

TWINNING GUIDE

This document is intended for watershed organizations



North American Network of Basin
Organizations (NANBO)
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North American Network of Basin Organizations
Réseau des organisations de bassin d'Amérique du Nord
Red de organizaciones de cuenca de América del Norte

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WO	Watershed Organization
INBO	International Network of Basin Organizations
NANBO	North American Network of Basin Organizations
ROBVQ	Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec



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Photo : OBV Saguenay



INTRODUCTION

Access to blue gold can generate various conflicts at the local and international levels as water is a scarce resource crucial to human life. However, factors such as population growth, urbanization, rapid industrialization and the growing demand from the agricultural sector are putting more and more strain on this coveted resource. The alarm has been raised about the situation but water continues to be used at a rate that largely exceeds Nature's capacity to renew this resource, to the extent that, we can hardly at times ensure sustainable water management.

The integrated and balanced management of water is supported by organizations whose territorial coverage is defined by the surface area of a watershed. Moreover, in certain regions or countries, basin organizations are grouped together into a network, association or regional cluster. There are a number of organizational models, but the goal remains the same: ensuring sustainable water resources management while taking into account the needs of different users.

Organizations in charge of the management of one or several watersheds are facing a number of very complex challenges. They are responsible for protecting and enhancing water resources while ensuring a concerted and shared management by all the stakeholders of the territory (governments, aboriginal communities, municipalities, enterprises, environmental organizations, farm producers and community-based organizations). Besides the issues associated with the integrated approach, there are new challenges such as climate change adaptation, invasive species, problems relating to the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons, etc.

The integrated and balanced watershed-based management approach is now recognized as the best solution for the planning and sustainable use of water. However, in the face of the rapid deterioration of this natural and vital resource, organizations must demonstrate innovation and creativity, especially by fostering new connections for discussions and information exchange. The idea of twinning basin organizations stems from this need to constantly innovate.

It is important to first provide a definition for the twinning of watersheds for use throughout this guide:

“A twinning of basins is a practical and direct tool that allows basin organizations to gain valuable insight through the sharing of relevant experiences, information, expertise and know-how and via the setting up of networks of contacts for the rapid mobilization of the most useful knowledge”. (ROBVQ, 2014)

The setting up of a twinning between basins is a process that should be well prepared and well grounded, requiring openness for collaboration and flexibility from the partners. This Twinning Guide has therefore been specifically designed to support the organizations from the conceptual phase throughout the twinning development process of the basins.



It is recommended that twinning between watersheds should be based on the latter's similarities regarding size, water resources development projects as well as current economic uses of water and the challenges encountered. The twinning will then give rise to collaboration between the basin organizations and their respective countries and allow them to compare methods and verify whether the measures implemented by both parties can be beneficial. Modes of collaboration and the resulting learning experience may differ from one twinning to another. The ultimate goal of this sharing process is more effective integrated water management through the implementation of innovative solutions.

Twinning is not only a simple way to share expertise and experiences but it can also facilitate the search for new financial support and enable the parties to benefit from an enriching cultural and social experience. Some forms of twinning can be used to support the establishment of a non-existent organizational structure or to strengthen a weak one.

Past twinning experiences have shown the relevance of this initiative. The merits include the interest and willingness of the relevant local authorities to take action, the quality of the collaborative relationship established through the twinning and the sustainability of the partnerships created. For instance, the twinning project between the Charente River in France and the Richelieu River in Quebec, initiated in 2005 with the support of the Twinbasin¹ programme, has enhanced integrated water management operations in both organizations. Moreover, the twinning has provided a platform for exchanges through the Causeries Chaplain, an event held alternatively in France and Quebec and which mobilizes a wide range of stakeholders. This example illustrates the positive outcomes of a twinning between basins.

Thus, a twinning between basins offers a pool of knowledge and know-how to the organizations concerned via direct experience and the complementarity of expertise to ensure a more effective integrated watershed-based management.

