

## PRESS RELEASE

### EU DIRECTIVE ON UNFAIR PRACTICES GETS "THUMBS DOWN" FROM BUSINESS

**Brussels, 19 January 2005** – Business is seriously concerned that recent legislative developments on a draft EU Directive on Unfair Commercial Practices have undermined the original intentions of the European Commission to enhance legal certainty and confidence in cross-border trade.

The proposed directive was tabled to harmonise and simplify existing rules on unfair commercial practices which allegedly cause distortions in the European market. This would provide legal certainty and a common high level of consumer protection that would boost consumer and business confidence in the internal market thereby stimulating economic growth.

Business supports these good intentions. However, UNICE, EuroCommerce and ICC, representing business at both European and international level, consider that the text agreed in first reading runs counter to the above objectives and puts legal certainty and genuine harmonisation at serious risk.

Business deeply regrets the political decision to remove the country of origin principle which was critical to provide companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, with legal certainty.

In view of the second reading in the European Parliament, it is paramount that the necessary changes are made to ensure that the directive truly harmonises the rules targeted and secures at least the minimum level of legal certainty required for companies to carry out their day-to-day business. The undersigned organisations have offered practical suggestions for achieving this objective.

UNICE, Eurocommerce and ICC call again on the EU institutions to respect the spirit of the original proposal by ensuring that it has the means to genuinely improve the functioning of the internal market for the benefit of consumers and companies alike. The objectives pursued as part of the Lisbon Strategy should not be forgotten when a chance is offered to move forward with action.

You will find attached the full positions on the second reading of the proposed directive.

Note to the editor:

**UNICE**

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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**EuroCommerce**

Established in 1993, EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations in 28 European countries, European and national associations representing specific branches of commerce and individual companies. Commerce is the closest link between industry and the 450 million consumers across the whole of Europe.

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**ICC**

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the world's largest and most representative business organization, the only body that speaks with authority on behalf of enterprises from all sectors in every part of the world. ICC was established in 1919 and has national committees and members in more than 130 countries.

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