

Twinning Satisfaction Survey (TSS Q3): Findings and Recommendations

02 May 2023

Prepared by Dr Anzhela Stashchak, CCG Director for Projects, and Dr Blanca Torres-Olave, CCG Director of Research

Summary

This report provides an overview of findings from the Twinning Satisfaction Survey (TSS) for Q3.

Overall, survey participants reported high satisfaction with their Twin institution and CCG's management of the Twinning Initiative. The qualitative responses provided a finer-grained insight into the barriers to moving from discussion into implementing activities with their Twin institution. The main obstacles included insufficient resources (including funding and staffing), logistics (notably language barriers) and the dire circumstances faced by Ukrainian staff due to the war. Recommendations for improving Twinning practice fall into three main categories: 1) Technical, that is, changes to day-to-day Twinning management practices; 2) Programmatic, that is, suggestions to incorporate services, types of events, or types of collaboration as part of the Twinning Initiative; and 3) System-wide, or forward-looking projects to strengthen Twinning or rebuild Ukraine after the war and which require significant involvement from external stakeholders to be accomplished.

In the following section, we outline the data collection procedures used in the survey, followed by a presentation of the main findings and recommendations for improving Twinning.

Method

The survey was divided into two main sections. **Section 1** included one five-item question matrix with a Likert scale (disagree, neutral and agree) and two open-ended questions concerning the relationship between the respondent's institution and their Twin institution. Respondents whose institution had more than one Twin were invited to indicate so and to complete an additional set of Section 1 questions for up to two additional Twins.

Section 2 concerned the respondents' experience with the overall management of the Twinning Initiative by Cormack Consultancy Group (CCG). Section 2 included one six-item question matrix with a 4-point Likert scale (Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied and N/A if the participant was not personally involved in one or more stages) where respondents could indicate their level of satisfaction with various areas of the Twinning process. Next, an open-ended question allowed respondents to include additional comments or recommendations on improving Twinning.

This question was followed by a multiple-choice item which asked respondents to indicate the country where their institution is located. The final question was optional and asked respondents to indicate whether they were the primary Twinning contact for their institution at the time of the survey.

The survey was prepared using MS Forms, a web-based form builder in the Microsoft suite of products. This format was elected due to its ease of use (including the ability to be completed on a computer, cell phone, or tablet), ability to collect anonymous submissions, branching logic capabilities, and ability to collect data from respondents that do not have a Microsoft account.

Based on the experience with the first round of the Twinning Progress Report and the Twinning Satisfaction Survey (Q1-Q2), CCG requested the assistance of UUK to encourage UK institutions to participate in the satisfaction survey and stress its importance in sustaining the initiative in the medium and long term. This intervention led to a higher response rate from UK institutions than TSS Q1-Q2. Adjustments to the timing of the survey in relation to the progress report may also have contributed to higher response rates overall. Nonetheless, aiming for a census would yield the most reliability in future surveys.

The survey was available to respondents from 27 February 2023 through 12 April 2023. The invitation and link to the survey were initially shared with all Twinning representatives on 6 March 2023 by email. Also, on March 8, 2023, we posted a link to the satisfaction survey in our Telegram channel "Twinning Ukraine". A total of 183 follow-up emails were sent to encourage Twinning representatives to participate.

Response rate and final sample

A total of 41 responses were received as of 12 April 2023, out of an estimated 106 total Twinned institutions at the time the survey was sent.

The response rate is calculated as the total number of responding individuals divided by the total number of eligible individuals. Twinning representatives were eligible to participate if their institution had registered for Twinning as of 6 March 2023.

- Of those who completed the survey, a total of 21 respondents (51%) were from Ukraine, 19 were from the UK (46%), and one was from Ireland.
- For the total sample, 98% of respondents indicated being the primary Twinning contact for their institution.
- Three of the respondents entered responses related to a second Twin. Unless otherwise noted, this report focuses on the relationship between a respondent's institution and Twin 1.

Findings

In the following sections, we present the findings of the survey. Section 1 details the findings related to respondents' perception of the relationship and the pace of the discussions with their corresponding Twin. Section 2 outlines the findings related to respondents' level of satisfaction with CCG's management of the Twinning Initiative.

