

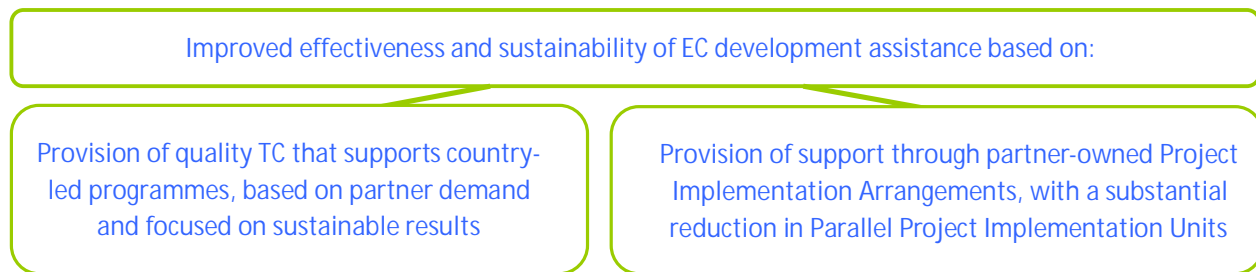
The European Commission Reform for More Effective Capacity Development

The European Commission launched in 2008 a far-reaching plan to reform the way it provides Technical Cooperation, known as 'The Backbone Strategy'. Member States of the European Union shared this reform agenda and have adopted an Operational Framework to guide the design and management of Technical Cooperation.

Both the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action called for an improvement of the quality, alignment and harmonisation of Capacity Development and related Technical Cooperation. The Backbone Strategy is a way of implementing the commitments made at Paris and Accra.

Internal Pressures

About the same time, the European Court of Auditors, our independent audit institution, issued its 2007 findings on Technical Assistance. The report found that as little as one in three technical assistance projects undertaken by the EC lead to a satisfactory outcome. The audit created a strong internal force for change and reform of how the EC works in the area of Technical Cooperation, transforming a priority into an emergency.



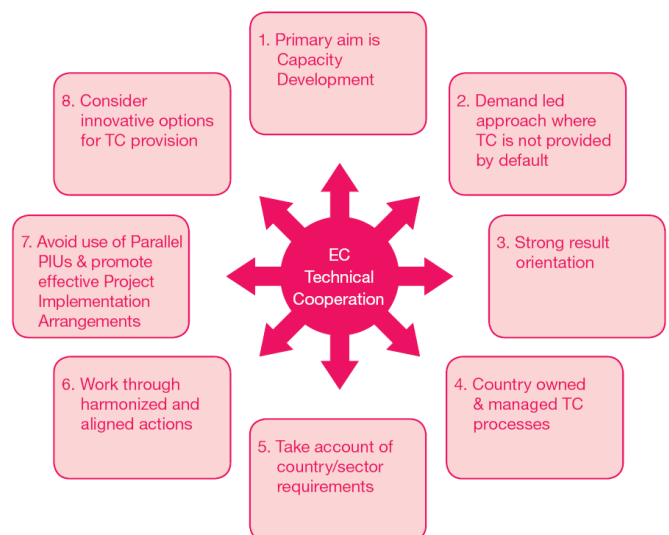
The Challenges

The reform included practical challenges for our work:

- to actively ensure real ownership by our partners, starting with their leadership of the programme cycle
- to base any support provided on open expressed demand
- to be clear on the roles and expected results of the TC providers and partners, particularly regarding Capacity Development
- to ensure high quality expertise, expand the types of providers to southern and public sector expertise and to non-commercial bodies

Capacity Development is the main objective of TC and requires strong country ownership. While TC can serve various purposes, its main purpose is to strengthen the capacity of partner country organisations and sectors to perform. The Backbone Strategy strives for quality and effectiveness of TC support that is conducive to more effective Capacity Development.

The reform aims also at reducing Parallel Project Implementation Units, as set by the Paris Declaration indicators. Country-owned programmes require sound implementation arrangements led by country partners integrated in their structures and combining both domestic and external inputs.



