

INFORMATION BULLETIN

BUREAUCRAT



CIB PROGRAMME : on the Crossroads of European Integration and Domestic Reforms



Declaring European integration as a national policy priority in 1998, the government of Ukraine, primarily, considered it as a component of the national foreign policy. However, the further Ukraine has been following this priority, the more obvious it becomes that this issue directly relates to almost every aspect of the domestic policy. The requirements to be met for creation of a free trade area with the European Union, for introduction of a visa-free regime with EU member states, mean not only significant changes to the national legislation of Ukraine in sectoral issues, but also the change in the principles of the entire state system operation.

For instance, let's say, following EU requirements Ukraine must abandon the most portion of the national quality standards (GOST and DSTU system) being survivals of the Soviet times, and at the same time the component of Ukrainian mentality.

The Comprehensive Institution Building Programme is a dramatic example how the European integration issues turns into the domestic policy of Ukraine.

Comprehensive Institution Building Programme (CIB) is a component of the European Union's Eastern Partnership initiative to provide institutional capacity building of key governmental bodies towards creation of prerequisites for implementation of the future EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and creation of deep free trade area.

Pursuant to the general concept, the Eastern Partnership should take into account, first, specifics of the new EU's Eastern neighbours – Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – second, bear in mind Eurointegration aspirations of the countries. The main goal of Eastern Partnership initiative is to support the efforts aimed at accelerating political association and further economic integration of the European Union and candidate states concerned.

In turn, the CIB programme being a component of Eastern Partnership initiative is focused on reforming and strengthening capacity of governmental agencies, which are supposed to implement provisions of the future association agreements including free trade area agreement.

According to the SIGMA evaluation conducted in 2006, the mechanism of public administration as it is in Ukraine is burdened with a large number of problems.

In particular, low professionalism of civil servants, insufficiently clearly defined roles and responsibilities of ministries and other central executive authorities, overlapping and contradictory legislative norms, strong trend to take ad hoc decisions, numerous policy development centres and no coordination, etc.

COVER STORY:

EUROPEAN
ORIENTATIONS
ARE CLOSE BY: CIB,
TWINNING, TAEX



Marcus Cornaro, Neighbourhood Policy Director in the European Commission in his interview to Dzerkalo Tyzhnia weekly mentioned:

"...We would like to link support to the administrative reform in Ukraine with the CIB programme. This programme is more focused on vertical spheres – migration policy, food safety and government aid. However, I believe that the CIB would enable us maximize focus of our resources on important areas and it dramatically demonstrates the connection of those spheres to administrative reform. So, I'd like to say that the Programme is not a decorative one. Today we approach the administrative reform in a very serious manner. And our intentions are firm"

The SIGMA experts emphasized the necessity of administrative reform in Ukraine, however, they mention that the strategy of accelerated introduction of progressive legal norms is not always effective.

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Project Manager: Serhiy Kucheruk

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The risks inherent in this approach concern not so much the inefficiency of a specific instrument, but rather undermining of the rule of law principle itself (when legislation is adopted, but it does not work).

The experts propose to focus on individual governmental bodies, where relevant opportunities emerge and gradually launch progressive standards. This is the logic that the Comprehensive Institutional Building Programme will follow.

CIB Programme Practical Dimension

A constituent document under the CIB programme in Ukraine shall be Memorandum of Understanding between the government of Ukraine and the European Commission on the Framework Document of the Comprehensive Institution Building Programme approved by order No. 1653 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 25 August 2010.

The next step shall be development of institutional reform plans by every defined direction to be agreed with national development strategies of relevant sectors and general logic of administrative reform in the country. Every institutional reform plan will define objectives, actions and resources for achieving the objectives.

The European Union provides 43.37 million euro under the CIB programme for implementation of institutional reform plans. At the same time, Ukraine undertakes to co-fund 20% of all investment components. Moreover, CIB Programme is open for other donors; in particular, Poland, Sweden, Latvia and Hungary expressed their interest in cooperating within the CIB framework.

