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Sent: Friday 5 January 2024 20:19
To: ELC Research
Subject: Draft Research Programme – Feedback Form

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Hello,

The Commission's website has eaten my text, so here's a copy

Kind regards

Des Gunning
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[REDACTED]

1. What is your view on the five proposed research strands? Are there amendments or additions you would suggest?

Will the Commission address shibboleths?

e.g. 'The Irish and Maltese parliamentary electoral systems are the same' . But if so, then why does Malta have no unaligned legislators while Ireland's population of same has grown from two in 1982 to almost thirty today? If the electoral systems are 'the same', then are the electors really so different?

Another shibboleth: The Republic of Ireland, as is now, uses the PR-STV/msc system (as Éire dis previously and Saorstát Éireann originally) at the dictate of the Imperial parliament in Westminster. Did the irish legislature have no 'agency' in the matter? What of Article 2 of the Saorstat Éireann Constitution whic provided that " All powers of government and all authority, legislative, executive, and judicial, in Ireland are derived from the people of Ireland . . . ". Does that and Article 6 of Bunreacht na hÉireann include the parliamentary electoral system?

I mention these because both these shibboleths were broadcast recently on a popular podcast, and the Electoral Commission featured in the following instalment.

2. Which of the research questions under section 4 would you consider most important and why?

They're all important.

3. Are there additional research projects that you consider important to promote and enhance Ireland's democracy and electoral events? If yes, please specify?

I think the Commission might look at how the impact of our electoral system, independent of voter preferences, has evolved over the history of the state under its three iterations to date. For example, until 1982 (when there were two) non-aligned TDs were rare. Since then the number has increased at every election. Currently, one can be elected a TD with, I think, .65% [two thirds of one percent] of the national turnout and I think that's going to decrease to .57% as the number of TDs increases. If the increase in Dáil numbers is now, constitutionally, a 'perpetual motion machine' then the threshold will decrease with every election. Individual candidates with such tiny mandates become less a product of elector choice **in the general sense** and more products of the **parliamentary** electoral system: the less attention they pay to the whole and the more to the niche, to more likely they are to have careers in the legislature, a body that needs a critical mass of legislators if it is to **deliver on the electorate's expectations**.

Given the vectors involved (if any) does a perpetual attachment to PR-STV with multiple seat constituencies "enhance Ireland's democracy"

In particular, is the multi-seat constituency a sacred cow? If so, does its maintenance generate social costs? And if so, are those costs proportionate **and who bears them?**

Will the Commission consider the multi-seat constituency's benefits and its disadvantages, if any?

The multi-seat constituency gives us proportionality, but are there downsides to its use? Does it, for example, 'de-centre' the attention of legislators, especially those in executive office. It might be interesting, for example, to canvass the views of people who have served in the past simultaneously as cabinet minister, party leader and constituency TD, in addition to normal personal and social roles within family and community.

Would international comparisons show that democracies elected by the 'List' form of PR-STV tend to have better infrastructure than we do, with our multi-seat constituencies? If that is so, is the electoral system a factor?

Will the Commission look into whether international comparisons suggest that the 'List' form of PR-STV better serves and promotes the common good of the whole nation (because it is whole nations that consume infrastructure) and enhance dignity and freedom of the individual, contributing to the attainment **of** social order? I think this could be done by measuring parliamentary electoral systems against 'outputs of government'. How many counties with 'List' systems, for example, continue to pump raw sewage into fresh and coastal waters as Ireland does with its multi-seat constituencies?

4. Are there any other comments or observations that you wish to make regarding An Coimisiún's research programme?

Since we have multi-seat constituencies, shouldn't it be a spoiled vote to select fewer preferences than there are seats to be filled? I think it should, on the grounds that such a vote is disrespectful of proportionality and, as behaviour contrary to the spirit of PR-STV/msc, is undermining or corrosive in terms of the principles the system is designed to uphold.

The state spends tens of millions of euro per annum running a Citizens Information Service. Does that service have something to offer in respect of voter registration and the integrity of the register, voter education (on the Active Citizenship/Voter Education model perhaps) and voter participation / encouraging and supporting turn-out?

Citizens Integration Service: Is there a case for an 'adult education' approach generally around questions like 'Why have a voting system?' 'What merits does democracy have that other forms of government don't have?' 'Has every parliament there's ever been survived? And if not why?' 'What is the fundamental unit of a parliamentary democracy?'

END