

**Technical Working Party for Vegetables**

Fifty-Fifth Session  
Antalya, Turkey, May 3 to 7, 2021

**TWP/5/12**

**Original:** English  
**Date:** February 26, 2021

**Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees**

Fifty-Third Session  
Roelofarendsveen, Netherlands, June 7 to 11, 2021

**Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops**

Fiftieth Session  
Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, June 21 to 25, 2021

**Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops**

Fifty-Second Session  
Zhengzhou, China, July 12 to 16, 2021

**Technical Working Party on Automation and Computer Programs**

Thirty-Ninth Session  
Alexandria, United States of America, September 20 to 22, 2021

**INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE TC AND 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 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 TWPs are invited to:
  - (a) note the information on participation via electronic means at the TWPs and TC in 2020;
  - (b) note the measures to improve virtual meetings held in the future, as set out in paragraphs 15 to 21 of this document;
  - (c) consider the possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraph 26 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

## BACKGROUND

5. The TC, at its fifty-sixth session<sup>1</sup>, considered document TC/56/12 "Increasing the participation of members of the Union in the work of the TC and TWPs" (see document TC/56/23 "Report", paragraphs 64 to 69).

6. The TC noted the outcome of organizing the 2020 sessions of the TWPs via electronic means, including the information provided by the Office of the Union on the TWC and BMT meetings held in September 2020.

7. The TC agreed that virtual meetings had shortcomings in relation to physical meetings, such as the difficulty to engage active participation and lack of possibility to have bilateral meetings.

8. The TC noted the increased number of participants at virtual meetings and agreed to explore integrating the benefits of this type of meetings into physical meetings.

9. The TC, at its fifty-sixth session, agreed to invite the TWPs to consider the following possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings:

- (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.

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<sup>1</sup> Held via electronic means on October 26 and 27, 2020

## PARTICIPATION AT THE TC AND TWP MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC MEANS

10. 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 by electronic means.

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

12. 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	TWC	BMT
2015	62	63	56	44	18	no BMT in 2015
2016	45	53	68	49	34	107
2017	58	30	54	36	31	49
2018	46	no TWO in 2018	64	40	28	55
2019	58	28	42	60	44	65
Average 2015-2019	54	44	57	46	31	69
2020	81	59	96	101	44	119
Change (%)	+50%	+34%	+68%	+120%	+41%	+72%

Figure: Number of TWP participants 2015-2020

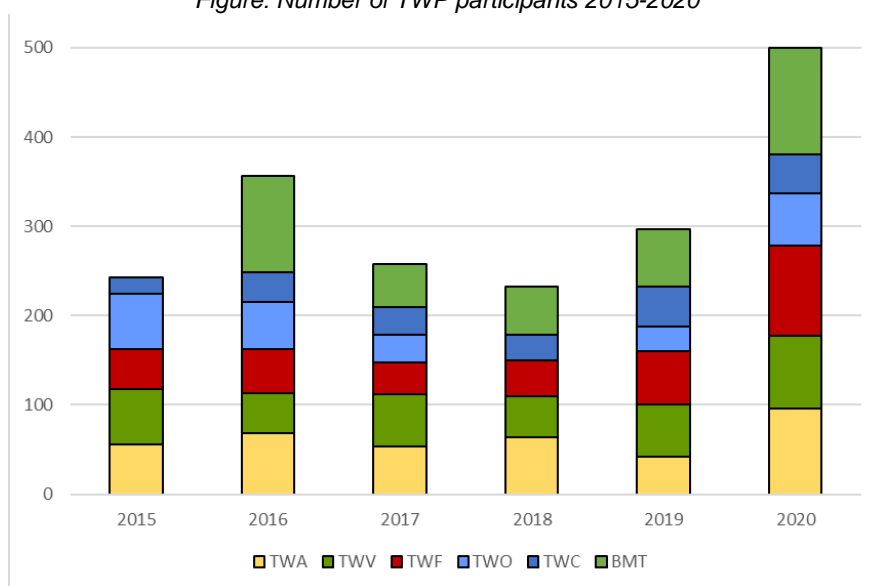
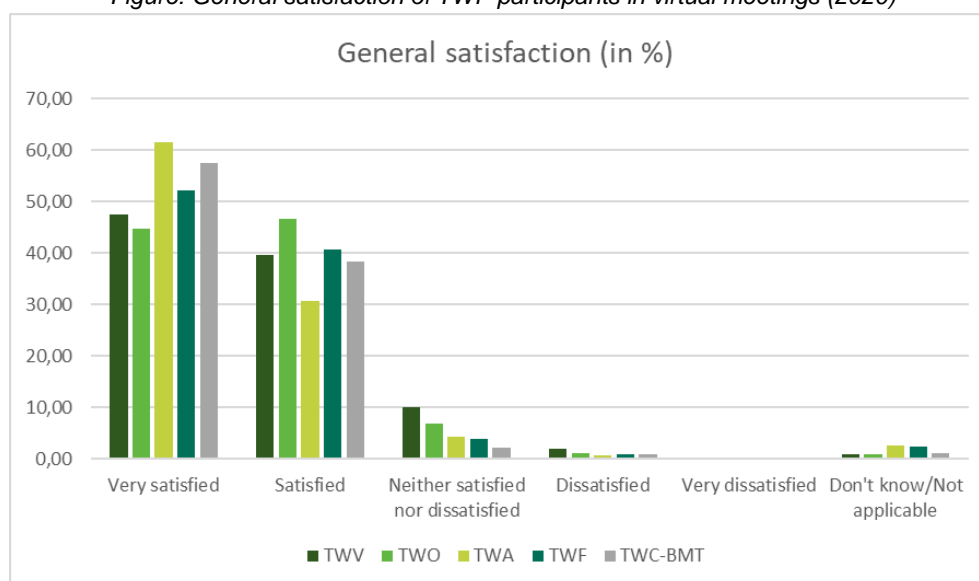


Table: Number of UPOV members participating in TWPs (2015-2020)

	TWV	TWO	TWA	TWF	TWC	BMT
2015	20	16	17	16	7	no BMT in 2015
2016	15	14	19	23	5	12
2017	18	14	28	19	9	19
2018	15	no TWO in 2018	23	18	15	18
2019	15	12	20	19	16	18
Average 2015-2019	17	14	21	19	10	16
2020	27	20	28	26	19	26
Change (%)	+59%	+43%	+33%	+37%	+90%	+62%

13. 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 participants that replied to the survey. Overall, 91% of participants replied that they were satisfied or very satisfied. The full set of responses from the TWA, TWF, TWO and TWV is reproduced in the Annex to this document.

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



14. The following table summarizes certain aspects of virtual and in-person meetings, according to experiences in 2020:

Aspect	Virtual	In person
Participation	Significantly increased	Largely static
Efficiency, task focussed	High	Medium
Discussion	Restricted (compensated by prior consultations)	Open
Opportunity for interactions outside the meeting time	Reduced	Easy, unrestricted
Field trips	No (virtual only)	Yes
Time scheduling	Difficult time differences	Jetlag but no issues at the meeting itself
Mastering the technology	Can be challenging	Less applicable

Issues identified in the survey of participants at the TWPs and BMT in 2020

15. The survey of participants at the TWPs and BMT provided feedback on the organization of TWP sessions in 2020 by electronic means. Possible points of improvement were identified and addressed at TWPs held later in 2020 or will be addressed in 2021, in the case of meetings organized by electronic means. The possible points of improvement in relation to online meetings identified in the survey are summarized below, along with corresponding information and/or initiatives to address those points.

*Schedule of sessions (time zones):*

16. The time zone of registered participants to the TWPs and BMT in 2020 ranged from UTC-6 (e.g. MX, US) to UTC+13 (e.g. NZ). It was therefore not possible to schedule the meetings at a suitable time for all participants.

17. As far as possible, sessions will be scheduled according to best accommodate the time zone of registered participants, particularly in the case of Test Guidelines subgroup meetings.

*Preparatory work prior to the meetings:*

18. Participants at the TWPs and BMT were invited to submit comments on documents in advance of the session. The timely posting of documents and presentations in advance of the session was reported as a limiting factor for providing comments.

19. In 2021, documents will be posted earlier (six weeks prior to session) and experts making presentations at the TWPs will be requested to make presentations available sufficiently in advance of the session. The deadline for providing comments in advance of the sessions will be set for two weeks prior to the session. The compilation of comments received will be circulated at least one week before the meetings. An overview of the steps prior to the meeting will be provided in meeting invitations and accompanying information.

*Online meeting platform:*

20. Participants at the TWPs and BMT reported the following main difficulties using the online meeting platform Cisco WebEx:

- changing the name displayed: Information will be provided in the “users guide”, during the training sessions and before meetings start. Participants at virtual meetings may be requested to identify themselves when taking the floor.
- requesting the floor (using the “raise hand” and “chat” functions): mobile phones and tablets may not display the “raise hand” function. The “chat” function will not be monitored for providing contributions to discussions but participants may use this function to request the floor. This information will be added to the “users guide” and explained to participants at training sessions and before meetings.
- registering for different testing- and daily-sessions: each WebEx session will last for the duration of discussions in one day. Participants will receive separate links via email for each day. A separate email will be sent to each registered participant with relevant instructions.

21. In 2021, the UPOV Office will conduct testing sessions prior to any meetings via virtual means to enable participants to test equipment and become familiar with functions in the online meeting platform.

22. *The TWPs are invited to note:*

*(a) the information on participation via electronic means at the TWPs and TC in 2020; and*

*(b) measures to improve virtual meetings held in the future, as set out in paragraphs 14 to 20 of this document.*

**PROPOSALS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN TWPS AND TC IN THE FUTURE**

23. 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 12 of this document).

24. Although the surveys revealed a high level of overall satisfaction with the virtual meetings (see paragraph 13 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 to this document):

- 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.

25. 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).

26. In accordance with the request of the TC, at its fifty-sixth session, the TWPs are invited to consider the following possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings:

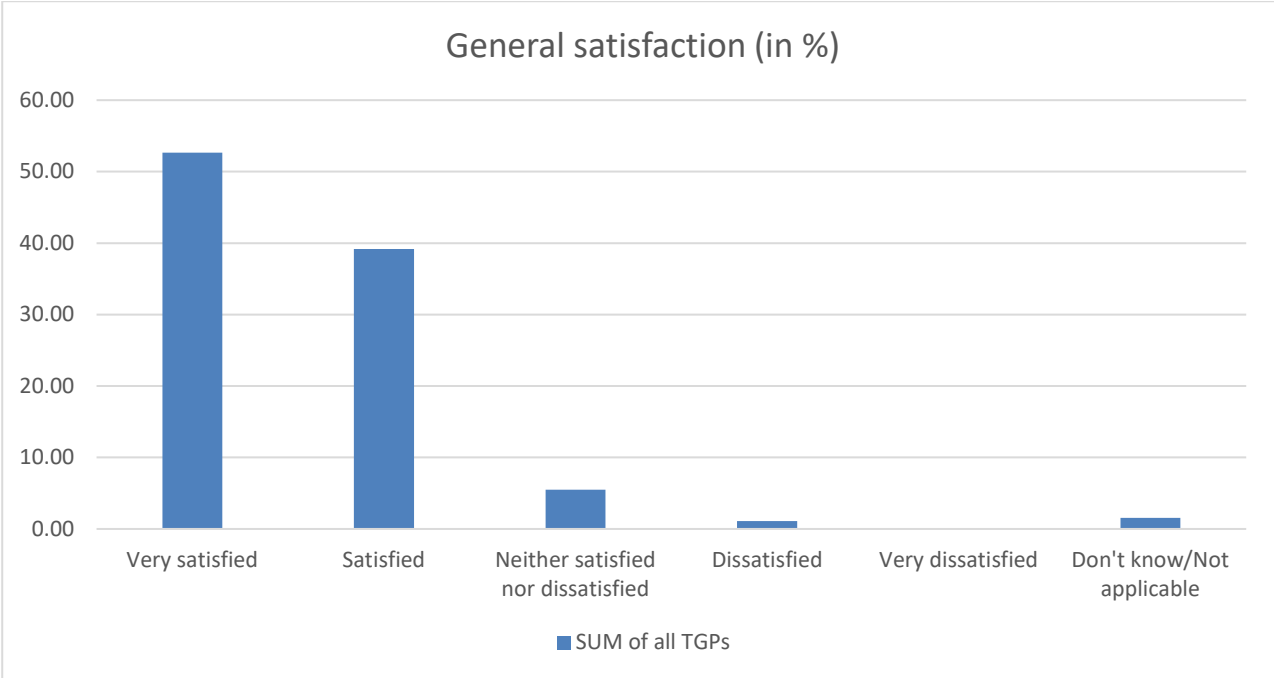
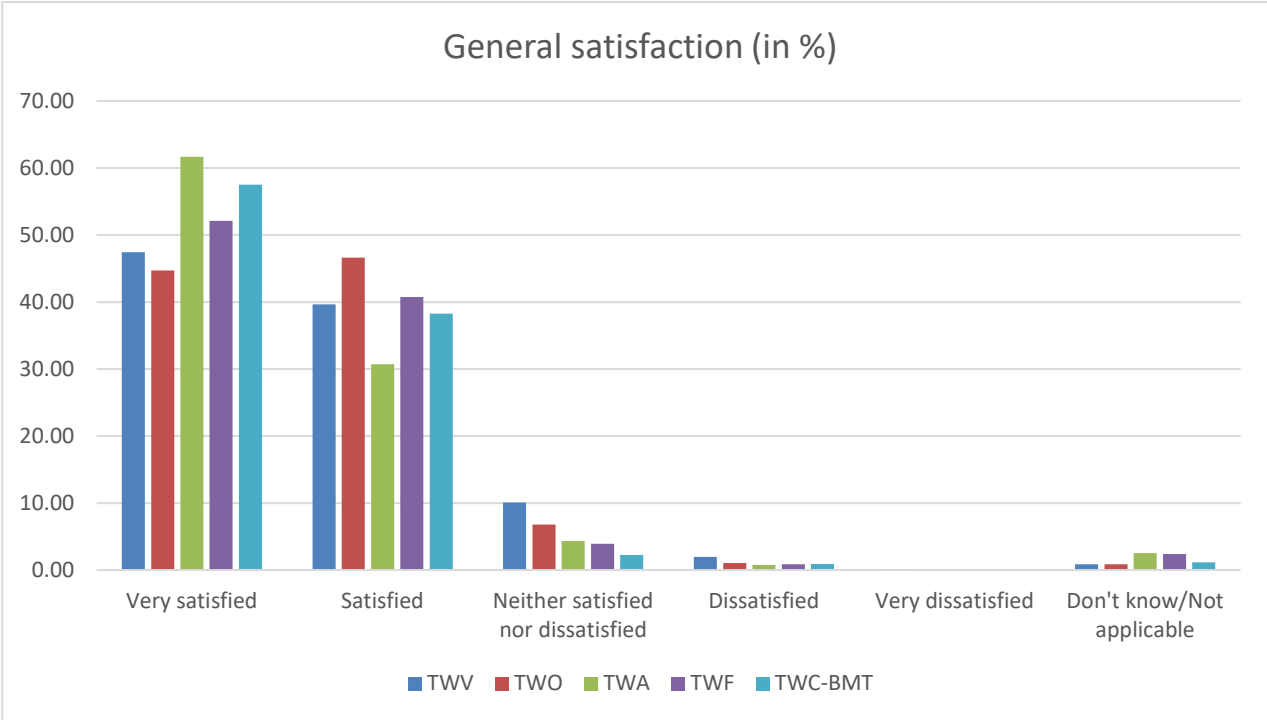
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  - (i) visits to DUS trials or related facilities;
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  - (iii) sessions to facilitate discussion or exchange of knowledge for DUS examination.

