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UNICE SUPPORTS THE CONCLUSIONS OF LISBON AND STOCKHOLM IN FAVOUR OF A FULL LIBERALISATION OF POSTAL SERVICES

Business activities generate more than 85 % of postal services in Europe. Therefore, UNICE supports the efforts of the European Commission and of some Member States, to speed up the process of dismantling of the postal service's monopoly.

Full liberalisation of the postal services should be achieved in 2007.

Such efforts are fully in line with the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council (23/24 March 2000). The goal of full liberalisation in this field of activity should be reaffirmed in Stockholm and be endorsed by the European Parliament.

In the meantime, all the postal operators have to adapt rapidly to customers' demands and to the international dimension of their activity. They have to cope with market developments, which requires better quality and a compliance with technological changes.

The remaining monopolistic situation of the incumbents in most Member States for letter packets, slows down their adaptation process, which has counterproductive effects for their customers as well as for themselves.

According to UNICE, full opening of the postal market to competition would have no effect on public service obligations. Such obligations can be fulfilled by both public and private operators, through tenders based on specifications.

Moreover, Member States should bear in mind the evolution of the postal and express courier services, due to the fast development of e-business in the global economy. This fundamental evolution makes it necessary to open totally all crossborder postal services to competition throughout the European Union, before the end of 2003, together with all direct mail activities and the national postal packets above 50 g. This particular need for liberalisation is market-driven. The current regime forms an obstacle for the postal operators to comply with the needs of their customers, i.e. the possibility to provide door-to-door delivery on a cross-border level.

The compromise achieved in the Council of Telecoms Ministers, in december 2000, i.e. a limit of 150 g., is totally insufficient and would be detrimental to the future of the postal market in Europe. It would shift any further progress in the liberalisation process into the distant future.

UNICE insists also on the need of transparency as to the activities of the public postal operators in markets which are already open to competition, since those companies still enjoy a monopolistic situation in their core business, i.e. the letter. Cross-subsidiation practices should be avoided by all means possible.