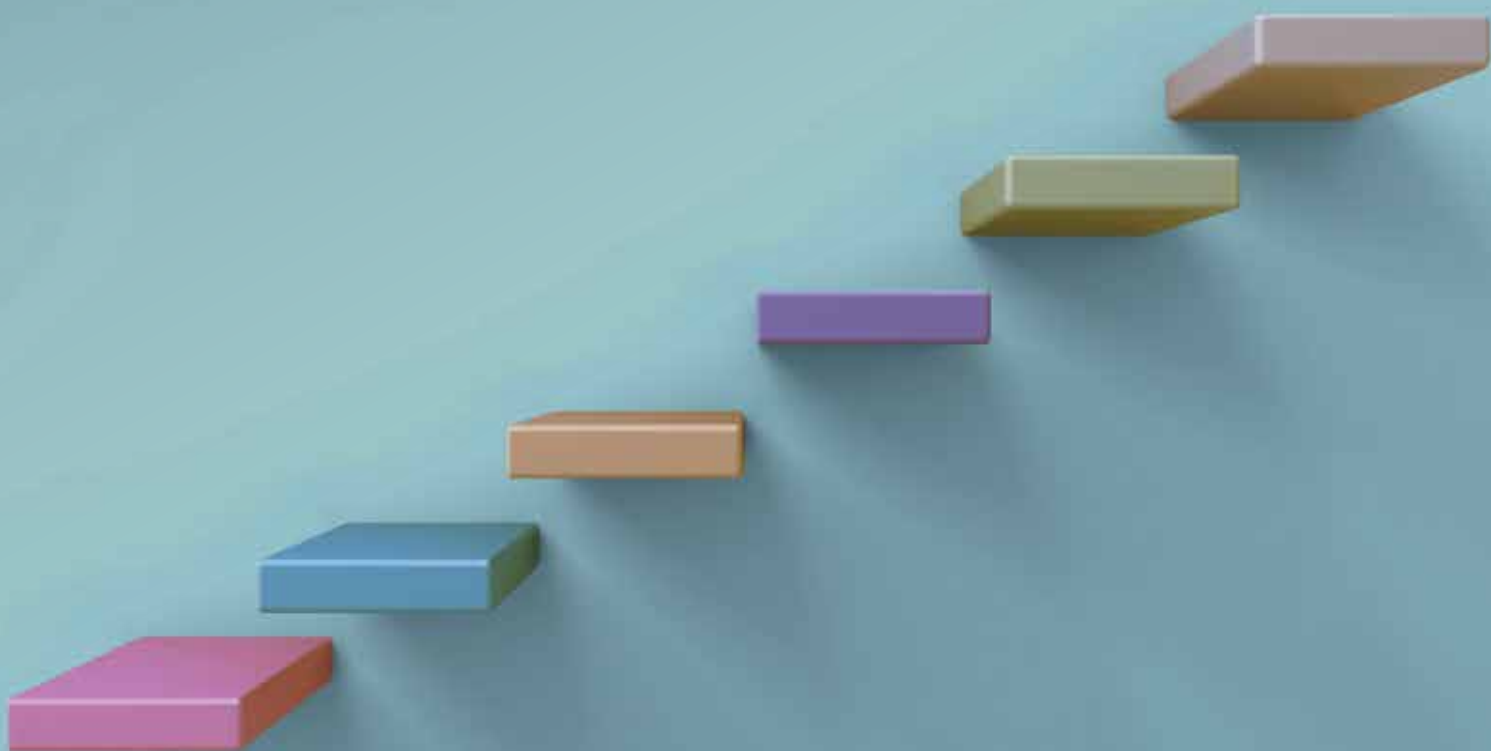




Global Forum on
PRODUCTIVITY

Activities report
2020



Contact information:

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Website

<http://oe.cd/GFP>

November 2020

Message from the co-chairs of the Steering Group

As the COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly propagated across the globe, all eyes have shifted to the near term economic outlook. Yet, the work of the OECD Global Forum on Productivity (GFP) – which has highlighted the importance of technology diffusion, resource reallocation and market dynamism – remains critical, as policymakers attempt to mitigate the immediate impact of the crisis while accommodating the “necessary” resource reallocations implied by COVID-19 to ensure a durable economic recovery. And efforts to “build back better” will be futile without policies to combat the productivity slowdown, which has undermined economic and social progress over the past two decades or so.

