

AN EVALUATION OF COMPLETED TWINNING PROJECTS

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1. Introduction

This report and the accompanying presentation to the National Contact Points' meeting has been prepared by two Member State administration officials, Chris Cooper and Mikael Johansen. The report serves as a fuller explanation of the contents of the presentation. In compiling this final version we have taken into account some of the observations that were made, formally and informally, during the NCP meeting in Brussels on 30/31 January 2003. In this way we hope that this short exercise will assist in the further improvement and refinement of technical assistance in acquis-related matters to the accession States both pre and post-accession.

Before progressing to the main content of the report several contextual points need to be made. This short exercise has been compiled very quickly and on a tight budget. It has not been possible for us - perhaps in contravention of the title of the presentation - to examine and evaluate the performance of even a small sample of completed Twinning projects. Indeed, as we argue below, to do so would not, in our view, have been a productive use of our time. This form of detailed evaluation has been and is being performed by others, most notably by the EMS Consortium whose reports, project by project and thematic, provide an excellent and valuable source of information.

Our investigations have therefore been designed to try to generate alternative perspectives to those already explored in order to try to 'add value' to this important process. One of our main observations about

Twinning is that there is very little to be said that has not been thought of already. There seems to be a large measure of agreement around the main issues which impact on Twinning as an instrument of accession-related technical assistance. Most people are consistent in their analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Twinning; there is perhaps less certainty about what to do to address the weaknesses and build on the strengths.

Our analysis is therefore based on a series of interviews with stakeholder groups, together with some research on relevant papers. Our desk research has been based on papers and reports provided to us. Most notable among these are the reports produced by PLS Ramboll/EurovalC3E, the EMS consortium and the internal assessment reports compiled by the EC Delegations. The groups we have sought to consult through interviews are as follows:

- National Contact Points in accession States (through a questionnaire and two face-to-face interviews)
- Desk Officers in DG Enlargement
- Enlargement contacts in line DGs
- Delegation PHARE and Twinning contacts

We do not claim to have consulted as widely as we would have liked in order to support our conclusions. We are however grateful to those who gave freely of their time and views to help us in this exercise. We are also grateful to Mr Michael Coyle of the Evaluation Department in DG Enlargement for his assistance and advice.

The remainder of this report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 contains some general observations about Twinning which have been gleaned from our research and which do not fit neatly into the framework of our detailed schemata for examining Twinning. In Chapter 3 we set out our conceptual framework for understanding and analysing the evolution of the Twinning instrument. Although this may seem a rather academic exercise we believe that it is useful in understanding some of the challenges that confronted Twinning in its early stages and in demonstrating the growing maturity of the instrument. This has relevance if Twinning is to be considered as a technical assistance tool in the future in the CARDS countries, and perhaps more widely. In Chapter 4 we set out our detailed observations using the conceptual framework described above and try to map these onto the different stages of the life cycle of a Twinning project. In Chapter 5 we consider what we - and others - believe to be the single most important constraint on the success of the Commission's efforts to improve administrative capacity in the accession States - fundamental weaknesses in horizontal public administration systems. In Chapter 6 we draw together our main conclusions and make some observations which, we hope, will serve to influence your discussions in looking forward to the future of technical assistance in support of administrative capacity building.

2. General Observations

In this chapter we make a number of overall, thematic points which do not fit within the framework of our detailed analysis at Chapter 4.

The first and most important thing to say is that all whom we have consulted, without exception, are convinced that Twinning has made a

significant and valued contribution towards the development of administrative capacity to apply the *acquis communautaire*. This view is particularly supported in the Accession States. While there were reservations about the operation of the instrument and concerns about its efficacy in its early stages, everybody now appreciates Twinning's contribution. All also are convinced that progress towards accession and meeting requirements of the *acquis* would have been much slower without Twinning. There is also a broad consensus that in most of the areas dealt with by Twinning, there was no alternative to the approach adopted by Twinning and that classical TA would not - in the majority of cases - have delivered the progress that Twinning has done.

The three main pillars on which Twinning is built - co-operation between administrations, the permanent presence of a Member State civil servant (the PAA) and a project management system based on the achievement of "guaranteed results" - are also supported. However, it is true to say that many would have preferred a more pragmatic and relaxed approach rather than the rather rigid application of these principles in instances where a sensible alternative was being proposed.

We found some evidence to suggest that the concept of Twinning was resented in its early years. Our sense is that this was because the overall philosophy was not discussed and agreed with the Accession States but that Twinning was 'imposed' without adequate consultation and explanation of the overall philosophy. Some Accession States appear to have resented the abrupt move from classical TA to an approach where Twinning was suddenly 'the only game in town'. Many would have preferred a more flexible attitude on the part of the Commission to the question of whether a particular project was more suitable to a Twinning

or a TA solution. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the judgements that were made, the imposition of Twinning did cause conflict and resulted in poor co-operation in some instances. Some PAAs had to fight hard to overcome the feeling that they were 'spies' appointed by the Commission. The lesson for the future is that the Twinning philosophy needs to be explained more comprehensively and introduced more sensitively if it is to gain acceptance and commitment from the recipient country.

Allied to this observation, there seems to have been a very poor understanding of the partnership approach which is fundamental to the achievement of the guaranteed results in Twinning projects. Accession States with long experience of TA projects were conditioned to the 'consultancy' approach whereby the accountability for achievements is one-sided - on the consultant. TA projects were seen as useful in that they generally took some burden off the AC administration - 'this is something we can leave to the consultants'. The Twinning philosophy is quite different but, in assigning joint accountability, was seen as more burdensome. The realisation that accepting a Twinning Project might involve more work for the AC administration came as a shock in many cases. Again, our impression is that ACs were not conditioned and prepared for this abrupt change of approach and were not adequately resourced to respond early enough to reap the full benefits of the co-operation offered. Again, the lesson learned is that the obligations of the recipient need to be made more explicit at an earlier stage and that tighter conditionalities need to be applied.

One further common theme emerged from our consultations, which has not received enough attention or acknowledgement. Twinning delivers ancillary benefits which are not predicted, nor accounted for, within the

evaluation framework. These benefits are often less tangible than those measured by the 'guaranteed results' framework but are nonetheless immensely valuable. Twinning is spoken of very often and very affectionately in terms of the behavioural change that it has engendered. Changes in organisational practices and culture, improvements in managerial styles, better communication and co-ordination between and within AC ministries - all of these are put forward as valuable bi-products of the process of MS civil servants working closely alongside AC counterparts. These 'unseen' benefits are multifarious and range from simple, almost banal instances of, say, improved telephone answering techniques to more macro-level benefits such as a realisation that better inter-ministerial coordination is a vital necessity for progress on implementation of the acquis. In a rather apt phrase Twinning was described to us as the 'finishing school for EU membership'. In addition, we were pleased to note that in some instances Twinning has initiated a longer-term cooperation between the MS and AC administration outside the terms of the covenant. This long-term relationship building - sometimes supported by bilateral aid programmes - is an important but mostly unrecognised benefit of Twinning.

In our view far too much energy has been expended in the debate about Twinning in contrasting it with classical TA provided by the private sector. This has led to a rather doctrinaire and sterile argument about the pros and cons of Twinning as against those of TA. Twinning needs to be evaluated on its own merits. As one of our interlocutors put it, the success or otherwise depends on the approach adopted by the stakeholders, not on whether they are from the public or private sector. This to us indicates that the Commission should take a more pragmatic approach to deciding whether TA or Twinning or a mixture of both is

appropriate - on a case by case basis. In the past it has seemed that the Commission has rested its case on an ideological standpoint rather than being willing to consider what is best likely to yield the desired result.

