

DEVELOPMENT IN THE FAST LANE

Twinning and TAIEX in Kosovo



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Executive Summary

For more than half a century the European Union, EU, has guaranteed the peace, stability and prosperity of its citizens. However, the EU is also dedicated to sharing its accomplishments with its neighbors; both with those looking to join the EU, and with those willing to approximate their law to European Union standards.

At the heart of the European Integration process, there is a set of rules that lets the twenty-eight EU countries and their half a billion citizens enjoy the same rights and quality standards.

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, TAIEX, instrument can help the public officials in a neighbouring country gain a better insight into EU legislation, just as the Twinning Programs, under the priority sectors, agriculture and food safety, freedom, security and justice, environment, energy, transport, telecommunications, and internal market, can foster both cooperation and exchange of know how. Today, TAIEX and its longer-term sister instrument Twinning continue to be in high demand as powerful and effective tools for capacity building, providing advice and guidance when it comes to EU values, standards and legislation.

This publication highlights the role of the EU supported TAIEX and Twinning projects by presenting specific completed activities, the objective, including input from European experts and the institution supported by the TAIEX or Twinning project, outcomes, and what this means for the life of citizens at the moment and in the future.

Moreover, special emphasis is placed on the relationship building and sharing of best practices component of TAIEX and Twinning between Kosovo institutions and EU member states. Particular focus is put on how these capacity building activities can support Kosovo's institutions to better implement the Stabilization and Association Agreement, SAA. Examples of implemented Twinning and TAIEX projects are presented in the publication, as well as lessons learned and testimonials shared by beneficiaries.

Finally, the publication includes Citizen's Ask boxes throughout, highlighting some questions from average citizens, students, civil society representatives and other professionals, including institutional representatives, across Kosovo directed to the EU office, about the EU and the Twinning and TAIEX components. The answers to these questions provide the reader with a brief response, helping you to better understand the EU and its many funding instruments.

Abbreviations

CILC	Center for International Legal Cooperation (CILC)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUICC	EU Information and cultural centre
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Association
FVAK	Food and Veterinary Agency of Kosovo
GK	Government of Kosovo
GI	Geographical Indication
GOVNET	Kosovo Government Network
IPA	Pre-Accession Assistance
IRZ	German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation
KBRA	Kosova Business Registration Agency
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
KC	Kosovo Customs
KfVL	Kosovo Food and Veterinary Laboratory
KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council
KJI	Kosovo Judicial Institute
KPIS	Kosovo Police Information System
LAVES	Lower Saxony State Office of Germany for Consumer Protection & Food Safety
LFS	Labour Force Statistics
MAFRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development
MEI	Ministry of European Integration
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MESP	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MLGA	Ministry of Local Government Administration
Mof	Ministry of Finance
Moh	Ministry of Health
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
REC	Regional Environmental Center
RTA	Resident Twinning Adviser
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilization Association Process (SAP)
SApD	Stabilization and Association process Dialogue
TAK	Tax Administration of Kosovo
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
WTO	World Trade Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

I.

How does the EU support Kosovo on its European path?

The benefits to Kosovo of joining the European Union, EU, have been voiced many times by central and local authorities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the international community in unison. European integration offers Kosovo's citizen numerous benefits, particularly, *political benefits*: increasing the stability of a safe, democratic Kosovo, allowing for freedom of movement within EU countries; *economic benefits*: joining the single market, allowing for the free transfer of goods, freedom to provide services, transfer capital, and unifying trade policy with EU countries; *social benefits*: increasing the quality of life by improving job safety, health and education prospects; *environmental benefits*: adapting to European ecological norms, eventually also improving the quality of life for citizens with cleaner air and a sustainable future.

In April 2016, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, SAA, entered into force between the EU and Kosovo, as the final SAA to be signed with Western Balkan countries. The agreement is a milestone for Kosovo's path towards a European future, providing an inclusive framework for closer political dialogue and economic relations between Kosovo and the EU, including opening EU markets to products from Kosovo.

The SAA covers cooperation in a wide variety of sectors, including justice and home affairs, trade, education, employment, energy, environment and a range of other policy areas. For more information on the SAA and its impact for Kosovo, please read the EU Information and Cultural Centre's (EUICC) publication, [SAA for Everyone: Your Guide to Understanding Kosovo's SAA with the EU, published in May 2016](#). The EU has, however, supported Kosovo on its European path long before the signature of the SAA. Previously, Kosovo's institutions had been focused on the priorities set out in the European Commission's feasibility study for the SAA issued in 2012, while its capacity to assume the obligations of membership are regularly addressed in the annual Country Report or Progress Report for Kosovo.

The goal is that this new deal with the EU will give Kosovo increased access to European markets and capital. The agreement is also expected to encourage Kosovo's government to work towards implementing reforms in key areas including the rule of law, organized crime, and corruption. For investors, this will mean fewer risks in opening new businesses and committing their capital to

Citizens Ask



Kaltrina Ibishi, French Language Teacher at Sami Frasheri Secondary School

One of the most frequent questions I get from my students is about visa liberalization, as well as asking what a Progress Report for Kosovo is?

The Progress Report, or the Country Report is an annual report about Kosovo's preparation for EU membership, where progress is measured on the basis of decisions taken, legislation adopted and measures implemented.

The report is based on information gathered and analysed by the EU Office in Kosovo in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) in terms of political criteria for membership: Democracy and rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities, as well as in terms of economic criteria for membership; The existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union.

Kosovo, a country with Europe's youngest, Western-oriented, and multilingual population, many of whom have worked or studied abroad. For businesses, this means opportunities to work with labs in the EU as well as other countries of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). For citizens, this means a better standard of living with more opportunity.

Pre-accession assistance to Kosovo

Kosovo's EU accession process has always been accompanied by various financial instruments, supporting the country with timely and efficient realization of accession priorities. Today, the EU is the single largest donor providing assistance to Kosovo and is at the forefront of development efforts from capacity development to infrastructure and institutional support.

EU Technical Assistance, TA which has been delivered to Kosovo in many forms, has helped public officials in Kosovo gain insight into EU legislation, providing a broad array of advice and guidance on EU standards and cultural values.

Pre-accession assistance is provided mainly by the transfer of "know-how", or assistance in the harmonisation and implementation of legislation, direct expert assistance for the elaboration of strategic documents, education activities and Public Administration Reform (PAR). This assistance is designed by the EU Commission to utilize previous enlargement experiences, incorporating lessons learned in current support to pre-accession countries.

The EC has helped promote Kosovo's integration into the global economy and create the basis for an enabling environment that stimulates private sector development. Moreover, EC implemented projects have allowed policy makers to make the most of opportunities, directly supporting Kosovo's ability to negotiate the most favourable position with regard to the SAA, as well as other major international trade agreements, such as the Central European Free Trade Association, CEFTA, and ongoing negotiations with the World Trade Organization, WTO. The latter exhibits the EU's dedication to making trade a central aspect of development not only in theory, but in practice.

As the EU is by far the most important trading partner for Kosovo, the help received in order to develop Kosovo capacities to negotiate agreements with broad reaching impact, is of crucial importance for all of Kosovo's citizens. Kosovo's citizens will benefit from these negotiated trade agreements from increased product safety and consumer protection imposed on Kosovo with the obligation to align with EU standards and norms. Moreover, Kosovo businesses are also bound to benefit from the same by having better access to the EU single market for their produced products, considering the restriction on quotes previously imposed on some products decreases heavily, and by being eligible for EU public procurement contracts and vice-versa, as well as operate a business in the EU. Additionally, benefits come in the form of eliminated custom duties on most imports and exports, eventually to be eliminated for all products in 10 years, as well as benefits for potential EU investors to come from the provided legal framework supporting their foreign investments.

In order to rationalize pre-accession assistance and streamline actions and efforts on what is expected from Kosovo as a potential EU member state, the EC developed a new pre-accession instrument called IPA. As of 2007, IPA replaced previous programs such as the PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD and CARDS, and unlike those programs IPA is offered to both **EU candidate countries** and **EU potential candidate countries**.

Citizens Ask



Venera Ismaili, Manager of Rezervimi.com

*I am sure none of my colleagues really know what the **acquis** means, or what the **Acquis communautaire** is?*

Acquis, is a French term meaning "the EU as it is" – in other words, the rights and obligations that EU countries share. The "acquis" includes all the EU's treaties and laws, declarations and resolutions, international agreements on EU affairs and the judgments given by the Court of Justice.

"Accepting the acquis" therefore means taking the EU as you find it. Candidate countries have to accept the "acquis" in its entirety before they can join the EU, and make EU law part of their own national legislation.

