

Foreword

This study is the result of a period of more than two years of collaboration between the OECD, the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), in response to strong demand from policy makers in the Latin American and Caribbean region for assistance in better leveraging SME policy as a tool for sustainable economic development.

Beginning in 2015, SELA approached the OECD with a proposal for adapting the Organisation's SME Policy Index methodology to the regional context. The SME Policy Index is an analytical tool developed by the OECD, in co-operation with international partners, to map SME policies and programmes and to assess alignment with good practice over time. It was developed for application in emerging economies within the context of the Organisation's Global Relations programmes. Since its first application in 2007, it has been used in 32 economies and various emerging regions of the world, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Southeast Europe and Turkey, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Eurasia).

While all these assessments share a common methodology, each regional application is adapted to reflect the regional priorities of the economies in question in order to anchor the assessment to the regional policy debate. Thus, the OECD and SELA organised two regional meetings during 2016 to develop the particular LAC assessment framework priorities and identify specific countries and/or sub-regional groups interested in undergoing the assessment process. Following these meetings, letters of interest were received from relevant ministerial authorities in Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay, as well as the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Pacific Alliance under Chile, expressing interest in engaging in the first application of the SME Policy Index in the region, and leading to the launch of this particular study. Since this time, further letters of interest have been received from various Central American countries, and the OECD looks forward to identifying future opportunities, in continued collaboration with regional partners, to respond to this demand.

This project is an output of the OECD Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean, which, building on the Organisation's longstanding partnership and dialogue with the region, was launched in 2016 to support the region in advancing its reform agenda along the three key regional priorities of increasing *productivity*, advancing *social inclusion*, and strengthening *institutions and governance*. It is a good example of OECD working methods, leveraging the production of comparable statistics, policy assessment, policy dialogue and policy advice, as well as the Programme's commitment to work hand in hand with regional partners and facilitate broader participation of Latin American countries in OECD work and their access to OECD expertise. During its first three years of existence, the Programme, through projects like these, has allowed for a systematic and mutually beneficial dialogue among OECD and Latin American countries, bringing the region's policy perspectives to the work of the Organisation.



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