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TWINNING PROJECTS – A MANUAL

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This Twinning Projects Manual is meant to provide some practical and comprehensive information for ICA Member Organisations involved in the preparation and implementation of Twinning Projects.

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Preface

Launched as an idea in May 2008, the Twinning Project (TP) is one of the tools of the ICA-SPP, which the section wants to develop.

Twinning Projects are an attempt to create (temporary) bilateral structures within the framework of the ICA-SPP to foster special bilateral relationships between archives of an 'SPP-nature', so to speak. One reason is that such a structure might better enable the SPP to attract active membership from the lesser developed countries and 'young' democracies which can –as an introductory road– 'twin' themselves with a member already active in the SPP and the modern archival field.

The objective is to get those new members (more and from the start) involved in the SPP by exchanging ideas, knowledge, experiences, and people on a bilateral basis. So, the concept includes an option to enlarge our section by establishing and offering an infrastructure, created by developed countries, making it possible for less developed countries and new democracies to approach the SPP with their 'twinning wish'. The ICA is then able to invite them to become member of the ICA and of the section as partner of another SPP-member.

Another reason for exploring twinning options is the enlargement of geographic scope of our section. The geographic area in which the project -focused on bilateral structures- will be developed, involves 'qualitate qua' more than one country, region or even continent, namely two. Probably the twinning will be of a European -African or a West-European - East-European, perhaps a US/Canada - South-America, East-European or African, perhaps even Asian nature.

I. Twinning

Twining aims to help Information Departments of ICA member institutions in the development of modern and efficient records and archives management, with the structures, human resources and skills needed to implement state-of-the-art records management and archives management systems.

Twining provides the framework for parliaments, political parties' and politicians' archives to work within a bilateral relationship with their counterparts in member organisations. Together they develop and implement a project that targets the transposition, enforcement and implementation of a benchmark level records and archives management system. As a precondition for a successful project the more developed partner has to dispose of relatively advanced records management and archives management tools and systems in order to be helpful in making the less advanced partner reach these stated goals.

The main feature of a TP is that it sets out to deliver specific and guaranteed results and not to foster general co-operation. The parties agree in advance on a detailed work programme to meet an objective concerning priority areas of records management and archiving. Since 2008, only a very few SPP member organisations have benefited from (partly still) informal Twining Projects.

The key input from the developed member organisation to effect longer-term change is in the core team of long-term seconding ICA-experts, practitioners in the implementation of 'state-of-the-art' systems, to the less developed partner / member organisation.

Each Twining Project has a Steering Committee (SC-TP), a Project Group (PG-TP) and a Project Leader (PL-TP).

Designated as member of the SC-TP are (the) (Central) Information Officers of both partners and their Chief Archivists (max. 4 persons). Both partner organisations provide 2 to 3 expert employees from their Information Services Departments as members of the PG-TP (max. 6 persons).

The PL is chosen from the PG-TP-members originating from the less developed partner organisation, the reason for that being the responsibility for change has to lie always in the hands of the changing organisation.

The PG-TP plans, develops and implements the project in line with the policy proposed by it and approved and determined by the SC-TP.

The PL-TP is responsible for the overall thrust and coordination of the project. PL's activities are supplemented by carefully planned and timed missions of other specialists, training events, awareness raising visits, etc., to accompany the modernisation processes towards the targeted results.

Notwithstanding the need for adjustment to the specific situations and procedures, Twinning Projects as an Institution Building instrument rests upon common features.

Firstly, Twinning Projects are built around jointly agreed ICA policy objectives (ICA Mission statement), such as:

- further, encourage and support the development of archives in all countries, in co-operation with other organisations, including international agencies, governmental and non-governmental;
- promote, organise and co-ordinate best practice, the development of standards and other activities in the field of records and archives management;
- establish, maintain and strengthen relations between archivists of all countries and between all institutions, professional bodies and other organisations, public and private, wherever located, which are concerned with the administration or preservation of records and archives, or with the professional training of archivists, especially through the exchange of information;
- facilitate the interpretation and use of archives by making their content more widely known and by encouraging greater access to them;
- strengthening of the ... (opzoeken) or enhanced co-operation in line with ICA policies, as foreseen under the ICA regulations;
- (preparation of) ICA membership enlargement.

