



Recent OECD work on

Adaptation to Climate Change





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OECD Work on Adaptation to Climate Change

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Recent Publications and Working Papers



OECD Work on Adaptation to Climate Change

Climate change poses a serious challenge to social and economic development in all countries, although developing countries are particularly vulnerable. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to move hand in hand with policies and incentives to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Societies have a long record of adapting to the impacts of weather and climate through changes in behaviour, choices of technology and infrastructure, use of market instruments, and public policies. Nonetheless, progress on adaptation to climate change remains limited in both developing and developed countries.

Many regions and sections of the society remain poorly adapted even to current climate. Further, climate change poses novel risks often outside the range of historical experience. These include increases in mean temperatures and sea levels, changes in precipitation patterns, melting of glaciers and permafrost, and changes in the intensity and/or frequency of weather extremes such as droughts, heat waves, floods and hurricanes.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supports governments by providing the analytical foundation required to develop efficient and effective policies that promote adaptation to

climate change. The OECD also has an important role in facilitating the integration of adaptation into development cooperation activities. Work on adaptation has been underway since 2002 within the Environment Policy Committee (EPOC) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. New work on adaptation is also being undertaken by other committees of the OECD. OECD's work on adaptation has contributed to key international assessments of climate change including the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.

This brochure provides an overview of recent and ongoing OECD work on adaptation to climate change, which is organized around three pillars: i) Mainstreaming Adaptation in Development Co-operation; ii) Economic Aspects of Adaptation; and iii) Adaptation in Developed Countries.



Mainstreaming Adaptation in Development Co-operation

1

The issue of climate change can seem remote, compared with such immediate concerns as poverty, disease, and economic stagnation for planners in developing countries and in development co-operation agencies. Development planners are often unsure on how climate change will affect their work, and how to integrate or “mainstream” climate change consideration within their activities. Yet, climate change can directly affect the efficiency of resource investments and the eventual achievement of many development objectives. How development occurs also has implications for the vulnerability of societies to its impacts.

Considerable analytical work has already been conducted on how development can be made climate-friendly in terms of reducing GHG emissions. Much less attention has been paid to how development can be made

more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Bridging the gap between climate change and development communities, however, can be a challenge. This is because they may have different priorities, may operate on different time and space scales, and may coordinate and act through different international organisations.

OECD member countries and donors have already initiated a number of activities to integrate adaptation within development activities. To further advance this agenda, the Development and Environment Ministers of OECD member countries adopted a Declaration on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation in 2006. Among other suggestions this Ministerial Declaration calls for “meaningful co-ordination and sharing of good practices on integrating climate change adaptation in development co-operation”.

OECD work has examined the two way relationship between climate change and development and provided policy guidance on integrating adaptation considerations within development processes. The OECD also tracks development assistance targeted towards adaptation objectives.

1.1 Linking Climate Change and Development

Climate change has a discernible impact on development. Even where impacts of climate change are not yet visible, scenarios of future impacts may justify the incorporation of adaptation responses into planning. In some cases, doing so is more cost-effective, especially for long-lived infrastructure projects. Similarly, current development activities may also irreversibly constrain future adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

OECD work has examined possible opportunities and trade-offs faced in mainstreaming responses to climate change. Such barriers include the segmentation within governments and donor agencies. Climate change expertise is typically housed in environment departments which have limited leverage over sectoral guidelines and

projects. Sectoral managers, on the other hand, often face “mainstreaming overload”, with completing agendas such as gender, governance and environment all vying for integration within core development activities. At the same time, available climate information is often not directly relevant for development-related decisions. Finally, there can be trade-offs between climate and development objectives in terms of allocation of scarce resources.