¹For more information on the Twinbasin programme, please visit: www.twinbasin.org

THE TWINNING OF BASINS IN 6 STEPS

SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENT STEPS FOR SETTING UP A TWINNING

1. ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your organization
- Define its needs and goals
- Define the exchange arrangements preferred by your organization
- Identify the institutional, legal, economic, technical and communicational aspects to be taken into account
- Select the representatives of the organization

2. EXPLORING AND IDENTIFYING THE “TWINS”

- Determine the selection criteria
- Develop the evaluation grid
- Select the organization
- Contact the selected organization
- Develop the exploratory mission programme jointly with the twin organization

3. EXPLORATORY MISSION(S)

- Define the budget for the mission
- Meet the representatives of the twin organization
- Meet the relevant local authorities
- Meet the stakeholders of the local roundtable
- Make a field visit of the watershed
- Prepare a report of the mission

4. DEVELOPING A TWINNING CHARTER

- Specify twinning goals
- Identify common priorities and develop the collaborative programme
- Specify the twinning period
- Describe the profile of the organizations and the specific characteristics of the watershed, the local counterparties, performance indicators, the financial mechanisms, etc.
- Provide details of the specific terms of the twinning.
- Approve, sign and ratify the Twinning Charter

5. ESTABLISHING A LONG-TERM STRATEGY

- Prepare a realistic schedule of activities

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE NEEDS OF THE TWIN ORGANIZATIONS

- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the twinning
- Evaluate the needs following the mission(s)
- Update the Charter and the collaborative programme

STEP 1: ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

Why does your organization wish to establish a twinning between watersheds? The very first step in developing a twinning involves assessing the needs and expectations of your organization. A first analysis of the strengths and weaknesses will provide a better understanding of your organization and thus facilitate the selection of a twin organization. It is essential in the first two years to be prepared to invest the required amount of time as it is during this period that the twinning terms should be established, exploratory visits should be conducted and that joint initiatives can be developed. It is important to clearly express the needs and goals of your organization, although other needs may arise during the setting up of the twinning. Moreover, the identification of goals specific to your organization will ensure twinning with another organization sharing the same or compatible goals.

Another point to keep in mind is the exchange arrangements established between the participating watershed organizations. In fact, they can take different forms such as an educational or training trip, capacity-building or exchange of personnel. It all depends on the goals, expectations and the financial and organizational capacities of the parties. The levels of contact to be established can thus vary largely from one twinning to another. The choice will depend on the expertise sought out by the organization through the twinning.

Furthermore, the twinning participants can vary. They can be technicians, directors of the basin organizations, politicians, representatives from the economic sectors, specialists, etc. It is strongly recommended that the participants from both organizations are from the same hierarchical level to ensure successful exchanges. It is obvious that discussions between two specialists on a specific issue will differ from those between a specialist and a politician. Moreover, it is important to choose representatives who are driven and interested in the success of the twinning. The selection should be based on the goals and the chosen employees, volunteers and managers should be able to represent the organization properly and make the most of the experience for their professional growth.

It is recommended that the twinning between basins should be based on their similarities regarding size, water resources development projects, economic uses of water and problems encountered. It is also important to identify the institutional, legal, economic, technical and communicational aspects to be taken into account when setting up a twinning between basins.

Moreover, if there is a national or regional network in your territory, their collaboration can be sought to select the best representatives or to facilitate the first contact with basin organizations from a different province, state or country. Basin organizations can refer to the International Network of Basin Organizations or its regional counterparts if they want to learn more about other types of organizational structures. The eight regional networks are: the North American Network of Basin Organizations, the African Network of Basin Organizations, the Latin-American Network of Basin Organizations, the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations, the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian Network of Basin Organizations, the Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organization and the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations.



STEP 2: EXPLORING AND IDENTIFYING THE «TWINS»

The next step is to identify the twins who have the strongest potential for the mutual benefit of both organizations. Though sometimes difficult, this step is crucial given that it involves identifying organizations with issues, territories or challenges that are similar to or compatible with those of your organization.

