

4. Enlargement

The number of member states of the European Union has grown from the original six who signed the Treaty of Paris in 1951 to fifteen today. The last round of enlargement in January 1995 saw the Union extend northwards to include Sweden and Finland and east to embrace Austria. A further 12 countries are candidates for membership, most of these lie on the eastern borders of the Union with the exception of the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus.

In part the work of the current Intergovernmental Conference is being carried out with the perspective of a new round of enlargement taking place around the turn of the millennium. In this chapter we will examine public opinion to the immediate and longer term future of the Union and the admittance of new members.

4.1 The immediate future of the Union

How do citizens feel about the immediate future of the Union? The following question, which has been used a number of times (the last being Spring 1995), was asked of the 65,000 respondents in the mega survey:

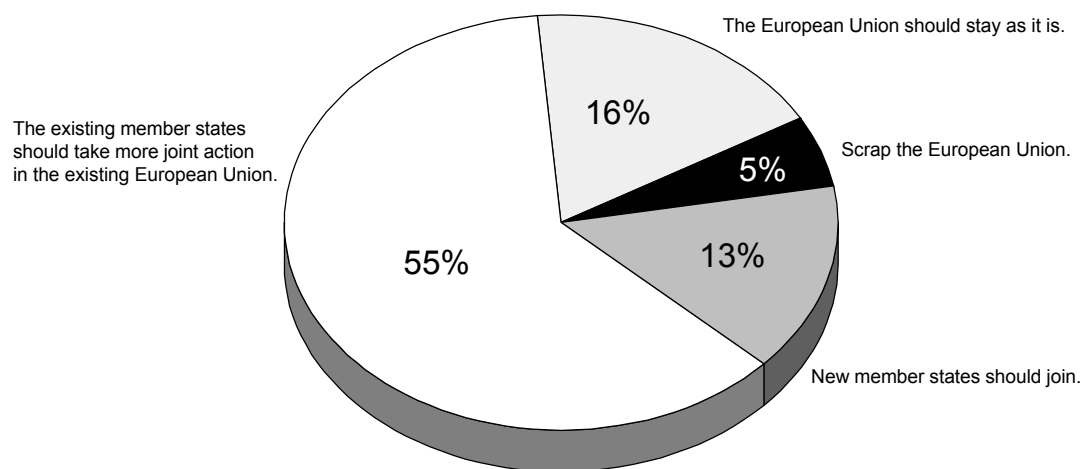
"Which of these three options for the immediate future of the European Union would you prefer?"

- ☐ *The European Union should stay as it is*
- ☐ *The existing member countries should take more joint action in the existing European Union*
- ☐ *New member states should join"*

The majority (55%) want the existing member states to take more joint action, 16% felt the Union should stay the same, while 13% supported the idea of new countries joining. Thus overall citizens see, as a priority, a better functioning of the existing Union. (Tables 4.1 and 4.3)

The Immediate Future Organisation of the EU

EU15



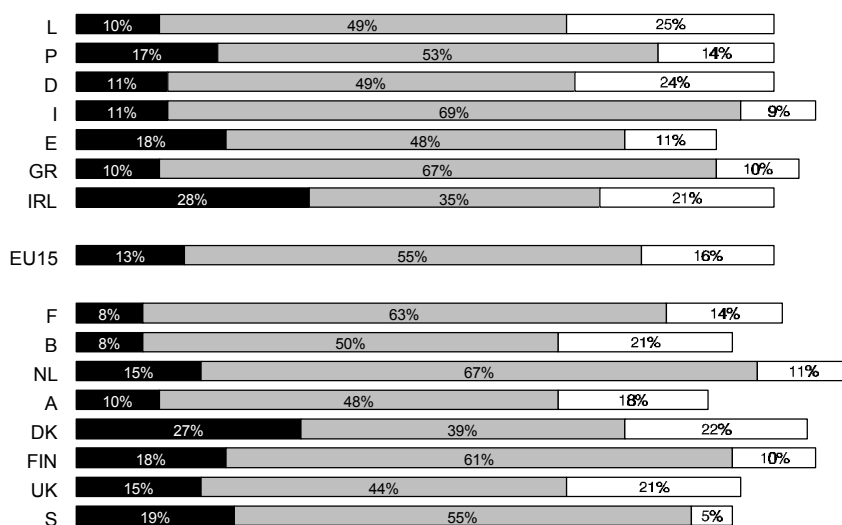
Source: Survey no. 44 Mega - Fieldwork Jan-Mar 96
Standard Eurobarometer 45 - Fig 4.1