*27. The TWPs are invited to consider the possible measures for physical and virtual participation at TWP meetings, as set out in paragraph 25 of this document.*

[Annex follows]

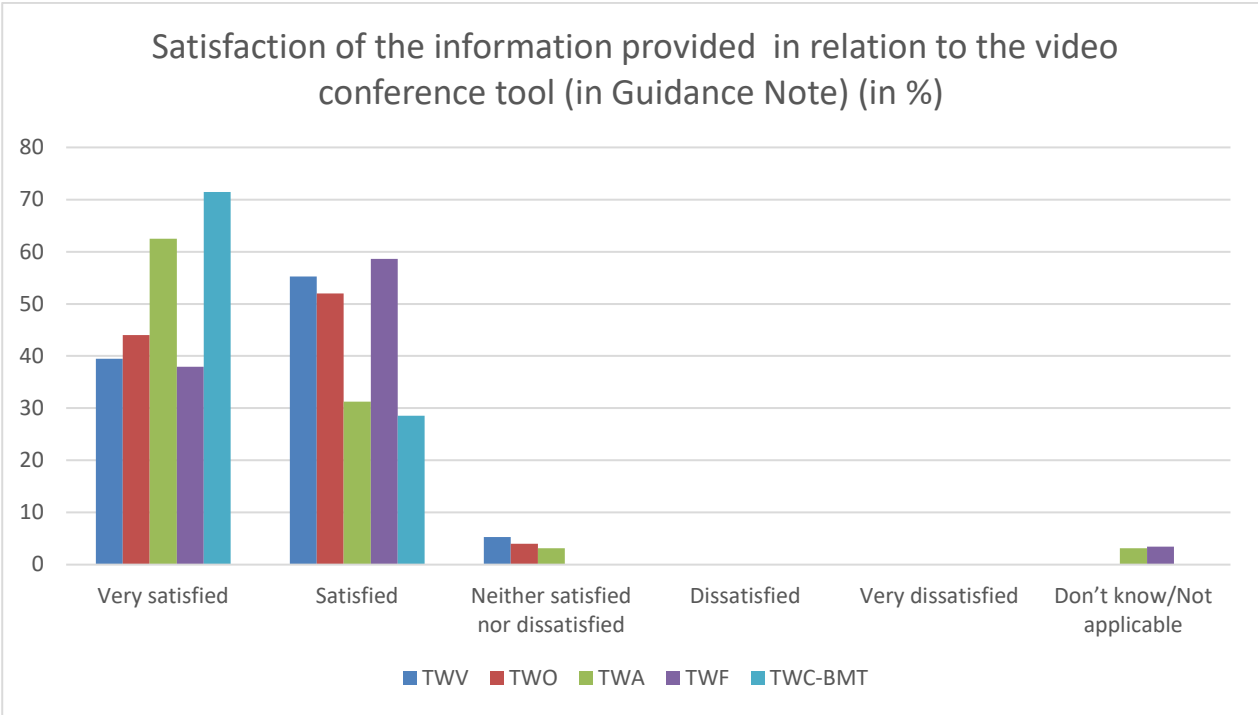
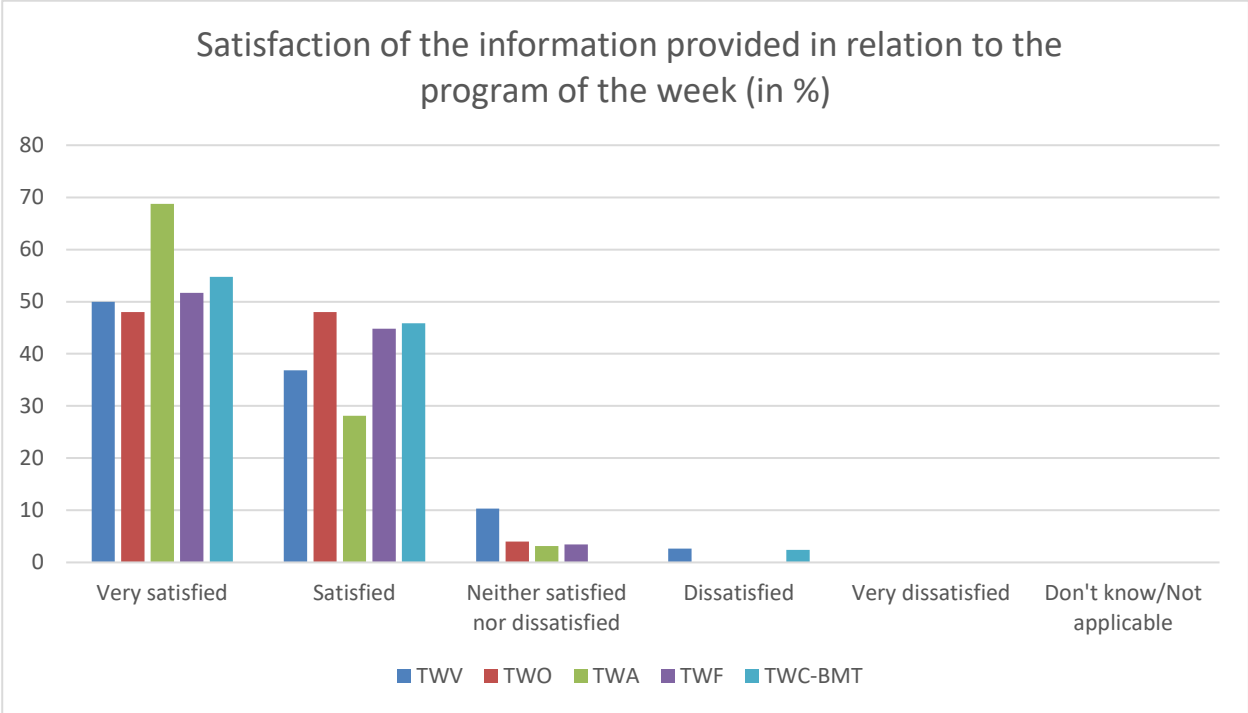


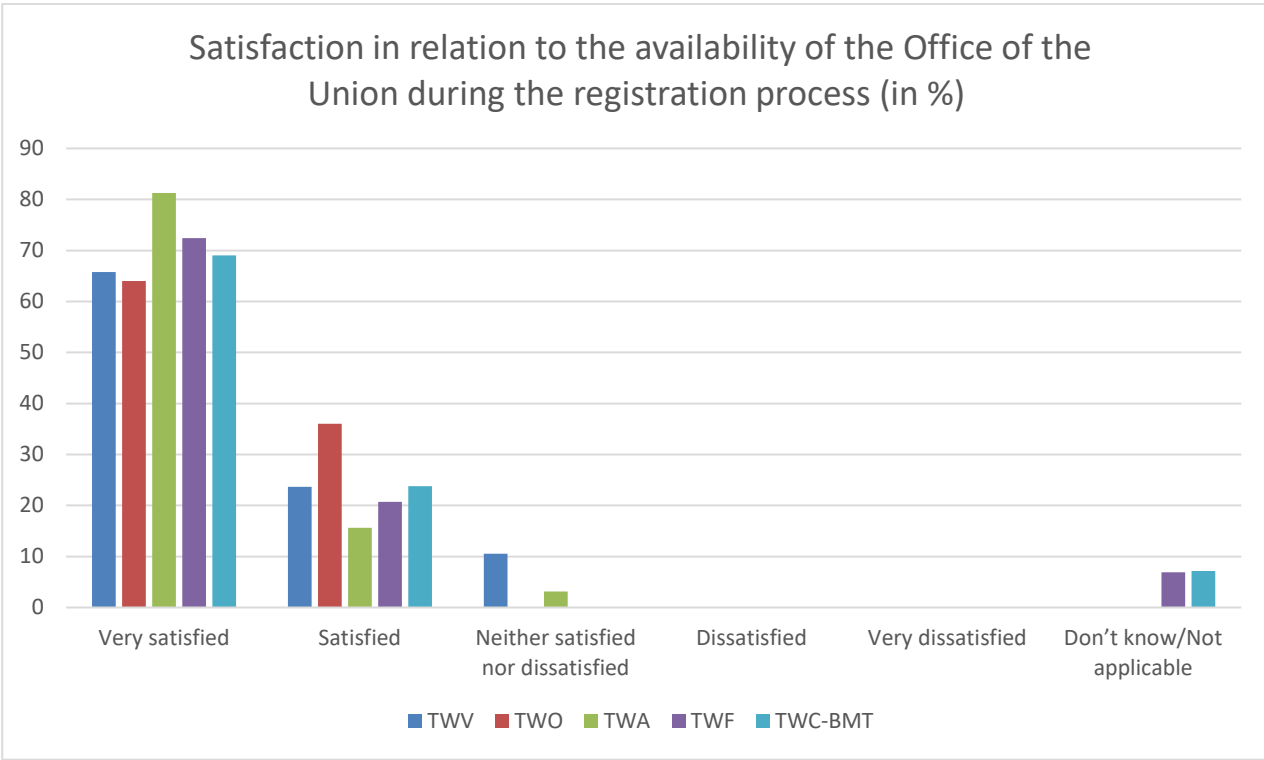
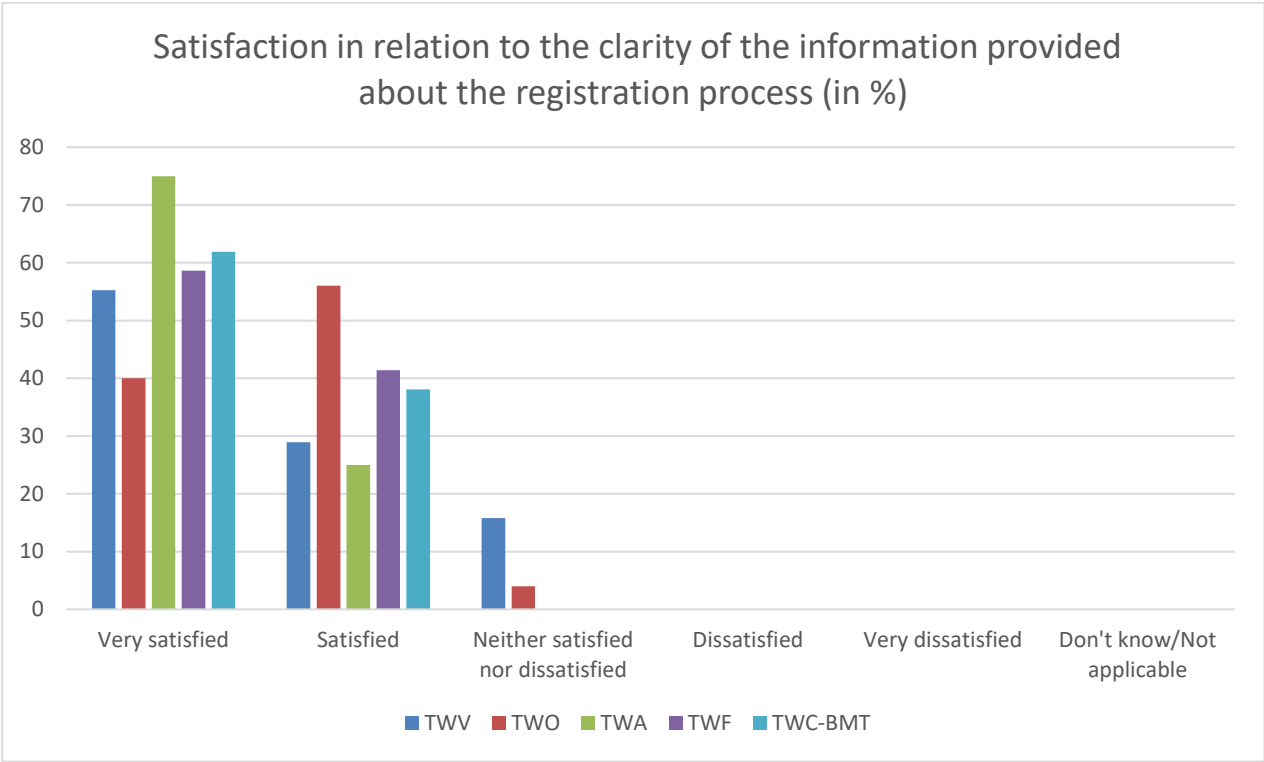
GENERAL LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

