

18 March 2002

**UNICE: SATISFACTION, BUT ALSO QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE RESULTS OF BARCELONA**

Following the Barcelona summit, UNICE expresses its satisfaction with the decision completely to liberalise the supply of gas and electricity to the non-domestic sector in 2004. UNICE calls for liberalisation of the domestic sector to be completed in 2005, without the creation of disproportionate public service requirements.

“However, the dual decision to liberalise and to invite the ECOFIN Council to adopt a directive opening the way for an increase in energy taxes by December 2002 is extremely worrying” said Mr de Buck, UNICE’s Secretary General. “The Barcelona communiqué says that the needs of businesses in the road transport sector will be taken into account when this directive is being drafted, but we presume that the same will be true for competitiveness needs in the industrial sector which are directly threatened by the Commission’s proposals” Mr de Buck added.

Regarding the follow-up to Barcelona, UNICE’s other main expectations are as follows:

- **Financial markets:** UNICE welcomes the summit’s conclusions and in particular the call to the Council and the Parliament to adopt as early as possible in 2002 the proposed directives on collateral, market abuse, insurance intermediaries, distance marketing of financial services, financial conglomerates, prospectus and occupational pension funds, and the International Accounting Standards regulation.
- **Telecoms:** It is essential that the new telecoms package is effectively and coherently implemented by all Member States by May 2003 so as not to endanger its objective.
- **eEurope:** UNICE fully supports the call for a comprehensive eEurope 2005 Action Plan which must endeavour to make cheap, fast and secure Internet access a reality for all in Europe.
- **Entrepreneurship:** UNICE welcomes the call for a more favourable environment for entrepreneurship and competitiveness, in particular by encouraging the setting-up of new businesses through full use of the Internet. It now wants to see concrete proposals to reach this objective.
- **Transport:** UNICE is pleased that the deadline of 2004 has been agreed for establishing the Single Sky, and calls for a precise timetable for adoption of the second rail package.
- **Community patent:** UNICE notes the Council’s call for a common political approach to be reached on the Community patent by May 2002. It now looks forward to concrete delivery in this field.
- **Research and development:** UNICE welcomes the fact that by 2003 the Commission is to draw up proposals to foster the necessary linkage between research and innovation.
- **Skills and labour markets:** UNICE welcomes the European Council’s call for further action in the field of education and training systems, and the emphasis placed on further reform of employment and labour-market policies as well as a reinforced employment strategy.

“Barcelona is a step in the right direction. European companies are willing to step their cooperation with the public authorities in order to make the EU the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010” said Mr. de Buck.

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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