

Technical Committee

TC/57/10

**Fifty-Seventh Session
Geneva, October 25 and 26, 2021**

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INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AND THE TECHNICAL WORKING PARTIES

Document prepared by the Office of the Union

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this document is to report on developments concerning measures to increase participation in the work of the Technical Working Parties (TWPs) and Technical Committee (TC), including the use of meetings via electronic means.

2. The TC is invited to:

- (a) Note the participation at the TWP sessions in 2021, as presented in Annex I to this document;
- (b) Note the comments by the TWV, TWO, TWA and TWF, at their sessions in 2021, on possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as presented in Annex II to this document; and
- (c) Consider possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraphs 11 to 13 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:

- BMT: Working Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques and DNA-Profiling in Particular
- 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
- TWM: Technical Working Party on Testing Methods and Techniques
- TWO: Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
- TWPs: Technical Working Parties
- TWV: Technical Working Party for Vegetables

PARTICIPATION AT THE TC AND TWP MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC MEANS

5. 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 2021 by electronic means. An analysis of the level of participation at the TWP sessions in 2021 is presented as Annex I to this document. Information on the participation at the TWC and BMT sessions in 2021 will be provided in an addendum to this document.

6. *The TC is invited to note the participation at the TWP sessions in 2021, as presented in Annex I to this document.*

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION AT TWP MEETINGS

7. The TC, at its fifty-sixth¹ session, agreed to invite the TWPs to consider possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as reproduced in Annex II to this document (see document TC/56/23 "Report", paragraph 69).

8. Comments by the TWPs, at their sessions in 2021, on possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings are presented in Annex II to this document.

9. Further background to this matter is provided in document TC/56/12 "Increasing participation in the work of the Technical Committee and Technical Working Parties".

10. *The TC is invited to note the comments by the TWPs, at their sessions in 2021, on possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as presented in Annex II to this document.*

Proposals for increasing participation in the work of the Technical Working Parties

11. On the basis of the comments by the TWPs, at their sessions in 2021, the TC may wish to consider the following possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings:

(a) *Virtual preparatory workshops prior to the TWPs*

- The virtual preparatory workshops would be organized as a series of webinars.
- The content of the virtual preparatory workshops would be agreed by the TC under agenda item "Preparatory Workshops".
- The content would be organized according to themes (e.g. drafting of Test Guidelines, molecular techniques in DUS testing, DUS testing methods, image analysis).
- Arrangements for the webinars would be finalized by the Office of the Union in coordination with the chairpersons of the TC and TWPs (e.g. dates, number of webinars required to cover content, speakers and panelists).
- The virtual preparatory workshops would replace the preparatory workshops held before each individual TWP. The series of webinars would open for experts from all TWPs.
- The webinars would be recorded and maintained online until replaced by an updated version. The Office of the Union would organize a webpage to host the videos (e.g. UPOV YouTube channel).

12. Further matters relating to preparatory workshops are presented in document TC/57/13 "Preparatory Workshops".

¹ held via electronic means on October 26 and 27, 2020

(b) *Comments and questions on TWP meeting documents to be provided in advance of the sessions*

- Participants would be invited to provide written comments on meeting documents in advance of the sessions, in the same way as in 2020 and 2021.
- The compilation of written comments would be circulated to registered participants one week prior to the session.
- Comments received in advance would be included in the discussions on the respective agenda item during the session.

(c) *Alternating one year of physical meeting with one year of virtual meeting*

- The TWP sessions would be scheduled one year as a virtual meeting and the following year as a physical meeting (e.g. 2023: virtual; 2024: physical).
- There would be at least two virtual TWP meetings in a calendar year, thereby ensuring that experts would be able to participate electronically in all discussions on Test Guidelines, TGP and TWP documents.
- Technical visits via virtual means: there would be an open invitation for any UPOV member to make a presentation on aspects of their testing systems through presentations, videos or live online demonstrations (e.g. DUS examination for particular crops, testing procedures, image analysis, trial layout).
- The timing of a particular virtual TWP session would be discussed by the TWP when planning the agenda for the forthcoming session.

(d) *Electronic participation at physical TWP sessions*

- The TWP host or the Office of the Union should provide a meeting platform for electronic participation in Test Guidelines subgroup meetings at physical TWP sessions. This measure should enable participation of crop experts otherwise not attending TWP sessions.
- The hosts of TWP physical meetings should participate in deciding how to organize virtual participation in Test Guidelines subgroup discussions.

(e) *Technical Working Party on Testing Methods and Techniques (TWM)*

- The TWM will meet electronically in 2022 and will assess the need to meet physically in the future, according to the range of topics to be covered.

