



Information package – UPU electronic voting system

Introduction

The 27th Universal Postal Congress will be held from 9 to 27 August 2021. As part of the proceedings, member countries will elect the next UPU Director General and Deputy Director General, and will decide on the membership of the UPU's Council of Administration (CA) and Postal Operations Council (POC) for the 2022–2025 period. In addition, Congress is expected to take a number of decisions concerning proposed amendments to the Acts of the Union (as well as other proposals of a general nature). It will therefore be necessary to verify compliance with various quorum requirements, voting procedures (including secret ballots) and thresholds.

As per the current rules, UPU member country delegates are required to attend Congress physically and to vote using the electronic Bosch DCN system (or ballot papers). However, owing to the global COVID-19 pandemic and subject to the relevant Congress decision, there is a high probability that the 27th Universal Postal Congress will be held in “hybrid” format. This means that UPU member country delegates (and other authorized attendees) will be participating in person and/or virtually.

In order to support Congress and, potentially, future UPU meetings and events (such as CA and POC sessions, Extraordinary Congresses, strategy conferences, and the meetings of user-funded subsidiary bodies, standing groups and task forces), the International Bureau (IB) has secured and implemented a new virtual conferencing system (Zoom) and an online event management platform (B-Com).

Furthermore, the IB intends to enhance the aforementioned virtual conferencing platform with the addition of a secure online voting system, in order to enable UPU member country delegates to vote from anywhere using any device, be this during the 27th Universal Postal Congress (if so decided by Congress) or at future UPU meetings. The sections below describe the procedures and actions implemented by the IB with the aim of selecting and deploying an electronic voting system that is secure, transparent and fully representative of the decisions taken by UPU member countries.

Independent review by the UPU Internal Auditor

The UPU's Internal Auditor (an externally sourced, independent entity) has been engaged to review and assist with the implementation of the UPU's electronic voting system.

Specifically, the Internal Auditor's mandate is as follows:

- Review the terms of the agreement with the chosen vendor in order to identify any risks that are not properly addressed by the terms of the contract;
- Review the installed technical architecture to identify any operational risks;
- Review the control design to ensure adequate voting and check the test scenarios;
- Assess the test results and measures taken to mitigate the identified risks;
- Review the training plan for IB staff and UPU member country delegates;
- Provide a summary report, prior to the opening of the 27th Congress, on whether any issues have been identified prior to the “go-live” decision.

At the 27th Congress, the Internal Auditor will also act as an observer of the voting process (in particular for the elections of the CA and POC members and of the Director General and Deputy Director General). In the event of any indication of issues that might have a negative effect on the electronic voting results, the Internal Auditor will notify the UPU immediately, so that the required remediation measures can be taken.

Based on these observations, the Internal Auditor will also perform spot-checks during the aforementioned elections using supplementary information drawn from the electronic voting platform, with the aim of



providing a report (negative assurance) on whether any issues have been identified that may compromise the voting results.

The Internal Auditor will report its findings and recommendations to the CA, through the IB's Internal Audit Committee, after the 27th Congress.

UPU voting system

The IB has completed the market research, analysis, selection and procurement process for the electronic voting system and, with the approval of the Director General, has selected ElectionBuddy Inc (electionbuddy.com) as the electronic voting system provider. This solution has been chosen for its superior flexibility to support the various ballot types necessary for the 27th Congress and future UPU meetings, and for its extensive compliance with best practice guidelines for electronic voting. Furthermore, it has been present on the market for several years and has a large global client base.

The ElectionBuddy platform is hosted at secure facilities in Canada. The platform provider has ensured compliance with data privacy and security legislation, including Canada's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), without prejudice to compliance with the UPU's own privileges and immunities as an intergovernmental organization and specialized agency of the United Nations.

