



EU-27 WATCH

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EU-27 Watch

On the Project

The enlarged EU of 27 members is in a process of reshaping its constitutional and political order, of continuing membership talks with candidate countries and taking on new obligations in international politics. This project sheds light on key issues and challenges of European integration. Institutes from all 27 EU member states as well as from Croatia and Turkey participate in this survey. The aim is to give a full comparative picture of debates on European integration and current developments in European politics in each of these countries.

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Chronology of main events

(between July and December 2007)

- 1 July** Portugal takes over the EU-Presidency for the second half of 2007.
- 4 July** 1st EU-Brazil Summit, Lisbon. José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission), José Sócrates (Prime Minister of Portugal and President of the European Council) and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (President of Brazil) launch a Strategic Partnership.
- 10 July** The Ecofin Council approves the adoption of the Euro by Cyprus and Malta for January 1, 2008.
- 14 July** Russian President Vladimir Putin suspends the “Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe“. The decree passed, will be effective 150 days after informing the contractual partners.
- 22 July** Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan’s party AKP (Justice and Development) wins the parliamentary elections by far and maintains a comfortable ruling majority.
- 23 July** Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), Brussels. EU member state representatives meet in Brussels for opening the IGC on a draft reform treaty to amend the existing EU treaties.
- 24 July** Fourth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the EU and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Brussels.
- 1 August** Bulgaria and Romania become full members of Europol.
- 27 August** French President Nicolas Sarkozy holds a speech on foreign policy suggesting that the EU should establish a committee of 10 "wise men" to think about the future of the Union in 2020.
- 28 August** The Turkish parliament elects previous Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as new State President. Gül, candidate of the ruling party AKP, had failed the necessary two-thirds majority in the first two ballots, this time he wins the ballot by simple majority.
- 3 September** European Neighbourhood Policy Conference (“Working Together – Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy”), Brussels. First meeting ever of Ministers and civil society representatives from all of the ENP countries and their counterparts from the European Union.
- 12 September** European Commission releases a public consultation paper in view of the 2008/2009 budget review (“Reforming the Budget, Changing Europe”).
- 14 September** 11th EU-Ukraine summit is held in Kiev. The leaders of the EU and Ukraine (José Sócrates, José Manuel Barroso, Javier Solana and Viktor Yushchenko) reaffirmed strong and sustained ties between the Parties.
- 10 October** The Second Ministerial Troika within the framework of the South Africa-EU Strategic Partnership is held in Tshwane, South Africa.
- 11 October** 12th ECOWAS-EU Ministerial Troika Meeting takes place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- 15 October** An EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and interim agreement is signed in Luxembourg.

18-19 October	Informal Summit/Session of the Intergovernmental Conference, Lisbon. EU's 27 Heads of State and Government agree on a precise text for the reform treaty.
21 October	Parliamentary elections in Poland. Donald Tusk's Party (PO) wins over Jaroslaw Kaczyński's PiS. On November 16 th , Tusk becomes Polish Prime Minister, governing in a coalition of PO and PSL.
26 October	20 th EU-Russia Summit, Mafra (Portugal). Russian President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, José Sócrates (Prime Minister of Portugal and President of the European Council), José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission) and Javier Solana (High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy) discuss mainly energy issues. Putin criticizes European plans to restrict Russian investment in EU energy distribution networks.
5-6 November	9 th Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference, Lisbon. Agreement on the priorities for 2008. Commitment to pursue the Barcelona Declaration objectives.
7 November	Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn announces to initial the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia. The Agreement could be signed at the earliest in January 2008.
8 November	European Commission releases "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007", its annual strategy document on EU enlargement.
15 November	European Parliament resolution on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy.
28 November	10 th EU-China Summit, Beijing. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, José Sócrates (Prime Minister of Portugal and President of the European Council) and José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission) made an overall review of the bilateral relations and welcomed the progress that has been achieved since 1998.
30 November	Russian President Vladimir Putin signs an act of parliament that relieves Russia of all duties regarding the "Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe", effective from December 12. 8 th EU-India Summit held in Delhi. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Muskherjee and Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Kamal Nath on the Indian side and José Sócrates (Prime Minister of Portugal and President of the European Council), José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission), Peter Mandelson (Commissioner for Trade) reaffirmed the Strategic Partnership launched in 2004.
3-15 December	United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia. Negotiations on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol dominate the conference. Central outcome is the so-called Bali roadmap which is a negotiating mandate for a follow-up agreement to Kyoto.
5 December	European Commission releases the communication "A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy".
8-9 December	EU-Africa Summit, Lisbon. Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