Institutional reform plans may be implemented via all accessible for Ukraine mechanisms, in particular, expert assistance via Twinning, TAIEX instruments, technical assistance projects, training programmes, civil servants training in the EU member states, supplies of specialized equipment.

According to the CIB Concept, Ukraine has chosen three vertical spheres which are most important for European integration – food safety, migration and government aid.

Besides the above general problems of the public administration system, all the sectors in Ukraine suffer other problems, in particular, vague separation of powers between responsible governmental agencies, lack of general strategic framework, poor institutional capacity, etc. So, the CIB programme in Ukraine will reform the public administration system in these sectors.

The most substantial expected outcome of the institutional reform plans shall be an optimized structure of governmental authorities in the relevant subsystems, adequate legislative framework consistent with the EU standards in the selected areas to enable the Ukrainian public administration system approximation to the European model and facilitate achievement of the strategic goal – full integration of Ukraine with the European Union. ★



FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM IN UKRAINE

Human Health versus Business Profit

Food safety and maintenance of the nation's health, respectively, are among the most important priorities in any country. Ukraine is not an exception in this context. The government places strong emphasis on the above issues: this is proved by the large number of state-owned laboratories and public inspectors (sanitary, veterinary ones, etc.) exceeding similar indicators of any European country

At the same time, quality of governmental policy implementation in the sector is still open to question since the list of food products exported by Ukrainian manufacturers to EU member states remains very limited, and EU's official controlling body in this sphere (Food and Veterinary Office) notes quite a large number of shortcomings in the Ukrainian system, in particular:

- *lack of coordination in activities of public authorities responsible for food safety;*
- *lack of guarantee that the personnel involved in inspections have been trained in line with the EU requirements applicable in relevant areas;*
- *official control conducted by Ukraine's governmental bodies, mostly, is inconsistent with EU requirements;*
- *the inspected plants were inconsistent with the general and specific EU requirements, one of inspected plants (out of two inspected plants) demonstrated inadmissible hygienic conditions of production;*
- *a large number of laboratories is involved in testing, the lack of coordination between them sometimes result in overlapping tests.*

Final Report of Food and Veterinary Office mission carried out in Ukraine between 20 and 29 October 2009 to evaluate beef production control for exporting beef to EU.

The other aspect of government policy in the sector should be kept in mind as well: creation of favourable business environment for development of national manufacturers.

The load on enterprises caused by several controlling bodies not in agreement between each other dramatically impairs effective business development.

Excessive legislative regulation is reflected in an incredibly large number of legislative and regulatory acts regulating sanitary and phytosanitary actions (only major acts total over 100 documents), and this situation does not encourage neither transparency of public authorities operations, nor creation of favourable business environment.

Today, 4 ministries, 3 state committees, 3 state services, 4 state inspections and National Commission for the Codex Alimentarius and National Accreditation Agency of Ukraine are more or less responsible for sanitary/phytosanitary issues. And, all the listed institutions, except of the latter two, have some controlling functions.

Overlapped and scattered functions of the government agencies in the food safety area are among key problems in the sector.

For example, milk production is subject to control by 4 governmental agencies – the Ministry of Agrarian Policy, the State Committee for Veterinary Medicine, the State Sanitary and Epidemiology Service and the State Committee for Consumer Standards, each of them conducting own control and issuing certificates and permits, inspecting, sampling and analyzing the products, etc.

One more problem requiring urgent solution is availability of the functions legalizing deviation from the legislative norms.

