

# INSIDE THE OECD: REGIONAL PROGRAMS

**2023**

Going Global, Going Regional



---

Permanent Representation  
of the Republic of Poland  
to the OECD

# INSIDE THE OECD: REGIONAL PROGRAMS

## 2023

Going Global, Going Regional

GLOBAL RELATIONS



The OECD and South East Europe



The OECD and Eurasia



The OECD and the Middle East & North Africa



The OECD and Southeast Asia



The OECD and Latin America & the Caribbean

*©2023 Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the OECD  
To cite this publication: Inside the OECD: Regional Programs 2023*

Paris 2023

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword by Zbigniew Rau</b> , Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.....	4
<b>Foreword by Mathias Cormann</b> , OECD Secretary-General.....	5
<b>Andreas Schaal</b> , Director of OECD Global Relations and OECD Sherpa to the G7, the G20 and APEC.....	8
<b>OECD SEE Regional Programme - Marzena Kisielewska</b> , Head of the South East Europe Division in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat.....	15
<b>OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme - William Tompson</b> , Head of the Eurasia Division in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat.....	23
<b>MENA-OECD Programme - Carlos Conde</b> , Head of the Middle East and North Africa Division in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat.....	31
<b>OECD SEA Regional Programme - Alexander Böhmer</b> , Head of the South and Southeast Asia Division in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat.....	40
<b>OECD LAC Regional Programme - Jose Antonio Ardavin</b> , Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat.....	47
<b>Final remarks by H.E. Aleksander Surdej</b> , Permanent Representative of Poland to the OECD....	55



## Foreword by Zbigniew Rau

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

By facilitating policy reforms among its Members and in third countries, the OECD has had an impact on enlarging the community of well-governed, innovative, prosperous, and rules-based market economies. Through policy dialogue the OECD provides non-Members with technical assistance and know-how across various policy areas. It shares good practices and lessons learned.

Since its accession to the OECD, Poland has played an active role in this regard. For instance, Poland shares its policy experience on introducing efficient and equitable tax collection systems and e-administration.

The OECD has been developing regional programmes as a framework for co-operation with non-Members, supporting them in pursuing domestic reforms to the benefit of their citizens. The examples of effective co-work in South East Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, described in this publication, confirm an important role that the OECD plays in designing public policies that benefit all.

Since the outbreak of Russia's unjustified full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the OECD has taken a clear stance: it has broken off any cooperation with Russia and offers assistance to Ukraine.

Poland has been fully committed to this action and motivates all Members to generously support Ukraine. Thanks to our joint initiative with Lithuania, the OECD Office in Kyiv was opened. We also welcomed the Country Programme that was signed with Ukraine to rebuild and reform its economy in line with OECD standards. We hope that as a result of these efforts Ukraine will become a member of the OECD soon.



## Foreword by Mathias Cormann

OECD Secretary-General

The OECD forms "a like-minded community, committed to the preservation of individual liberty, the values of democracy, the rule of law and the defence of human rights."<sup>1</sup> As an Organisation, our mission is to help deliver better policies for better lives, to increase economic and social wellbeing for people across the OECD and beyond, on the foundation of market based economic principles and a rules-based international trading system. Through evidence-based policies, best practices and standards we develop, we aim to have a positive impact globally, well beyond our Membership.

Our Global Relations Strategy and our engagement with partner countries and regions around the globe, serve as a platform for advanced, emerging and developing countries to find solutions to shared challenges through evidence-based fact finding, information and data sharing, standard setting, and multilateral policy dialogue. Our longstanding, inclusive and impactful work on international taxation, or our recently launched Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches designed to help optimise the global impact of emissions reduction efforts around the world, are flagship examples of that.

Across the range of OECD Global Relations tools, our Regional Programmes provide a structured basis to systematically broaden this global engagement, to promote and increase adherence to OECD standards through partnerships and a sound approach to economic, social and regional development.

The five Regional Programmes covering South East Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Eurasia, Southeast Asia and Latin America

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD Vision Statement; Trust in Global Cooperation. 2021

and the Caribbean are key pillars in this mission. Our soon to be launched OECD Africa Partnership will further complement our regional coverage.

The Five Regional Programmes helped bring partner countries closer to the OECD and encouraged some to embark on the positive transformational process of accession which helps catalyse reforms that benefit the candidate country and most importantly its citizens. Current candidate countries, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru, and Romania are making good progress on the technical work, while a positive dialogue with Argentina is ongoing.

Indonesia's recent application for OECD Membership as the first country from Southeast Asia also has its roots in the Southeast Asia Regional Programme, which Indonesia supported the creation of and led as its inaugural co-chair with Japan after its launch by then Prime Minister Shinzō Abe in 2014.

In order to deepen our impact in one of the fastest growing regions of the world, we are building the next strategic inroads with a new Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, welcomed at this year's Ministerial Council Meeting. The Framework will help enhance our partnerships across this region, which is a key driver of global economic growth and the green transformation, boosting participation by countries in the region in OECD bodies and instruments and creating the conditions to welcome countries from the region as Members of the OECD.

Through the Eurasia Regional Programme, established in 2009, we are also continuing to strengthen our support for Ukraine and other key countries in the region who need our support considering the geopolitical situation – including, among others, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We have opened an initial accession dialogue with Ukraine, and the OECD-Ukraine Liaison Office began operating from Kyiv in March. We have developed the Ukraine Country Programme in close cooperation with the government of Ukraine to help lift the country's adherence to OECD standards and participation in OECD bodies.

The MENA Regional Programme seeks since 2005 to promote meaningful policy reforms in the region, with a focus on gender equality, business integrity and anti-corruption standards across the Middle East. We are establishing a reinforced Partnership with Africa based on openness, inclusiveness, trust and mutual learning, while we have now also launched the first Joint Programme of Work between South Africa and

the OECD, and we continue to deliver on the country programmes in Egypt and Morocco. We opened the OECD Istanbul Centre for Global Relations in 2022 to promote relevant cross-regional work involving all regional programmes.

Our longest-standing regional programme, since 2000, on South East Europe has been playing a central role in supporting the competitiveness and sustainable development of this region, while our most recent regional programme since 2016 on Latin America and the Caribbean fosters regional cooperation and dialogue across four pillars: productivity, social inclusion, governance and environmental sustainability. The accession aspiration and the ongoing process with Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru und Romania is a clear demonstration of the tangible impact of these Regional Programmes.

Our mission and ambition can be underpinned by our work in regions beyond our Membership:

- Providing such platforms for evidence based mutual learning and international dialogue and cooperation.
- Providing standards as instruments and tools to help level the global playing field by encouraging a common approach to shared challenges.
- Providing evidence-based policy recommendations to help governments tackle both immediate challenges and longer-term structural reform priorities.

Always with our core vision in mind of ensuring better policies for better lives.

## GLOBAL RELATIONS



## Interview with Mr. Andreas Schaal

Director of OECD Global Relations  
and OECD Sherpa to the G7, the G20 and APEC

### 1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?

My academic background is in political sciences and public administration, and have been trained on the job in economic diplomacy, public policy and political economy. Before I was appointed "Director of OECD Global Relations" in 2016 and "OECD Sherpa to the G7, G20 and APEC" in 2022, I had the chance to "cross the OECD river" several times and to gain experience in global relations and global economic governance from different perspectives:

- first, between 2001 to 2006 as Economic and Industry Counsellor at the German Permanent Delegation to the OECD, when I served as a member of and then was elected Vice Chair of the OECD's Economic Development Review Committee (EDRC);
- second, as a German government official between 2006 and 2008 in Berlin, when I served as Deputy Head of the German G8 Sherpa office. In this role I organised the G8 Heiligendamm Summit where the Heiligendamm Process started – a dialogue between the G7/8 and Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa later hosted at the OECD;
- and third, since 2008 as an OECD official: I started as a Senior Investment Policy Analyst in the Directorate for Financial Markets and Enterprise Affairs (DAF), and then served as Advisor, Counsellor, Head of the Sherpa Office and G20 Sous-Sherpa in the Office of the Secretary-

General (OSG) between 2009 and 2018. And then, with the arrival of Mathias Cormann as Secretary-General, I was appointed OECD Sherpa to G7, G20 and APEC, which helps us to combine more effectively our work on global governance and global relations.

These different assignments allowed me to gain a thorough understanding and awareness of the different perspectives, interests and needs of governments, members and the OECD Secretariat from which I still benefit in my daily interactions with both OECD's executive leadership and high-level officials from OECD member and partner countries. I am proud and honoured to have served the Organisation, its Members, and two Secretary-Generals for over fifteen years now to make the OECD more relevant, impact-focused and globally-oriented. The OECD has changed quite a lot - and for the better - since I first walked from Metro La Murette to the Chateau in September 2001!

