



TAIEX and Twinning 2019 Highlights



Dear Friends of TAIEX and Twinning,

It is with great pleasure that I address you for the first time as Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement. As a former TAIEX expert myself, I have experienced the strong sense of solidarity underpinning the institution building instruments, and their unique contribution to the cooperation with our partners. Last year alone, 3365 experts and 20372 participants took part in TAIEX events, and 169 Twinning projects brought EU expertise to beneficiaries. The health, security, and prosperity of the European Union are inextricably linked with that of our closest neighbours and partners. I am honoured to be taking charge of implementing our shared vision for a better future, and of our cooperation on shared challenges.

One such shared challenge has emerged with the outbreak of COVID-19, and TAIEX and Twinning are playing an important role in our response. Despite the challenges posed by travel restrictions and social distancing measures, we have quickly adapted to the new normal and have stayed in close contact with our community. It is crucial that we embrace the possibilities of digital technologies by offering online alternatives to TAIEX and Twinning to help our partners in their fight against the pandemic and its social and economic repercussions. I fully support this digital leap, which will enlarge and complement our traditional peer-to-peer offer – while protecting the strengths of the instruments as we know them. More than ever, we rely on the network of National Contact Points to ensure the continued participation of partners, and to mobilise the best experts from EU countries.

When President von der Leyen took office in December last year, she put forward an ambitious political agenda with a renewed focus on inclusivity and gender equality, digitalisation and cyber threats, and on green growth. Both institution building instruments already have an impressive track record in these areas, and will no doubt offer an important contribution to the Commission's political priorities and our partners' reform goals. President von der Leyen also pledged to lead a geopolitical Commission. This means a Commission which strives for a Europe stronger in the world by reinforcing its capacity to act as a global leader, promote its values, and shape a better world through multilateralism. For years, TAIEX and Twinning have supported the EU in exporting its standards and values to the EU neighbourhood, and have promoted strong ownership, mutual exchanges, and fruitful cooperation with our neighbours. This task will be no less important in the years ahead, as changes in climate, geopolitics and digital technologies reshape the world order.

Against this background, and at a time when a new normal is taking shape and bringing about societal change, I look forward to working together with you for sustainable, resilient, stable, and prosperous societies. We are stronger together, and together we can strengthen Europe's role as a global leader. Thanks to recent strategic reforms of the instruments, and with your dedication and support, I am convinced that we are up to the task.

