1. Presentation of the evaluator

I was appointed to the Chair of Politics at University College Dublin in 2009, the longest established chair of political science in Ireland. Prior to that I worked at the University of Manchester in the UK where I was Professor (and in my final years there Head of Social Sciences). I am completing my final year as Head of the School of Politics and International Relations at UCD. I am also the President of the Political Studies Association of Ireland, and I have just been appointed to the position of research director of the Irish government’s Constitutional Convention whose work begins in January (and which will be following deliberative norms in its operation).

I am a long-standing expert in the study of electoral systems, political parties, and parliamentary representation, and more recently I have developed a research interest in the empirical study of deliberation, particularly as applied to debates over political reform. In short, my research interests overlap quite considerably with the focus of this project.

I am the editor of Party Politics, and of the Oxford University Press series on ‘Comparative Politics’. I am the author/co-author of: 5 books; 10 edited books; 37 articles in refereed journals; 42 chapters in books; 11 other publications; and 103 formal conference papers. To date I have accumulated €1.2m in research grants; and I have supervised 10 PhD students (9 completed; 1 ongoing).

I am acquainted with Professor Karvonen, simply because we share common research interests and have therefore encountered each other at international conferences. In 2006 I was invited by him to be the external examiner for the PhD of Krister Lundell (that is referred to in the documentation), which was passed without correction and with high recommendation by the panel members. I have also recently met Dr Herne, who participated in a conference I organized on the Practice of Deliberation in Dublin a month or so ago.

I have not co-written any scientific publication with any member of the team (senior or otherwise) at any point.

Apart from the PhD collaboration I refer to above and occasional meetings at international conferences I have had no scientific collaboration with any of the researchers (senior or otherwise) in this project. Nor am I aware of any research groups in my University collaborating with the assessed group.
2. The research plan, realization and the future

This is a project centred on the role of citizens in contemporary democracies, a topic that a growing number of us have shifted our research agendas to study. It may seem an obvious point, but one of the most impressive things about this project is the fact that this team were so ahead of the curve in developing this research agenda – years before many of the rest of us.

The research project is separated into two parts: (1) an exploration of the extent to which there has been a transition to what they refer to as an ‘Audience Democracy’; and (2) its consequences for citizens, which is where, among other things but particularly so, deliberation comes in. As is shown in this report – and in the comments on previous reviews of this Centre – most progress has been made on the first part, and it is the second half that is likely to be the bigger focus of attention in the coming period.

It is good to see the Centre zeroing in on what is probably the most significant question in the empirical study of deliberation, namely: how to scale it up. The basic problem with mini-publics is the fact that they are mini and therefore have limited impact on the wider body polity. There are all sorts of imaginative schemes that have been proposed (e.g. Fishkin’s deliberation day; or Dryzek and Goodin’s notions of ‘going global’), some more fanciful (and thereby of limited realistic applicability) than others. The bottom line remains that, to be relevant nationally, deliberation needs to resonate with the mass public, and the only way to credibly assess this is via mass survey data. This makes the role of this Centre in leading on the Finnish National Election Study all the more significant as they have the resource to examine this question. I also like the efforts being made to examine the potential of IT and telecommunications as a means of extending the reach of deliberation.

A second main strand of interest in the empirical study of deliberation is how to assess its quality, with probably the most exciting work on this (notably in developing DQI and other measures) being done by the likes of Bächtiger at Bern and Dryzek and colleagues at the ANU. The fact that this Centre is so closely integrated with these colleagues bodes well for making important advances in the near future.

These are exactly the areas that I would have expected to see the Centre focus its efforts currently and in the near future and I have no suggestions to add to what is an already full and impressive list of ongoing and developing research. This is world-class quality research, which will continue to place this Centre on the map internationally.

3. Scientific publications and other results

The publication profile (and related outputs) is very impressive, especially for a unit that has only been in operation for (by academic standards) a relatively short period of time. According to the questionnaire responses, to date the publications have included: 19 research monographs (authored or edited); 50 peer-reviewed journal articles; 20 book chapters or conference proceedings; and 48 other scientific publications. In the mix are publications in outlets entirely appropriate for the
research themes of this group: leading book publishers such as Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan; leading (and highly ISI-cited) discipline journals such as *European Journal of Political Research*, *International Political Science Review*, *Political Studies* and *West European Politics*; and leading (and also highly ISI-cited) field journals such as *American Review of Public Administration*, *Electoral Studies*, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, and *Party Politics*. There is also good evidence of a healthy regularity in the rate of quality publications, as shown for instance by the journal articles: 9 in 2008, 12 in 2009, 7 in 2010, 14 in 2011, and to date 7 in 2012.

Thank you for forwarding samples of their work, which I read with interest. I already have a well-thumbed copy of Karvonen's *Personalization of Politics* in my book collection. This is a very good study – and deservedly much cited – that tracks a trend in how politics is ever increasingly focused on the individual (as opposed, say, to the party), both in terms of the presidentialization of party leaderships (a campaign change phenomenon) and in terms of a greater emphasis on parliamentary candidates in our electoral systems (an institutional change phenomenon). Of the other pieces submitted, the truly stand out ones – at least for me – were the papers on deliberation in practice, notably: the papers on the nuclear power deliberative experiment reported in Grönlund et al. in the *European Political Science Review* and Setälä et al. in *Political Studies*.

