

Summary

This chapter draws together four documents emerging from the Meeting of OECD Education Ministers held in Athens on 27-28 June 2006. The first document is the chair's summary of discussions at the meeting. It describes how ministers agreed to go beyond growth by making higher education not just bigger but also better. Reforms are needed in six areas: to improve funding, to make higher education more equitable, to gain a clearer focus on what students learn, to promote responsiveness and diversity, to support research and innovation, and to devise an effective response to growing migration and internationalisation.

The second document is the speech by the new Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría. He reminded the meeting of how international debate has become central in higher education. This is because of new international policy instruments, like the European Bologna Process, because researchers and students are working and studying outside their home countries, and because of global competition for high-level skills. He argued that reform of funding is needed urgently, particularly in those countries where higher education is publicly funded but inadequately resourced to meet the costs of expansion. Mr. Gurría gave particular emphasis to the need for better measurement of outcomes in higher education, proposing a "PISA for higher education" to survey the skills of students.

The third document is the issues paper used to frame debate at the meeting. It covers the factors affecting the future of higher education, including technology, globalisation, demography, and governance. It looks at the objectives of higher education and the implications for governance, the question of who should pay for higher education, whether there might be better ways to measure quality in higher education, and how we might improve its contribution to the economy.

The final document provides a range of indicators in graphical form. These indicators cover the broader social and economic context; access, participation and progression; expenditure on higher education; economic returns; and internationalisation.