

# EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Autumn 2008

## NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BELGIUM

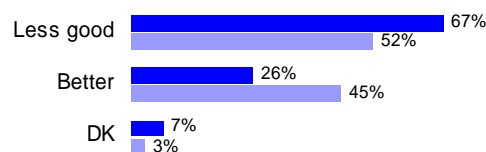
Since it was undertaken between 10 October and 6 November 2008, the Standard Eurobarometer 70 survey could get a sense of Belgian citizens' reactions to the emerging financial and economic crisis:

### **Worsening of the economic situation and decrease of households' purchasing power**

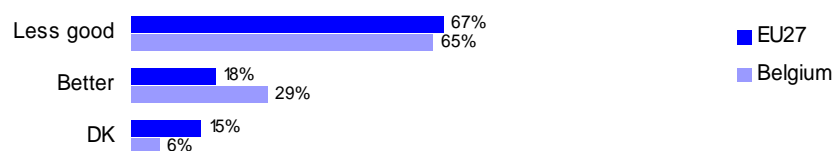
- While they considered that the economic situation in their country was good (65%) one year ago, Belgian citizens now observe that it is bad (72%). According to them, the worsening of the economic situation represents the most important problem their country is facing in Autumn 2008 (45%).
- From a personal point of view, the main issue they think they are facing is inflation (56%), rather than the economic situation (24%). They indeed note that the cost of living in their country is high (69%) and complain about the fact that their household can afford less than it used to five years ago (65%).
- When they compare their situation to that of the average of the European countries, the cost of living (52%), and in particular energy prices (65%), in Belgium appear higher. On the other hand, they recognise that their country's economic situation seems better (54%).

**For each of the following domains, would you say that the situation in (OUR COUNTRY) is better or less good than the average of the European countries?**

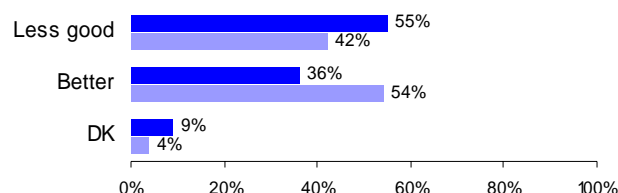
The cost of living in (OUR COUNTRY)



Energy prices in (OUR COUNTRY)



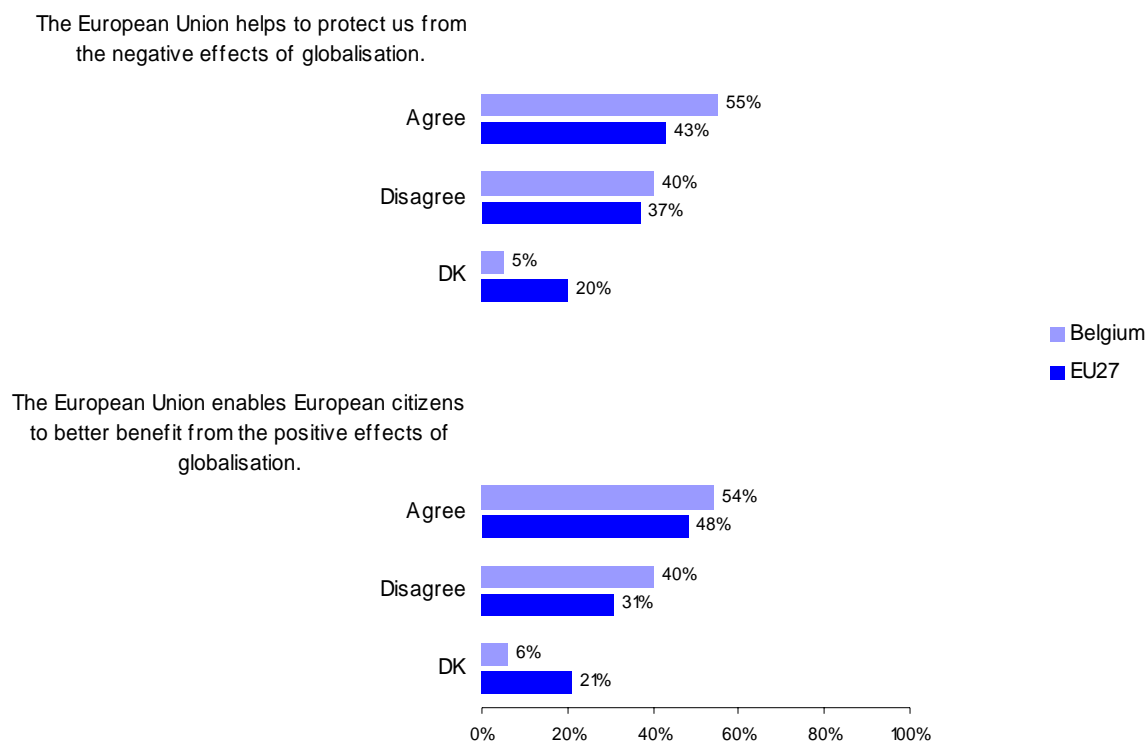
The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy



## Trust in the European Union and in its capacity to protect Belgium from the effects of globalisation and crisis

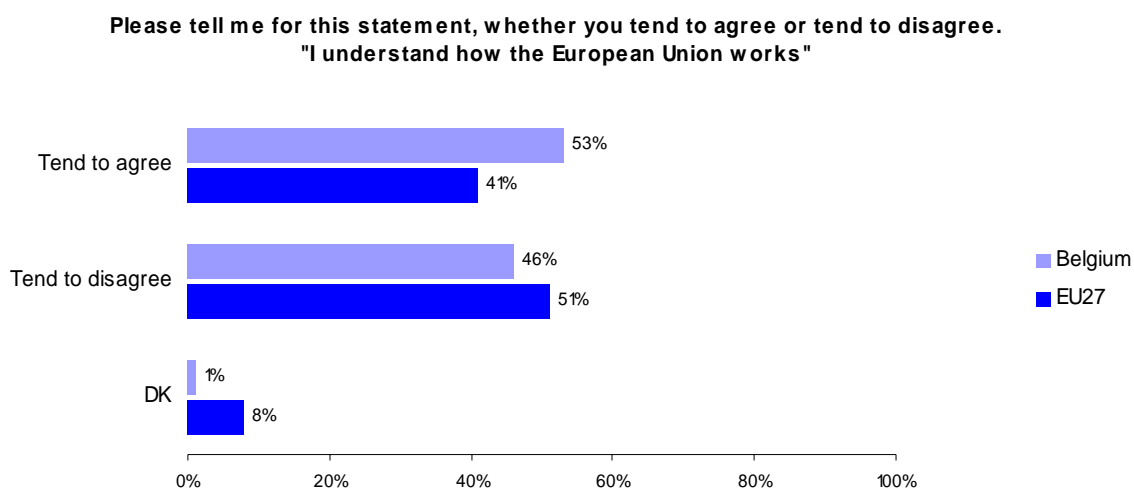
- In Autumn 2008, Belgian citizens show support vis-à-vis the European Union (61%) and its institutions (ranging from 57 to 65%), but distrust their Government (63%). In their mind, the European Union is more appropriate to take decisions related to the two issues which preoccupy them most, i.e. inflation (67%) and economy (63%). Above all, the European Union represents for them the euro (57%) and therefore greater economic stability for their country (62%).
- In a general way, Belgians are pleased with the fact that their country is an EU Member (65%) and recognise that it has benefited in some ways from its membership (68%). In a context influenced by the globalisation of trade, the European Union would, among other things, protect it from the negative effects of this phenomenon (55%) and enable it to use the opportunities that it generates (54%).

### The European Union's role vis-à-vis globalisation



### Good general knowledge of the European Union, but misconceptions regarding its budget

- While 51% of European citizens declare they do not understand how the European Union works, 53% of Belgians formulate the opposite opinion. According to their responses to a knowledge test about, amongst other things, the rotation system of the Council's presidency and the composition of the European Union, they appear to know more about the European Union (63%) than the citizens on average across the European Union (53%).
- Nevertheless, although a majority of Belgians (60%) have already heard about the European Union's budget, only 12% have a detailed knowledge of what it is. In their view, most of the European Union budget is spent on administrative and personnel costs, buildings (33%), as well as on economic growth (33%).<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> For more information on the actual distribution of the European Union budget :  
[http://ec.europa.eu/budget/budget\\_detail/last\\_year\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/budget_detail/last_year_en.htm)

## Rejection of the idea of further enlargement and priority given to energy issues and economic growth

- Following the accession of 12 new Member States in the last four years, Belgians consider that the European Union has been weakened (53%) and say they are opposed to further enlargement in the near future (53%). A shift to a negative attitude has thus taken place as compared to Spring 2008, when 50% of Belgians supported the idea of a new enlargement wave.
- The aspects the European institutions should emphasise in the coming years, above all, are, according to Belgian citizens, energy issues (44%). Furthermore, Belgians say they wish the European Union would dedicate in the future most of its budget to economic growth (46%), employment and social affairs (37%) as well as energy issues (35%).

**Aspects that should be emphasized by the European institutions in the coming years to strengthen the European Union**

