

Foreword

The release of the Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Progress in September 2009, was a defining moment. During his presentation of the Report, the then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy said: “In today’s circumstances, this report is important not just technically (but) also politically. It deals with questions that concern not only economists, statisticians and accountants, but also politics, and as a consequence, the whole world”. The Report’s key message was simple: change the focus of our statistics from measuring the size of economic production, which is what GDP is about, to measuring what shapes the well-being of people today and that of future generations. This change of perspective is crucial, in the words of Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz – one of the Commission’s chairs: “What you measure affects what you do”.

This message resonated well with the OECD where statistics are at the core of our evidence-based policy advice, and where, as early as 2004, we had been advocating for the expansion of our measurement frameworks to capture, not only aggregate economic performance, but also people’s quality of life. So we were well-placed to follow-up on President Sarkozy’s call that the OECD should play a critical role in implementing the Commission’s recommendations at the international level. In 2011, we adopted our new motto “*Better Policies for Better Lives*” and we launched the *OECD Better Life Initiative* which has played a key role in advancing the “Beyond GDP” agenda, through our flagship publication *How’s Life?* and the OECD Better Life Index.

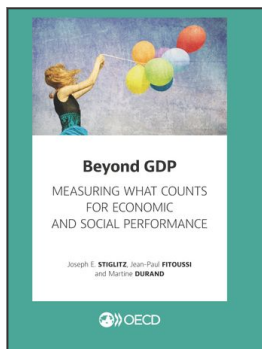
Our contribution has not been limited to measures and statistics though. In 2012, in the aftermath of the devastating crisis, we launched the New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC) Initiative, an organisation-wide reflection on why we did not see the warning signs, and in what ways we could change our “GPS” (our data, our models and our tools) in order to establish the basis of a better way for analysing economic challenges and improving our policy advice. Moreover, in the same year, we launched our Inclusive Growth project, aimed at jointly analysing “growth” and “inequality”, which had, until then, been looked at separately, sometimes leading to inconsistent policy recommendations. Building on this work, this year we launched the OECD Framework for Policy Action on Inclusive Growth which aims to guide policy-makers in designing policies that distribute the benefits of growth more equally, and to give people a fair chance to achieve their full potential. While we may not have travelled the full distance, we are now better equipped to address today’s realities and challenges. For these reasons, I very much supported the suggestion of our Chief Statistician, Martine Durand, that the OECD was the ideal place to “host” an independent group of experts, convened by Joseph E. Stiglitz and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, to maintain the momentum of the 2009 Commission and provide further direction to the “Beyond GDP” agenda.

This book provides an overview by the chairs of the OECD-hosted High-Level Group on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (HLEG), summarising almost five years of work. I would like to thank Joseph E. Stiglitz, Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Martine Durand for their leadership, and all HLEG members for their dedication and contributions.

I very much hope that the views expressed in this book – and in the companion report *For Good Measure: Advancing Research on Well-being Metrics Beyond GDP*, a collection of authored chapters by HLEG members – which are offered in the authors’ personal capacity, will have the same significant influence in the economic and statistical community as those of the 2009 Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission. It is only by having better metrics that truly reflect people’s lives and aspirations that we will be able to design and implement “*better policies for better lives*”.



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