

5 March 2019

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES  
(31<sup>st</sup> Session)**

**Bordeaux, France, 11 - 15 March 2019**

**European Union Comments on**

**Agenda item 3**

**Discussion paper on procedural guidance for committees working by  
correspondence**

**CX/GP 19/31/3**

*Member States Competence  
Member States Vote*

The Member States of the European Union (MSEU) thank the legal offices of FAO and WHO for preparing the discussion paper on committees working by correspondence.

The discussion paper rightly recalls that, in relation to committees working by correspondence, CAC41 agreed that 'it was important to maintain a wide range of options and flexibility on working methods'. The MSEU support further efforts to enable, within the rules, the ability for Committees to work by correspondence. There is a broad basis for CCGP to examine adjustments and improvements to existing procedures and practices to facilitate Codex working in this way to meet the needs of Codex and its members as expressed at CAC41. Codex is a member-driven organisation, which benefits from a pragmatic approach that allows for case-by-case identification of the most efficient and effective methods and formats to advance intersessional Codex work. To that effect, CCGP should look with an open mind at how the various Codex working formats (in particular committees working by correspondence and electronic working groups, but also physical meetings) relate to each other and can best complement each other - where appropriate, drawing inspiration from the procedures and working methods of other international organisations (e.g. IPPC).

In the light of the conclusions and recommendations of the discussion paper, CCGP could focus its attention primarily on making the work of electronic working groups (eWGs) more efficient, transparent and inclusive. For this purpose, the existing guidance for eWGs in the Procedural Manual needs to be revised, as recommended by CCEXEC73<sup>1</sup>. The revision should take into account new tools available for eWGs, in particular the Codex online platform. The revision should also consider items such as standardised reporting procedures

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<sup>1</sup> REP17/EXEC2, para. 91

and further guidance on the roles and responsibilities of eWG chairs, co-chairs and participants.

In addition to the review of existing eWG guidance, it would also be timely for CCGP to revisit existing guidance for physical working groups (pWGs), so as to take account of modern digital ways of working to ensure inclusiveness and wide participation. In this regard, inspiration can be drawn from the largely positive experience with the recent CCFICS pWG pilot, which used webinar technology to engage with members unable to attend.

In view of the above, the Committee should propose to CAC that CCGP is tasked primarily with the revision of the “Guidelines on electronic working groups” in the Procedural Manual and, in a subsequent stage, with revisiting the existing procedural guidance for physical Working Groups.

Finally, concerning physical meetings, which are usually necessary to achieve consensus to finalise standards for adoption, the options identified in CX/CAC 18/41/12 remain valid. The best solution to organise a physical meeting should be decided on a case-by-case basis. One option that could be part of this approach would be the implementation of a pilot for a Codex Committee on Standards Advancement (CCSA).