



## **THE ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS**

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*of Great Britain & Ireland*

### **GAT statement on our current position regarding the European Working Time Regulation (EWTR)**

The EWTR (formerly directive, or EWTD) is part of European Health and Safety Legislation which was first accepted into UK law in 1998. Full implementation of the regulations for junior medical staff was delayed until August 2009, with a gradual phased introduction of first a 52-hour then a 48-hour average maximum working week. Thirty-three hospitals have derogated their anaesthetic rotas following application to the European Union. The rest should, in theory, be working under full implementation rules.

Several members of GAT have asked for clarification of our current position with regards to the EWTR. The GAT Committee agree in principle with the concept of protecting doctors and promoting patient safety by removing the previous culture of long hours spent in the workplace. We are disappointed that, despite 11 years in which to prepare, the full implementation of the EWTR has been poorly planned and inconsistently applied. Anecdotally, at least, there appears to be an adverse impact on training. We must stress, though, that at present we do not have robust data and evidence of actual problems that have occurred in anaesthetic training since August 2009.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists is currently undertaking a data collection exercise to which we encourage all our members to contribute when given the opportunity. We hope that this data will allow us to make further statements on the matter and enable us to see where we need to be working to best serve our membership and make improvements. We also encourage you to contact us on [gat@aagbi.org](mailto:gat@aagbi.org) to let us know about any of your experiences.

GAT cannot change European legislation, but we can continue to work hard to help our members achieve the best possible outcomes from full implementation of the EWTR. We urge you to help us do that by providing us with the best possible evidence of working practices and experiences when we undertake our own surveys in due course.