The selection criteria used by your organization may differ from one twinning to another. However, it is worth highlighting some elements that need to be taken into consideration as these will increase the chance to make a wise choice and ensure the success of the twinning. The evaluation grid to select the «twin» can therefore be organized according to prioritized aspects, whether institutional, legal, economic, technical or regarding communications. It is possible to quantify certain elements and give them a greater relative weight in the calculation of the results. Officials in your organization responsible for the twinning can establish this grid.

After having selected the twin with the greatest potential for success, a first contact is established and a test phase is planned. It is essential that the two organizations meet either via videoconference, by telephone or in person to introduce themselves and to discuss the planned schedule of the mission(s). Several meetings should also be held between the two organizations from the time the selection is made and before the first mission. It is important to foster cohesion among the representatives and a genuine drive to collaborate based on mutual interest. A sense of belonging to the twinning needs to be developed at the very beginning since most of the collaborative interactions will be done remotely, unless the twinning is between geographically close organizations. It goes without saying that the mission's first face-to-face meeting will help strengthen the relationship between the twins and will be the best gauge of its success.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning the fact that the various preparatory meetings scheduled can be built around specific themes. For example, after the first introductory meeting, further discussions can be more of a technical or organizational nature or focused on a specific matter. Hence issues and topics that are of interest to both parties can be explored further during the visit. Front-loading the work before the first field trip greatly facilitates exchanges onsite given that representatives of the twin organizations are already aware of the partner's context.

STEP 3: EXPLORATORY MISSION(S)

Given that exploratory mission opportunities are rare, it is important to maximize the benefits. It is therefore appropriate to reflect on what the organization wishes to take away from this experience. Hence, it is recommended to plan a mission schedule with the twin organization before arrival onsite in order to make the most of the mission. The recommended duration of this exploratory mission is one week in order to build a solid understanding of the organization and its context.

One of the main takeaways from this visit should be the way water management is carried out in the targeted country and region. Being present onsite is the best method to gain an understanding of the functional modes and the interrelationships between the various stakeholders. Participation in a local roundtable will enable the organization to better grasp subtleties and better understand the roles of each stakeholder. The representatives of your organization will have the chance to discuss in person with some stakeholders and clarify any grey area or inquiry. Other more technical meetings may also be held (e.g. on the planning tools). The field trip to the watershed will in turn allow the organization to see the differences between the theoretical model of governance and the actual situation in the field. The trip will also allow the visiting organization to assess the magnitude of some of the challenges faced by the twin.

Finally, some priority budget items would be required to cover accommodation and living expenses as well as international and local travel expenses (subway, bus, train) associated with an exploratory mission. Additional costs for the purchase of cultural thank-you gifts will have to be considered in the budget forecast. Finally, all costs associated with travel insurance, visitor visas, vaccines or other relevant costs have to be taken into consideration when drawing up the twinning budget.

The drafting of a mission report is recommended in order to document the steps taken and all that has been learned. The mission report enables participating basin organizations to analyze and summarize the outcome of their visit and ensure easier monitoring and evaluation of the twinning. Below is a brief summary of the content that may be included in the mission report.

- Mission content and entities/organizations encountered;
- Difficulties met during the mission;
- Measures taken in response to these difficulties;
- Results and impacts of this first mission;
- Measures to be taken following this mission;
- Any other activity conducted as part of this twinning, apart from the missions;
- Any production or result achieved, including promotional efforts targeting the twinning and its impacts;
- Other aspects deemed relevant by your organization.

In summary, the exploration missions will validate the relevance of the twinning, mutual interest and the possibility of a lasting partnership. If there is a genuine interest on the part of both parties, the development of the twinning can be furthered.

STEP 4: DEVELOPING A TWINNING CHARTER

The charter aims to establish an initiatives programme and priority areas for action to improve the integrated water management of basins. A charter model is presented in Appendix 1 of this Guide in order to help the organization in the development of this document, which establishes a formal collaborative agreement.

The charter must be based on the themes and priority actions that will have been established by the twin organizations. It is normal for the content of the charter to vary from one twinning to another (especially in the case of Articles 2 and 3, when referring to the annexed charter model).