## **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

The major advantage and the greatest source of motivation of working at and for the OECD is that you can make a difference and really have an impact on policies with evidence-based analysis. In Global Relations and Co-operation we see our partner countries supporting their own reform agenda by moving ever closer to OECD good practices. Ultimately, the OECD can contribute to creating a world that is more balanced, fair and inclusive, in which all actors abide by global standards and thus contribute to creating a global level playing field.

The OECD's role in this respect is more important than ever. Being an active part of this endeavour is both motivating and rewarding. To give you an example, OECD legal instruments governing trade and investment openness and business integrity, such as the OECD Codes of Liberalisation, the Declaration on International Investment and MNEs, the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention or the G20/OECD Corporate Governance Principles, to which a number of partner countries have adhered or aim to adhere, are key pillars of the international economic architecture.

At the OECD we also use our expertise and standards to address global challenges. I am proud to work in an Organisation that stood up to its values when Russia started the war against Ukraine. The OECD is supporting Ukraine and the international community to address the

economic and social impacts of the war. We recently launched a four-year Ukraine Country Programme to support the country's reform agenda and paths to EU and OECD membership and set up the OECD-Ukraine Liaison Office in Kyiv. The Organisation is also working to address the global impacts of the war from inflation to supply chain bottlenecks.

Making OECD standards count on a global scale and helping governments collectively overcome shared challenges are central ways of ensuring that the OECD serves the best interests of its Members and is a driving force behind the Organisation's Global Relations Strategy.

### **3. What programme and activities does your Directorate co-ordinate?**

The Directorate for Global Relations and Co-operation (GRC) leads, under the oversight of Secretary-General Mathias Cormann and Deputy Secretary-General Ulrik Knudsen, on the Organisation's engagement with partner countries – both inside the Secretariat, with Members in the External Relations Committee, and directly with the partner countries on an individual and regional basis.

The OECD's Global Relations Strategy integrates partner countries and economies into the Organisation's knowledge and databases while also establishing global and regional platforms for policy dialogue and peer learning. While the OECD's ambition is not to become a universal organisation, engaging beyond the Organisation's membership ensures that the OECD's standards and policy expertise have a global impact by informing partner countries' policy making and reform agendas.

The OECD's Global Relations also works to engage and embed non-Members in key OECD initiatives. The Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA) is an important example of this kind of engagement. The launch event on 9 February 2023 saw the participation of 607 senior government officials and delegates representing 103 countries and jurisdictions and 9 international and other organisations – a truly global initiative that goes well beyond the Organisation's 38 member countries.

Against this background, the OECD has developed a set of Global Relations tools including:

- Key Partners engagement which supports strengthened co-operation with Brazil, the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia and South Africa;
- Regional Programmes support countries as a group to engage in selected OECD activities. The Programmes provide a platform for countries to highlight progress they have made on their policy reform agendas and encourage others to follow their lead. Our Regional Programmes – covering Southeast Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and South East Europe – foster regional cooperation and integration while also ensuring coordination and monitoring of OECD work in these regions.
- Country Programmes are a strategic and structured form of engagement that enable selected countries to anchor their policy reform agendas in OECD standards across a range of key policy areas. We are proud to have launched the Ukraine Country Programme at the OECD Meeting of Council at Ministerial Level 2023. The Country Programme will support Ukraine's agenda for reform, recovery and reconstruction and will help it advance its ambitions to join the OECD and European Union. Recently we embarked on a second phase of the Thailand Country Programme, began work on a country programme with Egypt, and continued to work closely with Morocco. These all build on the first such programmes with Peru and Kazakhstan. Viet Nam has been invited by the Council to engage in new Country Programmes.
- Finally, the OECD supports the G20, G7 and APEC through data, analysis and expertise that is based on our comparative advantages and follow Members' priorities and guidance.

**4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities that are active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

We co-operate closely with governments of partner countries as well as with a large number of international organisations, including the WTO, FAO, UNCTAD, IMF, World Bank, ADB, ASEAN, UN-ESCAP and ECLAC that have relevant programmes in our regions or work in the same policy domains. The form of this co-operation varies, depending on the issues and circumstances, from jointly implemented activities or publications, through formal or informal participation in each other's events, to exchange of information and statistics. The OECD is also deeply involved

at the core of leading multilateral economic and policy making fora, most notably the G20, G7 and APEC. Through effective co-operation, we enhance our institutional and policy know-how on a wide range of partner countries and ensure that their inputs are appropriately included in the OECD Global Relations programme. These collaborations also improve our insights into the other organisations' work and experience and thereby help avoid duplication of activities.

## **5. What are your flagship products?**

The prominent GRC flagship report by the Secretary-General to Ministers on OECD Global Relations is produced each year for the OECD's annual Ministerial Council Meetings. This year, we also delivered the Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework, the Ukraine Country Programme and the new Africa-OECD Partnership.

We have key publications for each of the regions we are working on:

- Middle East and North Africa (MENA): "Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean", "Middle East and North Africa Investment Policy Perspectives", "Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia";
- South East Europe (SEE): "SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2022" and "Competitiveness in South East Europe: A Policy Outlook (2024 (forthcoming))";
- Southeast Asia (SEA): "The SME Policy Index ASEAN 2024 (forthcoming)", "OECD Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China, and India", the "Skills Strategy in Southeast Asia", and "Enabling Sustainable Investment in ASEAN report";
- Latin America and Caribbean (LAC): "Latin American Economic Outlook", "OECD-IDB Government at a Glance";
- EURASIA: "SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2024 (forthcoming)", "Assessing the Impact of Russia's War against Ukraine on Eastern Partner Countries".

## **6. How do the programme and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

The OECD has proven to be a valuable policy advisor and the “place to go for reforms” in our partner countries. Evidence-based policy guidance and our country reviews in several domains have helped policy-makers and stakeholders to pursue their reform agenda. Further, through capacity building bilateral or regional workshops, training and advice, we target the specific needs of the concerned authorities to support domestic reform priorities.

### **7. Tell us about your vision for global relations at the OECD in 2050?**

In 2050, you mean one year after I have retired in 2049 from the OECD at the age of 80? I hope that I could then say, "mission accomplished" because the OECD has received in 2040 the Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to economic governance and for having brought major emerging economies into the framework of our values, standards and policies and thus helped shaping better policies which promoted better lives of million people in our Member and partner countries!

But on a more serious note, looking almost 30 years ahead, the OECD will not have become a universal organisation, but its standards will count on a global scale. It will be an effective, inclusive and flexible global policy network including Members and selected Partners that has developed global standards and policies on taxation, climate mitigation sustainable development & climate financing, digital transformation, trade and investment regimes, international capital markets, responsible business conduct, education, well-being, green growth, integrity and anti-bribery, and sound public management.

It may comprise 45-48 Members covering all regions of the world, including important countries from Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Mission accomplished by then!

## The OECD's Global Relations Tools

### OECD Global Relations Strategy [C/MIN(2021)17/FINAL]

#### Key Partners:

Brazil\*  
China  
India  
Indonesia\*\*  
South Africa

#### Joint Work Programmes:

Indonesia  
South Africa

#### Regional Programmes:

Southeast Asia  
Eurasia  
Latin America & the Caribbean  
Middle East & North Africa  
South East Europe

#### Country Programmes:

Morocco Phase II  
Egypt  
Thailand Phase II  
Ukraine\*\*\*  
Viet Nam (formal launch foreseen in 2023)

#### Accession Candidates:

Argentina  
Brazil  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Peru  
Romania

#### Strategic Partnerships:

The OECD-Africa Partnership

#### Global Forums:

15 Global Forums managed by committees

#### Global Governance:

G20, United Nations, G7, APEC, ASEAN

#### Partnerships in OECD Bodies:

Invites  
Participants  
Associates



\*Since 2022 Brazil is in the process of accession to the OECD.

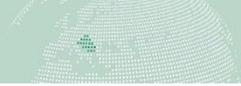
\*\*On 14 July 2023 Indonesia has requested to start the accession process and become a Member of the OECD.

\*\*\*On 5 October 2022, the OECD Council has decided to recognise Ukraine as a prospective Member country and asked the Secretary-General to engage in an initial accession dialogue. On 8 June 2023 at its meeting at Ministerial level, the Council launched a Ukraine Country Programme.

- Throughout the 1990s, work with non-Members was kept separate from committees' work with Members; in the late 1990s and 2000s, committees began to set up "outreach programmes".
- Since 2004, all work with non-Members has been fully integrated into committees' regular work programmes.
- In 2012, the OECD Council adopted a new Resolution which allows non-Member countries to engage with committees in 3 different capacities:
- Regional programmes have been established with South East Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Eurasia, Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The SEE is the oldest regional initiative – established in 2000 – but most recently – the Southeast Asia Regional Programmes was established (2014) as an OECD strategic priority, followed by the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Programme in 2016.
- Today, over 100 partner economies participate in OECD work.
- This work is framed by OECD committees' Global Relations Strategies and "Participation Plans".



