

# Technical Committee

TC/56/12

**Fifty-Sixth Session**  
**Geneva, October 26 and 27, 2020**

**Original:** English  
**Date:** October 6, 2020

## INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE UNION IN THE WORK OF THE TC AND THE TWPS

*Document prepared by the Office of the Union*

*Disclaimer: this document does not represent UPOV policies or guidance*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this document is to assist the Technical Committee (TC) in its discussions on possibilities to increase participation of members of the Union in the work of the TC and the Technical Working Parties (TWPs).
2. The TC is invited to:
  - (a) note the information provided in relation to the TWPs in 2020;
  - (b) consider whether to invite the TWPs to consider the possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraph 21 of this document.
3. The structure of this document is as follows:

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4. The following abbreviations are used in this document:

TC:	Technical Committee
TWA:	Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops
TWC:	Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs
TWF:	Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops
TWO:	Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
TWPs:	Technical Working Parties
TWV:	Technical Working Party for Vegetables

## DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

5. The TC, at its fifty-fifth session, held in Geneva on October 28 and 29, 2019, considered document TC/55/24 "Increasing participation of new members of the union in the work of the TC and TWPs" and agreed the following in relation to the different proposals made (see document TC/55/25 Corr. "Report", paragraphs 233 to 237).

Invitation letters

6. The TC agreed that TWP invitations letters should be sent earlier than the current three months and agreed that the "Guidance note for hosts of TWPs" should indicate six months in advance of the sessions.

7. The TC agreed to invite the UPOV Office to draft a short description on the importance of the work of the TWPs to accompany the invitation letters to the TWP sessions.

Organization of a seminar in Geneva

8. The TC considered the organization of a seminar to communicate the importance of the technical work conducted in UPOV and agreed that further consideration would be needed on the aim and target audience before pursuing the idea further.

Participation at the TC and TWP meetings by electronic means

9. The TC noted that the invitations to the 2019 sessions of the TWPs invited recipients to indicate particular topics in which they would wish to participate by electronic means.

## DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Invitation letters

10. The Guidance note for hosts of TWPs has been updated to indicate that invitation letters should be sent at least six months in advance of the sessions. For 2020, the TWP invitation letters were all sent as follows.

TWPs	Date of meeting	Hosted by	Invitation sent	#months before the meeting
Technical Working Party for Vegetables (TWV)	May 11 to 15	Brazil	09/01/2020	4
Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees (TWO)	June 8 to 12	Netherlands	19/02/2020	4
Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops (TWA)	June 22 to 26	Canada	19/02/2020	4
Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF)	July 6 to 10	France	09/03/2020	4
Joint session of the Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs (TWC) and the Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques, and DNA-Profiling in Particular (BMT)	September 21 to 25	United States of America	08/01/2020	8

Participation at the TC and TWP meetings by electronic means

11. As a part of the measures taken in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, it was agreed by the Chairpersons of the TWPs, after consultation with the TWP hosts and the TC Chairperson, to hold the TWP sessions in 2020 (see paragraph 10 of this document) by electronic means.

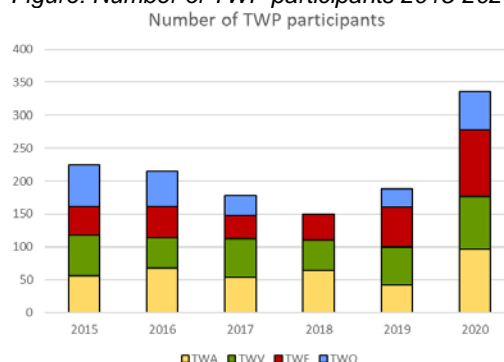
12. In order to assess the impact of the organizing TWP sessions by electronic means, the level of participation and participant satisfaction was monitored.

13. The results on the level of participation were as follows:

*Table: Total number of participants (members of the Union + observers) in TWPs (2015-2020)*

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF
2015	62	63	56	44
2016	45	53	68	49
2017	58	30	54	36
2018	46	no TWO in 2018	64	40
2019	58	28	42	60
Average 2015-2019	54	44	57	46
2020	81	59	96	101
Change (%)	+50%	+34%	+68%	+120%

*Figure: Number of TWP participants 2015-2020*



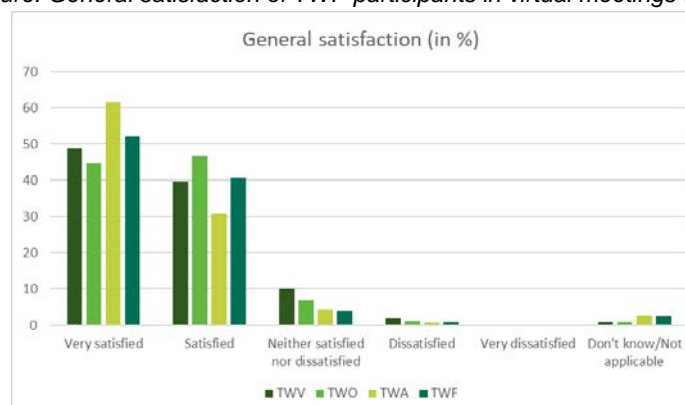
*Table: Number of UPOV members participating in TWPs (2015-2020)*

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF
2015	20	16	17	16
2016	15	14	19	23
2017	18	14	28	19
2018	15	no TWO in 2018	23	18
2019	15	12	20	19
Average 2015-2019	17	14	21	19
2020	27	20	28	26
Change (%)	+59%	+43%	+33%	+37%

14. The tables in Annex I provide more details about the participation in TWPs over the last 6 years (2015 to 2020).

15. To assess the level of satisfaction of participants at the virtual meetings, the Office of the Union conducted surveys of participants after each TWP session. The following chart illustrates the overall satisfaction of the week from the participants that replied to the survey. Overall, 91% of participants replied that they were satisfied or very satisfied. The full set of responses is reproduced in the Annex II to this document.

*Figure: General satisfaction of TWP participants in virtual meetings (2020)*



16. The TWC and BMT sessions, to be held from September 21 to 25, 2020, will also be held electronically. An oral report will be made to the TC/56 on the attendance and the result of the evaluation survey.

*17. The TC is invited to note the information provided in relation to the TWPs in 2020.*

#### PROPOSALS AS NEXT STEPS TO ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION IN TWPS AND TC IN THE FUTURE

18. A positive aspect of the virtual TWP sessions was the significant increase in the number of participants (increase ranging from 34-120%) and number of participating members of the Union (increase ranging from 33-59%), compared to previous years (see paragraph 13 of this document).

19. Although the surveys revealed a high level of overall satisfaction with the virtual meetings (see paragraph 15 of this document) under the given circumstances, participants identified disadvantages in not having a physical meeting. The surveys identified the following limitations for virtual meetings (full set of responses is reproduced in the Annex II):

- limited opportunities for in-depth discussions;
- reduced opportunities for bilateral/ small group discussions at the fringes of the session;
- reduced opportunities to network and meet other crop experts in DUS examination.

20. The TWF, at its fifty-first session, agreed to propose that meetings via electronic means could be considered for advancing discussions on Test Guidelines during the period between TWPs sessions (see document TWF/51/10 "Report", paragraph 27).

21. On the above basis, the TC may wish to invite the TWPs to consider the following possible measures for physical and virtual participation at meetings:

- To organize Test Guidelines subgroup discussions by electronic means prior to the TWPs instead of during the TWPs. The conclusions from the subgroups would be reported to the TWP session in the same way as the current procedure.
- To organize virtual preparatory workshops prior to the TWPs. Those preparatory workshops to be recorded and be made available on the UPOV website.
- To offer the possibility to provide comments and questions on documents in advance of the meeting.
- To organize electronic participation during the TWPs, using one of the following options, according to host facilities:
  - The host to provide the platform for virtual participants (with integrated audio/video on site), in addition to onsite participation in the meeting.
  - The UPOV Office to provide the platform for virtual participants. All participants (present on site or remotely) would be invited to join to the platform using their personal equipment.
- To have virtual meeting sessions for part of the day (e.g. 2 sessions of 2 hours per day) with sessions for onsite participants for the following:
  - visits to DUS trials or related facilities;
  - pre-organized bilateral discussions/ meetings on cooperation;
  - sessions to facilitate discussion or exchange of knowledge for DUS examination.

*22. The TC is invited to consider whether to invite the TWPs to consider the possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraph 21 of this document.*

[Annexes follow]

## ANNEX I

## UPOV Members Participation in TWPs 2020 compare to 2019 to 2015 (in English only)

Per Years

TWPs		TWPs 2020				TWPs 2019				TWPs 2018				TWPs 2017				TWPs 2016				TWPs 2015			
		TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV	TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV	TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV	TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV	TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV	TWA	TWF	TWO	TWV
Argentina	AR																								
Australia	AU																								
Austria	AT																								
Bosnia and Herzegovina	BA																								
Bulgaria	BG																								
Brazil	BR																								
Canada	CA																								
Chile	CL																								
China	CN																								
Colombia	CO																								
Czech Republic	CZ																								
Germany	DE																								
Denmark	DK																								
Dominican Republic	DO																								
Ecuador	EC																								
Spain	ES																								
Finland	FI																								
France	FR																								
Georgia	GE																								
United Kingdom	GB																								
Hungary	HU																								
Israel	IL																								
Italy	IT																								
Japan	JP																								
Kenya	KE																								
Republic of Korea	KR																								
Morocco	MA																								
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	MK																								
Mexico	MX																								
Netherlands	NL																								
Norway	NO																								
New Zealand	NZ																								
African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI)	OA																								
Oman	OM																								
Peru	PE																								
Poland	PL																								
European Union	QZ																								
Romania	RO																								
Russian Federation	RU																								
Sweden	SE																								
Slovakia	SK																								
Tunisia	TN																								
Turkey	TR																								
United States of America	US																								
United Republic of Tanzania	TZ																								
Uruguay	UY																								
Uzbekistan	UZ																								
Viet Nam	VN																								
South Africa	ZA																								

Footnote: non-listed authorities did not participate in a TWP in the last 6 years

Annex I, page 2  
TWPs 2020 Evaluation survey (in English only)

Per TWPs

		TWA							TWF							TWO							TWV					
TWPs		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Argentina	AR																											
Australia	AU																											
Austria	AT																											
Bosnia and Herzegovina	BA																											
Bulgaria	BG																											
Brazil	BR																											
Canada	CA																											
Chile	CL																											
China	CN																											
Colombia	CO																											
Czech Republic	CZ																											
Germany	DE																											
Denmark	DK																											
Dominican Republic	DO																											
Ecuador	EC																											
Spain	ES																											
Finland	FI																											
France	FR																											
Georgia	GE																											
United Kingdom	GB																											
Hungary	HU																											
Israel	IL																											
Italy	IT																											
Japan	JP																											
Kenya	KE																											
Republic of Korea	KR																											
Morocco	MA																											
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	MK																											
Mexico	MX																											
Netherlands	NL																											
New Zealand	NZ																											
	OA																											
African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI)																												
Oman	OM																											
Peru	PE																											
Poland	PL																											
European Union	QZ																											
Romania	RO																											
Russian Federation	RU																											
Sweden	SE																											
Slovakia	SK																											
Tunisia	TN																											
Turkey	TR																											
United States of America	US																											
United Republic of Tanzania	TZ																											
Uruguay	UY																											
Uzbekistan	UZ																											
Viet Nam	VN																											
South Africa	ZA																											</

Footnote: non-listed authorities did not participate in a TWP in the last 6 years

[Annex II follows]

## EVALUATION SURVEY - COMPARISON REPORT ON TWP's (2020)

The following questions were asked via an online survey to the registered participants of each TWP:

### Advance preparation of the Technical Working Party

1. Please rate the following:

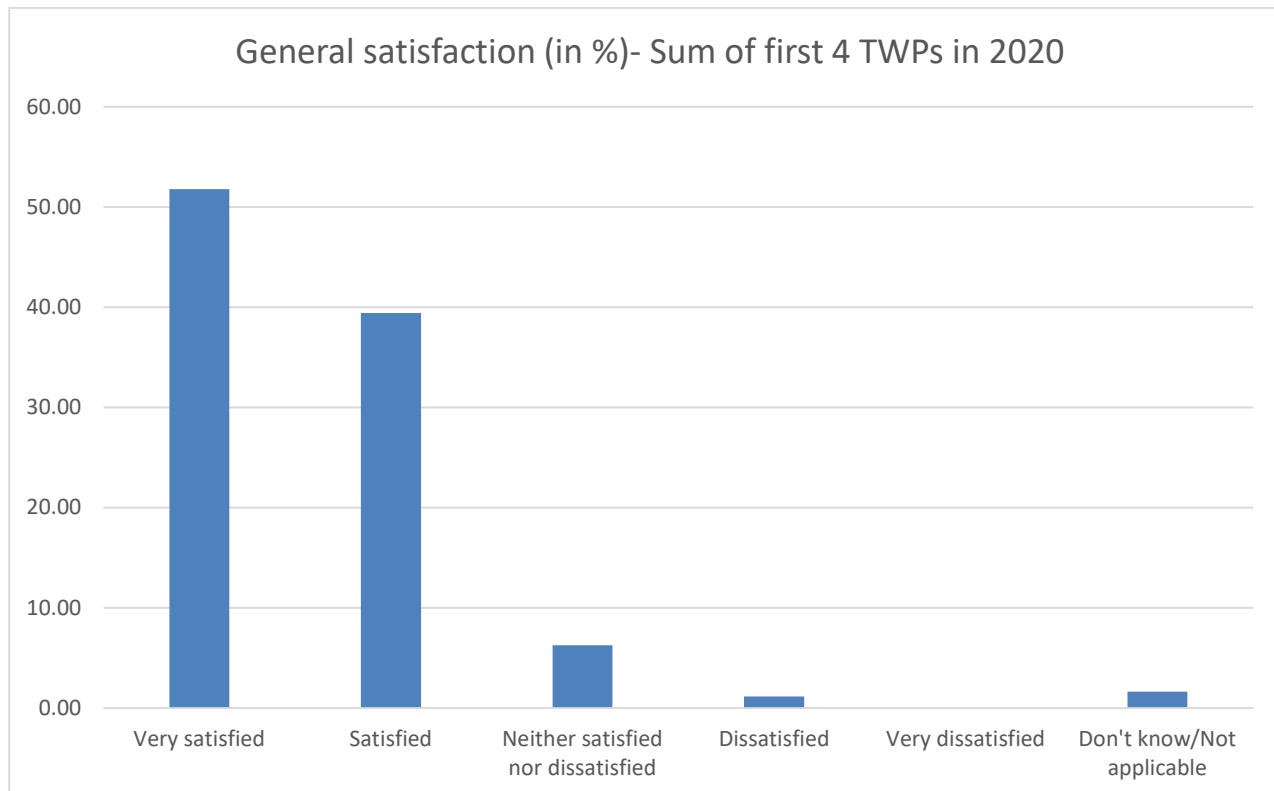
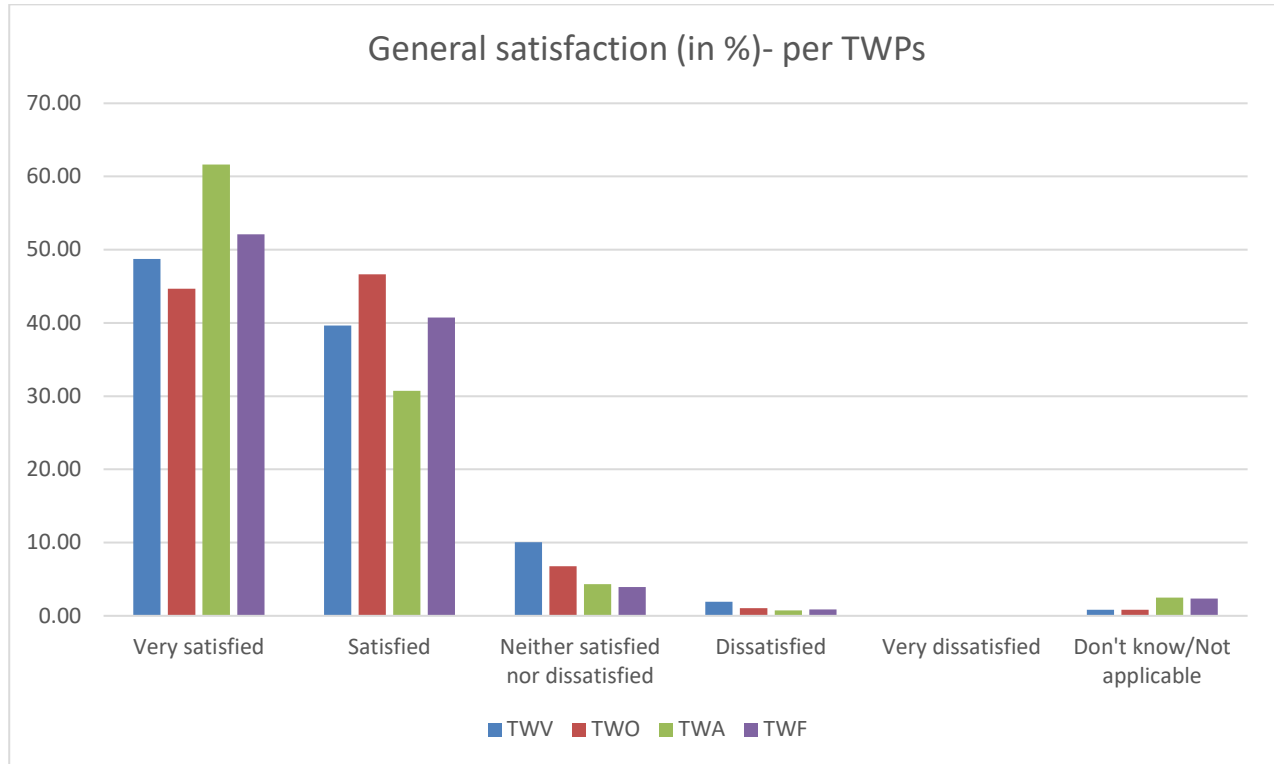
[illegible]

During the week of the Technical Working Party

**4. Please rate the following:**

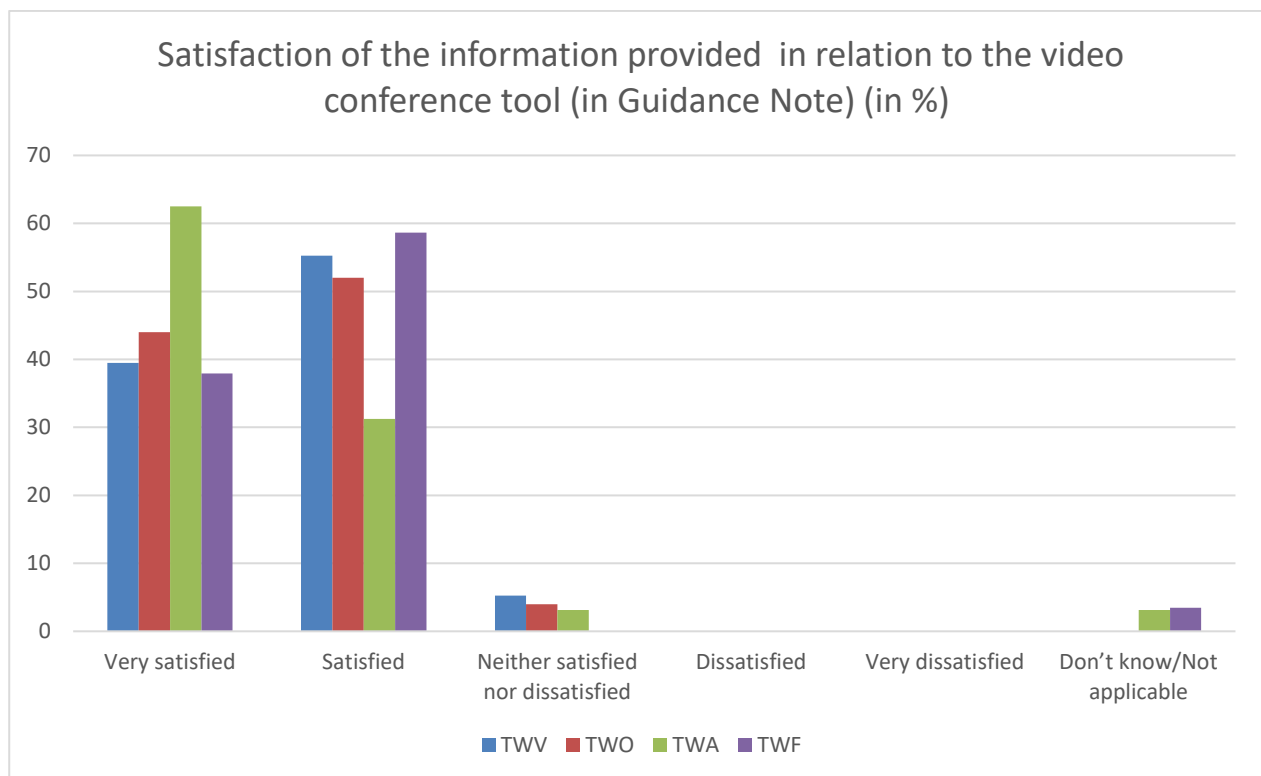
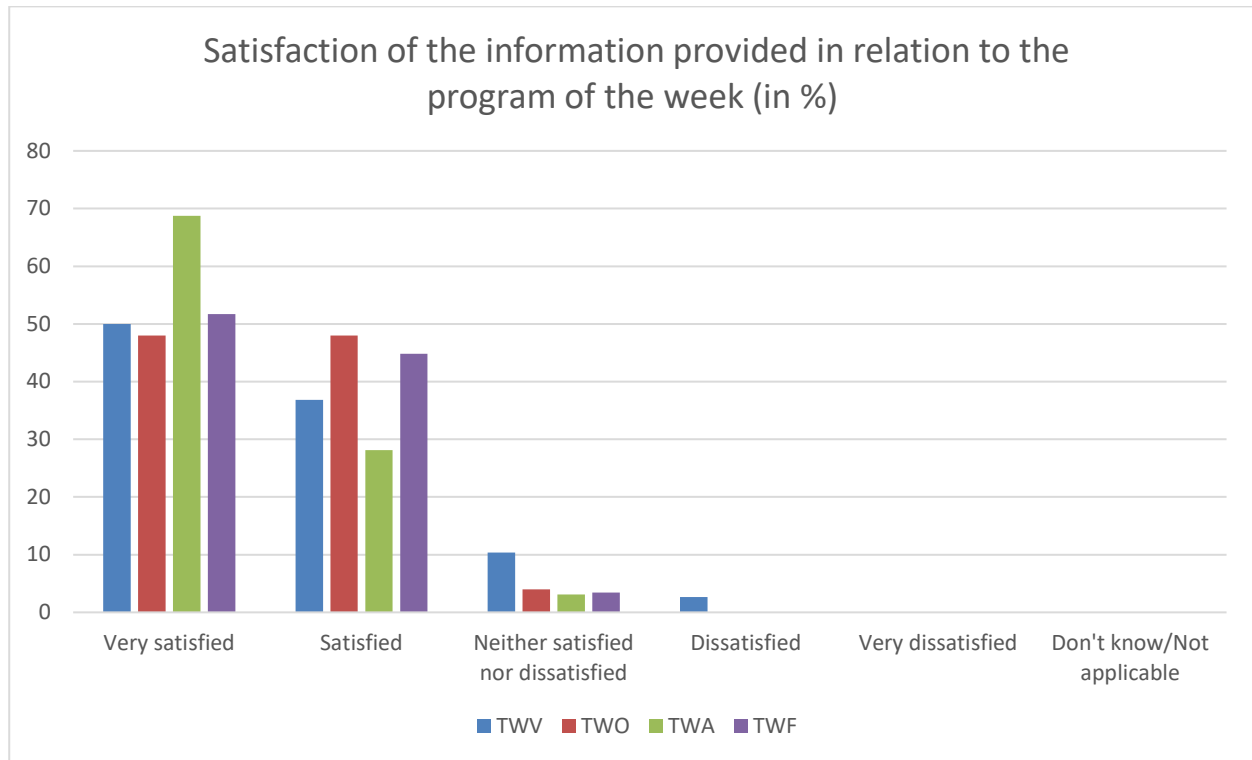
[illegible]

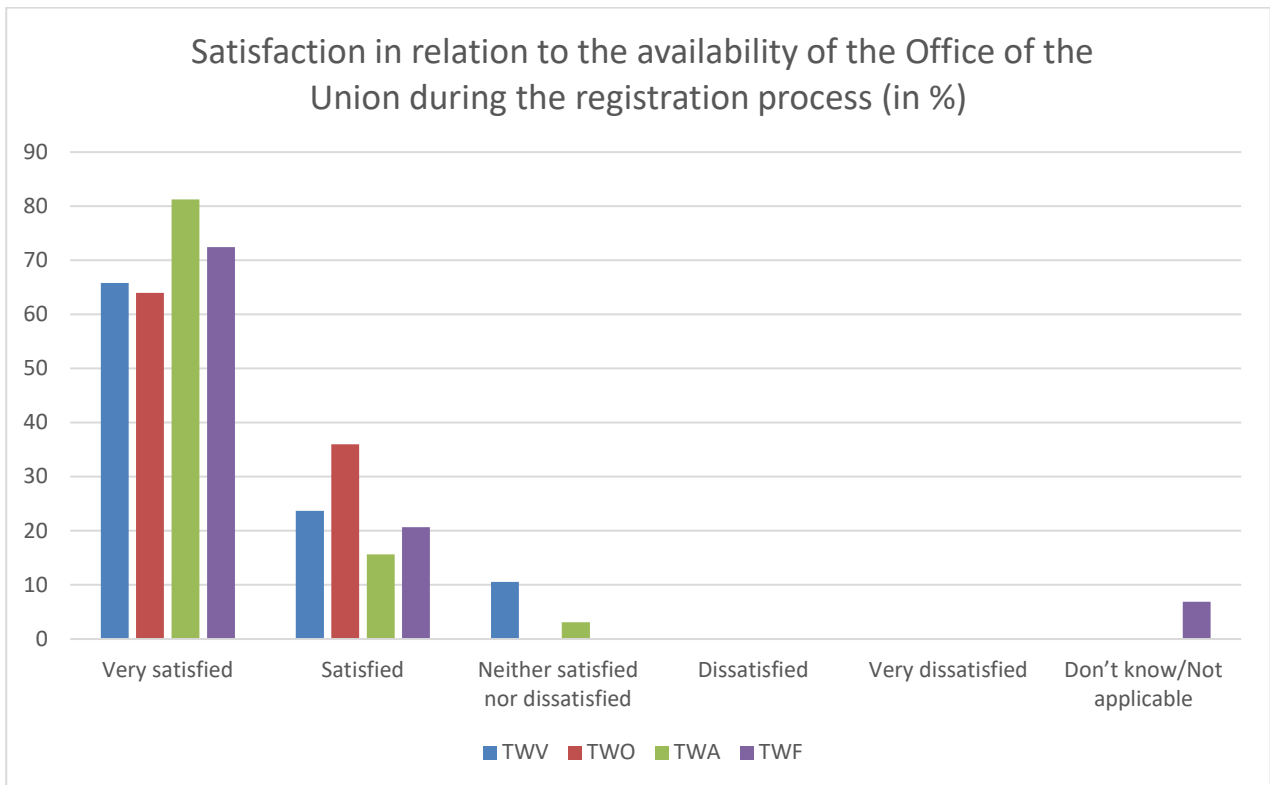
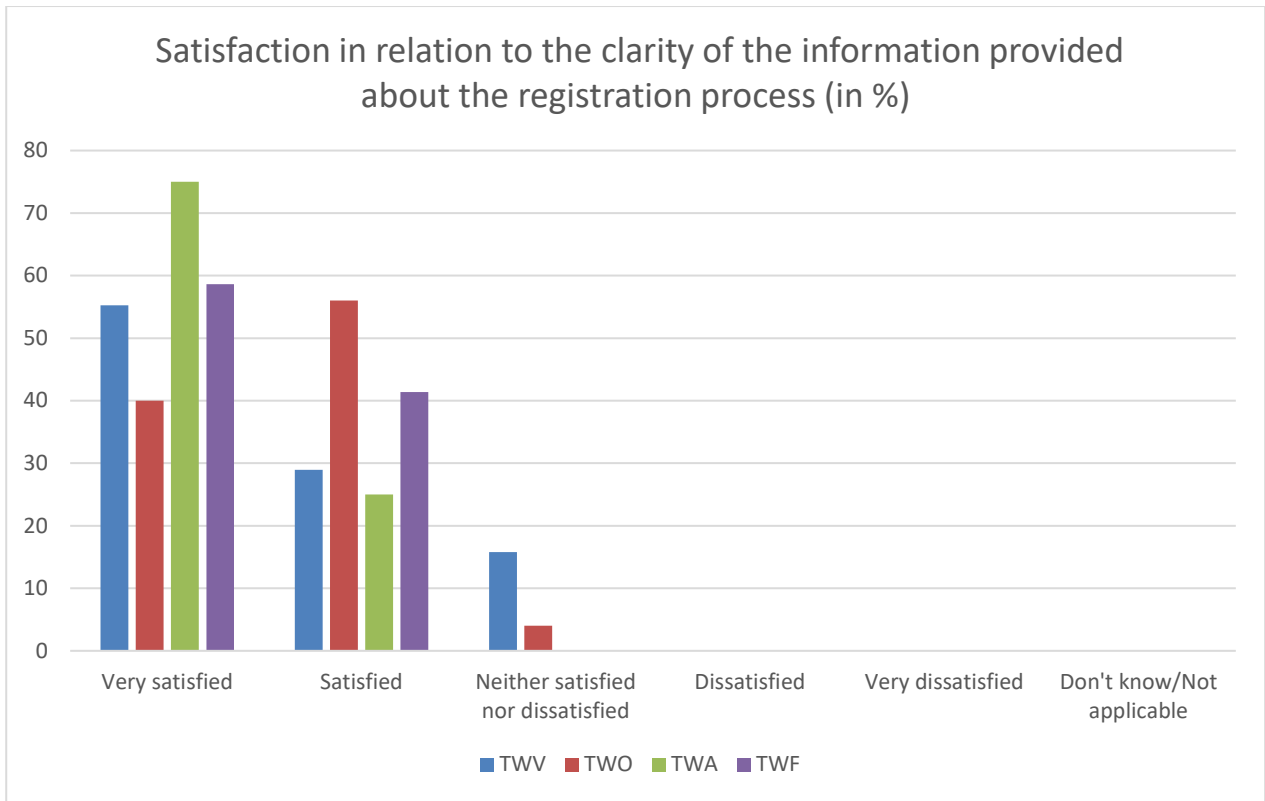
## GENERAL LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

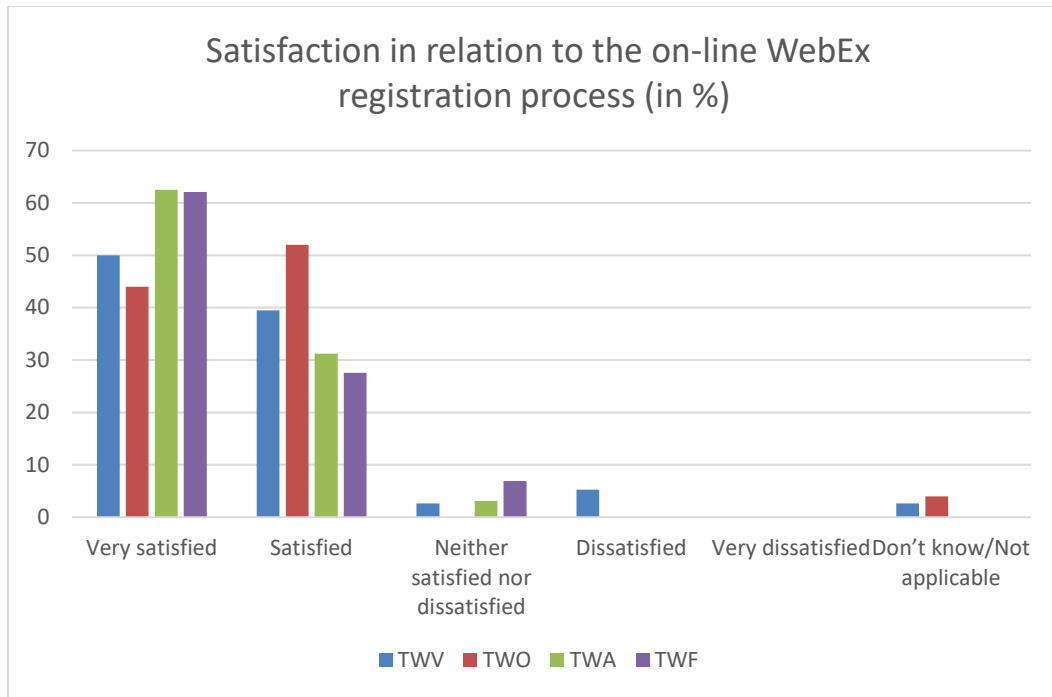




## INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS







## COMMENTS

### TWV:

many e-mails, very short before the meeting

Thank you

Ninguno

to build a name list of related people for convenience to join meeting.

Keep up the good work ,it was an amazing experience

The video conference guidance note was complete but it is essential to have time to try it before the session. Thank you for the test session

the information is not always clear on what will exactly be discussed except that the TWV has to note something

Working program was provided very late, so it was unclear until late which timeslots to reserve.

### TWO:

Please provide regularly to participate online

2 presentation were made available very late, leaving no time for forward comment

I participated from Asia, so it was slightly hard for me to join the meeting at night. But, I understand there were no way. I hope the situation become better in next year.

### TWA:

Very well organized and very easy to connect. Only comment is it would be better to circulate the hours for every continent.

The Weber testing session was so useful

It was excellent

was not possible participate in the test session of WebEx why never arrive the link or was not clarity how making.

internet challenges interfered with registration processes. It was, however, a learning experience

The on-line meeting could provide more chance for interesting party or members to join the meeting at home. I wish the online meeting method could be used together with the off-line meeting way in the future.

Congratulations to the team and the organizers

One registration for the entire week with the option to register for separate days if necessary would have been good.

Rather than use the link in the email provided, it was easier to use the Cisco Webex app on desktop and put in the meeting # as this brought you to the menu that allowed for name change as required

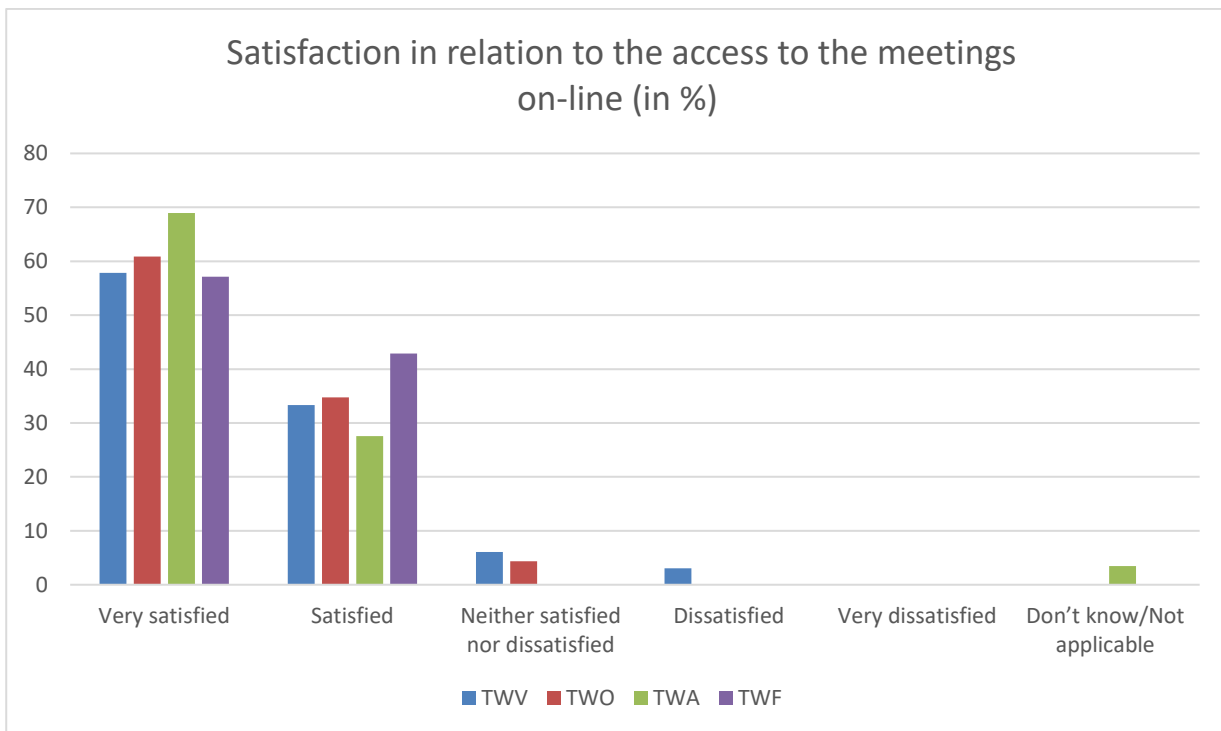
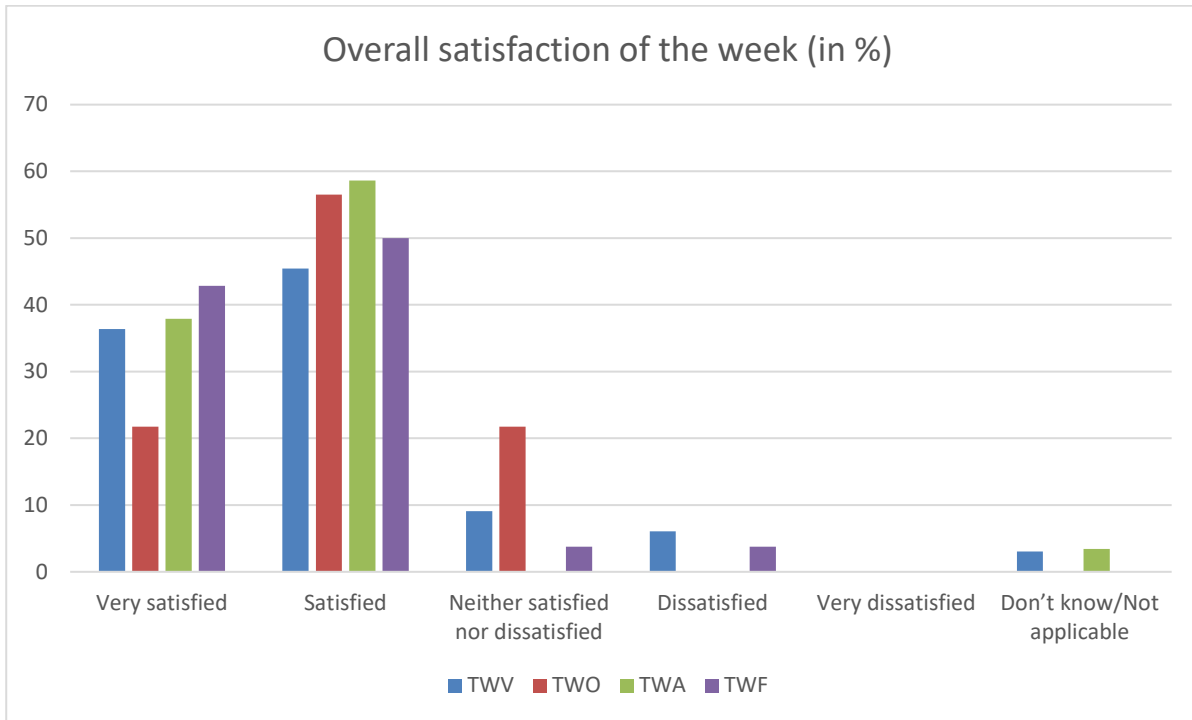
### TWF:

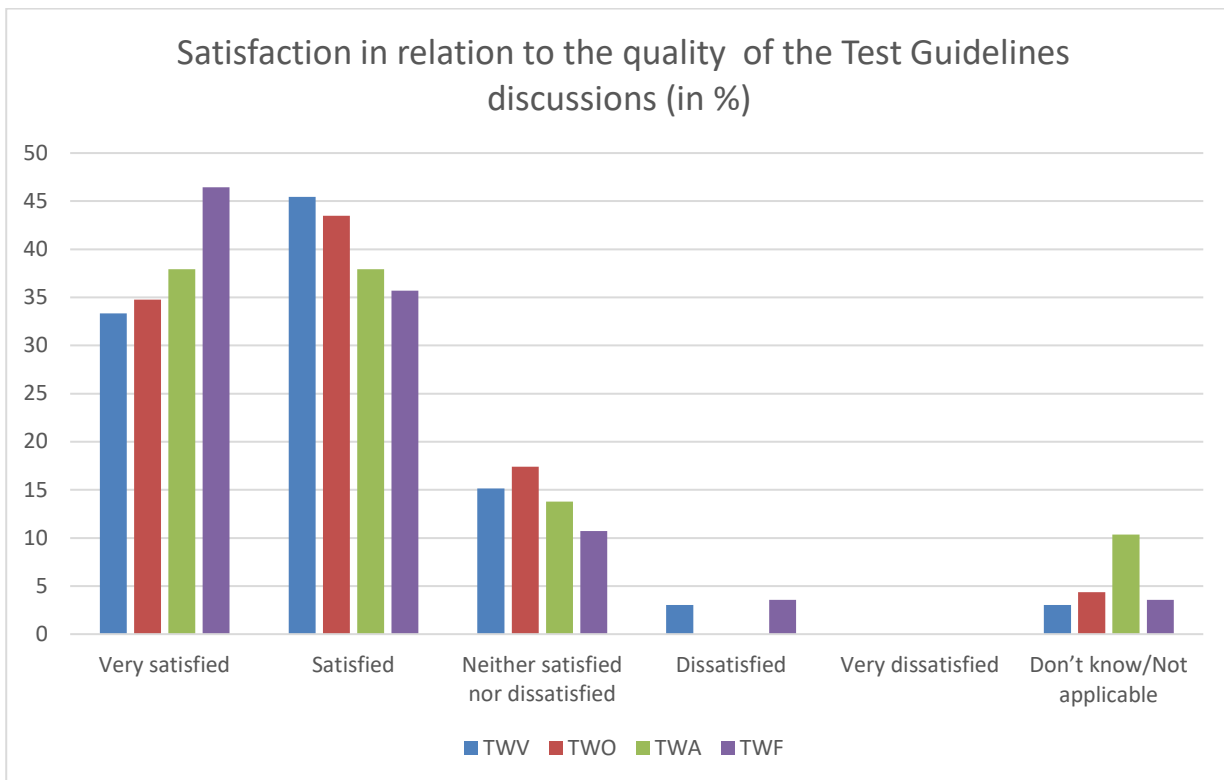
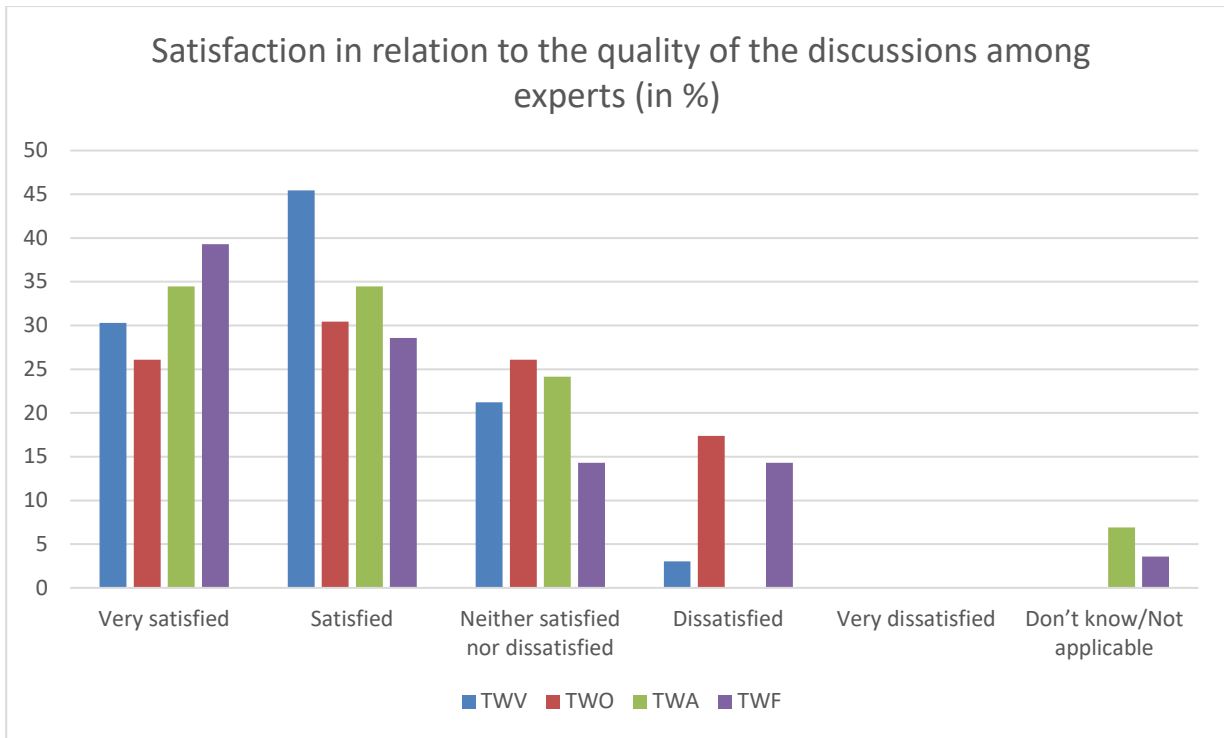
Give an indication of when the link will be sent