- 12 December** Signature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in Strasbourg. The Charter is proclaimed by José Sócrates (Prime Minister of Portugal and President of the European Council), José Manuel Barroso (President of the European Commission) and Hans-Gert Pöttering (President of the European Parliament).
- 13 December** Signing ceremony of the “Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community”, Lisbon. It is intended that the treaty would come into force on January 1, 2009.
- 14 December** European Council, Brussels. Agreement on establishing a “reflection group 2020-2030” to consider Europe’s future. The group will be headed by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzáles. The European Council also expresses the EU's readiness to assist Kosovo in the path towards sustainable stability, including an ESDP mission and a contribution to an international civilian office as part of the international presences. Nevertheless, there is no consensus within the EU on the future status/recognition of an independent Kosovo.
- 21 December** Nicolas Sarkozy (President of the French Republic), Romano Prodi (Prime Minister of Italy) and José Zapatero (Prime Minister of Spain) launch the “Appeal of Rome” calling for a Mediterranean Union.
- 21-22 December** Enlargement of the Schengen area. The following nine countries join the Schengen agreement: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- 1 January** Slovenia takes over the EU-Presidency for the first half of 2008.

1

Future of the EU

- **The Portuguese presidency managed to reach an agreement on the new reform treaty in Lisbon in October 2007. With the signing of the 'Lisbon Treaty' in December 2007, the period of ratification begins. In this regard, what are the reactions in your country in terms of the following?**
 - **the timetable for ratification,**
 - **communication with citizens / the wider public**

- **Please draw a picture of the state of discourse on the preparation of and probable obstacles to ratification in your country's**
 - **Parliament**
 - **Referendum**

- **What are the reactions to the establishment of a 'Committee of the Wise' with regard to the following?**
 - **its agenda/mandate**
 - **its members/personalities**
 - **its expected results**

Future of the EU

Belgium*

A quick ratification expected

Belgium welcomed the new reform treaty ("Lisbon Treaty") and expects a quick ratification process so that it can be implemented in January 2009. Concerning Belgium itself, political elites from the mainstream parties support the treaty and the ratification should not face any problems. Indeed, the main parties were pleased to see the end of the reflection period, although some openly regretted the text was illegible and a lack of political will existed to push the integration forward (Socialist, Green, Christian Democrat parties).¹ An agreement was reached between the federal and regional levels so that the treaty would be ratified by the seven Belgian parliaments before the summer of 2008.²

The media and public opinion were generally positive but also demonstrated a certain degree of criticism. The treaty was perceived as illegible but necessary and important. The reinforced role for the European Parliament, the number of MEPs for Belgium (which will have 22 MEPs in 2009) and the integration of the Charter for fundamental rights were the main positive elements mentioned in the public debate. The treaty should not be considered as the end however, as it is not a very ambitious text.³

Moreover, some groups, social actors and scholars protested against the Lisbon Treaty and its ratification. Indeed, they are not against Europe or the EU but plead for another Europe, based on democratic control and social rights. Some groups such as "Attac Vlaanderen" also contested the treaty because the entire process was kept secret, and was done without any transparency. It noted that 90% of the treaty was taken from the Constitution that was earlier rejected and that the ongoing process of ratification was not

* Groupe d'Etudes Politiques Européennes

¹ See the debates at the House of Representatives on the Lisbon council, 22/11/07, and the debate on the European Council of December, 08/01/08, in doc. 52 0419/001 (chambre); doc. 52 729/001 (chambre).

² Interview with a civil servant from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation.

