

Foreword

The traditional distinction between urban and rural areas is increasingly blurred. Places where today people live, work and consume largely encompass both urban and rural territories, which are ever more linked in economic, demographic and environmental terms. The challenge facing governments is how to govern these interactions, which cross different administrative boundaries and policy domains. If well managed, rural-urban interactions can help improve services provision, as well as increase growth opportunities and quality of life for people.

Rural-urban partnerships are important tools for better co-ordinating rural-urban interactions. They can be used to better design and implement policy at the appropriate scale, providing a flexible and inclusive approach that bridges different but interdependent interests. However, rural-urban partnerships face some specific challenges that may hamper their formation, and even policy, when designed without acknowledging the actual integration between urban and rural areas, can be an obstacle for the different actors to work together.

Rural-Urban Partnerships: An Integrated Approach to Economic Development delivers evidence-based recommendations on how to build effective and sustainable rural-urban partnerships for better economic development. The report builds on regional data analysis and 11 case studies from different OECD countries. It first provides a conceptual framework to understand the changing relationships between urban and rural areas and empirical evidence showing that regional performance increases when urban and rural areas are closer, hence more integrated. Rural-urban partnerships are then analysed in terms of purposes, benefits and risks. The report also documents the forms rural-urban partnerships take, the factors that hinder and enable rural-urban co-operation and the different governance approaches to manage urban-rural relationships.

This report can help national, regional and local policy makers build effective and sustainable rural-urban partnerships. It stresses the importance of fostering integration between urban and rural areas, by promoting an enabling legislative and regulatory environment and an increasingly integrated urban and rural policy agenda to foster regional conditions. However, evidence shows that a better understanding of the needs of both urban and rural communities and of their relationships is key to building sustainable rural-urban partnerships.

Better outcomes can be achieved when policy is tailored at the appropriate scale, reflecting where people live and work and where the relevant socio-economic and environmental processes occur. Rural-urban partnerships are a key solution to achieve better conditions and quality of life both in rural and urban areas.



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