

## Preface

On behalf of the OECD Territorial Development Policy Committee, it is my honour and privilege to introduce to you the first-ever *OECD Regional Outlook*. The production of such a volume is a remarkable undertaking, made possible by the close co-operation of member countries and the hard work of OECD staff.

The *OECD Regional Outlook* draws on the data and evidence presented in *OECD Regions at a Glance 2011* to explore the impact of the 2008 financial and economic crisis on regions and localities, as well as the policy responses to both immediate and longer term challenges facing OECD regions. To combat and reverse the trend, many regions are now focusing on innovation – harnessing each region’s unique strengths and assets in an effort to boost job creation and economic growth.

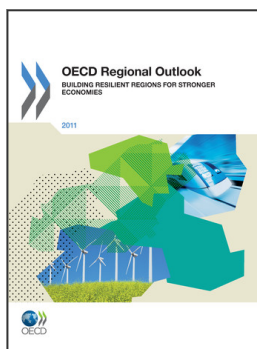
Today there is a growing demand for quality data on, and analysis of, regional policy and performance, as national and sub-national governments and organisations want to understand and map their strengths and assets. With severely strained budgets and ongoing austerity measures, sub-national governments have to be nimble and effective to adopt the very best practices whenever possible. To respond to these needs, this publication offers substantial analysis of regional trends, as well as a valuable discussion of regional policies and current governance responses around the world.

I remember not long ago we used to think about competitiveness in local, not global terms. As a former mayor, I know you were supposed to do everything you could to compete against the town or county next door. You’d cut taxes... you’d give away land... you’d even issue bonds to sweeten the pot... anything to get a factory or plant to relocate to your backyard. It was a zero-sum game – one that assumed there was only a finite number of jobs, and that the only way to win was to make your neighbour lose. That’s an outdated view of competition. When neighbour fights neighbour, we end up in a race to the bottom. Cities and states sacrifice long-term strength for short-term benefits. And over time, the very same competitive pressures that cause a manufacturer to relocate to a new town will cause it to relocate to another country – or go out of business altogether.

Our goal is to make our economies stronger, cleaner and fairer. In my travels, I have observed a great divide in economic, social and governmental development across regions. The purpose of this committee and the *OECD Regional Outlook* is to empower these disadvantaged regions by providing them with the very best statistical information and analysis we can offer – and then, let them make informed choices so that they too can tap into their competitive advantages.

We hope you find the *OECD Regional Outlook* to be a useful and valuable resource. We encourage readers to contact us with comments and suggestions on how to make the next edition even better.

John Fernandez  
OECD Territorial Development Policy Committee, Chair  
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