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Poland and the OECD: making Poland's voice heard

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Nobody questions that the world needs adequate governance structures and policies, i.e. shared principles, agreed rules and common institutions. Without them productive competition becomes destructive rivalry, cooperation takes place too rarely and global public goods remain underprovided. Still, the awareness of this generally recognized challenge does not translate into widely held convictions that the world has a proper governance setup which supports the sustainable development of people and nation states. The establishment of optimal governance structures and policies is the responsibility of world leaders. However, the way the institutions and organizations involved in the governance process operate depends on individual states. The latter are called to influence the functioning of all existing institutions by contributing ideas, people and resources and by maximizing their membership benefits. In other words, the quality of membership matters.

The OECD and our common future

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is one of the institutions that support the smooth functioning of global economy mainly by creating global standards and by assisting in the process of enforcing them. Founded during the Cold War period, the OECD has been renewing its mandate and broadening its

membership to countries that share its values and are ready and willing to take the responsibility for our common future.

In 1996, when Poland became a member of the OECD, the membership was considered a ticket to a group of countries which, at that time, embodied development standards to which our country aspired. 20 years since the acquisition of the OECD membership, Poland has substantially narrowed the development distance toward the remaining OECD members, and has built significant domestic assets. Today, Poland is ready to play an even more active role in the OECD in view of taking a fuller advantage of the OECD's policy ideas, implementation mechanisms and governance standards.

It seems, therefore, necessary to continue working on the quality of membership starting from an increased and more intensive use of the OECD-generated knowledge and expertise. In a period of growing complexity of economic and social matters, no single centre of power is able to generate optimal responses to national, regional and local challenges. This is why more and more people should be involved in creating policy ideas, discussing their relative virtues and loyally implementing agreed solutions in order to achieve positive aggregate results. Policy leadership is not in opposition to wider participation in the discussion of ideas, solutions and desired results. Quite the contrary, policy leadership may create conditions conducive to broader and more inclusive participation in that process.

Smart learning

Learning from others is the most cost efficient way of improving one's performance. However, learning does not mean copying or blind imitation. Learning is a smart discovery of what is a universal mechanism to take advantage of and what is a contextual factor that might be important for the effectiveness of that mechanism, but cannot be transferred to other circumstances. In other words, learning needs to assume that 'not everything equals everything else', that one needs to adapt general mechanisms to local contexts.

Certainly, Poland can still improve its public policies by means of smart learning from other OECD member states. This smart learning should go beyond the level of central government to local policy-makers since their policy entrepreneurship and public policy culture

are decisive for the general performance of the country. The OECD's archives of good policies and best practice are open and ready to be used in Polish smaller towns and villages.

The case for making Poland's voice heard

Poland is also increasingly ready to support the OECD in generating new and productive policy ideas. Every year, hundreds of Poland's delegates participate in the work of various OECD bodies. Certainly, they contribute to improved work results even if their contribution is not always identified as our national, Polish input. Therefore, we need to make Poland's contribution to the OECD-led debate more visible by focusing on these policy areas where our country has good achievements and results that have made us stand out. We need to let our policy experts and strong academic centres have their voice heard on the OECD forum. Should such efforts become focused on a well-defined policy field, Poland will get international recognition of its contribution to the sustainable socio-economic development of the world.

Emulating the best practice and averting conflicts

The world can peacefully accommodate a growing population and conflicting aspirations of nations only when we become individually and collectively more productive. Innovation and new technologies have properties of pure public goods. By generating and sharing them we diminish the potential for disruptive conflicts. The OECD is a platform of cooperation and dialogue that contributes to the emulation of productive solutions to local, national and global policy problems and challenges. Poland can both keep benefiting from its OECD membership and increasingly contribute to the OECD with its ideas, solutions and people. The ties are strong and the relationship is mutually reinforcing.