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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 2021 and is structured in five sections: (i) About the GFP; (ii) Research; (iii) Events; (iv) Communication; and (v) Summary.
Message from the Co-chairs of the Steering Group

As policymakers attempt to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and aim to “build back better”, they need to bear in mind longer term implications for economic growth and productivity. The acceleration of digitalisation and the green transition represent important structural changes of economic activity. They impact on the innovation of firms and involve a substantial reallocation of resources across them, with potential implications for future productivity growth, living standards and well-being.

The GFP was established to support policymakers in an ever changing and challenging economic and social environment. It helps them design successful productivity enhancing policies to combat the productivity slowdown, which has held back economic and social progress over the past two decades or so. 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; a slowdown in global value chain integration and its effect on productivity; and the rising market concentration in Europe and the United States. More recently, the GFP has focused on the role of skills and diversity for firm performance and the implications from an increasing adaptation of telework at the firm-level.

Over the past six years, the GFP has organised a number of high-level conferences and workshops spanning Europe (Portugal, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and Hungary), Latin America (Mexico, 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 policymakers. Our online platform has also provided greater visibility to productivity research being done by its contributors – including 31 OECD Productivity Working Papers, of which 11 this year – and by providing new visualisation tools for productivity data. Thanks to these efforts, online, physical and hybrid events organized by the GFP attract a large and diverse audience, with the latest 2021 annual conference in Venice – joint with the Italian G20 Presidency –, as well as the upcoming 2022 annual conference in Brussels being notable examples.

The present report summarises these accomplishments and highlights how the GFP has been maintaining its relevance during the pandemic era.

13 December 2021

Rita Bessone Basto (Portugal)
Stefan Profit (Germany)
Ottavio Ricchi (Italy)
Co-chairs of the Steering Group in 2021

The Steering Group of the GFP appoints Co-chairs to coordinate the activities of the Forum. At the 15th Steering Group meeting in November 2020, Rita Bessone Basto (Portugal) and Ottavio Ricchi (Italy) joined and Stefan Profit (Germany) as the GFP’s Co-chairs.

**Rita Bessone Basto** is currently Deputy Director of the Office for Strategy and Studies of the Portuguese Ministry of Economy and Digital Transition. Her current position involves work on the analysis of productivity and its determinants, in the context of the national productivity board; on policy evaluation models; and assessment and policy advice on economic developments and policies. She has previous work experience in areas of financial stability and macro-prudential policy, DSGE models with financial frictions, international relations, and monetary and financial issues. She holds a PhD in economics, with a thesis on monetary unions and economic policy coordination.

**Ottavio Ricchi** is Head of Unit in the Economic and Financial Analysis and Planning Directorate of the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance; he is responsible for potential output and structural public finance estimates, debt sustainability projections, and productivity analysis. He is the chair of the EU Output Gap Working Group and co-chair at the GFP. He was formerly in charge of the macroeconomic forecasts unit and of the liaison unit with the Economic Policy Committee in Brussels. He also attended the WP1 and STEP meetings at the OECD and the Lisbon Methodology working group and Expert Meetings at the EU. He graduated from the University of Naples and holds an MSc in economics at the University of York (UK) and a PhD in Economics from the University of Exeter (UK). His main areas of interest include productivity analysis, economic modelling, public finance, and international economics.

**Stefan Profit** is the Deputy Director-General at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. 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 PhD in Economics from Humboldt University Berlin.
GFP Steering Group members and contributors in 2021

The GFP is guided by its Steering Group, whose members fund the activities and 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 GFP Secretariat at OECD, contributors have the possibility to engage in joint research and policy analysis.

They can also co-organise and host GFP events to catalyse the public debate about the importance of productivity growth in their country and to raise the international and domestic visibility of their respective institutions. These events also provide an opportunity to network with high-level academics at the forefront of productivity research as well as with officials from other countries.

Finally, GFP contributors have access to a password-protected interactive platform to facilitate information-sharing among them.

In 2021, the Steering Group was composed of 20 members, representing countries or international institutions: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom; the European Commission and the Asian Productivity Organization (APO).

HOW TO JOIN THE GFP?
Contact us to find out more about eligibility at productivity@oecd.org
Visit our website: http://oe.cd/GFP
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. Members and 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.

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 or re-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.
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.

The human side of productivity

In 2021, we continued work on the GFP’s longer-term research project “The Human Side of Productivity”, whose main purpose has been to investigate how the composition and allocation of workers and managers within firms contribute to productivity performance, drawing on unique microeconomic data covering millions of firms and companies sourced from GFP partners.

