



*The OECD Factbook:  
Economic, Social and  
Environmental Statistics*

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## **The OECD Factbook:**

**A project, not a book.**

**Origin: The OECD World Forum on Key Indicators “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” held in Palermo, Italy (November 2004) ([www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum](http://www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum))**



## How is knowledge developed and used for decision making by:

- Citizens
- Businesses
- Policy makers



## Citizens (1)

- Recent NBER paper by Blinder and Krueger (September 2004). Main findings for the US case:

“Taken as a whole, our survey results hold little good news for those of us engaged in economic education and/or economic policy – or for economic theorists who use *homo economicus* as the backbone of their models of political economy”



## Citizens (2)

- “As a broad generalisation ... ideology seems to play a stronger role in shaping opinion on economic policy issues than either self-interest or knowledge, although specific (as opposed to general) knowledge does influence opinion on a number of matters”
- “The contrast with *homo economicus*, who is well-informed, non-ideological and extremely self-interested, could hardly be more stark”.



## Citizens (3)

- “Instead our findings seem more consistent with an idea expressed in the political science literature: that people often use ideology as a short-cut heuristic for deciding what position to take, when properly informing oneself is difficult”
- ‘In conclusion there is room for hope that greater knowledge will improve decision making, even though it appears from our survey that efforts in this direction have shown less than impressive results to date’.



## Businesses

- Too high importance attached to the latest figures (influenced by finance): loss of historical perspective
- Competitiveness indicator produced by an “authoritative” international source: Italy is worse than Botswana. Is this information reliable and useful for making decisions about future investment plans?



# Policy makers

- Decision on the participation in the Euro Area
- Greek statistics on public debt and deficit
- Recent declaration from the Prime Minister of a G7 country:
  - “I read some statistics which show the bad performances of our schooling system. I do not know if they are true or not and I do not care. However, I decided to address this important issue”



## **Strong demand for high quality statistical information about the situation and the performance of countries /regions/ communities**

- A lot of information is available
- Very heterogeneous quality
- Users are not fully able to distinguish between good and bad quality information
- Need to go beyond the measurement of economic performances (GDP)
- Participation of the civil society in defining society's goals



## Three main approaches:

- *Integrated economic/environmental and social accounts*
  - OECD Workshop (2003)
- *Composite indicators*
  - OECD-JRC Handbook on methodological issues (2005)
- *Key Indicators*
  - OECD World Forum (2004) and follow-up (2005-2007)
  - OECD Factbook (2005)

# The OECD World Forum

- 150 speakers/chairs/discussants
- 540 delegates from 43 countries
- 7 Plenary sessions, 16 parallel sessions, 2 visionary speeches, 2 keynote speeches, wrap-up session
- Secretary-General of the OECD, President of the ECB, General Comptroller of the United States, Ministers, etc.
- Thousands of people followed the conference via web-casting



# OECD Factbook (1)

- The Factbook presents, in an integrated way, a carefully selected range of statistics covering 10 broad thematic areas:
  - Population and migration,
  - Macroeconomic trends,
  - Economic globalisation,
  - Prices,
  - Labour market,
  - Science and technology,
  - Environment,
  - Education,
  - Public policies,
  - Quality of life.
- Special chapter on energy

## OECD Factbook (2)

- Each theme is covered by tables and graphs illustrating in a user-friendly manner trends over the past 10 years and the relative ranking of each of the 30 OECD countries.
- Alongside them, text will give definitions of the indicators used and comment on the extent of comparability of data from different national sources, thus enabling users to evaluate for themselves the relevance and value of specific data.
- Finally, the OECD Factbook guides readers to other OECD statistical and analytic publications which can assist them in their research and understanding.



## Different media (1)

- The online version of the Factbook is available for free at [www.oecd.org/publications/factbook](http://www.oecd.org/publications/factbook)
- Data contained in the Factbook are also used to prepare individual Country Statistical Profiles that will be made available in the new “country pages” of the OECD Web site. The Factbook provides tables and charts organised by topic. The Country Statistical Profiles will present the same information by country.

## Different media (2)

- During 2005 Country Statistical Profiles will be enriched with more detailed economic data at quarterly and monthly frequency, using tailored charts and tables.
- In 2005 the OECD will also launch a new service to provide **Key OECD Statistics on Mobile devices**. It will provide people using mobile phones and other wireless devices with a selected set of tables from the Factbook and MEI with monthly updates.
- This free service will also highlight the release of new statistical data and other OECD statistical products.



**Let's take a look**

[www.oecd.org/publications/factbook](http://www.oecd.org/publications/factbook)

*Thank you for your attention.*

For more information:

<http://www.sourceoecd.org/factbook>

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