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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AD	Action Document
AfIF	Africa Investment Facility
AIF	Asian Investment Facility
CIF	Caribbean Investment Facility
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EDF	European Development Fund
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EIP	External Investment Plan
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU RF	EU Results Framework
FI	Financial Institution
GP	Good Practice
IFCA	Investment Facility for Central Asia
IFI	International Financial Institution
IFP	Investment Facility for the Pacific
IP	Implementing Partner
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPA PF	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Performance Framework
ITF	EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund
KM	Knowledge Management
LAIF	Latin America Investment Facility
LFI	Lead Financial Institution
LL	Lessons Learned
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NIF	Neighbourhood Investment Facility
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
ROM	Results-Oriented Monitoring
TF	Trust Fund

INTRODUCTION

The Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) is the external monitoring system of the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). It aims at enhancing the European Commission's internal control, accountability and management capacity with a strong focus on results.

The ROM system assists DG DEVCO and DG NEAR Headquarters as well as EU Delegations in their internal monitoring and reporting functions, through independent and external services provided at different moments during the project cycle.

This Handbook presents the rules, modalities, specifications and quality standards for all ROM services. It is prepared by Units DEVCO 04 (Evaluation and Results) and NEAR A4 (Multi-annual financial framework, Programming and Evaluation), also referred to as "the ROM Coordination Units", with contributions by thematic and geographic units in both DGs.

It replaces in full the ROM Handbook edition of October 2018.

The ROM Handbook– For whom?

The primary intended users of this Handbook are ROM Contractors, ROM Experts, and Commission staff managing interventions that benefit from ROM services.

ROM Contractors must adhere to the standards prescribed in this Handbook. Modifications in the services to be provided by ROM Contractors will be agreed and reflected in updated versions of the Handbook.

ROM Handbook v. 2020

This **2020 version** of the Handbook introduces:

- New processes and services to be implemented by ROM Contractors as of 2019
- Up-to-date monitoring and reporting templates with methodological guidance
- Procedures and methodology for ROM reviews on blending operations
- Standards for enhanced support at design stage

1 BASIC CONCEPTS

It presents key terminology and concepts related to monitoring and results reporting in the context of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR

The EU and its Member States are committed to improving aid and development effectiveness. The EU endorsed the principles agreed during the Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2011) and renewed during the High-Level Meeting in Nairobi in 2016, i.e. ownership of development priorities by developing countries, a focus on results, inclusive development partnerships, transparency, and mutual accountability[1].

These principles translate into action during the implementation of interventions funded through the European Union external financing instruments and are reflected in the Commission's monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities are conducted applying relevant Commission regulations, the Better Regulation Package (2015), the internationally practised OECD-DAC criteria and terminology, and specific guidelines issued by DG DEVCO and DG NEAR. The following paragraphs illustrate some of the **key concepts underpinning all ROM services**. Additional definitions and technical guidance applicable to individual ROM services are available in the corresponding chapters.

1.1 Interventions

ROM services will target "interventions" as defined below.

Intervention

An intervention is a coherent set of activities and results, which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the Commission of its operations. In external action context, interventions are usually referred to as "programmes" or "projects". In the External Assistance Management Report (EAMR), interventions correspond to what is currently called "project", which can be either a contract or an action.

The term intervention comes from the Better Regulation package, where it refers to EU activities for the purpose of assessing performance (e.g. monitoring and reporting on results, conducting evaluations, reporting on KPIs). The scope of an intervention corresponds, in most cases, to an action[2]

[1] The New European Consensus on Development, p. 8.
[2] Action, as per the Financial Rules and the CIR, is a generic term describing the content (or part of the content) of a Commission Financing Decision. An action corresponds to one or several budgetary commitments. It usually takes the form of an Action Document or of a similar document.

or a part of it; however, several actions, action components, and/or contracts can contribute to a single intervention when the coherence of the planned activities and results allows.

The scale of an intervention and its level are determined in function of:

- The coherence of the planned activities and results; **and**
- The responsible entity (e.g. Delegation in charge).

The author of the Action Document (which is subject to quality review) indicates the level of the intervention. The intervention is then created in OPSYS[3] by the service in charge[4].

Understanding the level and scale of an intervention is essential to plan its monitoring and reporting effectively. The four examples below are representative of the application of the concept of intervention within the context of DEVCO and NEAR. Each box represents the scope of an intervention.

Case type 1: An intervention covering more than one action

Action D-23101 (2011) Special Measure for Belarus: Open Europe Scholarship Scheme

Delegation in charge: Belarus

- 1 intervention: Contract C-269645 (2011) - Open Europe Scholarship Scheme, NORDISK MINISTERRADS SEKRETARIAT

Action D-24447 (2013) Special Measure: Open Europe Scholarship Scheme – Phase II (OESS II)

Contributes to the same intervention, created in 2011

Delegation in charge: Belarus

- Contract C-331137 (2013) - Open Europe Scholarship Scheme, Phase II, NORDISK MINISTERRADS SEKRETARIAT

The two actions must share the same objectives and intervention logic

Case type 2: An intervention corresponding to a single action

Action D-37572 (2014) Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Initiative

Delegation in charge: Indonesia

- 1 intervention:

[3] OPSYS is a large-scale business transformation and IT program launched by DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and FPI (RELEX Family). Its purpose is improving the management of the EU external relations portfolio along the entire project cycle: from programming to final evaluation, all through the contracting and implementation phases. OPSYS is introducing substantial changes to the way of working in several areas, including monitoring and evaluation. Within the context of OPSYS, monitoring takes place at the level of the intervention.

[4] At the present stage of development, only EAMR interventions can be created in OPSYS.

- Contract C-388646 Enhanced Regional EU–ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI)
- Contract C-403948 Communication and visibility

Case type 3: An intervention at the level of an action component or a contract

Action D-38787 – Contribution to the African Investment Facility in support of regional economic integration in West Africa

Delegation in charge: Nigeria (regional)

- 2 Interventions
  - Contract C-386495 (2017) Construction du pont de Rosso, BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT

    Delegation in charge: Senegal
  - Contract C-386607 (2017), Projet de réhabilitation de la route Lomé-Cotonou (phase 2) et de protection côtière (Benin-Togo), BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT

    Delegation in charge: Togo

+ 3 more contracts in 3 more countries → 3 more interventions

Case type 4: Several interventions covered by a single contract

In some cases, it may be necessary to report on several interventions that are below the contract level. This may happen, among others, for contracts consisting in a contribution to an International Financial Institution (IFI). In the example below, the contract is a contribution to EBRD/EIB, who are in charge of managing different operations in different countries.

Action D-38055 (2015) – Western Balkans – Multi-country Action Programme for Connectivity for the years 2015-2016- allocation 2015

Delegation in charge: none

Contract 2016/375830 – EC Contribution Arrangement with respect to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund under the Western Balkans Investment Framework, EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (EBRD)

Delegation in charge: none

- Several interventions are created to monitor the infrastructure projects behind this contract:
  - KfW_WB-IG00-MNE-ENE-01 Trans-Balkan Electricity Corridor (I): Grid Section in Montenegro
  - WBIF CF 1002 MKD ENE MEPSO Power Interconnection (II): Grid Section in the fYRoM
  - MULTI-ENE-001-PRJ Preliminary and Main Design of the Ionian Adriatic Gas Pipeline – Montenegro and Albania sections

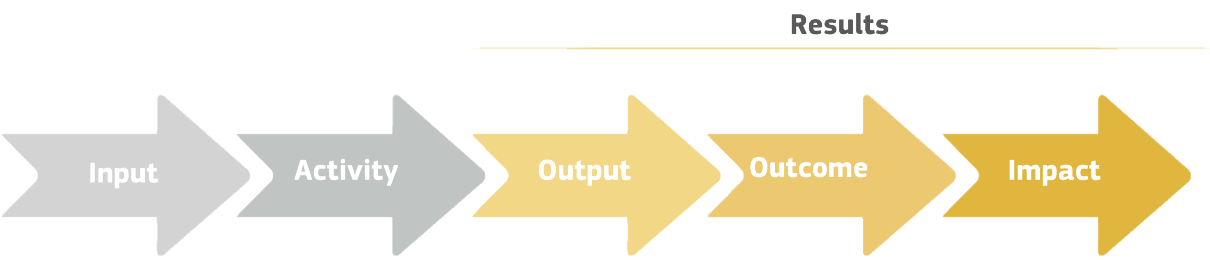
The alternative in this situation may be to consider that the three (or more) grant agreements constitute a single intervention (instead of the three interventions shown above), subject to single reporting and monitoring by EBRD. This would then result in a case type 3 intervention

1.2 Results

Interventions trigger change in the lives of those who benefit from them. **Results chains** show the logical relationship among the resources invested by the intervention (inputs), the activities implemented, and the changes or results achieved.

> **Results**
>
> Results are the output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention – OECD-DAC definition *definition*[5]

A schematic representation of a results chain is provided below:



Inputs refer to the resources provided. Examples: funding, staff, materials, equipment.

Activities refer to the process of converting inputs into outputs. Examples: conducting a training, conducting an awareness campaign, preparation of a roadmap.

Outputs describe the products, capital goods and services delivered by the intervention. They may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes (*OECD-DAC definition*)[6]. These changes relate to improved capacities, abilities, skills, systems, policies of a group of people or an organisation, and are generated by the EU intervention. Examples: enhanced skills of the teachers, increased awareness on how to access the legal system.

> Outputs take place during the implementation of the intervention. Their achievement is under the control of the intervention

> Outcomes take place during or after the implementation. Their achievement is under the control of the target group

Outcomes refer to short to medium term effects in the political, social, economic and/or environmental areas targeted by the intervention as well as changes in behaviour resulting from the intervention outputs (when institutions or people do something differently or better as a result of an output generated by the intervention). EU-funded interventions directly contribute or influence these changes, but their achievement depends on the

[5] https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2754804.pdf
[6] https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2754804.pdf

engagement, change in behaviour, take-up (use) and actions of the target groups directly in touch with the intervention as well as other players not directly in touch with it. Examples: more children completing a school cycle, increased access to paediatric and maternity health services, increased disclosure of rights violations, adequate dietary intake of children under 5 years of age, strengthened specific reform process.

Impact takes place months / years after the intervention and is only indirectly influenced by it

Impact is the broader change in the political, social, economic and/or environmental global context which tends to be long-term[7] and stems from the combined effort of a number of interventions by the partner government, development partners and other actors on which EU funded interventions will have an indirect influence. It is a detectable improvement in the lives of people based on economic, social, cultural, institutional, environmental, technological changes. Examples: reduction of poverty, improvement in literacy/numeracy, reduction of corruption, enhanced respect of human rights, reduction of the under-five mortality rate.

To measure the results achieved by an intervention, development actors define indicators, baselines, milestones and targets for each type of result:

Indicators are quantitative or qualitative factors or variables providing a reliable measure of the achievement of each result. Indicators should be Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy, and Robust (RACER), and they should be disaggregated as relevant. Examples: maternal mortality rate (quantitative); status of legal framework guaranteeing universal pensions (qualitative).

Results indicators

Indicators reflect the same hierarchy that exists among results. Examples:
- Output level: # of teachers trained, # of health clinics equipped.
- Outcome level: % of births attended by skilled health personnel, prevalence of under-weight children under 5 years of age.
- Impact level: proportion of population living below the poverty line, under-five mortality rate.

Targets and **milestones** specify the planned direction for progress. They should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). Example: stunting prevalence in children aged less than 5 years is 30% in 2020.

Baselines give the starting point (current value of indicator) and are required in order to be able to set meaningful targets. Example: stunting prevalence in children aged less than 5 years was 40% in 2017.

[7] DG NEAR has produced additional guidance on the sequential/temporal treatment of impact that applies to NEAR interventions allowing both intermediary and long-term impacts. Cf. DG NEAR Guidelines on linking planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, 2016.

1.3 Monitoring

This Handbook uses the OECD-DAC and Better Regulation definitions of monitoring:

Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. – *OECD-DAC definition*[8]

Monitoring is a continuous and systematic process of data collection about an intervention. It helps identify and address any implementation problems and generates factual information for future evaluation and impact assessments. – *Better Regulation, Tool # 41. Monitoring arrangements and indicators*[9]

In the context of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR monitoring can be:

- **Internal**, if carried out by Implementing Partners (IPs – entities in charge of implementing EU-funded interventions), and OMs (Operational Managers – Commission staff members and their established hierarchy, managing and monitoring EU-funded interventions), or
- **External**, if carried out by independent consultants supporting the Commission services. This is the case of the ROM system.

Depending on its purpose, monitoring can focus on different aspects such as:

- Financial, contractual compliance and disbursement;
- Implementation progress;
- Achievement of objectives.

All interventions have a **monitoring framework**, although its name and format may vary depending on the aid modality or financing instrument.

- For interventions in project modality, the **logical framework matrix** or **logframe** is the primary monitoring framework, summarising the intervention logic and setting out how the intervention will be monitored. The drafting of logframes starts with the Action Document, at design stage, when the OM identifies the results chain, the indicators and sources of verifications, and the assumptions[10]. At contract stage, the logframe is refined, and indicators are provided with

[8] Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD-DAC https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2754804.pdf
[9] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-41_en_0.pdf

[10] This does not apply to actions implemented exclusively through calls for proposals.

baselines and target values[11]. During implementation, the logframe must be used as a basis to monitor the intervention and must be reviewed regularly (and updated as needed). OPSYS will support this process by allowing to encode logframes at action level, during the design phase, and at intervention level during the implementation phase.

- For budget support, the **intervention logic table** is drafted at design stage, and is completed before the signature of the financing agreement. It includes the performance indicators that are used within variable tranches.
- For blending operations, **a list of indicators** is to be provided in the application form for blending facilities. This is included and possibly expanded in the subsequent contract with the concerned IFI.

In this Handbook, the term "logframe" is used to encompass all three types of monitoring frameworks. IPs report against the indicators set out in the logframe.

Monitoring systems (or monitoring arrangements) comprise monitoring-related elements at all levels of an intervention. Within an intervention, this means the approaches to data collection and analysis, the supporting tools and IT systems, the information and communication mechanisms, a budget, the stakeholders involved and the division of responsibilities. Monitoring systems are set up early during the intervention and should build on local and partners' systems as far as possible, to avoid duplication of efforts[12]. It is a good practice that IPs describe all the elements of a monitoring system in a **monitoring plan**.

1.4 Reporting on results

Monitoring systems are aimed at measuring progress on results, and ultimately at reporting on the latter, whether internally, for management and learning purposes, or externally for accountability and communication purposes. Reporting on results is a periodic exercise aimed at collecting, verifying, aggregating and presenting information on results using a results framework.

Results framework

It is a tool used to collect and measure results achieved against strategic objectives. It is used for institutional reporting to show the collective achievements of interventions.

[11] Baselines and targets are no longer mandatory in the logframe matrix of the Action Document as shown in the AD template included in the DEVCO Companion

[12] More information will be included in the forthcoming guidelines on Internal Monitoring for Results.

The EU Results Framework

In recent years, the European Commission has enhanced its focus on results-oriented management across the institution. A milestone was set in 2015 with the establishment of the **EU Results Framework (EU RF)**, to report on the results of EU development cooperation **at corporate level**.

Focus on results at global level

The EU efforts take place in a wider context, in which development organisations aim at setting up results-based management systems that allow for accountability, communication, steering and learning. The OECD Development Assistance Committee, of which the European Union is member, adopted since February 2004 in Marrakech, the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) principles. These were revised in 2019 into the new Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR) (DCD/DAC(2019)37/FINAL) to reflect the changing context for development co-operation and the broader set of actors involved, and help organisations to address the recurrent challenges they have been facing in practice.

The EU RF responds to the commitment to strengthen results monitoring and reporting and to enhance accountability, transparency and visibility of EU aid[13]. The EU RF underwent its first revision in 2018[14]; the aim was to align the framework with the evolving context of international cooperation at EU and international level. The revised EU RF incorporates the international objectives defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[15] and the New European Consensus on Development[16] and thus offers a tool to illustrate the EU's contribution to the progress of partner countries towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In an annual exercise, EU-funded interventions report results information, some of which is aggregated against a set of indicators included in the EU Results Framework. The EU RF aggregates results of interventions funded through the external assistance financing instruments managed by DG DEVCO[17] and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) managed by DG NEAR.

In addition to this, other specific results frameworks have been set up, such as those created to report on the Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA PF), the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), a pillar of the European External Investment Plan (EIP), the EU Emergency Trust

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[13] Increasing the Impact of the EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, COM(2011)637.

[14] A Revised EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New European Consensus on Development, SWD(2018)444final

[15] UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1

[16] Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission: The New European Consensus on Development, 2017/C 210/01, OJEU of 30 June 2017.

[17] The European Development Fund (EDF), the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the programmable part of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation and the Instrument for Greenland

Fund for Africa[18], the Bekou and Madad Trust Funds. Although specific, such results framework are set to contribute to the EU RF whenever possible through common indicators[19].

As shown in the diagram below, the EU RF is structured around three levels:

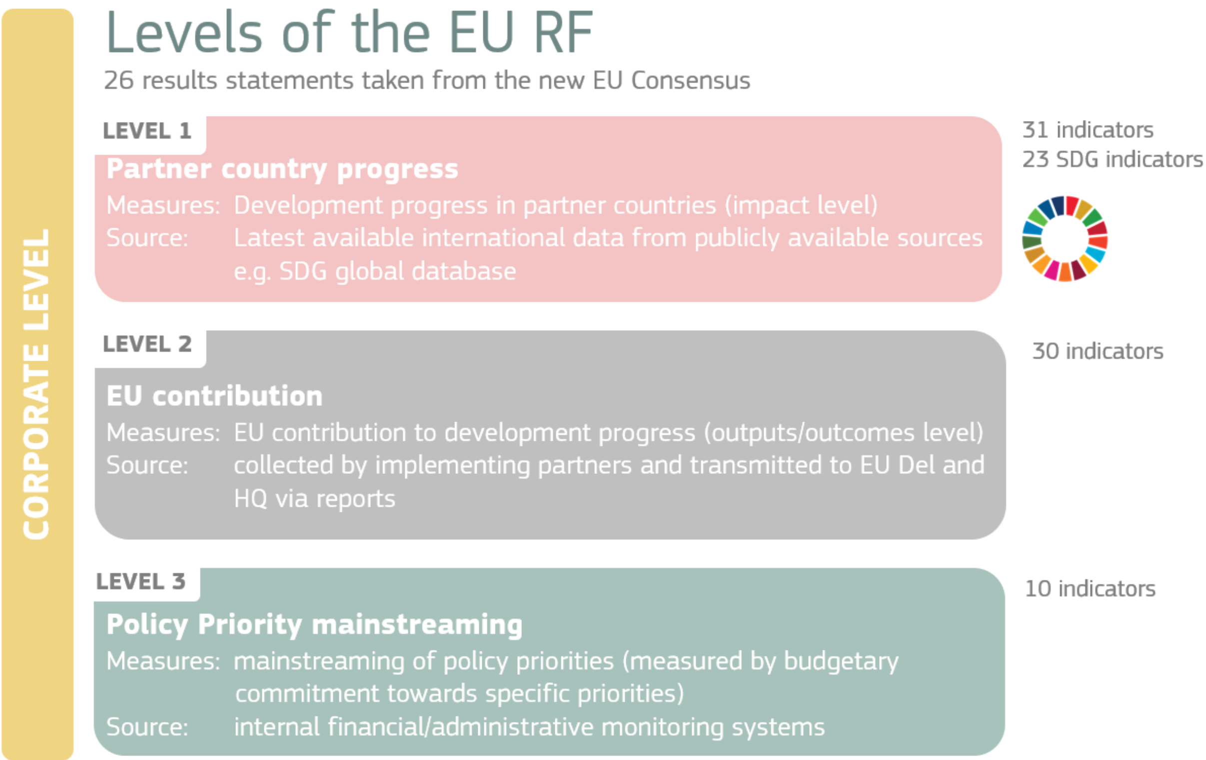

Figure 1. Structure of the EU Results Framework

Level 1 tracks **development progress** in partner countries: i.e. the medium/long term development impact achieved in partnership and collaboration with partner governments, donors and other development actors including the private sector and civil society. At this level, progress is by nature slow, and results do not directly assess the performance of EU international cooperation but rather give the operational context in which the EU provides external assistance. Data source: existing international databases.

Level 2 focuses on **development outcomes and outputs** to which EU-funded interventions contributed, in collaboration with partner governments and other funding providers. Level 2 results that are most relevant for internal decision-making, accountability, communication and lesson

[18] https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/results-monitoring-and-evaluation_en
[19] As an example, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) contributes to the EU Results Framework through its EUTF common output indicators. The EUTF list of common output indicators aggregates results at activity level from the three windows of the EUTF: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa windows. Each window has its own Monitoring and Learning System which enables to collect, gather and analyse results. Results gathered contribute to relevant EU Results Framework indicators whenever possible. In order to ensure coherence, the matching between the EUTF for Africa common indicators and the EU Results Framework is done by the EU TF monitoring teams at Headquarters with DEVCO 04 support.

learning are aggregated at the corporate level. Data source: results reported by IPs and by Commission OMs. **It is at this level that ROM system provides support to results reporting.**

Level 3 captures **organisational performance**, focusing on policy priority mainstreaming as measured by budgetary commitments directed towards specific priorities (e.g. human development, gender equality, nutrition). Data source: EU internal monitoring systems.

2 MONITORING AND REPORTING ALONG THE INTERVENTION CYCLE

This chapter presents:

- The main monitoring and reporting activities performed by Commission services and Implementing Partners along the intervention CYCLE
- The services provided by ROM Contractors and their timing

2.1 Monitoring and reporting along the intervention cycle

The monitoring and reporting activities of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR evolve throughout the cycle of the intervention, as illustrated in the graph below:

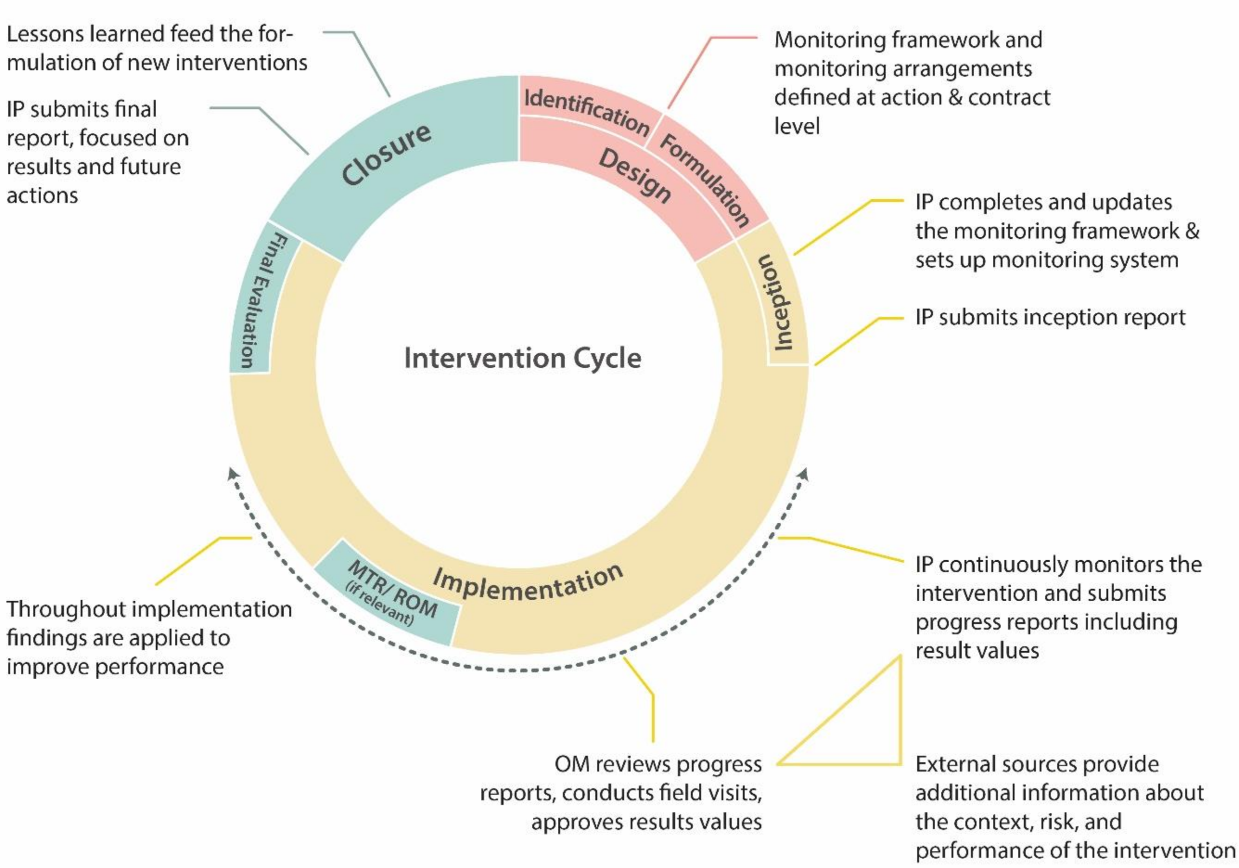

Figure 2. Monitoring along the cycle of the intervention

At design stage

The shaping of the monitoring and reporting systems starts at the design stage, following a context analysis and the review of the Indicative Programming Documents. These are the thematic Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes (MIP), National Indicative Programmes (NIP), or Regional Indicative Programmes (RIP), which contain the strategic overall and specific objectives. At the level of the action, these translate into expected results at impact and outcome levels and are accompanied by relevant indicators. While designing an action, the OM in charge:

- Drafts the intervention logic and the logframe matrix[20] referring, if needed, to the existing internal guidance on results and indicators for the specific sector[21] ;
- Flags the indicators that can contribute to the EU RF.
- Completes the risk assessment matrix.
- Designs the overall performance and result monitoring arrangements.
- Identifies or selects IPs (e.g. assessing proposals).

This process is supported internally by the Quality Review Group (QRG) meetings, where all Action Documents are screened and approved.

As soon as the IP is known, the OM can assess their monitoring and reporting capacity. Depending on the type of contract, the logframe matrix and monitoring arrangements can be negotiated in further details before contract signature.

At inception stage

At this stage, the IP establishes a monitoring and reporting system that covers the agreed intervention logic, including expected results and related indicators, as well as elements related to the context and risk factors. Assessing the quality of the monitoring and reporting systems of each IP is a key task of EU OM, in view of providing support where required. It is also crucial to avail of a reliable basis for the OM's own monitoring and reporting tasks, increasingly focused on results[22]. The monitoring and reporting system established by the IPs is presented in the inception report that is submitted for approval to the OM.

When several donors provide support (in particular budget support), there is an overall monitoring and evaluation framework agreed by government and donors and specific monitoring arrangements are developed. This may be the case also for other implementing modalities, like blending (i.e. combining EU grants with loans and/or credits from other public bodies and private sector entities) or other delegated management interventions. Particularly for these cases, the inception stage is crucial to establish monitoring and reporting processes that comply with the requirements of all involved donors and parties.

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[20] A functionality for this task is being developed in OPSYS
[21] https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/results-and-indicators
[22] More information will be included in the forthcoming guidelines on Internal Monitoring for Results.

At later stages of implementation

IPs monitor interventions through their own systems and procedures, which can differ significantly depending on the type of organisation (e.g. partner country, international organisation or Member State agency, civil society organisation…). They compile progress and completion reports, using the agreed monitoring framework as a reference. Progress reports by IPs describe the implementation of the intervention, including results achieved, difficulties encountered, and potential deviations from plans. In this process, they report specifically on result values on a regular basis, according to the schedule specified in their contract. Reports are submitted to the OM of the intervention, for approval.

For many interventions, the partner country plays a central role in the monitoring process, either as the contracting authority or as the main IP. This is particularly the case for programmes in support of country sector policies, including sector budget support programmes, for which internal monitoring functions cover the implementation of the sector policy reforms, the achievement of related targets, the formulation and implementation of the public budget and its allocation to sectors, policy dialogue and capacity development.

When the partner country does not play such a central role, they should nonetheless be informed of progress at the appropriate level (local authorities, central authorities). Steering committees can play an important role for discussing progress.

Commission services monitor implementation based on progress and completion reports from IPs, crosschecking the information presented in the reports with data from other sources (e.g. direct observation through field visits, ROM reviews, evaluations, project steering committee meetings with key stakeholders). Reporting on result values, as submitted by the IPs, are subject to quality checks, and once validated can be aggregated to report at higher levels through results frameworks.

Monitoring by the Commission services relies also on policy dialogue with a partner country and, at the same time, contributes to policy dialogue, helping to identify areas where action is needed.

Reporting at intervention-level feeds into institutional reports at the level of special instruments (e.g. EIP, EFSD, Trust Funds), at the level of the Directorate or EU Delegation (i.e. External Assistance Monitoring Reports – EAMR), and at Corporate level (i.e. Annual Activity Report, Annual report on the implementation of the EU external action, Programme statement on operational expenditure).

Findings and recommendations gathered through internal monitoring are used to improve the intervention's performance. In addition, the data collected through monitoring lays the foundation for evaluations at the level of the intervention, country/sector/theme, or at strategic level. Interventions can be subject to a mid-term evaluation by the Commission services.