Kind regards,

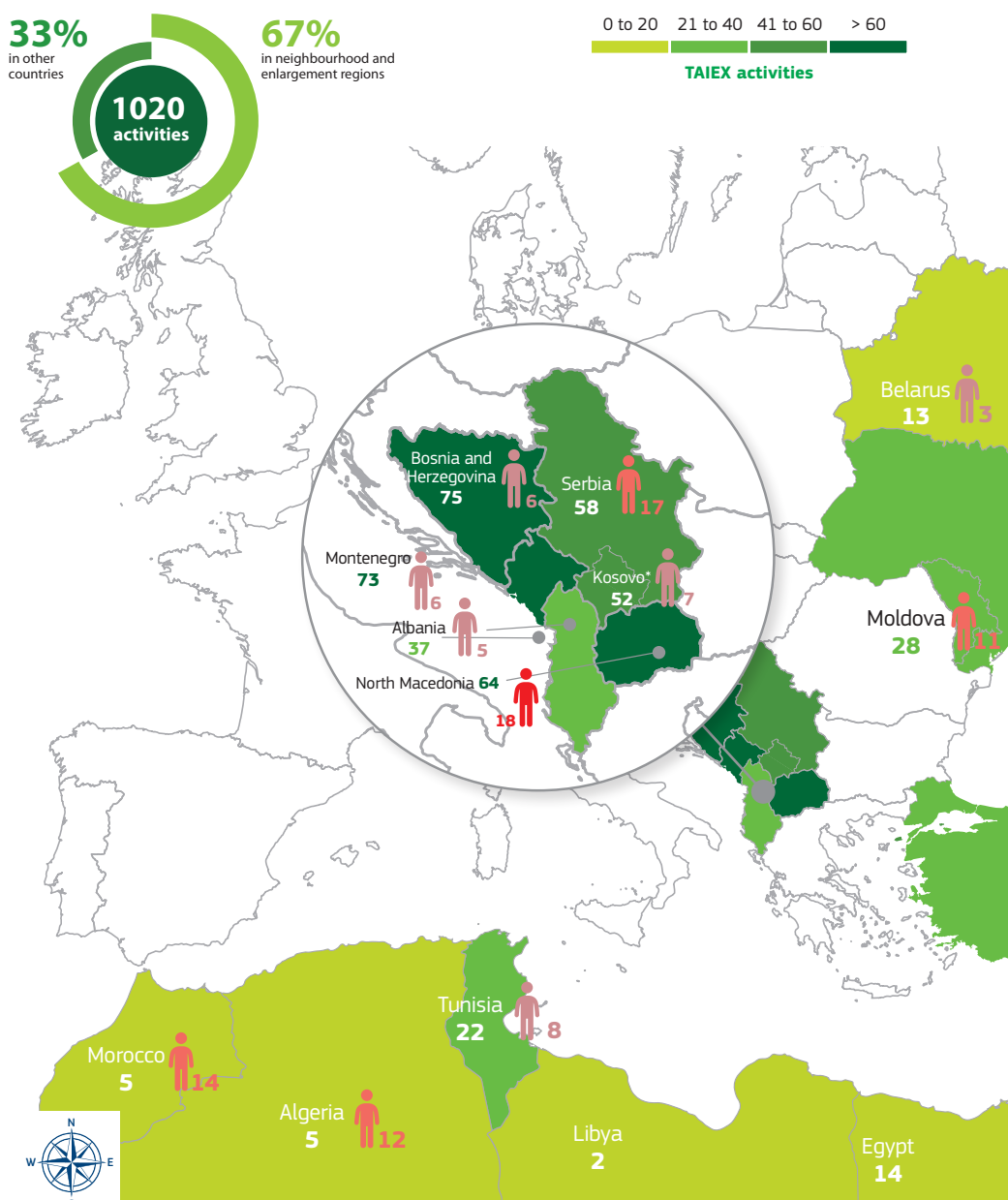
Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement

TAIEX Activities in 2019

TAIEX in Short

- TAIEX – Technical Assistance and Information Exchange – offers peer-to-peer technical assistance and policy support from public experts in EU Member States to beneficiaries in the neighbourhood and enlargement regions.
- In recent years, TAIEX assistance has also become available to countries covered by development policies and the Partnership Instrument worldwide, and to EU Member States to support key structural reforms and better regional and environment policies.
- TAIEX assistance can be requested by beneficiaries (classic) or EU services (strategic).
- The instrument targets public administrations, judiciary and law enforcement authorities, parliaments, representatives of social partners, trade unions, and employers' associations.
- TAIEX is funded from the EU budget and managed by the European Commission.

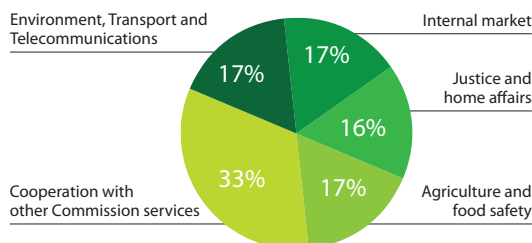
TAIEX Numbers in 2019



In 2019, an average of 85 activities took place every month. Every day, 9 experts and 56 participants exchanged expertise on a wide range of EU legislation and best practice. Expert missions were the most popular type of TAIEX activity, making up 45% of all events in 2019. Workshops and study visits accounted for 26% and 24%, respectively, and 5% of all events were work from home.

