Proceedings from the 7th OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers
MAYORS, MINISTERS, MEGATRENDS: PRINCIPLES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION
About the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE)

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities provides comparative statistics, analysis and capacity building for local and national actors to work together to unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, promote inclusive and sustainable regions and cities, boost local job creation, and support sound tourism policies.

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About the OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers

The OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers builds on a long tradition of policy dialogue on urban development at the OECD.

Established in 2007, the Roundtable aims to bridge the policy gaps in tackling climate change and spurring green growth, mobilising investment, creating jobs and ensuring sustainable, inclusive urban growth.


Visit our website: www.oecd.org/urban/roundtable
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Introduction

During the 7th OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers, organised in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Development of Greece and the City of Athens, ministers and mayors exchanged ideas, experiences and good practices from around the world on:

• What reforms should be introduced to existing National Urban Policies to better prepare for and address megatrends?
• How can Mayors and Ministers work closely together in co-designing a new generation of National Urban Policies?
• What types of innovative tools and new forms of partnerships can help Mayors and Ministers work effectively together to access the needed resources?

Participants included 20 ministers and vice-ministers and 8 high-level officials from national governments; 27 mayors and vice-mayors; 9 representatives from international and supporting institutions; and 3 city observers.

The Roundtable discussions were divided into three main blocks:

• In the first block, participants debated on how national and city authorities could co-design urban policies across levels of government. Building on the past 20 years of expertise accumulated in the OECD Working Party on Urban Policy, Mayors and Ministers shared practical examples of National Urban Policies for cities of all sizes.
• In the second block, the discussion moved on to innovative tools and new forms of partnerships that would allow Mayors and Ministers to work effectively together on implementing a new generation of National Urban Policies.
• In the third block, Mayors and Ministers concluded the Roundtable by discussing how to use the OECD Principles on Urban Policy in their own country.
Globalisation, digitalisation, climate change and demographic shifts – today’s cities are facing complex and interrelated megatrends. Such transformative trends cannot be dealt with in a haphazard and fragmented manner. To shape an inclusive and sustainable urban future, holistic National Urban Policies (NUPs) need to help local governments seize the new opportunities provided by megatrends.

National Urban Policies (NUPs) can set clear policy directions to transform megatrends into opportunities to boost local and national development. Among other countries, **Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile**, the **Czech Republic, France, Indonesia, Japan**, and **Spain** have an explicit NUP framework – although the stage of development varies from one country to another. An NUP does not replace local urban policies, but rather complements them to promote sustainable urban development.

NUPs needs to embrace cities of all sizes, including small- and medium-sized cities. In many cases, like in **Estonia**, smaller cities have an ageing and shrinking population. Smaller cities often lack skilled workforces to support economic growth and they struggle to remain competitive at the national scale.

Facilitating the exchange of lessons, knowledge and experience can help enhance the capacity of cities to face global challenges. For example, **Poland** is formally establishing a national urban forum for cities to share experiences. **France** has created a network of mid-size cities (of approximately 100,000 inhabitants) to facilitate the exchange of experiences and improve local projects.

Building on the experience and lessons from the past 20+ years of work on cities and urban policy, the OECD Principles on Urban Policy provide concise guidance for national and local governments to get their cities right.

The Principles are organised around “3S”: **Scale** of policy action; **Strategy** to build smart, sustainable and inclusive cities; and **Stakeholders** engaged in co-designed, co-implemented and co-monitored urban policy.
Urban policies that capitalise on the comparative advantages of localities is critical to face global challenges. Due to their proximity to citizens and other groups such as the academia, local governments are well-suited to ensure public participation in urban development. For example, Braga (Portugal) is working closely with academic groups on how to improve urban services. However, as the experience of Rotterdam (The Netherlands) suggests, it is also important to state how local projects contribute to achieving national development goals.

There is growing awareness of the importance of empowering neighbourhoods in driving development forward. Cities are made up of various neighbourhoods and sometimes considered not “local” enough. Devolving some resources to the community level helps give people a say in public service delivery. The city of Glasgow (UK), for example, provides funding to non-profit community-based organisations that work directly with citizens through the Glasgow Community Plan. Such organisations can harness their experience on issues such as digital inclusion and participatory budgeting.

An effective urban policy to face megatrends should also consider the importance of rural areas. As the experience of Sweden shows, working across political boundaries is critical to harness the interdependencies between urban and rural areas. Similarly, France has created metropolitan authorities to strengthen co-operation for urban development. Through this scheme, the national government works with large cities to help them integrate rural areas into their development strategies.

National governments and cities regard decentralisation and solid multi-level governance practices as key elements to reduce regional imbalances in confronting megatrends and boost economic growth. Greece, for instance, called for adequate mechanisms to be put in place to facilitate work across silos and across tiers of government.
Implementing National Urban Policies (NUPs) requires innovative techniques to enhance financing, work across levels of government, and engage different stakeholders. Given the major role that local governments play in making NUPs happen on the ground, it is essential for national and regional governments to better understand different local contexts and support local actions. However, the national government should primarily act at the local level when their intervention can bring additional benefits, according to the principle of subsidiarity as recalled by United Cities and Local Governments.

National governments sometimes need to work on their legal framework to empower local governments on development issues, provide them with technical support and ensure a fairer share of resources. In Europe, according to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, 60% of public investment is conducted by subnational levels of government. This calls for more local policies to empower municipalities to reach the 2030 goals.

