

(286–289) Proposals on institutional votes, especially to reduce geographical imbalance

Committee on Institutional Votes

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A list of institutional votes is maintained and updated between International Botanical Congresses (see Lindon & al. in *PhytoKeys* 150: Appendix B. 2020). This list, including the assignment of votes, is currently the responsibility of the Committee on Institutional Votes, a Permanent Nomenclature Committee newly established at the Shenzhen Congress of 2017 (Div. III Prov. 3, 7.1(c), 7.5, 7.9 and 7.12 of the *Shenzhen Code*, Turland & al. in *Regnum Veg.* 159. 2018). The updated list must be approved by the General Committee and published before a Congress. The number of votes assigned to an institution ranges from 1 to 7 and depends on the size of the institution and its level of taxonomic activity. There are no written criteria for translating these factors into a number of votes, hence the process seems not to be transparent.

One apparent function of institutional votes is to enfranchise *Code*-users who are based at institutions that lack the financial resources to support their in-person participation in the Nomenclature Section of a Congress. An institution's 1 to 7 votes may be cast, according to the institution's instructions, by an authorized member of the Nomenclature Section (the institution's delegate). This apparent function could become obsolete if online (virtual) participation in the Nomenclature Section, including online voting, becomes standard practice in the future, thereby avoiding often prohibitive travel costs. An institution with very limited financial resources could be represented by one or more of its staff members, each registered as an online member of the Section and carrying one personal vote (Div. III Prov. 5.9(a)). See the report of the Special-purpose Committee on Virtual Participation in the Nomenclature Section and associated proposals to amend the *Code* (Landrum & al. in *Taxon* 70: 1397–1398. 2021 and *Taxon* 70: 1399–1401. 2021).

It could be argued that another apparent function of institutional votes is to ensure that larger institutions retain more overall influence. The larger institutions with more votes tend to have more financial resources and could in theory support more of their staff members to participate in the Nomenclature Section, thereby having a double advantage when considering also their personal votes (Prov. 5.9). We propose that it would be fairer to allocate one vote per institution regardless of size or taxonomic activity.

There is also a geographical imbalance, partly because there are more institutions in Europe and fewer in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean; this especially applies to larger institutions with two or more votes (Table 1). Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have high biodiversity but very few votes, hence *Code*-users in those regions have relatively little influence on the nomenclature of their high biodiversity. Our proposal would increase their share of the institutional votes. Among the 931 institutional votes on the current list, Europe has 38%, but Africa has only 5% and Latin America and the Caribbean 12%. If each institution had one vote, Europe would have 33%, Africa 6% and Latin America and the Caribbean 14%. There would also be a small increase for Asia (20% to 22%), a decrease for Australasia and the Pacific (6% to 5%) and no change for Northern America (19%). In other words, there would be no major changes but the geographical imbalance would be reduced.

A third apparent function of institutional votes is to reduce the impact of greater attendance at the Nomenclature Section by members from the host country. At the Shenzhen Congress of 2017, members from China carried 30% of the total personal votes, reflecting the expected greater attendance by members from the host country.

Institutional votes reduced this figure: members and institutions from China carried 13% of the total personal + institutional votes. The reduction would have been smaller if each institution had carried one vote: from 30% to 18%. At the Melbourne Congress of 2011, members from Australia carried 34% of the total personal votes and members and institutions from Australia carried 18% of the total personal + institutional votes; the latter figure would have been 23% if each institution had carried one vote. See Table 2.

How else would one vote per institution affect the outcome of votes at the Nomenclature Section? Only the card votes (Div. III Prov. 5.10) preserve a record of numbers of personal and institutional yes or no votes (although there is no record of the number of institutions that voted or how many yes or no votes each one cast). At the Shenzhen Congress of 2017, 166 institutions had 427 institutional votes and eight card votes were conducted (Turland & al. in Taxon 66: 1236 [Table 2], 1243 [Table 5], 2017). If we multiply the totals of institutional yes or no votes by 0.39 (166/427), and make an assumption that institutions voted yes or no in the same proportion regardless of the number of votes they had, we can calculate new totals for the eight card votes. The new totals differ from the actual totals by –1.9% to +0.8% in the

percentage of yes votes, which in no case changes the result of the vote, because none was close to the required thresholds: at least 60% of votes cast is required to accept a proposal to amend the *Code* and more than 50% to establish or refer an item to a Special-purpose Committee (Div. III Prov. 5.1(a) and 5.2(f)). At the Melbourne Congress of 2011, 162 institutions had 396 institutional votes and 11 card votes were conducted (McNeill & al. in Taxon 60: 1507 [Table 1], 1510 [Table 3], 2011). If the same calculations are made, in this case multiplying institutional yes or no votes by 0.41 (162/396), the new totals differ from the actual ones by –2.3% to +2.8% in the percentage of yes votes and, again, in no case does this change the result of the vote. See Supplementary Table S1. Parallel data from earlier Congresses are not available.

The Committee on Institutional Votes proposes the following amendments to Div. III, the first of which allows a maximum of one institutional vote per institution.

(286) Amend Div. III Prov. 3 and 5.9 as follows (new text in bold, deleted text in strikethrough):

“3.1. Prior to an International Botanical Congress, the Committee on Institutional Votes updates the list of institutions from the

Table 1. Distribution of institutions and institutional votes according to geographical regions. Africa includes Madagascar; Australasia and the Pacific include Papua New Guinea; Europe includes Turkey west of the Bosphorus strait and Russia west of the Ural mountains; Northern America is defined as north of Mexico; Latin America and the Caribbean are defined as Mexico southward and the Caribbean islands. Source of data: see Lindon & al. (in PhytoKeys 150: Appendix B. 2020).

