



## **Standard Eurobarometer 78**

**PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION  
Autumn 2012**

# **NATIONAL REPORT**

## **IRELAND**

This survey has been requested and co-ordinated by the European Commission,  
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**Standard Eurobarometer 78 / Autumn 2012 – TNS Opinion & Social**

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## 1. Introduction

This Eurobarometer National Report on Ireland is one in a long series that examines trends in European public opinion from varying perspectives defined by the different questions contained in successive Eurobarometer surveys<sup>1</sup>. The present report focuses on the experience of and attitudes to European citizenship, 2013 being the EU's Year of Citizens<sup>2</sup>. This will be examined in itself and in relation to the extent of people's knowledge of the European Union. The paper will also assess Irish citizens' views on the European Citizens Initiative, which allows EU citizens to petition the EU Commission to propose legislation on matters of EU competence. Finally, the report analyses the sources and channels through which European citizens acquire and augment their knowledge of European affairs. The report will begin, though, by summarizing the economic and political context in which the data for Eurobarometer 78 in Ireland was gathered and must be interpreted.

## 2. The economic and political context of Eurobarometer 78

The economic and political context prior to and during the period in which Eurobarometer 78 was conducted was marked by a very high degree of salience attached to the European Union, and indeed to other international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, in the light of Ireland's continuing economic woes. Scarcely a day passes, and never a week when there is not some new twist in events that have a strong European dimension. The main driver of this salience is the so-called 'Troika', the name given to the combined delegations of officials from the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund. Beginning in the spring of 2011, this collective entity has arrived promptly every quarter to monitor Ireland's adherence to the terms of the combined EU/IMF 'bailout' (i.e. the conditions under which money could be provided to Ireland to keep the ship of state afloat).

The Irish electorate, or at least a significant section of it, has had to learn and come to terms with complex concepts such as 'senior bondholders' and 'promissory notes' as discussion of how to deal with the country's difficult economic situation dominates the media and sets the parameters of political discourse. The issue of the promissory note is particularly prominent

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<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork for Eurobarometer 78 was carried out in Ireland between 3 November and 18 November 2012 by Millward Brown/IMS. A total of 1,000 respondents were surveyed. Full technical details are contained in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.europa.eu/citizens-2013>.

at the time of writing, with the government recently striking a deal on this with the European Central Bank, which will alleviate the short-term impact of the banking debt on the country's budgetary situation<sup>3</sup>.

But in spite of this deal, the economic situation remains difficult: unemployment is above both the EU and Eurozone averages (of 10.2% and 10.4% respectively), with the CSO (Central Statistics Office) currently estimating the rate to be 14.6%, up from 14.4% at the time of Eurobarometer 76. GDP growth is relatively sluggish and the government continues to implement the austerity measures required by the EU/IMF bailout<sup>4</sup>.

The 2013 Budget, introduced in December 2012, saw cuts to children's allowances and grants to respite care as well as increases in motor tax, and the announcement that a residential property tax will be introduced in summer 2013. But while there has been public disquiet on these matters, illustrated by the fact that an estimated 50,000 people marched in cities nationwide in February 2013 protesting against the government's economic strategy, these have never been as disruptive or on the same scale as experienced by other troubled economies such as Greece.

But there appears to be some positives on the economic front: Ireland did tentatively return to financial markets last summer with an auction of short-term debt. Additionally, the government and 'The Troika' also maintain that the country is on course to exit the bailout programme as planned at the end of this year<sup>5</sup>.

The governing parties though appear to have taken a hit in terms of their public popularity, with the latest Red C monthly opinion poll showing Fine Gael on 28% and the Labour Party 11%, substantially down on the 36% and 19% each recorded in the February 2011 general election<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2013/0208/breaking7.html> (Accessed: 8 February 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Source data: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ireland/gdp-growth> and <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/labourmarket/principalstatistics/seasonallyadjustedstandardisedunemploymentrate> (Both Accessed: 8 February 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/0705/breaking1.html> (Accessed: 7 February 2013).

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see: <http://redcresearch.ie/news/sbp-jan-13-labour-support-down-ff-and-sf-make-gain> (Accessed: 8 February 2013).

As an integral part of the European context of Eurobarometer 78, Irish voters went to the polls in May 2012 and ratified the EU Fiscal Treaty by 60.3% to 39.7% on a turnout of just over 50%. In spite of the economic crisis and the austerity measures being vigorously pursued by the Fine-Gael/Labour government, passage of the referendum was never really in doubt with most of the major political groupings, with the exception of Sinn Féin and some independents from the left of the spectrum, supporting ratification.

This was not the only occasion on which Irish citizens were called to the ballot box in 2012 as the government also proceeded with a referendum, introducing specific rights for children into the Irish Constitution. The referendum was passed comfortably in November 2012 by 58% to 42%, but on a low turnout of 34%.

The issue of abortion, which had a European dimension to it, firmly came on to the political agenda in late 2012. The European Court of Human Rights insisted the Irish government were in breach of European norms on the issue of reproductive rights. The issue is a sensitive one in Irish politics, with no less than five referendums on matters relating to the right to life of the unborn being held in the past thirty years. The issue continues to inch closer and closer to full blown salience, as the Fine Gael/Labour government has committed to introduce new legislation later this year, in an effort to end the confusion and comply with its European obligations.

Looking into 2013, and admittedly indulging in some crystal ball gazing, we would expect that Europe, in its various forms, will remain a major issue in the Irish political landscape, particularly as Ireland currently holds the rotating Presidency of the Union. The question at hand is what impact has this contextual framework had on attitudes towards European citizenship and on the related issues of what people know and how comfortable they are with their knowledge of EU affairs.

