Reform of education and training as a key element in the successful economic restructuring of Eastern and Central Europe will be the theme of an OECD Conference to be held from 29th June to 1st July. The meeting will be opened and chaired by Mr. J.M.M. Ritzen, Minister of Education and Science of the Netherlands. It will bring together experts from OECD countries with key education officials from the former Communist countries, including the republics of the former Soviet Union. The OECD experts will stress the need to harmonise education with economic policies as an essential prerequisite for structural reform.

The old Communist regimes linked education with economic imperatives by teaching narrow vocational skills to future factory workers from an early age. As the countries of Central and Eastern Europe attempt to break this mould, they have asked for advice and assistance from the OECD in pursuing new priorities for their education systems. These include:

- The building of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes at all levels of education;
- The development of continuing education and training for workers co-ordinated with improvements in work organisation;
- The reconstruction of higher education systems which relate both to the research needs of industry and to the advancement of knowledge and culture across a range of disciplines.

The conference will attempt to provide practical advice to countries on how to move in this direction and find solutions to problems. The conference will also identify future work for the OECD in these countries.

The conference is not open to the press but interested journalists should contact Mr. Ian Whitman, Education in Central and Eastern European Countries and the Partners in Transition Programme [tel. (33 1) 45 24 92 99 and fax (33 1) 45 24 90 98].