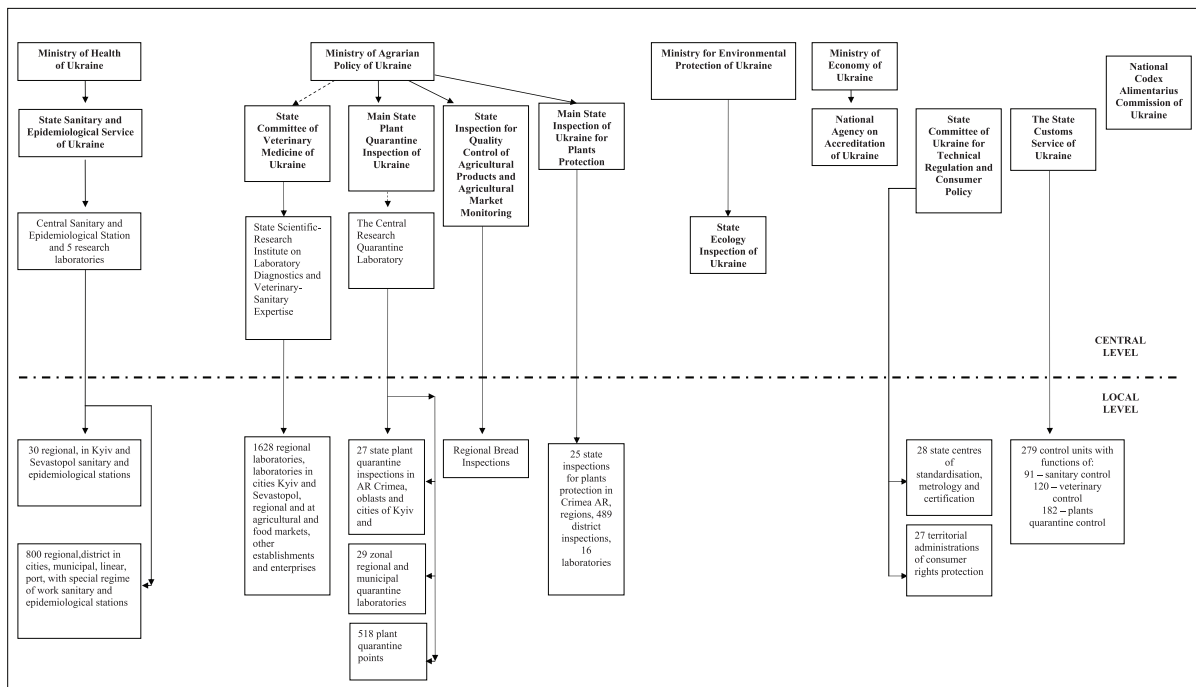
For instance, pursuant to the Law of Ukraine "On Potable Water and Water Supply" dated 10 January 2002 No. 2918-III and Resolution No. 1282 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the Procedure of Fiscal Charges Amounting to 10% of Value of the Potable Water Supplied via Centralized Supply Systems and Deviating from the Standards to Special Funds of Local Budgets" dated 28 September 2001, the State Committee on Consumer Standards "may issue a temporary permit for centralized supply of potable water deviating from the quality standards".

The state also possesses the powers excessively strengthening its influence on business environment

(for instance, according to the orders of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy on formation of sectoral tasting commissions (order No.332 „On the Central Sectoral Commission on Tasting Infant Food, Canned Milk and Juice" dated 14 May 2009, order No. 551 „On Approval of the Regulations and Membership of the Central Tasting Commission in Wine Branch" dated 31 July 2007, order No. 332 „On Central



Public Administration System for Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Spheres in Ukraine



Sectoral Tasting Commission for Quality Evaluation of the Food Manufactured by Ukrainian Union of Member Enterprises of the Union of Food Manufacturing Associations, Organizations and Enterprises "UKRPRODSPILKA" dated 14 May 2009, etc.), the latter is responsible for taking decisions on launching new food productions. Furthermore, European Union practices do not involve mandatory food standardization and certification.

Mandatory food certification has transformed in Ukraine into an additional ineffective controlling mechanism as obsolete standards are in force (GOST, DSTU) and the latter are inconsistent with current international requirements. There are no methods of identification and conformity certification of imported food additives, colouring agents and aromatizers. National certificates are not recognized outside CIS.

Food quality and safety in EU is controlled by manufacturers themselves and assured by quality system organizations such as ISO, HACCP and good production practice standards. Encouraging introduction of these quality systems, which completely regulate production processes, is more effective way of ensuring product quality during production cycle (stages: raw material, production, and packaging).

Western food manufacturers may certify food products on voluntary basis once relevant tests are passed in independent nongovernment laboratories. This kind of certificate is a supplementary evidence of adequate product quality.

