

A Framework for the Establishment of Country Programmes

(Approved by the Council at its 1277th session, on 30 April 2013)

C/MIN(2013)12



I. Introduction

1. This document provides a framework for the establishment of Country Programmes. It is a follow-up to the Vision Statement adopted by the 2011 Ministerial Council Meeting [[C/MIN\(2011\)6/FINAL](#)], which underlined the need to “develop new forms of partnership and collaboration with the aim of improving the well-being of all our citizens”.

2. The Statement also welcomed “collaboration with all those countries interested in sharing knowledge and expertise, promoting reform, and contributing and adhering to OECD standards”. In this respect, a note by the Secretary-General was submitted to Council, proposing, among others, an approach which would fix medium/long term objectives for countries keen to move towards OECD standards, with or without the ultimate goal of membership.

3. The starting point of this paper is the current framework for the OECD’s Global Relations. Its principal components are Key Partnerships, Global Forums, regional approaches and Partnerships in individual Committees. However, it lacks a tool to provide a structured and strategic form of engagement with countries willing and able to meet multiple OECD standards. Today, such countries can express interest in joining Committees and adhere to instruments one at a time, *i.e.* on a case-by-case and topic-driven basis. This approach is not conducive of maximising strategically all potential benefits of their relationship with the OECD. It will bring considerable benefits if co-operation with Partners keen to move closer to the OECD is developed in a strategic manner, according to mutual benefit and on the basis of an overall plan.

II. The Case for Country Programmes

The Policy Context

4. Achieving global prosperity through economic development has always been at the heart of the OECD’s mandate. With the recent economic and financial crisis, the need for international co-operation among countries at different stages of development has become even stronger. The OECD conducts policy dialogue with a large number of countries outside its membership. The Organisation recognises the need to reflect the experiences of these countries and to draw lessons from their approaches and development paths to design better policy tools. At the same time, the OECD embodies certain values and has the policy analysis that would benefit these countries. The Organisation has a strategic interest in creating a level playing field based on a common understanding of joint challenges.

5. In recognition of certain countries’ willingness to achieve OECD standards and best practices, the new Country Programmes will be designed to help a very limited number of countries to adopt these standards and practices and thus provide an anchor for their policy reforms. The programmes will also help foster a common understanding of the important policy challenges facing us all, so that we can move forward in addressing global problems together.

6. Country Programmes will be designed to be supportive of regional approaches to the extent that Partners in such Programmes can help disseminate best practices to, and bring policy perspectives from, their region.

The Programme Content

7. A structured form of co-operation with the Organisation would offer a country several benefits, including the ability to tap into OECD expertise and policy networks. Taking due account of the interest and priorities of OECD bodies, the Country Programmes will facilitate participation in selected OECD

activities, as well as the preparation of joint studies and peer reviews. The Programmes may also include participation in horizontal projects of global significance, systematic exchange of data and secondments of officials. They will offer a gradual, step-by-step approach enabling the country to familiarise itself with OECD standards and working methods. This gradual and mutually reinforcing process can provide the country with the possibility of adhering to existing OECD instruments and with greater involvement in the development of international instruments and recommendations developed by the OECD.

8. Each Country Programme will be given fixed-term mandates, subject to renewal. It will include provisions on funding and governance. While the programmes will follow a standard approach, the terms and modalities of each action plan will be discussed and agreed between the OECD and the country's authorities. This will allow work programmes to take into account priorities and circumstances of both Members and Partner countries, meeting specific policy needs and reflecting the country's views and experiences.

9. Subject to the OECD's financial regulations and other rules and practices, and programme of work and budget, funding is to be secured through multi-year funding arrangements, obtained by voluntary contributions and grants, including a financial commitment from the Partner country.