### **3. Irish attitudes to EU citizenship**

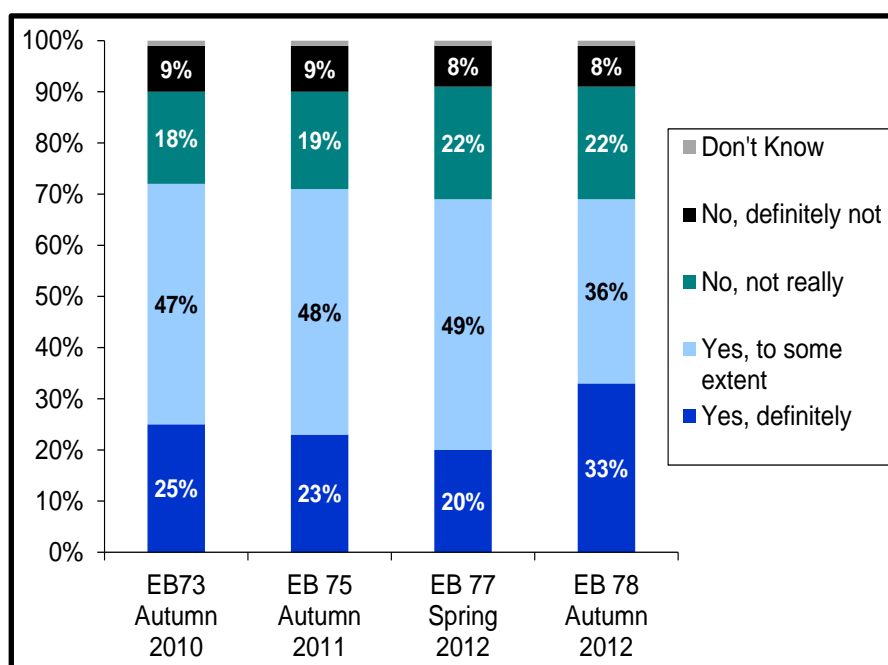
This brings us to the central focus of this report, namely the determinants and the consequences of a sense of European citizenship. Sense of European citizenship is measured in Eurobarometer 78 by agreement or disagreement with the proposition “you feel you are a citizen of the EU”, with the response categories being: ‘no, definitely not’; ‘no not really’; ‘yes, to some extent’ and ‘yes, definitely’<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Source of question: EB78, Question D2.1.

This formulation of the question produces quite high levels of sense of citizenship among Irish respondents, with 69% of respondents saying they felt some degree of EU citizenship. This breaks down into roughly 33% definitively endorsing a sense of European citizenship and 36% being only willing to acknowledge European citizenship 'to some extent'. About 30% of Irish respondents reject any notion of European citizenship, 8% definitively.

Irish feelings towards EU citizenship are above the EU average of 63%. They are also notably ahead of countries currently in receipt of EU financial assistance, namely Portugal (59%), Cyprus (55%) and Greece (46%). Figure 1 tracks this measure of citizenship in Ireland over time. It shows that there has been little change in how Irish people feel towards European citizenship in the past few years, with between 69 and 72% over the past two years expressing some degree of EU citizenship. That being said, there does appear to be a shift in the strength of feelings of citizenship in Eurobarometer 78. Whereas the majority of those who felt a sense of European citizenship were only willing to acknowledge an EU citizenship to some extent, Eurobarometer 78 shows a greater willingness among Irish respondents to express a stronger sense of EU citizenship, with the number of respondents who definitively endorse an EU citizenship rising from 20% in Eurobarometer 77 to 33% now.



**Figure 1: Feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland 2010-2012 (%)**. Source of data: EB73 – EB78.

European Union citizenship varies substantially by certain demographic factors in Ireland. The relationship between a sense of citizenship and age varies from 68% endorsing some degree of European Union citizenship among 18 to 29-year-olds compared to 80% endorsement among those 75 or older (see Table 1). However, the relationship is relatively weak and does not appear to form a coherent generational pattern.

**Table 1:** Feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland by age (%)

		<i>Age of respondent</i>				
		18-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+
<i>Feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland</i>	Yes, definitely	34	30	35	40	31
	Yes, to some extent	34	43	35	30	49
	No, not really	26	19	21	21	15
	No, definitely not	6	8	9	9	5
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	<i>N</i>	166	315	263	190	39

*Source of data:* EB78.  $\chi^2 = 17.687$  (0.126).

*Please note:* Respondents who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

If not age, then what demographic factors are having an impact? Part of the answer would seem to lie with education (see Table 2): a definite sense of European Union citizenship increases from 25% among those who have completed their full time education at age 16 or younger to 34% among those who say they completed their education aged 16-19 (i.e. those likely to have high school level education), to 39% among those whose education was completed aged 20 or above or who are still in education.

**Table 2:** Feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland by time the respondent completed full-time education (%)

		<i>Respondent completed full-time education</i>		
		Before aged 15 / no education	Aged 16-19	Aged 20+/still in education
<i>Feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland</i>	Yes, definitely	25	34	39
	Yes, to some extent	30	34	43
	No, not really	31	25	13
	No, definitely not	14	7	5
	Total	100	100	100
	<i>N</i>	138	451	382

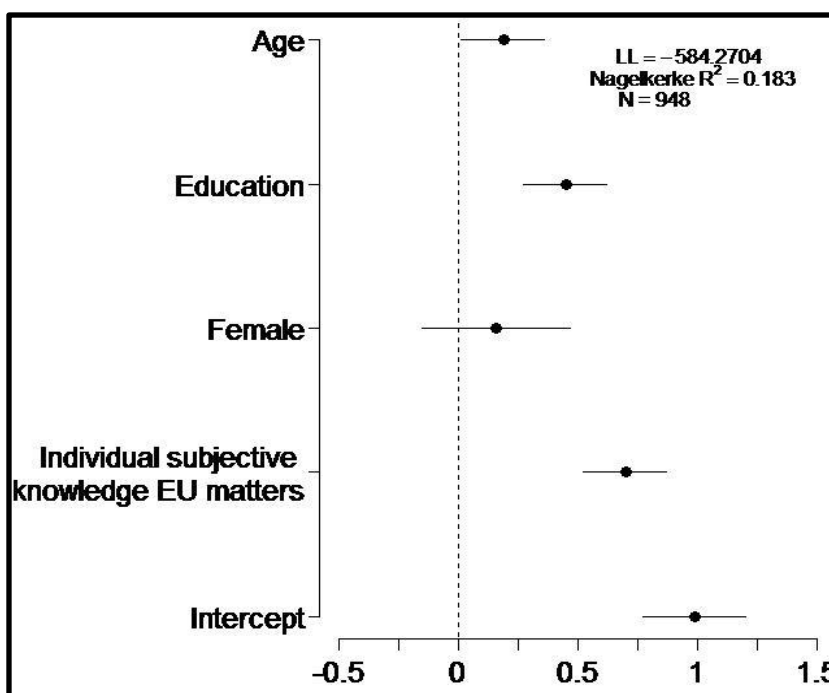
*Source of data:* EB78.  $\chi^2 = 44.523$  (0.000).