Establishing a single body responsible for food safety (or an effective integrated system) should be among priority steps in reforming the existing system.

European Union's experience demonstrates that EU member states some 20 years ago established one of the most effective sectoral public administration systems, and still they continue reforming it so far.

During recent years most EU countries founded national departments for food safety to achieve higher food safety standards and ensure effective control thereof.

Let's say, in Estonia, Veterinary and Food Department with the Ministry of Agrarian Policy is a single public administration body responsible for food safety. In Sweden, Sweden Food Administration is a central governmental body in food industry sector.

There are two food controlling bodies in Germany, namely: Federal Ministry for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture of Germany and Federal Risk Assessment Institute.

At the same time, the Federal Risk Assessment Institute is exclusively scientific organization issuing expert opinions on food safety, consumer health protection based on international scientific evaluation criteria.

So, on the one hand, public governance of the sanitary and phytosanitary system in Ukraine contains obsolete components inherited from the Soviet time, when the state was both a manufacturer and an inspector. The system worked rather effectively in those conditions. On the other hand, new components have emerged in independent Ukraine around the old system but the existing ones have not been materially reformed. These steps generated a resource-intensive, low-efficient in terms of public health protection and hazardous in view of national business development hybrid, and today it is an urgent need to reform it. A new system should strike a happy medium between human health and successful business. ★



OLENA ALEKSANDROVA:

TWINNING IS A STEP TOWARDS SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

During five recent years, Ukraine's governmental bodies have been successively using Twinning as institutional-building tool. Last year, when the first Twinning projects were completed in Ukraine, finally the opportunity emerged to evaluate their outcomes. For the first time, one could get answer to a long-standing question whether the results would justify the hopes of the Twinning projects' initiators, and the most important – whether the civil servants' efforts and labor input at the preparation and implementation stages are justified? Undoubtedly, the lessons learnt and outcomes of each individual project are somewhat specific. However, general and unquestioning fact is that Twinning proved its efficiency in achieving qualitative institutional shifts and changes in the public administration. Today governmental bodies accept and highly appreciate Twinning instrument. This is proved by a constantly growing number of projects in the Twinning Work Plan. The number of Work Plan projects initiated by one and the same beneficiary agency has also been growing (for example, State Aviation Administration, National Accreditation Agency of Ukraine, Headquarters of Interior Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, National Electricity Regulatory Commission of Ukraine, State Statistics Committee of Ukraine etc.). So, upon completion of the first project, a beneficiary initiates the next one thus enabling to ensure translational and continual process of reforming.

One of the bright samples of successful Twinning project implementation is the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine. Preparation of the first Twinning project "Harmonizing the Ukraine's Official Statistics with the EU Statistical Standards through Introducing New Indicators into the Macroeconomic and Structural Business Statistics and Checking the Impartiality of Self-assessment of Performance of the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine" started in 2008 and twelve months later the project was set in motion. The project was implemented in Twinning Light format. In contrast to ordinary Twinning project, Twinning Light envisages, in particular, a short implementation period – 6 months – and no Resident Twinning Advisor, which means that project management responsibility is entirely vested in a beneficiary agency's coordinator. As concern the State Statistics Committee, this is a Twinning Contact Person Ms. Olena Aleksandrova, who will provide us more details on the lessons learnt.

- Ms. Aleksandrova, as we know, the State Statistics Committee has gained vast experience in using the EU assistance, specifically, under the Tacis Program. In 2008, SSCU for the first time initiated a Twinning project. What are the advantages, in your opinion, as compared to other assistance instruments (in particular, classic EU assistance projects). What is your vision as to improving the principles of this tool operation?

- Indeed, the State Statistics Committee, like other executive authorities, to the end of continuous development of institutional capacity and due to insufficient support from the national budget, have been cooperating with European counterparts under international technical assistance projects.