Perception of Twin-Twin Relationship and Pace of Discussions

An essential aim of the survey was to understand how Twinning institutional representatives perceive their Twin institution(s)¹ and how the relationship was progressing at the time of the survey. Respondents were asked to use a 3-point Likert scale (Agree, Neutral, Disagree) to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements about their Twin institution:

- Twin institution is a good match for my institution in terms of size.
- Twin institution is a good match in terms of subject areas.
- Twin institution is responsive to communication.
- Discussions with Twin institution are progressing at a reasonable pace.
- There is a clear path from discussions with the Twin institution to implementing activities.

Overall, the results suggest a high level of satisfaction with their Twins. Most respondents (88%) agreed that their Twin was responsive and that there was a good fit between the institutions in terms of institutional size (80%) and subject areas (95%). Likewise, most respondents felt that the discussions were progressing reasonably: 88% agreed with the prompt, while 12% expressed a neutral stance. Similarly, 85% of respondents agreed that there was a clear progression from discussion to implementation of Twinning activities, and the remaining 15% entered a "Neutral" response.

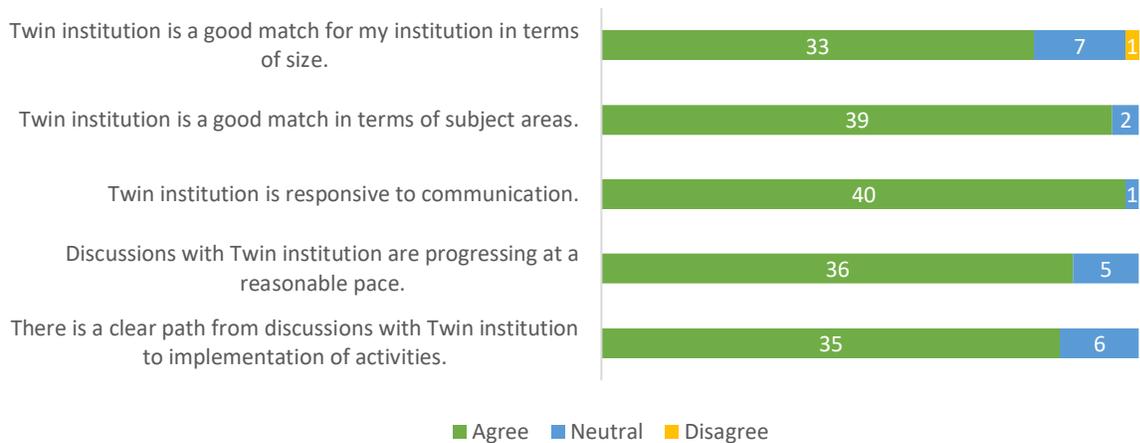
Respondents were somewhat more conservative when asked whether their Twin was well-matched in size. One respondent disagreed with the statement, and 17% submitted a neutral response. This is in contrast to the findings of the Q1-Q2 report, in which 85% of respondents were satisfied with the match in terms of institutional size.

¹ Three respondents indicated that their institution had a second Twin. All reported being satisfied with the Twin institution and the Twinning process; one of these respondents indicated that as the relationships evolve they find it easier to communicate with their Twin directly. The respondent also indicated that having more structure in the CCG-facilitated meetings would be helpful, such as in providing a list of attendees prior to the meeting.

This finding could suggest that, as the initiative grows, finding institutions that match well across all dimensions becomes more challenging.

Figure 1 shows the summary of responses to the survey prompts.

Figure 1: Respondents' perception of their relationship with the Twin institution (Twin 1)



Barriers to Twinning

The qualitative findings provide insight into the perceived barriers to moving from discussion to implementation of Twinning activities. An open-ended prompt invited participants to describe the main obstacles, if any, to move from discussion to implementing activities with their Twin institution. For ease of reading, the qualitative responses were recoded into major themes. Table 1 shows these themes and their distribution in the survey responses.

Table 1: Perceived barriers to Twinning implementation, by major themes

Theme	Distribution
Building internal engagement from the academic community	2%
Bureaucratic barriers (Ex. Visa restrictions; disconnect between middle and upper management in decision-making)	5%
Logistics (Ex. Time, distance, language and communication)	22%
N/A	7%
No perceived obstacles	20%
Resources (Ex. Funding, staff capacity)	22%
Twin partner unresponsiveness	2%
The volatile war environment (Ex. partial or total loss of infrastructure; severe disruptions to power supply; insufficient staffing; the challenges of operating an institution in exile)	20%

As Table 1 shows, 20% of respondents reported no perceived barriers to moving from discussion into implementing activities with their Twinning institutions; 7% did not respond to this question. By comparison, in the Q1-Q2 Satisfaction survey, 27% of respondents reported no perceived obstacles to Twinning implementation.

