

# EUROBAROMETER 69

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Spring 2008

## NATIONAL REPORT

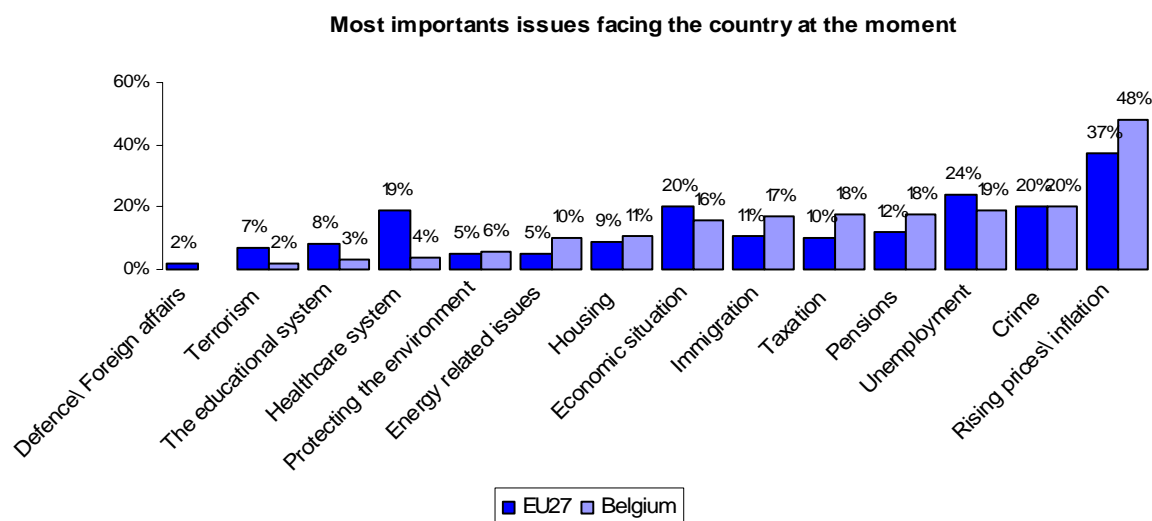
### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Belgium

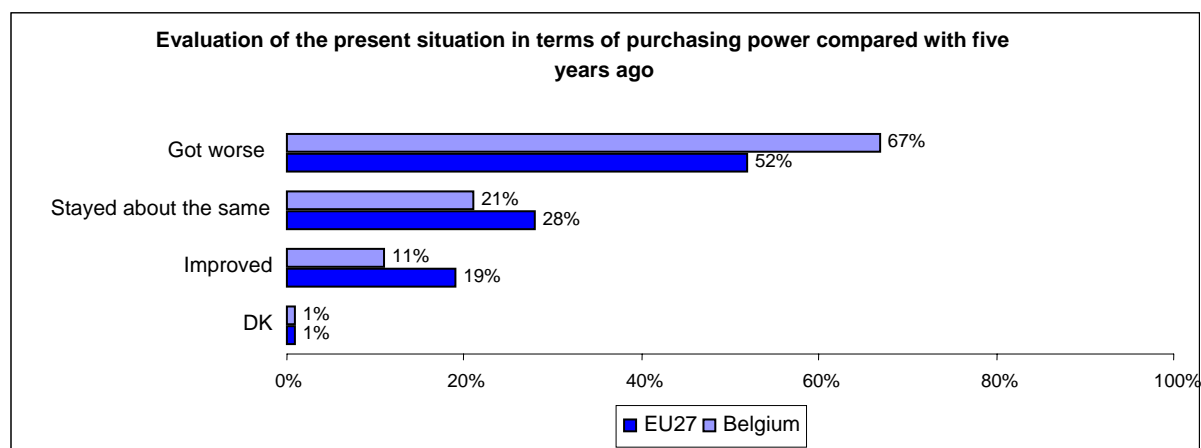
Wave 69 of the Standard Eurobarometer, which was carried out in Belgium between 1 March and 4 May 2008, revealed a number of opinion trends. The main ones, which are related to the economic situation, globalisation, the enlargement process, as well as membership of the European Union, are presented below.