It should be noted that TACIS projects have been no more available in Ukrainian official statistics sector since 2008. The alternative technical assistance instruments such as Twinning, TAIEX, bilateral cooperation and sector development strategy projects already existed then, but there was no clear information on their preparation and implementation mechanisms. TAIEX measures addressed solutions to important, complex, but narrow-focused problems. At the same time, the facts counted in favour of Twinning were as follows: Twinning Programme Administrative Office was in operation in Ukraine, the Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine demonstrated enthusiasm, which inspired us to start following their model and upon the series of training sessions organized by MDCSU, and we had the problems demanding urgent solutions. So, Twinning appeared to be the best option. A special distinct feature of Twinning is that partners (from an EU country and Ukraine) bear equal and collective responsibility, and this facilitates development of international cooperation and partner relationship practices.

Now about improvement of the instrument operation principles. As far as I know, Twinning Manual update is being prepared. My general wish is that Twinning regulation becomes less strict, in particular, financial restrictions. For example, raising threshold percentage of the approved budget redistribution. Fifteen per cent, as the practice demonstrated, are achieved very fast, and preparation of further amendments is an extremely labour-intensive procedure and takes quite long time. Unfortunately, Twinning does not cover visa expenses.



- Did your expectations concerning Twinning instrument prove to be justified? What is your evaluation of the instrument efficiency and what are actual results of the project?

- The project was really effective. Of course, we worked much and intensively, however, we managed to achieve even more results than planned. The user manual has been developed and two big new methodology manuals for macroeconomic statistics have been translated. All of them are available at SSCU's website.

From the very beginning, we were interested in "trying" the new instrument. First, in contrast to Tacis projects, Twinning envisages cooperation with counterparts from member states without any intermediary – nongovernmental organization. Second, the Twinning Manual describes all procedural matters. Tacis lacked that. By the way, the project reporting procedure has been recently simplified, and Twinning falls in the categories covered.

- Is it true that the SCCU's activities currently are recognized by Europe in full? What are the determinants of so big success, to your mind?

- Specifics of the statistics sector are that two activities should be conducted in parallel on continuous basis. The first is – development of the indicators needed by Ukrainian users (for instance, inflation rate), the second is – development of the indicators required by Eurostat from EU member states (for example, harmonized index of consumer prices). The latter activity is demanded by the governmental strategy on harmonizing national standards with the European *acquis communautaire*. At the same time, the national government is interested in getting new indicators in order to monitor efficiency of current government policies.

Despite high work loads (by the way, 96 % of employees with state statistics bodies of Ukraine are women) and ongoing need in advance training, it is worth sometime to stop and evaluate own attainments.

So, in 2006, Ukrainian statistics system was evaluated globally in the scope of Tacis project, and the findings demonstrated that the system is consistent with the European standards by 68 %. Under this year's Twinning projects our counterparts from the Statistics Service of Denmark evaluated impartiality of SSCU self-assessment against the principles and indicators of the European Statistics Code of Practice. As a result, SSCU's performance got high score.

Finally, I would like to remind with pleasure that the State Statistics Committee was among the first executive agencies which completed their relative sections in the draft EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

- At present, most agencies in Ukraine prefer ordinary Twinning projects.

Strictly speaking, SSCU is still the first and single initiator of Twinning Light project. Why did you decide to pioneer and start with a "short-term" project while Twinning Light project implementation, according to its principles, demand at the same time some additional input of beneficiary agency's efforts.

In fact, this is easy to explain. First, in 2008 SSCU was implementing a large-scale project under World Bank's financial and technical assistance. Second, the problems demanding urgent solution arose, but they were too complicated for TAIEX. On the other hand, the problems were not so plentiful to initiate a long-term Twinning project, while Twinning Light budget was quite enough for that purpose. SCCU's top management believe that activities should be carried out, but we may not have any project "beyond control" - where more obligations are undertaken than we can meet. So, a decision was made to prepare a short-term project – Twinning Light. As to our additional efforts, initiating and implementing any project for the first time always demand additional input whatever its budget is.

- Tell us, please, about your experience of organizing and managing the project and who played the key role in the process? In conclusion, could you formulate your main recommendations on Twinning preparation and implementation to new Twinning users.