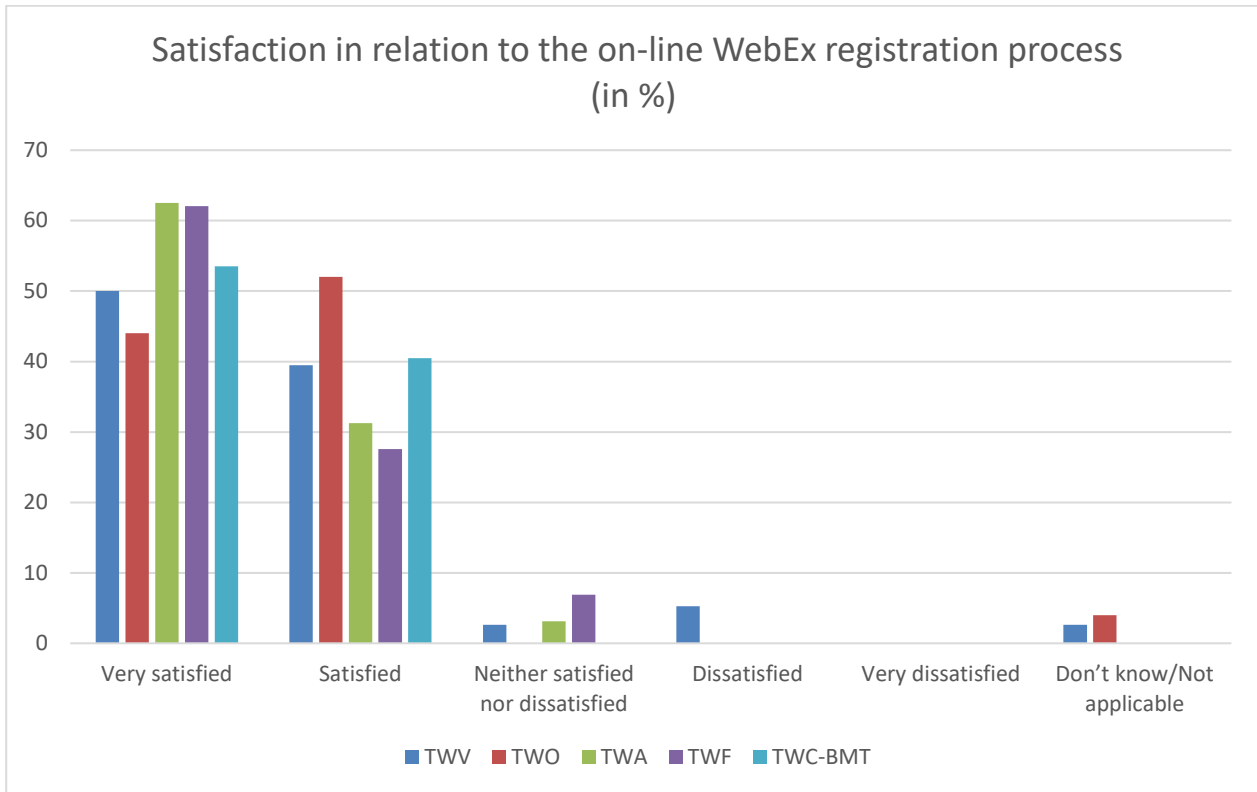




INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS







**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 an other 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

TWC-BMT:

Text input

This was a good program and everything worked well. I hope remote participation to all of the technical meetings will be offered in the future.

Due to time difference among region, it was quite confusing to participate the meeting.

The co-ordination of comments prior to the meeting was useful. The difficulty arises with late documents (and late comments - sorry about that!)

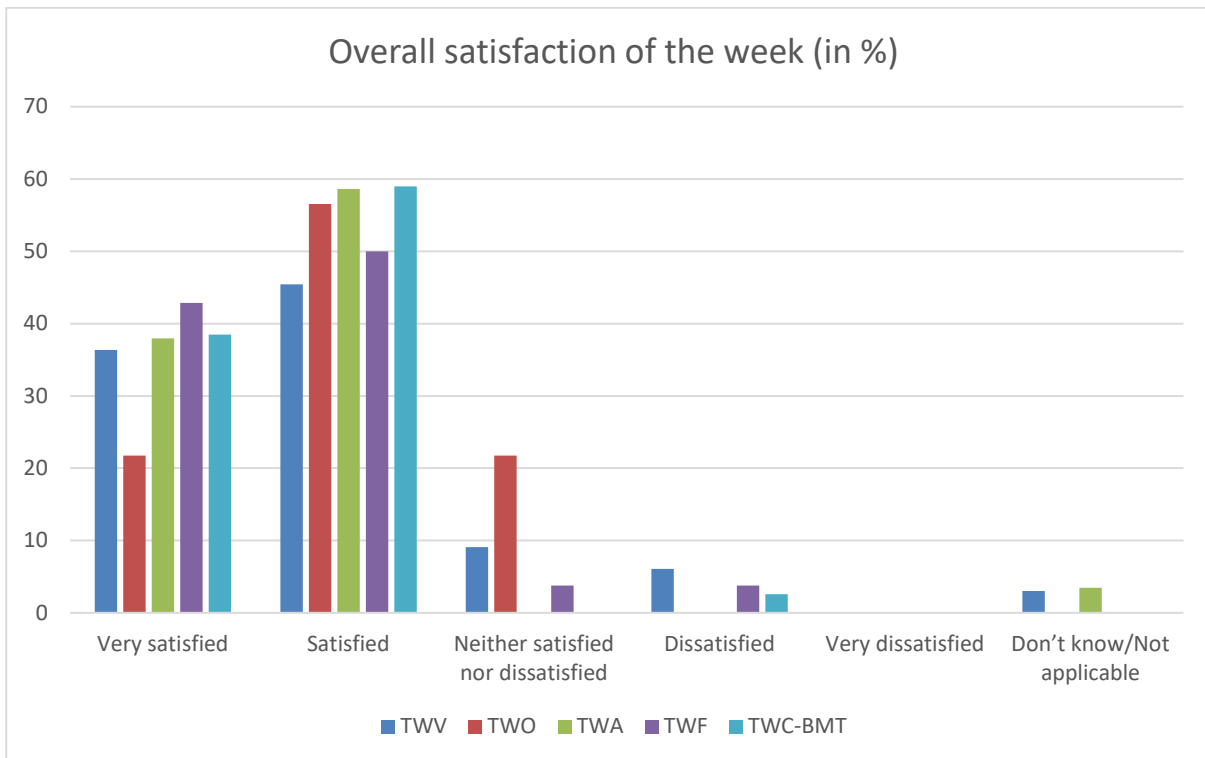
The WebEx training and testing sessions were superb. Much appreciated to understand how to take full advantage of the WebEx functionalities and to avoid being a 'problem' user.

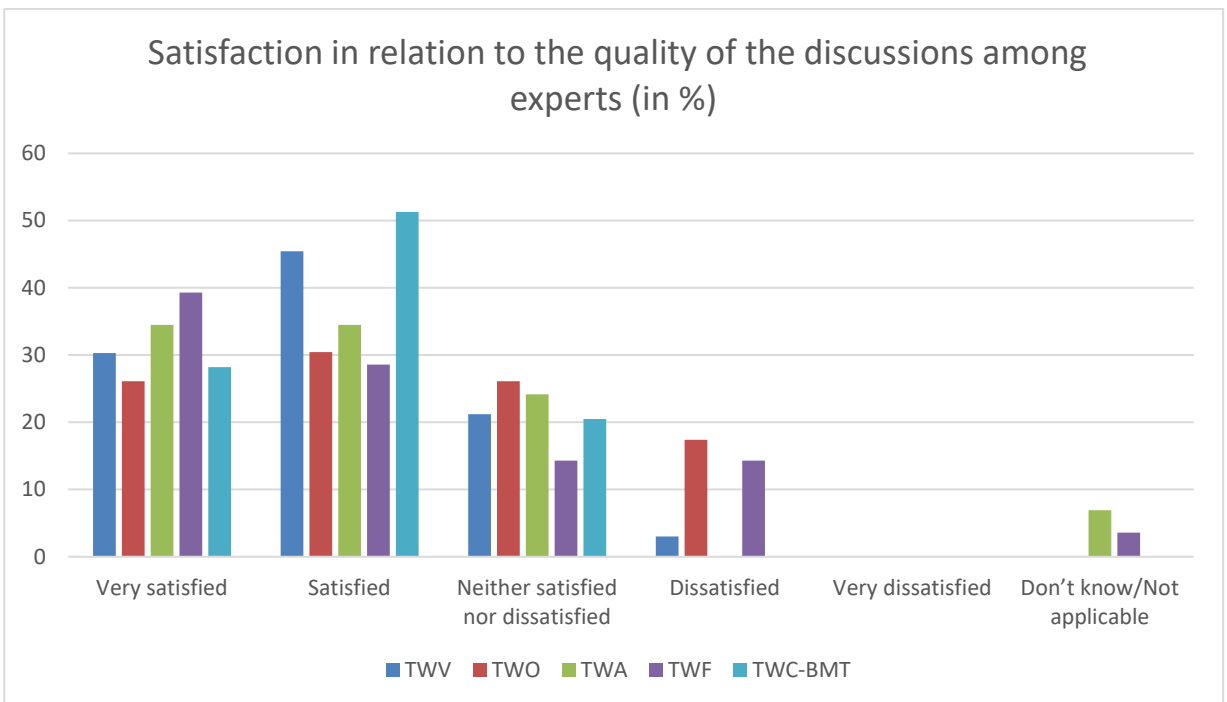
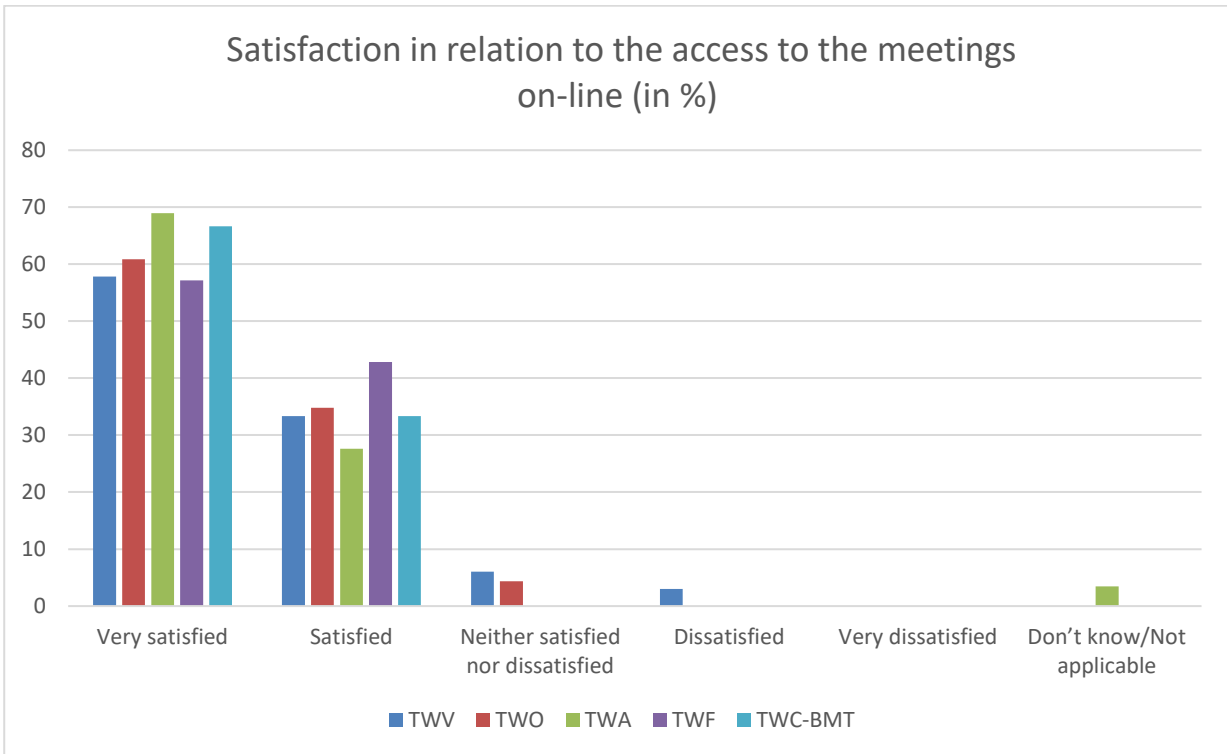
The video/sound dropped out quite a bit. We use MS Teams at my work for video conferencing and it looks like it works a little better although admittedly we are all in the same country.