At closure stage

IPs submit a final report that focuses on results and lessons learned, as well as ideas and recommendations for post-intervention work.

Interventions are mostly subject to a final or ex-post evaluation by the Commission services.

2.2 External support through the ROM system

What is ROM?

ROM is a key component of the monitoring and reporting systems of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR. It is external since it is contracted to external and independent Contractors and Experts, but it complements the internal monitoring performed by the EU OMs as well as the continuous monitoring by IPs as described in the previous sections. In their work, ROM Contractors use monitoring reports, evaluations and analyses produced by IPs, and build on what already exists, avoiding duplications.

The ROM system was first set up in 2001 to support the devolution of management of the EU external action. It was substantially reformed in 2015 to better suit the accountability needs of the Commission. Among other changes, the 2015 reform aimed at improving the quality of ROM reviews through 1) systematic use of specialised thematic and sector expertise, 2) longer field missions and 3) the introduction of a robust external Quality Assurance system (QA). Finally, the reform introduced ROM missions to support Delegations and Headquarters services in their results reporting tasks in line with the process of establishing and informing the EU RF.

The 2019 ROM system introduces some changes to the way of working, including:

- A **new service** supporting Commission services at design stage.
- Larger scope of ROM Reviews, in terms of their **timing** and **outputs**.
- Greater focus on **exploiting synergies** across different strands of work, and on learning.
- **New methodological guidance** for answering Monitoring Questions (MQs).

What services do ROM Contractors provide?

Three main services are now provided by the ROM Contractors.

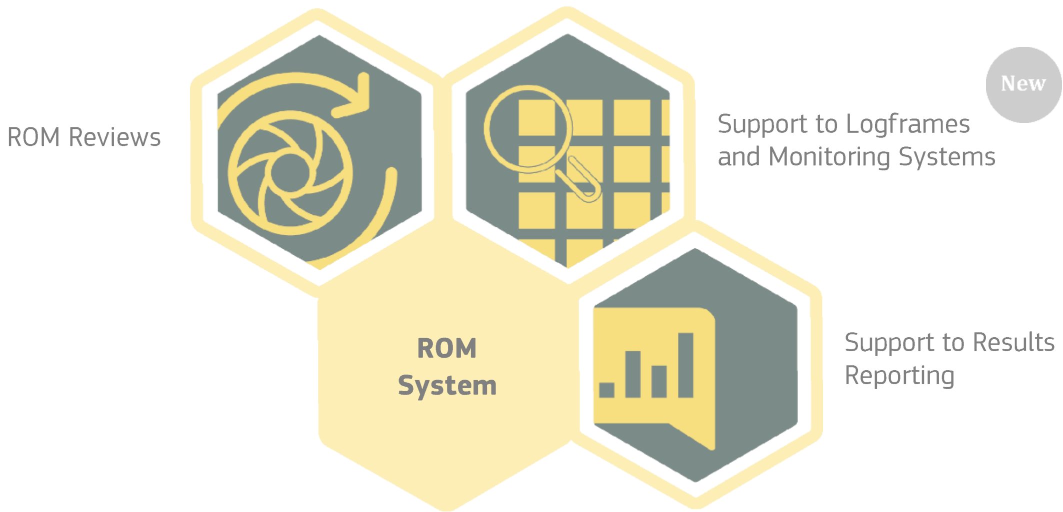


Figure 3. The ROM services

ROM reviews. It provides an external, objective and impartial assessment of selected ongoing interventions. ROM Experts assess interventions according to the four DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as well as four distinctive criteria dealing with aspects linked to the quality of the intervention logic and monitoring systems, the coordination, complementarity and EU added value, cross-cutting issues and visibility. ROM Experts analyse documentation and conduct field missions where they interview, to the extent possible, all parties involved, including beneficiaries. The ROM review methodology includes a standard set of MQs that are used to structure the analysis of documentation and empirical data. At the end of the mission, ROM Experts provide recommendations to improve project implementation, which are useful for both OMs and IPs. The scope of this service has been enlarged to include **three new products**:

Scope: Interventions in project modality and blending (NEW). Budget support interventions are not covered by the ROM reviews

- ROM Reviews of blending operations
- ROM Reviews at early stage
- ROM reviews at closing stage

For a full description of methodological and operational standards for ROM reviews, see chapters 4 and 5.

ROM Review versus Evaluation

ROM reviews are *different from evaluations*. Evaluations are in-depth assessments, which offer a much deeper and broader analysis. In specific cases, a ROM review may lead to the conclusion that a mid-term evaluation is necessary to define the approach and conditions to re-orient an intervention (without excluding the option of abandoning it).

Support to Logframes & Monitoring Systems. With this new service, ROM Experts provide technical support to Units and Delegations in the formulation of intervention logics and related logical framework matrices (logframes) as well as in the design of monitoring and reporting systems at intervention level. This support can also facilitate the matching with EU RF indicators if relevant. This is a remote service, carried out through phone calls or video conferences among the OM, the ROM Expert in charge and – if required by the OM – the IP(s). The output of this service is a revised set of documents that becomes part of the contract between the Commission and the IP (or the starting point for implementation if the revision takes place shortly after contract signature).

Scope: Interventions in project modality

For a full description of this new service by the ROM Contractors, see chapter 7.

Support to results reporting at institutional and intervention level. Within the annual results reporting exercise, ROM Experts ensure the encoding and quality control of data included in interventions' logframes, for a sample of interventions. They then support the aggregation of intervention-level results into the EU Results Framework and provide an indirect support to other result frameworks, such as the Trust Funds ones, to ensure coherence, in aggregating some of their results into the EU RF.

Scope: Interventions in project modality, blending operations and budget support

For a full description of the support to results reporting, see chapter 8.

When do ROM services take place?

The ROM external support takes place throughout the **cycle of the intervention** as shown in the figure below.

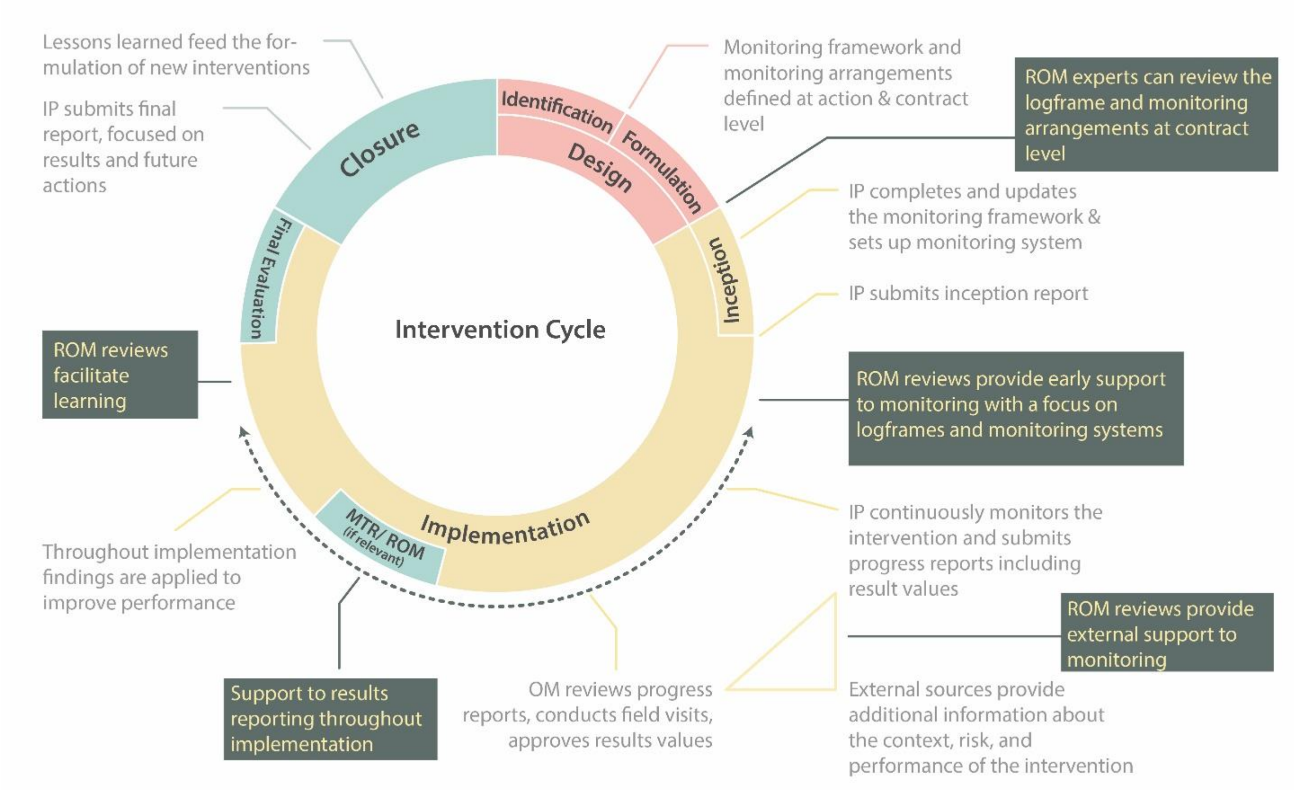


Figure 4. ROM along the cycle of the intervention

At design stage

ROM Experts assist OMs in defining intervention logics and logframes; they suggest improvements to the monitoring and reporting systems proposed by IPs, and may provide further technical input as required. **This is a new ROM service, provided on demand and remotely, by a selected group of ROM Experts. As a general rule, support is provided before the start of the intervention.**

During the first stages of implementation

As a new product, ROM reviews cover a sample of EU funded interventions **in the first stages of implementation (3rd-6th to 12th month depending on the actual duration of the project)**. These are ROM reviews missions, aimed at tackling potential design weaknesses and implementation delays as early as possible in the project cycle, to ensure a smoother implementation thereafter. At this stage, ROM reviews provide specific support in confirming or updating intervention logics, in producing revamped logframe matrices (including baselines and targets), in reviewing the monitoring system of the IP, in assessing risks and mitigation measures, and in fine-tuning the calendar of activities with a view to improving the performance of the intervention across the different assessment criteria.

At later stages of implementation

ROM Reviews take place on **a needs basis** in the following cases:

- Interventions flagged as having implementation problems through the Commission's internal reporting systems. In this case, the ROM review assists the OM in addressing the main problems, identifying causes and options for solution and making recommendations for follow-up actions.
- Other interventions for which the Commission requests a ROM review **(on demand)**. This covers interventions which could not be visited by the EU OM or for which the necessary sector expertise at Delegation-HQ level may not be available at a given point of time.
- **Blending operations** for which the Commission identifies a need for ROM review. ROM reviews on blending operations are limited to a certain number of selected operations per year and focus especially on assessing the added value of the EU contribution and the performance of blending interventions in terms of socio-economic development.

When to request a ROM Review

Interventions are not monitored through ROM reviews on a regular, annual basis but only when there is an **actual need for an external expert opinion** in support of the regular monitoring by EU operational services. Interventions are usually subject to ROM Review once during their lifetime; exceptions can be made, in particular if a previous ROM review showed significant performance issues, or if internal monitoring reveals prolonged problems/issues/constraints. OMs requesting a second ROM review on a given intervention must explain the reasoning behind their request.

On a yearly basis

Results data for a sample of EU funded interventions are encoded and quality controlled every year as part of the annual exercise of results reporting. The purpose is to ensure quality of data in view of institutional reporting as well as evaluations.

In this context, ROM Contractors ensure the encoding and quality control of values of the indicators included in the interventions' logframes. Such quality controls include amongst others: ensuring that

the latest available values related to logframe indicators are encoded and documented in sources of verification, verifying calculations of EU RF values and ensuring that indicators are correctly linked to an indicator from the EU results framework.

In the transition phase towards the full roll out of OPSYS, this service lays the foundation for regular monitoring and reporting on results by IPs and OMs through OPSYS[23].

Towards the end of implementation

ROM reviews with the purpose of supporting project management should not take place during the last 8 months of activities, to allow enough time to implement the Experts' recommendations. However, in specific cases, a ROM review towards the end of project implementation can be useful. The focus in this case is on lessons learned and recommendations for the future, in view of preparing a follow-up phase.

A joint effort to track results

The table below presents the main functions needed to ensure a focus on results in the EU external assistance, with related responsibilities, timing and rationale.

	Who is responsible?	When is it done?	Why is it necessary?
Design of logframes	EU OMs[24]	At design stage	To make sure that the intervention logic is coherent and a solid basis for monitoring and reporting of results
Design of monitoring systems	IPs	At inception phase	To organise proper monitoring and reporting on performance and results
Internal Monitoring	IPs	On-going process	To check if the implementation is on track, and take remedial action when necessary To report on results
	EU OMs	On-going process	To follow up progress and performance for operational steering, contract management and administration. To report on portfolio performance for strategic decision-making To report on results

[23] In OPSYS the OMs have to provide access to the Lead Implementing Partner/Contractor (the leader of the consortium) for the portfolio of interventions for which they have been contracted. Once the Lead IP access the intervention, they can encode the information on the logframe and submit it for approval. Once approved, the current values are encoded to monitor the progress. This task can be delegated to an Implementing Partner/Expert, nonetheless the Lead Implementing Partner/Contractor remains responsible for the submission of the values to the Operational Manager. In view to harmonise and improve the quality of indicators used in all logframes, OPSYS facilitates the process by suggesting pre-encoded indicators to operational managers and implementing partners.

[24] For Calls for Proposals the logframes are designed by the applicant.

	Who is responsible?	When is it done?	Why is it necessary?
ROM support to logframes and monitoring systems	Managed by DEVCO and NEAR Headquarters; performed by external ROM Experts	At design stage	To support the adoption of quality logframes and monitoring and reporting systems proposed by IP
ROM reviews		At early stage of implementation	To improve logframes and monitoring systems
		In the implementation phase	To provide recommendations for project management and contribute to learning
ROM support to results reporting		Once a year	To support the results reporting exercise at intervention and institutional level To facilitate accountability, and communication on results
Evaluation	At the level of the intervention, country, sector, theme: Managed by EU OMs in Delegation/HQ, conducted by external evaluators	At particular milestones: mid-term, final or ex-post	Provide recommendations for project management based on in-depth analysis Identification of lessons learned Accountability for results (impact)
	Strategic Evaluations: Managed by HQ Evaluation Units, conducted by external evaluators	A certain number of evaluations per year according to a multi-annual work plan	Provide input for strategic decision-making on country, sector or global level and especially for programming Accountability for results of public expenditure

Table 1. A joint effort to track results

3 ACTORS IN THE ROM SYSTEM

This chapter describes the actors as well as the organisational setup and governance structure of the ROM system

The main target group for ROM services is European Commission staff, and more specifically:

- DG DEVCO and DG NEAR operational staff in charge of designing and monitoring EU-funded interventions both in Headquarters and Delegations.
- DG DEVCO and DG NEAR Headquarters services in charge of reporting on results and ensuring accountability, transparency and communication to stakeholders (e.g. Member States, EU citizens, other EU and non-EU Institutions);
- Management of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR.

By promoting a sharper focus on the quality of design, implementation and results, ROM services also benefit IPs, partner countries, and beneficiaries of EU-funded interventions.

Throughout the ROM process, Contractors interact with all these stakeholders, each of them playing a specific role.

In the following sections, the main actors playing a role in the ROM system are introduced. A rapid view of the changes introduced by the 2020 edition is presented below.

What´s new?

- The management of ROM contracts in DG DEVCO has been centralised and is now part of the portfolio of DEVCO 04 – Evaluation and Results
- DG DEVCO and DG NEAR signed two ROM service contracts
- Asia and Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, and Centrally managed thematic interventions are now covered by the same contract
- The expert category “medium” has been introduced
- The experts involved in the new service at design level come from a specific pool and cannot be in charge of the ROM review of the same interventions

3.1 Commission Stakeholders

ROM Coordination Units and teams

Commission services lead the process of implementation and delivery of ROM services. In particular, Units DEVCO 04 – Evaluation and Results, and NEAR A4 – MFF, Programming and Evaluation, are responsible for the ROM system and for the operational management of the ROM contracts. They are the ROM Coordination Units and are referred to as such in this Handbook.

In support to the ROM Coordination Units, a Quality Assurance Contractor (QA) is responsible for assessing the quality of deliverables provided by the ROM Contractors (ROM reviews only) and making recommendations for improvement. The ROM Coordination Units in both DEVCO and NEAR benefit from technical assistance from other external Contractors, which can be involved to different extents in the coordination and the methodological supervision of the ROM system and in learning activities. The operational managers of the ROM contracts and the consultants involved in the ROM coordination form the **ROM Coordinating Team**.

The role of the ROM Coordinating Teams includes:

- The overall coordination of the ROM system, including launch of the exercise, approval of planning, approval of Experts, deviations from standard procedures and *ad hoc services*
- Taking the lead in all methodological and learning issues related to the ROM services, in close cooperation with representatives of thematic and geographic units;
- Managing the quality assurance of all deliverables, including through the steering of the dedicated contract and through the implementation of corrective measures.

The ROM Coordinating Teams organise regular meetings with ROM Contractors to clarify and, if necessary, adapt the rules of the ROM system described in this Handbook.

The ROM Coordinating Teams liaise with the Contractors for the day-to-day management of the activities and contracts. They approve the ROM work plan for ROM contracts for which they are responsible, including the CVs of the Expert(s) proposed for each assignment. They ensure methodological consistency across contracts and receive all the implementation reports and consolidated analyses. Together with the designated representative of the Contractor, they discuss QA findings, as well as other feedback received on services and deliverables, and conduct an annual review of the performance of the Experts.

The ROM Coordinating Teams liaise with Headquarters Units and Delegations receiving ROM missions and remote services and with OMs and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Focal Points. They intervene in case of serious disagreement between a Delegation or Unit and a ROM Expert/ROM Contractor on the findings presented in a ROM report. In such a case, additional QA services may be requested.

M&E Focal Points and ROM Blending Focal Points

Each Delegation and Headquarters operational unit appoints an **M&E Focal Point**. In Headquarters, M&E Focal Points in thematic and geographic (regional) units deal with projects centrally managed by their services. The ROM Blending Focal Points in the units in charge of blending in DEVCO and NEAR (currently DEVCO C3/C7 and NEAR A3) have an advisory role for all ROM reviews on blending operations for their DG, and facilitate the communication with the Financial Institutions (IFI and DFI) implementing the blending operation.

M&E Focal Points ensure appropriate information flows and good coordination among all actors involved in the selection of interventions to benefit from ROM services. M&E Focal Points also make sure that the services provided to their teams respond to the needs in an efficient way.

OMs

OMs are Commission staff members (and their established hierarchies) managing and monitoring EU-funded interventions. They can be based both in Headquarters (for centrally managed interventions) and in Delegations (for devolved actions). They are the direct beneficiaries of most ROM services for which they play a role in requesting the service, contributing to the ROM missions' work plan, offering guidance and insight to the Experts, facilitating the contact with the implementing partners and other stakeholders, providing feedback on the results of the mission.

3.2 Implementing partners and other stakeholders

Implementing partners

IPs are the entities in charge of implementing EU-funded interventions. As key actors, they are involved in ROM reviews as well as in other ROM services to the extent required by the OM. They benefit from ROM services as they are supported to better implement their interventions.

Other key stakeholders

When preparing and implementing a ROM review, ROM Contractors and their Experts have to consult other key stakeholders. These include the final beneficiaries and other actors in the area/sector of implementation.

3.3 ROM contractors

DG DEVCO and DG NEAR signed two contracts each for the implementation of ROM services under their supervision.

Under DG DEVCO

Both lots cover interventions financed by the European Development Fund (EDF) and the General Budget of the European Union.

LOT 1: Asia and Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, and Centrally Managed Thematic Interventions

Lot 1 covers

- Interventions in Asia and Pacific (national, regional and intra-ACP)
- Interventions in Latin America and Caribbean (national, regional and intra-ACP)
- Interventions centrally managed by DEVCO's thematic and horizontal directorates

LOT 2: Sub-Saharan Africa

Lot 2 covers

- Interventions devolved to EU Delegations in Sub-Saharan Africa (national, regional, intra-ACP and Pan-African)

- Regional interventions centrally managed by DEVCO geographic directorates covering Africa (currently D & E)
- Thematic interventions devolved to Sub-Saharan African Delegations

A more complete description of the allocation of interventions across the two lots is provided in the Terms of Reference.

Under DG NEAR

Both lots cover interventions financed by the General Budget of the European Union.

LOT 3: Neighbourhood region

Lot 3 covers

- Interventions implemented in Neighbourhood South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Palestine)
- Interventions implemented in Neighbourhood East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine)
- Interventions implemented in Russian Federation and EU Member States

(National, regional, interregional and Cross-Border-Cooperation, either single or multi-country)

LOT 4: Enlargement region

Lot 4 covers

- Interventions implemented in Pre-Accession beneficiary countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey)

(National, regional and Cross-Border-Cooperation, either single or multi-country).

Main responsibilities

ROM Contractors in each Lot are responsible for providing the necessary expertise to undertake the services under the ROM system, for managing the Experts' recruitment, training and deployment, the mission' logistics, the quality control of the entire process and outputs as well as any *ad hoc* technical assistance input which may be required by the Commission services in the framework of the Contract.

ROM Contractors participate in regular meetings with the ROM Coordinating Teams.

At their own expense, **ROM Contractors organise training (in person or online) for all ROM Experts** under their responsibility. The programmes and materials prepared by the Contractors must be in line with guidelines[25] and/or training material made available by Commission services. The Commission may propose training material and training packages on various topics, with particular

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

[25] In particular the guidelines provided for the MQ provided in Annexes 2 and 3.

attention paid to topics related to results reporting and support at design stage for logframes and monitoring and reporting systems.

Commission services may request “special reports”, i.e. additional services to those described in the contracts’ Terms of Reference. Any additional reports, analyses, monitoring missions requested by DEVCO or NEAR services will need to be approved by the respective ROM Coordinating Team and described in *ad hoc* Terms of Reference. The Contractor’s Core Team will assist the concerned service in drafting the Terms of Reference. These Terms of Reference, to be approved by the ROM Coordinating Team, will include the main objectives of the services to be provided, the expected results and deliverables, the timeframe and a description of the inputs required (e.g. man/days, travel, per diems, and venue) including the related cost estimates. After approval, the Contractor will ensure that the tasks foreseen in the Terms of Reference are implemented and communicate necessary revisions in a timely fashion. The ROM Coordinating Team will approve any product before final delivery.

Examples of “special reports” produced recently include:

- A study on results from ROM Review of selected Trust Fund projects in 2017-2019
- A paper on Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes
- A presentation on the link between design and performance in selected projects

Contractors produce inception, progress, and final implementation reports as described in their respective contract.

The box below provides some details on the Contractors’ organisational set-up as detailed in the respective Terms of Reference and tender proposals.

ROM Contractors' organizational setup

Each ROM Contractor sets up a **Core Team** of full-time Experts (220 working days/year, Key and Non-Key). Core Teams consist of a mix of Senior, Medium and Junior Experts as well as Project Assistants. The number of Core Team Experts engaged in each contract, their category, profile and tasks are detailed in the technical specifications of each contract.

The operational base of the core team is Brussels. Each contract indicates the minimum number of Experts that need to be based in Brussels. This includes the Team Leader, the Deputy Team Leader, Junior Expert(s) and Project Assistant(s). Other members of the Core Team can work from home or from an office in their place of residence, provided they guarantee their presence in Brussels when required.

Core Team Experts implement ROM services for their area of expertise and are responsible for:

- The overall management of the contract, and the quality of the services provided (this is the primary responsibility of the Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader).
- The internal quality control as well as training and transfer of knowledge to Non-Core Team Experts.
- The preparation of consolidated reports.

The **Core Team** works together, building synergies across the respective areas of responsibility with a view to ensuring that all ROM services are effectively interrelated.

As in the previous ROM contracts, Senior Experts take the lead in the implementation of ROM services and are required to have a solid profile in international development and cooperation, technical expertise in one or more sectors, and extensive experience in project management. To revamp the pool of Experts, this cycle of ROM contracts reintroduces the category of Medium Expert – with a minimum of six years' experience in development cooperation.

The core team will work closely with **ROM Experts**, i.e. short-term Experts assigned for the implementation of ROM services not carried out by the Core Team Experts. Their normal place of posting is their home residence or office in the place of residence.

For specific requests based on ad hoc terms of reference, agreed with the ROM Coordination Units, ROM Contractors may need to mobilise experts in other fields who will contribute to the implementation of activities (e.g. translators, Experts in the fields of data analysis and statistics).

All Non-Key Experts proposed by the Contractor must be approved by the Contracting Authority in writing before they start implementing their assignment.

3.4 Contractor for ROM Quality Assurance

DG DEVCO signed a separate service contract to perform quality assurance (QA) of the ROM review process. The QA Contractor assists the Commission in ensuring a high standard of quality across the ROM contracts. The QA Contractor screens ROM review deliverables and performs shadow missions and field missions on a sample of ROM reviews agreed with the Commission services. Additional services include *ad hoc* studies and workshops. QA findings provide the basis for improvement of the ROM system where necessary.

The tasks of the QA Contractor are described in chapter 6.

3.5 Governance

ROM contracts are steered by DEVCO Unit 04 "Evaluation and Results" and NEAR Unit A4. DEVCO Unit R5 and NEAR Unit R4 are responsible for financial and contractual matters.

DEVCO 04 and NEAR A4 organise periodical **ROM steering committee meetings** (jointly, if appropriate). With a view to having close steering of the ROM exercises, these meetings should have a minimum quarterly periodicity.

The purpose of the ROM steering committee meetings is to monitor the rolling implementation of the ROM work plan and to facilitate close cooperation among all those involved in the ROM exercises. The participants will report on policy, technical and contractual matters to the meeting seeking advice and/or decision, *inter alia*, on project activities, quality and conformity of outputs, timing, financial, communication aspects, etc. The meetings are executive, being DEVCO 04 and NEAR A4 the services with the authority to establish agendas, *ad hoc* participation, minutes and to adopt implementation decisions on the implementation of the ROM, as well as the authority for specific contractual matters.

Participation at the ROM steering committee meetings is compulsory for

- ROM Coordinating Teams and Management of the ROM Coordination Units
- Appointed representatives from geographic and thematic Directorates
- M&E focal points network from DG DEVCO geographic and thematic Directorates, if different from previous ones
- ROM contractors/core team (Project Manager, Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, etc.)

On an *ad hoc* basis, ROM steering committee meetings could also be open to:

- ROM Quality Assurance Contractor
- EU Delegation M&E focal points who might be available at the time/venue of the meeting
- Other technical assistance services supporting the ROM Coordination Unit

In any case, the ROM Coordination Units share approved minutes of the ROM steering committee meetings among those mentioned above (participants and potential participants).

Below a figure representing the governance of the ROM system:

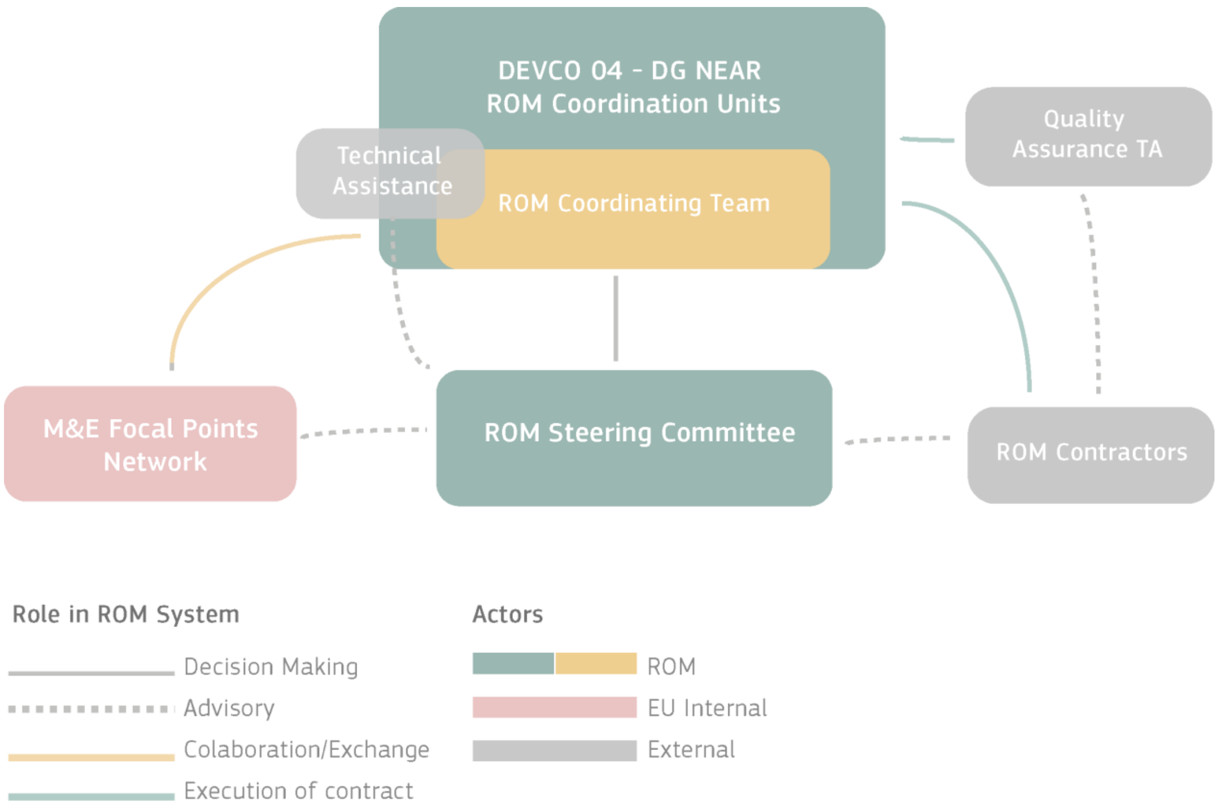


Figure 5. Governance of the ROM system

4 ROM REVIEWS

This chapter describes the main service available through the ROM contracts: the **ROM reviews of ongoing projects**. The chapter covers the entire ROM review process, focusing on:

- the elaboration of the **work plan**,
- the **implementation** of ROM reviews, and
- the **reporting phase**, which ends with the delivery of the final version of the ROM report to the Commission services

Interventions that benefit from ROM reviews are **ongoing interventions** that receive the external advice of a monitoring Expert, with relevant sectoral expertise, on their current performance, or on the foundations of their future performance (coherent design and well-structured monitoring system).