For TSS Q3, the top barriers to Twinning implementation were logistics (22%), resources and funding (22%) and the significant challenges caused by the war (20%). These categories were often intertwined in practice, as explained below.

Resources

A significant development in this round of the TSS was the number of respondents pointing to a lack of resources as a major barrier to implementing Twinning activities. Although this theme emerged in TSS Q1-Q2, in this survey round it was evident that some International Partners (IPs) were struggling to provide adequate support for their Ukrainian Twin due to a

lack of resources, including funding and staff time. Some respondents cited a mismatch between the needs of the Ukrainian Twin and their ability to meet those needs.

Moreover, there were significant differences in how respondents from different countries perceived these challenges, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Perceived obstacles to Twinning discussions and activity implementation, by country

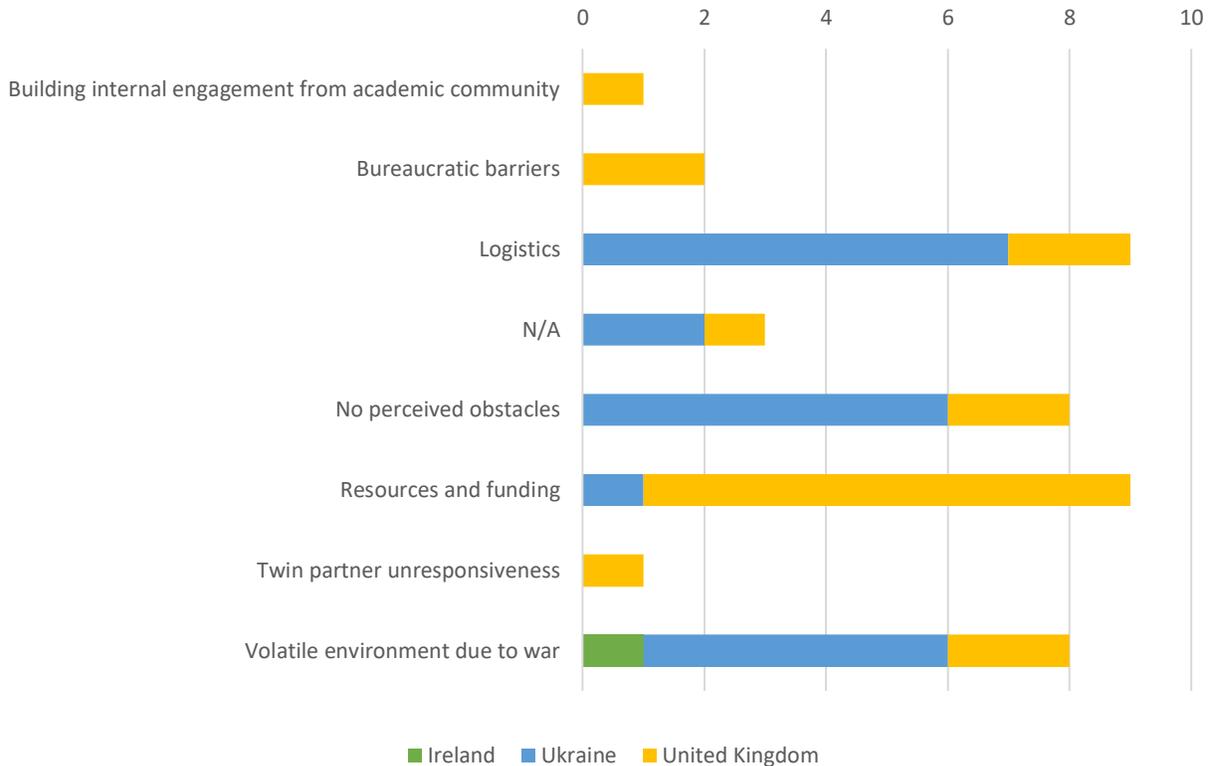


Figure 3 shows that respondents from the UK were the most likely to cite inadequate resources and funding or staff shortages as the main challenges to progressing activities. This is an important development because it shows that UK institutions are beginning to struggle to support their Twins as the war goes on. This point is further illustrated by some of the comments provided by respondents:

"Funding has been our main obstacle. We bid for money to support English language training which was rejected."

