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Introduction:

- For the past 60 years, **the OECD has enriched policy making and standard-setting across the world.** We have developed hundreds of best practice standards that are helping to level the global playing field, deepen international technical co-operation and implement shared policy objectives.
- Partner countries' adherences to OECD standards have **more than doubled over the past decade from 405 in 2012 to 867 today. Partners are also increasingly integrated in OECD bodies' work, reviews and indicators.** Enlarged co-operation between Members and partners in the areas of corporate governance, investment and fiscal affairs, for example, have resulted in the establishment of common solution to global challenges, most recently with the "two pillar solution" addressing the tax challenges linked to the digitalisation of the economy.

Global Relations Strategy:

- As they celebrated the 60th anniversary of the OECD's foundation in 2021, Members reaffirmed the Organisation's ambition to **remain an effective and inclusive global policy community and adopted the first OECD Global Relations Strategy.**
- The new Strategy creates an **overarching framework for stronger and more coherent global engagement with partner countries, regions and organisations, based on shared interests and mutual benefits.**
- It also provides the **basis for future co-operation with OECD accession candidate countries** (Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru, and Romania), **the OECD's five Key Partners** (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa) **and other selected partner economies through Regional and Country Programmes.**
- Importantly, the Strategy stresses the usefulness of **regional approaches** to facilitate the participation of countries as a group in selected OECD activities. These Programmes place emphasis on the progress made by some countries and encourage others to follow suit, thereby fostering regional co-operation and integration.

Engagement with South East Europe:

- The **OECD's engagement with South East Europe** was the **first of the five OECD Regional Programmes** to be established. It was founded in 2000 to promote peace, stability and prosperity in a region weakened by conflict.
- The SEE Regional Programme works with **policy makers, business leaders and civil society** to support the region's reform agenda, helping to foster **private sector development, attracting quality investment, creating new jobs and raising living standards** and feeding into their progress towards EU accession.

- The Programme has consistently helped countries to address emerging challenges, from the **global economic and financial crises in the 2010s to the COVID pandemic crisis that began in 2020**. It also helps governments to navigate the region's demanding **environmental and digital transition**.
- Some **key elements of this Programme** include:
 - The **OECD Competitiveness Outlook for South East Europe**, the broadest assessment of economic policy in the region to guide policy making.
 - The **OECD SME Policy Index for the Western Balkans and Turkey**, which supports SEE economies in unleashing SME growth by providing tailored policy advice.
 - Support on topics like **fostering integrity and tackling corruption** or on **labour migration and diaspora policies**.
- The Programme collaborates closely with experts from across the OECD and serves as a **way to apply OECD tools and standards to South East Europe**. Today, the SEE region is part of important OECD indexes and databases, such as the **FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index**, the **Services Trade Restrictiveness Index**, the **Digital STRI**, **CompStat** or the **STIP Compass**.
- These efforts build on the important work by **SIGMA**. We only know too well that **enhanced public governance and administration capacities** are key for designing and implementing structural reforms in a sustainable way. As such, SIGMA is a crucial partner for the economies of South East Europe.

Conclusion:

- In the face of global challenges such as climate change, digitalisation, and the recovery from COVID-19, the **OECD's Global Relations have an important contribution to make to the Organisation's mission of "Better policies for better lives" through stronger, cleaner and fairer economic growth** in Member and partner economies alike.
- Engagement with partner countries, regions and organisations remains **essential to making the OECD's standards and policy recommendations count on a global scale, fostering economic growth and well-being, and levelling the global playing field**.