percentage 'don't know' not shown

Support for enlargement has dropped by four percent since last measured in Spring 1995 (Eurobarometer 43). As then, Ireland and Denmark are the greatest protagonists (28% and 27% support respectively). Spain and Portugal record slight increases (+2% and +1%). Everywhere else there has been a decline in support as high as -14% in Greece and -9% in the United Kingdom.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNION				
Country	Stay the same	More joint action	New member states to join	% change for enlargement from EB43
EU15	16	55	13	-4
Austria	18	48	10	-5
Belgium	21	50	8	-4
Denmark	22	39	27	+2
Germany	24	49	11	-5
Greece	10	67	10	-14
Spain	11	48	18	+2
France	14	63	8	-4
Ireland	21	35	28	+2
Italy	9	69	11	-5
Luxembourg	25	49	10	-2
Netherlands	11	67	15	-2
Portugal	14	53	17	+1

The Immediate Future of the Union by country and EU15



■ New countries should join ■ More joint action in existing EU □ Should stay as it is

Source: Survey no. 44 Mega - Fieldwork Jan-Mar 96
Standard Eurobarometer 45 - Fig 4.2

Sweden	5	55	19	-3
Finland	10	61	18	-3
UK	21	44	15	-9

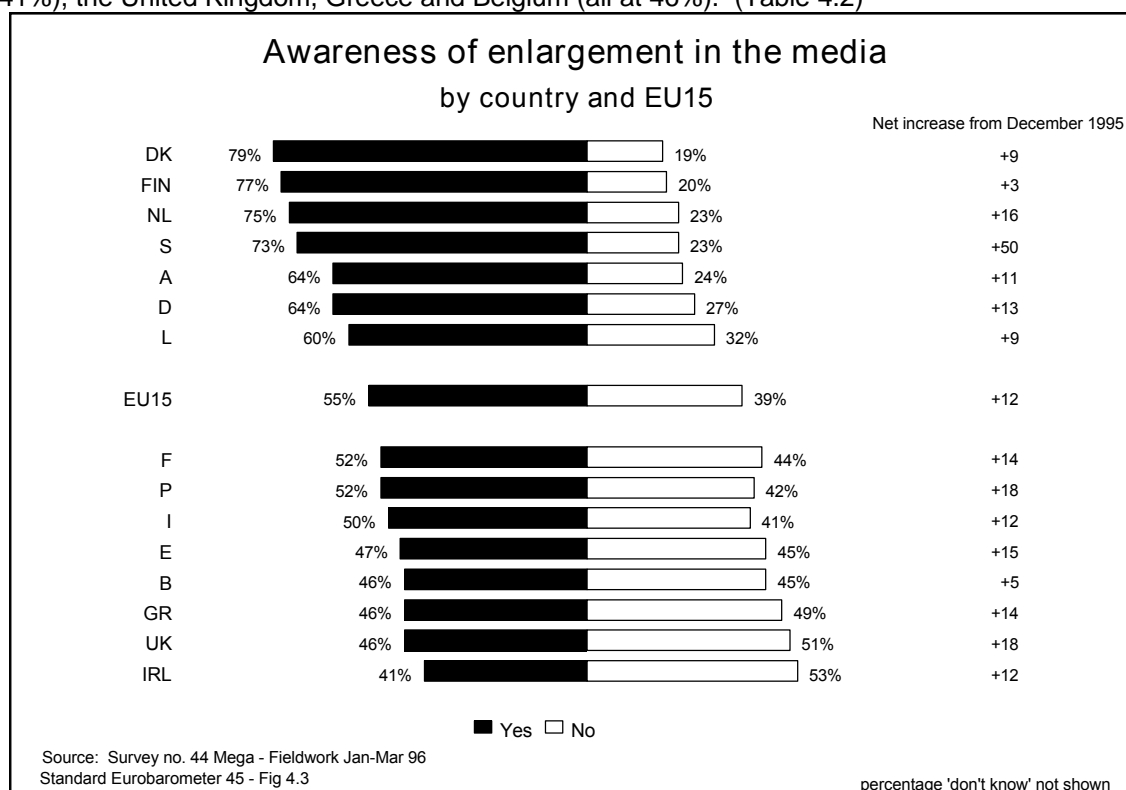
4.2 Awareness of enlargement

In order to measure the level of awareness of the enlargement debate in the media respondents were asked:

"Over the last three months, have you heard or read about discussions concerning the future membership of countries of Central and Eastern Europe?"

