**Overview**

**What does ‘balance of competences’ actually mean?**

It means examining the extent to which EU action affects the UK and analysing what that means for our country. It will look at how EU laws are put into place in the UK, what effect they have and where more EU activity could be to the national benefit or where less would be appropriate. This stemmed from a Coalition Commitment to examine the balance of EU competences.

**How will the review work?**

Substantive consultation and examination by Departments started last autumn, and reports on areas of competence will be published as the review progresses. Government departments will consult Parliament and its committees, business, civil society, EU and international organisations and stakeholders. The Devolved Administrations will also be consulted. Cabinet Office, in co-operation with the FCO, will coordinate the cross-Whitehall exercise to ensure a rigorous and consistent approach.

**Consultation**

**How do I contribute?**

As a representative or member of a professional interest group or as a member of the public you will have an opportunity to contribute evidence. The timing of these consultations is published on Departments’ websites at the start of their consultation. You will be able to follow this through the main website ([www.gov.uk/review-of-the-balance-of-competences](http://www.gov.uk/review-of-the-balance-of-competences)) which provides information on which competences are being examined at any given time and the timescales for contributing views on particular competences. Departments are also hosting a number of events and seminars where stakeholders will be invited to attend and contribute.

**Why should I contribute?**

This is one of the most extensive analysis of what the EU means for the UK ever undertaken. We are looking for people to contribute – the review will provide a constructive and serious contribution to the wider European debate about modernising, reforming and improving the EU.

**What sort of evidence are you looking for?**

We are looking for people to consider the advantages and disadvantages of EU action in a particular field, or to provide evidence on how the national interest might be served by action being taken at the same or different level. Businesses, for example, might want to consider the impact of the current balance of an EU competence (e.g. internal market rules, or taxation). The review will look at the scope of all of the EU’s competences (the power to act in a particular area) as they affect the UK and how they are used.

**How do you want to receive this evidence?**

Written responses are encouraged, but we are also flexible in how we receive evidence. Please contact the relevant department from the main website for more information on how you can feed in.

**How will my evidence be used?**

The review is an informed and objective analysis of what the EU means for the UK and our national interest. This will be analytical, transparent and evidence-based, with the aim of deepening public understanding of the nature of our EU membership and to provide a serious contribution to the wider European debate about modernising, reforming and improving the EU.

What will it not do? It will not be asked to produce specific policy recommendations, but will analyse the current balance of EU competences.

What about publication of the evidence? Progress of the review, including evidence submitted to it, will be transparent. We will expect to publish your response and the name of your organisation unless you ask us not to (but please note that, even if you ask us to keep your contribution confidential, we might have to release it in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act). We will not publish your own name unless you wish it included.

**Who is drafting the reports?**

Different Government Departments will lead the examination of competences that fall within their areas of responsibility.

**Will there be a Government clearance process?**

Yes. Reports will be taken to the European Affairs Committee; a Cabinet Committee chaired by the Foreign Secretary dealing with EU business.

**How will Parliament be consulted?**We will ask for the views of relevant parliamentary committees, and all individual MPs are welcome to comment. The Government will remain in touch with the relevant committees throughout. We will inform Parliament each semester when reports are launched, and published, at the end of that semester. We will also keep in touch with All Party Parliamentary Groups and other Parliamentarians with an interest.

**Who else will be consulted?**

Departments will be consulting with a range of interested parties and stakeholders domestically, but this will also include other EU Member States, EU Institutions and non-EU Governments.

**Are the Devolved Administrations being consulted?**

Yes. We have written to inform them of the review and will continue to consult them at regular intervals.

**Timetabling**

**How long will the review last?**

We expect work to conclude during 2014. It would be wrong to set a specific end date, not least given the amount of work we will need to undertake and uncertainty about events in the EU.

**Will you produce a final report?**

Of course this work will need to be drawn together. A final decision will be taken closer to the time on the most appropriate format for the analysis produced during the review, in the light of the EU’s rapidly changing situation but the exercise will conclude by the end of 2014. Details on individual reports, and the timetable, can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).