Added Value

10. The Country Programmes will add a new element to the Organisation's Global Relations programme. It will differ from the five Key Partnerships in several ways:

- The Key Partners were identified by the Organisation as countries of major importance to the world economy. No preconditions were imposed on the five countries, which made no prior commitment. Conversely, the Country Programmes will be based on a prior agreement between the country and the Organisation on the objectives to be achieved by means of the programme and targets would be set.
- Co-operation with the Key Partners is designed to be comprehensive, encompassing the work of all OECD bodies open to non-Members, in pursuance of the 2010 Council Guidelines on Deepening Enhanced Engagement [[C\(2010\)100/FINAL](#)]. Conversely, Country Programmes may include a more limited set of subject areas in which the countries concerned will make a political and financial commitment to achieve OECD standards and best practices.
- Key Partners have a special status in the Organisation by virtue of several Council decisions¹. Conversely, the Partners in a Country Programme will not have any special status and will consequently be treated like any other Partner, including in the context of the Council Resolution on Partnerships in OECD Bodies [[C\(2012\)100/FINAL](#)].
- A Country Programme will not imply any commitments (from the OECD or from the countries themselves) on accession.
- As a strategic priority, Key Partnerships are largely funded from regular Part I resources, contrary to the Country Programmes.

¹ Notably [C/MIN\(2007\)4/FINAL](#), which launched Enhanced Engagement, the Council Guidelines on Deepening Enhanced Engagement [[C\(2010\)100/FINAL](#)] and the Council Resolution on Partnerships in OECD Bodies [[C\(2012\)100/FINAL](#)].

11. The Country Programmes will allow for a whole-of-government determination of priority policy areas for co-operation on the basis of an overall strategy in a structured manner. The Output Areas and results to be included will need to respect the Committees' Global Relations strategies and Participation Plans and prerogatives regarding the instruments for which they are responsible. The output results will also be part of the programmes of work and budgets which the relevant Committees agree to submit to Council, via the Budget Committee. This means that these Committees will be consulted before a draft Programme is submitted for approval by the Members and that their prior agreement with the inclusion of output results in their areas of work is required.

12. The recently adopted Council Resolution on Partnerships in OECD Bodies will be one of the tools to implement the Programmes, as it provides for conditions and procedures for participation in Committees and gives these Committees a decisive role, so their interests and priorities are duly taken into account. In addition, the Programmes will allow the Partner countries to tap into the expertise of all relevant OECD Directorates, including the Development Centre. In this context, the multidimensional country reviews, conducted under the leadership of the Centre could, when applicable, play a role in assessing countries' policy needs.

Designating the Countries

13. Criteria to consider countries for these Programmes should be:

- the mutual interest and benefit which the Programme would serve, including the interest for Members of an effective and successful reform programme in the country concerned;
- the willingness of the country to commit itself to a long-term programme of reforms based on the standards set by the OECD's key instruments and by its best policy practices, as well as its ability to act on these commitments;
- the possibility that the country would act as a trailblazer for similar reforms in other countries, notably in the same region.

III. Implementation

14. The decision to launch a policy framework on relations with non-Members is taken by Council, which will also decide on any invitations to the Partner countries to join Committees or to adhere to selected instruments according to the existing rules [notably the Council Resolution on Partnerships in OECD Bodies, [C\(2012\)100/FINAL](#)]. Council may decide to invite specific countries to a Programme, or Delegate this decision to the External Relations Committee. The ERC will take the decisions on the design of the Programmes (mandate, duration, renewals, contents, governance and monitoring), as a delegated case, requiring consensus².

15. Partners benefiting from this type of Programme can be identified after this general framework has been approved, and in line with the Organisation's overall strategic priorities. A decision to establish a Country Programme will be based on a proposal by the Secretariat, which assesses the prospective Partner

2 Pursuant to the revised Council Resolution on governance [[C\(2006\)78/REV1/FINAL](#), par. 49, item (b), i], a decision to implement a policy framework on relations with non-Members could be delegated to the ERC and is to be taken by "mutual agreement" (*i.e.* consensus) among the Members. The decision to create a policy framework is taken by Council, as a fundamental case (par. 48, item v). The funding arrangements will have to be reviewed and agreed on by the Budget Committee before a Country Programme can be formally established.

country against the above-mentioned criteria for selecting countries and provides explanations on the long-term objectives and possible content of the proposed programme (after consultations with the relevant OECD bodies), as well as on its funding.

16. Work programmes will be developed with a view to the OECD Programme of Work and Budget cycle. The Programme content will be subject to decisions taken on the Output Results to be achieved under the programmes as part of the regular PWBs of the relevant Committees. There will be a co-ordination mechanism, including to develop joint priorities, for each Country Programme, involving interested Members, donors and, of course, the Partners themselves. The External Relations Committee will receive regular reports on programme implementation.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.