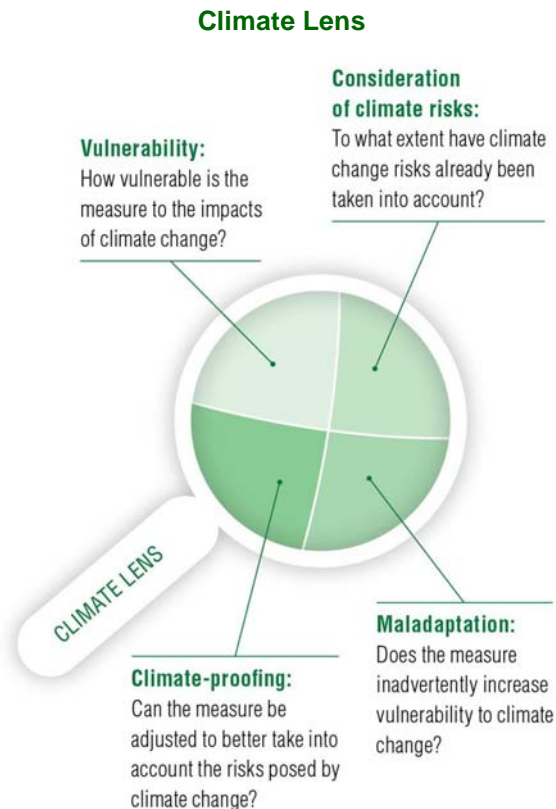
The OECD has identified a number of priorities for better incorporating adaptation considerations within development policies, plans and projects. These include: i) making climate information more relevant and usable for the development community as a basis for decisions on mainstreaming; ii) developing and applying screening tools to help screen development activities for climate risk and prioritise responses; iii) identifying and using appropriate entry points for climate information, such as humanitarian aid, poverty reduction, economic development, and natural resource management; iv) shifting emphasis to implementation, as opposed to developing new plans; and v) meaningful co-ordination and sharing of good practices. Here, a key priority is to forge successful links between mainstreaming initiated

under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the more bottom-up risk management initiatives by national and sectoral planners.

1.2 Policy Guidance on Integrating Adaptation into Development Co-operation

The OECD published in 2009 a Policy Guidance that takes a “whole of government” approach to integrating adaptation within development planning.

To help decision makers analyse the needs and options for adaptation to climate change, this Policy Guidance has developed a practical tool known as the “climate lens”. The climate lens prompts questions about the proposed or existing measure on vulnerability, climate risk, climate-proofing, and maladaptation. Application of the climate lens enables policy makers to decide whether a policy, plan or programme is at risk from climate change. For an intervention not at risk, no further action is needed. However, for

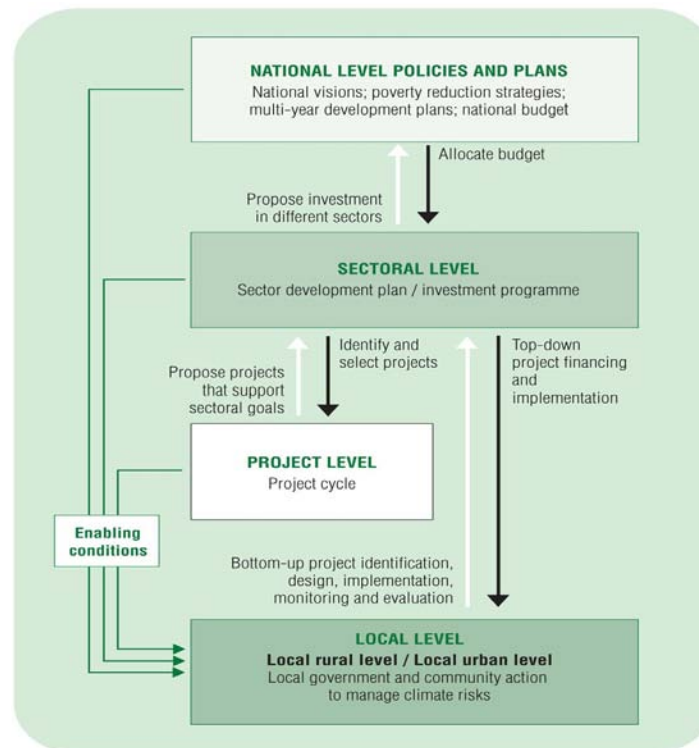


Source: OECD, 2009.

an intervention at risk, measures are required to identify the extent of the risk, assess climate change impacts and adaptation responses, and identify possible recommendations and “downstream” actions.