It would be good to know what strategy there is to publish in the truly front-rank journals (e.g. *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, or *British Journal of Political Science*). It could well be that the team members have been submitting work to such outlets and have not yet succeeded in having papers accepted (though we’re not told about the efforts made or, indeed, about papers out for review). But I wouldn’t attach undue importance to this issue at this juncture. The project is still relatively new; its reputation is well on the way to being established, but there is always a time lag before article referees and journal editors wake up to this. Plus, of course, there is the plain fact that the focus for the most part on small countries always adds an additional barrier to be overcome (something that I am all too familiar with myself!). In short, I’m not unduly concerned about the relative lack of front-rank journal articles to date, but I would suggest that this is something to look out for in a future review.

The other set of outputs that stand out as highly impressive relate to the number of dissertations completed under the supervision of team members: 7 PhDs (very impressive especially by what I understand to be the social science norm in Nordic countries); 5 Licentiate; and 128 Masters. These figures speak volumes for the efforts made to bring on a new generation of political science scholars.

### 4. Scientific activities, especially international cooperation

There is plenty of evidence of a team actively engaged in international scientific cooperation. Especially notable are the following. First, there are regular contacts with colleagues in other areas of excellence internationally, most notably, of course, the team at the Australian National University and the University of Bern, both renowned areas of excellence in the field of deliberation. Similarly, there is plenty of
evidence of reciprocal return visits to Åbo Akademi University by leading scholars, including scholars from those same research areas of excellence. These sorts of research visits show all the right signs of cross-fertilization. They also signal the growing international recognition of this research unit.

Another signal of this is the large number of international conferences and symposia organized by members of the research team, most notably their hosting of the Nordic Political Science Association annual conference in 2011 attended by 230 delegates; and the recent – and highly regarded – international conference on ‘Deliberative Democracy in Action’ (clearly meeting one of the recommendations of the previous evaluation of this Centre).

Other notable scientific contributions that stand out for me are: (1) the leadership roles provided by members of the team (e.g. directing the Finnish National Election Study, and the Nordic Network on Elections and Democracy); and (2) the key links made to such international projects as The True European Voter, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and the European Consortium for Political Research standing group on Democratic Innovations.

A final, and to my mind vital, piece of evidence of scientific activity (and also of seeking to make the Centre sustainable over the longer term) is the success members of the Centre have had in attracting additional research grants – by my reckoning to the tune of some €3,714,500. In the social sciences that figure is impressive by anyone’s standards.

I would have liked to see evidence of more effort to integrate with international projects in similar or cognate areas. For instance, the report makes reference to the Belgian PARTIREP project, though largely for the purpose of referring to how the research interests of the groups overlap. But, given that there is such considerable overlap, I would have expected more evidence of efforts to integrate and cross-fertilize research across both groups. For that matter, what about other projects of similar import such as the Making Electoral Democracy Work project directed by André Blais at the University of Montreal – which includes a heavy focus on experimental research – or more recently Pippa Norris’s Electoral Integrity project (based at Harvard and Sydney universities)? I note the Electoral Studies paper co-authored with Blais, so clearly the potential is there to develop cross-centre links.

5. The research group

By international standards, this is a relatively small group, with a healthy mix of senior, up and coming, and junior colleagues. I can see no evidence of anyone not pulling their weight, and what is particularly noteworthy are the efforts to publish as teams of researchers: there is no evidence of lone scholarly activity, which would be the death knell of a research centre.

As mentioned in the first section of this report, I know (or know of) some members of the Centre, but not all. The supplied written work has given me a good opportunity to become better acquainted with the quality of research on deliberation in practice produced by Grönlund and Herne. This is top quality research, as shown by the
quality of the journals that they’re publishing in, but also by the links they’ve cultivated with the Australian and Swiss centres of excellence in this field.

Karvonen is a leading international scholar, most notably in the field of party and representative politics, and so exactly the right person to lead this initiative. The only other members whose work I am aware of – and who I also rate very highly – are Anckar (a leading comparativist) and Lundell (a rising star in the field of electoral system research – and, based on his *Government and Opposition* paper, with an interesting new line on government accountability).

They have an impressive international advisory board, at least half of whom I know and rate very highly, and – a point made in an earlier review with which I agree – it is impressive to see the efforts made to integrate the board in the research activities of the Centre.

The decision to integrate the disparate sections working on the project in Åbo Akademi University into a department of government and political science is a very welcome move and should help greatly in the long term aim of putting this centre on a more stable and self-sustainable path.

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To conclude, I am grateful for this opportunity to acquaint myself with the activities of this Centre. It has a significant international reputation: I was already well aware of it before being invited to provide this assessment. But now that I have had a chance to scrutinize their activities and outputs more closely, I am entirely satisfied that they fully live up to their reputation. They are producing work of the highest quality that brings great credit to your institution.