Currently, Kosovo benefits from EU TA programs such as IPA, EIDHR, TAIEX, Twinning and P2P programs, as well as the TEMPUS program. IPA also supports the co-ordination of active donors in Kosovo, together with the Kosovo Ministry of European Integration (MEI).

Kosovo also benefits from the Instrument for IPA Cross-border Cooperation with Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, a program focused on projects of joint interest for neighboring countries.

In total the financial allocation for Kosovo under the IPA instruments between 2007 and 2013, was €637.6 million EUR.

Citizens Ask



Alban Shala, student of European Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Europe, Natolin/Warsaw, Poland

What is EU technical assistance?

EU technical assistance is a series of financial instruments approved by the European Commission, aiming to support approximation of Kosovo's legislation to the EU acquis, to strengthen cooperation between EU member states, and candidates as well as potential candidate countries, financed from the general budget of the European Community.

TA helps a potential member state, like Kosovo, to develop its public institutions, reform strategies and develop the necessary management skills to strengthen the country's economic, social, regulatory and administrative capacity.

Forms of TA include the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), community programs of the EU such as TAIEX, Twinning and P2P, Life-long learning program, Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens, Horizon 2020, Tempus and others.

2014 IPA Snapshot EU and Kosovo Assistance

IPA 2014

Approved 27 November 2014



€ 66,050,000

IPA 2014

212 projects



€ 9,330,000

Citizens Ask



Shpat Hashani, Owner of Babel Cafe and Eat Restaurant in Pristina

What countries are candidate countries and what countries are potential candidate countries?

As a new instrument IPA also makes a clear differentiation between the two groups of beneficiary countries, candidate countries and potential candidate countries.

IPA provides focused pre-accession financial aid to the following 2 groups of countries:

- Candidate countries: Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia.
- Potential candidate countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

What does pre-accession assistance for Kosovo ultimately mean?

EU assistance is not for quick-fix solutions. It focuses on impacting long-term progress and changes in the society and economy as a whole. The pace of reform and that of the accession process are closely related, as just as for building a house, a solid foundation is essential for a country's long term success.

The ultimate objective of any modern nation is to increase the standards of living of its people and to improve their individual and general well-being. That being said, the interplay between living standards, quality of life, and pre-accession assistance from the EU is closely interconnected. Improved living standards are supported by increasing the stability of the beneficiary country, the safety and security, enhancing the economic development and the health and education systems, which translates into better job opportunities.

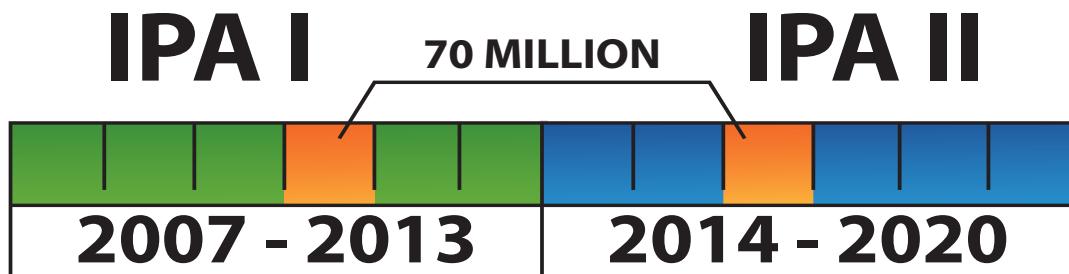
Numerous opportunities have been created for the people of Kosovo and many lives have been enhanced in terms of health, safety and education, as a result of pre-accession funds. This publication presents just a few specific impacts of Twinning and TAIEX technical assistance in Kosovo. More success stories can be found in other EUICC publications such as, [Top Ten European Chances of Kosovo, published in July 2013](#).

EU pre-accession assistance plans for Kosovo

EU assistance for Kosovo is foreseen for the development of a modern and democratic society, based on respecting human rights, rule of law, and protecting all communities that live in Kosovo.

The head of the EU office in Kosovo at the time, Mr. Samuel Zbogar, confirmed that the financial allocation for Kosovo in the period 2014-2020 will be over 645 million EUR.

EU funding for IPA I & II



Moreover, with the SAA entering into force, Kosovo must make good use of TA programs to focus on strengthening sectors oriented on export markets, developing the infrastructure needed to get products to new markets and to ensure the safety and quality standards so that they can operate competitively.

As Irfan Lipovica, Director of European Integration and Policy Coordination at the Ministry of Trade and Industry explains, considering the increased needs of Kosovo institutions, even if solely taking into account the SAA requirements, the need for technical support is enormous. He further explained “Kosovo institutions have now embarked on a contractual obligation with

the EU. Thus far it has only been a path towards European integration without contractual obligations. For instance, there is a lot of potential for our institution [Ministry of Trade and Industry - MTI] to use the TAIEX program for Free Movement of Goods, as well as additional support in analysing different requests that come from businesses in regard to their technical barriers for trade."

Much needed economic strengthening cannot be effective without an improved state of democracy and rule of law, which goes hand-in-hand with support for building institutional capacities, particularly PAR, a process closely associated with the EU integration process. PAR continues to be among the top priorities for the Government of Kosovo and the EU as part of the integration process, but also as a key instrument to improve the quality of services provided to citizens.

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, TAIEX, is one of the financial instruments of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission available to Kosovo.

Citizens Ask



Luan Tahiri, Kosovo restaurant owner

What will the EU do for businesses?

The EU is investing heavily in building Kosovo's small but highly open economy. But to grow a business and compete in a global economy, you need more than direct aid. You also need good policies. Policies at national level that, to enforce a legal framework that allows businesses to compete and to modernize their technology, to provide better business support services, develop a culture of entrepreneurship, to provide assurance of product quality and ensure access to finance at competitive rates.



2016 Free Movement of Goods Workshop at the EUICC with MTI Director, Irfan Lipovica (Photo Source:EU Office in Kosovo)

II.

What is TAIEX?

TAIEX is short-term technical assistance (usually 3-5 days) for Kosovo supporting the application and implementation of EU legislation, and improving the administrative capacities of government officials in their respective fields. Projects are demand driven, requested by local institutions, and focus on providing tailor-made expertise to address challenges within a short timeframe. These projects often pave the way for longer, more in-depth Twinning projects." For more information refer to [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/tenders/taiex/index_en.htm].

TAIEX assistance covers all aspects of EU standards and legislation, from fundamental rights to consumer protection. Among the most important areas are: The rule of law, environment, democracy, economic governance, energy and transport and telecommunications sectors. The beneficiary institutions interested in, for example, how to deal with polluting power plants or how to implement EU animal welfare laws, can submit a TAIEX online request, connecting the action to the priority areas above ,explaining the current situation in the beneficiaries' administration, and the desired objectives for the project, which is then reviewed for potential approval.

Every year TAIEX responds to some 2000 requests for assistance from all countries. TAIEX tailors support to the beneficiaries' specific need, organizing a workshop, expert mission or a study visit.

TAIEX Specific Rules

TAIEX support is available for 1) Workshops in the beneficiary country 2) Study visits to Member States and 3) Short term expert missions (up to 5-10 days).

Citizens Ask



Berna Visoka, human resources specialist, Raiffeisen Bank

What does TAIEX do?

Government institutions identify challenges in implementing specific policies related to the EU Acquis, and develop an application for assistance, sent to TAIEX. TAIEX provides swift delivery of assistance, usually within two months of an application being approved, and if needed experts can be deployed even within a few weeks. Through workshops, study visits or expert missions, member states support the beneficiary country with targeted expertise. For example, programs for Kosovo scheduled in 2016 will focus on double taxation agreements, while another will focus on industrial emissions reduction.

Topics eligible are related to policies or regulations on freedom, security and justice, internal market, customs, employment, or social policy, agriculture and food and safety policy.



Rexhep Vasolli Participates in an EU Supported Workshop for Fiscal Reform (Photo Source: EU Office in Kosovo)

TAIEX Collaboration in Kosovo

Kaloyan Simeonov,

a TAIEX expert from Bulgaria, supported two TAIEX mid-term projects in Kosovo. He worked as an expert supporting the European Integration Committee in the Assembly of Kosovo from 2009 – 2010 and again as an expert in the Department of the Ministry of European Integration (MEI), Department for European Integration and Policy Coordination in 2011

“It was very good that I had also come from recent EU newcomer (Bulgaria) and I have passed the whole pre-accession process considering I had worked in the Bulgarian administration since 1998, two years before the start of the negotiations for accession,” just one of the reasons why Mr. Simeonov found his engagement with TAIEX to be so successful”.

Moreover, his second engagement was specifically requested by Mr. Rexhep Vasolli, Director of Department for European Integration and Policy Coordination within the Ministry of Finance based on the success of his previous engagement and country specific knowledge.

Mr. Vasolli,

explained that when institutions are allowed to identify the specific TAIEX expert who would suit their department and institutions best, TAIEX programs end up being much more efficient and tailored to the beneficiary.

As Mr. Simeonov, recounts

“TAIEX is defined as a beneficiary driven programme - so the interest of the beneficiary ought to be respected and followed in the whole process. But there are also other things that helped our mutual success with Rexhep. One being Rexhep's professionalism and very good knowledge about EU issues and even more important - the very good contacts that he has with the other stakeholders - other institutions like MEI, Kosovo Customs, Kosovo Tax Administration, among others”.

Citizens Ask



Zijadin Thaqi, head of the Office for European Integration, Municipality of Kamenica

How many officials (maximum) from the local level can benefit from the same TAIEX program?

There is no set number of participants from institutions for each TAIEX activity; rather the beneficiary identifies the priority participants who are then engaged for the action. Study visits, however, are limited to generally three participants, unless additional representatives are approved by the EU.

What types of assistance does TAIEX provide?



Workshops: Over 1-2 working days, EU Member State experts provide information on specific elements of EU legislation, regulations, procedures and best practices to a larger audience;



Study visits: A group of up to three practitioners from Kosovo can take part in a study visit (for up to five days) to an EU Member State administration to gain practical insight into the implementation of EU legislation;



Expert missions: Experts from the public administration of the EU Member States (one or two) are sent to Kosovo for a short-term mission (up to five days) to provide in-depth advice on the transposition, implementation or enforcement of a specific part of EU legislation;

What services does TAIEX offer?

Providing short term TA and advice on the transposition of EU legislation into the national legislation of beneficiary countries and on the subsequent administration, implementation and enforcement of such legislation;

Bringing European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, ENPI, partner countries closer to the European Union, through increased economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation by sharing the experience gained during the enlargement process;

Providing technical training and peer assistance to partners of the beneficiary countries;

Providing database tools for facilitating and monitoring the approximation progress as well as to identify further TA needs;

TAIEX in Kosovo

Florim Canolli, director at the Department of Development Assistance within the MEI, sees the TAIEX instrument as popular for institutions since it requires much less time to develop the application and receive a response, providing quick support and expertise at the time of implementation by the government.

The MEI, as the coordinating body, advises institutions to tailor their requests based on the needs of the sector and EU priorities in this area. Mr. Canolli explained that the Ministry is planning a regional conference where the implementation of the TAIEX instrument will be discussed with the countries in the region in order to identify best practices.

The TAIEX and Twinning Activity Report 2015 issued by the European Union includes a snapshot of TAIEX activities per beneficiaries or partners in 2015, showing a relatively high number of activities for Kosovo.

Key trends in 2015

TAIEX activities per beneficiaries or partners 2015 ³

	22	21	12	Lebanon	6	3	7
Albania	22	21	12	Lebanon	6	3	7
Algeria	7	3	5	Moldova	16	22	10
Armenia	2	1	2	Montenegro	84	58	32
Azerbaijan	14	12	9	Morocco	3	7	1
Belarus	1	6	5	Palestine**	2	-	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22	10	23	Serbia	57	44	36
Croatia	14	18	9	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	39	47	32
Egypt	4	15	3	Tunisia	5	5	2
Georgia	21	6	6	Turkey	23	44	38
Israel	3	6	12	Ukraine	52	28	30
Jordan	6	12	2	Multicountry	-	-	100
Kosovo*	49	38	12	Total	452	406	389
	■ Expert missions	■ Study visits	■ Workshops				

- 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

Citizens Ask

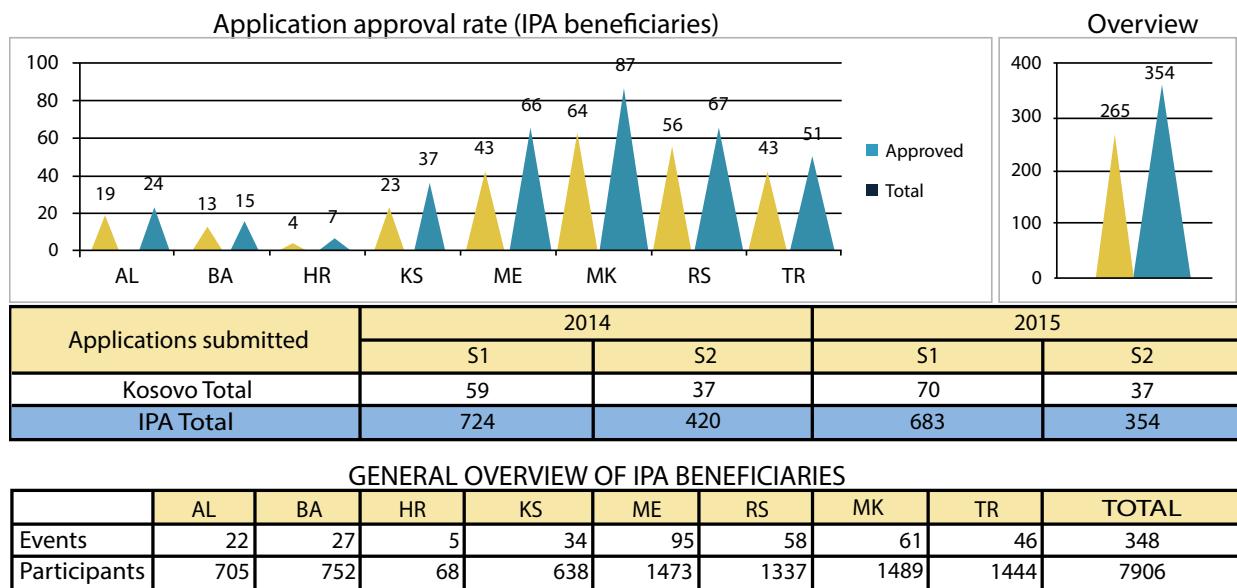


Vedat Vllasaliu, freelance journalist in Kosovo

Are journalists allowed to attend TAIEX events?

Yes, journalists and other stakeholders, be that from the business sector or NGOs, can participate in events in Kosovo, such as workshops; however, study visits are limited to three representatives, generally from government (central and local) institutions.

Kosovo & TAIEX in Numbers



Citizens Ask

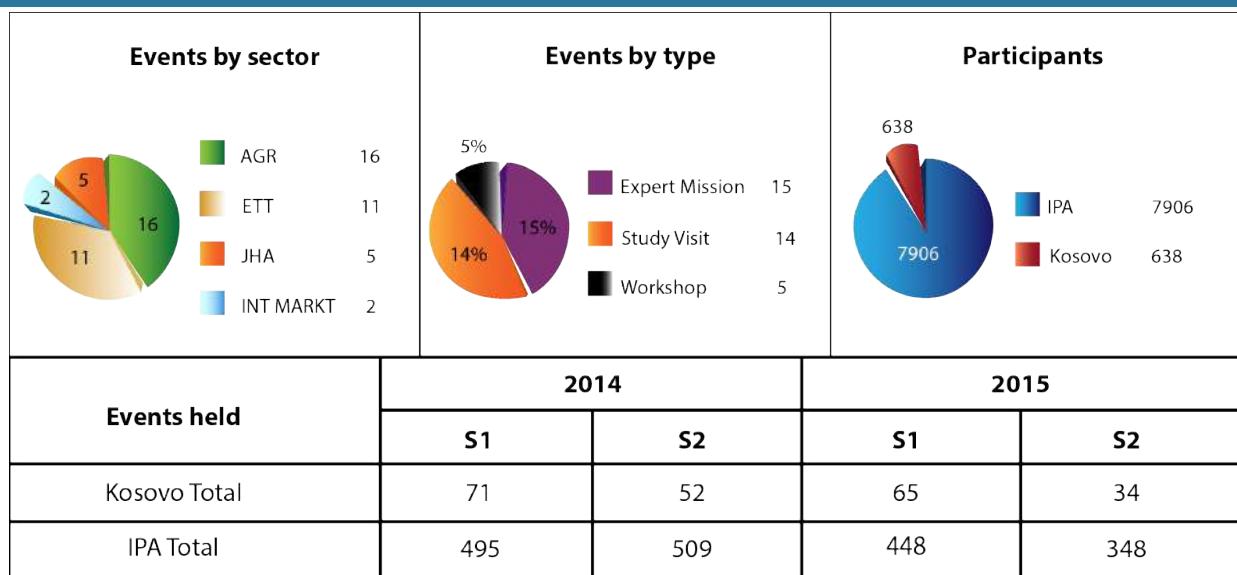


**Besa Rexhepi, administration officer,
Municipality of Lipjan**

What is the process for institutions to submit a TAIEX application?