➤ **Rising prices worry Belgians most, rather than unemployment**

In spring 2008, the Belgians are, above all, preoccupied by rising prices, which they identify as the main problem facing Belgium (48%), before crime (20%) and unemployment (19%).



Compared to other European citizens, Belgians appear quicker to point out rising prices (48%, +11points) and to complain about a deterioration in purchasing power (67%, +15 points). On the other hand, they admit they have less difficulties paying their bills at the end of the month (42%, -5 points), even if, compared to last autumn, these difficulties are becoming more frequent (+17 points).

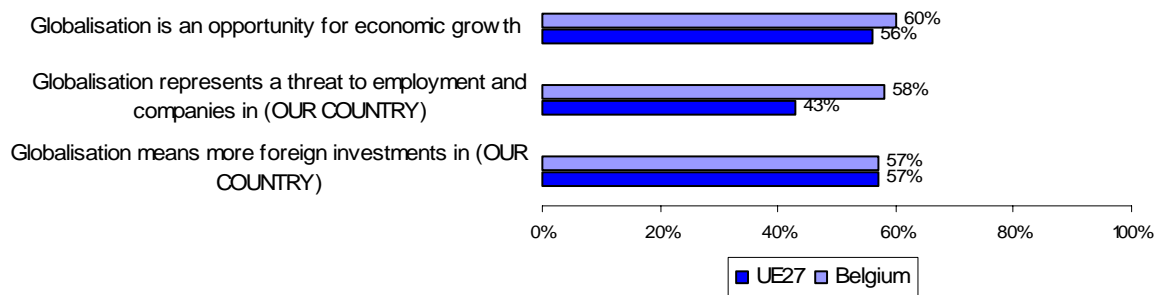


Lastly, their expectations vis-à-vis the economic situation in the coming months are more pessimistic than those of European citizens on average (54%, +8 points). In the same way, in the longer term, they tend more to envisage that the life of those who are children today will be more difficult than for those of their generation (69%, +5 points).

➤ **The European Union perceived as being able to moderate the negative effects of globalisation and to maximize the benefits from it**

The Belgians look at globalisation in an ambivalent way. They associate it foremost with businesses moving to countries where labour is cheaper (48%) and therefore consider it as a threat to their jobs and companies (58%). On the other hand, they recognize that this phenomenon can stimulate economic growth (60%) and encourage investment in Belgium (57%).

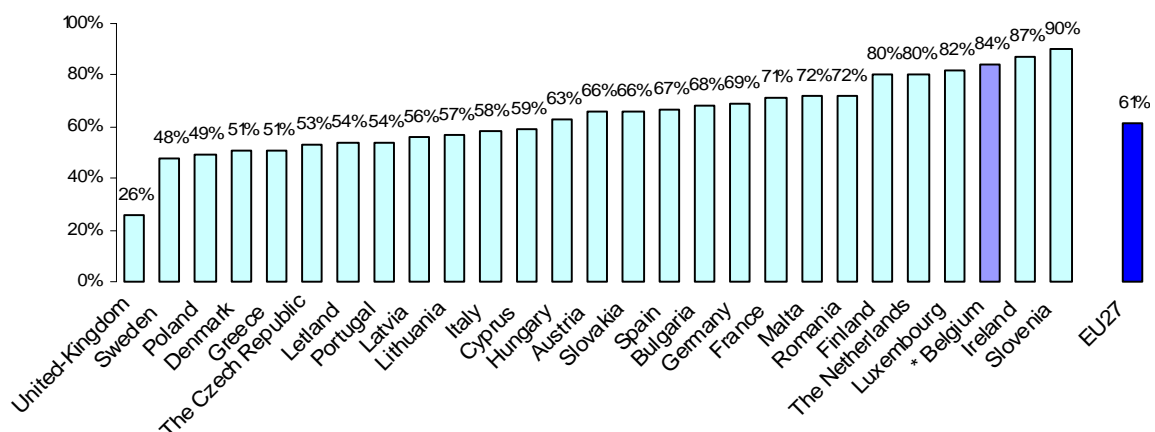
**Opinions on globalisation**



In order to be able to face the challenges set by globalisation, the Belgians stress the need to apply common rules at world level (69%) and turn more and more towards the European Union. In their view, it could protect them from the negative effects of this phenomenon (61%, i.e. +9 points since last autumn) and help them benefit more from its positive effects (61%, i.e. +2 points). Compared with other Europeans, the Belgians are more likely to consider that the European Union has a role to play vis-à-vis globalisation (+17 when it comes to moderating its negative effects and +13 points when it comes to maximizing its positive effects).

