



Standard Eurobarometer 76

**PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
Autumn 2011**

NATIONAL REPORT

MALTA

This survey has been requested and co-ordinated by the European Commission,
Directorate-General for Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Malta.

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This National Report for the EU Representation in Malta was written by MISCO International Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

The national report outlines the main findings of Wave 76 of the Standard Eurobarometer. The fieldwork was conducted between 4th and 20th November 2011. The Minister of Finance presented the 2012 Budget to the Maltese Parliament on 14th November 2011, which included measures about tax reductions for parents and women returning to work, an increase in maternity leave duration, and an increase in the education budget and certain social benefits. Additional measures included financial aid for businesses investing in energy-saving measures, schemes for business growth, and investment in creating new jobs. Furthermore, a budget was allocated for investment in the upgrading of industrial estates, the restructuring of Malta's national airline, a scheme to encourage restoration of buildings, and the further development of the Oncology centre. There was also the mention of an increase in the excise tax for cigarettes and an increase in the registration tax for used cars. Malta also agreed to pay a contribution to the European Financial Stability Facility. These factors may have had some impact on the participants' responses.

The report covers a number of topics, namely the Europe 2020 strategy as a means of addressing the financial and economic crisis, awareness of European matters, and sources used to acquire information regarding national and European political matters.

1. EUROPE 2020

1.1 General feelings towards the Europe 2020 strategy

Important initiatives to help the EU exit the financial and economic crisis

Citizens of the European Union (EU) were asked to rate a number of initiatives according to how important they thought they were to help the EU exit the financial and economic crisis, and prepare for the following decade. Maltese and other European citizens alike considered all initiatives presented to be important, thus all initiatives scored an average of 7 or more, out of a possible score of 10. The Maltese population gave these statements an average score of 1.0 higher, when compared to the EU27 average score.

As in all 27 EU Member States, the initiative which received the highest mean score by Maltese citizens was that related to help given to the poor and socially excluded, and enabling them to play an active part in society. This was also the same initiative that was given the most importance in EB 75¹, by Maltese people. Maltese citizens rated support towards an economy that uses fewer natural resources and emits less greenhouse gas, as the second most important initiative for helping the EU to exit the financial and economic crisis. There was a higher proportion of Maltese citizens, when compared to the EU27 average, who believed that it is important to enhance the quality and appeal of EU's higher education system, in order for the EU to exit the financial crisis. The main findings of Maltese citizens compared to those of the 27 EU Member States are clearly summarised in Figure 1.

¹ EB 75 fieldwork was carried out in May 2011 (Spring wave).

Figure 1 – Initiatives important for the EU to exit the financial and economic crisis, and prepare for the following decade

		Not important (1-4)	Fairly important (5-6)	Important (7-10)	Average
To increase the support for research and development policies and turn inventions into products	MT ²	4%	13%	66%	8.0
	EU27	11%	25%	60%	7.0
To enhance the quality and appeal of EU's higher education system	MT	1%	6%	85%	8.8
	EU27	7%	19%	70%	7.5
To develop the e-economy by strengthening ultra fast Internet within the EU	MT	9%	17%	57%	7.4
	EU27	16%	28%	49%	6.5
To support an economy that uses less natural resources and emits less greenhouse gas	MT	1%	7%	83%	8.9
	EU27	5%	16%	75%	7.8
To help the EU's industrial base to be more competitive by promoting entrepreneurship and developing new skills	MT	1%	13%	71%	8.3
	EU27	6%	21%	69%	7.5
To modernise labour markets, with a view to raising employment levels	MT	2%	6%	84%	8.8
	EU27	4%	14%	78%	8.0
To help the poor and socially excluded and enable them to play an active part in society	MT	1%	4%	89%	9.0
	EU27	4%	15%	79%	8.1

Attitudes towards Europe 2020 objectives

European citizens were then provided with a list of objectives which are to be reached by 2020 in the EU, and were asked to identify which ones were considered to be within reach and which were too ambitious. The main attitude of Maltese citizens toward the Europe 2020 objectives was that they were just about right. There was a considerable discrepancy between the percentage of Maltese people and the EU27 average, who rated each of these initiatives as 'Too modest'. In fact, these percentages achieved by the Maltese population were the lowest among all EU countries. Of note is the considerably higher percentage of respondents from other EU countries who believe that the objectives regarding schooling and qualifications were too modest. A possible reason for this discrepancy in results may be because according to the National Census 2005³, 57% of the Maltese population have no qualification, while only 15% of the population obtained a University certificate, diploma or first degree. Moreover, one should also note that 74% of Maltese respondents who were interviewed, were in education up to the age of 19. Although there was a high percentage of Maltese citizens who were not able to answer, there is no particular explanation for this. Figure 2 overleaf shows the main findings of Maltese and EU27 citizens.

