



## UK 2021 Local Elections – The role of the Association of Electoral Administrators

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Transliteration with Peter Stanyon, Association of Electoral Administrators

**International IDEA message:** Hello listeners, this podcast is hosted by International IDEA. In the next minutes we will help you make sense of what's happening today in democracy worldwide.

**Erik Asplund:** Hello and welcome to **Peer to Peer**. My name is [Erik Asplund](#)..

**David Towriss:** And my name is [David Towriss](#).

**Erik:** And we will be your hosts today for this International IDEA podcast focusing on elections. In this series we will share knowledge, experience, and good practice through our conversations with practitioners.

**David:** This first part of our series will focus on training, education, and research in electoral administration. Each episode will include a guest who will provide insights on how the Election Commission in their country prepares frontline workers for Election Day operations, and how it provides voters and other stakeholders with the information that they need to make the election a success.

**Erik:** In this episode, the third in our series, we are talking to Peter Stanyon, chief executive of the Association of Election Administrators, about the role his organization plays in training and educating electoral officers in the United Kingdom. Peter is himself an electoral trainer and he brings to our conversation over 30 years of experience of involvement in UK electoral administration, including



preparing election administrators and poll workers for the UK's recent local elections in May. Welcome, Peter. We are delighted to have you with us.

**Peter Stanyon:** Hi, hello everybody.

**00:01:35**

**David:** Indeed, I think the training and education that the association is carrying out in the UK will be of particular interest to our listeners for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, as we will explore later, the nature of the Association and the important role that it has fought for itself is in many ways unusual. Secondly, the UK system of electoral administration is the first decentralized system that our podcast has examined, and it is here that I would like to begin our conversation, Peter. Could you briefly take us through the UK's Election Administration structures, beginning at the top and finishing at the polling station level?

**Peter:** Thanks, David. I like the way you use the word briefly there, it is one most complicated systems now, that I have seen for a long time. Basically, the simple way of describing it is you have the lawmakers at the top, you have the governments, the UK Parliament. You have also got the devolved legislatures in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They also make election law for certain elections in their areas, and so that is where the law is made and effectively (we will talk later, I am sure, about the independent role of returning officers) they are then responsible for running the election as per the law that has been written by the relevant bodies.

We do have an Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission is basically an advisory commission. They do have a statutory responsibility to run national referendums, and there have been two since the Commission was formed back in 2000. But other than that, it is simply an advisory body to provide guidance, support, and to run the political party finance structures that go around that as well. Then effectively the elections themselves, and the electoral registration process, is run by the local authorities across the United Kingdom. It is slightly different in Scotland where there is a slightly more complicated system, but effectively, there is in the region about 370 local authorities.

Each of them appoints a returning officer and a registration officer, and then they run the actual elections themselves, with full independence from their local authorities. They appoint the staff, and they undertake the process. They make sure that it is run according to the law itself, but they themselves are then responsible to the law, and personally responsible to ensure they delivered it, so you are having a varied top with big structures.

There is no commission that runs in the same way, other countries are run by independent local returning officers very much at the local level, who then appoint all the staff, etc., from there.

**David:** Well, you did summarize that wonderfully succinctly, Peter, thank you. So, from that, we can say that the returning officers and the electoral registration officers are the key actors in electoral administration in the UK. Are those two positions held by the same person, or are they usually different people?



**Peter:** Generally speaking, across the majority of the UK, it will generally be the same person, they are independently appointed posts. You appoint a returning officer and appoint the registration officer, but they are so intrinsically linked together. Certainly, in England and Wales, the majority, I will not say every single one, but 99.9 per cent would be the same person. It is slightly different in Scotland, because in Scotland they have the Valuation Joint Board, which deals with the assessment of rates and things they have combined together. So, the registration officers are slightly different to the returning officers, but the same roles are being undertaken to ensure that the responsibilities in law are being delivered, but generally, yes, they are the same individuals.

**David:** And they are appointed from the local authority, is that correct?

**Peter:** Yeah, like I said, they have a duty to appoint an officer of the council as a registration officer and as a returning officer, but then their role, apart from providing resources to them, their role then stops. It is almost like a curtain comes down between their role as a local authority employee and then their role as the independent role of returning officer and registration officer. So, the independence of the process is maintained.

**David:** And Peter, who has responsibility for training the returning officers and the electoral registration officers?