³ La Libre Belgique, 23/07/07, 20/10/07, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); Trans Europe Express, 12/10/07, available under: [Hhttp://transeurope.express.blogs.lalibre.be](http://transeurope.express.blogs.lalibre.be)/H (last access: 15/07/08).

done in a democratic way. The ratification was compared to a race without any popular consultation.⁴

As far as communication with the citizens is concerned, the media coverage was relatively important but generally did not provide any in-depth analysis. This can be explained by the technicality of European affairs. The government edited brochures, pedagogical fact sheets, updated its web sites on Europe and initiated public debates at the level of the provinces. The quota of debates by provinces was reached.⁵

The major political parties in Belgium support the Lisbon Treaty despite some of its weaknesses in the opinion of some parties (e.g. opt-out for some member states, the lack of social Europe). There are three parties against the treaty: the extreme right "Vlaams Belang", "Front National" and the right-wing populist party "Lijst De Decker". The government hoped the ratification will be quick and believed that the ratification by the seven Belgian parliaments would not be problematic. Indeed, for the government, the most important item was to keep the innovations of the Constitution concerning the decision-making, although it regrets the symbolic elements were removed.⁶

Generally, the public opinion is also in favour of a new treaty as it was in favour of a European Constitution. Willy Helin, Head of Representation of the European Commission in Belgium, declared that he has no doubt about the Europhilia of Belgians; the treaty will be welcomed by the public. The Eurobarometer of 2007 indicated that 82% of the public in Belgium was favorable to the Constitution and the Belgian citizens are for more "Europe" at all levels.⁷ The newspapers noted that nothing is predictable and that it is

⁴ La Libre Belgique: «Le traité de Lisbonne, violation de la démocratie», 13/12/2007, available under: [Hhttp://vl.affac.be](http://vl.affac.be)/H (last access: 15/07/08).

⁵ Interview with a civil servant from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation.

⁶ Interview with a civil servant from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation. See as well the debate at the House of representatives on the European Council of December 2007, 08/01/08, doc. 52 729/001(chambre); La Libre Belgique, 21/11/07, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

⁷ See Le vif express, 13/12/2007, available under: [Hwww.levif.be](http://www.levif.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); Standard Eurobarometer 67, April-May 2007.

possible that some countries would face problems with the ratification process.

Was the government allowed to sign?

It is interesting to note that the success of the Belgian ratification process was never really put into question, whether officially or in the newspapers.⁸ However, this attitude was not self evident at first. Indeed, because of the political crisis in Belgium and the difficulties to form a government after the elections of June 2007, the government was resigning and could only deal with “current affairs”. Its capacity to sign the Lisbon Treaty was not assured and the image of Belgium in Europe suffered during that time.⁹ The legitimacy of the provisional and resigning government was frequently put into question by some political groups and scholars. The signing and ratifying procedure was considered as undemocratic. The government argued that it could sign the treaty because there was a precedent with Maastricht but also because the signature of the treaty was only the last step of a process that started before the elections. But generally, these legal arguments were seen as rather weak and did not convince the above-mentioned groups.¹⁰ Moreover, groups of citizens emerged to ask for a referendum or some form of popular consultation.¹¹ They considered that the absence of a referendum would only increase the democratic deficit.¹² But it should be said that the Belgian Constitution does not provide any basis for a referendum allowing citizens to participate in political decision-making in

general and in the process of ratification of international treaties in particular.¹³

To conclude, it can be said that the government was able to sign the Lisbon Treaty and that despite the emergence of some dissenting voices, the ratification of the treaty should be completed by the summer 2008 in Belgium.

The wise shall concentrate on future challenges and not on institutional reforms

As far as the mandate and the agenda are concerned, an analysis of the Belgian position and the media demonstrates that it is important that the Committee focuses on the future of the European socio-economic model, on sustainable development, on energy and climate change, on migration and on the fight against transnational crime. The group should thus give attention to the future challenges faced by the EU. It should work within a clear framework and not be able to make institutional proposals. The Belgian government would like to prevent the Committee, to give the impression of a sort of re-opening of the institutional discussions. Finally, it is essential that it could not interfere with the work of the EU or with the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty.¹⁴

Concerning the composition of the Committee of the Wise, Belgium expects the group to reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of the EU while remaining small in size.¹⁵

But, in the context of national political crisis, this issue was not of utmost importance in the Belgian debate: the main element is that if such a group is established, it should not focus exclusively on the question of external borders of the European Union or interfere with the ratification process.