This charter will, inter-alia, specify the objectives and the expected outcomes, the main activities, the duration of the missions, the foreseen duration of the twinning, the profile of the organizations and the specific characteristics of the watershed, local counterparties, performance indicators, financial mechanisms, etc. The main activities that can be part of a twinning are the organization of a joint event, a staff exchange or internship program, exchange of experts appointed to work on a specific issue (e.g., cartographer, hydro-geographer), etc.

When the charter has been developed and approved by the two organizations, its formal ratification may be made as part of an official mission, a seminar, a joint press release or any other media event.



STEP 5: ESTABLISHING A LONG-TERM STRATEGY

As pointed out in the previous section, the main issues of a twinning are to ensure its sustainability and to assess whether the exploratory missions helped to validate the interest in it. That being said, despite the importance of a twinning in strengthening the ties between basin organizations, willingness backed by effective means from both parties is critical to maintain the collaboration. A sustainable source of funding is necessary to ensure that an allotted number of hours is dedicated to tasks related to coordination of the twinning. A person within each organization should be nominated to represent the organization, to ensure a follow-up of the twinning project and to coordinate the relevant activities. The benefits of twinning depend largely on the time invested, especially in the first years.

The development of a realistic schedule of activities, either remotely or in person, is also greatly recommended so as to ensure sustainability. The activities organized can take various forms (conference, work seminar, information sharing meeting, exchange of trainees or specialists, etc.) It is also essential that the collaboration is based on mutual respect and that give and take dynamics are established, without which it is most likely that the twinning will lose its relevance thereby affecting the motivation of all involved.

Furthermore, the involvement of youth in this collaboration can be both a source of motivation at work for them and a way to ensure collaboration in the long run.



STEP 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE NEEDS OF THE TWIN ORGANIZATIONS

The last step, which should not be overlooked, is the monitoring and continued evaluation of the objectives and needs of the twinning organizations. Following the various missions and exchanges held over time, it is important to take the time to reflect on the results of the twinning in regard to initial objectives. It is likely that the needs of the twin organizations will change over time. The monitoring and evaluation step therefore is an opportunity to update the terms of the Twinning Charter so as to reflect the current context and state of affairs.

To take into account such changes over time, the Twinning Charter was designed to be flexible, so that it is always possible for the parties concerned to review, amend or terminate it. This tool embodies the vision of the partnership, and may therefore be revised at any time, if social, environmental, political or economic variables change or if the priorities of the basin organizations change.





SUCCESS FACTORS

There are a couple of factors that determine the success of a twinning. The next section presents these factors which facilitate interactions and lay the groundwork for success.

INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS FROM ALL DECISION LEVELS

As mentioned previously, twinning requires the involvement and mobilization of the two basin organizations if we want to reach conclusive results. As much effort should be made in developing the relationship between the twin representatives as in monitoring common issues. Moreover, participation and involvement should be at all levels of the hierarchy, not just the upper or lower ones. Whether it is the officials or the chairmen, the employees, the volunteers, the directors or the stakeholders in the territory, all should be involved because of their complementary roles to ensure a successful twinning.

ORGANIZING AN OFFICIAL EVENT

Formal procedures are important and should not be neglected during exploratory missions. Firstly, it is strongly recommended to organize an official reception with the participation of an official political representative of the concerned region. All stakeholders in the watershed should be invited to this reception. Finally, this is a time when the issue of water management could be put on the political agenda, or at least its importance reminded to policymakers.

Political meetings can also be organized. These will demonstrate the seriousness of the twinning and will, at the same time, inform the political decision-making bodies. It is important to remember that a single meeting could eventually lead to a collaboration between the political bodies of the twin territories.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

If one of the objectives of the twinning is to be sustainable over time, it is necessary to consider any language barrier before selecting a twin. Indeed, although the cultural experience may seem exciting from a personal perspective, it is essential that representatives of the twin organizations are able to communicate easily. It is best that all participants in the twinning share a common language. Otherwise, interactions are likely to be poor and the monitoring deficient. It is possible to consider translation by a member of the team, but it should be noted that this task requires considerable effort and that the follow-up becomes more complex.

