
All projects are problem-ridden ... so what?

On assessing the performance of Twinning projects in Moldova, between overblown outcomes and contested process.

Paper draft submitted to the CEU Annual Doctoral conference 2015

Stefan Roch

Central European University, 2015

Abstract:

The paper introduces the concept of performance to the study of EU Twinning projects within European Neighbourhood Policy countries, specifically Moldova. Using the organizational literature as a point of departure, it observes the extent to which Twinning performance criteria are based on outcomes or on process. Outcome based criteria are traced through studying the formal framework surrounding Twinning projects and its effect on conceiving and eventually starting projects on the ground. Process based criteria are traced through the study of cooperative and communicative action during Twinning projects and the extent to which the formal framework enables or constraints such processes. The paper comes to the conclusion that Twinning projects mainly follow an outcome based approach, which has adverse effects on their ability to respond to the inevitable problems faced during implementation. As a result, reforms achieved may only superficially link to domestic administrative structures and practices. The paper therefore advocates a more process based approach to Twinning projects, where pre-agreed outcomes are loosened and open to change through the results of cooperative and communicative interaction of project participants on the ground. Thus Twinning projects may become less a mechanism for the transfer and diffusion of EU norms and practices but a development tool that takes its own principles of cooperation and domestic ownership more seriously.