**Peter:** In terms of that, there is no formal training structure in place. They are simply appointed to and responsible to what the legislation requires them to do, and the codes of practice and things that come around that. They themselves then have the responsibility of ensuring those who deliver the actual duties on their behalf are trained to their satisfaction, brutally, to keep them out of court. That is what it boils down to. You know, a poll worker in a remote polling station could be the one that brings an election into disrepute, that action will be the one that puts the returning officer or registration officer before a judge to explain what went awry in that election.

So again, it filters down. There is no formal qualification for registration, there can be any officer of the Council. They just have a responsibility to run it according to law. The sensible returning officer and registration officer will get training, but there are many that will not, because they have so many other duties on their plates.

**David:** So, just to very briefly summarize them, they have these obligations under law, and they are responsible for ensuring that their poll workers are adequately trained. And there are two sets of poll workers, am I right in saying so? You have, within a polling station, this presiding officer, is that right? And then the polling clerks.

**Peter:** Yeah, the law requires there to be a presiding officer appointed for each polling station, and they have the duty to run it in the actual station. [inaudible] as are required to assist with the delivery of these services to the electors coming through the door.

**David:** Really interesting, thank you, Peter. How is this electoral administration funded? Is it also decentralized to the local authorities?

**Peter:** The body to whom is being elected is the one who is responsible for funding that election. So, on the election side, for example, a UK Parliamentary general election, it will fall to the central Exchequer to provide the resources to run that election. For local authority election, it will be down to the local authority to fund their own election on that side. *[inaudible]* registration, *that* is funded through local authorities, independently of the actual election itself, but effectively the body being elected to is the one that has to fund that particular election.

**David:** And do those funds usually include sums for election training?

**Peter:** Effectively yes. I mean, it is recognized, the staff on duty, whether it be in the stations at the counts on postal voting, etc., *[inaudible]* There is an element of that within the funding agreements, but it is left to the returning officers to determine what they think is the appropriate level of training for them once you roll out.

**Erik:** So, Peter, I was thinking maybe a good follow-up question would be, you know the roles of the presiding officer. Now, you said that he or she may have other duties. What kind of duties are we talking about here? And is this person doing other types of work at the same time as he or she is working as a presiding officer?

**Peter:** You mean the returning officers rather than the presiding officers? We are talking about the person in charge?

**Erik:** Right, yes, of course, the returning officer.

**Peter:** I think the element to that, generally speaking, the local authority will appoint a senior officer of the Council. That could be the chief executive officer of the local authority. So, they also have a responsibility to deliver the services strategically of that local authority, whatever type of authority that might well be, social services, education, and planning. All the other bits and pieces local authorities do as well as running independently the electoral process at the same time. I have often spoken to overseas observers not understanding how the system works in the UK, the way the Electoral Commission works in the UK, not being the deliverer of elections - how can these individuals maintain their independence?

Well, it is a statutory independence, so you will have an individual, for example working with the elected politicians on delivering their commitments, their manifesto commitments, at the same time having to run independently an election that could affect those very same politicians, so it is a strange setup, a historical setup that has been there since the mid-1600s and has not changed fundamentally as a result of that. It comes down to ensuring that returning officers bring down what I call the glass ceiling, to say that on one hand you are dealing with this, because you are personally not responsible for the delivery of safe election, but they will still be delivering their "nine to five"-job on the other side of the fence, in terms of the actual basic processes local authority will have to deliver. Whether that is unique or not, I do not know, but it is certainly a challenge for those individuals in those posts as they go through an electoral process.



**00:11:28**

**Erik:** Now that we have a good picture of how elections are administrated in the UK, I would like to move on to the important, and I think unusual role, that the AEA plays. Peter, in one sentence, could you describe the association for us?

**Peter:** It was set up in 1988, so it has been going for over 30 years now. I have been pondering this one, and the best way I can describe it is that the association is the independent professional body that supports election professionals in the delivery of their duties, sharing good practice, and encouraging innovation effectively. With my second sentence, I am sorry, Erik, is basically a group of like-minded individuals who came together back in 1988, before the formation of the Electoral Commission, to actually work out how to successfully deliver elections, and to share good practice in that way, that is what we are all about.

**Erik:** Great, I have one follow up question there, is it a membership-based organization, and in that case, how many members do you actually have?

