

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **My brand, my government? Brandhome decided to find out**

**Brandhome reveals the government's true image with the results of its 'My Brand, My Government?' study. In it the Antwerp marketing agency investigates the image of the different levels of government and their civil service staff. The study was performed for the annual conference of 'Kortom' (the association for government communication), on the theme 'Brand, Image and Identity', due to be held on Monday 7 May. Brandhome's Strategic Director, Erik Saelens, will introduce it.**

Brandhome's Erik Saelens: 'The study consisted of three elements. We began by determining the ideal and real image of the relevant government and how its identity relates to the acceptance of its policies. We then compared governments with brands, and concluded by examining the image of civil servants as the government's public face.'

A total of 2,245 respondents were surveyed online and via street interviews. You'll find the most striking conclusions – the 'true image of government' – below.

It was evident from the responses that the image of the various governments is by no means aligned with their ideal identity. The image is more negative, possibly due to politicians' failings on the one hand and the immense complexity of the Belgian system on the other. There is a notable difference between the different levels of government: the closer the authority is to the citizen, the more positive its image. Acceptance of policy follows the same trend: the more positive the image, the greater the degree of acceptance. 'We can conclude from this that budgets don't play a crucial role,' Saelens says. 'The Belgian Federal and Flemish governments might enjoy more exposure and have greater financial resources, but local authorities have a more positive image.' When asked whether they trust the Federal Government, only 19% of respondents answered positively. The corresponding figure for the local authority was twice as high at 42%.

If governments are compared with brands, civil servants and citizens come up with different associations. In terms of supermarkets, for instance, citizens equated the Federal Government more with the discounter Colruyt, while civil servants related it more to Carrefour. Local authorities, meanwhile, were more likely to be linked to local brands. A city council like Leuven's, say, was mainly compared to a brand like Leuven-based Stella Artois.

A government is a highly complex, dynamic system influenced by a great many factors and agents. 'Many of those, however, are virtually impossible for it to control,' Saelens explains. 'Civil servants are more or less the only exception, so it makes sense for governments to invest in them through training and internships. Above all because the research shows that the current image of civil servants is still clichéd and negative.'

'Governments still have work to do, therefore, if they want to change their image and strengthen themselves as a brand,' Saelens continues. 'If they do that, they can respond to the crisis of confidence on the part of citizens. The latter may have no choice about being "customers", but at least they can be satisfied ones.'

Brandhome is a communication agency that works according to a unique and effective brand-building methodology, the Brandhome method®. The agency's key goals include constantly increasing brand knowledge. Brandhome is headquartered in Antwerp, Belgium.

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*Note for editors, not for publication:*

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