The Policy Guidance recommends moving the co-ordination of adaptation activities into central bodies, and incorporating long-term climate risks in national planning processes and budgets. It also highlights the need to enhance the capacity of ministries, local governments, project planners and donor agencies to better assess climate change implications within centralised national government processes, as well as in urban and rural contexts. The Policy Guidance is now being applied by international donors to develop programmes for development practitioners.

Decision Levels Examined in Policy Guidance



Source: OECD, 2009.

1.3 Assessing needs and measuring success

Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an essential part of ensuring the effectiveness, equity and efficiency of adaptation interventions. The working paper “Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptation: Lessons from Development Co-operation Agencies” (2011) provides the first empirical assessment of M&E frameworks used by six development co-operation agencies for their projects and programmes with adaptation-specific or adaptation-related components. It identifies the characteristics of M&E for adaptation and shares lessons learned on the choice and use of indicators, baselines and targets

Other recent work on “Harmonising Climate Risk Management: Adaptation Screening and Assessment Tools for Development Co-operation” (2011) has considered how well current tools for screening climate risks and integrating adaptation into development planning meet users’ needs.

1.4 Adaptation Marker

The OECD DAC collects data on levels of official development assistance (ODA) targeting the objectives of the UNFCCC through the ‘Rio markers’. Data on mitigation-related aid have been collected since 1998. A new policy marker to track aid in support of climate change adaptation has been developed and was agreed at the end of 2011. This allows for a comprehensive presentation of aid that supports developing countries’ efforts to address climate change. Data on ODA flows are publicly available from the DAC’s online databases. In 2011, DAC members agreed to extend the application of the Rio markers for mitigation and adaptation to non-concessional developmental loans. The DAC is also working on improving statistics on other categories of flows such as export credits, private flows, public interventions that leverage private finance and on possibly identifying their relevance to climate change.

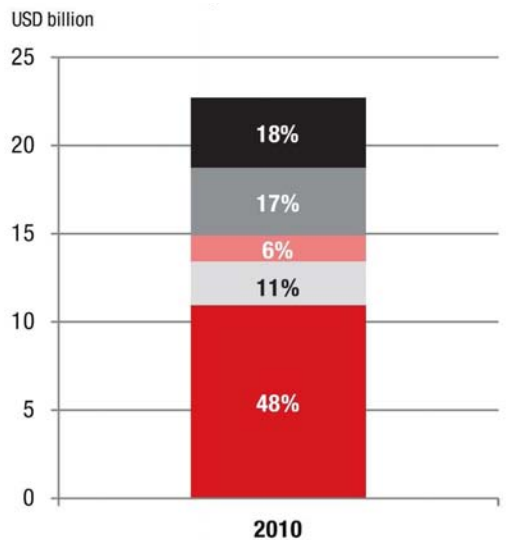
Key Links

www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation

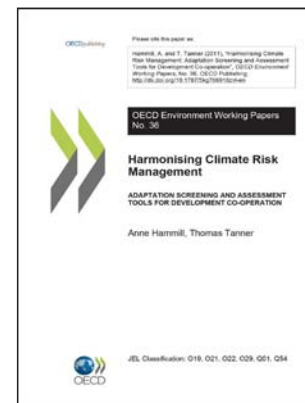
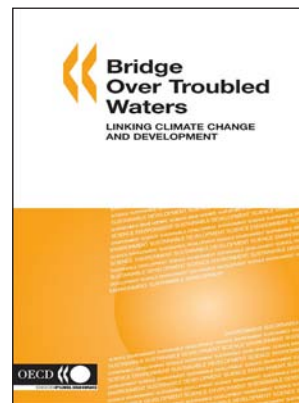
www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation/guidance

www.oecd.org/dac/environment/climatechange

Total climate change-related aid: USD 22.9 billion



- Activities marked both for mitigation and adaptation ("overlap")
- Adaptation only: significant objective
- Adaptation only: principal objective
- Mitigation only: significant objective
- Mitigation only: principal objective





Economic Aspects of Adaptation

2

The costs of adaptation, and how large the resulting benefits may be, are issues that are increasingly relevant for on-the-ground projects, as well as in national and global contexts where trade-offs might need to be considered between the costs of climate policies and the residual damages resulting from climate change.

