



IFLA Governance Proposal

Questions and Answers | 11 August 2020

IFLA published a draft Governance Proposal on 19 June 2020, circulated it via email and online, and opened a survey from 22 June to 14 July seeking directional input on the draft. The survey demonstrated strong overall support for the direction and highlighted a few areas for improvement in the final proposal.

This document includes a summary of common questions survey respondents asked about the draft proposal and process, and answers to those questions.

Governing Board

Q: In what ways will a smaller board be more effective?

A: *A board of eleven members will be better able to hold substantive discussions and to make timely decisions on strategic matters, with all members able to make a full and meaningful contribution. Scheduling more frequent meetings, sometimes on short notice, to handle emerging matters will also be easier with a smaller board.*

Q: How will the board be more transparent?

A: *All Board meetings are open, with the exception of items on a small number of well-defined issues where closed discussion is necessary to allow people to speak freely. We are already discussing the possibility of live-streaming board meetings in order to allow all Members to follow discussions. Furthermore, all ex officio members will be expected to reflect the views of the groups they represent during Board discussions as part of collective decision making and responsibility. We will also seek views, in the round tables, on other ways of ensuring transparency and communication between the Governing Board, Councils and volunteers and members in general.*

Q: What will be the process for co-opting board seats? How will it be transparent?

A: *Based on the feedback we've heard so far, we have revised the draft proposal to replace the two co-opted seats with two-elected seats, thereby preserving the democratic nature of the board. This represents a change from the current situation, where the possibility to co-opt members exists, but is not currently used. At the round tables, we look forward to hearing alternative ideas for cultivating a diverse board with finance and governance skills.*

Q: Who determines what skills are needed on the board? Will there be required qualifications, and if so, how is that regulated?

A: *The skills expected of Governing Board members will be set out in the Rules of Procedure, and in the call for nominations for candidates.*

Q: How can one Regional Council Chair represent all regions on the board?

A: *There will be a high expectation of the Regional Council chair to consult with all members of the Regional Council in order to ensure that their experience, collectively, is heard. This is similar to the current situation, where the Division V chair sits on the Governing Board and represents all the regions within their Division. Furthermore, in addition to meetings at the World Library and Information Congress where it will be simple for Regional Council members to attend the Governing Board, the intention is to hold joint meetings between the Regional Council and Governing Board on at least one other occasion each year.*

Q: What happened to the Executive Committee?

A: *the Executive Committee existed in order to allow for decision-making between meetings of the Governing Board, given the complexity otherwise of bringing together such a large group of people. With a smaller Governing Board, the need for a smaller group disappears, allowing all relevant decisions now to be taken by the Board as a whole, in line with the principle of collective decision-making and responsibility.*

Q: What happened to the Conference Advisory Committee

A: *The majority of the work of the Congress Advisory Committee is technical, rather than strategic in nature, and so can be most effectively carried out within IFLA Headquarters, or is already being carried out by other committees. As a result, there is no need for a specific committee for the Congress. The Governing Board and Professional Committee will then be able to focus on key questions such as decisions about venues and selection criteria, and the overall model of the Congress in the coming years.*

Regional Structure

Q: What will be the scope of the Regional Council's advocacy activities?

A: *The Regional Council will provide direction, guidance and support for IFLA's advocacy work around the world, notably concerning the Sustainable Development Goals, and engagement with the United Nations' regional agencies. It will also bring together information about advocacy priorities within each region in order to identify potential global activities, and to raise awareness in the regions of IFLA's work.*

Q: How will people be elected to the regional divisions? How are chairs elected? What will voting look like?

A: *This is a key open question at the moment. We will need to draw on the perspectives of Members within regions in order to understand how voting can be organized to ensure effective representation and diversity.*

Q: Will the regional divisions be equal in size? How will the number of members be determined?

A: *This is an open question for discussion at the round tables. In each regional round table, we will look to hear views on the best size to allow both for representativity and effectiveness.*

Q: *Why six divisions? Why these six? What are the criteria for a regional division? Can more regions be added?*

A: *The choice of six regions reflects the political division of the world employed across most parts of the United Nations system. Given that the Regional Divisions will have a role in strengthening IFLA's ability to engage with regional agencies in support of libraries, it will help to have a corresponding group for each region. Nonetheless, the regions will be defined in the Rules of Procedure, rather than the Statutes, meaning that there will be the possibility after a set time to review regions and consider whether additional regions, or a different division of the world, would make more sense. Furthermore, IFLA will be able to provide more support per region if there are six than if there are more.*

Q: *Why combine Asia and Oceania?*

A: *IFLA currently combines Asia and Oceania as a single region that also contains countries in Western Asia. It is proposed that in the future structure Western Asia would belong to the Middle East and North Africa region. Asia-Oceania itself currently operates as a UN political region, in the form of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific.*

Meanwhile, a separate Oceania region would have a very small population. However, if it becomes clear after a period of operating, that an Asia-Oceania region does not work for libraries in Oceania, there will be scope to explore different divisions of the world in future.

