

14 March 2005

**18 EUROPEAN BUSINESS FEDERATIONS UNITED IN THEIR URGENT  
CALL FOR EUROPEAN ECONOMIC REFORM**

**In a joint declaration, 18 European business federations urge the 22-23 March Spring European Council to refocus the Lisbon strategy on growth and jobs. The signatories include leading European business organisations from agriculture, industry and services sectors, representing craft, small, medium and large companies. In view of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy next week, the European business community supports the Commission initiative and launches an urgent call to heads of state and government to commit to economic reform.**

The joint declaration has been signed by the following European business federations: COPA-COGECA, CEEMET, EUROCOMMERCE, FBE, FEE, UEAPME and UNICE, as well as the industrial branch organisations ACEA, CEFIC, CEMBUREAU, CEPI, CIAA, EURATEX, EURELECTRIC, EUROFER, EUROMETAUX, EUROPIA, ORGALIME which, together with UNICE, have formed the Alliance for a Competitive European Industry.

UNICE President Jürgen Strube, speaking on behalf of all 18 European business federations: *“The new initiative for growth and jobs proposed by the Commission is an important step towards a future-oriented EU economic policy. But now the right reform policies need to follow which focus on the real growth drivers.”*

Member States' successes in providing the conditions for creating growth and jobs have been very mixed. The Nordic countries are among the most competitive in the world. Some new Member States are catching up quickly thanks to extensive economic reforms. But some Member States are seriously lagging behind, dragging down Europe as a whole. Therefore all European countries have to engage in economic reform.

At the Spring European Council, EU Member States have a last opportunity to prove their commitment to revitalising the Lisbon strategy by

- confirming the Commission's growth and jobs initiative by adopting all EU legislation without delay which enhances the Internal Market.
- preparing national action programmes for economic reform and debating them with national parliaments, stakeholders, social partners and the wider public.
- benchmarking their performance and identifying best practices inside and outside Europe.
- enhancing the role of the Competitiveness Council as the guardian of Europe's competitiveness.