More specifically, Twinning Projects are based on a number of basic principles:

- As a rule, the Archives of an ICA-SPP member institution of a developing country (ADC) proposes a Twinning Project to an Archives of an ICA-SPP member institution in an advanced country (AAC);
- Twinning Projects must bring to the ADC a concrete operational result (the so called mandatory result) in connection with the ICA acquired knowledge and experience, or other ICA policies open for co-operation;
- The Twinning partners commit themselves to achieving the pursued result, and not only to the means to achieve it. At the end of the project a new or adapted system should function under the sole responsibility and ownership of the ADC;
- Twinning is a joint project of a grant nature. It is not a one-way delivery of technical assistance from an AAC to an ADC. It is a joint process, in which each partner takes on responsibilities. The ADC commits itself to undertaking and funding reforms, the AAC to accompanying the process for the duration of the project;
- To underpin the credibility of their commitment, the Twinning partners draft a detailed Twinning work plan, before starting work. It may be adapted in the course of its implementation, but it must fix clear benchmarks to allow for close monitoring of progress towards the final result;
- The achievements of a Twinning Project (pursued results) should be maintained as a permanent asset to the ADC even after the end of the Twinning project implementation. This presupposes inter alia that effective mechanisms are put in place by the AAC to disseminate and consolidate the results of the project.

II. Five main stages

II.1. Informal reconnaissance

The first steps are to be taken by the member organisation that would like to participate in a Twinning Project. Most of the time it will involve an organisation from a developing country willing to learn from the theory and praxis of an institution in a developed country.

The first mentioned candidate partner informally invites the other would-be partner to start with a Twinning Project, mentioning the field of interest on which the focus of the project should be concentrated.

After the receiving member has positively responded to the idea, the next step will be the sending of a formal invitation.

II.2. Formal commitment

This then following formal invitation should take place at a high organisational level, e.g. by the CIO or Secretary-General or Director (CEO) of the inviting organisation. The invitation should also contain a list of proposed members of the Steering Committee Twinning Project from the initiating member organisation.

The invitation will contain a invitation to provide two possible experts / SC-TP members from the intended partner organisation as well.

After the invited party has accepted in principle to embark on a Twinning Project the projected results of such an endeavour have to be listed. The way to do this depends on:

1. Intensive contacts

- between the Twinning partners via e-mail, internet, blogs, etc. (using the new/ social media, e.g. FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc. on which a Group can/could be started; the SC- and Project Group members are q.q. member of this Group; others, 'innocent bystanders' as it were, can, of course, always make valuable contributions).
- the initiative for these contacts lies with the Project Leader, proposed by the ADC, agreed upon by the Steering Committee;
- this Project Group prepares a 'Twinning Contract'-proposal, including:
 - Identifying the area/system on which bilateral cooperation should focus
 - An analysis of the status quo regarding the chosen area/system
 - Specifying the results to be pursued
 - Formulation of a mutually agreed on approach
 - Prioritising actions

2. Agreement(s)

The Steering Committee decides on the Twinning Contract proposal, containing formal agreements on the subject matters involved.

II.3. Planning, organisation, execution

After mutually signing the contract the Project Leader takes the lead of the TP and draws

1. *A Planning and Time table*

- A clear outline of the activities, their scope and time span is essential for the monitoring of the project and its achievements
- This instrument is a major tool for the PL

2. *Role of PCOM*

- The PL submits the contract, Planning and Time table as a project proposal to the Programme Commission of the ICA (PCOM)
- The PCOM considers the submitted proposal for a possible dedicated award

3. *Personal exchanges*

- Essential for the success of a Twinning Project are the personal exchanges between the Project Group members and their mutual commitment.
- The selected partner(s) undertake(s) to transfer the requested hands-on records and/or archives management expertise available in its own institution;
 - E-mail and social media groups can primarily be very helpful;
 - Also this includes the secondment of (a) Twinning adviser(s) for at least 2 mutual visits.
- Some special procedures are necessary to take account of the particular nature of Twinning and to ensure sound financial management. The absence of commercial tendering and the choice of the project partner make it necessary to find other means of controlling the costs which may legitimately be borne by the programme. These procedures express the specific nature of Twinning projects.
- Twinning Projects encompass a series of actions and inputs. Long distance and incidental secondments of experts form the 'backbone' of Twinning Projects. To achieve its objectives, a Twinning Project also needs various other expert inputs, such as medium- and long-term specialists, training etc.