OECD Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum 2022



## Interview with Mrs. Marzena Kisielewska

Head of the South East Europe Division  
in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat

### **1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?**

I was a member of Polish civil service ever since graduating from the National School of Public Administration in 1994. I was directly involved in the process of Poland's integration with the EU at all its stages serving as, among other roles, Deputy Head of the Chief Negotiator's team during the EU accession negotiations as well as the Head of Cabinet of Ministers for European Affairs. This was an extremely intensive, enriching and rewarding experience, but we could have been even more successful had we had the knowledge we gained throughout it at the beginning of the process. When I learned that the OECD is looking for a Head of South East Europe Division in the Global Relations Secretariat, I thought that perhaps my knowledge, experience, network of contacts could be of use for the partners which strive to achieve similar goals. I applied, was accepted and joined the Organisation in 2014.

### **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

The Organisation offers an intellectually stimulating working environment. You are working with great minds on great ideas and projects, all from a global perspective. You learn about ideas from the time they are being born. At the same time, you have almost limitless access to knowledge of the issues and problems the world economy has

been struggling with. Being able to make the difference in partner countries by using and sharing expertise and knowledge built over years by the Members and the Secretariat is always a source of great professional satisfaction. The Organisation is also a very attractive working place, so as a manager, one can form a dream team composed of intelligent, competent, creative and dedicated people, passionate about what they do. Just like the South East Europe Division team, for example! It is a privilege to lead a team like this.

### **3. What programme does your Division co- ordinate?**

The OECD South East Europe (SEE) Regional Programme was established in 2000. It supports economies in the region, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, in the design and implementation of economic reforms in favour of growth that is inclusive and sustainable. The SEE Regional Programme engages in a dialogue with policy makers and non-governmental stakeholders from the region in order to identify economic challenges, share good practices that draw on OECD standards, and provide policy advice. In doing so, the Programme then supports the implementation of these reforms through capacity building and subsequently monitors and compares progress throughout this process. Moreover, the Programme's work aims at supporting these reforms in the context of the regional economies' EU accession and integration aims, and as a result its work is largely financed by the European Commission.

Almost all types of stakeholders benefit from our work, ranging from the governments whom we help guide policy reform to donors whom we help prioritise funding decisions. However, other beneficiaries include the private sector, civil society and academia who also frequently feature in our work.

### **4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities, that are active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

The SEE Regional Programme's work covers almost all areas of public policies, drawing on the OECD's broad expertise and databases. The Programme thus emulates the OECD's unique multidisciplinary approach in its co-operation with partners from the region. In this context, the flagship products of the programme are comprehensive, focusing on a wide array of policies enabling not only to compare the economies' performance, but also to look into the numerous interactions of policies and reforms.

While the OECD co-ordinates the work under each project, it also benefits strongly from the involvement of numerous partner organisations, such as the European Commission (EC), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Training Foundation (ETF). Other relevant regional organisations, such as the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), for example, have also a longstanding co-operation with our Programme. Our partnership approach adds value by ensuring consistency of the Programme's work with the activities of other organisations, thus stimulating greater synergies, drawing on relevant complementarities and avoiding duplication.

Furthermore, the OECD acts as independent adviser, sharing experiences and providing recommendations, which is appreciated by partners and donors alike. Our work identifies bottlenecks and informs priorities for investment. Therefore, it can be useful for international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and EBRD, in identifying where needs are the biggest and how investments should be channelled. In fact, our Programme is also part of, and provides inputs to, the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) - a joint initiative led by the EU - aimed at enhancing harmonisation and cooperation in investments for the socio-economic development of the Western Balkans.

The SEE programme is actively implementing the OECD unique method of co-operation based on "peer learning". It enables independent and rigorous analysis and assessment to be used by partners in benchmarking their performance against each other and against OECD good practice experiences. The OECD also complements other organisations' work by collecting data, developing benchmarking methodologies in order to make the evidence-based comparisons and analysis of economic performance in SEE even more relevant and useful.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the OECD SEE regional programme is very well placed to support international initiatives supporting SEE, such as the SEE Co-operation Process and the Berlin Process. The Secretariat is currently working to further define and organise its involvement in their activities and events.

## **5. What are your flagship products?**

Our regional programme publishes two cyclical flagship publications: the Competitiveness Outlook and the SME Policy Index. The [Competitiveness Outlook](#) is one of the OECD's most far-reaching publications and the most comprehensive assessments of economic policy in the region of South East Europe. It defines a sustainable structural reform agenda for greater economic competitiveness in the Western Balkans and directly supports other strategic documents and processes such as the European Commission's enlargement package progress reports, as well the economic reform programmes submitted annually by the Western Balkans within the EU accession framework. However, the Competitiveness Outlook and its recommendations are first and foremost a change-management tool for governments, the private sector and other non-governmental stakeholders to make sound policy and strategy decisions.

We have already released three editions of the Competitiveness Outlook, in 2016, 2018 and 2021, and the Programme officially launched the fourth assessment cycle during a [kick-off meeting](#) at the OECD in April 2023. This new iteration of the assessment covers 15 policy areas and focuses horizontally on policies supporting the twin green and digital transition. The policy areas assessed build on over 400 indicators. The assessment is set to involve hundreds of Western Balkan policy makers and statistical office representatives in the data collection phase. Unique to this cycle is also the introduction of a new digital data platform which will contribute to dissemination of the assessment's findings.

The [SME Policy Index](#) is our second flagship publication, compiling the key findings from the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) assessment that is undertaken periodically for the six Western Balkan economies and Türkiye. Using the ten principles of the SBA as a basis, the SME Policy Index provides important policy recommendations, which support the development of a robust private sector in the region and stimulate convergence with OECD and EU good SME policies. The latest edition was published in 2022, and its key findings will continue to be promoted at

relevant fora throughout 2023, aiming to increase the take-up of policy recommendations in support of enhanced private sector competitiveness.

A final new project, [Supporting Green Transition through Circular Economy Roadmaps](#), aims to assist governments from the region in preparing and implementing circular economy (CE) roadmaps to accelerate their green economic recovery and growth, in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. We are currently assisting Albania and North Macedonia with the drafting of their CE roadmaps to serve as a blueprint for their CE transition. The Programme organised its first Regional Circular Economy meeting at the OECD Istanbul Centre in April 2023. As part of the kick-off, the regional Circular Economy Peer Dialogue was formed – a platform aiming to facilitate exchange among government authorities, the private sector, civil society and academia on how to design, implement and monitor progress in their circular economy transition efforts.

Thus, through these flagship projects, the SEE programme brings partners from the region closer to the OECD and its good practices and instruments. These flagships are also consistently brought to the attention of high-level policy makers to ensure their relevance and usefulness for on-going reforms.

## **6. How do the program and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

The programme's work is designed to support the regional economies' ability to create effective policies and build the capacity of policymakers to address challenges. As such, our products seek to catalyse and assist transformation in these economies, both in specific areas of economic performance as well as the broader pillars of green and digital transformation.

Let me cite a couple of examples. First, the **Competitiveness Outlook** has so far helped policy makers and firms across the region to make important economic choices across all areas of the economy. It has been serving as a comprehensive manual to donors, investors, and thus makes the distribution of funding more effective by helping to prioritise and streamline decisions. It plays a large role in the EU accession process, as it is utilised as a key reference document for strategic accession processes of the European Commission.

Second, the **SME Policy Index**, on the other hand, has been instrumental in improving the overall business environment in which SMEs operate, and in bringing SME policies into alignment with OECD good practices. Moreover, the policy recommendations provided under our assessment substantially helped our countries progress towards meeting economic criteria for EU accession under Chapter 20 (enterprise and industrial policy).

Third, the Programme initiated its work on [Fair Market Conditions for Competitiveness](#) in 2019. Expanding upon previous team work on the role of corruption in hampering economic competitiveness and growth, the workstream aims to address these challenges and enhance transparency and integrity building on a collective action approach. Thus, its primary objectives centre around spurring and supporting a transformation of economies' culture toward integrity and anti-corruption.

Finally, it is also worth highlighting that our assessments are complemented with customised **support for policy implementation** activities. As part of these activities, we present practical examples from OECD and EU countries, which acted as a stimulus for the implementation of the recommendations stemming from our work. For instance, building on the key recommendations of the previous SME Policy Index, the Programme engaged in a dedicated project, co-implemented with GIZ, to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in design and implementing the right policies to facilitate businesses' digital transition. Amongst others, we have created an inclusive policy dialogue platform including various stakeholders and regional peers. I can fairly say that these activities have proven to be a big success so far and have served as crucial instruments in improving analytical and technical skills of policy-makers.

## **7. Tell us about your vision for your region in 2050?**

They say it is always difficult to make predictions, especially about the future! However, I believe developing a vision is as much about setting a resolute political course as about making accurate predictions, so I will try my luck:

My vision for the South East European region by 2050 is that of a region that is much more integrated with the EU – as full-fledged members- and partnering closer with the OECD while continuing to take advantage of

its strategic location on the south eastern edge of Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has strengthened the mutual recognition of the importance of these economies' integration.

