
Message from OECD Secretary General, Angel Gurría



Since my arrival at the OECD almost one year ago, I have sought to emphasise the OECD's role as a "hub of permanent dialogue on globalisation issues". The OECD Forum is a key element of this strategy as it brings together business and labour representatives, civil society personalities, government ministers and leaders of international organisations to discuss key aspects of the OECD agenda that will be covered by OECD ministers at their annual meeting afterwards.

The Forum theme of "Innovation, Growth and Equity" is of crucial importance to today's world. While innovation has driven much of the rise in living standards since the Industrial Revolution, its impact on growth is reinforced by globalisation. Increased competition and access to new ideas and technologies are at the root of this new innovation process. And at the same time, the emergence of new economies like China and India adds pressures for OECD countries to move up the value chain and engage in a continuous process of adjustment and innovation. Innovation is also important to addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development.

Many of our citizens are worried about the impact of globalization on living standards and job security. However, according to the OECD's reading of the evidence, the actual impact depends on the quality of national policies. For example, reducing the barriers to business start-ups improves the economy's capacity to seize the new opportunities arising from a more integrated world economy. Good national policies have an important role to play in terms of enhancing workers' mobility, upgrading their skills and providing adequate income support, in a context of increasing pressures to deal with technological change and adapt to this new context.

One of the great challenges for the policy agenda for reaping the full benefits of globalisation is the so-called political economy of reform. How can governments implement the necessary reforms and keep the public's support? Too often we have to wait for a crisis before reforms get launched – but with greater pain for all concerned. I firmly believe that a key element is engaging all stakeholder groups and the broader public in discussions on the benefits of reforms -- or the costs of the absence of reform. And this is where I believe that the OECD Forum has a unique role to play, because we are all stakeholders in globalisation.

I am therefore very happy that Spain's Deputy Prime Minister, Pedro Solbes, will report to OECD Ministers on the Forum discussions.

I look forward to welcoming you personally to OECD Forum 2007.

