



# Ensuring the Voice of Each Member is Heard – Proposed Changes to the IFLA Statutes

Reviewing IFLA's Governance

Following the publication of its [Strategy 2019-2024](#) IFLA has started to review its structures and processes through a Governance Review. This is the next step in IFLA's Development Roadmap, designed to continue our transition to being a more inclusive, efficient and effective organisation.

Already in September, less than a month after the Strategy launch, work [began](#), with IFLA Governing Board members evaluating the structure and operation of Professional Units, Strategic Committees, and the Governing Board itself. In carrying out their work, they have drawn on the results of a survey of IFLA's members, as well as inputs received throughout the Global Vision process, through workshops with IFLA's Professional Units, and from other expert stakeholders. This has provided an [excellent basis](#) for further work.

Thanks to these efforts, it was possible to make useful progress at our December Governing Board meeting. We agreed on a set of [key principles for the Review](#), focused on the need to create new opportunities for engagement.

There is a further survey and consultations planned in order to ensure that we have a set of proposals that reflect the views and priorities of the field. It is already clear that to achieve this, an update will be needed to IFLA's Statutes, the basic rules setting out IFLA's structures and the way they operate. This update must take place by the end of 2020 in order to start the election process, including that for the position of President-elect, professional unit standing committees and others.

With the conclusion of the Governance Review process in sight, it is time to think about ensuring that the final decision on adopting the changes is taken in a way that reflects the spirit of inclusion, effectiveness and efficiency that has characterised the Governance Review as a whole.

## The Current Situation

IFLA's Statutes, in articles 12 and 17, set out rules on how major decisions are taken, in particular those around the Statutes themselves. However, it contains two major flaws:

Firstly, the current procedure takes at least six months to complete. To make a revision to the Statutes there has to be:

- a) a consultative ballot of all members (for which no less than eight weeks must be given), followed by;
- b) the issuing of a convening notice with the proposed changes to the statutes at least three months ahead of a General Assembly.

Given the time required for preparing mailings and counting votes, this means that any process to change the Statutes currently needs to start six months or more before a General Assembly.

However, in the light of ongoing and planned consultations with you, by the time that we have final proposals it will be too late to be able to complete the formal process in time for a vote at the upcoming General Assembly. At the same time, we cannot wait for the following one in Rotterdam, which will be too late if we want to work with the new structures from 2021.

Secondly, and more importantly, whilst the consultative ballot gives all Members the opportunity to express their views, the General Assembly is only required to take notice of – but not necessarily follow – the result of the Members’ ballot. This creates the possibility for the decision of a ballot of all members to be overturned by those present or represented at the General Assembly, held during the IFLA Congress. As IFLA increases its membership – in particular in parts of the world where it may be difficult to attend the General Assembly every year – this rule risks becoming increasingly outdated.

As a result, retaining the current process of agreeing to changes to the Statutes would not only make it impossible to come to any agreement in time for implementation in 2021, but would be contrary to the spirit of inclusion that lies at the heart of the whole Governance Review process.

### Proposed Changes to the Procedure for Amending the Statutes

To address this situation, the Governing Board is recommending amendments to Articles 12 and 17 of the current Statutes (and re-numbering elsewhere where needed). These Articles explain how IFLA can make amendments to the Statutes themselves and decide on other major issues.

The changes aim to make for a simpler and more inclusive process of decision-making by Members by:

- Allowing a resolution on important issues to be decided by *either* a meeting of the General Assembly *or* a ballot of all Members
- Ensuring there is a single timeframe for decisions on all resolutions by Members whether at a General Assembly or by a ballot

These changes, if accepted, will mean that the process of making amendments will be far quicker, and that on crucial decisions, the voices of all Members can genuinely be heard, regardless of their ability to attend a General Assembly or identify a representative.

The attached comparison between the old and proposed new statutes provides more detail, but in short:

- Amendments to Article 12 (Voting in the General Assembly) will make it clear that postal or electronic ballots of members can be binding (i.e. provide the basis for deciding for or against a resolution)
- Amendments to Article 17 (Amendment of Statutes) set out that rather than the General Assembly being the only body that can take decisions on amendments to the statutes, now either a resolution of the General Assembly or a postal/electronic ballot can do so.
- Amendments to Article 18 (Dissolution and Settlement) simply renumber paragraphs articles in the light of changes to Article 17.

## Timeline

The proposed change to the Statutes must be considered by Members in line with the current process. Therefore, Members will be balloted on the amendments; and the outcome of the ballot reported to Members with the Convening Notice for the General Assembly at WLIC 2020 in Dublin, where the final decision will be made.

If these amendments are agreed, this will allow all future amendments to the Statutes, including those arising from the Governance Review, to be decided by members by ballot or at a General Assembly.

It is anticipated that the consultation process on the updating of the Statutes will be completed by the middle of the fourth quarter of 2020.