All in all, 1020 TAIEX activities took place in 2019. Reflecting our increasingly global reach, 2019 also saw an increase in events with partner countries outside the neighbourhood and enlargement regions. These events accounted for one third of TAIEX activities. In the NEAR regions, 63 % of activities took place in the enlargement region, with Bosnia and Herzegovina the overall frontrunner. In the neighbourhood regions, TAIEX activity increased in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and Israel.

Which policy areas?



- 3365** experts
- 92%** of participants rated TAIEX experts in 2019 as excellent or good
- 20372** participants



“ We often tend to focus on national legislation and forget that the entire region is facing similar challenges in setting up a legislative framework and mechanisms to protect whistleblowers. This TAIEX workshop was an excellent opportunity to exchange hands-on experience on alignment with the new EU Directive on Whistleblower Protection and effective enforcement of existing legislation. As a result, we were able to create a network of experts, and we are now working together on a number of concrete proposals. ”

Flutura Kusari, media lawyer from Kosovo, on the TAIEX workshop on the new Whistleblower Directive for the Western Balkans

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.
 ** This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

Twinning Activities in 2019

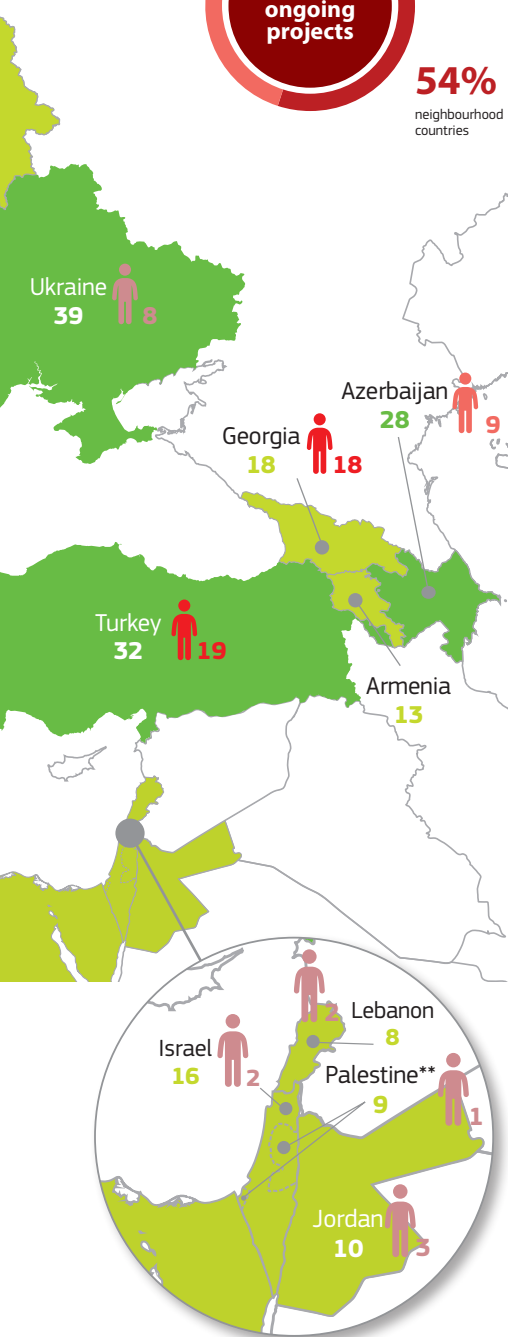
Twinning Numbers in 2019



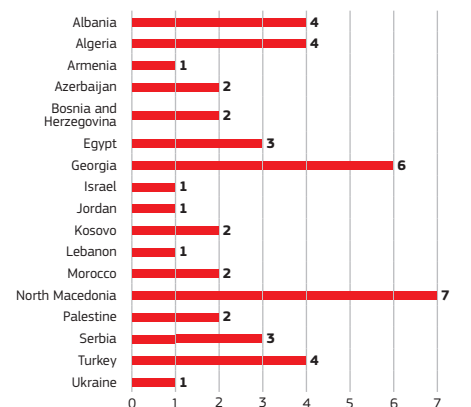
46%
enlargement countries



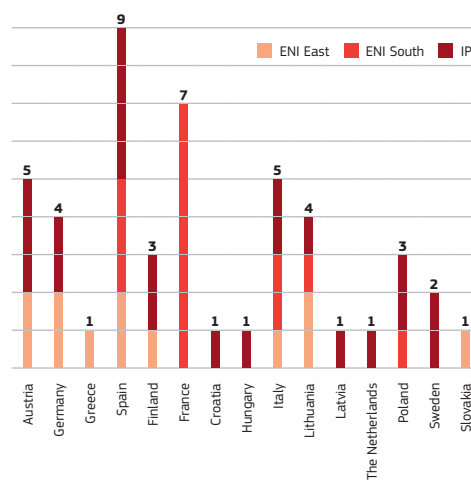
54%
neighbourhood countries



48 new projects awarded



Lead Member State



169 Twinning projects were ongoing in 2019, and 48 new projects were awarded. The distribution between the enlargement and neighbourhood regions remained largely unchanged compared to the previous year, with 54% of all Twinning projects taking place in the eastern and southern neighbourhoods, and 46% among candidates and potential candidates for EU membership.

Among EU countries, Spain was in the lead of the most projects (9), and was also one of three Member States with projects in all three beneficiary regions – the other two being Italy and Lithuania. In the eastern neighbourhood, Georgia took on the most new projects (6). Algeria initiated the most new projects in the south (4), and North Macedonia (7) was the frontrunner in the Western Balkans.

Twinning in Short

- Twinning is a policy-driven instrument supporting institutional cooperation between public administrations in EU Member States and partner countries.
- It brings together public sector expertise in order to achieve concrete, mandatory, operational results through peer-to-peer exchanges.
- Twinning relies on a network of stakeholders in EU Member States, partner countries, and EU Delegations or Offices.
- The instrument is funded from the national envelopes and jointly implemented by Member States and administrations in the partner countries.

How Does It Work?

Once a partner country and the Commission decide that a Twinning is the appropriate instrument to support reform and modernisation within the public administration, a Twinning fiche is prepared and a call for proposals is launched to all EU countries.

After receiving the proposals, a selection committee awards the project to a single Member State or a consortium.

Two project leaders, a Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA) and a RTA counterpart in the partner administration, are responsible for the implementation. The RTA is seconded to the partner institution for the full duration of the project. Twinning projects are reviewed 6-12 months after their implementation in order to ensure that the mandatory results have been achieved.



“ The role of a central bank is important for economic development. This Twinning project, the very first in Belarus, successfully strengthened the capacity of the National Bank to perform the key functions of a modern central bank, such as protecting the national currency, ensuring its stability, maintaining the resilience of the national banking system, and ensuring the efficient functioning of the economy. It led to a new draft payment law, which will benefit citizens to conduct transactions safely, and to the implementation of a risk-based supervision methodology, leading to better consumer protection. ”

Dariusz Lewandowski, Polish expert and Resident Twinning Advisor on a Twinning project with the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, conducted by a consortium of Germany, Lithuania and Poland.

TAIEX 2019 in Depth

Going Global: TAIEX Beyond the EU's Neighbouring Regions

In 2019, 33% of TAIEX activities were organised outside the EU's neighbouring regions, allowing an even wider range of public administrations to benefit from EU expertise.

TAIEX-REGIO supports the implementation of regional and urban policy in EU countries. Within this framework, TAIEX provides expertise to public bodies responsible for managing and implementing the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. 37 TAIEX-REGIO activities took place in 2019, such as an expert mission on simplified cost options in Cyprus, and a study visit on collection and treatment of organic household waste in Italy.

TAIEX-Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) helps EU countries to implement structural reforms agreed in the European Semester. Examples of TAIEX-SRSP events – of which there were 108 in 2019 – include a workshop on anti-money laundering in Greece, and an expert mission to Austria on better regulation practices.

TAIEX-Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) facilitates peer-to-peer learning between environmental authorities in EU countries in order to address challenges in the implementation of EU environmental policy and legislation identified by the EIR. For example, a multi-country workshop on sustainable urban development and an expert mission on waste management were organised last year in Belgium and Malta, respectively.

TAIEX-Partnership Instrument (PI) has enabled countries in the Americas, the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific to apply for TAIEX assistance. With 21 activities in 2019, such as a multi-country workshop on space applications in Panama, TAIEX-PI supports the alignment of countries worldwide with EU standards, norms and regulatory frameworks, and allows the EU to establish a wider political dialogue with these countries.

TAIEX assistance to the Turkish Cypriot community supports the preparation of legal texts aligned with the EU acquis and the community's ability to apply the acquis upon the entry into force of a comprehensive settlement on the island. TAIEX implemented 141 activities in 2019.

From 2020, developing countries are eligible for TAIEX – and Twinning – assistance. **TAIEX-DEVCO** aims at strengthening national development policy and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes, for example, support for digital signatures in Cape Verde, or assistance with the preparation of the census in Uzbekistan. The first Twinning DEVCO projects will be implemented in Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Namibia, Zambia, and the Dominican Republic in the fields of e-governance, audits, justice and home affairs, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

TAIEX: New Horizons

The TAIEX instrument is now being deployed in EU countries and far beyond EU's neighbourhood. Selected events are shown on the map below. From this year, countries covered by EU development policy will also able to request TAIEX assistance in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Copenhagen, Denmark

TAIEX-SRSP study visit on the design and management of pension information systems (beneficiary: Croatia)

29-30 October 2019

Warsaw, Poland

TAIEX-REGIO multi-country workshop on strategic public procurement

18-19 June 2019

Uzbekistan

TAIEX-DEVCO workshop on population and housing census

June 2020

Delhi, India

TAIEX-PI multi-country workshop on EU-South Asian cooperation on combating terrorism

3-4 December 2019

Bogotá, Colombia

TAIEX-PI multi-country workshop on Venezuelan migration

12-13 November 2019

Cape Verde

TAIEX-DEVCO expert mission on electronic identification – e-ID/digital signature

May 2020

“ Colorectal cancer is one of the most common, deadly and preventable cancers in the world, so screening measures are key. Through this workshop, TAIEX facilitated multi-country cooperation and brought expertise together. Some peers focused on health information systems, others on EU guidelines. I contributed with expertise on implementation through quality assurance measures. We all have a more complete picture now, which will bring great benefits to our future work.

Tatjana Kofol Bric, Slovenian public health expert on the TAIEX multi-country workshop on scaling up colorectal cancer screening programmes in countries of the Southeastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).



TAIEX 2019 Success Stories

Countering Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products in Bosnia and Herzegovina



October 2019

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU contains a commitment to aligning existing laws and future legislation with the EU acquis. In the area of tobacco control, the national legislative framework is not currently fully aligned, and significant divergences exist within the country. This workshop brought together policy makers and customs and health officials from EU countries and international organisations to present EU legislation and international instruments to regulate illicit trade in tobacco, with a focus on the new tracking and tracing system. They also shared their experiences with implementing the new system in practice. As a result, the workshop gave the participants from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina a sound understanding of the EU legal framework and practical issues surrounding its implementation, and supported the country in fulfilling its obligations under the SAA - the drafting or adoption of new legislation in the area is now underway at the sub-national level.