There are significant analytical and policy challenges associated with the economic assessment of adaptation. It is hard to define what falls within the scope of adaptation. For example, adaptation costs might increase if in addition to measures that directly reduce climate change damages, actions to increase adaptive capacity, such as investments in nutrition or education, are also included. The comparison of costs and benefits also raises several methodological issues, including valuation, discounting and distributional consequences. Further, unlike mitigation, which has to

be coordinated internationally, adaptation decisions are largely decentralised. Adaptation actions will be undertaken not only by governments but also by private agents, such as individuals and firms. The way different actors will consider costs and benefits of adaptation in their decision making process is not easy to foresee, and may vary from sophisticated studies to simple behavioural changes.

The OECD has undertaken analytical work on the economics of adaptation with particular reference to policy and measures that facilitate the implementation of adaptation. Previous work has focused on the costs and benefits of adaptation and on the interactions between adaptation and mitigation. Recent work has analysed ways in which the private sector can be engaged in developing adaptation measures and the role of public policies in relation to this.

2.1 Costs, Benefits and Policy Instruments for Adaptation

Significantly scaled up financing for adaptation is a core element of the ongoing international negotiations on climate change. Central to this policy imperative has been the need to gain a better understanding of the costs and benefits of adaptation as well as the role of actions taken by households, firms, governments, and civil society.

The OECD has analysed adaptation costs and benefits in key climate sensitive sectors, at national and global levels and examined the potential for economic and policy instruments to incentivise and motivate adaptation actions. Outputs of this work include the book *Economic Aspects of Adaptation to Climate Change: Costs, Benefits, and Policy Instruments* (2008).

The book contributes to assessing the magnitude of adaptation costs with a critical analysis of the existing literature in the field. Studies show that in certain sectors some adaptation actions, such as behavioural adaptations, can be implemented at low cost while others, such as infrastructural measures, will require significant investment. Aggregate multi-sectoral global estimates, however, face significant

limitations. Therefore, a consensus, even in terms of the magnitude of global adaptation “price tags” may be premature.

In addition to examining public policies, the OECD has also focused on the role of the private sector in implementing adaptation, and the role of public policy in furthering private sector engagement in adaptation and ensuring that private actors make timely, well-informed, and efficient adaptation decisions. This is particularly critical given that a majority of actions are undertaken by private actors and because the scope of the adaptation challenge will far exceed the public budgets available to address it. A range of policy instruments, such as insurance and environmental markets and pricing, are needed to establish the right incentives to influence such decisions. However, setting up the right incentive and partnership structures to promote adaptation will be a daunting task. Public private partnerships in particular would be key, not only for infrastructure but also for technology and innovation to facilitate adaptation.

Recent work has considered innovation in the field of crop biotechnology to create plants that are more resilient to environmental stresses. The working paper “Adaptation and Innovation: An Analysis of Crop Biotechnology Patent Data” (2012) found that innovation

in this area has significantly accelerated over the last quarter century, with the private sector playing a key role.

The working paper “Private Sector Engagement in Adaptation to Climate Change: Approaches to Managing Climate Risks” (2011) assessed what businesses are doing to manage their climate vulnerabilities and what factors can affect their adaptation decisions. The analysis found that while there is high awareness among businesses of a wide range of climate change risks, only a small proportion of companies are implementing climate risk management measures. The extent of companies’ engagement is significantly influenced by their capacities to assess and manage risks, their incentives to act, and their perspectives on the need to act. By helping companies to address capacity constraints and by establishing policy frameworks to incentivise action, governments can encourage greater private sector engagement in adaptation.

An ongoing OECD project aims to identify a domestic policy framework to encourage private sector investment in green infrastructure that is low-carbon and climate-resilient, including the use of market-based, regulatory and financial instruments. A series of working papers will explore (i) good practice in policy design and implementation and government practices (with a policy

checklist for government action), (ii) sectoral analysis of transport infrastructure, and (iii) country case studies.

