

Comparing public and private sector pay

Public sector pay, and in particular the claimed public sector pay premium, have been an issue for the European institutions for some time, and this was enshrined in the Euro-Plus Pact in 2011 which called on governments to “ensure that wages settlements in the public sector support the competitiveness efforts in the private sector (bearing in mind the important signalling effect of public sector wage).”

EPSU asked Torsten Müller of the European Trade Union Institute and Thorsten Schulten of the WSI trade union research institute in Germany to examine this question using data on public and private sector pay, comparing pay levels as well as looking at statistics available from Eurostat, the Commission’s statistics agency.

They found no clear evidence for claims about a public sector pay premium, no clear evidence for public sector wage leadership in pre-crisis period and actually severe pressure on public sector wages during crisis with public sector wages much harder hit than private sector wages.

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