This point also has a bearing on the question of mandated bodies. The impression seems to have been created that mandated bodies are trying to generate 'profits' from Twinning because of their private or quasi-private status and this is in some way subverting one of the primary principles of Twinning - that of the involvement of MS civil servants. This argument misses the point. Mandated bodies have deconcentrated responsibilities for implementing the various aspects of the acquis in some Member States. Where this is the case, this should be the clinching argument as to whether they can help their counterparts in the ACs, not whether they are civil servants or not and not whether they seek to make profit (most are not permitted to do so - they are however required to recover the full costs of their services and, particularly, in Northern MSs, this can seem prohibitively costly when compared with the cost of an expert from central MS institutions).

For the future, the Commission needs to adopt a more flexible approach to the issue of where the source of MS expertise in acquis-related matters lies and to design a framework which makes it easier for the competent organisation to participate in Twinning regardless of its status within or on the periphery of the MS public service. This will be particularly important since we gained the impression that MS resources may be becoming exhausted and that their willingness to participate may be waning.

Our final general observation concerns Twinning Light. In an attempt to introduce greater flexibility and recognising that as accession approaches there may be only small gaps to be filled for ACs to reach full compliance with the acquis, a modified form of Twinning was introduced. Twinning Light or Medium-term Administrative Cooperation (MAC) does not require the permanent presence of a PAA and projects are meant to be limited in scope, duration and budget.

Twining Light has not found favour and take-up has been limited to a very few instances. Feedback from stakeholders suggests that this is because the administration, preparation and implementation of Twinning Light projects is as complicated and lengthy as for traditional Twinning projects. It is also suggested that the poor take-up of Twinning Light is due to the fact that some actions that were required 'fell between two stools' i.e. they were too small for traditional Twinning but too big for Twinning Light. In this regard it is interesting to note that the average monetary value of a traditional Twinning project is 1M Euro and maximum for a Twinning Light project is 150 K Euro. This implies that the financial limit of Twinning Light projects was set too low.

3. A Conceptual Framework for the Evolution of Twinning

As noted in our introduction, for the purposes of the detailed analysis in Chapter 4 we have chosen to develop a framework which attempts to describe and explain the evolution of Twinning from its early days to the present. This is not a totally academic exercise. We believe it will help to understand how Twinning could be used in the future to assist other countries wishing to join the EU or, indeed, more widely, as an administrative capacity-building tool.

Twinning projects, in our view, can be seen as falling into three generations. It is not possible to be categorical about whether particular projects fall precisely into one generation or another and some may have characteristics which qualify them for inclusion in a different generation. We therefore offer this only as a framework to aid understanding and not as an attempt neatly to categorise individual projects.

First generation Twinning projects (say from the 1998 and 1999 PHARE rounds) can be characterised as rather broad, ill-defined and too ambitious in scope. Everybody at that stage was on a steep learning curve in getting to know the instrument. There was little feel for whether the instrument was appropriate to use in every institution building project. Fiche design was an inexact science because nobody knew how Twinning would differ from classical TA in terms of cost and feasibility. The tendency seems to have been to load Twinning fiches with everything and anything related to the broad areas of the acquis concerned. Little attention seems to have been paid to feasibility of the outcomes required in the light of the duration and budget of the project.

Covenant writing on the basis of the sometimes imperfect fiches proved problematic and lengthy in first generation projects. Procedures - and the rationale for them - were improperly understood and resented because of the level of detail. The concept of 'guaranteed results' was again not properly understood and (see below) may have been an inappropriate measurement tool to use given the nature of the projects.

In the implementation phase the concept of a partnership took time to be understood by both sides (see below). Projects were quickly realised to

be too ambitious and, compounded by capacity constraints on both sides, benchmarks were repeatedly missed leading to demotivation and a tacit acceptance by all stakeholders that the guaranteed results were unlikely to be achieved, or to be achieved only in part.

First generation projects, in the terms by which they were meant to be measured, were generally not very successful. Informal attempts to quantify success rates are ultimately not very accurate, helpful or consistent, but stakeholders commonly refer to projects achieving around a 25% success rate in reaching guaranteed results.

