European Commission

ROM
Handbook
2024

V. 6.3

Table of Contents

List of annexes

List of tables

List of figures

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAP	Annual Action Plan
AD	Action Document
CAR	Consolidated Analysis Report
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
DoA	Description of the Action
EAMR	External Assistance Monitoring Reports
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development plus
EIP	External Investment Plan
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EU	European Union
EURF	EU Results Framework
EUD	EU Delegation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FI	Financial Institution
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEMPS	Global Europe Monitoring Performance System
GERF	Global Europe Results Framework
GP	Good Practice
HQ	Headquarters
ICI	International Court of Justice
IFI	International Financial Institution
IP/IPs	Implementing Partner/Implementing Partners
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPA PF	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Performance Framework
IPA III RF	IPA III Results Framework
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LA	Local Authority

LFI	Lead Financial Institution
LL	Lessons Learnt
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programmes
MIS	Management Information System
MQ/MQs	Monitoring Question/Monitoring Questions
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDICI-GE	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe
NIF	Neighbourhood Investment Facility
NIP	National Indicative Programmes
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OM	Operational Manager
PFM	Public Financial Management
PINTV	Primary Intervention
PIQ	Primary Intervention Questionnaire
PP	Promising Practice
PRAG	Practical guide on contract procedures for European Union external action
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
QRM	Quality Review Meeting
RACER	Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor, Robust
RELEX	EU External Action
RIP	Regional Indicative Programme
ReMF	EFSD+ Result Measurement Framework
RMF	EFSD Result Measurement Framework
ROM	Results-Oriented Monitoring
ROM CU	ROM Coordination Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDL	Support to Design Logframes and Monitoring Systems
TA	Technical Assistance
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

INTRODUCTION

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

The ROM system assists DG INTPA 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 intervention cycle.

This Handbook presents the rules, modalities, specifications, and quality standards for all ROM services. It has been prepared by Units INTPA.D4 (Quality and Results, Evaluation, Knowledge Management) and NEAR.A4 (Coordination of financing instruments - performance, results and evaluation), also referred to as "the ROM coordination units", with contributions by thematic and geographic units in both DGs.

Version 6 has replaced in full the ROM Handbook edition of October 2018 (Version 5) and was revised in 2019-2020. The present edition is version 6.3 issued in 2024.

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 reflected in updated versions of the Handbook.

ROM Handbook v. 2024

This **version** of the Handbook presents:

- Processes and services implemented by ROM contractors, as of 2019.
- Methodologies and rules introduced following the COVID-19 crisis.
- Revised processes and tools following the roll out of OPSYS.
- Up-to-date monitoring and reporting templates with methodological guidance.
- Approach for ROM reviews of blending interventions.
- Standards for supporting the design of logframes and M&E systems.
- An update on the process for results data collection.

1 | BASIC CONCEPTS

This chapter presents key terminology and concepts related to monitoring and results data collection in the context of DG INTPA and DG NEAR

The EU and its Member States are committed to improving the effectiveness of their external action. In 2011, during the Busan High-Level Forum, the EU endorsed the principles of Aid Effectiveness, which were renewed in 2016, during the High-Level Meeting in Nairobi. As part of its response to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[1], the EU, along with its Member States, adopted the European Consensus on Development in 2017. The Consensus brings forward the importance of ownership of development priorities, focus on results, inclusive development partnerships, transparency, and mutual accountability.

The 2019 geopolitical European Commission, with its ambition to forge "a stronger Europe in the world", has given new impetus to the EU external action through the 2020-2024 Strategic Plans, which implement the political priorities of the Von der Leyen Commission[2], and are coherent with the commitment to achieve the SDGs.

In 2021, DG DEVCO restructured as DG INTPA to support international "partnerships of equals", and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe[3] (NDICI-GE) was created, reflecting the will to increase the effectiveness and visibility of the EU's external policies, strengthen their coordination with internal policies and give the EU the necessary flexibility to provide a faster response to new crises and challenges. Since December 2021, the Global Gateway has been providing a coherent strategic policy framework for four of the six geopolitical priorities of the Commission, facilitating investments in the digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research sectors.

---

[1] https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
[2] The six pillars of the Geo-political Commission are: (i) Green Deal; (ii) Digital and Data Technologies; (iii) Alliances for Sustainable Growth and Jobs; (iv) Migration Partnerships; (v) Governance, Peace and Security; (vi) Human Development.
[3] The NDICI-Global Europe instrument made up of three main components (geographical, thematic, and rapid response) and a more flexible element to counter emerging crises, combines all EU external action programmes into one broad financing tool, within the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027. It also includes an investment framework for external action to raise additional financial resources for sustainable development from the public and private sector, namely the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) and the External Action Guarantee. Only the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) is not included in NDICI-GE, although IPA beneficiaries can benefit from the NDICI-GE rapid reaction components and the External Action Guarantee under NDICI-GE.

Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs)[4], initially a feature of the EU Global Response to COVID-19, are now a key part of NDICI-Global Europe programming and implementation, aimed at achieving greater sustainable impact and transformational change.

The NDICI-Global Europe regulation[5] emphasises the importance of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as reporting focused on results covering outputs, outcomes, and impacts for accountability, transparency, and assessment of progress toward achieving objectives in partner countries benefitting from the Union's external financial assistance.

As of 2021, the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF)[6] replaces the EU Results Framework (EURF) with a broader performance monitoring system, the Global Europe Performance Monitoring System (GEPMS). The IPA III Results Framework (IPA III RF)[7] is established for the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) and supplements the IPA Performance Framework, the key performance indicators set in the IPA III Regulation[8], and the IPA III Programming Framework.

The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at DG INTPA and DG NEAR are managed through a central operational system (OPSYS) used jointly by EU services and their partners.

OPSYS

OPSYS is a large-scale business transformation and IT system launched by DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI (RELEX Family). Its purpose is to improve the management of the EU external relations portfolio along the entire intervention cycle: from programming to final evaluation, throughout the contracting and implementation phases.

Against this background, the ROM services described in this Handbook continue to support the monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities conducted by DG INTPA and DG NEAR, applying relevant Commission regulations, the Better Regulation Package[9], the internationally practised OECD-Development Assistance Committee[10] (DAC) criteria and terminology, and specific guidelines issued by the respective DGs.

---

[4] Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) are the flagship of the Team Europe approach, an inclusive process open to all EU Member States, their implementing organisations and financing institutions. They deliver concrete results for partner countries, in line with their strategic and national priorities, and promote the 'Team Europe' brand. TEIs should also bring together the best possible mix of modalities, tools and partners (e.g. CSOs and private sector) to deliver the intended impact - *Working Better Together as Team Europe. Tools and Methods Series Guidelines N° 10 (2021).*
[5] Regulation 2021/947 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0947
[6] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/eu-rfi_en
[7] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-staff-working-document-instrument-pre-accession-assistance-ipa-iii-results-framework_en
[8] Regulation 2021/1529 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529
[9] Better Regulation Package: https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation_en
[10] https://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/

The following paragraphs illustrate some of the **key concepts underpinning the ROM services**. Additional definitions and technical guidance, applicable to individual ROM services, are available in the corresponding chapters.

1.1. Interventions

ROM services target "interventions", as defined in the Better Regulation Package and further specified for the context of the EU external assistance. The term refers to activities undertaken by the EU and grouped together for assessing performance.

> **Intervention**
>
> An intervention is a coherent set of inputs and results, which narrates a theory of developmental change, follows a logical construction and constitutes the most effective level for the operational follow-up and reporting. In the external action context, interventions are usually referred to as "programmes" or "projects".

When elaborating an Action Document[11], the Operational Manager (OM) determines the scope of an intervention based on:

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

For the purpose of creating and maintaining an exhaustive database of non-redundant external action's operations, interventions are classified as **Primary Interventions (or PINTV)** when they comply with the characteristics of exhaustivity, non-redundancy and single responsibility, and allow for an optimal level of results-oriented follow-up.

> **PINTV observation levels**
>
> - Contract (most common case).
> - Group of contracts (e.g. series of programme estimates).
> - Action (e.g. budget support).
> - More than one Action (e.g. top-up cases, phased implementation).

Primary Interventions have to strictly correspond to one Contract or one Action, or to several Contracts or several Actions, but cannot correspond to Contracts and Actions simultaneously.

---

[11] The Action Document is a document summarising the identification and formulation of one or more interventions aiming at the same objectives and targeting common results.

The implementation of the EU budget for external assistance is complex and requires a number of financial, operational and administrative activities that do not directly contribute to a specific intervention. For easier reference, these are called "**support entities**"[12].

1.2. Results

Interventions trigger change in the lives of those who benefit from them. These intended changes can be visualised through **results chains,** showing the logical relationship among the resources invested by the intervention (inputs), the activities to be implemented, and the changes or **results** to be achieved.

The definition of results in this Handbook follows that of the OECD-DAC.[13]

Results

Results are the output, outcome, or impact (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of an intervention.

A schematic representation of a results chain is provided below:

Results

Input → Activity → Output → Outcome → Impact
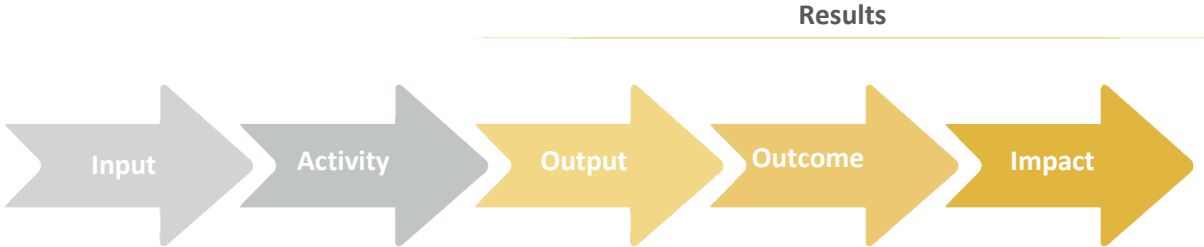
Figure 1. Results chain

Inputs The financial, human, material (in-kind), and institutional (including technological and information) resources used for the intervention. Examples: funding, staff, materials, equipment.

---

[12] The typology of support entities is diverse and includes the following categories: (i) Financial commitments (level 1 or 2) for outstanding payments beyond initial commitment, (ii) Support Contracts and agreements for administrative assistance (including general cooperation facilities and support to the national authorities dealing with EU cooperation), (iii) Feasibility studies (not linked to specific follow-up Primary Interventions), (iv) Evaluation, audit or verification contracts (not linked to specific Primary Interventions).

[13] Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (2023) https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/glossary-of-key-terms-in-evaluation-and-results-based-management-for-sustainable-development-second-edition_632da462-en-fr-es.

Activities refer to the process of converting inputs into outputs. <u>Examples</u>: conducting training, building a new clinic, conducting an awareness campaign, preparing a roadmap.

Outputs describe the products, capital goods and services directly delivered by the intervention. They may also include changes resulting from the intervention, which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes. Such changes relate to improved capacities, abilities, skills, systems, policies of a group of people or an organisation. <u>Examples:</u> enhanced skills of the teachers or health workers, increased awareness on how to access the legal system, improved policy evidence.

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

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

Outcomes refer to short/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's outputs (when institutions or people do something differently 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 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. <u>Examples:</u> more children completing a school cycle, increased access to paediatric and maternity health services, increased disclosure of rights violations, implemented 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[14] and stems from the combined effort of a number of interventions by the partner government(s), 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. <u>Examples:</u> reduction of poverty, improvement in literacy/numeracy, reduction of the under-five mortality rate, enhanced respect of human rights, reduction of corruption.

It is important to define indicators, baselines, milestones and targets for each type of result in order to measure the results achieved by the intervention.

Indicators are quantitative or qualitative factors or variables, which provide a reliable measure of the achievement of each result. Indicators should be Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor, and Robust (RACER). Indicators should include a clear unit of measure and be formulated in a neutral way

---

[14] 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.

and should be disaggregated as relevant. Examples: under-five mortality rate (quantitative), status of legal framework guaranteeing universal pensions (qualitative).

> **Results indicators**
>
> Indicators reflect the same hierarchy that exists among results. Example:
> - Output level: # of health workers trained with EU support who demonstrate increased Birth Emergency Skills, # of health clinics with neonatal equipment for resuscitation funded with EU support
> - Outcome level: Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel.

Baselines give the starting point, i.e. the value of the indicators that the intervention aims to change. They are required in order to be able to set meaningful targets. Example: under five mortality rate was 40 in 2017. The baseline reported must use the unit of measure of the indicator. In our example, the unit of measure is number of deaths per 1,000 livebirths.

Targets and **milestones** specify the planned direction for progress, by assigning target values to the indicators selected for measuring results. They are set using the same unit of measure as for the indicator. Example: under five mortality rate is 20 per 1,000 livebirths in 2028.

When designing an intervention, the operational services of the Commission establish, at the earliest possible stage, results chains that reflect the interlinked effects of the intervention. This is usually done in close collaboration with implementing partners. To facilitate this task, DG INTPA has developed a **Guidance on results and indicators** for a growing number of sectors, under the external action priority areas[15].

DG INTPA and DG NEAR have identified a selection of good practice indicators pre-encoded in OPSYS (**predefined indicators**), that are available to users as suggested indicators. Predefined indicators in OPSYS include those used for **corporate** monitoring and reporting (such as all 17 SDG (Tier I), GAP III[16], EURF/GERF IPA/IPA III Performance Framework[17] and FPI Performance Framework) and **sector-specific** indicators. Indicators used for corporate monitoring and reporting allow the Commission services to aggregate data/values against results. The use of other predefined indicators in OPSYS (not corporate) is not mandatory (except for some of the FPI indicators) but is highly recommended to ensure harmonisation and standardisation.

---

[15] The guidance is available on Capacity4dev https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/results-and-indicators
[16] Gender Action Plan III - https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf
[17] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/core-indicators-design-and-monitoring-eu-funded-interventions_en

1.3. Monitoring

This Handbook uses the OECD-DAC[18] and Better Regulation[19] definitions of monitoring:

> **Monitoring**
>
> A continuing process that involves the systematic collection or collation of data (on specified indicators or other types of information). Provides the management and other stakeholders of an intervention with indications of the extent of implementation progress, achievement of intended results, occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated funds and other important intervention and context-related information – *OECD-DAC definition.*
>
> Monitoring is a continuous and organised process of systematic data collection (or access) throughout the life cycle of an initiative to oversee its progress. Monitoring is necessary to generate information that feeds into future evaluation and impact assessments and to provide a solid evidence base for policymaking. – *Better Regulation, Tool # 43. Monitoring.*

In the context of DG INTPA and DG NEAR, monitoring can be:

- **Internal**, if carried out by implementing partners (IPs – entities in charge of implementing EU-funded interventions), and/or operational managers (OMs – 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 for the ROM system.

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

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

Interventions use a **monitoring framework** to track progress and achievement of results, 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 through a results chain, and setting out the indicators to be used for monitoring with baselines and target values, sources of verification, and assumptions. The logframe is drafted at the design stage by the OM and further refined at contract stage, with the IP[20]. During implementation, the logframe is used as a management tool

---

[18] Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD-DAC https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/glossary-of-key-terms-in-evaluation-and-results-based-management-for-sustainable-development-second-edition_632da462-en-fr-es

[19] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/br_toolbox_-_nov_2021_-_chapter_5.pdf

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

to guide the monitoring of the intervention. It can be modified, if necessary, for instance if the target values prove not to be attainable or if the indicators prove not to be fully adapted to the results they seek to measure.

- For budget support[21], 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 for monitoring the variable tranches[22].

- Until 2022, for blending interventions and budgetary guarantees, the monitoring framework provided in the Application Form (AF) template filled in by International Financial Institutions (IFI) used to require only **a list of indicators** and not a fully-fledged results chain with related indicators. Consequently, Contribution Agreements (for blending) and Guarantee Agreements (for budgetary guarantees) used to not have a results framework. Following the approval of NDICI-Global Europe and the establishment of the new European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), the use of results chains and monitoring frameworks has become standard practice. Application forms templates (updated in 2022 for Proposed Investment Programme (PIPs) and in 2023 for blending proposals) include a section with a results framework. In turn, Contribution Agreements (for blending) and Guarantee Agreements (for budgetary guarantees) must have a results framework too.

- For Team Europe Initiatives, the Joint Intervention Logic (JIL) identifies the impact, specific objectives, pillars, outputs and components of the TEI and defines a set of indicators for monitoring the TEI expected results.

In this Handbook, the term "logframe" is used to encompass all types of monitoring frameworks.

Logframe

The logical framework matrix of an intervention translates an internally coherent theory of change, linking inputs and activities with outputs and outcomes, and intended impact. It reflects: (a) the rational mechanism for delivering the intended change; and (b) the concern for monitoring, reporting, and communicating results.

Since 2021, OPSYS supports the monitoring of results through logframes, via the creation of the external action portfolio of primary interventions, and its use for systematic results data collection, monitoring, and reporting (see the following section).

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

---

[21] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/budget-support_en
[22] Budget support - European Commission (europa.eu)

of efforts[23]. It is good practice that the implementing partners describe all the elements of a monitoring system in a **monitoring plan**.

1.4. Reporting on results

In recent years, the European Commission has enhanced its focus on results-based management across the institution, reflecting the growing attention of the EU and its Member States to the effectiveness and performance of their action.

Focus on results at global level

The EU efforts take place in a wider context, in which development organisations aim to develop results-based management systems that facilitate accountability, communication, steering and learning. The OECD Development Assistance Committee, of which the European Union is a member, adopted in 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 to help organisations address the recurrent challenges they have been facing in practice.

The legal requirements embedded in the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation reflect the political role that the EU has taken globally in promoting a results-based approach as opposed to an activity-input driven approach. The EU Team Europe commitment[24] further strengthened the need for an inclusive and coordinated results-based approach as well as the Council conclusions on the European financial architecture for development (EFAD)[25] where the focus on enhancing coordination to deliver better results on the ground is explicit.

Reporting on results is the most visible part of a results-based management system, whether internally, for management and learning purposes, or externally for accountability and communication purposes. Reporting can take place at two levels:

- At **operational level,** each intervention reports on progress and results. IPs are responsible for submitting progress reports (on a quarterly, six-monthly, or annual basis depending on the provisions of the contract) and populating the logframes with results data, through OPSYS. OMs are responsible for monitoring on progress, approving reports and cross-checking the results values provided.

---

[23] More information is included in the guidelines on Internal Monitoring for Results
https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/Guidance+on+internal+monitoring+for+results
[24] Council conclusions 7894/21 "Team Europe", 21 April 2021.
[25] Council conclusions 9462/21 "European financial architecture for development", 10 June 2021

- At **institutional level**, DG INTPA and DG NEAR are committed to reporting on the achievement of results against their strategic objectives, and, since 2015, have used corporate results frameworks to collect and measure key results achieved by interventions funded by the EU external assistance financing instruments.

> **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.

The EU Results Framework was established in 2015 and revised in 2018, to align with the 2030 Agenda and the EU Consensus on Development. In 2021, the EURF was further revised to better align with the EC political priorities reflected in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 and in the new instrument for EU external action, NDICI- Global Europe[26], becoming the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF). This is described in more detail in the following sub-section dedicated to predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting.