² MT stands for Malta

³ The most recent Census carried out in Malta was published in 2005 by the National Statistics Office (NSO). The next Census is to be published by 2014.

		Too ambitious	About right	Too modest	DK
Three quarters of men and women between 20 and 64 years of age should have a job	MT	21%	58%	5%	16%
	EU27	21%	60%	16%	3%
The share of funds invested in research and development should reach 3% of the wealth produced in the EU each year	MT	10%	47%	3%	40%
	EU27	12%	55%	17%	16%
To reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020 compared to 1990	MT	9%	59%	5%	27%
	EU27	20%	53%	19%	8%
To increase the share of renewable energy in the EU by 20% by 2020	MT	9%	61%	3%	27%
	EU27	17%	57%	19%	7%
To increase the energy efficiency in the EU by 20% by 2020	MT	10%	60%	4%	26%
	EU27	16%	60%	16%	8%
The number of young people leaving school with no qualifications should fall to 10%	MT	16%	62%	7%	15%
	EU27	17%	50%	27%	6%
At least 40% of the younger generation should have a degree or a diploma	MT	27%	52%	3%	18%
	EU27	30%	48%	17%	5%
The number of Europeans living below the poverty line should be reduced by a quarter by 2020	MT	20%	57%	7%	16%
	EU27	22%	49%	25%	4%

Figure 2 – Attitudes towards Europe 2020 objectives

1.2 EU Priorities

			DK
Innovation	MT	Refocus research on new challenges such as climate change, energy and resource efficiency	17%
	EU27		7%
Young People	MT	Getting more young people into employment	3%
	EU27		3%
The Internet	MT	Develop further Internet services to the citizens (e.g. E-government, online health)	24%
	EU27	Extending broadband access to all European citizens	19%
Energy	MT	To give financial support to small business and households to make their energy consumption more efficient	4%
	EU27	To promote renewable sources of energy	5%
Industry	MT	To restructure those industries in difficulty	7%
	EU27	To change the rules to make it easier to set up and run a business, especially small and medium sized businesses	6%
Jobs and Skills	MT	To help people adapt to new working conditions and potential career shifts	4%
	EU27	To promote education and training opportunities for all those of working age ("lifelong learning")	5%
Poverty	MT	To provide innovative education, training and employment opportunities to the most vulnerable	3%
	EU27	To ensure the sustainability of social protection and pension systems and better access to health care systems	4%

Figure 3 – EU Priorities according to Maltese and EU27 citizens

Respondents were asked to identify what they believe the EU should focus on as a first priority, when it comes to a number of issues – namely, innovation, young people, the internet, energy, industry, jobs and skills, and poverty. A high ‘Don’t know’ answer features in Maltese results relating to innovation. A possible explanation for this pattern could be relating to a low level of awareness of the local population regarding research and development when compared to the rest of Europe. The main priorities identified by the Maltese and the rest of the EU27 are illustrated in Figure 3. Moreover, Malta was among the top ten countries who believe that the EU is in the right direction to exit the financial crisis and face challenges, as a result of these priorities. In fact, 52% of the local population have this belief.

