

Foreword

At the beginning of this new millennium, regional economies are confronting momentous changes. The globalisation of trade and economic activity is increasingly testing their ability to adapt and maintain their competitive edge. There is a tendency for income and performance gaps to widen between and within regions, and the cost of maintaining social cohesion is increasing. Rapid technological change and greater use of knowledge are offering new opportunities for local and regional development but demand further investment from enterprises, reorganisation of labour and production, more advanced skills and environmental improvements.

Amid this change and turbulence, regions continue to follow very different paths. Some regions are doing well in the current phase of the growth cycle and are driving growth. Others are less successful at capturing trade and additional economic activities. Many territories with poor links to the sources of prosperity, afflicted by migration, and lagging behind with respect to infrastructure and private investment, are finding it difficult to keep up with the general trend.

At the same time, central governments are no longer the sole provider of territorial policy. The vertical distribution of power between the different tiers of government needs to be reassessed, as well as the decentralisation of fiscal resources in order to better respond to the expectations of citizens and improve policy efficiency. Public authorities need to weigh up current challenges, evaluate the strategies pursued in recent years, and define new options.

Responding to a need to study and spread innovative territorial development strategies and governance in a more systematic way, in 1999 the OECD created the Territorial Development Policy Committee (TDPC) as a unique forum for international exchange and debate. The TDPC has developed a number of activities, including a series of National Territorial Reviews. These studies follow a standard methodology and a common conceptual framework, allowing countries to share their experiences and disseminate information on good practices. This series is intended to produce a synthesis that will formulate and diffuse horizontal policy recommendations.



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