Moreover, I fully believe in the untapped potential of the region to experience significant economic growth by 2050. With improved infrastructure, increased investment, and regional cooperation, South East Europe could reach higher standards of prosperity. Citizens of the region will be the first to benefit, but so will neighbouring countries and the EU at large.

By 2050, I also harbour a vision of increased political stability and regional co-operation, which could be achieved through improved dialogue and resolution of disputes. Enhanced political co-operation would lead to a more harmonious and prosperous South East Europe.

The will to realise this vision is widely shared in the region, on both sides of the EU border. It is also a vision that the OECD, under the leadership of Secretary-General Cormann, is working hard to make come true. However, I am also very much aware of the political and economic challenges that still lie ahead. I hope that our work in the region will help to overcome them.



***The South East Europe Programme (SEE)** signed in 2000, supported economies in this region to design and implement reforms to accelerate private sector development and competitiveness, attract more and better investment and raise the living standards. The OECD now cooperates with policy makers, business leaders and civil society from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.*

<sup>1</sup>This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.



Friends of South East Europe 2022



Friends of South East Europe 2022

 The OECD and Eurasia

## Interview with Mr. William Tompson

Head of the Eurasia Division  
in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat

### **1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?**

I spent the first part of my career as an academic in England, working mainly on the political economy of post-communist transitions – chiefly Russia and other post-Soviet states. I also taught international relations and international political economy. I came to the OECD in 2003 on a leave of absence from the University of London. That leave was extended, and in the end, I resigned my chair and remained at the OECD, first in the Economics Department and then in the Regional Development Policy Division of the (then) Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate. Although I arrived at the OECD to work in the Economics Department on Russia, Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, my OECD work increasingly took me away from this focus. I had projects in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan throughout those years, but I also worked on dozens of other Member and Partner Economies. Finally, in 2015, I was invited to head the Eurasia Division. This has been a wonderful chance to return to the region that has been my principal focus since the mid-1980s. The time I spent working outside the region has paid off, though, as it has given me a much broader perspective on many issues.

### **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

In brief: the people and the work. First, the people. I love working with a team of clever, highly motivated people from a wide range of cultural,

intellectual and professional backgrounds. I also greatly value the chance to engage with working officials and policymakers of member and partner countries, at all levels – from junior experts to prime ministers.

Secondly, the work. I never stop learning in this job. As a former professor whose interests were always more policy-focused than theoretical, I love the opportunity to work in important areas of economics and the social sciences – sometimes even pushing back the frontiers of those disciplines – that really can contribute to better lives for people. The OECD offers a rare opportunity to join cutting-edge research to real-world problems and real policy responses. Of course, it's not always so exciting on a day-to-day basis: there is still a lot of routine work, as in any public bureaucracy, dealing with budgets, staffing and internal procedures. And the impact of our work is rarely dramatic or immediate. But it is real, and it is critical that we all keep the OECD's mission in mind when we start to feel overwhelmed by the boring stuff.

### **3. What programme does your Division co-ordinate?**

Since its creation in 2008, the OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme has worked with countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia to assist in the implementation of policies to enhance competitiveness, improve the business climate and support the transition from planned to market economies.<sup>3</sup> The Programme serves as a gateway for OECD expertise and encourages partner countries to align themselves with OECD instruments and standards. Increasingly, we carry out our work in collaboration with other OECD directorates and relevant OECD Committees. The Programme serves as a platform for a discussion on a broad spectrum of thematic issues relevant to further improving the region's competitiveness. In recent years, our work has been greatly affected by shocks such as the COVID pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but while addressing these emergencies, we strive to keep the region's long-term structural challenges at the centre of our work. Ukraine, of course, looms larger than ever in our activities but we have made it clear to Partners across the region that we are there to help them weather these shocks, as well.

---

<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan (co-operation suspended since August 2021), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus (co-operation suspended February 2022), Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

#### **4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities, which remain active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

We are in regular and close contact with development partners in the region, particularly the World Bank, the EBRD, the ADB, UN agencies and actors like GIZ. The nature of our co-operation varies across themes and countries. For example, our most high-profile work in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus is the quadrennial Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe assessment; this we conduct in partnership with the EBRD, the European Commission and the European Training Foundation. Elsewhere – in Kyrgyzstan, for example – we have worked especially closely with GIZ. We provide mainly policy advice, while they are occupied with technical assistance (TA) that is beyond the OECD's mandate. When identifying projects, we work closely with partners to identify niches appropriate to the OECD's expertise and mandate and also to align our messages with one another. The issue of "OECD value added" is always a concern. In the main, we focus on the policy level, leaving TA to others. We also focus on OECD data and instruments, and on the opportunities that engagement with OECD Committees and other bodies can offer.

#### **5. What are your flagship products?**

Our most prominent regular output in the Eastern Europe-South Caucasus region is the SBA assessment, which is published every four years as the *SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries*, the next edition of which will be launched at the end of this year. In Central Asia, we do not have a standard product issued at regular intervals. Our most important recent publications in Central Asia have addressed trade and transport connectivity and the legal environment for business. There have also been regional reports for both Central Asia and the Eastern Partner region on the impact of the COVID pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, and the digital transformation. Increasingly, we are focused on joint projects involving collaboration with other directorates and with OECD Committees – for example, on investment policy in Georgia, public governance in Uzbekistan and decentralisation in Ukraine, to mention just three. The Programme also co-ordinates activity under the Memorandum of Understanding with Kazakhstan, as well as the new Ukraine Country Programme, which is an enormous and vitally important undertaking for the OECD and Ukraine.

## **6. How do the program and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

The Programme's "theory of change", if one may call it that, reflects standard OECD approaches based on the potential for policy dialogue, analysis and recommendations to contribute to policy change, supported by capacity-building activities to support implementation. It is based on partnership and is neither highly interventionist nor linked to "hard" conditionalities designed to *impose* change. Like all OECD work, our activities involve policy learning, via direct interaction (in Partner countries or at OECD meetings and events) between local stakeholders and policy-makers, on the one hand, and OECD or Member state officials and experts, on the other, and efforts to shape elite and public opinion via the dissemination of analytical results and recommendations (web, press, academia). The capacity-building activities provide policy-makers and officials with new or modified tools to help act on OECD recommendations (the "how" and not just the "what" of policy reform). This approach has proven successful in helping bring Partner countries' policies closer to the OECD *acquis* in such diverse fields as investment policy, SME policy, corporate governance and decentralisation.

Such a theory of change presumes, explicitly, that the local authorities are broadly open to reform, even if many specific aspects continue to be contested. This openness is evidenced, indeed, in their requests for OECD work, and it reflects, in turn, a number of factors that generate pressure for significant reforms, particularly against the backdrop of pandemic and war. Of course, that does not remove the many political obstacles to reform in the region, so the policy impact of our work still varies according to context. We try to focus energy on issues where there is greater receptivity, but there are still sensitive issues, like corruption, that must be part of the conversation, even if we recognise that progress there will often be slow.

In short, we work to advance policy reform by persuasion and dialogue, trying to create conditions in which countries really take ownership of better policies. I would be astonished – and not entirely pleased – if a country changed its policies simply because we told them that they should. We work instead to raise awareness of OECD standards and approaches, to bring better evidence to bear on policy challenges, and to promote policy dialogue – both domestic exchanges between public

and private sectors and also the international dialogue among policy-makers that is one of the OECD's greatest assets. This works in part because our activities are, as noted above, demand-driven: we are working on challenges identified in conversation with the countries themselves.

## **7. Tell us about your vision for your region in 2050?**

This is by far the hardest question, not least because there is not a single vision that might apply to all countries. Politically and economically, they are – despite the common institutional legacies of Soviet communism – in very different places. And the future is perhaps harder than ever to see in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID pandemic, both of which have affected the region profoundly. Across the region, economic developments have heightened pressure for reform, while political trends seem to have prompted many of the region's elites to tighten their economic and political grip.

Nevertheless, I think there are good reasons for cautious optimism about the broad direction of things over the longer run. The countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) – despite upheavals and changes of course – continue to feel the pull of Europe, an attraction that is in many ways stronger among populations than among sometimes ambivalent elites, who must weigh the benefits of integration against the challenges it could raise to their control and their ways of doing business. Of course, much depends on what happens in the European Union over the coming years – there is no doubt that Europe itself will change – as well as on the evolution of the region's other great neighbours, Russia and China. Neither is moving in a positive direction at present but remain huge factors shaping the future of the Eurasia region, especially Central Asia.

That said, I think this European orientation must be taken seriously, especially in the EaP region, and it bodes well for further political opening in some countries and for economic reforms in all of them. That doesn't mean that a course for European integration will always be the driving force for reform in every country. Too many other things are going on and there will be many zigs and zags along the way. But it is an underlying, almost tectonic, process that cannot be ignored.

