

FOREWORD

The world is facing a very serious economic crisis, which demonstrates how vulnerable our economies and societies are, and how politicians must play a fundamental role in improving not only the current conditions of a country, but also in securing the future of its citizens.

Given the OECD mandate to becoming a hub for discussion of global issues, we are carefully looking at new ways of harnessing its statistical and analytical resources to identify innovative ways to address the crisis. The multidimensional character of OECD work, its expertise in economic, social and environmental issues, the availability of a unique network of experts in all these domains put the Organisation at the forefront of this effort. This is why the OECD has prepared a strategic response to help governments find effective and efficient strategies to face these challenges, in the short-term, but especially in the long-term.

Moreover, the OECD is working towards its enlargement. Five countries were selected with a view to becoming new members: Chile, Estonia, Israel, the Russian Federation and Slovenia. But the OECD is also engaging key global players in its work, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa.

The *OECD Factbook* provides comparable statistics on long-term trends of key economic, social and environmental phenomena in member countries and selected non-member economies. In other words, looking at the *OECD Factbook*, readers can find a synthetic description of the key characteristics of the world in which they are living. At a moment when societies are fighting the crisis, defining how to overcome it and simultaneously thinking about how to insert their “exit” strategies in their long-term goals, data must play a fundamental role to underpin these strategies and policy decisions.

Finally, the debate about the best way to measure the progress of our societies, also promoted over the last few years by the OECD and other organisations, is expected to provide in 2009 some concrete recommendations on how to complement classical economic indicators with additional ones about people’s quality of life and well-being. The forthcoming Third OECD World Forum on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy”, to be held in Busan (South Korea) in October 2009, will be a unique opportunity to take stock of the new proposed indicators and discuss how they can improve policy making and foster the progress of our societies.



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