Lastly, in a general way, the Belgians feel more comfortable because their country is part of the European monetary union, which guarantees a certain economic stability (66%). It is, therefore not surprising that 84% of them support the euro – a percentage which makes them appear as vigorous supporters of the single currency.

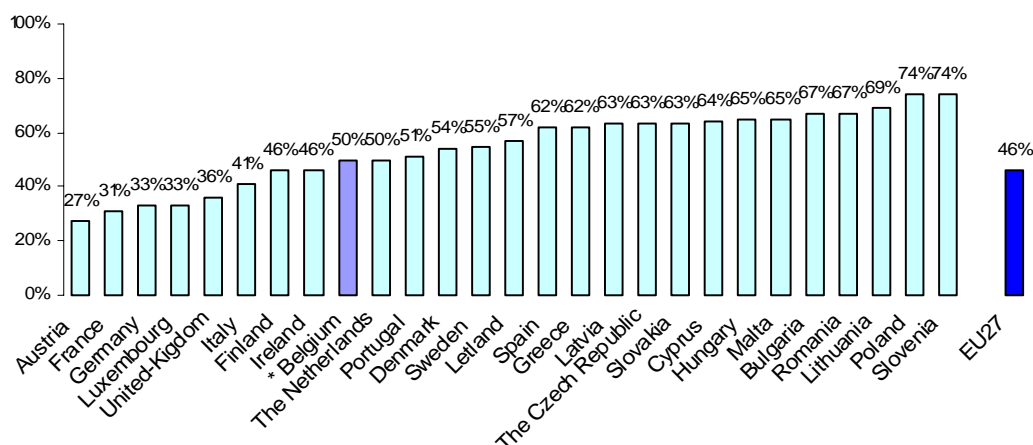
**Support for a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro**



➤ **Support for enlargement as a general idea, but opposition when the accession of the different (potential) candidate countries is envisaged, case by case**

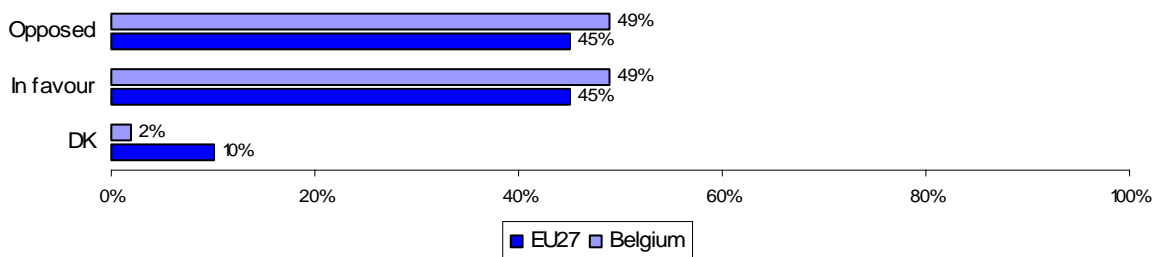
Evoking a new wave of enlargement triggers, in spring 2008, favourable reactions from 50% of the Belgian respondents and unfavourable reactions from 48% of them. These results represent, after a period during which opposition prevailed, a return to the situation of spring 2005, when the percentage of opinions in favour reached 50%. They also make Belgium appear among the Member States where the idea of a new wave of enlargement gets the support of only a small majority.