ROM reviews follow a well-tested and IT supported **process** which is represented graphically by the figure in the next page.

The process for the planning and implementation of ROM reviews is repeated at each ROM exercise. It consists of steps that take place once a year, at the beginning (planning) or at the end (lessons learning) of the operational year, and of steps that are repeated for each ROM review (desk, field and reporting phase). These are described in detail in the following sections. A rapid view of the changes introduced by the 2020 edition in the ROM Review process is presented below.

What´s new for ROM Reviews?

- Introduction of ROM reviews at **early stage** of implementation (on a representative sample) and at **late stage** of implementation
- Simplified "reasons for ROM request"
- Revised standards for budgeting the missions
- Group missions reintroduced
- Revised Monitoring Questions and guidance
- Revised templates for reporting and QC
- OMs do not have to encode a follow-up plan in the ROM Module but remain fully responsible for following up the ROM reviews' recommendations

The revised Monitoring Questions are presented in Annex 1, the new guidance for answering the MQ for standard ROM Reviews is presented in Annex 2, whilst the one for blending ROM reviews is presented in Annex 3. The revised templates for reporting (MQ and ROM Report) are presented in Annex 4, with a new template for lessons learning presented in Annex 5. Finally, the templates for internal Quality Control of ROM reviews are presented in Annex 6.

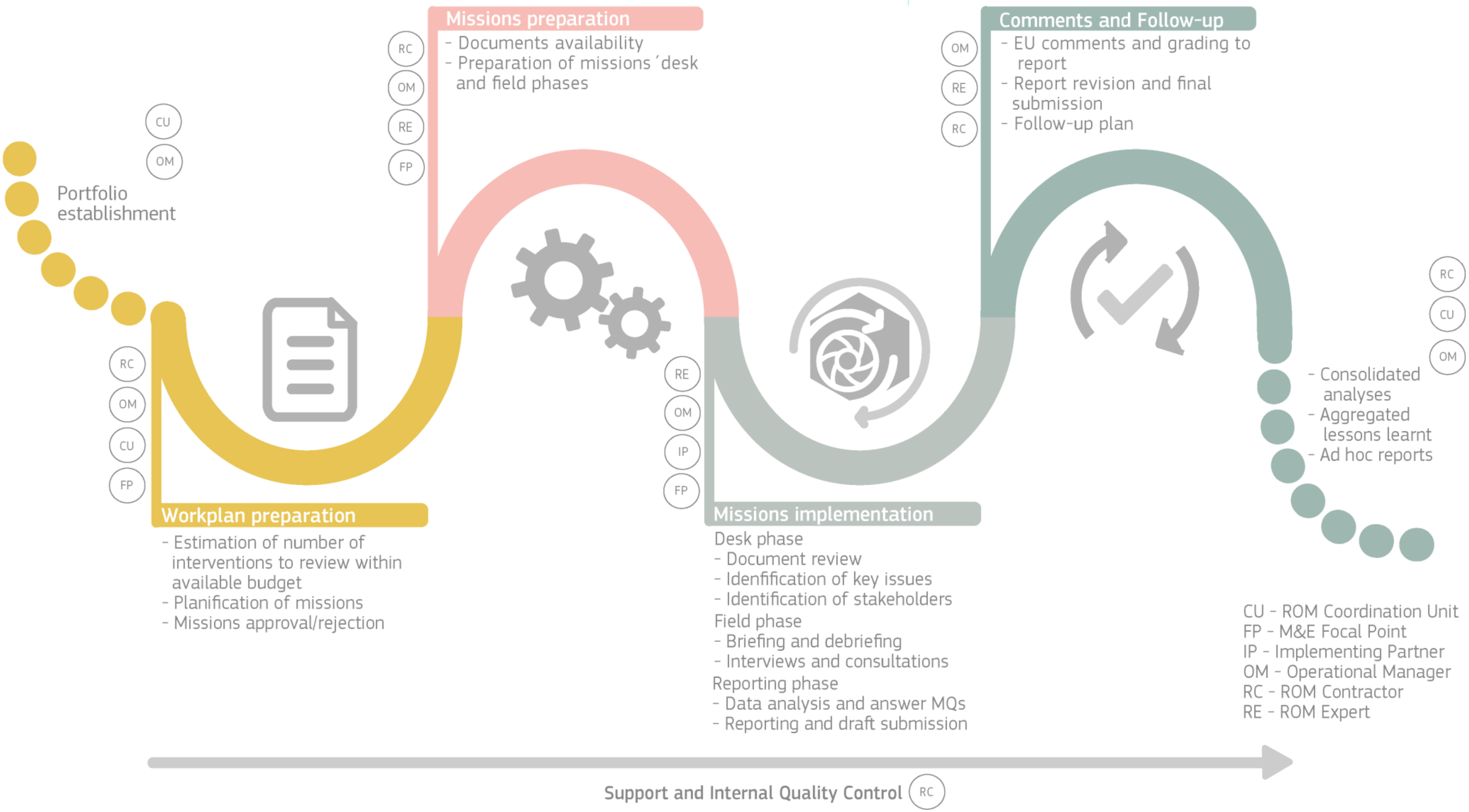


Figure 6. ROM Review Process

All steps involve a joint effort by the actors described in the introductory chapters:

- **OMs** provide information to plan and implement the missions, and give guidance and feedback.
- **M&E Focal Points** facilitate the process at Delegation level and thematic / geographic level in HQ.
- **ROM Contractors** take the lead in planning and organising the missions and quality controlling the deliverables.
- **ROM Experts** conduct the ROM review missions and draft the corresponding reports.
- **IPs** contribute to the ROM mission and benefit from the ROM exercise, which helps them to improve the performance of their interventions.
- **ROM Coordination Units** support the exercise, approve missions and provide methodological and technical guidance through the ROM Coordinating Teams.

Below the description of the process steps.

4.1 The portfolio of interventions for ROM Review

The ROM exercise starts with the establishment of the portfolio of interventions to be submitted to the Contractors for ROM reviews. This is an internal process that involves several services of the Commission, piloted by the ROM Coordination Units, and supported by increasingly integrated information systems. It takes place every year and consists of (i) the preparation of the list of all interventions managed by Delegations and HQ operational units, and (ii) the selection of the interventions to be externally monitored (ROM reviewed) on indication of the internal monitoring and reporting activities.

This process is supported by several IT instruments. The External Assistance Management Report (EAMR) is used as a reference for the list of intervention to be subject to ROM. With the information it contains on the performance of interventions (KPI 6 and KPI 7 in particular), the EAMR is also used to flag when a ROM review is needed. In DG NEAR, the Management Information System (MIS) provides additional information through a systematic risk assessment. Finally, the ROM module is used to make the portfolio of interventions for ROM review available to ROM Contractors, and subsequently to support the preparation and execution of the work plan. The ROM Module will be integrated in the upcoming versions of OPSYS.

The External Assistance Management Report (EAMR)

Through the EAMR, Heads of Delegations (and HQ Directorates) report annually on the performance and results achieved in the implementation of EU external assistance the year before. From the EAMR, several standard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are computed. Two KPIs are used to flag interventions with problems and potentially in need of ROM review, namely KPI-6 and KPI-7, through a "traffic light" scoring system used by OMs to report their view on the performance of the intervention.

The first traffic light (KPI-6) relates to the following question: What is the expected level of scheduled resources the project will be able to use before the end of the project (< 75%, red; 75% - 90%, orange; > 90%, green)? The second traffic light (KPI-7) relates to the following questions: 1. What is the likely level that the projects will achieve in terms of output targets (< 75%, red; 75% - 90%, orange; > 90%, green)? 2. What are the risks that - regardless of outputs achieved - the outcomes of the project will not be achieved (high, red; medium, orange; low, green)?

An intervention is considered to have implementation problems and therefore in need of ROM review, if at least one of the two KPIs is flagged orange or red.

The EAMR is also used to indicate interventions for which a ROM review is considered necessary by the Delegation/HQ operational unit, even if the traffic light on the two KPIs is green.

New

The OM in charge does not have to specify any longer in the EAMR the reasons for requesting a ROM and only selects a yes/no option in the EAMR tool.

The portfolio of interventions for ROM review includes four different categories:

- A **representative sample** of EU-funded interventions in their **early stages of implementation.** The sample is selected by the Commission services according to sampling procedures that are only outlined in Annex 7. For these interventions, ROM reviews support the OM in confirming or updating the intervention logic and logframe matrix (including baselines and targets), in reviewing the monitoring system of the IP, in assessing risks and mitigation measures and fine-tuning the implementation set-up and calendar of activities with a view to improving the performance of the intervention. (New)
- Interventions flagged as having **implementation problems** through the Commission's internal reporting systems (EAMR and MIS). In this case, the ROM review will assist the OM in addressing the main problems, identifying causes and options for solution and making recommendations for follow-up actions.
- Other interventions for which the Commission services **demand** a ROM review. Several reasons can justify this demand. For instance, a ROM review can be demanded for interventions which could not be visited by EU OMs or for which the necessary sector expertise at Delegation/HQ level may not be available at a given point in time.
- **Blending operations** for which the Commission identifies the need for a ROM review. More on ROM reviews on blending operations in chapter 5. (New)

Further details on the interventions that each year become part of the ROM portfolio or are excluded from it, are available in the table below:

In	Out
▪ Interventions with at least one orange or red flag for KPI-6 and/or KPI-7. ▪ Interventions with green traffic lights, for which the Delegation/HQ Operational Unit requests a ROM review. ▪ Interventions in early stages of implementation selected by HQ on a sample basis, irrespective of the traffic light they may already have on the EAMR. ▪ Blending operations and Trust Fund interventions selected through an internal consultation process. ▪ Interventions in a late stage of implementation (less than 8 months to the end) for which there is a justified request for ROM. These are specific requests and not the result of delays in implementing ROM reviews.	▪ Interventions that have just started but were not sampled for ROM review in their early stage of implementation. ▪ Interventions that are close to completion (less than 8 months to their end) and for which there is no justified need for ROM. ▪ Interventions with an orange or red traffic light, for which a mid-term-review (MTR) has recently taken place or is scheduled to take place shortly (evaluation has precedence). ▪ Interventions with an orange or red traffic light, for which a ROM review would be unproductive, since the risks or reasons of underperformance are well known such as in cases of civil war, natural disaster or other circumstances.

Table 2. Characteristics of interventions that are included and excluded from the ROM portfolio

Once the portfolio of interventions selected for ROM is compiled, it is shared with the ROM Contractors and all the actors involved in the ROM exercise through the ROM Module. The ROM Coordination Units import into the ROM module:

- The list of EAMR interventions eligible for ROM, with requests for ROM.
- The list of Trust Fund interventions for which a ROM review is requested.

The ROM reviews on blending operations are handled outside of the ROM module.

Once the development of the monitoring and reporting functionalities of OPSYS is completed, all the actions described above will take place through OPSYS.

4.2. The ROM Review Work Plan

ROM Contractors take the lead in the preparation of the ROM review work plan, with the support of M&E Focal Points and OMs (and their knowledge of interventions), and in consultation with the ROM Coordination Units, which must approve every mission.

The collaboration of Delegations is essential, especially for the organisation of group missions, which concern the great majority of ROM reviews. To avoid delays, in case of absence of the OM in charge, the M&E Focal Points acts as backup in the ROM module. In the following figure, an overview of the main steps for work plan preparation is illustrated:

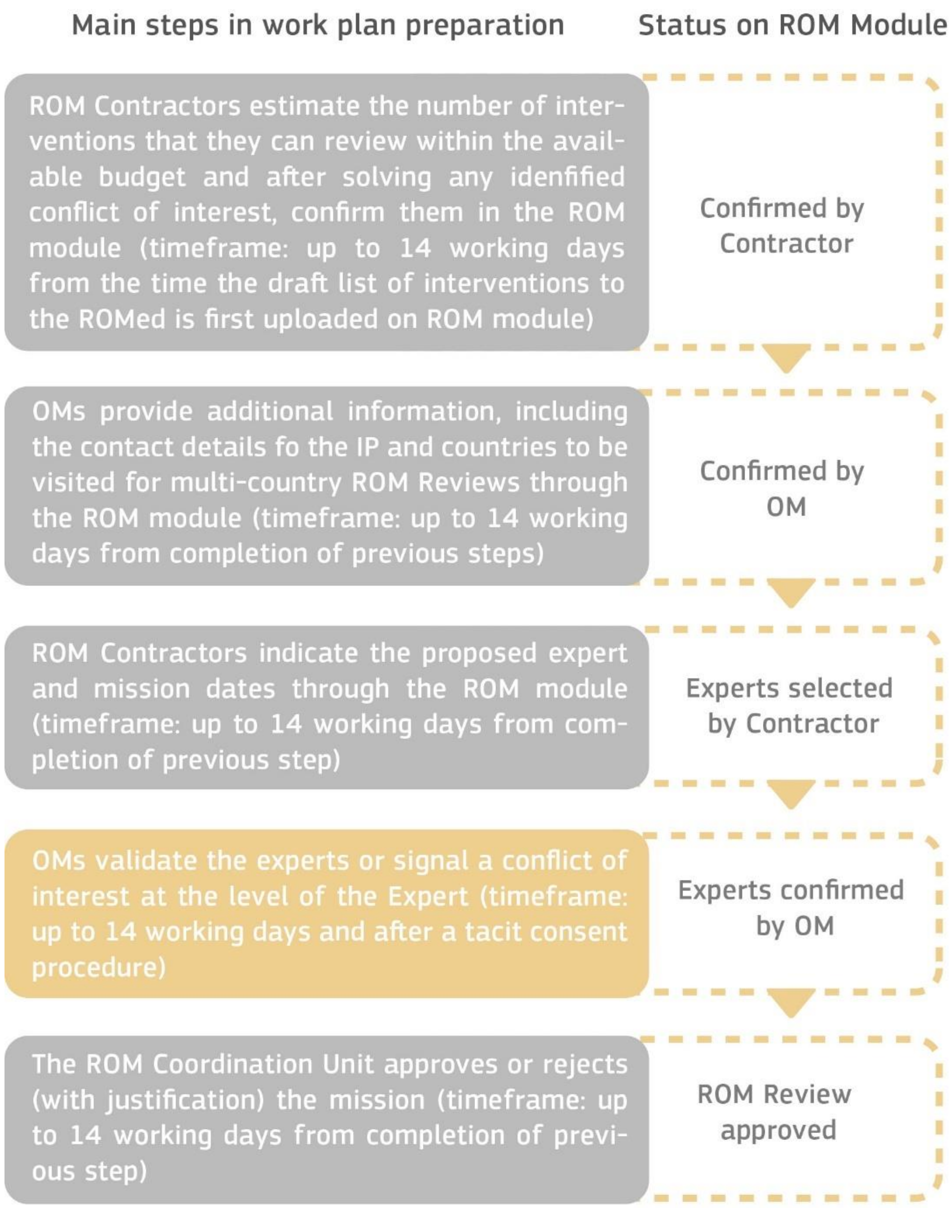


Figure 7. Work plan steps

A detailed description of the tasks and steps necessary to complete the work plan is presented below.

Identification and solution of conflict of interest at consortium level

A preliminary task for the ROM Contractors is to identify any conflict of interest that would occur in reviewing the listed interventions. This is the case when a member of the consortium has been involved in preparing and implementing the intervention for which a ROM review is requested. After alerting the ROM Coordination Unit, the ROM Contractor proposes a solution to neutralise the conflict of interest, by engaging another ROM Contractor to perform the review. The Contractor who has the conflict of interest remains in charge of all actions in the ROM module, while the alternate Contractor implements the mission.

Budget estimation and draft work plan

Following a preliminary desk study, Contractors proceed to estimate the number of reviews that they can implement within their budget and submit this information within the set period of max. **14 working days**. Simultaneously, Contractors submit Experts' CVs to the ROM Coordination Units for approval and encode Experts' credentials and sector(s) of expertise in the ROM module. ROM Contractors can also add Experts at a later point in time.

The budget estimation is based on:

- The applicable standards – as defined in the technical specifications in annex to the ROM contracts.
- Specific deviations from these standards to be requested and justified.

Field visits should be organised in order to group ROM reviews to the maximum extent possible, while at the same time meeting the needs of the services concerned. Reviews scheduled in the work plan for a given year to any EU Delegation are performed through a maximum of two field visits per year, except in duly justified cases[26].

Non-Key Experts performing ROM reviews can be either Senior or Medium**.** In any field visit, the group of Experts proposed by the Contractor should be a mix of Senior and Medium Experts – with Medium Experts accounting for between 40% and 60% of the team deployed. A Mission Leader is appointed to lead the field visit and coordinate the work of the other ROM Experts. The Mission Leader is also in charge of conducting the briefing and debriefing sessions scheduled within each field visit. The Mission Leader is a Senior Expert.

For each single-country intervention other than blending operations, (incl. regional interventions implemented in one country[27]) and for each multi-country intervention, ROM Contractors preferably assign **one ROM Expert** – or a maximum of three ROM Experts covering different countries. In the latter case, one of the Experts has the role of a Mission Leader. In case of specific needs in terms of expertise, ROM Contractors propose a solution considering those needs.

While preparing the work plan, ROM Contractors consider the standard allocation of days for ROM reviews given in the tables below.

[26] For HQ units and Centrally Managed Interventions the limit of two field visits does not apply, since the number of interventions to be ROMed is high and they do not reach the required status of implementation at the same time

[27] When the project has an overall objective of a regional or sub-regional scope and its outputs are implemented in one country. These projects cover, amongst other, support to regional institutions and organisations such as the African Union, Andean Community, the ASEAN, Mercosur, SAARC, ECOWAS, ECCAS and WAEMU.

Allocation of days	For single country interventions	For multi-country (*) interventions
Desk phase	1.5	2.5
Field phase (**) (including travel time, briefing and debriefing with DELEGATION or HQ)	9	20
Drafting of report and QC phase (***)	2	4
Total days	**12.5**	**26.5**

(*) A maximum of 3 Experts may be assigned a ROM review for a multi-country intervention.
(**) For multi-country interventions, up to 4 country visits of 5 man-days each is the standard.
(***) These days do not include the QC done by the Contractor's QC Expert but only the work carried out by the ROM Experts

Table 3. Allocation of days for ROM reviews for single and multi-country projects

Deviations from these standards can be requested by the ROM Contractors. This can be the case of interventions in particularly remote or dispersed locations, multi-country interventions in which more than four international travels are needed or/and additional working days are required for complex internal travels or for attending briefing and debriefing meetings in each country. Deviations can also be considered to cover additional preparatory time for Mission Leaders involved in reviews, or to cover additional reporting time to produce a fully revisited and clean logical framework matrix (if requested by the OM) or to elaborate on lessons learn through the new template. A certain degree of flexibility is considered in the application of standards if the deviations are duly requested and justified.

Preparation of travel and mission agendas as well as document research are not included in the ROM Experts' workload but are part of the ROM Contractors' Core Team and backstopping tasks.

For centrally managed interventions, briefing and debriefings are attended by one of the Core Team Experts and are not included in the standards. For interventions managed by Delegations, the Mission Leader (or Expert, in the exceptional case of individual missions) delivers the briefing at the beginning of the field mission and the debriefing at the end of the field mission; in this case, HQ services are invited to participate in the briefing and debriefing via videoconference, using the existing VC facilities.

Senior Experts in the Core Team are responsible for internal quality control. In duly justified cases, non-core team Experts may perform QC tasks. Prior approval by the ROM coordination unit is required.

Indicative allocation of days for QC by non-core team short term experts	For single interventions	For multi-country interventions
Quality Control	**1.5**	**2**

Table 4. Allocation of days for QC of reviews for single- and multi-country projects

The annual budget for ROM reviews is estimated based on the past few years' trends. The ROM module automatically ranks the interventions giving priority to those with red or orange KPIs (problematic) and those with a higher EU contribution. Should there be more demand for ROM reviews than the available budget the ROM Contractor alerts the ROM Coordinating Team, which may require an overview of the time spent on each of the ROM services.

At the end of this step, the ROM Contractors confirm the number of reviews that can be carried out and this information is shared with the other actors through the ROM Module

OMs and/or M&E Focal Points provide additional information

Once the list of reviews confirmed by the Contractor is available, the OMs are requested to add complementary information, on the following aspects:

- **Component(s) to be visited for multi-country interventions**. In the specific case in which more than 4 countries are to be visited, OMs explain why.
- **Preferred time for ROM review**: OMs give ROM Contractors an indication of the most suitable time frames to be considered when organising the field mission.
- Information on **security** and **safety issues**.

Other information that can be added:

- **Related CRIS reference**: CRIS documents attached to such projects will automatically be available in the "CRIS Library" and ROM Contractors/Experts will be able to consult them.
- **Contact details** of the IP to allow the ROM Contractor to start organising the field mission.
- General comments.

To provide additional information the OM and/or M&E Focal Point have **14 working days**.

Experts are selected for the specific reviews, and mission dates proposed

ROM Contractors can now plan the specific missions, assigning pre-approved Experts and proposing mission dates. They encode this information in the ROM module. The period allocated to complete this step is up to **14 working days**. Contractors identify the Quality Control (QC) Expert in charge of supporting the mission as soon as possible, but no later than before the submission of the draft report.

OMs check that Experts have no conflict of interest

Contractors propose the most suitable Expert for each intervention subject to ROM review, among those that are available. Should there be any concerns, e.g. for interventions that require a rare Expertise, OMs and M&E Focal Points can alert the ROM Coordination Unit that will inform the Contractors accordingly.

OMs and M&E Focal Points do not approve or reject the CV of the proposed Expert based on the quality of the CV. They provide an opinion on any potential conflict of interest of the proposed Expert(s). If needed, they can alert the ROM Coordination Unit on any other issue they deem relevant concerning the proposed Expert. The objectivity and quality of ROM Experts' judgments is crucial for the credibility of the system. Therefore, ROM Experts must not have been involved in the preparation or management of any part of the intervention monitored. In case of doubts, the ROM Coordination Unit can share the Experts' CVs with the Unit or Delegation concerned.

Contractors replace the Experts in conflict of interest. If there is no indication of conflict of interest **within 14 working days**, the Experts are confirmed (tacit consent procedure) and the ROM coordinator can approve the mission.

ROM coordination units approve the ROM reviews

Once all previous steps are completed, ROM Coordination Units can approve ROM reviews in bulk or one by one, **within a maximum of 14 working days**. While deciding whether to approve a mission or not, the ROM Coordination Units will take into account all elements, and in particular the association between Expert and the sector of the intervention, any issues raised by the Contractor or OM (including security matters), and any deviation from the ROM standards.

4.3 Preparing the ROM Review missions

In this phase, Contractors make the necessary preparations for the missions. They download all available project documents and make them available to the Experts through the ROM module. They provide the Experts with the tools and methodology for the ROM review as well as the contacts of the OMs and IPs. The OMs provide additional documents, if any, and prepare the field stakeholders for the arrival of the ROM mission.

Preparation for the desk phase

OMs must verify that all relevant documents related to the intervention under review are uploaded in CRIS (or, in the case of reports by IPs, that they are correctly filed in Ares as attachments to invoices). All relevant documents, including those for interventions that are not in CRIS (i.e. Trust Funds) must be available for the ROM Contractor through the ROM Module **no later than three weeks before the start of the ROM review mission**.

The MQ template includes a table on sources of information. The ROM Experts will later use the same list and tick the documents that were available. Note that the documents listed on the MQ template are not necessarily distinct documents and are sometimes included or attached to other documents (e.g. TAPs are generally attached to the Financing Agreement). If some key documents are missing, the Experts can request them from the OM and/or to the IP prior to the start of the field mission. Furthermore, ROM Experts will generally access additional documents throughout the course of the field mission.

The ROM Contractor will save all documents collected in the field and/or not available in CRIS/Ares into a database specific to the Contractor. The following is the file naming convention to be used:

- for Decision level documents: "D" – Decision number – Title
- for Contract level documents: "D" – Decision number – "C" (Contract number) – title

This archive serves the purpose of internal QC and quality assurance by the QA Contractor — which must be able to access all documents— and for easy reference if needs be, in the discussion on the ROM report. The archive remains the property of the Commission. The Contractors and ROM Experts are not allowed at any time during or after the completion of their contracts, to share documents

with people other than the ROM Experts, QA Contractor and Commission staff without prior approval of the European Commission. At the end of their contract, the ROM Contractors submit the archive to the ROM Coordination Unit.

Preparation for the field phase

The table below presents the steps for the preparation of the field phase.

Actor	Breakdown of tasks	When
OM	▪ Upload additional project documentation in a timely manner in CRIS and make available other documents ▪ Announce the provisional mission schedule to key stakeholders ▪ Brief stakeholders on the main objectives of a ROM review ▪ Communicate the name(s) of the ROM Expert(s) to key stakeholders ▪ Provide contact details of the IP and of other key stakeholders to ROM Contractors	At the latest, 3 weeks before the field phase starts Ideally as soon as possible
	▪ Ensure that all key documentation is made available to ROM Experts	At the latest, 3 weeks before the field phase starts
ROM Contractors	▪ Provide appropriate guidance and templates to ROM Experts, including guidance on security issues ▪ Update the sample of countries to be visited, if needed, based on the preliminary analysis of the available documents for multi-country interventions ▪ Arrange first contacts with ROM Experts and Commission services to schedule meetings prior to the field phase start	Once the ROM review has been approved by the ROM coordinator
ROM Experts	▪ Based on their documentary review of the project or programme, ROM Experts identify specific areas for collecting information during the following phase ▪ Prepare a draft agenda of the mission	During desk phase

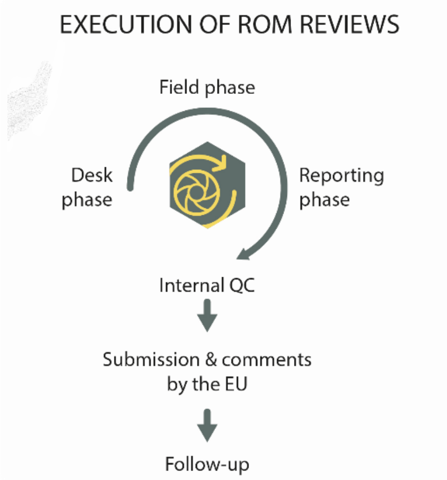
Table 5. Preparation for the field phase

Specific information on Duty of Care with regard to safety and security management is presented in Annex 8.

When necessary and possible, Commission services provide advice on the availability of transport means, security, support for issuing visas and internal travel authorisations. It may be also necessary to clarify as early as possible whether to accept transport by the implementing partners to project offices, project sites or to groups of beneficiaries is appropriate and can be factored in when preparing the draft agenda.

4.4. Implementing the ROM Review missions

ROM reviews missions are organised around three main phases:



- The **desk phase**, involving document and logframe analysis.
- The **field phase**, in which the main stakeholders are consulted, and briefing and debriefing sessions are conducted with the OM in charge.
- The **reporting phase**, in which the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the evidence gathered, with the guidance provided by a set of MQs, converge into a ROM report which is the key deliverable of each ROM review.

Each ROM review takes approximately 3 months, including internal QC, and comments by the Commission services on the draft and final versions of the ROM report.

During implementation of the desk and field phases, ROM Contractors provide technical and methodological support to ROM Experts.

The desk phase

Duly prepared by the ROM Contractors, this phase allows the ROM Experts to:

- **Review all documents** including the intervention logic reflected in the most recent logframe(s), implementation plans, the allocated resources and budget, all progress reports by IPs and internal progress reports by the OM, any previous ROM reports and mid-term evaluations.
- **Identify key issues** that need to be addressed during the field phase of the ROM reviews in order to answer the MQs.
- **Identify key stakeholders** that should be consulted during the field phase to include them in the mission agenda.
- **Prepare the briefing(s)** by developing a preliminary list of specific questions that they consider useful to ask the OM, IPs and other stakeholders.