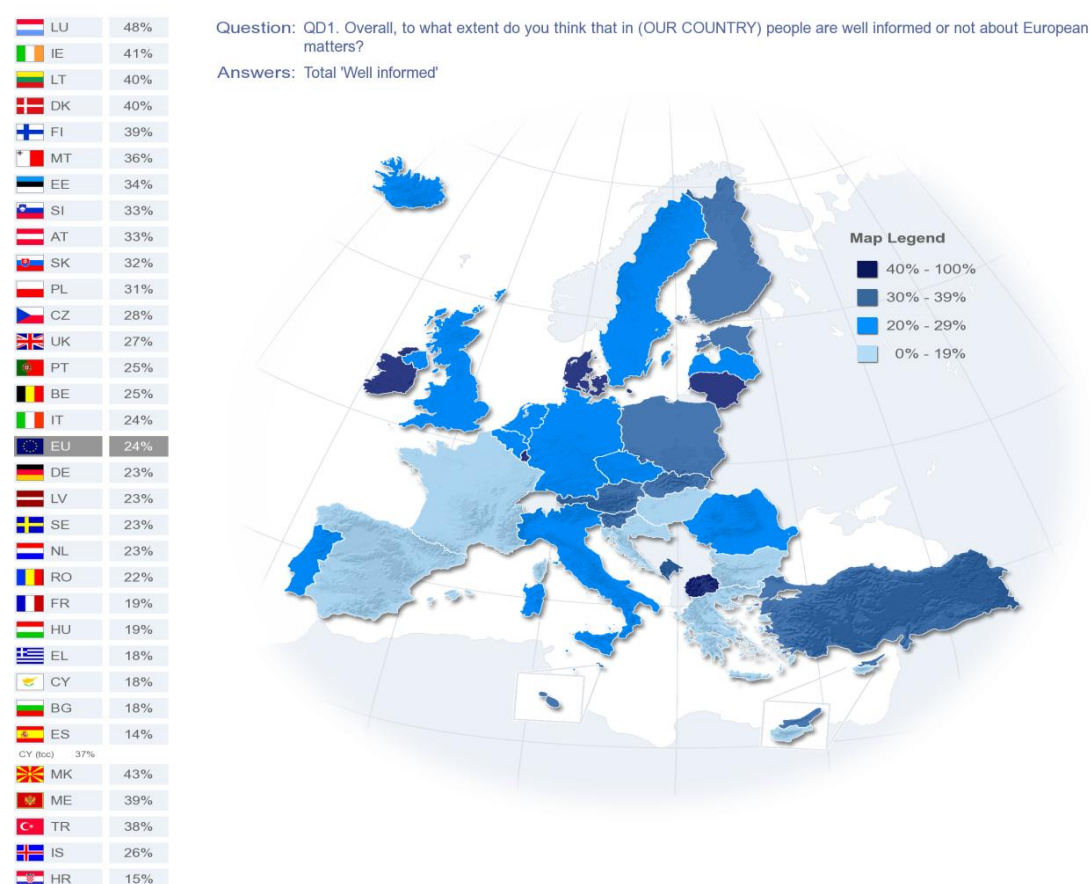
2. INFORMATION ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL MATTERS

2.1 Awareness of European matters

Awareness of respondents and of the country as a whole

European citizens were asked about the extent to which they think their country's population is well informed about European matters. 36% of Maltese citizens believe that the Maltese population is generally very well or fairly well informed – a figure which is 12% above the general belief of the 27 EU Member States. On the other hand, more than half of Maltese respondents believed that Maltese people are generally not well informed about EU matters (57 per cent), and the local population is among the lowest six European countries who share this belief. Malta was preceded by – in ascending order – Luxembourg (48 per cent), Turkey (50 per cent), Macedonia (51 per cent), Ireland (56 per cent) and Lithuania (57 per cent). The percentage of Maltese respondents who believe that generally the Maltese people are not well informed about European matters, has increased by 7% when compared to EB 74⁴. On a personal level, 39% of Maltese individuals who answered the questionnaire claimed to be well informed about European matters. This figure is comparable to the EU27 average percentage, albeit 6% higher, but has decreased by 5% from the EB 74 Autumn 2010 wave. Figure 4 below shows the percentage of respondents who are well informed about EU matters, while Figure 5 shows percentages for respondents who are not well informed.

