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EUROPEAN BUSINESS FEARS FRAGMENTED TELECOM MARKET

Telecommunications Ministers will be holding the key to a European Single Market in telecommunications when reviewing the EU communications legislation at their next Council meeting on 6 December. UNICE, the voice of 16 million companies in Europe, is concerned that there will be no Single Telecom Market, unless ministers decide to make changes to their Council Common Position, in particular a provision (article 6) in Europe's future Telecommunications Framework Directive. UNICE supports the idea that the European Commission would retain the ultimate power to require a national regulator to amend or withdraw a proposed measure that would be in contradiction with EU rules. In UNICE's view, greater flexibility inherent in the proposed new Framework Directive has to be balanced by a basic guarantee of consistency at EU level.

UNICE believes that there is no obvious benefit to business or users in having to comply with fifteen different sets of rules, and up to twenty-five or twenty-seven in the near future. Such a decentralised framework would be a barrier to pan-European services, and hence contrary to the aims set at the landmark Lisbon Summit of 2000.

In the light of continuing discussions between the institutions, UNICE would like to re-emphasise its commitment to the Single Market principle. UNICE urges Council to look again at its Common Position and seek a compromise which ensures that the right level of checks and balances are maintained in the new Framework.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 33 central industrial and employers federations from 26 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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