(f) *Reporting and review of measures*

13. The Office of the Union would report on the measures adopted for review and consideration by the TC, at its fifty-eighth session.

14. *The TC is invited to consider possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraphs 11 to 13 of this document.*

[Annexes follow]

PARTICIPATION AT TWP SESSIONS IN 2021

Table 1: Total number of individual participants at TWPs from 2015 to 2021*

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC	BMT
2015	62	63	56	44	18	no session
2016	45	53	68	49	34	107
2017	58	30	54	36	31	49
2018	46	no session	64	40	28	55
2019	58	28	42	60	44	65
Average 2015-2019	58	39	63	55	33	66
2020 (e-meeting)	81	59	96	101	44	119
2021 (e-meeting)	100	96	142	109	54	116
Change (%)**	+86%	+176%	+150%	+138%	+74%	+110%

* the total number of participants from members of the Union and observers is considered.

** Change (%) comparing 2021 against the average 2015-2019

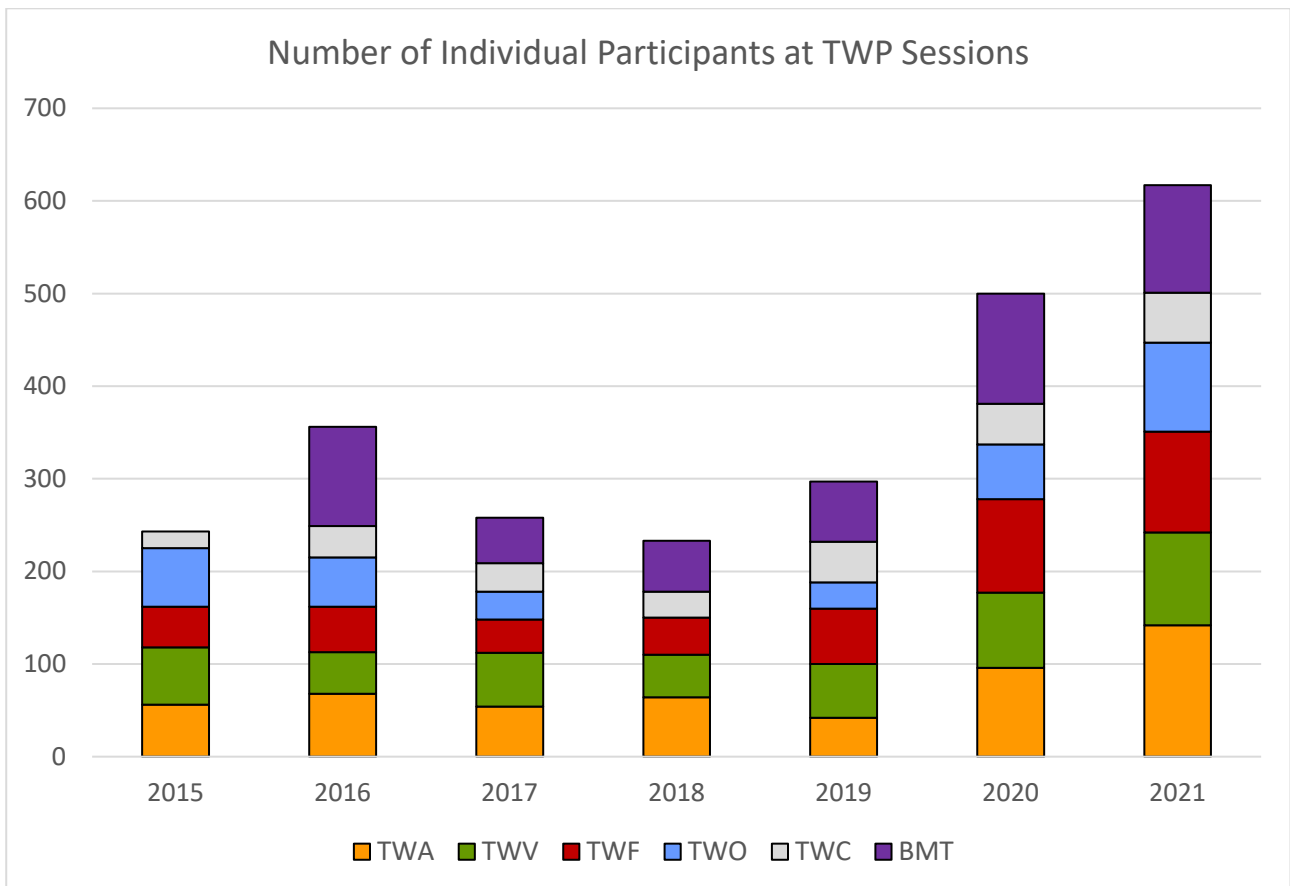
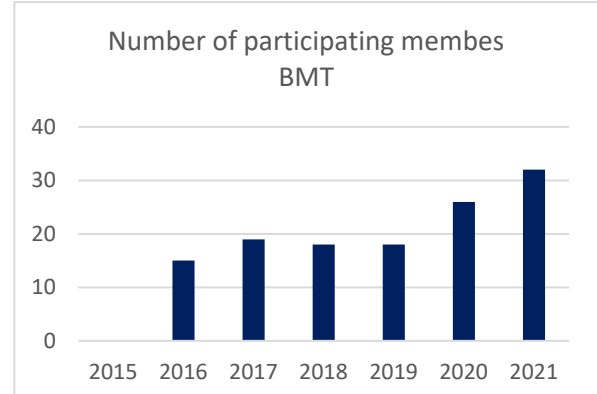
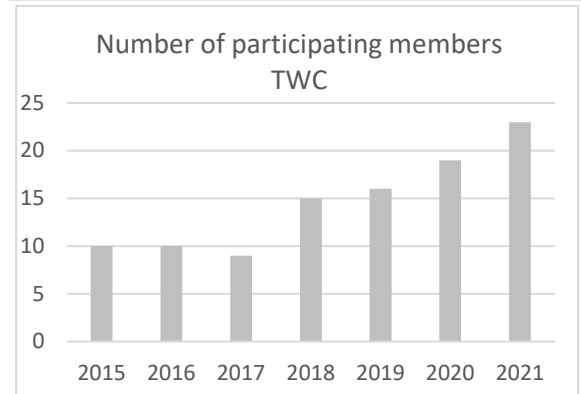
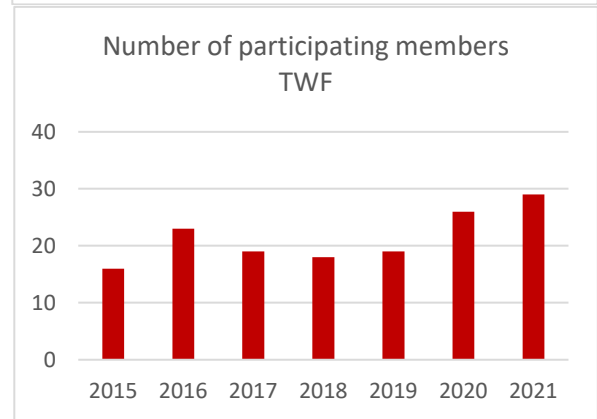
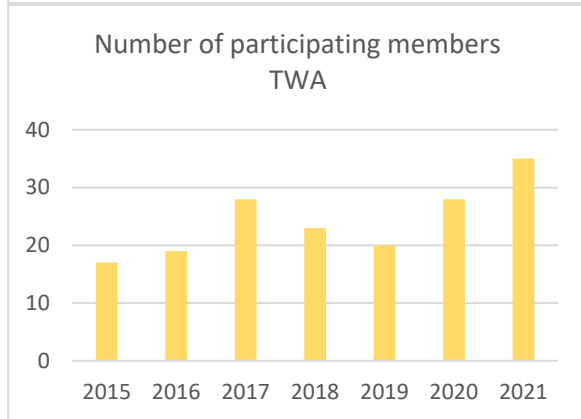
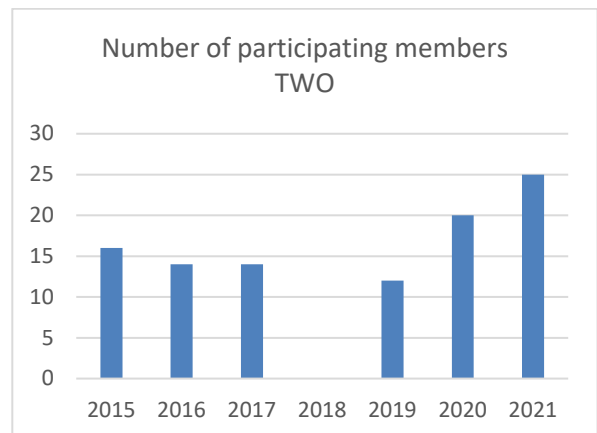
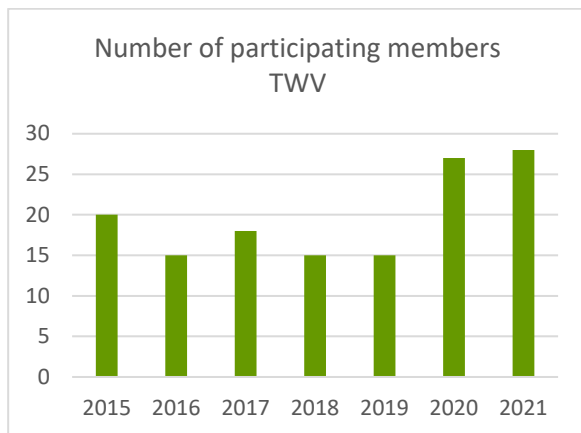


