



Decision-Recommendation of the  
Council concerning Chemical  
Accident Prevention,  
Preparedness and Response



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## Background Information

The Decision-Recommendation concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response was adopted by the OECD Council meeting at Ministerial level on 8 June 2023 on the proposal of the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee (CBC). The Decision-Recommendation sets out key elements to support the development of a chemical accidents programme covering the fields of prevention, preparedness, and response. It aims at helping public authorities in Members and non-Members having adhered (“Adherents”) to respond to the continued occurrence of chemical accidents with loss of life, injuries and damage to property and the environment.

### ***OECD’s work on chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response***

Chemical accidents with serious consequences continue to happen in OECD Members and worldwide. Over the past decades, successive major accidents have caused deaths, injuries, significant environmental pollution and massive economic losses. While high-profile accidents raise concerns, there are even more accidents occurring each year that do not make international headlines but still cause severe harm to workers, communities, municipalities, businesses and the environment.

The OECD started working on the challenges raised by chemical accidents as early as 1987 and has ever since developed key standards and tools to support industry and public authorities in preventing chemical accidents and, recognising that accidents may nonetheless occur, to mitigate adverse effects through effective emergency preparedness and accident response. Over time, the Council has adopted a set of standards and tools to address those challenges:

- In 1988, the Council adopted: the Decision-Recommendation concerning Provision of Information to the Public and Public Participation in the Decision making Processes related to the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Accidents Involving Hazardous Substances [[OECD/LEGAL/0239](#)]; and the Decision on the Exchange of Information concerning Accidents Capable of Causing Transfrontier Damage [[OECD/LEGAL/0240](#)].
- Between 1989 and 1992, the OECD Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response (“Guiding Principles”) were developed by the Working Party on Chemical Accidents (WPCA) based on a series of workshops addressing the wide range of issues associated with accident prevention, preparedness and response, and considering the roles and responsibilities of the various parties who are necessarily involved in such activities.
- The Guiding Principles were embodied in 1992 in the Recommendation concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/0264](#)].
- Between 1992 and 2002, a second edition of the Guiding Principles was developed as well as the companion document “OECD Guidance on Safety Performance Indicators” aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Guiding Principles, and to help stakeholders assess whether actions taken to enhance chemical safety in fact lead to improvements over time.
- On that basis, in 2004, the Council adopted the Recommendation concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/0319](#)], replacing the 1992 Recommendation.

As part of the OECD-wide Standard-Setting Review launched in 2016, it was agreed that these three legal instruments could be compiled into one consolidated legal instrument to bring more coherence and update their content for taking into account the developments in the OECD, including the update of the Guiding Principles, and in other international organisations since their adoption. It was also agreed that some of the provisions that are recommendations could be considered with a view to upgrading them to decisions. The Decision-Recommendation adopted in 2023 is the result of this consolidation and update exercise.

### ***Process for developing the Decision-Recommendation***

Substantive work to revise and consolidate the three above-mentioned legal instruments started in early 2021. Under the supervision of the WPCA, an informal steering group of experts was set up to support the development of the Decision-Recommendation. This steering group met on a regular basis (about every 8 weeks) over three years to update the three original legal instruments and compiled them into a consolidated Decision-Recommendation, include the comments and address the concerns of the WPCA.

Several drafts of the Decision-Recommendation were circulated to the WPCA for comments, and the CBC was informed about progress on its development. On 29 March 2023, the WPCA agreed to transmit the final draft to the CBC. The CBC approved the draft Decision-Recommendation by written procedure on 21 April 2023 and agreed to its transmission to Council for adoption at its meeting at Ministerial level (MCM) held on 7-8 June 2023. At the time of adoption, Canada and Germany made respective statements in relation to the Decision-Recommendation.

The development of the draft Decision-Recommendation has been done in parallel with the revision of the Guiding Principles, which are expressly referenced in the Decision-Recommendation, as it is important to ensure full consistency and harmonisation between these two documents.

