

NOTE FOR JOURNALISTS

Increasing investment quality is crucial to drive forward competitiveness and inclusive growth in South East Europe, says OECD

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“Investment has many virtues for growth and economic development. Its quality matters as much as quantity for long-term economic and social returns”, said OECD Deputy Secretary-General Mari Kiviniemi in her opening remarks at a [high-level conference on “Fostering Investment for Competitiveness in South East Europe \(SEE\)”](#), held today at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

The conference gathered a dozen ministers and senior leaders, and over two hundred high-level representatives from the region and OECD governments, participants from academic and business circles, the European Commission and other partner organisations to discuss ways to leverage regional experiences, OECD standards and international good practices to attract long-term, quality investment for more inclusive and sustainable development in SEE.

The event kicked off with keynote speeches by Ms. Martina Dalić, Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia, Ms. Eva Štravs Podlogar, State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Slovenia and Mr. Christian Danielsson, Director General, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission.

Participants also discussed the key insights from a new OECD report on [“Tracking Special Economic Zones in the Western Balkans: Objectives, Features and Key Challenges”](#), which focuses on six SEE economies: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia.

This pioneering [report](#), released today, examines the relevance of Special Economic Zones as a policy tool for sustainable and responsible investment in the region. Special economic zones have generated foreign direct investment inflows and job creation in the Western Balkans; but boosting competitiveness and sustainable development across the region will require additional focus on long-term investment as well as linkages between foreign and domestic companies.

The OECD study also raises questions aiming to improve policy outcomes and emphasises the importance of cost-benefit and sustainability analyses in order to reduce potential deadweight effects, foregone revenues or competition distortion.

This conference is part of the [OECD SEE regional programme](#) which is financially supported by the European Union.

For more information, contact:

Ms. Marzena Kisielewska
Head of South East Europe Division
OECD Global Relations
marzena.kisielewska@oecd.org

Ms. Vanessa Vallée
Communications Manager
OECD Global Relations
vanessa.vallee@oecd.org

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

¹ This conference is not a meeting of an official OECD body.