



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE**

**Thirty-first Session**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan, 30 September – 4 October 2019**

**LANGUAGE POLICY IN CCEURO**

*(Prepared by the Coordinator for Europe and the Codex Secretariat)*

## 1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of this document is to follow up on the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 73rd session (CCEXEC73) that the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO) “investigate its language policy, comparing it also to other FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees and regional organizations”<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Rule XIV, Languages, point 4 in the Codex Procedural Manual states that languages of subsidiary bodies set up under Rule XI.1(b), including Coordinating Committees, shall include at least two of the languages of the Commission. In addition, Rule XIII – Budget and Expenses states in point (2) that the estimate of expenditures shall make provisions for the operating expenses of the Commission and the subsidiary bodies of the Commission established under Rule XI.1(b)(ii), which corresponds to Coordinating Committees.

2.2. Since 2011, Russian has been a working language of the Commission together with English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. All technical Codex Committees use English, French and Spanish as official languages and for some, the host government adds another language (official or not) at their own initiative (Arabic in CCSCH; Chinese in CCFA and CCPR; and German in CCNFSDU). Codex has discussed use of Russian in CCEURO sessions since CCEURO29 (2014) (see section 3 below).

2.3. The Codex Secretariat currently covers regularly the cost for translation and interpretation services for the three official languages in CCEURO: English, French and Spanish. This was the situation before Russian became an official language of Codex. The Regional Coordinators or the Codex Secretariat have on an *ad hoc* basis provided Russian translation and interpretation services since 2007.

2.4. Currently **five** Codex Member countries of the CCEURO region have French as official language (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Monaco and Switzerland); **four** have Russian as official language (Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan); **three** have English as official language (Ireland, Malta and United Kingdom); and **one** has Spanish as official language (Spain).

2.5. In 10 further countries, Russian is a lingua franca (Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan).

## 3. PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

### *CCEURO29 (2014)*<sup>2</sup>

3.1. During the adoption of the Provisional Agenda of CCEURO29, the Coordinator for Europe suggested adding “Language regime of CCEURO” as an issue to be discussed under the agenda item “Other Business” because of the importance of the Russian language in the region.

3.2. The Delegation of Russia, supported by several other delegations, indicated that Russian was widely spoken in the region being that it is the first or second language in many countries of the region, and therefore urged to request the Commission to consider the use of Russian in CCEURO.

<sup>1</sup> REP17/EXEC2 para 140(i) and REP17/CAC para 155(i)

<sup>2</sup> REP15/EURO, paras 4, 84 and 86

3.3. CCEURO29 agreed to request the Commission to consider covering translation and interpretation services in Russian in CCEURO from the Codex budget.

*CAC38 (2015)*<sup>3</sup>

3.4. The Netherlands, as Coordinator for Europe, summarized the discussion of the language regime in CCEURO at CAC38. The Commission agreed that the Coordinator in collaboration with the Secretariat would prepare a paper to assist CCEURO in its deliberation on ways forward to accommodate Russian as a working language in CCEURO.

*CCEURO30 (2016)*<sup>4</sup>

3.5. The paper for CCEURO30<sup>5</sup> concluded that, considering the changes in the CCEURO Membership since its establishment in 1965, and in particular over the past 15 years, there was merit in reconsidering the current working language regime in CCEURO and recommended that CAC agree that working languages for CCEURO should be English, French and Russian.

3.6. The Delegation of Spain noted that the Committee had been using Spanish as a third language, which had contributed to making the work of the Committee a global point of reference. The Delegation recognized multilingualism as one of the fundamental values of the multilateral system and considered very interesting the inclusion of additional languages in this Committee, however this must not undermine linguistic practices that had been followed up to date. The Delegation said that they could not agree with the recommendation in CX/EURO 16/30/9 (paragraph 20).

3.7. CCEURO30 noted the unanimous support for the use of Russian as a language of CCEURO and confirmed the ongoing support for the principle of multilingualism. CCEURO30 agreed to request FAO, WHO, and CAC40 (2017) to consider funding translation and interpretation services in Russian for the effective operation of CCEURO as a matter of urgency.

*CCEXEC73 (2017)*<sup>6</sup>

3.8. The Secretariat informed the Committee that FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) had different needs for interpretation and translation and that the Codex budget could cover the cost of Russian translation and interpretation for the upcoming session. However, given the zero growth budget of Codex over many years, this could not be guaranteed indefinitely.

3.9. The Secretariat recognized that use of Russian language in CCEURO was important to facilitate participation especially of new Codex members from the Central-Asian countries and noted that UN agencies covering the same region such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) limited language services to English, French and Russian. The Secretariat further noted that other RCCs also limited language services to those most used in the region to maximize member participation while allowing for the organization of other activities of interest to their region. The Secretariat also stated that the reports of all RCCs would always be available in English, French and Spanish in addition to languages of particular interest to the RCC.

3.10. The representative of FAO reiterated the need to find a long-term solution that optimized participation in the region and made judicious use of the funds made available to CAC. CCEXEC73 encouraged CCEURO to investigate their language policy, comparing it to other RCCs and regional organizations and recognized the support provided by the Secretariat in funding Russian language services in the financial biennium 2018-2019.

3.11. CCEXEC73 encouraged CCEURO to investigate their language policy, comparing it also to other RCCs and regional organizations (as contained in the present document).

*CAC40 (2017)*<sup>7</sup>

3.12. CAC40 endorsed the CCEXEC73 recommendation. The Member States of the European Union expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for the provision of Russian language services in the next session of CCEURO, but reaffirmed that a long-term solution was necessary to ensure Russian language services were available beyond 2018-19.