This GFP project, which was launched in the context of the 2021 Annual Conference of the GFP co-organised by the G20 Italian Presidency, uncovers new evidence about the role of the skill and the demographic structure of firms and their relationship with productivity performance. It relies on a large-scale data collection effort, thanks to our partners in national institutions, academia and related OECD projects (LinkEED and Age Diversity) with access to rich linked employer-employee microdata for the universe of private sector companies. This allows us to document how the skill composition of the most productive firms – the “frontier” – differs from that of a typical firm; what managerial characteristics these top performers have; and how these patterns vary by sector in 10 countries over the period 2000-2018.

Results show that differences in firm performance are closely related to differences in the use of skills. Top performing firms employ almost twice the share of high skilled employees compared to the least productive firms (Figure 1, panel A). However, country-specific patterns reveal that firms at the productivity frontier can pursue different skill strategies depending on national circumstances. For instance, while firms at the productivity frontier
in France specialise in the intensive use of high skills, top productivity firms in Germany – with an established system for vocational training – also make intensive use of medium skills (Figure 1, panel B). From a sectoral perspective, it is mostly in the traditional, less knowledge intensive services – such as wholesale, retail, hotels, restaurants and transport – where medium skills are particularly widespread among the best performers.

Moreover, despite the pervasive focus on high skills at the productivity frontier in all countries, employees at top performing firms also rely to an important extent on the full range of skills, including medium and low skills. Beyond general skills, we also highlight the systematic link of firm productivity with the use of specific skills, such as management and communication (soft skills) and ICT skills (hard skills).

Distinguishing managers and workers shows that manager skills can have a disproportionate impact on firm performance, due to their key position within the firm’s organisation. However, high skilled managers and a highly skilled workforce are highly complementary; we find that high skilled managers are most effective with a highly skilled workforce. Reaping the full productivity gains associated with adjusting the firm’s skill structure – also taking into account manager-worker complementarities – corresponds to closing the productivity gap between the typical median performer firm and the frontier by 20%.

We also examined the role of firm organisation and cultural and gender diversity. Devoting more resources to formal management is linked to higher productivity, although the link is weaker in countries with traditionally flatter hierarchies (Denmark and

**FIGURE 1: THE ROLE OF SKILLS FOR PRODUCTIVITY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FIRMS**

**Panel A:** Firms at the productivity frontier rely more intensively on high skills

**Panel B:** The use of medium skills at the productivity frontier varies across countries

Sweden). Our results also show that more gender and culturally diverse firms – as captured by the share of the workforce with foreign background – are more productive. Diversity especially benefits the performance of managers, who can gain the most from the more comprehensive perspective that diversity offers for decision-making and identifying business opportunities; drawing on a broader pool of diverse candidates for better job matching may also be especially important for managers. Most firms currently exhibit low levels of diversity, hence important productivity gains could be made from becoming more diverse, closing productivity gaps by about 10%.

Telework and Productivity

In light of the pandemic and the related economic disruption starting in 2020, the GFP team expanded and re-prioritised its research activities and looked at the role of telework for productivity, which has led to the conduct of a survey among managers and workers from 25 countries over the course of 2020 and 2021. This was implemented in collaboration with Business at OECD (BIAC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) and the Energy Regulators Regional Association (ERRA), with additional support from GFP Steering Group members. The survey inquired from managers and employees about their experience with and expectations about telework. Survey results document that the share of workers doing telework once or more per week during the first wave of the pandemic roughly doubled across sectors compared to the pre-pandemic period (Figure 2 – Panel A). Even if this practice was new for many workers and had to be carried out in less than ideal conditions due to competing household and childcare duties, most managers and workers report telework had a positive impact on performance and well-being: the stigma has been broken. Accordingly, workers wish and managers expect telework to remain quite widespread after the pandemic (albeit less so than during the crisis). In a nutshell: telework seems here to stay.

FIGURE 2. VIEWS FROM MANAGERS AND WORKERS ABOUT IDEAL TELEWORK POST COVID-19

Panel A: COVID-19 catalysed wish for more permanently more widespread work among managers

Panel B: Managers and workers agree 2-3 days of telework per week are ideal

Source: Telework survey of the OECD Global Forum on Productivity.
In a previous policy note on the OECD COVID-19 hub, we argued that intermediate levels of telework are likely to be ideal for firm performance and employee well-being for most types of activities. Our survey results vindicate this hypothesis by showing that, according to both managers and workers, the largest share of regular teleworkers will likely work from home 2/3 days per week (Figure 2 – Panel B).

Why do managers and workers wish telework to be widespread in the future? Our survey finds that managers see the potential for better firm performance through telework because, in their opinion, workers work more intensively and more productively (due to the possibility for being more focused at home and for saving commuting time and effort). Moreover, this practice could generate opportunities for cost savings on reduced office space and better job matching from a geographically broader pool of talent. On the other hand, workers are keen to telework more because, among others, they can save money and time on commuting and they are more focused and relaxed at home.