⁸ La Libre Belgique, 23/07/07, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

⁹ La Libre Belgique, 03/12/2007, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

¹⁰ See the debate at the House of Representatives on the European Council of December 2007, 08/01/08, doc. 52 729/001 (chambre); Oral question from Karim Van Overmeire on the signature by Belgium of the reform Treaty on the European Union, 29/11/07, n°4-32, available under: [Hwww.senate.be](http://www.senate.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); Carine Dautrelepont: Le Traité de Maastricht n'est pas un précédent pertinent pour signer le future Traité européen, in: Le Soir, 22/11/07, Carine Dautrelepont/Pascale Lefèvre: La Belgique empêchera-t-elle la conclusion du nouveau traité européen?, in: Le soir, 31/10/07; Le Soir: Le traité de Lisbonne, violation de la démocratie, 13/12/07, all article available under: [Hwww.lesoir.be](http://www.lesoir.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); La Libre Belgique, 08/11/07, 03/12/07, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

¹¹ See the websites of “Democratie.nu”, [Hwww.democratie.nu](http://www.democratie.nu)H (last access: 15/07/08); “AttacVlaanderen”, [Hwww.vl.attac.be](http://www.vl.attac.be)H (last access: 15/07/08), “Attac WallonieBruxelles”, [Hwww.attac.be](http://www.attac.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

¹² Le Soir: Le traité de Lisbonne, violation de la démocratie, 13/12/07, available under: [Hwww.lesoir.be](http://www.lesoir.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

¹³ Article 33, 153 and 167 of the Belgian Constitution.

¹⁴ Interview with a civil servant from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation; Het Laatste Nieuws, 13/12/07, available under: [Hwww.hln.be](http://www.hln.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); De Morgen, 14/12/07, available under: [Hwww.demorgen.be](http://www.demorgen.be)H (last access: 15/07/08); Debate at the House of Representatives concerning the European Council of December 2007, 8/01/08, doc. 52 729/001 (chambre).

¹⁵ Interview with a civil servant from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation.

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Western Balkan - Enlargement

In November 2007, the Commission published its annual strategy document on EU enlargement summarising the progress of the candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and the potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo – under UN Security Council Resolution 1244).

- **What are the reactions in your country, which points are considered the most important, and what are the implications for the future of EU enlargement?**
- **Which positions does your country have on the status of Kosovo and the future of EU-Serbia relations? Are there any special interests or concerns?**

Western Balkan - Enlargement

Belgium*

Governmental crisis restricts Belgian foreign policy

Belgian foreign policy concerning both the EU enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy has been largely influenced by internal political factors. As a result of the long-lasting coalition formation of the federal government and the linguistic political crisis, the federal government was not allowed to take any binding action or position except for emergency cases. Few official positions or discourses were therefore devoted to this topic during the second semester of 2007.

Widening if deepening

Nonetheless, Belgium reaffirmed the importance of enlarging the EU, but in the mean time stresses the need of a political project for Europe and of fundamental core values. The federal government formed on December 21st 2007 states in its coalition agreement document¹⁶ that the Belgian government is open to a new enlargement of the EU under certain conditions, among which the respect of the accession criteria for the new members and the certainty that the enlargement will not constitute an obstacle to a deepened integration of Europe. Except for Turkey, the quality of the candidate countries has not really been debated in the Belgian political arena.

Belgium officially supports the Turkish candidacy in the EU. The main arguments frequently concern themselves with the presence of a peaceful Turkish community that contributes to the Belgian prosperity and a successful integration, as several political elites in different parliaments and parties have a Turkish origin. Nonetheless, several political forces express their opposition to the candidacy of Turkey. For example, the representatives of the Flemish extreme-right party ("Vlaams Belang") in the federal government asked the federal government to

reject the Turkish candidacy¹⁷ on 7 November 2007 or denounce the military occupation of North-Cyprus by Turkey.¹⁸ The Republic of Moldova also hopes to join the EU in mid-term, among others through the European Neighbourhood Policy. However, the Transnistrian conflict within this country is considered as an obstacle to the integration process.¹⁹

