Well-being in the Digital Age: Measurement and Policies

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The paper is a chapter on the impact of digital technologies on people's well-being that the author is currently drafting for the OECD Going Digital report.

Digital tools can help achieve important well-being outcomes such as health, education, civic engagement, better balance between work and family, participation in the sharing economy and better connection of disadvantaged groups and regions, thanks also to its impact on public governance. In helping citizens to interact with public administrations, digital technologies can also enable new models for participatory processes in policy agenda-setting and public service delivery. At the same time, digital tools can also erode or hinder achieving some of these goals, such as disruptive social connections, hate speech, fake news, hacking of personal data.

Governments have a role to play in helping people get these outcomes. To reap the benefits of digitalisation, governments have to ensure that people have equitable access to digital technologies and the skills to effectively use them. Governments will also have to redesign themselves and effectively use digital tools to provide citizens the services that will improve their well-being, and be able not only to measure costs and benefits but also to follow who benefits and who bears the costs of the digital transformation. Policies and regulations will also need to be adjusted to empower and protect individuals in areas such as consumer protection, children protection on internet, privacy and security.

To address those issues, the paper focuses on the impact of digitalization on the various dimensions of well-being (income, employment, health, security...) by applying the OECD well-being framework. Moreover, it will look onto how material conditions and the governance of the digital transformation in governments can impact inclusiveness and sustainability of well-being over time.

Each component of the framework will include a measurement element and a policy element. As a result, the application of the framework will enable to:

(i) Analyse the impact of digitalisation on a range of well-being outcomes which will require building a new specific set of indicators; (ii) derive policy recommendations to empower and protect individuals, as well as making government more digital by design.