However, just as there are two sides to every coin, this practice also entails important disadvantages that could hamper firm performance and well-being, especially in the long run. Managers are particularly worried about the longer-term impact of impaired communication among team members brought about by telework and the difficulties of training staff in a teleworking environment. In addition, they fear employees’ loyalty and team cohesion to be jeopardised when colleagues spend less time together in person. Focusing on the workers’ side, the fusing of private and work life, social isolation – which may become even more visible in the long run – and working from inappropriate spaces are the decisive drawbacks of telework.

Further reading

The Human Side of Productivity
- OECD EcoScope Blog: Catching up to the frontier through the Human Side of Productivity: the role of skills and diversity
- “The Human Side of Productivity: Uncovering the role of skills and diversity for firm productivity” by Chiara Criscuolo, Peter Gal, Timo Leidecker and Giuseppe Nicoletti
- Key Highlights
- Setting the Scene: Background paper to the 2019 Annual Conference of the GFP

Telework and productivity
- OECD EcoScope Blog: Telework after COVID-19: survey evidence from managers and workers on implications for productivity and well-being
- “The Role of Telework for Productivity during and post-COVID-19: results from an OECD survey among managers and workers” by Chiara Criscuolo, Peter Gal, Timo Leidecker, Francesco Losma, Giuseppe Nicoletti
- Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era: How can public policies make it happen?, OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Events

In 2021, we continued with our events in a hybrid - partly physical, partly virtual - or fully virtual mode to allow our stakeholders participation in case they could not attend in presence. On the positive side, the benefits from virtual participation involved not only an outreach to a wider audience but also allowed us to feature many high-level speakers from various parts of the world. In addition to our Annual Conference in a hybrid format, the GFP Webinar series and online workshops continued, to open up a new avenue of opportunities for GFP contributors to discuss cutting-edge research on productivity with specialists from different countries and institutions. Such online events will likely continue to be a part of the GFP’s portfolio of activities for the coming years.

Annual Conference of the Global Forum on Productivity co-organised by the Italian G20 Presidency
Venice, Italy and online (hybrid event) 8-9 July 2021

Productivity gaps across firms are large and persistent in most countries and sectors. These gaps, however, present an important potential for lifting productivity if their underlying causes are addressed. To what extent the diffusion of advanced managerial practices and the overall improvement of workers and managers skills can help narrowing these gaps? How can public policies ensure that the digital transformation and the rise of intangible assets, which have been accelerated by the COVID-19 shock, do not exacerbate but rather reduce existing disparities in income and productivity? These questions become even more pressing as governments are in the process of shaping the path to the post-crisis economic recovery.
The hybrid conference brought together high-level policy makers, top academics and experts on productivity. The event was a unique opportunity to discuss these challenging topics and reflect on how they can be incorporated in strategies to foster economic recovery and resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 400 attendees participated from 56 countries, among them about 60 in person from Venice.

**Riccardo Barbieri** (Chief Economist, Ministry of Economy and Finance), **Laurence Boone** (Chief Economist, OECD) and **Federico Signorini** (Senior Deputy Governor, Bank of Italy) opened the Flagship event. **Daniele Franco** (Minister, Ministry of Economy and Finance), **Ignazio Visco** (Governor, Bank of Italy), and **Mathias Cormann** (Secretary-General, OECD) introduced the High-level panel discussion among G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, which included **Christine Lagarde** (President, ECB) and **Andrew Bailey** (Governor, Bank of England) among others.

Keynotes and panellists throughout the event included **Daron Acemoglu** (MIT), **Oriana Bandiera** (LSE), **Janice Eberly** (Northwestern University), **Daniel Rock** (Wharton University), **Alexandra Roulet** (INSEAD), **Anna Valero** (LSE) and many others. The GFP also presented *Key Highlights* from its work on “The Human Side of Productivity: uncovering the role of skills and diversity for the productivity of firms” and on “The role of telework for productivity and well-being during and post-COVID-19: results from an OECD survey among managers and workers”.

Presentations, speeches and video recordings are available here: [https://oe.cd/gfp2021](https://oe.cd/gfp2021)
OECD GFP Special Session “Drivers of productivity and size differences across firms: the role of human factors, intangibles and digital technologies” at the 17th Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED) conference
Coimbra, Portugal and online (hybrid event) 20 November 2021 See conference Agenda

GFP Workshop
Joint Banque de France and OECD Global Forum on Productivity workshop on telework and productivity, featuring papers by the two institutions with John Fernald (INSEAD) acting as lead discussant
17 December 2021, online

Upcoming event
Annual conference of the GFP co-organised by the European Commission
7-8 July 2022, Brussels, Belgium
The European Commission will host the 2022 Conference of the GFP on 7-8 July 2022. 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 challenges to productivity growth in the post-COVID-19 era and how to manage the reallocation of resources that are associated with the green transition, accelerated digitalisation and the potential re-organisation of value chains.