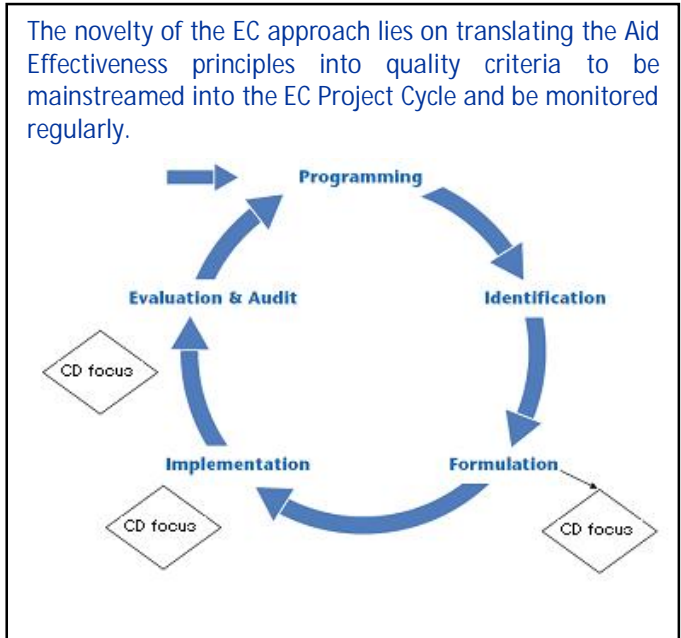
Implementation

We linked the Aid Effectiveness principles and the recommendations of our Court of Auditors to quality criteria: complying with the quality criteria is conducive to the provision of effective TC and CD. Compliance to the quality criteria has then been mainstreamed throughout the Project Cycle.

Reforming the modes of operation of a complex organisation such as the European Commission requires a big effort and a bold change strategy made of software and hardware changes. Guidance tools have been developed and disseminated widely; specific training modules have been developed for staff in headquarters, EU delegations worldwide and for larger audiences. It is worth underlining that all dissemination efforts have involved partner countries' representatives and other donors alike, in a joint effort to change mindsets and practice towards the Aid Effectiveness principles.

In the framework of the TC reform, EC procedures have been screened to highlight the options for taking forward the reform; in particular, enhancing ownership, improving the quality of support, and facilitating the mobilisation of relevant expertise.

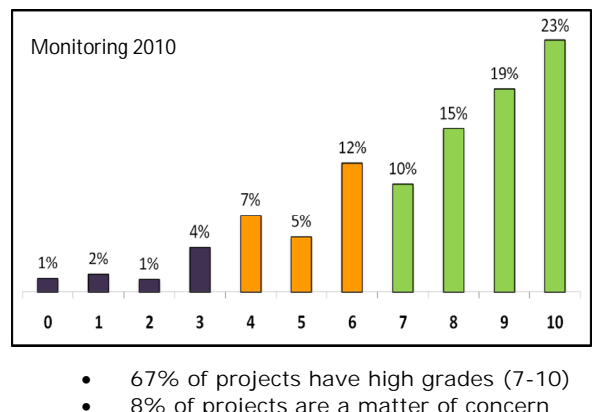
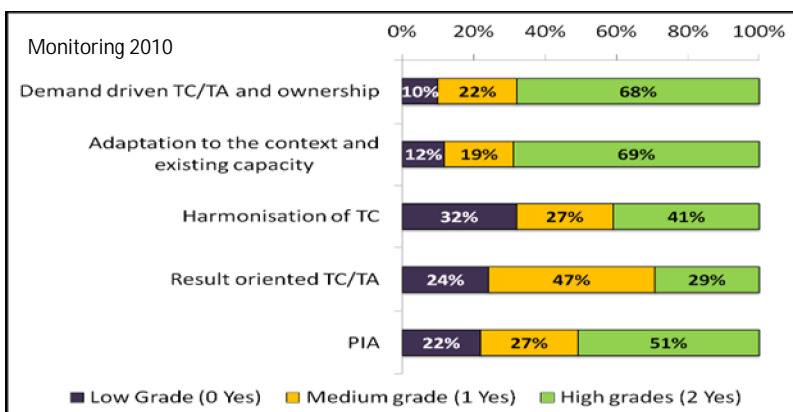
One of the main achievements of the reform is the creation of the knowledge exchange platform www.capacity4dev.eu. The platform was born to support the Backbone Strategy but it has now grown to become a proper knowledge exchange platform dealing with more than 25 topics all related to Aid Effectiveness. The platform has more than 3500 members from the development community and offers a space to exchange ideas and information on effective aid.



Results So Far

Reforming Technical Cooperation for ensuring the delivery of more effective Capacity Development support is a long-term objective. The reform journey is yet to be completed.

There are still challenges for us and for our partners: it is even a bigger challenge to move from theory to practice, when there is pressure for results. However, we have recorded positive trends through our regular monitoring, showing improvements in the design of our support programs and projects. Going forward, there is a clear commitment to focus on Capacity Development, as capacity and innovation help in achieving sustainable results.



For more information, please consult www.capacity4dev.eu, or write to us at EuropeAid-TC-CD@ec.europa.eu