



Guidelines on International Twinning

**Developing Links
Worldwide**

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Section 1 - Introduction

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has been responding to the needs of teacher organisation partners in both developed and developing countries for many years, having established an International Committee of Executive Members in 1930. The NUT has formed mutually beneficial relationships in countries within Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, among others.

As a major professional organisation, the NUT plays a significant role in supporting teacher unions worldwide. Twinning is part of the international work of the NUT and we remain committed to developing our international work through practical links with other countries.

In our efforts to enhance and strengthen interaction between countries, the NUT supports twinning and partnership arrangements. This publication aims to provide guidelines for associations and divisions to help you get started if you are planning international twinning. These guidelines present a range of options available and are designed primarily to assist you with the twinning process. Suggestions for exchanges and advice to avoid potential pitfalls and challenges are offered.

Section 2 - Purpose and Objectives of International Twinning

Twinning is a formal and mutually beneficial learning experience for unions in different regions and countries. It promotes the exchange of information and ideas, and develops mutual support and awareness for more effective unions, activities and campaigns.

Twinning promotes cooperative activity and encourages trade unionists to operate collectively at local, national and international levels whilst building long-term partnerships and a sense of solidarity. It is, however, strictly intended for the sharing of different perspectives and solutions and not for the persuasion of others to adopt one's ways.

Twinning can be reciprocal but can also involve one-way arrangements where a developing country is visited by members of a developed country. Either way, both parties should benefit from the partnership through the exchange of ideas and the experience gained.

A twinning initiative is aimed at formalising and strengthening the international solidarity between the participating countries and the unions and to give local associations and members the opportunity to make contact with unions, schools and teachers in other countries.

Twinning programmes aim for several benefits. For example,

- enable and promote mutual support and relationship building;
- help develop and strengthen other unions for stronger and more effective achievements;
- generate a personal and professional connection through the sharing of knowledge and skills; and
- facilitate social cohesion: aiming to influence and share effective education policies and campaigns;

Section 3 - Structures and Forms of Twinning

Twinning programmes can take several forms.

- **Training and study exchanges** - these include two-way study tours where group visits aim to receive and/or provide training.
- **On-site training** – one-way training provided on a specialised area.
- **Information exchanges** – regular exchange of publications and collaboration on mutual issues.
- **Technical exchanges** – implementation of a specific programme or activity.
- **Campaigns** - on areas of mutual interest.

Section 4 - Getting Started

Below are some important points to consider before setting up a twinning arrangement.

- Why do you want to embark on the programme?
- Who would be an appropriate twinning partner and why?
- Is the programme mutually beneficial?
- How can you add value and/or make a change?
- Have you defined the capacity and level of commitment and involvement needed?
- Consider a sustainable approach. Financing and funding issues should be forecast before agreeing to embark on a programme.
- If a twinning partnership is agreed, it must be acted upon – do not make promises you cannot keep!
- How will you get members involved locally?

Section 5 – The Twinning Process

The NUT recommends that the procedure set out below is followed to maximise the potential of any twinning arrangements being successful.

Step 1: Planning and Objectives

- I. Identify a partner for a potential twinning relationship. Ask NUT headquarters for advice at: international@nut.org.uk or visit www.britishcouncil.org/learning for ideas.

If you are unsure about where or how to set up a twinning arrangement, you may wish to consider the following for discussion at an association/division meeting.

- Where are your overseas members from?
 - Which organisations is your association/division affiliated to?
 - What issues are important to your association/division?
 - Are there overseas teachers in your association/division who may wish to build links with unions in their home countries?
 - What are the NUT's international development priorities at national level? (Look at the Unions' annual publication 'On the Global Stage').
- II. Establish whether there is enough support for a twinning programme. For example;
 - generate a good understanding of the role of the potential partner's policies, programmes, campaigns and main actors;
 - assess the benefits and challenges of being involved in a twinning relationship;
 - analyse the objective and feasibility of the partnership;
 - identify and concentrate on common issues (i.e. teaching methods, educational materials, or other professional or employment issues); and
 - collect your facts.