In Central Asia, the pull of Europe is naturally weaker and much more depends on what happens in Russia and China, whose presence is more powerfully felt. Still, we see here, too, reasons for a certain cautious

optimism about the region, even if there is little evidence of the kind of political opening that OECD Members would like to see. Among the factors that are driving reform across the region are the economic (though not political) opening of Uzbekistan since 2016, the growing interest in connectivity across the Eurasian land mass and the growing awareness across the region that the resource extraction-driven model of growth that prevailed after the mid-1990s has reached its limits. The region has long been peripheral to global trade flows, but it might now be returning to its more historic role as a critical conduit between East and West. Moreover, Central Asian elites are increasingly looking to the developed world for policy ideas and institutional models: they do not have the endowments to follow the Chinese path, and they do not *want* to follow Russia. They are looking for other ways to approach economic development and that is one reason they have been increasingly interested in working with the OECD.

There are certainly big downside risks ahead. Security is one. The Taliban victory in Afghanistan raises new issues for Central Asia, while the reduction in Russian influence may have contributed to conflicts elsewhere, as between Azerbaijan and Armenia or Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The other big downside risk is environmental: Central Asian countries, in particular, are vulnerable to climate change hazards. That is one reason we in the Eurasia Division co-operate so actively with the Environment Directorate's Green Action Task Force for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Sustainable Infrastructure Programme for Asia is now one of the main pillars of our work in Central Asia, in particular.

Both these risks are associated with opportunities, though, and much of our work as the OECD is focused on helping countries to make the most of the opportunities associated with the green and digital transformations – for opportunities must be seized and realised – and to mitigate some of the risks. So, while I cannot paint any utopian pictures of Eurasia 2050, it is not hard for me to imagine a region that will be both freer and more prosperous than today. I dare, at least, to hope for that.



Launched in 2008, **the OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme** helps 11 countries of the ex-Soviet Union, as well as Afghanistan and Mongolia to design and implement policies to enhance competitiveness. In particular, the Eurasia countries are encouraged to align themselves with OECD legal instruments and policy standards and to identify policy barriers to entrepreneurship and private-sector development. The Programme comprises two sub-regional initiatives: the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus Initiative (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), and the Central Asia Initiative (Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).



Second EU-Central Asia Economic Forum 2023



**Second EU-Central Asia Economic Forum 2023**



**Friends of Eurasia 2022**



The OECD and the Middle East &amp; North Africa



## Interview with Mr. Carlos Conde

Head of the Middle East and Africa Division  
in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat

### **1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?**

I am originally a professor of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Granada in Spain. During my time in Andalusia, I travelled extensively to Morocco and was truly fascinated by the country and its people. At the same time, I began to get interested in its political system and its process of economic transformation. I spent two years as visiting professor at the University of Al Akhawayn in Morocco (2001-2003), and when I came back to my University in Spain, I launched several initiatives of academic collaboration between European and Arab universities. I acquired some additional experience beyond Morocco, primarily in Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt. One day I saw an opening at the OECD to co-ordinate the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, so I applied... and started working at the OECD in 2007. In 2014, I moved to the Global Relations Secretariat to head the Middle East and Africa Division. Since then, I contributed to reinforce our engagement with the MENA region, and more recently, I was privileged to lead the process to define a new OECD partnership with Africa which has been approved in the last OECD Ministerial Council. I also had the chance of being responsible for setting up the OECD Istanbul Centre, fully dedicated to global relations, in close collaboration with the Government of Türkiye. The new OECD Centre has been operational for a year already

and counts on a permanent team of highly competent officials promoting our global relations strategy.

## **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

There are many, but I will underline just two. First, the impressive capacity of the organization to engage with governments and non-governmental actors to promote economic and social progress. The access to relevant information and the capacity to interact with officials and experts who are at the edge of new developments is very stimulating. Secondly, the OECD has access to the most advanced level of expertise in all the policy areas under its responsibility. After 15 years at the OECD, I am still impressed to see how colleagues working in different policy areas manage networks of practitioners and experts to efficiently gather relevant information on policy issues, analyze the information in the most rigorous way, and propose practical solutions to important problems. In the current context of geopolitical tensions and economic instability, the OECD has a unique role to play, by providing assurance on the right policies to implement and advocate at global level of the principles and values inspiring our organization.

## **3. What programme does your Division co-ordinate?**

Our strategic mandate is to oversee the coordination of the OECD's regional initiatives in the Middle East and Africa (MENA). The African continent is widely acknowledged as one of the world's fastest-growing regions, characterized by a youthful population that is expanding at an impressive pace. Similarly, the MENA region boasts robust economies and serves as a gateway for European businesses seeking entry into African markets. Given the tremendous potential that exists, both the MENA region and Africa have ample opportunities to enhance their integration into the global trade and investment landscape. While each region possesses its own unique characteristics, their collaborative efforts fall within the framework of a comprehensive approach to global relations, which my division is responsible for coordinating.

The MENA region encompasses a diverse range of countries with varying levels of engagement and connections to the Organisation. It is crucial for us to have a well-defined vision regarding our collaboration with each of these countries and to determine how we can effectively advance the Organisation's Global Relations Strategy with them. Over the past 15 years, these countries have demonstrated a noteworthy success in their

interest in engaging with the OECD. This increased interest has manifested in a growing policy dialogue, which our division has actively supported.

The Division's flagship initiatives include the Morocco and Egypt Country Programmes, which exemplify the fruitful collaboration between these countries and the OECD.

The Morocco Country Programme entered its second phase in 2021 following a successful initial phase. It has been instrumental in supporting Morocco's new development model, particularly by facilitating reforms to enhance competitiveness, productivity, and growth. Additionally, the programme focuses on territorial development, good governance, and social inclusion, with a special emphasis on women's empowerment.

The Egypt Country Programme represents a groundbreaking milestone in our regional engagement and stands as the largest-ever country programme of the OECD. It encompasses 35 projects, enabling the design and implementation of structural reforms in crucial areas such as environmental concerns, climate change mitigation, and digital transformation.

Both Morocco and Egypt have recently benefited from the establishment of a Desk in the OECD's Economic Department, a significant development that ensures their equal integration into OECD economic forecasts and information.

Furthermore, the Division is spearheading enhanced cooperation with Gulf countries, recognising the evolving nature of their development efforts. Given their role as major oil producers and contributors to carbon emissions, engaging with these countries is pivotal to achieving the Paris Goals in a realistic and timely manner. Many of these countries have embarked on ambitious reforms to diversify their economies and reduce their dependence on oil resources. Their strong interest in collaborating with the OECD to promote structural reforms has paved the way for promising upcoming collaborations, notably with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These partnerships will undoubtedly play a significant role in advancing the ongoing process of social reforms in the region, with a particular focus on protecting and advancing women's rights, which is a crucial policy area within our work.

Additionally, our Division actively addresses fragility and instability in both the MENA and African regions. We work closely with the UN, other IO's and IFI's to promote conditions for stability. Our efforts extend to countries like Yemen and Libya, where we play a significant role in fostering stability and economic development.

The implementation of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme is another vital aspect of our work. This ambitious platform promotes economic reforms throughout the MENA region and leverages existing networks to strengthen our ability to respond multilaterally to common challenges. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, these networks proved invaluable as they shared expertise and recommendations for navigating the crisis. Moreover, the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme has conducted in-depth analyses of the impacts of the Russian aggression on Ukraine, demonstrating its comprehensive scope.

We consider Africa to be the new frontier for OECD Global Relations, as evidenced by the willingness to scale-up co-operation expressed by the OECD and the African Union (AU) at the meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial level in June 2022. Following extensive consultations, we are pleased to announce the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the AUC will significantly amplify our collaboration with African countries, solidifying our commitment to the continent's development and progress.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the importance of our work with South Africa, led by Ambassador Surdej and the informal Reflection Group on South Africa. Their enthusiasm and wisdom have been invaluable in advancing our objectives. We are proud of the innovative cooperation on water management issues with African countries, which has been made possible through the support of the Government of Poland. This collaboration exemplifies our commitment to finding sustainable solutions to critical challenges in the region.

In conclusion, the Division's strategic initiatives and collaborations across the Middle East, Africa, and beyond are vital components of our comprehensive approach to global relations. Through targeted programmes, partnerships, and engagements, we are actively advancing economic development, promoting reforms, fostering stability, and empowering diverse populations in the pursuit of shared prosperity and sustainable growth.

#### **4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities, which are active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

During the last 12 years, there has been a clear tendency towards improving the collaboration between international organisations, regional entities, financial institutions and donors. We are all looking for synergies and opportunities to add value to the work of partner institutions and benefit from the input of others when needed. In the MENA region, we are implementing joint projects and initiatives with institutions such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Islamic Development Bank and others. We have very close links with the Union for the Mediterranean. The OECD is recognized in this context as a unique organisation, which adds value without entering into areas of overlap or duplications. On the one hand, we are not financial; on the other hand, the working methods of the OECD are quite unique, which allows us to easily enter into fruitful and mutually beneficial partnerships.