Amongst those interviewed 55% stated they had indeed read or heard something on the subject, which compares with only 43% recorded in our previous survey (December 1995). However, one should add a cautionary note, because a number of other items in the same question also reflected an increase in awareness.

Increases were recorded in all member states. Denmark remained the most aware, with 79% of people reporting having read or heard about enlargement in the past three months. Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden were high with 77%, 75% and 73% respectively. Least aware were Ireland (41%), the United Kingdom, Greece and Belgium (all at 46%). (Table 4.2)



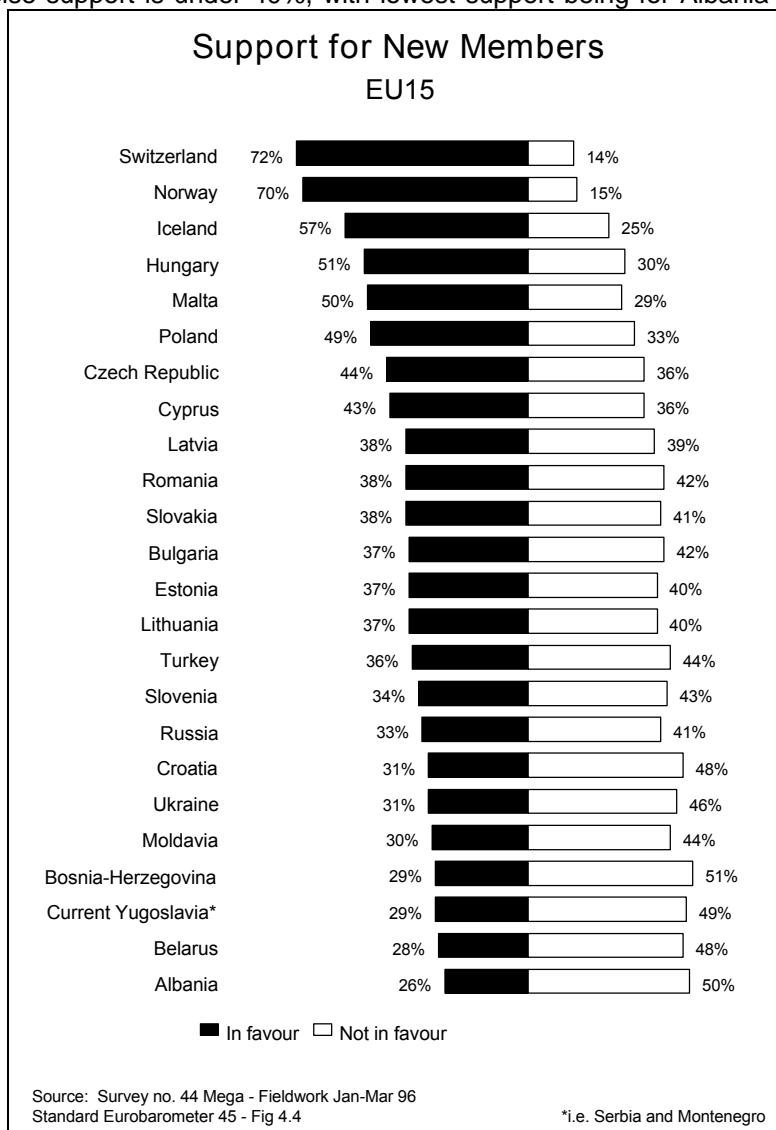
The demographic analysis reveals that men were more aware than women (61% to 49%). Those who are in management jobs (74% aware) and have completed their education after 20 (72%). (Table 4.4)

4.3 Support for European Union Membership

Support for new members was measured by asking people if they were in favour of them becoming part of the European Union in the future. The two most acceptable countries were Switzerland (72%) and Norway (70%), despite the Norwegian referendum rejecting Union membership (52% against membership, 48% for).