More information on the conference will be available in 2022 on the GFP website: http://oe.cd/GFP
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/

3 May 2021 | Margarita Lopez Forero | Productivity Growth Slowdown and MNE’s Intangibles: where is productivity measured?

Webinars in the context of the Annual Conference
(1 July - 2 July - 5 July 2021)

1 July 2021 | Webinar 1: Workforce composition and productivity (Part A) | Work practices and productivity post-Covid (Part B)

2 July 2021 | Webinar 2: The Human Side of Productivity –experiences from selected countries

5 July 2021 | Webinar 3: Digitalisation, Intangibles and Productivity
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.

Productivity working papers

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

January 2021 | Telework before the COVID-19 pandemic
Santo Milasi, Ignacio González Vázquez and Enrique Fernández-Macías

May 2021 | Productivity dispersion and sectoral labour shares in Europe
Martina Lawless and Luke Rehill

July 2021 | Employee training and firm performance
Pedro S. Martins

July 2021 | A new approach to skills mismatch
Amandine Brun-Schammé and Martin Rey

July 2021 | Productivity and human capital
Camilla Andretta, Irene Brunetti and Anna Rosso

July 2021 | The return on human (STEM) capital in Belgium
Gert Bijnens and Emmanuel Dhyne

July 2021 | Financial distress and the role of management in micro and small-sized firms
Fernando Alexandre, Sara Cruz and Miguel Portela

October 2021 | Productivity-wage nexus at the firm-level in Portugal
Alexandre Mergulhão and José Azevedo Pereira

December 2021 | The Human Side of Productivity: Uncovering the role of skills and diversity for firm productivity
Chiara Criscuolo, Peter Gal, Timo Leidecker and Giuseppe Nicoletti

December 2021 | Will it stay or will it go?
Analysing developments in telework during COVID-19 using online job postings data
Paweł Adrjan, Gabriele Ciminelli, Alexandre Judes, Michael Koelle, Cyrille Schwellnus, Tara Sinclair

December 2021 | The Role of Telework for Productivity during and post-COVID-19: results from an OECD survey among managers and workers
Chiara Criscuolo, Peter Gal, Timo Leidecker, Francesco Losma, Giuseppe Nicoletti
A selection of GFP media highlights and dissemination at various fora


The Hybrid Work Revolution Is Already Transforming Economies | Bloomberg article and interview, August 2021

“The Human Side of Productivity: Preliminary results, focusing on skills”

- Joint Conference of GROWINPRO, the OECD Committee on Industry, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Working Party on Industry Analysis on Value Creation and Distribution in the Digital Era
- Presentation with a special focus on Portugal at the National Productivity Board of Portugal (Conselho da Produtividade) webinar, February 2021
- Committee on Industry, Innovation and Entrepreneurship breakout webinar, February 2021

“Telework and productivity: Insights based on the OECD Global Forum on Productivity telework survey among managers and workers”

- Trade Union Advisory Council (TUAC) Working Group on Economic Policy (March 2021) and to Business at OECD (BIAC; April 2021)
- Panel participation at International Organisation of Employers, September 2021

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.
# Summary

## 2020

### Research
- The Human Side of Productivity
- Productivity gains from teleworking in the post COVID-19 era

## 2021

### Research
- The Human Side of Productivity: Uncovering the role of skills and diversity for the productivity of firms (Key Highlights and Productivity Working Paper)
- The role of telework for productivity and well-being during and post-COVID-19: results of an OECD survey among managers and workers (Key Highlights and Productivity Working Paper)

### Events
- GFP Webinar Series (6 events)
  - 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 digitalisation on productivity and labour share: an analysis of French firms
  - Global Productivity: Trends, drivers and policies
  - 2020 Annual Conference of the GFP (4 events)
- GFP Week Webinar Series
- Flagship Online Event

### Communication
- GFP Updates
- Redesigned Productivity Indicators
- Updated country profiles
- Webinar recordings
- 2020 Activities Report

### Events
- GFP Webinar Series
  - “Productivity slowdown and MNEs’ intangibles: where is productivity measure?”
- 2021 Annual Conference of the GFP joint with Italian presidency of G20 (4 events)
  - GFP Week Webinar Series
  - Flagship hybrid Event broadcast from Venice
- OECD GFP Special Session at the 2021 Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED) conference (Coimbra, Portugal and online)
- Joint Banque de France and GFP online workshop on Telework and Productivity

### Communication
- GFP Updates
- 11 Productivity Working Papers
- ECOSCOPE Blogs
- Bloomberg article and interview on telework
- Human Side of Productivity project webpage
- Webinar recordings
- 2021 Activities Report
The GFP team

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