### ***Scope of the Decision-Recommendation***

The Decision-Recommendation includes all the key elements to establish, maintain or strengthen programmes for the prevention, preparedness, and response to chemical accidents, which were initially spread out across three legal instruments, to provide a comprehensive legal instrument thus facilitating its implementation and dissemination. The main key elements are as follows:

- The Decision-Recommendation covers a range of critical issues such as the identification of hazardous installations, the development of safety objectives and a control framework, enforcement, land-use planning and siting of hazardous installations, investigation of accidents and the development of lessons learnt, communication with the public and the case of transboundary accidents.
- It refers to and is based on the work done by the OECD Chemical Accidents Programme since the adoption of the original legal instruments, in particular its key guidance documents. The development of this Decision-Recommendation has been informed by the parallel revision of the Guiding Principles.
- It also takes into account, and is consistent with, other international standards relevant to chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response. These include standards developed by the European Union (e.g. the “Seveso III” Directive), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (in particular the The Programme on Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies on a Local Level “APELL” and the Flexible Framework Initiative), the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
- It also aims at contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 3: Good Health and Well Being; Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities; Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; Goal 13: Climate Action and Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.

### ***Applicability of the Decision-Recommendation***

The preamble of Decision-Recommendation recognises that “Adherents have different legal and institutional frameworks through which they will implement [it] and in particular determine to which installations, hazardous substances and quantities it applies with regard to chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response”. Accordingly, the Decision-Recommendation does not specify the type of installations, or specific hazardous substances or their quantities, to which it applies. Thus, each Adherent will have to determine to which installations, hazardous substances, and quantities the Decision-Recommendation applies domestically with regard to chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response, as well as the mechanisms by which the control framework shall be applied.

Historically, the OECD programme on chemical accidents has limited its scope to the risk of chemical accidents at fixed installations. In line with this, the Decision-Recommendation applies to fixed installations at which hazardous substances are produced, processed, handled, stored, used or disposed of in such a form and quantity that there might be a risk of occurrence of a chemical accident (called “hazardous installations” in the Decision-Recommendation). This also includes pipelines as well as transport interfaces such as marshalling yards and port areas. The Decision-Recommendation does not address the transport of hazardous substances by road, rail, air, sea or inland waterways, and does not cover military facilities. Accidents involving the release of radioactive materials and release of biological materials are not addressed by the Decision-Recommendation; however, it does address accidents involving chemicals that have been produced at nuclear facilities, and chemicals produced by biological processes.

The preamble also recognises that “in accordance with those different legal and institutional frameworks, the responsibility for the prevention, preparedness and response to chemical accidents may be shared at different levels of government and public institutions and that accordingly this Decision-Recommendation is relevant at all such levels and institutions”. This provision helps clarify that the authorities responsible for the implementation of the various provisions of the Decision-Recommendation (whether binding or non-binding) will be determined by the Adherents’ domestic frameworks.

#### *The Decision-Recommendation is composed of four sections*

The first section “Programmes for the prevention of, preparedness for and response to chemical accidents” is based on the 2004 Recommendation concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response. Some of the provisions that were originally ‘recommendations’ are here updated into ‘decisions’. These provisions relate to the key elements that should be included as part of a programme for the prevention, preparedness and response to chemical accidents, such as: the development of overall safety objectives; the development and implementation of a control framework; the establishment of arrangements for monitoring safety of hazardous installations; the establishment of land-use planning arrangements; and the investigation of chemical accidents. Also a set of new recommendations has been added regarding the main elements that should be included as part of a control framework.

The second section “Access and provision of information to the public” is based on the 1988 Decision-Recommendation concerning Provision of Information to the Public and Public Participation in the Decision-making Processes related to the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Accidents Involving Hazardous Substances. The content of the Appendix of the original Decision-Recommendation providing “Guiding Principles on Provision of Information to the Public and Public Participation in Decision-Making Processes related to the Prevention of, and response to, Accidents Involving Hazardous Substances” has been updated and moved to the 3rd Edition of the Guiding Principles on Chemical Accidents Prevention, Preparedness and Response that was approved for publication by the CBC on 26 May 2023.

