PRESS RELEASE

UNICE

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UNICE WILL NOT OPT FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

UNICE President François Perigot announced today, Monday 16 March 1998, that UNICE will not at this time embark on negotiations with ETUC (the European Trade Union Confederation) on information and consultation of employees in national companies.

"Our member Federations are virtually unanimous in their conviction that the European Union should not intervene in such a matter, which has no transnational implications" said Mr Perigot. "We have always accepted that effective information and consultation of employees in companies of all sizes are requirements of good management, but the ways in which this is organised in purely national companies must be left for decision or negotiations at the local level. There is no reason for the Union to intervene."

Mr Perigot recalled that information and consultation of employees where European-level intervention is justified are already regulated by the directives on European Works Councils, on mass dismissals, on transfers of enterprises and by legislation on health protection and safety at work.

"Moreover, a substantial body of statutory and negotiated instruments exists in 13 out of the 15 Member States" added Mr Perigot. "In Ireland and in the United Kingdom, the establishment of information and consultation procedures is currently the subject of discussions with the legislator or between social partners. There is therefore no valid justification for a new intervention at the level of the Union."

Employers across Europe are very uneasy, not only because the subject on which the Commission plans to propose legislation is clearly of a national character, but also because practically all the comments they put forward in the first consultation phase were ignored, without any justification. They therefore question the manner in which European social policy is being developed and more specifically, how the social dialogue is being promoted. UNICE intends to discuss this with the Commission at the earliest opportunity.

In conclusion, Mr Perigot stressed that the fact of not embarking at this time on negotiations on information and consultation in national companies in no way casts any doubts on UNICE's willingness to occupy its place in European negotiations, as provided by the Maastricht Social Protocol. Indeed, UNICE will soon open negotiations with ETUC on fixed-term contracts.

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