
The OECD

Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development

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THE OECD: WHAT IS IT?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is a unique forum where the governments of 30 market democracies work together to address the economic, social and governance challenges of globalisation as well as to exploit its opportunities (www.oecd.org).

The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and co-ordinate domestic and international policies. It is a forum where peer pressure can act as a powerful incentive to improve policy and which produces internationally-agreed instruments, decisions and recommendations in areas where multilateral agreement is necessary for individual countries to make progress in a globalised economy. Non-members are invited to subscribe to these agreements and treaties.

Exchanges between OECD governments flow from information and analysis provided by a secretariat in Paris. The secretariat collects data, monitors trends, and analyses and forecasts economic developments. It also researches social changes or evolving patterns in trade, environment, agriculture, technology, taxation and more.

The OECD helps governments to foster prosperity and fight poverty through economic growth, financial stability, trade and investment, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship and development co-operation. It is helping to ensure that the environmental implications of economic and social development are taken into account. Other aims include creating jobs for everyone, social equity and achieving clean and effective governance.

The OECD is at the forefront of efforts to understand, and to help governments to respond to, new developments and concerns. These include trade and structural adjustment, online security, and the challenges related to reducing poverty in the developing world.

For more than 40 years, the OECD has been one of the world's largest and most reliable sources of comparable statistical, economic and social data. OECD databases span areas as diverse as national accounts, economic indicators, trade, employment, migration, education, energy, health and the environment. Much of the research and analysis is published.

Over the past decade, the OECD has tackled a range of economic, social and environmental issues while further deepening its engagement with business, trade unions and other representatives of civil society. Negotiations at the OECD on taxation and transfer pricing, for example, have paved the way for bilateral tax treaties around the world.

The OECD is a group of like-minded countries. Essentially, membership is limited only by a country's commitment to a market economy and a pluralistic democracy. It is rich, in that its 30 members produce almost 60% of the world's goods and services, but it is by no means exclusive. Non-members are invited to subscribe to OECD agreements and treaties, and the Organisation shares expertise and exchanges views on topics of mutual concern with more than 70 countries worldwide, from Brazil, China and Russia to least developed countries in Africa. ■

HOW HAS IT DEVELOPED?

The OECD grew out of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which was set up in 1948 with support from the United States and Canada to co-ordinate the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II (www.oecd.org/history).

Created as an economic counterpart to NATO, the OECD took over from the OEEC in 1961 and, since then, its mission has been to help governments achieve sustainable economic growth and employment and rising standards of living in member countries while maintaining financial stability, so contributing to the development of the world economy. Its founding Convention also calls on the OECD to assist sound economic expansion in member countries and other countries in the process of economic development, and to contribute to growth in world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis.

In recent years, the OECD has moved beyond a focus on its 30 member countries to offer its analytical expertise and accumulated experience to more than 70 developing and emerging market economies.

Globalisation has seen the scope of the OECD's work move from examination of each policy area within each member country to analysis of how various policy areas interact with each other, between countries and beyond the OECD area. This is reflected in work on issues such as sustainable development, bringing together environmental, economic and social concerns across national frontiers for a better understanding of the problems and the best way to tackle them together.

The Organisation is also expanding its relationship with civil society. Initially focused on relations with business

and labour, these have broadened to include a wide range of non-government organisations. The OECD also increasingly invites public comment on various aspects of its work.

In a rapidly-changing globalised economy, the OECD is changing too. The Organisation is reforming its management, including complex issues such as burden-sharing of the OECD budget, rules on decision-making and how to respond to pressures to enlarge the OECD membership. It is also renovating its Paris headquarters, including construction of a new conference centre. All these efforts are directed towards making the OECD a more effective instrument of international co-operation. ■

WHO DOES WHAT?

The OECD secretariat staff in Paris carry out research and analysis at the request of the OECD's 30 member countries. Representatives of member countries meet and exchange information in committees devoted to key issues. Decision-making power lies with the OECD Council.

Committees

Representatives of the 30 member countries meet in specialised committees to advance ideas and review progress in specific policy areas, such as economics, trade, science, employment, education or financial markets. There are about 200 committees, working groups and expert groups in all.

Some 40 000 senior officials from national administrations come to OECD committee meetings each year to request, review and contribute to work undertaken by the OECD secretariat. Once they return home, the national officials have online access to OECD documents and can exchange information through a special network.

The Council

Decision-making power is vested in the OECD's Council. It is made up of one representative per member country (www.oecd.org/membercountries), plus a representative of the European Commission (www.oecd.org/eu). The Council meets regularly at the level of permanent representatives to the OECD and decisions are taken by consensus. The Council meets at ministerial level once a year to discuss key issues and set priorities for OECD work. The work mandated by the Council is carried out by the OECD secretariat.