The third section “Chemicals accidents capable of causing trans-frontier damage” is based on the 1988 Decision on the Exchange of Information concerning Accidents Capable of Causing Transfrontier Damage. A new provision replaces the one referring to the Appendix III of the original Decision that linked the instrument to a fixed list of substances. The provision was redesigned to take account of the issues arising from having such a fixed list. It refers to the use of appropriate criteria for the identification of hazardous installations in accordance with applicable international agreements; or define, in the absence of applicable agreements, appropriate criteria for the identification of hazardous installations as far as possible in agreement with the potentially affected jurisdiction, and taking account of relevant OECD guidance. A set of new provisions has also been added that summarise the key points from Appendix I (provisions relating to the exchange of information) of the 1988 Decision. The rest of the Appendix I text has been moved to the 3rd Edition of the Guiding Principles, as well as the text from Appendix II (definitions).

The fourth section “Cooperation and technical assistance” comes from the third provision of the 2004 Recommendation concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response and highlights the need to work with industry for ensuring a responsible transfer of substances and technology.

The Decision-Recommendation contains also a set of definitions fully aligned with those used in the [3rd Edition of the Guiding Principles](#).

### **Next steps**

The CbC, through the WPCA, will support Adherents in disseminating and implementing the Decision-Recommendation, through the following modalities:

- self-assessment tools, which can include questionnaires, checklists, or practical descriptions of the policies and practices;
- collections of good-practices, which provide Adherents with information on what other Adherents have been doing to implement the legal instrument, what has worked and what has not, and other useful information on lessons learned.

The CbC will report to Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the Decision-Recommendation in 2028.

For further information please consult: <https://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/chemical-accidents/>.  
Contact information: [ehs.contact@oecd.org](mailto:ehs.contact@oecd.org).

## **Implementation**

### ***OECD Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response***

The OECD Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response (the “Guiding Principles”) have been updated in a third edition in 2023 (*forthcoming*) to support the implementation of the Decision-Recommendation. The document aims to be a reference for public authorities, industry and other stakeholders to ensure a strong chemical accidents programme that takes into account the latest good practices and advances in the field of prevention, preparedness and response.

The Guiding Principles also serve as a reminder of the key elements of process safety as accidents often happen with similar causes and could have been prevented “just” with basic process safety in place. This publication seeks to address the wide range of measures necessary to ensure effective chemical safety, in particular to:

- Minimise the likelihood that an accident will occur (prevention);
- Mitigate consequences of accidents through emergency planning, land use planning and risk communication (preparedness/mitigation);
- Limit the adverse consequences to health, the environment and property in the event of an accident (response);
- Learn from the experiences of accidents (follow-up) in order to reduce future accidents.

**THE COUNCIL,**

**HAVING REGARD** to Article 5 a) and 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

**HAVING REGARD** to the Decision of the Council on the Exchange of Information concerning Accidents Capable of Causing Transfrontier Damage [[OECD/LEGAL/0240](#)], the Decision-Recommendation of the Council concerning Provision of Information to the Public and Public Participation in Decision-Making Processes related to the Prevention of, and Response to, Accidents Involving Hazardous Substances [[OECD/LEGAL/0239](#)] and the Recommendation of the Council concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/0319](#)], which this Decision-Recommendation replaces;

**HAVING REGARD** to the standard developed by the OECD in the area of accidental pollution and the governance of critical risks;

**HAVING REGARD** to the work, including standards, developed by international organisations and fora on the transport of dangerous goods, in particular the United Nations Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods;

**CONSIDERING** the concerted work done since the conclusions adopted by the Third High-Level Meeting of the Chemicals Group on 18 March 1987 regarding the prevention of, and response to, unintended releases of hazardous substances to the environment; and the Concluding Statement of the OECD Conference on Accidents Involving Hazardous Substances of 10 February 1988 in which Ministers and other high-level officials called on the OECD to elaborate a Code of Good Practice relating to accident prevention and response and guiding principles for investments and aid programmes with respect to hazardous installations in developing countries [Environment Monograph No. 24, page 12];

