



# **THE ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS**

## **Formal response to the Call for Evidence on the Government's Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1. The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) was founded in 1987 and is the professional body representing the interests of electoral administrators in the United Kingdom. It is a non-governmental and non-partisan body and has some 1,750 members, the majority of whom are employed by local authorities to provide electoral registration and election services.

1.2. This paper sets out the AEA's comments on the issues raised in the Call for Evidence on the Government's Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union insofar as the Voting section is concerned. In accordance with the AEA's non-partisan and neutral position, this paper does not offer any views on the political implications raised in the Call for Evidence.

1.3. In essence, the AEA's comments relate only to the first question. Questions 2, 3 and 4 are not matters we would normally comment on. We have no other general points in response to question 5.

### **2. Comments in response to Question 1- "What are the benefits and drawbacks to the UK of the current division of responsibility between the EU and Member States at European Parliamentary elections"**

In terms of question 1, our view is that the current balance of competences is generally at the right level save for the following three issues.

#### **2.1. Information Exchange**

Our experience is that this overall process does not work in practice in respect of clearly identifying electors who have opted to vote in their "home" country. The reasons for this have been well rehearsed by Cabinet Office officials. In our view, a more robust system needs to be put in place or the matter should simply be left to ensuring that the appropriate sanctions for voting twice at the same election can be employed in each of the member states according to the laws adopted in those states.

## ***2.2. Day of Poll***

We believe firmly that the day of poll should remain a matter solely for member states. Any change to that arrangement would potentially cause confusion for the British electorate and probably lead to increased costs if the poll at European Parliamentary elections was not combined with polls at other elections due to be held in the same year as such elections.

## ***2.3. Close of the Poll/The Count***

The time for closing the poll on the last possible day for the election has an effect on the time at which the count can be held and, eventually, on the time the results can be announced. We recognise that the decision as to the time for closing the poll is a matter for individual states. However, "late" decisions can cause difficulties and additional costs in other states and particularly in the UK which is generally one hour behind the rest of Europe. We would suggest therefore that there should be a time limit as to when such a decision must be made, e.g. six months prior to the first day available for polling.

**John Turner**  
**Chief Executive**

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