Bridging national and local policies also calls for investment in innovation. Cities are laboratories for testing solutions for complex local challenges that could eventually be scaled up to national level. Cities are the platform for the innovation economy as most of the innovations are taking place at the city level. In some countries, digitalisation and urbanisation are driving innovation and entrepreneurship in cities. The experience of Estonia and Korea suggests that ICT and digital technologies open up new ways of service delivery, create new employment and make better investments in regional infrastructure. To face megatrends, cities need to bring their citizens to the centre of the problem-solving process.

National governments can enact regulation that establishes indicators to help cities measure progress on the implementation of global commitments such as the SDGs. In the experience of Indonesia, for example, these indicators need to be well integrated into the development agendas at all levels of government.
Co-financing is a major tool to implement co-ordinated national, regional and local development plans and investment. It offers a way to ‘do more with less’ in a context where public investment resources have often been reduced. Co-financing allows governments to share risks and responsibilities and align policies. Nevertheless, co-financing mechanisms need to be adapted to the local context and, in some cases, cities need to find alternative sources of funding to match national resources. Examples include:

- **In the Netherlands,** the national government commits to contribute to the financing of local projects as long as those resources are matched by local authorities.

- **In Switzerland,** all investment projects are co-financed by national and regional governments demanding authorities at different levels to work together.

- **In Argentina,** the Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing transfers a large share of its budget to subnational governments for the realisation of public works. The Ministry also provides assistance to subnational governments to design investment projects and seek finance from international donors.

- **In Morocco,** local governments finance 25% of investment in urban projects while the national government finances 75%. This scheme has facilitated collaboration for the implementation of urban policies.

- **In Korea,** regions can request funds from the national government to support their local projects, but there should be a quality return on national investment.

- **In Ireland,** as part of its economic and spatial planning, has created specific funds (i.e. climate fund, disruptive technology fund, urban regeneration fund) to help cities achieve the Ireland 2040 goals.

- **In Poland,** national and subnational governments co-finance some public investments on a 50-50 basis.

Co-financing also requires budget flexibility in subnational expenditure. For instance, **Madrid** (Spain), as other cities, needs flexibility to spend its own resources in projects it considers as critical, but also to acquire the necessary capacity (i.e. human capital) to implement these projects.
Mayors, Ministers and leaders from public, private and non-profit organisations backed the OECD Principles on Urban Policy through the **Athens Multi-Stakeholder Pledge**. They invited the OECD to support the implementation of the Principles through data and evidence, policy advice, user-friendly tools and leveraging OECD platforms and networks to share experiences.

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**Athens Multi-stakeholder Pledge on the OECD Principles on Urban Policy**

**Handed to the OECD’s Secretary-General, Angel Gurría**, at the 7 OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers, 19 March 2019, Athens, Greece

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**We, Mayors, Ministers and leaders from public, private and non-profit organisations, actively engaged in OECD work on cities and urban policies**,

1. **Fully support the OECD Principles on Urban Policy** as a valuable framework to help national and subnational governments design and implement better urban policies for better lives, in shared responsibility with public, private and non-profit sectors;

2. **Command the bottom-up, multi-stakeholder and inclusive consultation and co-production of the Principles on Urban Policy**, led by the OECD Working Party on Urban Policy and the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee, in close co-operation with a broad range of stakeholders, including umbrella organisations of cities and local governments, UN agencies and the private sector;

3. **Call upon governments from OECD member and partner countries to raise the profile of the Principles on Urban Policy** at local, national and global levels; to use them to guide decisions and policies, notably in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to share and scale up best practices for smart, sustainable and inclusive cities;

4. **Invite the OECD to support the implementation of the Principles on Urban Policy**, notably by:

   - Expanding the data and evidence base on cities and urban policies, and disseminating the findings to local and national decision-makers to guide public action.
   - Providing policy advice and technical support to advance smart, sustainable and inclusive development in cities, through policy dialogues, policy recommendations and action plans.
   - Leveraging OECD platforms and networks to share experience and facilitate peer-to-peer learning – notably within the Working Party on Urban Policy, the National Urban Policy Programme, the Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative, the Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers, the Roundtable on Cities and Regions for SDGs, and other partner platforms and networks.
   - Using the Principles on Urban Policy as a framework to help assess urban policy outcomes through Metropolitan Reviews, National Urban Policy Reviews and thematic reports.
   - Developing user-friendly implementation tools that can facilitate and accelerate uptake of the Principles, such as checklists, best practice repositories or self-assessment frameworks.

5. **Appreciate the OECD’s commitment and collaboration** and stand ready to contribute to future collective efforts in support of better urban policies for better lives.
On behalf of Mayors, Ministers and leaders from public, private and non-profit organisations, Vincent Fouchier, Chair of the OECD Working Party on Urban Policy, delivered the pledge to Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary General, and emphasised the collective efforts from national delegates, experts and other stakeholders over the past 20 years, which fed into the process to co-produce the Principles.

The OECD Principles on Urban Policy were co-developed in a bottom-up process with the contribution of the following stakeholder groups:
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<td>Aix-Marseille-Provence (Bouc Bel Air), France</td>
<td>Mayor Richard Mallié</td>
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The 7th OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers was organised by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) led by Lamia Kamal-Chaoui. The event was co-ordinated by Soo-Jin Kim, Head of the Urban Policies and Reviews Unit, and Oscar Huerta Melchor, Project Manager, under the supervision of Aziza Akhmouch, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division, and with the invaluable help of Natalia Altman, Kate Brooks, Klara Fritz, Mia Gruget, Sena Segbedzi, Vu Tran, Laura Valdés, and Sam Whittlesey.

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