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EurOccupations: the occupational structure in Poland

EurOccupations: Developing a detailed 7-country occupations database for comparative socio-economic research in the European Union

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Project summary

Occupation is the key unit in matching vacancies and job seekers, and it is used for occupational choice and for career consultancy. Occupation is a key variable in social research, particularly that which relates to the labour market, transitions from school to work, social stratification, gender wage gaps, occupational structures and skill requirements. The ILO’s International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) is the classification most commonly used, and it was recently updated to ISCO-08. Eurostat uses ISCO for its employment statistics. Some EU member states have their own occupational classifications, using cross-over tables to ISCO. Some countries maintain a dictionary of occupational titles.

The EurOccupations project aimed to build a publicly available database containing the most frequent occupations for use in multi-country data-collection, through the Internet or otherwise. It covered eight EU countries, notably Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and United Kingdom. One study aimed at investigating the development of the occupational structure in Poland.

The occupational structure in Poland

Between 2000 and 2007, the Polish labour force has increased in all economic activities except hotels and restaurants. Of all occupational groups, professionals showed the largest growth, for example in real estate, renting and business activities (199,000). In health care and social work, the number of professionals rose by 256,000, while the number of technicians fell by 238,000. This was mainly due to changes to the definition of nurses and midwives in the Polish occupational classification, as they gained the status of professionals instead of technicians. In manufacturing the number of professionals increased by 62,000 and the number of plant and machine operators and assemblers by 172,000, most likely due to technological development. The number of craft and related trade workers declined by 136,000. In construction, the number of technicians, clerks, craft and related trade workers, plant and machine operators and elementary occupations decreased; by contrast, only the number of senior officials and managers increased. Nevertheless, the occupational structure became more segmented. In education, for example, the number of professionals, technicians and service workers rose by 44,000, 9,000 and 28,000 respectively, and the workforce in elementary occupations rose by 27,000 (Michoń, 2009).

In Poland as well as in other new EU member states, the industry structure is assumed to be biased towards less skill-intensive industries and the occupational structure towards low-skills. Yet, Poland aims to attract growingly foreign direct investment (FDI), and since 1990 the amount of FDI in Poland has been rising. In 2007, the amount involved was over 16.5 billion euro, mainly in services (58%) and manufacturing (30%). Hence, it seems justified to anticipate skill upgrading, because technological diffusion occurs mainly via FDI.

Poland can be expected to experience significant structural changes, though manufacturing is likely to remain an important source of jobs. Obviously, due to technological improvement skill requirements will change, particularly formal qualifications. In the past few decades education and training have acquired a high status in Western countries, with diplomas and certificates playing a crucial role in determining an individual's opportunities. In Poland, like in other Eastern European countries, the role of education has gained such importance relatively late. From 1990 on, economic and social changes have increased the importance of education and professional experience. The demand for (tertiary) education has risen considerably in Poland. Between 1992 and 2008 the proportion of highly educated rose from 9.3% to 22.6%. New generations entering the labour market obviously understand the importance of education. In 2008, almost two in five young Polish persons (37%) graduated from tertiary education. In 1994 the share with only primary education was largest among the 40-44 of age, but in 2007 that had shifted to the 50-54 of age.

Project information EurOccupations

Funding scheme

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Websites

www.eurooccupations.org

<http://eurocc.icares.com>

www.wageindicator.org

Further reading

Michoń, P. 2009. "Twenty years of transformation and its consequences for the occupational structure in Poland." EurOccupations Deliverable D24

For more information

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