture Negotiations, Willem Jan Laan, met Mr Borchardt, responsible for WTO DDA negotiations in Commissioner Fischer-Boel's cabinet, on 21 November. At the meeting, Mr Borchardt explained the complex challenges involved in the agricultural negotiations but signalled the EU's willingness to remain fully engaged. In particular, he highlighted the challenges in EU-US negotiations over domestic subsidies and tariffs as well as US-India negotiations over sensitive agricultural products. UNICE reiterated its commitment to support the Doha Round and urged the Commission to balance all interests – agricultural, industrial and services – in its negotiating positions. UNICE and Mr Borchardt agreed that closer contacts between business and agricultural interests should be developed to overcome future challenges. Contact: [Adrian van den Hoven](#)

UNICE DEBATES EURO AREA ECONOMY WITH INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

At a European Policy Centre conference on 28 November, UNICE Senior Economic Advisor Marc Stocker discussed the state of the euro area economy with IMF director Michael Deppler and ETUC Deputy Secretary General Reiner Hoffmann. UNICE welcomed signs of the recovery becoming more broadly based, but warned against the risks of complacency. As structural difficulties become less apparent in the recovery, there is a real danger of reform slowdown. These have been typical mistakes of the past, which have led in recent years to weak growth and growing imbalances within the euro area. Policy-makers must show that they have collectively learned from these mistakes, and that reforms will not be put aside until the next downturn. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marc Stocker](#)



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A BALANCED EU CONSUMER POLICY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO MORE COMPETITIVENESS

On 24 November, a UNICE delegation led by Philippe de Buck met Robert Madelin, Director-General of DG SANCO, and members of his team. The discussion focused on better regulation, the forthcoming review of the consumer acquis communautaire, European contract law and health issues. Mr Erik Jonnaert, Chairman of UNICE's working group on Consumer/Marketing also took part in this meeting and expanded on UNICE's views for a EU balanced consumer policy. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY MUST BECOME AN ISSUE FOR THE COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

In view of the Competitiveness Council next week, President Seillière sent a letter to Mauri Pekkarinen, Finnish Minister of Trade and Industry and current President of the Competitiveness Council. He urged the Competitiveness Council to start formally cooperating with other Council formations on climate change policy given its serious implications for the competitiveness of European industry. President Seillière also encouraged the Finnish Presidency to continue raising the profile of [innovation](#) policy in Europe by defining strategic priorities for action and underpinning them with a concrete timetable. On the EU better regulation project, he expressed concern about slow progress in achieving real alleviations of the regulatory burden. He called for a 25% target for reducing administrative costs by 2012. [Read more](#) or contact: [Folker Franz](#)

80% OF WORKERS SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS...

The International Labour Organisation and the European Commission organised a conference on working conditions in the enlarged Europe on 24 November 2006. Discussing the origins of and responses to new labour market risks, UNICE recalled that 80% of workers are very satisfied or satisfied with their working conditions according to the Dublin Foundation. The best way to help workers to progress on the labour market is to facilitate job creation and support their efforts to enhance their skills. Unemployment remains the most important labour market risk. Flexible forms of work are part of the solution. Contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

AND 80% OF WORKERS SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The Commission launched an official consultation of the social partners on reconciliation of work and family life in October 2006. UNICE's reply to this consultation was approved by its Social Affairs Committee on 23 November 2006. A comprehensive legislative framework is already in place at EU level. Numerous social partners' initiatives have been and continue to be taken both at EU level and in Member States to help individuals to combine work and family life. These efforts are having an effect. According to the Dublin Foundation, 80% of workers are satisfied with their work-life balance. There is no need for legislative action in this field. [Read more](#) or contact: [Jeanne Schmitt](#)



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TAILOR-MADE CSR POLICIES BENEFIT SOCIETY AT LARGE

At the Finnish EU Presidency conference on 22 November on corporate social responsibility and innovation, Emmanuel Julien, Chair of the UNICE CSR working group, highlighted that tailor-made CSR policies can contribute to enhancing the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of those individual businesses which conceive and implement them, and also benefit their stakeholders and society at large. Regarding the dialogue and cooperation between companies and their internal and external stakeholders, he stated that in the case of CSR, drawing a clear line between external and internal stakeholders was losing relevance. When developing their CSR policies, companies speak to all relevant stakeholders. Contact: [Natascha Waltke](#)

FOR A COST-EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE EUROPEAN SUPPORT SCHEME FOR RENEWABLE ENERGIES

In view of the Commission's publication of the Long-term Renewables Road Map, UNICE has published a position with recommendations to move towards further harmonisation of existing national support schemes for electricity production based on renewable energies, with the long-term aim of creating a unified and market-based European scheme. The support must lead to smooth integration of electricity based on renewable energies in the supply system, be compatible with the internal market and not lead to high costs and dysfunctional power markets, which is generally the case today. [Read more](#) or contact: [Miriam Munnich](#)

UNICE SUPPORTS EPLA IN PATENT DISCUSSIONS

In the context of the ongoing debate on the future patent strategy in Europe, UNICE addressed a letter to COREPER to reiterate its support to the European Patent Litigation Agreement (EPLA) for the future patent litigation system in Europe. UNICE asked Member States to give the Commission a clear mandate to participate in the EPLA negotiations. A French proposal to give competence to a European court to litigate European patents was not supported. [Read more](#) or contact: [Ilias Konteas](#)

SARBANES-OXLEY ACT AND DEREGISTRATION: EUROPEAN BUSINESS KEEPS PRESSURE ON SEC

The US Stock Exchange Commission is expected to take a final decision on the revision of Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002 and deregistration of foreign private issuers listed in the US on 13 December. Compliance with the provision on internal control has proved extremely burdensome for EU companies. In addition, the current rules do not allow EU companies to delist as long as they have a certain number of US shareholders. UNICE therefore advocates the exclusion of institutional investors when determining the percentage of US shareholders in the companies' public float. In this context and reiterating UNICE's position on these topics, a letter was sent to the SEC Chairman Cox on 28 November. [Read more](#) or contact: [Marta Alegrias](#)