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<sup>3</sup> REP15/CAC, paras 120 and 127

<sup>4</sup> REP17/EURO, paras 59-70

<sup>5</sup> CX/EURO 16/30/9

<sup>6</sup> REP17/EXEC2, paras 136-140

<sup>7</sup> REP17/CAC, paras 156, 158

*CCEXEC76 (2018)*<sup>8</sup>

3.13. At CCEXEC76, the Coordinator for Europe (Kazakhstan) expressed the need to increase the use of the Russian language in the work of Codex.

*CAC42 (2019)*<sup>9</sup>

3.14. The Secretariat indicated that the issue of Russian language was on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of CCEURO. Furthermore, Members were encouraged to find a solution within the existing language rules noting that it was difficult for the Codex budget to support interpretation into four languages at the Coordinating Committees.

**4. IMPORTANCE OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE FOR CCEURO (Report of the Coordinator)**

4.1. Over the past 15 years, several Russian-speaking countries have become “new” Members of Codex, and CCEURO. Russian has become an official language of CAC and has been used by CCEURO thanks to the significant contribution of the Regional Coordinators. Russian is the most frequently used language in the region if counting official language and lingua franca (see para 2.4).

4.2. One of the objectives of the CCEURO as an RCC is to strengthen the link between the “old” and “new” Member countries and build bridges between the sub-regions within the region, in particular, between the east and the west. This in order to facilitate the exchange of information on relevant food safety and quality issues for the region that can be addressed in the context of Codex’s work or through FAO and WHO capacity development programs.

4.3. The inclusion of Russian as a working language facilitated the participation of many participants in CCEURO and increased transparency of the discussions and recommendations. Thanks to the efforts of the Regional Coordinators Switzerland (with Poland and Lithuania as co-hosts), Poland, the Netherlands, and Kazakhstan, Russian translation and/or interpretation has been available since 2007 in CCEURO. However, providing funds for the use of an additional language might not be possible for all Coordinators and can become a barrier preventing interested countries in the region from considering the position of CCEURO Coordinator in the future.

4.4. Use of resources should be carefully considered in accordance with the needs of Codex Members and the Codex objectives. The expense of interpretation and translation services to support a single language used by a small number of countries of the most developed sub-region is difficult to be considered sustainable or optimal resource management while another language is more widely used in economically less strong members.

4.5. The reports of the CCEURO sessions are available in English, French, Russian and Spanish for global accessibility. The introduction of the Russian language will significantly contribute to ensure collaboration, inclusiveness, consensus building, and transparency as core values of Codex.

4.6. To increase the low rate of involvement of developing countries in Codex work and ensure the successful implementation of Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, all Codex members should have the capacity to participate at all stages of the standard setting process.

4.7. The limited use of Russian constitutes one of the key barriers to the active participation of Russian speaking developing countries in CCEURO, which serves as the main platform for regional interaction on Codex issues.

4.8. The relevance of using Russian as a working language of CCEURO was confirmed by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, Codex members in the CCEURO region, during the field trips of the Coordinator of CCEURO in 2018-2019.

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<sup>8</sup> REP19/EXEC1, para 15

<sup>9</sup> REP19/CAC, para 116

## 5. POLICIES OF THE RCCS

5.1. The following table shows the languages used in the different RCCs and the number of countries using the languages as official language or as common language or *lingua franca* (number in brackets)

Committee	Languages	English	French	Spanish	Arabic	Chinese	Russian	Portuguese
CCAFRICA	E, F, P (interpretation only)	24 (2)	21	1	7	-	-	6
CCASIA	E, C	4 (6)	-	-	-	2	-	-
CCEURO	E, F, S	3 (1)	5	1	-	-	4 (10)	1
CCLAC	E, S	12	1	19 (2)	-	-	-	1
CCNEA	E, F, A	- (8)	(4)	-	16	-	-	-
CCNASWP	E	14	2	-	-	-	-	-

5.2. The table shows that:

5.2.1. One member of CCAFRICA has Spanish as official language, but CCAFRICA uses only English and French (with Portuguese for interpretation only)<sup>10</sup>.

5.2.2. One member of CCLAC has French as an official language, but CCLAC uses only English and Spanish.

5.2.3. Two members of CCNASWP have French as an official language, but CCNASWP uses only English.

## 6. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

6.1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is the only intergovernmental UN organization with a comparable membership to CCEURO. UNECE uses English, French and Russian as official languages.

6.2. Some further examples: A sub-regional organization, the Organization of the Black Sea Cooperation uses English, French, Russian and Turkish. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) uses English, French, German, Russian, Italian and Spanish. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development uses English and French. INTERPOL uses English, French, Spanish and Arabic though Russia and China are also members.

6.3. The rationale for different languages used may have multiple reasons and often be simply historical or related to budgets. Sub-regional European organizations with CIS members would normally have Russian as official language and not Spanish. The only organization comparable to the CCEURO is UNECE.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Following the changes in the Codex membership in the CCEURO region resulting in many members having Russian as official language and as *lingua franca*, Russian should become a language of the CCEURO paid for by the Codex Secretariat budget.

7.2. To implement 7.1, CCEURO may propose to CAC:

7.2.1. To add Russian as a language and keep the change cost-neutral by taking a similar approach to 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 without reducing the global availability of the CCEURO report in English, French and Spanish, or

7.2.2. To work with four languages (E, F, S and R) which are all paid for by the Codex Secretariat budget.

7.3. If proposal 7.2.2 is agreed by CAC, the Secretariat will propose how to accommodate the additional costs sustainably.

<sup>10</sup> Special case as Portuguese is a language of the WHO region.