

Brussels, 2 March 2004

**BOOSTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP: TIME FOR ACTION!**

**UNICE considers that boosting entrepreneurship is one of the most important success factors for competitiveness of the EU economy. We therefore support the European Agenda for Entrepreneurship, presented by the European Commission today, 2 March, during the “Entrepreneurship Day”.**

More favourable framework conditions are a must to foster Europe’s entrepreneurial spirit. One single measure cannot change mindsets and release entrepreneurs’ potential but rather a series of measures such as integrating entrepreneurship education into school curricula, reducing the overall tax burdens borne by companies, improving access to finance and ridding Europe’s entrepreneurs of unnecessary administrative hurdles.

Europe’s entrepreneurial potential is largely untapped: only 5 in 1,000 Europeans earn their living from their own business, whereas in the US entrepreneurs are twice as numerous. American start-ups are smaller than in Europe, but after two years more, and more stable, jobs are created. Business creation in Europe needs to be dynamised.

That cannot be the case in a EU where, according to a document released by the Irish Government, in a company of 8 persons, 50% of one persons time is devoted to form filling. According to the same source, it is estimated that the cost of unnecessary regulation to the EU as a whole is somewhere in the region of 0.45% of European GDP or nearly 40 billion Euro!

The Commission’s plan to boost entrepreneurship through this Action Plan, which adopts a strategic framework, identifying key actions to be accomplished, is a positive exercise, stepping in the right direction.

Upon the adoption of the Action Plan, Philippe de Buck, UNICE Secretary General commented: *“European competitiveness will not take off and the Lisbon Strategy will be ‘much ado about nothing’ if the EU and each of the Member States governments do not put entrepreneurship at the top of their political agenda. This Action Plan needs more than a good step from the Commission. It can only succeed if Member States provide firm commitment to carry out concrete actions implementing it”.*

Business expects the forthcoming EU summit on 25-26 March to make entrepreneurship one of its top priorities for action.

*Note to the editor:*

*UNICE represents more than 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.*