

Subject: FW: New submission from Research Form

From: The Electoral Commission <noreply@electoralcommission.eu>

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To: ELC Research <research@electoralcommission.ie>

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

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is pleased to see the commission's commitment to research as part of the Electoral Reform Act of 2022. In relation to Strand A: Longitudinal Survey Research and Data Collection, the Department has worked in conjunction with the Central Statistics Office since 2006 on Growing Up in Ireland, Ireland's National Longitudinal Study of Children. Growing Up in Ireland consists of two different age cohorts, each of which have completed multiple waves of surveys; Cohort '98, made up of young people born in 1998, has completed survey waves at ages 9, 13, 17, 20 and is currently undertaking fieldwork at age 25 years. Cohort '08 is comprised of young people born in 2008 and has completed several waves starting at age 9 months, with the age 17 survey due to be piloted later in 2024. A third birth cohort, Cohort '24, will commence this year. Growing Up in Ireland serves as a great example of how to design, implement and undertake longitudinal survey research in Ireland and information regarding every aspect of Growing Up in Ireland can be found at www.growingup.gov.ie. Additionally, the more recent waves for Cohort '98, particularly at age 20, collect information on the young person's political activities and the findings could be useful for informing the commission's work in relation to young people and children.

As part of Young Ireland, the new policy framework for children and young people, the Department is leading out on the development of a cross-government research programme for children and young people. The commission would be very welcome to contribute to the development of this research programme.

In regard to Strand D: Education, Public Engagement and Inclusion, the objective of increasing the inclusivity of Ireland's democratic system is greatly welcomed, especially the focus on researching how to support and increase political participation for those in the Travelling Community, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities. DCEDIY would emphasise the importance of involving these groups in any consultations regarding this research and throughout the research process via collaborative research. Collaborative research is research in which the people who are likely to be impacted by the research are directly involved in making decisions about, and conducting, the research. It is crucial that these groups have a say as to what research is being conducted and how it is carried out, to

make the resulting actions more successful. Equally important is that their experiences be heard and valued; research that is undertaken from the outside and not inclusive of the group in question only perpetuates the other-ing of the group, diminishes their own experiences and more often than not leads to inadequate policies and solutions. Research aimed at increasing inclusion is of the utmost importance, but is crucial that inclusion is not just the ends of the research, but also the means. The benefits of collaborative research include greater anticipation of potential issues, more authentic data and more equitable and effective policy outcomes. For reference, we would direct An Coimisiún to DCEDiY's recent webinar "Importance of Inclusive Research - Strengthening the citizen's voice in policy making," which included a presentation from the National Disability Authority. This webinar and the corresponding presentations can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/f11f2-the-importance-of-inclusive-research-strengthening-the-citizens-voice-in-policy-making/>.

This idea of collaborative research is equally applicable for the research focussing on the barriers to participation for young people, women, and other underrepresented groups. In terms of the inclusion of young people in the political and electoral system, we would like to bring to the attention of An Coimisiún the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020, available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9128db-national-strategy-on-children-and-young-peoples-participation-in-dec/>. The Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making-Action Plan 2023-2028 has been developed in 2023 as a successor to the Participation Strategy and is due for publication.

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

Of the research questions under Section 4, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth considers Strand D: Education, Public Engagement and Inclusion, concerning the voting age and democratic and electoral participation, to be the most important. Research that looks into the political engagement of young people and how best to provide a political voice to young people, including minors, is greatly welcomed. It is important that we understand how our young generations can best begin to participate in the electoral system and begin to shape their own future via democratic elections. Additionally, research into how to encourage political participation for under-reached groups is very important to facilitate ways to include as many voices as possible and ensure that those groups feel represented politically. An Coimisiún may be interested in the section on "Voting and Activism" in the Growing Up in Ireland publication The Lives of 20-Year-Olds: Making the Transition to Adulthood (Cohort '98), available at <https://www.growingup.gov.ie/pubs/The-Lives-of-20-Year-Olds.pdf>. Of the 35% of Cohort '98 eligible to vote in the 2016 election, only 51% were registered to vote while only 35% of those eligible to vote actually cast a vote. It is important for research to investigate why voting participation for young people seems to be so low and how to increase it, as these young people will have opinions on political matters that affect them and these opinions should be heard. Additionally, young people with parents with at least a degree were 16% more likely to be registered to vote than young people whose parents had lower second-level education or below; while young people with a family income in the highest income quintile were 14% more likely to be registered to vote than young people with a family income in the lowest income quintile. An Coimisiún could usefully address these inequalities during research to understand why they are occurring and inform policies to reduce the disparity across social groups.

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

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth wishes to ensure that An Coimisiún is considering research regarding voting rights and registration processes

among people in international protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTP), as Ireland has seen a substantial increase in the number of people arriving under International Protection and serving as beneficiaries of temporary protection.

The Department's Research and Evaluation team can be contacted at research@equality.gov.ie for any further information.

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Are you replying as an Individual or representing an Organisation?

I represent an Organisation

Name of Organisation

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth