

Official Statement

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Chair of the Committee, Ministers, Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the OECD, I would like to offer its comments on sustainable urbanisation, especially regarding the role of national-level urban policies.

Cities are by nature complex and interconnected places, and national policy needs to reflect this. However, in many cases, national policies which affect urban development have been designed and delivered separately. Take the example of climate change and pollution reduction. Fossil fuel subsidies negotiated at the national level clearly undermine local efforts to develop environmentally sustainable cities. Cities also require national policy for a tailored, integrated place-based approach. The house price in the highest priced region can be more than double of the national average, as is the case in the Czech Republic (Prague at 224) and Finland (Helsinki area at 200).

This is why we need more effective national urban policies. National urban policies can provide a framework to enable governments and other stakeholders to “get cities right”, complementing local urban policies, and moving as one towards the same goals. They can align different sectoral policies and ensure all the policies that affect urban areas are coherent in support of cities.

The OECD is working hard and across many fronts to promote national urban policymaking. Together with UN Habitat and Cities Alliance, the OECD launched last year in Quito the National Urban Policy Programme to support governments at all levels.

We also work directly with individual countries – including Poland and Kazakhstan – to assess how sectoral policies at the national level affect cities.

Let us also underline that urban areas are socio-economic and environmental entities that go beyond historically defined administrative borders. This crucial fact deserves to be clearly recognised by national governments and reflected in national-level urban policies. Data collection at the right spatial scale is crucial for evidence to inform decision makers and monitor the performance of urban areas and urban policies. The OECD metropolitan database, developed together with the European Commission, provides internationally comparable data, based on a definition of cities based on economic function, including data on the various dimensions of well-being of citizens.

Finally, for sustainable urbanisation, we would like to suggest attention being paid to adequate investment and financing mechanisms for cities of all sizes in infrastructure investment. In this regard, the role of national governments is also crucial. The OECD has also developed *the Global Observatory on Local Finances* to assess the financial capacities of regions and cities, and to help governments address possible fiscal gaps.

Ladies and gentleman, we all know that well-planned urbanisation can bring great benefits. Cities concentrate economic activity, job creation and innovation, but they can also be hotspots for poverty, inequality, unemployment, infrastructural bottlenecks and high levels of pollution. We have to act now and work together to harness the benefits of urbanisation, while ensuring it is sustainable and inclusive. For this, we need effective national urban solutions.

Thank you very much for your attention.