ROM Experts collect all relevant documents, such as action documents, logframe(s) and budgets (normally an annex to the contractual agreement), planning of activities as included in implementation plans and progress reports by IPs and OM, including the project's visibility and communication action plan. In the case of an intervention selected by a call for proposals, ROM Experts analyse the guidelines for the call for proposals as well as the Concept Note and the evaluation report and assessment conclusions from the evaluation of proposals phase.

When reviewing the documentation, ROM Experts pay attention to the fact that interventions at decision level may consist of several contracts.

ROM Experts need to consider the policy as well as the context in which an intervention has been developed in order to analyse its relevance. Country analyses, where relevant, are available from

different sources like the EU, Regional Development Banks (ADB, AfDB, IDB), UNDP (report on Human Development), and other UN agencies and think tanks. ROM Experts should also take into account the link between the intervention and the geographic or thematic programming document covering it.

The Intervention Logic and logframe analysis

> The logframe is analysed first during the desk phase. Improvement suggestions are prepared for further discussion with the OM

A key step of the desk phase is the analysis of the intervention logic as summarised in the logframe. This is particularly important, if the ROM review takes place at early stage of implementation and its main purpose is to improve the logical framework and future monitoring systems. The ROM Expert should refer to the logframe templates used for action documents and contracts after 2015, and to the specific guidance provided in Chapter 7 of this Handbook with the related methodological annex on how to check the quality of a logical framework and recommend improvements. During this phase, the Expert drafts preliminary answers to the relevant Monitoring Questions (MQs) dealing with monitoring, evaluation and learning as well as the related sections of the ROM Report.

When the implementation is delegated to agencies that have their own project cycle management methodologies (e.g. UN agencies), logframes can exist in different formats and can use different terminology. In this case, ROM Experts ensure that all the key elements of the EU template are well identified and taken into account for conclusions to be drawn from the review.

When a logframe does not exist or is of poor quality, ROM Experts prepare concrete suggestions for elaboration/improvement to be discussed with the OM during the field phase, possibly leading at the end of the review, to the elaboration of a revised logframe matrix if so requested by the OM and agreed with both the OM and IP.

The analysis of the implementation progress reports

IPs issue periodical progress reports, on a quarterly, six-monthly or annual basis depending on the provisions of their contract. The quality of implementation reports differs, in some cases obliging ROM Experts to dig for relevant information. Implementation progress reports include the activity and resource schedule of the previous reporting period and the provisional activity and resource schedule of the following period. Another important source of information are internal documents, including reports drafted by OMs.

ROM Experts review the actual progress of activities, in content and timing, and use of resources, in amount and timing, against what is planned and examine whether that also corresponds to what is reasonably needed. Progress reports including structured and accumulated data according to the logframe are the most useful. Where data are not accumulated, ROM Experts will need to consolidate data produced during each period, analysing the whole set of progress reports at their disposal in order to obtain the necessary overview, ensure solid analysis and draw conclusions. As a key part of all ROM reviews, these analyses are started during the desk phase. In case the intervention has deviated from the activity schedule and the use of resources, ROM Experts identify specific areas/points to be discussed with the OM and IPs during the field phase, with a view to providing a

complete assessment and recommendations for corrective actions in the corresponding sections of the MQs and ROM report.

The field phase

The field phase of a ROM review starts with a briefing meeting with the Unit or Delegation in charge of the intervention, continues with relevant bilateral meetings and/or group sessions with the key stakeholders of the intervention(s) reviewed, and ends with a debriefing meeting with the Unit or Delegation.

Below a summary table of the format that the briefing and the debriefing sessions should take:

Type of intervention	Location	Timing of the briefing	Timing of the debriefing	Attendees
For single country interventions managed by Delegations	Delegation	On the first day of the ROM review field phase	On the last day of the ROM review field phase	ROM Expert and OM (and/or M&E Focal Point or any other Delegation staff) plus any key stakeholders the participation of whom is considered relevant by the Delegation
For multi- country interventions managed by Delegations	Delegation	On the first day of the ROM review field phase	On the last day of the ROM review field phase	ROM Expert and OM plus any key stakeholders the participation of whom is considered relevant by the Delegation
	In each country	On the first day of the country component visit	On the last day of the country component visit	ROM Expert and main stakeholders in each country-component, the Delegation being systematically invited.
For centrally managed interventions	HQ	Some days prior to the ROM Expert(s)' field mission	Some days after the ROM Expert(s)' field mission before submission of the draft ROM outputs	ROM Contractors' TL or Deputy TL or, in duly justified cases, by the ROM Expert or the relevant core team Expert and OM
	In the country	On the first day of the country component visit	On the last day of the country component visit	ROM Expert and main stakeholders in each country-component, the Delegation being systematically invited.

Table 6. Briefing and debriefing standards

Commission services can invite IPs at their own discretion. When several ROM reviews are conducted at the same time, joint briefings can be envisaged. However, the possibility of having separate briefings is to be taken into account in organising the Mission Leader's agenda.

For projects implemented jointly with one or more EU Member States, ROM experts should also analyse the level of coordination between the European implementing partners and reflect specifically on the efficiency, effectiveness and value added of working in joint implementation.

Briefing meeting

Briefing meetings at the beginning of the field phase are crucial to clarify the setting of the review(s). They are used to provide guidance to ROM Experts about the intervention context, the key stakeholders, the progress or lack thereof, any changes introduced, as well as specific aspects/areas of interest for the review(s). The OM's knowledge of the intervention(s) will be instrumental to refine the information needs that the Expert had identified during the desk phase.

The table below details the role of each actor in the briefing:

Actor	Checklist for briefing
OM	▪ Recapitulate the reasons and purpose of the ROM review(s) ▪ Introduces further elements of context which are important to Experts (changes in the implementing team, reorganisation in the beneficiary's organisation, new developments in the sector, and quality of policy dialogue and donor coordination, etc.) ▪ Inform on follow-up of previous ROM/evaluation recommendations ▪ Inform on the status of potential upcoming amendments to relevant contracts ▪ Review with the ROM Experts the key documents to be consulted and ensure their availability ▪ Underline issues of special interest that are relevant to the ROM review and stress the specific points to be analysed by ROM Experts ▪ Brief ROM Experts on previous phases of the intervention and/or any complementary support deemed as important to the ROM review ▪ Provide a progress summary on the basis of benchmarks and indicators, their strong elements and weaknesses in terms of results ▪ Recall the last major events regarding the intervention such as mitigation measures which have already been undertaken, specific follow-up and internal monitoring efforts which have been implemented ▪ Set a date for the debriefing and define its format as well as the opportunity to include the participation of the IP and any key stakeholders.
ROM Expert or TL /Core Team Experts (for centrally managed interventions)	▪ Check with OM if they are in possession of the last update of the documentation already provided during the desk phase ▪ Ask any needed clarification to the OM on the ROM reviews ▪ Share first views on the quality of the intervention logframe ▪ Discuss with OM how the ROM review may add value in terms of support to the intervention management ▪ Share with OM how they intend to organise field visit(s) and provide a quick summary of logistics to ensure the right balance between travel time and site visits as well as ensuring due consideration of security issues
OM & ROM Expert	▪ *For interventions at an early stage of implementation*: identify the specific purpose of the ROM review e.g. whether it aims to strengthen the logical framework and/or support the establishment of a monitoring system ▪ *For interventions having problems*: establish the specific purpose of the ROM review e.g. whether it aims to identify or confirm any preliminary solutions to issues which might have occurred during implementation ▪ *For interventions not visited by the EUD or HQ services in the year*, identify the reasons and concerns which are behind the request for a ROM review ▪ *For interventions in the final stage of implementation*, establish the specific purpose of the ROM review e.g. whether a second phase is scheduled, or specific elements of innovation are to be identified and transferred to other interventions under

Actor	Checklist for briefing
	preparation in the country ▪ Together they review who is to be involved in the field phase, and if meetings other than those already scheduled during the desk phase with IPs, key stakeholders and, beneficiaries are needed ▪ Agree/confirm with the OM if transport offered by the implementing partner to project offices, to project sites or to groups of beneficiaries is accepted

Table 7. Checklist for briefing

After the briefing, ROM Experts:

- Study the briefing notes if the briefing is attended at HQ by the TL or other core team member in the case of centrally managed interventions.
- Finalise their itinerary for visits and interviews, taking into account logistic constraints and the provisional budget provided by the ROM Contractor prior to starting the field phase (i.e. for transport/fuel, accommodation, meeting rooms, etc.).
- Confirm interviews with all stakeholders where needed.
- Finalise specific questions, complementary to the MQs that they will address to stakeholders based on the elements obtained through the briefing/briefing notes.

If it was not possible to set up all meetings with stakeholders prior to the field phase, the OM or the IP may assist the ROM Experts in arranging these meetings.

Field visits and interviews

ROM Experts tailor the field visits to the nature of the intervention. During field visits, Experts meet with key stakeholders and check the quality of the outputs. The emphasis is on:

- Observing and ascertaining credible information on progress with regard to expected results (outputs and outcomes), as well as their quality and sustainability.
- Observing and ascertaining credible information about problems that emerged and possible solutions.
- Making sure that the exchanges with the stakeholders are meaningful to the purpose of the review, taking into account as much as possible their views and opinions.

In a wider sense, field visits serve to collect evidence.

As a general rule, it is important to interact with final beneficiaries without the presence of IPs, to obtain insights into the effects of the intervention on their lives and behaviour: meetings with small groups of final beneficiaries may provide information about access to services and/or outputs to be provided/obtained during the project. In some cases, the presence of the IP is instead advisable to overcome the beneficiary's reticence or shyness to speak in presence of the ROM Expert. In other cases, interviewing women separately from men may encourage them to speak more freely.

ROM Experts can visit civil society groups and local authorities, even if they are not directly involved. Sharing information with them can be a valuable additional source of insights into what is happening within the broader intervention's environment. Furthermore, while an intervention may be

implemented by, or benefit one specific institutional IP, there may be other government agencies that are working in related or complementary fields and which collect information relevant to the review. For example, departments of finance and planning, and national statistics offices may have information, which can complement data collected through internal monitoring systems.

ROM Experts meet donors other than the EU that are active in the same sector in order to assess the interactions of the intervention with their initiatives and/or to identify possible follow-up after the end of the intervention.

Interviews are separately conducted with the National Authority (where applicable), IPs, other key stakeholders including donors and Member States working in the same sector, and direct beneficiaries. It is preferable to conduct interviews on an individual basis to avoid potential “bias”. Inspection of a sample of outputs spread across different locations is desirable.

The primary purpose of all interviews is to obtain key stakeholders' reactions and suggestions that can confirm, refute or complete information already gathered on the intervention during the desk review and the briefing with the Delegation or HQ staff. ROM Experts should establish a list of all key stakeholders’ names and positions and make sure with the OM and through contacts and interviews that the list is complete.

If necessary and possible, Commission services continue to provide advice on the availability of transport means, on security matters, and on internal travel authorisations. Even though the Commission is not responsible for the security of ROM Experts, they should ensure that the Experts receive assistance and advice in this regard throughout the mission.

If OMs accompany ROM Experts during stakeholder consultations, they must not interfere in the work of the ROM Experts and should as much as possible adopt an observer role.

ROM Experts uphold a professional and respectful attitude. They do not offer their professional services. They do not accept gifts from stakeholders. They may accept transport to project offices, to project sites or to groups of beneficiaries if agreed in advance with the OM. ROM Experts should make sure they briefly remind and, where needed, clarify the objectives of the ROM review in order to prevent stakeholders from having false perceptions: often ROM reviews are confused with audits or evaluations. They should also recall that findings, conclusions and recommendations are the sole responsibility of ROM Contractors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU, and that the subsequent implication of the stakeholders will remain the OM's responsibility. For all ROM services, ROM Experts must also be very clear regarding the dissemination of reports, which remains the responsibility of Commission services.

The ROM Expert must be able to contact the ROM Contractor at any stage of the mission for advice or technical backstopping.

Debriefing meeting

Debriefing takes place following consultations with the stakeholders. Ideally, all relevant key stakeholders can be debriefed separately, but in consideration of time constraints, Commission services could consider the possibility of inviting them for a joint meeting. The ROM Experts should advice the OM before a debriefing, if there are sensitive issues that need to be discussed in a

confidential environment. In such cases, the OM should hold a separate debriefing meeting with the ROM Expert.

If a joint debriefing is foreseen, it is not supposed to be a forum to develop a consensual assessment on the review; it mainly serves to clarify issues and correct factual errors. In any case, the OM facilitates and moderates exchanges with ROM Experts and key stakeholders, respecting the independence of ROM Experts. In the case of centrally managed interventions, this joint briefing and/or debriefing will only be possible via conference call.

The following table details the role of each actor in the debriefing:

Actor	Checklist for debriefing	When
ROM Expert with OM	▪ May, where needed, meet the Contracts and Finance section to assess the feasibility of the recommendations presented to the OM and later drafted in ROM reports.	Prior to debriefing
ROM Expert or TL /Core Team Experts (for centrally managed interventions)	▪ Present the most significant preliminary findings, the problems encountered, and solutions adopted to collect data in the field as well as preliminary recommendations for further action. ▪ Present a snapshot of strong and weak points, and if possible, preliminary conclusions and recommendations	During debriefing
OM	▪ Enrich and/or clarify the analysis presented by the ROM Experts or TL/core team Experts. ▪ Take note of the ROM Experts' assessment of the specific issues of concern as identified during the briefing. ▪ Discuss the Experts' preliminary conclusions and recommendations ▪ Clarify any area of concern or doubt for the following reporting phase.	During debriefing

Table 8. Checklist for debriefing

The reporting phase

Reporting starts already during the desk and field phases with the logframe analysis, the preliminary answer to relevant monitoring questions and the drafting of relevant sections the ROM Report. The core of the reporting phase takes place after the end of the field mission and is completed within 14 calendar days from it. It involves a number of analyses leading to the elaboration of the **ROM report** accompanied by the answers to the **MQs** and the lessons learning log.

3 Key deliverables:

- ROM Report
- Monitoring Questions
- Lessons learning log

following standard updated templates

All deliverables have to follow standard templates presented in Annex 4 (ROM Report and MQs) and Annex 5 (optional - for lesson learning). ROM Contractors and Experts download the ROM report and MQs templates from the ROM module, which automatically pre-fills them with key information. ROM Experts use QC checklists, while QC Experts draft an internal QC report for each mission (see paragraph 5 "Internal Quality Control").

ROM Experts draft the ROM report providing their justified findings, on each assessed monitoring criterion as well as on crosscutting issues. They also provide a set of

actionable recommendations which become a follow-up plan for the review. The report should not exceed seven pages in total and an indicative limit in terms of words per section is also provided. The reports should be in one of the following languages: French, English, Spanish or Portuguese. The ROM Expert submits the QC checklist as an attachment to the report, using the template provided in Annex 6.

For multi-country interventions, the ROM Expert drafts a ROM report and a MQ document covering all components. As a rule, ROM Experts draft a MQs document for each country visit; however, this can be flexible based on the nature of the intervention and on the needs of the OM.

In the following figure, an overview of the main tasks and related timeframe to complete the reporting and obtain approval of the deliverables.

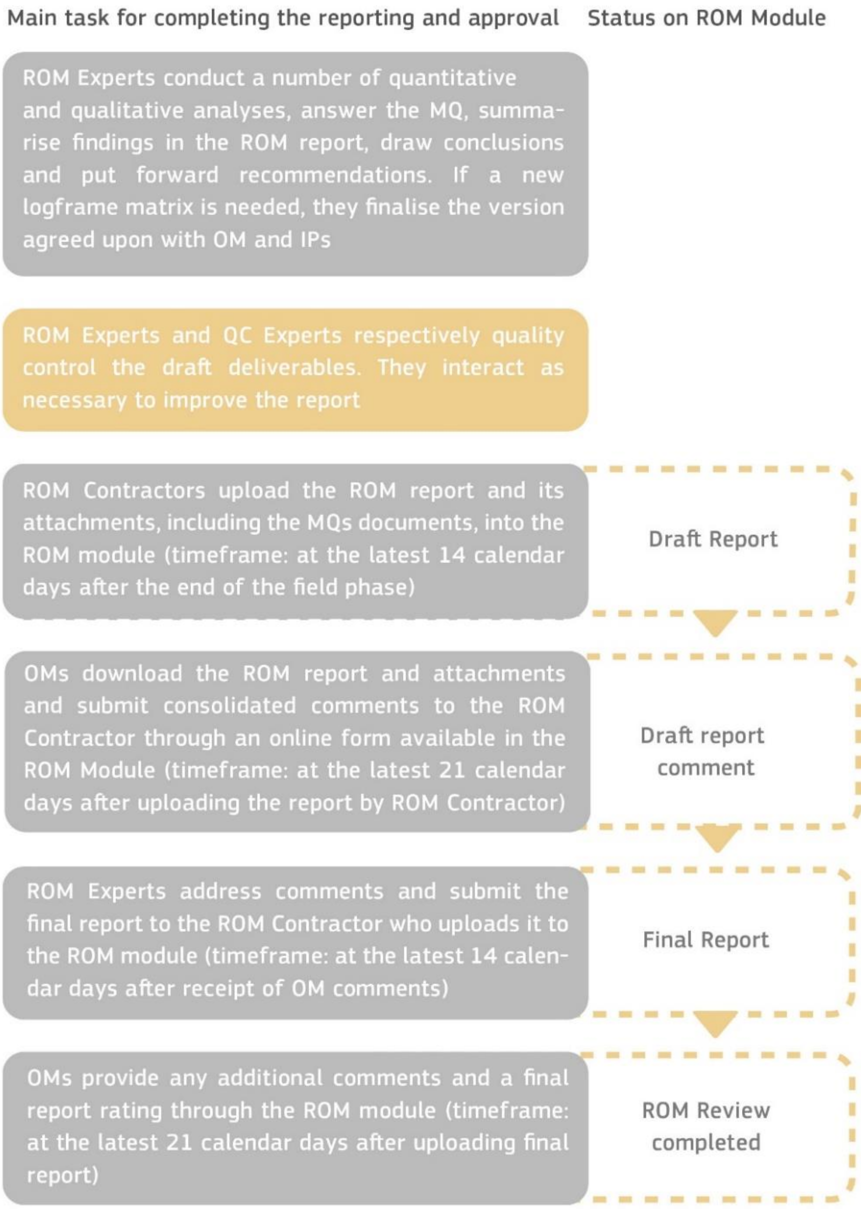


Figure 8. Reporting and approval tasks

In the following sections, a detailed description of the above-mentioned tasks and steps necessary to complete the reporting is presented.

Analysis of key documentation and information gathered through interviews

A mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches should support ROM Experts in drafting their replies to MQs and the resulting ROM reports.

Analysing quantitative data

Results and inputs are analysed to detect any significant deviations from those planned. The analysis focuses on measurable elements: outputs, direct outcomes, inputs (financial, human, and material resources), delays, milestones, number/category of target groups.

Measuring the percentage of achievement of an output or milestone versus those planned is useful to provide sound items of evidence of how close one is to achieving what was initially planned. Low figures immediately highlight areas of concern and trigger an analysis of causes and of possible remedial action.

Drawing on their experience and their knowledge of usual costs both for inputs and outputs in the sector, ROM Experts elaborate on deviations in order to provide an insight as to why the intervention is costing more (or less) than what may be considered normal. This approach is important to draw conclusions on the efficiency of the intervention.

Deviations are analysed at the level of the implementation schedule in order to explain any delays.

ROM Experts also investigate if interventions continue to target the intended beneficiaries in terms of number and categories (low/middle-income population, women/men, etc.).

Analysing qualitative data

The interpretation of qualitative data focuses inter alia on the relevance of the intervention, the expected ownership and leading role of partners in its management, the nature and level of capacities developed by partners, and its potential sustainability.

Qualitative data analysis is the process of interpreting and understanding the data collected during the desk phase and, more exhaustively, during the field phase. The interpretation of qualitative data completes the analysis of quantitative data.

To make a sound interpretation of qualitative data, ROM Experts may use different sources. All information and data (reports by IPs, interviews with stakeholders, and, when relevant according to the nature of the project or programme, observations of final beneficiaries) are crosschecked, analysed and compared (triangulation of data or sources of information). For qualitative analysis, ROM Experts will also rely on their sectoral expertise.

The Monitoring Questions

Monitoring questions are a key component of the ROM methodology. They provide guidance for the analyses to be conducted by the ROM Experts and support the synthesis to be included in the ROM report.

A rapid view of the specific changes introduced in the MQ tool by the 2020 edition is presented below.

What´s new in the MQs?

- 30 questions simplified and reorganised
- 6 M&E criteria, cross cutting issues, communication & visibility
- At the end of each criterion no section with conclusions
- Enhanced guidance on each question
- Enhanced mainstreaming of gender and RBA aspects

The MQs are presented in Annex 1 whilst a detailed guidance for each monitoring question is provided in Annex 2.

MQs identify key issues to be analysed under different monitoring and cross-cutting criteria.

The answers to the MQs are drafted from the desk phase throughout the field phase and mainly during the reporting phase. They help to structure the analysis of documentation, empirical data, views and possible clarifications provided by stakeholders throughout the course of the mission and during the debriefing.

As MQs are a working document supporting and structuring key findings and conclusions, ROM Experts answer them before drafting the ROM report, bearing in mind that they are submitted together with the ROM report, the two deliverables being subject to internal quality control.

ROM Experts use evidence from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to make a factual statement (findings). Answers must be specific and not just general assertions. All MQs have to be answered. If a question is considered irrelevant, a justification needs to be provided.

The factual statement under each question is accompanied by a grading based on a traffic light grading system. This provides a quick overview of the status of the intervention at the level of each monitoring question. A three-grade scale is adopted using the following categories:

- Green – good or very good
- Orange - with problems
- Red – off track or with serious deficiencies. The grade must be coherent with the findings; the justification of the grade must emerge clearly from the analysis.

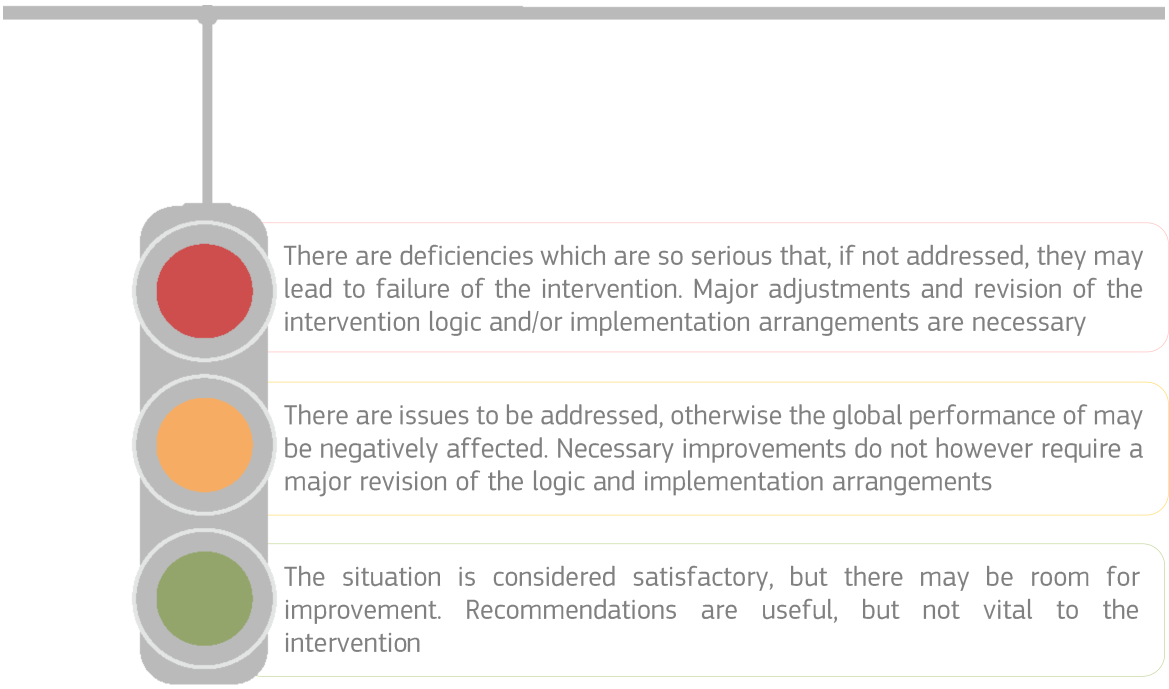


Figure 9. Grading reference for MQs

ROM Experts specifically comment on crosscutting issues (mainstreaming themes) and on the possible identification of lessons learned and good practices. The question on lessons learned and good practices is not graded. It is the only one that can be answered with Yes/No, and if the answer is yes (lessons learned or good practices exist and are worth sharing beyond the intervention), a specific form is filled (see chapter 9 and Annex 5).

The ROM Report

The ROM report includes a concise overview of the intervention logic (synopsis), the analysis and findings based on the answers to the MQs, and a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

What´s new in ROM Report?

- Executive summary
- Revised project synopsis
- Revised criteria in line with MQ
- Conclusions and recommendations are clearly linked

Throughout the report, ROM Experts use clear language and avoid highly technical vocabulary, overuse of abbreviations and repetitions.

The template for the ROM Report is presented in Annex 4 with the MQ template.

Its components are explained below.

- Executive Summary

  This is a one-page section summarising the main findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in the ROM report.

- Project or programme synopsis

  The project or programme synopsis serves as an introduction and provides background information. It includes three sections:

  - (Brief) Description of the context with a focus on the problematic to be addressed by the action
  - (Brief) Description of the intervention logic
  - (Brief) Description of the target group(s) and final beneficiaries

  In case of a multi-country intervention, the synopsis covers the entire programme and not just the components visited by the ROM review. The synopsis does not include appreciations and observations on issues related to the intervention implementation i.e. it should be purely descriptive.

- Findings

  In this part of the report, ROM Experts highlight the most important findings relating to the performance of the intervention and elaborate on them in detail while also pointing out any critical issues and/or serious deficiencies. Findings need to be reported in a manner that is accurate, concise and straightforward. They must be based on and coherent with the answers to the MQs. It is recommended that this link is made in a way that is easy to understand for the person reading the report.

  > ROM Experts do not put forward findings that:
  > - Are not evidence based
  > - Lack technical content
  > - Ignore state of the art knowledge on a given sector or topic

  ROM Experts provide a self-explanatory description of their assessment, which must be understandable by any person unfamiliar with the intervention while at the same time providing useful elements of information to the stakeholders.

  Pursuant to DEVCO's **anti-fraud strategy**, ROM Experts and Commission staff must report all facts noted during the mission that point to the possible existence of serious irregularities, corruption and fraud to the anti-fraud Focal Point in the Delegation concerned, or to the Unit in charge of audits at Headquarters (DG DEVCO R.2).

- Conclusions, recommendations and follow-up

  In the third part of the report, ROM Experts present the main conclusions and recommendations based on the answers to the MQs, which are summarised in the findings section.

  Recommendations derive from the conclusions; therefore, each recommendation should be clearly linked to at least one conclusion.

  They address issues of major importance to the performance of the intervention.

Recommendations must be realistic, actionable and addressed to one or more specific stakeholders. They must be **prioritised** and include a **timeframe for implementation**. They must take into consideration the applicable rules and other constraints, related for example to the context in which the intervention takes place.

4.5 The Internal Quality Control (QC) by ROM Contractors

Experts' deliverables are subject to internal quality control (QC) by the ROM Contractors. The internal QC of ROM reviews needs to be undertaken at different stages of the ROM review process, **starting as early as the desk phase**. Therefore, the internal QC by the ROM Contractors starts with establishing a systemic approach for such a control as regards the day-to-day implementation of the contract.

The internal QC covers:

- The availability of intervention documents and related background documents as a basis for the review and any problems encountered by the Expert in this respect.
- The preparation of briefings/debriefings and other aspects related to the mission organisation.
- The completeness of the ROM report, its quality in terms of language and clarity.
- The adequacy and reliability of the data used and the data assessment by the Expert; the soundness of the data analysis, including appropriate levels of evidence and justification supporting the analysis.
- The coherence of the answers to the MQs and the coherence of the conclusions; the justification of the findings, the consistency of the narrative with the grades.
- The coherence between the conclusions and the recommendations, and that they are clearly linked.
- The quality, usefulness and operational applicability of the recommendations.

ROM Contractors brief each ROM Expert on these quality criteria and provide guidance as necessary. They explain the quality control process and responsibilities and provide the necessary templates and checklists. To ensure an appropriate level of information amongst Experts throughout the implementation of the contract, the ROM Contractor produces an internal quality manual, describing the quality criteria and the process to facilitate the highest quality ROM reports.

Quality Control by ROM Contractors and interactions between the OM and the Contractor after the submission of the draft report take place outside the ROM module. Records of all QC documentation must be made available upon request to the ROM QA Contractor and to the Commission services

As part of their contract, ROM Contractors should provide regular refresher training to QC Experts. The establishment of an internal QC culture means that the work of QC Experts is assessed periodically, to ensure that adequate reporting standards are met.

As part of the internal quality control system, ROM Experts complete for each review a QC checklist as provided in Annex 6 where they assess the conditions of the mission/country visit, in particular in terms of availability of relevant documentation and the ability to interact with stakeholders. ROM Experts send the completed checklist to the QC Expert together with the draft of their deliverables.

