Structural Change and the Competitiveness of EU Member States

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Abstract

Is structural change and economic specialisation associated with developments of competitiveness as defined by the ability to raise standards of living and employment, while maintaining sustainable external balances? To assess this relationship for the EU countries, we develop a set of indicators to monitor structural change and economic specialisation between and within sectors. We apply both descriptive statistics and econometric analysis to test whether this indicator set is linked to competitiveness. Our results lend support to the view that indicators of structural change, patterns of specialisation in both industry and trade as well as of sectoral upgrading can shed light on firm capabilities, prospects for growth and how to cope with adjustment pressure in the wake of rising competition. It provides a balanced picture of the competitive strengths and weaknesses of EU countries across both manufacturing and services.

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