The OECD secretariat

Some 2 000 staff of the OECD secretariat in Paris work to support the activities of committees. They include about 700 economists, lawyers, scientists and other professionals, mainly based in a dozen substantive directorates, who provide research and analysis.

The secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General (www.oecd.org/secretarygeneral), assisted by four Deputy Secretaries-General. The Secretary-General also chairs the Council, providing the crucial link between national delegations and the secretariat.

The OECD works in two official languages: English and French. Staff members are citizens of OECD member countries but serve as international civil servants with no national affiliation during their OECD posting. There is no quota system for national representation; there is simply an equal opportunity policy of employing highly qualified men and women with a cross-section of experience and nationalities.

Funding

The OECD is funded by its 30 member countries. National contributions to the annual budget are based on a formula related to the size of each member's economy. The largest contributor is the United States, which provides approximately 25% of the budget, followed by Japan. With the approval of the Council, countries may also make separate contributions to particular programmes not funded from the main budget.

The size of the OECD budget – around 336 million euros a year – as well as its programme of work is determined by the Council.

The work of the OECD

The OECD provides a setting for reflection and discussion, based on policy research and analysis that helps governments shape policy that may lead to a formal agreement among member governments or be acted on in domestic or other international fora. Unlike the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, the OECD does not dispense money.

The OECD's way of working consists of a highly effective process that begins with data collection and analysis and moves on to collective discussion of policy, then decision-making and implementation. Mutual examination by governments, multilateral surveillance and peer pressure to conform or reform are at the heart of OECD effectiveness in areas such as its Convention on Combating Bribery in International Business Transactions. OECD analysis of how the information technology revolution contributes to economic growth helps governments craft economic policy, while work on the causes and cures for unemployment helps give political impetus to policies to reduce it. Crucial analytical work and consensus-building on trade issues, such as trade in services, feed into the success of international trade negotiations.

Discussions at the OECD sometimes evolve into negotiations where OECD countries agree on rules of the game for international co-operation. They can culminate in formal agreements, for example on combating bribery, on export credits, or on capital movements; or they may produce standards and models for international taxation or recommendations and guidelines covering corporate governance or environmental practices.

Much of the material collected and analysed at the OECD is published on paper or online; from press releases and regular compilations of data and

projections to one-time publications or monographs on particular issues; from economic surveys of each member country to regular reviews of education systems, science and technology policies or environmental performance. The OECD Internet site (www.oecd.org) enables any member of the public to access a wide range of OECD information, analysis and data.

How the secretariat operates

The work of the secretariat parallels the work of committees, with each directorate servicing one or more committees, as well as committee working parties and sub-groups. But increasingly, OECD work is cross-disciplinary.

The OECD's work on sustainable development, and its International Futures Programme which aims at identifying emerging policy issues at an early stage, are multidisciplinary. Work on population ageing has brought together macroeconomic specialists, experts on tax and enterprises or on health, as well as labour market and social policy analysis.

Environment and economic analysis can no longer be examined in isolation. Trade and investment are inextricably linked. Biotechnology concerns policy for agriculture, industry, science, environment and development. Gauging the effects of globalisation draws in virtually every field of policy analysis. ■

STRUCTURE OF THE OECD SECRETARIAT

(www.oecd.org/organisationchart)

General Secretariat		
Development Co-operation Directorate www.oecd.org/dac	Economics Department www.oecd.org/eco	Directorate for Education www.oecd.org/edu
Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs www.oecd.org/els	Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development www.oecd.org/cfe	Environment Directorate www.oecd.org/env
Executive Directorate www.oecd.org	Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs www.oecd.org/daf	Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries www.oecd.org/agr
Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members www.oecd.org/ccnm	Public Affairs and Communications Directorate www.oecd.org	Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate www.oecd.org/gov
Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry www.oecd.org/sti	Statistics Directorate www.oecd.org/std	Centre for Tax Policy and Administration www.oecd.org/ctp
Trade Directorate www.oecd.org/ech		

OTHER BODIES

Development Centre www.oecd.org/dev	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation www.oecd.org/edu/ceri	International Energy Agency www.iea.org
Nuclear Energy Agency www.nea.fr	Sahel and West Africa Club www.oecd.org/sah	European Conference of Ministers of Transport www.cemt.org

STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

Development

www.oecd.org/development

OECD donor countries grouped in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) account for more than 90% of official development assistance (ODA) worldwide. The Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) supports the work of the DAC and of the OECD as a whole by assisting with policy formulation, policy co-ordination and information systems for development. The 23 DAC members constitute the world's major aid donors. Recognising that developing countries themselves are ultimately responsible for their own development, the DAC concentrates on how international co-operation can contribute to developing countries' capacity to participate in the global economy and overcome poverty. The DAC chair issues an annual *Development Co-operation Report*, containing ODA statistics compiled by the DCD. The DCD works closely with other parts of the OECD secretariat on policy coherence for development.

