



Labour-market polarisation and elementary occupations in Europe. Blip or long-term trend?

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Labour market polarisation is not new. There is growing literature providing evidence (particularly from the US and the UK) of an overall increase in demand for low- and high-paid jobs, while people working in the middle of the wage spectrum tend to decline. The 'task-approach' to the skill biased technological change hypothesis seems to provide a good explanation for this trend. By lowering the opportunity-cost of capital, technological progress tends to substitute labour performing routine tasks, which generally occupy the middle of the wage ranking. Jobs at the top and the bottom of the spectrum (both abstract and manual non-routine tasks) are often complementary with technological progress. The labour market tends to become polarised, with an increasing number of workers at the extremes of the spectrum and fewer in the middle.

In this paper, particular attention is given to elementary occupations. The primary aim of the research is to describe and analyse European employment trends by occupation and provide evidence of emerging structural growth in elementary occupations and, thereby, of polarisation. The main results of the analysis can be summarised as follows.

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