

Unclassified**English - Or. English****7 December 2023****COUNCIL****Council****IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DIGITAL ECONOMY
POLICY****Executive Summary**

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IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DIGITAL ECONOMY POLICY

The Committee on Digital Economy Policy (hereafter “the Committee” or “CDEP”), was established in 1982 under the name “Committee for Information, Computer and Communications Policy” (ICCP) and was renamed CDEP in 2014.

According to its mandate, which was last revised in 2018, the Committee develops evidence-based policies through multi-stakeholder processes. By so doing, it aims to stimulate the growth of an accessible, innovative, open, inclusive and trusted digital economy for sustained prosperity and provides policymakers with the tools needed to develop a forward-looking, whole-of-government policy response that leverages the potential of digitalisation for growth and well-being across policy areas. The Committee’s main role is to help Members equip themselves with the resources needed to address the societal and economic changes resulting from a process of digitalisation that goes far beyond the sole sector of information and communication technologies.

The present In-depth Evaluation (IDE) assesses the Committee’s relevance, the effectiveness and quality of its products, and its functioning over the period 2009-2020.

This In-depth Evaluation finds the objectives and work of the Committee to be “highly” relevant for Members. CDEP scores very highly on the relevance of its programme objectives, particularly as regards the themes of “Innovation, emerging technologies” and “Digitalisation, digital economy, digital transformation” which are at the core of its mandate. Members’ perception of the Output Area “Digital Economy” (OA 1.3.1) for which CDEP is responsible has evolved during the 2009-2020 period covered by the evaluation from being a middle-ranking priority to a high-ranking priority. However, the participation of capital-based Delegates to the meetings of the Committee and of several of its Working Parties during the review period has been lower as compared to the three years preceding the review period.

Direct policy impact of the CDEP products shows as moderate in the quantitative assessment, based on Programme Implementation Report (PIR) data. At the same time, the qualitative assessment results point to an overall positive view of CDEP’s policy impact. More precisely, the CDEP has influenced national policymaking in three ways, corresponding well to its mandate.

Firstly, the Committee has been particularly able to identify emerging trends, opportunities and challenges, in a fast changing environment attracting strong public attention. The CDEP has addressed those topics and, according to policymakers interviewed, produced ground-breaking analyses, most often ahead of the curve of what was done in Members or in other international organisations.

The second way in which the Committee work has influenced policymaking in countries consisted in addressing the digital economy no longer as a series of technical changes but as a horizontal process of digitalisation affecting several dimensions of the social and economic life. Products delivered by CDEP offered views and tool to address issues such as privacy and security, artificial intelligence or 5G that go well beyond their technical aspects.

The third way the CDEP has generated impact in Members is through the development (and updating) of a series of standards including legal instruments, which, in addition to being normative tools, also contribute to disseminating of CDEP’s analyses. The Recommendation on Artificial Intelligence [[OECD/LEGAL/0449](#)] is notable in this regard, with the G20 deriving its G20 AI Principles directly from it. Indeed, the multi-stakeholder development process of this Recommendation is recognised by this evaluation as a Good Practice case that could be of value to other Committees. Beyond legal

instruments, the numerous publications issued in the context of the Going Digital horizontal project have had significant impact, a project for which CDEP was the lead Committee.

The CDEP is a well-functioning Committee, delivering its work in application of the 2018 revision of its mandate. The elaboration of the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) of the Committee, which addresses an expanding field of work, is managed through a process of consultation and prioritisation involving the Committee and Working Party Delegates, under the oversight of the extended Bureau. The organisation of the two annual meetings of the Committee and its Working Parties during “CDEP weeks” allows for exchange of information, also within the Committee sub-structure. It was adapted to the COVID 19 crisis, and the Committee identifies the lessons to be retained from moving to fully virtual meetings.

The Committee communicates its products through a variety of channels, and notably via special events organised on the occasion of the release of specific products. However, having a clearer communication strategy could further improve the Committee’s impact.

