

5 March 2002

BUSINESS BENCHMARKS BARCELONA SUMMIT

With less than two weeks to go before heads of state and government gather in Barcelona to assess progress made in making Europe the most competitive economic region, UNICE has today issued its own analysis of the situation. "Since Lisbon, the EU's relative performance has been poor", reckons Philippe de Buck, UNICE's Secretary General. "European business calls on Barcelona to revitalise the Lisbon process. Why? – Had we grown at the same pace as the US over the past 10 years, our GDP would be roughly 17% higher."

In its report, UNICE concentrates on five areas: promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, providing the necessary skills in flexible labour markets, building essential infrastructure for the Internal Market, liberalising markets for financial services, and ensuring a balanced approach to sustainable development.

- **Innovation and entrepreneurship:** In order to have a competitive, knowledge-based economy, Member States must recognise Europe's potential in the areas of science and high technology, and provide a legislative environment in which this can flourish.
- **Skills in flexible labour markets:** Labour market reforms must support lifelong learning strategies so as to translate economic growth into employment.
- **Essential infrastructure for the Internal Market:** Europe needs integrated and interoperable networks that are open and competitive. The Barcelona summit should provide new impetus for the full opening-up of energy, transport, postal and telecommunications networks.
- **Financial Services:** Governments must increase their efforts to push the financial services action plan measures.
- **Sustainable Development:** The Barcelona summit should uphold the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. In addition, the Barcelona summit should provide the impetus for wide regulatory reform to improve the quality of EU regulatory activity.

"The Lisbon process will be a failure unless concrete action is taken now. Europe's leaders must face the challenge of implementing the reforms they have all committed themselves to. Too much time has been wasted. Europe must now push ahead with determination," warns Philippe de Buck.

The full report can be downloaded from our web site: www.unice.org

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 34 central industrial and employers federations from 27 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

For further information, please contact:

Iona Hamilton: +32(0)2 237 65 77

Susanne Klunkert: +32(0)2 237 65 62 - GSM: +32(0)477 277 963

Website : www.unice.org