

Submitted as feedback to the Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland Interim Report – 1 December 2020

Switzerland has over a century's experience of referendums. I choose to take part in federal referendums; these usually take place two or three times a year.

I get information and a ballot in the post. The information is in the form of a very soberly written booklet. This sets out the question to be answered, the federal executive's recommendation and their reasoning, and the results of a vote in parliament. Further, the booklet includes the reasoning of the promoters of the referendum.

The ballot is a slip of paper. On it there is a question; the equivalent in a "border referendum" would look something like:

*Do you agree to the proposal that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland should be united?*

To the right of the question there is a box. The voter then has to write *yes* or *no* in the space.

The ballots do not put two proposals (for and against) and ask for an *X*.

The ballot is then placed in an envelope. The voter must sign a declaration and enclose this with the ballot-containing envelope in an outer envelope, and send it off in the post. The outer envelope has a window; the declaration is on the back of the address form, so when folded the other way, the address of the voting office is visible. (The Swiss, being very money conscious, reuse the envelope that the referendum material came in — it's specially designed for this purpose.)

I'd suggest that when it comes to the mechanics of the referendum that the Working Group ask for more information from the Swiss Embassy in London or Dublin.