Table 2: Total number of members of the Union represented at TWPs from 2015 to 2021

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC	BMT
2015	20	16	17	16	7	0
2016	15	14	19	23	5	12
2017	18	14	28	19	9	19
2018	15	0	23	18	15	18
2019	15	12	20	19	16	18
Average 2015-2019	17	11	21	19	10	13
2020	27	20	28	26	19	26
2021	28	25	35	29	23	32
Change (%)*	+69%	+123%	+64%	+53%	+121%	+139%

* Change (%) comparing 2021 against the average 2015-2019



[Annex II follows]

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION AT TWP MEETINGS, AS PROPOSED BY THE TC, AT ITS FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION

The TC, at its fifty-sixth² session, agreed to invite the TWPs to consider the following possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings (see document TC/56/23 "Report", paragraph 69):

- (a) 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.
- (b) To organize virtual preparatory workshops prior to the TWPs. Those preparatory workshops to be recorded and be made available on the UPOV website.
- (c) To offer the possibility to provide comments and questions on documents in advance of the meeting.
- (d) To organize electronic participation during the TWPs, using one of the following options, according to host facilities:
 - (i) The host to provide the platform for virtual participants (with integrated audio/video on site), in addition to onsite participation in the meeting.
 - (ii) 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.
- (e) 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:
 - (i) visits to DUS trials or related facilities;
 - (ii) pre-organized bilateral discussions/ meetings on cooperation;
 - (iii) sessions to facilitate discussion or exchange of knowledge for DUS examination.

COMMENTS FROM THE TWPS, AT THEIR SESSIONS IN 2021, ON POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION AT TWP MEETINGS

At their sessions in 2021, the TWV³, TWO⁴, TWA⁵, TWF⁶ and TWC⁷ considered document TWP/5/12 (see documents TWV/55/16 "Report", paragraphs 97 to 103; TWO/53/10 "Report", paragraphs 85 to 87; TWA/50/9 "Report", paragraphs 96 to 99; and TWF/52/10 "Report", paragraphs 81 to 84).

The TWV, TWO, TWA and TWF noted the information on participation via electronic means at the TWPs and TC in 2020 and the measures to improve virtual meetings held in the future, as set out in document TWP/5/12, paragraphs 15 to 21.

The TWV noted the increased participation in the TWPs in 2020 and agreed that it would be relevant to continue investigating possibilities to further increase the number of participating members in the technical work of UPOV, such as increasing the number of opportunities for interaction and exchange of information.

At their sessions in 2021, the TWV, TWO, TWA and TWF considered possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings and agreed as follows:

² held via electronic means on October 26 and 27, 2020

³ at its fifty-fifth session, hosted by Turkey and held via electronic means, from May 3 to 7, 2021

⁴ at its fifty-third session, hosted by the Netherlands and held via electronic means, from June 7 to 11, 2021

⁵ at its fiftieth session, hosted by the United Republic of Tanzania and held via electronic means, from June 21 to 25, 2021

⁶ at its fifty-second session, hosted by China and held via electronic means, from July 12 to 16, 2021

⁷ at its thirty-ninth session, hosted by the United States of America and held via electronic means, from September 20 to 22, 2021

(a) 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.

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC
View of the TWP	supported	Partially supported	Partially supported	supported	noted
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to gather relevant experts - Will allow more opportunity to freely discuss, exchange and contribute - Only major outstanding issues could be brought to the main session, if relevant. Most of the technical issues could be solved in subgroup discussions - Difficulty to find suitable time could prevent equal opportunities to participate (time zones) - Discussions via electronic means may benefit from participation of experts that may not attend TWPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test Guidelines subgroup discussions could be organized prior to TWPs as a valuable mean to move documents forward - The scheduling of such meetings should be carefully discussed among participants in subgroup - In-person meetings should still be used during the TWPs to discuss Test Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test Guidelines subgroup discussions should still take place during TWPs - Discussions via electronic means can be organized in addition to discussions at TWPs - Difficulty to find suitable time could prevent equal opportunities to participate - Discussions via electronic means may benefit from participation of experts that may not attend TWPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to gather relevant experts - Will allow more opportunity to freely discuss, exchange and contribute - Only major outstanding issues could be brought to the main session, if relevant. Most of the technical issues could be solved in subgroup discussions - Difficulty to find suitable time could prevent equal opportunities to participate (time zones) - Discussions via electronic means may benefit from participation of experts that may not attend TWPs 	

15. The TWV noted that organization of Test Guidelines subgroup discussions by electronic means prior to the TWPs would allow more time during physical meetings for other relevant issues, such as disease resistance characteristics.

