Intermediate regions - regions that are neither rural nor urban and which are composed of small and medium-sized towns - are a vital component of regional and local development. They provide a link between urban and rural areas and local and international economies. But these regions of potential economic importance often fall between the cracks when planners and legislators are drawing up development strategies.

A conference co-organised by the OECD on Territorial Development Strategies for Intermediate Regions in Alcoy, Spain 27-29 June 2001 will be a forum to discuss policies and specific instruments which encourage such regions to be more competitive in the worldwide arena while remaining socially and environmentally friendly. Participants will discuss solutions to problems such as poor communications infrastructures, shortage of skilled labour and inadequate links between universities and the labour market. Organised jointly by the OECD and the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the conference will address such questions as: How can the economy of intermediate regions become more competitive internationally? How can intermediate regions participate in the new economy? How can co-operation between municipalities be promoted? And how can tourism support the local economies?

The first morning of the conference will launch the OECD Territorial Review: the Valencian Central Districts, a new OECD publication available to journalists in electronic format (PDF) on request (news.contact@oecd.org). The Valencian Central Districts is a dynamic area belonging to two different administrative units in the region of Valencia. It produces textiles, toys, and tourism services, and provides an interesting example of how an intermediate region can respond to new challenges posed by globalisation.

The entire conference is open to journalists. News conferences will take place on Wednesday 27 June at 1.45 p.m. and on Friday 29 June after lunch.

Speakers will include: Mr. Fabrizio Barca, Director General of the Italian Ministry of Treasury, Mr. Francis Ampe, Counselor of the Director of DATAR, Mr. Bengt K.A. Johansson, former Swedish Minister of Interior and Mr. Eduardo Zaplana, President of the Valencian Regional Government. OECD speakers include Mr. Bernard Hugonnier, Director of the Territorial Development Service and Mr. Mario Pezzini, Head of the Territorial Reviews and Governance Division. The presentations will be followed by open discussion between the international experts and local policy makers and entrepreneurs.

For further information, journalists should contact Jacob Arfwedson (Tel. 33 1 45 24 81 03 or jacob.arfwedson@oecd.org). For conference registration and additional information, please contact Arantzazu Aramburu, Administrator at the OECD Territorial Development Service (Tel. 33 1 45 24 16 66 or arantzazu.aramburu@oecd.org) or Olana Bojic (Tel. 33 1 45 24 85 66 or olana.bojic@oecd.org).