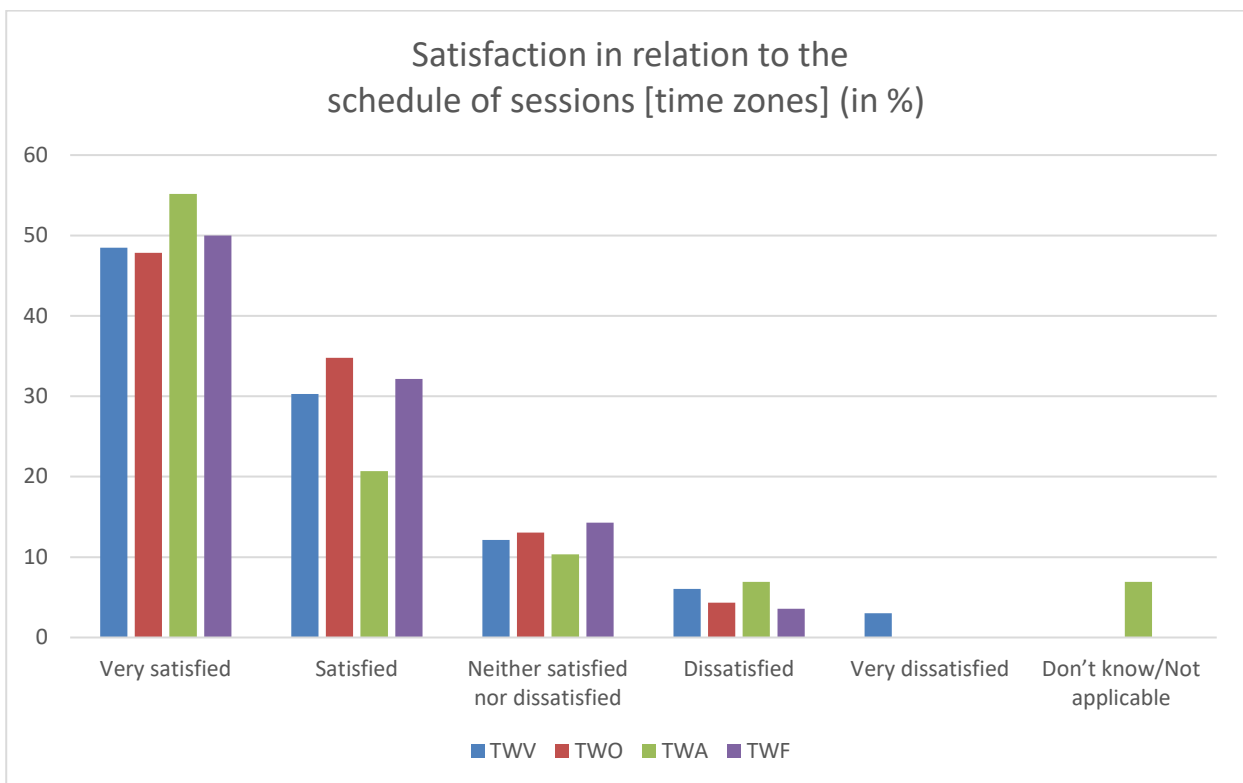
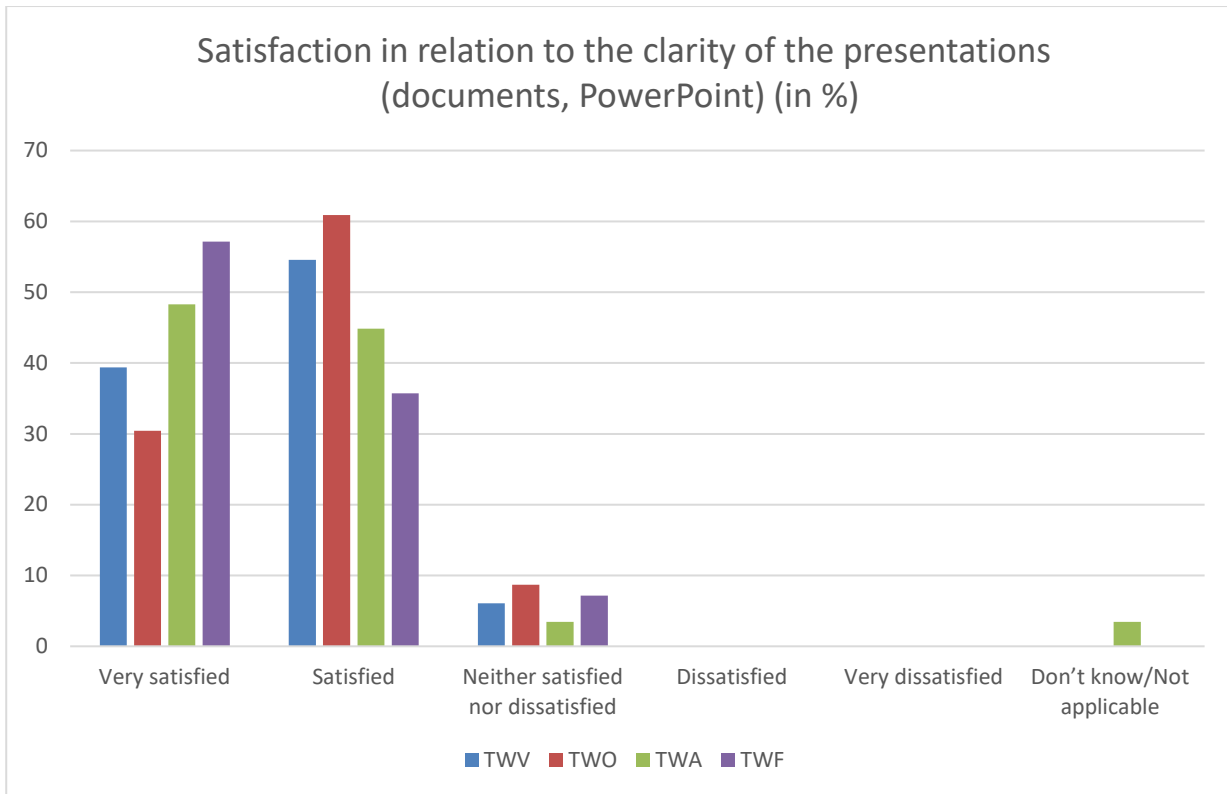
I couldn't use the camera. When I try, I receive message saying that the camera is used by another application when this is not the case

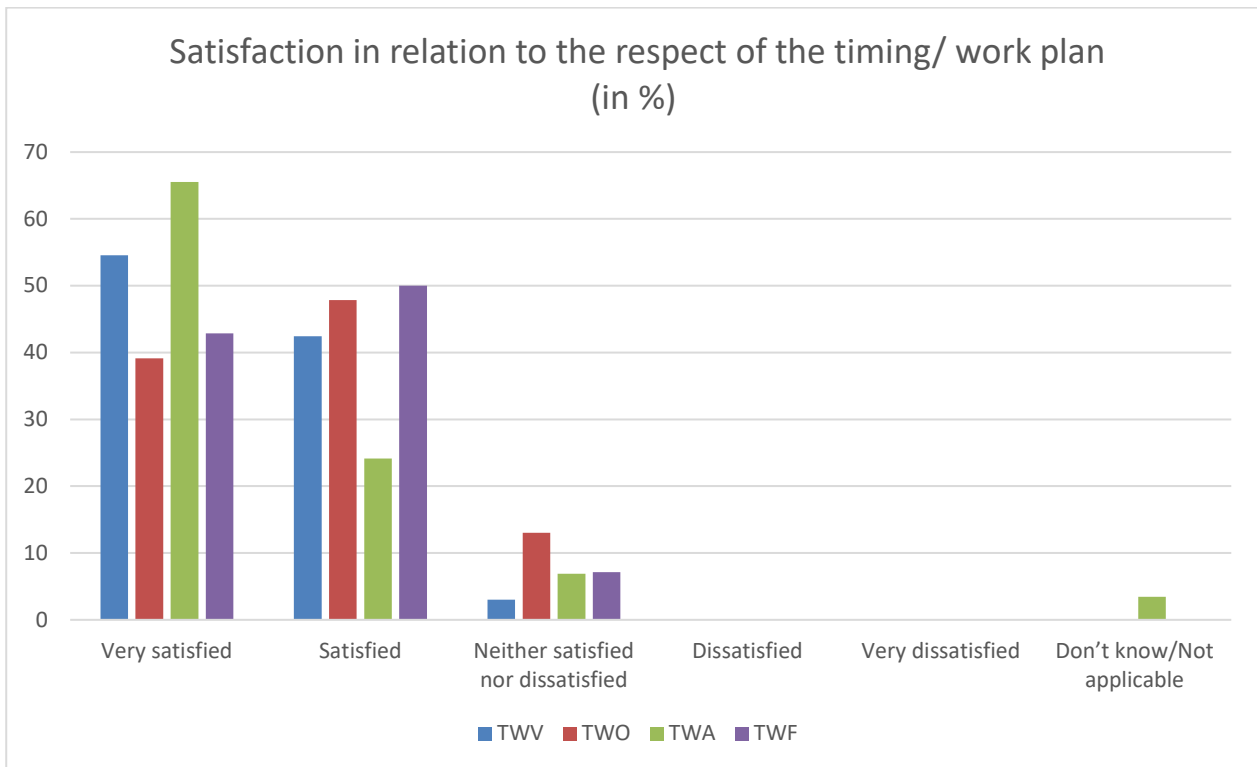
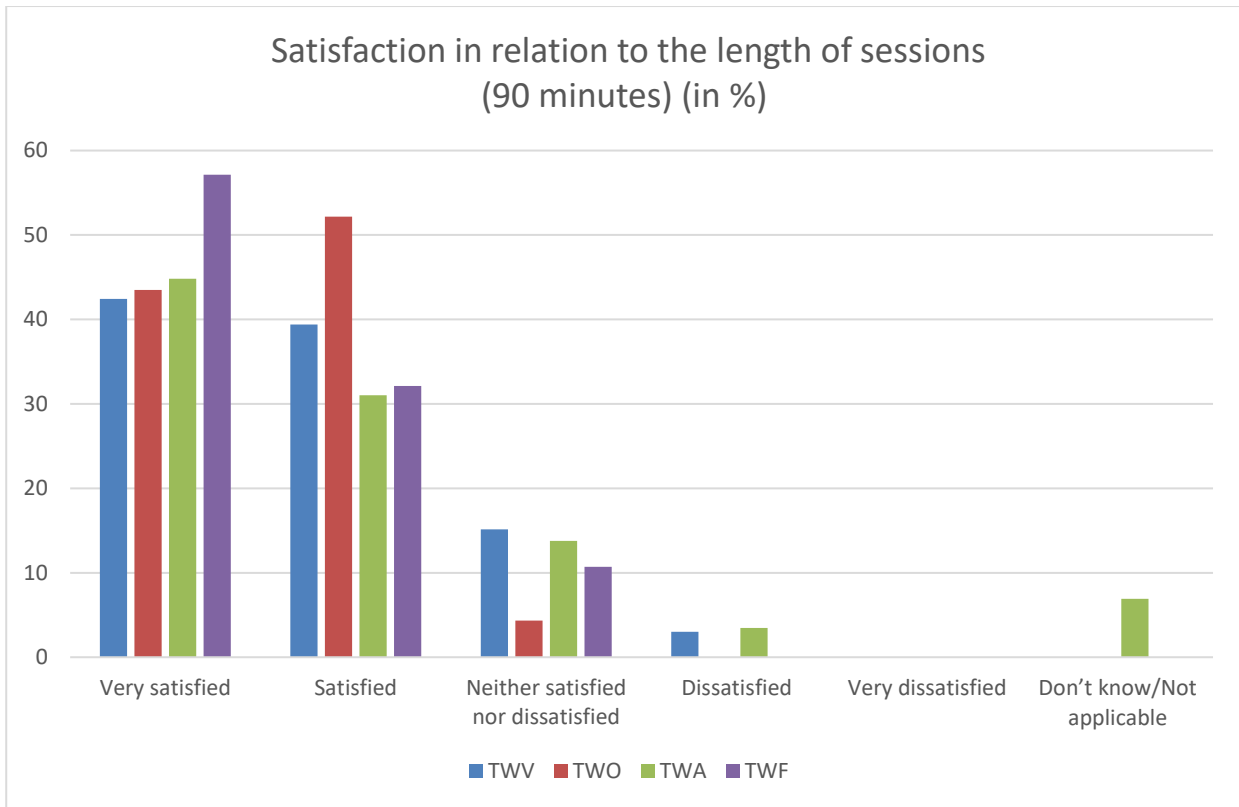
Suggest that greater emphasis be placed on the essential registration well before the session 1 start time even if joining in session 2 or 3. An hour before was notified but perhaps not adequately stressed its significance.

