



# Responsible Business Conduct: OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises



# The OECD Guidelines: Recommendations of 48 Governments to Multinational Enterprises

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are recommendations jointly addressed by the 35 OECD member states and 13 adhering countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Morocco, Peru, Romania, Tunisia and Ukraine). They provide a framework of principles and standards of responsible business conduct (Corporate Social Responsibility).

The application of the Guidelines is voluntary – however: all adhering countries are committed to set up a National Contact Point (NCP), where alleged breaches of the OECD Guidelines may be reported. The NCP has thereupon the possibility to initiate an informal conciliation proceeding.

## The Substance: a Framework for Responsible Conduct

### Concepts and Principles

The Guidelines are joint recommendations by governments to multinational enterprises. They provide principles and standards for responsible business conduct, which might go beyond applicable law. Yet the Guidelines are not legally binding.

### General Policies

Enterprises take fully into account established policies in the countries, in which they operate, and consider the views of other stakeholders. Furthermore, enterprises contribute to economic, social and environmental progress with a view to achieving sustainable development. They encourage their business partners to also apply the OECD Guidelines.

### Disclosure

Enterprises ensure that timely, regular, reliable and relevant information is disclosed regarding their activities, structure, financial situation and performance.

### Employment and Industrial Relations

Enterprises adhere to the internationally accepted labour standards:

- Freedom of association and negotiation / union rights
- Abolition of forced and child labour
- Elimination of discrimination at the work place



## **Environment**

Enterprises establish and maintain an effective internal environmental management, are oriented at the precautionary principle and maintain a contingency plan for preventing, mitigating and controlling serious environmental damage. They continually seek to improve corporate environmental performance.

## **Combating Bribery**

Enterprises do not, directly or indirectly, offer, promise, give, or demand a bribe and reject respective demands. They enhance the transparency of their activities in the fight against bribery.

## **Consumer Interests**

When dealing with consumers, enterprises act in accordance with fair business, marketing and advertising practices and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and quality of the goods and services they provide. This includes accurate information about the products as well as the protection of personal data.

## **Science and Technology**

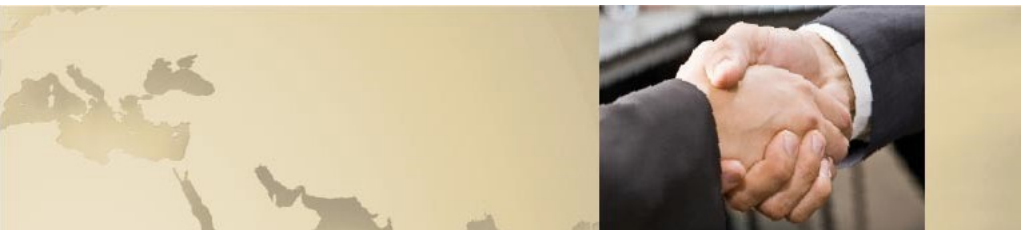
Enterprises let the countries in which they operate participate to their science and technology development – as appropriate for economic reasons and reasons of competitiveness or protection of the intellectual property. They develop ties with local universities and public research institutions and hence favor the science and technology transfer.

## **Competition**

Enterprises conduct their activities consistent with the principles of fair competition and fully cooperate with the competition authorities.

## **Taxation**

Enterprises ensure that their activities comply with the letter and spirit of tax laws and regulations. They contribute to the public finances of host countries by making timely payment of their tax liabilities.



## **The National Contact Point of Switzerland: Facilitator with Respect to Alleged Breaches of the Guidelines**

Both individuals and any interest groups may address the National Contact Point (NCP) if they wish to raise a company's behaviour, which might be inconsistent with the OECD Guidelines.

The submission should be raised in the country, where the alleged violation occurred. If in this country there is no NCP, the issue should be raised with the NCP in the country where the multinational company has its headquarters. If there is no NCP the address should be directed towards the NCP of the member state, in which the headquarters of the multinational enterprise resides.

In case there is a relation between the alleged violation and the Guidelines, the NCP may try to facilitate the dialogue between parties concerned in order to contribute to the conciliation of the issue. The proceeding requires the agreement of all parties concerned and is confidential – however, the NCP will make the results public.

The NCP is at any time available for all questions and remarks in relation to the Guidelines or the proceeding of the NCP.

The Swiss NCP is located at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO (Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER). It is embedded into the International Investment and Multinational Enterprises unit at the Foreign Economic Affairs Directorate.

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February 2018