The OECD Development Centre carries out comparative analysis of development issues and promotes informal policy dialogue with emerging and developing countries. Non-OECD countries Brazil, Chile, India, Romania, South Africa and Thailand are members of the Centre. A separate body, the Sahel and West Africa Club, supports the efforts of 17 African countries to define and implement medium and long-term development strategies for the region.

Economics

www.oecd.org/economics

Economic performance is high on the political agenda of OECD governments. The Economics Department examines economic and financial developments in OECD countries and selected non-member economies.

The department provides an overall framework to identify structural priorities needing government attention. It assesses the implications of a broad range of structural issues in an economy-wide perspective, drawing on work by a number of OECD specialist committees. This includes work on the economic implications of ageing, labour market policies, public expenditure, education and health systems, migration, innovation, product-market competition and financial market developments, barriers to international trade in services and foreign direct investment, and the effects of globalisation.

The twice-yearly *OECD Economic Outlook* presents analysis of recent macroeconomic developments and near-term prospects, highlighting key policy issues, and includes chapters on related macroeconomic topics. About 20 *OECD Economic Surveys* of member and non-member economies are published annually, covering the key macroeconomic and structural challenges.

Education

www.oecd.org/education

Countries spend a great deal on education, which is crucial to economic growth and social cohesion. The Directorate for Education helps member countries achieve high-quality learning for all that contributes to personal development, sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. It helps countries design

and implement effective policies to address the many challenges faced by educational systems. It focuses on how to evaluate and improve outcomes of education; to promote quality teaching and to build social cohesion through education. It also works on the adjustment needed by tertiary education in a global economy, as well as on the future of education.

The directorate produces regular peer reviews of educational systems of member and non-member countries. Progress in education and training systems is presented in an annual compendium of statistics and indicators, *Education at a Glance*. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) provides direct assessment of the levels of achievement of 15-year-olds every three years. Investigations of long-range trends and innovations in education are the focus of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.

Employment and Social Cohesion

www.oecd.org/social

www.oecd.org/migration

www.oecd.org/employment

High unemployment, exclusion and poverty tear at the fabric of society and can unravel economies. The Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs oversees work on the inter-related policy areas that can promote employment and prevent social exclusion. Its activities are focused on four main themes: employment and training, health, international migration and social issues.

The directorate monitors employment and earning patterns, and the annual *Employment Outlook* offers analysis of key labour market trends and policies. The flows and effects of how and why people move between countries are studied in

Trends in International Migration. Health and social trends are monitored regularly in *Health at a Glance*, *Society at a Glance* and *Pensions at a Glance*. The directorate also looks at the effectiveness of healthcare, social welfare programmes and the role of women in the labour force.

Energy

www.iea.org

www.nea.fr

www.oecd.org/energy

Energy issues are handled by two specialised agencies.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) was created after the 1974 oil crisis to co-ordinate energy policies. It is under the administrative umbrella of the OECD secretariat but managed independently. Founded largely around the need for an emergency sharing system in case of energy disruptions, the 26-member IEA has a broad mandate to consider means of improving energy supply and enhancing efficient energy use; integrating energy and environmental policies; and opening dialogue between energy producers and consumers within and beyond its own membership. It produces monthly *Oil Market Reports* and an annual *World Energy Outlook*.

The Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) is a specialised agency within the OECD. It helps its 28 members to maintain and develop, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal bases required for the safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Its studies and co-operative activities address nuclear safety and regulation; radioactive waste management; radiological protection and public health; nuclear science; economics, resources and technology; and legal affairs.

Entrepreneurship and Local Development

www.oecd.org/cfe

www.oecd.org/territorial

Fostering entrepreneurship, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), is high on policymakers' agendas in industrialised countries as well as in emerging and developing economies. The OECD's Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development fosters the development of an entrepreneurial society, capable of innovating, creating jobs and seizing the opportunities provided by globalisation while helping to promote sustainable growth, integrated development and social cohesion.