Figure 4 – Awareness of European matters



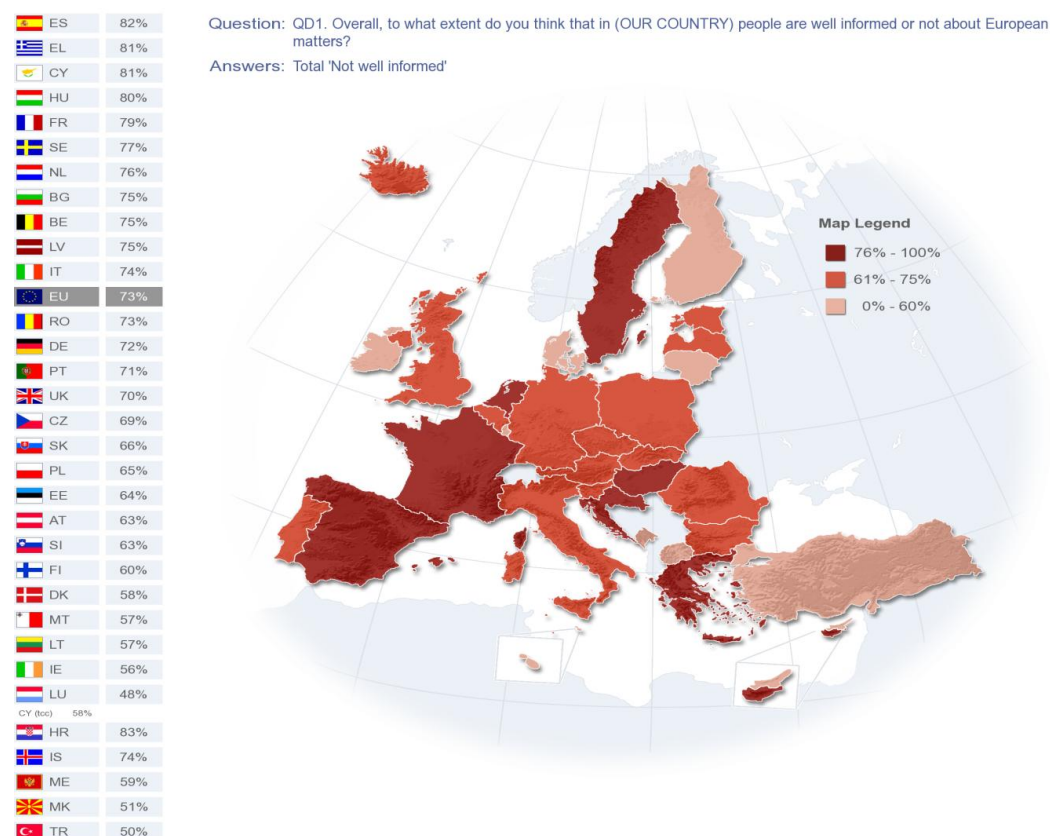
⁴ EB 74 fieldwork was carried out in November 2010 (Autumn wave).

2.2 Use of media for national and EU political matters

Use of Media at least once a week

Respondents were asked to identify how often they carry out a number of actions – namely, watching television on a TV set and via internet, listening to the radio, reading the written press, using the internet, and using online social networks. According to the EB 76 data, the media used by Maltese respondents is considered to be mostly high (38 per cent), whereas the EU27 data indicates that media use is mostly considered to be very high (39 per cent).

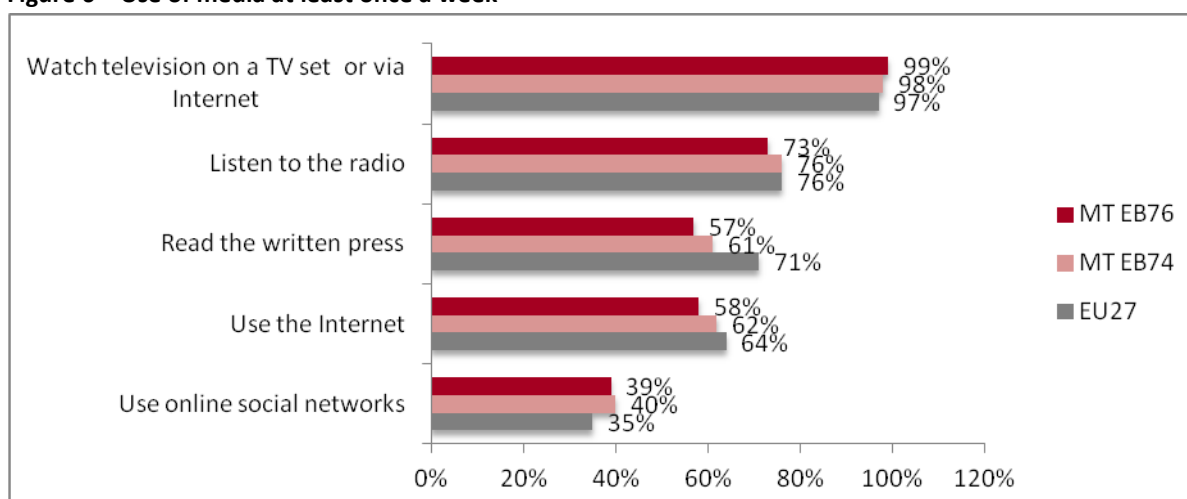
Figure 5 – Lack of awareness of European matters



Among all EU Member States, watching television at least once a week received the highest percentage of mentions, while use of social networks was the least popular. Although 57% of Maltese respondents read written press at least once a week, this form of media was the second least popular activity amongst Maltese respondents. It was also 14% less when compared to the EU27 average result. In fact, 32% of Maltese respondents claimed that they never read written press – a figure which is surpassed only by Turkey (33 per cent). When comparing with the EU27, Maltese respondents were amongst the most likely to claim that they never use the internet (39 per cent), preceded only by Portugal (41 per cent). This is a considerably high percentage when compared to the 21% of EU27 who claim to never use the internet. Furthermore, the number of non-users has increased by 14% from Autumn 2010. Seeing that one-third of respondents were aged 55 years or older, and that according to the ICT Usage by Enterprise and Households 2010 report⁵, internet usage among this age group was of 44%, this could be a possible explanation for the discrepancy in results.

⁵ ICT Usage by Enterprise and Households report was published in 2010 by the NSO.

Figure 6 – Use of media at least once a week



Acquiring news on national and European political matters

When asked about sources of their news about national and European political matters, the majority of Maltese respondents mentioned television as their primary source. This result is comparable to that of the 27 EU Member States. When considering all chosen news sources, 83% and 77% of Maltese respondents claimed to get their news about national and European politics, respectively, from television. Malta ranked the fourth highest percentage for individuals who do not look for news on European political matters (15 per cent), and was surpassed by Portugal (16 per cent), Turkey (18 per cent), and Italy (20 per cent).

With reference to acquiring news about political matters, national and European political matters, information websites – such as websites of newspapers and news magazines – were the online sources used most often by Malta for national (77 per cent) and European (70 per cent) matters. This was followed by Institutional and official websites (such as governmental websites).

With reference to institutional and official websites, the Maltese population showed a relatively high level of trust. In fact, only 7% of Maltese respondents claimed to trust institutional and official websites less than other websites. This result is the lowest from the other EU Member States, and is 10% lower than the EU27 percentage (17 per cent). It is worth mentioning that 30% of Maltese respondents did not distinguish between institutional and official websites, and other websites.

Television (47 per cent), the internet (27 per cent), and daily newspapers (17 per cent), were the three most common sources used by Maltese respondents, when they need to find information regarding the EU, its policies and its institutions. These media were also the first three choices of citizens among the other EU27 Member States. On the other hand, Maltese respondents were twice as likely to claim that they never look for such information. This percentage was the highest obtained by any European Member State – 31% of Maltese respondents, when compared to 16% of EU27. This lack of interest by Maltese citizens has also increased by 5% from EB 74.

2.3 Attitudes towards EU Information

Citizens of EU countries were asked about the extent to which they think the citizens of their country talk about the EU on television, radio, the press, and websites. On average, the Maltese population, together with the rest of EU27 citizens, believe that there is enough discussion about EU matters in the media. However, there has been an increase in the proportion of Maltese respondents who believe that the EU is mentioned too often on television, radio and the press, when compared to EB 74 results in 2010. In fact, there has been an average increase of 3% of respondents who think that there is too much talk about the EU on each of these media. When compared to the EU27, there is a relatively higher percentage of Maltese people who could not identify the extent of exposure of EU matters in the media, however there seems to be no particular reason which led to this result. More than half of Maltese respondents were unaware of the extent of which the Maltese nationality talk about EU matters on websites (53 per cent). This result was 11% higher when compared to the EU27, and has increased by 1% from results in 2010. Figure 6 illustrates the difference between results obtained in Autumn 2011 and 2010, and those of the EU27.

When asked about whether they believe that the Maltese media presents the EU too positively, objectively, or too negatively, most respondents were unable to give an answer, save for information received by means of television. In this regard, 42% of respondents residing in Malta think that the EU is presented objectively on television - neither too positively, nor too negatively. When compared to EB 74, this result shows a 7% increase, while respondents who believe that the EU is portrayed too positively by Maltese television, have decreased by 5%. The data for Malta shows a high percentage of 'Don't know' answers, however, there is no clear explanation for this.