"Resources within the UK institution. We're small and our capacity to support financially is not huge."

"We were turned down for funding for a research project. We are looking at how to help with staff training at the Twin and we are working out how to access our resources."

"Lack of funds from the UK institution - we have had to do this with goodwill and through external fundraising."

"The large list of issues the Twin wants us to help with--without prioritising effectively. They have asked for a lot of things and we struggle to match their expectations."

"Time available of staff in the UK is a major impediment."

Securing funding opportunities that help international partners provide adequate support without straining their resources is paramount.

Logistics

The responses that identified resources as a barrier to implementation often overlapped with the logistics of managing the partnership, especially concerning staff capacity and availability to work on Twinning-related projects. The following comment summarises the sentiment of many respondents:

"Internet connectivity, language barrier, access to our resources as an institutional email is required, academic teams busy schedule."

As the comment above suggests, English language proficiency also emerged as an important barrier to discussions, especially at the senior leadership level. Ukrainian respondents were aware of this issue many indicated prioritising English language training for staff as a critical component for the initiative's success. One respondent stressed that access to reallyEnglish was essential in overcoming this barrier.

"The main obstacle in the implementation of activities by our units is the poor command of English by our staff. To overcome this obstacle, we agreed with our Twin institution on conducting English language courses for free. More than 150 staff and students are registered on the platform reallyEnglish and have possibility to upgrade their English."

This finding is in keeping with CCG's prior assessment that professional development training and opportunities must be a priority for Twinning as we move into the second year of the initiative.

Respondents' Satisfaction with the Twinning Process

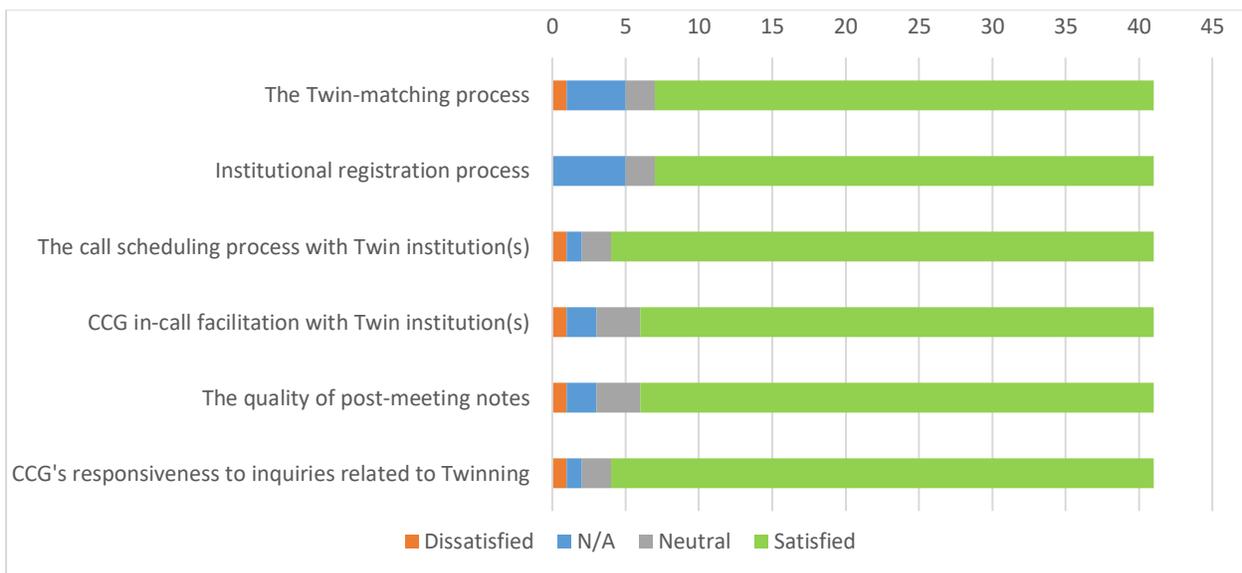
A second key aim of the survey was to assess the level of satisfaction with various aspects of the Twinning process. Respondents were asked to use a 4-point Likert scale (Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied and N/A if the participant was not personally involved in a given stage) to indicate their level of satisfaction with the following:

- The Twin-matching process
- The institutional registration process
- The call scheduling process with Twin institution(s)
- CCG in-call facilitation with Twin institution(s)
- The quality of post-meeting notes
- CCG's responsiveness to inquiries related to Twinning

Overall, the responses suggest a high degree of satisfaction with the different aspects of the Twinning process, including the Twin matching process (83%), the institutional registration process (83%), the call scheduling process (90%), the in-call facilitation provided by CCG (85%), CCG's responsiveness to inquiries related to Twinning (90%), and the quality of the post-meeting notes (90%). These rates closely mirror those from the Q1-Q2 report, indicating a consistent experience over time.

Figure 4 provides a summary of the satisfaction responses.

Figure 3: Respondents' satisfaction with key aspects of the Twinning process



It is important to note that some respondents indicated dissatisfaction with some aspects of the Twinning process (1 respondent in each category except for the registration process). The answers to the open-ended question provided additional context to these answers, and they are summarised in Table 2. Please note that "N/A" or "No comment" responses are not included.

Table 2: Open-ended comments and recommendations on how to improve Twinning

<p>Positive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation is appropriate so far. • We are much grateful for the constant help and assistance in establishing and fruitful realisation of the cooperation • CCG assists in the best manner • No - you have been excellent • I am fully satisfied with CCG facilitation • For now, everything in communication between our Universities is working in a great manner • CCG are very helpful • there is no problem in communication. We always are thankful for prompt replies and interntion to help in solving any issue. • Everything is fine • The existing facilitationb works good. • You have been great! No need to change. Thanks!!! • CCG has been very supportive and responsive. We feel fully supported. • At the beginning of the introduction of the partnership, CCG really promoted active communication and helped. Currently, two-way communication is very well configured and does not require help from third parties. • In our opinion, CCG contribute to the convergence of universities and the expansion of partnerships as much as possible. This is the objective opinion of the team • It's been great. CCG colleagues have supported where required. • CCG support was very important for meeting planning. The post-meeting summaries were also very helpful because you could
-----------------	--

	<p>always come back to them and nothing was forgotten. It was a very good job!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCG are doing their best, we are very grateful for full attention to our needs. All the people involved are cooperative, helpful and understanding. Thanks to CCG's involvement, we hope to have an advance in finding solution to the prioritised problems. • LNTU is heartily gratefull CCG for your assistance. Our Twin is responsive to communication and we are working on the development of our cooperation. • CCG do a great job and are always available to help • "Undoubtedly, we are very grateful to the Cormack Consultancy Group for the Twinning programme which made it possible to establish partnerships with UK higher education institutions and implement useful and ambitious projects by joint efforts. • As for our collaboration with the University of York, there is no lack of communication with the partners, and there is no miscommunication. Instead, for a long time, both institutions have been using clear communication channels, e.g. regular virtual meetings, email updates, a shared online workspace etc. In this regard, we see no need in third-party assistance with discussions between Karazin University and University of York at this stage, so we would not like to burden the CCG representatives with that." • At this time, we do not have any specific needs for the facilitation of discussions with our Twin institution. We appreciate the assistance and support provided by CCG in fostering our partnership with our Twin institution. If any needs arise in the future, we will definitely reach out to CCG for assistance. • Thank you! Could you go on with organising our monthly meetings
<p>Negative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are managing the connection ourselves and require no additional help. • No, I prefer conversations directly with the institution

<p>Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will need support to transfer Laptops to Ukraine this Summer. • To share on regular basis a relevant information about upcoming events in Twin institutions, e.i. conferences, round tables or professional events in the fields of coinciding interests. • "some guidance as to how other twinings are operating successfully. what works and what does not and perhaps tips to getting one successful activity underway. • A bit of support with immigration and visa issues as we do not have a specialist in house and it is a minefield." • Support in organising guest visits to the Twin to meet people in person and discuss everything on site could be really helpful. • hopefully not. we the cooperation agenda on the table and we'll do our best to move it forward . • Maybe having themed rather than just general meetings so a wider group could be involved • CCG facilitation has been outstanding. • The only thing I can think of is sharing best practice case studies from other twins across the sector. • "we have 2 Ukraine partners and although joint calls where great at the beginning, as individual requirements and projects developed separate calls where better. More structure to the meetings with list of attendees names and titles prior to calls would be helpful" • It started off well but we lost momentum. When CCG was leading the arrangement of meetings it was working well but we've lost pace now that's stopped.
------------------------	---