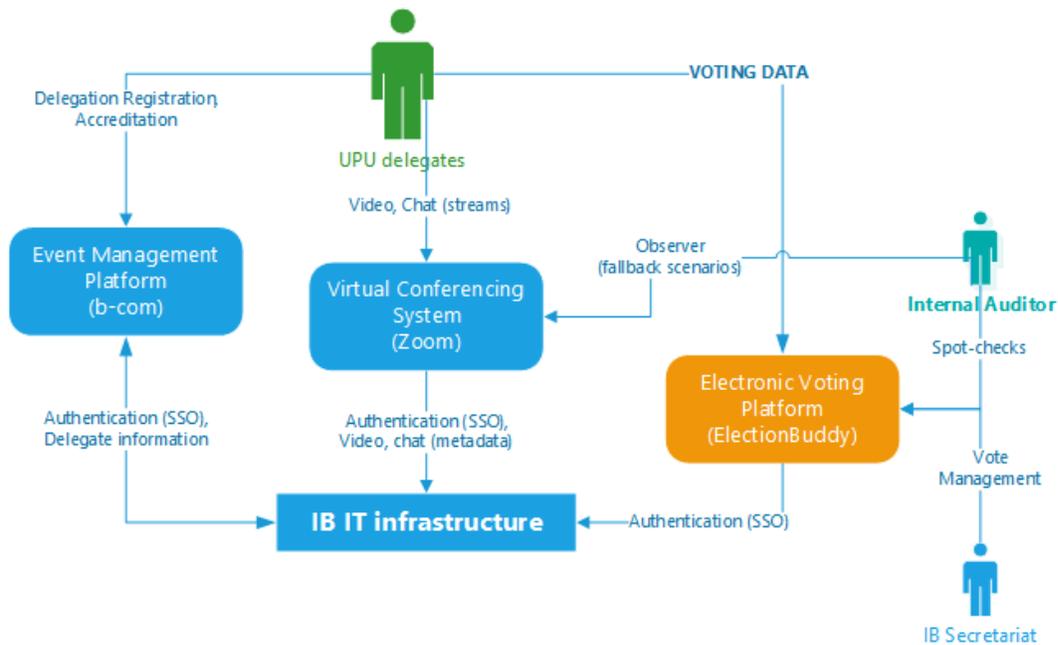
Moreover, ElectionBuddy applies the requirements of the United States Department of Labor on the use of remote electronic voting systems, with regard to observability, integrity, system design and access controls. ElectionBuddy is registered and operates from Canada, and has development and support teams in Brazil and the United States.

The technical integration of the ElectionBuddy platform will follow on from the implementation of the event management platform (B-Com), the virtual conferencing system (Zoom) and UPU TV (IB information technology), which are already in place, as briefly described in document CA 2021.1–Doc 12c.

The following architectural diagram provides a simplified representation of the platforms, their relationship with the IB information technology infrastructure, and the type of data exchanged with other UPU stakeholders.



UPU conferencing platforms and voting system – architectural diagram



Security and training

Access to the electronic voting platform will be possible only using a UPU account. However, an additional unique key code will be assigned to UPU member country delegates with the proper credentials (for the purposes of Congress) and with the right to vote. This key code will be used exclusively for the voting process.

As illustrated in the diagram above, all voting data will be exchanged securely between the electronic voting platform and the individual UPU member country delegate with the right to vote. Furthermore, to ensure anonymity, each vote will be assigned a unique verification code (hash) that the individual UPU member country delegate can use in order to independently verify that the vote they have cast is reflected in the final overall results.

In collaboration with the Internal Auditor, the IB has performed a risk analysis of the electronic voting process and developed fallback scenarios to support UPU member countries.

The IB will publish an operational manual for all UPU member countries on the use of the electronic voting platform, the processes to follow in order to vote, and the action to take in the event of a fallback scenario.

Lastly, the IB will publish a timetable for the performance of several test votes in July 2021 for all UPU member country delegates.

Frequently asked questions

Do I need any special devices in order to access the electronic voting platform?

A modern Internet-connected device is required (i.e. desktop computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone). You will need to ensure that your Internet connection is stable and that you can browse the web reliably. A



video illustrating the basic experience of using the platform is available at www.youtube.com/embed/b385JucEMkk.

How will I be securely and positively identified prior to taking part in the vote?

Firstly, you must be registered on the UPU event management platform (events.upu.int) and your country accreditor must have authorized you to vote at UPU meeting sessions. For the purposes of Congress, you must also have the appropriate credentials and the right to vote.

Secondly, the electronic voting system will issue directly to you a unique access code for a particular UPU meeting session. **You must keep this access code SECURE and SECRET.** This access code will be required to cast your ballot in all subsequent votes via the electronic voting platform.

How will I receive training in the use of the voting platform?

Please refer to the manual on the use of the voting platform, available at <https://www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/About-UPU/Bodies/Congress>.

Furthermore, at least two weeks prior to the 27th Congress, the IB will provide online training opportunities to all UPU member country delegations.

What happens if I experience a technical problem during the voting process?

Please refer to the platform access checks and the fallback scenario set out in the manual on the use of the voting platform, available at <https://www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/About-UPU/Bodies/Congress>

How can I check independently that I can access the electronic voting platform?

On your device (i.e. desktop computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone), check that you can access the voting platform at electionbuddy.com. Please note that the UPU will provide a different web link for votes conducted during UPU meeting sessions.

I will be physically present at the 27th Congress. Will I use a different platform to vote?

The electronic voting platform will also be accessible at the physical location of the 27th Congress. Therefore, all UPU member country delegates with the right to vote will use the same platform, regardless of whether they are participating in person or remotely.

How does the electronic voting platform ensure voter anonymity for secret ballots?

Prior to a secret ballot, the voting platform will issue a unique access code to each voter. The access code is not linked to the voter's identification, and the voting platform does not link ballot information with votes cast. Therefore, the ballots will be anonymous to the vote administrator.

Furthermore, voters will be issued a separate unique verification code (hash) after submitting their vote. This verification code is displayed in the voter audit report. Using the verification code, voters can anonymously verify that their vote has been correctly received by the voting platform and taken into account in the final result.

For further technical details, please contact support.events@upu.int.



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