

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Autumn 2007

NATIONAL REPORT

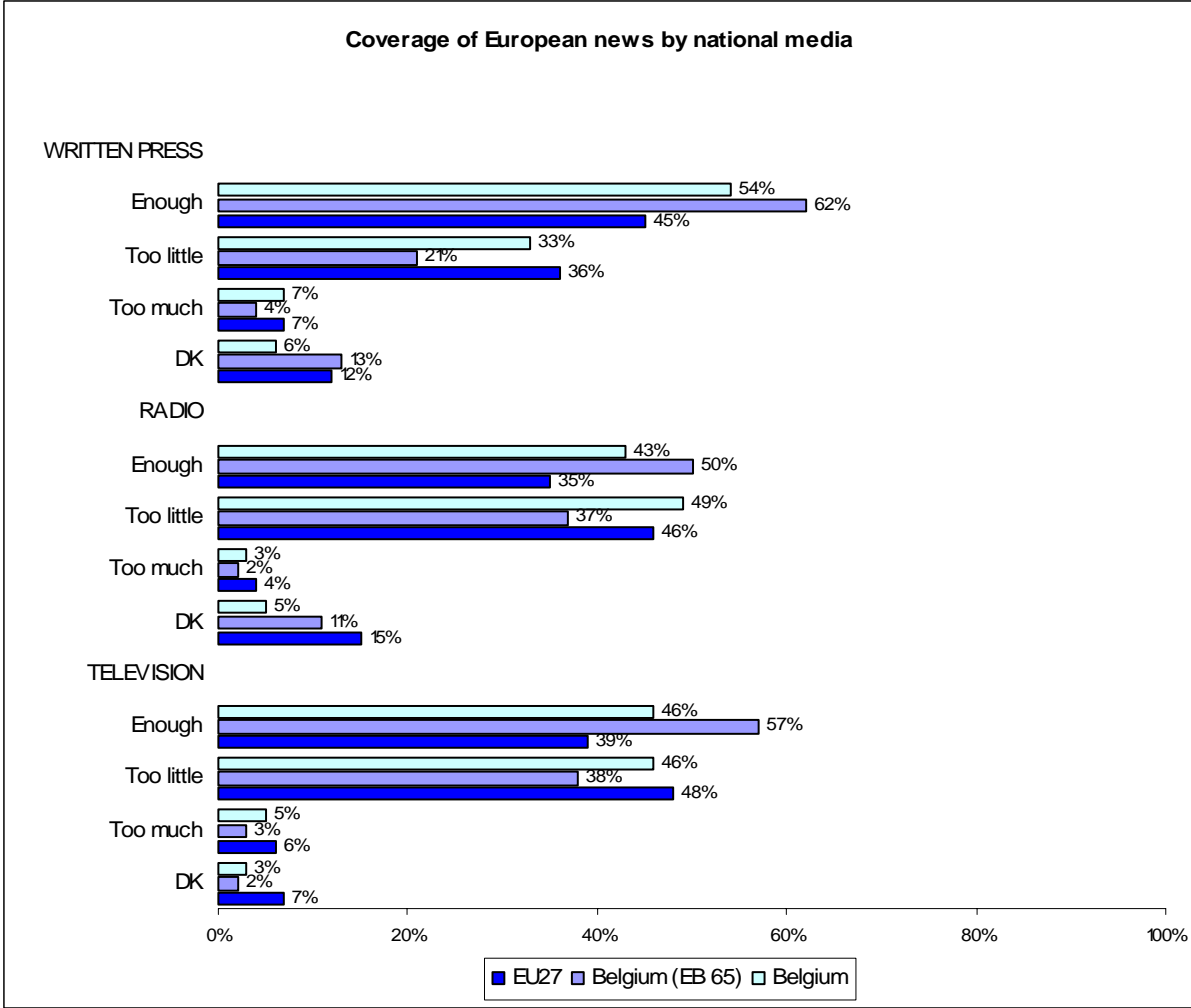
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BELGIUM

Having analysed the results of the Standard Eurobarometer survey in Belgium in Autumn 2007 in the attached report, the following points appear to be noteworthy:

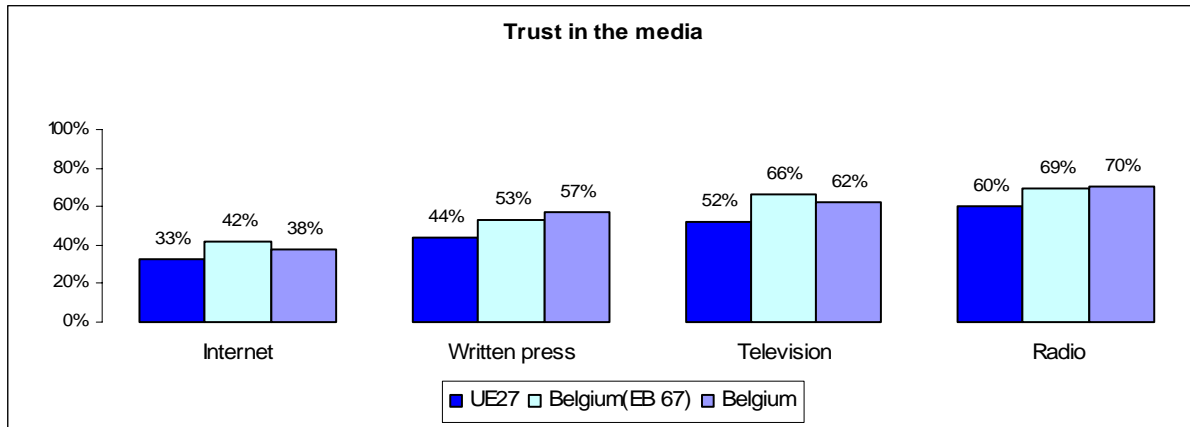
➤ **Coverage of European news by the Belgian media increasingly judged insufficient**