**Peter:** Yeah, it is membership based, it is primarily aimed at those who actually deliver the elections, so not directly at returning officers and registration officers, because they have that role. But those who actually do the work to deliver the election in the offices are pushing the paper for wanting a better way of punching the keys. We have just over 2000 members at the moment. We are represented at this stage in every single local authority in the UK, and effectively, yes, they each pay a nominal fee each year, to be a member, and they all then are an equal party to what we actually then deliver.

**Erik:** And how is the association structured, would you say?

**Peter:** Basically, we have a professional side of which I am an employee of, that provides the services when we work closely with the government, we are providing the training, we are working on consultancy and things like that. We have 11 branches around the UK, [several inaudible words] all autonomous of each other. They then act as the engagement for people within their areas to talk to each other, but we also have then the national structure where we all come together as a board, as a conference every year, so that we can actually then share nationally, all the bits in that respect. Professionals are providing the services, but it is also very much member led, in terms of the needs of members, in terms of what they require to assist them to run the electoral process.

**Erik:** Thanks, you said that it was membership based, so there is some kind of fee involved there? It would also be interesting to know how the Association is also funded in addition to that. For example, do you receive any state funding?

**Peter:** No, we took a decision very early on, in fact, we reinforced that very recently. We do not wish to receive direct state funding because of the simple answer - we want to remain independent of the process because we deem ourselves to be the critical friend of governments. We are not there to determine what the policy will be, a very good example at the moment, [several inaudible words] That is for the government [several inaudible words] to determine in terms of policy, we are here to be the

practical voice about “how can that be delivered without a creaking system falling over as a result of that?”. But primarily, our funding comes from things such as providing direct training to members, providing consultancy services where local authorities are unable to get staff in place. We have had our qualification, which is a self-funding thing, professional services, where we [*several inaudible words*] to returning officers, registration officers, and actually a quite small element of it is the subscriptions. It is £50 a year, for what the services provided it is incredible value for money, compared to what is provided by others, we have a conference, things like that.

You would not say it is *not* state funding because it will come through local authorities to procure the services that we have, but we have no direct state funding at all because of that very clear view that we do not want to be influenced in that way. Because if we are unhappy about something we want to be in that position to be able to say something.

**David:** Peter, before we begin to talk about the training and education services that you have just alluded to that the association provides, I think, would be helpful to get an idea of the landscape of election training in the UK. You mentioned earlier that the legislation places these obligations on the returning officers but does not necessarily provide the infrastructure there for them to be trained themselves. Is the association the only large-scale provider of election officer training in the country?

**Peter:** With the principle one, there are other organizations similar to ourselves, Solace, the Society of Local Chief Executives, deliver training to returning officers and registration officers, and they have that arm. But I am not actively in the market as much as the AEA itself is. You also have the other commercial supply, particularly around things such as polling station training, where the online video type training will be available to procure from other suppliers other than the AEA as well so. Generally speaking, we are recognized as being the, I would not say the only training provider, but everyone comes to the AEA for that level of training, because it is the professionals providing the support to the professionals in that way. That is probably the best-selling point that we have.

**David:** Yeah, and where a local authority chooses not to engage yourself or another training provider, do they then, generally speaking, provide the training to their poll workers themselves?

**Peter:** Yeah, that is right, the Electoral Commission, although they do not get directly involved, generally speaking, in delivering training (there will be the odd seminar there, be the odd briefing that they will provide), they do provide a suite of materials to support returning officers: PowerPoints, the Electoral Commission Polling Station’s handbook is the go to document for those things, and we link our training to those documents. But they are available to assist the vast majority of local authorities, which members will deliver their own training. I have stood in front, many occasions, of the staff, partly because you have that scare factor of “I want to make sure I've looked them in the eyes and they've listened to what I've said because they could be the one that ends up with me having to talk to a judge where all went wrong”, and there is lots of stories to tell around that. But the principal way of doing the training is adapt as a result of the Covid-situation we have been through recently, but generally speaking, it is the returning officer, or the registration officer, if they do election registration training to deliver the training from themselves, procure it into a bit of a mix and match, it is their judgment call to actually how they deliver that one. It is about making sure the key messages they want to get through and delivered on the day.



**David:** Thank you.

**Erik:** Peter, how does the devolved nature of election administration in the UK affect the training programs you deliver to poll workers in different parts of the country?

**Peter:** It is really just a case of the bulk of, we would often say in training courses that the book tells you how to run an election, but the nature of running an election in London or Manchester, the big cities, will be completely different to running it in very rural areas, Cornwall, Northumberland or places like that. The key elements of the way the training is “adapt to take account of local circumstances”. The returning officers have a very important role, their teams have an important role, in explaining “what are the differences?”, and if I were to go and deliver training in one local authority, and deliver the same training next door, it would not work. You have to actually be in a position to work out basic bits and pieces, that communication, for example. I used to work for a London local authority, and I had a mobile phone signal to every single polling station, and yet only 50 miles outside of London, you could find there are polling stations in dead spots, and then how do we cope with the things on the day, so it is really about local knowledge.

The principles, 80-90 per cent of training will be exactly the same. It is purely those local principles, and also learning from the things that have gone wrong. Building on the things that have gone right in those areas previously, and just to make sure that all of the staff involved 1) are listening to what's being said, there is an engaging element in those things. There's an age-old adage, which I'm sure applies around the world, is that “a brand-new polling worker will listen to every single word and deliver the election perfectly. The person who has been working for 30 years will be switched off within five minutes and *they will* be the biggest risk to the election, and that, again, another personal experience of that, is now keeping engaging local relevance for the type of polls being run, because the polling one made, for example, will be completely different to poll the next May depending on the area. So, sorry, very long-winded answer, Erik, sorry. It comes down to just trying to make absolutely clear that local circumstance is built into the training provision.

**00:21:51**

**Erik:** You mentioned earlier that things can go wrong. Do you have any like examples that you could share?

**Peter:** The one I always gave for this, many years ago, I was following a change in legislation around the stamping of ballot papers, the authorization papers, in the polling stations. I received a phone call from an elector on polling day, halfway through the day, to say to me: “Is it correct that the staff are writing the elector number details on the back of the ballot papers before they hand them to the voter?”

So, I was very polite to this particular lady, and I said, “thank you”, even though that is not the case that should be happening. I was far less polite on the telephone to the poll workers when I spoke to them. I will not tell you what I said to them. We went down there, that issued in the region 275 ballot papers by that point in the day in a very politically contentious ward. Technically speaking, every one of those ballot papers should have been rejected because of the fact that they were no longer a secret ballot in that way. There is a provision in UK law that allows us to correct procedural errors. We

instituted that successfully, but something as simple as, I think that the presiding officer in charge of the station said, “But we've always done that”. Any I said, “no, you've just not listened”. And that was one where I came very close to, I think was having a nervous breakdown on polling day, because how do we could deal with that? None of the electors' fault, it is all down to the staff. We got through it, but that is something very low key, very simple, and there will be lots of examples that every single returning officer could tell you as to where things have gone wrong or could have gone very more seriously wrong when they actually did on polling day.

**Erik:** Thanks Peter, it is quite an illustrative answer. I was wondering, because you did mention the pandemic earlier, so it would be interesting to have your view on this question. I was thinking what impact has Covid-19 had on the delivery of poll worker training, would you say?

**Peter:** The biggest fundamental change was the shift to online training, as simple as that. The traditional system of delivering polling station training was to have everybody in a room on a rolling basis to role play, that type of thing. But because of the pandemic, it was clear that was not a sensible approach, because you could have taken out the number of staff if one had tested positive, for example, during the training.

The fundamental shift was to online, and we were new to the market on that this year. But we were able to adapt our training specifically for local authorities to deal with their local issues. Other providers could also do that, but it meant that we were able to get that in with tests, with validation etc. So that is probably the biggest shift. It will be very interesting to see this year, leading into next year's May elections, the next major set of polls, whether people continue to use that online training or bring a blended approach in. Because there are positives and negatives. One of the things that I think was a bit of a negative was the fact that being able to train presiding officers, those in charge of the station, with some of the specific procedures around end of day process, and things like that, you cannot really do online.

I would probably suggest that the biggest change that has been brought in will be either to all online or there be more of a blended approach to training coming through, as a result of the limitations on movement.

**Erik:** Yeah, and I was thinking because we were discussing this before about online training and the challenges it represents, especially in ensuring active learning through kind of a participant interaction, and that *is* a challenge, and I was wondering, what's your take on that?