*Please note:* Respondents who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.



Later in this report we note some strong gender differences with respect to subjective levels of knowledge about EU matters, with women being substantially less inclined to think of themselves as well-informed on European affairs as men. But with respect to citizenship, there is simply no relationship between gender and EU citizenship. Women in Ireland are equally likely, or unlikely, to endorse European Union citizenship as men are.

The above relationships described are of a bivariate nature. The key question is whether they stand up when subjected to a more rigorous multivariate analysis, i.e. one that examines the impact of each independent variable while holding the other independent variables constant. Figure 2 examines this with a basic logit model, treating feelings towards EU citizenship as the dependent variable<sup>8</sup>. We take as our independent variables age, sex, and education. We also examine the impact of subjective levels of knowledge an individual has in respect of EU matters (a subject which we will examine in greater detail later in section 5).



**Figure 2:** Logit model examining the relationship between feelings towards EU citizenship in Ireland and socio-demographics and individual subjective knowledge about the EU. *Source of data:* EB78.

<sup>8</sup> We opt for a logit model because we are interested in the impact of our independent variables on whether an individual has a feeling of EU citizenship or not (and not so much the strength of feeling of EU citizenship a respondent feels). The two response categories are: individuals who feel a sense of EU citizenship (a combination of respondents who said 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, to some extent') and individuals who do not feel a sense of EU citizenship (a combination of respondents who said 'no, not really' and 'no, definitely not'). Those who responded 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

All variables in our model are standardized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The results are best explained graphically. The regression coefficients are represented by the black dots with the horizontal lines representing the 95 confidence intervals around these coefficients based on the standard errors. A line that does not cross the vertical line at zero can be said to be statistically significant. A dot to the right of the dotted vertical line indicates a positive effect (an increased probability of an individual feeling a sense of EU citizenship). A dot to the left of the dotted vertical line at zero indicates a negative effect (an increased probability of an individual not feeling a sense of EU citizenship).

As we can see from Figure 2, gender has no effect on an individual's feeling of European citizenship, confirming our bivariate observation above. Age has a significant but weak effect – the older an individual, the more likely they are to have a sense of European citizenship. This modifies somewhat our earlier finding based on the bivariate analysis.

Education has a substantial impact, independent of all other factors. The longer an Irish respondent remains in education, the more likely they are to feel they are a citizen of the EU. Finally, subjective knowledge of the EU has the strongest effect of any of the variables considered: the more an individual feels they know about the EU, the more probable they are to say they feel they are a citizen of the EU. Interpreting this particular finding though is tricky. On the one hand, it could be that the more an individual knows about the EU, the more likely they are to feel a stronger sense of EU citizenship. On the other hand, it could be that strong levels of EU citizenship result in greater knowledge of EU matters among individuals. Teasing out this relationship is beyond the scope of this report but what can be said is that there is a strong correlation between levels of knowledge of EU matters and feelings of EU citizenship among Irish citizens.

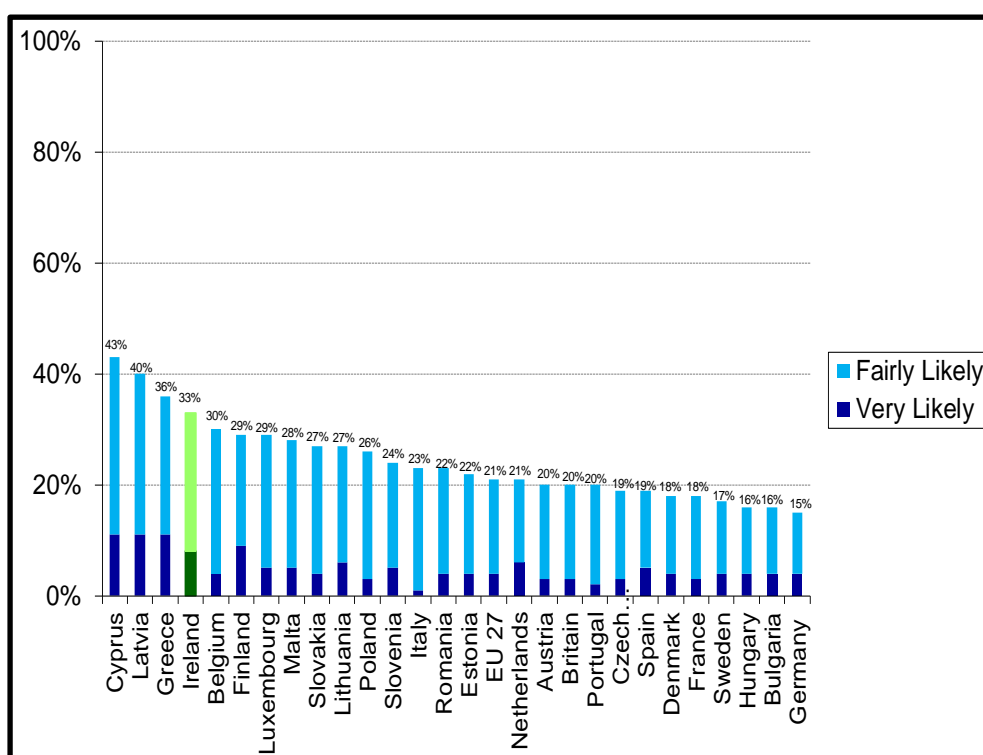
## **4. Irish citizens and The European Citizens Initiative**

The European Citizens Initiative is a tool which came into effect with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. It allows one million EU citizens from at least seven countries to petition the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate<sup>9</sup>. The Initiative could be considered as an EU means of 'direct democracy', as it enables citizens to put an issue on the EU agenda directly.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome> (Accessed: 6 February 2013).