The GFP was established to support policymakers in their efforts to design successful productivity-enhancing policies. Since its creation in 2015 during a Productivity Summit in Mexico, the GFP has become a meeting point for researchers and policymakers, and developed an ambitious agenda on productivity. It has delivered high-quality research on a range of subjects, including: the productivity divergence between frontier and laggard firms; GVC centrality and productivity; and trends in market concentration in Europe and the United States. This seminal work would not have occurred without the GFP, while the same is true for ongoing innovative work on the Human Side of Productivity, focusing on the influence of workforce composition on firm-level productivity performance, and analysis of the productivity

implications of teleworking undertaken at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis.

Over the past five years, the GFP has organised a number of high-level conferences and workshops spanning Europe (Portugal, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and Hungary), Latin America (Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia), Canada and Australia. While these events have been vital to the dissemination of findings related to the policy and structural factors behind the productivity slowdown, they have also raised awareness of the productivity imperative amongst the public and political class. The development of an online platform has also provided greater visibility to productivity research being done by its contributors, including 19 OECD Productivity Working Papers, and by providing new visualisation tools for productivity data. Thanks to these efforts, events organized by the GFP attract a large and diverse audience, with the latest 2019 annual conference in Sydney as well as the upcoming 2020 annual conference in Berlin – organised as a virtual event – being notable examples.

The present report summarises these accomplishments and showcases how the GFP has become a clearing-house of ideas, analyses and best practices, as it celebrates its fifth anniversary.

Ricardo Pinheiro Alves
Dan Andrews
Stefan Profit

About the GFP

The Global Forum on Productivity (GFP) was created in 2015 from an initiative of several teams in different parts of the OECD (Economics Department and Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation) and endorsed by their respective OECD committees, namely the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), the Committee on Industry, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) and the Economic Development Review Committee (EDRC). The GFP revolves around three axes – research, convening and communication – which draw upon, complement and enhance the work already designated within the work programme of these Committees.

As a platform for mutual exchange of information and ideas, the GFP is a forum to discuss the latest analyses and best practices in public policy through which governments combine efforts to uncover the structural and policy factors behind the productivity slowdown. Through this concerted mission to foster international collaboration, the GFP gives government institutions the opportunity to discuss their views on institutional setups, share data and knowledge and undertake joint policy analysis. The present Activities Report summarises the work carried out by the GFP over 2020 and is structured in five sections: (i) About the GFP; (ii) Research; (iii) Events; (iv) Communication; and (v) Summary.

GFP contributors in 2020

The GFP is guided by its Steering Group, whose contributors decide the programme of work of the Forum as well as the allocation of available funds among three main activities: research, convening and communication.

In addition to determining the work agenda of the OECD team, contributors have the possibility to engage in joint research and policy analysis. They can also co-organise and host GFP events, network with high-level academics at the forefront of productivity research as well as with officials from other countries, and raise the visibility of their respective institutions. Finally, GFP contributors have access to a password-protected interactive platform to facilitate information-sharing among them.

In 2020, the Steering Group welcomed our latest contributors – The European Commission and the Asian Productivity Organization – who joined the following roster of countries supporting the GFP: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

HOW TO JOIN THE GFP?

Contact us to find out more about eligibility at productivity@oecd.org

Visit our website: <http://oe.cd/GFP>

Hear it from our contributors



Vincent Aussilloux

Head of the Economics and Finance department, France Stratégie



Ottavio Ricchi

Head of Unit, Economic and Financial Analysis and Planning Directorate, Italian Ministry of Finance and Economy



Carlos da Costa

Deputy Minister for Productivity, Employment and Competitiveness, Brazilian Ministry of the Economy

We had a quick chat with Vincent, Ottavio and Carlos about what the GFP means to them.

GFP Team: What were the main reasons why your country decided to join the GFP?

Vincent: As is the case in most OECD countries, productivity gains have slowed down in France over the past decades. This slowdown has important implications and raises many questions for future prosperity. Given that most countries are confronted with the same challenges and working hard on finding the best policy solutions, the GFP is a useful platform to share experiences and diagnoses. The GFP enables us to connect with experts in other countries, learn from each other and identify best practices.

Ottavio: The slowdown in productivity growth in advanced economies since the turn of the century

is an empirical puzzle of great scientific and policy relevance. In Italy's case, the productivity slowdown has been even more pronounced despite reform initiatives undertaken by successive governments. Joining a forum in which additional analysis would be carried out systematically and on a continuous basis promised to provide valuable insights, especially as it is hosted by a leading international organisation such as the OECD.

Carlos: Some of the main policies discussed in the context of the Special Secretariat for Productivity, Employment and Competitiveness are related to the topic of firm productivity. We are highly interested in the experience and high-level technical discussions conducted by the GFP to continuously improve our policies on this issue.

GFP: What do you believe have been the most valuable contributions brought to your country by participation in the GFP?

Vincent: The most valuable contributions have been the capacity to have in-depth discussions on many topical issues and to confront different expertise and viewpoints in live sessions. The high quality analyses produced by the GFP team and by other members of the GFP network are very valuable inputs for the work done in France by all institutions and academics working on productivity related issues. The GFP complements and enriches the policy discussion in France, thus increasing the quality of policy reforms.

Ottavio: The GFP carried out pioneering work using firm data, which uncovered the highly relevant finding that productivity growth has remained strong when considering the forerunner companies, but there is an increasing gap with the remaining pool. This is where microeconomic evidence provides convincing explanations of phenomena, which in the past had predominantly been analyzed with macroeconomic tools. Investigating the reasons at the root of that gap –and some have already been highlighted by the GFP research – is crucial for providing relevant policy insight.

GFP: What role do you see for GFP-produced research and advice in policy discussions in your country?

Vincent: The public debate in France, like in many countries, will gain in quality if it draws on high quality expertise regarding the main issues the country is facing. With a more informed public

debate, the quality of public policies can only improve. By helping to disseminate the experience and best practices from other countries and high value in-depth analyses, the GFP is helping French public administrations and public bodies such as the National Productivity Board in fine-tuning their diagnosis and recommendations for reforms to revive productivity gains.

Ottavio: The GFP should strive to communicate even more effectively the wealth of insights gained so far and the fruit of future works, including by highlighting country specificities in the productivity area. Concerning Italy, research carried out by the GFP has always been well received by economists, experts and even high ranking civil servants, not infrequently spurring debate. However, policy advice will be more compelling once relevant stakeholder are fully engaged, for example by seeking partnerships with other institutions.

Carlos: Brazilian participation in the GFP is recent. In addition to the possibility to include data from Brazilian companies in future research conducted by the GFP – which we are currently discussing – the experience and data from previous GFP studies on firm productivity has been of great use for validation and adjustments in the methodology of the Brasil Mais program. This initiative offers training, consulting and technical support for the adoption of better management practices and digital technologies in the processes of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Co-chairs of the Steering Group in 2020

Steering Group contributors appoint on a yearly basis co-chairs to coordinate the activities of the Forum. At the 12th Steering Group meeting on 19 June 2019, Ricardo Alves (Portugal) joined Dan Andrews (Australia) and Stefan Profit (Germany) as the GFP's third co-chair.

Dan Andrews has recently returned to the OECD Economics Department, after a two year stint as Chief Adviser on Structural Reform and Macroeconomic Policy at the Australian Treasury. In that role, he led an effort to integrate large-scale (administrative and commercial) microdata sources into the policy process and served as Co-Chair of the OECD Global Forum on Productivity. His research exploits micro-data to assess the causes of the global productivity slowdown and the impact of structural reforms on growth. Prior to 2018, he was Deputy Head of Structural Policy Analysis Division and leader of the Productivity Workstream in the OECD Economics Department. Dan was a central banker at the Reserve Bank of Australia for a decade and undertook graduate studies at Harvard University, before joining the OECD in 2009.



Ricardo Pinheiro Alves is currently Director of the Research Office of the Portuguese Ministry of the Economy, coordinator of the National Productivity Board and Assistant Professor at UE-IADE, Lisbon. Previously, he held several positions in the Ministry of the Economy since 2008 while representing Portugal at different committees in the OECD and the Council of the European Union. He is also Assistant Professor at Universidade da Beira Interior and at Universidade Europeia / IADE since 2001. Since 1992 he held several positions in the banking industry. He is a member of the board of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Portugal-Spain and a member of the board of Finifundos, a real-estate fund.



Stefan Profit is the Deputy Director-General at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. His directorate deals with macroeconomic developments, economic analyses and projections. Before taking up this position, he was in charge of a unit focusing on the empirical research in the field of inclusive growth, productivity and investment, as well as assessing growth and distributional effects of structural reforms. Stefan is also Deputy-chair of the OECD Working Party 1 of the Economic Policy Committee. He has an academic background in labour economics and holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Humboldt University Berlin.



Funding and governance

Participation in the Steering Group entails commitment to contribute a minimum of 25,000 euros per year to fund the GFP. This budget covers the following costs: (i) the policy research agenda elaborated according to the preferences of the Steering Group, (ii) the management of the network and the organization of events (conferences, workshops and other types of convening), and (iii) the communication and dissemination of the activities of the Forum. Contributors of the Steering Group are at the centre of the GFP and guide the activities of the Forum during Steering Group meetings. These meetings also give contributors an additional possibility to share any relevant work being done in their respective institutions.

During the Fall Steering Group meeting, the GFP presents the results of research work carried out during the year, contributors have a brief overview of the budget situation and decide the programme of work for the next year. By the end of the year, contributors receive a draft forecast of the budget for the next year and express their willingness to participate in the GFP during the forthcoming year. New membership proposals are also expected to be presented on this occasion.

At the Spring Steering Group meeting, contributors overview the budget situation of the previous year, receive its full financial report and a budget estimate for the ongoing year, appoint the co-chairs and overview the planned activities for the year. In view of improving the financial stability of the GFP and enhancing the coherence and continuity of its programme of work, contributors are expected to send their voluntary contributions by the Annual Conference of the GFP which takes place before summer.

Fall – Steering Group meeting

- Presentation of analytical work
- Overview of the budget situation
- Agreement on the work programme of the next year

End of the year

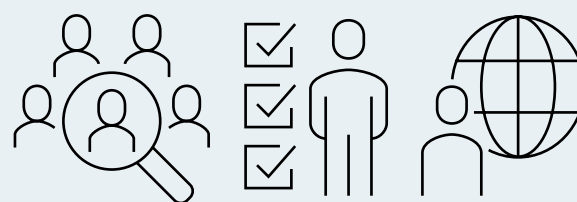
- Draft forecast of the budget for the next year
- Countries express their willingness to contribute to the GFP

Spring – Steering Group meeting

- Financial statement of the previous year and budget estimate for the current year
- Appointment of the co-chairs for the current year
- Oversight of ongoing activities

Summer – Annual Conference

- Countries are expected to send their voluntary contributions





Research

The analytical activities of the GFP revolve around the programme of work established by the GFP Steering Group and help to spur and implement collaborative research within the OECD and in joint projects with member countries. The research topics explored by the GFP correspond to the priorities identified by Steering Group members and have synergies with the work programme of the OECD Committees.

In 2020, we continued work on the GFP’s longer-term research project “The Human Side of Productivity”, whose main purpose is to investigate how the composition and allocation of workers and managers within firms contribute to productivity performance, drawing on unique microeconomic data sourced from GFP members. With the help of our country partners, we could already successfully implement the project – COVID-19 notwithstanding – in seven countries, and with others made good progress in preparing the analysis, including a country-specific analysis for Italy.