**Peter:** I think you have to get that they say the validation of it is the message getting through, taking the example I gave you with the staff saying, “we've always done it this way”, well, *that* they clearly had not. So, the challenge for all of the training providers, if it continues to remain on that remote type of delivery, will be that validation: “How do you make sure that you get through the quality of learning to the staff?”, because you are heavily reliant on those individuals to deliver that. There is a regular problem challenge in the UK in terms of getting staff to be employed, to put themselves forward for employment. They do get papers of voluntary aspects, that if you do actually get somebody set of test level at 85, 90, 95 per cent, to say they have through these things, what happens when they fail? You have still got a seat in that polling station. That is not to say you want to put somebody in there who is not going to be up to the standard, but it is a *real* challenge that is going on there because of the limited timescales available ahead of elections to train staff, so it is essential that



there's validation in there. How that is delivered successfully will be the big question mark as we go forwards.

**Erik:** Yeah, again, I was thinking a little bit about the training that you are delivering, and Covid-19, again. To what extent has it affected the content of the poll worker training course? Is there any new content on, for example, procedures, that have been highlighted by the Election Commission?

**Peter:** Only, though in a new context, because the elections in May this year run exactly the same as the election's previous year. The year, two years, before the last general election going back, they have not changed. There is no changed procedure because it is a very clear government decision, and quite rightly in my opinion, that the voter walking into a station should have exactly the same experience, except just being delivered in a pandemic. So, the only major change that took place to training delivery were the elements of safety in polling stations, the two-meter distance that was operating in the UK, screens, for example, hand sanitization. They were the new bits that came in for this particular poll, and as we go forward to the next major polls in May of next year, when local government elections are taking place, it will be down to returning officers how much of that they want to maintain.

We have already had something fed through to us, that some are going to maintain the screens, because they feel there is a barrier more for the safety and the health and well-being of the staff themselves. Others will take a different view, so the new bits were there for a one off and will be continuing by elections taking place now. But there may be elements of it that will maintain in place depending on individual local preference and circumstances.

**00:28:39**

**Erik:** I was thinking also about, you know kind of the delivery of training, and you mentioned before that you know you do have returning officers and providing officers who are actually the ones delivering your training. How many trainers does the Association have, and what kind of training do they receive? Or are they just naturals or?

**Peter:** We have a limited number of trainers, but the vast majority of them are employed by local authorities delivering elections. So, they do this as an addition to their day jobs. So, when it comes to things like more wider training out of election, we will be expecting, and that is, again, one of the big advantages that we as an association have, there is somebody who is actually doing the job who is training those who want to do that. You will need to learn about that job, so, there are personal anecdotes, interest, etc.

When it comes to delivering polling station training, and we have some retired members, we have some who are no longer directly employed consultants, for example, who will go to local authorities to deliver for them some of the big cities, for example, that can be delivering training to 1000 individuals, so they will be there for a week, just literally delivering it face to face. So, I think the difference in the training delivery, I think will happen now, is the fact that many will begin to go to the online provision, and therefore they almost self-train them in that respect. All the work is done before it gets to them. We have already heard that some individuals want to go back to that face-to-face training whereas, someone stick with the online. So, in terms of who the training individuals get, we have an education training manager. He writes the majority of the courses. They are all sense checked



before they are out there, and we simply pull in people and say, “here is the course, these are the key elements”.

And every single one of our trainers is accredited in terms of having been through a thorough training program, to get them to the standards that we would expect them to be in that *engaging* way. It is not about just delivery by route, it is about actually bringing people into the provision all the way through. So, it is a small arm, but at the same time it its quality trainers coming out.

**David:** As the linchpins of the UK’s decentralized election administration system, the ROs and the EROs seem to be the principal beneficiaries of the Association’s training course offerings. Could you give us an idea of the types of courses? The variety, I suppose, of courses that the Association offers to these election officers.

**Peter:** Yeah, certainly, I mean, basically, the thing we say is that “we can offer whatever training and returning officer wants. There are the ‘off the shelves’, but we also do the bespoke courses starting the very top, you see this in January, February, March of each year, interest from new returning officers and registration officers about what their responsibilities are. We do a strategic overview, as do Solace, as I mentioned, the other training provider for their side of things. So, you have that very strategic training. You have also got the more specific training around postal vote handling, about account management, about actually what makes a good training course to deliver to your poll workers, for example.

