

Brussels, 31 March 2003

**UNICE WELCOMES COUNCIL DECISION TO LIBERALISE
RAILWAY MARKET**

"We are pleased with the decision taken by the Council last Friday to support accelerated market-opening for railway freight transport. An open market will mean lower costs, better quality, increasing demand and timely innovation," says Philippe de Buck, Secretary General of UNICE.

The Council decision ensures that as from 2006, the whole European railway network will be open to competition for companies engaged in international goods transport.

Additionally, from 1 January 2008 onwards, these companies will also be allowed to accept transport orders within other member states (cabotage), optimising their transport trips from an economic and environmental point of view. This is commonplace for other competing transport modes such as road transport, and UNICE warmly welcomes this move towards putting the railway market on an equal footing. However, for the very same reasons, UNICE considers it is of utmost importance that both deadlines are set at 1 January 2006, as called for by the European Parliament.

UNICE therefore calls on the European Parliament to defend this position strongly in the second reading of the co-decision procedure.

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.