In light of COVID-19, we also expanded our research to focus on the topical issue of telework. The current health crisis may trigger a permanent switch towards more telework, with potentially profound implications for productivity. Which policies are needed to assure that this “new normal” benefits employees *and* firm productivity? The policy note on [“Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era”](#), written in the context of the GFP, addresses exactly this question. Future research, including a survey on the use of telework, will explore this topic further.

The human side of productivity

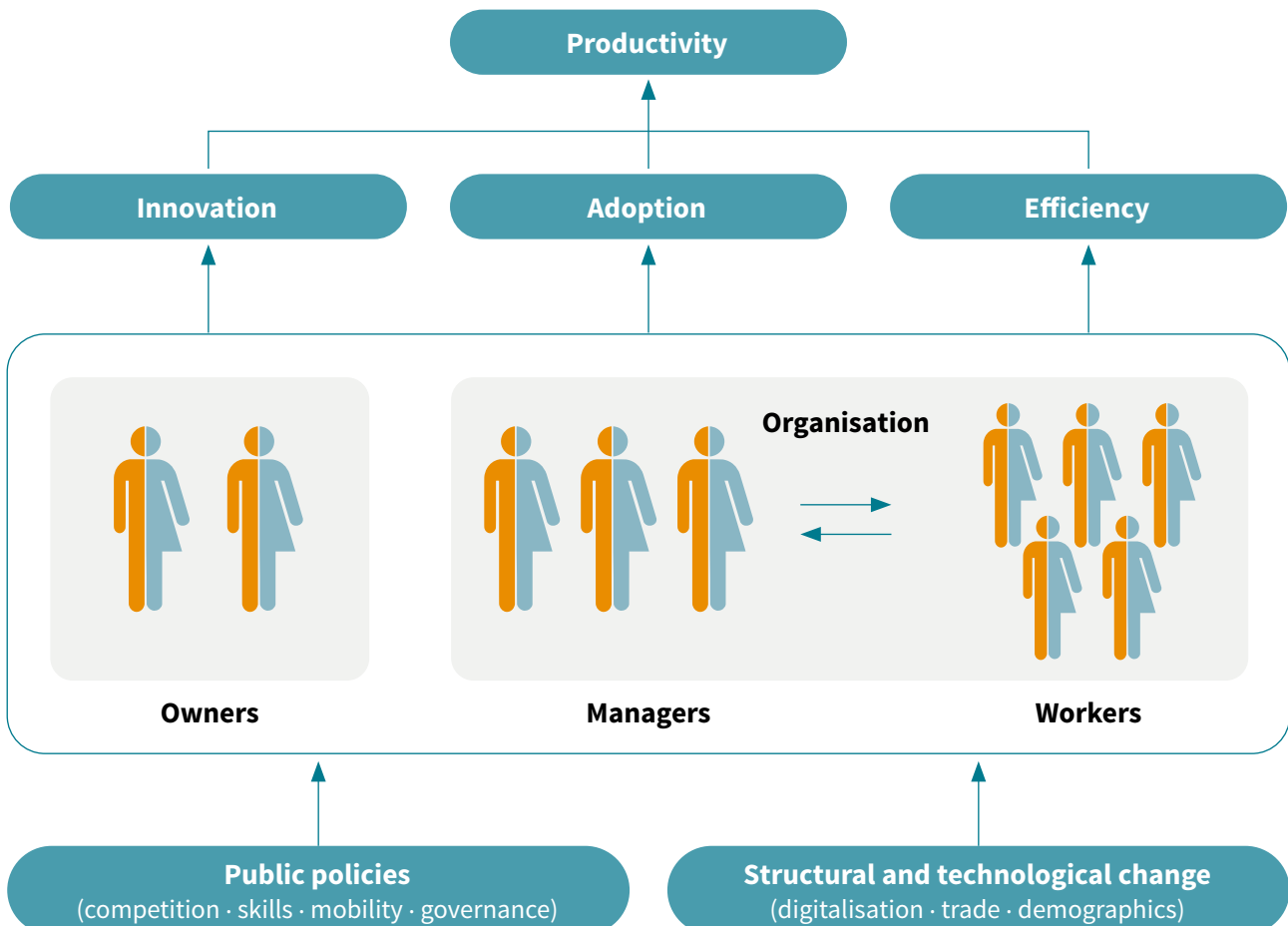
This ongoing project investigates the role of diverse actors within the firm – the ‘Human Side’ – for productivity. It uses a distributed micro-data approach that involves centrally written program routines, which collect results from national linked employer-employee datasets. This is made possible thanks to the data access and assistance provided by research partners in GFP Contributor countries, highlighting the collaborative nature of this work.