Other specific results frameworks are in place to report, for instance, on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA Performance Framework IPA PF[27], and IPA III Results Framework – IPA III the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD/+, a pillar of the European External Investment Plan), the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa[28], the EU Trust Fund for Colombia[29], the Bêkou and Madad[30] Trust Funds. Although specific, such results frameworks are set to contribute to EURF/GERF through common indicators.

Against this background, **reporting on results** is a periodic exercise, aimed at verifying, aggregating and presenting information on results, collected against a set of indicators included in the intervention logframes and in specific results frameworks.

Predefined Indicators for Institutional Reporting

Predefined indicators have been classified in three groups: 1) Predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting, 2) Other Corporate indicators; and 3) Recommended indicators.

1) The **predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting** are those defined in the Financing Instruments and in strategic management frameworks of Commission's services and allow the reporting of the Commission's external actions corporate results. Predefined indicators for institutional reporting are particularly relevant to ROM services because they are the object of the

---

[26] In particular the list of key performance indicators presented in Annex VI of the regulation to help measure the Union's contribution to the achievement of the results.
[27] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programmes-performance/pre-accession-assistance-performance_en
[28] https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/results/monitoring-and-learning_en
[29] Trust funds - European Commission (europa.eu)
[30] https://trustfund-syria-region.ec.europa.eu/monitoring-evaluation_en

Results Reporting Exercises and should also be considered in Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems (SDL) services.

Predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting are organised by levels:

→ Level 1 tracks the medium/long term **international cooperation and development impacts** 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 measure the performance of EU international cooperation, but rather give the operational context in which the EU provides external assistance.

→ Level 2 focuses on the EU external actions **direct contributions to results (outcomes and outputs achieved)**, to which EU-funded interventions contribute, in collaboration with partner governments and other funding providers. Level 2 results that are most relevant for internal decision-making, accountability, communication, and lesson learning are aggregated at the corporate level.

→ Level 3 captures **policy priority mainstreaming**, as measured by budgetary commitments directed towards specific priorities. They are not to be used in the logframes of interventions because level 3 indicators do not measure results.

The predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Predefined indicators for Institutional Reporting

Predefined indicators for institutional reporting	Instrument	MFF	Relevance for ROM Services
EU Results Framework[31] (EURF) - DG INTPA and DG NEAR – For all ROM Lots	The European Development Fund (EDF). The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) The programmable part of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) under article. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) The Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation The Instrument for Greenland The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)	MFF 2014-2020	In Results Reporting exercises that include MFF 2014-2020 funded interventions In SDL of interventions funded by MFF 2014-2020 corresponding Instruments In ROM reviews of interventions funded by MFF 2014-2020 corresponding Instruments
Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Performance Framework (IPA PF) – DG NEAR (enlargement) – Only applicable for ROM Lot 4	IPA IPA II	MFF 2014-2020	In Results Reporting exercises that include MFF 2014-2020 funded interventions

---

[31] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/eu-rfi_en

Predefined indicators for institutional reporting	Instrument	MFF	Relevance for ROM Services
			In SDL of interventions funded by MFF 2014-2020 corresponding Instruments In ROM reviews of interventions funded by MFF 2014-2020 corresponding Instruments
Global Europe Results Framework (GERF)[32] – DG INTPA and DG NEAR - For all ROM Lots	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE)	MFF 2021-2027	In Results Reporting Exercises that include MFF 2021-2027 funded interventions In SDL of interventions funded by MFF 2021-2027/NDICI-GE In ROM reviews of interventions funded by MFF 2021-2027/NDICI-GE
Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III Results Framework (IPA III RF)[33] – DG NEAR (enlargement) Only applicable for ROM Lot 4	IPA III	MFF 2021-2027	In Results Reporting exercises that include MFF 2021-2027 funded interventions In SDL of interventions funded by MFF 2021-2027 /IPA III In ROM reviews of interventions funded by MFF 2021-2027/IPA III

2) **Other Corporate predefined indicators** are included in:
   - Key outcome indicators of the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III).[34]
   - The European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus Results Measurement Framework (EFSD+ ReMF).
   - The Performance Framework of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

3) There are other **recommended indicators** which can be selected from the Results and Indicators Guidance[35].

---

[32] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/eu-rfi_en
[33] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-staff-working-document-instrument-pre-accession-assistance-ipa-iii-results-framework_en
[34] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/swd-2020-284-objectives-indicators-gap-iii_en.pdf
[35] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/core-indicators-design-and-monitoring-eu-funded-interventions_en

Version 6.3 – August 2024

2 | MONITORING AND REPORTING THROUGHOUT 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 activities

The monitoring[36] and reporting activities of DG INTPA and DG NEAR, evolve throughout the cycle of the intervention, as illustrated in the graph below:
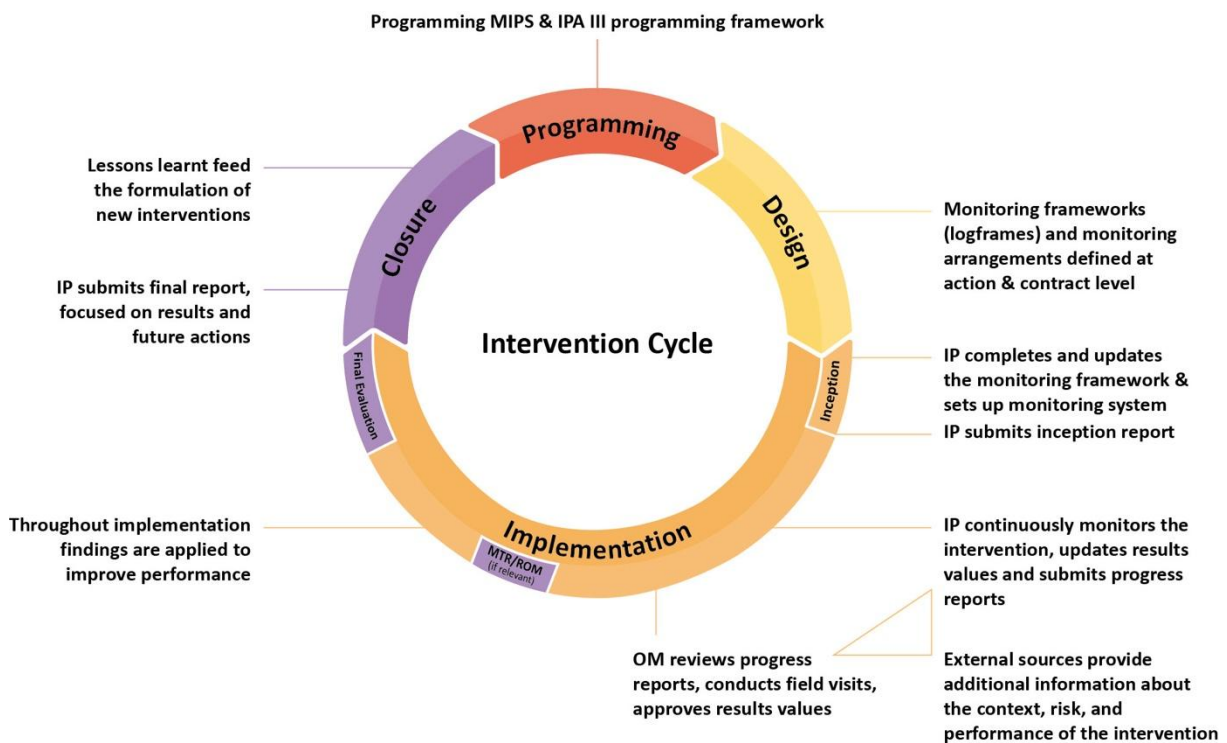
Figure 2. Monitoring and reporting along the cycle of the intervention