- III. Generate a list of contacts and invite expressions of interest from those likely to be interested in the programme.
- IV. Identify a co-ordinator at association or division level.
- V. Where appropriate, ask the NUT nationally to make initial contact with the proposed partner. It may be possible that the NUT has contact or has already twinned with the potential partner.
- VI. Draw up a profile of your association to exchange with your twinning partner. This will enable your partner to have some background to your activities (i.e. photographs, press cuttings, newsletters etc).

Step 2: Prepare a Programme

- I. Agree on a programme with the partner. It is essential for the programme to reflect each partner's purpose and objectives of the partnership. Describe the expected benefits. For example,
 - spend time sharing information with the partner;
 - identify strengths and challenges;
 - indicate areas to be addressed;
 - identify the target group;
 - suggest feasible solutions to outstanding issues; and
 - formulate an approach to assess the performance of the programme.
- II. Formulate an achievable action-plan for agreed activities with the twinning partner.
- III. Agree on the form and settings under which the programme will take place before starting the twinning process, bearing in mind the need for the following:
 - equal participation and interactions based on mutual respect, honesty and transparency;
 - creating added value (not just monetary);

- willingness to promote the relationship; and
 - communicating effectively.
- IV. Agree on a budget for twinning activities. Identify fundraising projects and events.
- V. Prepare a letter of intent outlining objectives, goals and prospects. The initiative does not necessarily require a contract between the parties involved, but it is wise to jointly format a written commitment of mutual objectives and purpose. This helps decide how resources should be allocated and to avoid misunderstandings between the partners.

Step 3: During and After the Programme

- I. Arrange for regular feedback to members about developments concerning the twinning, through newsletters and/or circulars.
- II. Keep NUT Headquarters informed via international@nut.org.uk. Provide an annual summary of activities to include what has and what has not worked, so that others can learn from the challenges you faced and your successes.
- III. Review and evaluate progress regularly to ensure objectives and targets are being met. For example,
- describe problems encountered;
 - suggest what to do differently;
 - formulate follow-up actions (if any);
 - assess the relevance of the programme; and
 - assess the feasibility and impact of replicating the programme.
- IV. Consider organising events to promote the partnership.
- V. Experience should be shared and publicised widely. For example,
- raise awareness;
 - build knowledge; and
 - encourage partnership.

Section 6 - Visits to Twinned Partners

Once you have successfully gone through the steps recommended and clear objectives have been set, it is highly likely that a visit or international exchange will be involved at some point during the course of the twinning programme.

Before embarking on the visit, ask yourself whether this visit or exchange is the best way of achieving the agreed objectives?

Who to Send on the Visit

Depending on the agreed objectives, the exchange group may compose of several people. For a comprehensive project, the exchange should involve, where applicable, not just the association/division leadership but stakeholders at grass root levels.

The delegation of roles and responsibilities should include:

- main liaison person with the twinning partner;
- obtaining basic information; and
- preparation of information.

Drawing up a Schedule

Remember that the objective of the visit is not just for a person to person contact but for the exchange of information, knowledge and experience. Issues to be discussed should be clearly planned before the visit takes place.

Here is some advice:

- be realistic with the amount of issues to be covered;
- allow for travelling between meetings;
- allow for interpretation (it takes longer to communicate through an interpreter); and
- understand the setting of the issue involved in order to be sensitive to the needs and cultural background of partners.

Practical Arrangements

Accommodation: Hotel accommodation is recommended though not always necessary. Lodging in members' homes may also be a possibility.

Travel: Arrange with twinned partner to organise a private mini bus for internal travel as relying on public transport can sometimes make the visit more complicated.

Insurance: Ensure all participants have health and travel insurance.

Interpreters: Professional interpreters can be very expensive. Check the resources of your association/division before referring to outside help.

