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Inequalities in Incomes and Earnings: An International Assessment Using Administrative Data

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Most comparative research on economic inequalities over the last decades, including by the OECD, has relied on data from household surveys, notably from the Luxembourg Income Study and EU-SILC. These surveys are easily accessible and relatively standardised, but they typically cannot shed light on inequalities within countries because of their limited sample sizes. This project will carry out a comparative analysis of geographic inequalities within countries using administrative data, focusing on outcomes at regional and sub-regional level. It will start developing an infrastructure to access, standardise and analyse register-based microdata on incomes, earnings and where possible wealth for a selection of OECD countries where such data exist. Depending on data access requirements, the data analysis will take place on OECD premises, via remote access facilities or on site, possibly through a network of local experts. The project will 1) map geographic disparities in incomes, earnings and possibly wealth, both across regions and between urban and rural areas; 2) study the role of geographic differences in prices levels, and notably in the cost of housing, for inequalities in living standards; 3) discuss the implications of these findings for labour market, social and economic policy. The project's main output will initially be a scoping paper on the promises and challenges of using register-based data for the analysis of geographic inequalities. In the future, this work could be extended to cover a greater number of countries and a more varied set of issues, including geographic differences in social mobility and regional labour market and social institutions, such as taxes and benefits or collective agreements.