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BETTER REGULATION: UNICE WILL JUDGE ON CONCRETE RESULTS

UNICE, the Confederation of European Business, representing millions of companies across Europe – most of them small and medium-sized – is pleased that the European Commission has once more demonstrated that it is strongly committed to simplifying and improving the regulatory environment in Europe. The strategic review of the better regulation project, presented today by Vice-President Verheugen, should give renewed impetus to the cutting of red tape and enhance the effectiveness of the programme.

Progress on simplification is far too slow even if the Commission manages to speed up the adoption of proposals. Almost all simplification proposals which have been adopted by the Commission are still pending before the Council and European Parliament and there is a considerable risk that new burdens will be added during the legislative process. There is an urgent need for a fast-track procedure to ensure that proposals are dealt with quickly without creating new burdens.

The quality of impact assessments needs to be improved. Experience with impact assessments in the area of REACH and the portability of pensions show that there are still significant shortcomings. The creation of an Impact Assessment Board acting independently of the policy-making departments to ensure consistent quality is a welcome step in the right direction to bringing more objectivity and independence in the impact assessment system but falls short of truly independent oversight of the process.

Measuring administrative costs and setting a 25% target for their reduction would be an important improvement in rendering the better regulation project more effective and achieving real results, especially for SMEs. Information about the size of administrative costs and a concrete goal for the reduction of these costs will not only greatly help businesses to compete better but it will also raise awareness about the need for cost reductions and generate support for concrete proposals. Alongside the overall target of 25% after five years, there should be interim targets to monitor progress.

Ernest-Antoine Seillière, President of UNICE, said: *“We need concrete progress on better regulation. Only real results will boost confidence in the overall worth of the project.”*

NOTE TO THE EDITOR

UNICE – the Confederation of European Business represents 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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