Eurobarometer 78 asked Irish respondents two questions on the European Citizens Initiative: how likely are they to make use of this tool and what areas they would likely make use of it for<sup>10</sup>. Figure 3 illustrates the number of citizens by country who said they were ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ to use the European Citizens Initiative. As we can see, 33% of Irish respondents said they were ‘very likely’ (8%) or ‘fairly likely’ (25%) to consider using the European Citizens Initiative (in Figure 3, we have coloured the Irish bars dark green and light green to illustrate where Ireland ranks). This represents an increase in the numbers of Irish people saying they would consider using the Initiative – up 10 percentage points on Eurobarometer 77. Figure 3 shows Irish people are amongst the Europeans most likely to say they would consider using the Initiative, along with Cyprus (43% saying they were ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ to use the Initiative), Latvia (40%) and Greece (36%).



**Figure 3: Likelihood of making use of the European Citizens Initiative by EU Member State (%)**  
 Source of data: EB78.

Irish citizens are much less likely to say would not consider using the Initiative compared to EU citizens in general. Whereas a majority of EU citizens as a whole, 69% say they are ‘not very likely’ or ‘not at all likely’ to use the Initiative, only 45% of Irish respondents said likewise.

<sup>10</sup> Source: EB78. QD7: “How likely or not do you think you would make use of this European Citizens’ Initiative?” and QD8: “And whether or not you think you might make use of it or not, if you were to do so, in which of the following fields would you be most likely to use the European Citizens’ Initiative?”

Just over a fifth of Irish respondents (22%) didn't know whether or not they would use the Initiative – amongst the highest level of 'don't know' expressed among the 27 Member States (only Romania has higher at 26%). This suggests two things: either a fairly substantial number of Irish citizens are indifferent towards the Initiative, or perhaps many are unaware of it.

In terms of the policy areas where citizens would make use of the European Citizens Initiative (see Table 3), there is little difference between Irish and EU respondents as a whole. Unemployment is cited by Irish and European people as the area for which they were most likely to make use of the Initiative: 41% of Irish respondents mentioned this while 38% of Europeans said likewise. Education was the second most mentioned area – 26% of Irish respondents said this while 24% of Europeans mentioned it. In Ireland, this was followed by consumer protection, with a fifth of respondents citing this.

**Table 3:** Use of the European Citizens Initiative by policy area: Ireland and EU27 (%)  
(data in ascending order of policy area mentioned most by Irish respondents)

	Ireland	EU27
Employment	41	38
Education	26	24
Consumer Protection	20	20
Fundamental Rights of the EU Citizen	17	22
Problems with the national government	15	12
Taxation	14	20
Pensions	13	22
Immigration	13	12
Crime	11	13
Mobility of EU citizens	10	9
Environment	8	19
Energy	8	13
Agriculture	7	8
Common Foreign & Security	5	9
Sport	5	4
Terrorism	4	6
Enlargement of the EU	4	6

Source of data: EB78.

Please note: Respondents were able to give multiple responses – a maximum of five.

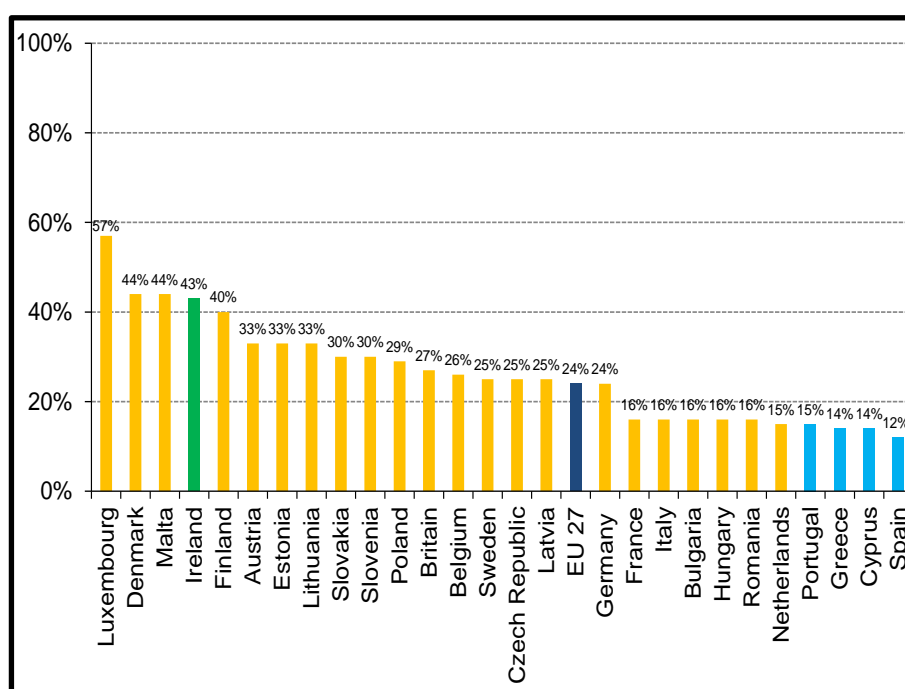
There were a few areas of divergence between Irish responses and the EU average: Europeans are far more likely to consider using the Initiative to deal with the environment – 19% mentioning this, while only 8% of Irish respondents said so. A similar pattern emerges for pensions, where 22% of Europeans cited potential use of the Initiative in this area,

whereas only 13% of Irish respondents mentioned it. Irish people are also less likely to use the Initiative for taxation policy, with only 14% saying they'd use the Initiative in this area compared to 20% of Europeans.

## 5. Irish citizens' subjective knowledge of EU matters

Eurobarometer 78 measures knowledge of the EU using two subjective indicators: the first asks to what extent respondents think that people in Ireland are informed about the EU, while the second focuses on the respondent themselves, asking them to assess how much knowledge they have about EU matters<sup>11</sup>. Both Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate that Ireland scores comparatively highly in respect of both measures and well above the EU averages.

Figure 4 shows that 43% of Irish respondents said they felt that Irish people in general were informed about EU affairs, putting Ireland fourth in the list of Member States, behind Luxembourg (57%), Denmark (44%) and Malta (44%).

