

14 June 2002

Lisbon agenda : failure to deliver

Seville, 14 June. Ahead of next week's European Summit in Seville, the presidents of 34 industrial and employers' confederations of Europe – UNICE's highest decision-making body – discussed key subjects on the EU agenda.

Business leaders confirm that Lisbon process remains their top priority and they urge the head of states and governments to step up efforts to enhance the competitiveness and dynamism of Europe.

The agenda of the council of presidents includes the following points : EU enlargement, followed by a discussion on the social dialogue, included a decision on an agreement with ETUC on telework, ways to strengthen sustainable development and a list of "to dos" for the Convention on Europe's future, in which UNICE, the voice of business in Europe, sits as an observer. UNICE's Council of Presidents adopted a declaration addressed to the European Council in Seville on 21 – 22 June.

Highlights of the debate were:

- **EU enlargement:** substantial progress has been made but additional efforts are necessary to find satisfactory and balanced solutions to the still open questions, and tackle the remaining shortcomings regarding implementation and enforcement of the *acquis communautaire* in the candidate countries. Decisions in Copenhagen should be based on each country's merit and not only on political considerations.
- **Social dialogue:** as a follow-up to the joint declaration of the social partners to the Laeken European Council, the Council of Presidents mandated UNICE to enter into discussions with ETUC in view of defining a work programme covering a period of three years maximum.
- **Teleworking:** after eight months of negotiations, the Council of Presidents unanimously adopted a voluntary agreement on telework, *to be implemented by UNICE's members*.
- **Sustainable development:** business commits to continue developing new technologies and resources.
- **Convention:** the Convention must deliver recommendations that will ensure a business-friendly environment in which companies can operate and compete on a level playing-field and adapt to the increasing challenges that globalisation brings.

UNICE's presidents also urged heads of state and government to take decisions on three issues when they meet in Seville next week:

- **Immigration:** in the framework of their efforts towards a better coordination of immigration policies, the European Council should reinforce its work on the draft directive on conditions for entry and residence of third country nationals who are seeking employment.
- **Community Patent:** business needs this instrument and calls for adoption of this regulation, as soon as possible. An agreement on the language regime and court system that meet users' needs is vital.
- **eEurope:** UNICE urges the European Council to adopt the eEurope 2005 Action Plan proposed by the Commission, and to ensure that concrete actions make eEurope a reality.

An assessment of the overall economic situation formed the background to the discussions of Europe's business leaders. UNICE's members warned against being overly optimistic about the economic outlook.

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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