Upon receipt of the draft ROM report, Experts in charge of internal QC assess the quality of the ROM report and MQ using the QC report also presented in Annex 6. They draw up a QC report and share it with the ROM Expert concerned. The ROM Expert modifies or corrects the ROM report accordingly and returns it to the QC Expert. This interaction may potentially take repeated turns before the ROM Expert and the QC Expert agree on the version of the report to be submitted to the Commission.

The QC report records all aspects relating to procedural quality issues (e.g. meeting deadlines, necessary revisions to the draft and final ROM reports) and quality control efforts undertaken. The QC Expert provides a score for the various quality criteria. In case of several exchanges between the ROM Expert and the QC Expert, the latter updates the initial QC report each time by adding additional comments related to the quality of the revised ROM report. The purpose of this is to be able to track the quality control efforts that have been undertaken by the ROM Contractor.

The duration of the overall internal QC process takes into account the fact that the ROM Contractor must submit the draft ROM report no later than 14 calendar days after the end of the field phase. Regarding the timing for the delivery of the draft ROM report by the ROM Expert, ROM Contractors may have special arrangements with their Experts. Draft ROM reports are uploaded on the ROM module only after the internal QC process is completed.

The draft and the final versions of the report are available to the ROM QA Contractor through the ROM module. Other documentation related to the internal QC process must be archived by the ROM Contractors and made available upon request.

ROM reports from ROM Experts who are members of the Core Team, and are, thus, QC Experts themselves, are preferably quality controlled by the Team Leader or Deputy Team Leader. In the quality control process, ROM Contractors, in their backstopping function, adopt all the necessary measures to verify the quality of the process at their level. Independent External quality control is under a separate contract, see Chapter 6.

The comments provided by OM on draft reports are equally an element of the overall quality improvement process. Therefore, ROM Expert and ROM Contractor take them into account in the framework of their own quality care and control.

4.6 Comments by Commission Services

As soon as the draft report is available on the ROM Module, the OM downloads it, and shares it with the IP (and, if relevant, with other stakeholders), inviting them to provide comments and indicate any factual errors.

> IPs should avoid updating figures on indicators, by considering activities that were conducted after the ROM review visit. The ROM report relates to the situation found when the field visit was conducted

The OM will formulate his/her comments on the draft report, considering the comments made by partners and stakeholders and send his/her comments to the ROM Contractor **within 21 calendar days**.

In the comments, the OM provides an overall opinion on the quality of the ROM report and each of its components. For each recommendation, the OM states to what extent (Yes, Partially, No) he/she agrees with the recommendation and reports the opinion of the consulted stakeholders. It is crucial to provide comments at this stage of the reporting, when the ROM Expert is fully involved in the ROM review and can act promptly and meaningfully on them.

The ROM Expert takes note of these comments. After consultation with the QC Expert, s/he decides whether or not to revise his/her report and, where appropriate, succinctly explains why comments cannot be taken into account. Within **14 calendar days**, the Contractor uploads the final version of the ROM report on to the ROM module. The OM has **21 calendar days** to provide final comments.

4.7 Dissemination of ROM reports

ROM Contractors and Experts are not entitled to share ROM reports (draft or final) but must transfer such requests to the OM in charge or to the ROM Coordination Units.

In principle, all ROM reports are shared by the Commission services with IPs during their elaboration. Sharing ROM reports with IPs is essential to transmit the ROM Expert's recommendations and improve the performance of the intervention. The MQs, on the other hand, are an internal document, and OMs are not expected to share them with IPs.

Any natural or legal person, including those from outside the EU, is entitled to ask for documents. These requests are handled under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on access to documents[28].

Requests for documents coming from Member States are dealt with by default under the principle of sincere cooperation laid down in Article 4(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

If a Partner Country with which the Commission has signed a FA for the implementation of actions on its sovereign territory asks for documents related to the implementation/monitoring/follow-up of

[28] See section 18.6 of the DEVCO Companion (for Commission staff).

this action, then the request should be treated according to the principles governing the cooperation between the EU and the Partner Country.

5 ROM REVIEWS OF BLENDING OPERATIONS

New

This chapter describes the specific features of ROM reviews on blending. It covers:

- **General principles** to be taken into account for monitoring blending operations
- The **process** of preparation, implementation and reporting for ROM reviews of blending operations.

In 2018, the process and methodology for ROM reviews were adapted to the monitoring requirements of blending operations. The main differences between standard ROM reviews and ROM reviews of blending are summarised below.

ROM Review for Blending: What´s different?

- More complex governance patterns and multiple level of delegation, involving the EU, a lead development financial institutions (LFI), government, other financial institutions (FIs), sub-delegated partners
- A non-straightforward identification of the ideal time for monitoring given the longer timeframe of implementation
- The combination of financial and sectoral expertise mobilised for each ROM Review
- An additional step in the ROM Review process: The Preliminary Assessment

Before entering into the methodology used for blending ROM reviews, the next section will recall some of the main principles of blending operations and their importance for monitoring.

Additional information can be found in the Guidelines on EU Blending Operations, Tools and Methods Series (2015) in the process of being updated at the time of writing.[29] Section 1 of this chapter is partly an extract from these guidelines.

5.1 Principles of monitoring for blending operations

In blending, EU financing[30] is combined with non-grant resources such as loans, equity and guarantees from development finance institutions (FIs) as well as commercial loans and investments in order to achieve a leveraged development impact. In the context of development cooperation, blending interventions are targeted at achieving sustainable growth and reducing poverty. The strategic use of

[29] Guidelines on EU Blending Operations, Tools and Methods Series, Guidelines N 5, DEVCO, November 2015.
[30] EU financing is used as a generic term covering different types of EU contribution to a project, including non-reimbursable contributions in indirect management as per the Title VI of the 2018 Financial Regulation, and financial instruments as per Title X of the 2018 Financial Regulation.

a limited grant element can make projects, with low financial return but a high economic and social return, possible.

Blending

Blending interventions managed by DG DEVCO and DG NEAR entail the strategic use of a limited contribution to mobilise financing from partner financial institutions and the private sector to enhance the development impact of investment projects.

The EU implements blending interventions in the context of the four EU Blending Frameworks through regionally or thematically focused blending facilities or platforms[31] that support projects contributing to the fulfilment of EU and partner country's strategic development goals. Blending facilities or platforms cover all countries eligible under the relevant financing instruments or frameworks.

Figure 10.Geographical coverage of EU Blending Facilities

The four EU Blending Frameworks correspond to the financing instruments providing funding in support of the Union's external policies:

[31] As per Article 2(6) of the 2018 Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046), "blending facility or platform means a cooperation framework established between the Commission and development or other public finance institution with a view to combining non-repayable forms of support and/or financial instruments and/or budgetary guarantees from the budget and repayable forms of support from development or other public finance institutions, as well as from private sectors institutions and private-sector investors."

- The **Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) Blending Framework** covers all eligible countries under the DCI with the LAIF, the AIF and the IFCA; as well as specific thematic programmes.
- The **European Development Fund (EDF) Blending Framework** covers all eligible countries under the EDF with the AfIF, the CIF and the IFP; as well as relevant thematic programmes.
- The **European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Blending Framework** covers all eligible countries under the ENI with the NIF. In the Neighbourhood, only countries that have signed a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan can benefit from assistance.
- The **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Blending Framework** covers all eligible countries under the IPA with the Western Balkans Investment Framework.

The type of support provided in blending projects varies with the type of project. The EU contribution can be in the form of:

- **Technical assistance** (it can be provided for project preparation as well as for project implementation; it can be used in all relevant sectors to finance project pre-feasibility or feasibility studies, address aspects related to the project enabling environment or key aspects in the success of project implementation, such as capacity development of different stakeholders, including reporting capacity on development impacts and supervision of works. In some cases, it has been granted under the facilities to support the development of a pipeline of projects in a specific sector/country or region);
- **Investment grants** (direct contributions, which can finance specific components of projects or a percentage of the total project cost, i.e. a *pari passu* share of all costs incurred);
- **Interest rate subsidies** (contribution used to reach a specific lower interest rate for a loan beneficiary reducing the initial investment and overall project cost);
- **Risk sharing instruments:**
    - **Guarantees** (contribution setting funds aside to cover potential future losses, subject to realisation of a number of pre-agreed events (non-payment, loss of value, etc.);
    - **Risk capital and other financial instruments** (finance provided to revenue-generating projects which typically is not secured. Four main forms of risk capital exist: equity, debt, quasi-equity/mezzanine, senior loans secured by collateral, etc.);

The contribution from FIs is mainly in the form of loans but can also be provided as guarantees, risk capital or technical assistance.

The amount of the EU contribution per project varies based on the objectives of the project, the country, the sector, the project economics and the type of support needed. It has varied in the past between less than EUR 1 million up to a maximum of EUR 70 million depending on the specifics of the project. A detailed justification for inclusion of the EU support needs to be provided on the project application form, along with a justification for the amount being sought.

The EU Blending project cycle comprises seven stages with responsibilities shared by key stakeholders. The main stakeholders in blending are EU Delegations, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR Headquarters, FIs, partner countries and regional organisations, EU Member States, as well as other Commission services and the EEAS. The "cycle", i.e. the different stages of a blending intervention are

illustrated in the chart below, while the Guidelines on EU blending interventions provide a detailed explanation of each stage.

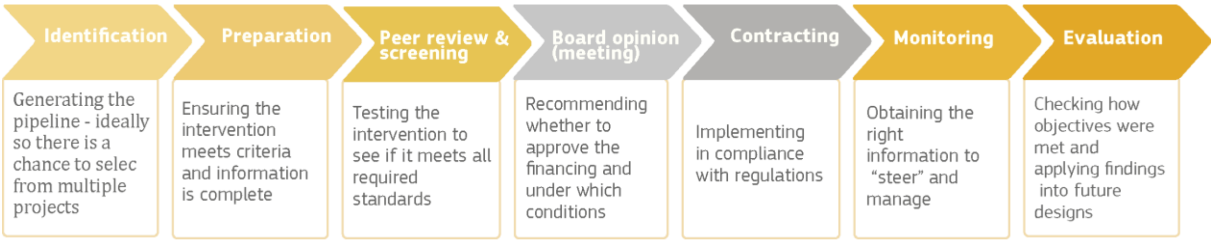


Figure 11. Intervention cycle of blending interventions

A particular challenge in blending interventions is matching this project cycle to that of the relevant FI(s) to ensure that quality projects are supported in a timely manner.

Identification

Potential blending projects are mainly identified by EU Delegations, FIs, Member States organisations and partner countries. The nature of the project determines the role of the partner countries' authorities and, where relevant, regional organisations. This also applies to potential engagement of private sector stakeholders (i.e. SME associations, local Finance Institutions, etc.). It is crucial that Delegations are consistently involved from the early stages of the process.

Based on the projects identified, geographical directorates are responsible for steering and developing the pipeline with Delegations and FIs, with the support of the relevant Blending Framework secretariat (DG DEVCO Blending Facilities Coordination for DCI and EDF, and DG NEAR Financial Assistance for ENI).

Project Preparation

The lead FI (LFI) is in charge of submitting project proposals to the relevant Blending Framework secretariat via a Project Application Form (PAF) for discussion at the Technical Assessment Meeting (TAM). Proposals should be submitted in accordance with the deadlines set in the calendar for the TAM and Board meetings to ensure sufficient time for assessment. Before submitting a project proposal, FIs are required to coordinate closely with the relevant national or regional Delegation. PAFs should be accompanied by a letter from the Head of Delegation, ensuring the involvement of the Delegation as well as clearing potential political issues related to the project. Early involvement of Commission Headquarters and EEAS services is also advisable.

Technical Assessment

The Blending Framework secretariat registers the project proposal received from the LFI and shares it with the relevant Commission services for internal technical assessment. The secretariat forwards the project proposal to the relevant Delegation(s), HQ operational and thematic units, relevant Commission Directorate-Generals (e.g. the DG for Economic and Financial Affairs, the DG for Climate Action), finance and contract units, and the EEAS.

Board Opinion

Opinions on requests for EU contributions are generally given by consensus at meetings of the relevant Blending Framework Board. The Board meeting (generally held from two to four times a year) is chaired by the relevant DG DEVCO or DG NEAR Director and is comprised of representatives from other Commission services and the EEAS, the EU Member States as voting members, and FIs as observers.

Contracting

The Commission decision allocating funds to a blending platform and the positive opinion of the relevant Board on specific projects are followed by formal contracting with the LFI. The Commission can decide to sign a financing agreement[32] with the partner country transferring the funds from the national (or regional) indicative programme to the blending platform or facility for political, visibility and ownership reasons.

Blending interventions are implemented in accordance with Article 62 and 159 of the 2018 Financial Regulation. In practice, they are generally implemented in indirect management (although direct management is not legally excluded). Blending contracts are contribution agreements with the lead FI, initiated by the Delegation/HQs services and then signed by the relevant geographical Director after financial verification. For interventions managed by Delegations, contracts are subsequently devolved to the Delegation for the first and subsequent payments and monitoring. EU funds are channelled directly through the LFI, who is responsible for the implementation of the project in exchange for a management fee. The LFI, in turn, may select (an) implementing partner(s).

Contracting is based on templates reflecting the requirements of the Financial Regulation, equal for EDF and EU budget-financed facilities, although the legal basis applicable is the relevant financing instrument (ENI, DCI, EDF). The Commission has negotiated a set of framework agreements with both inter-national organisations (EIB, EBRD, AfDB) and Member States organisations (KfW, AFD, AECID, etc.). Any derogations/supplementary provisions for blending purposes are included in the special conditions of the relevant individual contracts. The relevant templates (PAGoDA II/Contribution Agreement templates for technical assistance and investment grants; Contribution Agreement for Financial Instrument for risk-sharing instruments) reflect the requirements of Title X of the 2018 Financial Regulation.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

The LFI becomes a special type of Implementing Partner with specific decision-making procedures. It is responsible for project implementation (tendering and procurement procedures, implementation of technical assistance if relevant, regular updates with the partner country, etc.) and monitoring, as well as for reporting in accordance with the contractual provisions of the contribution agreement and the

[32] When a financing agreement is in place, individual legal contracts no longer need to be concluded within N+1 (by the end of the next financial year); the deadline for concluding the respective blending contracts in this case D+3 (three calendar years) from the signature of the financing agreement.

relevant memorandum of understanding or framework agreement for each blending intervention (and prior to that the application form for the design of the intervention).

While responsibility for project implementation and monitoring lies with the LFI as entrusted entity, the Commission remains accountable for use of EU funds and must therefore follow up and supervise implementation and monitoring by the LFI.

The Commission follows the progress of the project through the information provided in the LFI's reports. The content of such reporting is defined in the contractual templates and covers financial and operational aspects. Project reporting generally consists of at least an annual report to the Commission.

In addition, Commission staff can participate to joint monitoring missions.

The monitoring and reporting system of blending interventions should measure:

- The progress towards the achievement of policy objectives reflected in the relevant results indicators (including specific targets for women's inclusion);
- The extent to which environmental and social safeguards have been adopted and implemented. Particular attention will be paid to the environment and social impact, including disaggregated data (at least by sex, age and disability). The implementation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (referred in the contractual clauses) needs to be followed-up, as the recommendations made in a Strategic Environmental Assessment, as relevant.
- Information on costs actually incurred must be duly indicated in the report in order to allow the clearing of the pre-financing. Ensure that contractual clauses, including for example on recovery of fees and recovery of interest earned, are appropriately enforced when applicable.[33]
- Special elements of reporting related to the implementation of financial instruments additional to standard indirect management requirements (see box below)[34].

[33] For agreements using the Contribution and PAGoDA II template, the exact amount of recovery of management fees due to the Lead Finance Institution is only known after the Commission has established the total direct eligible costs based on the final report. Services are requested to adjust the final fees at the end of the project based on the final project expenditure. For agreements using other templates, contracts may provide for either lump sum-remunerations or remunerations depending on the final expenditure. A possible recovery of management fees has to be checked on a case-by-case basis depending on the provisions included in the individual contracts. Please note that under the new fees structure, in case of early termination of the contract, FIs will be entitled a minimum fee of up to 30% of the total fees when it is duly justified.
The conditions for possible recovery of interest on pre-financing are set out in the contractual conditions of the blending project. Interest on pre-financing is not due by default. If the LFI has the obligation to pay interest in accordance with its Rules and Regulations, the conditions for such payment are regulated in the Special Conditions. Interest that is due in accordance with the Special Conditions will either be reused for the corresponding project, deducted from the payment of the balance owed to the LFI or recovered.

[34] These reports can be found at http:// ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/innovative-financial-instruments-blending_en These reports present an overview of approved projects, progress in implementation of ongoing projects and expected results Under Article 250 of the 2018 Financial Regulation, the Commission annually reports to the European Parliament and Council on activities relating to financial instruments at facility level and not at project level.

Special elements of reporting related to financial instruments

Special elements of reporting to be provided by the LFI relate to the implementation of financial instruments additional to standard indirect management requirements:

- Achieved leverage and multiplier effect.
- Performance of the financial instrument, including investment realized.
- Balance of the fiduciary account ("action Account").
- Use of repayments and revenues (in accordance with Annex VII of the Contribution Agreement for Financial Instruments).
- In the case of equities, value of the equity investment with respect to previous years.
- Accumulated figure for losses of assets of equity investments and for called guarantees for guarantee instruments

A common and minimum set of indicators for blending interventions that reflect outputs and intended outcomes has been defined and agreed upon with FIs and Member States. The choice of indicators was guided, *inter alia*, by a series of considerations, such as coherence with facility objectives and priorities, the EU's external cooperation policy objectives and financial regulation, coherence with the EU RF, as well as current practices by financial institutions and the possibility for aggregation and reporting to the public. Guidance notes on how to complete an application form for blending facilities include a definition for each of the indicators agreed upon; they also require applicants to describe in qualitative terms the expected impact of the proposed intervention.

The table below presents an overview of the division of responsibilities of the main stakeholders in monitoring and reporting. In addition, the blending framework secretariats are responsible for preparing annual reports covering the activities of the different investment facilities.

Unit/entity	Tasks	Output
Lead financial institution	▪ Primary responsible for monitoring and reporting according to contractual obligations ▪ Should contact the EU Delegation upon monitoring missions (where joint monitoring missions are possible)	Regular monitoring missions and progress reports
EU Delegation, DG DEVCO/NEAR Headquarters	▪ Participate in joint monitoring missions ▪ Receive, review and approve periodic reports from lead financial institution; **ensure appropriate monitoring and progress against objectives and indicators defined for the project** ▪ Perform pre-financing payments (when relevant); manage information related to the financial statements received on the fiduciary account (e.g. decommitments in case of revenue or repayments) ▪ Process clearing of pre-financing ▪ **Initiate proposals for results-oriented monitoring interventions**	Payments Corrective actions Decommitments in case of generated revenue or repayments
DG DEVCO/NEAR Headquarters	▪ **Participate in selection of interventions** to be proposed for results-oriented monitoring	Results-oriented monitoring reports

How OMs monitor blending interventions, in practice

Operational Managers:

- Use contracts to verify compliance
- Participate in follow-up/steering committee meetings (where applicable)
- Participate in joint visits organized by the LFI (at least one per year)
- Prepare an initial list for interventions to be included in results-oriented monitoring
- Verify with the finance and contracts units whether financial information on costs incurred is sufficient to allow for clearing
- Meet the project manager from the LFI and the beneficiary/implementing entity, if possible, once per year, after the receipt of the progress report
- If applicable, progress on policy dialogue (e.g. when the blended intervention supports implementation of a sector policy) during project implementation should be reflected in the reports

ROM in the context of blending

Like "standard" ROM reviews, ROM reviews of blending interventions support monitoring activities by OMs in Delegations or HQ operational units.

Among others, ROM missions assess the need for additional or strengthened reporting mechanisms and for a widening of scope of the internal monitoring by the LFI and its partners to reflect socio-economic development results and implementation of EU policies. The ROM mission report may provide specific recommendations in this regard, which will become the object of discussions between the EU and the LFI.

ROM missions do not substitute in any way the monitoring system set up by the LFI. They are in line with contractual provisions envisaging external checks operated by the Commission on blending

The added value and leverage effect of the EU contribution are to be measured against the whole investment project

The contribution of the EU grant in blending is justified by its added value and leverage effect. This is measured against the whole investment project and, in most cases, cannot be measured by monitoring only the activities funded specifically by the EU (e.g. grant for technical assistance). The ROM mission should therefore avail itself of information regarding the **whole intervention**, according to needs – this may imply access to information such as private investments in the project, analysis of stakeholders involved in sub-lending schemes, etc. It may nevertheless happen that the EU contribution is limited in time and does not cover the whole duration of the investment (e.g. EU grant to fund technical assistance for project preparation), *de facto* limiting access to other information and consequently the scope of the ROM missions covering blending interventions. The Commission should therefore describe the scope of the ROM review, which may vary depending on the intervention, at the beginning of the mission, and ensure proper support from the relevant LFI.

Many blending interventions, especially infrastructure investments, have a long-time span; they have cost implications and/or are affected by changing market conditions. Because the effective cost implications (e.g. for maintenance) often become apparent a long time after the EU contribution has been completed, it can be difficult to provide an opinion on the sustainability of an investment and of the EU contribution. For these reasons, more than for other types of interventions, impact of a blending intervention is difficult to capture in short missions and in particular at a time where the intervention is far from completed. As for the standard reviews, impact will not be assessed by the ROM review but should be assessed by evaluations; potential and likelihood of sustainability will however be assessed by the ROM.

Evaluation

Responsibility for the evaluation of blended interventions is delegated to the LFI as set forth in the delegation/contribution agreement, and in accordance with its own procedures. The evaluation should include a social impact assessment, including how the operation contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment, and the full enjoyment of, and/or any adverse impact on, human rights (including the respective implemented mitigation strategies). It should also include an environmental and climate change component, to assess the effectiveness of the project's environmental management plan and climate resilience measures. The Commission may conduct additional project-level evaluations, if needed.

5.2 Overview of the process and actors involved in blending ROM reviews

The process for ROM reviews of blending interventions is very similar to the one for "standard" ROM review except for:

- the additional step of the preliminary assessment, before finalising the work plan, involving the visit to the Lead Financial Institution.
- the additional number of actors involved in the process.

The process is represented graphically in the following page while a detailed description of its steps is provided in the following sections.

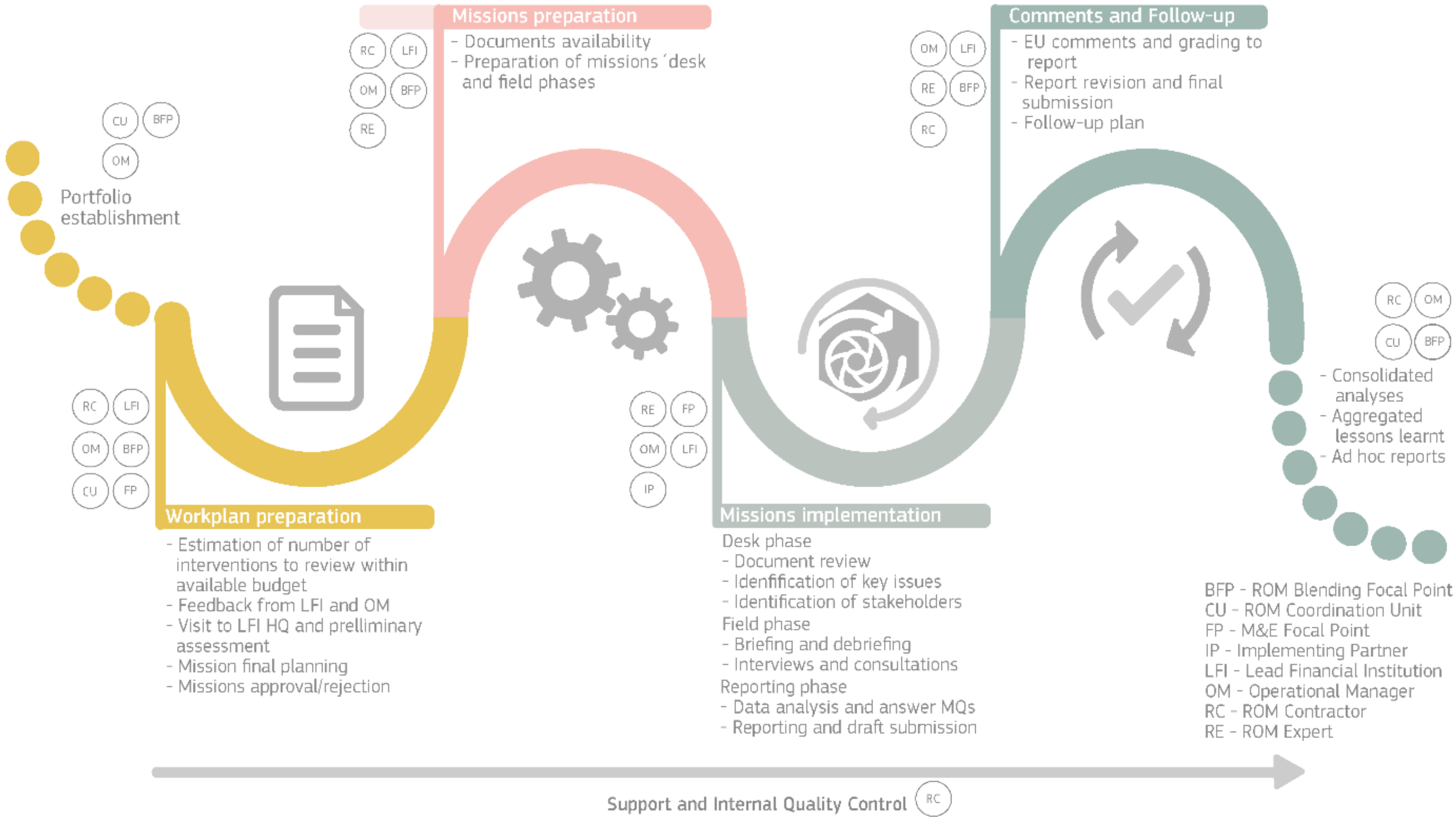


Figure 12. ROM Review Process for blending interventions

ROM reviews of blending interventions involve a joint effort by the same actors as the ones involved in the standard reviews, with some adjustments:

Operational Managers

OMs are the beneficiaries of the ROM reviews. Given that blending interventions are implemented in indirect management through LFIs, they rely on the collaboration of the LFIs for providing accurate information for mission planning. In their reports, ROM Experts must tailor their recommendations to OMs to this specific context.

M&E Focal Points

Monitoring and Evaluation Focal Points facilitate the process at Delegation level and thematic / geographic level in HQ.

ROM Blending Focal Points

ROM Blending Focal Points provide methodological support and have an advisory role during planning and execution of ROM missions. They work in DG DEVCO Unit C7 and DG NEAR Unit A3, which represent the respective DGs with regard to blending interventions and host the blending framework secretariats. In performing their role, ROM Blending Focal points liaise with thematic and geographic units, with lead FIs and with the other ROM stakeholders.

Financial Institutions

Financial Institutions (FIs) as implementing partners include both European FIs and Member States' FIs with a long history of collaboration with the EU as well as LFIs from other continents with less or no structural links with the EU.

ROM Contractors

ROM Contractors take the lead in planning and organising the missions and have to embed in their teams finance-banking specialists that can assess and quality control the deliverables.

ROM Experts

ROM Experts conduct the review missions and draft the corresponding reports. They generally work in teams of two covering a double perspective of banking/finance knowledge as well as sector expertise, and knowledge of the ROM system.

ROM Coordination Units & ROM Coordinating Team

The ROM Coordinating Team within the ROM Coordination Units (DG DEVCO 04 and DG NEAR A4) support the entire exercise keeping in close contact with the blending units at headquarters.

Below the description of the process steps for ROM reviews of blending interventions.

5.3 The portfolio of blending interventions for ROM Review

Within the overall portfolio of interventions earmarked for ROM reviews, there are approximately 20 blending interventions per year for DG DEVCO and 12 for DG NEAR. The selection of blending interventions takes place through internal consultation (some interventions, such as those under the ITF do not appear in CRIS). Taking the EAMR as a starting point, the ROM Coordination Units conduct a consultation to identify interventions:

- With implementation difficulties as recognised by the OM or by Commission headquarters, including operations for which communication/reporting processes pose difficulties whether at HQ or EU Delegation level.
- In need of re-assessment, following changes in project design, structure, or changes in the sector national policy framework that may influence the implementation of the intervention.
- Of specific interest but for which the EU could not yet organise a visit or has not the required expertise to do it.
- That for any other reason may benefit from ROM Review support, such as request for extension, request from the geographical or thematic units needing to draw experience from ongoing interventions for proper assessment of new interventions in the Technical Assistance Meetings (TAM)[35] .

Starting from 2019, ROM Reviews of blending are managed through the ROM module. Therefore, eligible interventions are uploaded to the ROM module at the beginning of the exercise

At this stage, it is important to involve both HQ and Delegations to make sure that the interventions selected are at a stage of implementation where a ROM review is appropriate. This cannot be established with a one-fits-all approach, but each intervention has to be assessed by those involved in its management. The ROM Contractors receive the list of blending interventions and start organising the missions through the next phase of the ROM review process: the work plan.