However, beyond the use of a common language, the presence of cultural, social or other similarities may facilitate the twinning. Although this aspect is not essential, experience shows that the presence of shared social and cultural values may foster better exchanges.

Finally, the opportunity to discover new things remains an aspect that is not to be overlooked. Participants will have to be open-minded to modes of operation that are different from their own and should not underestimate or judge them too quickly. It is worth pointing out that concepts such as punctuality, timelines, project planning and accountability are perceived and applied in very different manners from one country to another. So, one should be prepared to be flexible and consider these differences in the scheduling and planning of the twinning. The exploratory mission is a good way to become aware of and familiarize oneself with these cultural differences.





INVOLVEMENT OF REGIONAL GROUPS

The involvement of basin organization groups may be interesting for both the participating organizations and interested parties. Indeed, regional groups are an effective means of spreading the experiences and knowledge acquired as part of a twinning. These are resources that should be leveraged in order to promote your organization, but also to share with others the successes and difficulties encountered and the measures taken to address them. The twinning of watersheds is still a budding concept; it is necessary to increase the number of twinning projects to further develop the concept and increase such modes of collaboration

A GREATER VISION: TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TWINNING PROGRAMME

Your organization may want to take a step further and implement a medium- to long-term twinning programme for basin organizations. It might then be possible to structure a programme on a larger scale, such as multi-twinning. Various documents are available on the website of ROBVO² – with details on various collaborations with France, Mexico, Brazil and Central America – to support you in this equally relevant, but longer and more complex process.

²ROBVO, [Online], https://www.robvq.qc.ca/france_quebec and https://www.robvq.qc.ca/aller_retour

EXAMPLE OF TWINNING OF BASINS INTERNATIONALLY: THE AGENCE DE L'EAU SEINE-NORMANDIE IN FRANCE AND THE GERENCIA REGIONAL DEL AGUA DEL VALLE DE MEXICO IN MEXICO

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THIS TWINNING EXPERIENCE:

The mission in Mexico led to a common understanding of the similarity in the structure of the wastewater systems in Greater Mexico City and in Paris.

Furthermore, the water consumption per capita between these two cities is of the same magnitude and the administrative organization is of a comparable level of complexity. Finally, these two cities have to face similar challenges: daily management of very extensive works, necessary planning of amenities over long periods of time, consequences of increasing waterproofing and soil pollution due to spreading of untreated water.

Some differences between the two countries regarding the integrated watershed-based management operations were raised. Indeed, the differences relative to the basin organizations' funding system and management structure (centralized in Mexico and decentralized in France) have been identified.

Furthermore, two priority themes for technical collaboration have been identified as areas for action to be tackled urgently by the two partners:

- Major urban sanitation programme and the comparison of sanitation master plans: Genesis, obstacles and solutions.
- Management of river beds and banks (history, legal provisions, etc.)

Finally, thanks to the experience gained from this twinning, it was possible to identify issues that large cities are facing:

- Problem to access the water resource;
- Problem to access sanitation services leading to health issues;
- Pollution of the natural environment that has an impact on water uses and on people downstream of the watershed;
- Natural disasters due to increasing waterproofing.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS: Joint presentation on Sanitation at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico.

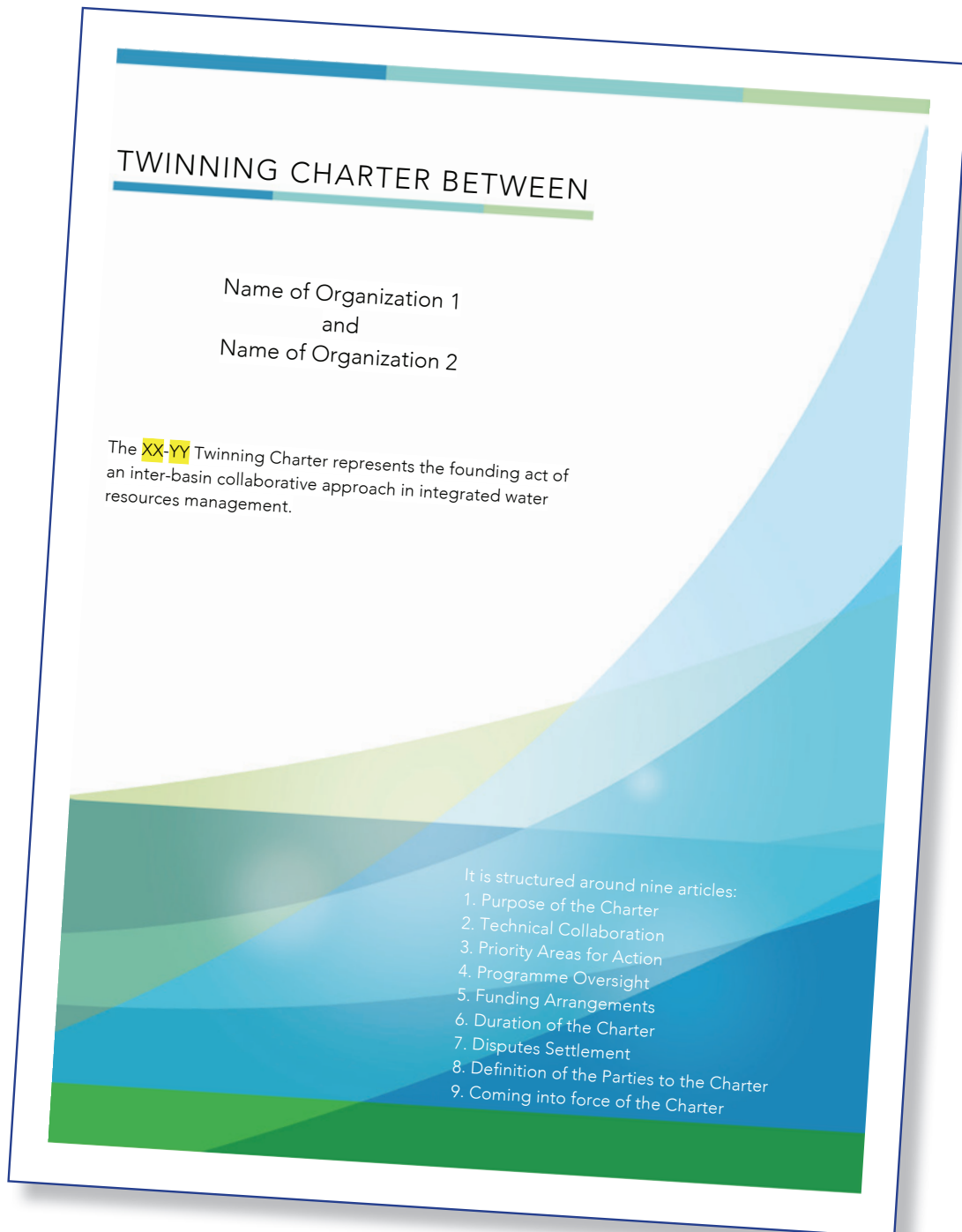
CONCLUSION

This Guide aims to help basin organizations in developing a twinning. We do not claim exhaustive knowledge in this Guide at any time; the implementation of this Guide needs to be flexible and scalable in order to adapt to the various contexts in which a twinning operates. The Guide only outlines the major steps and the means for facilitating a successful twinning of watershed organizations on a long-term basis. This Guide has been devised from the experience gained from past twinning projects and we hope that it will build on future twinning endeavours to keep pace with the evolving needs of the twin organizations and remain a useful and dynamic reference tool.