---

[36] The focus of this section is mainly on external monitoring.

At programming stage

The development of monitoring and reporting systems for interventions begins during the elaboration of the multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs)[37] at geographic and/or thematic level. MIPs, and their intervention frameworks, outline for each of the priority areas selected for EU financing, the specific objectives, the expected results, the performance indicators with baselines, targets and sources of verification, together with the envisaged methods of implementation, including TEI and/or the use of investment facilities.

Regarding EU pre-accession funds, programming is based on EU thematic priorities and the IPA III programming framework[38] is the overarching strategic programming document setting the thematic priorities under Windows which mirror the clusters of the negotiating chapters as per the enlargement methodology.

At design stage

The design stage includes two steps: the preparation of Annual Action Plans (AAPs) and the drafting of Action Documents (ADs). The preparation of AAPs ensures a coherent strategic approach. Once an AAP is approved, ADs are drafted to present the rationale and description of each action in detail.

While designing an action, the operational manager in charge:

- Drafts the intervention logic and the logframe keeping the coherence with the relevant MIP, and referring, if needed, to the existing guidance on results and indicators for sector-specific results chains[39].
- Flags the indicators that can contribute to the GERF.
- Completes the risk assessment matrix.
- Designs the overall performance and result monitoring arrangements, indicating the desired level for future results reporting (Primary intervention level: action or contract level).
- Identifies or selects IPs (e.g. assessing proposals).

All Action Documents are presented to the relevant Director for approval (in Quality Review Meeting-QRM) following an internal quality assurance by all relevant services.

As soon as the IP is known, the OM ensures coherence between the logframe at action and contract level, as well as the IP's monitoring and reporting capacity. Depending on the type of contract, the logframe and monitoring arrangements can be discussed in further detail before contract signature.

---

[37] With the Multiannual Financing Framework 2021-2027, MIPs replace the previous National Indicative Programmes (NIP) or Regional Indicative Programmes (RIP) and have the same format for all the beneficiary areas of NDICI-GE. Adopted MIPs can be found at https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/global-europe-programming_en
[38] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en
[39] OPSYS supports this process allowing to create logframes linked to relevant MIPs and facilitating the selection of predefined indicators for institutional reporting for measuring the specified results.

At inception stage

The inception stage, generally referring to the first 3-6 months of the implementation, is crucial for establishing monitoring and reporting processes that comply with the requirements of all involved parties.

The IP establishes a monitoring and reporting system which covers the agreed intervention logic, updates and completes the logframe agreed with the Commission services at contract stage, including elements related to the context and risk factors. This is presented in the inception report that is submitted for approval to the OM at the end of the inception period.

The OM assesses the quality of the monitoring and reporting systems of each intervention at this stage, providing support if required. This is a key task of the OM, since the effectiveness of the EU internal monitoring and reporting process relies on the soundness of the IP's monitoring and reporting system and the quality of the results data collected.

At later stages of implementation

Implementing partners 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 reports, using the agreed logframe as a reference. Progress reports by IPs describe the implementation of the intervention, including results achieved, difficulties encountered and potential deviation from plans. During this process, they report specifically on indicators values on a regular basis (using OPSYS), and according to the schedule and modalities specified in their contract. Reports are submitted to the OM of the intervention, for approval.

The Commission services monitor the implementation based on progress 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). The updated values for each indicator measuring the level of achievement of the results, as reported by the IPs, are subject to quality checks, and once validated can be aggregated to report at higher levels through results frameworks.

Reporting on results at intervention level feeds into institutional reports at the levels of instruments, including the special ones (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.

At closure stage

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

2.2. ROM support to monitoring and reporting

What is ROM?

The Results Oriented Monitoring is a key component of the monitoring and reporting systems of DG INTPA and DG NEAR. It is external, since it is contracted to independent contractors and experts, but it complements the internal monitoring performed by the operational managers as well as the regular monitoring by implementing partners as described in the previous chapter. ROM contractors make use of existing monitoring frameworks, monitoring reports, progress reports, evaluations and analyses produced by IPs, to build on what already exists and avoid duplications.

The ROM system was first set up in 2001 to support the devolution of management of the EU external action. It has been progressively adapted and expanded with new services to better suit needs, evolving geopolitical situations and integrate lessons learnt from previous periods.

What services do ROM contractors provide?

ROM contractors provide three main groups of services:

- ROM reviews
- Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems
- Support to Results Data Collection
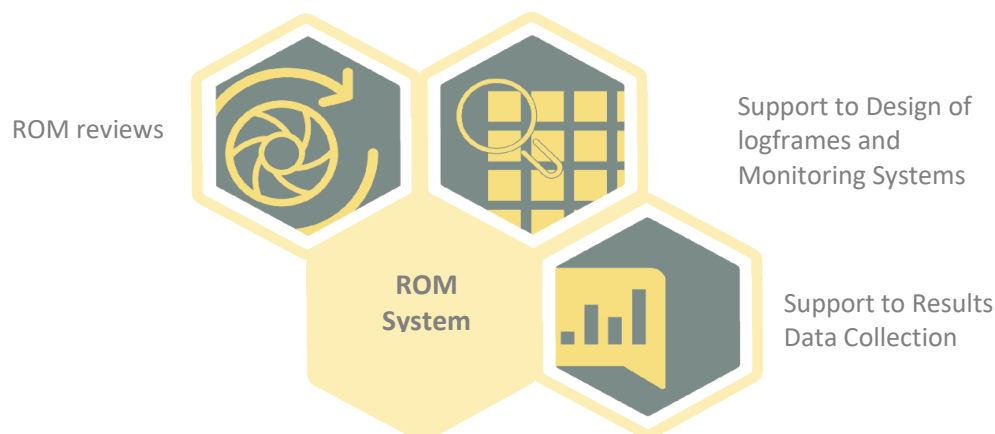
Figure 3. The ROM services

ROM reviews provide an external, objective, and independent assessment of selected ongoing interventions. ROM experts assess interventions according to the eight monitoring criteria: the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, as well as four additional criteria which are coordination, complementarity and EU added value; intervention logic, monitoring and learning; cross-cutting issues; and communication and visibility. ROM experts analyse documentation and conduct missions where they interview as many stakeholders as possible to collect the relevant and required information. The ROM review methodology includes a standard set of monitoring questions (MQs), linked to the monitoring criteria that are used to structure the analysis of documentation and empirical data. At the end of the mission, ROM experts provide recommendations to improve intervention implementation, which are useful for both OMs and IPs.

