Metropolitan areas in the OECD

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Abstract

The OECD, in collaboration with the European Commission, has developed a new methodology for defining urban areas, as functional economic places, in a consistent way across countries. Using population density and travel-to-work flows as key information, urban areas can be characterised by densely inhabited “urban cores” and “hinterlands” whose labour market is highly integrated with the cores. The OECD (2012) publication Redefining “Urban”: A New Way to Measure Metropolitan Areas presents the methodology which integrates geographic information sources (GIS) with administrative and survey sources. It is applied to 29 OECD countries, where a total of 1,177 functional urban areas have been identified (with population greater than 50,000).

Based on this methodology, the OECD has developed a Metropolitan areas database which includes a set of innovation and population variables as well as economic, labour and environmental estimates on the 268 metro areas with a population of 500,000 or more. The database is publicly available on the OECD Statistical Portal. In addition, it can be explored through interactive maps and histograms through the Metropolitan eXplorer. The Metropolitan eXplorer also offers a summary profile of each metropolitan area, including its share over the national value, as well as its ranking among the 268 metropolitan areas.