However, this is by no means to say that first generation projects were all failures and that the Twinning instrument was not adding value. As was noted in the Assessment Exercise in Summer 2000, Twinning was already being recognised as an important and valuable tool of accession-related technical assistance despite the initial resistance and considerable teething troubles. In 2000 it was already apparent that Twinning projects were having an impact on preparing the ground for accession. However, the successes were less tangible and probably not measurable within the framework of the 'guaranteed results'. The successes were no less valuable for being unmeasurable and were essential in preparing the ground for second generation projects which could not have taken place without the valuable preparatory work carried out in first generation projects.

The second generation of projects (for the sake of argument let us say those in the 2000 and 2001 round) benefited from the work done to sensitise AC administrations to the Twinning instrument; from the learning and experience of operating the instrument; and from the

refinements that were made to the Twinning Manual, partly as a result of the 2000 assessment exercise. Greater (although we would argue, still not enough) flexibility was introduced, procedures were simplified somewhat and actions were taken to try to reduce the delays in the preparatory phase of Twinning projects.

The cumulative results of all these developments has resulted in a second generation of Twinning projects which, by and large, are better focused, better planned, more reasonable in their ambitions and address themselves to targeted and specific deliverables related to implementation of the acquis. As such they are more amenable to measurement using the 'guaranteed results' methodology. While it is still too early to say whether the 2000 and 2001 projects will achieve a better 'success rate' than the 1998 and 1999 projects we feel confident in asserting that Twinning has evolved and improved; the instrument is better accepted and understood by all stakeholders; and demonstrable progress has been made towards legal and administrative approximation to the acquis, as is witnessed in the Regular Reports.

In making this sweeping assertion we are aware that we could be accused of having little concrete evidence to support this conclusion. To a certain extent this is true. In response we would reiterate that this exercise is not a substitute for a full and proper evaluation on a project by project basis of Twinning and its contribution to the ACs administrative capacities. The timing of this exercise is however critical and a full evaluation should not be undertaken until a critical mass of the 2001 projects have been completed and enough time has elapsed to take a view on their sustainability (i.e. say 6 months after the withdrawal of the PAA).

In moving to our third generation of Twinning projects, many of which are necessarily still at the preparation stage, we would expect to see a further evolution in the use of the Twinning instrument. An even more flexible approach to the use of Twinning will be required as the scope, extent and nature of the actions required to meet the final gaps in administrative capacity can be expected to vary widely from AC to AC. A flexible response will be required and a highly pragmatic approach to issues such as project duration, budgets and sources of expertise (public, mandated body, private) will need to be adopted. We do not advocate throwing away the rulebook - merely that greater emphasis needs to be put on developing practical solutions which solve specific problems rather than on designing projects to fit the existing rules. A specific instance of how this might be achieved would be a relaxation of the framework for Twinning Light (to make it truly 'light' and adaptable to needs).

4. Detailed Comments

In this section we give some recommendations, based on the reports that we have read and the interviews made, that in our view will further improve the Twinning instrument. We have classified our recommendations into the different stages of the lifecycle of a Twinning project. For the purposes of analysis we divide the lifecycle into five stages:

- Design of project fiches
- Selection
- Covenant-writing
- Implementation

- Post project

Before we go into details in the five phases we would like to stress that the Twinning manual is an excellent working tool for institutions, PAAs and PLs. Some of our recommendations can also be found in the manual but are maybe not always applied.

Design of project fiches

The programming and design of project fiches takes around 9 months. The phase includes a gap analysis by the Accession State. It is very important for the AC administration to make a proper gap analysis of its needs because the fiches are based on the analysis and in the later stages of Twinning it is difficult to effect changes. It is essential for the Commission to give comprehensive and forward-looking feedback to the AC during this phase. DG Enlargement should encourage the active involvement of the line DGs in this process. Many DGs already are involved but some could do more.

If it is possible during the programming to start working with Member States on the fiches it could be useful. This would contribute to more realistic and practical initial project plans and might shorten the period before the projects actually can begin.