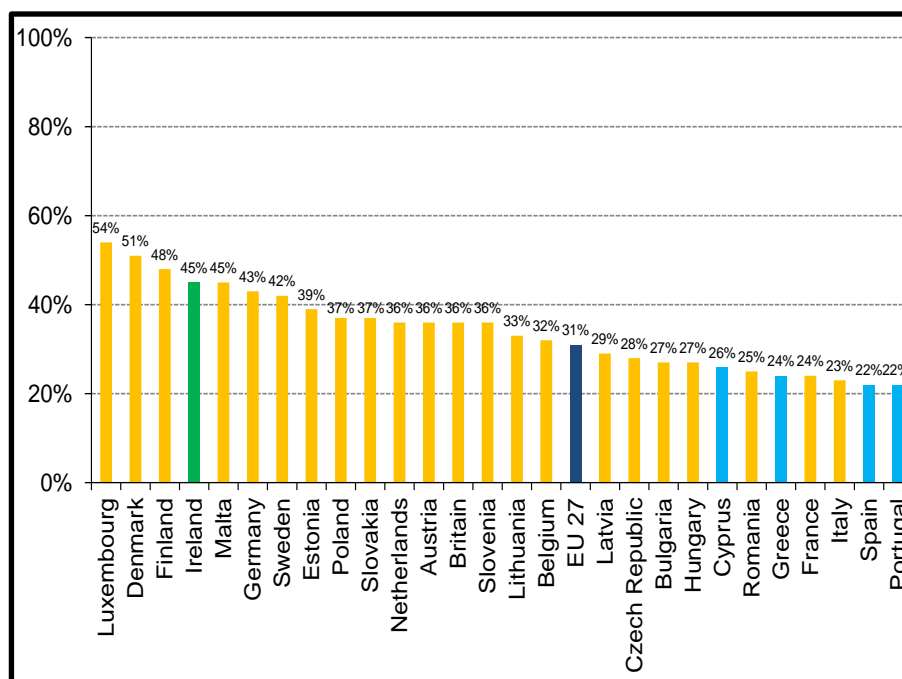


**Figure 4:** Individual assessments of subjective knowledge of EU matters of fellow countrymen by EU Member State (%)

Source of data: EB78.

<sup>11</sup> Source: EB78. QE1: "Overall, to what extent do you think that in (OUR COUNTRY) people are well informed or not about European matters?" QE2: "And overall, to what extent do you think that you are well informed or not about European matters?"

Figure 5 illustrates that Ireland ranks fourth again among Member States when it comes to subjective assessments of individual knowledge about EU matters, with 45% of Irish respondents saying they feel they are informed about EU matters.



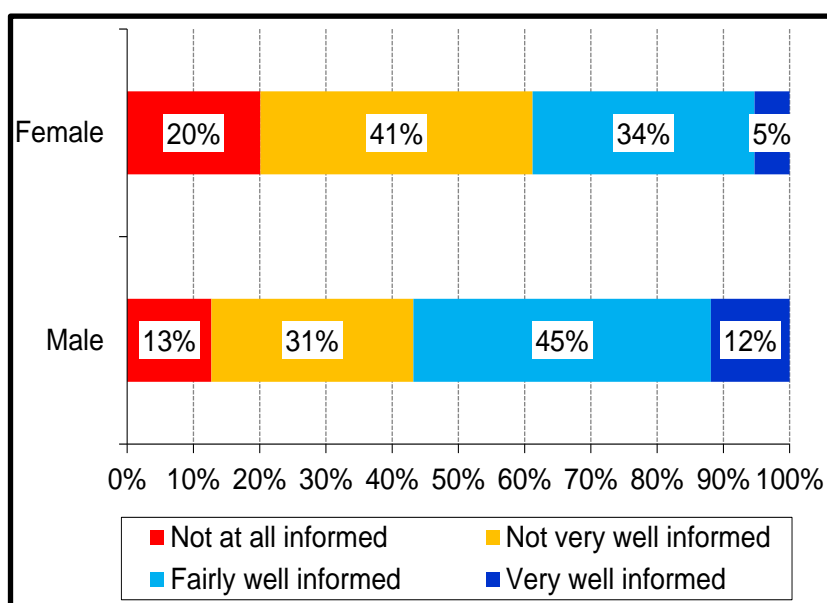
**Figure 5:** Individual levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters by EU Member State (%)

Source of data: EB78.

Again Ireland is behind Luxembourg (54%) and Denmark (51%), and, on this measure, Finland (48%). On this measure, it is well above the EU average of 24% and the Eurozone average of 30%. Also, it should be noted that individual levels of subjective knowledge among Irish citizens appears to be fairly stable over time, with little change on this measure since it was last examined in Eurobarometer 76. There are two perspectives from which the above findings could be viewed. The positive view is that Irish people feel more knowledgeable about the EU than citizens in other Member States – being substantially above the EU and Eurozone averages. Irish levels of subjective knowledge on both measures are also substantially higher compared to other countries where the EU is involved in providing financial assistance, namely in Cyprus, Greece, Portugal and Spain. In these four countries, subjective levels of knowledge about EU matters are much lower than in Ireland, and in some cases are below the EU average, which could be considered surprising given the extent of EU involvement in these countries economic affairs of late and the media coverage surrounding this.

In this light, Irish level of subjective knowledge about EU matters compare favourably. The pessimistic perspective is that Irish levels of subjective knowledge have to be considered low for a country that has held several referendums on EU matters, three of which have occurred in the last six years, with the most recent only seven months ago on the Fiscal Treaty. The knowledge levels are perhaps lower than expected given the focus that has been on EU involvement in Irish economic affairs since the IMF/EU bailout in winter 2010, which we noted earlier, especially the recent focus on the discussions with the European Central Bank on the issue of the promissory note, which was certainly topical in the news at the time of EB 78's fieldwork. But, it could be argued that a lot of this political debate is conducted at a sophisticated level of detail, and as a consequence, citizens may not be that plugged into issues of such complexity.

Turning to the socio-demographic differences, and from here on in we will confine our focus to individual assessments of subjective knowledge in respect of EU matters, we observe some interesting differences. Figure 6 shows that Irish men clearly feel they have stronger knowledge of EU matters than their female counterparts.



**Figure 6:** Individual levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters in Ireland by gender (%)

Source of data: EB78.

