

19 January 2005

**UNICE PRESIDENT STRUBE MEETS  
PRIME MINISTER JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER**

**In a meeting today with Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, UNICE urged the new Presidency of the EU to endeavour to put the Lisbon strategy back on track at the Spring summit. The wide-ranging discussion also covered the financial perspectives 2007-2013, the stability and growth pact, the economic impacts of environmental legislation and a number of other issues.**

President Strube on the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy due to be adopted at the European Council's meeting in March: *"The mid-term review is the last chance to make the Lisbon strategy deliver. The Spring summit must set more concrete policy priorities than the Wim Kok report was able to do, and decide on a number of dossiers to be completed by 2010"*.

On the financial perspectives 2007-2013, UNICE reiterated its view that more resources should be allocated to competitiveness, independent of other decisions about the overall ceiling and/or the cost of common policies.

Turning to the stability and growth pact, UNICE stressed that Europe must preserve clear and transparent binding rules applicable to all Member States, and which are not open to political discretion. UNICE shares Prime Minister Juncker's strong opposition to excluding certain expenditure categories from the calculation of public deficit.

The creation of a strong services sector in Europe is essential for Europe's ability to create growth and employment. The Council and the European Parliament should agree on legislation to remove obstacles to the free movement of services by the end of 2005.

UNICE is also very concerned that the economic impacts of some environmental legislation have been inadequately taken into account. In particular, pursuit of the Kyoto emission reduction objectives without the USA and large emitters such as China and India will raise costs and reduce competitiveness in Europe without any commensurate benefits for the global environment.

The REACH chemicals package is also excessively unwieldy. Some elements of REACH must be fundamentally changed to make it more cost-efficient. Industry supports the health and environment objectives of the proposed legislation but REACH needs to be more proportionate in its approach.

The first priority of the Commission's new social agenda should be to promote the creation of new jobs and integrate more people on labour markets rather than seeking to protect activities of the past or enhancing the rights of those already at work.

Lifelong learning is a crucial component of the Lisbon strategy. UNICE is in favour of a single, simple and more flexible lifelong learning programme, bringing together the different education and training programmes which currently exist.

UNICE looks to the launch of a new ambitious transatlantic initiative at the June Transatlantic Summit. This initiative should reinvigorate, deepen and broaden the Transatlantic partnership which is vitally important for the EU, the US and the global economy.

Lastly, trade and investment liberalisation is key for European business competitiveness. UNICE counts on the Luxembourg Presidency to push for significant progress in all the different areas of negotiations in parallel, in view of the December Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference.

*Note to the editor:*

UNICE is the voice of more than 20 million small, medium and large companies. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 38 central industrial and employers federations from 32 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe

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