1. Identify an issue related to the EU acquis in one of the priority areas.
2. Download the TAIEX application form.
3. Develop a well thought out application, requesting technical support in the form of a study visit, expert mission or workshop.
4. Submit the form through the online system.
5. Await response from the EC and EU Office in Kosovo.

At the heart of TAIEX is an ever-expanding database of highly qualified experts. On average, around five thousand (5,000) EU member States experts are mobilized by TAIEX every year, reaching over 30 thousand public officials from beneficiary countries.



III.

What is Twinning?

Twinning is an EU instrument for institutional cooperation between public administrations of EU Member States and of beneficiary or partner countries to develop capacities, focused on peer to peer interactions. By launching Twinning projects, the EU supports countries with prospects of EU membership in approximating local laws and practices to EU legislation and EU standards. For more information refer to the [European Commission's Enlargement website](#).

These projects support Kosovo's institutions to acquire the necessary skills and experience to adopt, implement and enforce EU legislation by learning from the systems and expertise of member states. Following a call for proposals to member state institutions to address specific challenges faced by the beneficiary country, projects are awarded jointly to partner administrations, for instance between the Parliament of Kosovo and the Parliament of Hungary.

Currently, the Hungarian Parliament is supporting the development of Kosovo's parliamentary institutions through the Twinning project, Further Support to the Kosovo Assembly, which builds on the results of two previous Twinning projects. The project aims to further develop parliamentary capacity and independence, with special attention to Parliamentary involvement in the SAA. The project launched in March 2016 and is expected to continue until February 2018. As of September 2016, the project brought more than 50 experts from Hungary and seven other parliaments of EU member states as well as from the European Parliament.

Twinning is a shared commitment, not a one-way TA instrument, and is often the most suitable approach to implementing the standards and best practices associated with the acquis. It allows member states to share practices developed within the EU and to ensure fruitful and long-

Citizens Ask



**Fatmir Goliqi, officer for return & reintegration,
Municipality of Lipjan**

I've heard of the Twinning instrument before, but I have never attended a formal presentation explaining what Twinning is in reality?

Twinning projects are another TA tool, which provide a way for the public administrations and semi-public organisations in candidate and potential candidate countries to work with their counterparts from one or more EU Member States to target a specific issue relating to EU reforms required for accession.

lasting relationships between administrations of current and prospective EU countries.

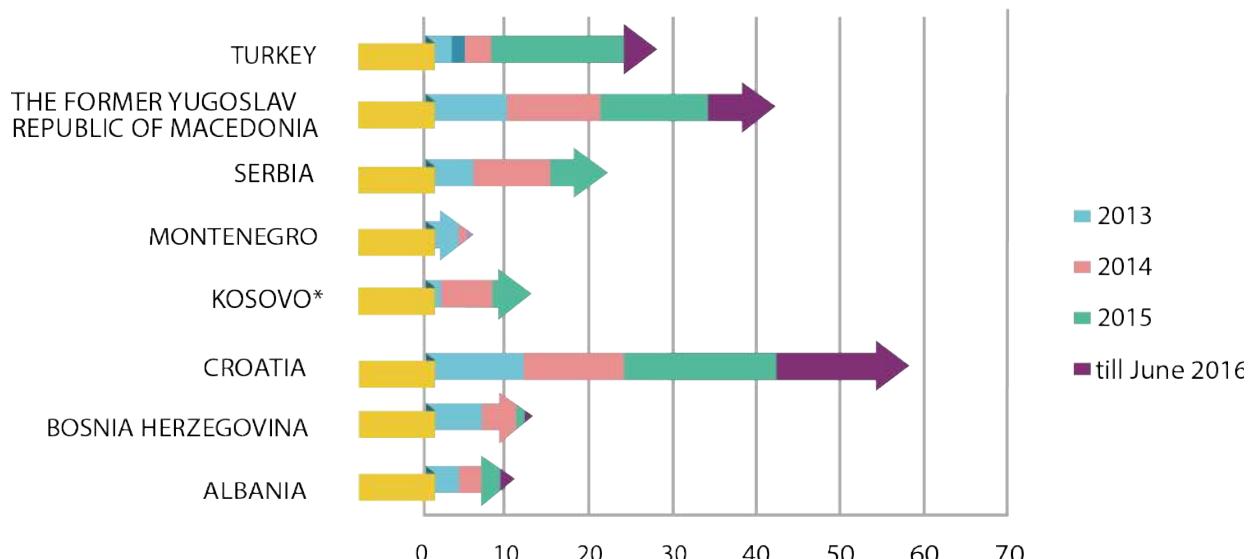
As part of IPA, Twinning aims to grant assistance for the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation, or the *acquis*, enhancing the public administration of the beneficiary country during the accession process, ensuring positive development in the region.

The most common Twinning projects last for 24 months, but short-term projects, known as Twinning Light, can last up to six months. Usually many offers are submitted for each project and the best among them is chosen. Projects can be implemented by more than one member state, which is known as a Twinning Consortium, where old and new member states are especially encouraged to work together to bring different areas of expertise to the project.

Participating in twinning projects brings benefits to all parties such as:

- ➔ Twinning partners are able to share their experiences and understanding on a level playing field between, often civil servant to civil servant, rather than from a technical expert;
- ➔ Twinning partners are able to export their best public administration practices;
- ➔ Twinning project leaders gain valuable project management experience;
- ➔ In Twinning Consortiums, member states also learn more about one another in addition to the candidate or the potential candidate country;
- ➔ Structured long-term working relationships and professional networks are formed, changing attitudes and stereotypes among countries;
- ➔ Training sessions support professional development of all countries involved;
- ➔ Changes are seen in the beneficiary country's organisational mechanisms, leadership styles are enhanced, and communication and coordination become more efficient; and,
- ➔ Approximation with current EU legislation is achieved with technical support, necessary for fulfilling SAA obligations and improving access to European markets.

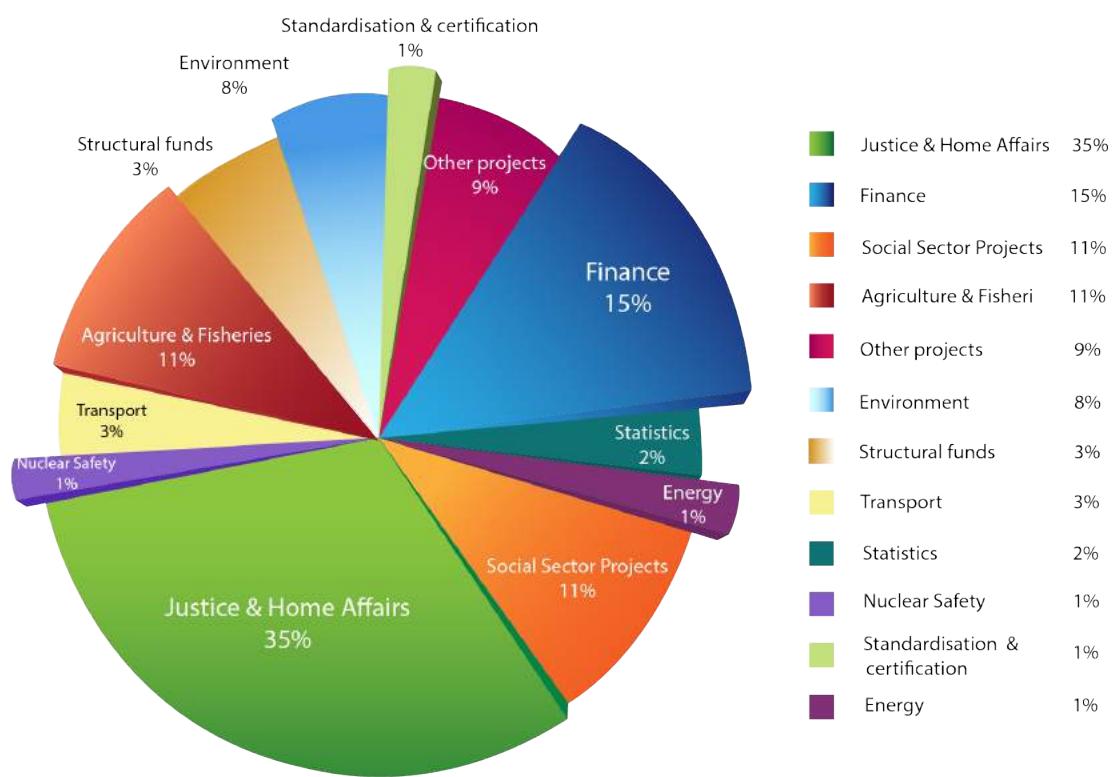
Twinning fiches Circulated in the IPA region from 2013 until June 2016



Twinning in Kosovo

The number of Twinning projects, reported by MEI, implemented in Kosovo since its inception shows that Twinning has a brilliant future in Kosovo, with many possibilities to come as Kosovo continues down its European path.

