

5. Employment

All surveys measuring the concerns of the general public indicate that the subject of employment remains central to the European citizen. Be it developing programmes to fight unemployment, providing job opportunities, improving equality of opportunity for women or minorities, all are considered important. In the following analysis we will examine attitudes to employment and at what level actions should be taken.

5.1 Employment as a key priority area

While the question of employment and jobs figures high on any list of concerns, the Eurobarometer asked respondents, for the four following actions, whether they were considered an area for priority action:

- ☐ Developing joint programmes to fight against unemployment
- ☐ Providing more opportunities to find a job anywhere in the European Union
- ☐ Improving equality of opportunity between men and women
- ☐ Improving equality of opportunity for minorities

In order to give perspective to the answers given by respondents, we give below the actual unemployment rates (seasonally adjusted) for each of the member states for 1996-07 (unless otherwise indicated).

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED 1996-07 ¹								
	EU 15	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL
Total	10.7	9.7	6.3	8.9	na	21.0	11.7	12.5
Men	9.5	7.6	5.1	7.9	na	16.7	9.8	12.1
Women	12.5	12.7	7.9	10.2	na	28.7	14.0	13.2

	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Total	12.1*	3.1	6.8**	4.1	7.2	16.3	10.1	8.3
Men	9.5	2.2	5.4	3.1	6.1	16.4	10.6	9.6
Women	16.5	4.8	8.9	5.4	8.5	16.2	9.4	6.5

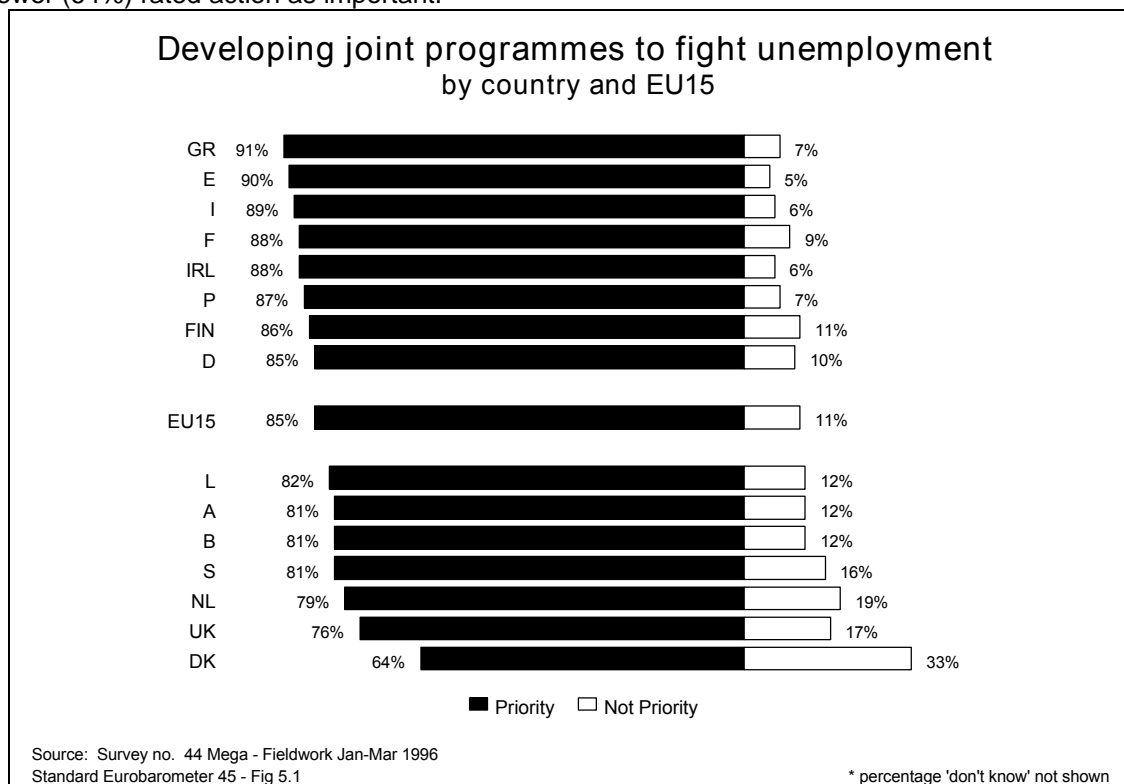
* Latest data available 1996-04

** Latest data available 1996-06

¹ Source: Eurostat - Unemployment 8/9 1996

5.2 Joint programmes against unemployment

The need to develop joint programmes to fight unemployment was seen as a key priority by 85% of all those interviewed. Scores were even higher in Greece (91% as a key priority), Spain (90%), Italy (89%), France and Ireland (88% each). Denmark was the only member state in which significantly fewer (64%) rated action as important.