16. The TWV noted the comment made by a representative of the breeding industry on the need to see the changes implemented in subsequent draft versions of Test Guidelines and the request that consideration be given to implementing such a functionality in the Web based TG template.

(b) To organize virtual preparatory workshops prior to the TWPs. Those preparatory workshops to be recorded and be made available on the UPOV website.

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC
Views	Supported	Supported	Supported	Supported	Supported
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To investigate possibility to keep videos available on UPOV website to create a resource collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The live session for questions and answers with panelists and Office of the Union is useful and should be maintained - A collection of videos could be maintained online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally considered as effective - Panel discussions were appreciated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To investigate possibility to keep videos available on UPOV website to create a resource collection 	

(c) To offer the possibility to provide comments and questions on documents in advance of the meeting.

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC
Views	Supported	Supported	Supported	Supported	Supported
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the Test Guidelines, comments in advance were seen as useful for the preparation, improving the process of discussion - The possibility to provide comments and questions on documents in advance should be kept in all cases (virtual and/or physical meetings) - Should not preclude discussing the topics at TWPs - Use of the web-based TG template should be encouraged for comments on Test Guidelines - Increasing the number of contributing members should be encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comments provided in advance of the session should all be addressed, even for participants that cannot attend a physical meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should not preclude discussing same topics at TWPs (as opposed to “consideration of documents by correspondence”) - Deadlines should be agreed in advance - Documents should be published sufficiently in advance to allow comments - Number of members providing comments should be increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the Test Guidelines, comments in advance were seen as useful for the preparation, improving the process of discussion - The possibility to provide comments and questions on documents in advance should be kept in all cases (virtual and/or physical meetings) - Should not preclude discussing the topics at TWPs - Use of the web-based TG template should be encouraged for comments on Test Guidelines - Increasing the number of contributing members should be encouraged 	

(d) To organize electronic participation during the TWPs, using one of the following options, according to host facilities:

- (i) The host to provide the platform for virtual participants (with integrated audio/video on site), in addition to onsite participation in the meeting.
- (ii) 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.

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC
Views	Partially supported	Partially supported	Partially supported	Partially supported	
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology to be used (e.g. video-conferencing platform) should be standardized allowing wide participation of members - Invitations should continue to ask whether participants intend to participate in-person or electronically, in order to assess the need to set up appropriate equipment for the Host. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater accessibility would be beneficial for promoting participation of experts in selected agenda items - Difficulty to find suitable time could prevent equal opportunities to participate - To consider alternating one year of physical meeting with one year of virtual meeting - Could require additional planning and costs for the host 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To consider online participation restricted to listening only (speaking rights restricted to onsite participants) - Meeting to be organized according to onsite participant's needs - Useful to increase participation in technical work of UPOV and training of staff - Beneficial for promoting participation of experts in selected agenda items (e.g. Test Guidelines, presentations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology to be used (e.g. video-conferencing platform) should be standardized allowing wide participation of members - Invitations should continue to ask whether participants intend to participate in-person or electronically, in order to assess the need to set up appropriate equipment for the Host. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To alternate one year of physical meeting with another of online meeting;

(e) 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:

- (i) visits to DUS trials or related facilities;
- (ii) pre-organized bilateral discussions/ meetings on cooperation;
- (iii) sessions to facilitate discussion or exchange of knowledge for DUS examination.

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC
Views	supported	Partially supported	Partially supported	supported	
Remarks	- No comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An opportunity to introduce new examiners to the discussions held in TWPs - The informal space provided in physical meetings is needed for discussion and participants' interaction - Visits to trials or related facilities is an important part of physical meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To consider alternating one year of physical meeting with one year of virtual meeting - Visits to trials or related facilities are an important part of physical meetings - Further consideration required on activities for onsite participants to justify travel to attend a physical meeting - TWP hosts should participate in deciding whether and how should virtual meetings could be organized 	- No comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have roundtables for introducing participants and break-out sessions to facilitate new participants to establish contacts for international cooperation.