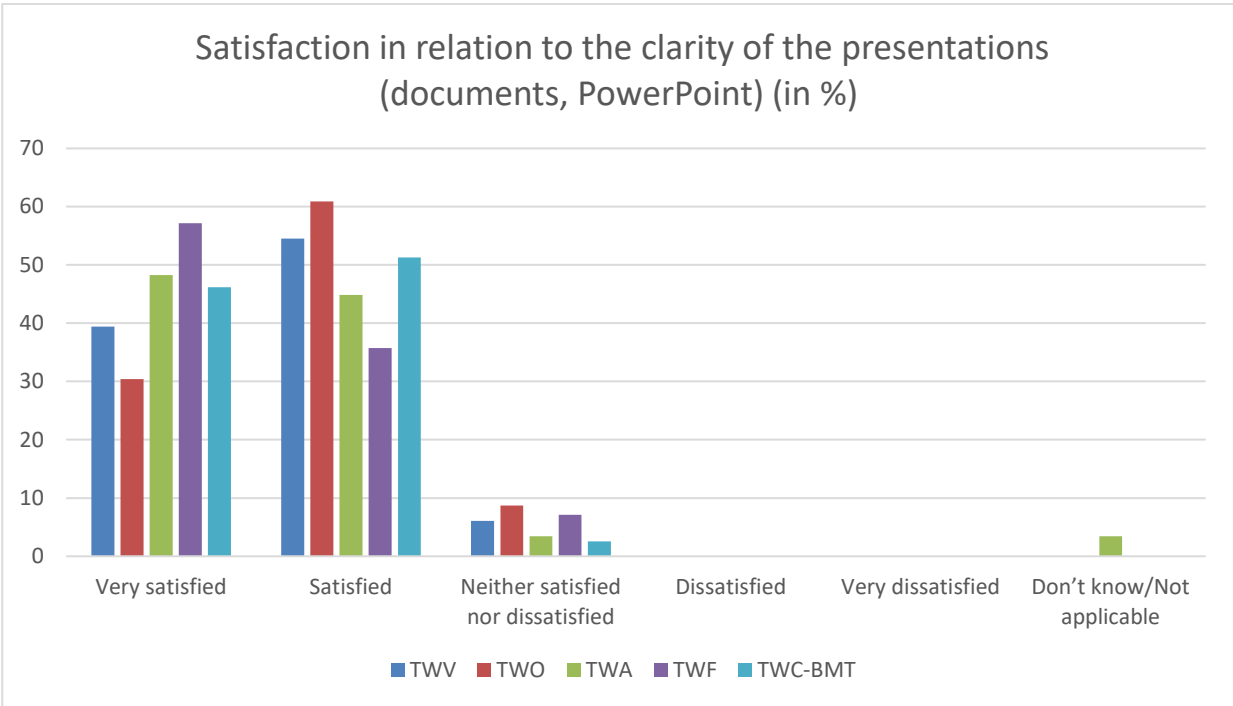
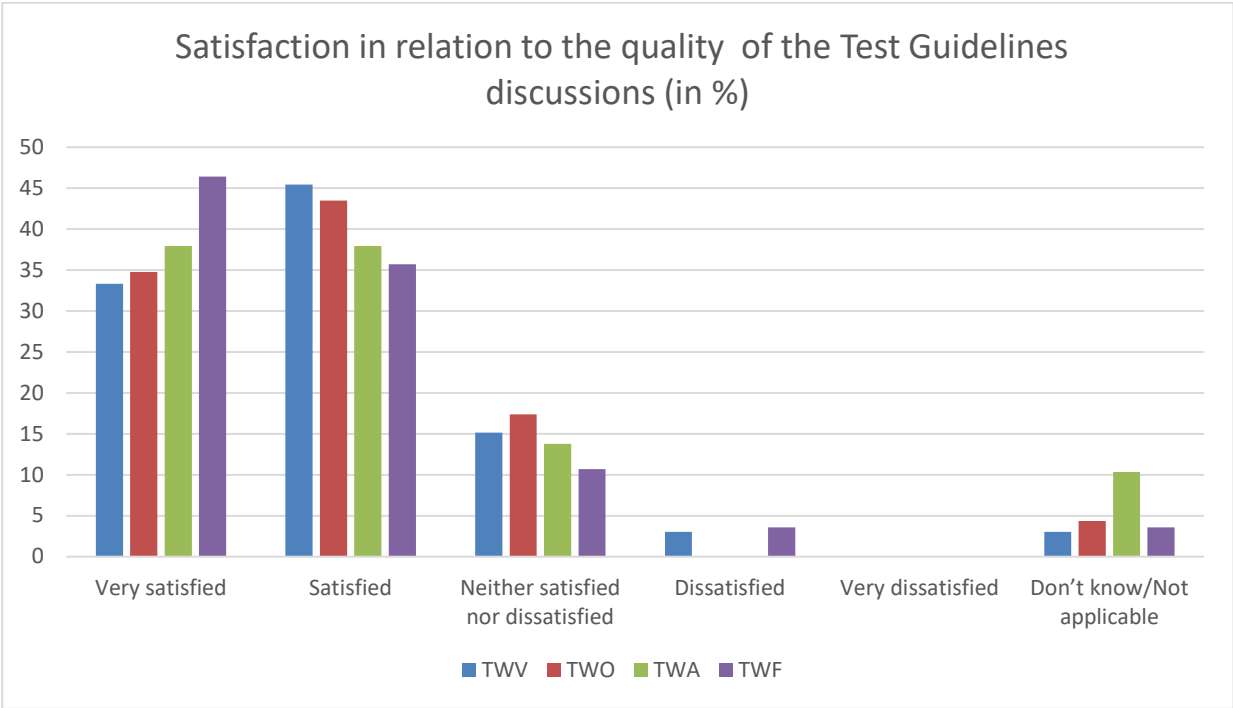
The information provided in relation to the program of the week is not absoltely complete because of the participants. Nothing to object to the Office of the Union

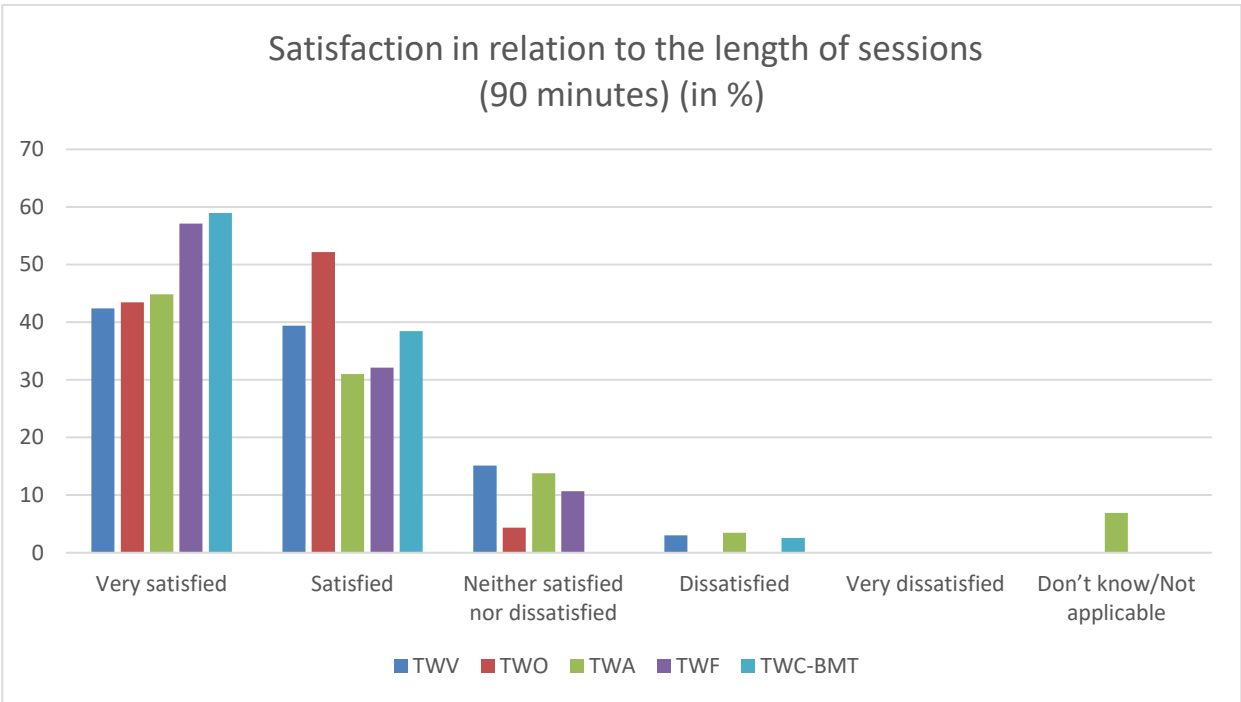
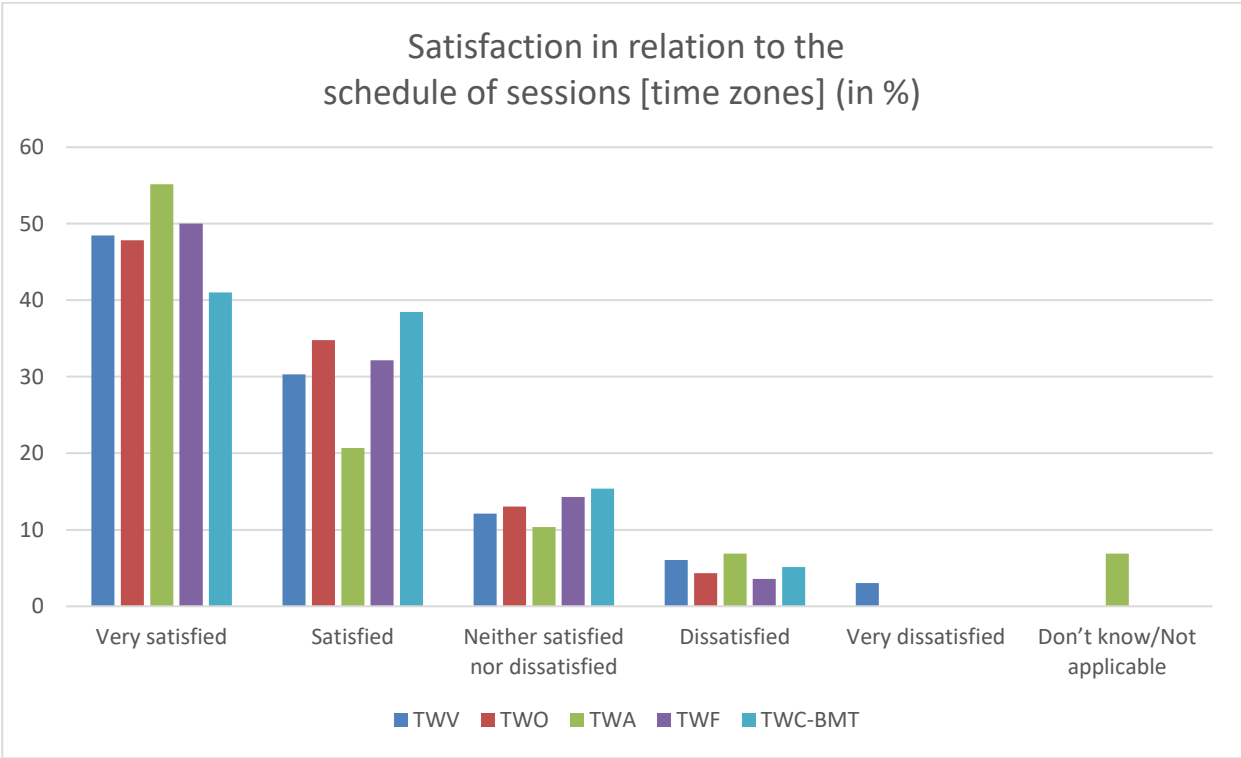
Everything was as professional and streamlined as possible.

