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SPRING COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC REFORM: UNICE CALLS FOR A REAL COMMITMENT TO GROWTH AND JOBS

The Spring European Council adopted 35 pages of conclusions following its discussions on the European growth and jobs strategy. European policy-makers must now prove that they are committed to what they agreed on today and translate words into real structural reform policies.

UNICE commends the European Council on many positive elements in its conclusions, such as:

- The emphasis on implementing National Reform Programmes and the recognition that they could include more specific targets and timetables. UNICE counts on national governments to update their NRPs accordingly. The European Commission must now establish a better governance process for following up national reform progress.
- The initiative on a European Policy for Energy. Out of the more than 30 action points, the priorities should be to establish market competition, ensure energy supply and take into account the link between energy and CO₂.
- The commitment to reduce the time to start a business to no more than one week by 2007. A broad programme on SMEs and Better Regulation must be pursued to achieve concrete improvements for doing business at EU and national level.

As the European Council adopted a positive assessment of the European Parliament vote on the services directive, UNICE reiterates that improvements to the current text have to be made to ensure that the directive makes a real difference for growth and job creation. The Commission must carry out a thorough impact assessment.

UNICE President Ernest-Antoine Seillière, who also spoke directly to the European Council on Thursday, said: *“As after every Spring Summit, the Council has produced a thick paper of conclusions on economic reform. They address the important economic policy challenges Europe is currently facing. But will they just turn out to be a report on yet another annual discussion on growth and jobs, or will they mark the beginning of a real commitment from political leaders? UNICE calls with all its might for the latter.”*

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 39 central industrial and employers' federations from 33 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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