Subject: FW: New submission from Research Form

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

The strands are broad and all encompassing which is welcomed. The aims of Strand A / longitudinal study to capture views and experiences over time is appreciated. I presume the data collected from the study will be used to feed into electoral matters with each election cycle? For example, how we can enhance how elections are run and how voting is made easier and more accessible to all.

Strand C - really important as related to The Electoral Commission's role in 'cleaning up' the electoral register. There is a major issue with voter duplication and this elimination will take time. From our feedback as an organisation (adult literacy/adult education) there is a real issue with those who have experienced addiction and incarceration or anyone with a chaotic life as they can have no records of the places they lived in.

Also - as polling stations open 7-10 and if people don't remove themselves from register in a different electoral area, is it possible they could vote twice?
At the moment, the responsibility lies with the individual to ensure they are registered but often if people lack skills and confidence to be able to do this themselves.

Another point that relates to Strand C is how well trained presiding officers are in counting votes and how this information is made public and transparent to all. How are they recruited and training/ongoing training? I think this could relate to information campaigns on the PRSTV system - to explain to all bow the votes are counted. It could be done in a really interesting way - 'a day in the life of a presiding officer/returning officer', etc.

Strand E - is an ambitious and very open strand but is an interesting way of looking at how we can be proud of our electoral system - it would be great to create some positive stories of how voting made/makes a difference in people's lives. Now more than ever we need positive stories of how politics and voting can make a difference for people.

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

I think clarity is needed under the point on 'residency and voting'. There is a lot of misinformation about this point - people think you have to have lived in Ireland in

from the previous Sept of for 6 months in order to vote. 'Ordinarily' resident is a term in the tax code but not in the electoral code. I think many people who know elements of the voting process would also find this quite confusing, so an information campaign on this point or

even simply the 'who can vote in which election' would be welcomed.

The points under Strand D - public engagement and inclusion, are really vital. There is a lot of interest in politics and joining youth branches of parties in Higher Education but this is not always the case in Further Education/ETB colleges or indeed in secondary . Could there be an opportunity to have a 'young Green party' for example in all areas of education as a way of explaining politics and that it becomes the fabric of education/people's lives and less about 'a theme adults care about'. Adult literacy is also a barrier as well to migrants/those with poor language but who can vote in local elections.

I think a lot of work under Strand D is needed to capture why people do/don't vote and address the reasons why/why not. The findings should be shared with the public.

Strand B - on electoral law and specifically constituency boundaries - it would be great for it to be clear to the public how these decisions are made (in line with census/population) but also what is happening with changes to local authority areas for local elections? Do the public have a say on how those changes are made (in constitution)?

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

Better voter education as a whole for all - not just those with literacy issues, but also within marginalised groups - travelers, migrants etc.
The system of registering and voting needs to be clearer needs to happen, and also for the creation of content in different languages.

There is a lot of information about TDS, councillors and senators already elected - it is needed also for similar to be made available for potential candidates once they are approved to run for election.

Positive stories on why voting counts! Examples of someone who won by a few votes and who created a positive change or even some ideas on how trustworthy our electoral system is compared with other democracies? This might serve to bring faith in our electoral system. It would be great to make a short film on everyone involved in an electoral event!

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

Here are some general comments from a focus group in our organisations that may make voting more accessible to all. These relate to the topics in the research programme:

Automatic registration when people turn 18/16 is a good idea.
School to run role plays on how to vote and make it part of the class to register. Have a set registration day.
Voting in Embassies abroad for Irish elections - for those living abroad
Create a campaign to target those voting for the first time
The Electoral Commission could find the creation of easy reads/books explaining the whole system
A plain English ballot paper/other material - for those with literacy issues/migrants
Creating a video - showing the steps to voting/or postal voting
Create videos 'a day in life' or councillor/TD so we know exactly what they do when we vote for them
Election posters - should be retained but limit the number per candidate and have them in a central location in a town/city/local authority area
Highlight how to vote more on social media - not just in a run up to an election
Community representatives - to help people know how to vote and who to vote for - like a

community welfare officer who can help in local area

More support - people are disillusioned and wonder will their vote make a difference

ads on TV - especially before popular programmes, such as " I'm a Celebrity"

Complicated language on occasion - use plain English

People are more likely to vote when they have a stake in it, for example young people returned from England to vote in the repeal and the marriage equality.

Young people don't really understand the political system but are engaged - more voter education! - but also show how the personal is political

Compulsory voting - focus group this idea

Pilot a voter education course and see how it helps!

Provide multiple ways to vote - online, using a QR code, etc. Once it is all tied to PPSN number

early education - in schools

Challenge fake news and misinformation - critical

Group discussion - participation is key

overcome the attitudes towards negative stories of politics and voting

It would be easier if people were automatically registered .

Get message across that every vote is important

Explain time-frame of when elections happening is important

More creative ways to reach people not just booklet in the door (podcast??)

Open space for open conversations and developing critical thinking from a young age and at all levels of education.

Name

Fionnaigh Connaughton-OConnor

Email

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Are you replying as an Individual or representing an Organisation?

I represent an Organisation

Name of Organisation

DALC (Dublin Adult Learning Centre, 3 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1.