Update on the OIE Laboratory Twinning Activities and Perspective of Twinning in Other Fields

Dr François Caya
OIE Regional Activities Department
Background

- On the current 178 Members Countries of the OIE, more or less 70% are developing or in-transition countries;

- In 2002, the World Assembly of Delegates adopted a Resolution for the OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres to enter into partnership with laboratories of developing and in-transition countries;

- The concept of Twinning between laboratories or Collaborating Centres was born to address this Resolution;

- Overall objective
  - To achieve an even geographical distribution of expertise
Mandate of an OIE Reference Laboratory (disease based)

• Centre of expertise and standardisation – develop and uphold OIE Standards

• Technical advice, diagnostic services and training

• Confirmatory testing, pathogen isolation and characterisation - report positive findings to the international community

• Develop new diagnostic tests

• Publish and disseminate useful information

• Provide expert consultants to the OIE
World distribution of the OIE-Reference Laboratories

236 Reference Laboratories with 176 experts covering 112 diseases/topics in 37 countries
Mandate of an OIE Collaborating Centres (competence based)

- Centre of research, expertise, standardisation and dissemination of techniques
- Provide technical advice and training
- Develop new techniques and procedures
- Publish and disseminate useful information
- Provide expert consultants to the OIE
The Twinning Concept

Sustainable enhancement of capacity and expertise by supporting a link between an OIE RL or CC (parent) and a national laboratory (candidate)
Aims and objectives - expertise

• To build scientific communities and improve compliance with OIE standards

• Improved access to high quality diagnostics and technical assistance for more OIE Member

• Eventually for some Candidates to apply for ‘reference’ status

• To help countries to enter scientific debate on an equal footing with others
Aims and objectives - networking

• Extend the OIE network of expertise to provide better global geographical coverage for priority diseases in priority areas

• To form long and lasting links between the two institutes

• Strengthen global disease surveillance networks

• To strengthen national scientific networks
Scope

- Project length is 1-3 years
- For OIE listed diseases or topics
- Focus on expertise
- No funding for hardware or upgrading of facilities
- Ultimate aim to reach OIE reference status
Steps after twinning

- Involvement with the international scientific community
- Joining disease networks
- Joint research opportunities
- Applying for OIE Reference Laboratory status
2012

• 6 projects complete, 33 underway, and 5 on the way

• Twinning website launched:
  • Lists on-going projects – to ensure coordination
  • Provides guidance on principles of twinning and application process
  • Promotes outputs of twinning projects and workshops

• Twinning project review (workshop and 3 project audits)

• Updated twinning guide
Global Twinning feedback workshop  
(OIE HQ, March 2011)

- Candidate labs must be able to send/receive samples
- Pre-twinning meetings would be useful
- OIE Regional Offices should promote more twinnings, and the profile and visibility of Candidate Laboratories
- Candidate Laboratories in the ‘transition phase’ should be recognised in the region so that they can provide technical advice and diagnostic services to other countries
- Veterinary Services must be committed to the long term support of the Candidate Laboratory
Updated twinning guide

- Option of OIE twinning funded by Candidate country
- Pre-twinning meetings
- Transition period after twinning
- Performance indicators
- Importance of effective communication
Situation in Europe
Situation in Europe

- Projects approved and underway:
  - Europe→Europe
    - 3 projects
  - Europe→Other Regions
    - 23 projects
  - Main diseases
    - Avian influenza and Newcastle disease
    - Brucellosis
  - Horizontal topics
    - Epidemiology
    - Food safety
    - Diagnostic capability
    - Veterinary Medicinal Products
Situation in Europe

- Project approved and due to commence:
  - Europe → Other Regions
    - 3 projects
  - Other Region → Europe
    - 1 project

- OIE has a larger number of proposals than funds at present:
  - On going work to secure more funds
  - Twinning projects to be funded by the Candidate rather than OIE.
Perspective of Twinning in Other Fields

- Based on the success of the Lab Twinning activities
- As part of the “treatment” of the OIE PVS Pathway
- Veterinary Education Establishments (VEE)
  - Twinning manual ready
  - 2 pilot projects under preparation
- Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSB)
  - Twinning manual under preparation
  - 1 formal request received
http://www.oie.int/en/support-to-oie-members/laboratory-twinning/
Candidate institutes join the OIE laboratory network

At the 88th OIE General Session (May 2022) in Paris, three Twinning Candidates were designated as OIE Reference Laboratories. The listed institutes are the Twinning Laboratory network: Changzhou Veterinary Research Institute (Jiangsu, China), the National Centre for Animal and Plant Health (Dublin), and the National Veterinary Laboratory (Australia). They will be recognized for their expertise in rabies, avian influenza, and foot-and-mouth disease, respectively in the Twinning programme. These are the first Twinning Candidates to be granted OIE Reference Laboratory status.

Additional funds urgently needed

OIE Twinning is a popular option for institutes applying to provide technical support to other countries. As of today, OIE Twinning projects are delivering expertise and technical capacity to more than 43 institutes across the Americas, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe, with at least 100 avian influenza outbreaks in the past 8 years. The popularity of OIE Laboratory Twinning is enhancing the resources available to fund new projects.

In short, Twinning has become a victim of its own success and funds are urgently needed to ensure that the programme continues to deliver much-needed sustainable benefits worldwide.

One of the strengths of OIE Twinning is that no one dictates to countries on what they need. OIE listens to National Veterinary Services about their needs, providing guidance and objective assessment.

Bennard Viollet, OIE Deputy General Director, said: “I am very happy with the OIE Twinning programme achievements. It has a young ambition and many more Twinning Candidates to become OIE Reference Centres in years to come.”

The ultimate objective of OIE Laboratory Twinning is to establish more OIE Reference Laboratories and OIE Collaborating Centres (collectively termed OIE Reference Centres) in areas where there is a need overall this will contribute to stronger global disease security.

Twinning website

For background and practical information please visit
http://www.oie.int/governance/technique/twinning/

OIE Laboratory Twinning Newsletter - June 2022