

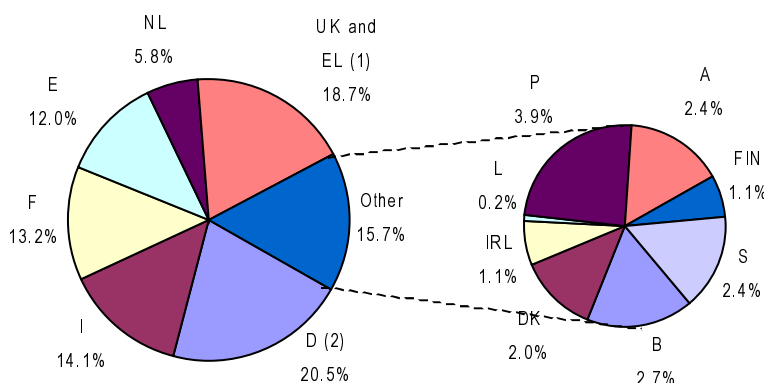
Distributive trades statistics

Employment and productivity in distributive trades

Joachim Hubertus

- **Distributive trades** were estimated to employ more than 22 million people in the EU in 1999.
- **Retail trade** alone employs about half of the workforce of distributive trades.
- **Women** make up 58% of the **retail** workforce in EU; **men** dominate the motor trade, with an EU average of 83%.
- **Turnover per person employed** in distributive trades is generally **higher** than in other economic activities.
- In all the countries providing data, **labour productivity and labour costs** in the **wholesale trade** are **higher** than in the motor and retail trades.

**Figure 1: Shares of the EU Member States
in total EU distributive trade employment, 1999**



(1) Shares for the United Kingdom and Greece are shown together, because these countries do not provide SBS data on employment in distributive trades.

(2) Germany does not provide SBS data for NACE Rev. 1 50.2, 51.1 and 52.7 and therefore employment in these activities has been estimated.

Source: Eurostat, SBS database and estimates

Distributive trades correspond to **section G** of NACE Rev. 1 classification and break down into three divisions:

Division 50: Sale, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; retail sale of automotive fuel

Division 51: Wholesale and commission trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles

Division 52: Retail trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of personal and household goods

Statistics in focus

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

THEME 4 – 1/2002

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The proportion of the Member States in the EU total

Estimates (SBS data) for 1999 put the number of persons employed in distributive trades in the European Union at more than 22 million people (Table 1).

The five largest Member States, together with the Netherlands, are estimated to account for about 80% of this figure. The highest absolute figures are observed in Germany, with 4.2 million people (this figure excludes three NACE Rev.1 groups – see footnotes to Table 1), Italy (3.1 million persons employed), France (2.9), and Spain (2.6). The United Kingdom does not provide SBS data on employment in distributive trades.

Employment in the three main distributive trade activities

According to the NACE Rev.1 classification, distributive trades are broken down into three main activities (NACE divisions): **motor trade**, **wholesale trade** and **retail trade**. The motor trade is a special case, as it includes both wholesaling and retailing activities, such as sales of motor vehicles or automotive fuel (see also box on page 3).

Figure 2 provides an overview of the relative importance of the various trade activities to employment at EU and country level.

It shows that the retail trade accounts for around half of total distributive trade employment in the majority of the countries observed, with an EU average of 51.6%. Ireland stands out with 62.2% of the distributive trade workforce employed in retailing.

Wholesaling follows, accounting for 33.5% of employment in distributive trades as an EU average, with Denmark (40.1%) and Sweden (40.6%) recording values clearly above this percentage. Motor trade plays the least important role in distributive trades employment, with

Table 1: Number of persons employed in the distributive trade activities (NACE divisions), 1999 (units)

	G Total distributive trades	50 Motor trade	51 Wholesale trade	52 Retail trade
EU-15	22 010 600	3 264 200	7 379 600	11 366 800
B	585 993	80 127	220 363	285 503
DK	437 972	65 084	175 682	197 206
D	4 177 527	436 492	1 213 405	2 527 630
EL	:	:	:	:
E	2 641 662	322 846	879 430	1 439 386
F	2 907 884	430 783	970 557	1 506 544
IRL	212 259	30 089	50 157	132 013
I	3 054 522	439 371	1 015 238	1 599 913
L	35 590	5 885	12 499	17 206
NL	1 231 565	138 542	431 243	661 780
A	537 417	77 290	192 551	267 576
P	822 614	135 706	266 317	420 591
FIN	231 383	35 011	82 951	113 421
S	528 167	76 226	214 678	237 263
UK	:	:	:	:

*EU-15: estimation; D excludes NACE Rev.1 50.2, 51.1 and 52.7;
IRL: 1997 data; I, L, NL, P: 1998 data;*

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Figure 2: Proportions of the distributive trade activities (NACE divisions) in total distributive trades' employment, 1999



*EU-15: estimation; D: excludes NACE Rev.1 50.2, 51.1 and 52.7;
IRL: 1997 data; I, L, NL, P: 1998 data.*

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

an EU average of 14.8%. The proportions do not vary greatly from one country to another, with the Netherlands at 11.2% and Luxembourg at 16.5% of motor trade employment in total distributive trade employment.

Table 2 shows the available information on employment in the distributive trade activities in a more detailed breakdown (NACE groups).

This further analysis of the number of persons employed reveals that, in most countries observed, most people in the **motor trade** work in the **sale of motor vehicles** (NACE Rev.1 50.1). In Finland, Spain (both 1999 data), Italy and Portugal (both 1998), however, the activity **maintenance and repair of motor vehicles** (NACE Rev.1 50.2) employs more people. The difference in Italy is particularly high, with the workforce in this activity being nearly three times that employed in the sale of motor vehicles. In some countries (such as Ireland and Luxembourg) the retail sale of automotive fuel (NACE Rev.1

50.5) accounts for a large share of motor trade employment.

For the majority of the countries providing data, employment in wholesaling is particularly high in **wholesaling of machinery, equipment and supplies** (NACE Rev.1 51.6). This activity includes the wholesaling of machine tools, industrial and construction machinery and also office machinery, computers etc. France records the highest absolute number of persons employed (282 000 in 1999) followed by Germany (201 000 in 1999) - where this activity is not the most important for wholesale trade employment - and the Netherlands with 129 000 (in 1998).

The dominant wholesale activity in employment terms in Germany

involves **non-agricultural intermediate products** (NACE Rev.1 51.5) (339 000 persons employed in 1999).

In Spain it is **wholesale of food, beverages and tobacco** (NACE Rev.1 51.3) (284 000 in 1999), and in Italy **wholesale intermediaries** (NACE Rev.1 51.1) (316 000 in 1998).

In the **retail trade**, 'retail sale in non-specialised stores' (NACE Rev.1 52.1) is the prevalent activity in Denmark, Ireland and Finland. 'Other retail sale of new goods in specialised stores' (NACE Rev.1 52.4) accounts for the highest shares of retail trade employment in all other countries (and is second in the above-mentioned ones).

Table 2: Distributive trades, number of persons employed by activity (NACE group), 1999 (units)

	EU-15	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Motor trade (NACE Rev. 1 50)																
50	3 264 200	80 127	65 084	:	:	322 846	430 783	30 089	439 371	5 885	138 542	77 290	135 706	35 011	76 226	:
50.1	:	39 506	28 933	304 159	:	103 277	223 640	10 764	85 741	3 289	91 356	32 301	46 289	9 760	30 078	:
50.2	:	23 027	17 533	:	:	128 857	104 900	7 051	234 815	498	17 371	24 722	47 625	11 638	23 013	:
50.3	:	10 270	6 147	84 232	:	39 980	62 132	:	41 538	714	15 826	10 014	17 651	6 578	8 192	:
50.4	:	1 953	540	8 925	:	6 357	13 359	:	20 278	45	2 408	1 210	7 952	421	1 484	:
50.5	:	5 371	11 931	39 176	:	44 375	26 752	7 896	56 999	1 339	11 581	9 044	16 189	6 614	13 459	:
Wholesale trade (NACE Rev. 1 51)																
51	7 379 600	220 363	175 682	:	:	879 430	970 557	50 157	1 015 238	12 499	431 243	192 551	266 317	82 951	214 678	:
51.1	:	13 685	6 426	:	:	66 042	64 739	1 931	316 424	618	10 117	8 788	31 919	5 580	9 245	:
51.2	:	7 379	10 258	51 033	:	37 195	56 054	1 617	26 637	388	32 521	16 553	9 827	1 986	6 654	:
51.3	:	36 805	22 069	221 055	:	284 299	175 172	11 045	161 132	2 614	66 900	35 586	56 219	7 286	25 892	:
51.4	:	55 545	36 200	316 303	:	192 454	184 959	9 627	217 894	1 838	92 779	45 521	68 038	15 070	53 117	:
51.5	:	44 703	36 935	338 893	:	159 617	200 415	10 017	159 939	3 011	77 490	41 140	41 890	16 369	54 175	:
51.6	:	55 595	58 297	201 153	:	129 802	281 622	11 032	89 951	3 498	128 761	42 110	38 006	28 305	63 900	:
51.7	:	6 651	5 497	84 968	:	10 021	7 596	4 888	43 261	532	22 675	2 855	20 418	8 355	1 695	:
Retail trade (NACE Rev. 1 52)																
52	11 366 800	285 503	197 206	:	:	1 439 386	1 506 544	132 013	1 599 913	17 206	661 780	267 576	420 591	113 421	237 263	:
52.1	:	84 621	89 366	841 959	:	340 513	550 439	63 416	379 110	4 852	234 248	67 307	84 748	56 708	79 997	:
52.2	:	31 923	13 409	152 460	:	248 233	95 668	9 694	204 845	1 689	56 578	19 057	58 103	3 954	18 764	:
52.3	:	21 125	8 041	268 952	:	86 788	145 704	7 085	94 186	888	38 041	22 857	18 814	7 460	13 122	:
52.4	:	131 972	79 647	1 090 614	:	655 844	586 551	48 434	735 200	9 054	295 408	146 837	238 123	40 834	108 353	:
52.5	:	3 018	908	7 150	:	3 359	13 633	968	4 697	58	6 627	1 939	1 094	713	1 812	:
52.6	:	9 647	2 641	166 495	:	75 106	85 171	895	141 459	456	24 969	6 979	9 269	1 806	8 916	:
52.7	:	3 197	3 194	:	:	29 543	29 378	1 521	40 416	209	5 909	2 601	10 440	1 946	6 299	:

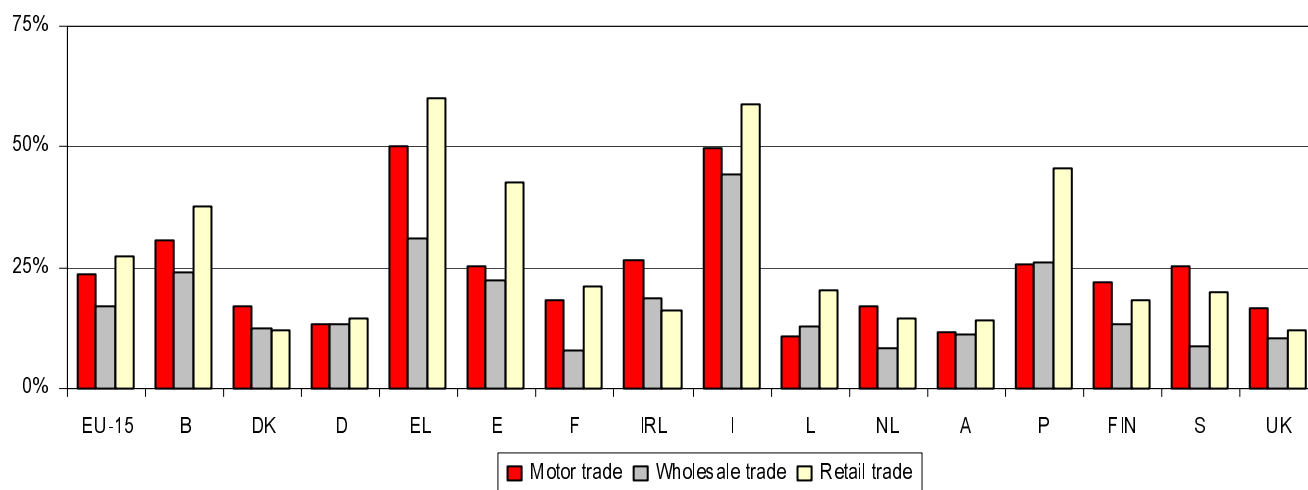
EU-15: estimation; IRL: 1997 data; I, L, NL, P: 1998 data;

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

50	Sale, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; retail sale of automotive fuel 50.1 Sale of motor vehicles; 50.2 Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles; 50.3 Sale of motor vehicle parts and accessories; 50.4 Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories; 50.5 Retail sale of automotive fuel
51	Wholesale trade and commission trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles 51.1 Wholesale on a fee or contract basis; 51.2 Wholesale of agricultural raw materials and live animals These groups include only wholesale on own account; 51.3 Wholesale of food, beverages and tobacco; 51.4 Wholesale of household goods; 51.5 Wholesale of non-agricultural intermediate products, waste and scrap; 51.6 Wholesale of machinery, equipment and supplies; 51.7 Other wholesale.
52	Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of personal and household goods 52.1 Retail sale in non-specialised stores; 52.2 Retail sale of food, beverages and tobacco in specialised stores; 52.3 Retail sale of pharmaceutical and medical goods, cosmetic and toilet articles; 52.4 Other retail sale of new goods in specialised stores; 52.5 Retail sale of second-hand goods in stores; 52.6 Retail sale not in stores; 52.7 Repair of personal and household goods.

Self-employment and female employment in distributive trades

Figure 3: Distributive trades, shares of self-employment in total employment by activity (NACE division), 1999



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

High self-employment in the retail trade...

Figures from the Labour Force Survey (household survey) reveal that retailing generally records the highest level of self-employment (Figure 3) of the three distributive trade activities, with an EU average of 27% of retail workers (including family workers) self-employed. 24% of the motor trade workforce and 17% of the wholesaling workforce are self-employed.

The relatively high shares of self-employment recorded in the retail and motor trades can be partly explained by the higher levels of fragmentation of these two sectors than in wholesaling, i.e. by the many small

and family-run businesses.

The southern European Member States tend to record higher proportions of self-employment than the EU average for distributive trades. The figures are particularly high in the retail trade: 59% and 60% respectively for Italy and Greece. Both countries also show high percentages of self-employment in the motor trade, at 50%, and Italy also in the wholesale trade, at 44%, which is due to an important number of self employed working as wholesale agents (NACE Rev. 1 51.1 – see also table 2).

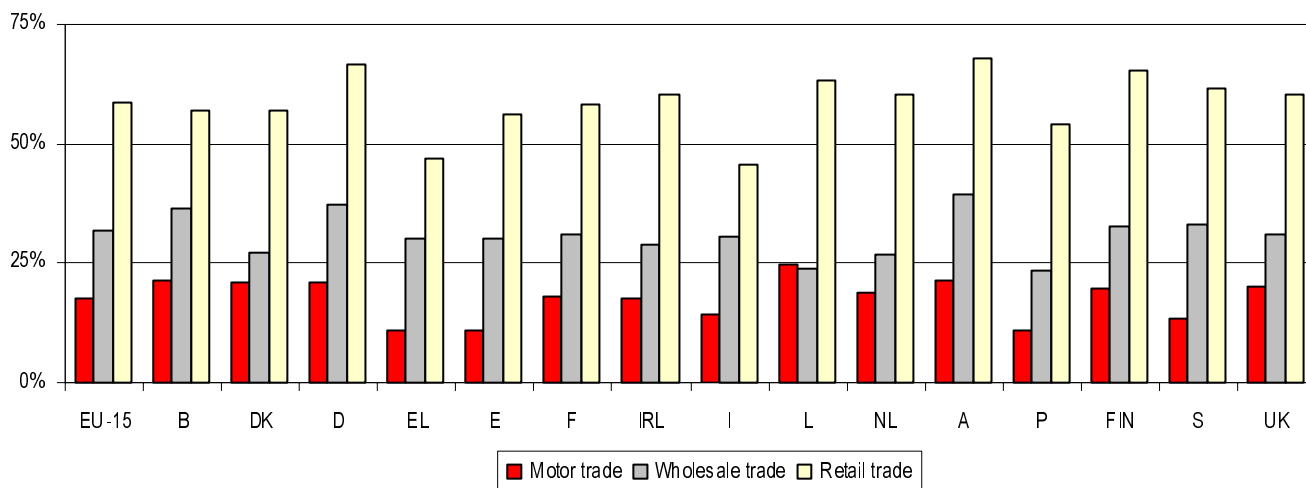
Proportions well below the average are instead recorded in most Northern European Member States.

...and the motor trade is still a 'male domain'

Figure 4 shows that, while the retail trade employs high proportions of women, the motor trade is male-dominated. The proportion of female workers at EU level is 58% in retailing, 32% in wholesaling and 18% in the motor trade.

The southern European Member States record female employment values below the EU average in all three activities, while Germany, Austria and the northern European Member States (the latter except in wholesaling) show figures above the EU average for female employment in the distributive trades

Figure 4: Distributive trades, shares of female employment in total employment by activity (NACE division), 1999



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Turnover and productivity indicators in distributive trades

Table 3 shows that, in comparison with other economic activities, distributive trades record a high turnover per person employed.

Generally the values for distributive trades exceed those of other economic activities, particularly in the service sector. Some exceptions are the figures for mining (NACE Rev.1 Section C) in Denmark and Italy, and for manufacturing (NACE Rev.1 Section D) in Ireland.

The high turnover per person employed in distributive trades can be

explained by the fact that turnover includes the value of goods purchased for resale, except in some specific 'service' activities (e.g. repair activities), which are also classified in distributive trades.

Of the countries providing data, Belgium records the highest turnover per person employed in distributive trades (EUR 384 800 in 1999), followed by Luxembourg (ECU 342 300 in 1998) and Finland (EUR 326 600 in 1999).

The lowest levels of turnover per

person employed are recorded in the southern European Member States and in Ireland, with values ranging from ECU 142 400 in Portugal to ECU 202 300 in Italy (both 1998 figures).

Of the other activities, 'hotels and catering' (NACE Rev.1 Section H) has the lowest level of turnover per person employed. Values range from EUR 30 600 to 73 200 per person employed (in Portugal and Finland respectively - 1999 data).

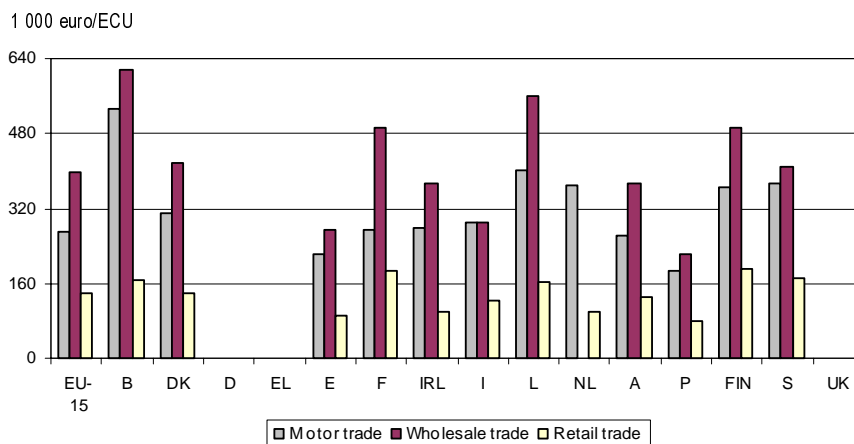
	C Mining	D Manufacturing	G Distributive trades	H Hotels and restaurants	I Transport, storage and communications	K Real estate, renting and business activ.
EU-15	:	170.1	245.4	:	:	:
B	205.3	241.0	384.8	47.9	140.1	105.7
DK	1 065.7	139.2	276.1	46.6	155.9	107.5
D	109.9	171.6	:	36.7	96.9	106.2
EL	:	:	:	:	:	:
E	74.5	132.9	167.6	32.7	:	:
F	143.9	220.1	300.7	64.7	112.0	112.1
IRL	175.7	319.0	190.6	:	121.1	64.4
I	217.7	149.6	202.3	52.4	107.2	69.5
L	152.9	211.8	342.3	58.2	151.4	85.5
NL	:	206.8	:	47.2	104.6	:
A	185.0	159.4	237.0	45.6	112.4	104.9
P	63.3	65.2	142.4	30.6	85.0	92.4
FIN	170.9	199.1	326.6	73.2	117.5	100.3
S	171.1	189.5	296.7	65.6	137.5	120.8
UK	463.2	157.4	:	:	:	:

Table 3: Turnover per person employed in selected economic activities (NACE sections), 1999 (1 000 euro/ECU)

*EU-15: estimation;
D: 1998 data for H;
E: 1998 data for C, D, H;
IRL: 1997 data for G, I, K;
I: all 1998 data;
L all 1998 data except for I (1995);
NL: 1996 data for D, 1998 data for H, I;
P: 1998 data for G;
UK: all 1997 data;
Data for 1999 are in euro, those for previous years in ECU.*

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Figure 5: Distributive trades, turnover per person employed by activity (NACE division), 1999



*EU-15: estimation; IRL: 1997 data; I, L, NL, P: 1998 data.
Data for 1999 are in euro, those for previous years in ECU.*

Source: Eurostat, SBS database

Figures 5 and 6 show the differences in turnover per person employed and apparent labour productivity (value added per person employed) across the three main activities (NACE divisions) that make up distributive trades.

In all countries providing data, wholesaling shows the highest values for both indicators and retailing the lowest. This is due mainly to the different natures of the two activities: wholesaling is more capital-intensive and more highly automated, while retailing is more labour-intensive, so that labour productivity tends to be lower.

The motor trade values for these two indicators are generally between those of the other two activities.

In absolute terms, the highest apparent labour productivity in wholesaling is recorded in Luxembourg (ECU 59 500 per person employed in 1998) while the lowest values are recorded in Spain (EUR 30 000, 1999) and Portugal ECU 24 000, 1998). Luxembourg also ranks first with regard to motor trade, with ECU 45 700 per person employed in 1998, while for retail trade the highest is France (EUR 32 300 in 1999).

For these two activities Portugal is again the lowest, with ECU 16 200 per person employed in motor trade and 11 400 in retail trade (both 1998 data) (Figure 6).

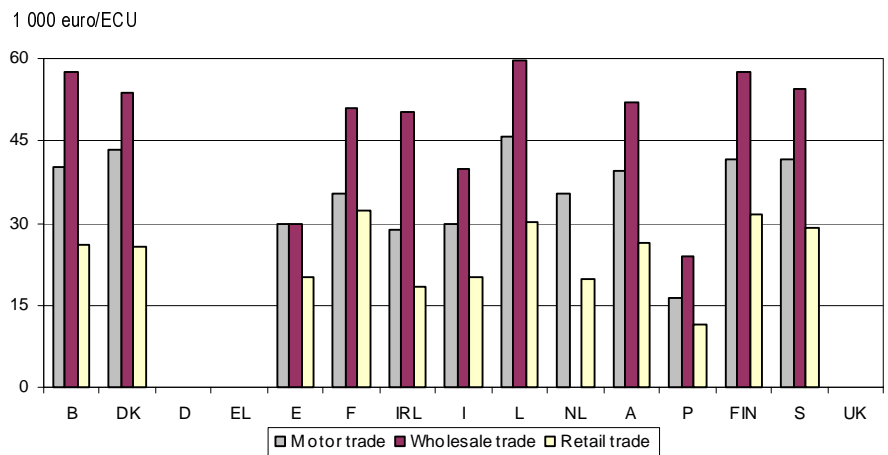
A comparison of unit labour costs (Figure 7) and productivity figures (Figure 6) reveals that the levels of these two indicators are generally similar both for countries and for activities. Both indicators are high in wholesaling and both are low in Portugal and Spain, for example.

However, it has to be noted that the personnel cost is related only to costs linked to employees (salaries, social contributions etc.) and disregards the income of the self-employed, who account for high proportions of personnel costs in distributive trades, particularly in the retail trade. This fact has to be borne in mind since, for the self-employed, the proprietor's income is included in the operating result and not in the personnel cost.

This is also a possible explanation for the high operating rates (gross operating surplus as a % of turnover) observed in retailing for all countries providing data (Figure 8).

A cross-country comparison shows that gross operating rates tend to be higher where the market is generally more fragmented (e.g. Italy or Spain) or in countries characterised by a high concentration, like the United Kingdom.

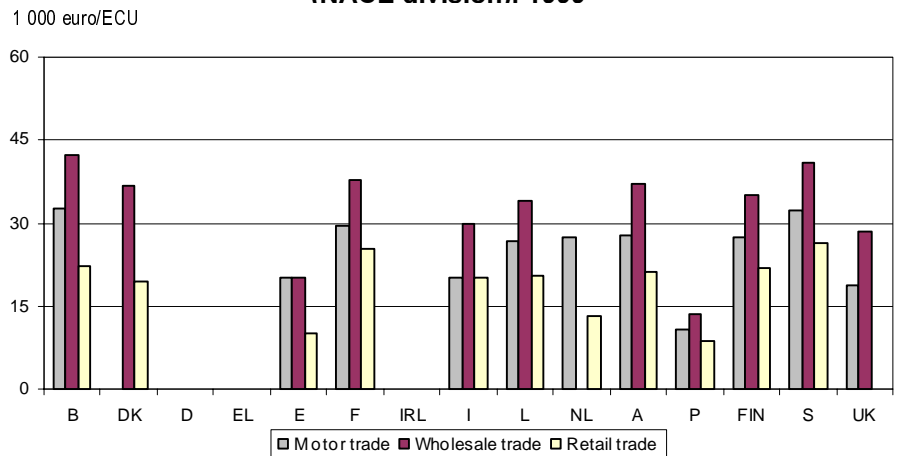
Figure 6: Distributive trades, value added per person employed by activity (NACE division), 1999



DK: 1995 for motor trade, 1998 data for the other activities; IRL: 1997 data; I, L, NL, P: 1998 data
Data for 1999 are in euro, those for previous years in ECU.

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database

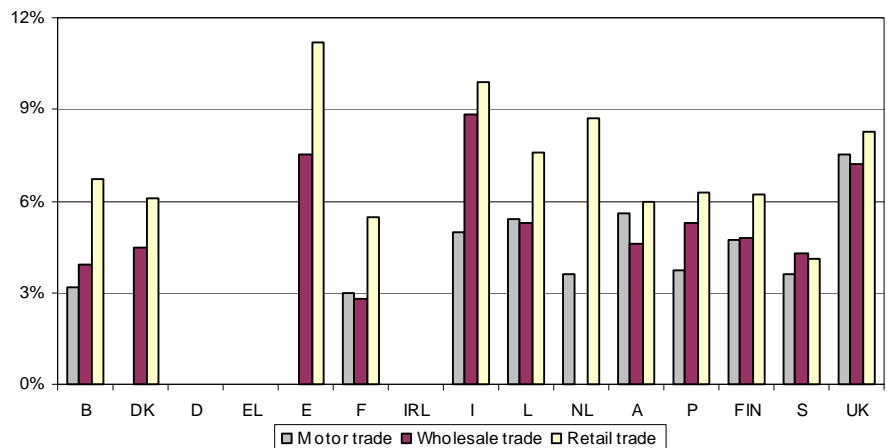
Figure 7: Distributive trades, unit labour costs by activity (NACE division), 1999



DK, I, L, NL, P: 1998 data; UK: 1997 data. Data for 1999 are in euro, those for previous years in ECU.

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database

Figure 8: Distributive trades, gross operating rates by activity (NACE division), 1999



DK, I, L, NL, P: 1998 data; E: 1998 data for wholesale trade, 1997 data for retail trade.

Source: Eurostat, SBS Database

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Database

This Statistics in Focus (SiF) is based on structural business statistics collected under the terms of Council Regulation (EC, EURATOM) No 58/97 of 20 December 1996. The reference data are stored in Eurostat's reference database New Cronos (theme 4 - domain SBS – collection enterpr: annual enterprise statistics – dft files enter_ms and preli_ms).

The figures presented reflect the situation of the database as of 25 October 2001.

Data on employment are also taken from the LFS (Labour Force Survey). These data are collected in accordance with Council Regulation N° 577/98 adopted in 1998, which replaced the previous Regulation to take account of new statistical requirements. The methodological basis and the contents of this new series of surveys are described in the publication entitled "Labour Force Survey - Methods and Definitions - 1998 edition".

Statistical classification

The data were collected mainly on the basis of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev. 1). This SiF deals with NACE **Section G** (Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods) which breaks down into the following divisions:

50: Sale, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; retail sale of automotive fuel;

51: Wholesale and commission trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles;

52: Retail trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of personal and household goods.

SBS variables

Number of persons employed

The total number of persons who work in the observation unit (employees receiving remuneration, working proprietors and unpaid family workers) as well as outside working persons who belong to the unit and are paid by it. It includes all persons who are on the payroll of the enterprise, whether they are temporarily absent (excluding long-term absences), part-time, seasonal or home workers, apprentices etc.

Number of employees

The number of employees is defined as those persons who work for an employer and who have a contract of employment and receive compensation in the form of wages, salaries, fees, gratuities, piecework pay or remuneration in kind.

Turnover

Turnover comprises the totals invoiced by the observation unit during the reference period, which corresponds to market sales of goods or services supplied to third parties. It includes all duties and taxes on the goods and services invoiced by the unit, with the exception of the VAT invoiced by the unit vis-à-vis its customers and other similar deductible taxes directly linked to turnover.

Value added at factor cost

Value added at factor cost is the gross income from operating activities after adjusting for operating subsidies and indirect taxes. It can be calculated from turnover, plus capitalised production, plus other operating income, plus or minus the changes in stocks, minus the purchases of goods and services, minus other taxes on products which are linked to turnover but not deductible, minus the duties and taxes linked to production.

Personnel costs

Personnel costs are defined as the total remuneration, in cash or in

kind, payable by an employer to an employee in return for work done by the latter during the reference period. Personnel costs also include taxes and employees' social security contributions retained by the unit as well as the employer's compulsory and voluntary social contributions.

Gross operating surplus

Gross operating surplus is the surplus generated by operating activities after the labour factor input has been recompensed. It can be calculated from the value added at factor cost less the personnel costs. It is the balance available to the unit which allows it to recompense the providers of own funds and debt, to pay taxes and eventually to finance all or a part of its investment.

The above SBS variables are laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No 2700/98 of 17 December 1998.

Apparent labour productivity

Apparent labour productivity is defined as value added per person employed.

Unit labour cost

Unit labour cost is defined as personnel costs per employee.

Gross operating rate

Gross operating rate is defined as gross operating surplus/ turnover.

More information on business statistics methodology can be found at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/ramon/>

or

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/dsis/bmethods/info/data/new/main_en.html

The above-mentioned Regulations and statistical classification can be downloaded under 'legal texts'

Further information:

Databases

New Cronos: Theme 4, Domain SBS;
Theme 3, Domain LFS

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