**CONSIDERING** the continued occurrence of significant chemical accidents with loss of life, injuries and damage to property and the environment and the further efforts required for their prevention, preparedness and response;

**CONSIDERING** the co-operation and efforts at an international level including those between intergovernmental organisations to share experience and further the effort toward prevention, preparedness and response throughout the world, in particular the co-operation work through the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC);

**CONSIDERING** the importance of a standardised system of classification and labelling of hazardous substances and the role of the United Nations Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS);

**CONSIDERING** that the prevention of chemical accidents requires the implementation of good practices with regard to the construction and operation of hazardous installations, the adoption of safety management systems to ensure a process of continual improvement, and inspection by public authorities to provide oversight and enforcement where necessary;

**CONSIDERING** that evidence from past major chemical accidents has shown that a lack of effective land-use planning may have a considerable impact on the local community, and that continued effort to regulate and control the siting of hazardous installations at appropriate distances from vulnerable buildings and locations can contribute to minimise this impact;

**RECOGNISING** that Members and non-Members having adhered to this Decision-Recommendation (hereafter the "Adherents") have different legal and institutional frameworks through which they will implement this Decision-Recommendation and in particular determine to which installations, hazardous substances and quantities it applies with regard to chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response;

**CONSIDERING** as well that, in accordance with those different legal and institutional frameworks, the responsibility for the prevention, preparedness and response to chemical accidents may be shared at different levels of government and public institutions and that accordingly this Decision-Recommendation is relevant at all such levels and institutions;

**CONSIDERING** that the Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response (hereafter the “Guiding Principles”) provides guidance for industry, public authorities, the public and other stakeholders, and may be modified as appropriate by the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee.

**On the proposal of the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee:**

I. **AGREES** that, for the purpose of the present Decision-Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

- **Chemical accident** refers to any unintentional event, such as a release, fire or explosion at a hazardous installation, involving hazardous substances, that has the potential to cause harm to human health, the environment or property. This also covers chemical accidents triggered by the effects of natural hazards.
- **Hazard** refers to an inherent property of a substance, agent, source of energy or situation having the potential of causing undesirable consequences.
- **Hazardous installation** refers to a fixed installation at which hazardous substances are produced, processed, handled, stored, used or disposed of in such a form and quantity that there might be a risk of occurrence of a chemical accident. This also covers pipelines and transport interfaces such as marshalling yards and port areas, with the exclusion of military installations and the hazard arising from ionising radiation at nuclear installations.
- **Hazardous substance** refers to an element, compound, or mixture which, by virtue of its chemical, physical or toxicological properties, has the potential to cause harm to human health, environment or property.
- **Operator** refers to the legal or natural person who under applicable law is in charge of the installation and is responsible for its proper operation. The concept of operator is defined in the law applicable in the country of the installation, in which attention may be given to criteria such as ownership of certain hazardous substances or possession of a license or permit.
- **Programmes** refers to any legislation, policy, regulation and implementation mechanisms for the prevention of, preparedness for, and response to chemical accidents.
- **Transboundary damage** refers to any serious damage to human health, the environment or property, suffered by an affected jurisdiction in the event of a chemical accident originating in a different jurisdiction.

**Programmes for the prevention of, preparedness for  
and response to chemical accidents**

II. **DECIDES** that Adherents establish, maintain or strengthen programmes for the prevention of, preparedness for, and response to chemical accidents, taking into account the Guiding Principles and other relevant OECD guidance. To this effect:

1. Adherents shall:
  - a) develop overall safety objectives related to the prevention of, preparedness for, and response to chemical accidents;



