

Brussels, 3 October 2002

**EUROPEAN BUSINESS FOR A STRONG AND COMPETITIVE EUROPE**

The Presidents of UNICE's national member federations met in a two-day seminar to reflect on the EU Convention. The seminar was preceded by a meeting with a delegation of the European Parliament. UNICE's Presidents also presented their views to the Convention President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing today.

UNICE is actively engaged in the work of the Convention with observer status. The seminar takes place halfway through the process, at the end of the listening phase. The Presidents addressed a number of key issues: Antonio D'Amato, President of Confindustria addressed competitiveness, Michaël Rogowski, BDI President talked about economic governance, Georges Jacobs about functional subsidiarity, Jacques Schraven, President of VNO-NCW, about the decision-making process, and Hans Skov Christensen, Director General of the Confederation of Danish Industries about external economic relations.

Georges Jacobs, UNICE President: *"European business has high expectations for the outcome of the Convention. It is a major challenge and demands full answers. No half-measures will help us here. Business wants to play a leading role in progress towards a strong and competitive Europe"*.

To Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Georges Jacobs spoke on behalf of 16 million companies, small, medium and large, employing over 106 million people, who may not have heard the word "Convention" yet but who expect their Europe to be a better place to live and to work in.

UNICE's message is:

- **EUROPE MUST PROMOTE COMPETITIVENESS**
- **A SINGLE AND CLEAR TREATY TO HELP EU REFOCUS**
- **A STRONG EUROPEAN COMMISSION**
- **SIMPLIFICATION OF LEGISLATION**

Economic integration is and must remain the main dynamic behind the peace, stability and prosperity of Europe. The EU must deliver 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. This will be achieved through promotion of competitiveness that will lead to wealth creation and, therefore, employment opportunities.

UNICE recommends consolidation of the existing treaties in a single comprehensible and structured instrument. The basic values and objectives of the EU, the nature and hierarchy of its instruments, its general competences and related decision-making procedures, and the division of powers among its institutions must be made clearer.

The Convention must make recommendations on how to improve the efficiency and transparency of the EU institutions while preserving the Community method and a strong Commission. UNICE is for the extension of the qualified majority voting as a general rule with the exception for social policy matters and policy initiative in the field of taxation.

Business wants to play a greater role in regulating its own initiatives as a better response than inadequate legislation. Co-regulation and self-regulation should be considered more often as alternatives to legislation. The Convention must also consider ways in which respect of the subsidiarity principle, in both its territorial and functional dimension, can be ensured strictly and systematically.

The full text of the UNICE position on the Convention can be found on [www.unice.org](http://www.unice.org)

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