Twinning is a simple and effective in use instrument because it has been tested for many years in other European countries. Of course, Ukraine will face the time when the European Union stops customer-oriented assistance for Twinning Fiche preparation and then own efforts will have to be put to develop them. So, we should start training to develop Twinning Fiches on our own now. At present, preparation of the second Twinning project is under way in SSCU, the Twinning Fiche, like in the first project were prepared by SSCU engaging assistance from Twinning Programme Administrative Office. It should be noted that the quality of developed Fiche appeared to be rather high. Moreover, significant time for project preparation is saved. Moreover, EU technical assistance projects are supposed to be a test site for training.

As to lessons learned, these are many gained in the course of work. The most important thing, of course, is that the agencies' administration actively supports Twinning project implementers; and implementers keep in mind their final goal.

What can I recommend to new users of this instrument? To read Twinning Manual and other methodological documents and seek assistance of Twinning Programme Administrative Office employees and colleagues from other Twinning project beneficiary agencies.

Thank you very much for the interesting story! ★



UKRAINIAN-POLISH COOPERATION TO OPTIMIZE TWINNING INSTRUMENT

On September 9, 2010, at the initiative of the Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine and the support of the Polish Foreign Ministry "The Practical Issues of Twinning Instrument Application in Poland and Ukraine" workshop was held. This event was aimed at the exchange of experience at the level of Twinning communities in Poland and Ukraine. Representatives of state bodies – beneficiaries of Twinning projects in Ukraine - took part in the event, as well as the Polish experts of the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, who presented their experience and vision of resolving problem issues arising in course of work in the Twinning framework.

Based upon long-standing experience of implementing Twinning projects, Polish colleagues provided information on the most frequent mistakes and risks in the project development and implementation.

Problem: Identifying the topics of the future Twinning project

Solution: the topics must comply with the acquis communautaire, which will enable finding the EU partner country and transfer the European best practices; must satisfy the key strategic documents of the country (Agenda of the Ukraine – EU Association, national strategic documents in the specific sector concerning the project area).

Problem: Determining incorrect project objectives, vague or overly detailed project description

Solution: Carrying out the analysis, which will enable more accurate description of the objective; engaging competent persons to prepare detailed project fiche, or training the staff in a respective area.

Problem: Changing needs result in the fact that activities planned on Twinning project framework get irrelevant and prevent reaching the objectives.

Solution: Flexibility of the proposed actions (however, according to the procedures).

Task: Reaching the mandatory results by Twinning Project and project sustainability

Solution: Reasonable planning of the project, accurate definition of objectives and indicators, monitoring and flexibility of activities, planning the follow ups (upon completion of the project), which will enable ensuring sustainable results of the project.

Task: Ensuring procedures of control for monitoring and support of the project sustainable outputs



Solution: Choosing the right types of activities (a pilot program, "training the trainers", etc.), which will enable supporting the sustainability; developing and maintaining operational monitoring system during and upon completion of the project.

Task: Developing budget at a proper level

Solution: All expense items indicated in the work plan must be reflected in budget sections (the names of expense items in the work plan and budget must be identical); the budget only includes those items, which are eligible for coverage under the Twinning rules and are economically justified; all expenses must be indicated in Euro currency.

The representatives of the Ukrainian beneficiaries, in their turn, presented their experience within Twinning project and specified the key aspects to be focused on to obtain the optimum result. In particular, the importance of proper selection of experts was emphasized, which are supposed to be involved in the project activities, both from the beneficiary's, and from the EU partner's side, the importance of arranging cooperation between partners at an adequate level; the knowledge of languages and corporate culture of both partners, as well as proper allocation of time and creating opportunities to work in the project framework on an ongoing basis, planning project actions with consideration of strategic plan planning in beneficiary agency.

We are pleased to note that the Ukrainian-Polish cooperation in this context has been lasting for several years now and is rather diverse in its nature. This activity is important and creates opportunity to gain new skills and experience, to find a common solution to the problems, since the cooperation in Twinning projects requires daily work and, sometimes, even ingenuity and diplomatic abilities. ★



TAIEX : AN EFFICIENT INSTRUMENT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

In 2006 Ukraine was the first one among TACIS countries to become the beneficiary of foreign assistance of the European Commission – TAIEX .