2.2 Integrated Assessment Modelling of Adaptation

Increasing attention on financing for adaptation has motivated a number of recent global and regional estimates of adaptation costs. While important from an agenda setting perspective, many of these estimates are static, do not assess the benefits from investments in adaptation, and are delinked from policies and investments in GHG mitigation.

To address these issues, the OECD examined adaptation and mitigation within an integrated modelling framework, which incorporates adaptation as a policy choice. Global and regional costs of adaptation were assessed dynamically and the benefits were also quantified.

The results from this analysis show that all types of adaptation options, including proactive and reactive actions and developing adaptive capacity, are important in off-setting some of the adverse impacts of climate change. The timing and composition of these interventions is also critical as investments in adaptation stock become effective with a

time delay. The costs and policy mix of the investments vary considerably across regions, over time, and depend upon the level of adaptation and mitigation, in addition to assumptions about climate damages and discount rates.

The policy simulations show that the costs of climate change are lowest when mitigation and adaptation strategies are undertaken in conjunction.

2.3 The Role of Microfinance in Adaptation

The current debate on economic aspects of adaptation to climate change has focused on the estimation of adaptation costs, ways to scale-up funding, and the design of the international institutional architecture for adaptation financing. However, little emphasis has been placed on mechanisms to channel these resources at the sub-national level, in particular to the poor who are often most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

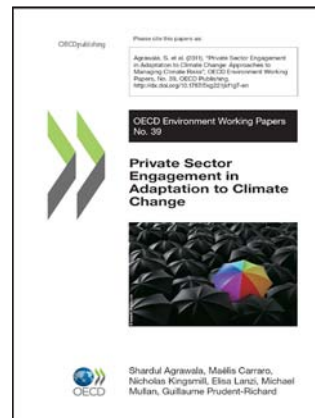
OECD work offers a first empirical assessment of the linkages between microfinance supported activities and adaptation to climate change. Examination of lending

portfolios of microfinance institutions in two climate vulnerable countries – Bangladesh and Nepal – identifies strong linkages between traditional microfinance activities and adaptation needs. Income and livelihood diversification can reduce vulnerability to weather and climate risks, while projects focussing on disaster preparedness, irrigation and sanitation facilities, crop diversification, insurance schemes, and construction of housing can increase the resilience to the impacts of current and future climate.

Key Links

www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation

www.oecd.org/env/cc/ecoadaptation





Adaptation in Developed Countries

3

Adaptation to climate change has established itself as an important and complementary response to GHG mitigation, which is reflected in the growing levels of action by developed countries. Within this overall trend, there is considerable variation in terms of the level of progress and approaches that are being adopted.

OECD work on adaptation within this context has focussed on assessing the progress made on adaptation at the domestic level across OECD member countries, providing in-depth analysis of adaptation strategies in vulnerable regions or sectors, and identifying areas of emerging good practice in the development of domestic policy frameworks.

3.1 Progress on Adaptation in Developed Countries

The OECD has examined broad trends in progress on assessment and implementation of adaptation to climate change in developed countries. Primary inputs to the OECD assessment are the National Communications (NCs) by these countries to the UNFCCC, but other activities have also been examined.

OECD analysis shows progress across all developed countries in terms of understanding climate projections and its impacts, and in identifying adaptation options. Less progress has been made on establishing institutional mechanisms and explicitly incorporating climate change risks in projects and policies. The analysis identified several positive examples at the project level, and progress in coordination at the national level. An example for the latter is the incorporation of climate change

impacts and adaptation within existing modalities for project design, approval, and implementation, such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). The OECD is currently examining how countries' progress has developed in recent years and countries' experiences in implementing adaptation, including lessons learned and key challenges for the future.

3.2 Adaptation in Vulnerable Regions or Sectors

One strand of OECD research examines the implications of climate change for economies in particularly vulnerable regions and sectors. For example, OECD work (2007) has examined measures to address two key vulnerabilities in the European Alps related with losses in winter tourism and exposure of settlements and infrastructure to natural hazards. The implications of this work extend beyond the European Alps to other mountain systems which may face similar climate and contextual challenges, and provide examples of good practice.