Simplifying Procedures and Improving Public Administration in Tunisia



June 2019

Public administration reform is at the centre of the EU's relationship with its neighbours. Good governance and well-functioning public administrations are instrumental to meeting the demands of citizens and creating a regulatory environment that promotes growth and employment. Against this background, the Government of Tunisia launched a Strategy for the Modernisation of Public Administration in 2017. The purpose of this study visit was to support the implementation of the strategy by studying a successful example of simplification of administrative procedures in the EU: The Belgian Agency for Administrative Simplification. This allowed national officials to learn from the Belgian experience, meet experts in the field, discuss examples of best practice, and draw inspiration for the implementation of similar processes in Tunisia in order to optimise public service delivery and administrative procedures to the benefit of citizens and businesses.



Preventing and Controlling Communicable Diseases in Georgia



November 2019

Requested by the Commission's department of health and food safety and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), TAIEX organised a series of events on communicable diseases and their prevention and control. Following a pre-assessment seminar in Stockholm, the TAIEX mission contributed to an assessment of the capacities of Georgia to implement EU legislation, comply with necessary EU requirements, and act on best practice in the field of public health, with a focus on cross-border health threats. Throughout the five-day conference, experts from EU Member States and the ECDC verified, refined, and corrected the pre-collected data and gathered more information about the practical functioning of the Georgian system. On this basis, they identified strengths and areas for further improvement, in turn providing important guidance for the reform process and giving the Georgian public healthcare system improved conditions for detecting and controlling cross-border health threats.



Creating Circular Economies on the Island of Ireland



March 2019

Circular economies have the potential to reduce demand for primary raw materials and create economic opportunities locally while strengthening the competitiveness of cities and regions. However, translating international and national environmental legislation into practical solutions at the local level can be a challenge. This TAIEX-Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) workshop allowed a number of cities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to learn from counterparts in Belgium and the Netherlands with more advanced experience in the transition towards a circular economy. The workshop offered capacity building and exchange of best practice on issues such as resource efficiency, circular economy roadmaps, eco-innovation, job creation, and commercial regeneration. The workshop enabled the beneficiary cities to find solutions to engaging citizens in innovative urban circular economy policy and embedding this policy in business strategies and local job creation.



Twinning 2019 Success Stories

Strengthening the Capacities of the Algerian Civil Protection Services in Algeria



January 2017 - June 2019

With its vast and complex territory, Algeria is vulnerable to a range of natural and man-made disasters. Civil protection is therefore an important feature of public service in the country. Between 2017 and 2019, the Directorate General for Civil Protection received Twinning assistance from the ministries of home affairs of France and Spain. The Twinning sought to reduce vulnerabilities and the impact of disasters in the country. To this end, assistance was provided in a number of specific areas of civil protection, such as traffic accident coordination, speleology, and infectious waste management. In addition, 1439 officers were trained in prevention, intervention, logistics and ground operations. Twelve simulation exercises were carried out and a study on the creation of two national training centres was published. The Twinning led to upgraded civil protection methods, procedures, and tools in line with European standards, and improved capacities for prevention, decision-making and crisis and risk management.



Crime Scene Investigation in North Macedonia



February 2018 - November 2019

Good crime scene investigation practices are instrumental for the efficient work of the Ministry of Interior in North Macedonia, and were the subject of a Twinning project led by the Lithuanian Police Forensic Science Centre and supported by the Forensic Service Department of State Police of Latvia. The Twinning enhanced the forensic capacities of crime scene investigation units by assessing the available facilities and equipment, revising standard operating procedures, offering capacity-building to staff, and helping to prepare a strategy and action plan for 2020-2025 for the capacity development of crime scene investigation units at regional and local levels. The Twinning supported the wider reform priorities in North Macedonia in the areas of justice and police as set out in national strategies.



