
Message from OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría

OECD Week 2011: Better Policies for Better Lives



The OECD was created to foster international co-operation. Article 1 of our founding Convention states that our role is “to promote policies designed to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living” in member countries, partner countries and on a global scale.

The OECD is marking its **50th anniversary** at a time when international co-operation is more essential than ever. The list of global challenges requiring co-ordinated policy action is getting longer, and in most cases, this action is becoming more urgent. This means that the inspiring vision of our founding parents is still relevant and will continue to serve as the guiding principle for our work. Much remains to be done to achieve a cleaner, stronger and fairer world.

Take climate change. We need to make growth greener, to make our economic and environmental policies more compatible and even mutually-reinforcing. This is not just a matter of new technologies or new sources of renewable, safe energy. It is about how we all behave every day of our lives, what we eat, what we drink, what we recycle, re-use, repair, how we produce and how we consume.

There are other common challenges. The world economy is recovering from its worst crisis in modern times, but this recovery remains tentative. With budgets stretched, governments can no longer spend their way into recovery. They need to implement structural reforms and to find new sources of growth. They need to make the public sector more efficient and they need to ensure that the private sector is more competitive. They need to fight corruption, promote ethic behaviour and restore trust in institutions.

Last but not least, the social dimension. The human and social costs of this crisis are still being felt across the globe. Unemployment, especially among the youth, remains high. Poverty, hunger and preventable diseases still affect millions of people in developing countries. Solving these challenges requires well designed social and employment policies, efficient public services and investment in health and education. Promoting development requires international solidarity, effective and well-coordinated assistance, and a cross-cutting, integrated approach to build institutional capacity and mobilise domestic resources.

The OECD can and should play a major role in addressing all of these challenges. It is an

institution with one of the most advanced forms of co-operation and engagement. It has expertise in a broad range of economic, social and environmental policies. Its work involves many stakeholders – government, business, trade unions, civil society and academia. Its working methods help ensure that the necessary “horizontal” exchange of ideas takes place across policy domains.

As a result, the OECD is a major source of cross-cutting, evidence-based advice for governments and a standard setter to facilitate and galvanise action. It is a forum where policy makers can learn from each other, where best practices can be identified and disseminated, and a place where authorities can get the support of peers to help implement domestic reforms.

These assets will continue to serve the international policy community well for years to come, but the Organisation still needs to adapt and change. We are witnessing a revolution in the way the world is governed and the only way to remain relevant in the next 50 years is to continue to deliver high quality and substantive contributions to global debates, incorporating the perspectives of countries which are key for this new global governance, but which are not yet Members of the OECD.

The OECD 50th Anniversary Week is a unique opportunity to think collectively about how to best achieve the vision of our founding parents. Achieving better policies for better lives is a journey, not a destination.

The OECD is ready to embark with you in that journey, armed with our foundational values: openness, objectivity, boldness, pioneering spirit and sound ethics.

I look forward to working with you to establish the roadmap for this journey.

See you in Paris.