**Support for further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years**



However, when the accession of the various candidate and potential candidate countries are explicitly referred to, the Belgians show clear reluctance. Thus, they declare that they do not wish that Albania (66%), Turkey (63%), Serbia (62%), Bosnia-Herzegovina (57%), Montenegro (54%) or the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (53%) join the European Union. Only Croatia's entry in the European Union would be welcomed in Belgium (50%). It is noteworthy that, in the hypothesis that Turkey were to comply with all the conditions set by the European Union, 49% of the Belgians would be in favour of its membership, while 49% would be against it.

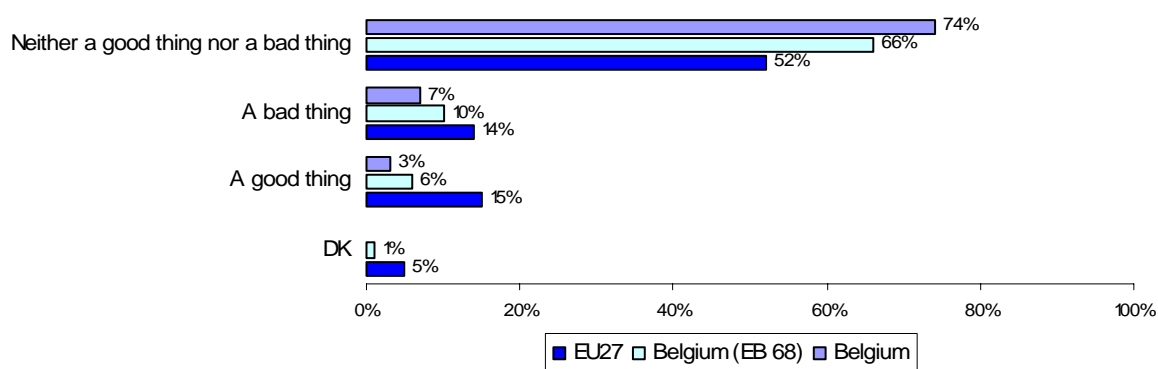
**Opinions about to the accession of Turkey once Turkey complies with all the conditions set by the European Union**



➤ **Satisfaction as to Belgium's membership of the European Union and the feeling of being heard at EU level**

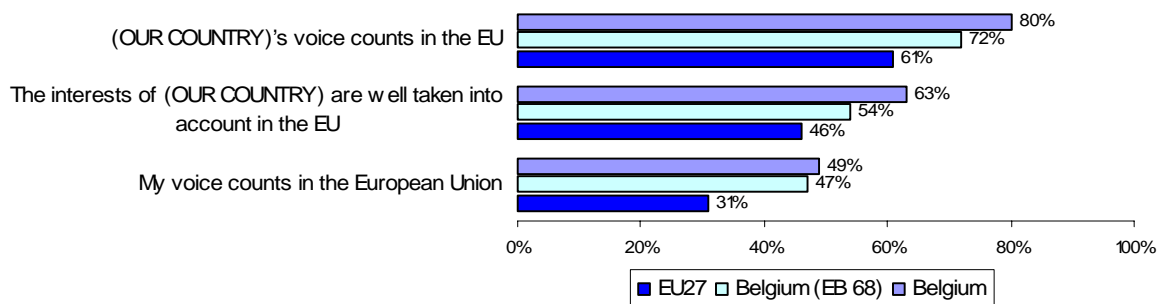
The Belgians think that being part of the European Union is a good thing for their country (74%) and are even more convinced of it than six months previously (+8 points). Taking everything into account, they judge that has Belgium benefited from its membership of the European Union (70%), among other things, when it comes to maintaining peace and to reinforcing security (34%), as well as in terms of economic growth (30%).

**Evaluation of membership of the European Union**



In addition, the Belgians seem to be more satisfied than last Autumn about the place of their country in the European Union: 80% say they think that Belgium's voice counts (+8 points) and 63% that its interests are taken into account (+9 points) at European level.

**Impression of being heard at EU level**



By contrast, as individuals, the Belgians are sceptical about whether their voice is heard in the European Union and by the European institutions, i.e. the European Commission (57%) or the European Parliament (56%). Nevertheless, 58% of Belgians have similar doubts when it comes to their national government.