

Redesigning Devolution: International Lessons for the UK

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

28 September 2012, 9.30 – 15.00

Institute for Government, 2 Carlton Gardens, London SW1Y 5AA

What lessons can the UK learn from devolved and federal democracies elsewhere in the world about how best to design a decentralised political system?

On 28 September, experts and practitioners from the UK, Canada, Spain and Belgium will address this question at an international conference at the Institute for Government in London, targeted at policy-makers and thinkers involved in debates about the future of devolution and the Union.

The political systems of the UK, Canada, Spain and Belgium reflect four very distinct constitutional models, each a different answer to the question of how to balance pressures for decentralisation with the interests of the country as a whole.

Each country offers lessons for how to design a territorial constitution, how to manage multinational diversity, how to share resources, and how central and sub-national governments can work together to solve collective problems. Further reform also remains on the agenda of each of these countries, and there is a powerful case for each to learn from each other as the reform process continues.

The Institute for Government is delighted to host this conference in partnership with the Québec Government Office in London, the Delegation of the Government of Catalonia to the UK, and the Representation of the Government of Flanders in the UK.

This conference will address three main themes:

Fiscal decentralisation: Agreeing upon the division of tax and spending powers in federal and devolved systems is fraught with difficulty. This session will compare the design of the Canadian and Spanish fiscal systems to the highly centralised UK model, at a time when greater fiscal autonomy for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is being widely debated.

Policy cooperation: All states must find ways to tackle policy challenges that cut across the division of powers between central and subnational governments, notably in relation to the economy and complex problems such as social exclusion and worklessness. With each of the four UK governments controlled by different parties, cooperation between governments seems more elusive than ever. Can best practice from overseas help the UK deal with this challenge?

Social citizenship: Multi-level states must manage the tension between the rights (or perceived rights) of all citizens to receive a certain level of public service and welfare provision, and the autonomy of each region to take policy decisions and allocate resources within its own sphere of competence. How do the different countries strike this balance?

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9.00 Arrival and registration (tea & coffee served)

9.30 **Introduction & welcome: Peter Riddell**, Director of the Institute for Government

9.40 **Fiscal Decentralisation: How to allocate resources and tax-raising powers**

Speakers from Scotland, Wales, Spain and Canada will discuss the division of fiscal powers between national and subnational governments at a time when further fiscal devolution in the UK is under serious consideration.

Albert Carreras, Secretary for Economy at the Government of Catalonia, and professor of Economics at UPF University, Barcelona

Professor Noel Lloyd, member of the Commission on Devolution in Wales, and former Vice-Chancellor, Aberystwyth University

Professor Alain Noël, Professor of Political Science, Université de Montréal, and member of the Commission on Fiscal Disequilibrium in Canada

Jeremy Purvis, leader of the Devolution Plus campaign in Scotland, and former Liberal Democrat finance spokesman in the Scottish Parliament

11.00 **Coffee break**

11.20 **Policy Cooperation: How to work together to solve shared problems**

This panel will discuss how well governments at different tiers work together to tackle challenges that cut across the divide between national and devolved policy responsibilities, such as fostering economic growth and improving complex social outcomes.

Luc van den Brande, former Minister-President of Flanders and President of the EU Committee of the Regions, currently vice-chairman of the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions

Liz Cameron, Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Professor Montserrat Guibernau, Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University of London

Alan Trench (chair), author of Devolution Matters blog, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, UCL Constitution Unit

12.40 **Lunch**

13.40 **Social Citizenship: How to find the right level of policy autonomy**

The final session will explore the tensions between policy autonomy for subnational governments, and public expectations that all citizens should receive a similar set of public services, issues that have come to the fore in the UK during controversies over 'postcode lotteries' and the free provision of university education, medical prescriptions and other services in Scotland and Wales but not England.

Professor Peter Bursens, Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Professor Alain G. Gagnon, Professor of Political Science at UQÀM (Université du Québec à Montréal), Canada

Professor Daniel Wincott, Cardiff University Law School, member of 'Citizenship After the Nation State' research project

Sir John Elvidge (chair), former Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, and Associate of the Institute for Government

15.00 **Closing comments**