Every summer the Commission issues a programming guide on the types of assistance that the ACs can make use of: 1) TA (which includes 'real' TA and Twinning). 2) Supplies and 3) Works. The Commission has put a lot of emphasis on the Twinning concept. It might be useful to evaluate/analyse whether it is possible to combine the different types of

assistance to support individual projects. Often the ACs lack the necessary financial resources to provide for external assistance as a supplement to Twinning. Therefore, a reasonable and proportionate combination of Twinning and conventional TA should be sought as the best way to arrange the external support and assistance that ACs institutions may require to achieve their institution and capacity-building objectives. In any event, conventional TA should be arranged as a supplementary measure to the mainstream support to be provided under Twinning; thus giving the Twinning partners a shared responsibility for the identification of areas and activities to be better covered by conventional TA (development of ToRs), the selection of appropriate service providers (in accordance with standard rules applying to all EU-funded programmes), and the monitoring of the contractors' performance.

In the third generation of Twinning projects we expect that the programming should focus on fewer and more precisely described topics. For example, pay reform instead of public administration reform.

The fiches are written on the basis of the programming document. The tasks described in the fiches have to be implemented by the Twinning projects; therefore the content of the fiche must be very well elaborated and sustainable over the following years. But the fiches must also be resilient and flexible enough to cope with changes in the AC (such as changes in government, parliamentary elections or changes in national priorities) and be able to respond to these occurrences.

It is very important to avoid overlap between different Twinning projects and other EU-supported projects but it is equally important that bilateral

assistance is taken into account to avoid duplication with EU support. Here the MSs need to be vigilant.

Many fiches have been too ambitious and too many activities have had to be implemented especially in the first and second generation Twinning projects. The result has been that projects have been evaluated as poor when measured by the guaranteed results framework. The lesson to be learned is that new concepts (e.g. in audit, in the energy sector) need a longer period in which to mature. Introducing a new concept, followed by new legislation and ultimately implementation is very difficult to achieve in just two years.

Better preparation of fiches could involve assistance from Twinning institutions in MSs as this would provide a more realistic view on the number and extent of the activities that it is possible to implement within a given timescale and budget. A helpdesk function with a number of days set aside for writing project fiches with assistance from MS Twinning institutions should be considered.

Feedback from Brussels during the elaboration of the fiche on the EU policy in the specific subjects of the fiches could also prove valuable. In some cases closer cooperation on the drafting could be useful when very complex legislation is involved.

In summary, the process of programming and fiche design means that the details of Twinning projects are "set in stone" at far too early a stage in the project cycle. At the covenant-writing stage the counterparts are encouraged to conduct a "reality check" on the feasibility of the fiche and to re-design accordingly. However, the counterparts are also admonished

not too be too radical about this re-design since this may well result in a referral back to the PHARE Management Committee where the fiches were originally approved. This delays the process further. This is another example of the dictates of administrative process taking precedence over the need for sensible and responsive project management. The Commission should discuss with the PHARE Management Committee whether it is necessary for the Committee formally to approve the project fiches. It is not apparent to us that this procedure adds any value in terms of resulting in better fiches and the approval procedure constrains much-needed flexibility at later stages of the preparation phase.

Selection

Two major concerns have been raised regarding the selection procedure - the quality of the twidders, mainly the PAAs and project leaders (PL), and the exhaustion of Twinning resources in the Member States.

We have to acknowledge that Member State institutions are primarily concerned with domestic affairs. They are not necessarily accustomed to international work and are not used to dealing with secondments of staff to ACs. This means that we cannot expect that all relevant Member State institutions will be able to participate in Twinning projects. The submission of Expressions of Interest and the participation in presentation of proposals, before final selection of partner by ACs, is dependent upon the available resources of the MS institution. The National Contact Point in the MS could maybe support potential Twinning institutions with the resources needed in order to boost the number of MS institutions bidding.

During selection the AC has the first and only meeting with possible partners. The presentation takes about one hour. During this one hour projects as big as 2M Euros are decided upon. As the selection is a very crucial and demanding task for the AC institutions more time should be used for each presentation. How the bidder expects to solve the issues involved, the strengths of the back office in the MS and the pool of experts, could also be among the subjects discussed more rigorously than at present.

The quality of the PAAs has been questioned. Better scrutiny of CVs by Member States, Delegations, ACs and the Commission (line DGs) could improve the quality. As PAAs are working in a new environment abroad and without their normal back-up in this situation their capacity as managers is challenged. During secondment the PAAs have tasks that are closer to the task of a consultant than normal civil servants have. Further improvement in the training of PAAs including some individual feedback on their personal and inter-personal strengths and weaknesses would probably give the PAAs a better understanding of how they are seen by their new colleagues in ACs.

The question of professional skills versus managerial skills of PAAs has been mentioned. Here one has to scrutinize the project set-up. If the project involves many MTE and STE days the role of the PAA is closer to that of a manager than an expert, but if the MTE and STE days are fewer then the inputs from the PAA are one of the main contributions and therefore the professional expertise of the PAA is the key to a well-implemented project.

Concerning the three generations of Twinning project the above suggestions can be applied to all of them.

Covenant-writing

The writing of the Covenant is very crucial for successful implementation of the project. All relevant material (legislation, reports, analysis etc.) for the drafting of the Covenant must be provided by the ACs.

Not all AC and MS institutions are familiar with the log frame approach to project management. Training in interpreting and using the Project Cycle Management methodology should be more widely available.

More active support from the Delegation during the writing of the Covenant especially the elaboration of the budget would be welcomed by both the MS and AC administrations. We appreciate that all staff in Delegations are stretched but the task managers have a key advisory role to play. The importance of this role is made more crucial because the MS administration often has little awareness of the practical constraints of operating in the AC administration

When elaborating the Covenant and before implementation it must be clear who is responsible for the implementation in the AC and the MS. The commitments of the MS and AC must be unambiguous and the project must have the attention and approval of the highest possible political authority.

The concept of guaranteed results has proven to be difficult to work with. Instead emphasis should be put on results (benchmarks) and the activities arising from these results. The results must be quantified, measurable and be time-limited.

Implementation

The implementation of the project starts when the Covenant is signed. At this point the PAA has to take up his/her post in the AC. It is mandatory that the AC institution should have prepared for the arrival of the PAA and subsequently the MTEs and STEs. Office facilities must be ready.

It is important that the PAA very quickly gets a full overview of the institution that s/he now is a part of. As part of this the PAA should talk with all staff to familiarize him/herself with the work of the beneficiary institution, the structure of the organisation and the tasks of the staff. Political relations between the beneficiary and the rest of the public sector and horizontal relations are important for the PAA to understand. Working groups dealing with the different aspects of the covenant must be appointed and their tasks and responsibilities defined.

Regular meetings and standard agendas for the steering committee (outside the beneficiary institution involved) must be made. Within the institution regular meetings with the management group must be scheduled to monitor the progress of the Twinning project.

Quarterly meetings between PAA, PLs (AC and MS) and the Delegation should be scheduled. The main aim of these meetings is to discuss progress, obstacles and the sustainability of the results mentioned in the

Covenant. All partners, including the Delegation, must act in order to facilitate the implementation of the Twinning projects. As results are obtained the sustainability and the follow-up of the results should be discussed. Conclusions made here may well point towards relevant activities that need to be undertaken after the end of the Twinning project.

Annual or biannual meetings between the PAAs, PLs (AC and MS), Delegations and the relevant line DG should be held. The main aim should be to have the latest up-date on Commission policy and the implementation of this in ACs. These meetings could cover all Twinning projects in a AC or could reach across the AC and target the professional fields of the Twinning projects. DG Regio has with success arranged this type of meeting.

