



Standard Eurobarometer

European
Commission



EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Autumn 2008

NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY BELGIUM

Standard Eurobarometer 70 / Autumn 2008 – TNS Opinion & Social

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This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Belgium.
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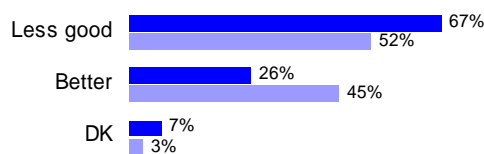
Since it was undertaken between 10 October and 6 November 2008, the Standard Eurobarometer 70 survey could get a sense of Belgian citizens' reactions to the emerging financial and economic crisis:

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

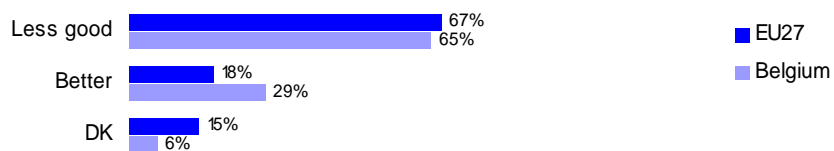
- While they considered that the economic situation in their country was good (65%) one year ago, Belgian citizens now observe that it is bad (72%). According to them, the worsening of the economic situation represents the most important problem their country is facing in Autumn 2008 (45%).
- From a 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 ?

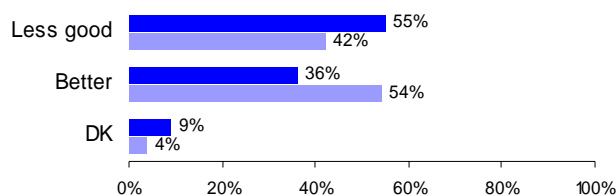
The cost of living in (OUR COUNTRY)



Energy prices in (OUR COUNTRY)



The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy

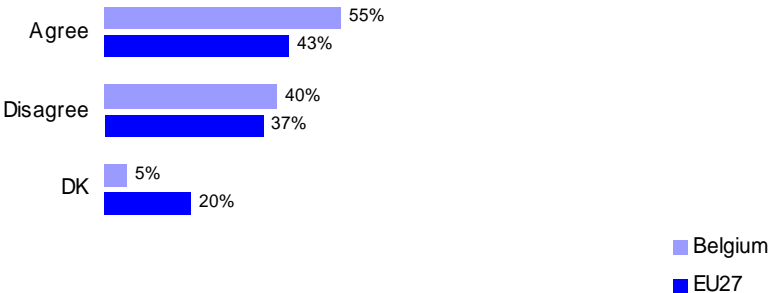


Trust in the European Union and in its capacity to protect Belgium from the effects of globalisation and crisis

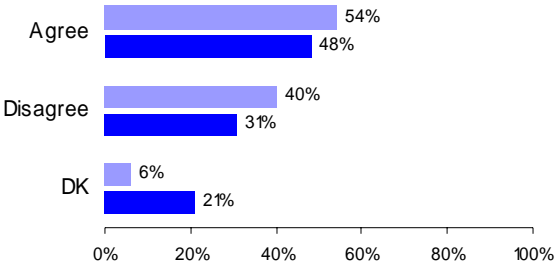
- In Autumn 2008, Belgian citizens show support vis-à-vis the European Union (61%) and its institutions (ranging from 57 to 65%), but distrust their Government (63%). In their mind, the European Union is more appropriate to take decisions related to the two issues which preoccupy them most, i.e. inflation (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

The European Union helps to protect us from the negative effects of globalisation.



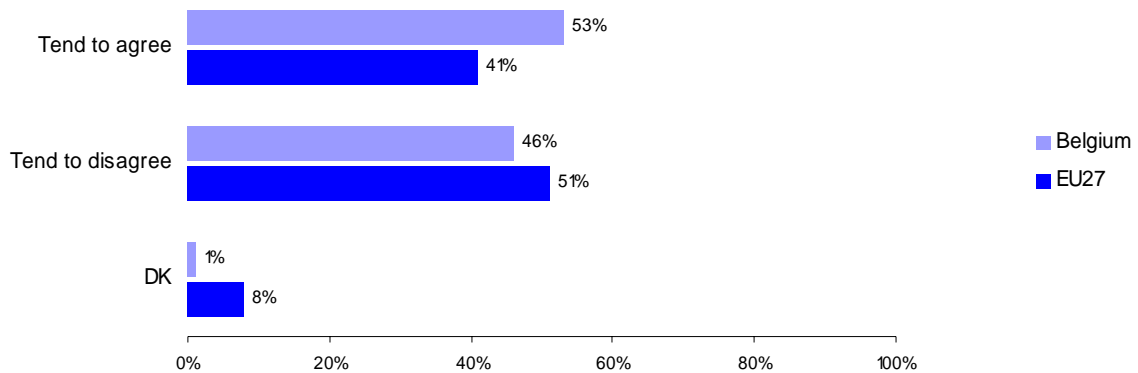
The European Union enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalisation.



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%).¹

Please tell me for this statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree.
"I understand how the European Union works"



¹ For more information on the actual distribution of the European Union budget : 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