Q: *Where does Mexico belong, LAC or NA?*

A: *Mexico has always been part of IFLA's Latin American and the Caribbean region. It is also part of the Latin American and Caribbean region in the UN's division of the world.*

Q: *Why split Africa and North Africa?*

A: *It is clear that many in North Africa feel a sense of belonging both to Africa as a whole, and/or to the Middle East and North Africa region. Similarly, countries in the region are active in both different regional fora. Therefore, while it is necessary to identify a 'primary' region of attachment in order to make the regional structure work, countries in North Africa will not be prevented from attending and engaging in Africa Division meetings. Similarly, those in Western Asia will not be prevented from engaging in Asia-Oceania meetings.*

Q: *What resources and support will be available, and how will the resources be apportioned?*

A: *IFLA will provide support to Regional Divisions in organizing meetings, and will carry out a similar function with regards to the Regional Council as it does currently with the Professional Committee. Furthermore, IFLA's Policy and Advocacy team will work closely with the Regional Divisions and Council in defining advocacy priorities and needs, and defining plans for implementing these.*

Q: In practice, what does the change of status from Section to Division entail?

A: *The Regional Divisions will have a greater focus on identifying areas of advocacy that will help move the library field in that region forward, and in supporting engagement with regional UN agencies. They will have a key role in developing regional action plans focused on bringing together all IFLA work relevant to the region, across both the professional and policy and advocacy sides of the organization's work. The Divisions will receive more support from IFLA HQ in setting up meetings, and in delivering on their actions. Furthermore, the result of the reforms will be that instead of just one representative on the Professional Council responsible for representing regional concerns, there will be a whole committee at the same level, carrying out this work.*

Q: What will be the relationship of the regional divisions to national associations? Won't IFLA be competing with national associations for members?

A: *It is anticipated that national associations will have a strong role in nominating and electing persons to the regional division, and indeed strongly supported the concept of regional divisions. Regional divisions should have increased communication with IFLA members in the region, including national associations, in order to identify advocacy priorities and needs, and to define responses. Work to enhance IFLA's membership in regions will focus on institutions and associations (including through the creation of new associations), while national associations tend to focus on individual members, meaning that there is little risk of competition.*

Q: What will be the relationship to the Professional Council and Divisions? How will an overlap in efforts and topics be avoided?

A: *Overall, IFLA's professional structure will continue to lead IFLA's work on professional questions, while the regional structure's direct work will focus on building IFLA's reach on the ground and advocacy at the regional level. Nonetheless, we recognize that there are (and should be) regional aspects to professional work. As a result, the Regional Divisions will gather information about regionally-focused professional work in regional action plans, and work with relevant professional units to support delivery where valuable. The existence of regional divisions and action plans should act as a support for regional members of professional units, giving them more scope to advance relevant projects within the context of their unit.*

Q: What will be the relationship to regional offices? And what happens to them?

A: *Regional offices will continue to be linked directly to IFLA Headquarters but attend and participate in their relevant regional division. They will support the organization of division meetings, and take on responsibilities on behalf of IFLA HQ where appropriate and agreed in the context of regional action plans.*

Q: What will be the relationship to caucuses at the WLIC?

A: *Caucuses at WLIC are currently a mix of language and region-based meetings. They enhance IFLA's multilingualism and provide an opportunity to provide updates and discuss IFLA activities in different languages. They are not in the scope of the Governance Review, and should not be affected by it.*

Q: How will IFLA regions interact with existing regional library organisations?

A: *IFLA's new regional structures are focused on strengthening the ability of IFLA to adapt its activities and offer to reflect realities within different parts of the world, in line with the Global Vision. The new Regional Divisions will search for close cooperation with existing organisations at the regional level, recognising existing areas of expertise and activity, and cooperating in a spirit of mutual respect in order to provide the best possible support for the field.*

Regional Representation

Q: In what ways will this be better for developing countries than the current model? What support and resources will be different?

A: *A regularly voiced concern is that IFLA's current model leads to a default focus on the concerns and priorities of libraries in richer countries. Under the new model, there will be an explicit focus on the need to concentrate on regional issues across IFLA's work (both professional and policy and advocacy), and structures to ensure this – including a Regional Council with a majority of representatives from primarily developing regions – which should work to the benefit of developing country concerns.*

Q: Is this new structure the best way to improve regional representation?