The TAIEX and Twinning Activity Report 2015, shows the Twinning calls for proposals per country in 2015, with four Twinning calls for proposals launched for Kosovo.



Twinning calls for proposals per country in 2015

	Albaria	2		Georgia	2		Marocco	2
	Algeria	5		Israel	1		Serbia	7
	Armenia	0		Jordan	0		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	12
	Azerbejan	8		Kosovo*	4		Tunisia	12
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1		Lebanon	0		Turkey	13
	Croatia	18		Moldova	1		Ukraine	8
	Egypt	0		Montenegro	0	Total		97

Key features of Twinning projects implemented in Kosovo:

Projects are built around jointly agreed EU policy objectives

Project objectives for Kosovo are derived from the European Commission programming priorities. Meanwhile, Twinning partners agree in advance on a detailed work plan to meet an objective related to priority areas of the acquis, with input from the European Commission Country Reports and monitoring exercises with input in all phases. To ensure smooth collaboration, Kosovo's administration works closely with the EU to develop a specific and targeted Twinning fiche in the context of general policy orientations, with a specific, tangible operational result.

Kosovo preserves ownership of project

Kosovo has the right to choose the Member State partner it considers appropriate to jointly implement its Twinning project. Further, the success of a Twinning project relies on the full willpower of Kosovo to carry out reforms, as Kosovo is in the driver's seat throughout.

Moreover, Kosovo must commit to full political support for the project from the start, understanding that this might entail far-reaching reforms, requiring practical commitment of human and financial resources. This required commitment places the ownership, and potential for impact of the Twinning project, firmly with Kosovo's institutions.

Twinning projects focus on concrete operational results related to the adoption of the EU acquis

All project partners commit themselves to work towards a commonly agreed result during the project's duration, related to a priority area of the acquis. Progress towards this result is measured by clear benchmarks continuously monitored through interim reports. Moreover, the beneficiary institution in Kosovo ensures that the necessary pre-conditions for success are met, permitting close monitoring of progress towards the final result.

Projects involve a peer-to-peer exchange of hands on public sector expertise and experience

Twinning assistance involves an exchange of know-how between civil servants, peer to peer. All experts are experienced practitioners from member state administrations, as there are few, if any, private sector advisers who can give Kosovo the advice and assistance required in technical areas, such as border management and more.

Projects are a genuine partnership fostering close cooperation

Lasting up to two years and with the possibility of targeted follow-up, Twinning provides technical and administrative assistance over a significant period of time. This supports the deep connections between Kosovo and EU Member States, sharing public administration best practices on a daily basis.

IV.

Twinning & TAIEX Success Stories in Kosovo

Agriculture and Food Safety



Agricultural production is a large source of income across Kosovo. Furthermore, one of the major components of European Integration is agriculture, namely through the Common Agriculture Policy, CAP, which seeks to ensure food security for all European citizens.

In the context of Kosovo, the implementation of CAP ensures the production of high quality food at competitive prices, by supporting farmers, promoting rural development, improving agricultural productivity and the conditions for Kosovars living in rural areas. These priorities, in return, increase food production, expands the market in which farmers sell their products without tax, protects livestock, the environment and natural resources, as well as improving agricultural tourism.

As per the 2014 EU funded MEI report, *The EU & Kosovo: Overview of Key European Integration Policies*, the EU has provided around 100 million EUR in financial support to the agricultural sector in Kosovo since 2000. Funding in this area will continue to grow with the objective of ultimately increasing local consumption and exports so that food products from Kosovo satisfy health and food safety requirements of the EU. IPA II will further contribute to the competitiveness of Kosovo's agriculture and food production, to raise food safety standards of local products and to improve the living standards of Kosovo's rural population.

Besides financial assistance, the EU helps potential candidates, such as Kosovo, with support in sector reform, to increase productivity and export potential with instruments such as Twinning and TAIEX. The development of mechanisms and institutions with capacity for administering trade policy and processing farm support payments, for instance, are major priorities for agricultural assistance in Kosovo.

According to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014 – 2020: *Indicative Strategy Paper for Kosovo*, the Agriculture and Rural Development Program (ARDP) 2014 – 2020 was planned with support from an EU Twinning project and a Danish technical assistance project. The TAIEX instrumental so provides support to agricultural policy, food safety, veterinary, and phytosanitary sectors.

Twinning

Meeting EU standards on Food Safety and Veterinary Service

A 2 million EUR EU funded project KS 07 IB AG 01, was the first twinning project for Kosovo which enhanced the commercial and export potential of the agricultural and agribusiness sectors by improving controls on animal health, food safety and quality, in line with EU standards and technical requirements. The project was implemented by the German Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, the Lower Saxony Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (LAVES) and the State Veterinary and Food Service of the Republic of Lithuania, whereas the beneficiary administration was the Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA), Veterinary, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Inspection Services.

The project brought the previously fragmented food control institutions under one umbrella and made regulations more coherent and efficient, while it will also help increase rural employment; reduce the risk of food borne diseases and improve the animal health control system.

Twinning

Support to Kosovo Food and Veterinary Laboratory

The Twinning project, Support to Kosovo Food and Veterinary Laboratory, began in February 2016, and is led by the President of the LAVES, Prof. Dr. Eberhard Haunhorst, with a budget of 700,000 EUR. During the 24 month project, Dr. Erhard Zittlau, from the Ministry of Rural Areas and Consumer Protection of the Land of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany, will be stationed on site as a Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA).

With bilateral trade at 164 million EUR in 2014, Germany is Kosovo's most important trading partner within the EU. As Kosovo seeks to increase exports it must keep in mind the closed system of regulations and controls throughout all stages of food production, processing and trade that guarantees food safety in the EU, one key component of this project. As such, the project will aim at improving the Kosovo Food and Veterinary Laboratory (KfVL), laboratory, increasing the quality of analysis and expanding the testing spectrum so that the chemical-analysis tests match EU standards in terms of scope and quality.

With project implementation led by the LAVES, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Federal Office for Consumer Protection (BVL), approximately 25 scientists from the partner institutions in Germany will be in Kosovo as short-term experts.

