

Foreword

The critical role played by entrepreneurship in driving economic development and job creation is increasingly understood. But even now, in the emerging “New Economy”, its potential is often not fully recognised and supported by policymakers. In terms of social cohesion, too, entrepreneurship can play an important role, allowing some of those people otherwise marginalised from the labour market to create their own opportunities to participate in economic life. One of the concerns of the OECD LEED Programme, therefore, is to stimulate policy debate on the factors that encourage entrepreneurship, the obstacles that stand in its way and the policy measures that can be developed to support it. This Notebook represents part of this effort, covering the important topic of youth entrepreneurship. It presents some of the many youth entrepreneurship programmes that have emerged at the local level in recent years. These programmes are easing the entry of young people into the labour market in a way that is making our economies stronger and more flexible. But the book also identifies some of the barriers that remain to releasing the entrepreneurial talent of young people and points to how policy approaches might be strengthened.

This stock take of developments in youth entrepreneurship policy is based on materials prepared for an international conference held by the OECD LEED Programme in Rome in November 1999, with the support of the Italian agency for youth entrepreneurship, *Imprenditorialità Giovanile*. A number of papers were commissioned for the conference, covering the policy context in countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and examining the nature of the youth problem in our changing economies and societies. To complement this work, the LEED secretariat also carried out background research to identify, describe and compare some of the most interesting youth entrepreneurship programmes in operation in the OECD countries.

This Notebook represents a synthesis of the resulting debates and analyses. It is written by Robert Cornell, a former Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD, who was invited to give his view of the current policy challenges for youth entrepreneurship.