A: *This structure is only part of the measures proposed in the Governance Review to improve regional representation and participation. While the Regional Council and Divisions aim to provide a focus and a means of ensuring continued emphasis on representation and participation, success will rely on effective steps inside professional units better to ensure regional participation, including dedicated positions on professional unit standing committees for members from regions which otherwise would not participate. We also know from many comments that membership rules risk being a barrier for some – these will be addressed as a next step after the completion of the Governance Review.*

Q: How will regional representation be determined and how will this include all voices of all peoples?

A: *Within the regional structure, representation within regions (in Regional Divisions) will be determined through a vote by members. The rules around this – for example caps on the number of representatives from any one country or region – will be determined following consultation during the regional round tables, and further discussions. The regions themselves reflect the political regions defined by the United Nations. Both the regional and professional round tables will provide an opportunity to discuss how to ensure greater regional participation in professional units as well.*

Q: How will IFLA ensure that regional divisions and council aren't dominated by a small number of countries?

A: *This will be a key topic for discussion at the regional round tables. We are keen to hear views from members in each region about the factors the Governing Board should bear in mind in setting the rules, notably around caps on numbers of representatives from any one country or sub-region.*

Q: How does this new regional structure develop new pathways for volunteers into positions of responsibility?

A: *The new regional structure will create a number of new positions for members of our field interested in stronger library advocacy at the national level, as well as representing their country or sub-region. Currently, IFLA does not have any committees focused on advocacy, meaning that we can struggle to work directly with engaged members of the field. In the meanwhile, new structures mean additional opportunities for new voices to gain experience and profile among peers.*

Q: Will the Regional Divisions reduce the number of candidates for professional units?

A: *The skills and focus of candidates for Regional Divisions will be on advocacy and cross-cutting representation of the interests of all types of libraries, while candidates for professional units will typically be more concentrated on a specific issue. As a result, there should be less risk of competition for candidates between types of committee. Moreover, there will be no ban on someone sitting both on a Professional Unit Standing Committee and a Regional Division.*

Professional Structure

Q: What is the rationale for equalising the number of professional units in each division? And how would this be achieved?

A: *The current Divisional Structure sees some Division Chairs managing 15 Professional Units while others manage 3 to 7. The proposal is to have more Divisions so that the composition of Divisions is flexible, and the structure can respond to the changing library environment. All Divisions will have a similar number of professional units, so that Division Chairs can ensure effective administration and communication*

Q: Will sections be eliminated, and how will this be determined?

A: *It is not intended to eliminate any Sections and this has not been part of the discussions of the governance review.*

Q: Will professional units lose resources and support under this model?

A: *No. Professional units are supported directly by the Professional Support Officer at IFLA HQ. In addition, around seven staff at IFLA HQ are involved in providing support through advice, communications assistance, etc. The Professional Committee provides technology resources such as Basecamp, Zoom and Survey Gizmo which will continue to support unit activities and communication.*

Q: To where will the Chair of the Committee on Standards Report?

A: *The Chair of the Committee on Standards would report to the Governing Board. We heard the concerns expressed by some that reporting to the Professional Council could be seen as giving less status to IFLA's work on Standards, which was not the intention of the proposals. Where reporting*

from the Committee on Standards focuses on professional matters, it will nonetheless make most sense to delegate discussions to the Professional Council.

Q: To where will the Chair of the Cultural Heritage Programme Advisory Committee Report?

A: *The Cultural Heritage Programme Advisory Committee Chair would report to the Governing Board under the new structures. We are aware that reporting to the Professional Council could have been seen by some as reducing the status of IFLA's work in the field – this was not the intention of the proposals. In practice, where the work of the Committee is focused on professional matters, it will nonetheless make most sense to delegate discussions to the Professional Committee.*

Q: What is the role of sections in IFLA governance?

A: *IFLA is committed to transparent processes where discussions occur with those affected by governance decisions. Sections and Standing Committees have been involved in all developments from the Global Vision to the IFLA Strategy and now the Governance Review. Sections can raise issues with the Professional Council and the Chair of the Professional Council can bring these concerns to the Governing Board for discussion. A Member of the Governing Board will also sit on the Professional Council in order to strengthen the connection.*

The Governing Board is ultimately responsible for IFLA governance.

Q: What is considered a Working Group or Network? What is their role in developing new leaders?

A: *A Working Group is intended to be a short-term group focusing on solving a problem by taking action together; or bringing interested people together to discuss or explore a topic or issue. The focus is on effectively carrying out the business of the group with goals identified at the start to be completed within the life of the group.*

A Network is intended to be a group of interested individuals from across IFLA's volunteers and members and beyond, under the sponsorship of a section, strategic programme or regional council, who want to keep in communication and/or working together on a topic of shared interest after a Section, Special Interest Group or Discussion Group has finished its life. Enables a time-based group to continue any outstanding business, or to close where there is still an active interest in the topic without its members feeling 'abandoned' or that the work is 'incomplete'.