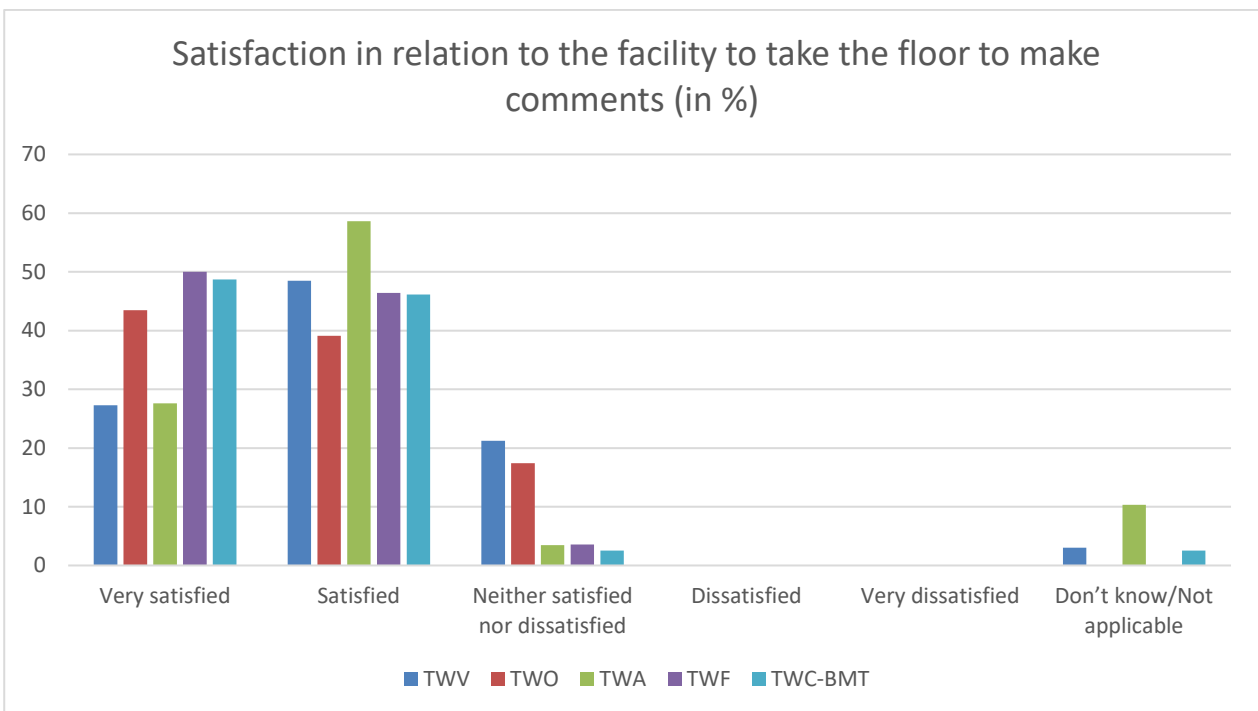
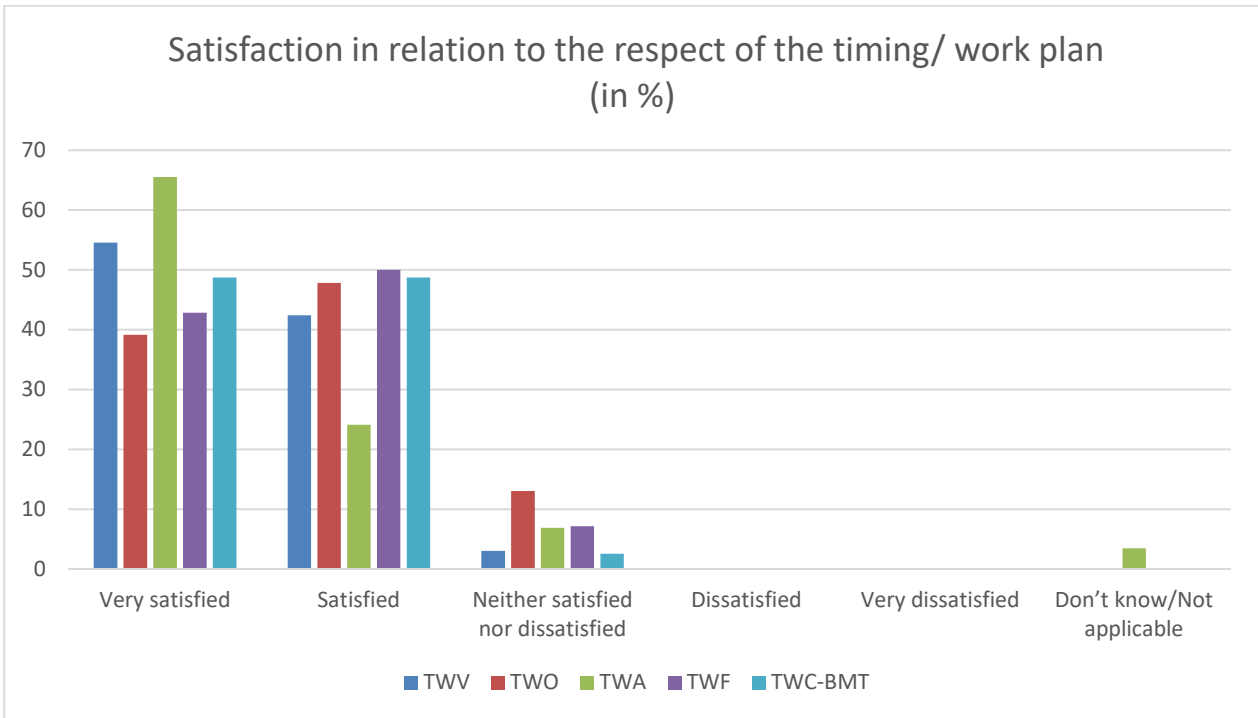
Very few documents, which arrived relatively short before the meeting