Tackling Air Pollution in Azerbaijan



November 2016 - April 2019

Air pollution is a major health risk in Europe, and caused more than 400,000 premature deaths in 2016, according to the European Environmental Agency. According to World Health Organisation estimates, costs linked to premature deaths due to air pollution amount to 7% of the GDP of Azerbaijan. A Twinning project led by the Finnish Meteorological Institute and supported by experts from meteorological and environmental institutions in Latvia, Austria, and Finland supported the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) of Azerbaijan in modernising air quality monitoring and management systems in line with EU best practice. With the help of the EU experts, the MENR revised and streamlined internal roles and responsibilities in environmental data collection, and increased the ministry's data collection, processing, analysis, reporting and communication capacities. Moreover, the old air quality monitoring station was replaced by a modern, online air quality monitoring station.



Support to Policy Planning in the Water Management Sector in Serbia



January 2019 - July 2020

Recent droughts have exposed the vulnerability of aquatic ecosystems in Serbia, and floods, water stress, and deterioration of aquatic ecosystems are likely to become more widespread in the future. In addition, water management forms an important part of the EU's environmental policies to which Serbia has committed as part of the country's accession negotiations with the EU. With the help of experts from Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, this Twinning led to a river basin management plan for Serbia in line with the EU Water Framework Directive and recommendations for sound water management and protection of freshwater ecosystems. It also led to the creation of a list of necessary water protection measurements, cooperation between foreign and domestic experts, and increased public stakeholder involvement.



Twinning 2019 in Depth

The Twinning Working Group: A Structured Dialogue Mechanism

In March 2019, the Commission launched a platform for regular, in-depth exchanges between Twinning stakeholders. The new Twinning working group was tasked with identifying and addressing challenges in EU Member States and partner countries, and sustaining the engagement of all parties to maintain the high quality of Twinning projects. One year and three meetings later, the results are already beginning to show. In addition to creating an even closer knit and committed Twinning community, EU

Member State engagement has increased as a result of enhanced awareness raising about upcoming projects in the working group. The biggest impact was seen in the enlargement region, where the number of proposals per project increased from 1.4 to 2.4 in 2019. The group has also commissioned a survey to identify and analyse legal constraints for public officials' participation in TAIEX and Twinning activities, with the first recommendations expected in July 2020.

Twinning Turns 10 in Georgia

2019 marked the 10th anniversary of Twinning in Georgia, which has since become an avid user of the instrument. We spoke to the National Contact Point, Nino Grdzlishvili, about the celebrations and 10 years of Twinning.

"We decided to organise an event to celebrate the progress achieved and exchange the lessons learnt through the last 10 years. The event itself took place in the Georgian National Museum – one of the country's first Twinning beneficiaries – and was attended by more than 100 guests.

"In our view, one of the great benefits of Twinning is that it is not only designed to provide advice or technical assistance, but as a project of administrative cooperation between peers, where the beneficiary administration is actively involved. Partnerships fostered through Twinning last beyond individual projects, and often result in new cooperation projects.

"The importance of the instrument undoubtedly increased when Georgia signed an Association Agreement (AA) with the EU. Since then, Twinning has contributed significantly to the approximation of Georgian legislation to the acquis, and the implementation of other obligations stemming from the AA. Over the years, we have also observed how Georgian institutions mature through their Twinning experiences and become viable counterparts to their peers in the EU.

"In future, we hope to share our experiences and expertise with other countries as an associated partner rather than solely as a beneficiary."

Nino Grdzlishvili, National Contact Point for TAIEX and Twinning in Georgia



Twinning in Practice: The Practitioners' View



What does Twinning mean to practitioners? Nathalie Burette is a Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA), and Mohamed Saïd Chilla is her counterpart on a Twinning project to strengthen the capacity of the Algerian Court of Auditors in the fields of jurisdictional control, execution of the finance law, and the quality of the management. The project was implemented in cooperation between the courts of auditors of Algeria, France, and Portugal.

In your experience, what is the added value of Twinning?

