

1 May 2004

**UNICE PRESIDENT JÜRGEN STRUBE:
“A HISTORIC DAY”**

For European business, today's enlargement is a historic day. It is the largest, and symbolically the most important, enlargement of the Community. With progressive economic integration through increasing trade and investment links the acceding countries of Central and Eastern Europe have now successfully reached the end of a long road by becoming full members of the EU. This enlargement will require change, and change will create challenges. Europe must exploit the opportunities that these challenges offer.

This enlargement will expand the EU further eastwards and southwards to include ten new countries with very different economic histories and levels of development including former Communist states (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) and small, but dynamic, island economies (Malta, Cyprus).

Jürgen Strube, UNICE President: *“The acceding countries have worked hard to adapt their economies into the modern era and to the realities of market economics. They deserve our praise for the profound reforms they have undertaken to meet the political and economic criteria for entering the EU.”*

The enlarged EU market will offer tremendous opportunities for the EU's trade and investment partners. On 1 May, non-EU exporters will gain access to a much larger market of 450 million people. Strong growth in foreign direct investment in the acceding countries exemplifies the tremendous potential of the enlarged EU market. There is still some way to go before they catch up with their Western neighbours in terms of prosperity, but for European business the results of their efforts are nevertheless remarkable in such a relatively short period. However, given that the *acquis communautaire* contains about 100,000 pages, UNICE has called for a moratorium on new legislation to allow the new members to digest existing legislation.

Jürgen Strube, UNICE President: *“Enlargement presents opportunities to rethink how our markets and companies are organised. European decision-makers should take the chance to carry through political and economic reforms that target improved competitiveness and well-being in Europe.”*

“With this most important enlargement, Beethoven's “Ode to Joy” becomes a reality” the UNICE President concludes: *“These our nations once divided / now your magic spells unite / where your wing does beat around them / brotherhood and love delight.”*

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 36 central industrial and employers federations from 29 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe