

# Statistics in focus

## INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

THEME 4 – 3/1999

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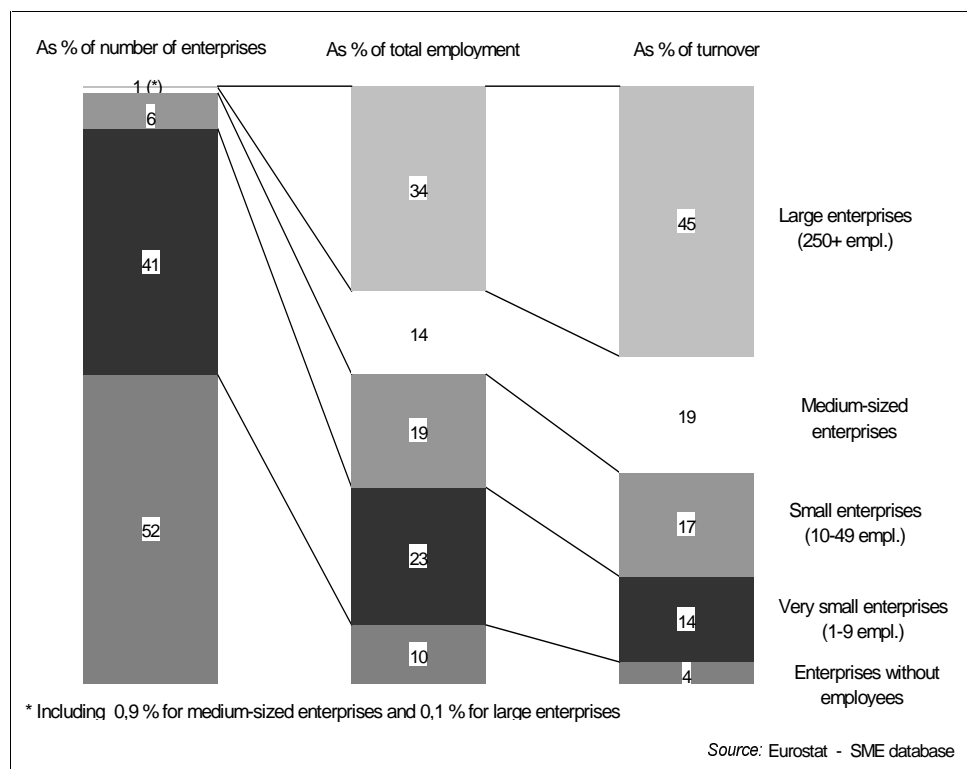
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# Two thirds of jobs in the European Union are in enterprises with fewer than 250 employees

*Maria Pia Vigliarolo*



### *Enterprises in the European Union in 1995 - distribution by employment size class*

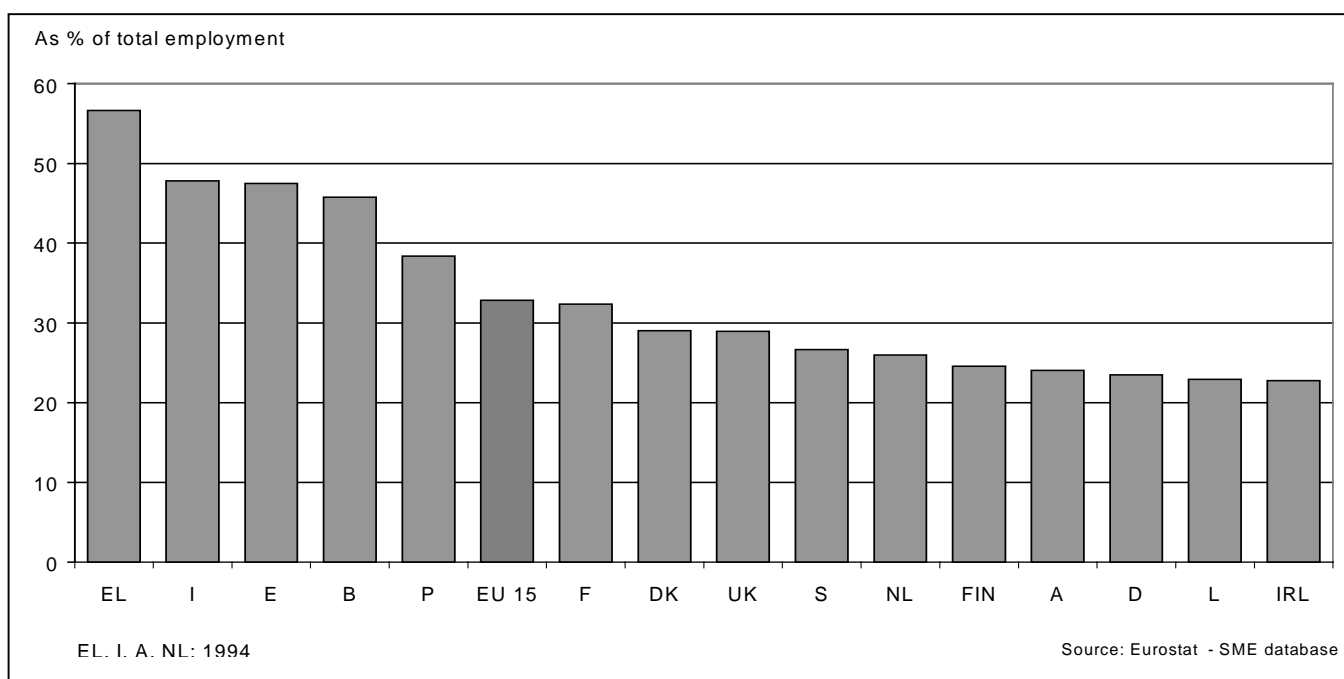
Almost all of the 18 million European enterprises in the non-agricultural market sectors are SMEs, i.e. small and medium-sized units with fewer than 250 employees; they therefore play a decisive role in the EU.

Jobs are divided almost equally between very small units with fewer than 10 employees, including those without employees, small and medium-sized enterprises with up to 249 employees and large enterprises with 250 employees and over.

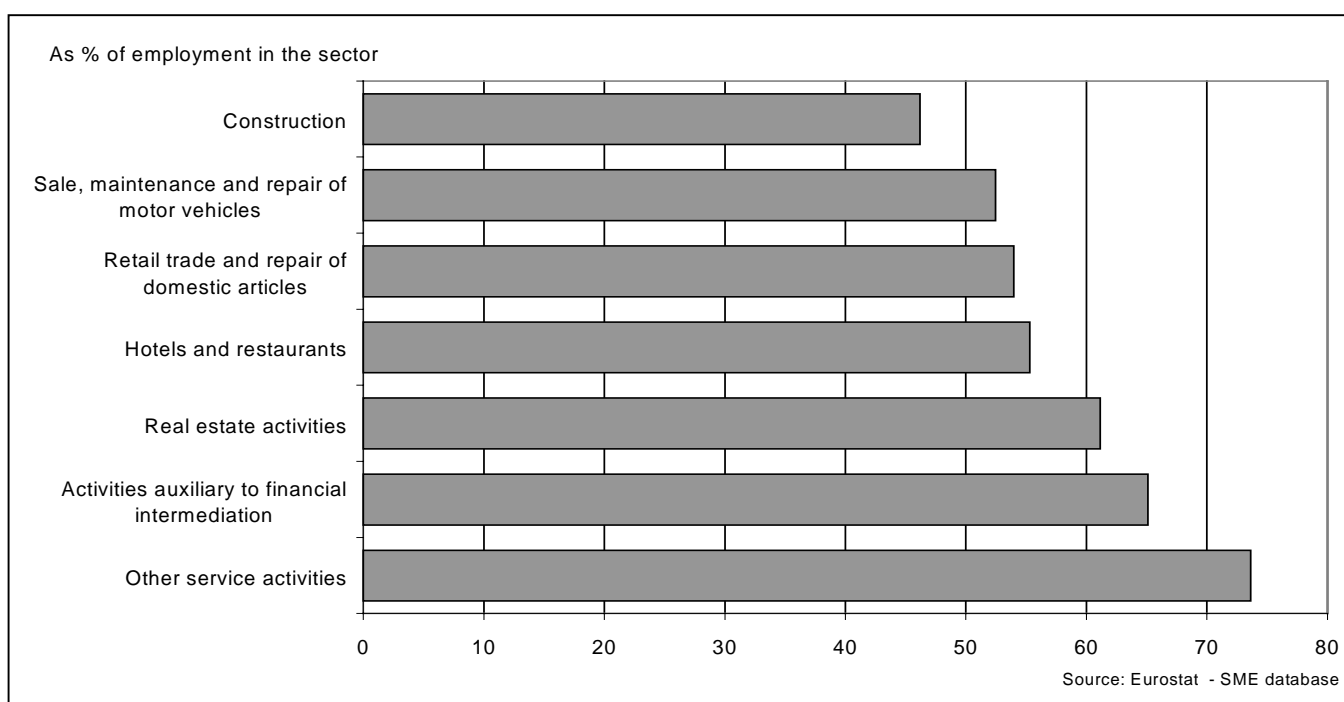
However, 36 000 large enterprises account for 45 % of total turnover.



## 50% of European enterprises have no employees



Share of total employment in the Member States accounted for by very small enterprises (0-9 employees) - 1995



Economic sectors dominated by very small enterprises (0-9 employees) – EU-15 - 1994

Over 90% of European enterprises have fewer than 10 employees and of those 50% have no employees.

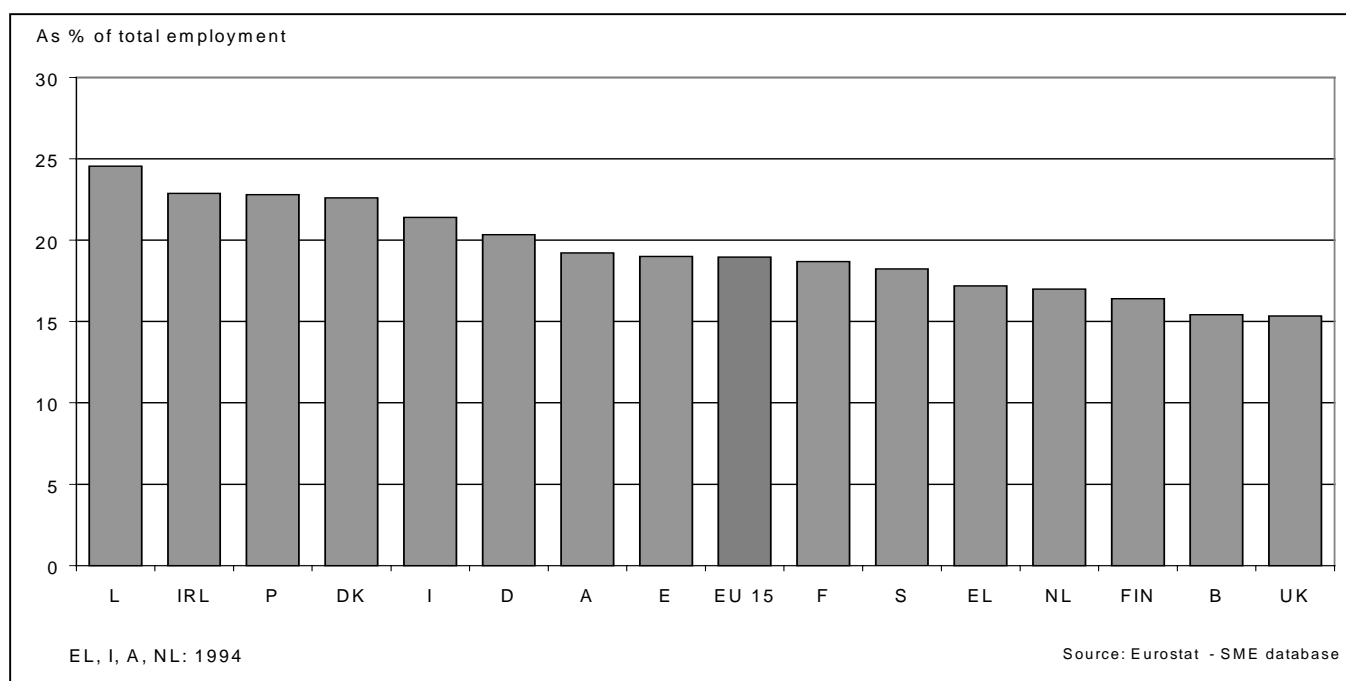
In all the Member States at least 20% of the labour force is employed in small enterprises. The figure is lowest in Germany, Ireland,

Luxembourg and Austria.

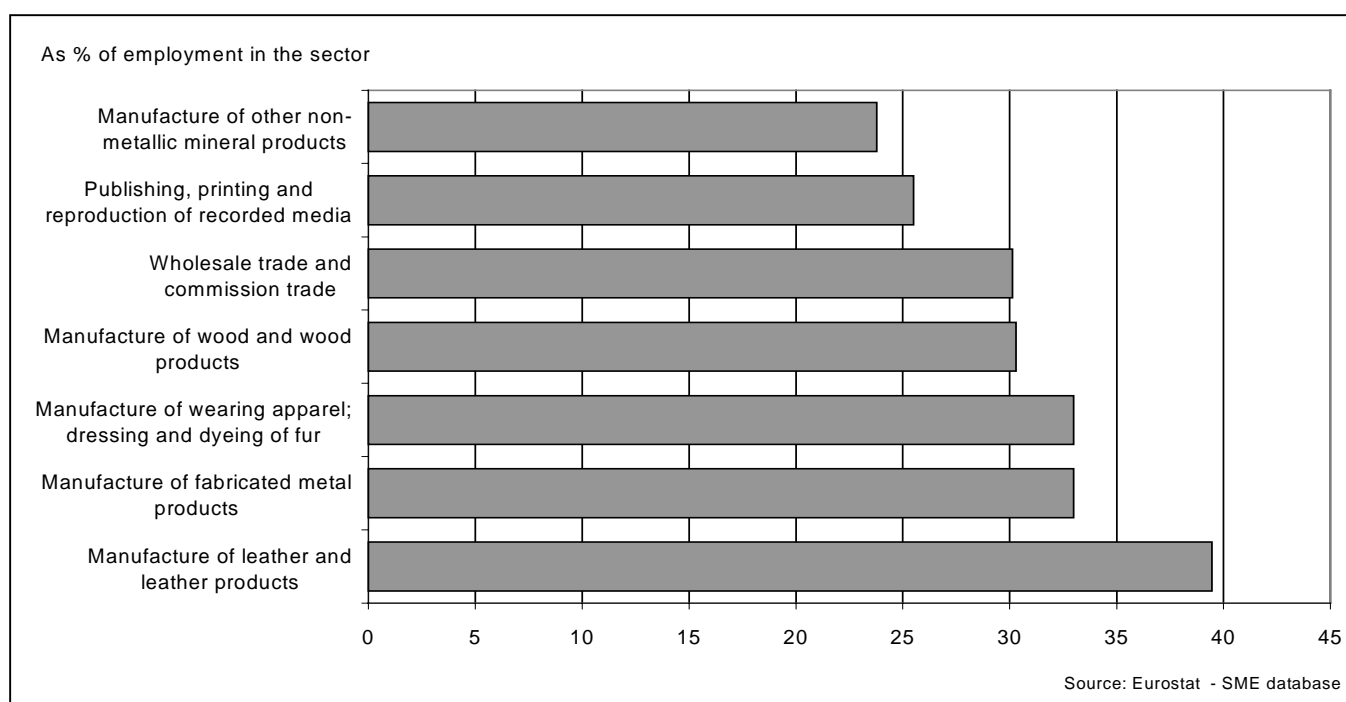
In southern European countries and Belgium the percentage of jobs in very small enterprises is well above the average; in Greece it amounts to 57%. Often they consist of self-employed people carrying out craft

activities in the construction sector or small family businesses in the trade, hotel and restaurant sectors. Finally, small enterprises operate in service sectors such as real estate activities and other service activities (personal services).

## Small units account for between 15% and 25% of jobs in the Member States



Share of total employment in the Member States accounted for by small enterprises (10-49 employees) - 1995



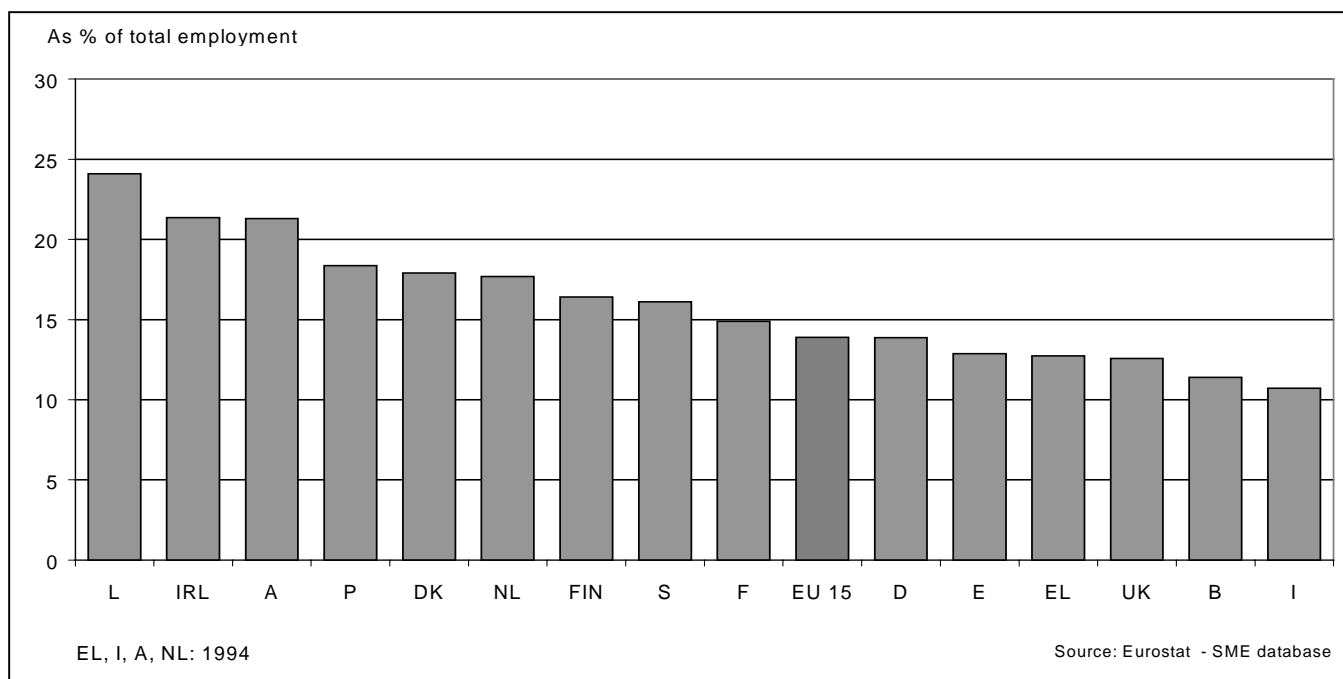
Economic sectors dominated by small enterprises (10-49 employees) – EU-15 - 1994

The proportion of jobs accounted for by enterprises with 10 to 49 employees is comparable in all the Member States and is never more than 6 percentage points away from the average (19%). The average is, therefore, very representative of the situation in the EU.

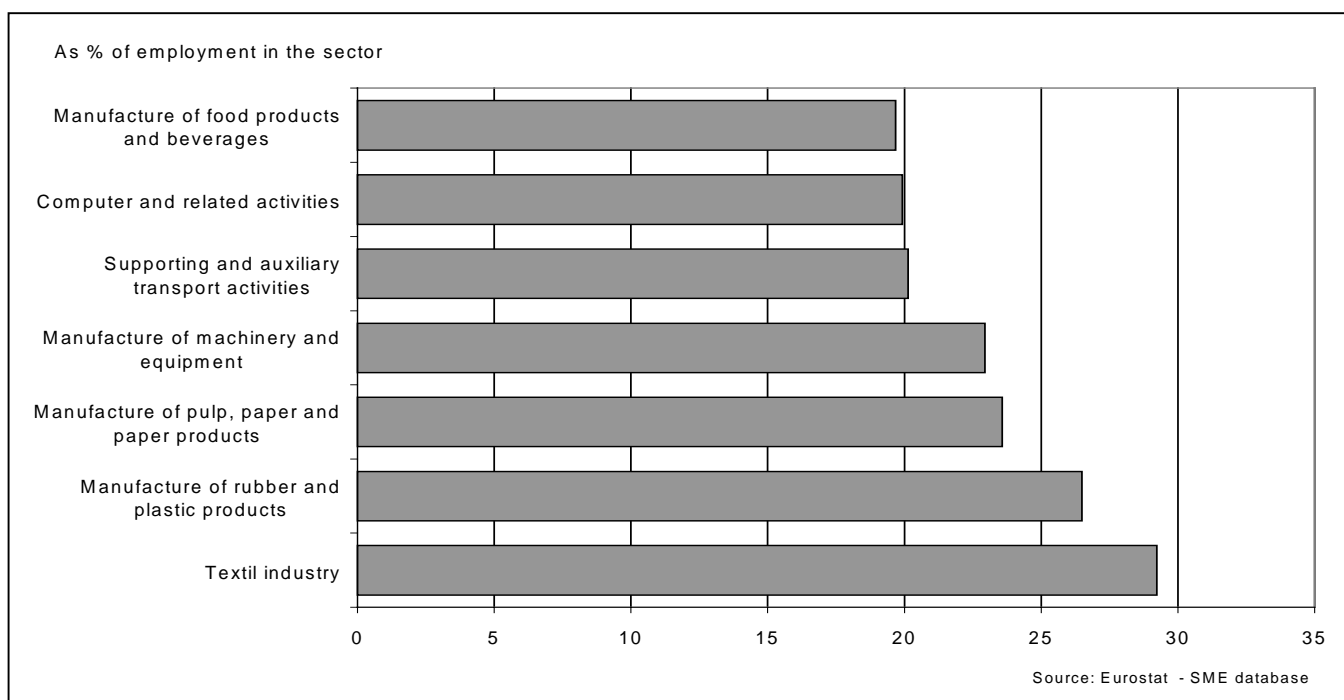
From the point of view of jobs, these enterprises particularly dominate certain sectors of industry such as metal processing, the production of non-metallic products, the manufacture of wood and wood products and the clothing and leather industries.

The wholesale trade, which employs one in three members of the workforce, also contains a high proportion of small enterprises.

## Decisive role of medium-sized enterprises in the smallest countries



Share of total employment in the Member States accounted for by medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees) - 1995



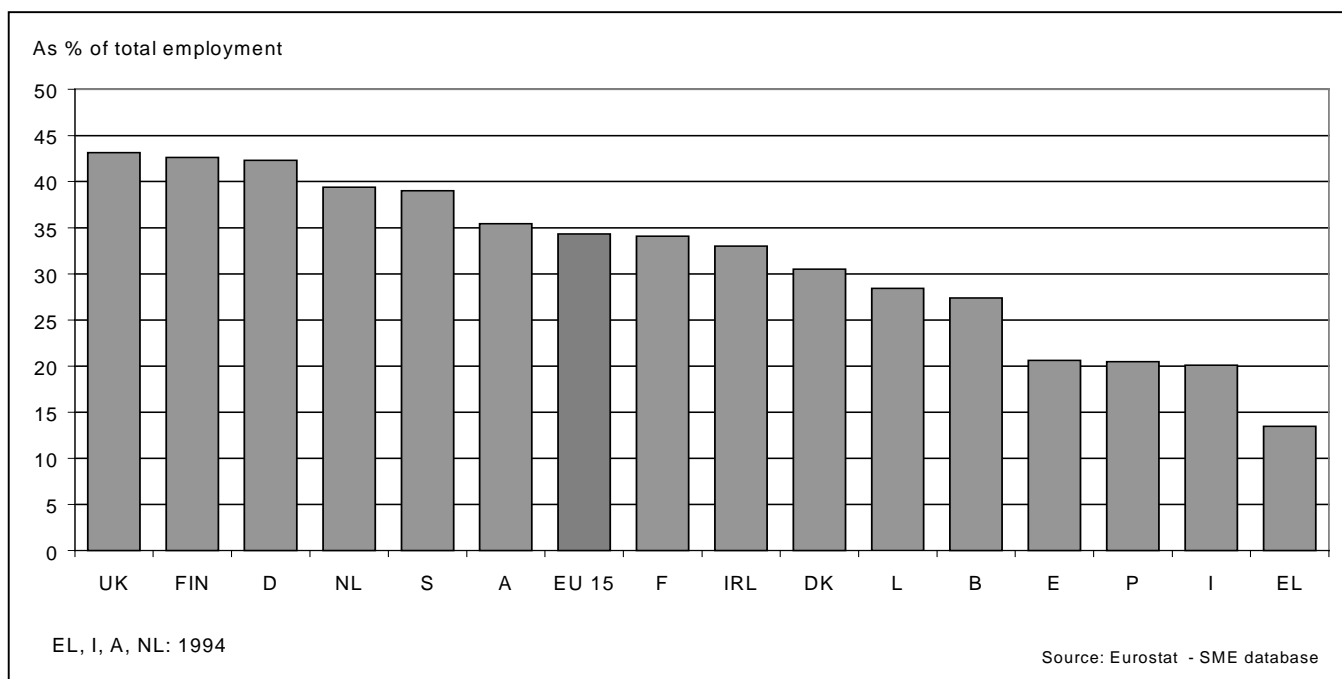
Economic sectors dominated by medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees) - EU-15 - 1994

Medium-sized enterprises are already quite large, with an average of 95 persons employed per unit. In countries such as Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg they employ a higher proportion of the workforce than the Community average.

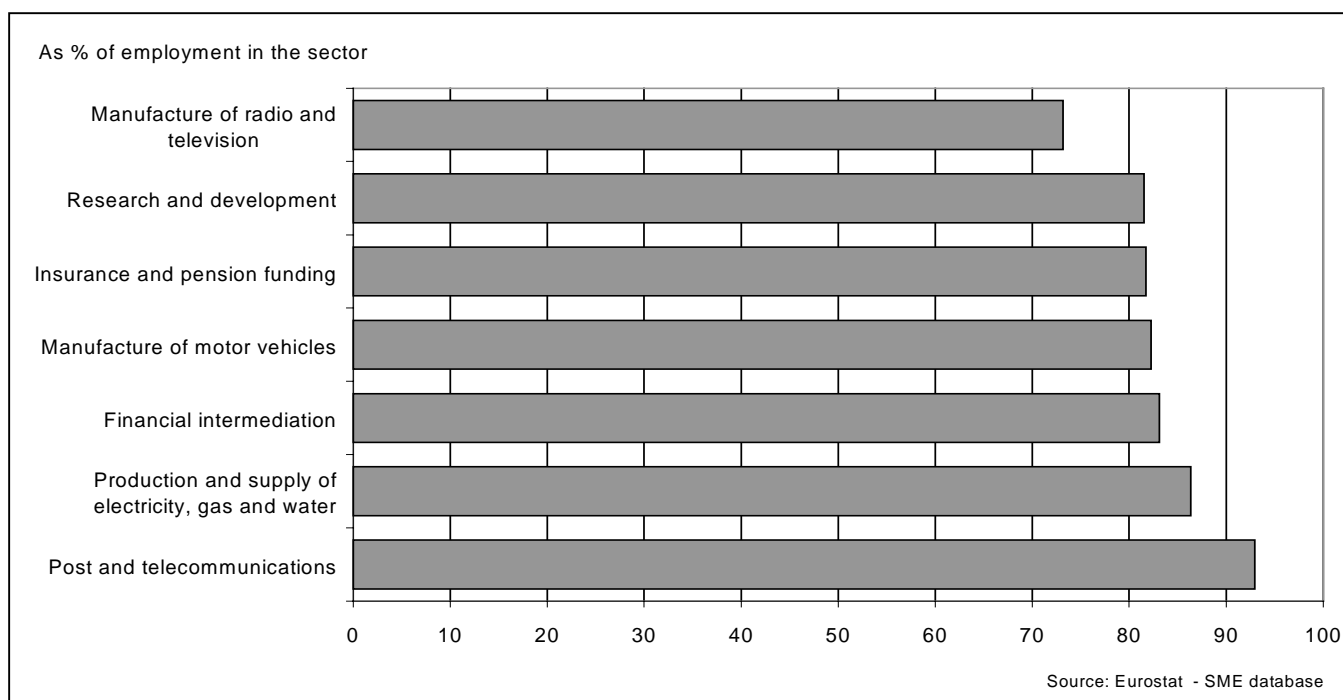
Irrespective of the economic structure of the country concerned, most medium-sized enterprises are engaged in manufacturing - particularly in the textile, rubber and paper industries and in mechanical engineering.

However, in some countries such as Luxembourg and the Netherlands, medium-sized enterprises are also very active in the service sectors such as computing.

## Large enterprises dominate the capital-intensive sectors



Share of total employment in the Member States accounted for by large enterprises (250 employees and over) - 1995



Economic sectors dominated by large enterprises (250 employees and over) - EU-15 - 1994

The "traditional" industries: energy, the motor industry and the production of radio and television equipment, etc, contain a high proportion of large enterprises (which are defined as those with over 249 employees). This is particularly true in Germany where

the proportion of large enterprises in industrial activities is higher than the EU average in almost every case.

Another sector where large units are predominant - and this is true in virtually all the Member States - is post and telecommunications.

Enterprises of 250 and over represent more than 90% of jobs in this sector.

Similarly, 8 out of 10 people employed in the insurance and financial intermediation sector work in a large enterprise.

Finally:

- irrespective of the size class of the enterprise, France is always very close to the EU average;
- the number of small enterprises with 10 to 49 employees is similar throughout all Member States;
- the structure according to size class is the result of both the sectoral specialisation and the business culture of each country: there tend to be very small businesses and hotels in Greece, medium-sized industries and businesses in Denmark, and large industries in Germany.

## ➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

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### **Reference years**

The data presented refers to years 1994-1995. However, since economic structures change quite slowly, these data may be considered relatively representative of the current situation. This is also confirmed by the fact that the change in the number of enterprises is fairly small each year, since the establishment of enterprises tends to be almost totally offset by closures.

### **Database**

Eurostat has estimated the figures for the European Union using the data by country collected for statistics on SMEs. The data cover all the non-agricultural market sectors (all sections of the NACE Rev.1 classification except A, B, L and Q).

### **Total employment**

Total employment corresponds to the number of persons employed. It includes the employees and other employed persons working for the unit in question, including part-time workers and those on leave (of fixed duration) or on strike.

### **Statistical unit**

The enterprise.

### **Size classes**

The size classes, expressed in terms of the number of employees, correspond to the Commission Recommendation concerning the definition of small and medium-sized enterprises (Commission Recommendation No 96/280/EC of 3 April 1996): "0" (no employees; sole proprietorships), "1 to 9" (very small enterprises), "10 to 49" (small enterprises), "50 to 249" (medium-sized enterprises) and 250 and over (large enterprises).

### **Economic activities**

Enterprises are classified according to their main economic activity using the NACE Rev.1 classification. For the choice of the most representative sectors for each size class, two criteria were used: the proportion of total employment accounted for by the size class had to be higher than the average taking all sectors together and the sector had to have at least 500 000 persons employed.

# Further information:

## ➤ Reference publications

Title "Enterprises in Europe – 5<sup>th</sup> Report"  
available at the beginning of 1999  
Catalogue No CA-12-98-174-EN-C Price EUR 44

## ➤ Data bases

New Cronos  
Domain "SME"  
CD Rom "Enterprises in Europe – Database"  
available at the beginning of 1999

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