- b) develop and implement control frameworks covering all aspects of chemical accident prevention, emergency preparedness and mitigation of accidents, emergency response, and follow-up to accidents such as investigation, clean-up and recovery, recognising appropriate roles of all stakeholders including industry, labour and the public;
- c) establish arrangements for monitoring safety of hazardous installations and for enforcing any requirements related to the control framework;
- d) arrange for the development and implementation of compatible off-site and on-site emergency preparedness plans for hazardous installations;
- e) establish arrangements for land-use planning in order to mitigate possible off-site effects of a chemical accident, recognising also the need to take into account the possibility of chemical accidents that are capable of causing transboundary damage. This shall cover:
  - siting of new hazardous installations;
  - modification of existing hazardous installations;
  - inappropriate developments near existing hazardous installations.
- f) ensure that chemical accidents with significant consequences or with potential for learning lessons are investigated with regard to their causes, recommendations made, and measures adopted to prevent their recurrence.
- g) report these accidents, together with lessons learnt, to the relevant bodies as defined in the programme.

2. Adherents should:

- a) develop control frameworks which:
  - have a defined scope so that the activities to be regulated and that the hazardous substances and hazardous properties of those substances may be clearly identified (in line with GHS), and consider the need for qualifying quantities;
  - require the operator of an activity covered by the scope to notify the public authorities with regard to the activity and the hazardous substances involved and to provide sufficient information so that the public authorities may establish appropriate monitoring activities;
  - identify systematically the hazards posed by the activities and hazardous substances, assess and document the risks, and require that the operator of the activity adopt appropriate measures to manage those risks at an acceptable level;
  - take into account the potential impacts of malicious acts in the hazard identification and risk assessment process, considering that malicious acts can lead to chemical accidents;
  - determine whether a chemical accident may be capable of causing transboundary damage;
  - require the operator to provide the public authorities (including of relevant transboundary jurisdictions) with sufficient, appropriate information to carry out land-use planning activities.
- b) make appropriate use of safety performance indicators to assess the performance related to the prevention of, preparedness for, and response to chemical accidents;
- c) encourage and/or facilitate processes in which all stakeholders, including industry, public authorities, and the public can take action and help ensure effective communication and co-operation;
- d) share information and experience on accident case histories at the regional, national, and international levels, including by reporting past accidents to the Major Accident Reporting System

of the European Commission (eMARS) scheme, with a view of encouraging the development of lessons learnt and the prevention of future accidents;

- e) support and promote related research, including co-operative international activities.

#### **Access to and provision of information to the public**

### **III. DECIDES** that Adherents shall:

1. Ensure, through the legal and procedural means they deem appropriate, that the potentially affected public:

- a) is provided with specific information on the appropriate behaviour and safety measures they should adopt in the event of a chemical accident;
- b) is provided with general information on the nature, extent and potential off-site effects on human health or the environment, including property, of possible chemical accidents at a planned or existing hazardous installation;
- c) has access to such other available information needed to understand the nature of the possible effects of an accident (such as information on hazardous substances capable of causing serious off-site damage) and to be able to contribute effectively to decisions concerning hazardous installations and the development of community emergency preparedness plans.

2. Take measures, through the legal and procedural means they deem appropriate, so that, where a potential chemical accident at a hazardous installation may cause transboundary damage, appropriate information is made available to the public authorities of the potentially affected jurisdiction, so that the potentially affected public is informed, as far as possible, to the same degree as in the jurisdiction in which the hazardous installation is located.

**IV. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents take measures to facilitate, as appropriate, opportunities for the public, in all potentially affected jurisdictions, to comment prior to decisions being made by public authorities concerning siting prior to construction and start-up of hazardous installations and the development of community emergency preparedness plans.

#### **Chemicals accidents capable of causing transboundary damage**

**V. DECIDES** that, for considering where chemical accidents are capable of causing transboundary damage, Adherents shall:

1. Use appropriate criteria for the identification of hazardous installations in accordance with applicable international agreements; or

2. Define, in the absence of applicable agreements, appropriate criteria for the identification of hazardous installations as far as possible in agreement with the potentially affected jurisdiction, and taking account of relevant international standards.