Geographical region	Number of votes	% of world votes	Number of institutions	% of world institutions	Average number of votes per institution
Africa	48	5%	35	6%	1.4
Asia	185	20%	121	22%	1.5
Australasia and the Pacific	57	6%	28	5%	2.0
Europe	353	38%	182	33%	1.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	111	12%	76	14%	1.5
Northern America	177	19%	104	19%	1.7
World	931		546		1.7

Table 2. How institutional votes reduce the impact of greater attendance at the Nomenclature Section by members from the host country. Analysis of the Shenzhen and Melbourne Congresses, with additional calculations based on one vote per institution. Sources of data: for Shenzhen see Turland & al. (in Taxon 66: 1235 [Table 1], 2017); Lindon & al. (in PhytoKeys 150: Appendix B. 2020); for Melbourne see McNeill & al. in Taxon 60: 1509 [Table 2], 2011); Flann & al. (in PhytoKeys 41: Appendix A. 2014).

	Number of institutional votes	Number of personal votes	% of personal votes	Total number of votes	% of total votes	Number of institutions	Total number of votes with 1 vote per institution	% of total votes with 1 vote per institution
Shenzhen								
China	30	46	30%	76	13%	12	58	18%
Other countries	397	109	70%	506	87%	154	263	82%
World	427	155		582		166	321	
Melbourne								
Australia	40	69	34%	109	18%	15	84	23%
Other countries	356	135	66%	491	82%	147	282	77%
World	396	204		600		162	366	

previous Congress and allocates **one vote** to each institution ~~one to seven votes~~ (see Prov. 5.9(b)). The list must be approved by the General Committee and published (see Prov. 1.4) prior to the Congress. No single institution, even in the wide sense of the term (e.g. mycological and botanical divisions together), is entitled to more than ~~seven votes~~ **one vote**.”

“3.2. Prior to an International Botanical Congress, any institution desiring to vote in the Nomenclature Section and not listed as having been allocated ~~any votes~~ **a vote** in the previous Nomenclature Section should notify the Rapporteur-général of its wish to be allocated ~~one or more votes~~ **a vote** and provide relevant information regarding its level of taxonomic activity (e.g. number of active staff, size of collections, current publications). ~~An institution allocated one or more votes in the previous Nomenclature Section and desiring to alter its number of votes may similarly notify the Rapporteur-général.~~”

“3.3. An institution wishing to exercise its ~~vote(s)~~ **vote**, as allocated in the published list (Prov. 3.1), must provide its official written authorization to be presented at the Nomenclature Section by its delegate (Prov. 5.9(b)).”

“3.4. A delegate who is a member of an institution that has not previously applied for, or been allocated, ~~votes~~ **a vote** may apply in person for one institutional vote at the Nomenclature Section.”

“5.9. There are two kinds of votes at the Nomenclature Section:

(a) Personal votes. Each member of the Section has one personal vote. No accumulation or transfer of personal votes is permissible.

(b) Institutional votes (see Prov. 3). An institution may authorize in writing any member of the Section as a delegate to carry its ~~votes~~ **one institutional vote**.

No single person will be allowed more than 15 votes, including personal vote and institutional votes.”

The following three proposals are independent of the one above. The Committee agreed that when an institution applied for one or more institutional votes, or wished to alter its number of votes, it should be registered in an online, open-access index such as Index Herbariorum (<https://sweetgum.nybg.org/science/ih/>), although it could be a regional rather than an international index. Hence we propose an addition to Div. III Prov. 3.2.

(287) Amend Div. III Prov. 3.2 as follows (new text in bold):

“3.2. Prior to an International Botanical Congress, any institution desiring to vote in the Nomenclature Section and not listed as having been allocated any votes in the previous Nomenclature Section should notify the Rapporteur-général of its wish to be allocated one or more votes and provide relevant information regarding its level of taxonomic activity (e.g. number of active staff, size of collections, current publications) **and show that it is registered in an online, open-access international or regional index of herbaria, collections, or institutions**. An institution allocated one or more votes in the previous Nomenclature Section and desiring to alter its number of votes may similarly notify the Rapporteur-général.”

When members of the Nomenclature Section wish to exercise institutional votes as delegates of institutions, they must present written authorization from those institutions. The Committee questioned how the officers at the Section would recognize written authorization as “official”, and it was agreed that use of the institution’s letterhead should be required.

(288) Amend Div. III Prov. 3.3 as follows (new text in bold):

“3.3. An institution wishing to exercise its vote(s), as allocated in the published list (Prov. 3.1), must provide its official written authorization **on the institution’s letterhead** to be presented at the Nomenclature Section by its delegate (Prov. 5.9(b)).”

Division III Prov. 5.9 implies, but does not explicitly rule, that a member of the Nomenclature Section may serve as a delegate of more than one institution (because one person may carry up to 14 institutional votes, and no institution is allowed more than 7 votes). We propose to add a sentence to make this explicit.

(289) Amend the final sentence of Div. III Prov. 5.9 as follows (new text in bold):

“5.9. [...] **A member of the Section may carry the institutional votes of more than one institution.** No single person will be allowed more than 15 votes, including personal vote and institutional votes.”