

Brussels, 7 July 2004

**“MAKE THINGS BETTER!”
UNICE EXPECTATIONS FROM THE DUTCH PRESIDENCY**

“Make things better” in the fields of governance, regulation and communication was the main message European business delivered to Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende and Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, Dutch Minister for Economic Affairs. The UNICE delegation, headed by UNICE President Jürgen Strube and Jacques Schraven, President of the Dutch business organisation VNO-NCW and Vice-President of UNICE, emphasised the key position of the Dutch Presidency which will set the course for the new political cycle 2004-2009.

UNICE President Jürgen Strube: *“The Dutch Presidency should make its promise to make things better real! For European business this has to be translated into better governance, better regulation, and better communication!”*

UNICE supports the Dutch Presidency when putting competitiveness at the top of the agenda. The Competitiveness Council is of utmost importance in order to address Europe’s structural problems.

Jürgen Strube: *“The Competitiveness Council must give clear statements on whether legislative proposals would enhance competitiveness. It must coordinate and evaluate competitiveness-related decisions of other Council configurations. UNICE is eager to continue the tradition started during the Irish Presidency to have meetings at political and technical level ahead of the Competitiveness Councils.”*

Better regulation, a top priority, must lead to a significant reduction of existing red tape. Involvement of representative stakeholder organisations should be mandatory for all proposed legislation.

Jacques Schraven, President of VNO-NCW: *“Europe should learn from our good experiences with the independent regulatory impact assessment Actal in the Netherlands. Extensive impact assessment must be carried out from the very early drafting stage to the final adoption in Council and Parliament.”*

European business recommends that the Dutch Presidency, together with new European Parliament and the new Commission, initiates a Europe-wide communication strategy, which needs to be implemented by national governments and parliaments. The Lisbon Strategy has to become known as a strategy for growth, jobs and prosperity.

Other issues discussed:

- **REACH:** its practical consequences for all industry activities have to be completely catalogued and fully understood
- **Innovation:** strengthening innovation and R&D as a cornerstone of the Lisbon process
- **Negotiations with Turkey:** open up negotiations as soon as it has completed the remaining tasks with regard to the Copenhagen criteria
- **DDA Round:** maintain unity in the EU position and strive for balanced negotiating frameworks on the core issues
- **Community patent:** continue efforts for agreement, the single-language solution should be applied
- **Financial perspectives:** reallocate budgets primarily towards policy areas that enhance competitiveness
- **IFRS:** convergence with US standards must be ensured
- **Services directive:** apply the country-of-origin principle
- **Climate change:** EU must prepare a revised climate change strategy

UNICE will present its proposals at a Press Conference on 8 July at 15h00.

UNICE expectations from the Dutch Presidency are also on the UNICE website at www.unice.org

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 36 central industrial and employers federations from 29 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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