We have more wider things, such as employment responsibility to the returning officer who employs the staff, they have to make sure they are dealing with all general employment law. Effectively, there are bite sized elements of the whole process, it is dealing with in a great deal of detail as well as strategic. We also offer, for new starters to the profession, our foundation course, which basically takes place over, five-day, four-day period, either by residential, or on a modular-type basis, which takes somebody coming to the *[inaudible]* from the start to the end of the whole of the electoral registration and the election process. Which then means that they have that very good understanding of what their responsibilities are. So, very blended, very much a ‘mix and match’, really being led by what members are shouting for *[inaudible]*.

**David:** Thank you.

**00:33:15**

**Erik:** Peter, I talked a little bit about this already, but I understand that the association also offers a professional qualification in electoral administration. Could you tell us a bit about the qualification, including the structure of the course?

**Peter:** Yeah, certainly. I mentioned the foundation course. Start off with that is a precursor to our certificate program. We have a certificate and a diploma, and they are independent of the association itself because we need to keep that independence for the veracity of the qualifications. So, I happen to be the chairman of the Qualifications Board as well, so I work independently in that way. The way the certificate works is effective in England and Wales. It is basically, candidates are expected to do

four written assignments throughout the year and then two examination papers, one on electoral registration matters and one on elections matters.

Same basic principle in Scotland, but the issue there is that, because of the different nature of elections delivery, they will deliver their examinations either electoral registration, or elections, depending on which background they come from, and then on general Scottish public administration matters. So, once they have been through that process, they are qualified, they then have the *[several inaudible words]*.

And then they may then move on to the diploma process, which is more of a management level type course, which is designed just to make sure that the individuals are able to deliver as managers in their areas on that side. So, to be fully qualified probably will take a fast track - two years, three years, generally speaking four or five years to get through that that part of the process. But it is the only qualification in the UK for electoral administration, and we are looking at the moment with some stakeholder and local authorities, an apprenticeship standard for electoral administration, because they are very conscious of the fact that there is a lack of people coming through into the profession. Because, as we mentioned earlier, it is a niche profession, it is not something that people would necessarily look toward. But the apprenticeship standard is going through that process now, and *that* will fit into the qualification structure as well, so long as that gets agreed by the independent body that runs apprenticeship standards in the UK.

**Erik:** And how is the qualification viewed within the electoral administration field in the UK, would you say?

**Peter:** Every single job advert now requires you to have the certificate, or to be prepared to study for the certificate. We have had just over 900 administrators since it was brought into, if I get this right, about 15 years old now, that qualification. And there is about 900 awarded that certificate. We have a cohort calling this year round, at 50 new people coming in, that is about 50 each year going through, the diploma - about just under 100 people have been awarded the diploma over that time, but to give an example again, one of the reasons I have appointed to a post many years ago, was because it was very tight between me and the other individual candidate, but because I held the AEA diploma, I was actually offered the position rather than the other individual. So, it just gives an example of the importance of that now within this set-up.

**Erik:** Peter, I would like to round off our interview with a more reflective, and to some extent personal question. Namely, what is the most important lesson you have learned over your career?

**Peter:** Good question, Erik. I think the answer I would give will be: never take anything for granted. Treat every single electoral event with respect. It does not matter whether it is the smallest by-election, or a UK parliamentary, or an EU referendum, regardless of what it is. You are only as good as the last election that you run, because you will be judged on what you run, and even within every single election, you must treat every single aspect of that correctly, because things can come back and bite you a little bit later on, down the line. So, it is as simple as that. Just do not take anything for granted.

Double check, treble check, all the way through, and in that way, you have a fair chance of coming out the other side without challenge and having delivered the election that you want to do to the qualities



that you expected that the electors themselves expected. So that is it. Do not take anything for granted.

**David:** Peter, it has been an absolute pleasure to have you on. It has been a whirlwind tour of the election administration of UK elections, and the incredible work that the Association are doing, and the importance of their role within the field now, as reflected in the qualification. So, it has been wonderful to hear from you. Thank you very much for your time, so that is it for today. For any suggestions or recommendations, feel free to email us at [elections@idea.int](mailto:elections@idea.int).

**David:** My name is David Towriss.

**Erik:** My name is Erik Asplund and thanks for listening.

**International IDEA message:** *Thank you for listening to the Democracy IDEAs Podcast. Keep following International IDEA on social media. We need all of you to participate in constructing better societies.*

*This transcript has been lightly edited to enhance readability and clarity without changing the sense of the points made by the discussants.*