Post project

Because of the very nature of Twinning the institutions of the MS and the AC become very closely connected during the project and co-operation often continues after the formal end of the project. This co-operation could also be supported by Twinning in the following ways: meetings between the Twinning institutions/partners twice a year for the next couple of years to secure sustainability of the results achieved and implemented; meetings between the Delegation and the beneficiary institutions to review improvements in the administrative capacity of the ACs in the specific areas covered by the project.

For the third generation of Twinning projects the Commission should consider whether it would be possible to reserve 'follow-up funds' to be

used post-project for the purposes of securing the sustainability of the achieved results. At present this is not possible.

5. Public Administration Reform

Much concern has been exercised regarding the ultimate sustainability of institution building under Twinning. Indeed, this is not a concern which is limited to Twinning projects but is an issue which goes to the crux of any technical assistance project. The design of the instrument - with its focus on guaranteed results - recognises and attempts to address this fundamental issue. It is possible to argue that the system of guaranteed results has not worked and that a perfectly adequate, mature and proven alternative - the Project Cycle Management (log frame) methodology - would have been a more appropriate planning and monitoring tool.

However, this debate misses a more important issue. The main constraint on the success of Twinning initiatives in the ACs has been the lack of effective Public Administration Reform (PAR) strategies. This point was extensively dealt with in the Assessment exercise in 2000, is highlighted also in the EMS consortium's thematic review of Twinning and in the Court of Auditors' Report. The concern is also echoed in the Commission's Review of PHARE in 2000 and in a succession of Regular Reports on the ACs' progress towards accession. There is, therefore, a unanimous acceptance that the issue is fundamental; what seems to be lacking is any coherent impetus to address the issue.

It would be otiose for this report to rehearse once again the various ways in which poor public administration principles and practices undermine sustainability of Twinning projects. These points have been well argued

and accepted already. What seems more appropriate is for us to reiterate the seriousness of the situation and to make a further plea to the Commission to initiate urgent and sustained action to deal with this fundamental weakness which has the potential to undermine much of what Twinning has achieved over the past five years.

We understand and appreciate the Commission's nervousness in this regard. The public administration reform efforts under classical PHARE in the mid-1990s did not generally have much impact in changing behaviours and practices despite the raft of work that was done in drafting (and re-drafting) legislation. Attempts to transport western-style PAR to transition and developing states around the world have proven to be only limited in their success. PAR is not easily transferable and one of the main lessons learned is that there needs to be a sustained political commitment from within the recipient country for PAR to have any chance of success.

This is not an argument for inertia although it may sometimes appear to be a 'counsel of despair'. The task is probably not one that lies solely within the competence of the Commission - pressure also needs to be exerted at the political level if the argument for a neutral, apolitical, permanent stable and secure civil service is to be won. However, the Commission should be active at the technical level and Twinning has - in our view - a part to play. Twinning has not engaged - other than in a very few instances - with horizontal PAR. The argument is that PAR is not acquis-related. Despite this, the Twinning philosophy - of cooperation between administrations - would be ideally suited to assisting the ACs to develop better PAR strategies and practices. Who better than civil servants to advise on the implementation of reform initiatives aimed at

strengthening and maintaining administrative capacity? This is not a bid for an approach to PAR which would be exclusively addressed through Twinning. That would be to replicate mistakes that have already been made. However, it does seem to us that Twinning has much to offer as an approach to dealing with the growingly urgent issue of PAR.

In this regard we were interested to hear about the Commission's response to PAR in Romania where a suite of PHARE projects (including a Twinning project which has responsibility for the coordination of the other 3 TA-based projects) is seeking to address PAR at both strategic and technical levels. The support of SIGMA has also been used extensively and other bilateral donors (DFID) have been involved. It seems to us that this sort of concerted and coordinated approach, making uses of all appropriate sources of expertise - public, private, other donor, SIGMA - has much to commend itself. This may well serve as a model for future efforts at a comprehensive strategy in support of PAR in the ACs.

