

Evolutions de la part salariale belge: Essai de quantification rétrospective longue (1960-1970-2007)

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of the macroeconomic “capital/labour” income distribution, notably of the wage share, is a central topic in many economic debates. However, due to lack of homogenous long term retro-polated time series in the national accounts, there is in Belgium no consensus on the basic data upon which changes in this income distribution could be assessed and quantified. On the basis of partial figures, this study tries to make a consistent pre-1995 statistical retro-polation of several wage share indicators. It also tries to specify the sources of the divergence between the so called actualised and measured wage share developments, on the one hand, and the few other available estimates for Belgium over a long period (1970-2007, and even 1960-2007), on the other hand. Special focus is put on the differences between covered economic fields as well as on the impact of hypotheses and methods adjusting for the growing salarization, more specifically with respect to the imputation of earned income of self-employed persons. On the latter point, an important conclusion is that the common simplified hypothesis of permanent equivalence of the imputed self-employed compensation per job with those of the wage-earners must be rejected in the Belgian case. This hypothesis leads indeed, especially in the 1970s, to strongly biased results which contradict also other historical and available statistical evidence. Finally, in the Belgian case, a structural and significant decrease of the effective or corrected wage share can be measured since the mid-1980s, compared to the first half of the 1970s. This is especially true when the analysis is carried out on the private sector, excluding public administration, or on the sector of non-financial corporations and quasi-corporations.

Keywords: wage share, allocation, profitability, competitiveness, income.

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