

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

Report on the activities of the Polish National Contact Point

July 2000 – May 2001

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are the recommendations addressed by the governments to multinational companies, providing voluntary principles and standards for conducting business activities. Since their adoption almost 25 years ago, the Guidelines have been the pattern of conduct for the OECD multinational enterprises. They are a model solution, which, along with national law and regulations and other codes of conduct, should be followed in the international activities of the companies. Despite the non-binding character of the Guidelines, they have had a significant impact on international and national economies and reflect good practice for both multinational and domestic enterprises.

The process of revising the Guidelines, which came to an end in June 2000 during the OECD Council on the Ministerial Level, created the possibility to adjust the principles, envisaged in the document, to the changing business environment of the globalising world. The adoption of the revised Decision of the Council on the Guidelines with the Annex has enabled further effective implementation of the Guidelines in Poland. We believe that the National Contact Points are an appropriate forum for discussion and assistance to the business community, employee organisations and other parties concerned and should continue their efforts to promote principles of the Guidelines.

The Polish Government recognises the foreign direct investment (FDI) as an indispensable element for sustainable economic growth and further transformation of our economy. Since 1989 till the end of 2000, nearly USD 40 bln of FDI were invested in Poland. Almost 90% of this total value came from the OECD countries. The number of foreign enterprises in Poland increased strongly since the beginning of 90-ties, now exceeding 13,000. For these reasons, Poland attaches great importance to the Guidelines, which can play a major role in increasing labour, environment, consumer protection and other standards of the multinationals and consequently the Polish companies.

After the accession to the OECD in 1996, Poland has launched a process of promoting the Guidelines and encouraging the enterprises to apply them in their activities. For the first two years the National Contact Point was located in the Ministry of Treasury, and then was transferred to the Ministry of Economy and located in the Department of Economic Strategy:

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In 1997, a special task force, consisting of the representatives of the Ministries of Economy, Treasury, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Labour, Environment, Agriculture, Internal Affairs, Post and Telecommunications, Office of the Committee for European Integration, Office for Competition and Consumer Protection, National Bank of Poland, Polish Agency for Foreign Investment, was created with the objective to promote the Guidelines. During the entire process of elaborating the new version of the Guidelines, the Polish National Contact Point conducted intensive and transparent dialogue with the members of the task force, representations of trade unions and the business community, as well as with other non-governmental organisations.

Since July 2000, the activities of the Polish National Contact Point have focused on information on the new revised Guidelines and their promotion. The main audience were governmental institutions, employers' organisations, trade unions, non-governmental organisations. The new text of the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises and the Guidelines with the Procedural Guidelines and the Commentaries have been translated to the Polish language and published in the form of booklet. The booklet has been sent to the large number of the institutions and organisations together with the general information on the objectives and the role of the Guidelines. The internet page has also been created within the Ministry of Economy web site, where the Polish text of the document is available. Additionally, the new version of Guidelines was presented during the seminars, organised for the representatives of the labour unions in Poland.

Despite many efforts aiming at making the Guidelines better known by the parties concerned, they are still not widely recognised in Poland as an effective instrument for assuring the appropriate standards of the corporate business conduct. The interest on Guidelines among the enterprises, representatives of employees and non-governmental organisations is rather weak.

At the end of 2000, the decision was made to change the location and the structure of the Polish National Contact Point. Since April 2001, the Polish National Contact Point is located in the Polish Agency for Foreign Investment (PAIZ):

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PAIZ was set up in 1992 as a joint stock company, wholly owned by the State Treasury, to encourage foreign companies to choose Poland as their preferred investment location. PAIZ's role is that of an intermediary, serving individual and corporate foreign investors. The Agency is responsible for providing comprehensive information regarding investment conditions and procedures, facilitating the initial stages of foreign investors investment process and assisting them in contacts with

the Polish authorities and business organisations. PAIZ also helps companies considering investing in Poland in identifying potential business partners and entering the Polish market.

The change of location of the NCP will be accompanied by the change of its structure. After the initial stage of functioning of NCP in Poland, devoted mostly to the general promotion and information on Guidelines, the future activity should focus more on the developing and maintaining relations with representatives of the business communities. The closer co-operation with business should aim at raising the awareness of both multinational and Polish companies on the issues considered by the Guidelines as the most important for responsible business conduct. Additionally, the deeper involvement of the social partners into the works of the National Contact Points is being considered. The objective is to create a forum for discussion on all the issues covered by the Guidelines with the parties concerned. We hope that the new formula of NCP will result in the broader recognition of the Guidelines as an important instrument facilitating the implementation of standards for responsible business conduct.