As shown in Table 2, two respondents expressed an overall negative opinion of CCG's management of the Twinning initiative; both responses pointed to a desire to manage communications with the Twin directly. This contrasts another respondent's comment that communication with their Twin "started off well but we lost momentum. When CCG was leading the arrangement of meetings it was working well but we've lost pace now that's stopped." **These contrasting experiences suggest the importance of maintaining open communication between CCG and Twins at more advanced stages of collaboration to determine the degree of continued support they need.**

Some respondents included helpful recommendations for improving Twinning or moving the initiative forward. A related item in the survey also asked participants more specifically about recommendations for CCG to improve the facilitation of Twinning discussions. Most of the responses indicated high appreciation and satisfaction with CCG's performance in this area. Table 3 shows the responses provided by respondents. Please note that "N/A" or "No comment" responses are not included.

Table 3: Open-ended responses about how CCG may improve the facilitation of Twinning discussions

- We are working on quality of our degree programmes and wish to continue and develop inter-institutional joint activity, including joint degrees
- Continuity of CCG staffing might help. We are happy to manage the process ourselves. Very little added value from CCG.
- Beketov University Kharkiv have undergone a recent merger, leading to a new email system for staff. MCC continues to issue meeting invites to the old emails, which is creating some confusion around meeting arrangements.
- To involve more Master and PhD students in Twin initiatives.
- I think CCG has done a great job with this project.
- Excellent initiative!
- We are very grateful CCG for help and support. Hope our cooperation with Twin Institution would be on the high level
- Some information sessions with Ukrainian universities sharing their experience in the programme could be helpful
- CCG have implemented an outstanding initiative with demonstrates the breadth of support in the higher education community.
- We appreciate all steps which our Partner does. As additional comments we can say again THANK YOU.
- identification of funding for smaller institutions to apply to for support
- it would be great to have access to broader support mechanisms we could capitalise upon to support our relationship and some of the needs of the twin partner in Ukraine
- We would like to know more about possibilities of double degree programmes
- we would like to hear more about expectations from organisers and limits of the possible cooperation pathways
- All cooperation system works perfectly.

- Currently, thanks to CCG, cooperation with our Twin-partner is expanding in educational and scientific fields. Therefore, we are grateful to the CCG for coordinating this work and have no comments or additional recommendations.
- I think all institutions will manage and fund things in a different way. A newsletter updating on everyone's might be interesting. In terms of supporting individual academics, we're receiving a number of requests outside of our Twin and it might be useful to have some kind of posting system to alert all institutions of need in order to be able to accommodate wider support for Ukrainian institutions.
- Meeting notes are sometimes ad-hoc, possibly because early on there were sometimes different people from CCG, but that has stabilised, so seems to be getting more consistent.
- Thank you for a great job and for your support.
- Twining scheme works well and I have no recommendations for its improvement.
- To make funding available to start some of the development ideas
- "CCG does it best to conduct the project."
- We are very pleased with the TWINNING initiative and the support we have received so far. We believe that the programme has been very useful for us and has helped us to build a strong partnership with our Twinning partner. One thing we always look forward to is governmental or other initiatives that would allow us to submit joint project proposals with our partner. We believe that this will help us to further strengthen our partnership and achieve even greater success in our cooperation.
- More information about the Ukraine education system, ECTS etc
- In the near future, we would like to explore opportunities for joint research projects, dual degree programmes, student & staff exchange schemes, as well as donations of equipment which is no longer used by the Twin institution.

All suggestions noted in Tables 2 and 3 are revisited in the recommendations for improving practice in the next section.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations for Improving Twinning

As the findings section illustrates, with few exceptions, survey participants reported high levels of satisfaction with their Twin institution and with CCG's management of the Twinning Initiative. The qualitative responses provided a finer-grained insight into the barriers to moving from discussion to implementing activities with their Twin institution. These open-ended comments provided important insights into ways in which the management and orientation of the Twinning Initiative can improve.

