

Supplementary written evidence—Professor Simon Hix, LSE (VEU0015)

As requested at the public evidence session yesterday, I have looked at the latest Eurobarometer public opinion data on “knowledge of the EU”. The most recent survey for which the data is publicly available is from the “standard” Eurobarometer survey (EB83.3) that was conducted in May 2015 ([link](#)). The survey interviewed approximately 1,000 citizens in each member state, properly sampled, including 1,306 in the UK.

To test “knowledge” of the EU amongst the public, the survey included the following question:

"For each of the following statements about the EU could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false [Options: True / False / Don't Know]

1. The EU currently consists of 28 Member States
2. The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State
3. Switzerland is a Member State of the EU"

Two simple ways of analysing the responses to this question are to look at: (1) the percentage of citizens in each member state who answered *at least one question correctly*; and (2) the percentage of citizens in each member state who answered *all three questions correctly*. The results are shown in Table 1 (weighted by the appropriate statistical sample weights).

Table 1. Knowledge of the EU in May 2015, by Member State

Member state	At least 1 correct answer (%)	Rank 1	All 3 correct answers (%)	Rank 2	Overall Rank
Luxembourg	98	1	54	3	1
Slovenia	95	5	66	1	2
Croatia	95	6	55	2	3
Greece	97	3	51	5	4
Czech Republic	95	8	49	6	5
Malta	94	10	54	4	6
Austria	98	2	44	13	7
Slovakia	94	9	48	9	8
Germany	96	4	39	16	9
Sweden	95	7	42	14	10
Bulgaria	93	14	48	8	11
Denmark	93	12	46	10	12
Hungary	94	11	45	11	13
Lithuania	92	18	48	7	14
Portugal	91	19	45	12	15
Finland	93	15	38	17	16
Cyprus	93	16	38	18	17
Belgium	92	17	37	19	18
The Netherlands	93	13	30	25	19
Romania	88	24	40	15	20
Poland	90	21	35	22	21
Italy	89	23	35	21	22
Ireland	87	25	36	20	23
Estonia	89	22	31	24	24
France	90	20	29	26	25
Spain	81	28	31	23	26
Latvia	86	26	25	28	27
United Kingdom	84	27	29	27	28

In short, the latest opinion poll data suggest that, averaged across these two ways of measuring knowledge of the EU, UK citizens are less knowledgeable about the EU than the citizens of any other member state: 84% of the UK public could answer only 1 of the three questions correctly, and only 27% could answer all three questions correctly.

We can also look breakdown the sample by age group, which results in the following percentages for UK citizens (Table 2).

Table 2. Knowledge of the EU in May 2015, by Age Group in the UK

Age group	At least 1 correct answer (%)	All 3 correct answers (%)
15-24 years	80	18
25-39 years	80	22
40-54 years	89	33
55 years and older	87	33

In other words, these numbers suggest that older people in the UK are more knowledgeable about the EU than younger people. For example, only 18% of 15-24 years olds could answer all three questions correctly as compared to 33% of people over the age of 40.

But, will providing more information about the EU make people more pro-European, as many Eurosceptics fear? The evidence from this survey does not support that assumption. Another question in the May 2015 Eurobarometer survey asked people about whether they had a positive or negative image of the EU:

“In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image? [Options: Very positive / Fairly positive / Neutral / Fairly negative / Very negative / Don’t Know]”

Table 3. Knowledge of the EU in May 2015, by image of the EU

Image of the EU	At least 1 correct answer (%)	All 3 correct answers (%)
Very positive EU image	86	41
Fairly positive EU image	88	36
Neutral EU image	83	22
Fairly negative EU image	89	31
Very negative EU image	92	33

It is not possible with these data to clearly identify whether providing more information about the EU leads people to be more pro-EU or anti-EU, or whether having strong views on the positive or negative side leads people to be better informed. Nevertheless, as Table 3 shows, there is suggestive evidence that British people who have a more negative image of

the EU are just as likely to be as well informed about the EU as people who have a more positive image of the EU: 86% of British people who have a 'very positive EU image' answered at least 1 question correctly, compared to 92% of people who have a 'very negative EU image'. Also, 41% who have a 'very positive EU image' answered all three questions correctly, compared to 33% who have a 'very negative EU image'. In other words, learning more about the EU may be just as likely to lead people to have a negative view of the EU as a positive view.

1 December 2015