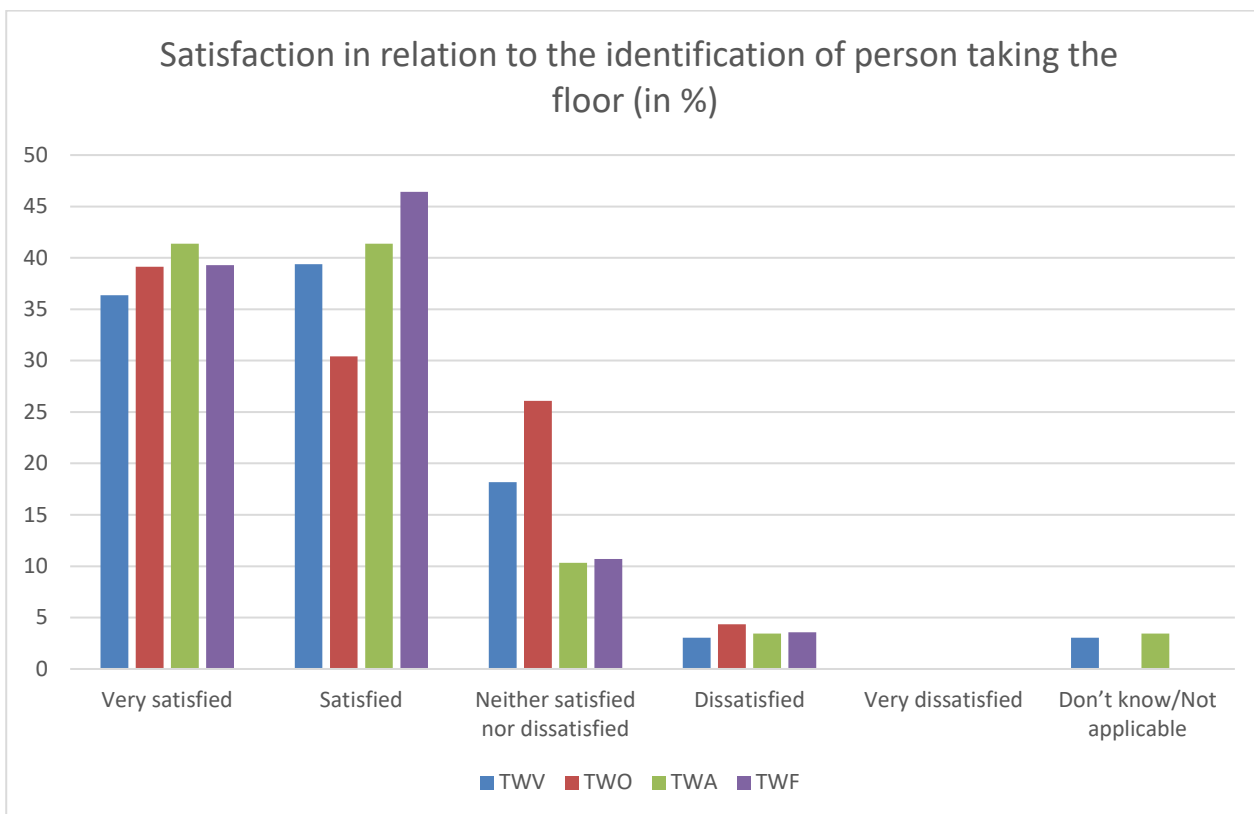
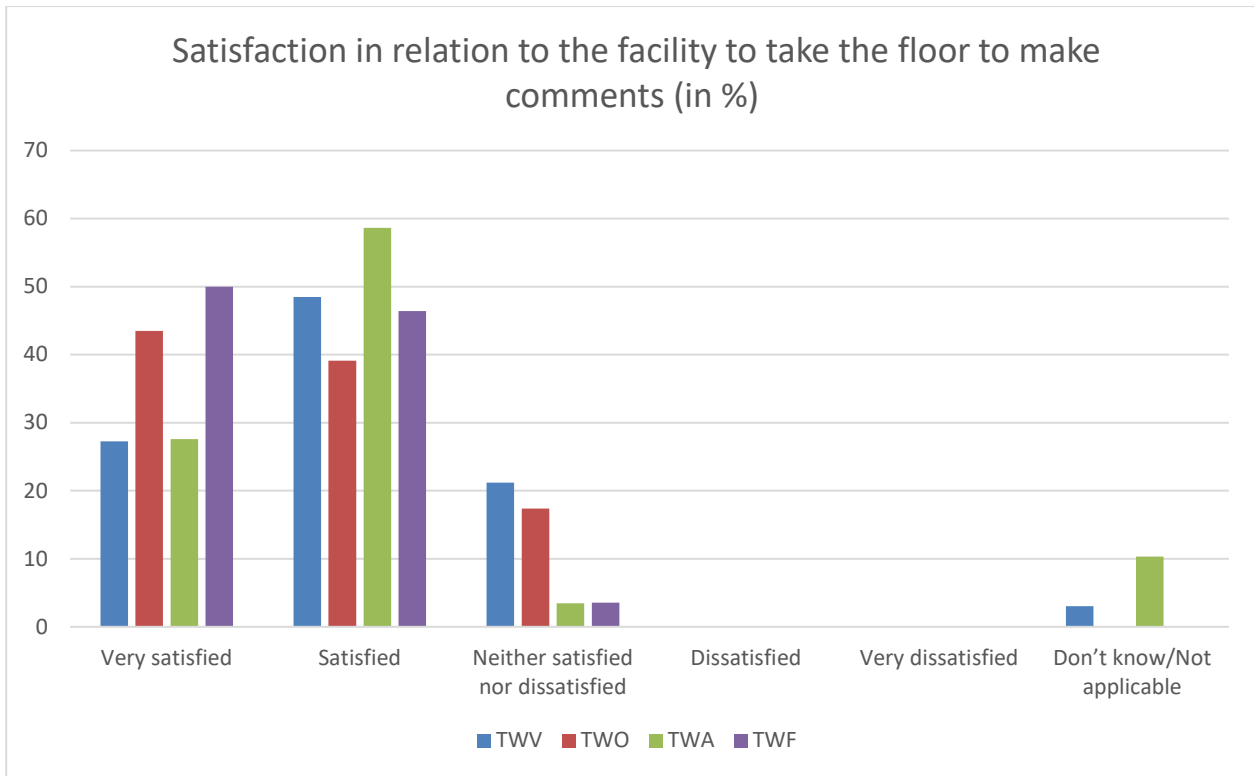
Dear Sir Would it be possible to make video conferencing a permanent add on to TWF meetings ? It helps with more participation. Regards Carensa Petzer