We then observe a substantial gap of about 20% before we reach a second group of countries where approximately half of European Union citizens say they support their membership applications. These include Iceland (57%), Hungary (51%), Malta (50%) and Poland (49%). Just over four in ten citizens support membership for the Czech Republic (44%) and Cyprus (43%).

Everywhere else support is under 40%, with lowest support being for Albania (26%), Belarus (28%),



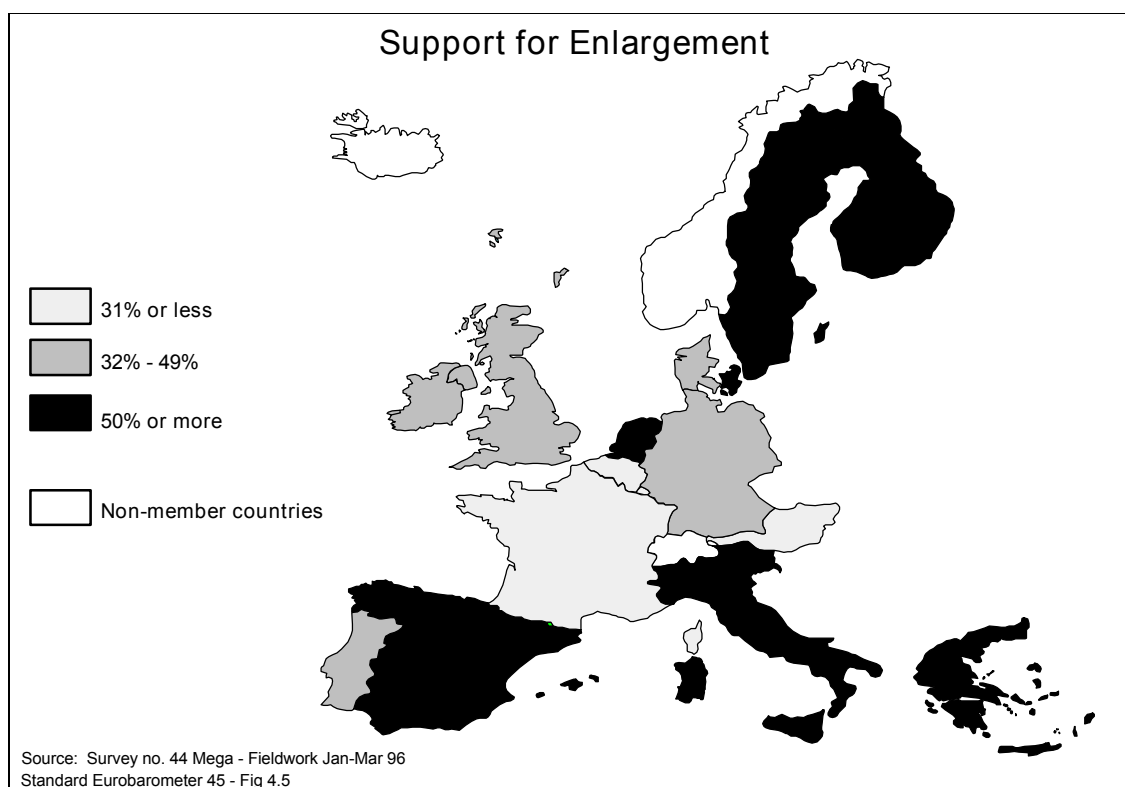
Bosnia-Herzegovina and current Yugoslavia (both 29%). For countries where comparable data from previous surveys exists¹, we see an overall decline in support in the range of -10 to -3. (Table 4.5)

¹ Standard Eurobarometer 42, December 1994.

In addition to measuring the overall level of support for individual countries, a further analysis was carried out to examine EU citizens attitudes to enlargement more generally. Were some countries more positive than others?

