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**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE:
VITAL FOR EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS
UNICE STATEMENT**

Release the entrepreneurial potential of Europe's young people.

Entrepreneurship in the broad sense is first and foremost a state of mind which is beneficial to individuals in all walks of life. Indeed, it can be characterised by personal qualities such as creativity, responsibility, spirit of initiative, taking risks, rising to challenges. Such personal qualities must be nurtured at an early age (primary and secondary education) so that the entrepreneurs of tomorrow are equipped to fully realise their potential. Entrepreneurship should be seen by young people as a career opportunity and an essential part of personal development.

Heads of State have recognised on many occasions that "entrepreneurship" is an important element to reach the Lisbon goal, for Europe "...to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world...".

Not least, the Lisbon European Council in 2000 rightly pin-pointed "entrepreneurship" as one of the 'new basic skills' for a knowledge-based economy.

The European Charter for small enterprises (19-20.6.2000), the European Commission's Entrepreneurship Action Plan (11.2.2004) as well as the joint Commission – Council report "Education & Training 2010" (March 2004) state policy commitment at the highest level to developing European entrepreneurship, notably through fostering entrepreneurial mindsets among young people or entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, the European Commission has published two expert reports on Entrepreneurship education (November 2002 and March 2004), the conclusions of which UNICE welcomes.

There is a relation between entrepreneurship and economic performance, achieving progress in employment growth, competitiveness and innovation. Nonetheless, Europe's entrepreneurial potential is not being exploited: although 47% of Europeans prefer self-employment, only 17% actually realise their ambition¹ whereas in the US entrepreneurs are twice as numerous. Lack of an entrepreneurial culture leads to missing opportunities: 44% of Europeans agree that '*one should not start a business when there is a risk of failure*' whereas only 29% in the US agree.

An essential element to releasing Europe's entrepreneurial potential and developing an entrepreneurial culture is through appropriate education.

UNICE member federations are fully aware of the need to foster entrepreneurial mindsets. They are committed and they act to promote entrepreneurial mindsets among young people throughout Europe. In that context, they have initiated and participated in numerous concrete actions bringing entrepreneurship education to young people.

This statement, complementary to the European Commission expert reports, aims to highlight a series of recommendations based on UNICE member federations' experience in promoting entrepreneurship education among young people. On the basis of member federations first hand experience and through the difficulties they have encountered, UNICE, in a spirit of constructive dialogue, develops recommendations for all parties involved: Member States, the European Commission and companies to work together to release European young people's entrepreneurial potential.

¹ In COM(2004)70, « Action Plan : the European Agenda for Entrepreneurship », 11.2.2004, p. 3.

UNICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

For Education Ministries:

Entrepreneurship is a policy traditionally led in Member States by Industry or Economy Ministries. Horizontal by nature such a policy field calls on close cooperation systems among the different Ministries. In the case of Entrepreneurship Education, there is a necessity for Education Ministries and Industry / Economy Ministries to coordinate actions in this regard. **UNICE also calls on Member States to:**

- **recognise** the benefits of entrepreneurship education and adopt/implement national strategies on entrepreneurship education in primary, secondary and higher education;
- **translate** at national level through concrete measures the will to develop entrepreneurial mindsets among young people:
 - o **develop** school curriculum which integrates entrepreneurship education starting in primary school;
 - o **make available and promote** appropriate teaching material in close cooperation with business;
 - o **foresee** entrepreneurship education courses in teachers training institutes;
 - o **facilitate** links between teachers and local companies;
 - o **promote and facilitate** in-house training in companies, notably through a reduction of administrative procedures imposed on companies willing to take on trainees.

For the European Commission:

Although we recognise that education and training policies are a competence of Member States, the European Commission has an important role to play. **UNICE urges the European Commission to:**

- **agree** with Member States quantitative targets to assess progress on entrepreneurship education among young people. This should be done as part of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan (Key Action 1) and be assessed during the evaluation of the relevant chapter of the SME Charter;
- **adopt** regular reports on progress achieved by Member States regarding the recommendations of the final report of the Expert group "Education for entrepreneurship" completed in 2004;
- **coordinate** and widely disseminate good practice regarding entrepreneurship education in Member States;
- **facilitate** the use of community funds to help the development of entrepreneurship education among young people: development of specific teaching programmes, awareness campaigns, etc;
- **further integration** of entrepreneurship in the future EU life-long learning programme

For Companies:

UNICE considers that entrepreneurship education cannot be a success if business people are not involved actively to share with, Education administrations, school headmasters, teachers, teachers trainers, children and students their first hand experience in the business world.

UNICE invites companies and business organisations to:

- **participate** actively (financially or in kind) in entrepreneurship education initiatives;
- **maintain and develop** contacts with local education authorities – schools with the aim of consolidating an ongoing dialogue with a view to raising awareness on the benefits of entrepreneurship education among young people and implementation of such courses.

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*UNICE Statement on Entrepreneurship education among young people
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