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UNICE TO START TALKS ON TEMPORARY AGENCY WORK

Today, UNICE has decided to open negotiations with ETUC on temporary agency work. This decision follows two previous agreements: one on part-time work signed in June 1996 and one on fixed-term work signed in March 1999. It must be seen in the context of an overall policy to improve the functioning of labour markets in Europe.

UNICE President Georges Jacobs states: "In many Member States, temporary agency work is still constrained by out-dated restrictions. Employers are prepared to discuss how to avoid unfair discrimination of temporary agency workers. However, if trade unions are serious about putting Europe back on the track of full employment, they must recognise that temporary agency work is an integral part of well functioning labour markets and part of the solution to Europe's problems. Promoting the free use of temporary agency work throughout Europe would be an essential contribution from the social partners to the efforts to increase employment rates as recently agreed by the European Council in Lisbon".

Temporary work responds both to companies and workers needs. It is used in companies of all sizes as a way to deal with peaks of activity or to have access to specialised skills needed for a limited period of time. "Temporary agency workers are a particularly precious help in newly created companies at an early stage of development and in SMEs", says UNICE President Jacobs. "For job seekers, it increases employability and can serve as a stepping stone to permanent jobs".

In Europe, the average number of temporary workers assigned through an agency on any day amounts to more than 2 million. This represents approximately 7 million people working through employment agencies each year. More than fifty percent of the temporary agency workers who look for a permanent position do find one while on assignment or shortly afterwards.