Nathalie Burette: *Twinning means institutional cooperation between peers providing highly operational expertise. The partners in this Twinning showed strong commitment and great proactivity throughout. This had a visible impact on the internal reforms undertaken by the Algerian Court of Auditors as part of the process of modernisation in the country.*

Mohamed Saïd Chilla: *The added value lies in the drive for change that Twinning puts in motion, thanks also to the relationship of trust between the RTA and their counterpart. Two years of intense work led to visible results in breaking up silos in the internal activities of the Court through more transversal collaboration and on reducing the delays in carrying out control missions, inter alia.*

What are the benefits for the country and with respect to partnerships?

NB: *This Twinning project contributed to a strengthened control system and more efficient and transparent management of public finances. This improves citizens' confidence in their institutions. In addition, the cooperation has continued after the end of the project, and facilitated bilateral partnerships between the countries involved.*

MC: *This Twinning improved the Court's practices and control tools, which we can see in practice in the Court's annual report, for example. This ultimately benefits citizens, who enjoy more transparent, better-structured, and targeted information on public accounts.*

TAIEX and Twinning Towards the Future



Digital Leap: Taking TAIEX and Twinning Online

Peer-to-peer support and cooperation through TAIEX and Twinning are an important part of the EU's global response to the pandemic. However, at a time when face-to-face interaction is discouraged, innovative solutions are required. This is an opportunity to embrace new ways of working.

This will enable us to continue to provide support to our partners throughout the crisis, make the instruments fit for future challenges, and add a new dimension to the existing offer. The TAIEX budget will cover the cost of facilities to make digital event resemble regular events as much as possible, such as channels for interpretation or the rental of teleconferencing equipment. Online tools will also play an increasing role in Twinning, and additional flexibility has been introduced to facilitate the remote implementation of ongoing Twinning projects.

While face-to-face interaction is – and will continue to be – a key strength of our instruments, innovative, digital tools should not only be a solution for the short term. Once circumstances allow

regular TAIEX and Twinning activities to resume, the digital tools should continue to enrich our offer and increase the quality of the instruments by facilitating early preparation, extensive follow-up, and wide participation.



Green Trends: TAIEX for the Future

In order to support the European Green Deal, TAIEX and Twinning are being transformed to contribute to the green transition in the EU and its partners.

TAIEX is already applying a range of green practices. For example, we always book direct flights for our experts and participants where possible, and aim to find accommodation within walking distance of the venue. Our events are principally paperless, and we do not use plastic bottles. In addition, future TAIEX events will increase its use of goods and services with reduced environmental impact throughout their lifecycles, and comply with green public procurement principles and the Commission's guidelines for sustainable meetings and events – for example by giving preference to environmentally certified hotels and catering services focused on reducing food waste. The digital leap for the

instruments will also have a positive effect on our carbon footprint through reduced air travel.

TAIEX has an excellent track record of supporting green policy exchanges. Last year, a series of workshops under the EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) addressed issues such as marine litter and biodiversity. Another workshop, involving all enlargement and neighbourhood regions, focused on the EU Plastics Strategy. The EPPA workshops will continue in 2020, and a flagship event on the European Green Deal is in the pipeline. The amount of events on green policies ultimately depends on requests, and we will therefore promote this area vigorously in all meetings with the institution building community.



Supporting Gender Equality

Equal opportunities were the focus of nine TAIEX activities in 2019. For example, a workshop in Turkey sought to boost the entrepreneurship of women in rural areas, economic diversification, and improved access to finance. The experts also presented EU best practice and regulatory initiatives to boost entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

Moreover, TAIEX is working on ensuring equal representation of men and women as TAIEX experts in future. Questionnaires identifying current obstacles to gender equality are currently in circulation among National Contact Points from Member States and a sample of pre-selected experts.

The share of women among TAIEX participants went up from 46% to 50% between 2018 and 2019. Meanwhile, the figure for female TAIEX experts remained unchanged at 40%.

For more information, please visit our websites or contact the Institution Building Unit directly:

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