> **Scope:** Interventions in project modality including blending interventions. Budget support interventions are covered by the ROM reviews for DG NEAR only.

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

Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems. With this service, ROM experts provide technical support to Units and Delegations for the revision of intervention logics and related logframes, as well as monitoring and reporting systems at intervention level. This is a remote service, undertaken via e-mails, phone calls and/or video conferences among the OM, the ROM expert in charge and the IP(s). The output of this service is a revised set of documents that becomes part of the implementation arrangements between the Commission and the IP.

> **Scope:** Interventions in project modality including blending interventions

For a full description of this service, see chapter 6.

Support to Results Data Collection. ROM experts support the logframe-based monitoring and reporting in OPSYS. This includes providing IPs and OMs with assistance in checking the quality of results data reported against the logframes of primary interventions (ongoing and recently closed).

> **Scope:** Interventions in project modality, blending interventions and budget support.

For a description of the support to results data collection, see chapter 7.

When do ROM services take place?

The three ROM services take place at different stages of the **cycle of the intervention**:

1. **Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems.** This service is provided on demand. Generally, the support is provided before the start of the intervention, but if needed, it can be

requested at any time during implementation, e.g. in case of weaknesses or inadequacies identified during results data collection or ROM reviews.

2. **Results Oriented Monitoring reviews.** ROM reviews can take place at different moments throughout implementation:

i. *During the early stages of implementation:* This type of ROM review covers a sample of EU-funded interventions in the first stages of implementation **(3rd-6th up to 18th month of implementation).** They aim at tackling potential design weaknesses and implementation delays as early as possible in the intervention cycle, to ensure a smoother implementation thereafter. At this stage, ROM reviews may focus on confirming or updating intervention logics, revamping logframes (including baselines and targets), reviewing the monitoring system of the IP, assessing risks and mitigation measures, and fine-tuning the calendar of activities, in order to improve the performance of the intervention across the different assessment criteria.

ii. *Between the second year and final year of implementation,* the ROM reviews take place on a **need basis** in the following cases:

- Interventions **flagged** through the Commission's internal reporting system as having implementation problems and for which OMs have requested a ROM review.
- Other interventions for which the Commission requests a ROM review. This covers interventions which could not be visited by the OM, or for which the necessary sector expertise at Delegation-HQ level may not be available at a given point in time, or for any other reason that justifies the support of an external expertise.
- Selected **blending interventions** for which the Commission identifies a need for a ROM review.
- **For DG NEAR, budget support operations** for which the Commission services identify a need for ROM review.

iii. *Towards the end of implementation.* To allow sufficient time to implement the ROM experts' recommendations, ROM reviews should not take place in the last 8 months before closure. However, in specific cases, a ROM review towards the end of implementation can be useful to draw lessons and recommendations for the future, in view of preparing a follow-up phase or a new intervention.

3. **Support to Data Collection.** Results data of primary interventions is reported by IPs and OMs through OPSYS and is quality assured every year, in preparation of the annual institutional reporting. ROM contractors provide support in reporting the values of the indicators included in the interventions' logframes through OPSYS. Such support includes, amongst others: ensuring that the latest available values related to logframe indicators are encoded and documented in sources of verification and that indicators are correctly linked to EURF/GERF/IPA/IPA III indicators.
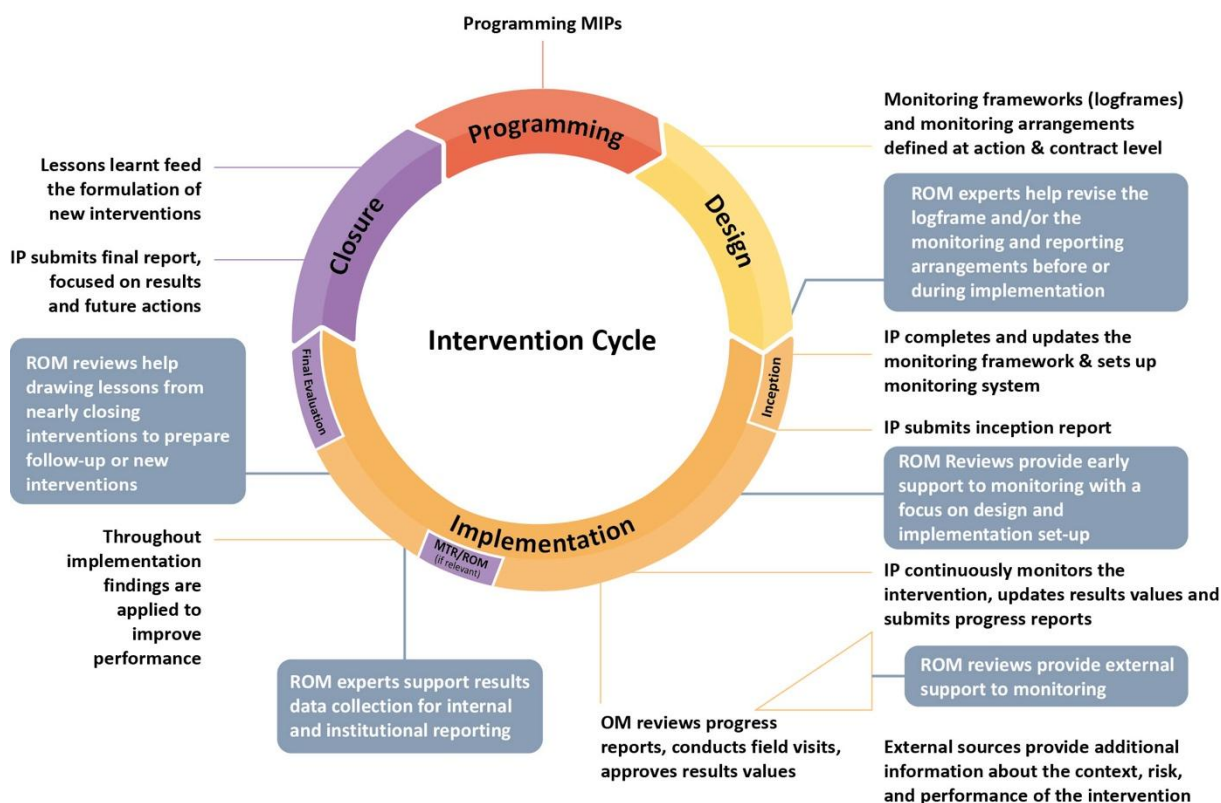
Figure 4. ROM services along the cycle of the intervention