Recommendations for improving Twinning practice fall into three main categories:

- 1) Technical: Recommendations for amending day-to-day Twinning management practices
- 2) Programmatic: Suggestions to incorporate services, types of events, or types of collaboration as part of the Twinning Initiative
- 3) System-wide: Recommendations concerning forward-looking projects to strengthen Twinning or rebuild Ukraine after the war and. implementation of these recommendations requires significant involvement from external stakeholders.

The recommendations can be summarised as follows:

Table 4: Recommendations for Improving Twinning, by scope

Area of improvement/growth	Recommendation	Present/Future Action
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a list of Twinning representatives, institution, and contact information before and/or after each Twinning call to that participants can have this information at hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This recommendation was made in TSS Q1-Q2 as well. Although CCG piloted a revised meeting format to provide this information ahead of time, the volume of calls made it difficult to apply the new practice consistently. • It is worth revisiting how to improve the pre-call arrangements. In the invitation to a call, CCG could include a request to ensure all participants change their Zoom name to include their Full name and role at their institution. The meeting notes can include a quick summary of all meeting participants and their contact information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of CCG staffing might help. We are happy to manage the process ourselves. Very little added value from CCG. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a new Twinning match is in place, CCG typically assigns a staff member to facilitate discussions between the Twins up until the signing of an MoA (or until the parties determine CCG's support is no longer needed). Personnel exigencies sometimes require that one staff member fills in for another during a call. • CCG will continue to strive to ensure that a single staff member oversees all communications between their assigned Twins.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing success stories and best practices • Some information sessions with Ukrainian universities sharing their experience in the programme • To share on regular basis a relevant information about upcoming events in Twin institutions, e.i. conferences, round tables or professional events in the fields of coinciding interests. • guidance as to how other twinings are operating successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents called for greater dissemination of case studies, success stories and best practices. The Twinning Good News newsletter managed by UUKi may be a good vehicle for this. It is worth assessing the visibility of this medium (as well as existing CCG communications on these issues), as many respondents do not seem aware of it. • Alternatively, expanding the scope of the newsletter to include more information about best practices, upcoming

		events and related items may be helpful.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having themed rather than just general meetings so a wider group could be involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is worth discussing whether holding open drop-in sessions is the most efficient format. Establishing a calendar of themed sessions may be a good option for sharing some of the targeted information Twinning representatives need. Sharing an easily accessible FAQ list at the session's end could help reduce redundant enquiries.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting dual degree agreements between with international Twins • double degree programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project is underway to support the creation of dual degree partnerships among Twins. As mentioned above, it may be worth gauging the extent to which current Twinning communications are visible to all representatives and stakeholders.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult frequently with Twins to determine level of facilitation they need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is already part of CCG's practice, but it may be worth bringing it up frequently or more systematically with each pair of Twins to ensure the level of facilitation suits their needs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in organising guest visits to the Twin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although important, this level of support may be beyond CCG's current capabilities.

<p>System-wide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would like to hear more about expectations from organisers and limits of the possible cooperation pathways • More information about the Ukraine education system, ECTS etc • support with immigration and visa issues as we do not have a specialist in house and it is a minefield. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These items all point to areas where CCG may need to collaborate with other stakeholders (Ex. UUKi, FCDO, Ukrainian higher education specialists) to provide accurate and actionable information.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To involve more Master and PhD students in Twin initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate-level student involvement varies significantly from one project to another. Nonetheless, advocating for system-wide initiatives to support such efforts (ex., Scholarships, research funds) should be a priority given the importance of research to the reconstruction effort.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and funding • broader support mechanisms we could capitalise upon to support our relationship and some of the needs of the twin partner in Ukraine • identification of funding for smaller institutions to apply to for support • governmental or other initiatives that would allow us to submit joint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These items point to what seems to be a watershed moment in the Twinning initiative: IPs require system-wide resources to support their UA Twins adequately. As the war continues, the needs of UA HEIs change and grow. IPs have demonstrated a strong commitment to raising funds and providing

	<p>project proposals with our partner.</p>	<p>support in keeping with their own resources. However, without the aid of external funding sources, IPs may reach a point where ongoing support of their Twin is simply not feasible.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're receiving a number of requests outside of our Twin and it might be useful to have some kind of posting system to alert all institutions of need in order to be able to accommodate wider support for Ukrainian institutions. 	