

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES
(32nd Session - Virtual)**

European Union Comments on

CL 2020/59/OCS-GP:

**Request for Comments on the Annex of the Procedural Guidance for
Committees Working by Correspondence**

*Member States Competence
Member States Vote*

The Member States of the European Union (MSEU) widely agree with the analysis and proposals of the document. There is clearly a need for procedural guidance to address specific features of the work of CWBC.

Such guidance could be added as a stand-alone text under a new title “Guidelines on CWBC” in Section III of the Procedural Manual. Another option could be to insert text in the appropriate places as additions to existing guidance texts of section III, possibly supported by an additional section on CWBC in the handbook for chairs.

The MSEU consider it important that the Guidelines would only include what is specific and different in the context of CWBC and not repeat text already in section III of the PM in order to avoid the insertion of new text that differs from the PM and may cause unintended room or need for interpretation in the future.

Furthermore, the MSEU support the idea of CCGP further working on virtual tools. It would be interesting to develop, as a subsequent separate step, directives on the use of virtual tools in general (and in a long-term perspective), based on the outcome of a feedback exercise on the Covid crisis and its impact on Codex (the main stakeholders could also be involved in that exercise). In this regard, the MSEU would underline the work that is currently being coordinated at the UN level regarding the use of virtual tools in UN agencies. It is important that the Codex approach is consistent with future UN guidelines in this area.

Furthermore, the MSEU support including the bracketed text into the Guidelines to ensure that the use of virtual meetings both at working group and committee level is not excluded from the tools available to Committee chairs to advance work. As the Covid-19 pandemic has forced the Codex Alimentarius Commission, its Executive Committee and technical sub-committees that used to meet exclusively on a physical basis into well-functioning virtual meetings, it would seem outdated to deny committees that by definition do not hold physical sessions the possibility to meet virtually.

Lastly, the MSEU would like to make the following editorial suggestions:

On point 3 “Criteria relevant for selection and assignment of work by correspondence”:

- We suggest deleting item “v b”; in our view, the main factor that can result in the prolongation of work is the complexity of a topic rather than the recent track-record of a committee and the speed of its working mechanism (*as is illustrated in para 6.9. of CX/GP21/32/4*).

On point 8 “Role of chairpersons of CWBC”, under the heading 'Interpretation of silence':

- We suggest replacing the first sentence (*The interpretation of silence in deliberations of CWBC should be clearly established*) by the following sentence:

'Means of communication to signal support or objection shall be explicitly clarified in advance of sessions, including alternative ways of communication in cases where the chairperson identifies temporary technical problems by delegations.'

Thereafter, the paragraph could continue as follows: 'Silence, the absence of specific contrary views or objections,...

- We suggest the following amendments to the last sentence of the paragraph:

Chairpersons should allow sufficient time for response to ~~assure~~**exclude** that silence ~~is not the result of~~ **caused by** temporary technical problems **is taken as support**.
