50 years of OECD countries at a glance
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A visual overview of 50 years in OECD countries with time distance methodology
At the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the OECD SICENTER presents a visual overview across several decades of the development for all present OECD countries for selected indicators based on the time distance methodology.Time distance concept arranges the same data from the OECD Factbook 2010 in an additional way so that data are arranged by selected levels of indicators showing in which year these levels of the indicators were achieved by given country. The level-time matrix compresses original data from the usual time series table in the Factbook 2010 in a new easily understandable way while still containing the most important information. The table-graph in yellow colour shows the range of values achieved for a given country over the period from available data. This allows for a quick level comparison of the situation across the whole set of OECD countries and individual countries as well as of how many steps over levels of indicators was achieved a given country.
The selected indicators are: life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, road fatalities, projections of population growth rates and of elderly population until 2050, employment rates, tertiary attainment, gross domestic expenditures on R&D, telecommunication access paths, gross domestic product per capita, international trade in goods and services, current account balance, and general government expenditures as percent of GDP. This additional way of presentation over many countries and many years provides a much better summary and understanding.

The level-time table-graph for share of elderly population covers the period of 100 years (1951-2050). It is difficult to imagine that the usual table of 34 countries across 100 years with 3400 entries would allow such a compressed essence of the long-term information and visualisation for a relevant perception of the situation.Â
For the majority of the selected indicators it is obvious at a glance that the differences between OECD countries are large. For instance, for gross domestic expenditures on R&D, GDP per capita and tertiary attainment the indicator values for the best countries are 4 to 5 times higher than for the lowest countries. While best practices are of interest it is obvious that policies have to be differentiated and adjusted to such wide differences in the circumstances. There is a wealth of information and possible comparisons in the tables; the comments provided are just some examples of such interpretations. â€˜Seeing with new eyesâ€™, to borrow the phrase from Marcel Proust, creates new knowledge, better understanding and material for telling new development stories. Â Â Â Annex 1 shows using the example for life expectancy how the level-time matrix can lead further to derivation of two novel statistical measures: S-time-distance and S-time-step. Â All three look easily understandable and are bringing even to general public additional understanding of the situation to build their perception about the disparities involved. S-time-step shows how many years were needed in the past to increase one year in life expectancy, thsi indication of dynamics depends only on the developments in the given country. The values of S-time-distance in the table compare the value for a country to the benchmark OECD average, showing the lead (-) or lag (+) in time against the OECD average.
Full presentation: 50 years of OECD countries at a glance.pdf