

Brussels, 6 March 2003

UNICE PRESENTS 15 NATIONAL REPORTS ON LISBON STRATEGY
“TIME IS RUNNING OUT, ACTION NEEDED NOW”

For the first time, all 15 UNICE national business organisations have produced reports assessing the Lisbon strategy in each of the EU countries. Also, Norway and Turkey. The national reports give concrete examples of the reforms that need to be carried out in each country. The national reports complement the UNICE report Lisbon strategy /status 2003, *“time is running out, action is needed now”* which focuses on shortcomings identified in the areas of entrepreneurship, innovation, single market, human capital and sustainable development.

The EU Spring summit on 21 March must hold an in-depth debate on how to encourage implementation at national level. Unfortunately, a negative assessment of the agenda agreed upon at Lisbon in 2000 continues to prevail. The Lisbon Strategy must be respected, because it is key to economic growth and prosperity in the EU. Member States must increase their efforts to implement legislation that has been adopted at EU level quickly and efficiently.

The following priorities are identified in the reports:

- Market opening in member states
- Access to finance, specially for small and medium companies
- Reduce tax pressure for companies
- Stimulate innovation to improve competitiveness
- Improve labour market to combat unemployment
- Modernise social protection taking into account economy's changes
- Adapt education and training to enhance people's skills and employability
- Dismantle unnecessary regulation to decrease burden on companies
- Reconcile sustainable development and competitiveness.

Politically, it is crucial to restore confidence among market participants including consumers, producers and investors. Such a signal could come in the form of a serious commitment by the Member States to actually implement the Lisbon strategy. Policy-makers must show signs that they are willing to deliver sound reforms – especially in the labour market – because existing rules are not appropriate for today's dynamic economic conditions. It would positively influence employment prospects and hence consumer confidence.

“The implementation of Lisbon strategy in the Member States will only be successful if it is perceived as the solution for the economic stagnation we suffer in Europe. Governments need to be aware that the Lisbon strategy is the only way to achieve a better and prosperous Europe” stressed Philippe de Buck, Secretary General of UNICE.

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 35 central industrial and employers federations from 28 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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