An outcome of the Global Vision was more opportunities for new or emerging leaders to engage with IFLA and to learn about its work, and to provide new opportunities to be part of IFLA's activities outside of formally elected positions on standing committees. Working Groups and Networks are looser arrangements, not requiring nomination and election to a position and may be of more interest to emerging or new leaders. They must however be sponsored by a Section or Committee.

Q: What are Networks? How do they align with sections?

A: *A Network is intended to be a group of interested individuals from across IFLA's volunteers and membership and beyond who want to keep in communication and/or working together on a topic of shared interest after a Section, Special Interest Group or Discussion Group has finished its life. The*

concept of Networks enables a time-based group to continue any outstanding business, or to close where there is still an active interest in the topic without its members feeling 'abandoned' or that the work is 'incomplete'. The Convenor will come from the sponsoring Section, Committee or Regional Council. The aim is to ensure the Network is plugged into IFLA's Strategy and work and not a group of people off on their own.

Q: Is further limiting committee service the best way to make room for emerging leaders and new members of our profession?

A: *Based on feedback heard so far, the Governing Board will be soliciting alternative ideas about how to balance the need for continuity on committees with making room for new committee members.*

Q: What is the plan for addressing the financial and time barriers to serving on IFLA standing committees?

A: *To address some of the financial barriers, it is proposed that Standing Committees have five places reserved for regional participants who can have full membership and rights on the committee without the obligation to attend WLIC. The Round Tables will discuss this further.*

Q: What is involved in a review of committees and structures? Who conducts this review?

A: *It is good organisational practice to review internal structures to ensure they add to the organisation and its current objectives. As IFLA and the library field grows and changes, IFLA's structure may need to change to address new needs.*

It is proposed that the Professional Council develops a schedule to review all Professional Units across a five-year period – this rolling review program ensures transparency for Professional Units, and that the workload for the Professional Council is consistent. There will be a comparable number of Professional Units from each Division reviewed each year. This reflects the current Rules of Procedure.

For example, the current review process for Special Interest Groups involves an analysis of communication activity, a submission from the SIG convenor on its activities, plans and reports naming those involved, and submissions from the sponsoring Section and from the relevant Division Chair. The Professional Committee discusses the documentation and decides whether to continue with the SIG, provide time to remedy concerns, or close it.

Financial Issues

Q: What is the financial impact of the proposal, overall?

A: *The most immediate financial impact of the proposal will be via the plan to cover the travel and accommodation costs of Governing Board members in order to ensure that these do not represent a barrier to participation. This can be made possible through savings and reallocation of funds, as long as the size of the Governing Board is reduced in line with these proposals. Other changes should not lead to any additional financial impacts as they currently stand.*

Q: Specifically, how does the proposal help IFLA achieve financial sustainability?

A: *The proposals should enhance IFLA's ability both to increase its membership around the world, as well as our ability to seek funding and support for work in different parts of the world by underlining our global relevance. Furthermore, a greater focus on finance and risk at the level of the Governing Board should enable us to deal better with issues in future. In particular, as part of the process of electing IFLA's Treasurer directly, candidates will be expected to demonstrate their skills and experience in this area.*

Q: What new sources of revenue is IFLA pursuing?

A: *IFLA is actively pursuing partnership and grant opportunities to support our mission. It is hoped that the Regional Council and Regional Divisions will allow IFLA to bid for new funding and development opportunities at the regional level as a support for our Members in the regions.*

Other Issues

Q: What new opportunities are there to participate in IFLA in addition to the new regional positions?

A: *New opportunities to participate in IFLA will include the new working groups and networks, in addition to dedicated regional positions on each Standing Committee. It is expected that Standing Committees will increase their communication with IFLA Members who have subscribed to the Section, and to call on them and others more readily to assist with particular projects if needed.*

Q: Are there plans to offer training and development on IFLA governance?

A: *We already offer training for incoming Governing Board members in order to help them to understand the organization, and will take additional steps to explain the new structures – and the opportunities they create – for all involved in the Federation.*

Q: Will members be involved in planning WLIC? How will this happen?

A: *WLIC falls outside the scope of the Governance Review, but as part of IFLA's Strategy 2019-24, is subject to a review. We will communicate separately about this process.*

Q: What is the impact of COVID-19 on these ideas?

A: *COVID-19 has underlined the importance of agile, fast and responsive decision-making, as well as the importance of finance and risk expertise. It has also made clear the importance of giving volunteers a variety of possible ways in which to engage in the Federation.*