Appreciation for Hosts: NUT merchandise goods can be purchased from the NUT Shop on HEARTH. Alternatively, gifts reflecting your project, city, town, or county may also be adequate.

Climate and Clothing: Consider what dress code would be culturally appropriate as well as suitable for the weather and occasion.

Support from the NUT

Twinning initiatives should be, ideally, routed through the head office of the respective organisations. The NUT works to enable the two unions to be in a position to evaluate the success of the proposed twinning programme, and to ensure a spread of links across each country.

Section 7- Past and Current NUT Twinning Partnerships

Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association (CADFA)

The CADFA initiative provides an excellent model of twinning arrangements at local level and could be replicated elsewhere. The initiative aims to promote human rights and respect for international humanitarian law in Abu Dis and Palestine. The programme uses the potential of people-to-people geographical links as a way of developing positive projects on Palestine across Britain. The work aims to promote twinning with Palestine as a new model for work on Palestine in a British town in co-operation with the NUT and other unions and the British Palestine Twinning Network.

Teachers in Cuba and the UK (1999)

An initiative undertaken jointly by the NUT and the Cuban Teachers' Union, SNTECD which gave associations and divisions the opportunity to make contact with teachers in Cuba to:

- develop contact and enable the exchange of information
- learn how the education system is organised differently
- understand structures and issues
- establish personal and professional links
- exchange ideas at first hand

The NUT also sent a delegation to Cuba in May 2009 for:

- solidarity with teacher trade union colleagues in Cuba
- pedagogical research on comparative education with the aim of the outcomes informing the Union's international work
- exploring the educational developments in Cuba, particularly in relation to primary style teaching at secondary level

Magna Carta Study

The partnership is a joint project between the NUT and the United States National Education Association (NEA) which focuses on developing strategies and materials for teaching the Magna Carta's tenets of freedom, justice, fairness and human rights. The project is an example of a two-way information exchange where NUT members travelled to the United States to participate in a workshop.

The first phase of the study took place in April 2008 where the NUT held a joint professional development event with the NEA at Stoke Rochford, Lincolnshire. The second phase took place in October 2009 in Washington DC, USA.

NUT/ITU

The Israel Teachers Union (ITU) and the NUT have embarked on a series of exchanges in order to strengthen links between the two unions by organising meetings about shared professional concerns. It is envisaged there will be a series of such meetings over the next few years.

The first meeting took place in England in November 2007 and focused on professional responsibilities in relation to working in a multicultural society.

The Phase 2 of the exchange took place in November 2008 where a delegation from the UK visited Israel. The objective of the visit was to build on the work carried out in Phase 1 and to work towards a joint publication on teaching about controversial issues with anti-semitism and Islamophobia as the focus.

Section 8: Twinning Database

The NUT is collecting information about all twinning arrangements so that details can be shared and new opportunities identified. This information will be placed on HEARTH. If your association/division has a twinning arrangement, please complete the attached form and return to international@nut.org.uk or by post to Hellen Njie, National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9BD.

Twinning Database



The NUT's international work includes developing links with sister unions overseas. In continuing to improve our service to divisions and associations, we are looking for examples of good practice of twinning arrangements (whether formal or informal, on-going or one-offs) so we can share these with colleagues nationally and regionally with a view to developing existing links further or identifying new opportunities for twinning.

Name of your association/division	
Name of international officer/contact	
Name of twinning coordinator if different	
Your email address	
Tel number	
Postal Address	
Name of twinned union and city/country	
Name of branch/region with whom you are twinned	
Contact name there	
Address	
Date twinning set up	
How did the twinning come about?	

Activities held and dates (include any published articles/materials)	
Specific achievement for special mention	
Challenges encountered (if any)	
How were the challenges overcome?	
Are there improvements for twinning which could be adopted nationally or shared with other associations and divisions?	
Any other comments	
Do you consent to this information being shared with other NUT associations and divisions?	Yes/No Name and signature

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this form. Please return to international@nut.org.uk or by post to Hellen Njie, National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9BD.