**VI. DECIDES** that Adherents shall exchange information relating to chemical accidents capable of causing transboundary damage on a reciprocal basis, subject to the limitations of their domestic law concerning the protection of confidential information, including both proprietary data and information protected for reasons of national security. To that effect:

1. Adherents shall:

- a) provide relevant information to the public authorities of the potentially affected transboundary jurisdiction, in case where a hazardous installation located or planned on their territory and a chemical accident is capable of causing transboundary damage;
  - b) establish mechanisms to consult and exchange of opinions on new hazardous installation;
  - c) transmit an emergency warning to exposed jurisdiction by the mechanisms and procedures previously agreed, in the event of an accident or imminent threat of an accident capable of causing transboundary damage;
  - d) communicate appropriate information relating to the accident or imminent threat of an accident to the authorities responsible for receiving emergency warnings in the exposed jurisdiction, in the absence of an agreed system for transmitting information relating to an accident.
2. Adherents should:
- a) conclude arrangements or agreements aimed at specifying procedures for exchanging information relating to chemical accidents capable of causing transboundary damage;
  - b) establish mechanisms by which consultation and an exchange of opinions on the planned hazardous installations may take place, where a new hazardous installation is planned.

### Co-operation and technical assistance

**VII. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents co-operate within Adherents and non-Adherents and, with regard to developing countries, support the transfer of technology and provide bilateral technical assistance, in line with the relevant parts of the Guiding Principles and other relevant guidance. To that effect, Adherents should work with industry to ensure a responsible transfer of substances and technology, in particular to:

1. Promote the safe management of the produced substances throughout their life cycle, including handling and use by downstream users;
2. Determine whether their customers can safely handle the substances (including, as appropriate, processing, use and disposal of the substances) before completing the sale of hazardous substances;
3. Ensure that in transferring technology, the technology will be applied in a way which will result in a level of safety equivalent to that achieved in the technology supplier's own installations using that technology, and that it can be operated to an acceptable level of safety, recognising that certain safety technology may not be appropriate in all locations;
4. Ensure that where transfer of substances and technology involves investment, that relevant corporate policies and guidelines for accident prevention, preparedness and response are applied; and ensure that when an enterprise acquiring an existing installation concludes, following an assessment, that the installation does not meet the standards of the enterprise or internationally accepted safety levels, the installation should be brought up to such safety levels within a reasonable period of time. Where retrofitting cannot be accomplished to meet these levels, the investing enterprise should, in a timely manner, inform the public authorities, employees, and employee representatives of the situation and their intended plans.

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**VIII. ENCOURAGES** other international organisations to disseminate and support the implementation of this Decision-Recommendation as well as to use and promote the Guiding Principles.

**IX. INVITES** the Secretary-General to disseminate this Decision-Recommendation, the Guiding Principles and other relevant OECD guidance.

**X. INVITES** Adherents to disseminate this Decision-Recommendation and promote the use and dissemination of the Guiding Principles, Guidance on change of ownership in hazardous installations, Corporate governance for process safety: Guidance for senior leaders in high hazard industries, and other OECD guidance in the area of chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response to non-Adherents and other relevant stakeholders.

**XI. INVITES** non-Adherents to take account of and adhere to this Decision-Recommendation, subject to a review by the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee through its Working Party on Chemical Accidents.

**XII. INSTRUCTS** the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee, through its Working Party on Chemical Accidents, to:

- a) serve as forum to exchange information on chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response including to share experience on the implementation of this Decision-Recommendation;
- b) continue developing, updating and supporting the use of the Guiding Principles and other OECD guidance related to chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response; and
- c) report to Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of this Decision-Recommendation no later than five years following its adoption and at least every ten years thereafter.

## About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD Member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union takes part in the work of the OECD.

## OECD Legal Instruments

Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, more than 500 legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **Decisions** are adopted by Council and are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. They set out specific rights and obligations and may contain monitoring mechanisms.
- **Recommendations** are adopted by Council and are not legally binding. They represent a political commitment to the principles they contain and entail an expectation that Adherents will do their best to implement them.
- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
- **International Agreements** are negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangements, Understandings and Others:** several other types of substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.