We value strategic partnerships that allow us to benefit from our partners' expertise and strengths while enhancing our own contributions. Our coordination with the UN, particularly through the New York UN office, is crucial. We have also established solid collaborations with ESCWA and UNECA. In particular, our work in Libya and Yemen is fully embedded in the coordinated international system. In the case of Yemen, one of the most important OECD contributions has been the reinforcement of the donor coordination mechanisms.

In line with our partnership strategy, our engagement with Africa reflects diverse orientations that contribute to the dynamics of the OECD. The MoU with the African Union will foster strong political partnerships and facilitate meaningful policy dialogues. We have been fostering connections with regional communities like COMESA, SADC and ECOWAS, with a focus on supporting the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area).

Furthermore, we have embarked on an important initiative on informality in collaboration with UNDP and the ILO. This initiative aims to facilitate the transition from informal employment and businesses in the MENA region to formal economic activities. Such a transition holds

the potential to significantly boost productivity in MENA economies while promoting social inclusion.

### **5. What are your flagship products?**

Even if it cannot be necessarily defined as a product, I think that results-oriented policy dialogue is the main output of our work. The MENA region is the least integrated region of the world, both economically and institutionally. In this context, our networks of policy makers and experts provide unique platforms where countries can exchange on critical development policy issues, something they otherwise cannot do.

The recently released Progress Report titled "Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean" is a noteworthy achievement. This report, utilizing the OECD's robust methodologies and expertise, offers rigorous and evidence-based research on integration in the region. The recommendations presented in the report are the outcome of a participatory process and extensive consultations with policymakers and experts across the region, aligning with the OECD's unique approach.

In collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the OECD has made substantial progress in developing the AU-OECD Investment Observatory. The anticipated launch of this observatory in 2023 holds great promise. Its aim is to stimulate private investment, mobilize domestic resources for productive transformation, and facilitate job creation. Additionally, the observatory will complement existing AU, OECD, and other programs by contributing to awareness-raising, analysis, skills development activities, policy dialogues, and support for policy implementation at both the regional economic communities (RECs) and country levels.

### **6. How do the program and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

We have supported the countries in making policies based on evidence, consultation, evaluative approaches, international good practices and standards, allowing them to move away from autocratic ways of delivering services and policies. This is very visible and recognised in very important areas such as anti-corruption, women's empowerment, investment or public governance. The countries of the region are tackling these issues in a totally different way than they were ten years ago, illustrating the very clear impact of OECD work. In our work, we have not

only supported governments with new capacities and tools, we have also empowered civil society and the private sector to help build a new way to manage the economy and tackle the most relevant social challenges of the region.

The MENA region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. To address this challenge, we have actively supported and coordinated the participation of MENA countries in the OECD's Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA). The IFCMA serves as a unique platform that brings together diverse perspectives on carbon mitigation from various countries. It provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of existing approaches and leverage the OECD's evidence-based insights to design and implement more tailored and effective emissions reduction policies. Notably, two African countries, Mauritius and Nigeria, are currently part of the IFCMA's Steering Group.

Additionally, we have been spearheading a new approach to collaboration with Africa. This partnership is based on a shared agenda of work aimed at supporting Africa's transformative agenda and promoting convergence with OECD standards and best practices. This partnership has emerged from extensive consultations, resulting in the identification of key thematic areas. These areas include: (1) regional integration through trade, investment, and value chain resilience, (2) resources mobilization for economic transformation, (3) human capital development and just green transition for sustainable growth, (4) a transversal pillar on statistics and data development.

By focusing on these thematic areas, we aim to strengthen cooperation with African countries, support their development objectives, and foster their alignment with international standards and practices.

## **7. Tell us about your vision for your region in 2050?**

Today more than ever, my vision is that of a region in peace. The Middle East and Africa are unfortunately the theatre of most of the violent conflicts of the planet. Fragility, displaced populations, violence and insecurity are unfortunately the daily experience of millions. We have a role to play in this. The OECD was born from the devastation of World War II in Europe, and we know that the economic conditions of prosperity and well-being are fundamental factors for peace and stability. Building economies that deliver jobs and welfare to citizens is a

necessary element for a peaceful region, and we will make all the necessary efforts with our capacity to achieve this end.

A region in peace is also better equipped to tackle the challenges posed by climate change and work towards achieving Net Zero emissions. I envision strong partnerships between the region and the African continent. By fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective action, we can address climate challenges more effectively and work towards sustainable development. Such partnership will not only benefit the region but also contribute to global efforts in creating a sustainable and resilient future.



***The MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development** was launched in 2005. Its objective is to promote policies for sustainable and inclusive growth in the region. It also addresses regional needs and development priorities, including the integration of women and youth through jobs and greater participation in public life. The participants covered by this programme are Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.*



**MENA Steering Group Meeting 2023**



**Egypt Country Programme Coordination Committee 2023**



## Interview with Mr. Alexander Böhmer

Head of the South and Southeast Asia Division  
in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat

### **1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?**

I have always been interested in international economics and law, and my academic background has been focused on international economic law and economic policy. I hold a Ph.D. in the federal structure of the European Union with a specific emphasis on competition law and policy. Prior to joining the OECD, I gained experience working in institutions centred around trade and investment policies, including the German Federal Economic Ministry, the EU Commission DG Trade, and the Federation of German Industry.

When I began my 20-year journey at the OECD, I initially worked with Business at OECD. Subsequently, I joined the Middle East and North African Regional Investment Programme. Following that, in 2013/14, I assumed my current role as Head of the South and Southeast Asia Division. In this position, I was responsible for establishing the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme and overseeing the OECD's collaboration with key partners such as India and Indonesia.

### **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

Overall, the OECD provides an ideal environment for both professional and personal growth. Being surrounded by talented and multicultural peers and colleagues, I have had the opportunity to learn from

individuals specializing in diverse areas. This continuous learning experience has been invaluable in expanding my perspectives and knowledge. The regular influx of guests and speakers for conferences at the OECD ensures that I am always updated on ongoing global economic situations and provides the chance to engage with a wide range of interesting individuals.

I particularly appreciate the value derived from our work with partners in Southeast Asia, as it allows us to shift the narrative towards mutually beneficial cooperation through the adoption of sound and respected policies. It is truly rewarding when we can exchange knowledge on topics such as structural reform and economic policy, among others, and explore tangible outcomes through collaborative efforts.

The OECD's emphasis on collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and staying at the forefront of global economic developments makes it an ideal environment for both professional and personal growth. I am grateful for the opportunities it has provided me to expand my horizons and contribute to meaningful outcomes.

### **3. What programme does your Division co-ordinate?**

The main responsibilities of my division include strengthening cooperation between the OECD and key partners, namely India and Indonesia, advancing the ongoing Country Programmes with Thailand and Viet Nam, and enhancing the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP). Additionally, our division is responsible for managing the OECD's relations with regional organizations such as ASEAN, ADB, ERIA, AMRO, APEC, the Pacific Islands Forum and UN-ESCAP.

Following the Asian Economic crisis in the late 1990s, the OECD and Southeast Asia established a longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship that has steadily deepened over the decades. The OECD SEARP Programme, established in 2014, aims to support domestic priorities, policy reforms, and regional integration efforts in Southeast Asia. It also facilitates mutual learning and the exchange of best practices between policymakers in Southeast Asia and OECD member countries.

To achieve our goals, we have implemented various tools and mechanisms to encourage systematic exchange of experiences, including thematic Regional Policy Networks (RPNs) and Initiatives, as well as a

Regional Economic Outlook. Over the years, our work has expanded and intensified, growing from 9 workstreams in 2014 to the current 13 workstreams. These workstreams encompass areas such as tax, good regulatory practices, investment, education and skills development, SMEs, sustainable infrastructure, trade, innovation, gender, competition, green recovery, and tourism.

Our annual OECD Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China, and India serves as a comprehensive analysis, providing valuable insights into emerging trends in the region and contributing to the various workstreams mentioned. Overall, our primary objective is to foster closer ties between Southeast Asia and the OECD, while collaboratively working towards a resilient global economy.

**4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities, which are active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

Southeast Asia is home to a diverse and highly institutionalised network of regional economic governance initiatives. One of the notable initiatives is the ASEAN process, which has emerged as a highly successful economic integration process, second only to the European Union's in its advanced internal market. However, it is important to acknowledge the presence of other influential frameworks in the region, including APEC, EAS, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, which serve as vital platforms for regional collaboration and economic development.

In 2022, the OECD and the ASEAN Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the aim of strengthening bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The implementation plan, covering over 30 policy areas, supports the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprints and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF).

Within this context, the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) recognizes the importance of operating in close support and coordination with existing regional architectures. We have formed partnerships with several regional organizations, such as ADB, ERIA, AMRO, and UN-ESCAP, as implementation partners in the region. Leveraging the OECD's strengths, SEARP focuses on crucial areas such as data collection and the provision of analytical products for policymakers. By utilizing our expertise in these areas, the OECD contributes to

evidence-based decision-making and enhances the effectiveness of policies in the region.

