Introducing the Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer public opinion surveys ("standard Eurobarometer surveys") have been conducted on behalf of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual of the European Commission each Spring and Autumn since Autumn 1973. They have included Greece since Autumn 1980, Portugal and Spain since Autumn 1985, the former German Democratic Republic since Autumn 1990 and Austria, Finland and Sweden from Spring 1995 onwards.

An identical set of questions was asked of representative samples of the population aged fifteen years and over in each Member State. The regular sample in standard Eurobarometer surveys is 1000 people per country except Luxembourg (500) and the United Kingdom (1000 in Great Britain and 300 in Northern Ireland). In order to monitor the integration of the five new Länder into unified Germany and the European Union, 2000 persons have been sampled in Germany since Eurobarometer 34: 1000 in East Germany and 1000 in West Germany.

In each of the 15 Member States, the survey is carried out by national institutes associated with the "INRA (Europe) European Coordination Office". This network of institutes was selected by tender. All institutes are members of the "European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research" (ESOMAR) and comply with its standards.

The figures shown in this report for each of the Member States are weighted by sex, age, region and size of locality. The figures given for the European Union as a whole are weighted on the basis of the adult population in each country. In certain cases, the total percentage in a table does not always add up exactly to 100%, but a number very close to it (e.g. 99 or 101), because of rounding. When questions allow for several responses, percentages often add up to more than 100%. Percentages shown in the graphics may display a difference of 1% compared to the tables because of the way previously-rounded percentages are added.

This report, which was drawn up by the Public Opinion Analysis Unit (X.A.2 ; Head of Unit : Anna Melich) of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual, is an internal working document of the European Commission.

Types of surveys in the Eurobarometer series

The European Commission (Directorate General X) organises general public opinion, specific target group, as well as qualitative (group discussion, in-depth interview) surveys in all Member States and, occasionally, in third countries. There are four different types of polls available:

- *Traditional Standard Eurobarometer with reports published twice a year*
- *Telephone Flash EB, also used for special target group surveys (e.g. Top Decision Makers)*
- *Qualitative research ("focus groups"; in-depth interviews)*
- *Central and Eastern EB, an annual survey of general public opinion in the 10 Central and Eastern European applicant countries in cooperation with DG I and DG 1A*

The face-to-face general public standard Eurobarometer polls, the telephone Flash EB polls and qualitative research serve primarily to carry out surveys for the different Directorates General and comparable special services of the Commission on their behalf and on their account.

Highlights

The findings presented in this 49th Eurobarometer report, which illustrate the state of public opinion towards the European Union in the spring of 1998, can be summarised as follows:

EU Support

- Support for the European Union has increased since the last survey. With more than half of the EU population now considering their country's membership as a good thing and with nearly half of the population feeling that their country has benefited from EU membership, support levels are now higher than they have been during the last few years. However, there are large variations in support levels between the 15 Member States.

Information

- EU citizens are particularly keen to find out more about their rights as EU citizens (49%), the single currency (45%) and employment (42%) which are all top priorities for the European Union. Interest in the single currency tends to be higher in countries that will introduce the euro on 1 January 1999 than in countries that will not introduce the single currency from the start.

- EU citizens are most likely to consult the television (67%) when they look for information about the European Union. Newspapers and magazines are also popular: on average, they are one of the preferred sources of information for 4 in 10 Europeans.

Support for current policy issues

- Co-operation with developing countries, the fight against drugs and foreign policy are the areas where citizens are most likely to want decision-making to take place at the EU level, followed by scientific and technological research, currency, regional aid and the protection of the environment.

- Now that the arrival of the single currency on 1 January 1999 is imminent, approval rates of the euro among EU citizens have reached their highest level since the survey began measuring support in 1993. 60% of EU citizens are now in favour of the euro, compared to just over 50% in the autumn of 1997. This increase of nearly 10 percentage points represents a truly significant improvement, with opposition to the single currency falling below 30%. 66% of people living in countries that will introduce the euro on 1 January 1999 support the euro, with highest support levels recorded in Italy (83%) and Luxembourg (79%). In Austria (56%), Finland (53%) and Germany (51%), support levels are above the 50% mark for the first time.

- The gap in support levels among men and women is narrowing. 65% of men are now in favour of the euro, compared to 56% of women. In the autumn of 1997, 57% of men and 46% of women were in favour of the euro. People who have stayed in full-time education until the age of 20 or older remain clearly more favourable (70%) than people who left school at a younger age (52% of those who left school before they reached age 16 support the euro).

- On average, roughly half of the population has received information about the single currency. Among the countries that will introduce the euro on 1 January 1999, this ranges from 20% of the people in Ireland to 89% of the people in Luxembourg. 41% of those who have obtained information got it from the television, 28% got it from newspapers and magazines, 16% from the radio and 15% from financial institutions.

- At this stage, a quarter of the population feels very well or well informed about the euro. It is therefore not surprising to find widespread interest in a public information campaign. Even in the countries that will not introduce the euro from the start interest levels are high so that on average 9 in 10 people feel that such campaigns should take place.

Enlargement

- Many Europeans respond positively to the idea of enlarging the European Union to include new European countries. 74% feel that the Union will be more important in the world if it includes more countries and 66% regard a Union that consists of more member countries as a cultural enrichment and believe that a larger Union will guarantee more peace and security. However, the results also reveal that quite a few people are concerned about the economic implications of enlargement: 45% believe that enlargement will cost their own country more money and 47% believe that their country will receive less financial aid once new countries have joined.

- While economic factors thus clearly play an important role for EU citizens, these are not the only issues that the public takes into account. There is widespread consensus that new countries can only join the European Union if they respect Human Rights and the principles of democracy (95%), if they fight organised crime and drug trafficking and if they protect the environment (both 92%). Around 8 in 10 Europeans regard a country's ability to pay its share of the European Union budget and the costs of joining for existing members as important enlargement criteria.

- Compared to the previous survey, EU citizens are now more supportive of the six applicant countries with whom accession negotiations have started becoming part of the European Union. In most of the Member States, support for each of the six applicant countries increased, the average increase being 6 percentage points.

The European Parliament

- EU citizens have become more inclined to believe that the European Parliament plays an important role in the life of the European Union. 55% now hold this view, compared to 47% in the autumn of 1997. In a number of countries, people are also significantly more likely to want the European Parliament to play a more important role than it currently does. 43% now hold this view compared to 38% in the autumn of 1997.

- Nearly 3 in 4 Europeans say they will vote in the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament, to be held in June 1999. Voting intentions are highest in Denmark (92%) and lowest in Austria (56%).

- More than half of Europeans (52%) want the European Parliament to pay particular attention to employment. 36% believe the fight against drug trafficking and crime should be a priority and 27% feel this way about protecting the environment and the consumer. Nearly a quarter of Europeans feel the European Parliament should pay particular attention to the fight against cancer and AIDS and to economic policy.

The 21st century

- The future holds more good than bad for the majority of Europeans. 67% believe that in the 21st century it will possible to eliminate or cure serious diseases like AIDS or cancer and 48% believe that their children and grandchildren will have a better life than their parents and grandparents had. Only 35% agree with the statement that the 21st century will be worse than this century while 46% disagree. Satisfied people are in all respects significantly more likely to be optimistic about the future than people who are not happy with the life they currently lead.

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REPORT

Introduction

This 49th Eurobarometer report presents the views of European citizens towards the European Union in the spring of 1998 and begins by examining **how much people currently know about the European Union** and whether they **desire more information about it**. The first chapter also examines which **specific EU topics arouse most public interest**, which **sources people use to obtain information** and **how people prefer to be informed**. The chapter ends with a look at the extent to which people are **willing to be pro-active in their search for information about the EU**.

Chapter 2 looks at **long-term developments in public opinion** towards the European Union. It describes **how support for EU membership** and **perceived benefit from EU membership** have evolved over time. The chapter also looks at the evolution of **support levels for a number of current policy issues**.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a detailed description of how the public feels about two of the main policy areas of the European Union. **The single currency, the euro**, is the focus of chapter three. The chapter begins with a look at **support levels** and then describes **current knowledge levels** and the **extent to which the public feels well informed**. It also reports on the **extent to which people have already received information** about single currency **and from whom**. The chapter ends with an investigation of **people's views about the need for public information campaigns**.

In chapter 4, people's views towards **enlargement** are presented by covering both positive and negative sentiments about this issue. The chapter also looks at **which criteria EU citizens consider important in deciding whether new countries can join** and finishes with a look at **support levels for the 11 applicant countries**.

The fifth chapter of this report deals with attitudes towards the **European Parliament** and measures its perceived and desired importance. The chapter also discusses the areas that the public feels it should pay specific attention to.

The final chapter looks at the **current state of being** among Europeans. At the end of the 2nd Millennium, it also looks at **people's expectations of the 21st century.**

We wish to thank all the European Union citizens who have taken part in the survey over the years. Without their participation, this report could not have been written.

The Eurobarometer Web Site address is:
http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg10/infcom/epo/polls.html

1. Knowledge of the European Union : the need for more information

During the European Council meeting at the end of the British EU Presidency, held in Cardiff on the 15th and 16th of June 1998, the Heads of State and Government of the European Union discussed the need to bring the European Union closer to its citizens.

One of the reasons why the need to involve citzens more closely in the activities of the European Union has become a priority is the realisation that many people feel they do not know what the Union does. The extent of this so called 'information deficit' is the subject of this chapter. We examine how much people feel they know about the European Union, how they would like to be informed, which topics interest them the most and what they are prepared to do to obtain information about the European Union.

1.1. Perceived knowledge of the European Union

Although the large majority of Europeans still perceive their knowledge of the European Union as relatively low[1], a slight improvement can be noted since the last survey which was carried out in the autumn of 1997.

Self-perceived knowledge of EU affairs in Spring 1998 (EB49) compared to Autumn 1997 (EB48), in % (EU15)

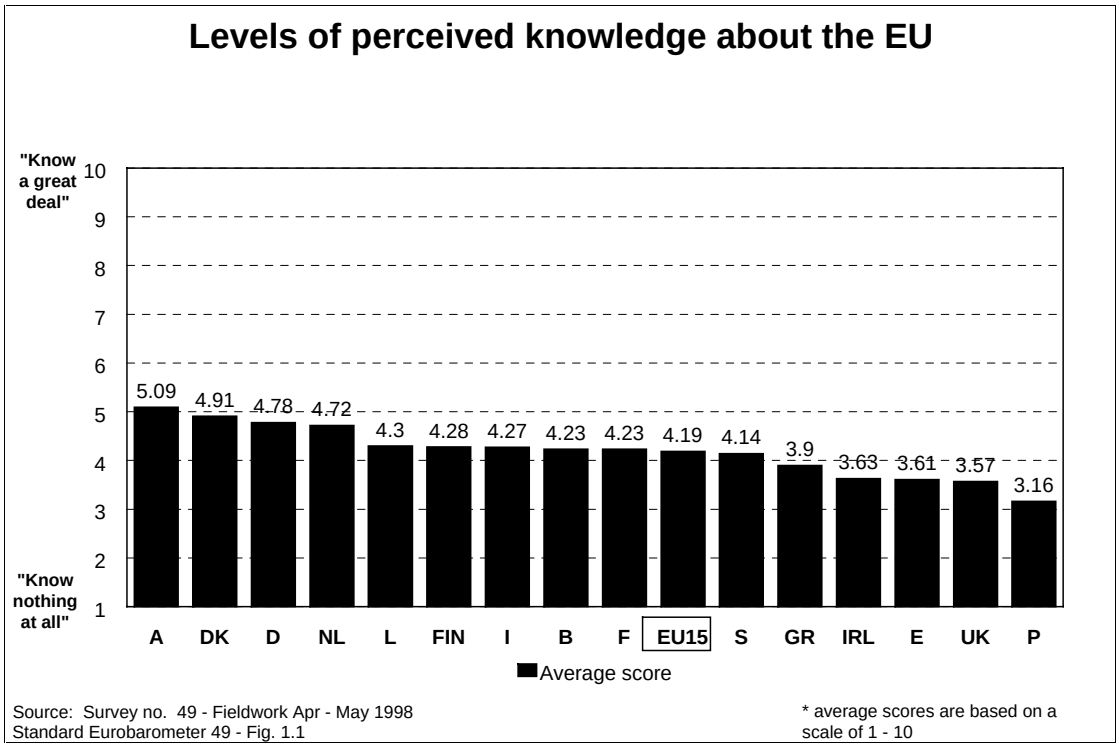
Scale	EB 49	Change EB48
Know nothing at all	10%	-3%
2	11%	-1%
3	17%	+1%
4	16%	0%
5	19%	+1%
6	11%	+1%
7	8%	+1%
8	4%	0%
9	1%	0%
Know a great deal	1%	0%
Don't know	2%	-1%
Average score	***4.19***	***+.18***

The average results for the European Union as a whole (EU15) presented in the table above show that a quarter of EU citizens now feel they know quite a lot to a great deal about the European Union (i.e. those choosing the numbers 6 through 10 on the scale), compared to 23% in the Autumn of 1997.

Looking at the country results shows that self-perceived knowledge levels vary significantly from one Member State to the next. The following graph presents the average scores[2] for each of the 15 countries.

[1] Respondents were asked : *'how much do you feel you know about the European Union, its policies, its institutions'* and were asked to select from a card a number - on a scale from 1 to 10 - which best represents their perceived knowledge about the European Union. The higher the number they select, the more they feel they know about the EU.

[2] The average scores, or means, show the central tendency of the responses and represent the sum of the responses for each point on the scale times the value of each point divided by the total number of responses.



The average scores range from a low of 3.2 in Portugal to a high of 5.1 in Austria. An inspection of the distribution of responses shows that 38% of Austrians (up from 31% last Autumn) feel they know a lot to a great deal about the European Union (i.e. those choosing point 6 on the scale or higher), compared to only 9% of the Portuguese. Other countries where around a third of the people feel they know a lot to a great deal are The Netherlands (37%), Denmark (35%) and Germany (34%). In Spain (16%), Ireland (17%), Greece and the UK (both 18%) less than 2 in 10 people place themselves at the higher end of the scale. (Table 1.1[3])

Looking at the levels of knowledge among the various (socio-)demographic groups in the EU shows that opinion leaders, managers, those who have stayed in education the longest and those who use the media the most are the groups that feel they know the most about the European Union, its policies and its institutions. This is clear from the average knowledge scores these groups have on the self-perceived knowledge scale, as shown in the table below. At the bottom of the table we find people who score the lowest on the opinion leadership index and those who use the media the least. (See Appendix C.4 for a definition of the opinion leadership index and the media use index).

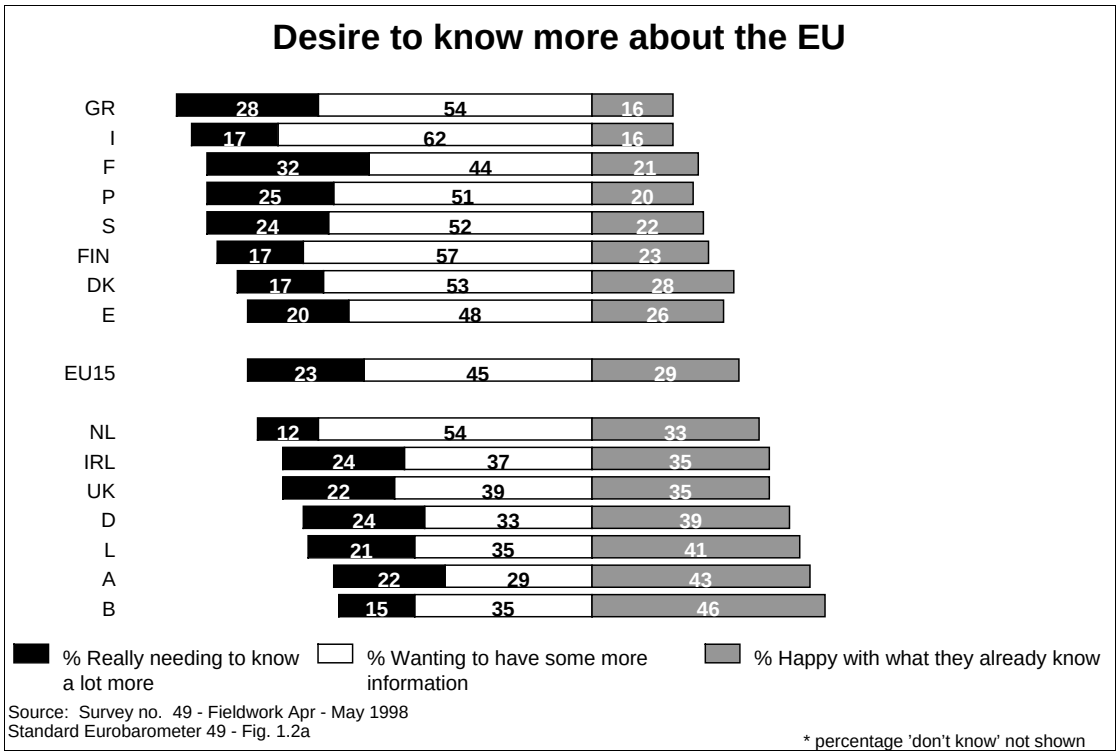
[3] In table 1.1 in the back of this report , a recoded version of the perceived knowledge scale is presented consisting of four categories: 'know (almost) nothing' – points 1+2; 'know a little' - points 3-5; 'know quite a lot' – points 6-8; and 'know a great deal' – points 9+10. This has been done for graphic presentation purposes.

Average scores on perceived knowledge scale for various groups at the EU15 level	
Group	**Score**
Opinion leadership index: ++	5.81
Managers	5.17
Educated up to age 20+	4.95
Opinion leadership index: +	4.73
Media use index:+++	4.72
Men	4.64
Self-employed	4.60
Employees	4.59
Aged 40-54	4.46
Students	4.39
Aged 25-39	4.32
Educated to age 16-19	4.26
Average for EU15	***4.19***
Media use index: ++	4.09
Aged 15-24	3.99
Aged 55+	3.99
Manual workers	3.95
Opinion leadership index: -	3.95
Unemployed	3.94
Retired	3.93
Women	3.77
House persons	3.55
Educated to age 15 or younger	3.53
Media use index: --	3.43
Media use index: ---	3.24
Opinion leadership index: --	3.01

1.2. The need for more information

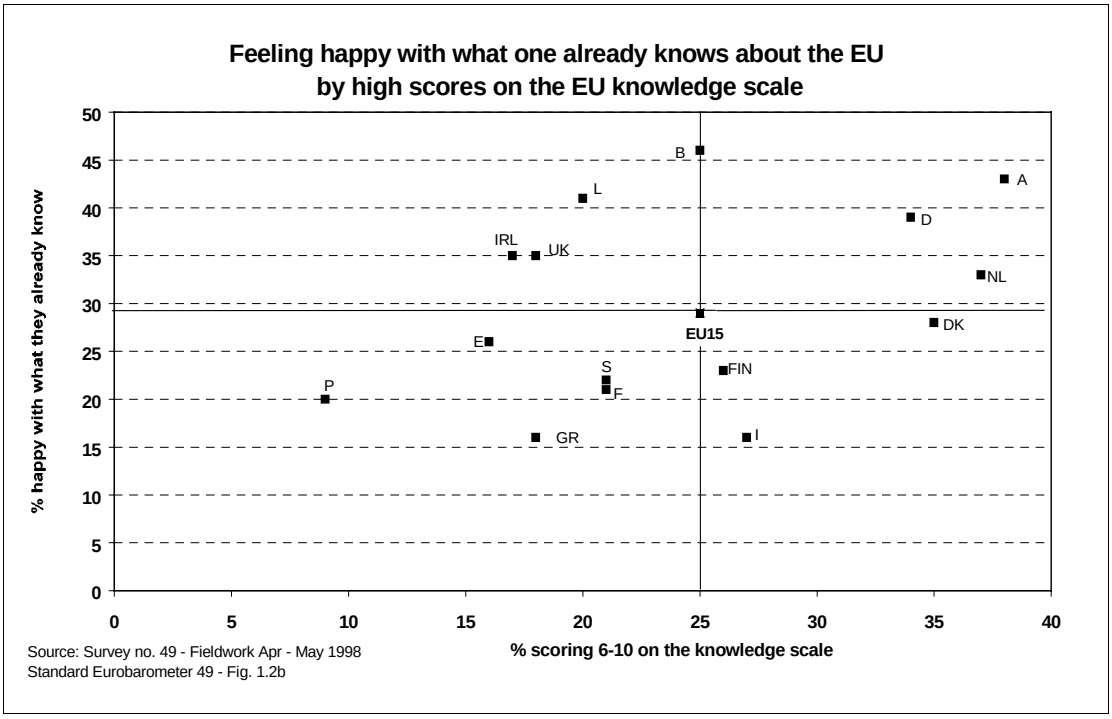
Since self-perceived knowledge levels are quite low, one would expect to find that the public desires more information about the European Union. With 23% of Europeans saying they really need a lot more information and a further 45% saying they would like some more information this is indeed the case. Less than 1 in 3 people say they are happy with what they already know.

The need for more information is most widespread in Greece (82%), followed by Italy (79%), France, Portugal, Sweden (all 76%) and Finland (74%). Belgium (50%), Austria (51%), Luxembourg (56%) and Germany (57%) are the only countries where less than 6 in 10 people desire more information about the EU.



In a number of countries, the need to know more about the EU increased significantly since the question was last asked in the spring of 1997. These are Belgium, Ireland, Finland (all +9), Denmark (+7), Greece, Portugal (both +6) and Spain (+5). In Luxembourg (-11), Austria (-6) and the UK (-5), people are now less likely to want more information than they were a year ago. (Table 1.2a)

Whilst it is tempting to assume that countries where many people feel they know little the need for more information is high and vice-versa, the reality is more complicated. The following graph pictures for each country the percentage of people who score high (i.e. points 6 to 10) on the self-perceived knowledge scale by the percentage of people who feel happy with what they already know about the EU.



- There are 8 countries where there is a positive relationship between self-perceived knowledge levels and not needing more information[4]. The relationship can be found by looking at the top right-hand and the bottom left-hand corners of the graph. Austria, Germany and The Netherlands, located in the top right-hand corner, are countries where both the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale and the proportion who feel happy with what they already know are clearly above the EU average. Portugal, and to a lesser extent Spain, Greece, France and Sweden, located in the bottom left-hand corner, are countries where both the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale and the proportion who feel happy with what they already know are clearly below the EU average.

- There are 5 countries where a negative relationship between the two variables exists. This relationship can be found by looking at the top left-hand and bottom right-hand corners of the graph. Ireland, the UK and Luxembourg, located in the top left-hand corner, are countries where the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale is below the EU average and the proportion who feel happy with what they already know is above the EU average. In Italy and to a lesser extent Finland, located in the bottom right-hand corner, the opposite is the case. Here the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale is above the EU average and the proportion who feel happy with what they already know is below the EU average.

- In Belgium, the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale is on par with the EU average while the proportion who feel happy with what they already know is significantly above the EU average.

- In Denmark, on the other hand, the proportion who score high on the knowledge scale is significantly above the EU average while the proportion who feel happy with what they already know is on par with the EU average.

The analysis of the demographic variables shows that there are no significant differences between men and women when it comes to wanting more information about the European Union. Students, people who stayed in full-time education until the age of 20 or older and managers are most likely to want more information while people who completed their full-time education at the age of 15 or younger, people aged 55 or over and unemployed people are most likely to feel happy with what they already know.

Finally, the results show that the desire for more information also depends on how people feel about their country's membership to the European Union: 78% of people who perceive it as a good thing want more information, compared to 61% of people who perceive their country's membership as neither good nor bad and only 56% of those who perceive it as a bad thing. (Table 1.2b)

Which specific EU topics do people want more information about?

The survey measures the extent to which people want more information about specific EU topics. Of the 18 topics included in the questionnaire, those which are top priorities for the European Union - people's rights as EU citizens (49%), the single currency (45%) and employment (42%) - are the most popular. The Treaty of Amsterdam lists placing citizens' rights and employment at the heart of the Union as one of its main objectives[5]. The high amount of interest in the single currency is not surprising given that 11 countries will be introducing the euro on 1 January 1999, as decided by the European Council on May 2-3, 1998[6].

As the next graph shows, issues that affect people directly are more popular than issues that are more removed from most people's daily lives, like TV and film policy (7%), agriculture and fisheries policies (10%), foreign and external policy or cultural policy (both 12%). In this vein, the results also show that only 14% of people are interested in getting more information about enlargement, despite the fact that this is a top priority for the European Union.

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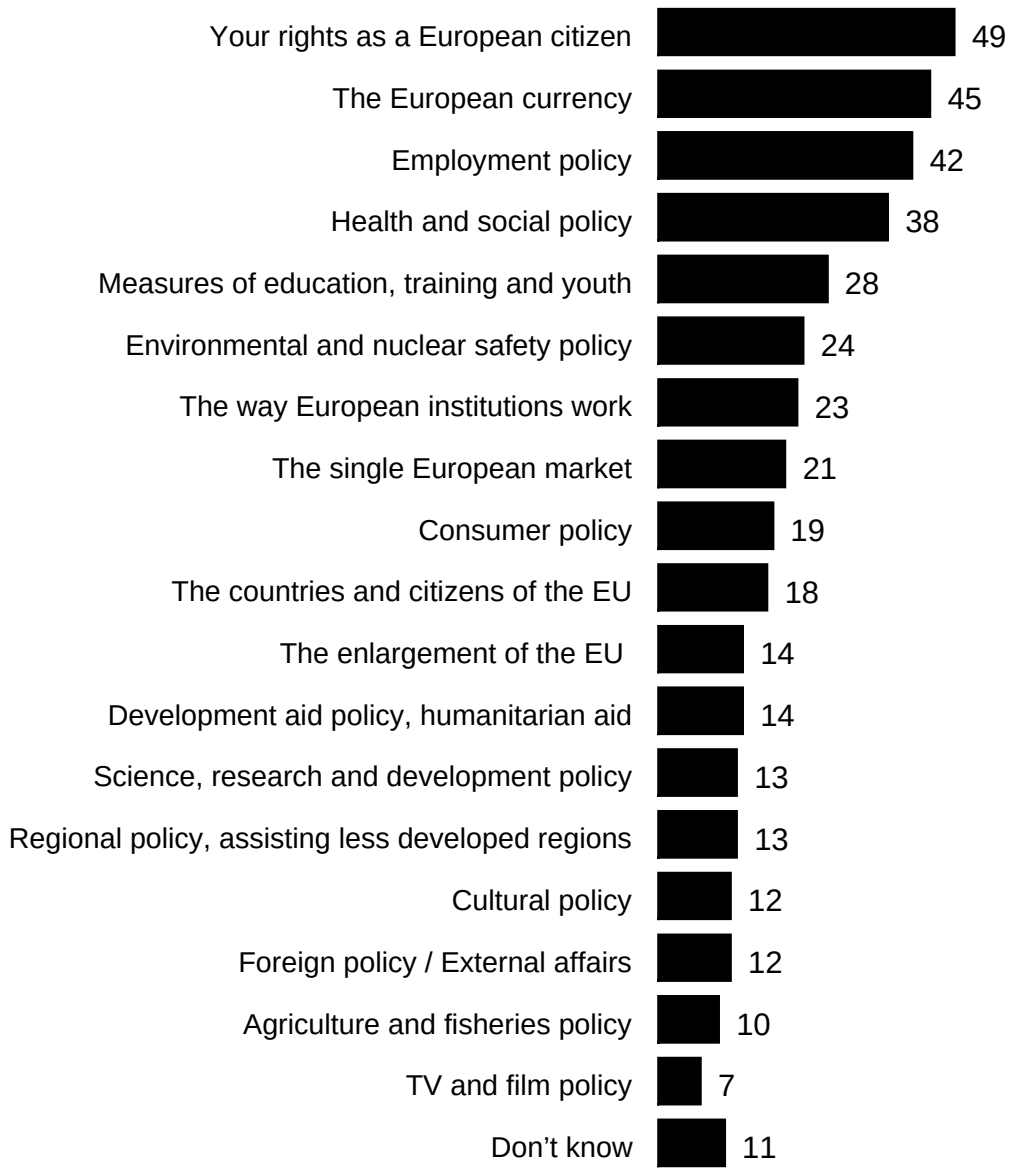
4 It is important to note that these analyses only refer to country level findings and that they do not measure any relationship between these two variables at the individual case level.

5 The full text of the Amsterdam Treaty is on the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/Amsterdam/en/treaty. A Citizen's guide is available in all official Community languages from the Office for Official Publications. The European Commission also has a special web-site dedicated to citizens' rights: http://citizens.eu.int/.

6 See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of public opinion on the euro.

EU topics for which more information is desired

(EU15)



Source: Survey no. 49 - Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig. 1.3a

The following table shows that ***citizens' rights*** tops the list in 8 Member States. Interest for more information about this topic is most widespread in Sweden (62%), followed by Greece (59%) and Finland (58%) and least widespread in Ireland (36%) and Luxembourg (35%), the latter being the only country where it does not make the top three.

The ***single currency*** tops the list in 6 Member States and makes the top three in 12 Member States. People from countries that will introduce the euro from the start - the "Euro-11" countries - tend to be more interested in getting more information about it than people from the 4 "pre-in" countries (Denmark, Greece, Sweden and the UK) who will not introduce the euro in January 1999. Among the "Euro-11" countries, the desire for more information is highest in Portugal (60%), Luxembourg (57%), The Netherlands (55%), Belgium and Germany (both 51%) and lowest in Austria (33%) and Italy (41%). Among the 4 "pre-in" countries, around 4 in 10 people want more information, with the exception of Denmark where only 26% desire more information about the single currency.

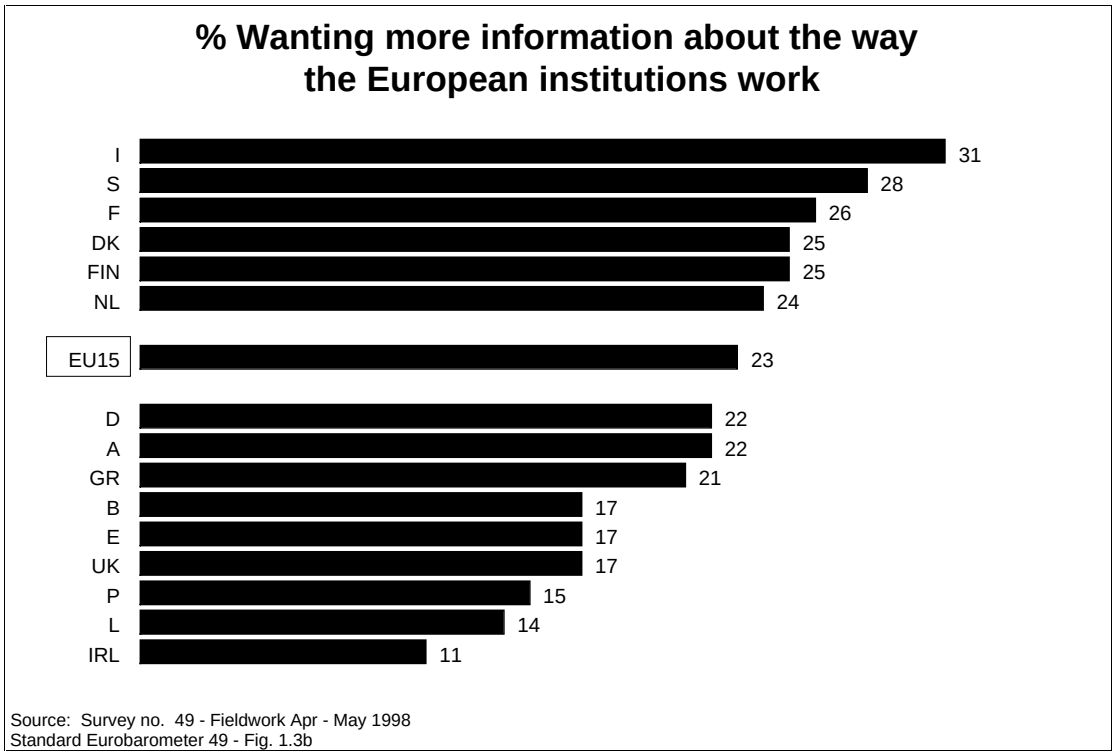
Employment makes the top three in 10 Member States. The desire for more information about this topic is most widespread in France (52%), followed by Finland (46%) and Spain (45%). While these three countries have among the highest unemployment levels in Europe (21% in Spain, 14% in Finland and 13% in France), there does not seem to be a relationship among the other countries between unemployment levels and a desire to want more information about the topic. For instance, 42% of people in Luxembourg want more information, despite the fact that in 1997 it had the lowest unemployment rate in Europe (4%). In Ireland, on the other hand, only 29% want more information, yet here the unemployment rate was 10% in 1997.

Health & social policy makes the top three in 8 Member States. People in The Netherlands (54%), Finland (52%) and Greece (46%) are most inclined to desire more information about this topic. Denmark is the only country where health & social policy tops the list (42%) and where ***environmental & nuclear safety policy*** (38%) makes the top three.

TOP THREE AREAS FOR WHICH PEOPLE WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION (IN %, BY MEMBER STATE)

Belgium	
Single currency	51
Citizens' rights	45
Employment	38
Denmark	
Health & social policy	42
Citizens' rights	41
Environment	38
Germany	
Single currency	51
Citizens' rights	44
Employment	40
Greece	
Citizens' rights	59
Health & social policy	46
Single currency	43
Spain	
Citizens' rights	53
Employment	45
Single currency	45
France	
Citizens' rights	52
Employment	52
Single currency	47
Ireland	
Single currency	46
Citizens' rights	36
Employment	29
Italy	
Citizens' rights	51
Employment	42
Single currency	41
Luxembourg	
Single currency	57
Employment	42
Health & social policy	39
Netherlands	
Single currency	55
Citizens' rights	54
Health & social policy	54
Austria	
Citizens' rights	41
Employment	38
Health & social policy	35
Portugal	
Single currency	60
Employment	42
Citizens' rights	39
Finland	
Citizens' rights	58
Health & social policy	52
Employment	46
Sweden	
Citizens' rights	62
Health & social policy	42
Single currency	40
United Kingdom	
Citizens' rights	46
Health & social policy	39
Single currency	39

Nearly a quarter of Europeans would also like to get more information about the way the European Union institutions work. The graph below shows how interest in this topic varies between the 15 Member States.



At 31%, Italians are most interested in receiving more information about the way the EU institutions work. Interest is also above average in Sweden (28%), France (26%), Denmark, Finland (both 25%) and The Netherlands (24%). The Irish are least inclined to want more information about this topic (11%), followed by people in Luxembourg (14%), Portugal (15%), the UK, Spain and Belgium (all 17%). (Table 1.3)

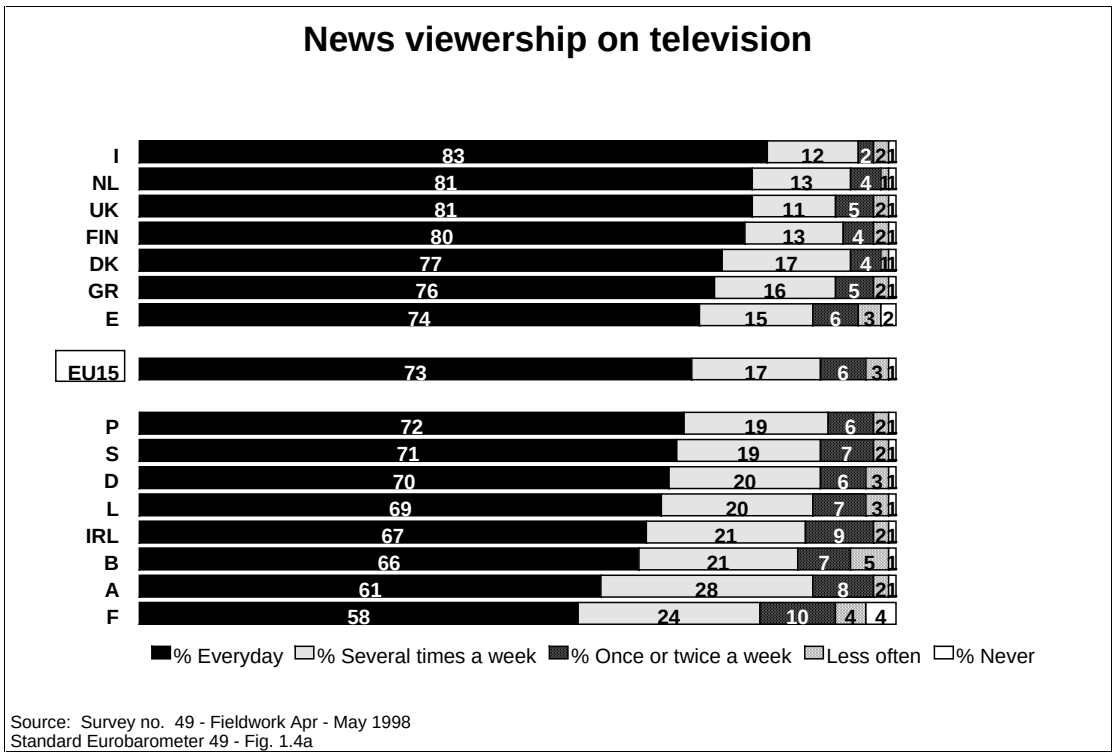
1.3. Sources of information

Further evidence of the widespread desire among the public to receive more information about the European Union is obtained from the finding that when asked from which source they would like to receive information, only 9% of respondents say they never look for such information. In Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Finland only 3% of respondents never look for information. In Greece (15%), the UK (14%), Portugal (13%) and Spain (12%), on the other hand, the number of respondents who never look for information is somewhat higher.

Before examining which sources of information people use when they look for information about the EU, it is interesting to look at behavioural patterns for the three main news media - the television, the daily newspapers and the radio - and the extent to which people have access to modern information tools.

News viewership on television

As the table below shows, watching the news on television is a common feature of life throughout the European Union. 73% of Europeans watch it every day of the week and 17% watch it several times a week[7].



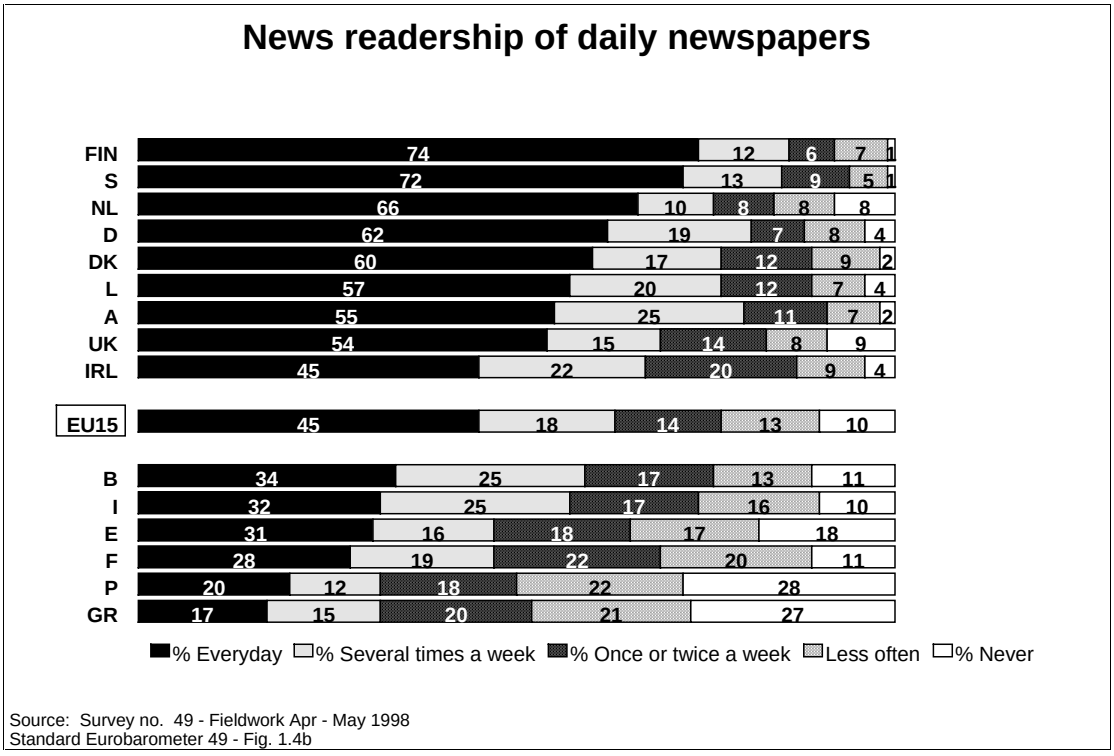
Country by country analyses show relatively little variation between the 15 Member States. People in Italy (83%), The Netherlands, the UK (both 81%) and Finland (80%) are most likely to watch the news on a daily basis while people in France (58%) and Austria (61%) are least likely to engage in this activity every single day. Yet, when the percentage of people who say they watch the news several times a week is added to the precentage who say they watch it every day the differences virtually disappear, with France being the only country where nearly 2 in 10 people watch the news on television once or twice a week or less often.
(Table 1.4a)

News readership of daily newspapers

More than 6 in 10 EU citizens read the news in daily newspapers every day (45%) or several times a week (18%).

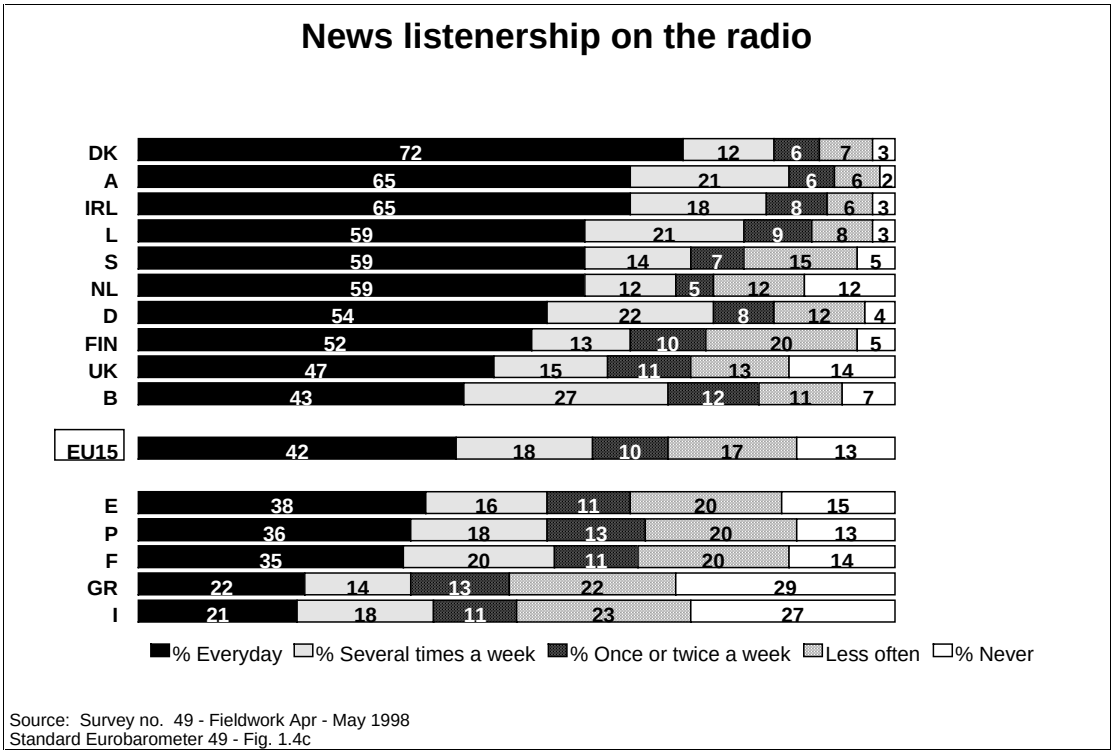
The country analyses show that in Finland (86%), Sweden (85%), Germany (81%), Austria (80%), Denmark (77%) and The Netherlands (76%), more than three in four people read the news in daily newspapers at least several times a week. Greece and Portugal (both 32%) are the only countries where less than 4 in 10 people read the news in daily newspapers at least several times a week. (Table 1.4b)

[7] The figures presented in the text and graphs for news media intake levels are based on a recalculation of the percentages without the 'don't know' responses. In the tables (1.4a-1.4c) in the back of the report, the 'don't know' responses are shown.



News listenership on the radio

News listenership on the radio is also fairly common with 6 in 10 EU citizens doing this every day (42%) or several times a week (18%).

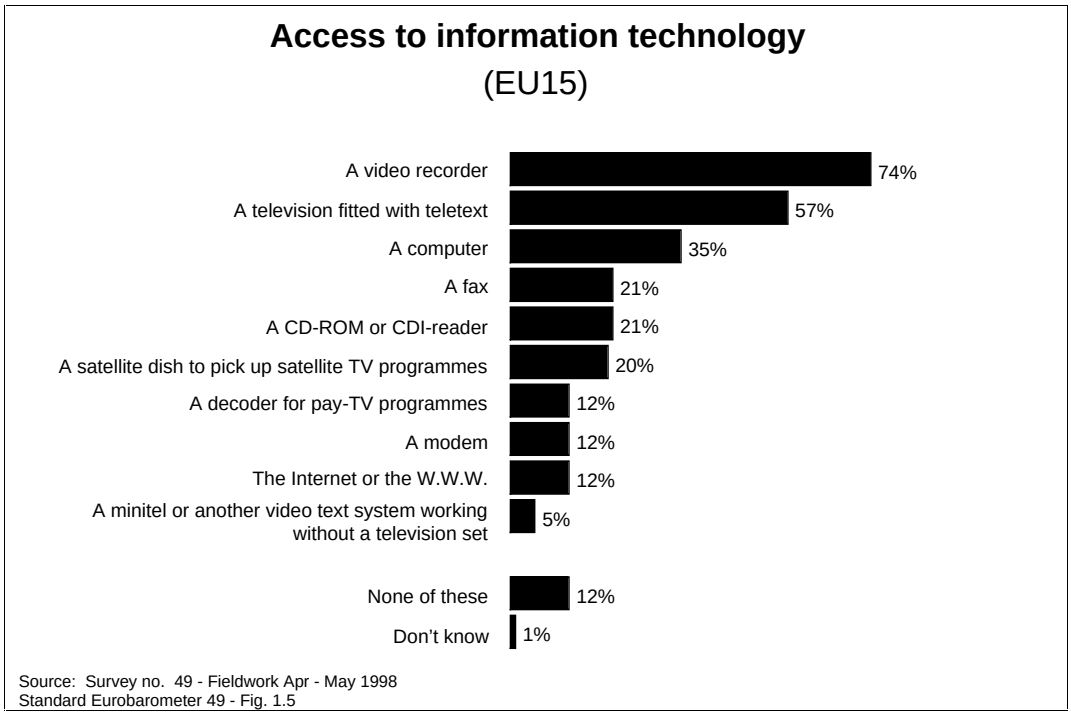


Country analyses show that 8 in 10 people or more in Austria (86%), Denmark (84%), Ireland (83%) and Luxembourg (80%) listen to the news on the radio at least several times a week. Greece (36%) and Italy (39%) are the only two countries where less than half of the population uses the radio as a news medium this frequently. (Table 1.4c)

Access to information technology

Modern technology enables people to use a wide variety of information tools. The survey measures the extent to which the public has access to a number of these tools.

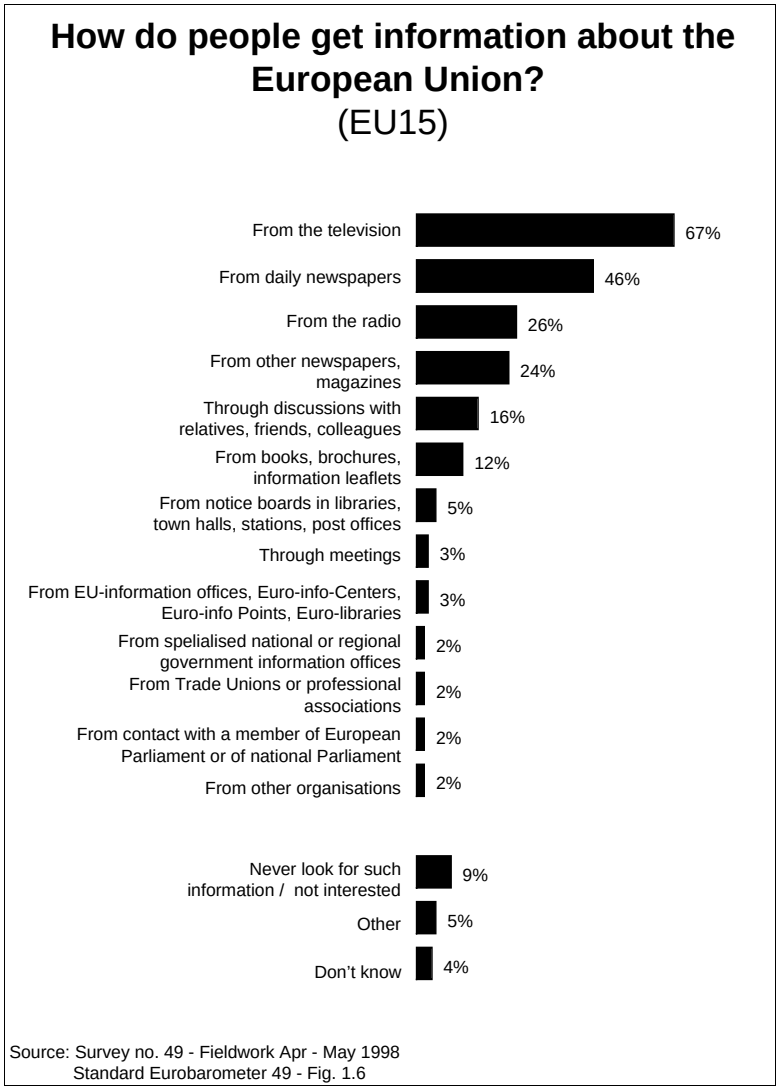
Access to a video recorder (74%) is most widespread. This comes as no surprise as the video recorder is the oldest of the new information tools and arguably should no longer be considered as new. 57% have access to a television that is fitted with teletext, 35% have access to a computer, 21% have access to a fax and to a CD-ROM and 20% have access to a satellite dish to pick up satellite TV programmes. Other tools are less widespread, as the graph below indicates. (Table 1.5)



Where do people look for information about the EU?

Focusing now on where people look when they want information about the European Union, it should come as no surprise that the television is by far the most consulted source, with 67% of respondents selecting this option[8]. 46% of respondents look in the daily newspapers for this purpose, 26% use the radio and 24% consult other newspapers or magazines. Discussions with relatives, friends or colleagues and books, brochures or information leaflets are the only two other sources where more than 10% of respondents look for information about the European Union.

[8] Respondents were asked "if you are looking for information about the European Union, its policies, its institutions, how do you get it?" and were given a card which lists 13 sources, an "other" option, a "don't know" option and the "never look for information/not interested" option discussed at the beginning of Section 1.3.



Country by country analyses show that the use of the television as a source of information about the EU is most widespread in Luxembourg (84%), followed at a distance by Germany (77%), Italy and Portugal (both 76%) and least widespread in the UK (47%), Ireland (52%) and The Netherlands (55%).

Looking for EU information in daily newspapers is most widespread in Germany (61%), followed at a distance by Luxembourg (53%), Sweden (51%) and The Netherlands (50%), but done by less than 3 in 10 respondents from Portugal (23%) and Greece (28%).

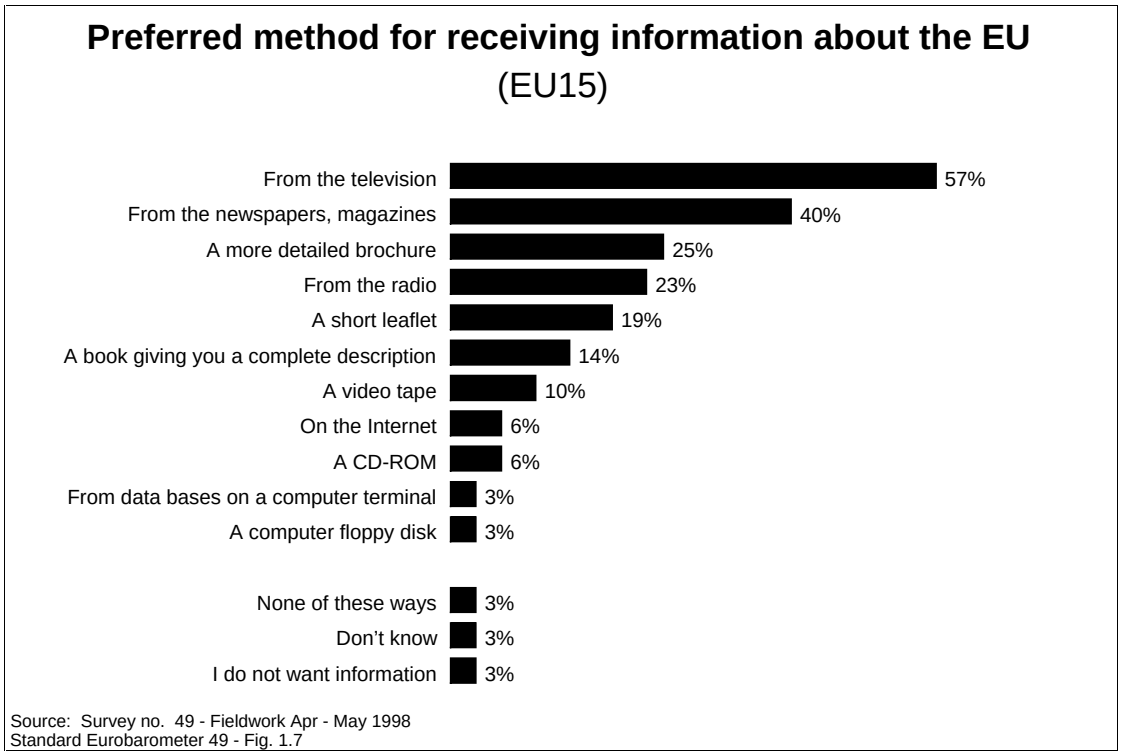
At 62%, people in Luxembourg are significantly more inclined to listen to the radio when they are looking for EU information than in any other Member States. The next highest percentage of 36% is recorded in Belgium and France. Use of the radio for this purpose is lowest in the UK (13%), The Netherlands (14%) and Italy (17%).

Consultation of other magazines and newspapers is by far the highest in Finland (42%), followed by Denmark (32%), Italy (31%) and Luxembourg (30%). It is below 20% in the UK (15%), Sweden (16%), Ireland, The Netherlands (both 17%), Portugal (18%) and Spain (19%).

People from Greece (24%), France (23%) and Germany (22%) are significantly more likely to get information through discussions than people in the The Netherlands, the UK (both 6%), Ireland and Sweden (both 8%). The consulation of books, brochures or information leaflets is most widespread in Denmark (23%), followed by Austria (19%) while in Portugal (7%), Italy, the UK, (both 8%) and Spain (9%) this is done by less than 1 in 10 people. The results also show that 11% of Danes get information directly from EU information offices and the like, as do 7% of the Austrians and Finns and 6% of the Swedes. (Table 1.6)

How do people prefer to get information about the European Union?

Respondents were also asked to indicate their preferred methods of getting information about the European Union from a pre-defined list of twelve sources. The television is not only the most used medium, it is also the most preferred source (57%). Due to the relatively low proportions of people who have access to some of the newer information tools, printed sources such as "*newspapers and magazines*" (40%), "*a more detailed brochure*" (25%), "*a short leaflet that just gives an overview*" (19%) and "*a book giving you a complete description*" (14%) continue to be preferred over newer sources, like "*on the Internet*", "*a CD-ROM*" (both 6%), "*a computer terminal*" or "*a computer floppy disk*" (both 3%). The radio should not be ignored as a useful method for disseminating information about the EU as 23% of respondents choose it as one of their preferred sources. Finally, it should be noted that only 3% of respondents took the liberty of spontaneously saying that they do not want any information about the European Union.



The country analyses reveal that the Greeks (71%) are most likely to prefer the television as a source of EU information, followed by people in Denmark (67%), Finland (65%), Portugal (63%), Italy (62%), Germany and Luxembourg (both 61%). Ireland (36%), Austria (45%) and the UK (47%) are the only countries where less than half of the respondents choose the television as one of their preferred sources of EU information.

Preference for newspapers and magazines is most widespread in The Netherlands (54%), Finland (53%) and Denmark (52%) and least widespread in Ireland (21%), Portugal (22%) and Spain (27%).

Preference for a more detailed brochure is most widespread in France (34%), followed closely by Austria (32%), Belgium, Denmark, Germany (all 31%) and The Netherlands (30%). At 12%, Italians are least interested in this source.

The country analyses also reveal that people in many of the northern European countries continue to express a stronger preference for the Internet than people from the other nations do. (Table 1.7) In these countries, and particularly in Scandinavia, access to the Internet is also considerably above average and is, in fact, increasing at a spectacular pace.

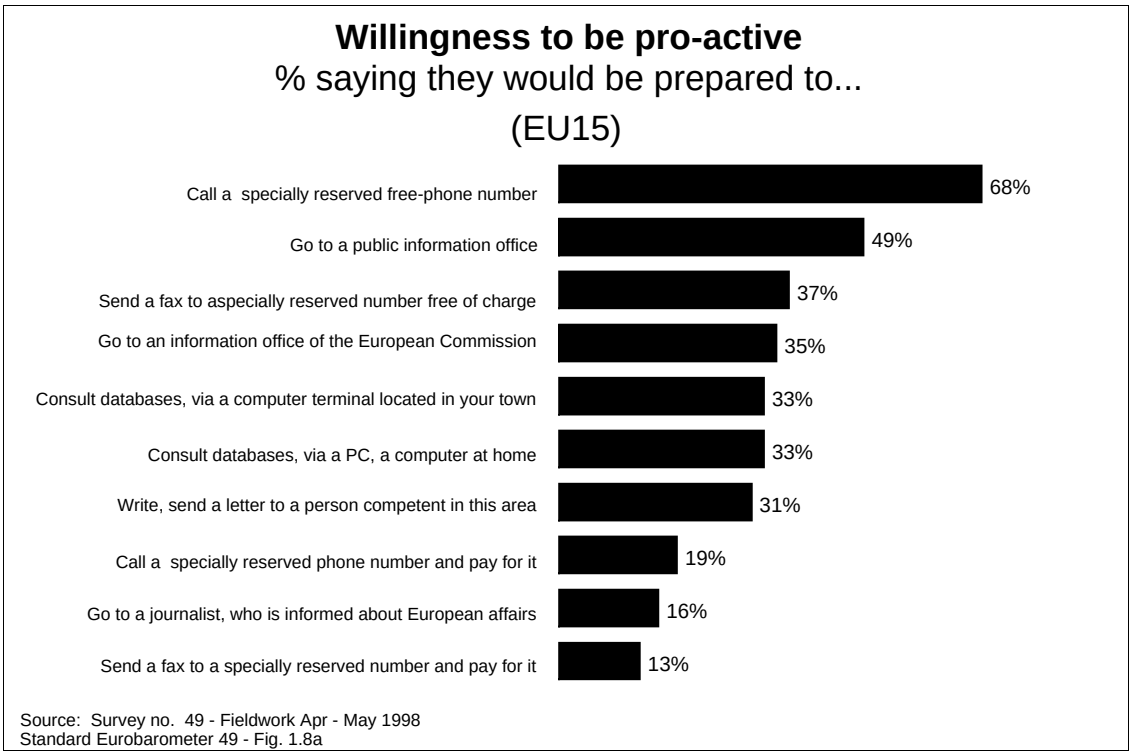
% of population with access to the Internet and %choosing the Internet as preferred information source about the European Union (by country and EU15)

Country	% with access to the Internet Spring 1998	% Change from Autumn 1997	% choosing Internet as preffered source Spring 1998	% Change from Autumn 1997
Sweden	39%	+13	22%	+7
Denmark	35%	+12	16%	+1
Finland	31%	+6	17%	+2
The Netherlands	23%	+9	12%	+4
UK	20%	+9	9%	0
EU15	***12%***	***+4***	***6%***	***0***
Luxembourg	11%	0	6%	-5
Italy	9%	+2	7%	0
Belgium	9%	+5	5%	+1
Spain	8%	+3	5%	+1
Ireland	8%	+1	4%	0
Germany	8%	+2	4%	0
France	7%	+2	5%	-1
Austria	7%	+2	4%	-1
Portugal	6%	+3	6%	+1
Greece	3%	+2	4%	-1

1.4. Willingness to be pro-active in the search for information

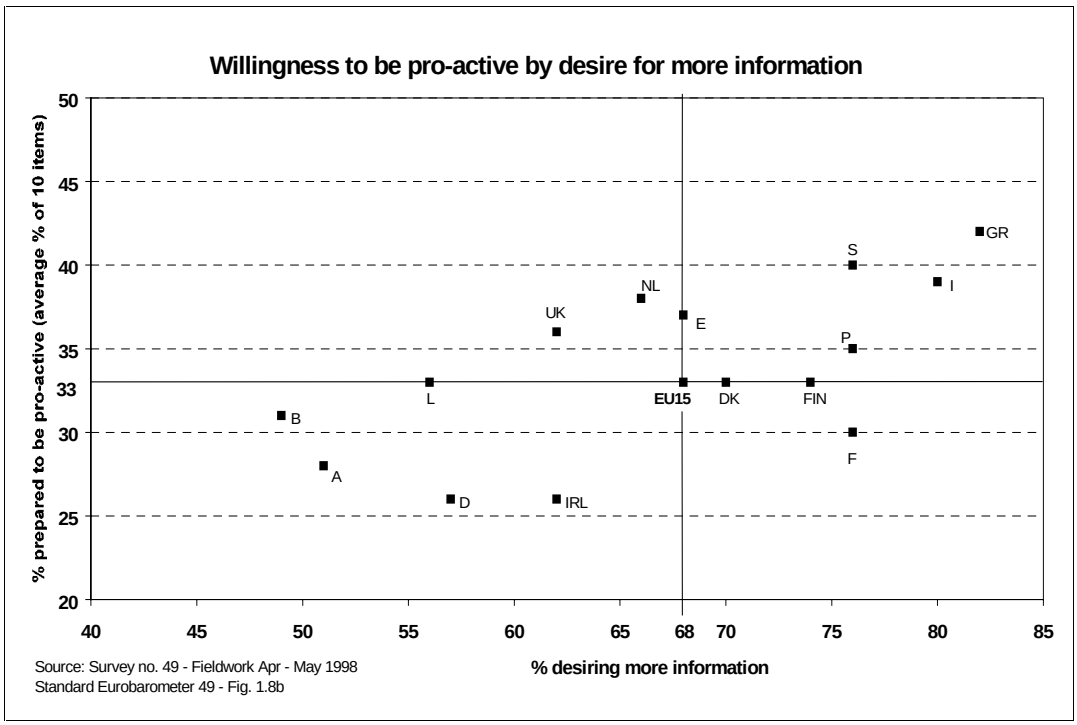
In the previous section, it was shown that people are most inclined to turn on the television when they want information about the European Union and that this is by far the most preferred source of information. Since the television is a passive one-way information medium, the question arises whether people are willing to be pro-active when it comes to getting information about the European Union. In this context, the survey asks whether people would be prepared or not to do 10 things in order to get information about the European Union which to a greater or lesser extent require a pro-active approach.

The graph below shows that 49% of EU citizens are prepared to go to a public information office and that 35% are prepared to go to an information office of the European Commission. This indicates that many people are prepared to be pro-active in order to get information about the EU. However, the findings do show that there are more people who are prepared to carry out activities which require little work, like calling a specially reserved free-phone number (68%), than there are people who are prepared to carry out activities which require a bigger effort, like going to a journalist who is informed about European affairs (16%). Sending a fax to a free-phone number (37%) is less popular than making a free phone-call. This is undoubtedly because fewer people have access to a fax than to a phone. Yet, the fact that making a phone call is far easier than sending a fax which needs to be written or typed first may also help explain why the phone is more popular than the fax.



The other finding that is highlighted by the results is that very few people are prepared to pay for their information needs. As the graph shows, less than 2 in 10 Europeans are prepared to call or send a fax to a specially reserved number and pay for it in order to get information about the European Union.

Last but certainly not least, the country by country analyses show that in some countries there is a relationship between the desire for more information about the EU and being prepared to be pro-active in order to get this information.



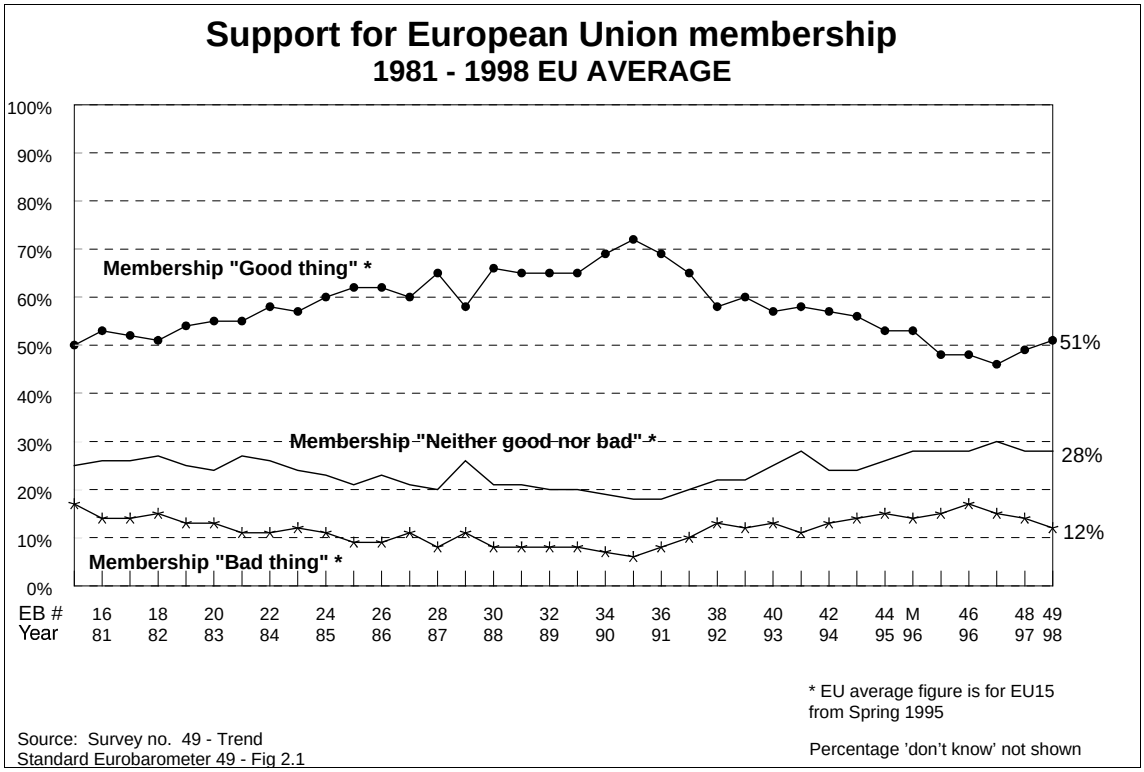
As the graph on the previous page shows, the percentage of people who desire more information about the EU and the percentage of people who are prepared to be pro-active in order to get information lies above the EU average in Greece, Italy, Sweden and Portugal. The opposite is the case in Belgium, Austria, Germany and Ireland. In these countries, the percentage of people who desire more information and the percentage of people who are prepared to be pro-active lies below the EU average. (Table 1.8)

2. Trends in public opinion of the European Union

In this chapter we examine some standard Eurobarometer questions that have been asked for many years, making it possible to analyse how public opinion of the European Union has developed over time. We also look at the level of support for a number of current policy issues and at the extent to which EU citizens nowadays share a common sense of identity.

2.1. Support for European Union membership

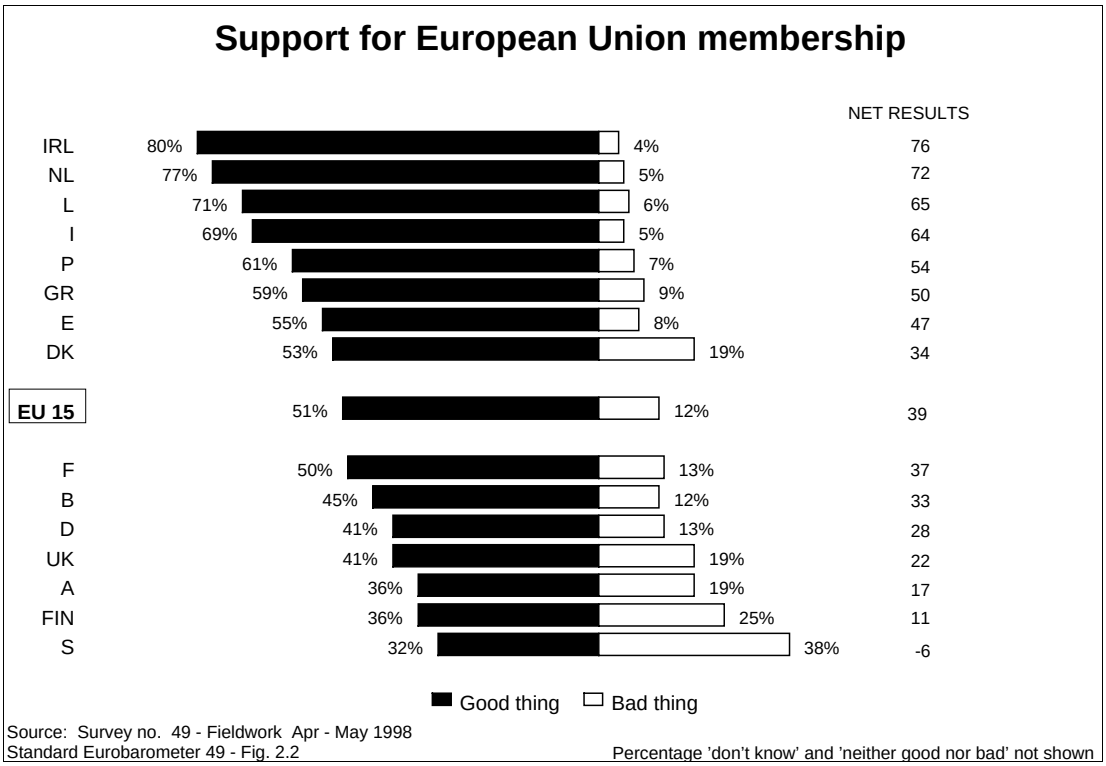
Since the survey began measuring support for membership to the European Union in 1973, the popularity of the European Union has, metaphorically speaking, gone through peaks and valleys.



Fifty-one percent of Europeans now regard their country's membership to the European Union as a good thing. The graph above indicates that the European Union is slowly regaining in popularity, with average support levels rising to above 50% for the first time since 1995. Support was at its highest in 1990 when 72% of citizens from what was still a Community of 12 Member States regarded their country's membership as a good thing. The next 6 years were marked by a steady decline in support, reaching a low of 46% in the spring of 1997. The economic crisis, the debate on the Maastricht Treaty, the inclusion of three relatively Euro-sceptic nations in 1995, and, last but not least, the BSE crisis are but some of the reasons which provide an explanation for this period of decline.

Country by country analyses show that in the spring of 1998 support levels have increased in 9 of the 15 Member States, the most notable rise being in Austria, Portugal and the UK (all +5). (Table 2.1a)

Despite a small drop, support for European Union membership continues to be highest in Ireland (80%), followed, like last autumn, by The Netherlands (77%), Luxembourg (71%) and Italy (69%). Portugal (61%) now comes in 5th place as a result of the increase in support levels in that country. Support for EU membership is lowest in Sweden (32%), Finland and Austria (both 36%).



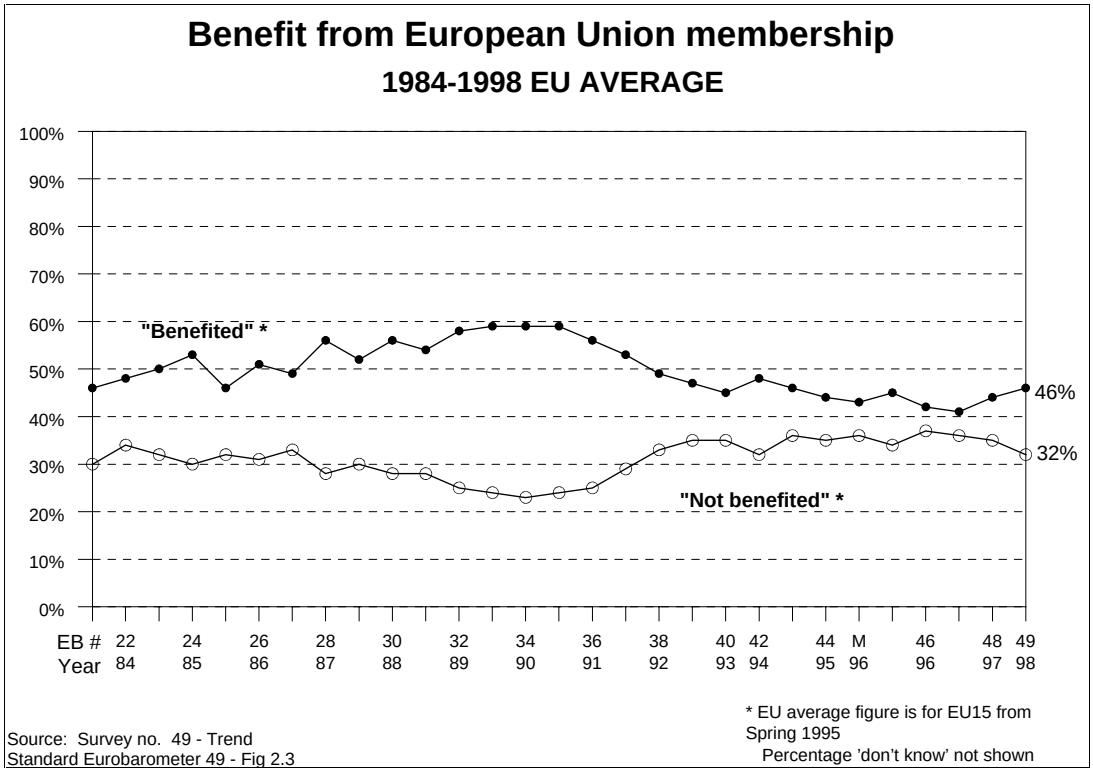
Demographic analyses highlight a well established pattern: men (56%) are more likely than women (47%) to regard their country's membership as a good thing. Women are more likely than men to lack an opinion or to regard their country's membership as neither good nor bad so that opposition levels are the same for both sexes. The longer one has been in full-time education, the more positive one feels about the EU (support levels stand at 66% for those who left school aged 20 or older and at 41% for those who left school aged 15 or younger). Looking at the various occupational groups shows a 20 percent gap between support levels among managers (63%) and the unemployed (43%).

The pattern for age has changed so that the latest survey reveals no differences between support levels for people aged 15 to 54 (54%). Only the oldest age group is different with significantly lower support levels recorded among people aged 55 and over (46%) than among the younger age groups.

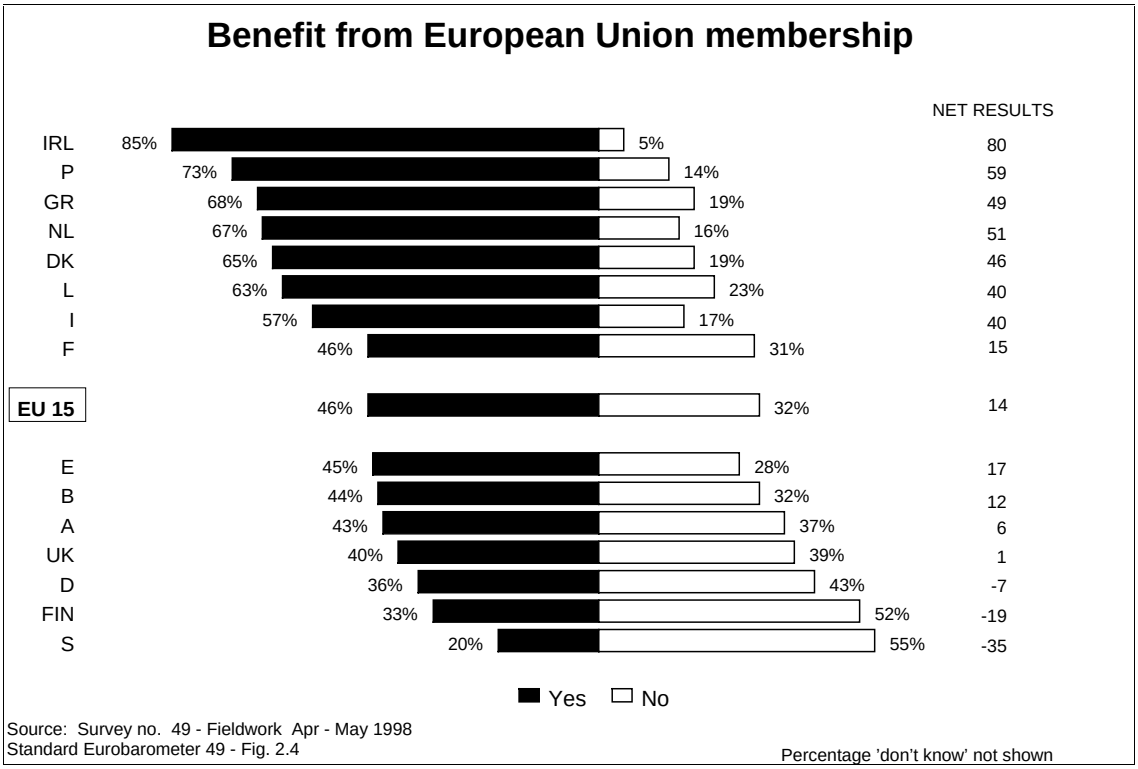
The data also show that people who score highest on the knowledge scale are significantly more likely to regard their country's membership to the EU as a good thing than people who score lowest on the knowledge scale (65% and 41%, respectively). As was shown in chapter 1, well-educated people and men are more likely to feel they know a lot about the EU than less well-educated people or women. (Table 2.1b)

2.2. Benefit from European Union membership

For the second time in a row, the figures show an improvement, with 46% of Europeans feeling their country has benefited from EU membership in the spring of 1998, as compared to 44% last autumn. Like support for EU membership, the trend analyses show that positive responses reached a high (59%) in the late 80's and early 90's and then dropped steadily over the next few years to reach a low of 41% in the spring of 1997.



Country by country analyses show a positive development in 8 Member States. The most significant increases occurred in Belgium and Austria (both +8), followed by Portugal (+6). At -3, the largest negative shifts are recorded in Spain, Ireland and Finland. (Table 2.2a)

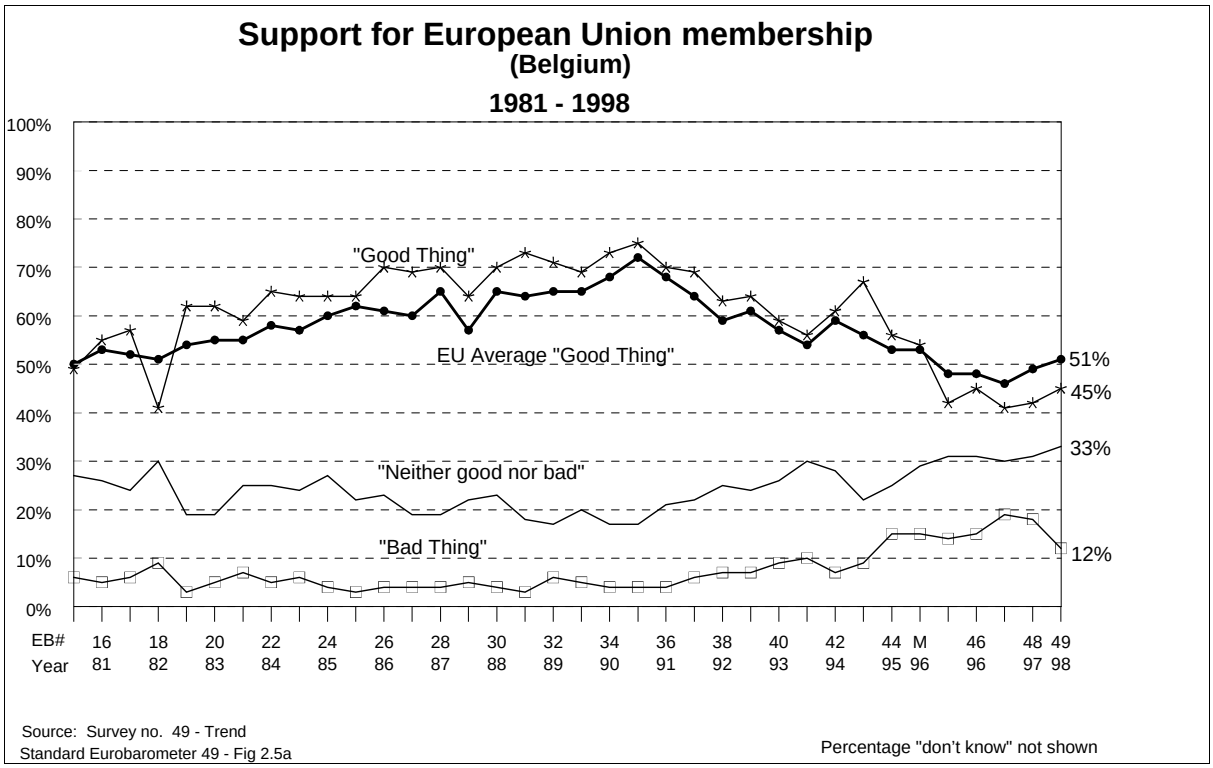


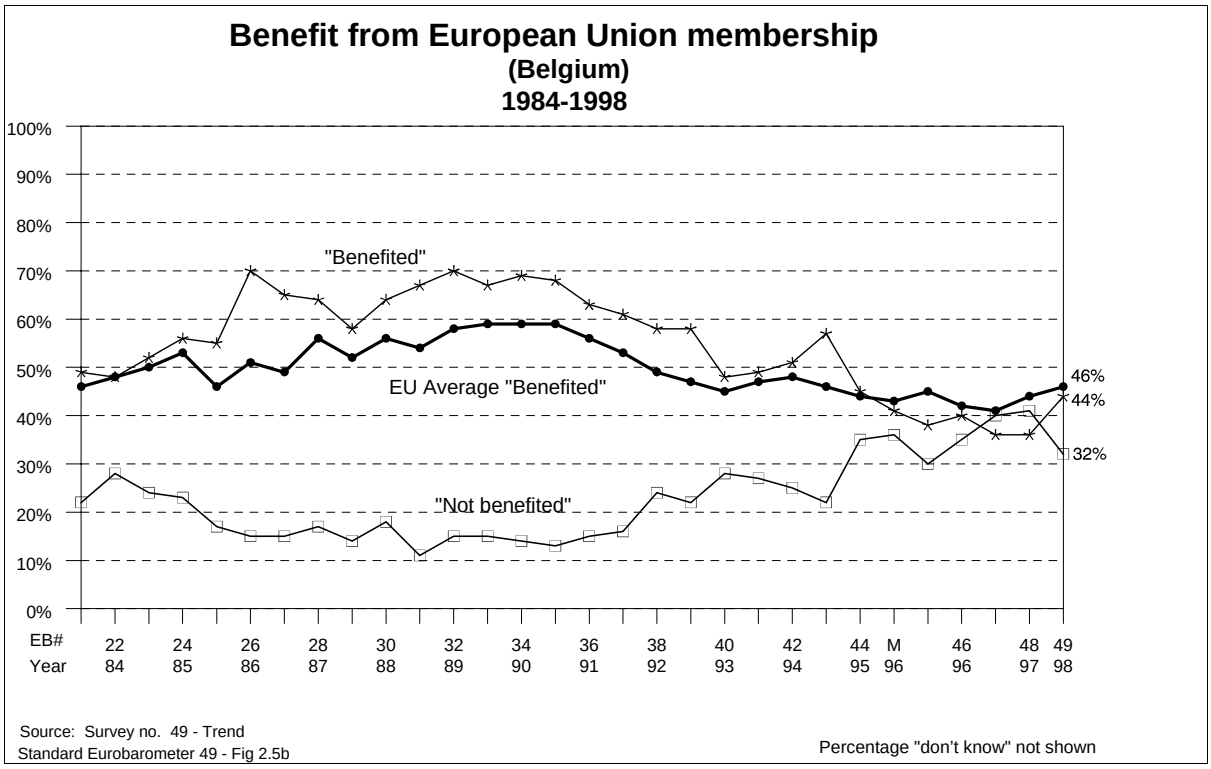
People in Ireland continue to be the most positve, with 85% saying that their country has benefited from EU membership. Portugal (73%) now takes 2nd place in the rank order, having surpassed Greece (68%). More than 6 in 10 people in The Netherlands (67%), Denmark (65%) and Luxembourg (63%) also feel their country has benefited from EU membership, while levels continue to be by far the lowest in Sweden (20%).

Demographic analyses show that the people who stayed in full-time education the longest (59%), managers (58%), students (55%), the self-employed (53%), men, and the young (both 51%) are significantly more positive than those who have completed the fewest number of years in full-time education (37%), manual workers, the old (both 41%) and women (42%).

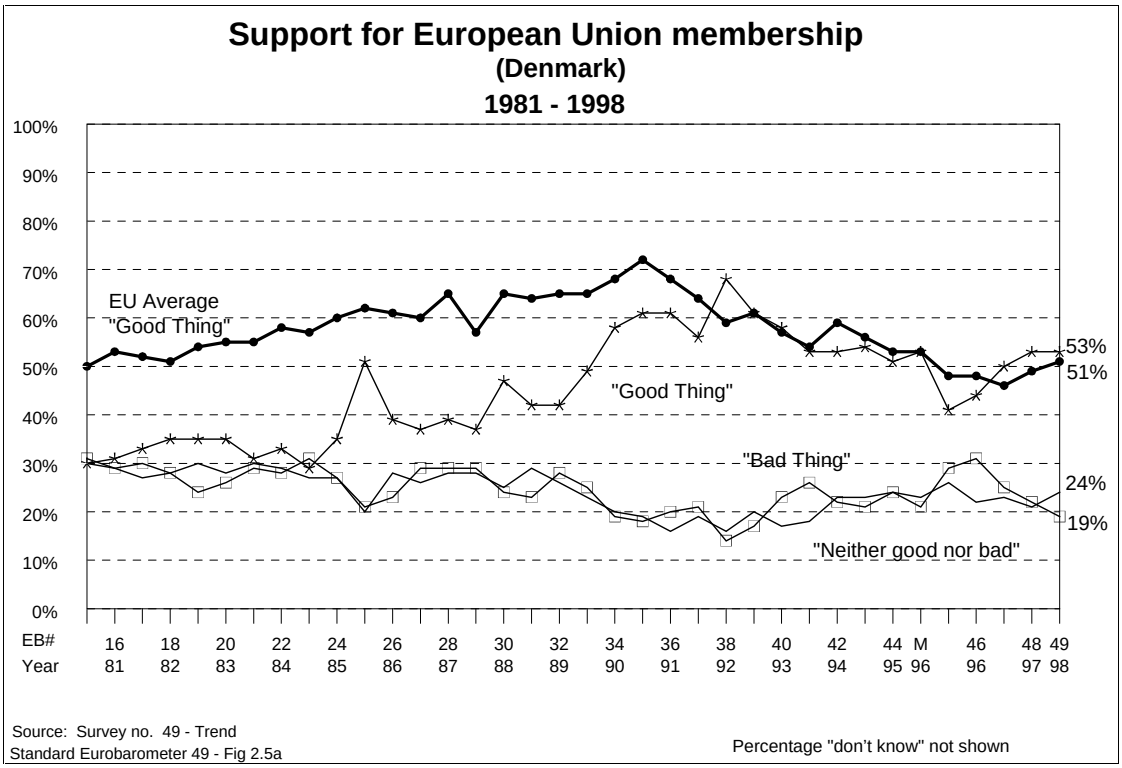
The data also reveal a large degree of polarisation among supporters and opponents of the Union: 73% of those who believe their country's membership to the EU is a good thing also believe their country has benefited compared to only 9% of those who regard membership as a bad thing. (Table 2.2b)

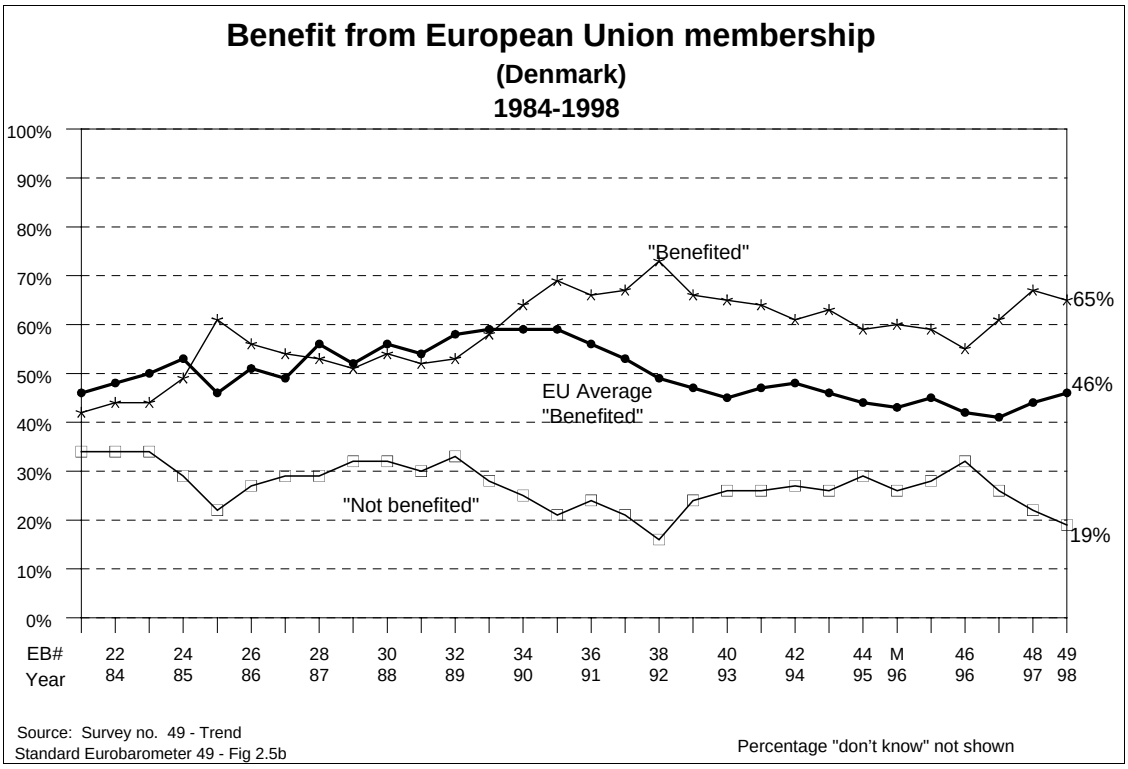
BELGIUM


Support for European Union membership
(Belgium)
1981 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
EU Average "Good Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
51%
45%
33%
12%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

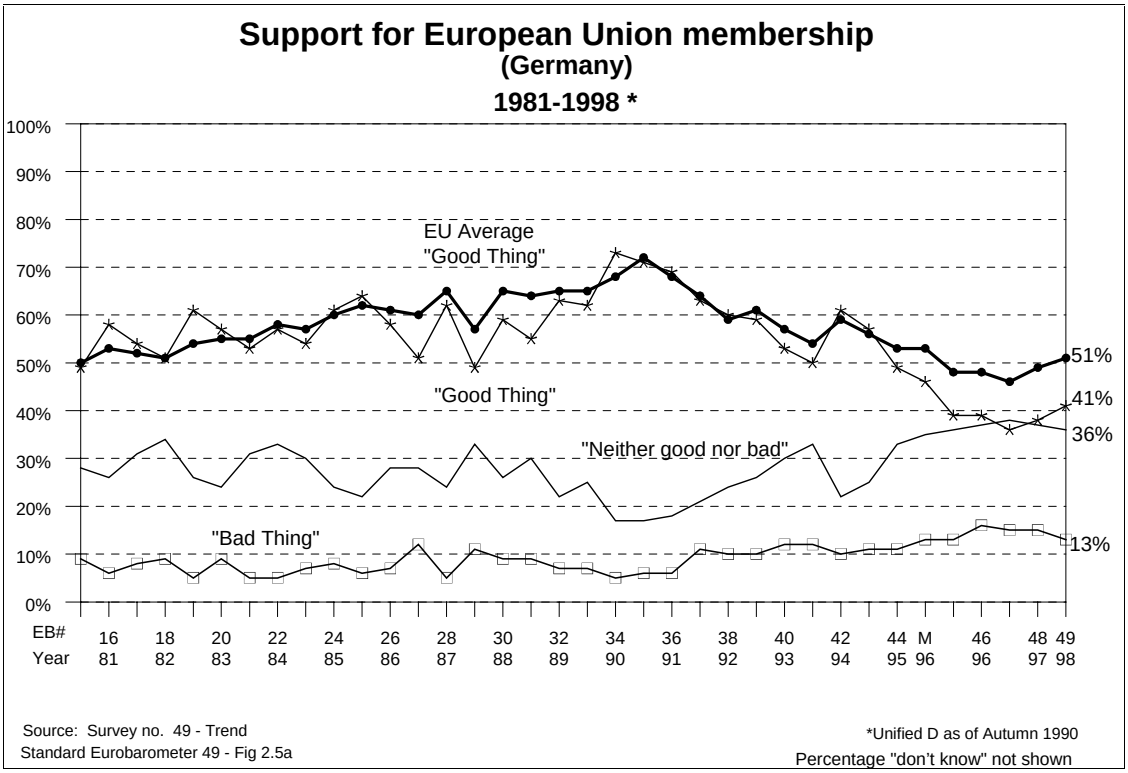

Benefit from European Union membership
(Belgium)
1984-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
EU Average "Benefited"
"Not benefited"
46%
44%
32%
EB# 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

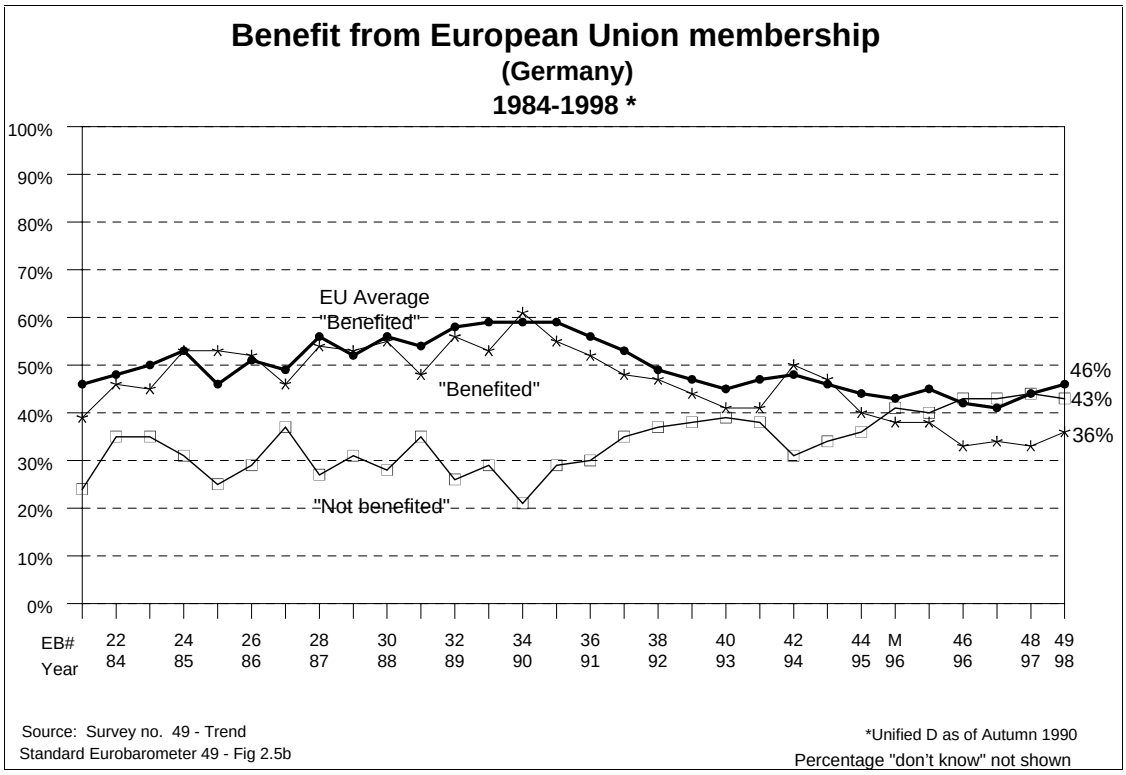
DENMARK


Support for European Union membership
(Denmark)
1981 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Good Thing"
"Bad Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
53%
51%
24%
19%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

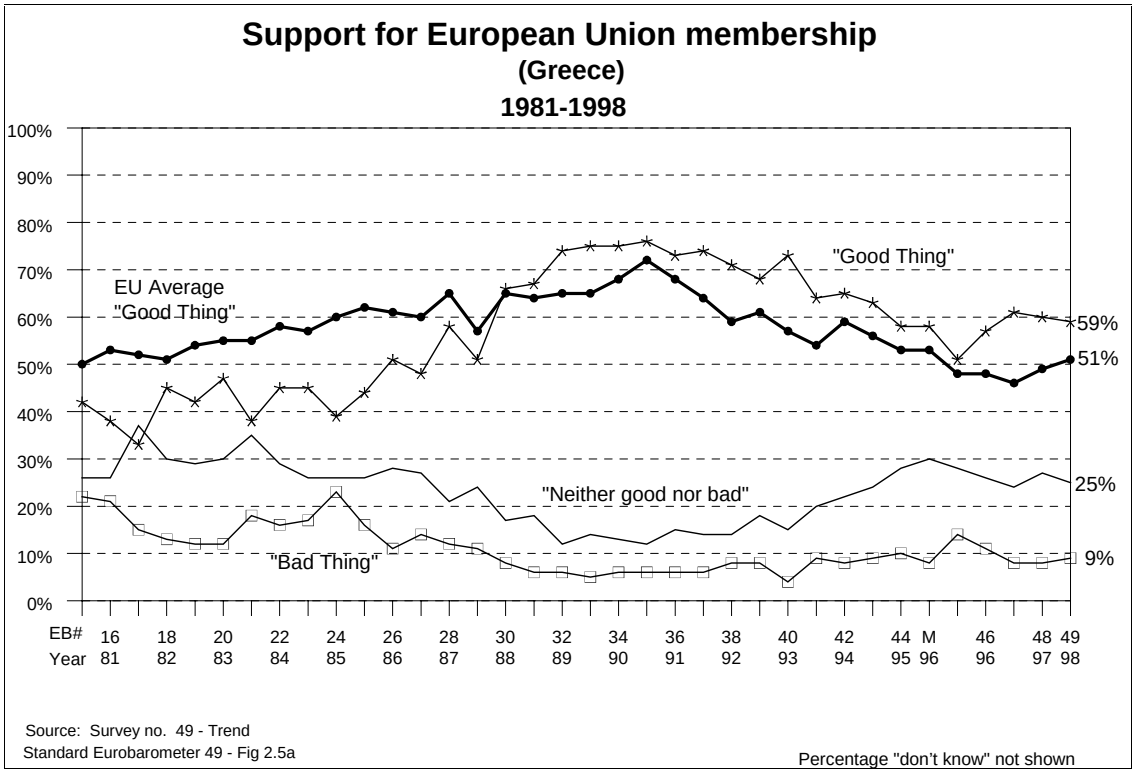

Benefit from European Union membership
(Denmark)
1984-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
EU Average
"Benefited"
"Not benefited"
65%
46%
19%
EB# 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

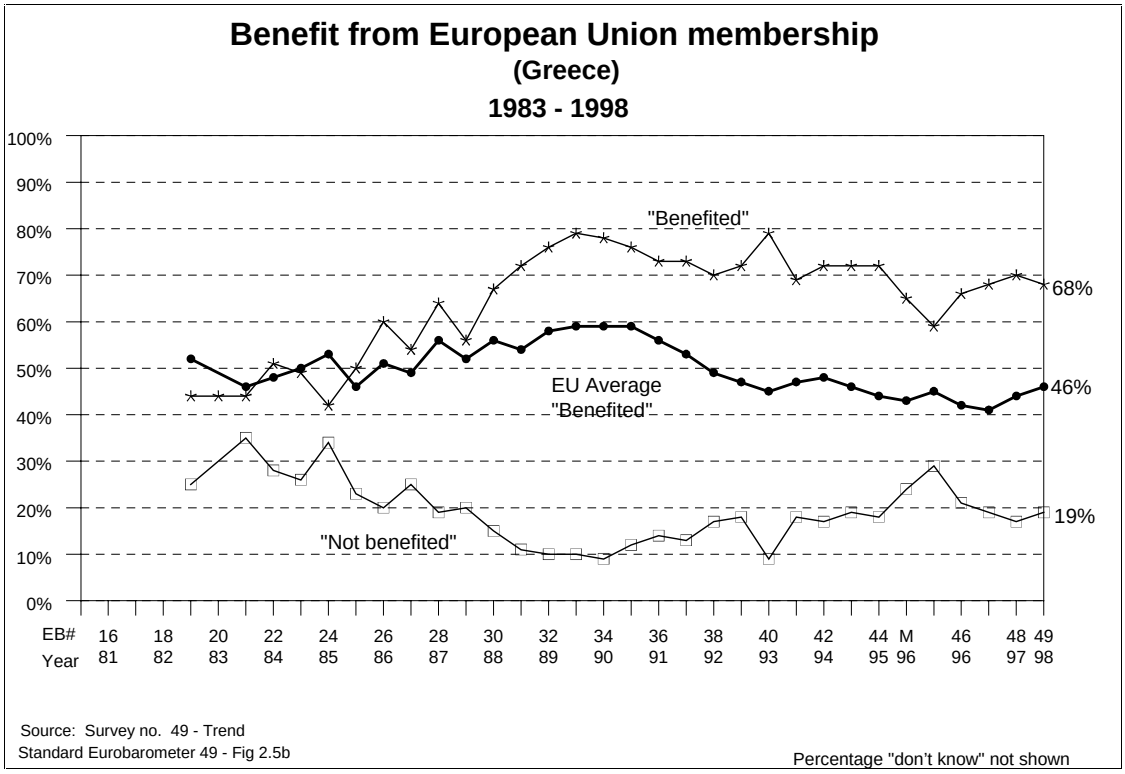
GERMANY


Support for European Union membership
(Germany)
1981-1998 *
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Good Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
51%
41%
36%
13%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
*Unified D as of Autumn 1990
Percentage "don't know" not shown

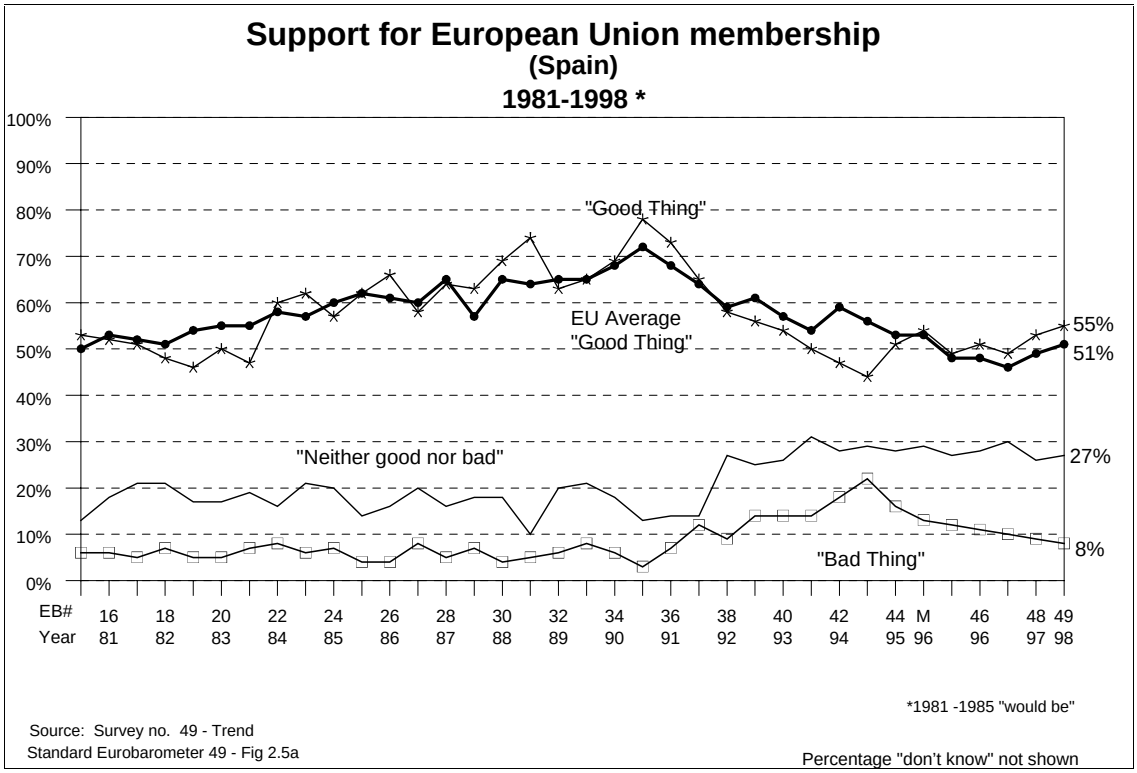

Benefit from European Union membership
(Germany)
1984-1998 *
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Benefited"
"Benefited"
"Not benefited"
46%
43%
36%
EB# 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
*Unified D as of Autumn 1990
Percentage "don't know" not shown

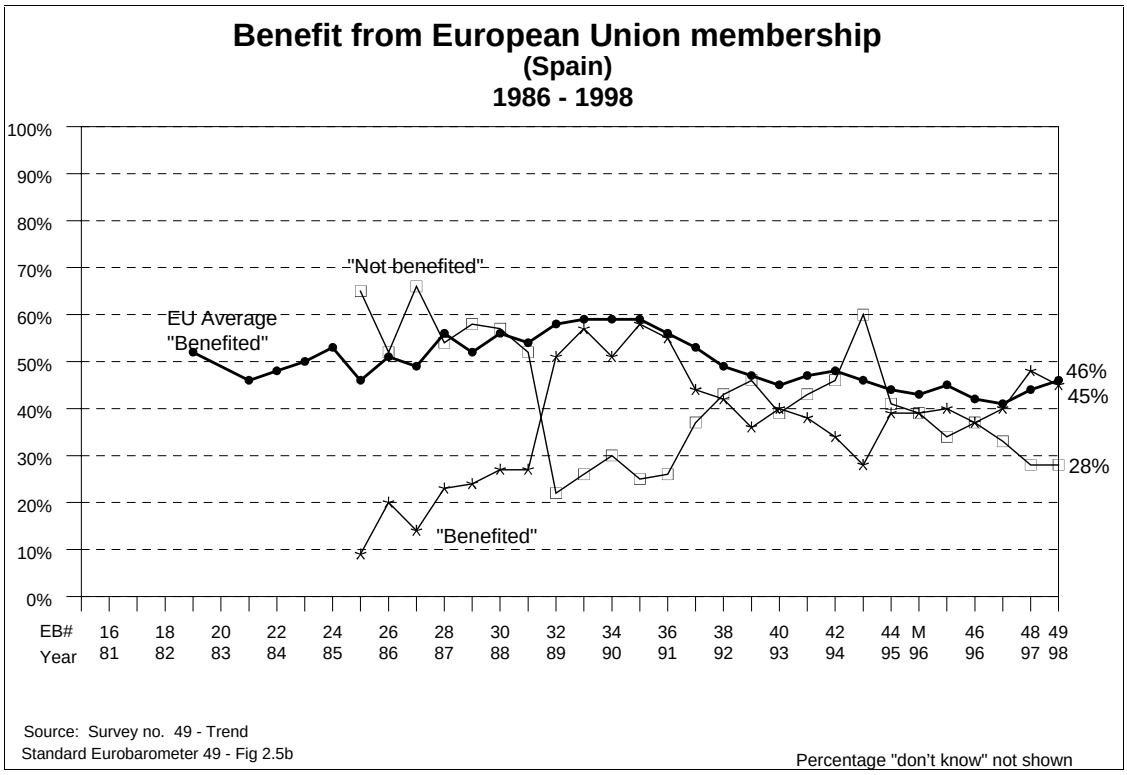
GREECE


Support for European Union membership
(Greece)
1981-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Good Thing"
59%
51%
"Neither good nor bad"
25%
"Bad Thing"
9%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

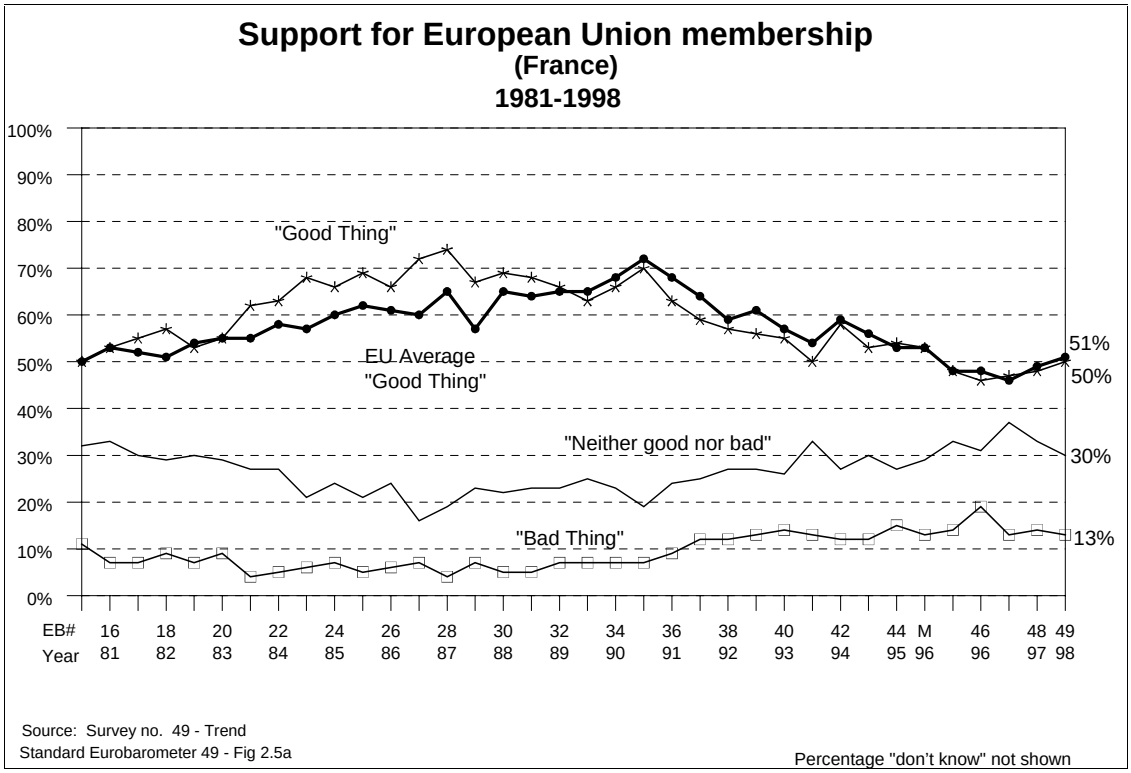

Benefit from European Union membership
(Greece)
1983 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
68%
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
"Not benefited"
19%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

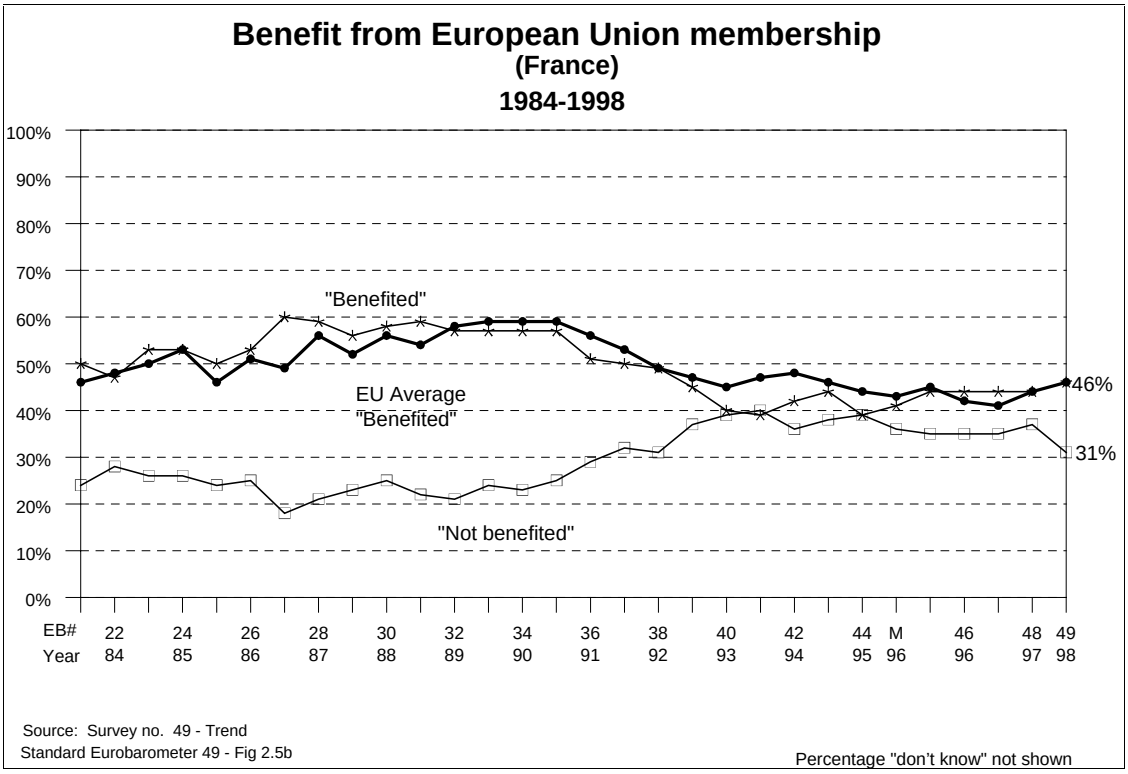
SPAIN


Support for European Union membership
(Spain)
1981-1998 *
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
EU Average
"Good Thing"
55%
51%
"Neither good nor bad"
27%
"Bad Thing"
8%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
*1981 -1985 "would be"
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

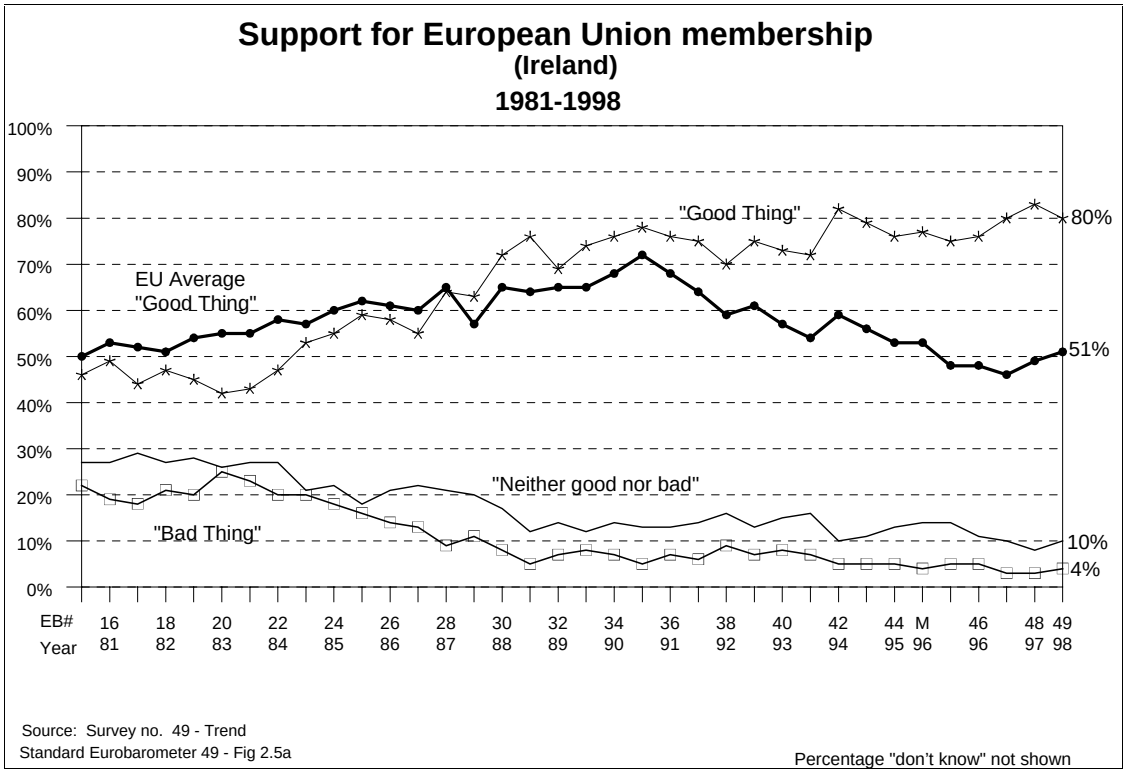

Benefit from European Union membership
(Spain)
1986 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Not benefited"
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
45%
28%
"Benefited"
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

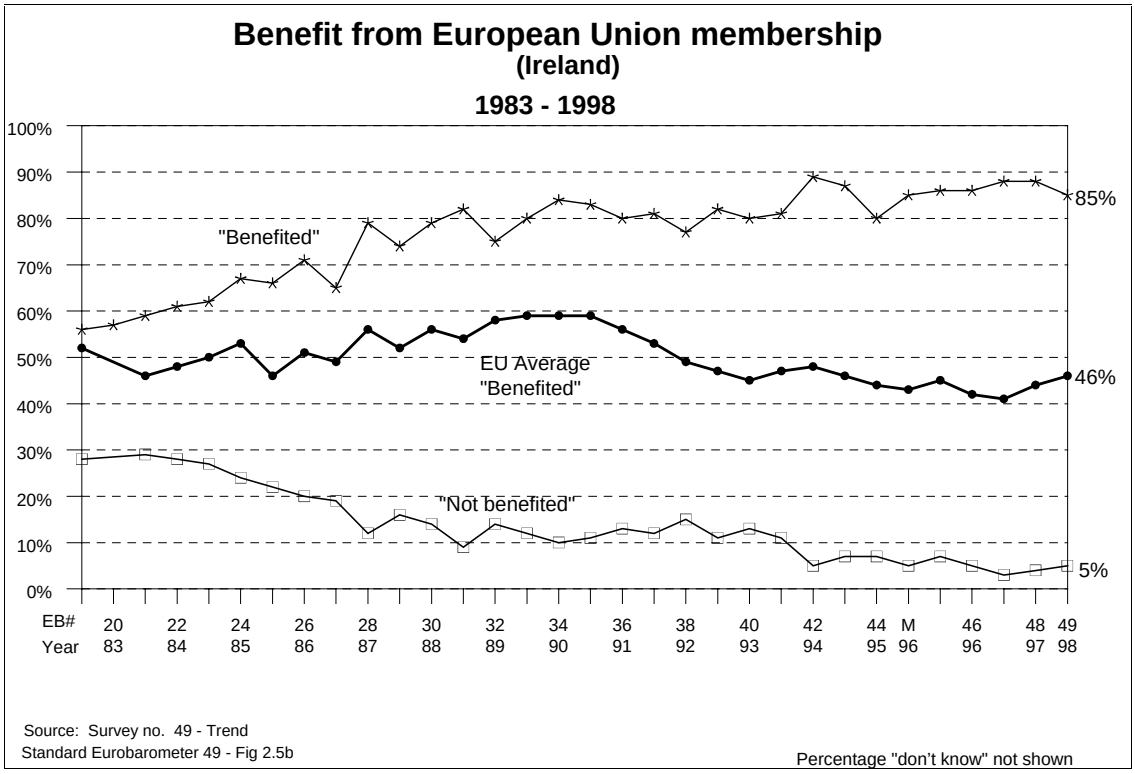
FRANCE


Support for European Union membership
(France)
1981-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
51%
50%
30%
13%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

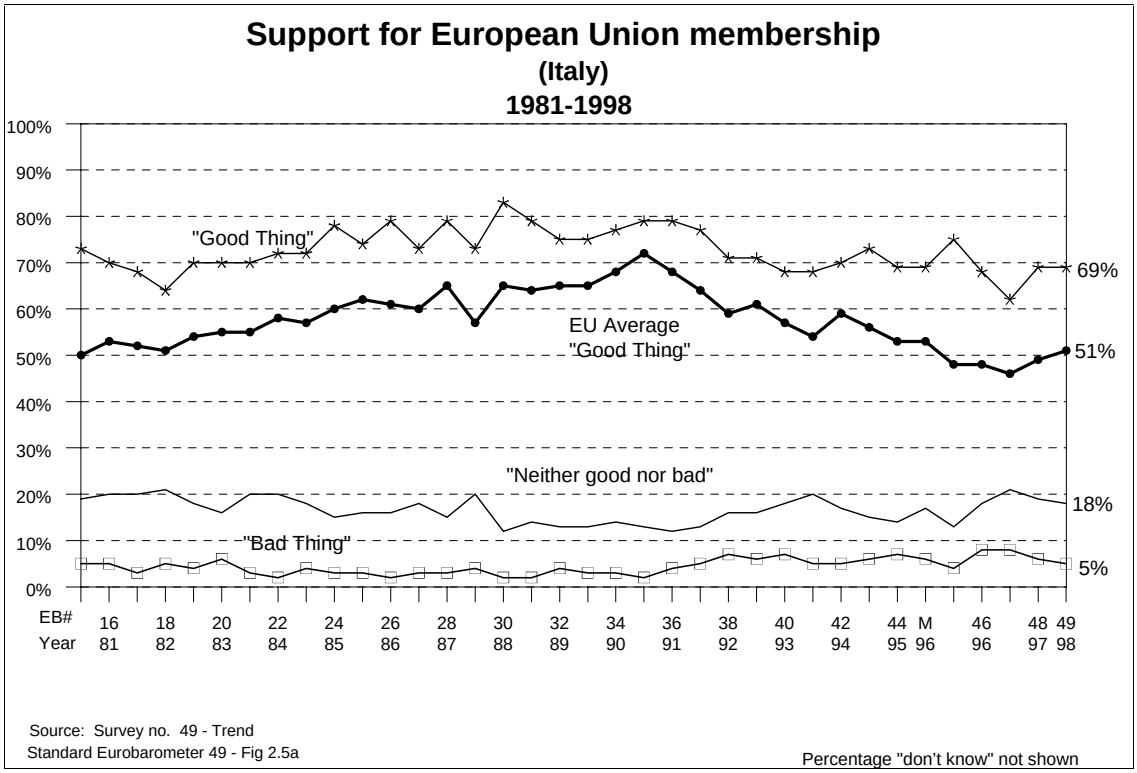

Benefit from European Union membership
(France)
1984-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
EU Average
"Benefited"
"Not benefited"
46%
31%
EB# 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

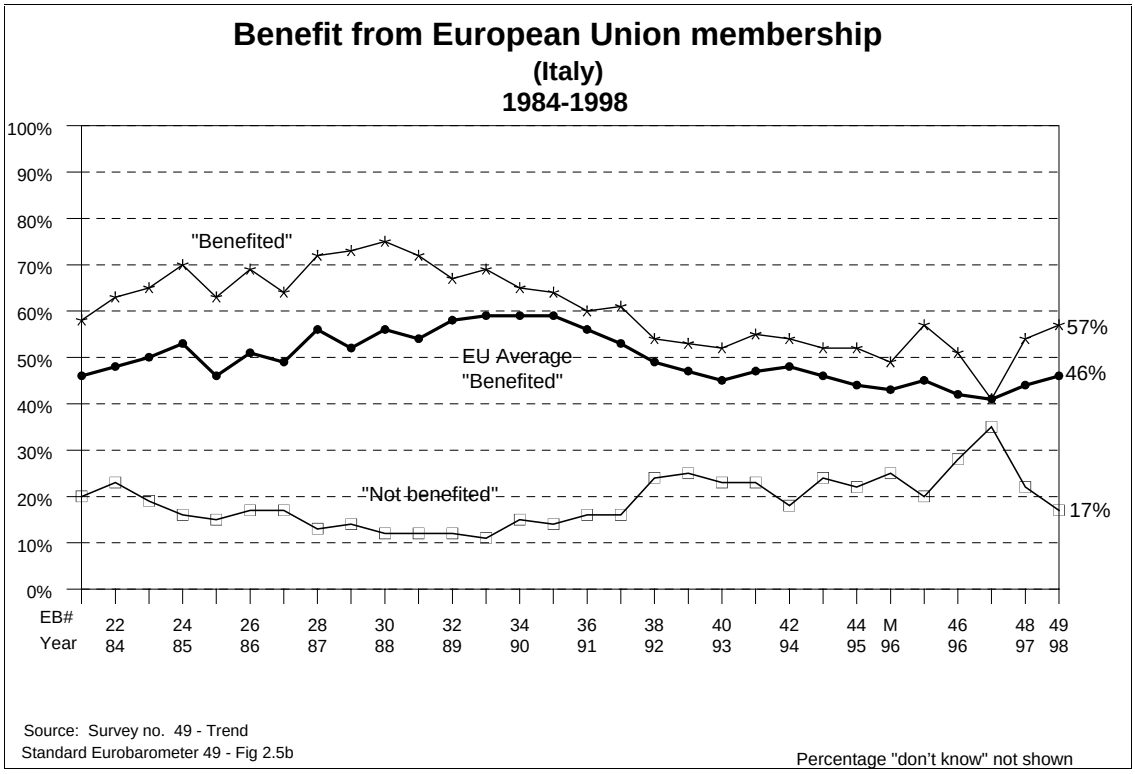
IRELAND


Support for European Union membership
(Ireland)
1981-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
80%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
51%
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
10%
4%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

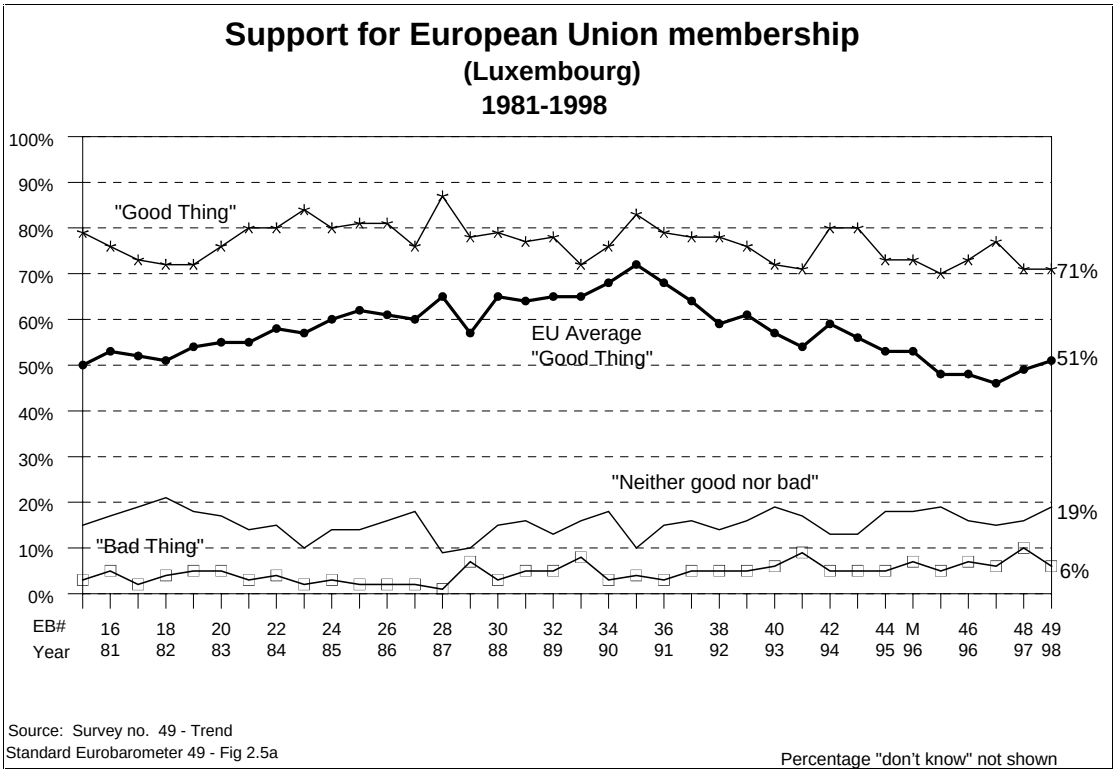

Benefit from European Union membership
(Ireland)
1983 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
85%
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
"Not benefited"
5%
EB# 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

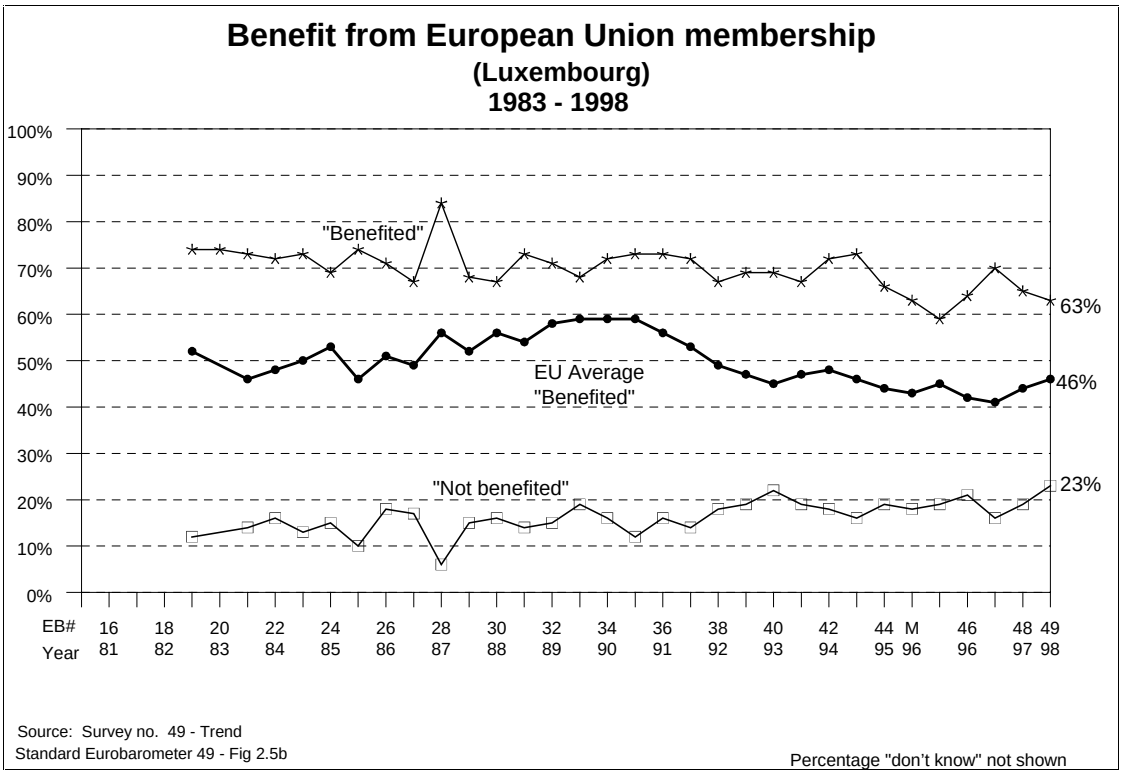
ITALY


Support for European Union membership
(Italy)
1981-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
69%
51%
18%
5%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

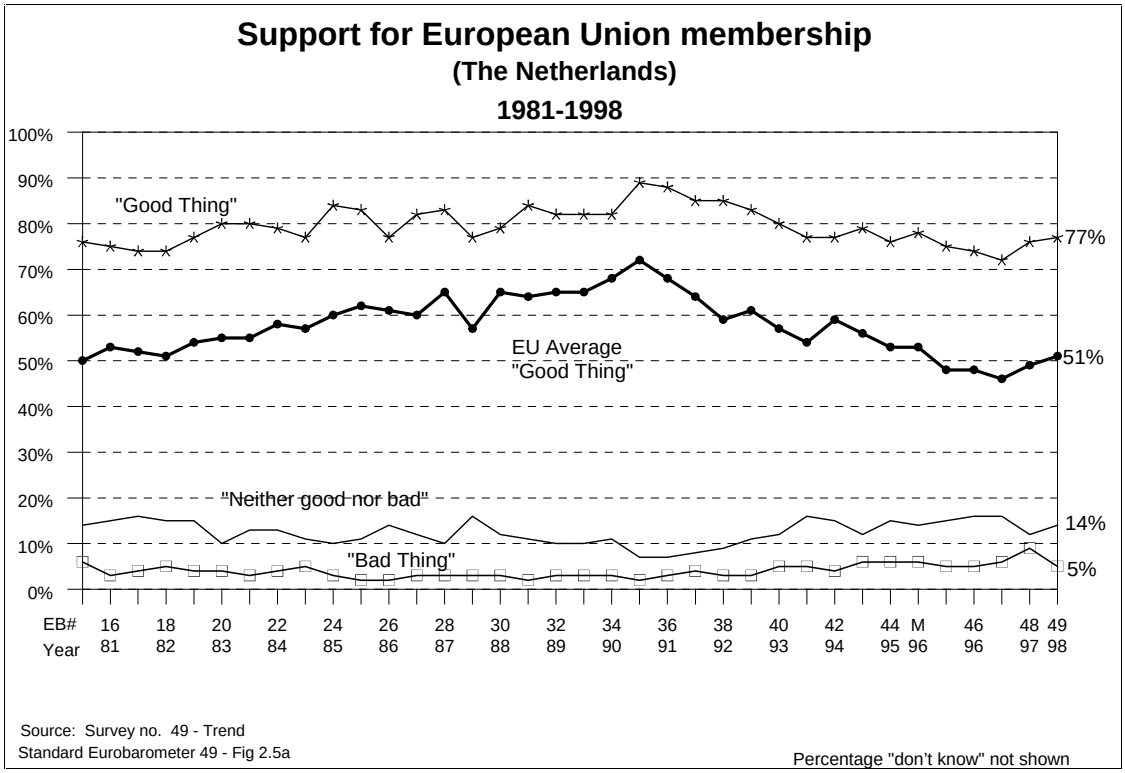

Benefit from European Union membership
(Italy)
1984-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
EU Average
"Benefited"
"Not benefited"
57%
46%
17%
EB# 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

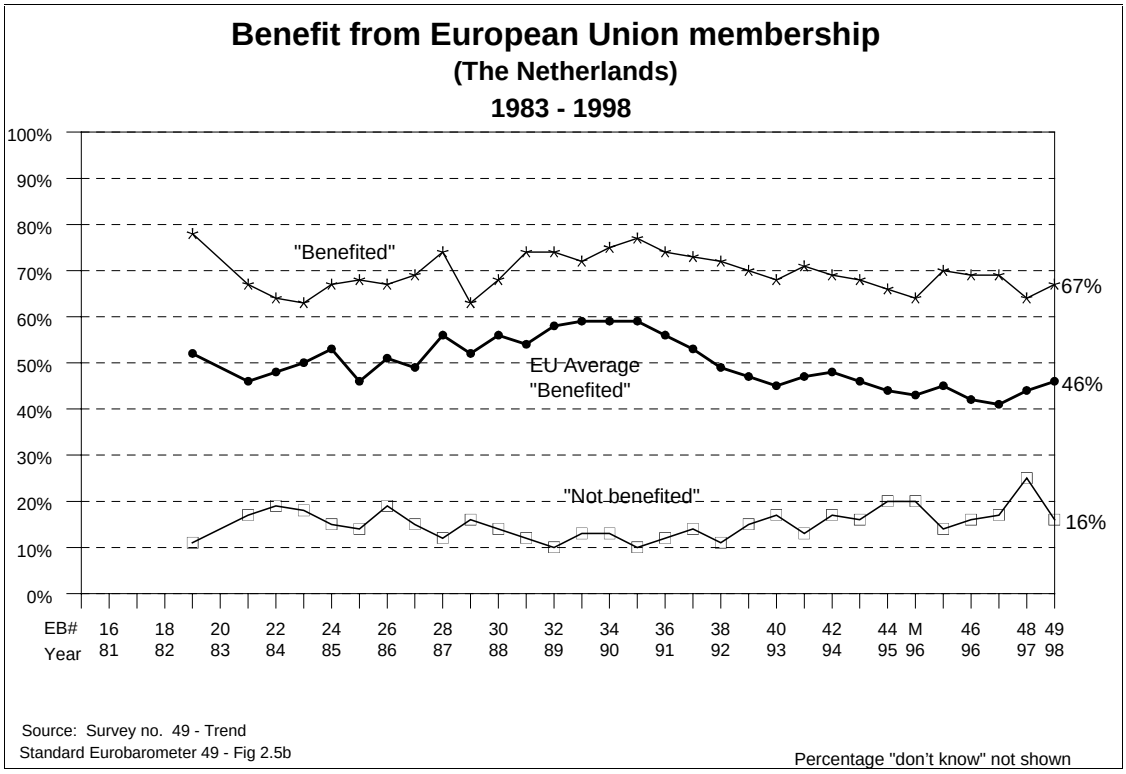
LUXEMBOURG


Support for European Union membership
(Luxembourg)
1981-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Good Thing"
71%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
51%
"Neither good nor bad"
19%
"Bad Thing"
6%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

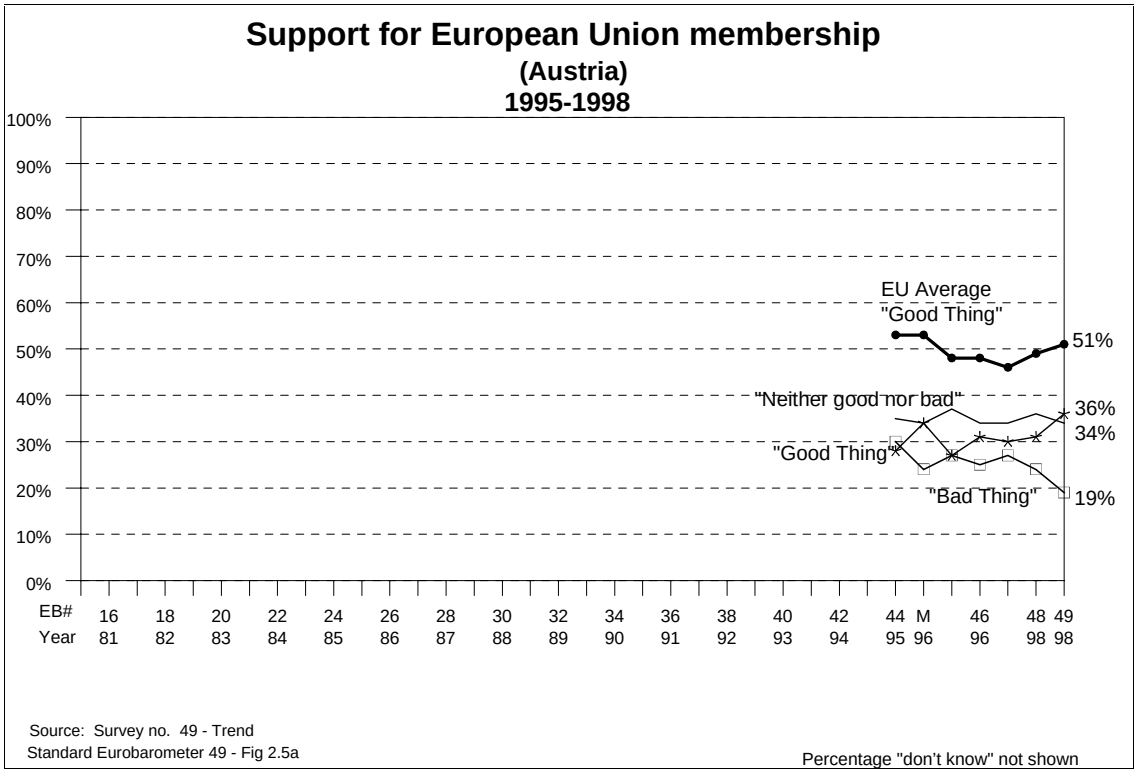

Benefit from European Union membership
(Luxembourg)
1983 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
63%
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
"Not benefited"
23%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

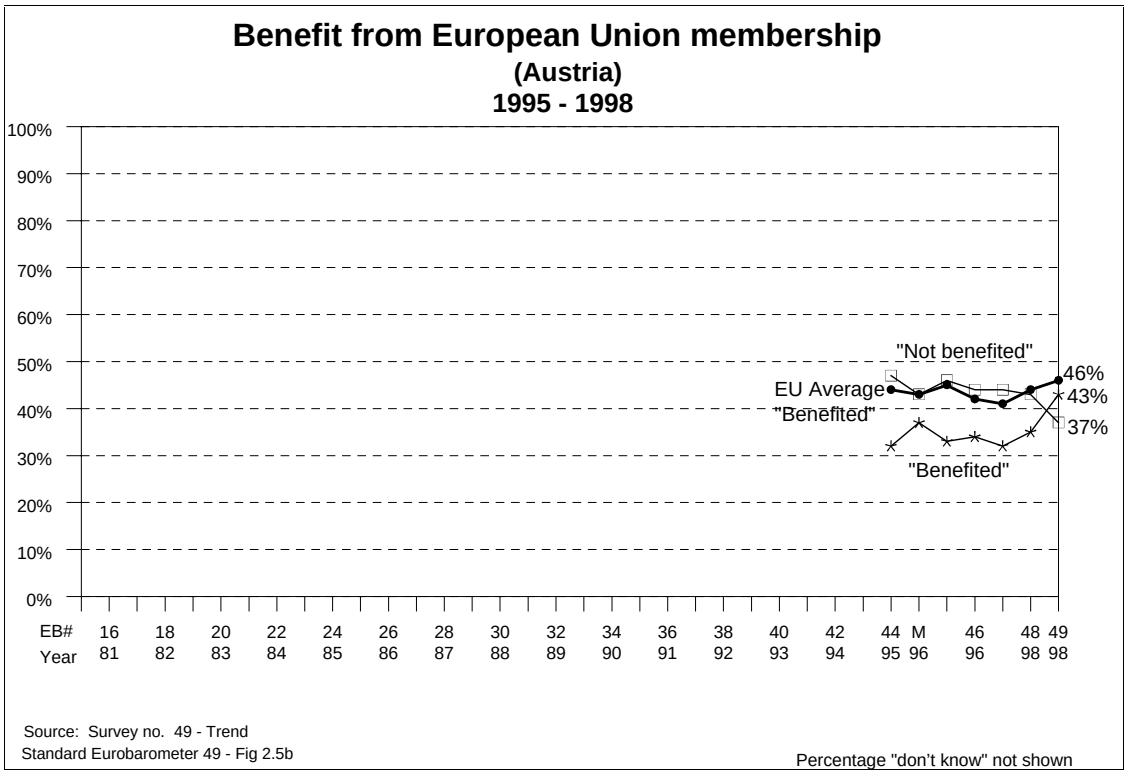
THE NETHERLANDS



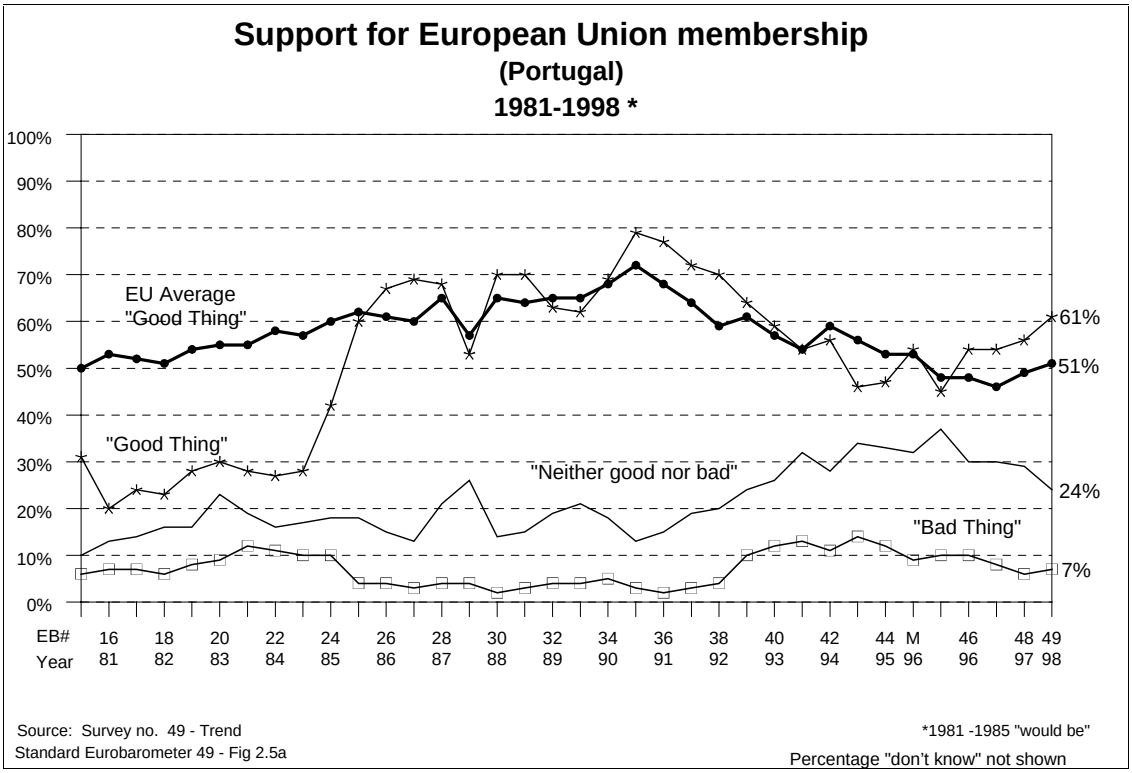


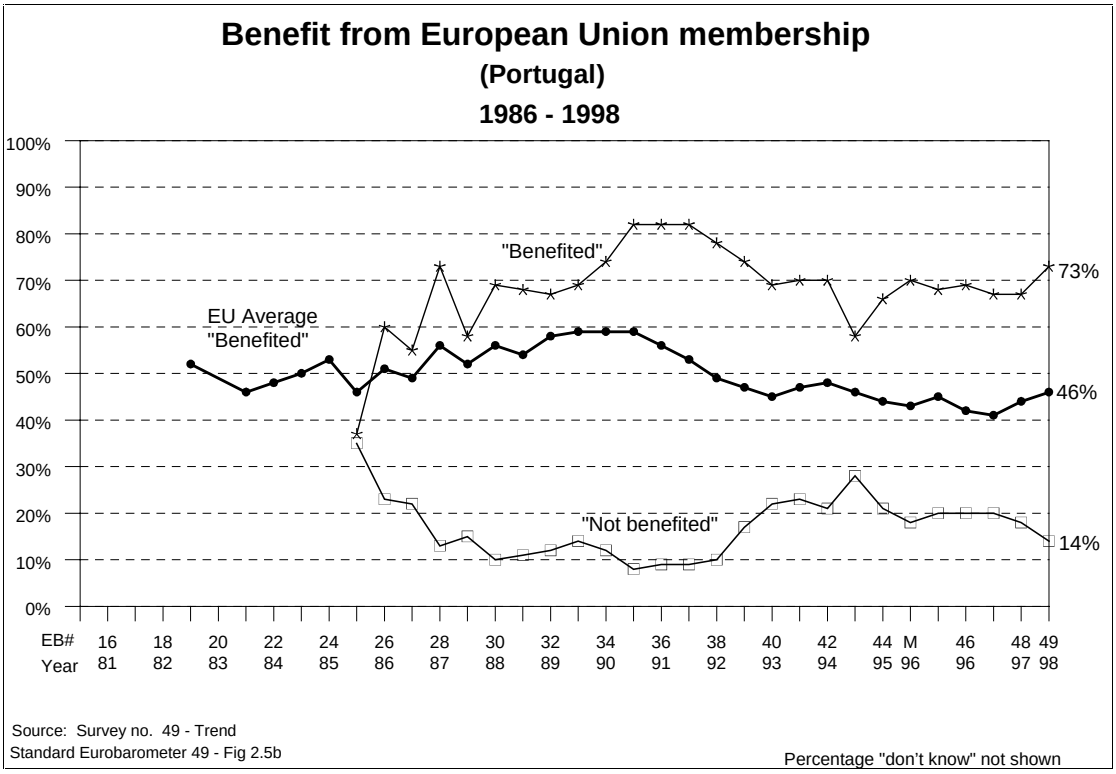
AUSTRIA


Support for European Union membership
(Austria)
1995-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
51%
"Neither good nor bad"
36%
34%
"Good Thing"
"Bad Thing"
19%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 98 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

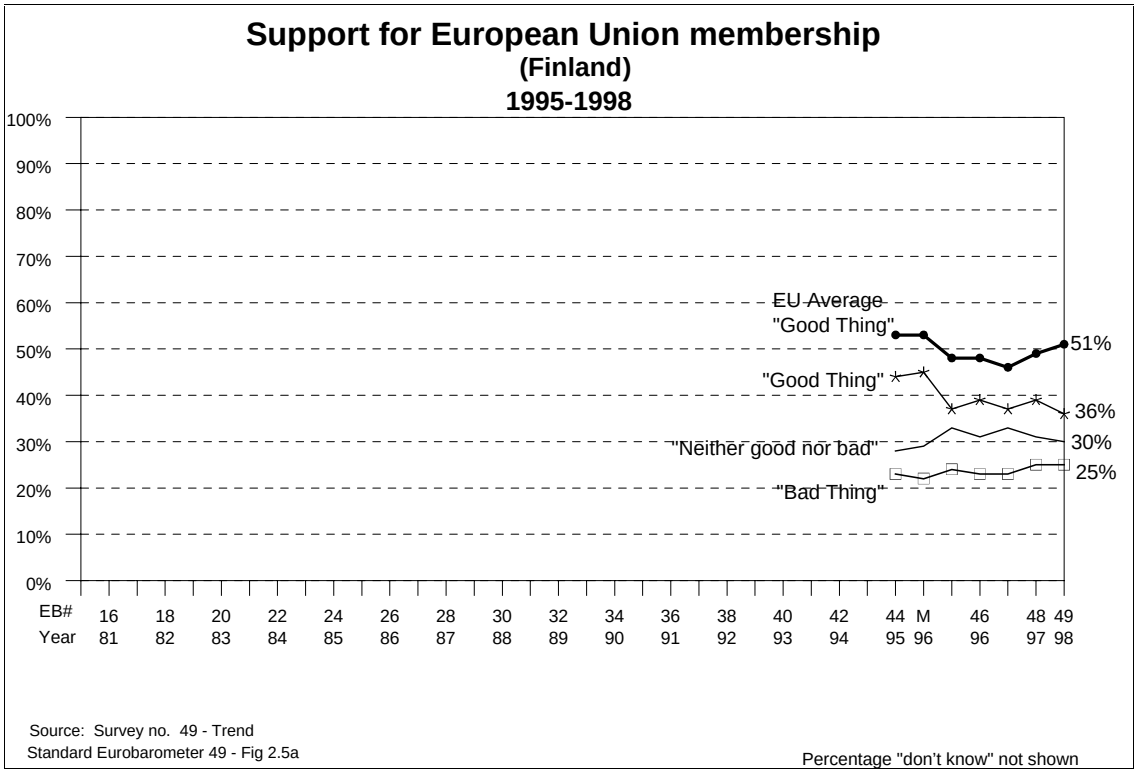

Benefit from European Union membership
(Austria)
1995 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Not benefited"
46%
EU Average
43%
"Benefited"
37%
"Benefited"
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 98 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

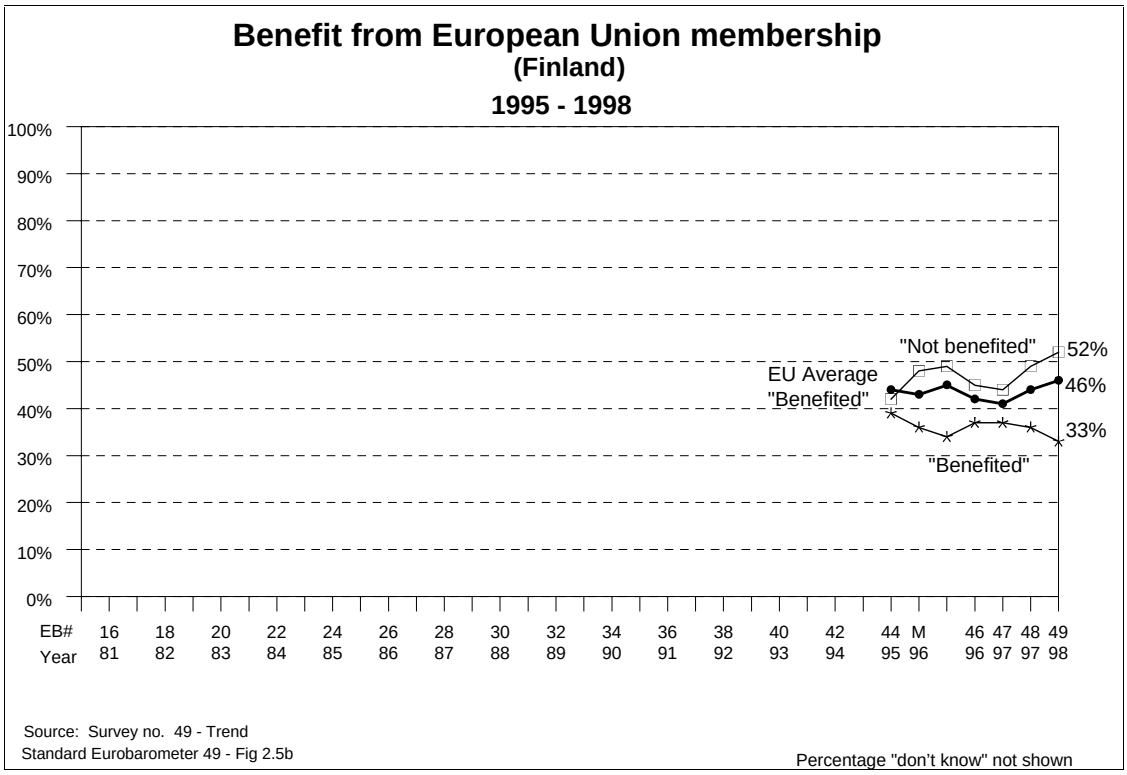
PORTUGAL


Support for European Union membership
(Portugal)
1981-1998 *
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
"Good Thing"
"Neither good nor bad"
"Bad Thing"
61%
51%
24%
7%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
*1981 -1985 "would be"
Percentage "don't know" not shown

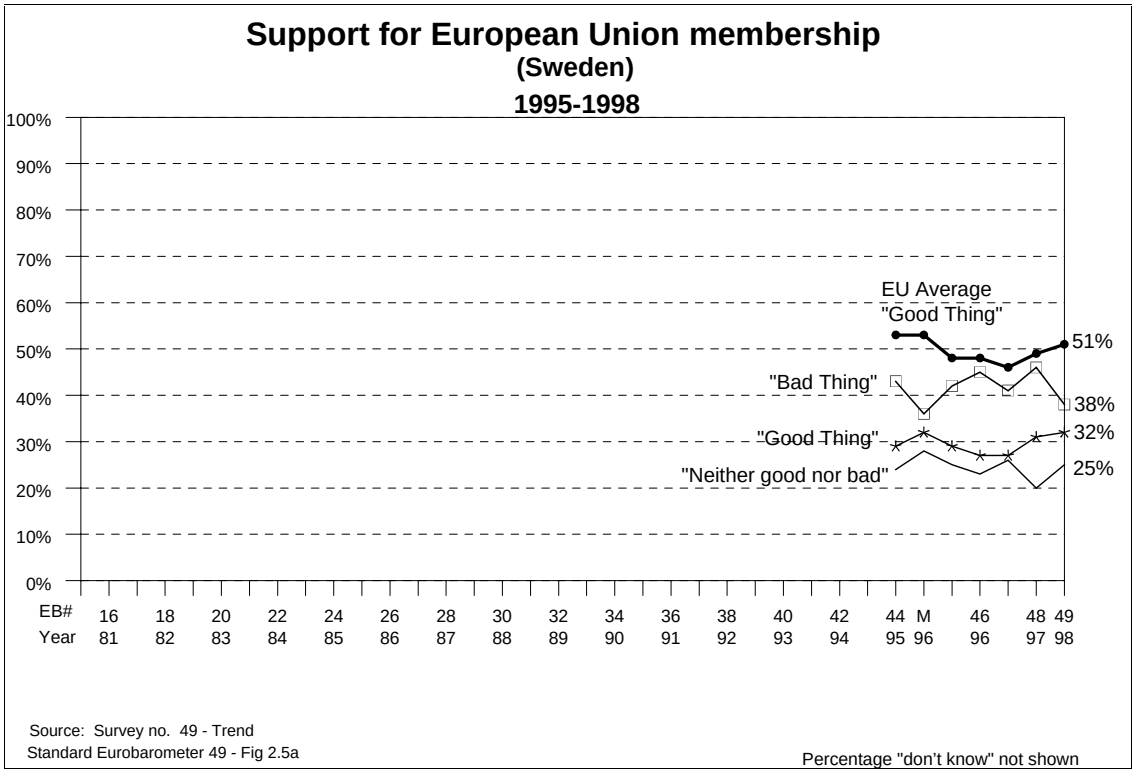

Benefit from European Union membership
(Portugal)
1986 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Benefited"
EU Average
"Benefited"
"Not benefited"
73%
46%
14%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

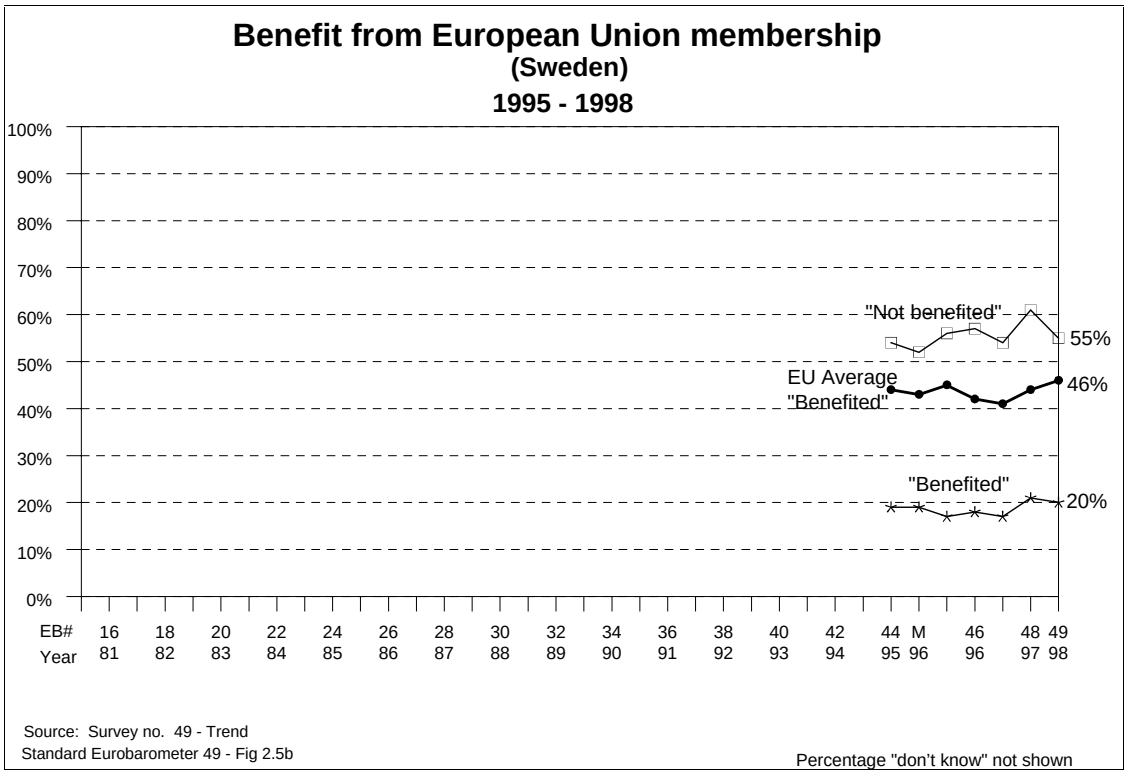
FINLAND


Support for European Union membership
(Finland)
1995-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
51%
"Good Thing"
36%
"Neither good nor bad"
30%
25%
"Bad Thing"
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown

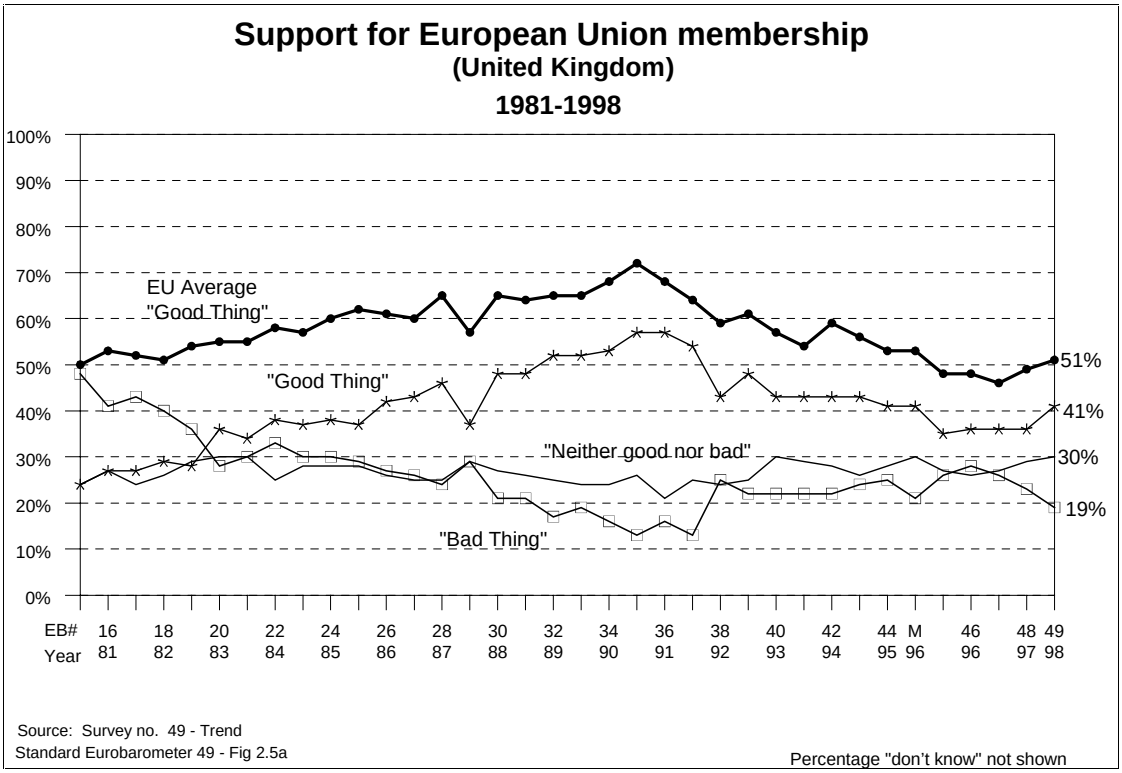

Benefit from European Union membership
(Finland)
1995 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Not benefited"
52%
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
33%
"Benefited"
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 47 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

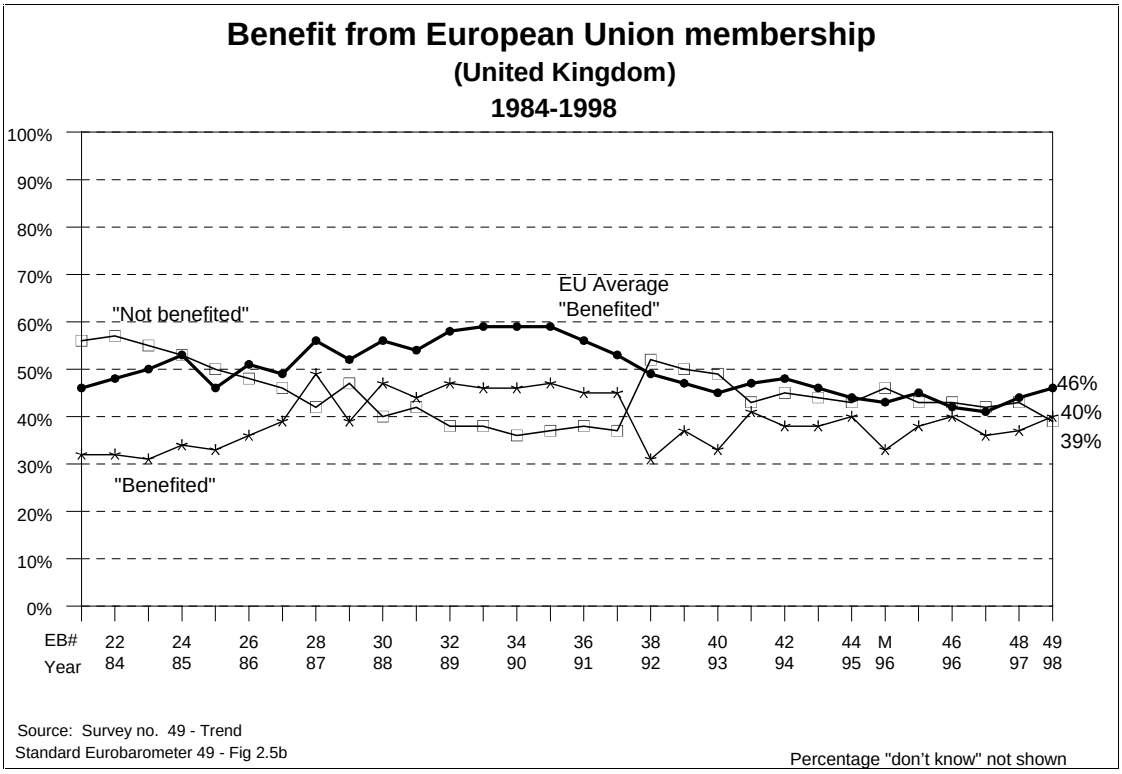
SWEDEN


Support for European Union membership
(Sweden)
1995-1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
EU Average
"Good Thing"
51%
"Bad Thing"
38%
"Good Thing"
32%
"Neither good nor bad"
25%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5a
Percentage "don't know" not shown


Benefit from European Union membership
(Sweden)
1995 - 1998
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
"Not benefited"
55%
EU Average
"Benefited"
46%
"Benefited"
20%
EB# 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 M 46 48 49
Year 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 96 97 98
Source: Survey no. 49 - Trend
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.5b
Percentage "don't know" not shown

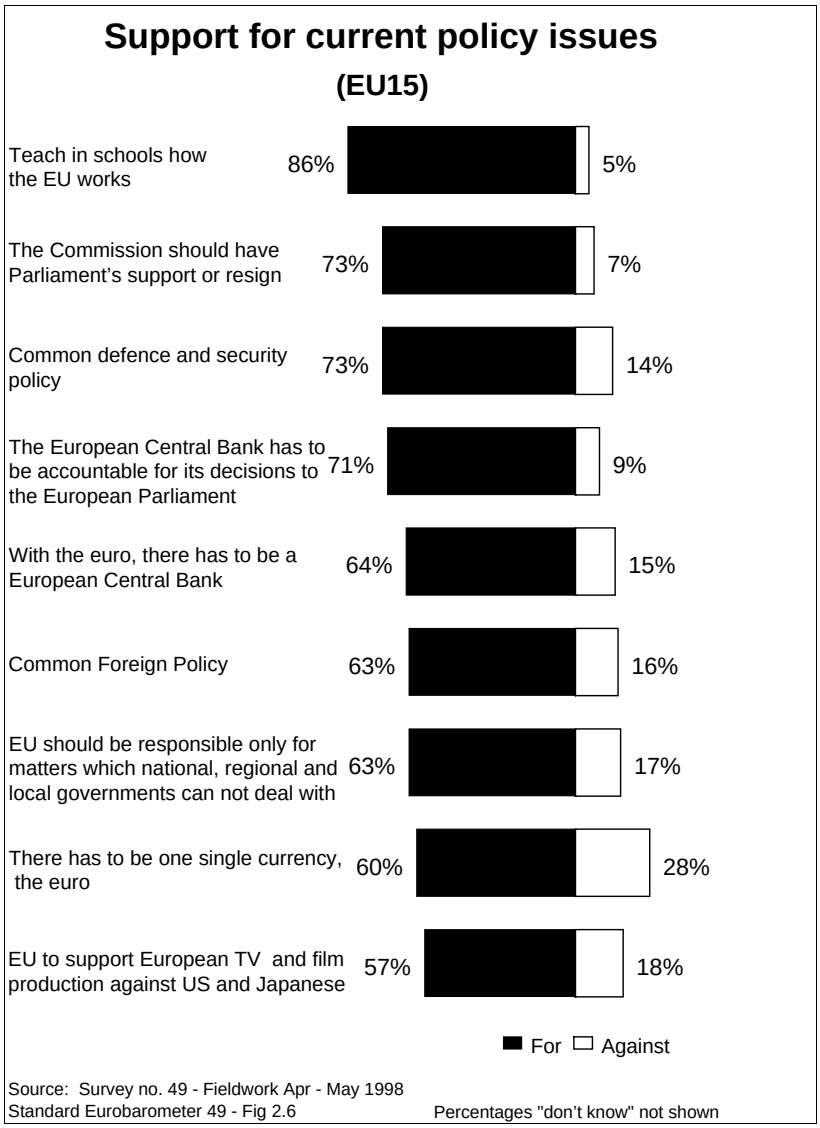
UNITED KINGDOM





2.3. Support for current policy issues

Since 1993, the Eurobarometer has gauged public opinion towards a number of the Union's current policy issues.



All the policy issues presented in the survey receive the support of the majority of EU citizens. 86% support the notion that children should be taught in school about the way European Union institutions work. Europeans also attach great value to democratic processes with 73% supporting the notion that the European Commission should resign if it doesn't have the support of a majority in the European Parliament and 71% supporting the notion that the European Central Bank has to be accountable to the European Parliament. 63% of Europeans agree with the principle of subsidiarity, which is based on the notion that the EU should be responsible for matters that cannot be effectively handled by national, regional and local governments. A Union that can defend itself against outside threats and that has a voice in world affairs is also considered important by many people, with 73% supporting a common defence policy and 63% supporting a common foreign policy. 60% of the public is for a single currency and 64% agree on the need to have a European Central Bank once the single currency arrives.

As the table below shows, Europeans are now significantly more supportive of the single currency than they have been in the past few years. Support for a common defence policy and for more democratic processes has also increased, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. In recent years, Europeans have become less supportive of the need to protect the European film and TV industry.

SUPPORT FO KEY ISSUES - TRENDS FROM 1993 TO 1998 - EC12/EU15[9]								
Theme	**Spring 1993 EB 39**	**Spring 1995 EB 43**	**Autumn 1995 EB 44**	**Spring 1996 EB 45**	**Autumn 1996 EB 46**	**Spring 1997 EB 47**	**Autumn 1997 EB 48**	**Spring 1998 EB 49**
EMU								
Single currency	52	52	53	51	51	47	51	60
European Central Bank	NA*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	64
Foreign policy and defence								
Defence policy	77	75	73	60	68	68	69	73
Foreign policy	66	67	69	66	64	63	63	63
Democratic processes								
EP to support Commission	66	70	72	71	70	69	69	73
Subsidiarity	57	55	63	64	61	60	60	63
ECB accountable to EP	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	71
Education and Culture								
Teach in schools about EU	NA	84	86	84	84	87	85	86
Support for EU TV & Film production	NA	64	66	59	64	62	60	57

* NA = Not asked

The country by country analyses show that support for the single currency is highest in Italy (83%) and Luxembourg (79%) and lowest in Denmark, the UK (both 34%) and Sweden (39%)[10]. Support for the notion that with the euro there should be a European Central Bank is highest in The Netherlands (84%) and Luxembourg (78%).

People in The Netherlands, Greece, Luxembourg and France are most likely to support a common foreign policy. The Dutch, Italians and French are most likely to support a common defence policy. Sweden is the only country where support for both policies is below 50%.

The notion that the European Commission needs the support from the majority of European Parliamentarians is very popular throughout the European Union, with support most widespread in The Netherlands (90%) and Finland (84%). People from these two countries (87% and 81%, respectively) are also most likely to support the notion that the European Central Bank should be accountable to the European Parliament. Opposition levels are below 20% throughout the European Union. Subsidiarity is most popular in Italy, Finland and Luxembourg (all 69%) and least popular in Sweden and Denmark, where 35% and 28% of the people, respectively, say they are against this principle.

[9] The figures for the EB 39 survey are for EC12. The others are for EU15.
[10] In Chapter 3, support for the euro is discussed in more detail.

Support for teaching children about the way the European Union institutions work in the classroom is high in every single Member State. Attitudes to protecting the European film and TV industry are more varied: in France 70% are in favour of this, while in Denmark 46% oppose it. (Table 2.3)

2.4. Support for joint EU decision-making

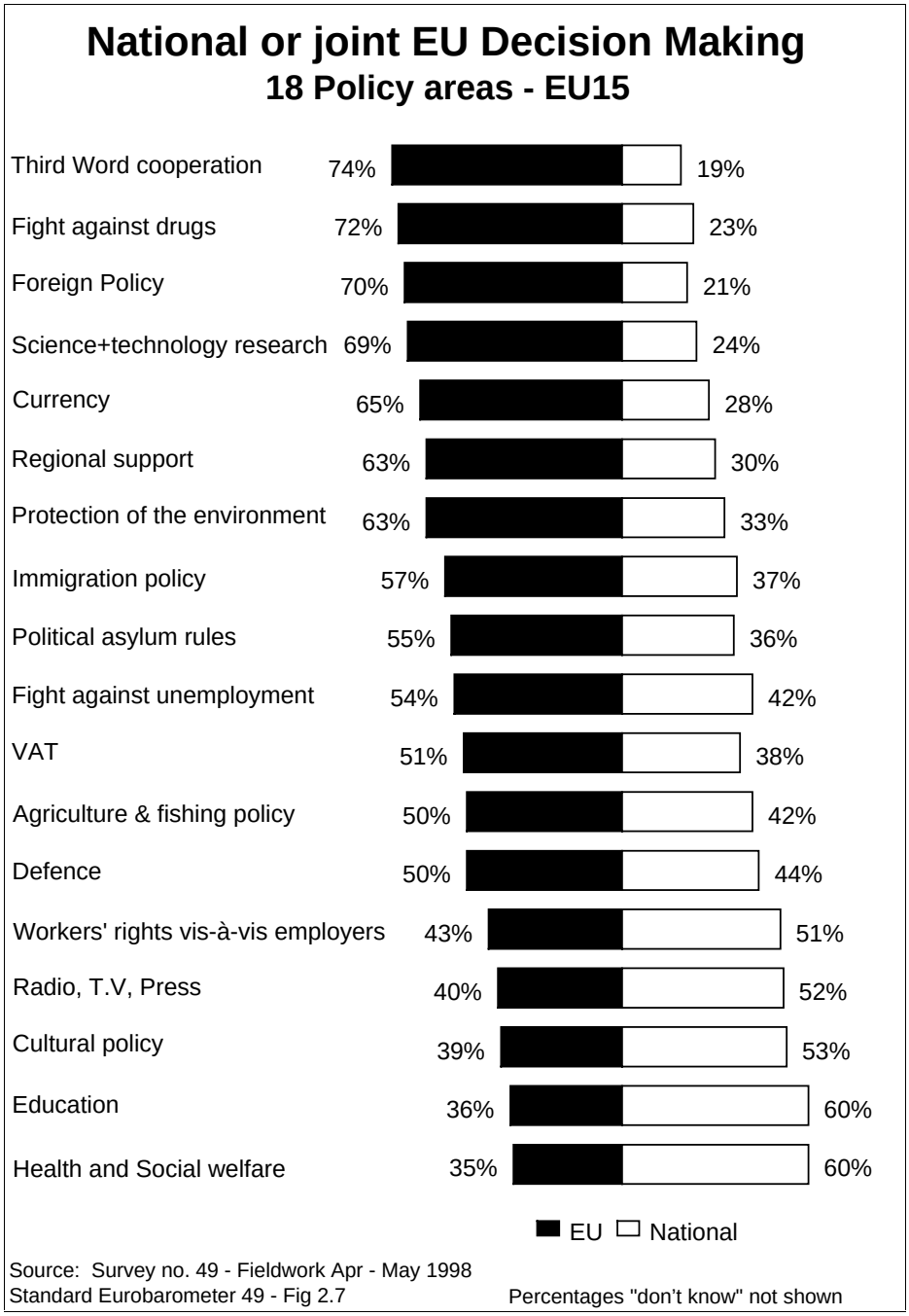
In the previous section, we have shown that 63% of Europeans agree with the principle of subsidiarity. While this implies that the Union should only focus on issues which can not be handled effectively at a lower level, there are many policy areas where the public favours joint EU decision-making over decision-making at the national level.

As the table below shows, the average level of support for EU decision-making in the 18 policy areas presented in the questionnaire stands at 55% and for 13 of the policy areas, the public favours EU decision-making over national decision-making.

SUPPORT FOR JOINT EU DECISION-MAKING BY COUNTRY

Country	Average % support for EU decision-making	Number of areas where EU decision-making is more popular than national decision-making (18 areas maximum)
Italy	65%	18
The Netherlands	62%	13
Belgium	60%	14
France	59%	13
Luxembourg	57%	13
Germany	56%	13
EU15	***55%***	***13***
Spain	54%	12
Ireland	53%	14
Austria	51%	9
Greece	49%	10
Portugal	44%	7
United Kingdom	43%	6
Sweden	41%	6
Denmark	39%	6
Finland	37%	7

Looking at the country differences shows that support for joint EU decision-making is highest in Italy, where it is favoured over national decision-making in all the policy areas covered in the survey. There are several other countries where the majority of the public supports EU joint decision-making. In these countries, EU decision-making is more popular than national decision-making in around 13 of the 18 areas. In Finland, Denmark, Sweden and the UK, preference is given to national decision-making. In Portugal and Greece, the relatively low level of support for EU joint decision-making can in part be explained by the above average occurrence of ‘don’t know’ responses in these countries.



Looking at the various areas listed in the survey shows that people do apply the principle of subsidiarity by making a distinction between areas which are more likely to affect them directly and areas which are more removed from their daily lives. As usual, highest support for EU joint decision-making goes to areas which are less likely to affect people directly or which transcend national borders such as the Third-World (74%), the fight against drugs (72%), foreign policy (70%) and research (69%). On the other hand, the majority of Europeans want the national governments to decide in areas which concern them more directly such as health & social welfare, education (both 60%), cultural policy (53%), broadcasting rules for the media (52%) and workers' rights (51%). (Table 2.4)

2.5. European vs. National identity

Since 1992, the Eurobarometer has been tracking the development of a shared "European" identity among the citizens of the EU by regularly asking the following question:

"In the near future, do you see yourself as?"

Nationality only
Nationality and European
European and nationality
European only

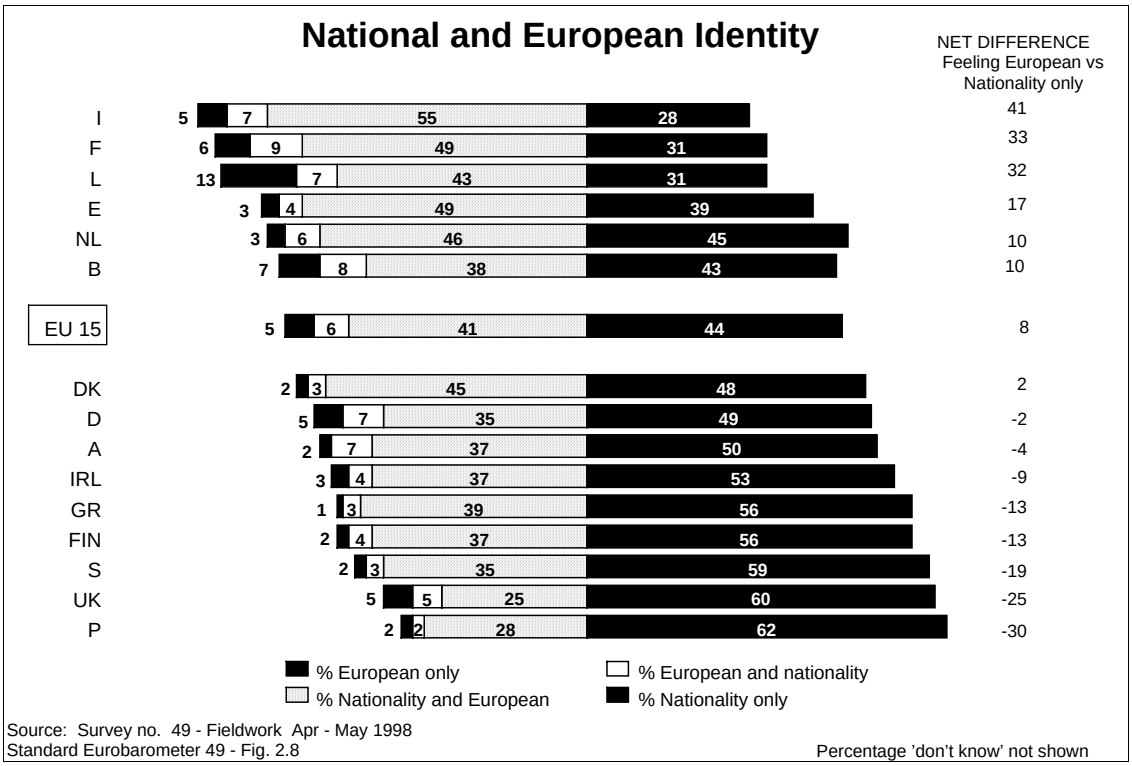
Overall we find that 44% of respondents see themselves as *"nationality only*", 41% as their own "*nationality and European*", 6% as *"European and nationality*" and a further 5% as *"European only".*

FEELING EUROPEAN - TRENDS FROM 1992 TO 1998 - EC12/EU15[11]							
	EB 37 Spring 1992	**EB 40 Autumn 1993**	**EB 42 Autumn 1994**	**EB 44 Autumn 1995**	**EB 46 Spring 1996**	**EB 47 Spring 1997**	**EB 49 Spring 1998**
Nationality only	38	40	33	40	46	45	44
Nationality & European	48	45	46	46	40	40	41
European & nationality	7	7	10	6	6	6	6
European only	4	4	7	5	5	5	5

Throughout the years that the survey has tracked the development of a European identity, there have always been more people who feel to some extent European than people who identify themselves as only having their own nationality. However, as the table above shows, the sense of sharing a common identity does not appear to have become more widespread over the years.

The rank order amongst countries that had been established in previous surveys has now changed slightly. Although Luxembourg residents are at 13% still by far the most likely to feel European only, the number of people who now feel Luxembourgisch only has increased significantly (+8) so that Italians (67%) are now most likely to feel to some extent European. In Portugal (62%), the UK (60%) and Sweden (59%), people are still most likely to see themselves as their own nationality only.

[11] The figures for the EB 37, EB 40 and EB 42 surveys are for EC12. The others are for EU15.



The sense of feeling to some extent European has increased significantly in Belgium (+6), Denmark (+5), Spain (+4) and Italy (+3). Apart from Luxembourg, the sense of identifying with one's own nationality only has increased significantly in Portugal (+4), Ireland, The Netherlands and the UK (all +3) since the spring of 1997. (Table 2.5a)

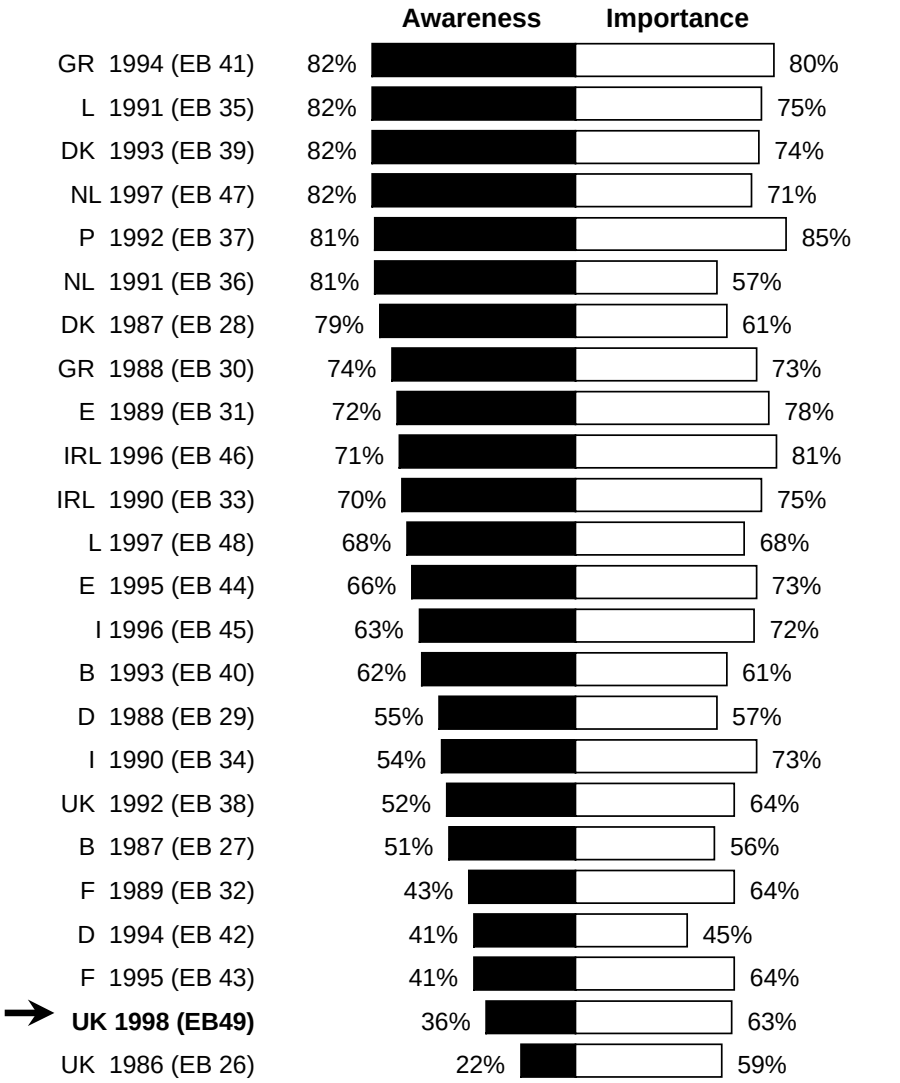
The demographic analyses show that 54% of men and 50% of women feel to some extent European. People aged 55 and over (42%) stand out as significantly less likely to feel to some extent European than the other age groups. An above average sense of feeling European is found among well-educated people (69%), students and managers (both 66%). How people perceive their country's membership to the European Union is, as usual, an important factor with 70% of those who support their country's membership feeling European compared to only 19% of those who regards it as a bad thing. (Table 2.5b)

2.6. Awareness and importance of the Council Presidency

Each Member State of the European Union holds, in turn, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for a six-month period. For many years, the Eurobarometer has measured both awareness and the perceived importance of the Presidency among the citizens of the country that holds the Presidency at the time of the survey.

During the first six months of 1998, the Presidency was held by the UK. As the table below shows, 36% of the UK population were aware of this fact. This is significantly lower than when the UK held the Presidency in 1992 (-16), although awareness levels where even lower when the UK held the Presidency in 1986. In no other Member State have awareness levels been this low, although the data do indicate that people in the larger Member States generally tend to be less aware of their country's role than people from the smaller Members. Low awareness levels do not point to a lack of perceived importance. In the case of the UK, nearly 2 in 3 citizens regard their country's Presidency as important.

Awareness and importance of the Council Presidency



Source: Survey no. 49 - Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig 2.9

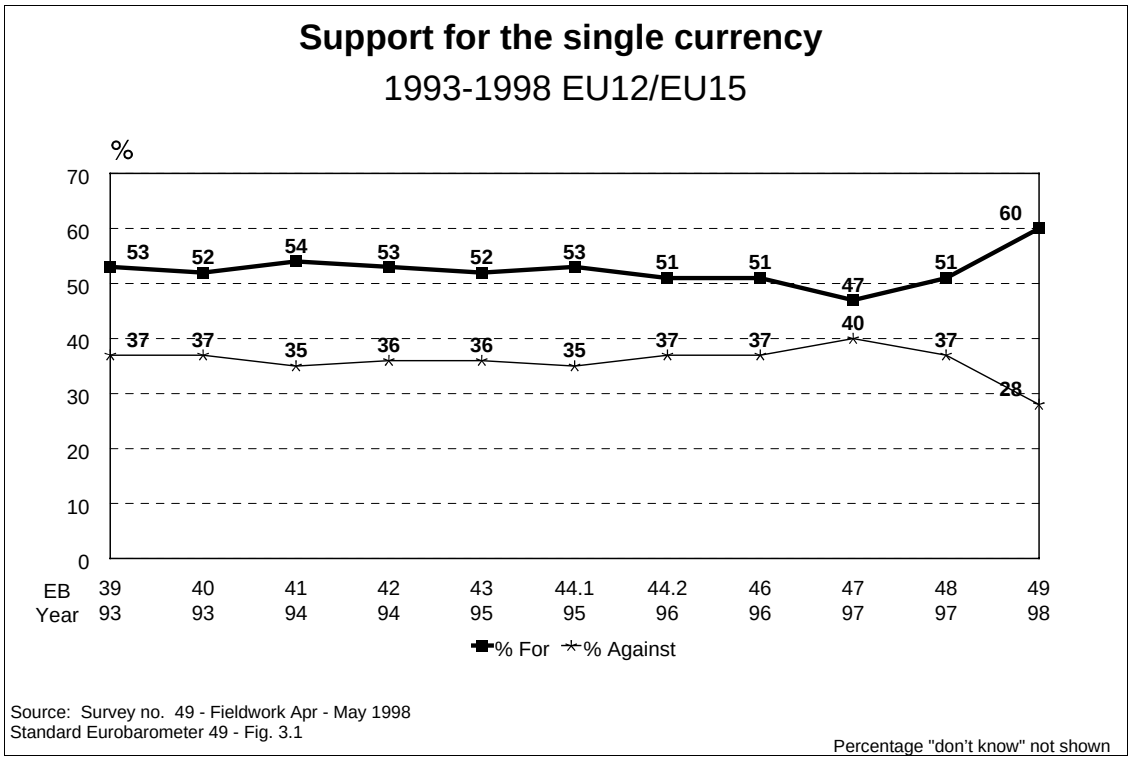
Not aware/not important and 'don't know' not shown

3. Current policy issues : the euro

The European Union will have a single currency, the euro, from 1 January 1999. At the end of March 1998, the Commission and the European Monetary Institute published their respective convergence reports in which they describe which Member States meet the necessary conditions and the Commission recommended a list of 11 countries. On 2 May, the Heads of State and Government of the European Union held a special Council meeting in Brussels to confirm which Member States will introduce the euro from the start on January 1st, 1999. During this Council meeting, the Heads of State and Government of the European Union also designated the President and the members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank which has now become operational (replacing the European Monetary Institute).

3.1. Support for the single currency

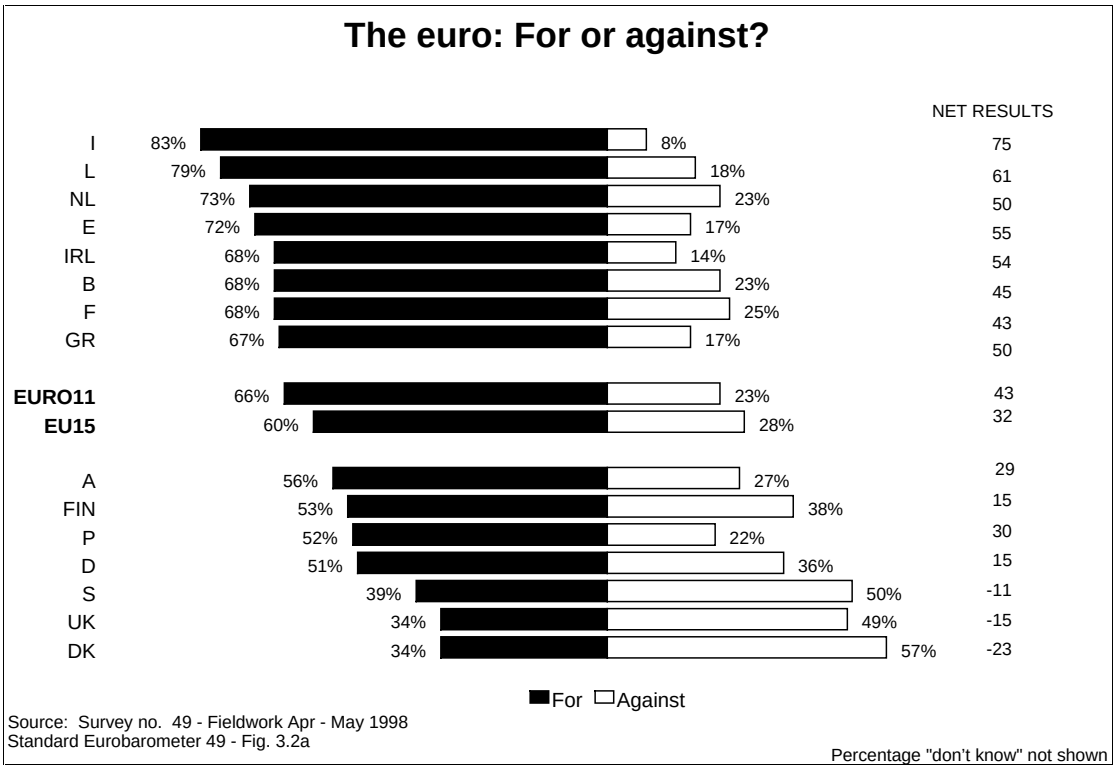
Now that the arrival of the single currency on 1 January 1999 is imminent, approval rates of the euro among EU citizens have reached their highest level since the survey began measuring support in 1993. 60% of EU citizens are now in favour of the euro, compared to 51% in the autumn of 1997. This increase of nearly 10 percentage points represents the first truly significant improvement since 1993, with opposition to the single currency falling below 30% for the first time as well.



The fact that the single currency will not from the start be introduced in all of the Member States is mirrored in the results. Among the 11 countries that will participate from the start - the "EURO 11" countries - support for the euro stands at 66%, compared to 39% in the 4 countries that will not participate from the start - the "pre-in" countries.

Looking first at the "EURO 11" countries, that is Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland, shows that support levels are highest in Italy (83%) and Luxembourg (79%). In Austria (56%), Finland (53%) and Germany (51%), support levels are above the 50% mark for the first time.

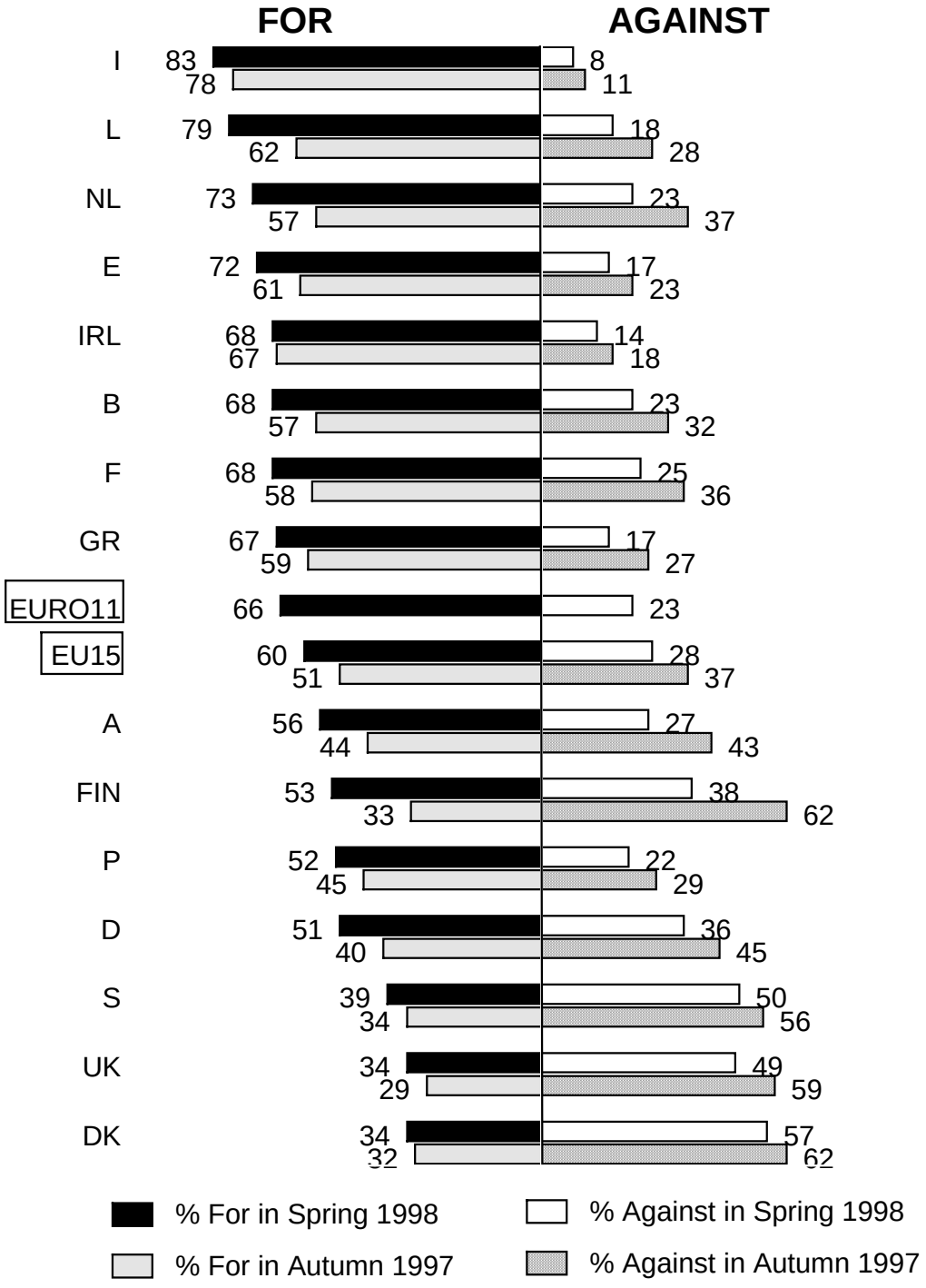
The 4 "pre-in" countries are Denmark, Sweden, the UK and Greece. There are clear differences between these countries in terms of public opinion on the euro. Support levels in Greece (67%) are nearly twice as high as in Sweden (39%), the UK and Denmark (both 34%). Among the three last countries, the UK stands out as having quite a significant proportion of people (17%) who at this stage can't say whether they are for or against the euro. Since the last survey, opposition levels here have dropped by 10 percentage points while support levels and the proportion of don't know responses both increased by 5 percentage points.



Looking next at how public opinion has shifted since the autumn 1997 survey at the country level shows that support for the euro increased and opposition to the euro decreased in each of the 15 Member States. Among the "EURO 11" countries, the most significant increase is noted in Finland (+20). Other "EURO 11" countries where increases of 10 percentage points or more are recorded are Luxembourg (+17), The Netherlands (+16), Austria (+12), Belgium, Germany, Spain (all +11) and France (+10). Ireland is the only "EURO 11" country where the increase in support levels is not statistically significant (+1).

Among the 4 "pre-in" countries, the largest increase in support for the euro is noted in Greece (+8). Statistically significant increases are also recorded in Sweden and, as already noted, in the UK (both +5). In Denmark, support levels increased only slightly (+2), although opposition levels did drop significantly (-5). (Table 3.1a)

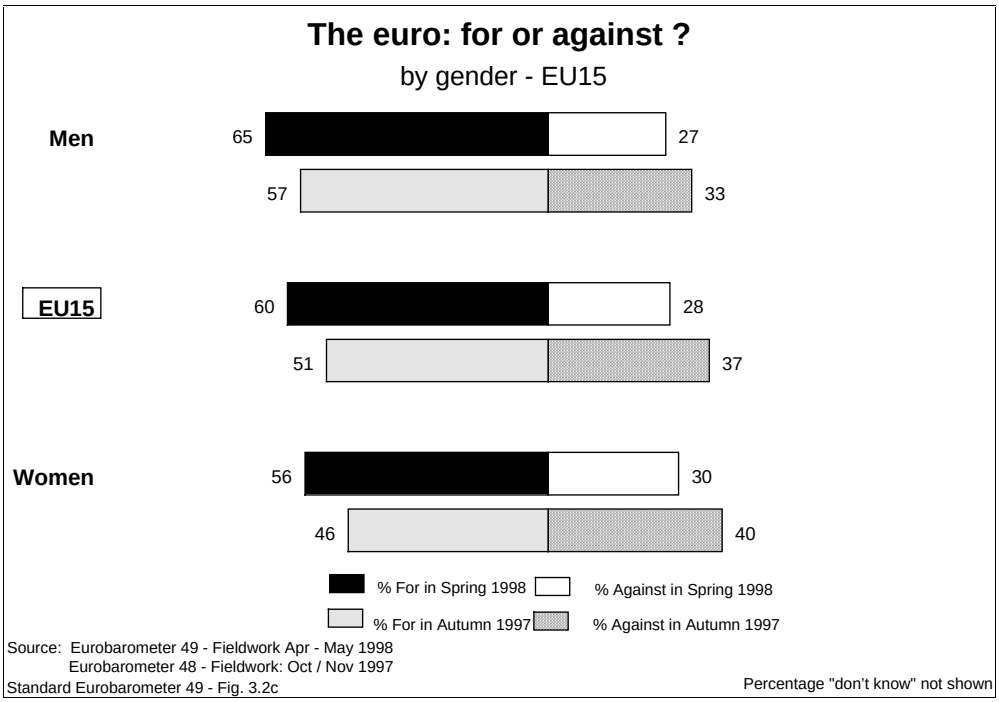
The euro: For or against?

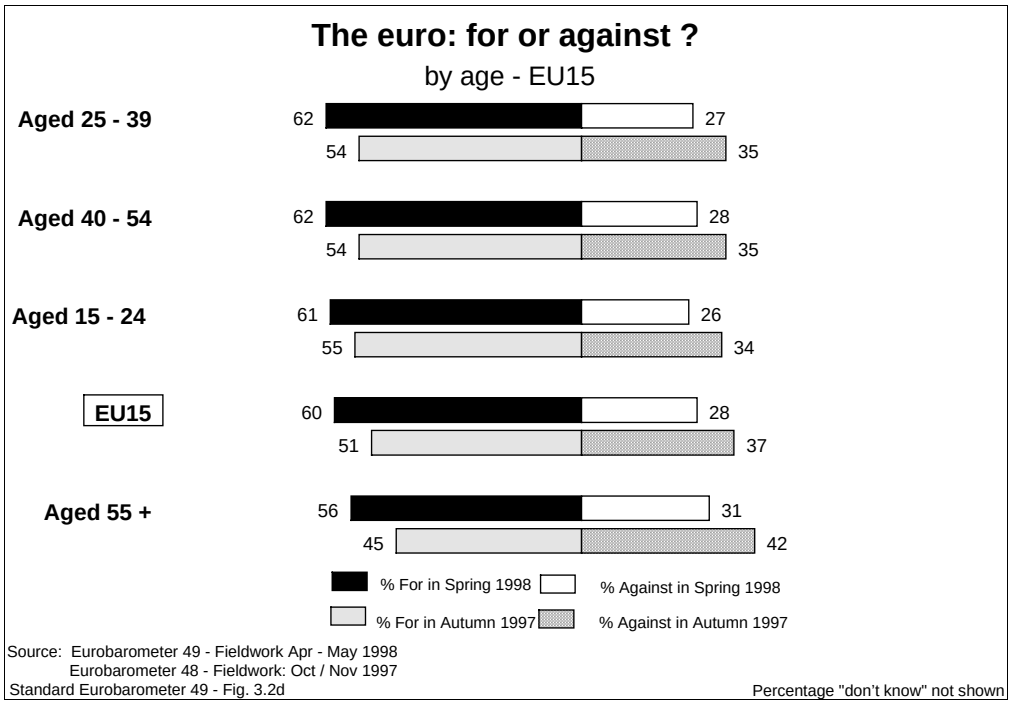


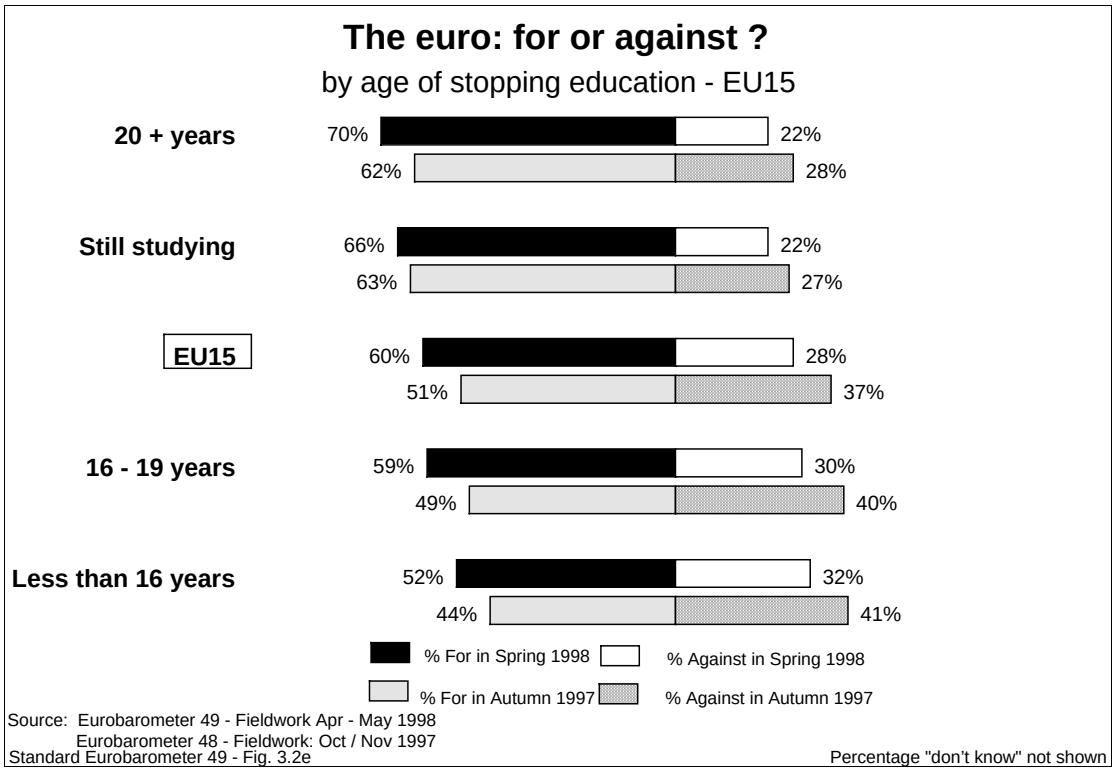
Source: Eurobarometer 49 - Fieldwork: Apr / May 1998
Eurobarometer 48 - Fieldwork: Oct / Nov 1997
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig. 3.2b

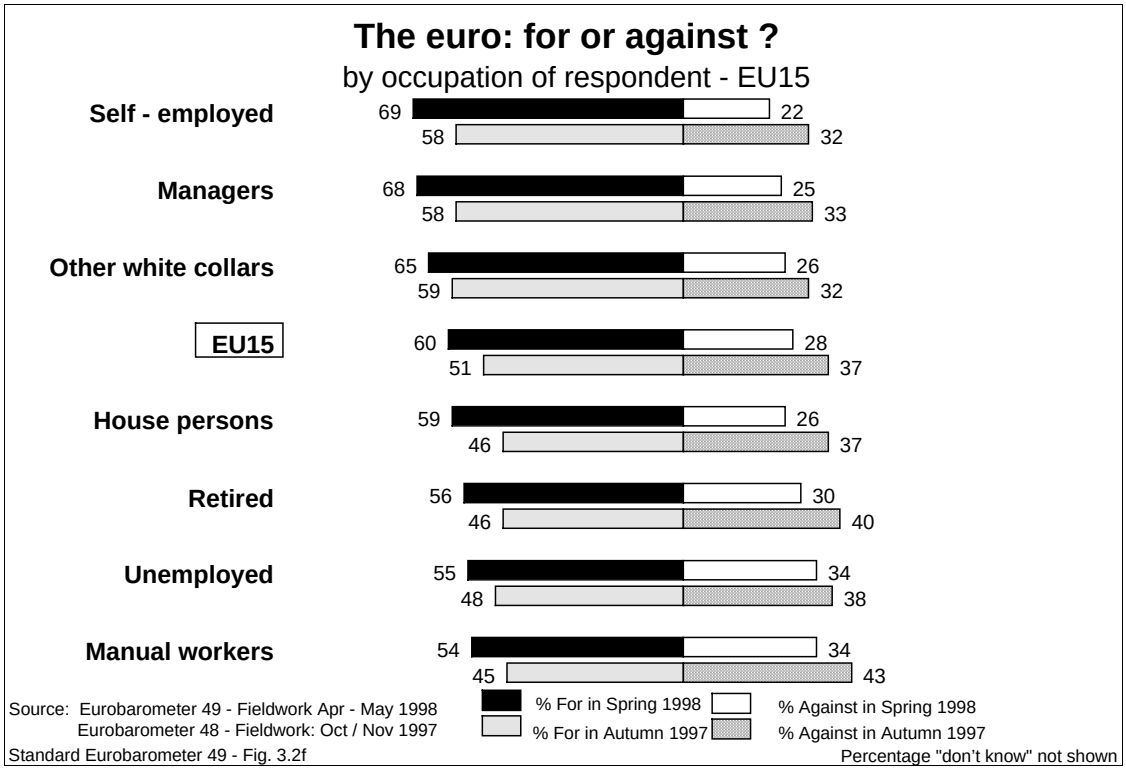
Percentage "don't know" not shown

The analysis by standard demographic variables shows that men (65%) continue to be more supportive of the euro than women (56%), although the gap between the genders has narrowed since the last survey. Whilst support levels have increased among people of all ages, the largest increases are recorded among people aged 55 and over (56%; +11). In the previous survey, a gap of 9 percentage points was measured between people aged up to 54 and people aged 55 and lower. The gap has now narrowed to 6 percentage points, although the oldest age group continues to be the least supportive. Support levels have also increased among all the various occupational groups. The largest increases are recorded for the self-employed (69%; +11). Support levels among managers (68%; +10) and white collar employees (65%; +6) are also significantly above average while manual workers (54%; +9) continue to be the least supportive. Support for the euro is strongly dependent on people's level of education with those who stayed in school the longest significantly more favourable than those who left school at an earlier age.









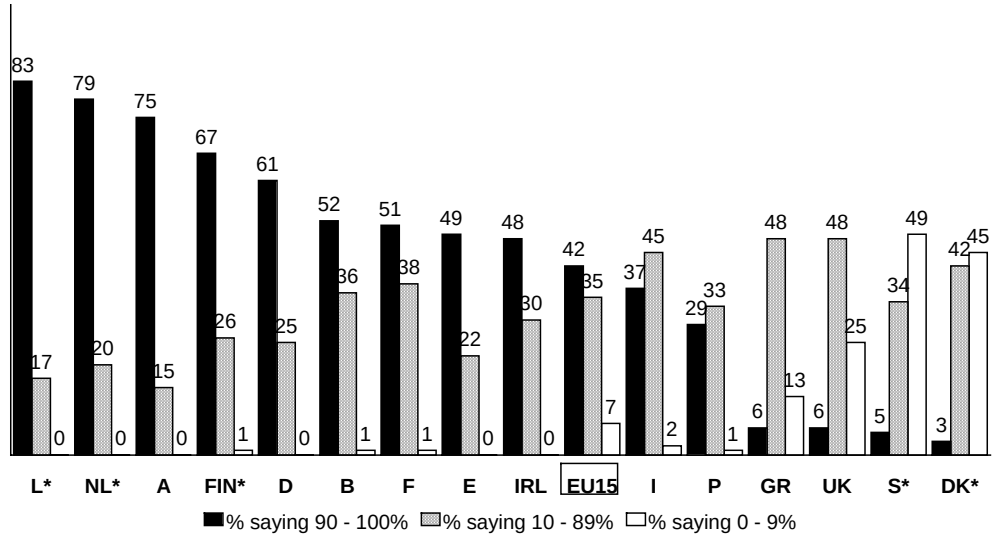
Support for the euro has increased both among supporters and opponents of the Union. However, the gap between the two groups remains very large: 79% of those who regard their country's membership as a good thing are in favour of the single currency compared to only 23% of those who think it is a bad thing. (Table 3.1b)

3.2. Assessment and knowledge about which countries will introduce the euro from the start in 1999

The survey includes two questions which relate to the May 2-3, 1998 European Council where the Heads of State and Government announced which Member States will introduce the single currency from the start.

The first question asks respondents how likely they think it is, on a scale from 0 to 100%, that their country will take part in the single currency. Before analysing the responses, the following caveat needs to be made. Because some respondents in 5 countries were interviewed after the Council announced which countries will participate in the euro from the start in 1999, the responses in these countries represent a mixture of personal assessment of their country's political and economic position vis-à-vis the euro and knowledge of the actual Council decision[12].

From 0 to 100%, how likely do you think it is that our country will take part in the single currency from the start in 1999?



Percentage "don't know" not shown

Source: Survey no. 49 - Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig. 3.3a

* Interviews still undertaken after Council decision on which countries will participate was taken

As the graph above shows, around 8 in 10 respondents in Luxembourg and The Netherlands perceived their country's participation as highly likely. In Denmark and Sweden, this response was given by only around 1 in 20 respondents while close to half perceived it as highly unlikely. The large majority of the population in these four countries thus made the right judgement based on a mixture of personal assessment and knowledge. In Austria, where 75% perceived their country's participation as highly likely, the majority of people proved to be correct based solely on their personal assessment of the situation. In the UK and Greece, the 6% who perceived their country's participation as highly likely were also correct in their personal assessment. However, people in these 2 "pre-in" countries where less inclined to perceive their country's participation as highly unlikely than people from the other 2 "pre-in" countries.

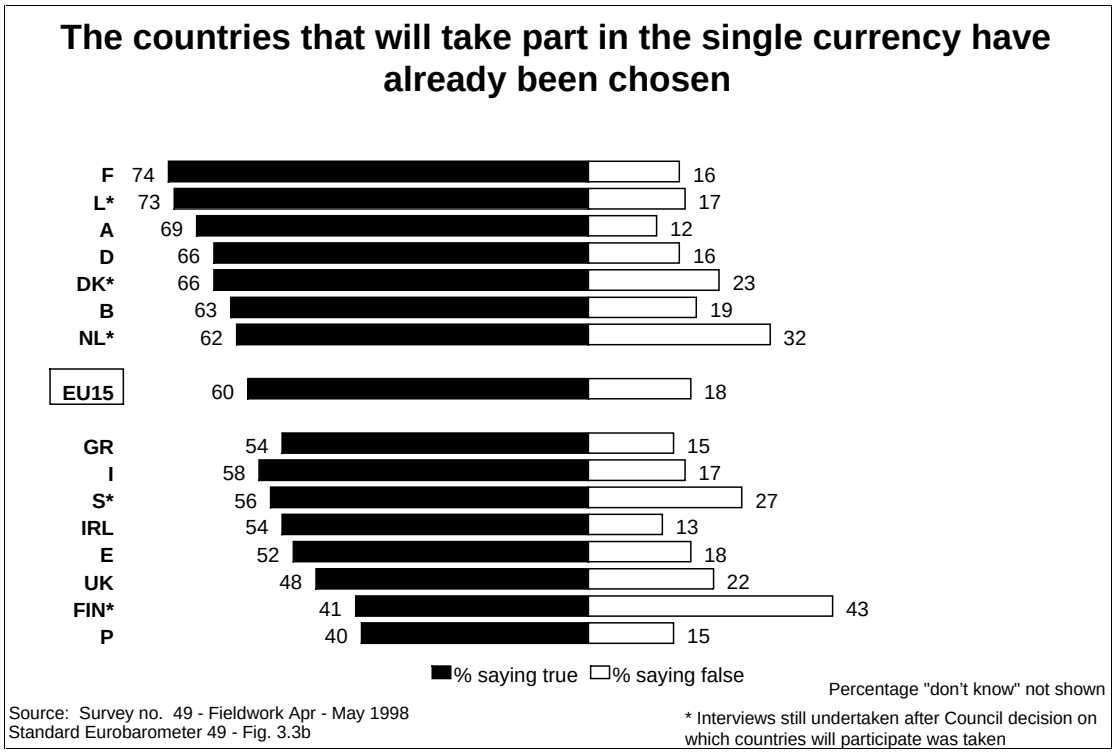
In a number of "EURO 11" countries, the public seemed less sure as to whether their country would take part in the single currency from the start. In Portugal (29%), Italy (37%), Ireland (48%) and Spain (49%), less than half of the people perceived their country's impending participation as highly likely. (See also table 3.2)

[12] This applies to Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Sweden.

As part of a battery of quiz statements, respondents were also asked whether they think the following is true or false:

"The countries that will take part in the single currency have already been chosen"

In the countries where all interviews were completed before the May 2-3 Council announcement, respondents gave the correct answer if they said that the statement was false. In the 5 countries where some interviews took place after the announcement, the analyses of responses is more complicated.

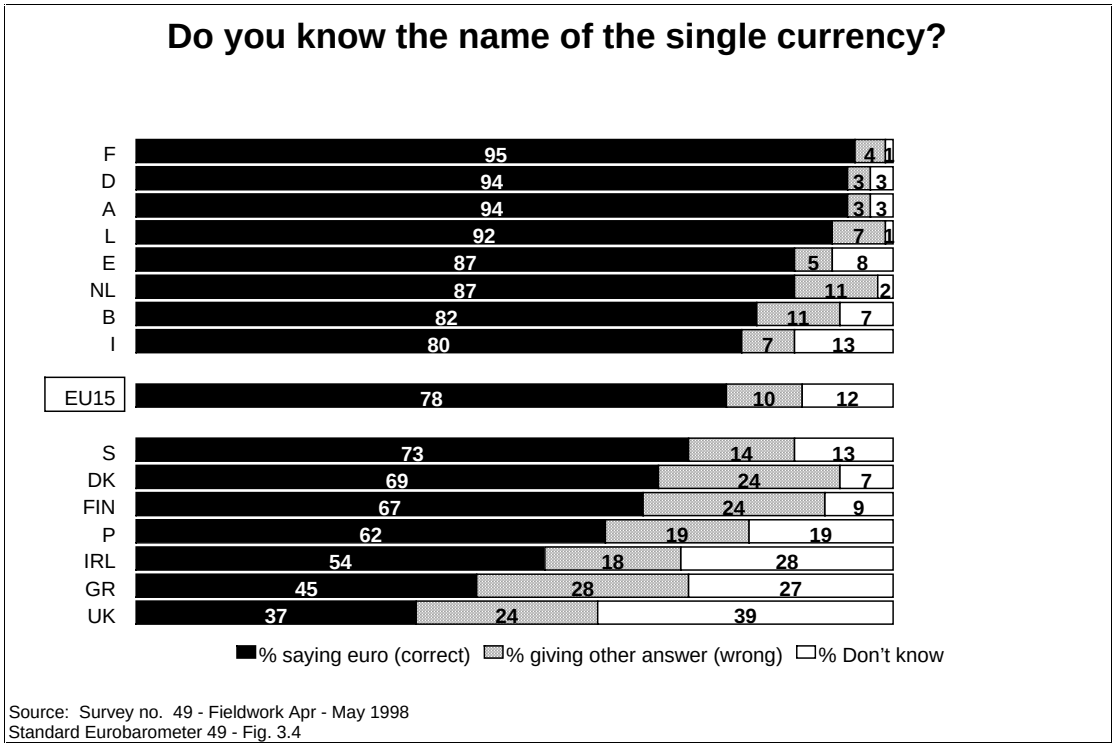


The overall impression provided by the graph is that many respondents wrongly thought that the countries that will take part in the single currency had already been chosen at the time that they were being interviewed. Looking first at the countries where all interviewing had been completed before the May 2-3 announcement, we see that in France, 74% of respondents identified the statement as being true, followed by 69% in Austria, 66% in Germany and 63% in Belgium. People that were interviewed after the announcement would have been correct in saying the statement is true. Yet, in the countries where this happened respondents were not more likely to say that the statement is true, with Luxembourg arguably being the only exception. (Table 3.3)

From these observations we can conclude that the citizens of the "EURO 11" countries did not need to hear the official announcement to believe that their country would participate in the euro.

3.3. Knowledge of the euro

Moving on to a more straightforward set of knowledge questions, respondents were asked what the name of the single currency is. As the graph below shows, in all but three of the "EURO 11" countries, at least 8 in 10 people correctly said the euro. Knowledge levels among the "EURO 11" countries are lowest in Ireland where only 54% gave the correct answer. Among the 4 "pre-in" countries, knowledge of the name of the single currency is highest in Sweden (73%) and lowest in the UK (37%). (Table 3.4a)



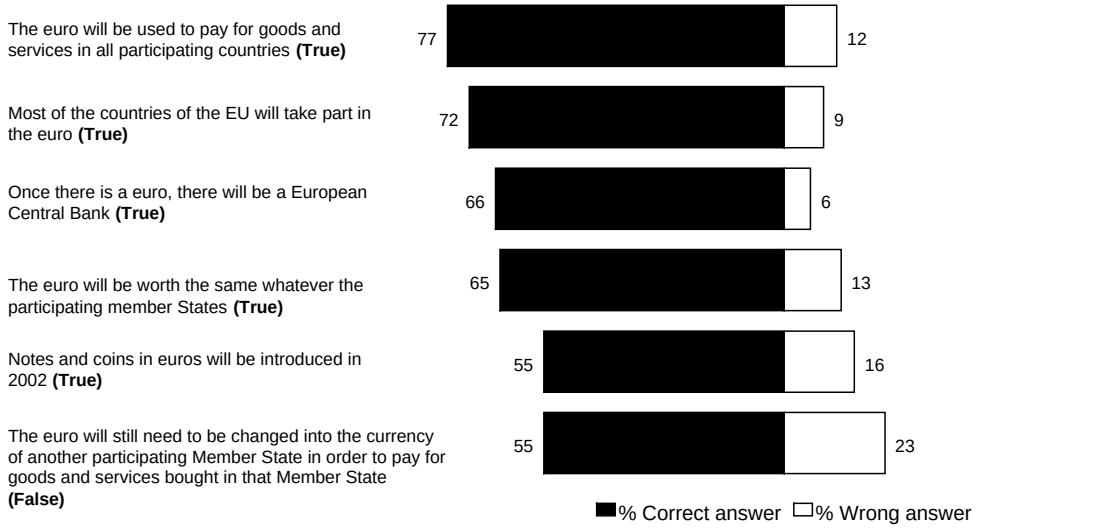
Men are not only more supportive of the single currency than women, they are also more likely than women to know its name (82% vs. 74%, respectively). The level of education is an important factor, with people who stayed in school until the age of 20 or older significantly more likely to know the name of the single currency than people who left school by the age of 15 or younger (87% vs. 69%, respectively). Differences between the various age groups are less pronounced, with people aged 25 to 54 somewhat more likely to know the name of the single currency than the youngest and oldest age groups. Among the various occupational groups, more than 8 in 10 managers and white-collar employees know the currency's name, compared to around 7 in 10 house persons and unemployed people. As expected, people who feel they know a lot about the European Union are significantly more likely to know what the single currency is called (90%) then people who feel they know very little about the Union (66%). (Table 3.4b)

As the following table shows, people who watch the news on television, read the news in daily newspapers and listen to the news on the radio at least several times a week are more likely to know the name of the single currency than people who use the news media less frequently.

% who know the name of the single currency by media use (EU15)	
Media use	**% saying "euro"**
Frequent use of all media	84%
EU15 average	***78%***
Frequent use of 2 media	76%
Frequent use of 1 medium	70%
Infrequent use of all media	72%

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, respondents were also presented with a short knowledge quiz, consisting of a number of statements which they had to identify as being either true or false. The results show that around 3 in 4 respondents correctly identified the statements "*the euro will be used to pay for goods and services in all participating countries*" and "*most of the countries of the EU will take part in the euro*" as true. Awareness that "*once there is a euro, there will be a European Central Bank*" is also high (66%) as is the knowledge that "*the euro will be worth the same whatever the participating member state, that is if you change a euro used in your country into dollars you will receive the same amount as if you had changed into dollars a euro used in another country*" (65%). More than half of respondents know that "*notes and coins in euros will be introduced in 2002*" and the same proportion correctly identified the statement which reads "*the euro will still need to be changed into the currency of another participating Member State in order to pay for goods and services bought in that Member State*" as being false.

Euro quiz
% correctly or wrongly identifying whether statement is true or false
(EU15)



Source: Survey no. 49 - Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig. 3.5

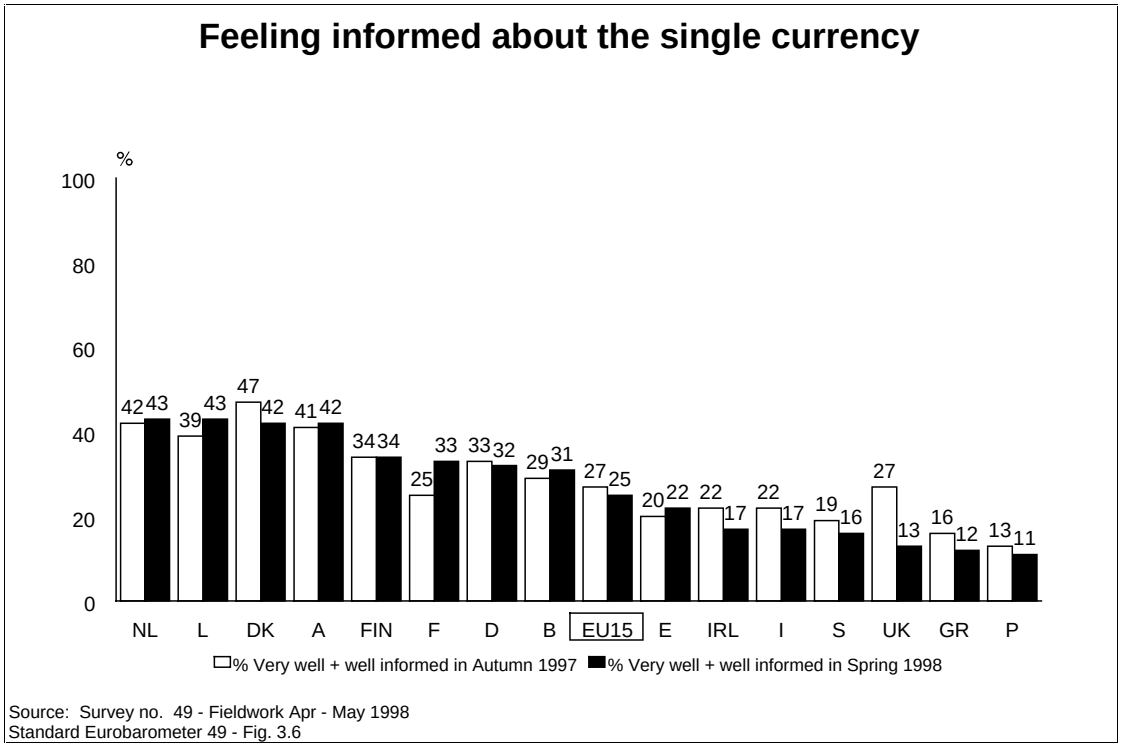
Percentage "don't know" not shown

Looking at variations in knowledge levels between the 15 Member States shows that on average more than 3 in 4 people in The Netherlands, Finland and Luxembourg answered the items on the quiz correctly. The table below shows that on the whole the percentage of correct answers in the 4 "pre-in" countries lies below the EU15 average. The UK is the only country where, on average, less than half of the respondents answered the items on the quiz correctly. (See also table 3.5)

Average % giving correct answers on the euro quiz by country	
Member States	**Average % of correct answers**
The Netherlands	77%
Finland	77%
Luxembourg	76%
France	73%
Germany	71%
Belgium	68%
Austria	67%
Spain	66%
EU15	***65%***
Italy	64%
Ireland	60%
Sweden	60%
Denmark	58%
Greece	56%
Portugal	50%
The UK	49%

3.4. Feeling informed about the euro

The survey also measures how well informed people feel about the euro. On average, only 1 in 4 EU citizens feel very well or well informed. This is slightly lower than the measurement recorded in the autumn of 1997 when 27% felt well informed. (Table 3.6a)



Looking at how levels of feeling informed are developing shows, once again, a distinction between the "EURO 11" countries and the 4 "pre-in" countries. In most of the "EURO 11" countries, the proportion of people who feel well informed has increased or has remained at more a less the same level since the last survey and it therefore seems that people in these countries are beginning to feel better informed as the single currency approaches. The only exceptions are Ireland and Italy, where the level of people who feel well informed has dropped since the last survey from 22% to 17% in both countries. One possible explanation for this drop is that once people realise that they will soon be using the euro they become more rigorous in their definition of feeling informed and therefore now feel less informed even if they may know more than they did before this realisation had sunk in.

In all 4 "pre-in" countries, levels of feeling informed have dropped significantly since the last survey. Whilst it is difficult to explain why people in these countries now feel less well informed, the survey results offer some insight. As was noted in the first chapter, people from the "pre-in" countries tend to be somewhat less interested in receiving more information about the single currency than people from the "EURO 11" countries. This is particularly true of the people in Denmark. Thus, it may well be that people in the "pre-in" countries now feel less well informed about the euro because they are less interested in receiving information since their country will not introduce the single currency for the time being. It may also very well be that people in these countries are actually receiving less information about the euro than people from the "EURO 11" countries. This explanation certainly seems appropriate in the UK where 90% of respondents say they have not yet received any information about the euro. In the other three "pre-in" countries people are also less likely to have received information about the euro than people from most of the "EURO 11" countries.

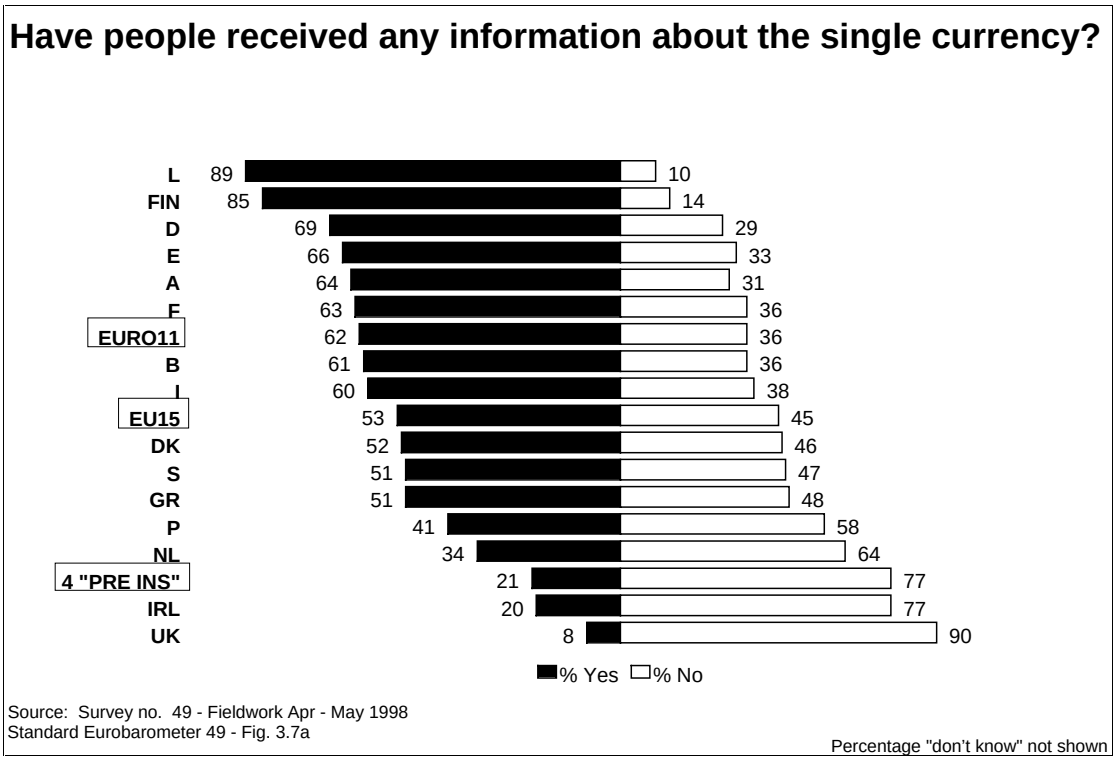
Before further examining the extent to which people have received any information about the single currency, we finish the examination of the levels of feeling informed about the euro with a description of the differences among various groups in the population. The first difference to note is between supporters and opponents of the European Union. The results indicate that 32% of people who feel their country's membership to the European Union is a good thing feel well informed about the euro, compared to only 21% of those who feel their country's membership to the EU is a bad thing. Similarly, 31% of people who are for the euro feel well informed about it, compared to only 18% of people who oppose the single currency.

Furthermore, as the table below shows, 64% of the people who feel they know a lot about the EU feel well informed about the euro, compared to only 10% of those who feel they know very little about the EU. Other groups that are more likely than the average EU citizen to feel well informed are people who score high on the opinion leadership index, managers and those who stayed in full-time education until the age of 20 or older. (See also table 3.6b)

% feeling well informed about the single currency (EU15)	
Group	**%**
Score 8-10 on knowledge scale	64
Opinion leadership index: ++	48
Managers	38
Educated up to age 20+	38
Score 4-7 on knowledge scale	32
Media use index:+++	32
Men	32
Opinion leadership index: +	31
Students	31
Employees	29
Happy with knowledge of EU	29
Aged 40-54	29
Self-employed	28
Aged 25-39	28
Average for EU15	***25***
Educated to age 16-19	24
Media use index: ++	23
Aged 55+	22
Unemployed	22
Retired	22
Aged 15-24	21
Manual workers	21
Opinion leadership index: -	20
Really desire info about EU	20
Women	18
House persons	18
Media use index: --	17
Educated to age 15 or younger	16
Media use index: ---	12
Opinion leadership index: --	12
Score 1-3 on knowledge scale	10

3.5. Information about the euro - have people already received it and from whom?

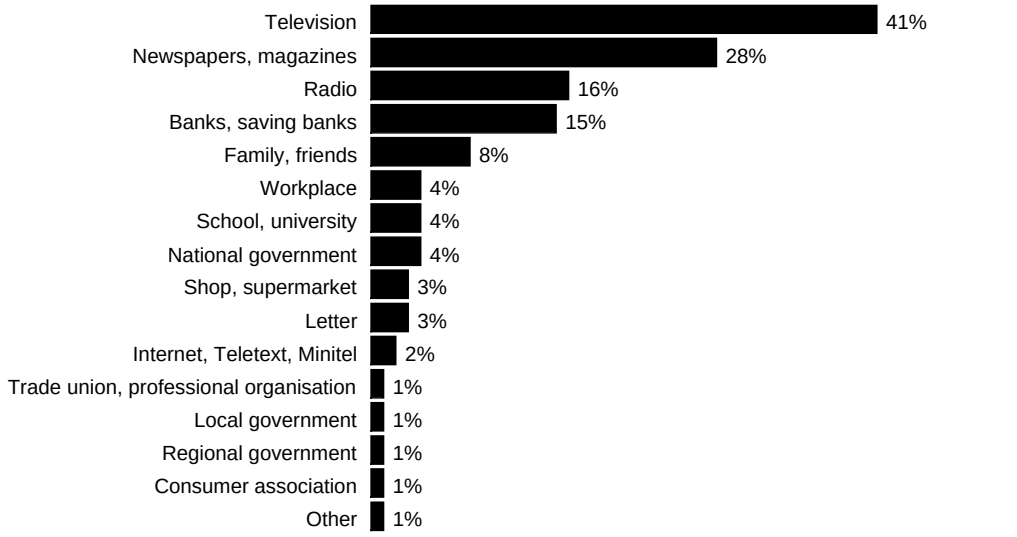
Returning now to the question as to whether people have already received information about the euro, the results for the EU as a whole show that 53% have and 45% have not received any information.



In Luxembourg and Finland, the large majority of the population has already received information about the euro. In Germany, Spain, Austria and France this is the case for around two-third of the people. Among the countries that will introduce the euro in January, 1999, the proportion of people who have received information about the euro is lowest in Ireland (20%), The Netherlands (34%) and Portugal (41%). As already noted in chapter 1, the single currency is the topic about which the largest proportion of people in these three countries want more information.

Looking at the sources from which people have received information about the euro shows that the television has so far provided more than 4 in 10 respondents with information and that more than a quarter found information in the written press. At 16% and 15%, respectively, the radio and financial institutions are the next most mentioned sources, far ahead of any of the remaining sources that respondents could choose from[13].

From whom have people received information about the single currency?
(EU15)*



Source: Survey no. 49 - Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49 - Fig. 3.7b

* Asked of those who have received information

The next table shows that the television is the most mentioned source in all the Member States, with the exception of France where financial institutions come first and the television second. The press and the radio also make the top four in all the countries. Financial institutions make the top four in 8 of the "EURO 11" countries, with Spain, Italy and Portugal as the exceptions. The financial institutions also do not appear on the list in any of the 4 "pre-in" countries which is expected as banks in these countries do not have to prepare their customers for any changes at this stage. Where financial institutions do not make the top four, family and friends do, with the exception of the UK which is the only country where the workplace appears on the list.

While the rank-order of most mentioned sources is fairly similar throughout the European Union, the percentages who have received information about the euro from these sources varies significantly from country to country. For instance, the results show that in Finland and Luxembourg around 3 in 4 people have received information about the euro from the television, compared to only 5% in the UK and 9% in Ireland. Among the "EURO 11" countries, 39% of the French have received information from financial institutions, compared to 5% of Italians and 4% of Portuguese. (See also table 3.7)

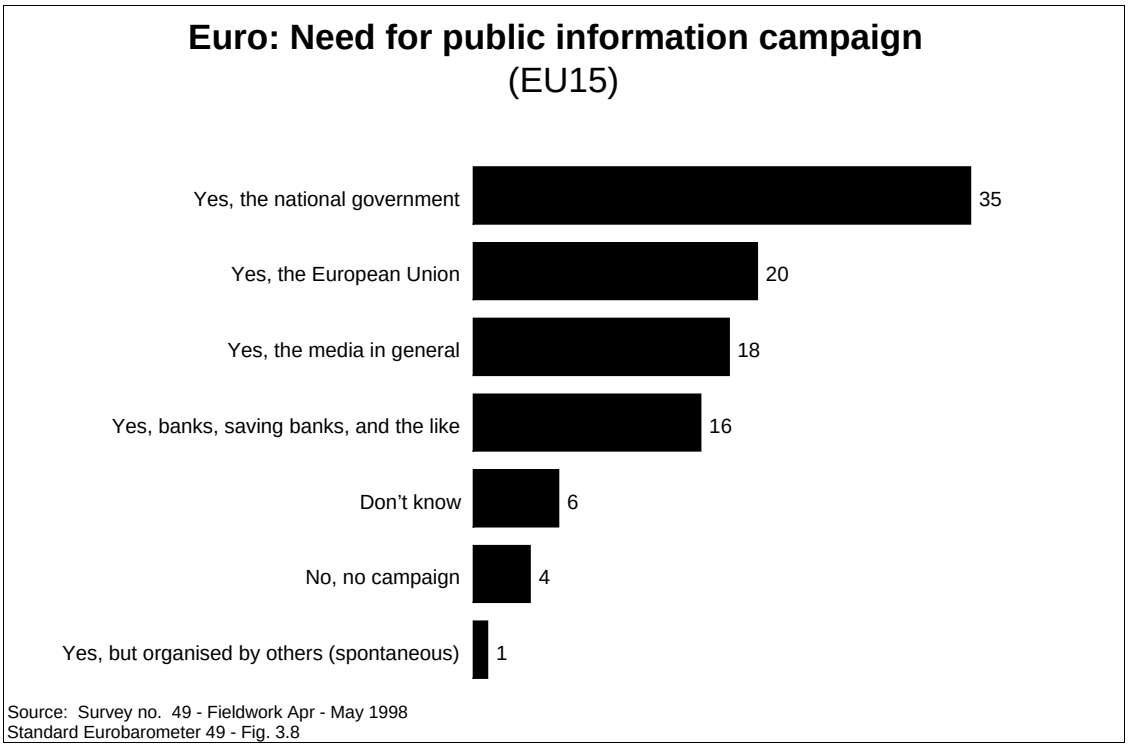
[13] The combined total of the responses is greater than the percentage of people who have already received information because respondents could give more than one response.

TOP FOUR MOST MENTIONED SOURCES FROM WHICH PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT THE EURO (IN %, BY MEMBER STATE)

Belgium	
Television	47
Newspapers, magazines	28
Financial institutions	22
Radio	17
Denmark	
Television	43
Newspapers, magazines	34
Radio	25
Family & friends	8
Germany	
Television	54
Newspapers, magazines	45
Radio	22
Financial institutions	21
Greece	
Television	45
Newspapers, magazines	16
Radio	13
Family & friends	10
Spain	
Television	58
Newspapers, magazines	31
Radio	21
Family & friends	13
France	
Financial institutions	39
Television	34
Newspapers, magazines	22
Radio	18
Ireland	
Television	9
Newspapers, magazines	7
Radio	5
Financial institutions	4
Italy	
Television	54
Newspapers, magazines	33
Radio	12
Family & friends	9
Luxembourg	
Television	75
Radio	58
Newspapers, magazines	58
Financial institutions	25
Netherlands	
Newspapers, magazines	21
Television	19
Financial institutions	17
Radio	10
Austria	
Television	41
Newspapers, magazines	34
Radio	26
Financial institutions	25
Portugal	
Television	35
Newspapers, magazines	12
Radio	8
Family & friends	6
Finland	
Television	76
Newspapers, magazines	65
Radio	45
Financial institutions	14
Sweden	
Television	45
Newspapers, magazines	39
Radio	25
Family & friends	5
United Kingdom	
Television	5
Newspapers, magazines	4
Radio	2
The workplace	1

3.6. Need for a public information campaign about the euro

With the single currency on the doorstep, it is not surprising to find large support for an information campaign among a public that does not feel it knows much about the euro. Even in the 4 "pre-in" countries, interest in a public information campaign about the euro is widespread so that on average 9 in 10 EU citizens feel that such campaigns should take place.



Thirty-five percent of Europeans prefer that the national governments of the Member States organise such a campaign, and thus the national governments remain by far the most preferred organisers among the public. The European Union (20%; +1) has moved from third to second place since the last survey, exchanging places with the media in general (18%; -2). 16% of the population, compared to 14% in 1997, want banks and other financial institutions to be the campaign organisers.

While EU citizens agree on the need for information campaigns, the country by country analyses show clear differences in opinion as to who should be in charge of organising them. In Portugal (58%), Greece (54%), the UK (51%), Ireland (49%), The Netherlands (45%), Denmark, Spain and Sweden (all 43%), the national governments are by far regarded as the preferred organisers while in Belgium (18%) and Germany (21%) less than a quarter of the people give preference to their national governments. The popularity of national governments to handle the matter has increased since the last survey in most Member States and particularly so in Ireland (+12), Greece, The Netherlands (both +10) and Portugal (+9). In Finland (-8) and Denmark (-6), preference for the national governments as campaign organisers has dropped since the last survey.

There is less variation between the countries when it comes to preference levels for the European Union, although people in the "EURO 11" countries tend to be more likely to support the EU as the campaign organiser than people in the 4 "pre-in" countries. Support is by far the highest in Italy (31%; +3) and lowest in Denmark (10%; -2) and the UK (11%; no change).

The media in general once again receives the highest support in Belgium (31%), both when compared to the other countries and when compared to support for the other options. In Finland, support for the media as campaign organisers increased from 22% last autumn to 28% in the spring of 1998. In The Netherlands, Portugal (both -7), Germany and Ireland (-6), significant drops in the percentage that prefer the media as campaign organisers are noted.

Support for financial institutions as campaign organisers is significantly above average in France (26%), Belgium (25%) and Germany (24%). In the four Mediterranean countries, on the other hand, support levels are significantly below average. In Germany, France (both +6), Luxembourg and Finland (both +4), support for the financial institutions as campaign organisers increased significantly while Ireland (-5) is the only country where support levels dropped significantly. (Table 3.8)

4. Current policy issues: enlargement

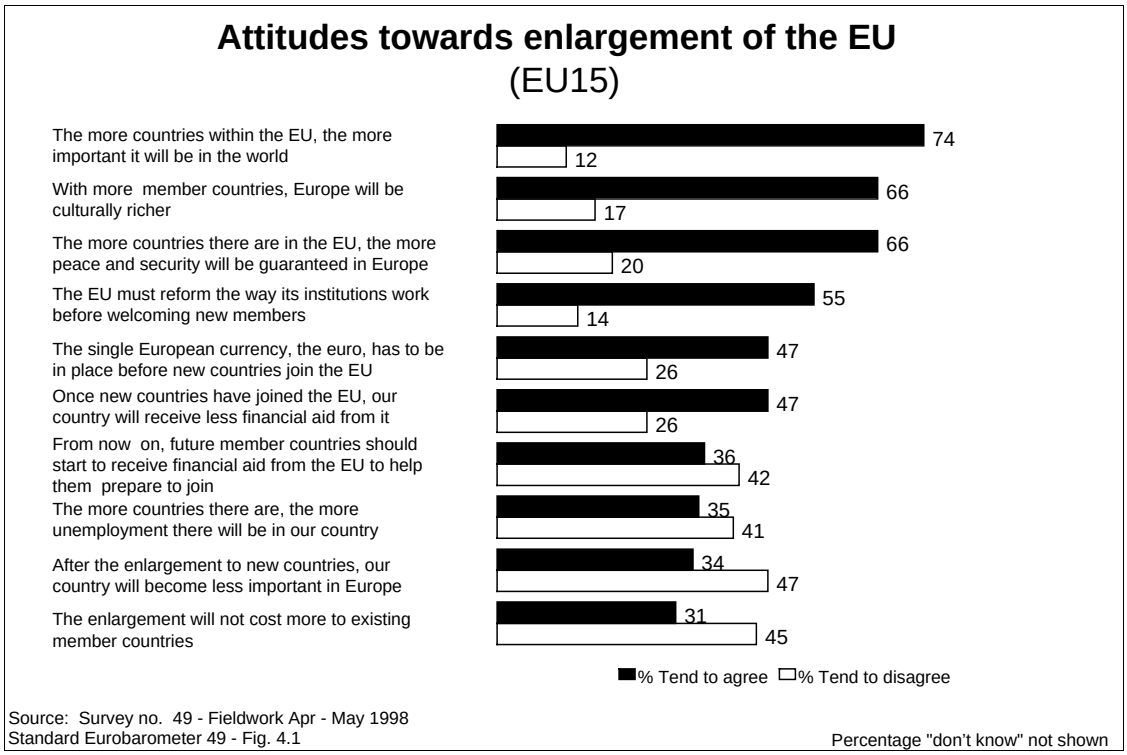
In this chapter we examine how the public views the prospect of enlargement[14] now that the European Union is preparing its expansion to the east and south of Europe. Accession negotiations with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia opened on the 31st of March, 1998. Furthermore, Accession Partnerships have been set up with Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia to prepare these countries for membership and to familiarise them with the Union's policies and procedures through the possibility of their participation in Community programmes. The importance of enlargement was clearly expressed by Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, in a speech to the European Parliament in July, 1997:

> *"Enlargement represents a historic turning point for Europe, an opportunity which it must seize for the sake of its security, its economy, its culture and its status in the world."*

4.1. Attitudes to enlargement

The idea of enlarging the European Union to include new European countries incurs positive responses from many EU citizens. The majority feel that the Union will be more important in the world if it includes more countries (74%) while only a minority (34%) believe that their own country will become less important as a result of enlargement. 2 in 3 EU citizens regard a Union that consists of more member countries as a cultural enrichment and believe that a larger Union will guarantee more peace and security.

[14] Enlargement falls under the umbrella of Agenda 2000 which is the Commission's communication of the development of EU policies and of the accession applications, together with an overall assessment of the medium term financial requirements. More information about Agenda 2000 can be found on the Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agenda2000.



Many Europeans also share the official view that the Union's institutions must be reformed (55%) and that the euro has to be in place (47%) before new countries can join. Agreement with the last statement is clearly dependent on whether people support the euro in the first place. In countries where support for the euro is high, like France and Luxembourg, people are more likely to agree that the euro has to be in place than in countries where support for the euro is lower, like Sweden, Denmark and the UK.

Despite the many positive views, the results show that the economic implications of enlargement concern quite a few people. 45% of EU citizens believe that enlargement will cost their own country more money. The Dutch (64%), the Danes (63%) and the Germans (62%) are particularly inclined to feel this way. Many people also suspect that the budget will be shared differently with 47% feeling that once new countries have joined, their country will receive less financial aid. People from Ireland (67%), Denmark, Finland (both 60%), Portugal (59%) and Greece (58%) are most likely to hold this view.

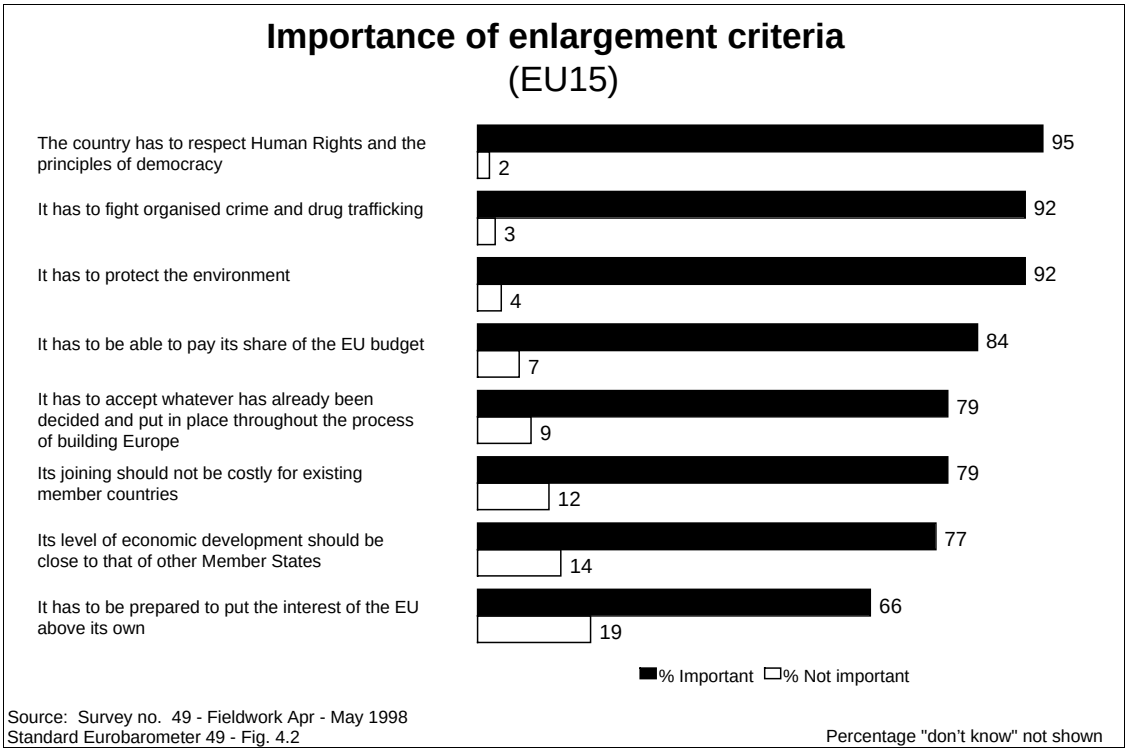
Many people also express their economic concerns by not wanting to provide future member countries with financial aid to help them prepare to join (only 36% agree that this should happen). Greece (64%), Ireland (52%) and Portugal (50%) are exceptional in being the only countries where at least half of the people feel that the applicant countries should start to receive financial aid, despite the fact that many of these people feel that enlargement could result in less funding for their country.

Furthermore, the results show that 35% of Europeans believe that enlargement will lead to higher unemployment levels. This concern is most widespread in countries that border with potential new members, like Austria (55%), Germany and Greece (both 48%).

The proportion of 'don't know' responses for all the statements about enlargement continues to be substantially higher than what we usually find on this survey, which indicates that public opinion still has not fully developed and most likely will change as the issue becomes more of a reality for people. (Table 4.1)

4.2. Criteria that applicant countries should meet

While economic issues thus clearly play an important role for EU citizens, results from a battery of questions which asks people to judge the importance of a number of criteria in deciding whether countries should join the European Union or not shows that these are not the only important issues for people. According to EU citizens, new countries can only join the European Union if they respect Human Rights and the principles of democracy (95%), if they fight organised crime and drug trafficking and if they protect the environment (both 92%). Around 8 in 10 Europeans regard a country's ability to pay its share of the European Union budget and the costs of joining for existing members as important criteria.



The majority of EU citizens also feels that applicant countries have to accept whatever has already been decided and put in place throughout the process of building Europe (79%), that the economic development of these countries should be close to that of the Member States (77%) and that these countries have to be prepared to put the interest of the EU above their own (66%).

The table below shows that on average people in France, Austria and The Netherlands are most likely to consider the criteria as important, while this is least likely among the people in Denmark. Portugal, Spain and Italy appear below the EU average on the rank-order mostly because of the fact that quite a few people from these three countries lack an opinion. The table also shows (in the last column) that the smallest difference in opinion between the 8 criteria is found in Luxembourg, while the spread in opinion is largest in Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

RANK-ORDER OF COUNTRIES FOR % OF POPULATION THAT REGARDS THE ENLARGEMENT CRITERIA AS IMPORTANT (AVERAGE % OF 8 CRITERIA AND SPREAD FROM LOWEST % IMPORTANT TO HIGHEST % IMPORTANT)		
Country	**Average %**	**Spread**
France	87%	24
Austria	87%	25
The Netherlands	87%	29
Belgium	86%	22
Germany	86%	20
Greece	85%	28
Ireland	83%	22
EU15	***83%***	***29***
Luxembourg	82%	16
United Kingdom	81%	35
Italy	80%	31
Sweden	80%	58
Spain	79%	21
Finland	79%	59
Portugal	78%	22
Denmark	73%	65

The next table provides further insight. It shows that people in Denmark (33%), Finland (38%) and Sweden (40%) are significantly less likely than other EU citizens to insist that applicant countries should be prepared to put the interest of the European Union above their own. While on average 77% of EU citizens believe that the level of economic development in the applicant countries should be close to that of other Member States in order for them to be able to join the Union, only 59% of Danes and 63% of Swedes share this view. Denmark also stands out in being the only country where people are significantly less likely than other EU citizens to consider the costs of joining for existing member countries as an important criterion (54% compared to EU average of 79%).

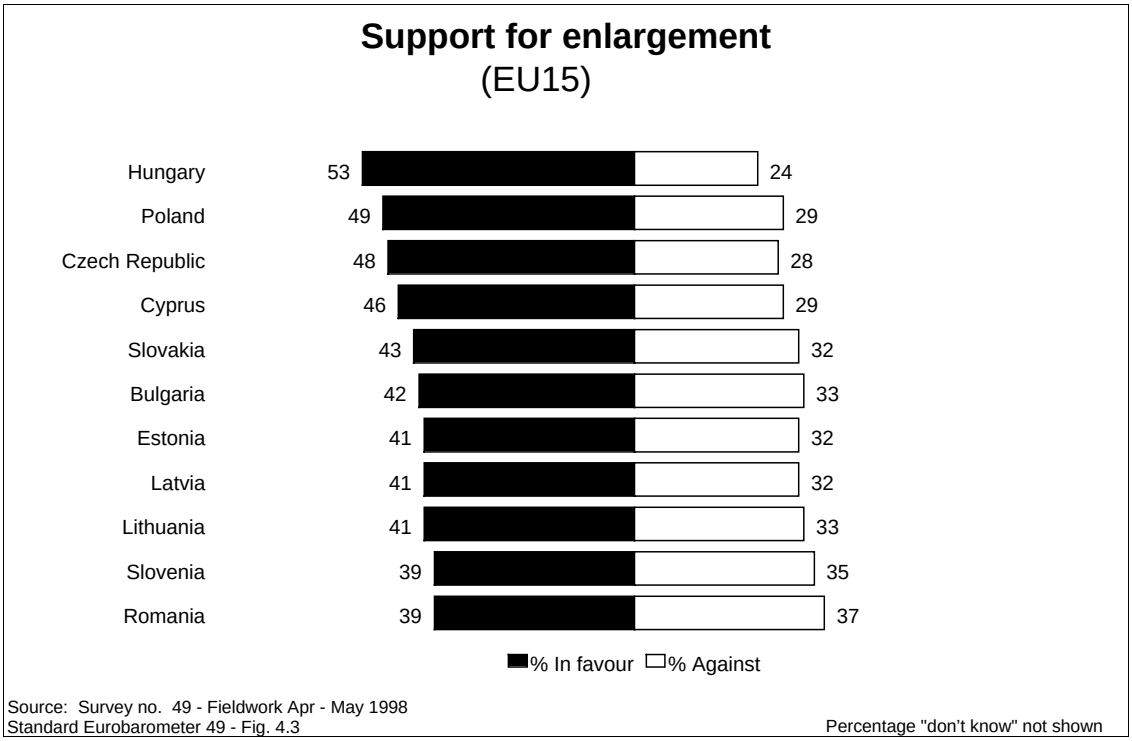
The table also shows that, on average, people have become even more likely to find the criteria important. The largest increase since the previous survey, which took place in the autumn of 1997, is recorded for the criterion that the economic development of applicant countries should be as close to that of other Member States (+5). This is particularly the case in Greece, Portugal and Spain. (See also Table 4.2)

CRITERIA FOR JOINING THE EU
% CONSIDERING EACH CRITERIA AS IMPORTANT AND % CHANGE BETWEEN AUTUMN 1997 (EB48) AND SPRING 1998 (EB49) FOR EACH MEMBER STATE

Member State	Human Rights	Econ. dev.	Accept Acquis	Not be costly	Put EU interest on top	Fight crime & drugs	Protect environ-ment	Pay budget share
B	96% +4	77% +7	89% +9	82% +12	74% +4	93% +1	91% +2	88% +5
DK	98% 0	59% +1	69% 0	54% -7	33% -2	96% 0	98% +1	75% -2
D	95% +1	84% +5	80% +9	85% +1	75% +6	92% +1	92% +1	87% +2
GR	96% -1	82% +11	83% +2	83% +1	68% -1	93% -3	94% -3	84% +4
E	94% +3	74% +9	73% +7	74% +3	63% +4	90% +2	89% +4	76% +8
F	98% +2	79% +5	89% +3	79% +3	74% +5	94% +2	93% +1	86% +1
IRL	94% 0	73% 0	83% +1	79% -2	72% 0	94% -1	93% 0	77% -5
I	94% +2	77% +5	74% +5	77% +3	63% +1	88% -1	89% +4	79% +5
L	90% -6	81% +6	83% +8	74% -5	75% -1	87% -2	86% -6	82% -3
NL	98% 0	76% +5	94% +4	77% +5	69% +3	98% +6	98% +1	89% +4
A	96% +4	87% +2	81% +7	87% +4	71% +7	93% +3	94% +2	88% +1
P	92% +4	70% +10	75% +6	71% +6	64% +4	90% +2	89% +2	74% +5
FIN	97% +1	71% +7	70% +9	81% 0	38% +5	95% 0	94% -1	88% +1
S	98% 0	63% +2	79% -1	75% -2	40% -1	98% +1	98% 0	85% +2
UK	92% +2	71% +3	76% +1	79% 0	57% +2	92% +1	92% +3	85% +3
EU15	***95% +2***	***77% +5***	***79% +4***	***79% +2***	***66% +4***	***92% +1***	***92% +2***	***84% +4***

4.3. Support for enlargement

Having looked at people's attitudes towards enlargement and at the criteria which they consider important for countries to be allowed to join, the next section examines how people feel about the 11 applicant countries becoming part of the European Union.



For each of the 11 applicant countries, respondents were asked whether they are in favour or against it becoming part of the European Union. Support is highest for Hungary (53%), Poland (49%), the Czech Republic (48%) and Cyprus (46%), four of the six countries with whom accession talks have now started. Support for the two other "qualifying" nations, Estonia (41%) and Slovenia (39%), is obtained from around 4 in 10 EU citizens and is very similar to the level of support for the 5 countries remaining applicant countries.

RANK-ORDER OF COUNTRIES FOR % OF POPULATION THAT IS IN FAVOUR OF APPLICANT COUNTRIES BECOMING PART OF THE EU (AVERAGE % SUPPORT FOR THE 11 APPLICANT COUNTRIES, SPREAD FROM LOWEST TO HIGHEST % SUPPORT, AVERAGE % CHANGE IN SUPPORT LEVELS FROM AUTUMN 1997 AND AVERAGE % OF 'DON'T KNOW' RESPONSES)

Country	Average % Support	Spread	Average % change in Support	Average % of 'Don't know' responses
Sweden	63%	18	+2	24%
Denmark	61%	23	0	16%
The Netherlands	57%	21	+3	15%
Finland	56%	26	+6	18%
Greece	56%	38	-3	17%
Spain	54%	6	+9	33%
Italy	47%	10	+6	29%
Portugal	46%	5	+9	35%
EU15	***44%***	***14***	***+6***	***25%***
Ireland	44%	12	+2	36%
United Kingdom	43%	16	+5	32%
Luxembourg	38%	9	+6	18%
Germany	36%	32	+7	19%
France	35%	16	+7	22%
Austria	33%	35	+4	20%
Belgium	32%	7	+6	22%

The average support level for the 11 applicant countries as a whole is 63% in Denmark and 61% in Sweden. This indicates that support for each of the applicant countries tends to be the highest in these two countries. The exceptions are: Hungary, which people in Finland (69%) are most likely to support; Cyprus, which gets the most widespread support from people in Greece (85%); Bulgaria and Romania which people in Greece (57% and 56%, respectively) and Spain (56% and 55%, respectively) are most likely to support; and Slovenia which people in Spain (52%) are slightly more likely to support than people in Denmark (50%) while people in Sweden (56%) are most supportive. On average, less than 4 in 10 people in Belgium, Austria, France, Germany and Luxembourg support the membership of the 11 applicant countries. (See also table 4.3)

In a number of countries, people hold very similar attitudes towards all the applicant countries. This is the case for Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy, where the least amount of spread between the lowest level of support and the highest level of support is noted. In Greece, Austria and Germany, where the spread is the highest, attitudes to each of the applicant countries are more diverse.

An analysis of the average shift in support levels since the measurement was last taken in the autumn of 1997 shows that people in most countries have become more likely to favour the entry of the 11 applicant countries into the European Union.

Once again, we find that that a significant proportion of Europeans does not yet hold an opinion. In some countries, more than 3 in 10 respondents on average gave a 'don't know' reply. This implies that support levels may change as the enlargement process develops.

We end the chapter by examining how public opinion towards the 6 'accession negotiation' countries has changed in each of the Member States since the autumn of 1997.

Shifts in Support between Autumn 1997 and Spring 1998 for the 6 Applicant Countries with whom Accession Negotiations have begun (in percentage points)

	Cyprus	Czech Rep	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovenia
B	**+7**	**+6**	**+7**	**+5**	**+6**	**+4**
DK	+3	0	***-4***	+1	*-2*	0
D	**+5**	**+7**	**+7**	**+6**	**+8**	**+6**
GR	*-3*	***-4***	***-5***	*-3*	*-2*	-3
E	**+10**	**+8**	**+11**	**+10**	**+10**	**+10**
F	**+11**	**+9**	**+11**	**+9**	**+8**	**+10**
IRL	+3	**+4**	**+4**	+1	+1	+3
I	**+8**	**+7**	**+7**	**+6**	**+7**	**+5**
L	+2	**+5**	**+4**	**+9**	**+7**	**+6**
NL	**+5**	**+5**	**+4**	+3	**+4**	+1
A	+2	+1	**+4**	0	**+5**	+3
P	**+8**	**+7**	**+11**	**+9**	**+6**	**+10**
FIN	**+4**	**+8**	**+5**	**+8**	**+6**	**+4**
S	**+4**	**+5**	+1	+3	+1	**+5**
UK	+3	**+7**	**+4**	**+4**	+2	**+5**
EU15	**+6**	**+7**	**+6**	**+6**	**+6**	**+6**

As can be seen, EU citizens are as a whole now more supportive of EU membership for the 6 applicant countries with whom accession negotiations have begun than they were in the autumn of 1997. In most of the Member States, support for each of the 6 applicant countries increased. The largest increases are noted in Spain, France (average: +10) and Portugal (average: +9). Significant increases for each of the 6 applicant countries are also noted in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Finland. In Denmark and Greece, people are now less likely to support Estonia's membership, while in Greece people are now also less likely to support the Czech Republic's membership.

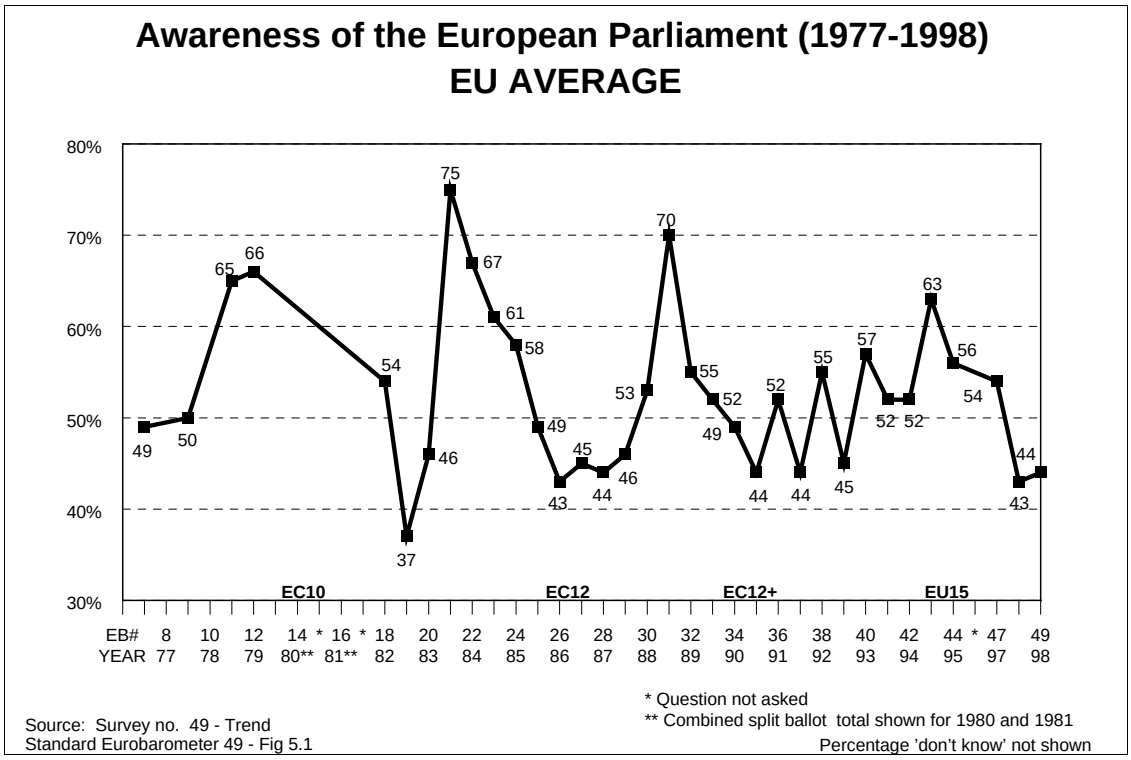
5. The European Parliament

As a result of the Amsterdam Treaty, the European Parliament will share co-decision-making powers with the Council in most of the Union's policy areas. This strengthened role of the European Parliament, whose members are directly elected by the public, represents one of the ways through which the European Union is brought closer to its citizens.

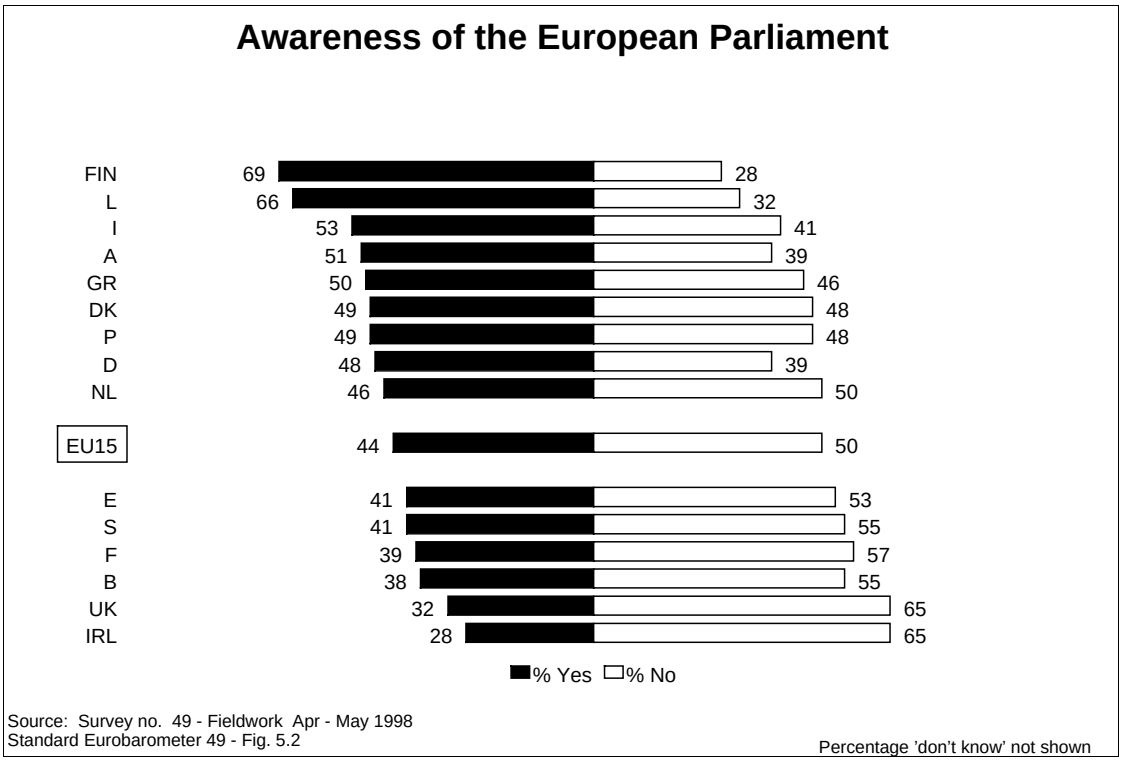
In this chapter we examine the public's awareness of the European Parliament, the role people think it plays and would like it to play within the European Union and the extent to which people intend to use their democratic right to vote in the June 1999 elections. We also look at people's assessment of the European Parliament's ability to protect their interests and we examine which areas people think it should treat as priorities.

5.1. Awareness of the European Parliament

Since 1977, the Eurobarometer has been measuring the extent to which the public has seen or heard anything about the European Parliament in the papers, on the radio or on television. As was shown in the first chapter of this report, these three media represent the main sources of information about the European Union for most people. The latest measurement shows that 44% of Europeans have received information about the European Parliament through the media.



Awareness levels depend on the amount of media coverage the European Parliament receives. As the graph above shows, awareness levels are always highest when media coverage is most intense just prior or shortly after elections to the European Parliament. This explains the relatively low awareness levels recorded during the latest measurement which was taken many years after the 1994 elections and before campaigning begins for the 1999 elections. Awareness levels also depend on the extent to which people use the media to receive information about the European Union. Thus, in countries where people are more likely to do this, awareness levels tend to be higher and vice-versa.



Awareness levels are currently highest in Finland (69%) and Luxembourg (66%). At least half of the people in Italy (53%), Austria (51%) and Greece (50%) have also seen or heard something about the European Parliament through the media. Awareness levels are lowest in Ireland (28%) and the UK (32%).

Country shifts in awareness levels of the European Parliament in the media

	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I
EB 48 Autumn 97	48	51	42	55	49	35	33	48
EB 49 Spring 98	**38**	**49**	**48**	**50**	**41**	**39**	**28**	**53**
Change Autumn – Spring	*-10*	*-2*	*+6*	*-5*	*-8*	*+4*	*-5*	*+5*

	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	EU 15
EB 48 Autumn 97	64	49	51	54	69	42	33	43
EB 49 Spring 98	**66**	**46**	**51**	**49**	**69**	**41**	**32**	**44**
Change Autumn – Spring	*+2*	*-3*	*0*	*-5*	*0*	*-1*	*-1*	*+1*

The table on the previous page shows that since the autumn of 1997 awareness levels have increased significantly in Germany (+6), Italy (+5) and France (+4), while they have dropped significantly in Belgium (-10), Spain (-8), Greece, Ireland and Portugal (all -5). (See also table 5.1a)

While significant shifts in awareness levels are noted at the country level, the table below shows that the pattern of differences between the various socio-demographic groups in the population has remained more stable. Awareness levels are highest among managers (59%), people who stayed in school the longest (57%), the self-employed (51%) and men (50%). They are lowest among young people (34%), house persons (35%), people who left school at the age of 15 or younger (36%), women (38%) and manual workers (39%).

Awareness of the European Parliament in the media: Shifts among various groups in the population

	Sex		Age			
	M	**F**	**15-24**	**25-39**	**40-54**	**55+**
EB 48 Autumn 97	49	38	36	46	49	40
EB 49 Spring 98	**50**	**38**	**34**	**46**	**48**	**44**
Change Autumn – Spring	*+1*	*0*	*-2*	*0*	*-1*	*+4*

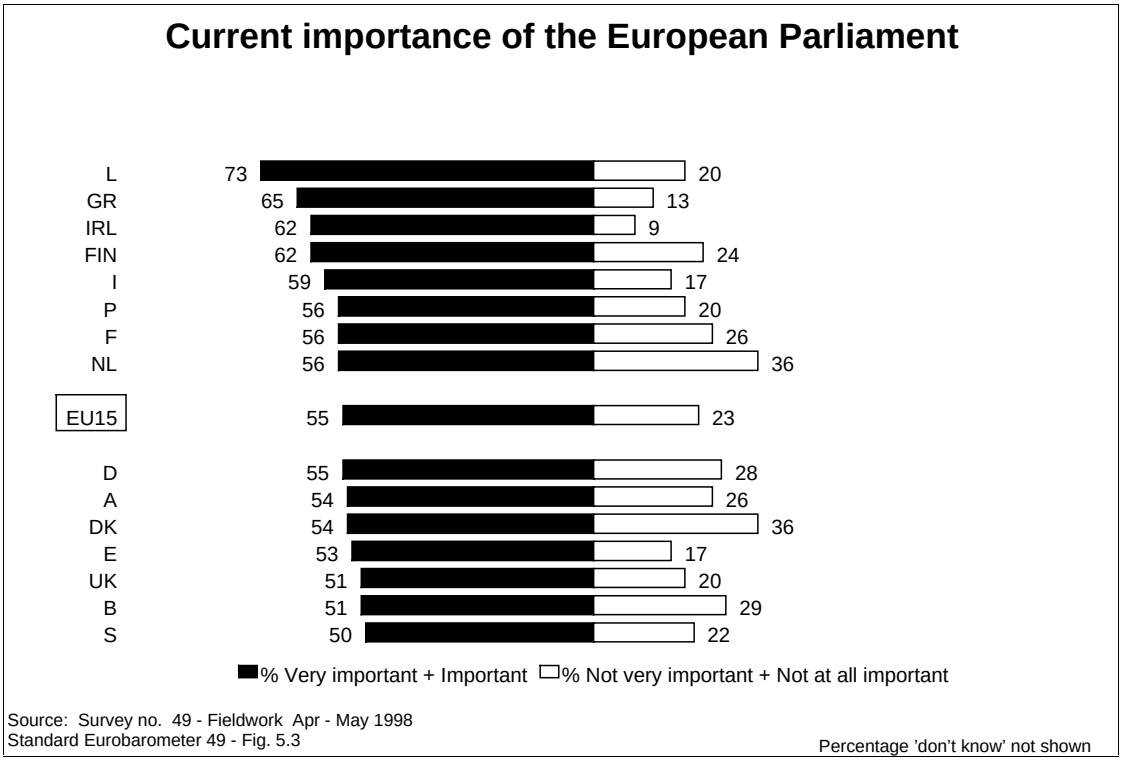
	Main economic activity						
	Self-empl.	**Man-ager**	**White collar**	**Man. worker**	**House-person**	**Unempl.**	**Retired**
EB 48 Autumn 97	52	59	47	40	34	37	40
EB 49 Spring 98	**51**	**59**	**49**	**39**	**35**	**40**	**43**
Change Autumn – Spring	*-1*	*0*	*+2*	*-1*	*+1*	*+3*	*+3*

	Terminal education age				Score on knowledge scale		
	15<	**16-19**	**20+**	**Still studying**	**1-3**	**4-7**	**8-10**
EB 48 Autumn 97	34	43	56	42	29	53	71
EB 49 Spring 98	**36**	**43**	**57**	**41**	**28**	**53**	**69**
Change Autumn – Spring	*+2*	*0*	*+1*	*-1*	*-1*	*0*	*-2*

The results also show that awareness levels depend on how much people feel they know about the European Union. 69% of those who score highest on the knowledge scale have heard or seen something about the European Parliament in the media, compared to only 28% of those who score lowest on the scale. (See also table 5.1b)

5.2. The European Parliament's perceived and desired importance

The survey also measures people's assessment of the European Parliament's role in the life of the European Union. The latest results indicate that people have become more likely to feel it plays an important role, with 55% of EU citizens now saying this, compared to 47% in the autumn of 1997. Less than a quarter of people now say the European Parliament does not play an important role, compared to 27% in the autumn of 1997. A substantial proportion of the population feels unable to make a judgement (22%), although this is lower than it was in the autumn of 1997 when 26% of people couldn't assess the importance of the European Parliament within the European Union.

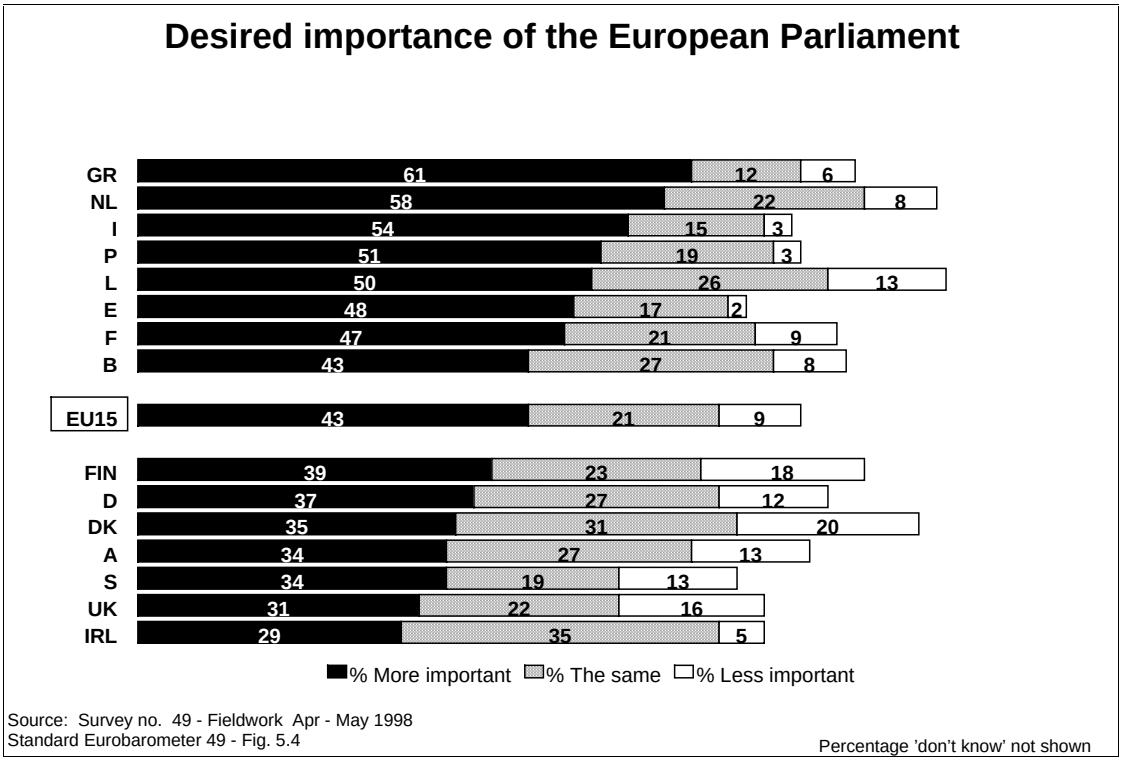


The country analyses reveal that the majority of people in each Member State see the European Parliament's role as important. People in Luxembourg (73%) are most likely to express this view, followed by those in Greece (65%), Ireland and Finland (both 62%). In The Netherlands and Denmark (both 36%), the proportion of people who feel it does not play an important role is the highest, although people who hold this view are clearly in the minority in both countries.

In 14 of the 15 Member States, people are now more likely to regard the European Parliament's role as important than they were in the autumn of 1997. The largest increases are recorded in The Netherlands (+17), Finland (+11), Germany, France (both +10) and the UK (+9). (Table 5.2a)

Analyses of the demographic results show that differences between the various sub-groups in the EU population are mostly explained by variations in the level of 'don't know' responses. (Table 5.2b)

Looking at the role the public desires the European Parliament to play shows that 43% of EU citizens would *personally* like it to play a more important role than it does now, while 21% are happy with the role it currently plays. Very few people feel the European Parliament plays a too important role: only 9% say they would like it to play a less important role than it does now.



People in Greece (61%) are most likely to desire a more important role for the European Parliament, followed by people in The Netherlands (58%), Italy (54%), Portugal (51%) and Luxembourg (50%). In all Member States only a minority of people would like it to play a less important role, with people in Denmark (20%), Finland (18%) and the UK (16%) most inclined to feel this way. In Spain (2%), Italy and Portugal (both 3%), on the other hand, there are hardly any people who believe the Parliament should play a less important role.

In a number of Member States large increases are recorded since the autumn of 1997 in the proportion of people who would like the European Parliament to play a more important role. These are Luxembourg (+18), Sweden (+11), the UK (+10), Spain and The Netherlands (both +9). In no Member State has the proportion of people who would like the European Parliament to play a less important role increased significantly.

The proportion of 'don't know' responses remains high, ranging from a low of 11% in Luxembourg to a high of 33% in Spain and Sweden. (Table 5.3a)

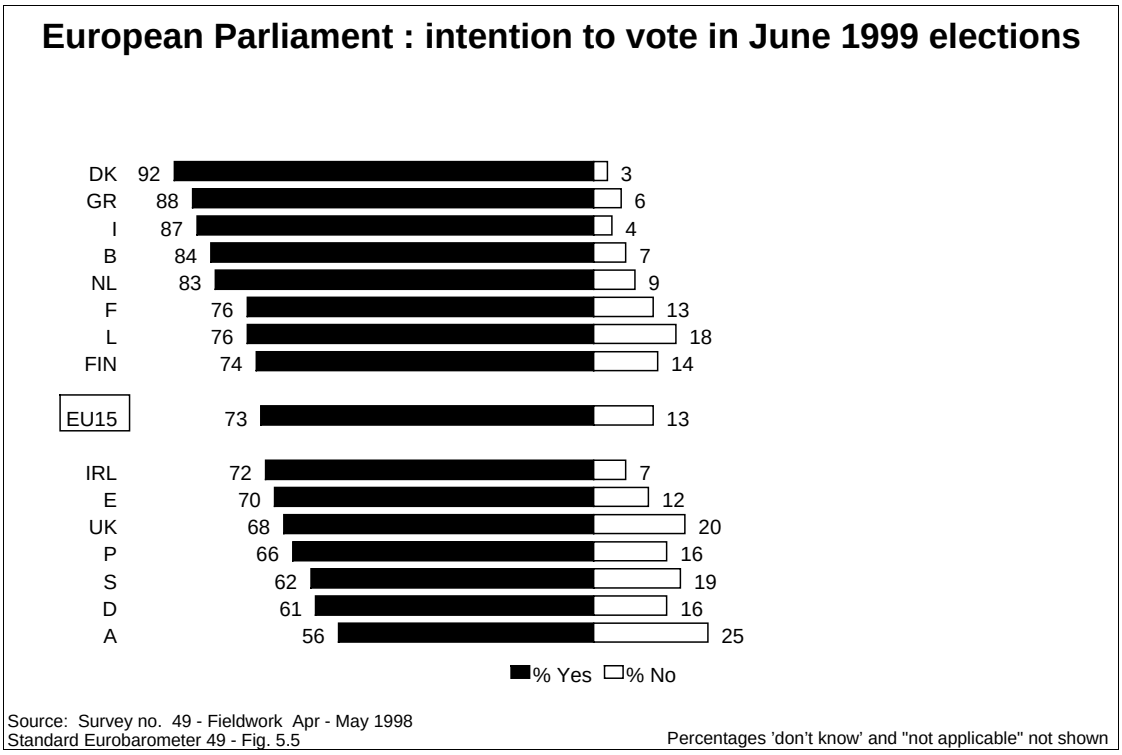
Analysis of the demographic results reveals that men (48%) are more likely than women (39%) to want the European Parliament to play a more important role than it currently does. Those who have stayed in school the longest (55%) are significantly more likely than those who left school the earliest (37%) to share this view. At least half of the managers (54%), self-employed people (51%) and employees (50%) in the sample want the Parliament to play a more important role, compared to only 38% of manual workers and people looking after the home. However, as is the case for the assessment of the Parliament's current role, these differences are mirrored in varying levels of 'don't know' responses and there is, in fact, very little variation among the groups in the proportion of people who want the Parliament to play a less important role. (Table 5.3b).

The public's desired role of the Parliament varies considerably depending on how they feel about the European Union in general. The table below shows that 61% of people who say they feel European together with their own nationality would like the European Parliament to play a more important role, while only 26% of those who regard their country's membership to the EU as a bad thing hold this view.

% wanting the EP to play a more important role than it currently does	
Attitude:	**%**
Feels European and own nationality	61
Thinks country's membership to the EU is a good thing	56
In favour of the single currency	55
Feels country has benefited from EU membership	55
EU15 average	***43***
Feels country has not benefited from EU membership	35
Feels nationality only	32
Against the single currency	28
Thinks country's membership to the EU is a bad thing	26

5.3. Participation in the June 1999 European Parliament elections

The next elections to the European Parliament will take place in June 1999 and more than 7 in 10 EU citizens say they will vote. While people's stated intentions are not always mirrored in their actual behaviour on voting day, the results are a good indication of the public's interest in the European Parliament. Only 13% say they will not vote while a further 2% say they will not be eligible and 12% don't yet know whether they will vote or not.



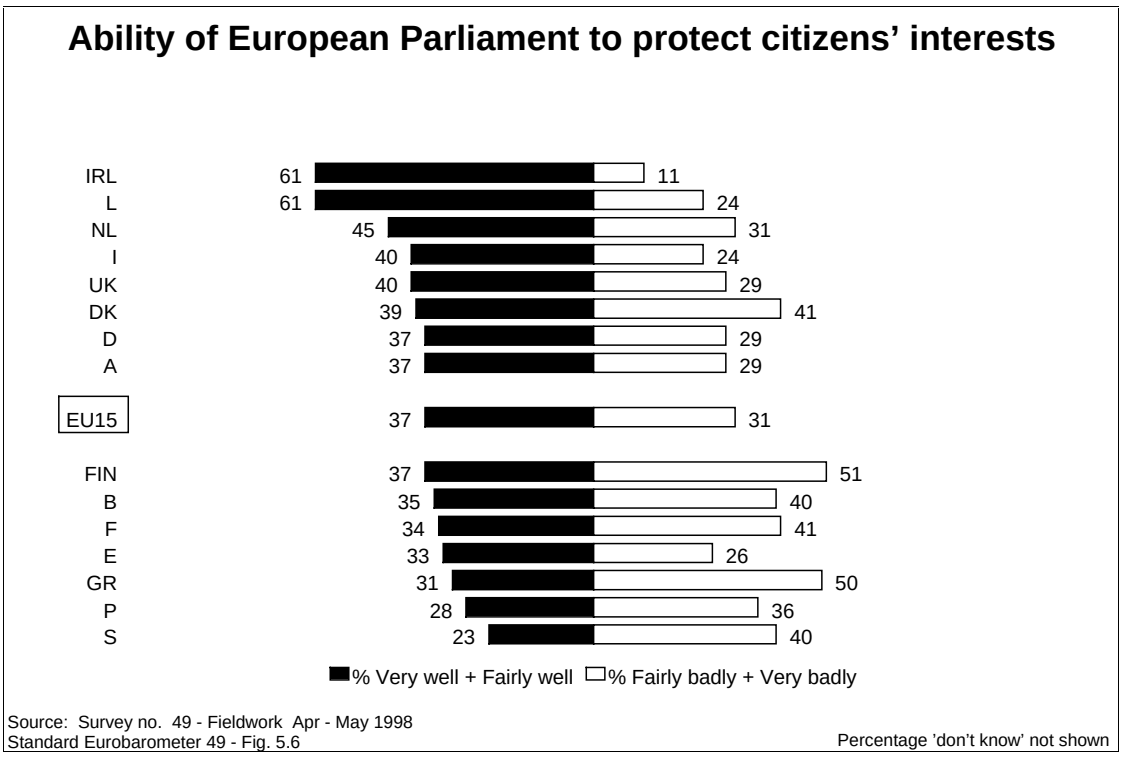
Country by country analyses show that 92% of the people in Denmark intend to vote in the elections. The next highest levels are found in countries where voting is compulsory, namely Greece (88%), Italy (87%) and Belgium (84%). Voting intentions are also high in The Netherlands (83%), where voting is not compulsory. Austria (56%) is the only country where less than 6 in 10 people intend to vote.

An examination of how voting intentions have evolved since the question was previously asked in the autumn of 1997 reveals large increases in Luxembourg (+10) and The Netherlands (+8). In Denmark, Italy (both +5), Spain and Portugal (both +4) people are now also significantly more likely to say they will vote. Greece, Austria and the UK (all +4) are the only countries where the proportion of people who say they will not vote increased significantly. (Table 5.4a)

Demographic analyses reveal no significant differences in the intentions of men and women to vote. Older people are significantly more likely to intend to take part in the elections than those aged 15-24 of whom 9% say they will not be eligible. Looking at people's main economic activity shows that 83% of managers and 80% of self-employed people say they will vote. Voting intentions among unemployed people (64%) are significantly lower. Education is an important predictor: 69% of people who left school by the age of 15 or younger say they will vote, compared to 82% of those who stayed in school until the age of 20 or older. People's attitude towards the European Union is even more telling: 82% of those who regard their country's membership to the EU as a good thing say they will vote, compared to only 58% of those who feel their country's membership is a bad thing. (Table 5.4b)

5.4. The European Parliament's ability to protect citizens' interests

The survey also measures the extent to which EU citizens feel the European Parliament protects their interests. A slight favourable development can be noted in comparison to the autumn of 1997. 37% now feel that their interests are very or fairly well protected by the European Parliament, which represents an increase of 3 percentage points while 31% now feel that their interests are fairly or very badly protected, which represents a significant decrease of 6 percentage points. The remaining 32% say they don't know how well or how badly the European Parliament protects their interests.



People from Ireland and Luxembourg (both 61%) are by far the most likely to feel that the European Parliament does a good job in protecting their interests. In all other countries, less than half of the population feels that their interests are well protected by the European Parliament.

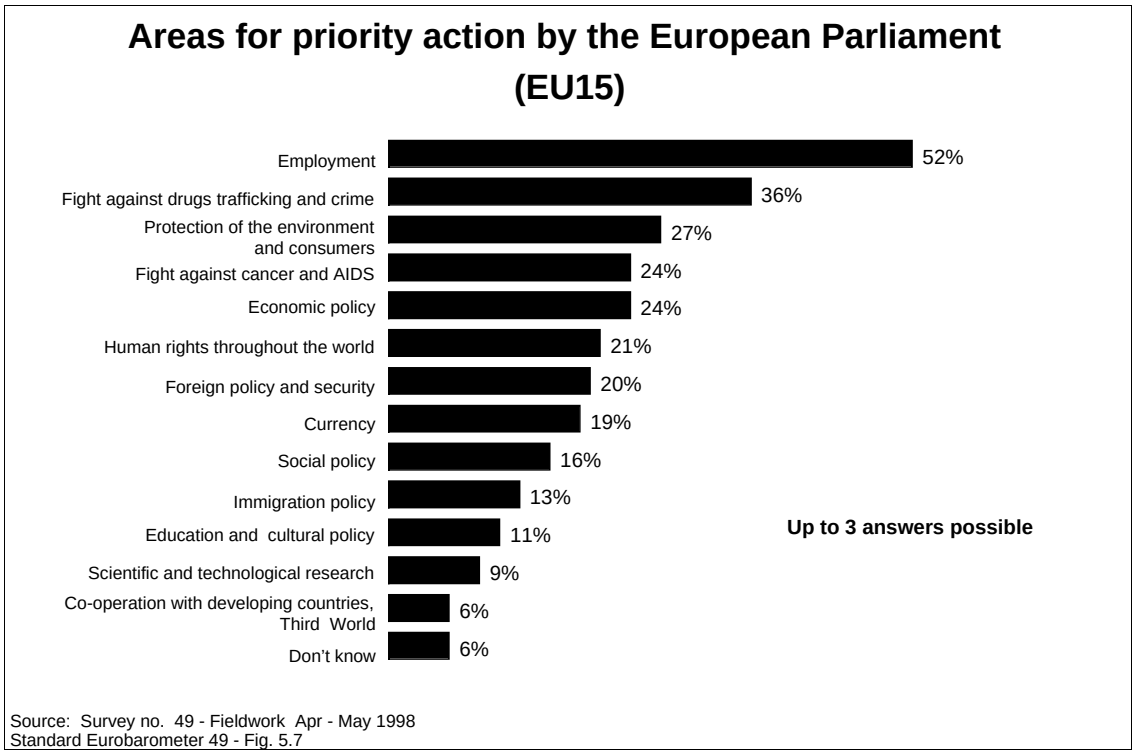
Luxembourg (+8), Germany (+7), The Netherlands (+6), Denmark, Austria (both +5), Belgium and France (both +4) are the countries where significant positive developments are recorded. Furthermore, the proportion of people who feel the Parliament protects their interests badly has dropped significantly in Spain (-8), Italy (-7) and Portugal (-4). Greece is the only country where people are now significantly less likely to feel that the Parliament protects their interests well (-8), while in Sweden (+5) people are now significantly more likely to feel that the Parliament protects their interests badly.

The percentage of 'don't know' responses ranges from a low of 12% in Finland to a high of 41% in Spain. (Table 5.5a)

Demographic analyses show that managers (48%) are by far the most likely to feel that the Parliament protects their interests well while people who left school at the age of 15 or younger (31%) are the least likely to feel this way. As usual, supporters of the European Union (51%) are significantly more positive than opponents of the European Union (15%) are. (Table 5.5b)

A further question asks respondents to indicate, from a list of 13 policy areas, which one(s)[15] the European Parliament should pay particular attention to so as to defend their interests.

More than half of the respondents (52%) believe the European Parliament should pay particular attention to ***employment*** to defend their interests, making this the most frequently chosen policy area. The next most popular area is ***the fight against drug trafficking and crime*** which 36% of respondents selected. Nearly 3 in 10 respondents believe the European Parliament should focus on ***protecting the environment and the consumer*** (27%) and nearly a quarter believe it should pay attention to ***the fight against cancer and AIDS*** and to ***economic policy*** (both 24%).



People are significantly less likely to believe the Parliament should pay particular attention to areas which do not affect them directly, such as co-operation with developing countries (6%) and scientific and technological research (9%). Areas which many people believe are the responsibility of national governments, such as education and cultural policy (11%), are also less likely to be regarded as priorities for the European Parliament[16].

The next table shows that ***employment*** tops the list in 10 Member States. People in Belgium (64%), France (63%) and Italy (60%) are most likely to regard this area as the top priority for the European Parliament. In the UK (44%), Sweden (40%) and The Netherlands (38%), employment comes second on the list, while it takes third place in Luxembourg (33%). Denmark (22%) is the only country where it does not make the top four.

The fight against drug trafficking and crime makes the top four in all the Member States and tops the list in Sweden (53%) and the UK (45%). In Ireland (49%), Denmark (42%) and Germany (41%) it comes second in the rank order. People in Spain (24%) and Italy (29%) are least likely to want the European Parliament to pay particular attention to this topic.

[15] Respondents were able to choose a maximum of three areas.
[16] See Chapter 2.4.

Protecting the environment and the consumer tops the list in Denmark (55%) and The Netherlands (39%) and makes the top four in all other countries except Portugal (21%), Greece (22%), Ireland (25%) and Germany (28%), where nonetheless more than 2 in 10 people consider it as a topic that deserves special attention.

The fight against cancer and AIDS makes the top four in 7 of the Member States. People in Portugal (34%) and Belgium (30%) are most likely to select it, while Germany (18%) and Finland (19%) are the only two countries where less than 2 in 10 people regard it as a priority area.

Economic policy makes the top four in Greece (38%), Germany (30%) and France (24%). While it doesn't make the top four in Austria (24%), Belgium and Italy (both 23%), nearly a quarter of the people in these countries consider it a priority. People in Luxembourg, Portugal (both 11%) and Denmark (13%) are least likely to believe the European Parliament should pay particular attention to this topic.

The issue of ***human rights throughout the world*** makes the top four in Sweden (39%), Denmark (34%) and The Netherlands (30%). People in Belgium (13%), Austria and Portugal (both 14%) are least likely to perceive it as a priority for the European Parliament.

Foreign policy and security makes the top four in Greece (39%), Finland (30%), Austria (29%) and Germany (28%). It is least likely to be seen as a priority in Portugal (5%), Belgium (9%) and Ireland (10%).

Currency is the most frequently selected policy area in Luxembourg (38%). It also makes the top four in Ireland (26%) and Portugal (21%). While it doesn't make the top four in Germany (24%), Spain (22%) and France (21%), more than 2 in 10 people in these countries regard it as a priority. People in Denmark (5%), Sweden (8%) and Finland (9%) are least likely to share this view.

TOP FOUR PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN THE MEMBER STATES

Belgium	
Employment	64
Drugs & crime	37
AIDS/Cancer	30
Environment/Consumers	25

Denmark	
Environment/Consumers	55
Drugs & crime	42
Human rights	34
AIDS/Cancer	28

Germany	
Employment	47
Drugs & crime	41
Economic policy	30
Foreign policy & security	28

Greece	
Employment	40
Foreign policy & security	39
Economic policy	38
Drugs & crime	33

Spain	
Employment	58
Environment/Consumers	25
AIDS/Cancer	25
Drugs & crime	24

France	
Employment	63
Drugs & crime	32
Environment/Consumers	26
Economic policy	24

Ireland	
Employment	55
Drugs & crime	49
AIDS/Cancer	29
Currency	26

Italy	
Employment	60
AIDS/Cancer	29
Drugs & crime	29
Environment/Consumers	26

Luxembourg	
Currency	38
Drugs & crime	36
Employment	33
Environment/Consumers	28

The Netherlands	
Environment/Consumers	39
Employment	38
Drugs & crime	36
Human rights	30

Austria	
Employment	52
Drugs & crime	37
Foreign policy & security	29
Environment/Consumers	25

Portugal	
Employment	55
Drugs & crime	40
AIDS/Cancer	34
Currency	21

Finland	
Employment	59
Drugs & crime	38
Foreign policy & security	30
Environment/Consumers	27

Sweden	
Drugs & crime	53
Employment	40
Human rights	39
Environment/Consumers	38

United Kingdom	
Drugs & crime	45
Employment	44
AIDS/Cancer	27
Environment/Consumers	25

The following table shows the areas which are the least popular in each of the 15 Member States.

BOTTOM TWO PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN THE MEMBER STATES			
Belgium		**Luxembourg**	
Third World	4	Third World	4
Foreign policy & security	9	Research	4
Denmark		**The Netherlands**	
Currency	5	Third World	8
Education & cultural policy	9	Immigration policy	8
Germany		**Austria**	
Third World	5	Research	6
Education & cultural policy	5	Education & cultural policy	6
Greece		**Portugal**	
Immigration policy	2	Immigration policy	2
Third World	4	Research	3
Spain		**Finland**	
Immigration policy	4	Third World	4
Third World	5	Immigration policy	5
France		**Sweden**	
Third World	6	Third World	7
Education & cultural policy	9	Currency	8
Ireland		**United Kingdom**	
Immigration policy	4	Third World	6
Third World	5	Research	9
Italy			
Immigration policy	7		
Third World	9		

As can be seen, the ***Third World*** is the least frequently selected policy area in 8 of the 15 Member States and the second least frequently selected area in 3 further countries. Denmark (14%) is the only country where more than 1 in 10 people believe the European Parliament should pay particular attention to this topic.

Immigration policy is the least frequently selected policy area in Greece, Portugal (both 2%), Spain, Ireland (both 4%) and Italy (7%) and comes second to last in Finland (5%) and The Netherlands (8%). However, in some countries - notably Germany (24%) and Austria (19%) - quite a few people regard this area as a priority for the European Parliament.

Education and cultural policy is the second least frequently selected policy area in Germany (5%), Austria (6%), Denmark and France (both 9%). In Spain and Italy it is also selected by only 9% of the people. In the UK (22%), Greece (17%) and The Netherlands (16%), people are considerably more likely to regard this area as a priority for the European Parliament.

Currency is the least frequently selected policy area in Denmark (5%) and comes second to last in Sweden (8%) - two of the countries that will not introduce the euro in January 1999. In Greece (17%) and the UK (15%) - the other "pre-in" countries, people are somewhat more likely to want the European Parliament to pay particular attention to this topic. In most of the "EURO 11" countries, this view is significantly more popular. (See also table 5.6)

6. The current state of being among Europeans and their expectations for the future

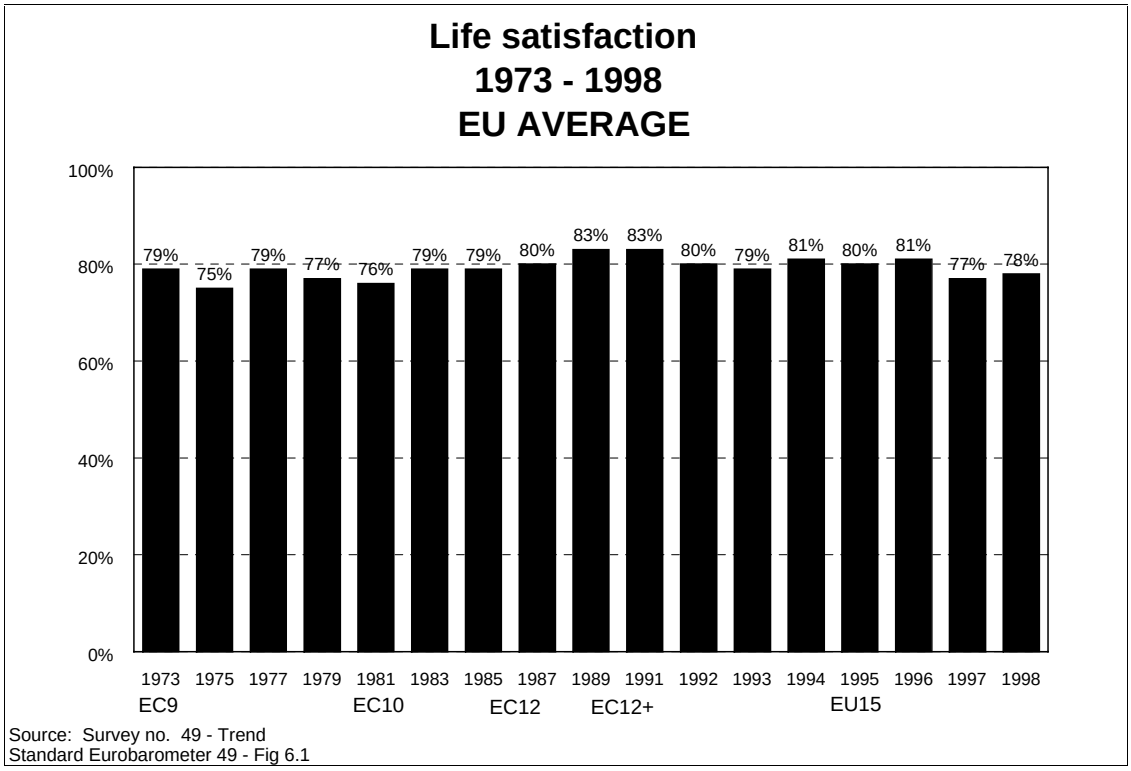
The final chapter in this report examines the current state of being among Europeans and looks to the future by measuring how people feel about the 21st century.

6.1. Perceptions of private and public life

Life satisfaction

One of the questions the Eurobarometer has regularly asked since its creation in 1973 is whether Europeans are satisfied with the life they lead. This particular measurement gauges the overall state of being among the people of the European Union. In essence, it asks people for a synopsis of how they feel about all the things related to their lives, ranging from their personal happiness, their health, their family and their economic situation to their views about society in general.

Throughout the past 25 years, the large majority of Europeans[17] have been very or fairly satisfied with the life they lead. As the graph below shows, on average at least 75% of respondents have given this positive assessment of their life whenever the question has been asked.



Although there has overall been very little variation in satisfaction levels, it has been higher in some years than in others. Satisfaction levels were particularly high in the late 80's, early 90's and lowest in 1975, when people were feeling the economic effects of the oil crisis.

[17] That is citizens of the 9 EC countries until 1980, 10 EC countries from 1981 to 1985, 12 EC/EU countries from 1986 to 1994 and 15 EU countries from 1995 until today.

The following graph shows that the current satisfaction level of 78% for the European Union as a whole conceals large variations between the individual Member States.

People in Denmark (97%) are by far the most satisfied with the life they lead. It is the only country where more than half of the population feels very satisfied (67%). Satisfaction levels are also very high in The Netherlands (95%), Sweden (93%), Luxembourg, Ireland (both 89%) and Finland (88%). The other countries where satisfaction levels are above average are the UK (86%) Austria (83%) and Belgium (79%). Satisfaction levels are lowest in Greece (55%) and Spain (60%). Nonetheless, more than half of the people in both countries feel satisfied with the life they lead.

In comparison to last year, satisfaction levels have improved significantly in Germany (+6). In Denmark (+5) and Austria (+4), people are now more likely to feel very satisfied while the proportion of people who are not satisfied has not changed. In Ireland (-9) and Sweden (-7), people are now less likely to feel very satisfied. Instead, more respondents in both countries (+7 and +4, respectively) this time opted for the 'fairly satisfied' response. The only countries where satisfaction levels dropped significantly are Greece (-9), Spain (-6) and Luxembourg (-5). Furthermore, in Portugal respondents are now significantly more likely (+5) to give the 'not very satisfied' response, although the recorded drop in satisfaction levels (-3) is too small to be considered statistically significant. (Table 6.1a)

The demographic analyses show that equal proportions of men (78%) and women (77%) are satisfied with the life they lead. There are also no significant variations between different age groups. There are, however, significant differences between the various occupational groups in the population, with managers (87%) significantly more likely to feel satisfied than people in other occupations. Of all the demographic groups, unemployed people (58%) are the least likely to feel satisfied. Education is also an important factor with people who are still studying (83%) or people who stayed in school until the age of 20 or older (82%) more likely to feel satisfied than people who left school aged 16 to 19 (77%) or aged 15 or younger (72%).

Finally, the analyses show that 83% of supporters of the European Union, who are more likely to be managers and to have stayed in school until the age of 20 or older, feel satisfied compared to 70% of people who regard their country's membership as a bad thing. (Table 6.1b)

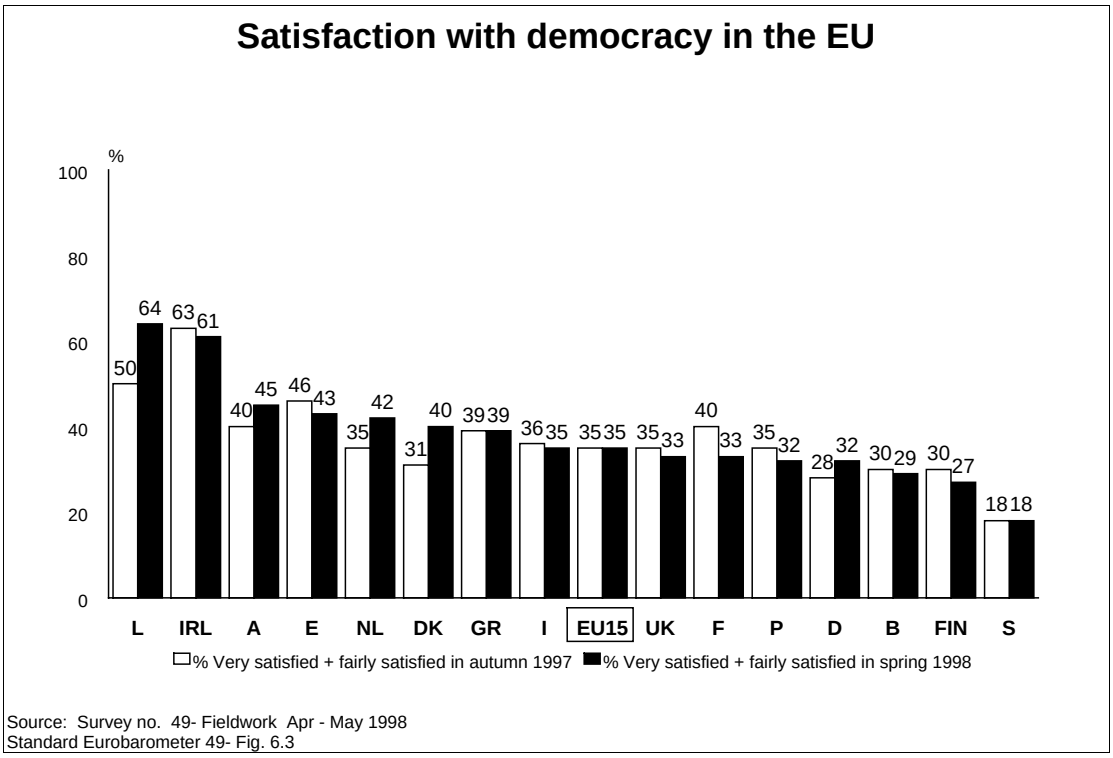
Satisfaction with democracy

The survey also provides information about how satisfied people are with the way democracy works in their own country and in the European Union.

One often reads about the democratic deficit that affects many western societies. Nonetheless, due to changes in educational levels, increased levels of media exposure and the increasing importance politics plays in people's daily lives, political awareness levels among Europeans have increased significantly in the post-war period. As a result of this high level of political awareness and despite the democratic deficit, people expect increasingly higher democratic standards from the systems which govern them.

The results show that 47% of EU citizens are currently satisfied with the way democracy works in their own country. Taking the public's increased expectations into consideration suggests that satisfaction levels are better today than they were when the question was first asked in 1973, even if an equal proportion of people (48%) felt satisfied at that time. (Tables 6.2a+b)

The same political awareness theory can be applied when analysing the extent to which the public is satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union. However, here we also need to consider the added factor that people are more likely to oppose the existence of the European Union than they are to question the existence of their own national governments. This attitude, as we shall see below, clearly influences how people feel about democracy in the European Union. Thus, we find that on average 35% of the EU public is satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union, a figure which includes the views of people who are against its existence in the first place.



Source: Survey no. 49- Fieldwork Apr - May 1998
Standard Eurobarometer 49- Fig. 6.3

The national results show that people in Luxembourg are the most satisfied (64%) with the way democracy works in the European Union and that the proportion of satisfied Luxembourgers is now significantly higher than it was in the autumn of 1997 (+14). In Ireland, satisfaction levels have remained stable with more than 6 in 10 people responding positively both in the autumn of 1997 and the spring of 1998. Apart from Luxembourg, significant improvements in the overall satisfaction levels are also noted in Denmark (+8), The Netherlands (+7), Austria (+5) and Germany (+4). Satisfaction levels remain lowest in Sweden (18%), followed at a distance by Finland (27%) and Belgium (29%). In Belgium, people are generally not very satisfied with democracy and no distinction is made between their own country and the European Union. In Finland and particularly in Sweden, the generally sceptical view people hold about the European Union is reflected in the way they feel democracy functions. (Table 6.3a)

Looking next at how levels of satisfaction with democracy in the EU vary among the different groups in the population shows that 36% of men and 34% of women are satisfied. However, men are more likely than women to say they are not satisfied, while women are more likely to lack an opinion. Higher levels of satisfaction are found among younger Europeans (38% for those aged 15-24) than among older Europeans and especially those who are retired (28%). Significant variations also exist among the various educational levels with higher satisfaction levels recorded for those who stayed in school the longest (39%) than those who left school the earliest (30%). People who are still studying are the most positive (42%). Managers (41%) and other white collar workers (39%) are more satisfied than the self-employed (35%) or manual workers (34%), while those without work are the least satisfied (26%).

As mentioned above, people's attitudes to the European Union in general are strongly linked to their judgement of how democracy functions: 47% of people who regard their country's membership to the European Union as a good thing are satisfied with the way democracy works, compared to only 13% of people who believe their country's membership is a bad thing. (Table 6.3b)

Finally, the results show that satisfaction with democracy - both at the national level and at the EU level - is related to how people feel about their life in general.

% feeling satisfied with the way democracy works by life satisfaction (EU15)

	People who are satisfied with life in general	People who are not satisfied with life in general
% Satisfied with national democracy	55	43
% Satisfied with EU democracy	40	17

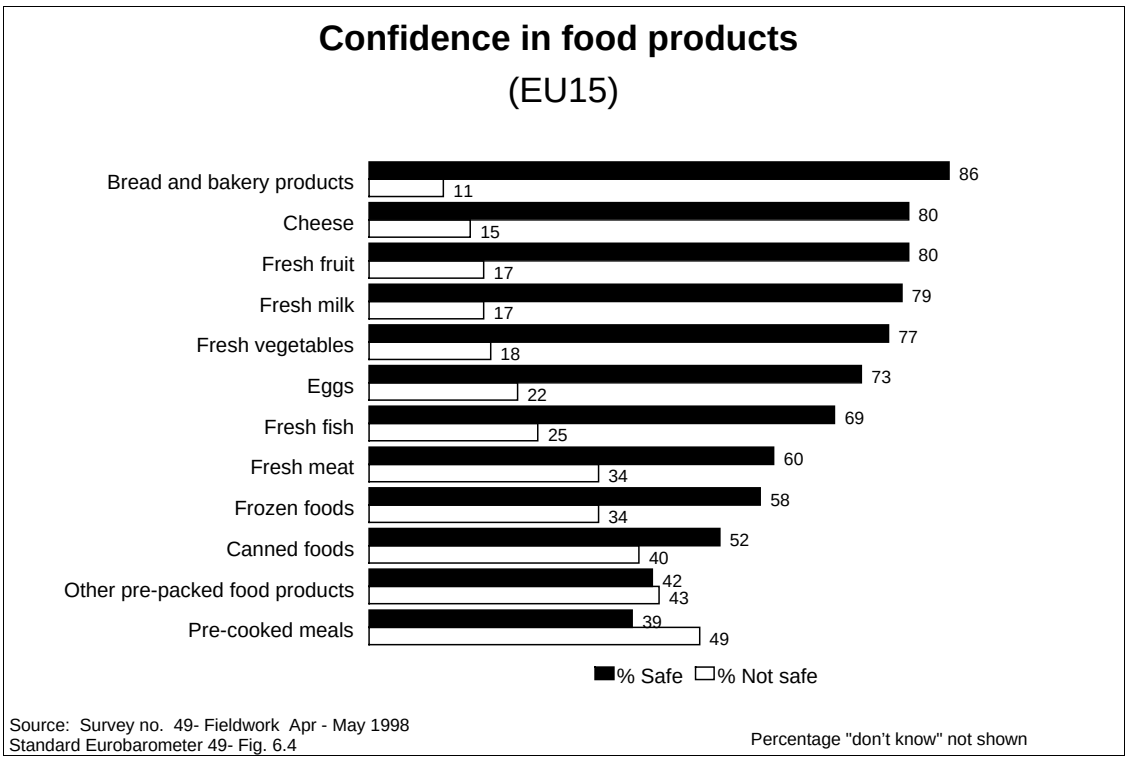
As the table above shows, people who are satisfied with their life in general are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works than people who are not satisfied with the life they lead.

6.2. Issues of concern at the end of the 2nd Millennium

In the following section we examine a number of issues which concern Europeans at the end of this Millennium.

Confidence in food products

In recent years, public confidence in the safety of food products has been damaged by numerous scares, such as the BSE epidemic, scrapie, salmonella and swine fever. As part of a special battery of questions concerning this issue, a special study within the framework of this Eurobarometer survey asked respondents to state how they feel about the safety of a number of food products[18].



As the graph shows, 86% of Europeans are of the view that bread and bakery products are safe. Confidence is also high when it comes to fruit and vegetables and dairy products. People are somewhat less likely to believe that animal products such as fresh fish and fresh meat are safe and a significant proportion of the population questions the safety of frozen and canned foods. The most widespread concern is found for pre-cooked meals (39%) and other pre-packed foods (42%), which less than half of EU citizens believe are safe.

There are significant variations between the Member States. As the following graph shows, on average, more than 8 in 10 people in Sweden, The Netherlands, the UK and Finland consider the 12 food products to be safe. In Greece, Germany and Portugal, less than 6 in 10 people share this view.

[18] A more detailed report on food safety will shortly be published by the Directorate-General for Consumer Policy and Consumer Health Protection (DG XXIV).

FOOD SAFETY : RANK-ORDER OF COUNTRIES (AVERAGE % SAFE FOR 12 FOOD PRODUCTS AND SPREAD FROM LOWEST % SAFE TO HIGHEST % SAFE)		
Country	**Average %**	**Spread**
Sweden	84%	27
The Netherlands	83%	42
United Kingdom	82%	34
Finland	81%	41
Spain	75%	51
Ireland	74%	58
Austria	71%	53
EU15	***66%***	***47***
Denmark	64%	54
Belgium	63%	49
France	63%	46
Italy	61%	64
Luxembourg	60%	56
Portugal	58%	63
Germany	54%	44
Greece	53%	70

The large spread between the lowest percentage saying safe and the highest percentage saying safe in each country indicates that people throughout the European Union make clear distinctions between the various food products. (Table 6.4)

The following table shows that people who are satisfied with the life they lead are more likely to believe food products are safe than people who are not satisfied with the life they lead.

Attitudes to food safety by life satisfaction (EU15)		
Food products	**% of people who are satisfied with life in general saying safe**	**% of people who are not satisfied with life in general saying safe**
Bread and bakery products	87	79
Cheese	83	73
Fresh fruit	82	74
Fresh milk	81	70
Fresh vegetables	79	70
Eggs	75	67
Fresh fish	71	64
Fresh meat	62	55
Frozen foods	61	47
Canned foods	55	41
Other pre-packed food products	45	30
Pre-cooked meals	41	30

Cancer prevention

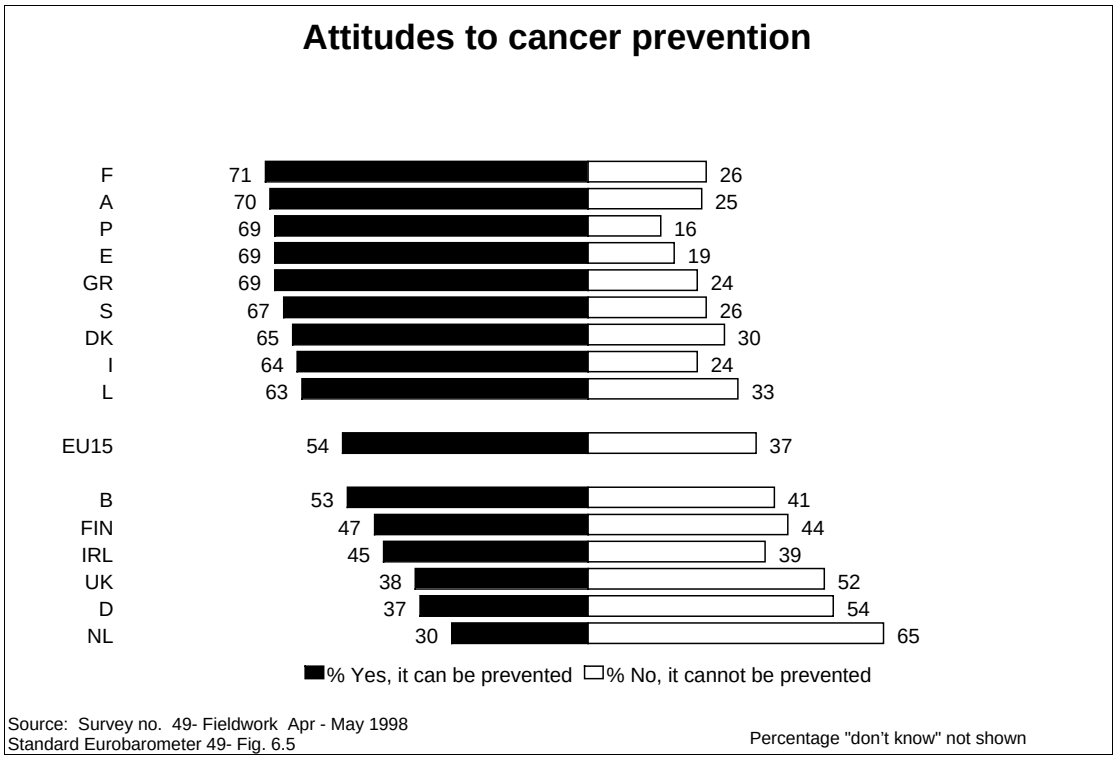
Despite all the advances that have been made in the field of medicine, cancer causes over 800,000 deaths annually and there are over 1.3 million new cases each year in the European Union.

In order to ascertain how Europeans feel about cancer prevention, a special study within the framework of this Eurobarometer survey includes the following question[19]:

"Do you personally think that cancer can be prevented, or not?"

Around a quarter of EU citizens believe that cancer can be prevented by regular medical check-ups and 18% believe that it can be prevented by a better balanced diet and by leading a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, one in ten Europeans is of the view that it can be prevented if people are taught to recognise the signs of cancer. Nonetheless, there is widespread pessimism about the possibility of preventing cancer among the European population - 37% of respondents say that it can not be prevented.

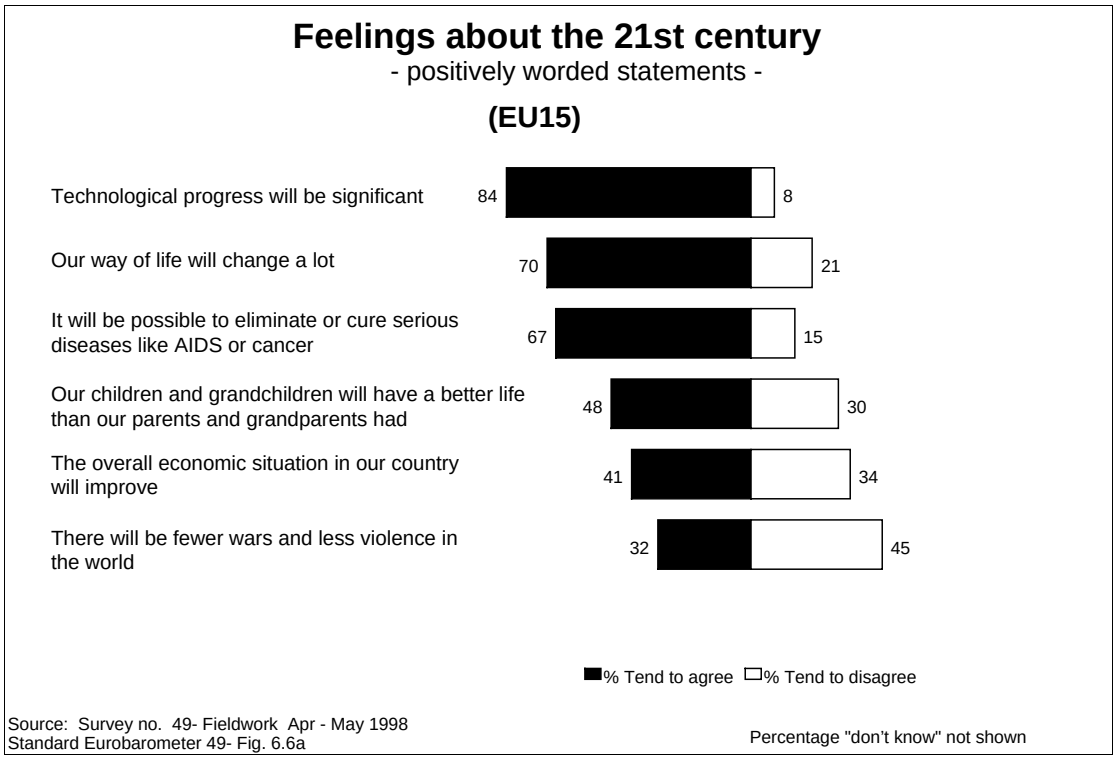
The following graph shows that around 7 in 10 people in France, Austria, Portugal, Spain and Greece believe cancer can be prevented, followed by 67% of the Swedes, 65% of the Danes, 64% of the Italians and 63% of the Luxembourgers. In The Netherlands (65%), Germany (54%) and the UK (52%), however, more than half of the population is of the view that cancer can not be prevented. (Table 6.5)

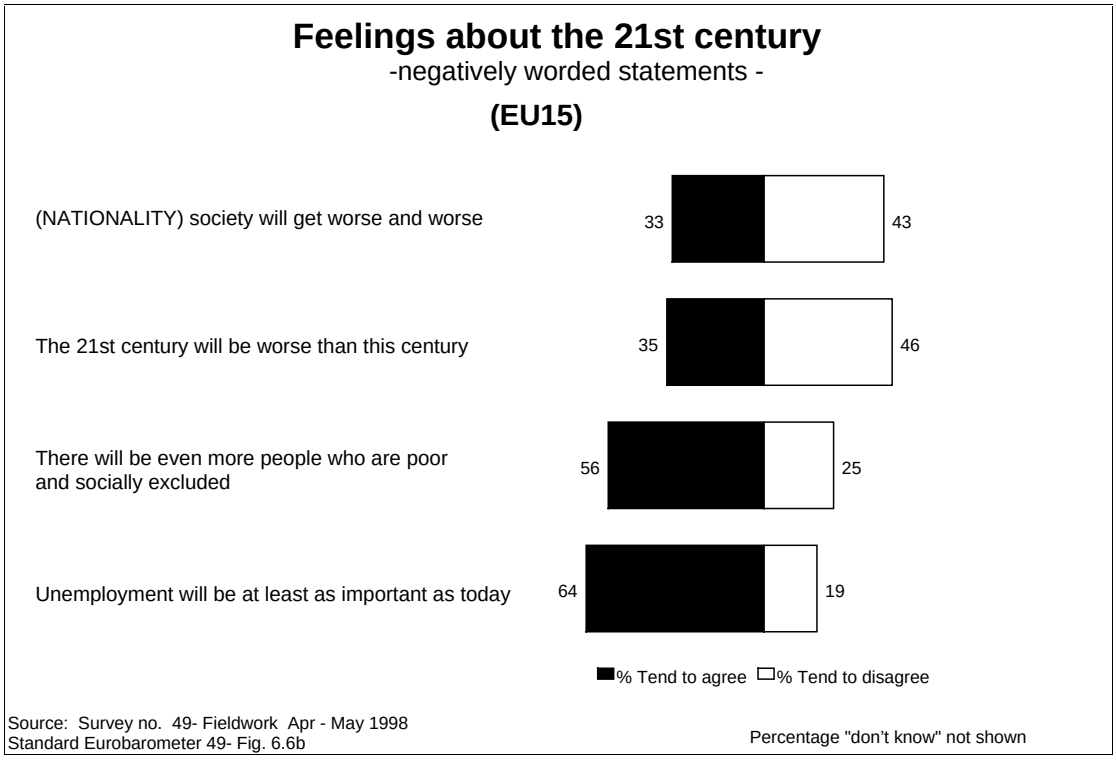


[19] A more detailed report - Cancer and Europeans - is being prepared by the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG V).

6.3. General expectations for the 21st century

To measure how Europeans think about the beginning of the next Millennium, the survey contains 10 general statements about the 21st century.





The majority of Europeans (70%) believe that our way of life will change a lot in the 21st century. The first century of the next Millennium will be marked by significant technological progress according to 84% of Europeans and 67% believe that in the 21st century it will be possible to eliminate or cure serious diseases like AIDS or cancer. The Dutch stand out as being significantly less likely (39%) than people from other countries to believe that it will be possible to eliminate or cure serious diseases. As was noted earlier, they are also most likely to hold the view that cancer can not be prevented.

When presented with general statements about the 21st century, the future holds more good than bad for the majority of Europeans. 48% believe that their children and grandchildren will have a better life than their parents and grandparents had while only 30% disagree. Furthermore, only 35% of people agree with the statement "the 21st century will be worse than this century", while 46% disagree. Finally, only 33% agree that their country's society will get worse and worse in the 1st century of the next Millennium, compared to 43% of people who disagree.

The country analyses reveal that around 7 in 10 people in Spain (73%) and Ireland (68%) believe their children and grandchildren will have a better life, compared to less than 4 in 10 people in Belgium (35%), Germany (36%), Austria (37%) and France (38%).

The Spaniards (18%) are also by far the least likely to feel that the 21st century will be worse than this century. People in Denmark, The Netherlands (both 25%), Finland (26%), Sweden (27%) and Ireland (28%) are also less pessimistic than the average European. In Luxembourg (63%) and Greece (56%), on the other hand, the belief that the next century will be worse is shared by more than half of the people.

At 48% and 47%, respectively, the Greeks and Luxembourgers are also most likely to believe that their country's society will get worse and worse in the next century. In Spain (18%) and Denmark (19%), on the other hand, less than 2 in 10 people share this view. In Ireland (25%), Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden (all 26%), people are also far less likely to hold this pessimistic view of their society at the beginning of the next Millennium.

Europeans are less optimistic about the future when it comes to specific social, economic and political issues: 64% feel that unemployment will be at least as important as it is today, 56% feel that there will be even more poor and socially excluded people and only 41% are of the view that the overall economic situation in their country will improve in the 21st century. Furthermore, only 32% of Europeans believe that in the 1st century of the next Millennium there will be fewer wars and less violence in the world.

People in Spain and Portugal are significantly more optimistic about the employment situation in the next century than people in Finland and Germany. In the first two countries only around half of the population believes unemployment will be at least as important as today, compared to around 8 in 10 people in the latter two countries. People in Spain (39%) are also least likely to believe that there will be even more poor and socially excluded people, followed by the Italians (46%), the Danes (48%) and the Irish (49%). People in Greece (71%), Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg (all 69%) and Finland (68%) are the most pessimistic. The optimism among the Irish and Spanish is also evident from the finding that 60% of the Irish and 56% of the Spanish are of the view that in the 21st century the overall economic situation in one's country will improve. Only 27% of the Germans and the Austrians are optimistic about their country's economic situation in the next century. Finally, the country by country comparisons show that people in Italy (39%), Luxembourg (38%), Spain and Ireland (both 37%) are most likely to believe that the next century will see fewer wars and less violence, while only around a quarter of the people in Austria, Finland, The Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden share this opinion. (Table 6.6)

We end this 49th report with an examination of the extent to which people who are currently satisfied with the life they lead perceive the future differently from those who are not satisfied.

Attitudes to the 21st century by life satisfaction (EU15)		
	People who are satisfied with life in general	**People who are not satisfied with life in general**
Positively worded statements	***% agreeing***	***% agreeing***
Technological progress will be significant	85	80
Our way of life will change a lot	70	70
It will be possible to eliminate or cure serious diseases like AIDS or cancer	69	62
Our children and grandchildren will have a better life than our parents and grandparents had	50	41
The overall economic situation will improve	43	34
There will be fewer wars and less violence	33	28
Negatively worded statements	***% disagreeing***	***% disagreeing***
The 21st century will be worse than this one	49	34
Society will get worse and worse	47	31
There will be more poor and socially excluded people	26	20
Unemployment will be at least as common	20	17

As the table above shows, satisfied people are in all respects significantly more likely to be optimistic about the future than people who are not satisfied with the life they lead.