



THE VOICE OF BUSINESS IN EUROPE

Brussels, 25 May 2000

**UNICE BENCHMARKING REPORT 2000:
CLOSE EUROPE'S INNOVATION GAP ASAP**

UNICE - representing more than 16 million enterprises in Europe - today launched its new Benchmarking Report on "Stimulating Creativity and Innovation in Europe". This Report clearly shows that **Europe is suffering from an 'innovation deficit' compared with the USA and Japan**. Companies in the EU have been slower to enter new markets and to introduce new products. This innovation gap contributes to Europe lagging behind in competitiveness, living standards, economic welfare and employment.

UNICE's President Georges Jacobs warned today that **"the EU risks falling further behind if necessary actions by both governments and companies to boost innovation in Europe are not taken rapidly"**. UNICE urges governments of EU member states to raise awareness of the need for creativity and innovation for Europe's economic and social well-being. **"European regulators need a dramatic change in attitude towards innovation"**, said President Jacobs. Innovators who take risks should get more support, mainly with regard to financing access and (over)regulation.

The Single Market must be completed. Liberalisation of financial services needs to be ready by 2003. UNICE calls on the EU to remove obstacles to innovation and market entry. Regulations that slow down time-to-market, create uncertainty or increase development costs - especially in the field of biotechnology - must be reformed. UNICE asks for **rapid adoption of the Community patent**. The Benchmarking Report shows that costs for patents are up to 15 times higher in the EU than in the USA. "This is unacceptable, especially for SME's", Georges Jacobs stated.

"UNICE is pleased that innovation has - finally - been put at the top of the agenda by the heads of EU states and government at the Lisbon summit. Especially the fact that benchmarking best-practice policies is now accepted as a tool to improve Europe's economic performance, can be seen as a major contribution of UNICE to this important debate", said President Jacobs. **But the time for debate is now over. Now is the time for action**. UNICE will continue monitoring progress in all those areas regularly and contributing to **a business climate in Europe that is conducive to innovation and growth**".

The UNICE Benchmarking Report is now available on its website: www.unice.org

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