Whereas 57% of men say they either feel ‘fairly well informed’ or ‘very well informed’ about EU matters, only 39% of women feel likewise. This gender gap is not confined to Ireland – in the EU as a whole, 41% of men say they feel more informed about EU matters compared to 28% of women. Ireland is amongst the countries with the greatest gender gap on this measure – an 18 percentage point difference between men and women, with similar gaps being observed in The Netherlands and Sweden.

The question naturally arises why is there such a gender gap? The observation that men are more likely to feel knowledgeable about political matters than women is hardly new with a vast array of literature on the subject in political science. The reasons put forward to explain these differences range from the idea the men are more likely to become involved in outside organizations than women, and membership of these increases their political knowledge. There is also the proposition that men are more likely to retain factual political knowledge about politics than women or the idea that men are more likely to express a viewpoint on political matters than women, even if they are not confident in their answer. This latter proposition is driven by social desirability – akin to a male drivers’ purported propensity to fail to ask for directions when lost!

Table 4 illustrates the differences on individual levels of subjective knowledge of EU matters and when a respondent finished full-time education. Not surprisingly, a clear pattern emerges: the longer an individual remained in education, the more knowledge the individual feels they have about EU matters. For example, among those who finished their education aged 15 or before or have no education, 64% consider themselves uninformed about EU matters (31% say they are ‘not at all informed’ while 33% say they are ‘not very well informed’). If we compare this group to respondents who finished their education aged 20 or above and to those respondents who are still in education, this figure falls to 44%. Among this group, a majority consider themselves to be informed about EU affairs, with 45% saying they are ‘fairly well informed’ and 11% ‘very well informed’ about EU matters. This would seem to suggest a strong correlation between education and levels of subjective knowledge of EU matters.



**Table 4:** Individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU in Ireland by the age at which individual completed full-time education (%)

		<i>Respondent completed full-time education</i>		
		Before aged 15 / no education	Aged 16-19	Aged 20+/still in education
<i>Individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU</i>	Not at all informed	31	17	11
	Not very well informed	33	40	33
	Fairly well informed	31	36	45
	Very well informed	5	7	11
	Total	100	100	100
	N	137	454	380

Source of data: EB78.  $\chi^2 = 39.182$  (0.000).

Please note: Respondents who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

We also examined whether age has an impact on levels of knowledge. Table 5 indicates that the younger an Irish individual is, the more likely they are to feel uninformed about EU matters, but the chi-square test is insignificant, casting doubt on the relationship observed. Subjective knowledge does appear to increase the older an individual is. The difference appears to be between individuals aged below 45 and those aged 45+. For example, among 18-29 year olds, 42% consider themselves informed about EU matters. This rises to 51% among the 45-59 age group, and 54% among respondents aged 75+. But deciphering whether this observation is by chance or is statistically significant requires further analysis.

**Table 5:** Individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU in Ireland by age (%)

		<i>Age of respondent</i>				
		18-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+
<i>Individual levels of Subjective knowledge about the EU</i>	Not at all informed	23	19	14	14	5
	Not very well informed	36	37	35	35	41
	Fairly well informed	33	38	42	41	41
	Very well informed	9	6	9	11	13
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	N	164	313	267	191	39

Source of data: EB78.  $\chi^2 = 15.464$  (0.217).

Please note: Respondents who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

In line with our analysis in section 3 and the overall theme of this report, we also examined the correlation between feelings of EU citizenship and individual levels of subjective knowledge of EU matters. Table 6 shows that the more an Irish respondent feels they are a citizen of the EU, the greater their levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters. Among those who say they definitely do not feel they are a citizen of the EU, only 30% feel 'fairly

well informed' or 'very well informed' about EU matters (although one should acknowledge that the number of cases on which this finding is based is relatively small). But among those who say they feel they are a citizen of the EU to some extent, 47% say they feel 'fairly well informed' or 'very well informed' about EU matters. This rises to 65% among respondents who definitely feel they are a citizen of the EU. Table 6 clearly suggests a strong correlation between subjective levels of knowledge and feelings of EU citizenship, confirming our analysis above. However, our earlier caveat still applies in respect of the direction of the relationship. It is also important to acknowledge again that the preceding analysis on individual levels of subjective knowledge has been based on bivariate analysis. To have confidence in our observations, a comprehensive multivariate analysis is necessary.

**Table 6:** Individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU in Ireland by feelings towards EU citizenship (%)

		<i>You feel you are a citizen of the EU</i>			
		No, definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to some extent	Yes, definitely
<i>Individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU</i>	Not at all informed	42	27	12	10
	Not very well informed	29	49	41	25
	Fairly well informed	27	22	42	47
	Very well informed	3	2	5	18
	Total	100	100	100	100
	N	77	204	360	335

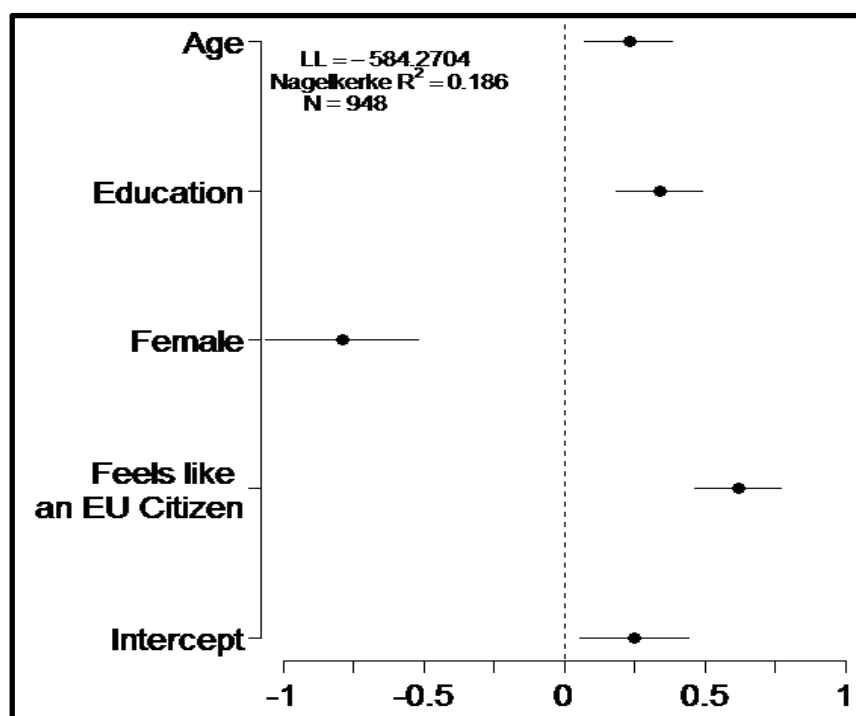
Source of data: EB78.  $\chi^2 = 159.924$  (0.000).