In the analysis the average number of positive scores were calculated for each member state. Overall the Netherlands was most receptive to new applications followed by Sweden, Greece and Spain. Those countries who were the least positive included France, Austria, Luxembourg and Belgium. The following table gives the national scores:

POSITIVE RESPONSES TO ENLARGEMENT					
50% or more		32% - 49%		31% or less	
Netherlands	57%	Denmark	41%	Belgium	31%
Sweden	53%	United Kingdom	40%	Luxembourg	29%
Greece	52%	Ireland	37%	Austria	29%
Spain	51%	Germany	35%	France	29%
Italy	50%	Portugal	34%		
Finland	50%				



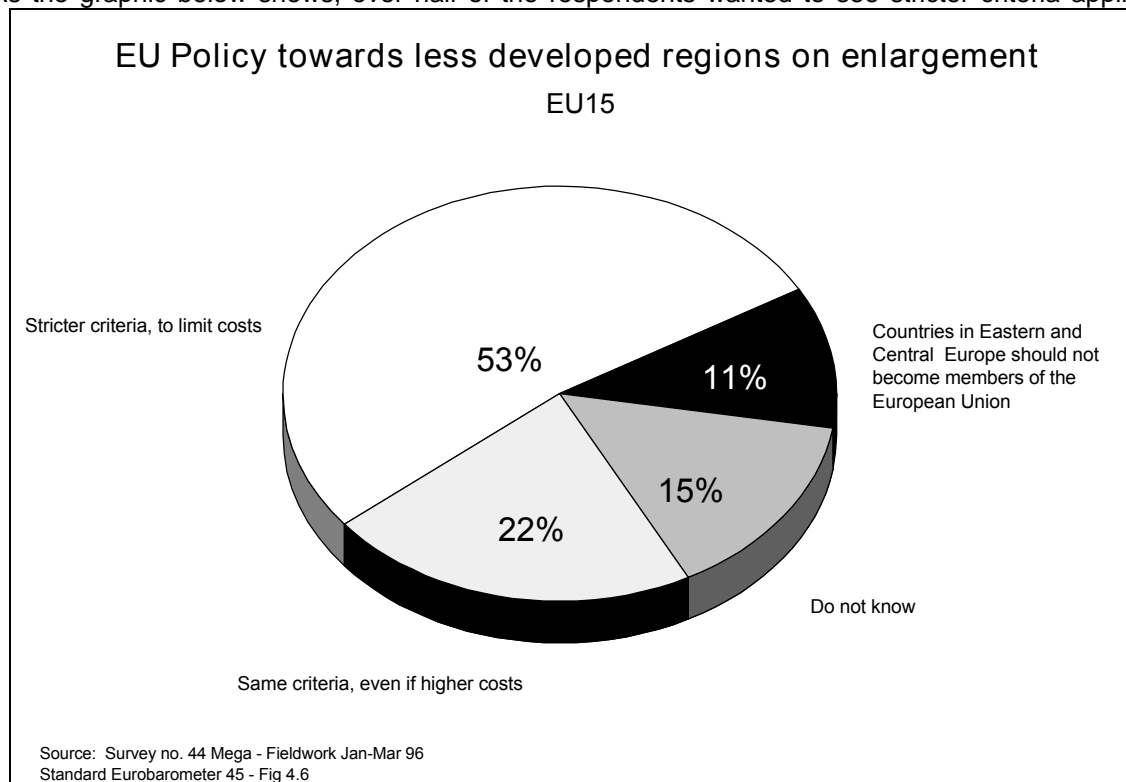
4.4 European Union policy towards less developed regions on Enlargement

A final question about future enlargement concerned the Union's treatment of less developed regions:

"If countries in Eastern and Central Europe become members of the European Union, what do you think the European Commission should do for all the less developed regions of the European Union?"

- *Give aid to all the less developed regions, based on the same criteria as today, even if the costs of this aid will be much higher because countries in Eastern and Central Europe have become members.*
- *Give aid to all the less developed regions, based on stricter criteria than today in order to limit the increased costs of this aid, because the countries in Eastern and Central Europe have become members.*
- *(Spontaneous answer) Countries in Eastern and Central Europe should not become members of the Union".*

As the graphic below shows, over half of the respondents wanted to see stricter criteria applied for



regional aid. One in four supported some level of aid even if it cost more, while 11% spontaneously opposed further enlargement and 15% held no opinion.

In the country by country analysis, we observe significant variations in attitudes, which reflect general attitudes towards enlargement as described above. Those in favour of enlargement generally were more willing to pay the price, conversely those who want the Union to consolidate did not wish to see further expenditure, but rather stricter criteria on spending.

