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**UNICE HAS HIGH HOPES FOR BARCELONA SUMMIT:
TIME TO DECIDE**

European business expects its political leaders to take decisive steps at this weekend's Barcelona summit. Under the umbrella of UNICE, a high-level delegation of presidents and Directors General of national business associations will meet EU President José-María Aznar tomorrow (14 March) in Barcelona to encourage and urge Heads of State and Government to take the political action which is long overdue to make Europe the most competitive region worldwide. "We can no longer afford to wait," warns UNICE President Georges Jacobs. "Twenty percent of the time until the 2010 deadline has expired – and progress is still lacking in important areas such as energy liberalisation."

UNICE expects decisions on the following:

- **Research and Development (R&D):** quantitative and qualitative upgrading of public support to R&D, combined with an improvement of framework conditions for innovation, so that the ratio of R&D to GDP can reach 3% in Europe by 2010.
- **Community Patent:** to overcome national self-interest and to adopt a cost-efficient Community patent as early as possible.
- **Energy Markets:** to create a fully operational internal market for business customers by 2 January 2003 for electricity and by 1 January 2004 for gas.
- **Skilled Labour:** to support lifelong learning strategies so as to translate economic growth into employment. The modernisation of the labour market depends above all on measures taken within Member States. But the European level must avoid imposing additional constraints in the form of ill-conceived social measures.
- **Information Society:** to demonstrate their commitment to making cheap, fast and secure Internet access a reality for all in Europe by requesting continuation of a more focused eEurope Action Plan beyond 2002.
- **Financial Services:** to push for adoption by 2003 of six key legislative proposals: the directives on insider dealing and market manipulation, the directive on e-commerce and financial services, the directive on international financial collateral arrangements, the directive on a single company prospectus, the directive on prudential rules of occupational pensions, and the regulation on international accounting standards.

Since Lisbon, the EU's relative performance has been poor. In order to allow an average growth rate of around 3%, Europe needs a stable macro-economic climate, with free and open markets which offer opportunities for investment and growth. "That is why business pins its hopes on EU President Aznar and his colleagues to deliver the necessary political framework. We have no time to lose," warns UNICE President Georges Jacobs.

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.

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