

# Oral proceedings before the Boards of Appeal – restrictions due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and introduction of video-conferencing technology in appeal proceedings

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## URL

<https://www.epo.org/law-practice/case-law-appeals/communications/2020/20200515.html>

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## 15 May 2020

Owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Boards of Appeal have been obliged to adopt measures for the conduct of oral proceedings.

The Boards of Appeal resume the holding of oral proceedings, to a limited extent, at their premises in Haar from Monday, 18 May 2020. Parties will be contacted accordingly by communication. They will be requested to confirm that they expect to be able to attend in person and that they do not anticipate being affected by travel restrictions. To facilitate the arrangement of oral proceedings, parties and their representatives will be asked to inform the registry as soon as possible whether they plan to attend.

Parties and representatives are kindly asked to complete a simple [screening questionnaire](#) complete in advance of their arrival. Any person replying to one of the questions in the affirmative will be denied access to the Boards of Appeal premises. The competent board will be informed accordingly and will decide whether the oral proceedings can be held without that person or whether they will need to be postponed. In the light of the current restrictions, in particular the need for social distancing, parties are also requested to consider whether all representatives and accompanying persons need to attend.

It will be possible for members of the public to attend oral proceedings. However, in view of the current circumstances, only limited places will be available. Visitors interested in attending oral proceedings are therefore encouraged to announce their interest well in advance using the EPO [contact form](#). Such visitors are kindly asked to complete in advance of their arrival the same [screening questionnaire](#) as for parties and representatives, and they will likewise be denied access to the premises if they answer one of the questions in the affirmative.

Video-conferencing technology (VICO) is now available for the conduct of oral proceedings before the Boards of Appeal. **Oral proceedings will be conducted by VICO only in agreement with the parties concerned, who will be sent an advance communication in this regard.** Oral proceedings to be conducted by VICO will be listed in the oral proceedings calendar.

Oral proceedings before the Boards of Appeal are public. Any member of the public wishing to attend oral proceedings conducted by VICO may do so in a dedicated room located at the premises of the Boards of Appeal in Haar. In view of the current circumstances, however, only limited places will be available. It will not be permitted to make photographic images or sound recordings or to re-transmit any part of the oral proceedings. As is generally the case for external visitors to the Board of Appeal premises, members of the public wishing to attend oral proceedings conducted by VICO will be required to complete a [screening questionnaire](#) in advance of their arrival and are encouraged to announce their plans to attend well in advance.

Strict sanitary measures will be put in place to ensure that oral proceedings are held in optimum conditions. These measures will include, in particular, rules on minimum physical distancing and the requirement to wear a face mask on the way to the oral proceedings room. Parties, representatives and other visitors are asked to bring their own face masks.

The President of the Boards of Appeal will continue to monitor the situation and take appropriate measures as it develops.

As the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve rapidly, all parties to oral proceedings scheduled to take place before the EPO Boards of Appeal are advised to check the web section of the Boards of Appeal regularly for updated information on access to the premises of the Boards of Appeal in Haar.

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[Screening questionnaire](#). (PDF, 71 KB)