4. *Results*

- Following the completion of a Twinning Project, the PG-TP is expected to have achieved significant progress in the identified area of the project. In some cases, one Twinning Project may not be sufficient to achieve this goal, and a series of additional actions (Twinning, Twinning light or other instruments of Institutional Development) may be required to achieve full compliance with the relevant goals. However, this in no sense diminishes the need for each individual project to have clearly defined goals and a precise, timed and budgeted work plan for their achievement.

Twinning activities are ideally suited to projects with the following features:

- the goal is relatively clear, i.e. the ADC has a good understanding of the relevant part of the acquis or the relevant area of co-operation, and has selected the type of system(s) it intends to adopt;
- sufficient political will exists in the ADC to create the best possible conditions for drafting and adoption of the relevant legislation;
- sufficient ADC and AAC commitment exists to ensure that the required resources (financial, staff) are mobilised in a Twinning Project; a realistic estimate of the costs of a 2 year period Twinning Project involving two visits from the ADC to the AAC and at least one visit v.v. would be around at least € 20.000,- [€ 10.000,- per year].
- The fact that a successful Twinning Project requires a budget as indicated above implies the requirement of the involvement of a third party, because the ICA, nor the ICA-SPP or the Twinning Partners themselves have sufficient pecuniary means at their disposal to finance an 'external' project like an international twinning. 'Third party' refers to international organisations like the EU, the OECD, the OCSE, the UNDP, UNESCO, etc., which often run programs where ICA-Twinning Projects hopefully might fit in.
E.g., the informal two years Twinning Project of the Republic of Albania Parliament and the House of Representatives of The Netherlands [2008-2009] has been largely financed by - and has been successfully carried out under the auspices of - the OSCE Presence in Albania in the framework of the Parliamentary Support Project (Phase II).

If an ADC is lacking any point of reference for the development of a specific sector, there may be a case for traditional Technical Assistance in order to help better define the options for redesign or reform. For example, there are at least two quite different types of registry, document or records management systems in use in an AAC. Before a Twinning Project can begin to develop a system for a particular type of registration, etc., the ADC must already have decided upon the model that is expected to fit their needs the best way.

II.4. Evaluation

At the end of the Twinning Project, some two years after the start, the PG drafts an evaluation report in which the Twinning Project as a co operational process is described together with the stated and achieved results.

II.5. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations have to be part of the evaluation report that is presented to the SC. The SC decides on whether to follow up the recommended actions or to suggest a (partly) other course.

The SC-decision(s) will be included in the final report that will be presented to the ICA-SPP. The report then will be published and made available to all ICA-membership.

III. Continuation or swap

A likely outcome or recommendation will involve the possibility of continuing a fruitful cooperation within the Twinning Project involved.

Another outcome, however, might be that a further development of the ADC partner would benefit better from another possible AAC twinning partner that is the more advanced in the field of interest and expertise at this moment required by the ADC.

In this last case the advantages of a swap should be considered. The ADC might then approach the other AAC for another Twinning Project.

Of course, it can work the other way around as well. An AAC might consider that its endeavours for the benefit of another ADC in a different stage of development than its current twinning partner would promise to be the more fruitful. The AAC should in such a case make it known to the ICA-SPP community that it is available for a Twinning Project in the field in question.

IV. Follow-up

As stated above, the follow-up of a Twinning Project may take all sorts of form. The main thing is that its benefits and/or set-backs will be available in a transparent and open way for all of us, the whole ICA community. It is the only way to learn from each other and find out in which direction we, in our particular situation, should be heading, and/or which path(s) we should avoid.

Epilogue

It goes without saying that this draft-manual is a first attempt, nothing more than that, to give an outline of the actions and activities that have to be taken in order to get a Twinning Project off-the-ground.

Hopefully many positive experiences with Twinning Projects in the future will attribute to the complementing and extension of this text. Every twinning partner of current and future (attempts) at Twinning Projects is invited to share his or her difficulties, results, successes and failures with the ICA(-SPP) community. Whatever might be useful for this manual will find its rightful place in it, thus benefitting everyone.