



**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 29 April 2003

**European Services Business welcomes  
the EU Initial Offer on Services in the Framework of the Doha Round**

The European Services Forum (ESF) warmly welcomes the initial offer on services which the European Communities and its Member States have tabled today in Geneva. This conditional offer shows the EU's commitment to open markets in many services sectors. It is particularly important that the EU made an attractive offer on mobility of natural persons. This responds positively to many developing countries' requests to allow the easier movement of foreign service suppliers within the EU on a temporary basis. European business also needs to be able to move highly skilled personnel around the world to serve their clients. ESF hopes that other developed countries will follow suit, thus improving the chances for a substantial global agreement to liberalise trade in services.

By tabling this positive offer, the EU demonstrates that it wishes to be seen as a leader in opening up further service sectors which are already quite open. The binding of our liberalised services sectors under the WTO Rules will continue to ensure the attractiveness of our European economies for foreign direct investment (FDI), where services already represent 70% of the GDP and more than two thirds of employment. The improvement of the EU commitments will strengthen our competitive environment for the benefit of European services consumers, and should help to secure reciprocal liberalisation in other countries, to the benefit of exports and employment in the EU.

Between 7% and 14 % of the persons working in the European services sectors work for an foreign-controlled company (the percentages vary in the various EU countries)<sup>1</sup>, and that it is estimated that a minimum of 15% of the labour force in the private sector of services are working for export. Thus between 25% and 33% of those employed in the services sector are directly connected to international trade and affected by the GATS negotiations in the WTO.

The ESF has emphasised to the European Commission and the EU Member States the importance of services in Europe and the rest of the world. In economic terms they are significantly more important than agriculture, and the ESF urges the European Union to be as flexible as possible on agriculture negotiations. At a recent meeting of European business leaders with Commissioner Lamy, Sir Iain Vallance (Chairman of the ESF) said:

*"I suggested to Commissioner Lamy that the negotiations on agriculture and on other issues in the Doha Round should not stand in the way of the success of the services negotiations, which will bring much more benefit to world trade than any other WTO issue, in particular for many developing countries"*.

Sir Iain Vallance called upon all WTO members, and in particular the developing countries, to join the countries that have already done so in tabling initial offers, and to participate actively in the final phase of the services negotiations.

*"Developing countries have an even stronger need to liberalise their services economy, to engage in the fast and sustainable development of their services infrastructure which will improve quality, and to hold down costs for the benefit of their whole economy "[ENDS].*

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*The European Services Forum (ESF) is a network of high-level representatives from the European Services Sector committed to promoting the interests of European services and the liberalisation of services markets throughout the world through WTO Services Negotiations. It comprises more than 40 major European service companies and more than 35 European service sector federations covering service sectors like financial services, tourism, telecommunications, air and maritime transport, business and professional services, distribution, postal and express delivery, IT services, energy services and the audio-visual industry (see list of members and position papers in the web-site: [www.esf.be](http://www.esf.be)).*

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Eurostat