The project will document a new set of stylized facts on how workers and managers differ in terms of age, gender, and various skills between top

performing firms and other businesses, and how their interactions through the firm’s organization shape firm performance. Results already available for seven countries demonstrate the importance of focusing on more detailed worker characteristics – e.g. going beyond standard skill measures and distinguishing between managerial and non-managerial employees – to uncover the link between a firm’s workforce and its productivity. The final report will be presented at the 2021 Annual GFP Conference in Italy. It will consist of a part relating the comparative patterns unveiled across countries and a part reporting results of country-specific studies.

OPENING THE BLACK BOX OF THE FIRM

A schematic overview of the role of people for firm productivity.

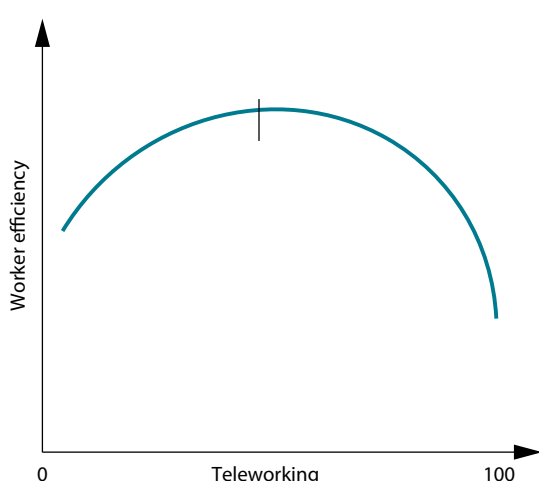


Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era: how can policies make it happen?

COVID-19 may have catalysed more widespread telework becoming the “new normal” – even after the health crisis subsides. This line of research focuses on the likely implications for productivity, and the policies promising to raise the gains from telework for workers and firms.

Examining the use of telework before the crisis – across countries, sectors, occupations and firms – the study argues for a large potential to use telework more widely in “normal times”: for instance, large differences across countries may largely reflect differences in “soft factors”, preventing telework in some countries while promoting it in others; in Germany more productive firms are more likely to use trust-based working time arrangements – a proxy for telework –, demonstrating that high performance and novel working arrangements can go hand-in-hand.

The optimal diffusion of telework is likely to be at intermediate levels



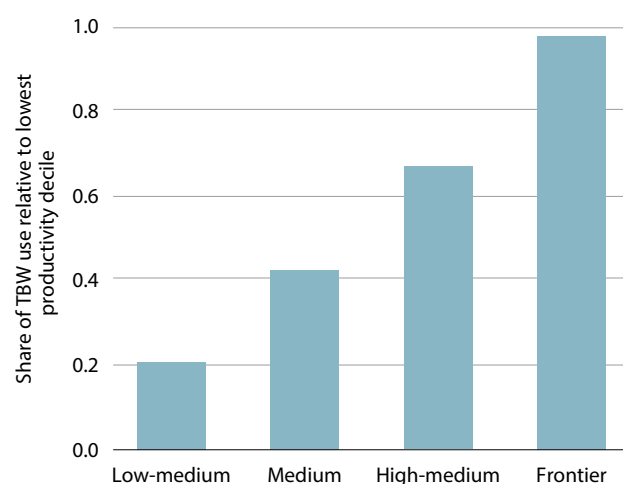
Note: A depiction of an inversely U-shaped link between worker efficiency and teleworking as elaborated in the telework note. Higher worker satisfaction – for instance thanks to fewer distractions and less commuting –, especially at low levels of telework, raises efficiency, while the lack of personal encounters impairs communication the less time is spent together on site or at the office, implying a “sweet spot” at intermediate levels of telework.