Please note: Respondents who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

Figure 7 illustrates a simple logit model examining the relationship between individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU in Ireland. For our independent variables, we take three socio-demographic variables, namely age, education, and gender. We also include feelings about EU citizenship<sup>12</sup>. As with our earlier model, all variables are standardized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 and we present our model graphically. A black dot to the right of the dotted vertical line indicates a positive effect (an increased probability of an individual feeling informed about EU matters). A black dot to the left of the

<sup>12</sup> As with our earlier model, we again opt for a logit model because we are interested in the impact of our independent variables on whether an individual feels they have knowledge of EU matters, rather than the extent of knowledge they feel they have. The two response categories are: individuals who feel they are knowledgeable about the EU (a combination of respondents who said 'fairly well informed' and 'very well informed') and individuals who do not feel knowledgeable about EU matters (a combination of respondents who said they were 'not very well informed' or they are 'not at all informed'). Those who responded 'don't know' are excluded from the analysis.

dotted vertical line at zero indicates a negative effect (an increased probability of an individual not feeling informed about the EU matters).



**Figure 7:** Logit model examining the relationship between individual levels of subjective knowledge about the EU in Ireland and socio-demographics and EU citizenship.  
*Source of data:* EB78.

The socio-demographic variables all have a statistically significant effect on individual levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters, behaving largely as we would expect considering the bivariate relationships observed above. Irish females are much more likely to feel less knowledgeable about EU matters compared to men. This observation holds even when controlling for the effects of age and education and feelings towards EU citizenship. On the other hand, education has a positive effect – the longer an Irish respondent remains in education, the more knowledgeable they are likely to feel about EU matters. Age also has a statistically significant positive effect – the older a respondent, the more knowledgeable they are likely to feel about the EU.

The strongest predictor of individual levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters in Ireland is the level to which an individual respondent feels they are a citizen of the EU. The more definitive an Irish respondent is about EU citizenship, the more probable they are to feel informed about EU matters. Again, interpretation of this relationship is not straightforward, with the direction of causality unclear.

The above model and analysis is only able to examine the correlates of Irish levels of subjective knowledge about EU matters to a certain extent due to data availability. In an ideal research design, we would like to be able to explore the issue further, particularly with a focus on objective levels of knowledge, given the expected strong correlation between subjective and objective knowledge. But on the basis of the above analysis, we can infer a number of points. Firstly, women are much less confident than men in their knowledge about EU matters. Secondly, education and subjective levels of knowledge are clearly correlated – the more education an individual has received, the more probable they are to be confident in their knowledge of EU matters. Finally, there is a strong correlation between feeling like an EU citizen, and feeling confident about knowing EU matters.

In terms of the implications of these observations, it does indicate that politicians and policy makers whose objective it is to increase knowledge about EU matters among Irish people should concentrate their attentions on females, individuals who have less education, and those who take a cautious approach to the idea of EU citizenship.

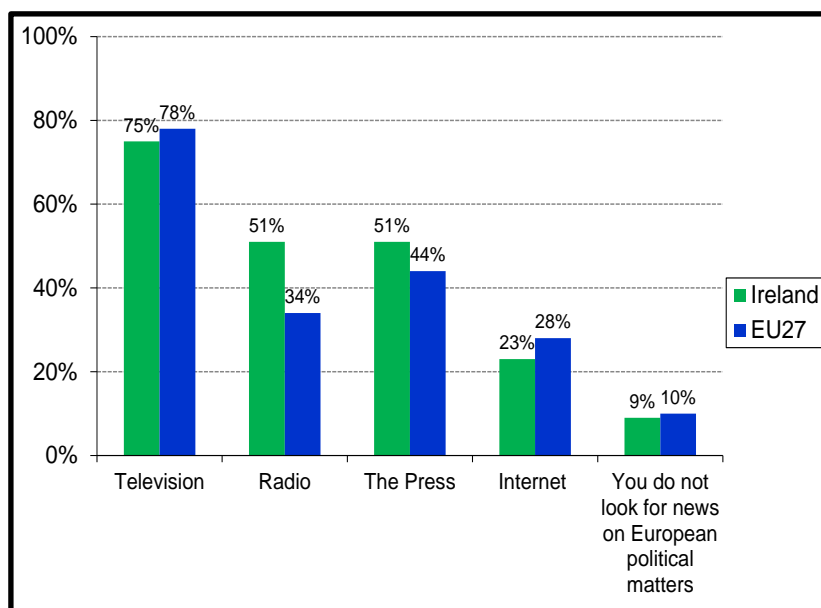
## **6. Sources of news on EU matters and Irish attitudes towards media coverage of European issues**

### **6.1 Sources of news on European political matters**

Up to this point, we have focused on the levels of knowledge Irish citizens feel they have of European affairs. This naturally raises the question as to what sources Irish citizens use to obtain information about EU matters. Eurobarometer 78 has collected data on the channels by which citizens learn about EU political matters<sup>13</sup>. Figure 8 shows that European matters are accessed by Irish people mostly via television, with 75% of respondents mentioning this channel. This is in line with the EU as a whole, where 78% of EU citizens mentioned television. There is a substantial gap of 24 percentage points to the next channel used by Irish respondents, namely radio. As noted in Eurobarometer 76, Irish citizens are much more likely than their European counterparts to consume political information in respect of the EU via radio, with 51% of Irish respondents citing this source, compared to an EU average of only 34%. A similar number of Irish respondents stated that the press was their source of information for EU political matters, above the EU average of 44%.

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<sup>13</sup> Source: EB78. QE5: “Where do you get most of your news on European political matters?”