Since spring 2006, the percentage of Belgian respondents who complain about the Belgian media talking too little about the European Union has increased: +5 points in the case of television, +12 points for the radio and +12 points as regards the written press. Even if they are, overall, still satisfied with the coverage given by the written press to European news (54%), they tend to judge that that given by television (46%) and the radio (43%) is not enough. In addition, 72% say they are not well informed about European political affairs. Nevertheless, the percentage of Belgian respondents that consider they are well informed about European political affairs (27%) is higher than the European average (18%) and places Belgium seventh among the Member States having the largest numbers of respondents who think they are well informed.



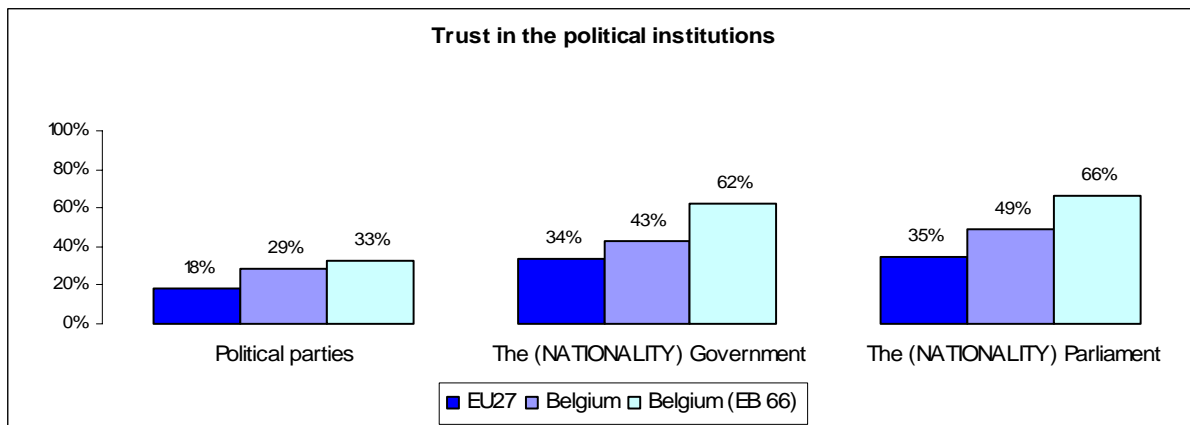
➤ **Trust in traditional media, but not in the Internet**

Generally speaking, the Belgians trust their media (70% for the radio, 62% for television and 57% for the written press) and think that they talk objectively about European news (71% for television, 69% for the written press and 67% for the radio). On the other hand, they tend to distrust the Internet (45%), and more strongly than last summer (+4 points).



➤ **Support for political institutions: stable in the case of European institutions, but regressing as regards Belgian institutions**

The Belgians say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (66%), despite a clear erosion of trust in their political institutions in 2007. The trust index of the Belgian Government indeed experienced a drop of 19 points since autumn 2006 (49%), as did that of the Belgian Parliament with a drop of 17 points (49%) and that of Belgian political parties with a drop of 4 points (29%).



Although they tend to trust the European Union less, in general, than one year ago (65%, -8 points), the Belgians still show above-average support for it (+17 points). Their trust in the European Commission (67%, -1 point) and in the European Parliament (68%, no change) has remained stable

since last summer and is still stronger than the levels of trust of other European citizens (+17 points for the European Commission and +13 points for the European Parliament).

➤ **Renewed optimism vis-à-vis the job situation, but increasing concern about rising prices**

Whereas, in summer 2007, 62% of the Belgians judged that the job situation in Belgium was bad, 52% now consider it is good. Their main concern in autumn 2007 is no longer unemployment (27% citations, i.e. -12 points compared to six months ago), but inflation, which they identify as the most important issue facing Belgium (35% citations, i.e. +15 points).

➤ **General attitude towards Belgium's EU membership is positive, but not so regarding the European Union's role in relation to inflation**

The Belgians are more convinced than other European citizens that their country's membership of the European Union is a good thing (74%, +16 points). Taking everything into account, Belgium would have benefited from being a member state (75%), especially in terms of fighting terrorism (69%), defence and foreign affairs (62%) and economy (53%). Four Belgians out of ten also think that the European Union plays a positive role in health (40%) and education (40%), which are, however, national competences. On the other hand, a relative majority of Belgian citizens think that the European Union plays a negative role in relation to rising prices (45%).

➤ **Optimism as to the future of the European Union**

Belgians say they are optimistic as to the future of the European Union (75%) and tend to think more that, in general, things are going the right way in the European Union (48%) than they did in last year's survey (+11 points).

➤ **Priorities for the European Union: immigration, energy, environment and solidarity with poorer regions**

For more than one Belgian in four, in the coming years, the European institutions should focus on certain areas in order to strengthen the European Union in the future: immigration (38%), environment (35%), energy issues (35%), the fight against crime (30%) and solidarity with poorer regions (22%).