Environment

www.oecd.org/environment

A healthy environment is a prerequisite for a strong, healthy economy and for sustainable development. The Environment Directorate helps member countries to design and implement efficient, effective policies to address environmental problems and to manage natural resources in a sustainable way. To encourage more sustainable consumption and production patterns, the directorate examines the interplay between the environment and economic, sectoral or social concerns. It works with other directorates on key issues, such as trade and investment, agriculture, transport, climate change and environmental taxes, and is a key contributor to the OECD's work on sustainable development.

The directorate produces regular peer reviews of member countries' environmental performance. It compiles environmental data and indicators and produces future-oriented outlooks of environmental conditions. Its programme on environmental health and safety includes work on chemical testing and

risk assessment procedures, co-ordinating data and laboratory practice standards, and harmonising methodologies for assessing the safety of modern biotechnology products.

Financial and Enterprise Affairs

www.oecd.org/finance

www.oecd.org/corporate

Financial markets play a key role in economic growth and stability. The Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs takes up public policy challenges of direct concern to business to enhance economic growth and development, ensure financial stability and promote the effective integration of non-OECD countries in the global economy. It works closely with government officials to analyse emerging trends and prepare recommendations favouring policy convergence and best practices for national action and international co-operation.

These efforts are enriched by regular contacts and consultations with the private sector, labour and other civil society representatives. Non-OECD countries participate actively in this work and several have undertaken the same commitments as OECD members in tackling corruption, ensuring non-discriminatory treatment for foreign investors and recommending high-standard behaviour to their multinational enterprises.

A separate intergovernmental body, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF, www.fatf-gafi.org), develops and promotes policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Its secretariat is housed at the OECD.

Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

www.oecd.org/agriculture

Governments have long intervened in domestic and international markets to support agricultural production. Much of this support imposes costs on consumers and taxpayers, reduces economic efficiency, distorts production and trade, impedes growth in developing countries, and may damage the environment.

The Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries provides analysis and advice to help governments design and implement policies that achieve their goals in effective, efficient and least trade-distorting ways. The work covers three broad areas: agricultural policy reform, agricultural trade liberalisation, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

The annual report *OECD Agricultural Policies: Monitoring and Evaluation* provides unique, internationally comparable information on policy developments and their impact. The *OECD Agricultural Outlook* highlights market trends and the likely impact on global markets of alternative future policy scenarios. Work is under way to measure the environmental performance of agriculture. The OECD annual *Review of Fisheries* examines policy developments in this area.

Public Governance

www.oecd.org/governance

Good, effective public governance helps to strengthen democracy, promote economic prosperity and social cohesion. The Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate helps countries to adapt their government systems and territorial policies to the changing needs of society. This involves improving government efficiency while protecting and promoting society's longer-term governance values. The

directorate analyses how governments manage the public sector, improve public service delivery and make policy implementation more coherent. It promotes innovation in territorial development policy and helps countries manage the current shift from providing subsidies to enhancing territorial competitiveness.

One of its primary functions is to create a forum where countries can exchange ideas on how to address governance challenges. Top government officials meet in specialised working groups on budgeting and management, policy making, regulatory reform, human resources management, managing conflict of interest, e-government, territorial policy in urban and rural areas, and territorial indicators.

Science, Technology and Industry

www.oecd.org/science

www.oecd.org/enterprise

www.oecd.org/ict

Scientific invention and new technology are changing the face of industry. The Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry helps OECD countries understand and shape the evolution of a knowledge-based economy, in order to achieve the highest innovation potential and adapt national policies to opportunities provided by globalisation. It provides statistics and analysis to underpin government policies on emerging scientific, technological and industrial issues.

It examines framework conditions for industrial competitiveness and productivity growth and the implications of global value chains.

The directorate examines how to stimulate science and innovation, to improve the contribution of intellectual property to economic growth and to enhance the

effectiveness of research and development and industry-science links. Its work on biotechnology focuses on policy analysis and development. The directorate also works on enhancing consumer protection and user trust in the online environment. In shipbuilding and steel, it assists multilateral negotiations for binding agreements to limit public support.

Statistics

www.oecd.org/statistics

Statistics underpin the whole fabric of the OECD's analytical work, so their accuracy and timeliness are vital to the Organisation's reputation. The Statistics Directorate collects economic statistics from across the OECD. These are standardised to make them internationally comparable and are published in both printed and electronic form. The monthly *Main Economic Indicators* is one of the principal publications. Other specialised publications cover foreign trade, national accounts, employment and unemployment, and there are also regular releases of updated figures. Other parts of the OECD publish indicators for specialised sectors. Working with statisticians from member countries and other international organisations, the OECD has played a major role in developing new data systems to respond to new policy concerns and users' needs.