As can be seen, while high real unemployment rates may solicit high scores on this item conversely countries with lower unemployment rates may still consider the question of unemployment and ways of tackling it as extremely important.

Demographic analysis shows that this is a key priority for all socio-economic groups: men and women, young and older respondents. The only group to give a lower score are those with a negative attitude towards Europe. (Table 5.1 and 5.2)

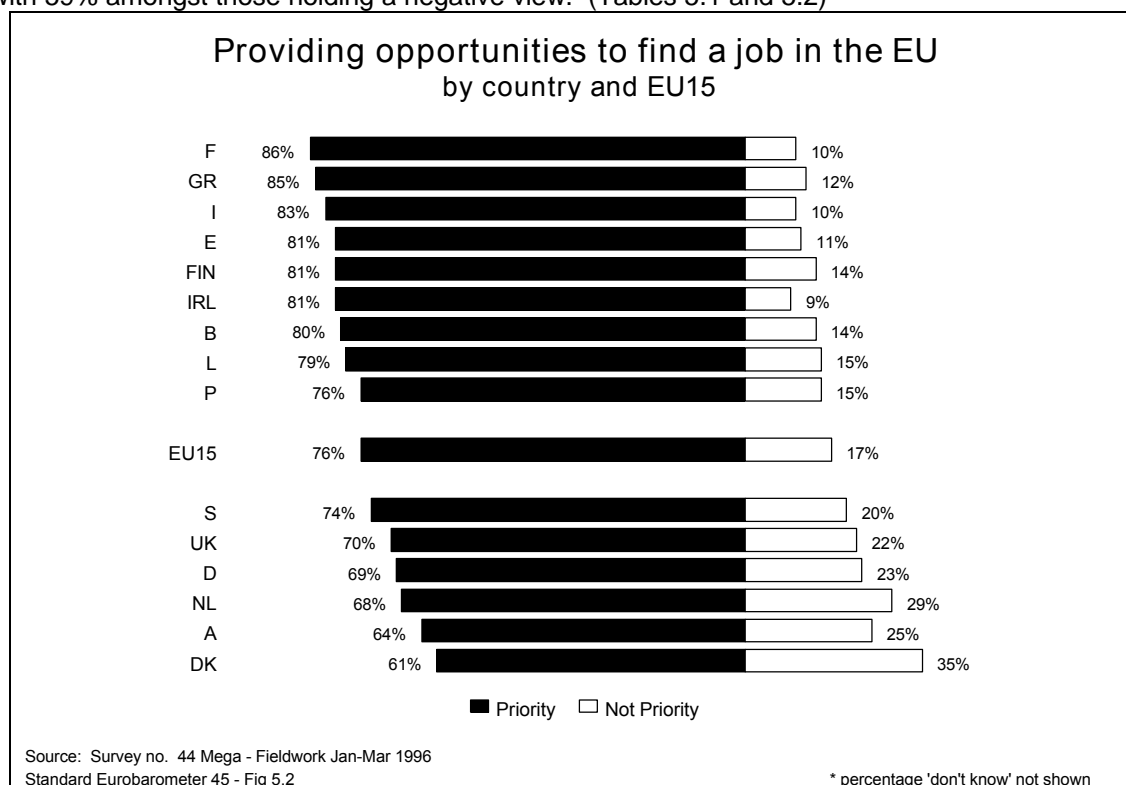
5.3 Providing opportunities to find a job in the European Union

The possibility of the European Union becoming more active in providing opportunities (for its citizens) to find a job anywhere in the Union was rated as a key priority by three-quarters of all those interviewed.

Again we see the "Mediterranean" countries (France, Greece, Italy and Spain) very much in favour of such a strategy as were Finland, Ireland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Nevertheless, we see lower scores in Denmark (61%) and Austria (64%).

The concept of job mobility is supported more by the young; of the 15-24 age group 79% rate it as a priority and correlating with that, those who are still studying place more value on being able to find a job anywhere in the Union (82%).

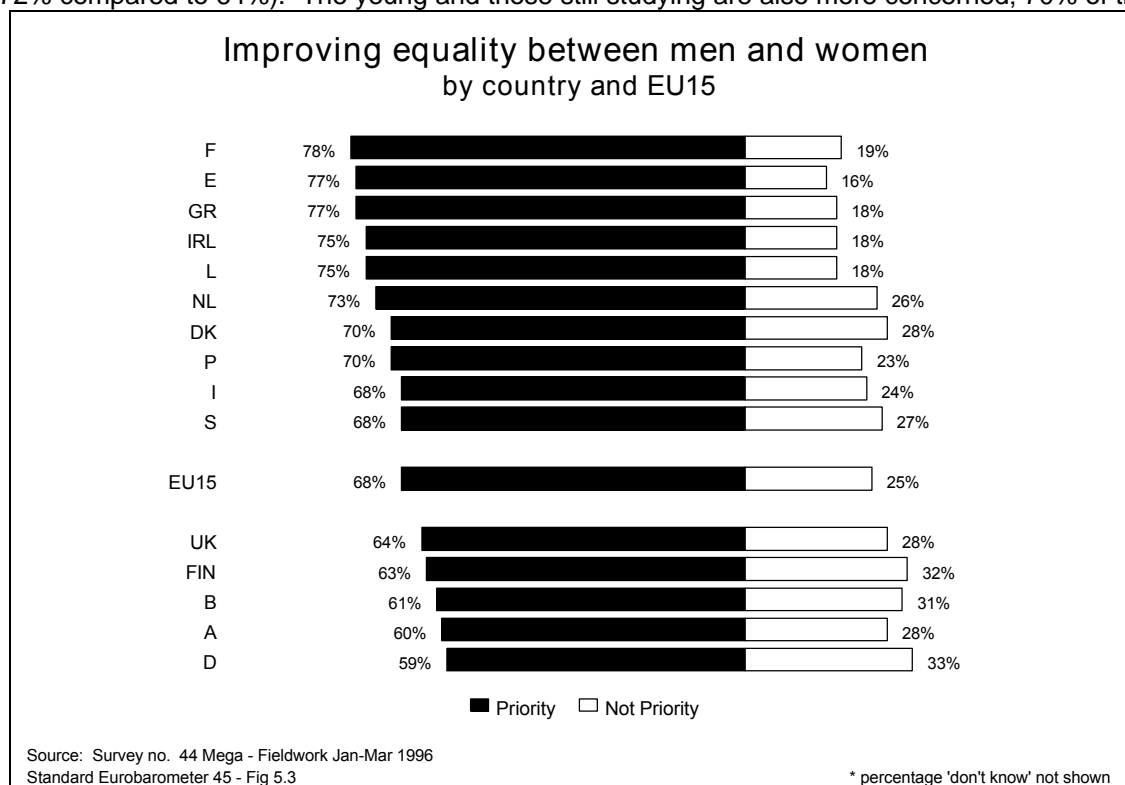
In the occupation categories we find the "inactive", and interestingly the unemployed, marginally less likely to support this as a priority area. Positive European attitudes generally are closely associated with the idea of job mobility; 83% of those holding positive attitudes rate it as a key priority compared with 59% amongst those holding a negative view. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2)



5.4 Equality of opportunities between men and women

Sixty-eight percent of respondents consider improving equal opportunities between men and women to be a key priority for the Union. The issue is of particular importance in France (78%), Greece and Spain (77% each), Ireland and Luxembourg (75% each) and Denmark (70%). Countries scoring lower on this issue were Germany (59%), Austria (60%), Belgium (61%), Finland (63%) and the United Kingdom (64%).

The demographic analysis indicates, predictably, that women see this as a greater priority than men (72% compared to 64%). The young and those still studying are also more concerned; 70% of the 15-



24's compared with 66% of the over 55's. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2)

5.5 Improving opportunities for minorities

The final area which respondents were asked to rate as a priority area or not for the Union, concerned improving equal opportunities for minorities; in this two-thirds rated it as a priority action area.

Feelings on this were strongest in Luxembourg (77%), Spain (76%), France (75%), Ireland (74%) and Greece (73%). Conversely, comparatively low scores were recorded in Austria and the United Kingdom (56% each). Again we observe a slightly greater support for priority action amongst women as compared to men and amongst the young and particularly students as compared to the older generation. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2)

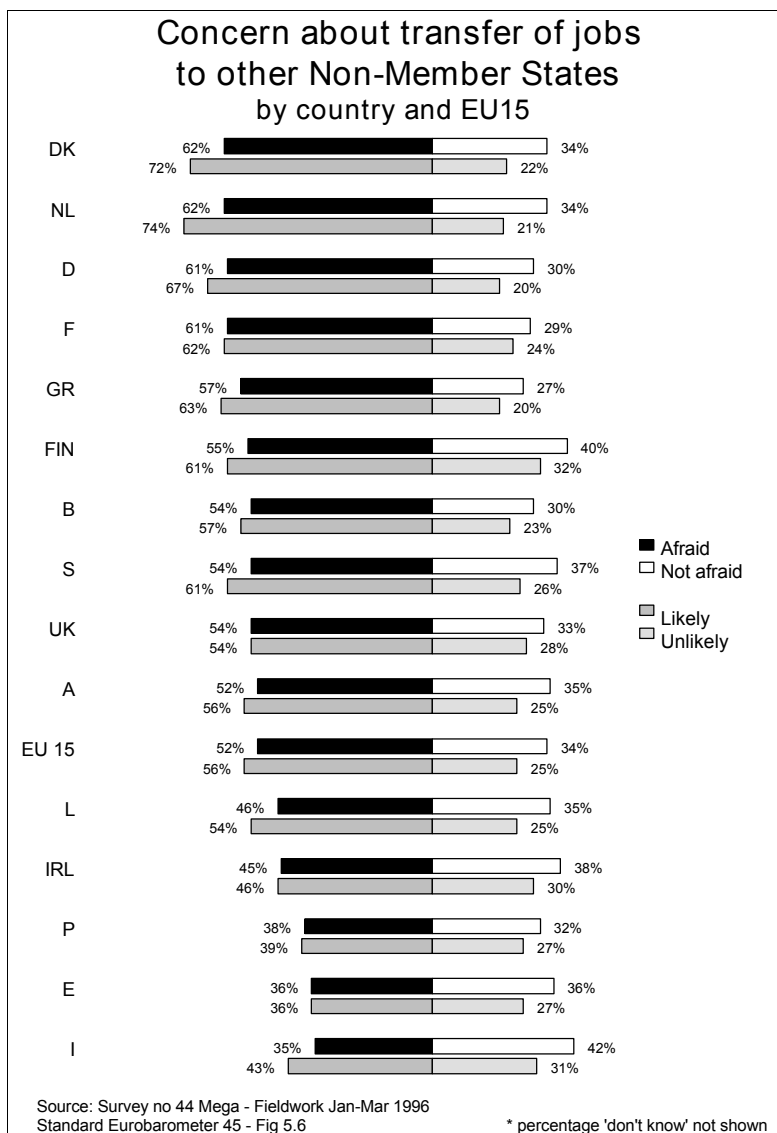
5.6 Anxieties concerning the job market

In the examination of attitudes to employment the survey looked, in specific terms, at the transfer of jobs within the Union and the possible transfer of jobs to lower wage economies outside the Union. Respondents were asked if they feared the transfer of jobs both within and without the Union, and if they saw this as a likelihood.

Overall, half of those interviewed expressed concern over the transfer of jobs either within the Union itself or outside to countries which have lower production costs. Feelings were strongest in northern Europe; in Sweden 66% feared the transfer of jobs within the Union, and scores of 63% was recorded in Germany, Denmark and Finland. Conversely, the southern states were significantly less fearful, with Italy and Spain recording scores of 40% and Portugal 42%.

Generally, the rank order of concern for the transfer of jobs, within and without the Union, was similar with one or two notable exceptions, principally in the three new member states. Sweden, while highest for concern for transfers within the Union, was less fearful of transfers to non-member states (66% compared to 54%), Finland, likewise, scored 63% for intra-Union transfer, but a lower 55% for extra-Union transfers and Austria recorded 60% compared to 52%.

In the demographics analysis we find the young and those still studying least concerned by the probability of job transfers. Those feeling more insecure were predictably those in manual jobs (59% concerned), clerical jobs (57%) and the unemployed (56%).



The second part of the question related to the likelihood of these transfers occurring. In all cases respondents were more inclined to believe that jobs would indeed be transferred to areas of lower production costs, whether in or outside the Union. Overall, 64% foresaw jobs moving internally and 56% for jobs moving outside the Union.

The likelihood of job transfers within the Union happening was most strongly believed by the best educated, those completing their studies after the age of 20 (69% inside the Union and 62% to outside the Union), managers (71% within the Union, 65% outside) and, finally, those having high opinion leader scores (70% within and 63% outside). (Tables 5.3 and 5.4)

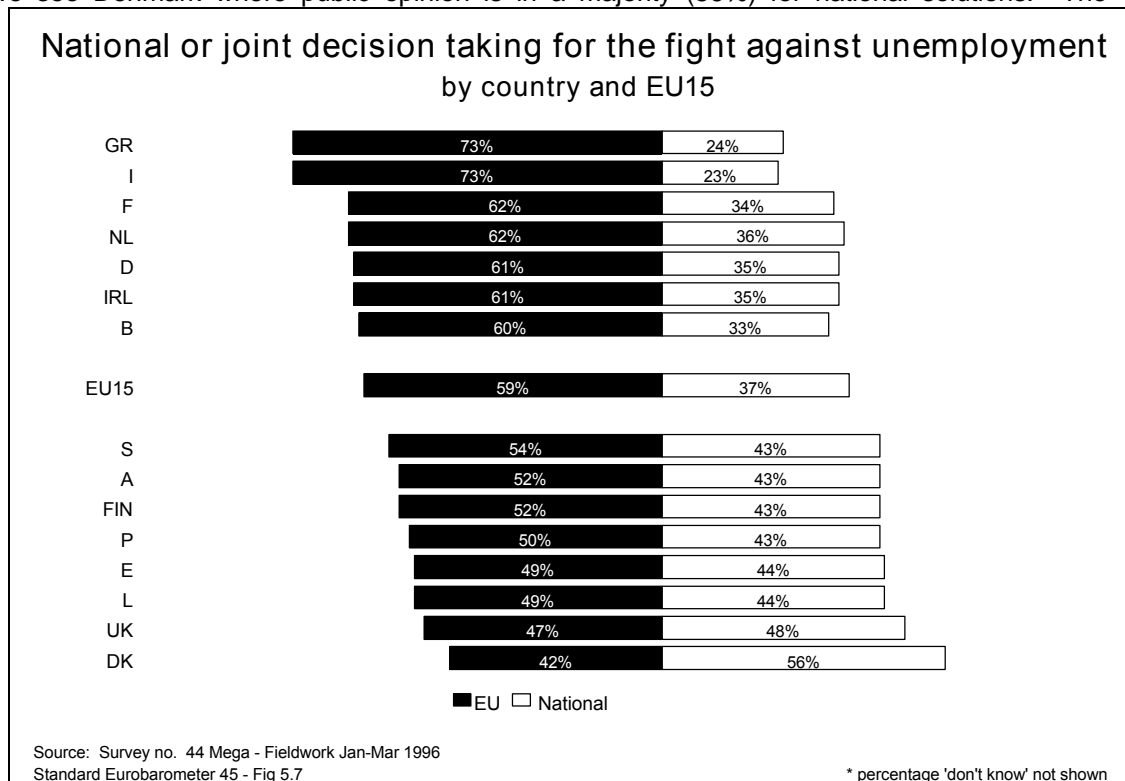
5.7 Decision taking - a National or an EU issue?