5.4 The ROM Review work plan for blending

As part of the preparation of the ROM review work plan, ROM Contractors plan the missions for the blending interventions, with the support of the M&E Focal Points, the Operational Managers, the ROM Blending Focal Points, the LFIs implementing the intervention, and in consultation with the ROM Coordination Units, which must approve every mission.

[35] TAM are the instance to prepare and negotiate with FIs the future blending interventions

The main differences with the ROM of "standard" interventions at this stage are:

- The (future) involvement of the ROM Blending Focal Points in defining the list of blending interventions to be monitored and the scope of the missions (although for the time being all interventions mature for ROM for each LFI are being monitored).
- The involvement of the LFI in the planning of missions.
- The planning of a three-step mission, including a preliminary assessment of the scope of the review with a visit to the LFI's headquarters.
- Final approval on experts and working days for the ROM blending missions takes place after the preliminary assessment

The collaboration of the LFI and of Delegations is essential to establish the scope of the reviews and for the inclusion of ROM of blending missions into ROM group missions when feasible. It is also crucial for grouping different preliminary assessment missions with the same delegated LFI

The following figure is an **overview** of the main steps for the preparation of the work plan:

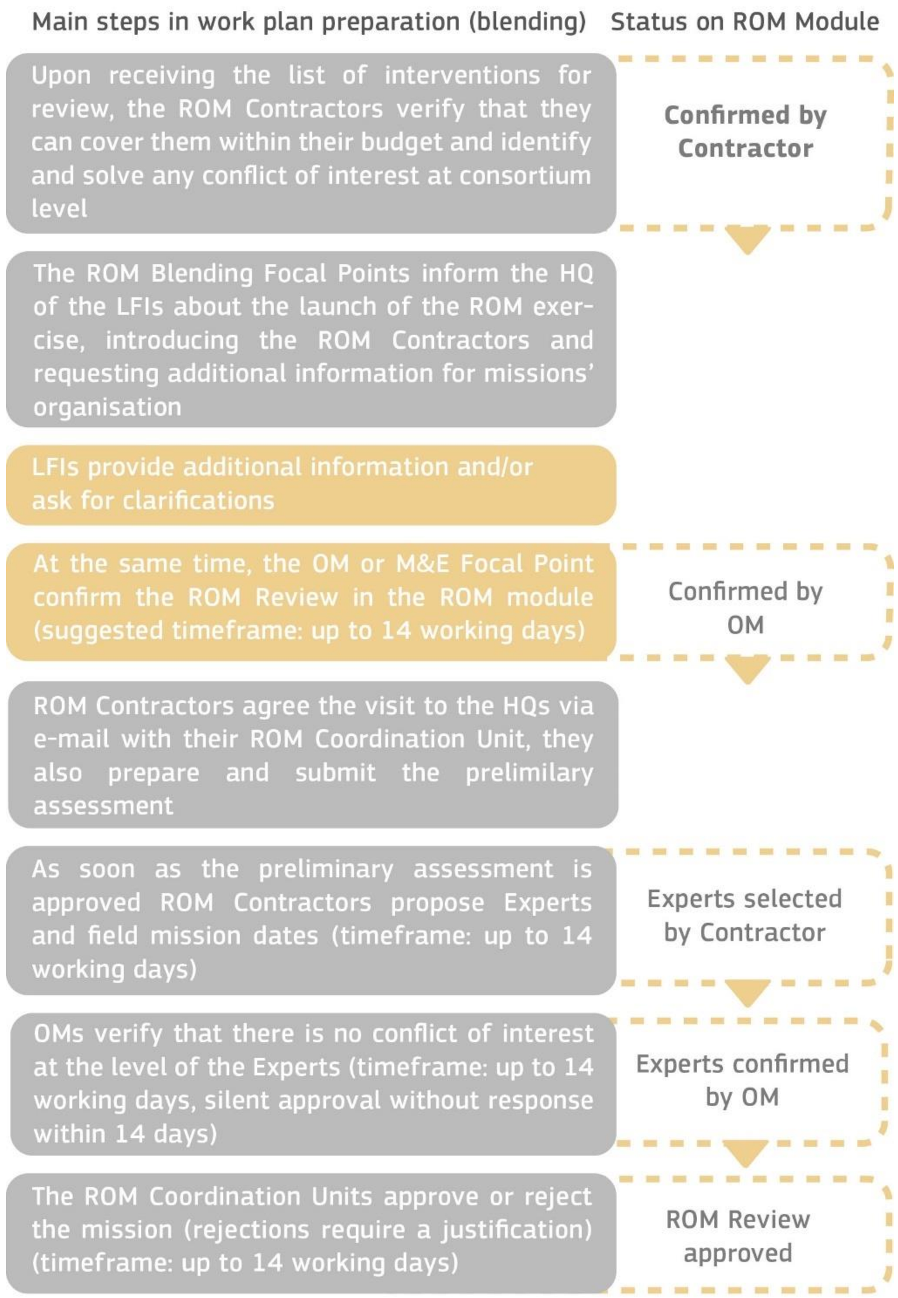


Figure 13. Work plan steps for blending interventions

A **detailed description** of the tasks and steps necessary to complete the work plan is presented below.

Identification of conflict of interest at consortium level

This step is the same as for standard ROM reviews as described in chapter 4 of this Handbook. Any possible conflict of interest needs to be addressed and solved at ROM Contractor's consortium level.

Budget estimation

The ROM Contractors proceed to estimate the budget of the missions. This is an indicative estimation based on the ROM standards and on the information provided with the list of interventions to be reviewed, i.e. a proposal of countries to be visited, and any particular issues communicated through the comments to KPIs 6/7 of the EAMR.

The final scope of the mission and the exact number of working days to be allocated to each Expert is confirmed and approved by the ROM Coordination Units only during the preparation phase, with the submission of a preliminary assessment. In duly justified cases, Contractors may propose deviations from the set standards.

ROM reviews on blending interventions are performed by either key or non-key senior Experts. As a general rule and if appropriate, blending interventions are monitored by two Experts – one with a specialisation in banking/finance and one with expertise corresponding to the sector of intervention of the blending intervention. One of the two Experts is appointed as Mission Leader and is responsible for the organisation of the mission in collaboration with the second Expert.

The two Experts visit the intervention at the same time, but while in the field, they can diversify contacts and interviews at local level to cover both the financial and sectoral dimensions of the blending intervention. They draft all the ROM reporting documents in a collaborative way. There are cases where mobilising a single Expert may be more appropriate, and this can be decided during the preliminary assessment; for example, for smaller infrastructure interventions, or purely intermediation interventions without need of sectoral approaches, or for a second ROM review (if any) carried out some years after the first ROM review.

The standards to be considered for the budget estimation are the following:

Allocation of days per Expert	For single country interventions and programmes	For multi-country (*) interventions
Preparatory & desk phase (including the visit to FI and preliminary assessment)	4	4
Field phase (**) (including travel time, briefing and debriefing with EUD or HQ)	9	20
Drafting of report and QC phase (***)	3	4
Total days	**16**	**28**

(*) A maximum of 3 Experts may be assigned a ROM review for a multi-country intervention
(**) For multi-country interventions and programmes, a maximum of 4 country visits of 5 man-days each is the standard
(***) These days do not include the QC done by the QC Expert but only cover the work carried out by the ROM Expert

Table 10. Allocation of days for ROM reviews on blending interventions

Preparation of travel and mission agendas as well as document research are not included in the ROM Experts' workload but are part of the ROM Contractor core team and backstopping tasks.

For centrally managed interventions, briefing and debriefings are attended by one of the Core Team Experts and are not included in the standards. For interventions managed by Delegations, the Mission Leader (or Expert, in the exceptional case of individual missions) delivers the briefing at the beginning of the field mission and the debriefing at the end of the field mission; in this case, HQ services are invited to participate in the briefing and debriefing via videoconference, using the existing VC facilities.

Senior Experts in the core team are responsible for internal quality control. In duly justified cases, non-core team Experts may perform QC tasks. Prior approval of the ROM Coordination Unit is required.

Indicative allocation of days for QC by non-core team short term Experts	For single interventions	For multi-country interventions
Quality Control	1.5	2

Table 11. Indicative allocation of days for QC of reviews for single- and multi-country interventions

The timeframe for the budget estimation is up to **14 working days**.

Launch of the ROM Exercise

Once the list of interventions to be reviewed is available and confirmed by Contractors, ROM Blending Focal Points inform the LFIs of the launch of the ROM exercise. They provide a concise presentation of the ROM review process, including the methodology and tools used, and the list of missions foreseen for the particular LFI.

In this initial communication, ROM Blending Focal Points specify that the Experts will have to meet with the different units of the LFIs involved in the operation, request the contact details of the HQ manager of each operation, as well as contact details of the LFI's local representatives, key partners and stakeholders. LFIs are also requested to provide all relevant documentation pertaining to the operation, including logical framework; governance framework, implementation reports, studies, risk assessments, and any other documents that may be relevant.

Additional Information

LFIs may indicate that some of the interventions under their responsibility are not yet mature enough for a ROM review. In this case, ROM Blending Focal Points, OMs and ROM Coordination Units may decide to substitute the intervention with another one that may benefit from ROM. On the other hand, a ROM review can be beneficial even if the blending intervention is at its very beginning, so whether to replace an intervention or not should be considered case-by-case.

At this stage, LFIs may request additional information on the confidentiality clauses under which ROM Experts operate, and may request additional confidentiality statements to be signed. ROM Blending Focal Points assist during this process.

This phase should take up to **14 days**.

Visit to the LFI HQ and Preliminary Assessment

ROM Contractors request the approval of the CVs of the blending Experts that they intend to engage. They also request approval for the visit to the LFI HQ, via e-mail.

Blending interventions are subject to centralised decision-making processes and LFI project managers as well as the internal stakeholders of the interventions work in the LFIs' HQ. Therefore, visiting the LFI HQ, is crucial to have a clear understanding and assessment of the implementation status of the intervention.

During the visit to LFI HQ, the ROM Expert must meet all units involved in the implementation of the intervention, and not just the managing unit

During the visit, LFIs are expected to share detailed information about the intervention, including on conditions, fees and the structure of the arrangements among the lead LFI, the co-financiers and the implementing partner(s). The visit also allows learning more about the LFI's monitoring and reporting practices, including in terms of respect of contractual obligations and provisions.

After this meeting, the ROM Experts draft a **preliminary assessment** using the template available in Annex 9 of this Handbook.

The preliminary assessment is submitted to the ROM Coordination Unit copying the OM, the M&E Focal Point and the ROM Blending Focal Point within 7 days from the return from the visit to LFI HQ. The preliminary assessment contains additional information and justification of the proposed work in the field. The concerned services must send their comments to the ROM Contractor **within 14 days**.

The importance of the Preliminary Assessment

The preliminary phase is specific to the ROM blending methodology. I tis unanimously considered as necessary because the interventions are quite complex, mixing financial as well as sector issues, include project and often sub-project activities, and involve different kinds of IPs whose role is defined by different agreements.

The LFI often manages the intervention from its HQ, with one or several project managers, but also with different HQ services involved (finance, legal, thematic and geographic units, etc.). Preliminary meetings are essential for the overall comprehension of the interventions. They must not be limited to meetings with people in charge of institutional links with EU HQ. These meetings proved very useful as a coordination tool between the LFI, the EU and the ROM blending Experts. They are essential to understand and draw all the timelines of the interventions. They are also necessary to properly evaluate the right format of the ROM review in terms of number of days and number of Experts.

The ROM Contractor can group the meetings with a certain LFI to cover all interventions subject to review in a given work plan. This allows Contractors to judge even several months in advance what should be the optimal configuration and duration for one or several missions linked to the same LFI.

Proposed Experts and Tentative Schedule

Since the ROM module does not foresee the preliminary assessment stage (the full process for ROM review of blending, including the preliminary assessment, will be implemented in OPSYS in the near future), the entire schedule of the mission is encoded in the ROM module following the approval of the preliminary assessment.

OMs can then flag potential conflicts of interest in the ROM module. In the event of no indication of a conflict of interest within 14 days, the Experts are considered as approved by the OM.

Approval of the ROM Review Missions

Once all previous steps are completed, the ROM Coordination Units can approve the missions, within a maximum of **14 days**. While deciding whether to approve a mission or not, the ROM Coordination Unit will take into account all elements, and in particular the association between Expert(s) and sector(s) of the intervention, any issues raised by the Contractor, ROM Blending Focal Point, LFIs, or Operational Managers (including security matters), and any deviations from the ROM standards. Missions may be rejected with a justification.

5.5 Preparing ROM Review Missions for Blending Interventions[36]

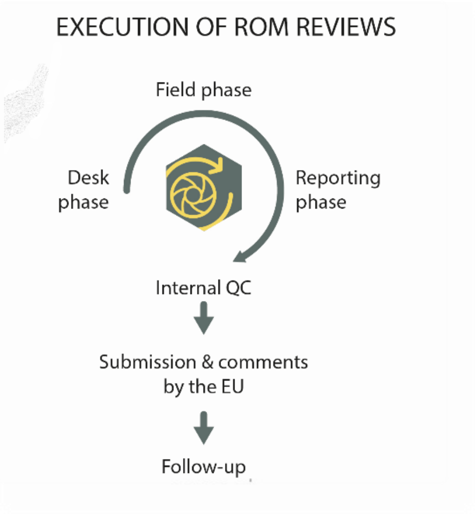
This step starts already during the work plan phase, in order to prepare the visit to the LFI and complete the preliminary assessment. CRIS and Ares documentation of blending contracts and decisions is available through the ROM module when the intervention is encoded in CRIS. However, more documentation is usually necessary for the preparation of the mission. ROM Blending Focal Points, the OMs involved and the LFI implementing the blending intervention provide additional documents throughout the duration of the mission. As a general rule, all relevant documents will be available for the ROM Contractor about three weeks before the start of the ROM review mission.

5.6 Implementing the ROM Review missions for blending interventions

ROM review of blending are organised around three main phases:

[36] Additional information on blending operations is available through a list of essential reading for ROM Experts monitoring blending operations provided in Annex 10.

- The **desk phase**, involving a desk documentary analysis, following the meeting with the LFI and the elaboration of a preliminary assessment.
- The **field phase**, in which the main stakeholders are consulted, and briefing and debriefing sessions are conducted with the OM in charge, and depending on OM's choice including local LFI branch and /or the LFI manager of the intervention by video conference.
- And the **reporting phase**, in which the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the evidence gathered, with the guidance provided by the set of monitoring questions, converge into a ROM report which is the key deliverable of each ROM review.



Each ROM review takes approximately 3-4 months, including internal QC, and comments by the Commission services on the draft and final version of the ROM Report.

Throughout the three phases, ROM Contractors provide technical and methodological support to the Experts performing the missions.

Desk Phase

During this phase, with the support of the Contractor's Core Team, ROM Experts:

- **Review all documents** including the intervention logic reflected in the relevant documents (PAF, the contracts between EU and the LFI, MoU, results frameworks or logframe(s) when available), the implementation plans, the allocated resources and budget, all progress reports by implementing partners, any previous ROM report and mid-term evaluation;
- **Take stock of the visit to the LFI HQ** and of the additional information obtained about the intervention to identify any information gaps and key points for study during the field mission.
- **Prepare the briefing** by developing a preliminary list of specific questions to be asked during the field mission.
- **Build on the preliminary assessment's** proposed scope and focus of the field mission, and prepare the mission agenda.

Documentary and logframe analysis

ROM Experts collect all relevant documents and insights, not only on the specific intervention financed by the EU but on the entire investment project to which the EU grant is meant to bring leverage and additional economic and social value. The Experts will analyse action documents, logframe(s) if available, budgets, planning of activities as included in implementation plans and progress reports by LFIs, IPs and OMs, as well as the intervention's visibility and communication plan.

The logframe is analysed during the preparatory phase. Improving suggestions are prepared for further discussion with the OM and LFI

It is also important to consider the policy and other context in which an intervention has been developed in order to analyse its relevance. Often blending interventions have a political leverage objective, to support reforms in line with EU and partner country policies. Country analyses, where relevant, are available from different sources like the EU, Regional Development Banks (ADB, AfDB, IDB), UNDP (report on Human Development), and other UN agencies and think tanks. ROM Experts should also take into account the link between the intervention and the geographic or thematic programming document related to it. In line with the aid effectiveness objective of blending interventions to improve cooperation between European and non-European aid actors, ROM Experts take into account the strategy and implementation documents produced by other donors.

The analysis of the intervention logic is based on the narrative in the application form, contract, MoU, and further developed by the implementing LFI. Logframes can exist in different formats when the implementation is delegated to LFIs that have their own methodologies and terminology; in this case, ROM Experts ensure that all the key elements of the EU template are well identified and taken into account for conclusions to be drawn from the review.

Experts analyse the quality and relevance of the results indicators and verify the existence and quality of the baselines and monitoring systems in place. During this phase, the Expert drafts preliminary answers to the relevant Monitoring Questions (MQs) dealing with the intervention logic, monitoring and learning as well as the related sections of the ROM Report (MQ are presented in Annex 1 whilst the specific guidance for answering them is presented in Annex 3).

The analysis of the implementation progress reports

The analysis of the implementation progress reports produced by the implementing LFI is another key aspect of the documentary analysis. IPs issue periodic progress reports, as stated in the Delegation Agreements with the EU. The quality of implementation reports differs, and ROM Experts may need to complement the information found in these reports with other sources, including with targeted questions during the field phase. Implementation progress reports include the activity and resource schedule of the previous reporting period and the provisional activity and resource schedule of the following period.

In case the intervention has deviated from the activity schedule and the use of resources, ROM Experts identify specific areas/points to be discussed with the OM and local LFI during the field phase, with a view to providing a complete assessment and recommendations for corrective actions in the corresponding sections of the MQs and ROM report, taking into account the context of indirect management through the LFIs.

For further guidance on the analysis of progress reports by the ROM Experts, refer to chapter 4 of this Handbook

Field Phase

The field phase of a blending ROM review has the same format as a "standard" ROM review mission, starting with a briefing meeting with the Unit or Delegation in charge of the intervention, and continuing with relevant meetings and group sessions with the key stakeholders of the intervention reviewed. The mission ends with a debriefing meeting with the Unit/Delegation, and whenever relevant with the ROM Blending Focal Points and/or other interested parties at the Commission HQs (e.g. line DGs invited by the ROM Blending Focal Point or by the OM). If the debriefing takes place at EU Delegation, a video conference should be organised to involved concerned HQ services.
For more information on the field phase of ROM reviews, refer to chapter 4 of this Handbook.

Reporting Phase

As for standard ROM reviews, the reporting phase lasts approximately 14 days and involves the elaboration of three key deliverables following mandatory standard templates. The main deliverable is the **ROM report** accompanied by the answers to the monitoring questions (templates in Annex 4), and the lessons learning log (optional – template in Annex 5). The monitoring questions for blending ROM reviews are the same as for non-blending reviews but they are accompanied by a dedicated guidance to cater for the specific features of blending interventions (Annex 3).

5.7 The Internal Quality Control (QC) by ROM Contractors

Internal QC of ROM reviews applied to blending interventions follow the same procedures as for non-blending interventions. As mentioned above it will be crucial to have at least one Expert in the ROM Contractor's team with adequate expertise. Templates for QC are included in Annex 6.

5.8 Comments by Commission Services

The process can be slightly longer than for standard interventions since both HQ Units and Delegations may be commenting the same report. However, the commenting period is **21 working days** as for standard reviews and follows the same process.

5.9 Dissemination of ROM reports

The same rules as for standard ROM reviews apply to sharing ROM reports on blending interventions. ROM reports should be sent to all relevant services in the Commission for information and lessons learnt. Sharing ROM reports with LFIs is essential to transmit the monitor's recommendation and improve the performance of the intervention. However, it is strongly recommended to consult the HQ Units in charge of blending and the ROM Blending Focal Points in case of doubts about the appropriateness of doing so.

The MQs, on the other hand, are an internal document and Commission services are not expected to share it with the LFIs.

6 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ROM REVIEWS

This chapter describes the **quality cycle for ROM reviews** and the role of the ROM QA team

In addition to the internal quality control (QC) performed by the ROM Contractors, the monitoring of quality within the ROM reviews system comprises the intervention of a Quality Assurance (QA) Contractor, independent of the other ROM Contractors. Its role in the overall ROM review quality cycle is described in the following sections.

The importance of quality

Each ROM service has its proper quality assurance cycle. The ROM Reviews system (standard and blending review) benefit from an additional and external quality control ensured by the QA Contractor

6.1 The ROM Reviews quality cycle

The quality cycle applied for the ROM reviews is represented in the following figure.

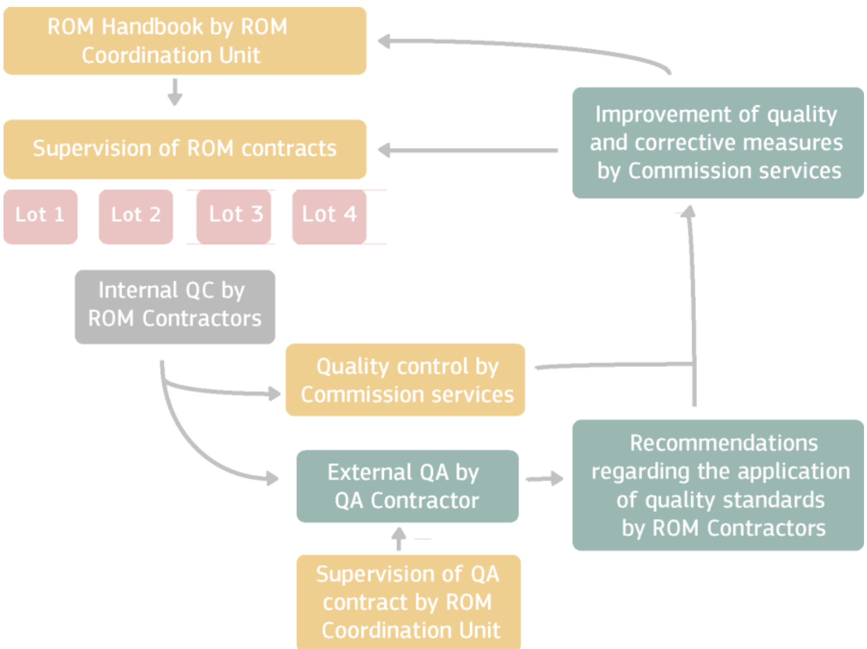


Figure 14. The ROM reviews quality cycle

The ROM quality cycle thus includes:

- The quality standards described in the ROM Handbook and as further communicated by the ROM Coordinating Team in the regular coordination meetings with ROM Contractors.
- The internal quality control system put in place by each ROM Contractor, including the QC by the ROM Experts and further QC by the Contractor's core team.
- The comments by the Commission services on the ROM reports.
- The external Quality Assurance assessing the quality of ROM reviews services.
- The overall supervision by the ROM Coordination Units (in DG DEVCO and DG NEAR).

The specific responsibilities of Contractors, Experts, QA Contractor and Commission services in relation to the overall ROM reviews quality system are summarised below.

	Actors	Specific responsibilities
Internal QC by ROM Contractor	**ROM Experts**	Apply the ROM Handbook in the implementation of ROM services as specified in the Handbook, in particular: ▪ Complete quality checklists for each ROM review. ▪ Keep, track and transfer reports and related documents to the ROM Contractor in a form accessible to the external QA Contractor and Commission services.
Internal QC by ROM Contractor	**ROM Contractors**	Apply the ROM Handbook in the implementation of ROM services as specified in the Handbook, in particular: ▪ QC Experts complete a specific QC report for each ROM review, except for ROM reviews implemented by the Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader, which are subject to QC by the back-stopping team of the ROM Contractor. ▪ If the team of key Experts has only one "statistics and performance /measurement" Expert, then his/her work is quality controlled by the backstopping team of the ROM Contractor. Otherwise, the work of such an Expert is quality controlled by another "statistics and performance /measurement" Expert. ▪ Share the QC report with the ROM Expert. ▪ Ensure timely follow-up of QC comments by ROM Experts. ▪ Take corrective measures to ensure quality of ROM reviews. ▪ Reflect QC efforts and corrective measures taken in the quarterly and annual QC reports to be submitted to the ROM Coordination Units. ▪ Keep records of all QC documentation. Records must be available upon request in a form accessible to the external QA Contractor and Commission services.
External QA	**QA Contractor**	Apply the ROM Handbook in the fulfilment of its mission; in particular: ▪ Review across the four ROM contracts specific ROM review reports based on a sample selected each month by the ROM Coordination Units. ▪ Complete a specific QA report for each ROM review verified. ▪ Review the level of compliance with ROM service standards by each ROM Contractor and establish quarterly QA reports, flagging and setting out critical issues. ▪ Submit the corresponding quarterly QA reports (four reports for each ROM contract over a year) to the ROM Coordination Units. ▪ Submit an annual consolidated QA report on the implementation of the four ROM contracts to the ROM Coordination Units, including recommendations for

	Actors	Specific responsibilities
		the improvement of the rules, modalities, specifications and quality standards governing the ROM system.
Commission services	ROM Coordination Units	▪ Receive from ROM Contractors draft QC reports, the six-monthly and annual contract implementation reports, share them with the external QA Contractor and comment/approve them. ▪ Approve quarterly and annual QA reports. ▪ Share QA reports with issues on individual ROM reviews and quarterly QA reports with the ROM Contractor and agree on any follow-up needed ▪ Define and propose any follow-up needed at DG level. ▪ Jointly ensure appropriate coordination of the ROM system.
	OMs/ M&E Focal Points	▪ Contribute to the preparation of the ROM mission by providing all the necessary documentation and other information on the interventions to be subject to ROM. ▪ Ensure that draft and final ROM review reports are duly and timely commented on, taking into account the comments from other stakeholders in the project.

Table 12. Roles and responsibilities in the ROM reviews quality system

6.2 Scope of the QA Contract

The ROM QA Contractor supports the Commission services in the monitoring and overall supervision of the quality of the ROM review service implemented by the ROM Contractors in accordance with the standards set out in the present Handbook. The QA Contractor's deliverables contribute to constant improvement of the ROM system by:

- **Monitoring the quality** of compliance and the application of the ROM Handbook with regard to the implementation of the ROM review services by the ROM Contractors, through quality checks of a random sample of ROM review services and through direct interviews with a sample of ROM stakeholders, namely Commission services, ROM Experts, ROM Contractors and other ROM stakeholders;
- Where appropriate, **providing recommendations** for the improvement of the quality of the ROM review services and their impact on the entire ROM system. This may result in a revision of the present Handbook.

The QA applies to ROM review services implemented by the ROM Contractors, including the ROM Contractors' organisation and internal QC of and support to the reviews.

DG DEVCO 04 is responsible for the direct supervision of the QA contract in collaboration with DG NEAR A4. This includes supervising the application of corrective measures that may be recommended by the QA Contractor.

6.3 The QA Experts Team

The Core Team of Key Experts is composed of a Team Leader and a Deputy Team Leader employed full-time (220 man-days/year). The Core Team is complemented by a minimum of six ROM QA Experts

for a total of 880 man-days/year. To ensure proper coordination at all times with the Commission services, the ROM QA Contractor has an office in Brussels. The QA Contractor participates in regular coordination meetings with the ROM Coordination Units and, at the request of the latter, in coordination meetings with the ROM Contractors.

The QA Experts have specific professional experience in providing services in training and consulting businesses or public entities with regard to the introduction of quality assurance and/or management systems in accordance with international standards, and in setting up and/or consulting on quality assurance-related systems in companies or public institutions (setting quality standards, assessing and monitoring processes, etc.).

The Team Leader holds overall responsibility for the implementation of the QA assignment, coordination of the entire QA process, procedures and deliverables (submission of the QA work plan, monthly QA reports, quarterly and annual QA reports) coordination with the Commission services and QA implementation progress reporting. The Team Leader works in close cooperation with the DEVCO and NEAR ROM Coordination Units. He/she should organise and support training sessions on ROM services and the ROM quality system for the team of ROM QA Experts.

Independence of QA Experts

To ensure independence of the QA process, QA Experts shall not have any conflict of interest with regard to the interventions to be reviewed.
QA Experts are not allowed to:

- Review any intervention in which he/she or the firm employing him/her under this contract has been previously involved to any degree
- Implement any ROM service under a ROM service contract

The Deputy Team Leader supports the Team Leader in fulfilling his/her tasks and responsibilities and is in charge of all statistical analysis, in particular with respect to the quality of information provided by the ROM Contractors in their quarterly and annual QC reports.

The QA Contractors ensure timely delivery of ROM QA reports and inform as early as possible the ROM Contractors and the respective ROM Coordination Units of ROM review reports with low scores by the OMs.

6.4 The QA tasks

ROM reviews to be assessed by the QA Contractor are selected by means of random sampling. Random sampling is performed each month by the QA contractor, totalling each year a minimum of 230 reviews to be QA checked. The ROM Coordination Units may request additional QA reviews based on duly justified requests.

In order to perform their task, the QA Contractor receives all key information on the interventions to be reviewed and on the internal QC implemented by the ROM Contractors. To this end, all QC documentation is made available by the ROM Contractors in a form accessible to the QA Contractor.

In order to understand ROM implementation issues and difficulties, each QA Expert will implement a number of field missions (up to 25 per year) to Delegations and HQ operational Units for information and exchange with the latter and with involved local ROM stakeholders as regards the implementation of ROM reviews by the ROM Contractors and Experts. The selection of the Delegations and HQ Units to be visited by the QA Experts is performed by the ROM Coordination Units, in collaboration with the QA Team Leader.

In addition to these standard field missions, the QA Contractor will perform a number of **'shadow' field missions"** (one per year per ROM Contractor and two per year on blending). The purpose of these shadow field missions is to witness the implementation of the ROM process during the ROM reviews' field mission and to verify how the selected ROM Expert applies the principles and the standards described in the present ROM Handbook. To this end, the QA Expert will accompany the ROM Expert during the ROM review field phase but will also be copied in all relevant correspondence during the preparation and report writing phases, including the internal QC process. The ROM Contractor will be informed of the ROM shadow field mission early enough to be involved in all communications preparing the field mission. The IP will be informed by the ROM QA that a QA expert will accompany the ROM expert during the field mission and act as an "observer" of the exercise.

In shadowing the ROM reviews, the QA expert maintains an observer's attitude and does not interfere with the work done by the ROM Expert

6.5 Expected QA deliverables

The QA Contractor maintains a QA work plan and has reporting tasks to accomplish. The QA activities carried out converge in the compilation of a number of deliverables, monthly, annually and ad hoc, as described below.

QA reports on individual ROM reviews

For each ROM review assessed by the QA Contractor, a QA report is completed based on the template provided in Annex 11. The QA report includes critical issues to be brought to the attention of the ROM Coordination Units. The reports are uploaded on a monthly basis on a dedicated group on the Capacity4Dev platform.

QA reporting has two objectives:

- To review the quality of ROM reviews and related processes as implemented by the ROM Experts.
- To review the quality and consistency of the internal QC ensured by the ROM Contractors, taking the following into particular consideration:
    - Quality checklists by the ROM Experts reflecting the level of compliance with quality standards defined in the present Handbook.
    - QC reports by the ROM Contractors' QC Experts reflecting the internal QC process.

The reports should be in Word/Windows compatible format and in English.

Quarterly QA reports

The QA Contractor prepares and submits a draft quarterly QA report for each ROM contract to the ROM Coordination Units (DEVCO and NEAR, for the respective contracts). It reviews on a quarterly basis the level of compliance with ROM review standards by each ROM Contractor.

The ROM Coordination Units share these reports with the ROM Contractors for comments and discussion. Reports include conclusions and, where appropriate, recommendations/measures to be adopted by the ROM Contractor in agreement with the ROM Coordination Units and to be communicated by the ROM Coordination Units to the ROM Contractors.

The quarterly reports are structured as follows:

- The **first part** reports on the quality of individual ROM reviews and related services which have been subject to a QA report during the quarter. Key findings relate to the compliance of ROM Contractors with the present Handbook: ROM Experts profile, allocation of days to ROM Experts, consistent work plan for ROM reviews with justified deviations from the initial list of projects and programmes provided by the Commission services, analysis of issues signalled with respect to the reviews.
- The **second part** reports on the quality of the quality checklists by ROM Experts and of the internal QC reports, assessing the ROM Contractor's internal quality control system. The quality and performance of the organisational, supporting and back-stopping services provided by ROM Contractors are also reviewed.
- The **third part** provides key conclusions on quality issues which might have occurred during the quarter as well as any recommendations for improvement.

The reports should be in Word/Windows compatible format and in English.

Annual QA report

The QA Contractor submits an annual QA report to the ROM Coordination Unit within 30 days of the end of the reporting period, including reporting on the follow-up of key recommendations to and corrective measures implemented by the ROM Contractors with respect to the ROM reviews process.

The annual QA report analyses the compliance of ROM Contractors with the ROM Handbook. It includes a special focus on the overall quality of the expertise provided by the ROM Experts, based mainly on the interviews with ROM Coordinating Teams, OMs in Delegations and HQ, other ROM stakeholders as well as the QA Contractor's shadow missions. It provides analyses on:

- the relevance and effectiveness of the communication flow with the Commission services during the preparation of the work plan.
- the implementation of ROM reviews.
- examples of good and bad practice.
- the quality of briefing and debriefing meetings.

- the availability of documentation and data.
- the level of perception/understanding of ROM services by ROM stakeholders.

The annual QA report is a key part of the ROM reviews' overall quality system. The ROM Coordination Units provide comments within 30 days.

The QA Contractor presents the report and its conclusions and recommendations in an annual workshop organised by the ROM Coordination Units involving ROM Contractors and a number of ROM Experts. Where appropriate, the conclusions and recommendations of these exercises may result in a revision of the present Handbook.

The reports should be in Word/Windows compatible format and in English.

Ad hoc reports

Throughout the year the QA Contractor may be asked to use the QA Experts to produce ad hoc reports on specific subjects / themes of interest for the ROM review system.

QA implementation progress reports

Progress reports are submitted together with the QA contractor's invoices and provide an overview of the progress of the assignment and an analysis of the problems encountered during the implementation of the assignment. Methodological issues with respect to the QA are also addressed.

The reports should be in Word/Windows compatible format and in English.

QA End-of-contract report

Within 45 days of the end of the last contract period, an end-of-contract report is submitted by the QA Contractor to the ROM Coordination Units, describing the activities undertaken during the entire contract period. Among other things, this report includes the rate of accomplishment of the assignment, problems encountered, and methodological issues raised during the period of the contract, financial execution, and a hand-over to the next ROM QA contract (if applicable). The ROM Coordination Units provide comments within 45 days. The QA Contractor finalise its report within three weeks. The delay for final approval by the ROM Coordination Units is also three weeks.

A list of all interventions reviewed should also be included. All reports established during the contract period should be attached to the end-of-contract report in electronic form.

The reports should be in Word/Windows compatible format and in English.

New

7 SUPPORT FOR DESIGNING LOGFRAMES AND MONITORING

This chapter presents a new ROM service that will support OMs at the design stage of interventions. The chapter presents:

- The **purpose** of the service and timing of delivery
- The **scope** of the work
- The **process and standards** to be observed by the ROM Contractors and Experts

Units DEVCO 04 and NEAR A4 provide quality assurance and technical support during the identification and formulation of interventions (in DG DEVCO particularly at the level of the Action). In addition, both Units provide guidance and training on M&E, both for Delegation and HQ staff. This work will continue in the upcoming period, though it will be adapted to address new priorities.

Past ROM missions have been continuously emphasizing weaknesses in the coherence of individual interventions. Therefore, starting from 2019, ROM services will be expanded to include a new service: support for designing logframes and monitoring systems for interventions (contracts).

7.1 Purpose, type and timing of the service

The **purpose** of this service is to improve the development and formulation of intervention logics, and of their correspondent logframes, as well as monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems for EU-funded interventions.

The service is delivered **at the request of the HQ Unit or Delegation in charge of the intervention.**

This is an **on-demand remote service** for interventions with a budget over EUR 1 million for DG DEVCO and over EUR 500,000 for DG NEAR. For example, the OM may be negotiating a contract with an international organisation and may want to have technical support for revising the draft logframe proposed by the potential partner. Or, the OM may have a complex Action Document which will be implemented through several interventions and wants to ensure that the coherence of the intervention logic is ensured, while assigning relevant components to each IP. Alternatively, the OM may be communicating with an IP that has limited M&E capacities and may need the ROM Expert to extract the necessary inputs and strengthen the proposed logframe.

The service is provided **before contract signature** (or an extension signature) and in limited cases[37] shortly after signature.

ROM Experts are not expected to follow the negotiations of all the M&E elements of the intervention until the end of the contracting process. The scope of their work is limited in terms of time and type of activity; their role is to flag key points that require attention from the OM and prepare him/her to complete the negotiations with the IP when needed.

If a logframe is found to be problematic during results reporting, the OM can request its revision through this new ROM service

In exceptional cases, the service is extended to interventions whose logframes were found during results reporting to have been poorly formulated (e.g. no longer representing the intervention's content). In these cases, the ROM Expert doing the results reporting mission will advise the OM to request the service following the standard process presented in section 3 below (the OM submits a request to the ROM Contractor, copying the ROM functional mailbox of the respective DG - DEVCO: EUROPEAID-04-ROM@ec.europa.eu, NEAR: NEAR-EVAL-MONITORING @ec.europa.eu).

If the need to improve a logframe arises during a ROM review, additional time can be allocated to the ROM Expert to prepare an improved version of the logframe

When appropriate, service provision includes coordination/exchange with the IP(s). Each OM decides whether they want to be the interface with the IP (i.e. if contract negotiations are ongoing) or if it would be more effective to include the IP directly in the discussions with the ROM Expert (i.e. to increase their ownership over the final product).

7.2. Scope of the service

The scope of the service covers three aspects described in the following sections and further detailed in Annex 12. The OM can request only some aspects of the service: each request does not need to cover all aspects.

Support for designing logframes

The new service supports EU Delegations and HQ units in ensuring that Descriptions of the Action (in draft contracts) include logframe matrices of adequate quality in terms of results. To this end, ROM Experts perform a number of checks at different levels.

[37] Estimated as under 20%. If the requests for support after contract signature exceed this threshold, the ROM Contractor will inform the ROM Coordination Units.

Result chain

At this level, ROM Experts check the definition of result levels in order to ensure:

- compliance with OECD DAC definitions,
- SMART definitions, and
- coherence with the intervention logic, as described in the following table

Compliance with OECD DAC definitions	SMART Definition	Coherence with the intervention logic
▪ Output ▪ Outcome ▪ Impact[38]	▪ Specific ▪ Measurable ▪ Achievable ▪ Relevant ▪ Time-bound[39]	▪ Reflecting the sequential and temporal result flow and assumptions of the intervention logic narrative ▪ In line with the corresponding Action Document

Table 13. Checks on result chain

In collaboration with Experts from thematic facilities (when present), ROM Experts also check:

- the causal links between result levels to ensure that they are logical and realistic (given the available budget, activities and timeline), and
- whether lessons learned from past/similar interventions are taken into account.

Indicators, baseline values and targets, as well as the related sources of data

ROM Experts screen the horizontal logic of the logframes in order to:

- Check that indicators are RACER: Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy, Robust and disaggregated as relevant[40]. In this framework, it is important that the ROM Expert assesses whether the indicators are sufficient in scope to measure what they are supposed to measure – corresponding result(s).
- Flag EURF/MIP/IPA II PF indicators and promote the use of EURF indicators where relevant.
- Ensure that baseline & target values and their respective reference years are included for each indicator, where available (following the unit of measure of the indicator).
- Identify any baseline or target data gaps that need to be filled by the IP in the first progress (inception) report.

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[38] Please note that DG NEAR allows more than one impact statement (Overall Objective), while DG DEVCO requests only one impact statement (as per the Action Document and PRAG templates). DG NEAR has produced additional guidance on the sequential/temporal treatment of impact that applies to NEAR interventions. Cf. DG NEAR Guidelines on linking planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2016/20160831-dg-near-guidelines-on-linking-planning-progrming-vol-1-v-0.4.pdf

[39] Recognizing that the time-bound criterion is not always applicable for impact.

[40] Disaggregation of indicators (sex, age, ethnicity, etc.) is often key to ensure inclusive and conflict-sensitive targeting of beneficiaries and should be always checked.

- Ensure that a source of data is specified for each indicator, flagging any studies/surveys that might need to be commissioned.

Assumptions

ROM Experts ensure that sound assumptions are identified at activity, output and outcome levels, in terms of external conditions that must hold in order for the result chain to be realised.

Intervention logic narrative

ROM Experts check the intervention logic narrative and ensure that the causal links between result levels are well explained, and that assumptions are integrated at appropriate levels.

ROM Experts ensure that each of these aspects is well defined (in line with the required terminology and standards provided in Annex 12) and complete.

Support for the definition of M&E systems

The new service supports EU Delegations and HQ units in the definition of appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems. To this end, ROM Experts review the proposed M&E system and recommend any additional tools/methods that may be needed in order to inform the relevant indicators. This can include, for example:

- Studies or surveys that might be needed to collect baseline and progress data, or to establish a target (e.g. baseline/endline surveys of the target population, studies of specific aspects the intervention aims to influence, net impact evaluations/impact assessments).
- A dedicated M&E Expert (or Focal Point) in the implementing team in charge of collecting progress data. This is even more important and complex in the case of interventions that are geographically dispersed, have multiple IPs/subcontractors or where data needs to be disaggregated according to several criteria.

Any studies/surveys or other tools that may need to be commissioned by the intervention will be flagged as such in the logframe so that a budget can be allocated by the IP. Whenever a baseline survey is planned and budgeted, the ROM Expert should ensure that a similar final survey is also planned and budgeted accordingly.

Support for the definition of reporting systems

The new service supports EU Delegations and HQ Units in defining the scope of the IP's reporting requirements, in line with the established legal provisions (special conditions of draft contracts).

If requested by the OM, the ROM Expert can also provide feedback on the proposed reporting requirements, which are outlined in the contract special conditions. The ROM Expert should ensure that the special conditions of the draft contract with the IP have been adapted to the intervention at hand. The ROM Expert should recommend any additional reporting requirements for the special conditions. For example, the frequency of reporting can be increased in some cases, or certain annexes or documents can be requested with each progress reports (i.e. updated databases of beneficiaries).

The ROM Expert ensures that the OM is aware of the latest PRAG models for interim and final narrative reports[41] (July 2019 at the time of writing), which include analytical sections on the progress of achieving each result and a logframe with a column for current values for each indicator.

7.3 Process

The provision of this new design service follows a 3-step process, including preparation, implementation as well as monitoring and quality control.

Preparation of the service

Establishment of an initial pool of specialized Experts by ROM Contractors

At the start of the ROM cycle, ROM Contractors propose CVs for the initial pool of Experts available for providing this service in French, English and Spanish, covering different thematic and geographic areas (no budget support and blending expertise is required since these interventions are screened by Commission services). Experts should be available to call Delegations in a variety of time zones. Sectoral Experts are not required for each thematic area covered by ROM, but the ROM Contractor should nevertheless ensure as much diversity as possible. Experts in this specific pool have a strong background in formulating intervention logic narratives and logical frameworks for development interventions, as well as experience in monitoring and evaluation.

Experts are subject to approval by the ROM Coordination Units, which may also request to expand the pool of Experts as needed.

Internal promotion of the service by the ROM Coordination Units

The ROM Coordination Units will promote the service through mailing lists and presentations at internal events/regional seminars and webinars.

Provision of guidance by the ROM Coordination Units[42]

The ROM Coordination Units organise an annual workshop for this service. Following introductory workshops held in October and November 2019, which will cover key messages and scope of work/technical aspects to consider in quality control, steps, timing and responsibilities, the annual workshop will focus on lessons learned from the service delivery process and any changes in requirements. Additional, follow-up workshops can be provided through webinars, on a needs basis.

With the introduction of OPSYS, this service will be delivered online ahead of the signature of the contract between the Commission and the IP. In the meantime, tools and methods will be set up by the ROM Coordination Units to establish adequate links with the staff in charge of drafting intervention documents.

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[41] All templates are available under Grants at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?isAnnexes=true.
[42] Also to be performed during implementation of the service.

Implementation

Service request

The OM submits a request to the ROM Contractor, copying the ROM functional mailbox of the respective DG (DEVCO: EUROPEAID-04-ROM@ec.europa.eu, NEAR: NEAR-EVAL-MONITORING @ec.europa.eu). The request should be submitted at least 5 working days before the expected start date.

The service request will include a justification, the draft Description of the Action (DoA), Action Document and any background documents (e.g. baseline/feasibility study or evaluation report of a previous phase). The draft contract should include, as a minimum, a draft logframe with outputs, outcomes and impact statements[43] and some indicators at each level, as well as a list of activities.

The standard logframe template prescribed by the PRAG should be used unless the OM specifies otherwise in the service request (i.e. in some cases, the Delegation may accept to follow the logframe template of a pillar-assessed organisation or another donor).

Allocation to ROM Expert by the ROM Contractor

The Contractor receives the request and allocates the assignment to an Expert from the designated pool (confirming his/her availability).

Allocation of days	For a simple logframe (with 15 results or less and one IP)	For a complex logframe (having more than 15 result statements and/or more than one IP)
ROM Expert - logframe and intervention logic narrative – first service component	2	3
ROM Expert - recommendations for the M&E system and reporting requirements – second and third service components	1	1
Quality Control	0.5	1

Table 14. Allocation of days for support to logframes and M&E systems

Any deviation from these standards must be agreed with the ROM Coordination Unit.

[43] DG NEAR has produced additional guidance on the sequential/temporal treatment of impact that applies to NEAR interventions. Cf. DG NEAR Guidelines on linking planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2016/20160831-dg-near-guidelines-on-linking-planning-progrming-vol-1-v-0.4.pdf

Service provision

The ROM Contractor forwards the request and background documents to the confirmed Expert within a maximum of 2 working days. The date when the request and background documents are sent to the Expert will be considered the start date.

The ROM Expert contacts the OM immediately to propose a time for a meeting to take place within 2 working days of receiving the documents (by phone). The OM can invite the IP(s) to join this meeting – this is left at their discretion.

Involvement of IPs

When appropriate, service provision includes coordination/exchange with the IP(s). Each OM decides whether they want to be the interface with the IP (i.e. if contract negotiations are ongoing) or if it would be more effective to include the IP directly in the discussions with the ROM Expert (i.e. to increase their ownership over the final product). The same approach applies to any thematic Experts who may be supporting the design of the intervention.

The ROM Expert reviews the draft DoA, the Action Document and any background documents beforehand. They also check with the OM if other Experts (incl. thematic) are supporting the intervention development, with whom the ROM Expert should coordinate (they can even join the call).

During the **first call**, the ROM Expert provides initial feedback on the existing logframe and intervention logic, proposing the key revision points. The revision will follow a two-phase approach: (i) revision of the result chain and intervention logic after the first call; (ii) once these elements are confirmed by the OM, revision of the indicators and other logframe elements. If the result chain and intervention logic are well formulated, the ROM Expert can immediately focus on the indicators and other logframe elements, M&E system and any specific reporting requirements. The ROM Expert should explain this phased approach in the introductory call with the OM.

During the first revision, the ROM Expert sends to the OM a track changed version of the revised result chain and intervention logic, including comments boxes explaining the reason for each substantial change (1-2 sentences) or flagging questions for discussion. In the email message, the ROM Expert provides a bullet list of 3-5 key changes. Once these aspects are settled, the ROM Expert starts the second revision.

The ROM Expert then organises a **second call** with the OM to discuss the proposed changes in the remaining elements. The ROM Expert prepares suggestions for indicators at all levels and other recommendations for the M&E system and reporting requirements, in order to get feedback from the OM.

After the second call and before sharing with the OM, the ROM Expert submits the final draft of deliverables to the Contractor for internal QC (template in Annex 13). Depending on the scope of the request, this second round of revision may include (a) the final draft of the intervention logic and logframe where all content has been revised, (b) M&E system requirements and (c) any specific

reporting requirements that should be adapted in specific conditions (in addition to standard progress reports).

Once checked, the ROM Contractor will send the deliverable (both a track changed and a clean version in Word) by email to the OM, with a request for feedback (link to a short survey and rating)

If the OM does not approve/provides negative feedback on the deliverables, the Commission services and the ROM Contractor will discuss corrective action. The ROM Expert will fill out his/her own quality checklist, following the template in Annex 13.

Performance monitoring and internal QC

The ROM Contractor controls the quality of all deliverables internally, before submission to the OM, focusing on a) the technical quality of the inputs provided and their alignment with the standards detailed in the ROM Handbook; b) the completeness of the comments and their clarity. The QC follows the checklist in Annex 13 and is completed within two working days of receiving draft material from the Expert.

In addition, to ensure an appropriate level of competence amongst its Experts, the ROM Contractor produces an internal quality manual, describing the quality criteria and the processes to facilitate the best quality of ROM deliverables, and briefs all the Experts under its responsibility. The QC must be documented, and internal QC documentation must be made available to the Commission services representative performing QA, upon request.

OMs will be able to express their feedback through a quick satisfaction survey, which they will receive together with the final version of the deliverable (survey questions are enclosed in Annex 13). Corrective action to improve the performance of the ROM Contractor will be recommended in case of lack of compliance with the technical guidelines or process.

Mechanisms for the quality check and quality assurance will be further specified by each ROM Coordination Unit with the respective ROM Contractors.

8 ROM SUPPORT TO RESULTS REPORTING

This chapter covers:

- The **process** of results reporting exercise at DG DEVCO and DG NEAR
- The **tasks** of each actor throughout the different steps of the process
- The **standards** to be observed during desk, field, post-field and QC phase
- The allocation of **working days** for ROM Contractors

Since the introduction of the EU results framework, five annual exercises have taken place to collect results information from interventions and aggregate values against indicators from the EU RF.

The yearly results reporting exercise draws on monitoring systems at intervention level. Since 2018, the exercise covers a sample of ongoing interventions, while previously only completed interventions were reported upon.

Currently, the main use of results information is for accountability, communication and transparency purposes. Results data is presented in institutional reports and communication material; it is used for evaluations as well as for special reports on specific funding instruments and policies.

As of today, results reporting has been a yearly standalone exercise carried out with the support of ROM Experts. In the near future, it is foreseen that all interventions will make use of a regular, structured and standardised internal monitoring systems (as part of the OPSYS corporate solution). The adoption of the logical framework as a tool for recurrent reporting will be enhanced and this will allow to provide data on results as a regular practice.

> In paving the path towards this transformation, the business practices enforced through OPSYS are already adopted during this year's exercise, namely the use of logframes as internal monitoring and reporting tool and the role of OMs as main actors

This year the results reporting sample is the largest possible one. It consists of ongoing and recently completed interventions above € 750,000 including selected blending and budget support operations. It will indeed consider variable tranche indicators from budget support interventions and the indicators in the application form for blending. For the first time, more than 1,500 ongoing interventions are monitored for two consecutive years as they were already subject to results reporting last year: this allows the consistency of the approach to be assessed as well as observing trends facilitating the transfer of knowledge on internal monitoring among EU Delegations and headquarters services.

All in all, the 2019 results reporting exercise covers up to 3,000 interventions managed by DG DEVCO and the European Neighbourhood Instrument in DG NEAR, for which ROM Experts will help OMs in collecting the latest available logframe information for their interventions, and in recording

contributions to the indicators of the EU results framework. In addition, DG NEAR will report on the results of approximately 300 interventions within the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II).[44]

Logframe

All interventions have a monitoring framework, although those from different modalities and or financing instruments may have a different name for this. As explained in chapter 1, for simplicity, the term logframe is used to encompass logframes for project modality interventions, variable tranche indicators from budget support interventions and the indicators in the application form for blending.

8.1 The overall approach for 2019-2020 Results Reporting

Actors

The actors involved in the results reporting exercise are not dissimilar to those involved in the entire ROM process, however their role and tasks can be different, and it is worth recalling this here:

- **OMs** are in charge of validating logframes and related values for their interventions. They also ensure that the latest logframe together with all the necessary documentation are provided to the ROM Experts.
- **IPs** provide the values of logframe indicators through progress reports and/or other relevant documentation and can be involved during the phase of data collection and encoding.
- **M&E Focal Points** coordinate the preparation of the missions and the validation of the list of interventions.
- **ROM Experts** support the OM in the encoding of indicators' values and EU RF matching
- **ROM Contractors** support the ROM Experts throughout the entire assignment and reviews the final values before validation
- **ROM Coordination Units** – the ROM Coordinating Teams within these Units provide methodological instructions, training, necessary documentation as well as an IT platform and guidance to carry out the exercise. They also validate the mission work plan and approve any deviation in terms of ROM Experts' working days. They further liaise with the other relevant thematic Units on methodological issues.

[44] The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) contributes to the EU Results Framework through its EUTF common output indicators. The EUTF list of common output indicators aggregates results at activity level from the three windows of the EUTF: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa windows. Each window has its own Monitoring and Learning System which enables to collect, gather and analyse results. Results gathered contribute to relevant EU Results Framework indicators whenever possible. In order to ensure coherence, the mapping between the EUTF for Africa common indicators and the EU Results Framework is done by the EUTF monitoring teams at Headquarters with DEVCO 04 support. In this line, EUTF for Africa projects are excluded from the ROM standardized exercise described in this chapter.

The process of reporting against the logframe: key elements

The logframe is informed by the data provided by the IP, and approved by the OM. A technical assistance service to the ROM Coordination Units encodes all the latest available logframe structures while the ROM Experts are mainly in charge of encoding baselines, targets, current values and EU RF matching values. For each intervention subject to RR, ROM Experts support the OMs in:

- **Assessing if a logframe is suitable for reporting**. If the OM judges that the entire logframe of an intervention is not suitable for reporting this year, the latter is not reported upon in the current round. This is recorded, and the OM will have the possibility to request the support of ROM Experts to revise the logframe to ensure its inclusion in next year's exercise. Reasons for exclusions include, among others: logframe not representative of the actual intervention, poorly formulated indicators, excessively long and fragmented results and/or indicators, lack and/or unreliability of data, lack of sources of verification.

Revising logframes is outside the assignment's scope. ROM Experts will only record data for indicators that are included in the latest logframe. Small adjustments may be made upon an OM´s request, focusing on minor improvements not affecting the basic purpose of the action (i.e. overall objective and/or specific objective). The guidance on internal monitoring for Results (forthcoming) details the provisions to adapt the logframe

- **Selecting indicators for which data are available for reporting in the current year**. It is always possible that one or more values of specific indicators of a logframe are not reported in a given year. In this case, they are simply encoded as "not available" without bringing any change to the logframe. Indicators may be reported upon in the following year once data becomes available. On the other hand, whenever the OM, together with the ROM Expert, assess that a specific indicator is not suitable for monitoring or the related data are not collected in a reliable manner, the indicator can be left out from reporting in the current exercise and the Expert can flag the specific case into the system. The related logframe will need to be updated and modified in preparation for next year's reporting.
- **Reporting the latest available figures for the indicators included in the latest logframe**. For interventions covered by the exercise for the first time, ROM Experts fill in available indicator values, including target values and baselines. If the intervention was already subject to results reporting in the previous year, ROM Experts update the logframe values with data from the latest available reporting. Where some indicators were not yet been reported upon due to lack of data, they may be reported upon for the first time where data has become available.
- **Reporting relevant contributions to the indicators of the EU results framework**. Logframe indicators can be matched to EU Results Framework indicators, the latter being the ones that are aggregated for reporting. Matching indicators are the ones quality controlled by the ROM Coordination Units and deserve special attention. Whenever an intervention was not

part of last year's reporting, the matching link as well as the related values are to be reported; if the intervention was already included, matching values are expected to be updated. If an indicator was encoded as "no data" in the previous year, it is always possible to establish a new EU RF match.

Working Days

The following table provides an estimation of the number of working days per intervention that Contractors are expected to mobilise. The allocation of ROM Expert days is standardised across the different type of interventions including budget support and blending.

Phase	Description	WD (per intervention)
Desk phase	▪ Review of documentation and of available Logframe ▪ Liaison with OMs to check for latest reports and LF ▪ Preliminary encoding of values including links to EU RF indicators	0,5
Field Phase	▪ Individual exchanges with OMs ▪ Encode values and validate with OMs including links to EU RF indicators	0,5
Post-field phase	▪ Report outstanding values ▪ Final quality control of values	0,5
Support by ROM Contractor	▪ Technical and methodological support to ROM Experts throughout the mission ▪ QC completed by the end of the field visit[45]	0,5
Total		**2**

Table 15. Allocation of Expert days for results reporting support missions[46]

Contractors estimate the number of working days to be allocated for each Unit or Delegation; the calculation is finalised during the mission preparation, as soon as the total number of interventions per Delegation/Unit is validated. During the missions Experts and OMs may identify a number of interventions that are not suitable for reporting, nevertheless these will not be excluded from the calculation of working days.

In duly justified cases[47] and upon request by the ROM Contractor, the ROM Coordination Units can agree to allocating additional working days. Requests for deviations to the standard number of working days are submitted by ROM Contractors to the ROM Coordination Units on a regular basis, together with an update of the overall work plan for the missions[48].

Depending on the total number of interventions in a given Unit or Delegation, more than one ROM Expert could be mobilised for the same Unit or Delegation. Moreover, regardless of the number of

[45] This would be the "optimal practice" so that comments can be discussed with the OM, it is clear that outstanding issues can still be discussed successively via email.
[46] The division between different phases is used as an example, this is not mandatory, and Contractors are free to optimise the division of work.
[47] For instance, in the case of logframes with excessive number of indicators and other justified cases.
[48] The update of the work plan will be done automatically and will include all needed information. An information email will be sent to the ROM Contractors and they will then forward it to ROM Coordinators.

interventions, missions are not expected to last more than two consecutive working weeks in one Delegation, in duly justified cases it will be possible to split the mission in two or more tranches. Remote support is foreseen for all Units or Delegation with less than 7 interventions.