Source: OECD.

Existing evidence on the channels and mechanisms through which telework affects productivity is used to develop a simple framework to understand the likely impact of telework on productivity, and the factors that shape this link: telework holds the promise to simultaneously raise worker satisfaction and firm productivity, but whether it does so depends on several conditioning factors. Policies will play a crucial role, e.g. to promote an optimal level of telework, disseminate best managerial practices, improve the working environment from home, and support a fast and reliable communication infrastructure.

In cooperation with employer and employee representatives, the GFP Team will further expand this research, drawing on additional data sources and conducting a survey to get “on the ground” insights on the prospective use of telework.

Use of trust-based working time arrangements (TBW) in Germany increases with productivity



Note: The figure shows the difference in the share of firms using trust-based working time arrangements (TBW) across different segments of the within-industry productivity distribution. For more details see OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era : How can public policies make it happen?

Source: OECD calculations based on German LIAB for 2000-2016.



Events

2020 brought a particular set of new challenges to organising events. In order to overcome the physical barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, an overhaul of the GFP event calendar was required to allow our stakeholders full virtual participation. In addition to a remodelled Annual Conference with open access to the public, the new GFP Webinar series opened up a new avenue of opportunities for GFP contributors to discuss cutting-edge research on productivity with specialists from different countries and institutions.

Not only have these innovations made it possible to maintain the GFP's convening activities in 2020, they have also substantially increased the overall amount of events to which participating countries and institutions had access throughout the year, and will continue to be a part of the GFP's portfolio of activities for the coming years.

2020 Annual GFP Conference, hosted by Germany, 30 November-8 December

FLAGSHIP ONLINE EVENT (8 December 2020)

GFP WEEK – OPEN WEBINAR SERIES (30 November, 2 December, 3 December)

Digital technologies and business models drive productivity growth and are key to job creation and prosperity. However, they can also create “winner takes most” dynamics, market concentration and rising productivity gaps across firms. How do these developments affect market dynamics and competition in interconnected economies and what role can modern industrial policy play to promote structural change while maintaining a “level playing field” to ensure fair competition in global markets? The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have an accelerating effect on these already ongoing structural changes. Against this background, government action becomes even more important and policy dialogue around these topics is more timely than ever.

This event, hosted by Germany, will be a unique opportunity to discuss these difficult topics and reflect on how they are shaped by economic crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic. **Peter Altmaier** (Minister, BMWi), and **Angel Gurría** (Secretary-General, OECD), will open the Flagship Event, with keynotes and panellists including **Hal Varian** (Google), **Philippe Aghion** (College de France), **Chad Bown** (PIIE), **Ufuk Akcigit** (University of Chicago), **Thomas Philippon** (NYU Stern), **Diane Coyle** (University of Cambridge), **Cristina Caffarra** (Charles River Associates) and many others.

More information: <https://oe.cd/GFP2020>



Federal Ministry
for Economic Affairs
and Energy



Market Dynamics, Competition and the Role of Industrial Policy in the Context of the COVID-19 Crisis

Flagship Online Event on 8 December 2020

GFP Week – Open Webinar Series on
30 November, 2 and 3 December 2020



ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE OECD
GLOBAL FORUM ON PRODUCTIVITY 2020



WEBINAR

NEW GFP WEBINAR SERIES

The OECD Global Forum on Productivity launched its webinar series in the spring of 2020.

Leading academics and policy experts are invited to present their takes on current challenges for productivity to the Steering Group contributors of the GFP and OECD staff.

To keep the conversation alive and broad-reaching, the full video recordings and materials from our webinars are made available to the general public one month later.