Additionally, SEARP has the objective of forging closer ties between Southeast Asian countries and OECD bodies and instruments. This objective involves facilitating knowledge transfer, cooperation, and alignment with international standards and best practices. These efforts not only enhance the region's economic capabilities but also strengthen its integration into the global economy.

### **5. What are your flagship products?**

Our Southeast Asia Regional Programme has produced a number of OECD flagship publications on the Southeast Asia region. Some notable publications include the OECD Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China, and India, OECD Skills Strategy Southeast Asia, and the Enabling Sustainable Investment in ASEAN report.

Currently, we are actively working on the development of the new ASEAN SME Policy Index (ASMEPI), which is scheduled to be released in 2024. The ASMEPI serves as a benchmarking tool for Southeast Asian economies to monitor and evaluate policies that support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). This index will enhance the capacity of policymakers across Southeast Asia to identify areas for policy reforms and implement them in line with international best practices.

In addition to our publications, my division has been instrumental in supporting the Secretary-General's key priorities, particularly in relation to engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. In 2023, our team provided support in drafting the OECD Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, which was subsequently adopted at the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in June. We have also led negotiations on Memoranda of Understanding with various countries and regional organisations in Southeast Asia to formalize and strengthen the OECD's engagement with them. Notable examples include Thailand in 2023, ASEAN and Singapore in 2022, and ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) and Vietnam in 2021.

### **6. How do the program and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

Nearly 10 years since its establishment, the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) has created momentum in policy developments in the region and achieved numerous tangible outcomes. This transformation can be explained in three ways:

Firstly, as one of SEARP's objectives, the Programme has assisted Southeast Asian countries in implementing domestic reforms. Through the Regional Policy Network on Tax, SEARP has supported countries in undertaking necessary reforms to align their domestic laws and regulations with international standards. For example, seven out of ten Southeast Asian countries have now adhered to the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, with Vietnam being the latest country to join in March 2023. Thailand has also amended its law on the Exchange of Information for International Agreements on Taxation BE2566, which was promulgated in early 2023 to comply with the Convention.

Secondly, SEARP has facilitated capacity building efforts for policymakers in the region to align with OECD best practices. The Regional Policy Network (RPN) on SMEs has worked closely with the ten Southeast Asian countries and the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSMEs for nearly a decade. The RPN on SMEs has provided best practices in areas such as statistics and data collection on SMEs, access to finance, SME regulation, and entrepreneurial education, among others. This network has also strengthened the collaboration between the OECD and ASEAN policymakers in the field, fostering an exchange of evidence-based policy experiences and practices, which are at the core of the OECD's work.

Lastly, I have observed that countries in the Southeast Asian region have utilized the OECD as a catalyst for national reforms and are converging with OECD standards in their efforts to get closer to the organisation. Many Southeast Asian countries have made significant efforts to adopt a whole-of-government approach aimed at aligning with international standards, using OECD instruments and recommendations as essential benchmarks. This demonstrates that our Programme is on the right track and has inspired countries to undergo transformations influenced by the OECD's work.

Overall, the SEARP has played a crucial role in driving policy developments, supporting capacity building, and inspiring reforms in the Southeast Asian region, leading to convergence with OECD standards and best practices.

## **7. Tell us about your vision for your region in 2050?**

Economic activities in Southeast Asia are gaining again momentum post-COVID as the region possesses rich resources, a skilled work force, and an expanding middle-class. It experiences a well-paced economic recovery, implementing important structural reform for enhancing the business and investment climate, and is thus one of the main drivers of global growth.

Following the pandemic, we anticipate a definite recovery in the region, both economically and socially. Despite being heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the region has demonstrated resilience and responded swiftly to economic shifts with prompt and efficient measures.

In addition to economic recovery, we anticipate the region expanding its opportunities and growth in other areas, such as the digital economy, the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, the development of a sustainable blue economy, and the transition towards green energy generation, among others. With upcoming projects and initiatives in collaboration with the OECD, we can expect the region to showcase its full potential as a growing and inclusive region. These efforts can also contribute to further discussions with regional partners about moving closer to the OECD.



*The OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) carried on since 2014 focuses on three main objectives: to contribute to regional integration and connectivity initiatives, to support domestic reform processes and to bring Southeast Asian countries closer to OECD bodies, legal instruments and best practices. All ten members of the ASEAN are engaged in the cooperation with the OECD under this framework.*



**OECD Ministerial Conference –  
Southeast Asia Regional Programme**



## Interview with Mr. Jose Antonio Ardavin

Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division  
in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat

### **1. What is your background? How did it happen that you took over your current function?**

I am a Mexican Economist from the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM) with a master's in public policy from the JFK School of Government of Harvard University. I started my professional career in the public sector as an Economist in the Mexican Central Bank and as Advisor to the Vice-Minister of Finance.

My links to the OECD started after completion of my Master's degree, as I took the Policy Analysis Exercise (a type of practical thesis) for the OECD Agricultural Directorate (currently Trade and Agriculture Directorate), authoring a paper that was published as a case study on Trade Structural Adjustment of the Avocado Industry in Mexico after the market was open to the US market. After some years working in private consulting, I joined the OECD in 2006 and I have had three very complementary roles since then: First, economic policy analysis subject to committee discussion and approval in a substantive directorate (the Regional Development Policy Division); Second, communication with government officials, media, business, academia and other stakeholders, expanding the knowledge of the OECD in Latin America when I had the opportunity to Head the OECD Mexico Centre; and Third, my current role, initially as Head of Unit since 2013, as Acting Head of Division since 2018 and Head of the LAC Division since 2021. My role involves advancing co-operation

between Latin America and the OECD, both at regional level through the launch and implementation of the OECD LAC Regional Programme, and at country bilateral level through the design and implementation of co-operation programmes. It has been particularly satisfactory in this role to see the process of engagement of Argentina, Peru, and Brazil, which are currently candidates for membership in the OECD, the two latter of which have started their accession process.

## **2. What are the advantages of working for the OECD?**

Working at the OECD is like undertaking a permanent PhD in public policies. It allows you to understand the complexity of the design and implementation of public policy and to learn from the interaction with experts in all policy fields and from government delegates from all over the world. It is a unique multilateral organisation which is grounded on reality and not in theory, as the knowledge creation comes from concrete policymakers with challenges, who come up with possible solutions and who benefit from learning from their peers with the facilitation from the secretariat. A comparison I often give (which works very well in the Latin American context) is that coming to the OECD is similar to our Latin-American football players (such as Messi, Neymar or Chicharito) playing in some of the best football teams worldwide. This gives them the opportunity to play a different level of game, and they must play with those higher standards, but when they come back to our countries with the high-level experience acquired, they can then make a stark difference and improvement to the overall national team performance.

## **3. What programme does your Division co-ordinate?**

The OECD LAC Regional Programme is the most recently created Programme (2016), however its roots stem from the early 2000's when many OECD committees started opening regional networks. The oldest are the Corporate Governance and Competition networks, which have more than 20 years of continual yearly meetings. Today there are more than fourteen of these networks, linked to the OECD committees, and I often say, that is where the magic happens, because it is there that LAC public officials are able to participate from the committees' discussions, adapted to the LAC context, and they learn from OECD relevant policy practices.

In 2016, the OECD Council decided to create the LAC Regional Programme to provide a co-ordinated and strategic approach to this decentralised and dispersed co-operation. The Programme has succeeded in becoming a platform for high-level, whole-of-government policy dialogue between the OECD and the region, it has certainly been one of the causes of the growing interest in the region by the OECD and the significant increase in the adoption of OECD instruments and standards from LAC countries. By the end of 2022, the total number of adherences to OECD legal instruments by LAC partners was 280. This figure increased from eighty-three when the Programme was established in 2016, (i.e., +237%).

The Programme originally focused on three key priorities, which found a strong consensus of being the most challenging for the region: increasing productivity, enhancing social inclusion, and strengthening governance and institutions. Most recently, in 2022, a new priority on Environmental Sustainability was added to the Programme. The LACRP works in cycles of three years, under the co-chairmanship of Chile and Peru (2016-2019), and the co-chairmanship of Mexico and Brazil (2019-2022) the Programme had one High Level Meeting in the region for each of the three priorities. In 2022, we started the third cycle under the leadership of Colombia and Paraguay, and we are having in October 2023, the first Ministerial Summit on Environmental Sustainability in Costa Rica. In each of these meetings we help advance the reform agenda, notably by proposing specific Action Plans with specific actions and recommendations that countries in the region can implement.