As per the ROM Contracts General Conditions, necessary travelling time is to be regarded as part of the mission and the corresponding fees will be paid. An additional 0,5 working days are allocated per Expert for each Delegation/Unit for briefing, debriefing and final questionnaire, as described in the following example:

Calculation of working days in one Delegation where 15 interventions are part of the sample:

ROM Expert Desk phase = 15*0,5
+ Field phase = 15*0,5
+ Post mission phase = (15*0,5) + (1*0,*5)*

23
+ Support by ROM Contractor (15 *0,5) = 7,5

Total = 30,5 working days (between ROM Expert and QC Expert) + necessary travelling time

Documentation

Documentation related to the interventions and available in the Commission's information systems is downloaded before the start of the work plan phase and made available to Contractors as the Results Reporting Library. During the preparatory phase, ROM Contractors verify the availability of key documents in the library, and when these are missing, ROM Contractors request OMs to make them available as soon as possible.

Key documentation

The following documents are key for the implementation of Results Reporting:

- Legal agreements, including addenda, Technical and administrative Provisions (TAPs)
- Latest logframe of the intervention (the one included in the contract or any successive update)
- Latest narrative/programme report of the intervention
- Any existing evaluation of the intervention (internal or external)
- Any ROM review or monitoring report
- National level statistics to calculate EU RF values, where appropriate

When any new relevant document is collected by ROM Contractors or ROM Experts, this will be filed int the Results Reporting Library by ROM Contractors.

This library of documents will serve as an easy reference and, if need be, as a source during the discussion on the results reporting. The database remains the property of the Commission. ROM Contractors and ROM Experts are not allowed at any time during or after their contract to share documents with people other than the Commission staff without prior approval of the European Commission.

8.2 Tasks along the Results Reporting process

The graph below represents the main steps of the results reporting process:

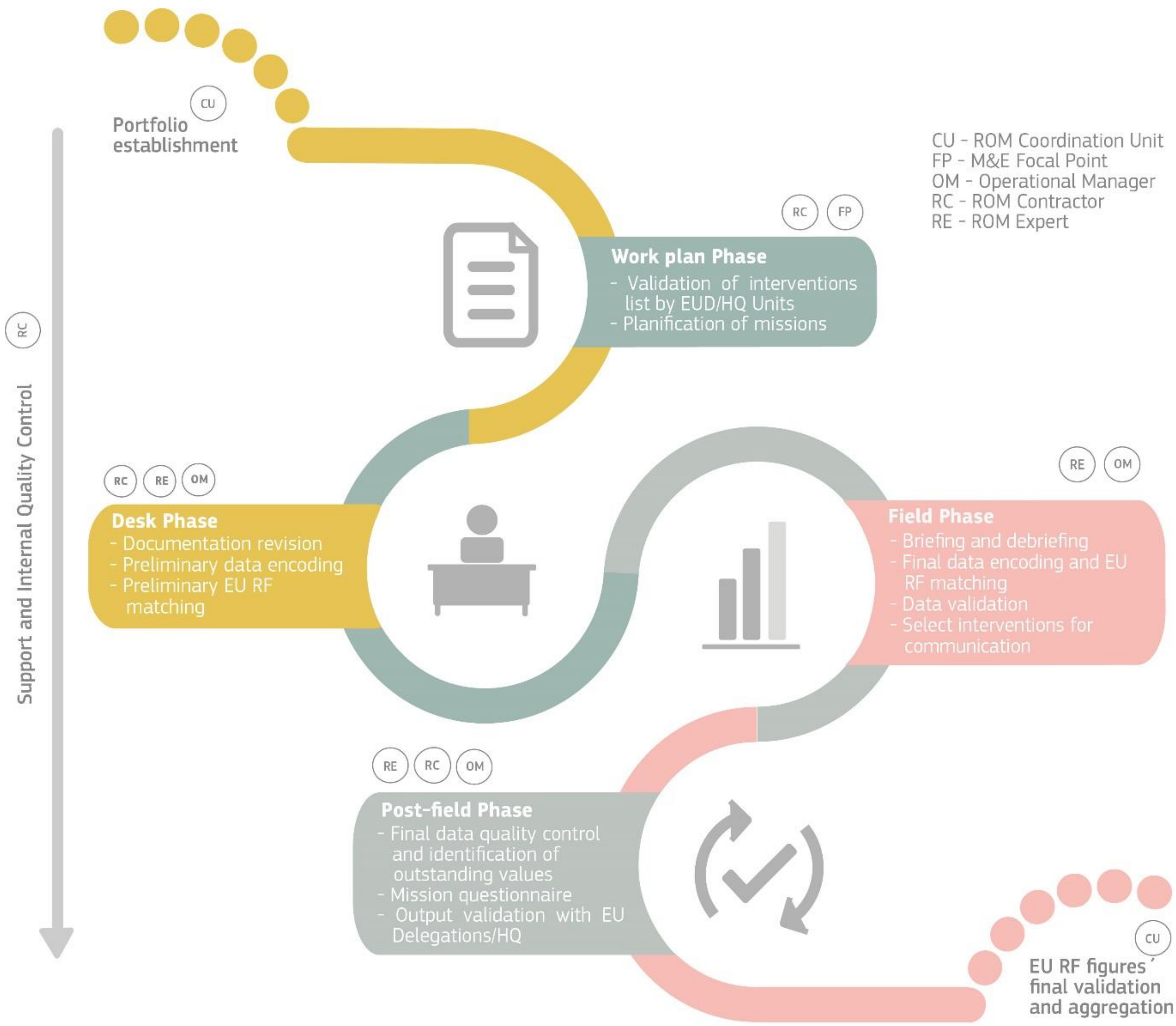

Figure 15. The Results Reporting process

Work plan and mission preparation

The first step in the exercise is the validation of the portfolio of interventions subject to results reporting with the concerned services. ROM Contractors receive a draft list of interventions from the ROM Coordination Units; those interventions and the related logframes are pre-encoded in an IT system set up by the ROM Coordination Units.

M&E Focal Points are the point of contact for ROM Contractors in charge of preparing the results reporting missions in Delegations/HQ Units.

The list needs to be agreed with the EUD / HQ units to clear any potential mistakes in the concept of intervention. These are corrected during this phase

ROM Contractors confirm the list of interventions and finalise the plan of all field visits within 8 weeks of receipt of the list, in coordination with the M&E Focal Points and the Heads of Unit/Heads of Cooperation.

During work plan and mission preparation, M&E Focal Points ensure proper coordination between OMs and ROM Contractors, in order to maximise the presence of OMs during the proposed mission dates.

Delegations and Units may also provide feedback on the list of interventions, which is recorded and transmitted by M&E Focal Points to ROM Contractors and validated in collaboration with the ROM Coordination Unit. Changes to the intervention list are permitted where the Delegations/Units want to change the level of reporting (e.g. from Decision to Contract) or would like to add an intervention.

To promote ownership of the exercise and ensure the selection of the most meaningful sample, Delegations/Units are allowed to add a maximum of 20% of the initial work plan if they find that interventions outside the initial selection have substantial results to report. No intervention should be excluded at this stage[49].

On a weekly basis, the ROM Contractor submits the update on the status of the work plan validation and mission planning (the IT system automatically provides a form report) to the respective ROM Coordination Unit.

Desk Phase

The latest available logframe is preliminarily encoded[50] and made accessible to ROM Contractors through the existing IT platform. ROM Experts verify with OMs if any update is available and, if so, transmit it to the ROM Coordination Unit and to the Contractors for its amendment. ROM Experts will read through the intervention documentation that will be provided directly into the system or made available by the OM. Key documents are: Progress and Final reports, evaluations, ROM reviews, etc. A particular attention is paid to results/values that could be reported – and whenever available, preliminary values are encoded in the logframe during the desk phase. At this stage, ROM Experts also update values reported against EU RF indicators or pre-identify new indicators (from the logframe but that might have not been matched in the past, due to lack of source of verification or other reasons) and figures that match with EU RF ones. ROM Experts share the logframe encoded with related indicators values with OMs prior to the scheduled meetings.

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[49] Interventions for which it is considered premature to encode results are kept in the exercise for future reference.

[50] CRIS logframes are encoded into a platform for ROM purposes. Unfortunately, in many cases (up to 40%), the encoded logframe is not the last one. During the Results Reporting mission, Experts check with the OM if the encoded logframe needs an update or a modification. ROM Contractors' junior Experts are in charge of encoding the required modifications in the ROM platform. This task implies an average of 0,25 working days per modified logframe.

This initial analysis and preliminary encoding ensure that ROM Experts optimise the use of time set aside for their meetings with OMs during the field phase.

ROM Contractors provide technical and methodological support to ROM Experts during the desk phase. This may include advice on how to deal with any request for logframe amendment and revisions as well as the calculation and identification of indicator values; particular attention is paid to the adherence of suggested matching indicators with the related methodological notes.

To this end, ROM Experts submit the pre-encoded logframe to the ROM Contractor at the end of the desk phase, allowing the QC Expert to carry out a pre-check of the reporting. Whenever possible, QC Experts should prioritise those interventions for which they have the latest reporting to hand, leaving aside those more likely to be subject to changes during the mission.

Documents

A package with the following main preparatory documents is provided to Contractors:

- Note by DG launching Results Reporting missions
- Factsheet for OMs: A one pager on the RR exercise and role of Delegations and OMs
- EU RF methodological notes
- Power Point slides for the briefing in the EU Delegation/HQ Unit
- Results Reporting training material and other supporting material
- Latest logframe available in the system and documentation also available in the system

Before the arrival of ROM Experts, OMs are expected to familiarise themselves with the documents related to the intervention and particularly with the latest progress report and the related logframe, if the intervention was subject to reporting in the previous year, special attention is also dedicated to its final findings. A list of key preparatory document is provided in the box below.

Field phase

Whenever information gaps occur during the desk phase, OMs confirm – if they have not done so yet – whether the version of the logframe made available to the ROM expert is the most recent one, and/or provide an updated version if changes have been implemented. OMs will also share any additional documentation that contains data that would be relevant for results reporting (progress reports, external evaluations, etc.) although this is optimally done during the desk phase.

Briefing

Each mission starts with a briefing session on the results reporting exercise and the EU Results Framework. It is delivered by the mission team based on the material provided by the ROM Coordination Units. OM, M&E Focal Points, Heads of Cooperation/Heads of Unit as well as Heads of Section are expected to participate in the briefing sessions. Whenever possible, physical meetings are preferable.

During the meeting, OMs should confirm appropriate arrangements with ROM Experts to ensure enough time is allocated for meetings on each selected intervention.

Data reporting per intervention

During the meetings OMs are expected to discuss with ROM Experts what results information can and should be reported, including any assessment of data quality, and possible links to the EU RF indicators.

If results can be collected or updated, the latest available values related to logframe indicators are encoded. Results data have to be documented in an external evaluation, a progress report or in any other source of verification. Any collected document is to be made available to the ROM Coordination Units and referred to as data source when relevant. ROM Experts do not report on inputs or activities; only output or outcome indicators are to be reported.

During the meetings with the OMs, ROM Experts provide appropriate guidance on results reporting. ROM Experts furthermore identify any data quality issues, flagging to OMs any concerns they may have about the consistency of data from progress reports compared with other data sources and regarding the potential bias of information included in those reports. ROM Experts and OMs also discuss and agree if an intervention can be reported upon or if the logframe will need revision. ROM Experts will inform OMs about the opportunity to ask for support through the ROM system. ROM Experts will also indicate if an intervention should be subject to the exercise in the following year. The latter will facilitate the planning of the subsequent results exercise. It is relevant for those interventions that have reached the end of implementation, but for which final reports are not yet available. These will be included for reporting in the following year.

OMs may organise a meeting with IPs, if this helps to collect the relevant information. This meeting does not, however, replace the exchange between OMs and ROM Experts.

Finally, OMs can select some results (main results) for each intervention that may be used for reporting and communication purposes at HQ as well as Delegation level. For instance, results aligned with the Consensus, results relevant for the partner country and its national or sector strategy, priority areas where it may be more difficult to provide quantitative results, results that met or exceeded the target, etc.

After meetings with OMs where changes to the data were discussed, ROM Experts submit the latest updated logframe to OMs for review or agree on any necessary next steps that ROM Experts will take to finalise reporting. At the end of the field phase, the OM should agree with the results data encoded, as they are presented in the online template made available by the ROM Coordination Unit.

Moreover, a pilot system for consolidating and communicating the information on intervention performance has been developed and is incorporated into the Results Reporting exercise for 2019. The pilot phase foresees the submission of a simple questionnaire to the OMs as well as the automatic calculation of a traffic light score, generated by the IT portal. The pilot is carried out on a selected sub-set of interventions as fully described in Annex 14.

Debriefing and presentation of results at the end of the mission

At the end of the mission, ROM Experts will organise a short debriefing meeting with the OMs involved in the exercise with the participation of the Head of Cooperation. The ROM Coordination Unit will provide a template for the presentation that will be focused on the lessons learned from the exercise

and the next steps foreseen. If more than one expert was involved in the mission, it is preferable that they all participate and animate the debriefing. If this is not feasible for logistical reasons, the last expert on the field will be in charge of collecting information from the others and carry out the debriefing.

Post-field phase

Following the field visit, ROM Experts may need to encode outstanding values as agreed with OMs during the final meeting.

Final quality control

Quality Control Experts provide quality control support to ROM Experts throughout the entire process. This is to increase the quality of reporting early in the exercise, ensure methodological consistency and decrease the need for changes after the field phase. This double pair of eyes approach to the exercise entails an interaction between QC Experts and ROM Experts as needed.

In terms of data quality control, QC Experts control reported values, provide advice on EU RF matches suggesting additional EU RF matches to ROM Experts and calculating figures where applicable, and validate reported EU RF figures including data sources and calculations. They also highlight any issues of double counting between EU RF matches in the same intervention or between interventions.

During this time, OMs are available to reply to questions, and corrections are made by ROM Experts or ROM Contractors in coordination with OMs. Any exchange of e-mails during this phase must be saved.

At this stage, the ROM Coordination Unit may make ad-hoc checks of submitted reporting.

Questionnaire

Within six weeks after the end of the mission, ROM Contractors submit a structured questionnaire (one per Delegation/Unit) on the quality and availability of logframes and related results data. A space for comments and exchange of information on the entire mission and not specifically on interventions, is available.

Output and validation with Delegation/HQ Unit

The output of the exercise is the completed results reporting and the completed questionnaire. The ROM Coordination Unit submits the completed reporting and the related mission questionnaire no later than 6 weeks following the end of the field phase.

The ROM Coordination Unit sends the final version of the logframes to the services in charge. At this point, the final results are presented in a data sheet which is validated by the Head of Cooperation or Head of Unit or his/her representative. If no reply is received within 10 working days, the results reporting is considered as final.

Where requests for changes are received, the ROM Coordination Unit will be in charge of verifying the correctness of the request and modifying the related data accordingly.

Logframes and values are subsequently published externally via the International Aid Transparency Initiative website and exported into OPSYS.

Final validation of EU RF figures by ROM Coordination Unit

The ROM Coordination Unit carries out additional checks for EU RF figures focusing on:

- Double counting across years within the Delegation/Unit portfolio and between interventions
- Double counting between thematic and geographic interventions
- Specific checks on EU RF indicator are carried out in coordination with thematic officers, when relevant

When applicable, the ROM Coordination Units subsequently validate aggregated figures with the EU RF indicator thematic leads in HQ thematic Units.

International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

IATI brings together government, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society organisations and others to increase the transparency and openness of resources flowing into developing countries.

IATI publishers include a broad range of organisations, from donor governments, development finance institutions and UN agencies to non-governmental organisations, foundations and private sector organisations.

IATI supports organisations to publish a range of information about their spending and activities according to the IATI standard. For example, organisations can publish details of their future budgets, projects´ locations or achieved results.

For further details: **https://iatistandard.org/en/**

Communication with ROM Coordination Units:

- DEVCO 04: EuropeAid-EU-RESULTS@ec.europa.eu
- NEAR A4: NEAR-EVAL-MONITORING@ec.europa.eu

9 KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING FROM THE ROM SYSTEM

This section of the ROM Handbook describes the provisions incorporated in the ROM process designed to exploit the potential for learning and knowledge management of ROM data beyond the scope of the intervention under review.

The Commission places great emphasis in the development of a corporate learning culture, as reflected in DG DEVCO's "Learning and Knowledge Development Strategy 2014 – 2020" and in DG NEAR's "Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation". A number of special learning events are organised on a regular basis and serve as fora for knowledge sharing, such as events organised by the Methodology and Knowledge Sharing programme (MKS), the seminar for newly appointed Heads of Delegation, management training courses for Heads of Section and Heads of Cooperation, initiatives linked to the DEVCO Academy, the EU Knowledge Week and many more.

ROM activities offer the opportunity to contribute to the knowledge sharing and learning practices of the EU, through the ROM services themselves – ROM reviews, support to results reporting, support at design stage – and through consolidated analyses.

Reflecting on the past ROM exercises and sharing good practices across ROM lots helps fine-tune the way ROM Experts capture knowledge when carrying out ROM activities and the way Commission services incorporate learning into programming. Taking into account the wealth of practices that were put in place during the past ROM cycles, this chapter presents a coherent collection of products and actions to support the incorporation of lessons learned and good practices emerging from ROM activities into programming decisions and the design of interventions.

The ROM methodology foresees a single reporting template for LL, GP and PP. For simplicity, in this chapter, we use the abbreviations LL/GP.

Lessons learned, good practice, promising practice

Lessons Learnt (LL): Generalise findings and translate past experience into relevant knowledge that should support decision-making, improve performance and promote the achievement of better results. Ideally, they should support the work of both the relevant European and partner institutions. A lesson may be positive or negative. A lesson must be significant in that it has a real or assumed impact on interventions.

Good Practice (GP): Successful process or methodology that is ethical, fair, and replicable. It should also consider, when relevant, what were the transformative practices that worked. A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but one that has been proven to work well and produce good results. It has been tested and supported by a series of evidence and validated sufficiently through its various replications. It can therefore be recommended as a model. It is not to be viewed as prescriptive, it can be adapted to meet new challenges, becoming better as improvements are discovered

Promising practice (PP): A practice that has demonstrated a high degree of success in its single setting, and the possibility of replication in the same setting is guaranteed. It has generated some quantitative data showing positive outcomes over a period of time. It has the potential to become a good practice, but it doesn´t have enough research or has yet to be replicated to support wider adoption or upscaling. As such, a promising practice incorporates a process of continuous learning and improvement.

9.1 Stakeholders, objectives and limitations

Stakeholders

The main stakeholders involved in generating and sharing knowledge within the ROM system are:

- **ROM Contractors and Experts**, primarily responsible for identification, collection, consolidation, analysis, reporting and dissemination of knowledge and learning evidence that stems from the implementation of interventions; this is done through technical expertise and advice provided with the three ROM services.
- **IPs**, who establish progress and final reports, provide information to ROM Experts, and take knowledge into account in the design/implementation of their operations; and
- **Commission services**, particularly HQ Units in DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, responsible for feeding knowledge into the EU system.

Objectives

The high-level objectives of generating and sharing knowledge within the ROM system are:

- **To improve performance at intervention level**. The ROM system helps assessing whether design builds upon GP and solid sector experience. This is useful especially for future identification and formulation, for the elaboration of Action Documents and guidelines for Calls for Proposals, and for Quality Review Group (QRG) activities.

- **To improve development and cooperation effectiveness at portfolio or sector level**, in particular for the programming phase.
- **To build knowledge and in-house expertise**, drawing conclusions on cross-cutting issues and policy priorities.

Limitations

The evidence collected through ROM services stems from individual interventions under review and thus has limitations because LL/GP are mediated by the context of the specific intervention. However, ROM Contractors have access to a significant number of reviews from which they can **extract trends, validate and compile findings**, thus upgrading the scope of the analysis to a broader perspective (sectoral, geographic, by instrument, by implementation mechanism, by strategy /approach…).

9.2 How are LL/GP collected?

Through ROM reviews

The collection of LL/GP in ROM reviews is mainly done through the answers to the relevant MQs (particularly 3.1 and 3.5, see next point) and using the dedicated template (Annex 5) at the level of each individual intervention.

Before filling in the dedicated template, ROM Experts should reflect on the information collected during the briefing meeting. The briefing meeting allows identifying areas on which the OMs need information, and this helps focusing the collection of LL/GP to match the Commission operational priorities.

Results reporting & support at design stage

ROM Experts will observe where LL/GP are either applied or generated when, for instance, outcome indicators are of RACER quality (at design stage) or well on track (results reporting). In particular, LL/GP could be drawn from (i) how the logframes of the interventions are built, and in particular how the indicators are formulated/selected; (ii) regular reporting information on the outputs and outcomes achieved; and (iii) the reporting of IPs if LL/GP are explicitly mentioned.

As of today, results reporting is a yearly standalone practice carried out with the support of external Experts and the OMs as main actors in the exercise. In the near future, it is foreseen that all interventions will make use of a regular, structured and standardised internal monitoring systems (as part of the OPSYS corporate solution). The adoption of the logframe as a tool for recurrent reporting will be enhanced. Practical modalities of OPSYS operation are currently being designed.

9.3 Deliverables

ROM reporting templates

Within the standard MQs' template, ROM Experts assess LL/GP related to the intervention and, if necessary, issue recommendations for improvement. Thus, MQ 3.1 invites the Expert and the intervention stakeholders to reflect on the application of previous knowledge to the intervention:

*"To what extent does the intervention, as currently designed and implemented, take into account **past experiences** in the sector, best practices and lessons learned from previous interventions?"*

While MQ 3.5 invites the Expert to identify LL/GP and document them:

*"Are there any **lessons learned and good practices** that would be useful to share beyond the intervention context?"*

If the answer to this question is yes, the ROM Expert fulfils a basic template for describing and classifying the LL/GP (both positive and/or negative; see Annex 5).

Compendium of lessons learned and good practices

At the end of each yearly exercise, ROM Contractors compile a list and analyse the LL/GP using the information collected through the dedicated template. The basic information initially provided by the ROM Experts is completed and expanded, when needed, by the Core Team Experts, who may get back in contact with the IP (cc. the OM in charge of the intervention) to gather more information on specific practices or may possibly add some additional desk research.

Consolidated report

At the end of each yearly exercise, ROM Contractors produce a report consolidating statistics and general findings from the implemented ROM services[51]. ROM Coordination Units update the report terms of reference every year in order to fit changing information needs of Commission services.

On demand products

The interaction between supply and demand is a core element of producing knowledge and using it effectively. Improving the quality of knowledge products generated with the ROM involves building the bridge between the information supplied by the system and expectations and demands by end users. Moreover, collecting and analysing information is an intensive task that is worth doing only when the effort is purposefully oriented.

Thus, consolidated studies and analyses that in previous ROM exercises were produced annually, will now be produced **on demand**, so that the information that needs to be collected is ultimately determined by the end users.

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[51] This corresponds to the 'Part I' of the consolidated reports produced in the previous ROM cycle.

At the beginning of each ROM exercise, the ROM Coordination Units consult Delegations and Units, to inquire about their **priority needs** that could be addressed using the information collected by the ROM system.[52] ROM Contractors are informed about such priorities and take the necessary measures to collect the required information through the **standard ROM operations**.

In addition to drafting ad-hoc reports (based on information collected through standard ROM operations), ROM Contractors may be required to present findings, validate recommendations with relevant users and to participate in conferences and other events where it will be relevant to present ROM findings. Delivery of these on-demand products can take place during or at the end of the exercise, taking into account the needs of the Commission and the ROM Contractors' workload.

Use of knowledge by ROM Contractors and reporting

ROM Contractors should regularly update their internal training and materials used to mentor and provide guidance to ROM Experts with LL/GP. ROM Contractors will provide a summary description of all activities undertaken to collect, analyse, disseminate and apply LL/GP as part of their regular progress reports. Sources of good practices and lessons learned that are utilised during ROM operations are reported in a list of consulted documents.

9.4 After collections…

Quality Control of LL/GP

In view of the number of LL/GP collected, a uniform way to quality control this information should take into account the quality criteria to define a LL/GP and their categorisation or classification.

Collected LL/GP should respond to identified quality criteria, such as being well documented, which implies among others an adequate description of the context, evidence of positive results, replicable nature, and success factors identified and so on.

Concerning a possible categorisation of LL/GP, it is currently an open question. ROM Contractors could use OECD/DAC categories (sector, budget, type of IP, PCM phase; etc.), specific criteria derived from Commission research and studies[53] or other custom categories. In the latter case, a list of categories could be proposed to the ROM Coordination Units at the start of each ROM exercise.

In any case, LL/GP should be recorded in a specific table according to the chosen categorisation for analysis and dissemination.

Examples of categories to record good practices grouped by M&E DAC criteria are:

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[52] This might include the analysis of specific sector or theme (e.g. gender), specific country or region (e.g. Central Asia), specific context (e.g. conflict zones), particular IP organisation (e.g. UN), particular implementation modality (e.g. grant schemes), methodological aspects (e.g. DAC criteria), etc.

[53] Such as the ROM study "Causes underlying Effectiveness and Impact of EC Development Projects ROM reports" (2005-2007) which has identified 47 key variables for the poor-performing projects and 43 for the well-performing ones. Most of these variables are the same for poor and good performers. A group of six of these variables is considered crucial to determine the performance of an intervention.

Relevance

- Design process of the project proposal/methods to involve local stakeholders (local ownership).
- Successful synergies and networking with stakeholders inside and outside the project.
- Coordination, complementarity and EU added value.
- Complementarities and synergies established with other interventions.
- Intervention logic, Monitoring and Learning.
- Logframe and indicators.
- Knowledge/Learning system put in place.
- Reporting and monitoring systems put in place.

Efficiency

- Internal management and communication, i.e. especially relevant for CSO partnerships, including internal knowledge management practices.
- Funding modalities (when conducive to ensuring relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and/or sustainability of the project).
- Implementation modalities found particularly innovative, efficient and/or cost-effective (i.e. functioning of CSO partnerships).

Effectiveness

- Effectiveness of activities such as: dialogue models/methods used to increase civil society participation/to increase dialogue between state authorities and CSOs/also between CSOs and the private sector (business).
- Effectiveness of activities such as: Capacity development, i.e. training and mentoring methods, processes, follow-up.
- Effectiveness of activities such as: Advocacy, i.e. strategies used to promote legislative changes etc.
- Effectiveness of activities such as: External communicational policies and practices
- Effectiveness of activities such as: Direct support to EUDs and type of these activities (i.e. on demand of EUDs or pre-defined support packages)

Sustainability

- Actions to support the sustainability of local stakeholder activities.
- EU practices, i.e. coordination between DEVCO and EEAS, engagement of EUDs.
- Existence of exit/handover strategies.

Analysis and synthesis of information

LL/GP can consist of information of a statistical nature, text information drawn from standard ROM deliverables or more elaborate analyses.

The analysis of information involves the following steps: formulate the scope of analysis; translate the scope in terms of data; find, verify and group data. The synthesis of information should produce both quantitative and qualitative LL/GP.

Reporting

Knowledge products are presented in different formats as described in point 3. Reports are stored in a Knowledge Management database or equivalent. LL/GP are cited in the report with detailed explanatory notes (disclaimers). These notes should include the working hypotheses of the analysis, the limitations of the approach and the risks associated with the conclusions.

Dissemination

There are various channels of LL/GP dissemination:

At the level of ROM Contractors

- Internal guidance on ROM reviews, results reporting or support at design stage, regularly updated with LL/GP.
- Internal trainings.
- During the process of the elaboration of the Consolidated Report.
- QC process.

At the level of DG DEVCO /DG NEAR

- Recommendations made in ROM reports, reviews debriefing, results reporting debriefing or support at design stage.
- Compendium of LL/GP.
- Ad-hoc/on-demand studies.
- Capacity4Dev.

At the level of IPs

- Validation of the conclusions of ROM reports at the end of the ROM missions.
- Ad-hoc on-demand presentations by ROM Contractors

9.5 Overview of the knowledge building process

The table below provides an overview of the process and products for leaning in ROM activities in the framework of the knowledge management cycle:

KM Cycle		Learning Products		
		Individual ROM Reviews	**Compendium of LL and Good Practices**	**Consolidated Analysis**
	Collection of LL	**ROM Expert**: MQ template Template for LL and GP	**Senior Experts:** Completes information on the templates for LL /GP	**ROM Experts** will compile the analysis information on the basis of the MQ database
	Analysis of GP and LL		**Contractors:** Compendium of Good Practices and Lessons Learned	**Contractors:** On demand Consolidated Analyses
	Dissemination of LL/GP	**Contractors and ROM Experts:** Trainings and preparation of ROM reviews	**Contractors:** updates internal training and communication materials taking into account GP, LL and ROM findings. Presents findings to targeted audiences upon DEVCO's request **DEVCO** may use the contents of ROM findings and LL/GP to adapt to their communication and trainings. Contractors will collaborate in providing the necessary contents and information.	
	Applied LL and GP	**ROM Experts:** details on how ROM reviews are founded upon LL and GP to be provided in Annex 5	**Contractors:** details on how LL, GP and ROM findings is managed and re-applied to be provided in regular Progress/Implementation Reports.	

Table 16. Overview of the knowledge building process