Digitalisation is a process affecting numerous if not all sectors of public policy, and, naturally, the work of the Committee involves horizontal cooperation. The main mechanism for such cooperation is the “Going Digital” horizontal project, to which fourteen “core Committees” contribute with the CDEP as lead. In addition to this project, there are other cases of fruitful Committee-to-Committee exchanges. However, Delegates are not always aware of their existence.

CDEP engages with OECD Key Partners as well as with a small number of other non-Members. This has led to increased involvement of several longstanding partner countries. However, the level of engagement of several countries that have strong presence in the international landscape of digital economy has remained moderate.

One strong asset of CDEP is the depth and quality of its exchanges with stakeholders and civil-society organisations (CSOs). Business at OECD (BIAC), Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) and CSISAC (the Civil Society Information Society Advisory Council, created explicitly to represent civil society at CDEP) expressed satisfaction with their participation in the Committee work. Representatives of other CSOs have also been invited to address the Committee, which has further enriched its debates.

The overall good performance notwithstanding, some areas for improvement were identified:

- The declining participation of capital-based delegates to the meetings of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies merits attention;
- At global level, while the Committee has generated global impact through the G20, its efforts in contributing to gender equality or other Sustainable Development Goals, despite the provisions of its mandate and PWBs can still be improved;
- The Committee has developed online tools for communicating its results and conducted ad hoc dissemination efforts, which were appreciated by interviewees. Developing a communication strategy could further maximise its impact;
- The CDEP has numerous joint activities and types of co-operation with other Committees, the most significant being the Going Digital horizontal project. This successful co-operation has led to an increasing number of joint activities with a larger scope, which has resulted in several Delegates, including Bureau members, finding it increasingly difficult to keep a comprehensive view of the network of exchanges in which the CDEP evolves;
- Similarly, the Committee is benefiting from its exchanges with representatives of civil society, but their diversity and number call for ongoing consideration of their respective roles and expected contributions.

Assessment¹

<i>Relevance</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Medium to High</i>
<i>Quality of Committee Products</i>	<i>High to Very High</i>
<i>Committee functioning</i>	<i>Highly Satisfactory</i>

Recommendations

Recommendation N° 1: The Committee on Digital Economy Policy should analyse the causes of the decreasing participation of capital-based Delegates to its meetings and to those of its working parties, and take the appropriate measures in view of ensuring its continued relevance.

Recommendation N° 2: The Committee on Digital Economy Policy should ensure that its products contribute to gender mainstreaming and to the relevant sustainable development goals, with the view to increase the global impact of its products.

Recommendation N° 3: The Committee on Digital Economy Policy should elaborate a communication strategy with the view to be more systematic and results-oriented in the dissemination of its products.

Recommendation N° 4: The CDEP has numerous successful joint activities and types of cooperation with other Committees, the most significant being the Going Digital horizontal project. This successful co-operation has led to an increasing number of joint activities with a larger scope, which has resulted in several Delegates, including Bureau members, finding it increasingly difficult to keep a comprehensive view of the network of exchanges in which the CDEP evolves. The Committee on Digital Economy Policy should ensure that Delegates are kept fully aware of the activities conducted in co-operation with other Committees, in order to ensure continuous monitoring thereof and seize opportunities for such co-operation as relevant.

Recommendation N° 5: In order to maximise the benefit it can draw from the involvement of civil society organisations in its work and in the work of its subsidiary bodies, the Committee on Digital Economy Policy should, given their diversity and number, periodically assess the involvement of civil society organisations in its work and the rationale for their participation. It should also ensure continued balance in the interests represented by those CSOs.

¹ Relevance, effectiveness and quality are rated on a 9-point scale (Very Low / Very Low to Low / Low / Low to Medium / Medium / Medium to High / High / High to Very High / Very High); committee functioning is rated on a 5-point scale (Poor / Fair / Satisfactory / Highly Satisfactory / Excellent).