

7 June 2002

**"MAKE eEUROPE A REALITY"**

Brussels, 7 June. "Make eEurope a reality!" This was the request from UNICE, the voice of business in Europe, following a debate with Commissioner Liikanen, responsible for the Information Society dossiers in Europe.

UNICE welcomed the Communication on eEurope 2005 adopted by the European Commission on 28 May 2002 in view of the Seville European Council (21/22 June 2002) and encouraged Member States not only to adopt the Action Plan, but also to ensure that initiatives deriving from it are focused on ones which will "make a difference".

With only a few days to go before Heads of State are asked to endorse the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, UNICE highlighted industry's own recommendations for the future of eEurope:

When speaking today at a press conference at the European Business Summit, Philippe de Buck, Secretary General of UNICE said: "To make eEurope a reality, a lot remains to be done. We need cheap, fast and secure Internet access in all of Europe. We need to make broadband availability a top priority".

He was strongly supported by Mr Treschow, Chairman of the board of Ericsson and vice-president of UNICE's Swedish member, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises, who joined Mr de Buck on the podium. "E-Europe cannot be achieved without an efficient and competitive telecommunications market," he said. "Effective liberalisation of telecommunications is a must. Otherwise, we will miss an important step towards creating a genuine single European telecommunications market."

Security for e-commerce transactions is another issue dear to UNICE. UNICE welcomes initiatives aiming at the creation of a safer Information Society. Industry is the driver in combating computer crime. UNICE demands that governments' initiatives in this field should be more open and transparent. Stakeholders should be consulted in order to avoid combating cybercrime at the expense of industry or to the detriment of fundamental rights such as the right to privacy.

Finally, UNICE calls for actions to encourage SMEs to participate fully in the eEurope of tomorrow. Lack of fast lines and lack of security are two reasons stopping SMEs - i.e. more than 90% of companies in Europe - from fully embracing the Internet. But other factors also influence the decision to go 'e'. That is why UNICE called for an eBusiness Forum to exchange best practice and coordinate all initiatives related to e-Business.

Recognising the need for Europe to exploit the opportunities of the new economy quickly, and in particular the Internet, will be an important element on Europe's way to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

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.