As we have seen in Chapter 3, employment or the lack thereof is rated as a high priority amongst EU citizens, but in whose competence do people believe the decisions concerning policy should reside?

In the Mega survey respondents were asked:

"Some people believe that certain areas of policy should be decided by the (national) government, while other areas should be decided jointly within the European Union. Which of the following areas of policy do you think should be decided by the (national) government, and which should be decided jointly within the European Union?"

Concerning the fight against **unemployment**, nearly six in ten consider this essentially an EU issue; particularly high scores are recorded in Greece and Italy with 73% each. At the other end of the scale we see Denmark where public opinion is in a majority (56%) for national solutions. The United

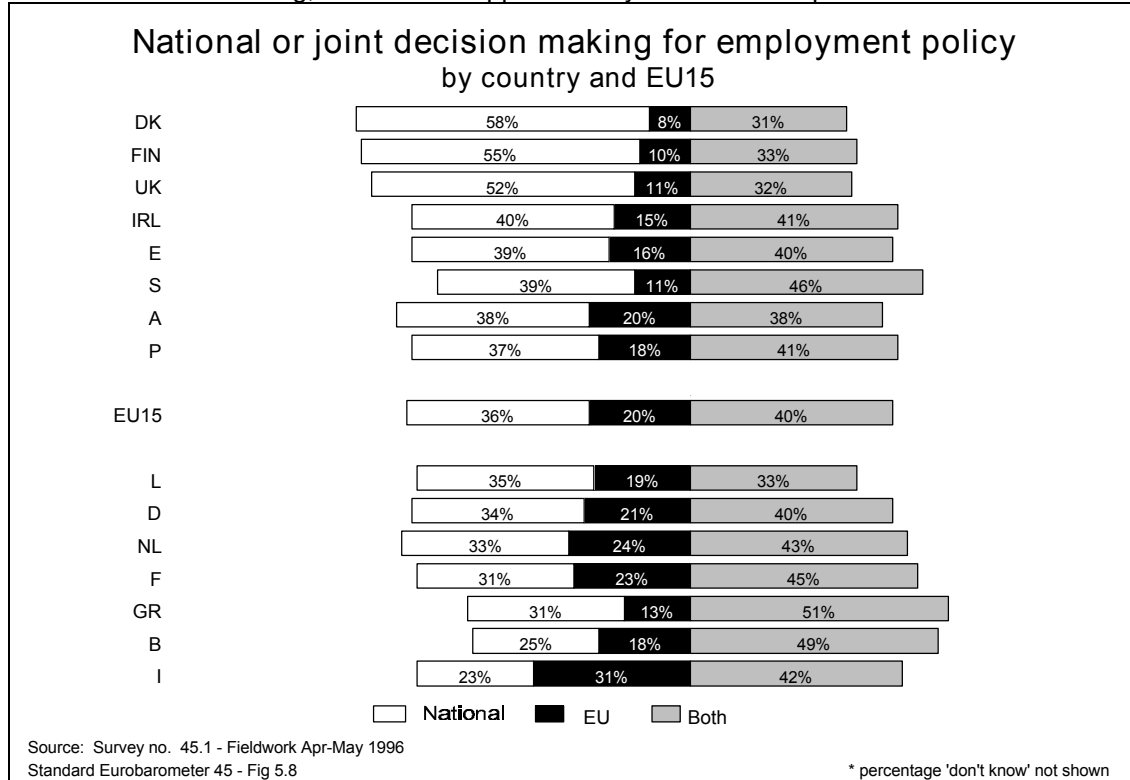


Kingdom is almost evenly split between national and EU decision taking. There is stronger support for EU level action amongst men, the educated, opinion leaders and management. (Tables 5.7 and 5.8)

A second question concerning **employment** policy was asked in Standard Eurobarometer 45 and this provided for a more nuanced response, also allowing respondents to choose joint decision taking.

In this formulation we see that people would like to see efforts on all three fronts; national, EU and joint (36% national only, 20% EU only and 40% for a joint effort).

In this version three countries, Denmark, Finland and the United Kingdom expressed majority support for national decision taking, but even so approximately four in ten respondents in these countries saw



EU and joint policy making as desirable. (Table 5.5 and 5.6)