Watch the videos: <https://www.oecd.org/global-forum-productivity/webinars/>



Harald Fadinger



Fabiano Schivardi



Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas

5 May 2020

Robot Imports and Firm-level Outcomes: Evidence from French Firms

Harald Fadinger

5 June 2020

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on firm liquidity

Fabiano Schivardi, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas,
Sebnem Kalemli-Özcan and Lilas Demmou



Sebnem Kalemli-Özcan



Lilas Demmou

GFP WEBINARS 2020

9 June 2020

COVID-19 and the future of capitalism

Philippe Aghion

29 June 2020

Working from home: Past, present, future and some tips

Nicholas Bloom

23 September 2020

The impact of ICTs and digitalisation on productivity and labour share: an analysis of French firms

Gilbert Cette

7 October 2020

Global Productivity: Trends, drivers and policies

Alistair Dieppe



Philippe Aghion



Nicholas Bloom



Gilbert Cette



Alistair Dieppe



UPCOMING EVENT

2021 CONFERENCE OF THE GLOBAL FORUM ON PRODUCTIVITY

(joint with Italian presidency of G20)

8-9 July 2021, Italy

The Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Bank of Italy will host the 2021 Conference of the GFP on 8-9 July 2021 back-to-back with the G20 Ministerial meeting.

The conference will bring together high-level policy makers, central bankers, top academics and experts on productivity.

The event will be a unique opportunity to discuss the topics of skills, digitalisation and productivity. The first day will be centred on the GFP Human Side of Productivity report while the second day will revolve around the digitalisation issues that are at the core of the Italian G20 Presidency.

More information will be available in 2021 on the GFP website: <http://oe.cd/GFP>

Communication

The communication activities of the GFP consist in disseminating information on GFP events, productivity-related findings and data as well as other useful work and links in contributing countries. To do so, the GFP team disposes of a number of instruments, namely the [GFP website](#), the [OECD Productivity Working Paper series](#), social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) and the mailing list used to circulate messages such as the periodic GFP Updates. Steering Group contributors of the GFP also have their exchanges facilitated by the password-protected Clearspace community page.

New country profiles

In 2020, the GFP redesigned its [Productivity Indicators repository](#), which now contains data on more than 40 countries, spanning up to 35 years. We have also updated the [country profile pages](#) available on the GFP website to include the latest productivity-related information coming from GFP partner countries.

GFP updates

Our biannual newsletter compiles the latest news in GFP work, teases upcoming events and advertises productivity-related information from GFP contributors. It has a public of over 400 subscribers – spanning policymakers, researchers, business representatives and OECD colleagues, among others.

Productivity working papers

The GFP accepts voluntary paper submissions from its supporters, to be published under the [OECD Productivity Working Paper Series](#).

A selection of GFP media highlights

The Economist:

[What more should antitrust be doing?](#), August 2020

The Australian:

[Rapid tech take-up could kickstart productivity](#), August 2020

El País

[La era digital topa con la barrera de la productividad](#), February 2020



The
Economist

THE
AUSTRALIAN

EL PAÍS

Summary

2019

2020

Research

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Industry Concentration in Europe and North America ● The Human Side of Productivity (ongoing) ● GVCs, Productivity and Innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Human Side of Productivity – ongoing ● Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era |
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Events

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshop on “Spatial Dimensions of Productivity” (Bolzano, Italy) ● 4th Annual Conference of the GFP (Sydney, Australia) ● Workshop on “R&D and Innovation Policies for the Marketplace” (Lisbon, Portugal) ● 3rd Ministerial Productivity Summit (Bogota, Colombia) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GFP Webinar Series (6 events) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Robot Imports and Firm-level Outcomes: Evidence from French Firms – The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on firm liquidity – COVID-19 and the future of capitalism – Working from home: Past, present, future and some tips – The impact of ICTs and digitalization on productivity and labour share: an analysis of French firms – Global Productivity: Trends, drivers and policies ● 2020 Annual Conference of the GFP (4 events) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – GFP Week Webinar Series – Flagship Online Event |
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Communication

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GFP Updates ● Updated Visual Identity ● 2019 Activities Report ● 3 Productivity Working Papers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GFP Updates ● Redesigned Productivity Indicators ● Updated country profiles ● Webinar recordings ● 1 Productivity working paper (upcoming) ● 1 paper in the Policy Responses to COVID-19 ● 2020 Activities Report |
|---|---|

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