6. Conclusions

Depending on which perspective is adopted an analysis of the results of Twinning projects in the candidate countries can come out with very different results.

The framework used in this evaluation gives as indication of why this is so. If one evaluates the first generation of Twinning projects and focuses on the guaranteed results the evaluation will turn out to be poor. Many of the fiches and covenants were far too ambitious. When we then add that

institution building began on virgin soil it is easy to see why the conditions for the first generation of Twinning projects were so difficult.

As soon as institution building was secured better results came from the Twinning projects and we conclude that the second generation of Twinning projects building on the institution building of the first generation have had good results with law approximation, implementation of legislation and sharing experiences from MSs. The Twinning projects have had great impact in the ACs and close co-operation between MS and AC institutions has been developed.

From our interviews and our own experience as evaluator and PAA we concur with the conclusion reached by the EMS consortium on the basis of their examination of earlier Twinning projects - "When the conditions are right and the people are right it (Twinning) produces excellent results. This happens in a minority of cases." However, as we note above, we believe that second and third generation Twinning projects have far better prospects of success. With experience we now have a far better idea of what constitute the right conditions and where to find the right people.

There is still room for improving the instrument. In Chapter 4 we make various recommendations. If we look at our division into different generations it is relevant when preparing fiches to take into account the development level of the areas where the Twinning project is to be implemented. We have learnt that we cannot introduce a new concept, build supporting institutions, produce legislation, implement the legislation and monitor the application of the legislation in the public sector in a single Twinning project. If applying the whole process is the objective of the fiche the process must be split into different projects

where the first project must concentrate on concept understanding and institution building as this is the most difficult task. And one of the reasons is that this involves taking political decisions. Twinning projects cannot be responsible for political decision-making but it can support the process with advice on best practice. Only once the concepts have been understood and accepted and legislation has been prepared and passed, can assistance focus properly on implementation and monitoring. Too many of the early Twinning projects attempted to do all of the above too quickly.

When designing Twinning project for new countries eligible for Twinning support in the future these observations should be taken into account.

Most of the Twinning projects in ACs at present are second generation projects. These projects seem to achieve better results. Better preparation and more experience in ACs and MSs and an improved Twinning manual have had a beneficial effect. The institutions have been built and the targeting of the projects is more precise. Improvements can still be made especially in the selection procedure, the covenant preparation and in the training of PAAs and PLs. A new post project phase with the purpose of ensuring sustainability and long-term impacts could be introduced.

When turning to the third generation project it is difficult to predict. We expect these to be even more focused. As the institutions are built and major parts of legislation come into force we can expect more focus on maintaining the knowledge, monitoring the application by public institutions and implementing improvements in existing legislation. This

probably means that the third generation of Twinning project will be more focused on ad hoc activities. Projects will probably need fewer expert-days on average. One approach that would address this type of need could be helpdesks manned with experts from MSs and the Commission available and ready to respond when need arises.

No matter whether we are considering the first, second or third generation of Twinning projects we have heard from everyone that there needs to be an overall Public Administration Reform strategy in the ACs. We can only support this and if the Commission can develop an approach or even a policy towards PAR this will certainly be an advantage. However, a PAR approach must be ongoing. PAR will not be achieved through a single project - Twinning or TA. Therefore in conjunction with any support offered, an overall PAR strategy - together with concrete arrangements for the implementation and development of the strategy - must be in place.

Any overall evaluation of the effectiveness of Twinning as a capacity-building instrument needs to be viewed in the evolutionary context we have described above. The early years were difficult but progress has been made and lessons have been learned and acted upon. The main concept of Twinning - that of co-operation between administrations - remains a sound one. It should continue to be promoted where appropriate but it should not be regarded as the only tool in the box. Further and more in-depth evaluation would prove useful since the instrument has developed quickly. The achievements of Twinning are manifold both in terms of real progress in establishing capacity to implement the acquis and the less tangible, but nonetheless important, contribution that Twinning has made to fostering co-operation and

understanding between the existing and future Member States of the enlarged European Union.