**Figure 8:** Use of media channels to consume information on European political matters: Ireland and EU 27 (%)  
Source of data: EB78.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the penetration of the Internet in Ireland, only 23% of Irish respondents cited use of the Internet as their source of information for EU political matters. Thus, it is clear that what could be described as the traditional channels of communication, namely television, radio, and the press, still dominate in terms of dissemination of political information in respect of EU matters in Ireland. The potential of the Internet as a source of information for citizens, at least in Ireland, has yet to be fully realised.

## 6.2 Irish attitudes towards media coverage of European issues

Eurobarometer 78 also asked respondents two questions measuring citizens' attitudes towards the media coverage of European issues in their respective countries. The first asks whether citizens believe certain media sources cover EU matters too much, the right amount, or too little<sup>14</sup>. The second question focuses on respondents' views about each media channel's objectivity with respect to their coverage of EU matters<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Source: EB78. QE10.1: "Generally speaking, do you think that the (NATIONALITY) ... talk(s) too much, about the right amount or too little about the EU?"

<sup>15</sup> Source: EB78. QE11.1: "Do you think that the (NATIONALITY) ... present(s) the EU too positively, objectively, or too negatively?"

Table 7 details respondents' assessments of the level of coverage of European matters by different media channels. The first observation to be made is that a majority of Irish citizens with respect to all three main media channels feel that these mediums cover EU matters a sufficient amount. This is not surprising – the economic crisis in Ireland is so intertwined with the EU, it was to be expected that Europe would occupy a salient position in the media. However, between one fifth and one quarter of Irish citizens would like these channels to cover EU matters even more. Only between 12 and 14% of respondents felt that the Irish media covered EU matters 'too much'. The assessments of Irish citizens are broadly in line with the EU averages on these measures.

**Table 7:** Assessments of level of coverage of European matters by media channel: Ireland Autumn 2012 (%)

		<i>Media channel</i>		
		Television	Radio	Press
<i>Assessment of level of coverage of European matters</i>	Too much	14	12	12
	Enough	51	51	57
	Too little	26	26	20
	Don't know	9	11	11
	Total	100	100	100

*Source of data:* EB78.

Table 8 examines Irish respondents' assessments of the objectivity of their media's coverage of EU matters. What emerges from the data is a similar picture that we observed with respect to attitudes regarding the amount of coverage of EU affairs. Firstly, a majority of citizens clearly consider that all the three main channels of media report EU matters objectively (58% think this with respect to television and radio, 56% with respect to the press). Secondly, between 10-12% of respondents rate the Irish media's coverage of European affairs to be 'too positive', while 15-16% considering it to be 'too negative'. Again, these figures are broadly in line with EU averages.

**Table 8:** Assessments of objectivity of coverage of European affairs by media channel: Ireland Autumn 2012 (%)

		<i>Media channel</i>		
		Television	Radio	Press
<i>Assessment of media channel objectivity EU affairs coverage</i>	Too positive	12	11	10
	Objective	58	58	56
	Too negative	15	15	16
	Don't know	15	16	18
	Total	100	100	100

*Source of data:* EB78.

## 7. Conclusions

With 2013 deemed the European Year of Citizens, Eurobarometer 78 focused on citizenship, the European Citizens Initiative, knowledge of EU matters, and where Europeans obtain their political information on EU matters from. The context for Eurobarometer 78 in Ireland was marked by extensive Europeanization of issues, as evidenced by Ireland's continued adherence to an EU/IMF programme, the quarterly arrival of the 'Troika', the on-going discussions (now completed) with the European Central Bank over the promissory note, and the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Ireland's abortion policy.

It is clear that a sense of European citizenship is quite widespread among Irish people, with 69% of Irish respondents indicating they feel some degree of EU citizenship. Looking deeper, a sense of EU citizenship in Ireland is marginally increased by age: those who are older tend to feel a greater sense of EU citizenship. It is substantially increased by the extent of participation in education: the longer an Irish respondent has remained in full-time education, the more likely they are to feel a sense of EU citizenship. A sense of EU citizenship is also strongly linked to individuals' personal sense of knowledge of EU matters. Interpreting the latter finding, though, is tricky given that the direction of causality is unclear. It could be that a sense of citizenship inspires people to go and seek knowledge about the EU; alternatively, greater levels of knowledge of the EU may intensify a sense of EU citizenship; the best we can say on the basis of the data to hand is that the relationship is probably reciprocal but further analysis is needed on this issue.

The Lisbon Treaty introduced a mechanism by which citizens can have a direct influence on policy through a petition of one million citizens to the European Commission to initiate policy in areas of EU competence. Eurobarometer 78 shows that Irish citizens are amongst the Europeans most likely to say they would consider using the Initiative, with a third of Irish respondents saying they were 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to do so. However, 45% of Irish citizens are indifferent to the Initiative, saying they are unlikely to take it up – although it should be noted that figure is substantially lower than the EU average of nearly 70%. A fifth of Irish citizens said they had no opinion of the Initiative, perhaps indicating a lack of knowledge on the issue.

Eurobarometer 78 examined subjective levels of knowledge in Ireland. Ireland was shown to score relatively highly from a cross-national perspective, ranking in the top four Member States on both measures. Focusing on individual levels of subjective knowledge, Eurobarometer 78 revealed that women feel they have far less knowledge of EU matters than men. Education was also shown to have a strong relationship with feelings of knowledge: the longer a respondent remains in education, the more likely they are to feel knowledgeable about the EU.

The analysis also showed that there is a strong correlation between feeling like an EU citizen, and feeling confident about knowing EU matters. In terms of the implications of these observations, it does indicate that the politicians and policy makers whose objective it is to increase knowledge about EU matters among Irish people should concentrate their attentions on females, individuals who have less education, and those who take a cautious approach to the idea of being an EU citizen.

In summary, the findings presented in this report suggest that politicians and policy makers whose objective it is to increase knowledge about EU matters among Irish people should concentrate their attention on women, on individuals who have less education, and on those who take a cautious approach to the idea of being an EU citizen. The implication for policymakers and communicators seeking to further develop a sense of EU citizenship is to nurture this feeling, while at the same time seeking to increase citizens' knowledge of EU affairs – given that the relationship between feelings towards EU citizenship and knowledge of EU affairs is strong and is likely to be reciprocal, this would seem to be quite a good case for placing an each-way bet.