

Brussels, 23 September 2003

**INTERNAL MARKET STRATEGY:  
...NOW IT'S TIME TO DELIVER!**

**The Competitiveness Council held on 22/23 September recognised that the Internal Market Strategy is a key component of an integrated strategy for competitiveness and agrees that Member States have to share responsibility for the functioning of the Internal Market. At the same time Member States are increasingly failing to implement the Internal Market directives as last years increased implementation deficit (1.8% - 2.8%) shows!**

Given that the Brussels European Council in March called for a strong new push to improve the Internal Market and identified the Internal Market Strategy as the "basis for further action" in its conclusions, UNICE had expected today's Council conclusions to show a much stronger commitment from Member States towards a well functioning Internal Market.

Philippe de Buck, UNICE Secretary General, said: *"This is not enough. The full potential of the internal market can only be realised if Member States show full support and a much stronger commitment."*

He continued: *"The Internal Market Strategy presented by the Commission in May 2003 was a good and dynamic blueprint for moving forward. Now Member States must take their responsibility to implement and to deliver."*

Latest figures published by the Commission show a further deterioration in implementation of the Internal Market directives by Member States. The average "transposition deficit" has widened to 2.8% from 1.8% in the last year. This corresponds to 558 outstanding notifications of national implementation measures. In the same time period the number of open infringements has increased by 6%.

It is not just the lack of timely and correct implementation but also a lack of homogeneous interpretation of the common rules and a lack of mutual recognition which are still causing barriers in the Internal Market. Given this fact Member States must take a much more active role in enforcement, problem-solving and day-to-day running of the Internal Market. Reversing the recent negative trend is important in particular with a view towards boosting competitiveness consistent with the Lisbon objectives across an enlarged Europe.

Note to the editor:

UNICE speaks on behalf of 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe. 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.