

19 February 2002

**UNICE PUSHES FOR REDEFINING THE eEUROPE ACTION PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

On the eve of the informal meeting of Ministers of Telecommunications and the Information Society in, UNICE calls on ministers to redefine Europe's future strategy for the Information Society beyond 2002. Despite some progress, UNICE believes that a lot remains to be done: ***cheap, fast and secure Internet access for all is not yet a reality in Europe.***

**UNICE urges Member States to take appropriate actions to:**

- ***promote*** the take-up and roll-out of broadband in Europe;
- ***demonstrate*** their commitment to **effective** and full liberalisation of telecommunications;
- ***stimulate*** full participation by SMEs in the e-Economy;
- ***seek*** to increase Internet penetration;
- ***provide*** stakeholders in e-commerce with legal clarity and security;
- ***improve*** the security of information infrastructures and combat computer-related crime while refraining from doing so at the expense of industry and/or at the expense of fundamental rights such as the right to privacy.

**If quantitative targets to get Europe on-line are not followed up by qualitative targets beyond 2002, Europe will not reach the Lisbon objective of making the EU “*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*” by 2010.**

In this context, the upcoming informal meeting of ministers is crucial for Europe's “e-future”: If ministers do not prepare an eEurope action plan proposal that goes beyond 2002, and that meets the six essential requirements listed by UNICE, the Barcelona summit of heads of state and government in mid-March will not be able to approve meaningful, coherent guidelines for a thriving Information Society in Europe.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 33 central industrial and employers federations from 26 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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