



OECD

OECD Regional Development Ministerial

**MEGATRENDS: BUILDING BETTER FUTURES  
FOR REGIONS, CITIES AND RURAL AREAS**



#OECDregions



## MEGATRENDS: BUILDING BETTER FUTURES FOR REGIONS, CITIES AND RURAL AREAS

Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Regional Development Policy Committee

Athens, Greece | 19-20 March 2019

Megaron Athens International Conference Centre

Governments across the OECD are seeking innovative solutions to seize opportunities and mitigate risks emerging from major transformations in economy and society, such as globalisation, digitalisation, the changing nature of work, inequality, demographic changes, urbanisation, resource scarcity and the transition to a low-carbon economy. While we cannot predict exactly where these trends will lead, we do know that the path taken will look markedly different across cities, regions and rural areas.

On the occasion of the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee's 20th anniversary, Ministers will gather in Athens, Greece on 19-20 March 2019 to discuss the geography of global megatrends, and how place-based policies and effective multi-level governance arrangements can help ensure that all places thrive in this shifting context. Key themes include:

### **Looking back, looking ahead**

*Ministers will take stock of the state of regional development policy over the past two decades and consider the need for adaptation in response to megatrends.*

### **Tired or wired? Regional policies in a digital and global economy**

*Ministers will review the policy frameworks to help places – both cities and rural areas – boost productivity and innovation in the context of digitalisation and technological change, and assess the need for adaptation.*

### **Including everyone, everywhere: managing demographic and social change**

*Ministers will discuss regional development policies in relation to demographic and social change, and how sectoral policies could integrate a place-based lens to better address inclusion and inequality issues.*

### **Smart spending: Investment in quality infrastructure**

*Ministers will explore how megatrends are affecting infrastructure needs and how to set and implement innovative governance arrangements and financing models to foster quality infrastructure investment at local and regional levels.*

### **Rethinking policies for sustainable development from the ground up**

*Ministers will discuss the role of national governments in mainstreaming sustainable development into local and regional policymaking, planning tools and investment strategies, and data and evidence gaps.*

# Draft Agenda

## Day 1 | 19 March 2019

8:00

Registration desk open

12:30-13:30

Opening Session: The geography of global megatrends

Globalisation, digitalisation, demographic change, climate change, resource scarcity, urbanisation: these global megatrends will continue to shape our societies and economies, transforming how people live and work in both urban and rural communities. While we cannot predict exactly where these trends will take us, we do know that their impact will be markedly different across places. Some regions and communities are fully seizing the opportunities these trends bring, while others are struggling to keep up, increasing divides and putting considerable stress on the economic and social fabric of our societies. This session will help to set the scene for the discussions over the next two days: how to design and implement public policies that take the geographic specificities of megatrends into account, manage the resulting trade-offs, and ensure that no place gets left behind. In addition the session will serve as the launch of the OECD's new Regional Outlook. The Regional Outlook unpacks the consequences of global megatrends for different types of places, and how to address geographic divides in the context of an uncertain future.

13:30-13:45

Family Photo

13:45-15:15

Lunch

15:15-17:00

Plenary 1: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

On the occasion of RDPC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this session will provide an opportunity to take stock of the state of regional development policy over the past two decades. It will also examine the OECD's role in shaping the narrative and how countries have translated lessons from OECD work on regional development and multi-level governance into concrete actions on the ground. Looking forward, it will consider how well the existing regional development policy paradigm responds to megatrends and the adaptations needed moving ahead.

- What have been the key successes – and shortcomings – of regional development policy over the past 20 years, and what are the key lessons to be drawn?
- How do current policies and governance frameworks need to be adapted to help communities prepare for megatrends and ensure that no place gets left behind?
- What further data, evidence and support do policymakers need to design and implement effective regional development policies going forward?

19:30

Dinner and visit at the Acropolis Museum

## Day 2 | 20 March 2019

9:00-10:30

**Plenary 2: Tired or wired? Regional policies in a digital and global economy**

Already globalisation has not benefitted all regions equally. From preparing for the “future of work” to leveraging to the new production possibilities presented by Industry 4.0, digitalisation and technological changes will continue to shape how places boost productivity and compete in the global economy. With the right policy frameworks in place, the digital transition can facilitate a swifter diffusion of innovation, support industrial transition, and promote participation in Global Value Chains, helping to close productivity gaps between leading and lagging regions. Many subnational governments are also directly seizing digital innovation to deliver more efficient, sustainable and inclusive public services through “smart city” and other initiatives in regions and rural areas. However, these benefits are not automatic, as many regions have yet not been able to take advantage of the technological transition to date.

- Is the existing regional development policy toolkit adequate to help all places – cities, rural areas and places with geographic specificities – boost productivity and innovation in the context of a digital and global economy?
- What opportunities and challenges will digitalisation and technological changes bring to urban, rural and regional economies and how can policymakers respond?
- How should the existing governance framework be adapted to respond to this new environment? How can stakeholders outside of the public sector and citizens be better engaged?