APPENDIX 1: TWINNING CHARTER MODEL

The charter is available at <http://www.monroban.org/public/documents/outils/uploaded/gkhvvggqt.docx>



Considering the growing importance of sustainable integrated water resources management;

Considering that Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in **xx and yy countries** addresses the common goal of promoting better use of water resources to protect aquatic, terrestrial and riparian ecosystems while supporting economic and social development;

Considering that the chosen management approaches are different and can inspire one another;

Considering that the continued development of interactions and spontaneous technical exchanges between the basin organizations contribute to the protection and sustainable use of water in their respective territories;

Convinced of the benefits:

- of collaboration in the field of integrated water resources management and the need to protect the environment especially aquatic environments.
- of a comparison between the work processes, joint actions, knowledge and assessment of data on aquatic environments;

AND

based on laws applicable in **xx and yy countries**,

the Parties pledge to undertake joint initiatives based on the principles defined in the following articles.

- Identifying problems with the implementation of integrated water management including institutional and socio-economic issues;
- Improving the methods and tools for the management of an evaluation and information system based on reliable databases and relevant indicators.³

Article 4: Programme Oversight

The Parties agree to hold regular meetings to coordinate the implementation, evaluation and updates of their twinning.

The **xx and yy** national basin organizations and the regional networks of the International Network of Basin Organizations (**xx and yy**) act in support of the twinning.

Article 5: Funding Arrangements

No financial commitment of any kind is attached to this Charter. Each Party shall bear its own travel and mission expenses for initiatives implemented in the context of this Charter. Any joint action will be subject to a special agreement regarding its cost, funding arrangements and the responsibilities of each Party.

Article 6: Duration of the Charter

This Charter is not a fixed protocol, but shall be scalable and allow the necessary adjustments as per the evolution of the parties concerned and their respective territories. The aim, therefore, is to enhance it as proposed by the partners.

The Twinning Charter is effective for a period of 2 years.

³ The priority areas for action listed in Article 3 are for information purposes only. The twin organizations are requested to modify and/or add specific points.

⁴ The eight regional networks of the INBO are : the [North American Network of Basin Organizations](#), the [African Network of Basin Organizations](#), the [Latin-American Network of Basin Organizations](#), the [Network of Asian River Basin Organizations](#), the [Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian Network of Basin Organizations](#) , the [Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organization](#) and the [Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations](#).

Article 1: Purpose of the Charter

The Charter aims to define an initiatives programme and establish priority areas for action to improve the integrated water resources management for **XX** and **YY** basins.

It is signed by the Parties subject to the approval of the executive authorities of the institutions concerned.

Article 2: Technical Collaboration

For the duration of this twinning, the Parties agree to develop an initiatives programme that will consist mainly of:

- Exchanging general and scientific information, technical documentation, tools and experiences for the mutual enhancement of their knowledge on integrated water management;
- Organizing technical visits and other activities (seminars, conferences, workshops) aimed at increasing knowledge and building awareness on topics of common interest;
- Carrying out expert studies and missions of common interest for each basin;
- Holding regular meetings (which can be done remotely) between the representatives of the two basin organizations.²

Article 3: Priority Areas for Action

The priority areas for action targeted by the Parties concerned are the following:

- initiatives in terms of communication, awareness-building and education for greater public involvement in integrated water resources management;
- Improving governance methods within the basins by strengthening collaboration between all local users and decision-makers;

¹ See the «Description of the twin organizations» in Appendix 1

² Points 1 to 4 are provided for information purposes only. The twin organizations are requested to modify and/or add specific points.

Article 7: Disputes Settlement

Any dispute arising from the implementation or interpretation of this Charter shall be settled by mutual agreement between the Parties.

Article 8: Definition of the Parties to the Charter

Add a short description of each of the Parties concerned specifying:

- The type of organization (governmental, NGO, etc.)
- The date it was founded
- Its mission

NB. The detailed description of the organizations may be added in Appendix 1.

Article 9: Coming into force of the Charter

The Charter will take effect upon signature, with the prior approval of the Board of Directors or the authorized executives of each of the Parties concerned.

Signed at **Place**, on **date**

For name of organization 2

For name of organization 2

Name of the Representative

Name of the Representative





Regroupement des Organismes
de Bassins Versants du Québec



North American Network of Basin Organizations
Réseau des organisations de bassin d'Amérique du Nord
Red de organizaciones de cuenca de América del Norte

Financial partner :



*Relations
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