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LISBON TARGETS WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED UNLESS MEMBER STATES TAKE URGENT ACTIONS

In view of the upcoming Spring Council, the European business organisations EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce, UEAPME and UNICE deplore the gap between Member States' commitment three years ago to achieve the Lisbon targets and their delivery of it. They insist that the heads of state and governments hold at the Spring Summit a profound debate on how to overcome the delay and to accelerate the implementation of the changes necessary to meet the targets they set. Otherwise the strategic goal to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010 will definitely fail.

The urgency to act has been reinforced as economic growth for Europe has slowed, as reliable signals for a recovery in the near future are missing, and business confidence is far from high. The current uncertain geopolitical situation clearly has a negative impact, too.

In order to achieve the Targets set in Lisbon, the four organisations call on the Summit to

- Foster a culture of entrepreneurship to ensure the dynamism required in the Lisbon objectives by reweighting the risk-reward balance in favour of enterprises, reducing bureaucracy and red tape for businesses and inculcating a sense of entrepreneurial behaviour throughout the European educational systems;
- Increase labour market flexibility and employability by reducing cost burdens and by upgraded skills as a result of lifelong learning strategies;
- Establish a legislative and regulatory environment attractive for R&D. Upgrade the volume and quality of public spending on research and development in Europe and encourage SMEs to invest in innovation;
- Unleash the single market by full and immediate implementation of the internal market directives through all Member States and by avoidance of infringements.

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EUROCHAMBRES

EUROCHAMBRES is the Brussels-based Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The association represents national associations of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 40 different countries - and a European network of 1,600 regional and local Chambers with over 15 million member enterprises, and 100 million employees across Europe. EUROCHAMBRES is the sole European body that serves the interests of every sector and every size of European business - due to the multisectoral membership of Chambers - and the only one so close to business, as a result of the Chambers' regional focus. EUROCHAMBRES works hand in hand with all European Institutions in promoting a positive, competitive, pro-business environment.

EuroCommerce

Created in 1993, EuroCommerce represents the commerce sector – retail, wholesale and international trade – vis-à-vis the European Union. With more than 100 members from 24 European countries, EuroCommerce, as the trade representation to the European institutions is a strong sectoral social partner and defends the common interests of its members at EU level and keeps them informed on European dossiers that impact their activities. It is the objective of the 4.7 million of enterprises active in the commerce sector to create welfare for their total of 22.5 million employees while meeting the needs and expectations of over 370 million consumers in the Internal Market

UEAPME

UEAPME is the employer's organisation representing the interests, at European level, of crafts, trades and SME's in the European Union and countries applying for accession to the European Union. Its 72 member organisations consist of national cross-sectorial federations, European branch federations and other associate members, which support the SME family. Across the whole of Europe, UEAPME represents over 10 million enterprises with nearly 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

UNICE

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 35 central industrial and employers' federations from 28 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.