Water is a key medium through which the impacts of climate change will be felt. Beyond aggravating current stresses, climate change will increase risks (e.g. variability in supply and extreme events) and introduce a greater degree of uncertainty beyond what water managers have traditionally had

to cope with. Current OECD work is exploring how economic instruments and financing mechanisms can play a role in promoting efficient adaptation and risk management in the context of uncertainty. In co-operation with the United Nations Economic Council for Europe (UNECE) and the European Water Initiative, the OECD is working with governments in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to help them factor climate change and the need for adaptation in their water policies. The OECD's contribution focuses on the use of economic and financial instruments to adapt water allocation and investment in water-related infrastructures.

The OECD is also focusing on challenges facing agriculture in adapting to climate change. OECD work on *Climate Change and Agriculture: Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation* (2010) examined key economic and policy issues. Part of OECD work on agriculture and the environment is focusing on the role of OECD agricultural policies in facilitating or hindering adaptation of the sector. This work will include analysis of different policy scenarios of shifts in land use and production patterns due to climate change and alternative agricultural support measures. It will also examine synergies between GHG mitigation and adaptation, and the links with other environmental objectives, such as water and air quality and biodiversity.

Recent OECD work on *The Economics of Adapting Fisheries to Climate Change* (2011) identifies fisheries and aquaculture management and governance models that are suited to address climate change and outlines the actions that fisheries policy makers must undertake in the face of climate change. These include strengthening the global governance system, a broader use of rights-based management systems and, in particular, using aquaculture as a key part of the response to climate change.

Key Links:

www.oecd.org/agriculture

www.oecd.org/water

3.3 Incorporation of Adaptation at National, Regional and Local Levels

Recent work has analysed policy frameworks that are important for facilitating adaptation to climate change impacts in coastal zones and the water sector. The work on coastal zones has focused on climate change impacts in the Gulf of Mexico and the role of federal agencies to guide adaptation. With respect to the water sector, the OECD has examined domestic policy frameworks to determine to what extent adaptation to climate change is being incorporated into existing water policy frameworks in selected developed and developing countries. Work is also underway to develop a framework for a programmatic approach to adaptation, which would provide an enabling architecture that can prioritise and implement mainstreaming as well as more adaptation specific outcomes, and more importantly, ensure their longer term sustainability.

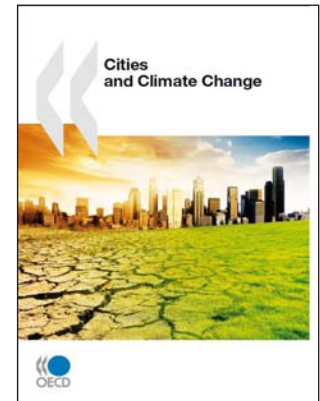
The OECD is also working to highlight the role of cities in delivering cost-effective policy responses to climate change, including adaptation. Recent outputs include reports on the global ranking of port cities with high exposure to climate extremes, case studies of Copenhagen (2008) and Mumbai

(2010), a conceptual framework for the economic assessment of impacts and policy benefits at the urban scale, and a new volume, *Cities and Climate Change* (2010), that analyses the role of urban policies, such as land use planning and building regulations, in enhancing resilience to climate change. OECD work is continuing on the urban dimension of climate policies and green growth, including an ongoing comparative study of green growth in cities, with case studies to analyse the impact of green growth initiatives on environmental targets and urban economics. Other work focuses on better understanding the potential for sub-national governments to contribute to cost-effective climate change solutions within the framework of multilevel governance, leadership in urban adaptation and an update of the 2008 port cities ranking to include a fuller risk assessment..

Key Links

www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation

www.oecd.org/env/cc/cities



A photograph of a paved road leading straight into the ocean. The road is flanked by concrete walls. In the distance, a red octagonal stop sign stands on the right side of the road. Large, white-capped waves are crashing against the road's end, creating a dramatic and somewhat surreal scene.

Recent Publications and Working Papers

Books

- OECD (2011), *The Economics of Adapting Fisheries to Climate Change*, OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/9789264090415-en.
- OECD (2010), *Climate Change and Agriculture: Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation*, OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/9789264086876-en.
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Selected Working Papers

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