Abstract

Satisfied@Work. Differences between self-employed and employees in the European Union

Chantal Remery
Universiteit Utrecht, Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance, Department of Economics

Joop Schippers
Universiteit Utrecht, Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance, Department of Economics and 2019-NSVP fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, Amsterdam

Purpose – The main purpose of this paper is to compare work satisfaction between employees and self-employed in order to see whether there are indeed major differences between both groups as is sometimes claimed in policy discussions and to discuss whether the factors that determine work satisfaction differ between these two groups of workers.

Design/methodology/approach – Using data from the 6th Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), collected in 2015 the paper reports on OLS regressions to explain work satisfaction from three groups of factors: work content and process, work-family fit and the ‘rewards’ from work.

Findings – Self-employed report a slightly higher work satisfaction than employees. Work satisfaction is determined predominantly by the same factors for both groups. It is primarily factors related to work content and work processes and the ‘rewards’ from work like earnings and health effects that determine work satisfaction.

Research limitations/implications – The cross-sectional nature of our analyses does not allow to correct for self-selection related to the choice to enter self-employment. That is why some of the results have to be interpreted with care.

Originality/value – Studying work satisfaction the study broadens the perspective compared to earlier studies focussing on specific job characteristics. It studies the determinants of work satisfaction separately for self-employed and employees, revealing to what extent different dimensions of work matter to both groups of workers. Using recent data for all EU member states diminishes the likelihood that the results primarily reflect national institutional differences. Moreover, the data allow to include those who are in self-employment merely because, after the economic crisis at the end of the first decade of this century, this was their only opportunity for an active role in the labour market.