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**UNICE SETS OUT NEW APPROACH TO
EUROPEAN SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

UNICE presented today its new social policy paper to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in the European Parliament and to the European press.

"Releasing Europe's employment potential; Companies' views on European Social Policy beyond 2000" builds on previous publications on competitiveness and entrepreneurship. It focuses on European social and employment policy and sets out a new, more qualitative approach. "European social policy should not be judged by the quantity of regulation. More regulation is not necessarily better. It is the quality of policy that matters", UNICE's Secretary General Dirk Hudig stated.

Economic and social challenges are linked and Europe's success depends on the competitiveness of its companies. "This must continue to be a central concern for all European policies. Europe's weakness in translating growth into jobs needs to be put right", Mr. Hudig warned. "Our poor performance will not be cured by remedies of the past. Europe needs forward looking structural reforms of all markets".

Most of these reforms must be taken by the Member States, based on the principle of subsidiarity. However, the EU will have a key role to play using the European employment guidelines. "The EU should become the champion of structural reforms and distance itself from illusory solutions such as across-the-board reductions in working hours", Mr. Hudig urged the Members of the European Parliament.

"For far too long, Europe believed that it could solve all social issues by decree. Thus European social policy has been mainly associated with European directives. European social policy should be based - like the European employment strategy - on exchanges of experience and benchmarking, thereby promoting the best performing practices in the Member States. Priority should always be given to action by the social partners in their areas of competence", Mr. Hudig concluded.

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