

14 November 2003

**COMPETITIVENESS DAY:
EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURS DEMONSTRATE FOR COMPETITIVENESS:
RELEASE COMPANIES' POTENTIAL – FREE GULLIVER!**

Under the leitmotiv “Release companies’ potential – Free Gulliver!” some hundred of entrepreneurs and business leaders from all over Europe came together in Brussels on 14 November 2003 to the first EU Competitiveness Day. They discussed with high-level politicians, including Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Italian Minister for Productive Activities Antonio Marzano, representing the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as well as Commissioner Erkki Liikanen, and Irish minister for European Affairs Dick Roche, the competitiveness challenges Europe faces and necessary actions to be taken to re-launch EU economy. On that occasion, UNICE presented a manifesto on competitiveness and its annual assessment of the Lisbon strategy, which analyses the current situation and calls for progress in specific areas.

Within two panel sessions, Presidents of UNICE's member federations discussed challenges and responses to be taken to boost again European competitiveness. UNICE's assessment clearly shows that Europe's economy is not catching up to its main competitors and risks missing the train in the 21st century.

Antonio D'Amato, President of Confindustria said: *“Europe lacks growth! Our main competitors as the USA and Japan have increasing labour productivity rates whereas the EU is deteriorating.”* BDI President Dr Michael Rogowski continued: *“Structural rigidities don't let the space companies need to prosper, but tie them up with competitive disadvantages. Industrial production and research activity are leaving Europe. If no urgent decisions are taken, Europe risks de-industrialisation!”*

UNICE identifies six top action points where political decision-makers have to deliver:

- **Regulation:** reduce existing legislation, make real impact assessment on all envisaged business relevant legislation with Competitiveness Council as a key decision body
- **Public finance:** continue social protection reform and reduce structural government deficits
- **Innovation:** stimulate R&D and promote industry cooperation with knowledge institutions
- **Employment:** introduce more flexibility into national labour markets
- **Trans-European Networks:** complete Trans-European Networks, considering more Public-Private Partnerships
- **International economic relations:** pursue the completion of the Doha Development Agenda in the WTO

In his conclusions, UNICE President Dr Jürgen Strube made clear: *“We need a real commitment to competitiveness among all European institutions. The Lisbon strategy, aiming at making Europe the most competitive, knowledge based economy in the world by 2010, must be implemented. The European Union needs an integrated competitiveness strategy, creating space for entrepreneurial activity!”*

The Lisbon Strategy Document and the Manifesto are available at www.unice.org

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies 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.

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