#### **4. How does your work relate to the activities of other international entities, that are active in the region and/or in the same work areas that you have mentioned?**

The LAC Regional Programme has created a very productive space for co-operation between international entities and organisations active in the region. At present, fourteen international organisations take part in our Steering Group meeting, and in 2022 we started having a LACRP “Partners” meeting where we foster synergies with these organisations. The Programme has become a privileged space to discuss the substantive challenges of the region and enhance synergies with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Latin America Development Bank (CAF), the Latin American Economic System (SELA)

and the Organisation of American States (OAS), some global multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the ILO, UNDP, Ibero-American institutions such as the Summits Secretariat (SEGIB), the Organisation of Ibero-American States for Science Education and Culture (OEI), the Social Security Organisation (OISS) and the Youth Organisation (OIJ), plus the EU-LAC Foundation and a key academic pillar of the region, FLACSO. The High-Level Meetings we have organised during the last six years are a good example of the fruits of this co-operation. Many of them were organised with one or more of these institutions and have included the participation of many of these organisations.

### **5. What are your flagship products?**

The annual LAC Ministerial Summits are the key outputs of the LAC Regional Programme. They take place in the region, with the participation of dozens of Ministers and high-level authorities. Each year, we focus on one of the Programme's priorities in these meetings. So far, we have held four on productivity (Chile 2016, Costa Rica in 2018, Colombia 2019, and Brazil 2022), two on social inclusion (Paraguay 2017 and Dominican Republic 2020), and two on governance (Peru 2018, El Salvador 2021). Right now we are organising the very first on Environmental Sustainability in Costa Rica in 2023. These meetings rely on a number of substantive inputs from across the Organisation. The LAC Division has co-ordinated the preparatory process of the Key Issues publications that have informed every Ministerial summit of the LACRP.

The LACRP has also contributed to increasing the number of publications on the LAC region. There is, of course, the Latin American Economic Outlook which is produced by the Development Centre with ECLAC, CAF and the EU, the OECD-IDB Government at a Glance or the OECD-ECLAC-CIAT Revenue Statistics that have many editions already, but we have supported more recent specific reports such as the OECD-IDB Broadband Toolkit, the first two editions of the LAC Health at a Glance and the upcoming first edition of the LAC Environment at a Glance. In 2019 we launched the first OECD SME Policy Index for Latin America, in collaboration with CAF and SELA, and the second edition is forthcoming for the last quarter of 2023.

### **6. How do the program and your main products affect the transformation of the countries in question?**

This is by far the most passionate part of my job. I have been able to see how the OECD is helping the region reshape itself into a more modern and sophisticated region in terms of its public policies. The region is going through a complex time. Following the strong impact of the COVID pandemic and Russia's war on aggression in Ukraine, the growth perspectives for 2023 and 2024 are low (1.5 and 1.7%), compared to what the region would need to catch up with OECD standards. Public debt has been increasing and limit the fiscal space, at a moment where a public and private investment boost is needed. Recent calls for attention with social protests and recent government alternances are unleashing a new wave of social policies, underpinned by more progressive taxation (this is happening already with the proposed reforms in Chile and Colombia) and bold anti-corruption measures. The Programme has been putting these reforms on the table and facilitating exchange of good practices. For instance, we produced a very concrete Integrity and Anti-Corruption Action Plan, linked to the Lima Commitment that countries in the region signed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Americas, and already some countries, such as Colombia and Ecuador, have signed an MOU with the OECD oriented to accompany their implementation of National Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategies. We are following a similar approach for the upcoming Ministerial on Environmental Sustainability, in Costa Rica, which will propose a concrete Action Plan for countries to implement climate adaptation, mitigation and crosscutting environmental sustainability policies.

In addition, the bilateral cooperation with some countries is bearing concrete fruits. For example, during the Peru Country Programme (2015-2017), this country enacted a number of important laws and decrees which use OECD standards as a basis: a new Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) law, a new framework for regulatory impact assessment, and the legislation on corporate liability required as part of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. We are starting to see a similar approach under since the Peru accession process started in 2022. The government recently enacted two laws that are relevant for OECD accession: the Law on Chemical Substances and a Law on Regulatory Quality. A Draft Pensions Law was recently presented to the Council of Ministers, and it is likely to follow suit. The same could be said of the Competition reform in Brazil since 2012, the Pensions reform of 2018 and the ongoing Tax Reform proposed by the Lula Administration. Beyond the candidates for accession, Uruguay recently adhered to the OECD Declaration on

International Investment and Multinational Enterprises, and Ecuador and Honduras recently conducted Integrity and Governance Reviews.

The LAC Regional Programme has actively promoted these processes.

### **7. Tell us about your vision for your region in 2050?**

The process of slow, but evident alignment of more countries in the region with OECD standards and the three ongoing accession processes makes me optimistic about the future of the region. There are other positive developments which should, in principle, consolidate in the long run. Firstly, the region is very actively working to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including these goals as part of the National Development Plans (in the case of Peru and Colombia for example). Secondly, while in the recent decades some integration initiatives consolidated (the Pacific Alliance, Mercosur, Central America, and the Caribbean) in 2023 we have seen significant efforts for greater integration and co-ordination throughout the whole Latin America and the Caribbean region. The EU-CELAC Summit, will mark an important milestone in this regard. This leads me to believe that by 2050 the region will be more integrated in economic terms, and with greater policy standards, likely following OECD standards.

Some studies say that by 2050 Brazil and Mexico will be amongst the seven largest economies in the world. This could be quite possible as these two emerging economies, and the region, still count with an important demographic bonus, while the rest of the world is rapidly ageing. The role of these two largest economies of the region, will be crucial for the future and the potential greater integration. I see both these countries as members of the OECD and contributing to a better institutional architecture for the region and increasing the importance of the region in global governance. By 2050, my hope is that at least seven countries in the region (Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and the three current candidates Argentina, Peru, and Brazil) will be members of the OECD. I think the membership of these countries will be as important as the membership of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia in anchoring a clear development path rooted in democracy, market economies and rules-based economic co-operation, not only for the countries themselves but for the whole region.

The region has two important assets which could be critical for the catching-up with industrialised economies: its vast young population,

which could play a critical role in fast adoption of technology under the digital transformation; and its vast natural resources and biodiversity, which become critical as the world aims to decarbonise the economy. Better policies are needed in both fronts. The OECD, which has a compelling reputation in the region, could prove to be critical in making all this happen, in particular through the increasing efforts to reconcile economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.



*The OECD Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (LACRP) was initiated in 2016 to reinforce collaboration with around 26 Latin American and Caribbean non-OECD countries along three key priorities: productivity, social inclusion and governance.*



**LAC Regional Programme Steering Group 2022**



**Meeting with Brazilian MPs, 2023**



## Final remarks by H. E. Aleksander Surdej

Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Poland to the OECD

### Productivity and Global Cooperation

The OECD is sometimes portrayed as a club of mostly rich countries. This description contains a reference to a club – an institution one cannot join without meeting certain criteria, being invited and likely paying a fee, and hinting at a certain level of income. A club sounds exclusionary and richness may lead to questions about its sources.

Yet, in reality the OECD is not an organization of self-centered countries enjoying the fruits of inherited wealth, but rather a global think tank jointly owned by countries whose politicians, administrators and citizens come to Paris to learn from peers and not to get involved in disputes.

Such an attitude results from the awareness that to enjoy high quality of life countries need to be productive. In his treaty on good work<sup>4</sup>, Polish philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński has elevated the principle of productivity almost to the status of moral imperative. Productivity means “more output from the same resources or less resources for the same results”.

To be productive contemporary societies need, among others, educated and healthy citizens, modern technologies, good managers, dynamic entrepreneurs and sound public infrastructure. What the OECD offers to its members are facilitating services for a constant learning process through which productivity is enhanced and the quality of life maintained.

---

<sup>4</sup> “Traktakt o dobrej robocie” - English translation: *Praxiology. An Introduction to the Science of Efficient Action*, Pergamon Press 1965.

Productivity is a concept which encourages countries to focus on domestic factors. International trade and investment flows do change a country's productivity at the margin. Productivity depends on domestic resources, actions and policies that shape them.

The OECD's regional programs aim to help non-member countries to design policies that could improve their productivity and lead to better living conditions. Economically successful countries also create conditions for mutually beneficial economic exchanges. My country – Poland – supports such programs as its goal is to continue to prosper amidst prosperous neighbors.

Nowadays, no group of economies, even the most successful ones, can isolate itself from the rest of the world due to the presence of global public bads and an insufficient supply of global public goods. For this reason alone, the OECD member states need to cooperate with non-members with a view to designing collective actions to tackle urgent public health, environmental or international taxation issues.

By helping other countries to improve their public governance, design smarter policies, mobilize domestic fiscal resources, the OECD member states hope to gain efficient and responsible partners to address pressing global issues.

From such a perspective the OECD regional programs are a natural extension of the Organization's mission stated in its founding convention. Indeed, the OECD does not need to be a universal organization to exert a positive global impact.

## Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the OECD



136, rue de Longchamp  
75116 Paris

Tel. +33 (0)1 56 28 57 60

Fax. +33 (0)1 56 28 94 66

[paryz.oecd.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl](mailto:paryz.oecd.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl)

<https://www.gov.pl/web/oecd>