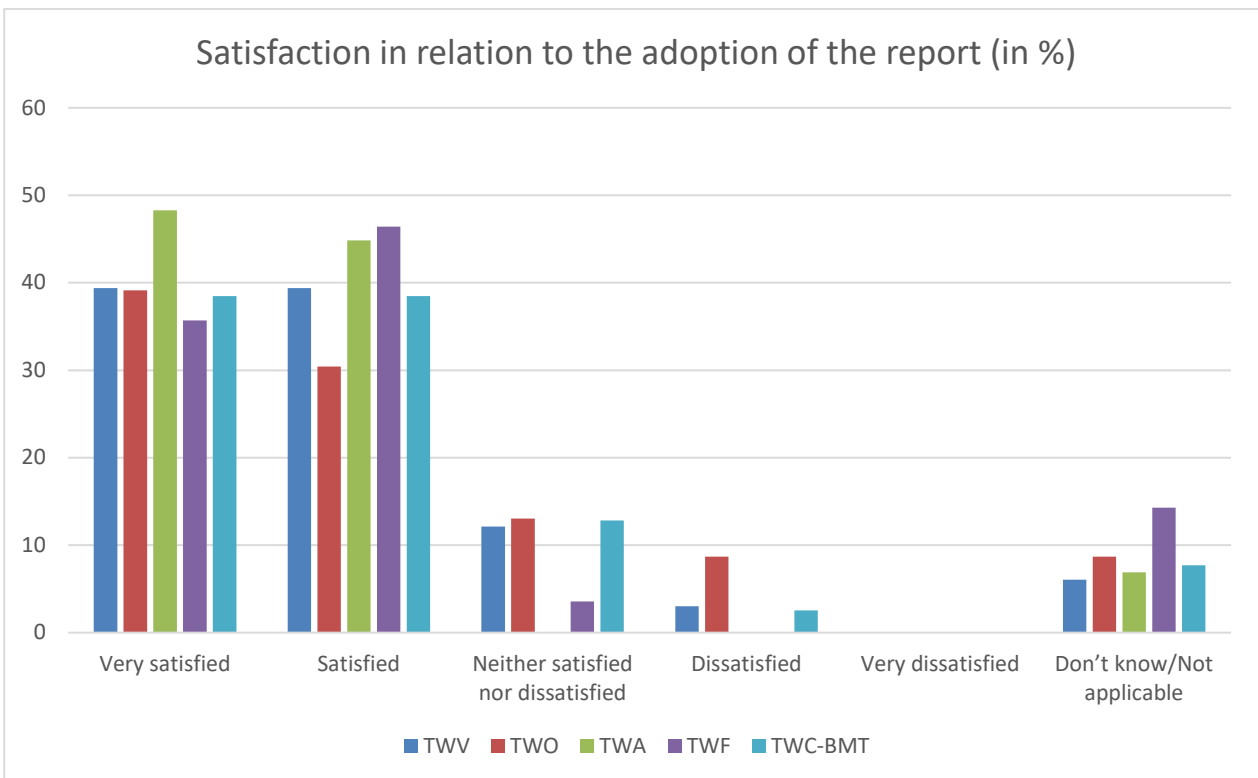
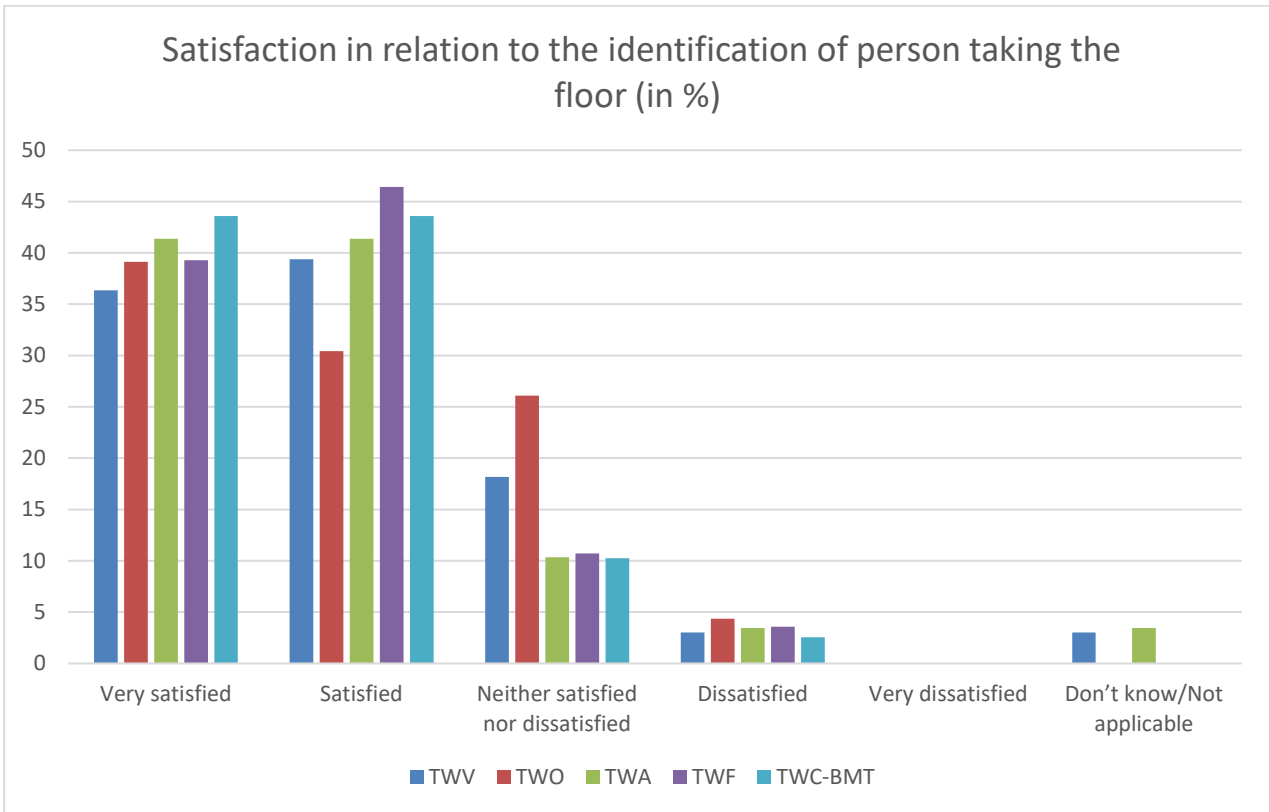












## COMMENTS

TWV:

Text input

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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 discussionspoint 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

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TWO:

Text input

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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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

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

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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.

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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.

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TWF:

Text input

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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

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

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

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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.

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TWC-BMT:

Text input

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All very well done by UPOV. Thank you.

---

It takes a bit of practice to be very familiar with this type of meetings, but I give 10 points, because I feel that if there is need for more conversations the space would have been there, very good work and planning

---

Discussions are more difficult when you are not face-to-face. Sometimes (after BMT/19/5) discussion was cut off (not clear why, maybe because of time). I feel, improvement by discussion is the most important element of this working group. the agenda item without papers can be skipped without losing time. More time for the agenda items with papers.

---

Taking the floor was a little rushed if you are not very familiar with webex (ie the buttons are not yet natural). The Chairs generally allowed for this, but it is a notable consideration. There were some sound issues during the presentations, which is to be expected on a virtual meeting.

---

Some alternative way to capture comments could be explored

---

I only attended for the BMT.

---

The report would benefit from representing a fuller account of discussions. This is difficult, but it does mean that the group can build on these in continuing topics. It also makes the group look more dynamic and interesting to those considering participation.

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It was great to be able to hold the BMT but I still feel there is great value to be had in face to face meetings as these last for more than 3x90 minute sessions each day! By this I mean that more discussions take place outside of the meeting room.

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Thanks to all (including the unseen) for making this meeting possible and smoothly-run. As an English speaker, I am grateful that the language was used AND also grateful to those who may have had to struggle in using it.

---

In webinar mode, it can take some times to raise our hand. More time could be allowed to react when the audience is asked to participate /give an answer

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Extremely efficient, easy and convenient way of attending and participating to the meeting. In favor of maintaining this possibility in the future.

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About the access: It only allows you to do it (showing the name and surname and country,) from the computer where the registration was made. If the same participant uses the mobile, they do not register it and the gmail or another appears

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I participated from Japan, so the schedule was hard for me. But I understand difficulty of this special situation.

---

Not available when report was being adopted

---

3 sessions of 1.5 hours per day is of course much less than the regular meeting time for a BMT meeting. There were not enough documents, not enough discussion per topic (certain discussions were cut short because of lack of time), and there was insufficient capture of the discussions in the report. Very often the report mentions 'The BMT noted.....' and that's it. In many cases it would have been beneficial to take action and agree on an action point in the report, e.g. on the vmDUS presentation or on the Confidentiality of Molecular Information, by the joint industry associations.

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TECHNICAL PROBLEMS:

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

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 restored 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 organizing

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Just the one I mentioned before about the chat.

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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 receive 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 can 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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