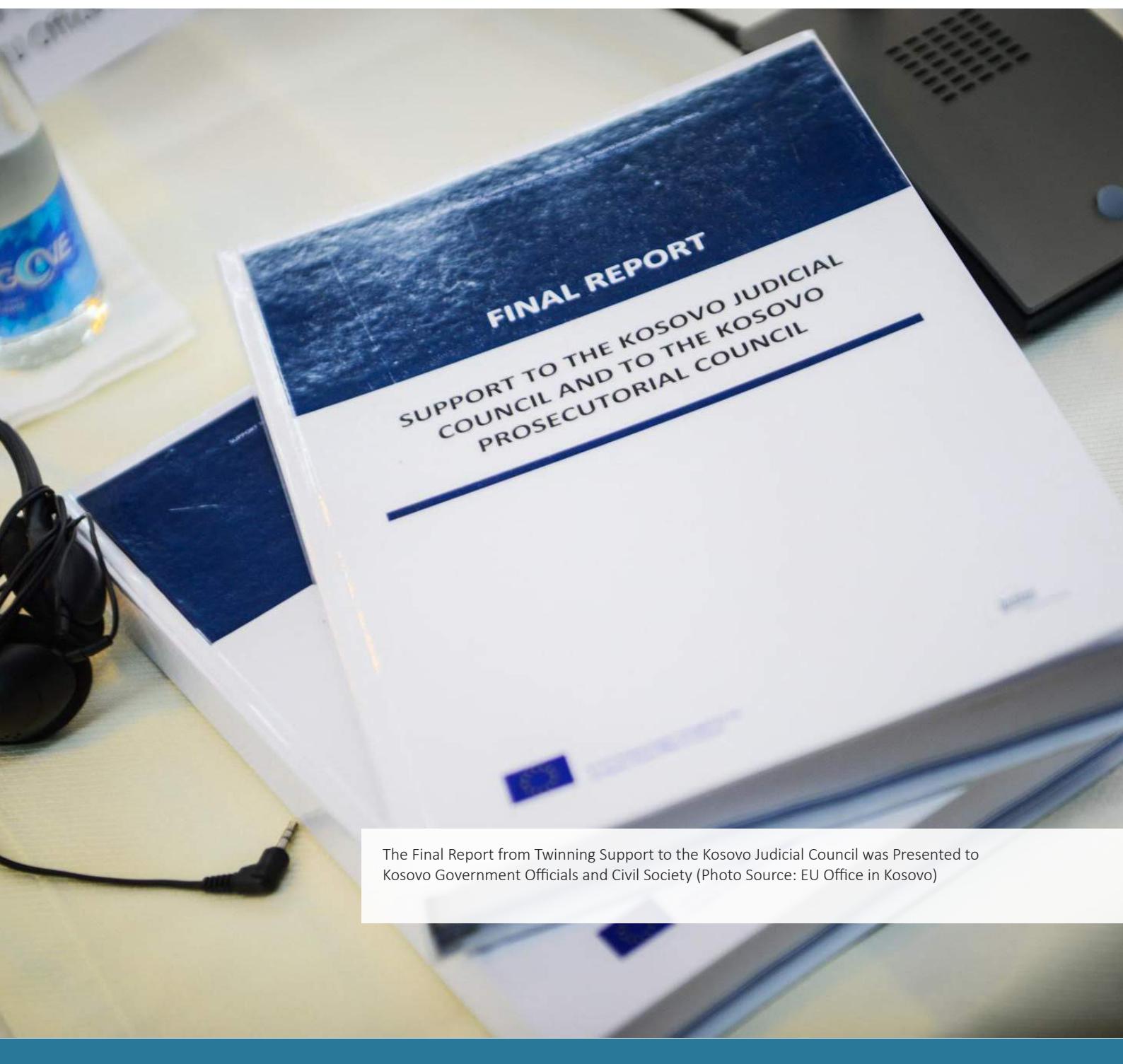


Freedom, Justice and Security



Kosovo's justice sector has undergone continuous reform in recent years, culminating in 2013 with a new structure of courts and prosecution offices with more efficient procedures and more professional and transparent operations making the justice sector more accessible to all. EU TA in the justice sector, such as training for judges, prosecutors, court staff and other technical support to judicial institutions, has offered significant assistance to Kosovo's reforms towards a European future. TAIEX assistance has and will continue to contribute to the model and the priority of strengthening the EU as an area of freedom, security and justice.

Twinning projects have been implemented in Kosovo in the field of public safety, *Improving Education in the Sectors of Public Order and Security in Kosovo*, and the second one, *Support of Further Education in Public Safety in Kosovo*, and the third, *Further Support to Public Safety Education in Kosovo*. Government officials involved consider all three projects successful.



The Final Report from Twinning Support to the Kosovo Judicial Council was Presented to Kosovo Government Officials and Civil Society (Photo Source: EU Office in Kosovo)

Twinning

Further Support to Public Safety Education in Kosovo

The first Twinning project Improving Education in the Sectors of Public Order and Security in Kosovo, made possible the accreditation of a Bachelor's program in Public Safety at the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety. Consequently, the Faculty of Public Safety was opened to offer higher education for officials of the Public Security Agencies.

The general director of the Academy for Public Safety, Ismail Smakiqi, has only the best experience to share for the second Twinning project, "The implementation of this project funded by the EU is very important to achieving the objectives in improving education in the public safety sector", shared Smakiqi. He emphasized that the Twinning projects are excellent opportunities for the Academy and that ever since the war in Kosovo, the Academy remains one of the most important institutions for training public safety officials.

The third project, a 1.4 million EUR Twinning project, Support to Further Education in Public Safety in Kosovo, will last for three years and will be implemented by the member states Finland and Estonia in full partnership with Kosovo's institutions, the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety, KAPS, in Vushtrri. It aims to support further education in the field of public safety.

One of the successful project activities that teaching staff, students and ICT personnel in KAPS spoke highly of was the e-learning seminar, organized on 25th of May 2016. Three experts from Finland's Police University College (Senior Twinning Partner) and Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Junior Twinning Partner) were the lecturers Mr. Marek Link, Mr. Markku Rissanen and Mr. Vaiko Mäe. They introduced e-learning possibilities and benefits as well as best practices in using and integration different e-learning tools, including mobile learning possibilities. The KAPS staff expressed changes in attitudes and perspectives towards e-learning following the presentation and were very happy to have had participated.

Amongst these activities, Mrs. Krista Haak, the Twinning Project Leader, also highlighted a three-day seminar on curricula development that was held at the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety for working group members of all public safety agencies, KAPS staff, and other stakeholders contributing to a sustainable vocational training structure for all public safety agencies. The participants learned about the theory, principles and requirements for curricula development, and the methods of defining the learning outcomes for each particular course, as well as the requirements for validation and implementation of new curricula

Twining

Further Support to legal education reform the Kosovo Assembly

The project's purpose is to strengthen the judiciary by improving the capacities of the Kosovo Judicial Institute, KJI, and achieve advanced training capacities, including further development of interdisciplinary and personal competencies in training programs and commercial, administrative and serious crimes curricula. The project will also as well as enhanced management of the KJI, including enhancing the information management system of the KJI.

The project is being implemented by the German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation and the Center for International Legal Cooperation from the Netherlands. The project began on 1 February 2016, upon arrival of the Resident Technical Advisor, Mr. Klaus Erdmann, and will last for 30 months.

TAIEX

TAIEX Expert Mission on the Implementation of the Human Rights Legal Package at Local Level

Several TAIEX support missions have focused on implementing various legal packages in Kosovo. One TAIEX mission focused on the implementation of the human rights legal package at the local level in April 2016, specifically, developing a coordinated strategy for implementation, identifying potential weaknesses in the current framework, and best practices for information gathering and reporting on the human rights legal package.

The mission engaged all actors involved in the process including the Ministry of Local Government, MLGA, the Office of the Prime Minister, OPM, the Ombudsperson, Mayors of Municipalities, Directorates of Human Rights in the Municipalities, Kosovo's safety and legal Institutions as well as civil society representatives.

Yll Valla, the Head of European Integration Department, MLGA explained that as part of the expert mission, the current legal package was compared with regional legislation, discussing common implementation challenges (particularly central vs local implementation), as well as institutional structures supporting the legal package were reviewed, including a stress test of Kosovo's legal institutions was undertaken to support proper handling of legal violations.

Environment, Energy, Transport, Telecommunications



TAIEX and Twinning support is also offered in the environment, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. Particularly, the EU is increasingly focused on supporting energy savings and the use of renewable energy in Kosovo which has been visible in a number of targeted TA projects since 2008. The EU Office in Kosovo has also worked closely with municipal officials (beginning with 14 pilot municipalities) to develop Municipal Energy Efficiency Plans, with great potential for energy savings due to the high number of public buildings across the country.

The EU Office in Kosovo has organized numerous workshops for central and local government officials, while simultaneously successfully implementing energy efficiency measures in more than 50 primary and secondary schools. These schools are now climate controlled, improving the learning environment for children.

In the coming years, energy will remain high on the European agenda. Based on a proposal from the Commission, the European Council adopted a new EU-level target in October 2014, energy efficiency should be improved by at least 27 % by 2030. Kosovo will also benefit from this target if reforms are implemented, with new opportunities for businesses, affordable energy bills for consumers and a positive impact on the environment.

According to the *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014 – 2020: Indicative Strategy Paper for Kosovo*, future EU funds will be focused on environment-friendly projects. However, Kosovo's present transportation policy and energy production plants favor the least environmentally friendly mode, reducing opportunities for EU support in these areas.

IPA II assistance may also be mobilized to respond to unanticipated European integration priority needs, which are not considered to be within the priority sectors. This may incorporate ad hoc and short-term TA provided under the TAIEX instrument and through twinning projects.

Twinning

Providing information and communication technology for the schools in Kosovo is crucial since textbooks are out of date and do not embrace modern learning cultures. Despite the lack of learning material available in Albanian and Serbian, numerous online resources exist to build the capacity of teachers, and were a key activity of the program.

The project is being implemented by the Finnish educational institution, Omnia, together with partners from Austria, KulturKontakt. Kosovo counterparts in the project include the MEST as well as the University of Pristina and local education authorities. The Finnish Embassy highlights a functional public education system as one of the main factors that helped Finland move from poverty to prosperity. This project aims at enhancing the quality of the education system while supporting the implementation of the new curriculum in Kosovo, while promoting equality and increasing employment in the education sector. It is a three-year project with a budget of 4 million euro.

Mr. Sampo Suihko, Project Leader of the Twinning Project and **Ms. Kirsi Lindroos**, RTA, explained that in addition to the new curriculum, the project included capacity building for educators, implementation of quality assurance measures in education and support for providing adequate school supplies needed for the new curriculum. The EU-funded project has provided laptops and projectors for the schools and the Twinning-project experts have held trainings in ICT for teachers in 134 schools.

One successful beneficiary of this program is the Mihail Grameno Secondary School in the municipality of Fushe Kosovo, where new ICT-device were operationalized.

School Principal, **Mr. Ismet Gashi** considers the project to have been a great support for the education sector and for the implementation of the New Kosovo Curriculum Framework in municipalities. The school he directs has benefited from the program with three lap tops and three projectors and several capacity building trainings for both its teachers and its IT experts, such as **Mr. Besart Hyseni**, who manages school's web page and social media networks, and has since trained other school teachers.

A set of trainings are expected to be implemented for secondary school quality coordinators in Kosovo sometime in January 2017. Mr. Gashi believes that the latter will benefit the school greatly as it will allow these coordinators to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of lessons at the school which he directs.



Internal Market



The establishment of the internal market is one of the EU's major economic successes, providing an economic area in which citizens can move freely and enjoy the right to work or set up a business. It has dismantled barriers and opened doors. EU citizens can live, study, work or retire in whichever EU member state they desire.

In the context of Kosovo, gaining access to internal markets requires work in economic and structural reforms that will lead to increased prosperity and job opportunities for the country's citizens. It will also give a major boost to businesses, large and small, in the EU, which is why Kosovo must enable its entrepreneurs to gain maximum benefit by implementing EU regulations promptly and properly, while developing the necessary infrastructure to support business. Only by achieving an efficient, market based economy with functioning institutions and a strong rule of law will support Kosovo's competitiveness. To support reforms in this area, the EU continues to support TA in this area, particularly through TAIEX and Twinning instruments.

EU Assistance here is mainly focused on social and employment policy, intellectual property rights issues, financial services, competition policy and consumer protection and health policy. SMEs and industry, competition issues, structural funds and free movement of capital, taxation and customs, are also high on the agendas in terms of TA. The Ministry of Trade and Industry, MTI, has made gradual progress in implementing the strategy on free movement of goods that it adopted in February 2013 with EU technical support.

While a series of institution building activities were undertaken during previous IPA programmes, the capacities of line ministries and state agencies remain relatively weak in terms of meeting the demands to receive EU TA support. The capacity for identifying and preparing projects according to EU standards must continue to be improved. Line ministries and other government institutions involved in IPA programming and Twinning and TAIEX activities are facing challenges with the inadequate composition of application material, implementation and monitoring of IPA programmes.



Closing Conference for Twinning Project Supporting the Kosovo Agency of Statistics
(Photo Source: EU Office in Kosovo)

Citizens Ask



Agron Bektashi, director of the Regional Environmental Center in Pristina (REC).

Environment has not been part of the EU priorities in Kosovo, and as such I would like to know what is EU committed to do for us in regards to environment protection?

The EU environmental acquis is larger than any other part of the acquis communautaire and has a considerable impact on the policies of countries aligning national legislation with the EU's. The EU has some of the world's highest environmental standards.

Environment policy helps green the EU economy, protect nature, and safeguard the health and quality of life of people living in the EU. Current EU policy up to 2020 is based on the 7th Environment Action Programme, the dual responsibility of the EU institutions and national governments. The latter will encourage and demand accountability from the Kosovo institutions to comply with environment preservation.

Twinning

Support to the Environment Sector in Kosovo

The Twinning project concentrated on air quality, management and control of water resources, beginning on the 25th of November 2010, continuing until 30th of September 2012 with co-financing from the Government of Kosovo.

Air pollution in Kosovo is for many reasons abundant, especially in concentrated population centres. The fast rate of economic growth often brings new sources of air pollution, having a direct negative impact on human health. In Kosovo's urban areas dominated by traffic and residential heating needs, air pollution is much higher while energy production facilities and factories also emitting a high amount of pollutants dominate industrial areas. Additionally, Kosovo's transport sector is characterized by a large number of old vehicles with out of date emissions standards.

To target these challenges, the project incorporated the EU investment to the development of the air quality monitoring technology, as well as the development of an air quality reporting system, in line with the EU requirements. A major outcome was also to train the air quality experts in Kosovo to use and maintain the air quality monitoring techniques in order to report the findings to the EU.

The consortium was led by the Austrian Environmental Agency, Umweltbundesamt, UBA, in cooperation with local partners in Kosovo – Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, MESP, Environment Protection Agency (KEPA) and Hydro-Meteorological Institute, while the Finnish Meteorological Institute and Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre were junior partners.

According to the KEPA director, Mr. Ilir Morina, this project was very important for the future of Kosovo's environment, while also helping institutions prepare for better utilization of the IPA Environment Development Component by KEPA, responsible for introducing new major policies, reforms and infrastructure development planned for the future.

Twinning

Support to Statistics

In partnership with Statistics Denmark, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, KAS, implemented a 1.5 million EUR project that ran for 24 months until December 2015. The project's goal was to strengthen the statistical system of Kosovo, with a focus on improving national accounts and business statistics based on EU standards, modernizing the internal IT systems and improving internet dissemination.

The project improved the quality of annual national accounts and began the compilation of quarterly accounts, improving structural business statistics and increasing the coverage of short-term statistics. Another key outcome was the improved Statistical Business Register.

TAIEX technical assistance in Geographical Indication legal harmonization

The objective of this TAIEX technical assistance was to assess the differences between the current law in force and EU legislation. Specifically, identifying guidelines to improve and update the related Kosovo legislation, particularly the secondary legislation, to develop a more effective GI protection system that will contribute to rural development in Kosovo.

The Kosovo Government approved a law in 2013 on the Geographical Indications, GI, and Traditional Specialties (Decree-Law No 555). Related legislation in EU (Regulation No 1151/2012) has been in force since January 2016.

The other objective of this TA was to draft the product specification for Sharri Cheese and assess the opportunity for Sharri cheese to receive a GI.

As Mr. VeliHoti, former senior legal officer at the Industrial Property Office at MTI explains, in the minds of most Kosovar people - producers, consumers and administrative bodies - the name Sharri cheese designates a specific product made in a specific place - in the Sharri mountains - although the boundaries of the geographical area remain unclear. What is more, the Sharri cheese is well known outside of Kosovo, in Albania and Montenegro.

The objectives of the project were part of three different successful TAIEX applications, with each successful project being followed-up by all officials applying for TAIEX assistance.

Study Visit on the GI for the Representatives of the Kosovo Stakeholders

The visit was organized in June 2015. Kosovar authorities were introduced to the French GI system and organizational framework as well as to the practical examples of the cooperation between government institutions and farmers. Participants consisted of representatives from the Kosovo Industrial Property Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, MAFRD, and the Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA).

Expert Mission on Drafting the Product Specifications of Sharri Cheese

The mission was organized in June 2016. Two French Experts were assigned to work on the Sharri Cheese product specifications and the initial draft of the administrative instructions on the registration procedure for geographical indications and designations of origin. There were field visits to the farmers, traditional and industrial producers. The mission produced an initial draft of the Sharri Cheese product specifications and the draft of the administrative instruction on the registration procedure for GI and designations of origin.

Workshop on the Establishment of the Association of the Sharri Cheese Producers.

This TAIEX Workshop was held on September 2016. The main purpose of the workshop was to inform the Sharri Cheese producers about the necessity of having a producer's association for the purposes of protecting the Sharri Cheese and conducting collective action.

First Conference on GIs in the Region to be held in October

A regional Conference on GIs is planned to be held in Kosovo on 22nd and 23rd of October 2016. This is the first conference of its kind in the region, providing the opportunity for neighbouring countries to share their experiences so that Kosovo will benefit as well as establish contacts. This will particularly support potential Cross Border Geographical Indications among the Balkan countries.

As Mr. Hoti highlights, "It is immensely important to state that as a result of this TAIEX assistance the Kosovar authorities have established good contacts with the French counterparts." He further explained that a study visit was organized by the Agro-Paris-Tech, Bio-Div-Balkan Project, and the French Embassy supported by the MTI and MAFRD as a result of this cooperation.

Moreover, wines are also a good candidate for GIs. As Mr. Hoti explains specific attention should be kept on the identification of organoleptic specificities of each wine. Information sharing between Sharri cheese producers and wine producers could help create a collective culture on GIs. The beekeeping and sheep rearing industry in the Sharri Mountains are other potential sectors.

The Kosovar authorities will need further assistance for implementing the forthcoming legislation, but even more so, to implement the GI policy in line with EU requirements.

Facts

What is a geographical indication?

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a geographical indication (GI) is a sign that identifies a product as originating from a particular location which gives that product a special quality or reputation or other characteristic. Well-known examples of GIs include Bordeaux (wine), Darjeeling (tea) and Tuscany (olive oil).



EU Officials visit an Upgraded Cheese Factory
(Photo Source: EU Office in Kosovo)



A Kosovar Family presents their Sharri Cheese Product
(Photo Source: Veli Hoti)

Traditionally, Sharri cheese was produced for centuries with sheep's milk and was a seasonal product. The practice of mixing sheep milk with cow milk, during ewes' late-lactation began with some shepherd with a small number of cows. It's important to note that currently, small agricultural holdings with 1-2 cows still represent 58 - 75% of the total of cattle farms in Sharri territory (Source: Agriculture Census 2014, National Statistics of Kosovo).

As markets and consumer preferences were evolving, and in light of Kosovo's post-war reform, the dairy industries developed a Sharri cheese made with cow milk. While the distinction between Sharri cheese from sheep milk and Sharri cheese from cow milk is not immediately noticeable, many agree that Sharri cheese from cow milk has a lighter taste and smell.

V.

Lessons Learned

Particularly, integrating lessons learned from former candidate countries to build Kosovo's administration to properly absorb EU support is of the utmost importance. In doing so, it is necessary to take into consideration that in many cases Kosovo's institutions need support in drafting the appropriate sector strategies to form the framework for effective change initiatives, especially using a sector approach.

TAIEX programs have proved very useful to help regional and local authorities in the Western Balkans identify a way to improve the existing system of allocating public funds in accordance with financial allocations for regional development as practiced by the EU Member States.

To date, TAIEX programs have been much more common than the use of Twinning programs in Kosovo. While institutions value TAIEX' flexibility, the short-term projects are often too



short to address strategic objectives. The Twinning instrument, however, best addresses these strategic objectives, although assistance generally begins 2-3 after the initial idea is developed. Nevertheless, Twinning projects are also very useful tools requiring further development in Kosovo. Their impact is twofold: not only do they translate into direct accomplishments helping to improve the administrative capacities of the beneficiary countries, but most importantly they provide traction for further legislative and institutional developments and fuel deeper bilateral cooperation between countries. As Kosovo's institutions develop, able to serve as a credible partner for EU member states, Twinning requests are expected to rise.

Both TAIEX and Twinning have a vital role to play as Kosovo continues its European path, particularly given the new approach of the European Neighbourhood policy. Hence, TAIEX and Twinning will undoubtedly continue to rank amongst the most essential instruments, available to foster stability, security and prosperity in Kosovo and throughout the enlargement region.



Ramadan Ilazi, Deputy Minister of European Integration

"Twinning and TAIEX are great EU-funded programs for Kosovo to establish contacts and to support mutual exchange between EU Member States. It is important however for Kosovar institutions to retain an awareness of and be responsive to more targeted requests."



Edmond Rexhepi, Director for urban planning and environment protections in the Municipality of Lipjan

"I have found TAIEX programs to be very useful for the Kosovo Institutions. I myself have been part of the Study Tour on protection and management of water resources in 2013, 24 up to 26th of April. Although it was a short three day study tour, the practical examples that were shared by highly qualified experts from all around provided us with knowhow and a clear picture of how management and protection of water resources ought to be implemented under EU standards."



Sadije Jashari, Officer for European Integration (EI) at the Municipality of South Mitrovica

"I am very thankful to TAIEX for giving me and my European integration officer colleagues the opportunities to learn from the EU chosen experts. I have benefited from the TAIEX program in the year of 2013, 16 - 18 of October in a seminar for the Employment policies and the fight against youth unemployment in the west Balkans, organized in Brussels. I had a great cooperation with Ms. Nurtene Demiri from the Office of EU in Kosovo in regards to this activity."

Participants in the seminar were officials from neighbouring countries, such as Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The networking throughout and following the seminar was very useful for me, as it allowed me to get a lot of information on how other EU candidate countries have dealt with the implementation of the employment policies for youth. The seminar also incorporated a visit to the European Parliament and the Regional Committee, which was very welcomed by other participants and me."



Nuriye Fazliu, Officer for European Integration (EI) and Legal officer at the Municipality of Fushe Kosove

"I found TAEIX programs to be very useful, especially because of the exchange it provides with country representatives who have already gone through the same steps of pre-accession process before. In the TAIEX/ LAF Seminar on local dimension of EU Regional Policy I took part in 2004, several of our peers from regional countries presented on the state of EU affairs in their countries, which presentations followed by further discussions on the future of EU. Although still behind on its pre-accession process towards EU, in comparison to other countries at the seminar, Kosovo also presented its current state of affairs and discussed the challenges it faces as well as potential ways to tackle them.

I would reiterate again how beneficial the lessons learned from other regional countries on redistribution and decentralization of competences in the field of regional development at this seminar "



Florim Canolli, Director at the Department of Development Assistance within the Ministry of European Integration

"Kosovo institutions are using the TAIEX instrument every time more and more. Nevertheless, the sectors that are worth noting with the most applications are: agriculture and rural development, energy, transport and telecommunication, rule of law and internal affairs and internal markets. As per the TAIEX activity report 2013, a successful project that is worth mentioning is "Advanced Wireless Internet Access".



Ajshe Xhemiali Bërvëniku, Officer for European Integration (EI) at the Municipality of Pristina

"I have been involved in TAIEX programs since 2012, and I have benefited from the program twice already. The first time I took part in a study visit in Brussels organized by TAIEX on 12 - 12 march 2012 for the EU Regional Policy and Efficient Use of Structural Funds, 12-14 march 2012, which was very useful considering that all the EU funds for which the municipalities apply are interrelated with the office of EI. The second TAIEX program was another visit to Brussels on 23-25 April in 2014 for Employment Policies, with two other colleagues of mine from other municipalities, Jeton Abazaj - Director for Budget and Finance in the Municipality of Peja, and another officer for information in the Municipality of Klina.

Today, we have the pleasure of transferring the same knowledge and best practices in terms of fight against youth unemployment to other colleagues locally. Working with the TAIEX team has always been a professionally rewarding experience."



Mimoza Karameta, Officer for European Integration (EI) at the Municipality of Lipjan

"I believe that the importance of both TAIEX and Twinning is great on Kosovo's path towards European Integration. TAIEX projects in particular are about a genuine and fruitful peer to peer exchange between EU and beneficiaries experts. In May of 2014 I took part in the TAIEX/ LAF Seminar on local dimension of EU Regional Policy.

In May of 2014 I took part in the TAIEX/ LAF Seminar on local dimension of EU Regional Policy. The aim of this study tour was to present the EU legislation on regional development and cohesion policies to local and regional authorities coming from the Western Balkans. The main objective of the meeting was to obtain a clear picture of EU best practice on redistribution and decentralization in the field of regional development and territorial cohesion.

Twinning, is also a very good instrument for Kosovo, and although it is a relatively new concept for us and far more demanding than the technical assistance in terms of beneficiary input, the results often prove that the decision to start using the twinning instrument is the right one."



Shaban Gërxhaliu, Procurement Manager in Basic Court Pristina

"I have benefited professionally from TAIEX programs in procurement in the past, and was extremely grateful to have been part of the program in the year of 2012. My one take away would be that in the case of TAIEX study visits or seminars abroad with more than one participant from Kosovo, meetings prior to the program themselves ought to be made mandatory to assure coordination between participants as well as to increase prospects of participants benefiting fully from the program."

VI.

Useful Links

SAA for Everyone: Your Guide to Understanding Kosovo's SAA with the EU, published in May 2016: <http://euicc-ks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SAA-Final-Draft-ENG-Per-print.pdf>.

Top Ten European Chances of Kosovo, published in July 2013: http://euicc-ks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/20140117_top_ten_european_chances_of_kosovo_en.pdf

For more information on TAIEX refer to the European Commission's Enlargement website: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/tenders/taiex/index_en.htm

For more information on Twinning refer to the European Commission's Enlargement website: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm.

Questions about Europe? Get in touch with Europe Direct: http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm

Youth portal: <http://europa.eu/youth/index.cfm>

EU Bookshop: <http://bookshop.europa.eu>

Publications of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/eac_en.html

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