
PRESS RELEASE



UNICE

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 5 July 2000

**UNICE WELCOMES POSITIVE MOVE TOWARDS
CREATION OF A COMMUNITY PATENT**

At a time when innovation is acknowledged as a key element of economic and employment growth, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) very much welcomes the European Commission proposal to create a Community patent. The success of the Community trademark has proved the need for and efficiency of Community instruments to protect intellectual property rights. Adoption of a Community Patent is the next logical step towards further completion of the Internal Market in the field of intellectual property.

As shown in the recently adopted UNICE benchmarking report on innovation, the current system for obtaining and maintaining patents in Europe is less supportive of innovation than in the US and Japan in terms of time and costs. The average cost of patenting an invention in eight countries of Europe is Euro 30,000 (of which almost 40% is taken up by translations), compared with Euro 5,000 in the US. The current legal arrangements are also a hurdle standing in the way of companies wanting to reap the fruit of the R&D activities, and in particular SMEs. Urgent action was therefore needed in this field.

“The Commission proposal is a first step in the right direction. Companies and in particular SMEs need a Community patent that is cheap and rapid to obtain. This dossier must now progress rapidly” says Dirk Hudig, Secretary General of UNICE.

The Commission proposal is seen as a direct follow-up to the Lisbon Summit and UNICE hopes very much that Member States will now transform their declarations into action by supporting this ambitious proposal that could give the EU a system to encourage innovation that can be compared with what exists in Japan or in the USA.

There is room for improvement of the proposal but the Commission has chosen the ambitious approach that was needed in this field. UNICE will now study in detail the content of the proposal and will come up with suggestions to make sure the proposal does not fall short of meeting users' needs especially for SMEs.

UNICE therefore calls upon Member States and the European Parliament to support the Commission proposal and to allow rapid progress on this dossier.

For further information, contact: Jérôme P. Chauvin (32 2- 237 65 51)