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I have read the background information provided on the above proposed research ideas and have the following observations to make regarding some of them.

- 1 The voting age should not be lowered to 16. As someone who had an unusually deep interest in politics from about the age of 12 I firmly believe that voting at 16 is not justified on many levels. Immaturity in life, stake in society at 16 is not sufficient, school and exam issues, peer pressure and other issues which rightly belong to young people are all indicators that say 16 year olds should not vote in elections. Because Scotland has opted for the lower voting age, most likely to demonstrate a differentiation from Westminster, does not, in my opinion, mean that it was the correct decision. Also, Scottish politics had an overriding push for independence which was thought more likely to be enhanced by giving votes to 16 year olds.
- 2 By-elections should be retained at all costs. People have the right to vote for a new TD at a by-election. The examples of the Euro and local election systems are not relevant to this issue. The current system works well - don't meddle with it - it works well - leave it alone.
- 3 The electoral register should always be revised and kept up to date at all times. This is so obvious and logic that it needs no discussion or debate. Just keep it updated.
- 4 I was one of those who advocated in my submission on the recent constituency redraw that we should have more four, five and six seat constituencies and less with three seats. This was especially needed in Dublin. The terms of reference ruled out any six-seat constituency thus tying the hands of the Commission. Larger constituencies are more democratic and reflect more accurately the wishes of the people in an election. However, I firmly believe that the 20,000 to 30,000 limit in the Constitution should be changed, by referendum, to allow for larger numbers of electors per TD in order to contain the overall numbers of TD's at around current levels.
- 5 Education in politics, civil society and the value of democracy should be taught in all schools up to leaving cert. Programmes developed should enable students to value their vote when they get to use it at 18 years of age.

Peter McDonnell