Kosovo: effects of recognition debated

Concerning the Balkans, Belgium almost did not discuss the stabilisation and association agreement between the EU and the Republic of Montenegro. This agreement has already been voted by the federal Senate and will be presented to the House of Representatives in 2008²⁰ and should not be heavily debated. However, the case of Kosovo was often discussed and covered in the media during the second semester of 2007. Not only does Belgium provide support with 195 troops inside the KFOR peace-keeping force of NATO and is in favour of being part of the police crisis management force under the responsibility of the EU in 2008, but the independence of Kosovo created some social (some demonstrations were observed in Brussels' streets) and political unrest. The question of the official recognition of Kosovo was solved by the decision of the federal government to align behind the EU position regarding this issue. Nevertheless, the political arena is aware²¹ that this independence may affect other neighbouring regions, specifically Russia and the Caucasian region.

* **Groupe d'Etudes Politiques Européennes**

¹⁶ Coalition agreement concluded between negotiators of the Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams (CD&V), Movement Réformateur (MR), Parti Socialiste (PS), Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Open Vld) and centre démocratie humaniste (cdH), 23/12/2007, p. 42.

¹⁷ House of Representatives: Resolution Proposal related to the candidacy of Turkey for EU accession, doc. 52 0286/001 (chambre).

¹⁸ House of Representatives: Resolution Proposal related to the military occupation of Cyprus, member of the EU, by Turkey, doc. 52 0787/001 (chambre).

¹⁹ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Policy note on the bilateral relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

²⁰ House of Representatives: Law Project, doc. 52 1064/001 (chambre).

²¹ CharlesTannock: Kosovo indépendant, un précédent, in: La Libre Belgique, 08/10/2007, available under: [Hwww.lalibre.be](http://www.lalibre.be)H (last access: 15/07/08).

3

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Russia

- **Please outline the positions in your country with regard to the following aspects of ENP:**
 - **Key regions/countries for ENP**
 - **The new “enhanced agreement” with Ukraine**
 - **The beginning of negotiations on a new partnership agreement with Russia**
 - **The Nordic dimension of ENP and Baltic cooperation**
 - **Black Sea Synergy / Black Sea Cooperation**
 - **The potential impact of Sarkozy’s project “Mediterranean Union” on ENP**
 - **The biggest challenges from ENP regions – East and South (immigration, security, energy, etc.)**
 - **The probable impact of new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty on external relations and ENP**

European Neighbourhood Policy and Russia

Belgium*

Belgium focuses on Russia and its neighbours

The coalition agreement document²² of the newly formed Belgian government stipulates that Belgium aims at developing a complete and coherent European foreign policy, including a security and development policy but does not include references to the Neighbourhood Policy of the EU. This demonstrates the lack of interests for these questions among the Belgian political elites. As far as the media and public opinion are concerned, their discourses almost uniquely repeat the EU position on these neighbouring issues, and do not consider the Belgian position as inherently different from the European one.

Nonetheless, there is in Belgium a strong will to start negotiations for a partnership agreement with Russia. This agreement has been slowed down by the Polish and then by the Lithuanian problems.²³ The part of this agreement concerning energy is important and a strategic energy dialogue is necessary and can be beneficial for all parties. The relations between Belgium and Russia are said to be excellent²⁴ and important. As a proof of this importance, the federal advice committee in charge of European affairs and composed of delegation of members of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the European Parliament made a report on the relations between the EU and the Russian Federation.²⁵ Simply put, the relations between Belgium and Russia have to be understood in a larger framework as they are part of the more global relationship between EU and Russia. Belgium also seeks to reinforce its bilateral relations with Russia's neighbour, the Ukraine. The ultimate goal of this policy is to progressively integrate this country inside EU and NATO institutions.

Concerning the Black Sea region, the position of Belgium is quite different, especially as far as energy issues are concerned, but Russia still remains the primary partner. Belgium supports positive initiatives towards the countries of this region – especially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan – but this policy is just the continuation of a policy of dialogue. The Caucasian region is also relatively important for Belgium, not only because of the energy issue (the oil and gas pipelines) but also because Belgium is one of the primary commercial partners of Armenia.

