



**Launch of the new OECD report**

***Small, Medium, Strong.***

***Trends in SME Performance and Business Conditions***

**15 May 2017, 11.00-12.30,**

**OECD Headquarters, Paris**

**Opening remarks by Mari Kiviniemi**

**Deputy Secretary-General**

**OECD**

- Your excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.
- I have the pleasure to welcome you to the launch of a new OECD report, ***“Small, Medium, Strong. Trends in SME Performance and Business Conditions”***.
- This publication documents the multiple contributions of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to the economy across OECD countries. It responds to the growing demand by governments for tools to monitor and benchmark how well the SME business environment is creating the appropriate conditions for these firms to flourish and grow.
- The report is extremely timely. In many OECD countries, governments are facing the challenges of low growth, weak trade and investment, and rising, or persistently high inequality.
- Concerns about the uneven distribution of benefits from globalisation and disruptive technological changes are fuelling backlashes and populism. At the level of businesses, many of the recent trends and perceptions centre around the concentration of benefits in a small number of very large, multinational firms, with smaller firms being at disadvantage.
- SMEs have an important role to play for boosting growth and achieving more inclusive globalisation. SMEs are the backbone of all our economies, representing a key source of employment and value added across OECD countries. They are a driving force of innovation, knowledge diffusion and social inclusion.
- However, SMEs face specific challenges in participating in and reaping the benefits of a globalised and digital economy. Their contributions depend to a great degree on conducive framework conditions, and on access to strategic resources, such as skills, knowledge networks, and finance.

- The policy space to foster SME contributions is complex. But, in many countries, improving the approach to SMEs is not an option – it is a necessity! If we don't enable SMEs and the people they employ to reap the benefits of globalisation and digitalisation, we risk an even bigger backlash with serious implications for open and prosperous societies.
- The new publication that is presented today represents an important step in this direction. It is the outcome of a project undertaken in 2015-16, which brings together, for the first time, a vast array of OECD data pertaining to business environment conditions for SMEs and leverages unique expertise with business statistics.
- This work capitalises on the OECD's ability to draw on its work from across diverse committees to provide a cross-cutting perspective that can help to level the playing field and enable SMEs to increase their contribution to sustainable and inclusive growth.
- This work represents an important building block in an Organisation-wide effort to strengthen support to Members on the issue of SMEs, which will include also an OECD Ministerial Conference on SMEs in Mexico in February 2018.
- I am pleased now to invite Martine Durand, Chief Statistician and Director of the Statistics Directorate, and Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Local Development and Tourism, to present the report. Martine will start by presenting some of the key trends about SMEs. Lamia will then present the main findings on SME business environment conditions.