A joint effort to track results

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

Table 2. A joint effort to track results

	Who is responsible?	When is it done?	Why is it necessary?
Design of logframes	OMs[40]	At design stage	To ensure the intervention logic is coherent and presents 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.

---

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

	Who is responsible?	When is it done?	Why is it necessary?
	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.
ROM Support to - Design of - Logframes and Monitoring Systems	Managed by DG INTPA and DG NEAR Headquarters; Performed by external ROM experts	At design and implementation stage	To improve the quality of logframes and monitoring and reporting systems.
ROM reviews	Managed by DG INTPA and DG NEAR Headquarters; Performed by external ROM experts	At early stage of implementation	To improve logframes and monitoring systems.
		In the implementation phase (between the 2nd and final year of implementation)	To provide recommendations for project management and contribute to learning.
		Towards the end of implementation	To draw lessons and recommendations for the future, in view of preparing a follow-up phase or a new intervention.
ROM Support to - Results -Data -Collection	Managed by DG INTPA and DG NEAR Headquarters; Performed by external ROM experts	Once a year	To support the results data collection exercise in OPSYS at intervention and institutional level. To facilitate accountability and communication on results.
Evaluation	At the level of the intervention, and sector or theme if not considered as strategic evaluation: Managed by 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 learnt. 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.

3 ACTORS IN THE ROM SYSTEM

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

ROM services support the European Commission staff, and more specifically:

- DG INTPA and DG NEAR operational staff, who are in charge of designing and monitoring EU-funded interventions both in Headquarters and Delegations.
- DG INTPA and DG NEAR Headquarter 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 INTPA and DG NEAR.

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

ROM contractors interact with all these stakeholders, each of them playing a specific role in the ROM system. Actors and roles have evolved over the years to integrate lessons learnt and adapt to new circumstances.

In the following sections, the main actors playing a role in the ROM system are presented.

3.1. Commission Stakeholders

ROM coordination units

The Commission services lead the process of implementation and delivery of ROM services. In particular, Units INTPA.D4: Quality and Results, Evaluation, Knowledge Management and NEAR.A4: Coordination of financing instruments - performance, results and evaluation, are responsible for the ROM system and for the operational management of the ROM contracts. They are the ROM coordination units (ROM CU). Within the ROM CU, operational manager(s) in charge of ROM contracts act as ROM Coordinators.

A Quality Assurance (QA) contractor supports the ROM coordination units by conducting reviews of the ROM contractor's Quality Control (QC) systems, assessing the quality of deliverables provided by the ROM contractors (limited to ROM reviews and Consolidated Analysis Reports) and making recommendations for improvement and alignment with the ROM methodology.

Additionally, the ROM coordination units in both DG INTPA and DG NEAR, benefit from technical assistance by other contractors, which can be involved to different extents in the coordination and the

methodological supervision of the ROM system and in learning activities. The role of the ROM coordination units includes:

- Performing operational tasks related to the day-to-day implementation of the ROM system.
- Taking the lead in all methodological and learning issues related to the ROM services with the support of technical assistance.
- Managing the quality assurance of all deliverables, with the assistance of the ROM QA contractor.
- Implementing corrective measures and adapting the ROM services to changing needs.

The ROM coordination units liaise with the contractors regarding day-to-day management of the activities and contracts. They approve the ROM work plans 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 ROM contractor, they discuss QA findings, as well as other feedback received on services and deliverables.

The ROM coordination units liaise with Headquarter Units and Delegations receiving ROM missions and remote services, as well as 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. The ROM QA contractor can be mobilised for an independent review of the ROM review report should such a situation arise.

The ROM coordination units organise regular meetings with ROM contractors to clarify and, if necessary, adapt the rules of the ROM system described in this Handbook.

M&E focal points

Each Delegation and Headquarter operational unit appoint an **M&E focal point,** who dedicates a portion of his/her time to monitoring and evaluation practices. In Headquarters, M&E focal points in thematic and geographic (regional) units handle interventions centrally managed by their services. In EU Delegations, they are the main liaison with Headquarters' Units INTPA.D4 and NEAR.A4 for disseminating information on M&E matters.

M&E focal points ensure appropriate information flows and effective coordination among all actors involved in the selection of interventions to benefit from ROM services. M&E focal points support the ROM review process and the results data collection. They also coordinate the annual needs assessment for ROM consolidated analyses, identifying specific interests for additional ROM analyses in the EU Delegation/HQ unit. M&E focal points are in regular contact with the ROM contractors and the ROM coordination units and participate in formal meetings to define the ROM strategy and system.

M&E focal points for **blending** are appointed in the units in charge of blending coordination at DG INTPA and DG NEAR (as of 2024: INTPA.E5: "External Actions Guarantees" and NEAR.A5 "IFIs and Investments: Blended Finance and EU Guarantees"). M&E focal points for blending play an advisory role for ROM reviews on blending interventions for the respective DGs.

Operational managers

Operational managers (OMs) are Commission staff members (and their established hierarchies), managing and monitoring EU-funded interventions. They can be based both at 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, offering guidance and insight to the ROM experts, facilitating the contact with the implementing partners and other stakeholders and providing feedback on the ROM deliverables. They share findings and outputs of ROM with IPs as appropriate.

3.2. Implementing partners and other stakeholders

Implementing partners

Implementing partners (IPs) are the entities in charge of implementing EU-funded interventions. These can be EU Member States agencies, UN agencies, other donors' agencies, international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), local NGOs, Civil Society Organisations (CSO), Governmental entities including Local Authorities (LA), regional organisations, (Development) Financial Institutions, Universities, Private sector organisations and companies, etc... As key actors, they are involved in ROM reviews as well as in other ROM services to the extent required by the OM. Their active collaboration is key to the quality of the ROM services. IPs benefit from ROM services, as they are supported to better implement their interventions.

