Recent major changes in Central and Eastern European countries have emphasised the importance of pressing ahead with programmes of technical assistance. These countries recognise that the establishment of a secure revenue base is a prerequisite for a successful move to a market economy. Therefore, changes to be made in their tax systems will require an increase in the level of expertise and the number of officials dealing with tax policy, tax administration and the management of complex new tax systems.

The OECD’s Centre for Co-operation with the European Economies in Transition, with the support of a number of Member governments, and the Committee on Fiscal Affairs, has decided to establish three multilateral tax training centres for Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. The centres are situated in Budapest, Copenhagen and Vienna. Other international organisations (the International Monetary Fund, the EC PHARE programme and the World Bank), which are also providing technical assistance, will be closely associated with this initiative. These three Tax Training Centres will play a key role in meeting part of the training needs of the economies in transition and in the establishment of a network of contacts between the economies in transition and OECD countries.

The inauguration of the multilateral tax training network was marked in Vienna on 25th February by a high-level seminar which discussed the formulation and implementation of tax reforms. The seminar was opened by Mr. Ferdinand Lacina, Austrian Minister of Finance, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Danish Minister of Economic Affairs and Taxation, Mr. Mihály Kupa, Hungarian Minister of Finance, and Mr. Salvatore Zecchini, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the OECD’s Centre for Co-operation with European Economies in Transition.

The tax training needs of Central and Eastern European countries are fourfold:

1. Training tax inspectors and administrators. This first category of needs will be met by the creation of national training schools. The OECD tax centres will act as a forum where the directors of such tax schools can exchange views and provide training for the instructors.
2. Training middle to senior level policy-makers and managers. The OECD and its Member countries, as well as other interested international organisations, will use the newly established training network to play a major role in training middle to senior-level officials responsible for taxation. The issues to be covered in these training programmes will include: the formulation of tax policy; alternative strategies for promoting tax reforms; the economic analyses of alternative programmes; the organisation and management of the tax administration; the collection of tax; relations with the taxpayer; all areas in which common problems arise. The Hungarian Ministry of Finance has agreed to provide facilities in Budapest at which courses on domestic tax issues will be given.

3. Training officials who will deal with international tax issues. These training requirements will be met at a second training centre to be established in Vienna. The Austrian tax authorities have agreed to provide facilities at their training school for customs officials. Courses will focus on three areas: an introduction to international taxation issues; the role of tax treaties; transfer pricing issues and auditing MNEs. Other courses may be offered as appropriate.

4. Training of tax officials from the Baltic countries. A training centre for senior tax officials from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is to be established in Copenhagen at facilities provided by the Danish Ministry of Taxation. This centre will provide courses on both domestic and international tax issues, and will assist these three countries in implementing tax systems compatible with the move towards a market economy.

These three regional centres will provide flexibly-organised courses and also support for the development of National Tax Schools. They will fulfill a networking function and act as regional depositories for reference works on taxation. All three centres will be operational by Spring 1992.

Journalists may obtain further details of the assistance in the tax area provided by OECD to Central and Eastern European countries from:

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