Being implemented in Ukraine, TAIEX has proven to be an effective and efficient engine for cooperation with the European Union in the institutional development, state reforming, approximation and implementation of the EU standards.

As one of the key tasks of the Commission's officers is to improve the understanding of the legal framework on the topics of monitoring the securities market in the EU member countries, TAIEX is the instrument meeting the needs of exchanging theoretical and practical experience through an expert dialogue relating to reinforcement of legislative acts in this area.

In addition to that, the use of this instrument for the Commission has a considerable effect upon the strengthening of mutual ties with the securities regulators in the EU countries.

Victoria Kozlova, chief specialist of the international relations department, State Commission for Securities and Stock Market

Since 2006 the one could observe the ongoing growth in number of TAIEX activities and the quality of the submitted applications. Ukraine was acknowledged as the leader among the European Neighbourhood Policy regarding the use of this instrument. During 2006 – the first six months of 2010 3625 Ukrainian civil servants took part in 172 TAIEX activities.

A standardized and simplified form of applications considerably affecting the speed of their drafting and submission to the European Commission and contributing to disclosure of some problematic issues, are characteristic of such assistance.

Victoria Kozlova

At the same time, the quality issue remains a problem. Thus, in 2009 about 40% of TAIEX applications from Ukraine were rejected by the European Commission.

In order to obtain a positive reply, at the stage of defining needs in the use of TAIEX instrument the institutions-beneficiaries should always consider the following:

- Specifics, framework and procedure of using TAIEX instrument;
- Compliance of the content of the action with the EU legislation;
- Correspondence between the action topics to the overall state priorities;
- Detailed justification of the expedience of taking TAIEX action, clear specification of the needs;
- There should be no overlapping with Twinning and other technical assistance projects.

Potential beneficiaries of TAIEX must, first of all, familiarize themselves with the legal framework concerning the drafting and implementation of the Plan for engaging external assistance of the European Commission in the TAIEX framework, owing to which the Ukrainian party will have no problems with filling in and submitting applications.

Larysa Sheremetyeva, Head of International Relations Department, Foreign Economic Activities and International Relations Department, Ministry of Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine

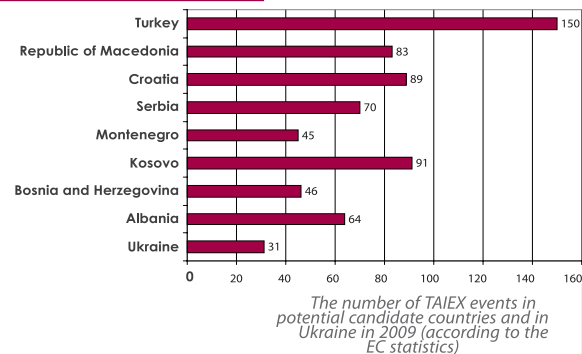
New framework of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, in particular, the Association Agenda, as well as the future Association Agreement, impose a number of obligations on Ukraine. EU may contribute to the fulfilment of those commitments, primarily via external assistance projects, in particular, TAIEX.

TAIEX instrument may become an efficient tool of for implementation of the Ukraine commitments under Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, with the assistance of European party. So, pursuant to clauses 62, 63, 64 of the List of Priorities on the Ukraine-EU Association Agenda for 2010, the State Commission for Securities and Stock Market submitted the propositions regarding respective activities in the framework of TAIEX.

Victoria Kozlova

Despite the leadership of Ukraine among the European Neighbourhood Policy countries in the use of TAIEX, the comparison of numeric indicators in Ukraine and candidate countries shows a considerable potential of using this instrument.

A doubtless leader in the use of TAIEX is Turkey, where 150 events TAIEX in 2009 (to compare: only 31 TAIEX events took place in UKRAINE over the same period).



Opportunities offered by TAIEX are very promising, since civil servants get assistance with interpretation, alignment and implementation of various areas of the EU *acquis communautaire* and related topics; may exchange with information and the best practices in organizing joint activities between the EU member countries and the countries of European Neighborhood Policy.

Larisa Sheremetyeva★