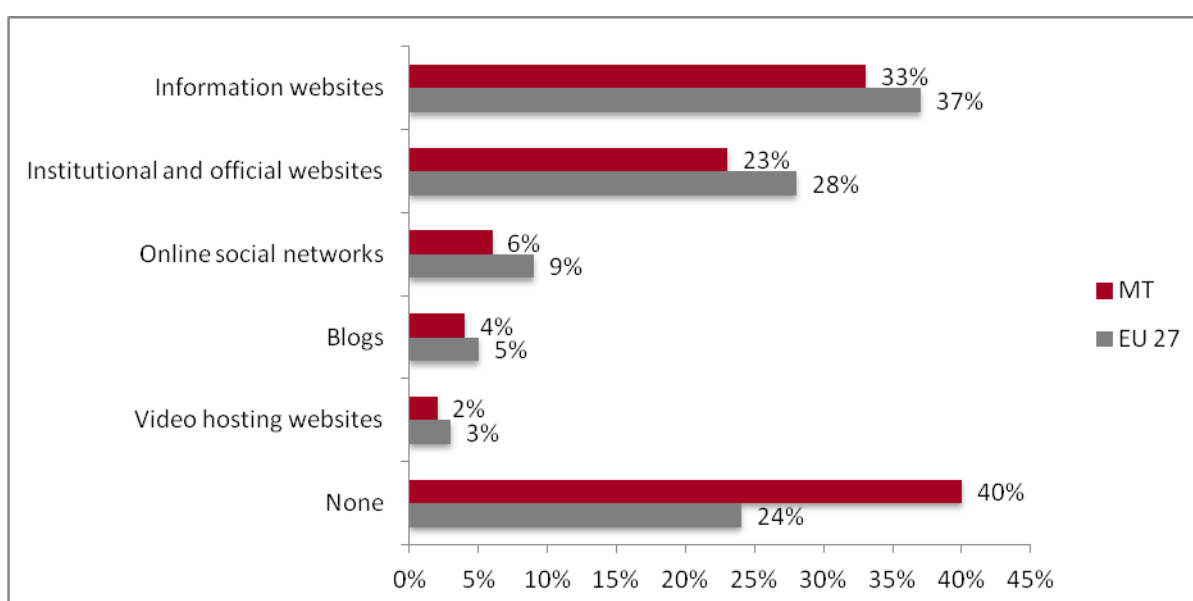
Figure 7 – Extent of EU matters discussed on the media

		Too much	Enough	Too little	DK
Television	MT EB 76	15%	47%	25%	13%
	MT EB 74	11%	47%	27%	15%
	EU 27	11%	54%	28%	7%
Radio	MT EB 76	8%	38%	20%	34%
	MT EB 74	5%	34%	26%	35%
	EU 27	6%	48%	26%	20%
Press	MT EB 76	10%	42%	16%	32%
	MT EB 74	7%	43%	15%	35%
	EU 27	10%	55%	19%	16%
Websites	MT EB 76	6%	31%	10%	53%
	MT EB 74	7%	34%	7%	52%
	EU 27	5%	41%	12%	42%

2.4 Useful websites to acquire information about EU matters

European citizens were asked to identify the type of website which would be useful for them, to find information regarding the EU. A significant number of Maltese respondents (40 per cent) said that there was no specific type of website from those presented, that they consider to be useful to find information regarding the EU. This percentage is the highest among the rest of the EU countries, with an average 20% difference between respondents from the rest of the 26 EU Member States who gave this reply. From the respondents who provided an answer, one-third of Maltese citizens would find it useful to have information regarding the EU on information websites (such as websites of newspapers, news magazines), and a little over one-fifth would prefer institutional and official websites such as governmental websites.

Figure 8 – Websites useful for gathering EU information



2.5 Attitudes towards online social networks

Respondents were provided with four statements regarding online social networking websites and their use for political affairs, and were asked about the extent of their agreement, regardless of whether they personally make use of online social networks or not. In the case of Maltese respondents, 50% or more believe that online social networks are a modern way of keeping abreast of political affairs, can get people interested in political affairs, and are a good way to have their say on political issues. The percentage of Maltese respondents, who agreed with these aforementioned statements, was above the EU27 average. Nevertheless, 37% of these respondents also believed that information on political affairs from online social networks cannot be trusted.

When compared to EB 74, there has been an average 7% increase in the number of Maltese respondents who believe that online social networks are a good way to keep abreast and share their opinions on political issues. This could possibly be due to the ever-increasing popularity that social networking sites are achieving, and are considered as a direct and personal means of communication with the public. Figure 9 overleaf shows the attitudes towards online social networks used for political affairs.

Figure 9 – Attitudes towards online social networks and political affairs