Taxation

www.oecd.org/taxation

The OECD helps policy makers shape the tax systems of the 21st century. The Centre for Tax Policy and Administration examines all aspects of taxation, including tax policy and tax administration. It also fosters dialogue with non-OECD economies, thereby promoting international co-operation in taxation.

This involves dialogue with more than 80 non-OECD economies and includes work on negotiating, applying, and interpreting tax treaties, transfer pricing and effective exchange of information.

Major statistical publications provide annual comparisons of tax levels and tax structures in member countries. The Centre works with other directorates on issues with a strong tax component such as the impact of taxation on the functioning of labour markets.

Trade

www.oecd.org/trade

Trade and investment liberalisation has stimulated economic growth and has been a key factor in integrating an expanding number of countries in the world economy. The Trade Directorate's work supports a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system that will maintain momentum for progressive trade liberalisation and rules-strengthening while contributing to rising standards of living and sustainable development in OECD and non-OECD countries. It supports the process of liberalisation flowing from multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the effective functioning of the multilateral trading system.

Its analytical work seeks to underpin the rationale for continued trade liberalisation and to foster an understanding of the links between trade liberalisation and a range of issues of public concern. This work advances an informed debate and helps build consensus. The directorate is involved in analysis and preparations for ongoing and future trade negotiations that may cover new categories of trade rules. At the same time, its analysis of evolving trade issues and policies can help forestall problems that emerge under the pressure of ever-intensifying competition. ■

GLOBAL RELATIONS

www.oecd.org/emerging

Over time, the OECD's focus has broadened to include extensive contacts with non-member economies and it now maintains co-operative relations with more than 70 of them. These contacts aim to further economic integration by making the OECD's experience available to other countries and enabling the OECD to profit from the insights and perspectives of non-members.

The Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members develops and oversees the strategic orientations of the OECD's global relations with non-members. It co-ordinates a number of programmes linked to the key themes of OECD work in areas such as improving the investment climate, public and corporate governance, trade, agriculture, competition and taxation. The Centre also co-ordinates both the non-members' participation in OECD bodies and the process of accession of new members. It is a point of contact with other international organisations and promotes and co-ordinates relations with them.

Helping the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe improve governance and management is the concern of a special programme, Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA). This is a joint venture with the European Union. ■

THE OECD AND THE PUBLIC

www.oecd.org/media

www.oecd.org/publicaffairs

www.oecd.org/civilsociety

Effective communication is essential to enable the OECD to fulfil its mission to promote intergovernmental co-operation, as well as to explain its activities to a broad range of audiences and stakeholders from policy makers to business representatives, academia, labour, civil society, the media and the general public. The OECD Web site (www.oecd.org) is vital in getting the OECD's message across to a wide audience as it is the primary point of contact with the Organisation for most people around the world. The Web site is also used to invite public comment on certain projects.

OECD publications (www.oecd.org/publications) are a prime vehicle for disseminating the Organisation's intellectual output, both on paper and online. The Organisation publishes around 250 new titles a year, in English and in French, with selected titles translated into other languages. Information about publications is available through the OECD in Paris and through the online bookshop (www.oecdbookshop.org).

The OECD Centres (www.oecd.org/centres) in Berlin, Mexico, Tokyo and Washington organise lectures, seminars and other events to disseminate the Organisation's work, often helping to bridge language gaps.

The *OECD Observer* (www.oecdobserver.org), the Organisation's public magazine, also keeps readers up to date on key issues related to OECD work.

The OECD has had co-operative relations with civil society (www.oecd.org/civilsociety) since its creation,

principally through the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC, www.biac.org) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC, www.tuac.org). Over the last decade, the OECD has undertaken increasingly extensive dialogue and consultations with other civil society organisations and parliamentarians.

The OECD also maintains close relationships with parliamentarians in member countries, notably through its close and long-standing links with the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, and with the Economic Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. It has recently strengthened its parliamentary links by launching a programme of high-level parliamentary seminars.

As part of its relations with other international organisations and bodies, the OECD has official relations with the International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, International Atomic Energy Agency, and many other United Nations bodies. The OECD also co-ordinates with the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, an independent body linked to the OECD that deals with issues of improvement of all forms of transport.

The annual OECD Forum (www.oecdforum.org), held in conjunction with the annual ministerial meeting, enables leaders from business, labour and non-governmental organisations to discuss key issues on the ministerial agenda with government ministers and senior officials of international organisations. The Forum is open to the public. ■

OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES

Australia	www.oecd.org/australia
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