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²² Coalition agreement concluded between negotiators of the CD&V, MR, PS, Open Vld and cdH, 23/12/2007, p. 42.

²³ Interview with a diplomat from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development cooperation.

²⁴ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Policy note on the bilateral relations with Russia, Ukraine and the countries of South Caucasus and Central Asia.

²⁵ House of Representatives: Report on the relations between European Union and the Russian Federation, doc. 52 0965/001 (chambre), doc. 4-0520/1 (senate).

4

Budget review

In September 2007, the Commission started the 2008/2009 budget review by publishing a public consultation paper on 'Reforming the budget, changing Europe'.

- **How is this review of the budget perceived in your country (involvement of civil society, media impact, etc.)?**
- **What are the main topics in the debate?**
- **What are the positions in your country on the following issues?**
 - **EU spending (Future policy priorities, Co-financing of Common Agricultural Policy, etc.)**
 - **EU resources (British rebate and generalisation of a correction mechanism, Proposal for EU tax, etc.)**

Budget review

Belgium*

The EU budget - a topic of low salience

This issue is not relevant for this reporting period as the EU budget practically never made it to the public or political agendas in Belgium. The only impacts of the EU budget that have been discussed concern the allocation and use of the Regional and Structural Funds and the budgetary consequence of the EU presence in Brussels (building and security costs, mainly during summits).

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5

Current issues and discourses in your country

- **Which other topics and discourses are highly salient in your country but not covered by this questionnaire?**

Current issues

Belgium*

Governmental crisis paralyses Belgium

In Belgium the second half of 2007 has been overwhelmed by the political crisis derived from the difficult formation of a new federal government. Not only did the media and the different political actors focus broadly on these linguistic and state reform issues instead of discussing about EU-related topics, but also this 'transitional' federal government did have a specific status. This status implies that only emergency or basic state management issues can be dealt with and that every political decision – for example the drafting of the federal budget for 2008 – should be postponed until the nomination of the new cabinet. These elements explain the lack of attention devoted to EU-related issues during the end of 2007. One has to stress the fact that, in the newly formed federal cabinet, a state secretary (junior minister) in charge of the preparation of the EU-presidency was appointed: Olivier Chastel, a French-speaking liberal. Belgium will be responsible for the EU-presidency during the second half of 2010.

* Groupe d'Etudes Politiques Européennes



Presentation of EU-CONSENT

WIDER EUROPE, DEEPER INTEGRATION?

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EU-CONSENT is a network of excellence for joint research and teaching which stretches across Europe.

EU-CONSENT explicitly addresses questions related to the **mutually reinforcing effects of EU deepening and widening** by analysing the integration process to date and developing visions and scenarios for the future of the European Union. The thematic focal points of the network are organised in five thematic “Work Packages”:

1. **Theories and Sets of Expectations** (responsible: B. Laffan/W. Wessels)
2. **Institutions and Political Actors** (responsible: E. Best)
3. **Democracy, Legitimacy and Identities** (responsible: M. Karasinska-Fendler)
4. **Economic and Social Policies for an Expanding Europe** (responsible: I. Begg)
5. **Political and Security Aspects of the EU’s External Relations** (responsible: G. Bonvicini)

The network involves 52 institutional partners, including 27 universities, approximately 200 researchers and 80 young researchers from 22 EU member states and three candidate countries. The project started working in June 2005 and is scheduled until May 2009.

The results of the network’s activities will be incorporated in the following **special EU-CONSENT products**:

- **EU-27 Watch**, an analysis of national debates on EU matters in all 27 member states as well as two candidate countries (responsible: B. Lippert).
- **WEB-CONSENT**, the project’s website at www.eu-consent.net, containing all relevant information and announcements (responsible: M. Cricorian).
- **EDEIOS Online School**, presenting a core curriculum of conventional and virtual study units on EU deepening and widening (responsible: A. Faber).
- **a PhD Centre of Excellence**, consisting of integrating activities for young researchers such as six summer/winter PhD schools (responsible: A. Agh).
- **an E-Library**, containing resources and papers available online as well as literature lists for all thematic focal points of the project (responsible: A. Faber/M. Cricorian).

