



March 19, 2003

**NATIONAL BANK OF BELGIUM****Press release: consumer survey March 2003****CONFIRMATION OF DETERIORATION IN CONSUMER CONFIDENCE**

In March consumer confidence continued the decline that had begun a year ago. Since the end of last year, the rate of deterioration has actually accelerated, with the overall indicator dropping back to the level recorded in November 2001. The persistent international uncertainty is weighing increasingly heavily on the confidence of households. As was already the case in February, all components of the indicator have deteriorated. For the fourth consecutive

month, households were clearly pessimistic about the Belgian economic context and the outlook for the labour market. After remaining relatively stable throughout 2002, the prospects for the financial situation of households over the next year have worsened for the second month in a row. Moreover consumers are taking a more pessimistic view of their future saving ability.

**Indicators of consumer confidence**

		Forecasts economic situation in Belgium over the next twelve months	Forecasts unemployment in Belgium over the next twelve months*	Forecasts financial situation of households over the next twelve months	Forecasts saving capacity of households over the next twelve months	Consumer confidence indicator
2002	March	6	23	7	18	2
	April	2	22	7	12	0
	May	5	22	6	16	1
	June	5	24	6	12	0
	July	0	32	7	19	-1
	August	-5	27	5	13	-3
	September	-4	27	5	12	-3
	October	-2	27	5	13	-3
	November	-1	29	4	11	-4
	December	-8	38	4	10	-8
2003	January	-16	40	4	16	-9
	February	-19	45	1	12	-13
	March	-28	50	-1	6	-18

Source: NBB

\*For the question in regarding the unemployment forecast, an increase in the balance indicates an adverse movement and a fall in the balance indicates a favourable movement.