

Foreword

This publication provides evidence on how regions and cities contribute to the national growth and well-being of societies. It does so by providing region-by-region indicators on a wide range of policy fields to examine trends, highlighting the persistence of regional disparities, identifying areas that either are outperforming or lagging behind in their country, and offering indications as to how a region's contribution to aggregate development could be increased.

The report is organised into five chapters plus statistical annexes. A methodological chapter, Measuring regional economies in OECD countries, introduces the reader to the way OECD subnational information has developed across a range of topics and different territorial levels. It also sets out a statistical agenda to better respond to the increasing demands of sound local statistics to inform both the political debate and communities wanting to better understand the quality of life of the places they live in.

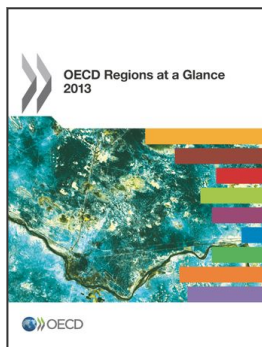
Chapter 1 is devoted to the special topic of metropolitan areas. It provides a first-time comparative analysis of the economic competitiveness and labour market trends, environmental sustainability and administrative organisation of the 275 OECD metropolitan areas. The analysis relies on a common definition of urban areas in OECD countries, consisting of densely populated urban cores and their less-populated surrounding territories linked to the urban cores by a high level of commuting.

Chapter 2 illustrates the regional contribution to national growth, highlights factors driving the competitive edge of regions and shows how these factors are distributed within countries. Chapter 3, a novelty of this edition, presents an overview of subnational finance and recent trends in public investment and debt of subnational governments. Chapter 4 looks at regional disparities on social inclusion and access to services, providing new measures of quality of life in regions to encompass a rich definition of development and well-being. Chapter 5 provides measures of environmental sustainability in regions. Chapters draw both on the latest comparable data and on past trends; they also include an analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on regions and cities.

The main messages of this publication and a profile of regional development in each of the 34 OECD countries are also delivered with interactive graphs and maps at <http://rag.oecd.org>.

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