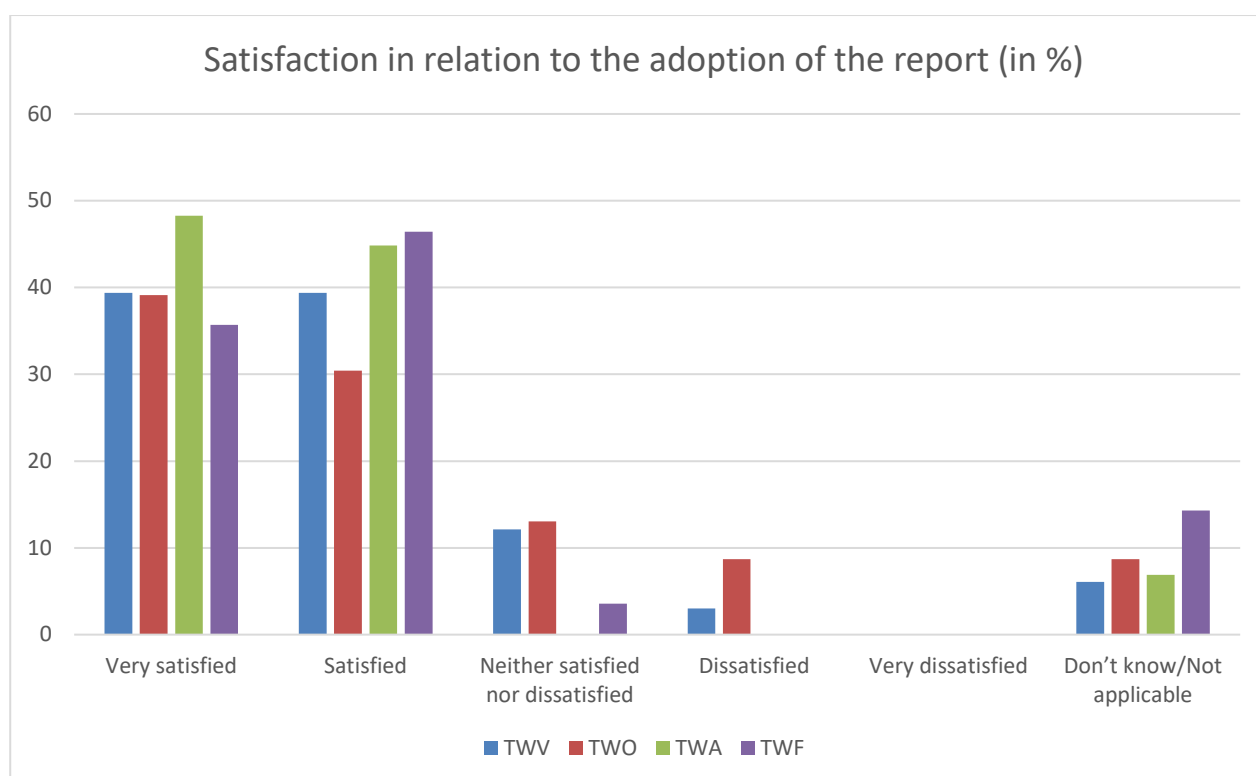












TWV:

Text input

some sessions needed more time, because of the status of the project guideline, others needed less. 'raise hand' doesn't work. in guideline discussions it's better to just ask in the microphone for the floor. But is identification is clear to others in the meeting? Online meeting is very useful in training or involving colleagues in the world of UPOV. It should be clear whether they have to register or not. Preparation to the meeting gave a large workload, we were not prepared for that. I would advise to inform participants on the roadmap to the TWP as soon as possible.

Exchanges can only be more limited compared to a physical session. On the other hand, visio conference allows for a broader attendance, including additional experts who could not attend the physical meeting. I think that UPOV achieved the best that could be done taking into account the experience accumulated.

I think the little problem that sometimes comes up in the discussion is that the network or the equipment of the individual expert is not very good.

As the only possible alternative, the videoconf was very satisfying. However, it is more a conclusion than a discussion also due to the issue of timerestriction. All discussions point have to be solve in advance and only minor issues can be touched during the session. The possibility of bilateral/small group 'coffeebreak' discussions would be good.

i like the report less cryptic and to include more the comments of the floor

Under the circumstances this was the best option. Discussions are more difficult, less discussion on TWP documents and sometimes more time needed for TGs. Did not have time to go through report thoroughly.

The electronic version of this TWV could have been a good opportunity to have some new collaborations from "new participant countries"; but it didn't occurs. At the opposite we couldn't have discussions as much as it used to be on face to face meeting, including during the breaks were we can discussed with ours colleagues from others EO

TWO:

Text input

There was insufficient time to check the report prior to its adoption

The time given to review the report was very quick. I did not get the report immediately when it was sent out (maybe delays in transmission) so then did not get much time to review the document.

The discussions were shorter than usual. In my view the reason for this might be that some participants were hesitating to take the floor.

Good for mere reporting but poor for discussion. However, given the circumstances, it was better than cancelling the meeting. In should not be an option for future meetings as long as no strict travel restrictions apply.

I'm not a good English speaker, so it was difficult for me to communicate in English, through Webex. Discussion with comments was so good, but I needed more days for preparation of comments.

TWA:

Text input

Every was fine, but a minor detail in the soybean discussion many has the microphone open and for a moment was difficult to attend.

My presentation was focused on a specific topic and i did not attend access the meeting the other days. My impression is very positive

The session was well scheduled with adequate time to participants to share their experiences and comments

AFSTA was not able to provide inputs during the session as 'raise hand' and chat sometimes got disabled, may be due to gadget use, cell phone. With the new normal, we will improve on our gadgets

Webex meetings are ok but possibilities for interaction are limited. In the future we should go for a hybrid system.

I didn't participate the session

My comments refer only to the session on sugarcane test guidelines revision.

This was our first participation and we learnt a lot from experienced participants

Sometimes I didn't know if I had taken the floor to make comments.

The circulation of comments on the documents in advance greatly facilitated and accelerated the discussions (in particular those on the revised guidelines as feedback on comments of others could be discussed prior to the meeting). This should be considered to keep, even when meetings are 'at location' again. However, personal interaction between participants was sadly missed. Discussion via video is more difficult than live at location. Coming from Europe, the time schedule was fine for me, but I can understand it was not optimal for the Americas and Asia/Australia/New Zealand. Due to not having to travel, many more participants were able to participate in (parts of) the meeting. The possibility to access the meeting via WebEX is something worthwhile to consider for the future, even when meetings are 'at location' again.

I feel it could be better to go through a Test Guideline in full, rather than stopping it after 90 min or so. In many cases 90 min will be enough to go through at least once, but in some cases not. In those latter cases more time should be allotted. It would also be good to somehow capture the decisions made at a previous TWP. Example: once hilum colour or maturity group of soybean is decided, there is no need to come back to it at a next TWP. Under the current system, these characteristics were discussed 4-5 times in subsequent years.

Overall, the sessions went very well. Kudos to the UPOV Office and to Beate for keeping us on time. There is a lot less feedback provided than an in-person meeting (we all agreed). In terms of the participants within the different time-zones, I would be interested in finding out about their experiences too.

Just a few issues with some of the connections. I think time scheduling was the best it could have been to satisfy all participants. Overall 90 minutes seem to allow complete review of the documents.

TWF:

Text input

The technical experts are among the best in the world. The problem we as breeders of vegetatively reproduced species have is that the EDV text was written specifically with F1 hybrid seed crops in mind. In the light of the Nadorcott decision it is only a matter of time before yet another loophole is prised open. Different crops need different wording or rules. It really is not fair on the judges to have to try and get wording which is purpose written for one species to work on another species. In the meantime we really need the technical working party to take on board our proposals. It was quite dismaying to listen to some of the fringe examples being raised as reasons not to accept the proposals made by CIOPORA

I think the testguidelines discussions were a little harmed during this meeting more because of the participants than the organization. But in general the meeting was really good, it was well organized and the tool worked very well. Congratulation to UPOV.

there are no real discussions in electronic meetings - it is acceptable tool for reporting with a limited need for questions

It was difficult to have wider discussions, round table view points, feed back from others.

My dissatisfaction is mainly based on the inefficient participation that might be due to the use of the virtual medium

Some people joining the sessions could not be identified at all for ex. someone connecting as "Elwin 77" (or Elvin 77), etc. Could be helpful to ask people joining anyhow to introduce themselves at the begging or to impose beforehand the name to be displayed.

I had had a problem participating the meeting, because of time difference.

TEHNICAL PROBLEMS:

Participants reported were invited to report on any technical problems, ex. internet issues or audio issues.  
In TWF:

Text input

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Very minor: I lost the connection for 1 minute. Probably due to own internet connection glitch. The session restaured itself quickly.

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The 51st TWF was really successful as a virtual meeting and I did not experience any problems. A huge thank you to all involved with the organising

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Just the one I mentioned before about the chat.

---

use of camera

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Lost audio connection , could not rejoin.

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I did not understand well how to raise hand. I finally was using the chat to say that I am raising hand. In fact it's a minor problem, they always gave me access to the floor as soon as I ask for it in the chat to the UPOV Host. Thank you very much; the conference was very useful and interesting.

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i would have to leave and come back to fix my connection issues

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A couple of days I registered but I did not received the link to join the meeting

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Care must be taken in joining by computer audio and not phone. Joining by phone can occur easily in error and it ca be frustrating to have no audio and unclear why. Care is needed when connecting.

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audio on two occasions

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some audio issues and loss of the hand icon and some minor problems due to the device used

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[End of Annex II and of document]