10:30-11:00

**Coffee break**

11:00-12:30

**Plenary 3: Including everyone, everywhere: Managing demographic and social change**

High levels of inequalities and in particular the lack of opportunities in many lagging regions are at the root of growing discontent, stirring social, economic and political tensions. And even within leading regions, many populations are left behind, as evidenced by the relatively high rates of inequalities in cities. Broad scale demographic and social changes such as ageing population, urbanisation/depopulation, and migration will have different impacts across communities, potentially amplifying existing divides or presenting new opportunities to address them. Better leveraging the untapped potential of the people and places currently left behind can both accelerate growth and open up new avenues for responding to megatrends and unexpected shocks. Crucial issues such as access to jobs, the quality of public services (education, health, etc.) and affordable housing cannot be effectively addressed without a place-based lens. These issues – and the impact of policies designed to address them – not only vary considerably across regions, cities, and rural areas, but also across neighbourhoods within those places.

- What impact will demographic and social change have on different types of communities, and how should regional development policies be adapted accordingly?
- How can other policies that matter for inclusion, outside of regional development portfolios, (e.g. health, education, housing, migration) integrate a place-based lens?
- How can regional policies help to reconcile potential trade-offs between social and economic objectives in the face of these megatrends?

12:30-14:00

**Lunch**

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<p><b>14:00-15:30</b></p>	<p><b>Breakout A: Smart spending: Investment in quality infrastructure</b></p>	<p><b>Breakout B: Rethinking policies for sustainable development from the ground up</b></p>
	<p>Global megatrends will place a strong demand on quality infrastructure investment in cities, regions and rural areas. The sheer scale of investment needed, combined with the policy momentum on the importance of quality infrastructure investment, is a signal for all levels of government to develop and deploy more innovative governance and financing tools to meet investment requirements. Better catalysing private investment is essential, but it is also critical to continue strengthening governance mechanisms for effective place-based investment, at all levels of government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How are megatrends affecting infrastructure needs and subnational finance systems?</li> <li>▪ Which innovative governance arrangements and financing models can foster quality infrastructure investment at the local and regional levels?</li> </ul> <p>How can better performing investment for regional development be fostered?</p>	<p>The success of implementing global agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement to advance the sustainability agenda will be determined largely at local and regional levels. From adapting infrastructure to greening the economy, ensuring that cities, regions and rural areas are on the right track towards meeting these goals will require that national and local actors work together to align priorities and ensure that the necessary resources and capacities are in place on the ground. Neither should the importance of engaging local communities in charting their own paths for their future be overlooked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How can sustainability be mainstreamed into local and regional policymaking, planning tools, and investment strategies?</li> <li>▪ How can multi-level governance arrangements support national, regional and local actors in working together to support the emergence of the circular economy? What is the role of regional policies in this area?</li> </ul> <p>What tools are needed to better assess progress at the subnational level? What data and evidence gaps are there and how can they be filled?</p>
<p><b>15:30-17:30</b></p>	<p><b>Closing session: The path forward</b></p>	
<p>In a first part of this closing session, Ministers will be invited to discuss the draft OECD Principles on Urban Policy and the draft OECD Principles on Rural Policy. These Principles consolidate OECD expertise in these policy areas, offering a valuable tool to ensure that both urban and rural areas are prepared for the changes brought by global megatrends. Both sets of Principles will contain common guidance on how to integrate urban and rural policy agendas into a coherent regional policy mix. At the end of the discussion, Ministers will be invited to welcome both sets of Principles.</p> <p>To help chart the path forward, Ministers will be invited to adopt the outcome document in the second part of the closing session. This document will consider the implications of their discussions on the future of regional development policies in their own countries and internationally.</p>		
<p><b>17:30</b></p>	<p><b>Closing press conference</b></p>	

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## Side Events

### Seventh OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers

9:00-12:00 | 19 March 2019

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, will see ministers and mayors exchange ideas, experiences and good practices from around the world on how to channel megatrends for more productive, sustainable and inclusive cities in a constantly changing world.

Established in 2007, the OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers is a unique global platform convening high-level representatives from both *national* and *local* governments to discuss pressing urban policy issues. It builds on a long established expertise in urban development and effective policy dialogue across levels of government at the OECD.

### Regional Development: The case of Greece

17:15-17:45 | 19 March 2019

This session will provide a policy highlight on the OECD's ongoing Territorial Review of Greece, which has a special focus on regional policy for Greece post-2020.

## More information

Visit the website: [www.oecd.org/regional/ministerial/](http://www.oecd.org/regional/ministerial/)

Contact: [RDPC.Ministerial@oecd.org](mailto:RDPC.Ministerial@oecd.org)

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