Other key stakeholders

ROM contractors and their experts consult other key stakeholders. These include the final beneficiaries and other actors in the area/sector of implementation such as line Ministries, National and local authorities, Government agencies, other donors, EU Member States representations, private sector organisations, civil society organisations, related programmes on site, etc.

3.3. ROM contractors

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

DG INTPA

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 the Pacific (national, regional and intra-ACP).
- Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean (national, regional and intra-ACP).
- Interventions centrally managed by INTPA thematic and horizontal directorates.

LOT 2: Sub-Saharan Africa

Lot 2 covers:
- Interventions managed by EU Delegations in Sub-Saharan Africa (national, regional, intra-ACP and Pan-African).
- Regional interventions, centrally managed by INTPA geographic directorates covering Africa.
- Thematic interventions, devolved to Sub-Saharan African Delegations.

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 the 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 Assistance Instrument beneficiary countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo[41], Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and, Türkiye).

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

Main responsibilities

ROM contractors are responsible for providing the necessary expertise to undertake the services under the ROM system, managing the experts' recruitment, training and deployment, the mission logistics,

---

[41] 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.

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 ROM Contracts.

ROM contractors participate in regular meetings with the ROM coordination units.

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[42] and/or training material made available by Commission services.

As per the Terms of Reference for ROM contracts, the Commission services may request additional services beyond those already described in detail. Any additional reports, analyses, monitoring missions requested by INTPA or NEAR services, will need to be approved by the respective ROM Coordinator and described in ad hoc Terms of Reference. The ROM 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 coordination units, 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. working days, travel, per diems, and venue), and the related cost estimates. After approval, the ROM contractor will ensure that the tasks foreseen in the ad hoc Terms of Reference are implemented and communicate necessary revisions in a timely fashion. Any product is subject to approval before final delivery.

Examples of additional reports produced in the past include:

- Consolidated Report on ROM reviews in the health sector in Afghanistan 2023.
- ROM Consolidated Analysis Report 2023 for Sustainable Transport.
- Compendium of Lessons Learnt and Action Points for future deployment of the Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems.

ROM contractors produce inception, progress and final implementation reports as described in their respective contracts.

The box below provides details on the ROM contractors' organisational set-up as detailed in the respective Terms of Reference and tender proposals.

---

[42] In particular, the guidance on the Monitoring Questions as provided in Annexes 2 and 3.

ROM contractors' organisational setup

Each ROM contractor establishes a **core team** of full-time (220 working days/year) key and non-key experts. Core teams consist 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 specifies 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 their respective areas of responsibility, with a view to ensuring that all ROM services are effectively interrelated.

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 and 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 INTPA signs separate service contracts for the quality assurance of the ROM review system. A QA contractor assists the Commission in ensuring a high standard of quality across the ROM contracts. QA findings provide the basis for improvement of the ROM system where necessary.

The quality cycle of the ROM review process and the tasks of QA contractors are described in chapter 5.

3.5. Governance

ROM contracts are steered by INTPA.D4: "Quality and Results, Evaluation, Knowledge Management" and NEAR.A4: "Coordination of financing instruments – performance, results and evaluations". As

mentioned above, they are also referred to as ROM coordination units. INTPA. R6: "Finance and Contracts for Centralised Operations" and NEAR.R4: "Contracts and Finance Neighbourhood" are responsible for financial and contractual matters.

INTPA.D4 and NEAR.A4 organise ROM steering committee meetings (jointly, if appropriate).

The purpose of the ROM steering committee meetings is to facilitate close cooperation among all those involved in the ROM exercises and to discuss any major changes to the ROM methodology and services.

Depending on the agenda, participants in the ROM steering committee meetings may include:

- ROM Coordination Units.
- Representatives from the M&E focal points network from DG INTPA and DG NEAR geographic and thematic Directorates.
- ROM contractors/core team (Project Manager, Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, etc.).
- ROM QA contractor.
- Other technical assistance services supporting the ROM coordination units.

4 ROM REVIEWS

This chapter describes the process for **ROM reviews of ongoing interventions,** including blending interventions and, for DG NEAR, budget support operations, focusing on:

- The elaboration of the **work plan**,
- The methodological approach for the **implementation** of ROM reviews,
- The **reporting phase**, which ends with the delivery of the final version of the ROM report to the Commission services.

ROM reviews in brief

The first and most known service in the ROM system, launched in 2001 and periodically revised until now.

An external and impartial assessment of ongoing interventions that is organised on a need-basis and not systematically fir all interventions.

An assessment that looks at the progress and performance of interventions under different lenses following a methodology inspired by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, but still different from an evaluation.

A service that takes place any time during the life of an intervention although with a different focus depending on the stage of imlplementation.

A service that applies to interventions in project modality, blending operations.

ROM reviews follow a well-established and IT supported process involving the joint effort of several actors.

Figure 5. ROM reviews key features

4.1. The ROM review process and actors

ROM reviews are organised per **cycles or rounds** (closely linked to the EAMR cycle) covering approximately one year, through the ROM contractors, with the active involvement of other **actors** presented in the introductory chapters:

ROM reviews' key actors

OM

Operational Managers provide information to plan and implement the missions and give guidance and feedback.

IP/LFI

Implementing Partner (IP)/Lead Finance Institution (LFI) for Blendings, contribute to the ROM missions and benefit from the ROM exercise, which helps the improve the performance of their interventions.

ROM contractor

ROM Contractors take the lead in planning and organising the missions and in ensuring the quality of deliverables.

ROM expert

ROM experts conduct the ROM review missions and draft the corresponding reports.

ROM QC Expert

ROM QC experts provide a quality control of ROM deliverables.

M&E FP

M&E Focal Points facilitate the process at Delegation level and thematic/ geographic level in Headquarters.

ROM CU

ROM Coordination Units support the exercise, approve missions and provide methodological and technical guidance.

QA contractor

QA contractor contributes to the quality management of the ROM process and provides an external and independent quality assurance of ROM deliverables.

Figure 6. ROM reviews' key factors

The main steps of the ROM reviews process are:

- The establishment of **the portfolio** of interventions for ROM reviews.
- The elaboration of the **work plan** of ROM reviews.
- The **preparation** of the ROM review missions, including the preparation of **preliminary assessments** for **Blending interventions**.
- The **implementation** of the ROM review missions and reporting.
- The **quality control** and **validation** of the ROM review outputs.
- **Comments** by Commission services.
- **Dissemination of ROM reports.**

The entire process is represented graphically in the next figure whilst the different steps are analysed in detail in the following sections.
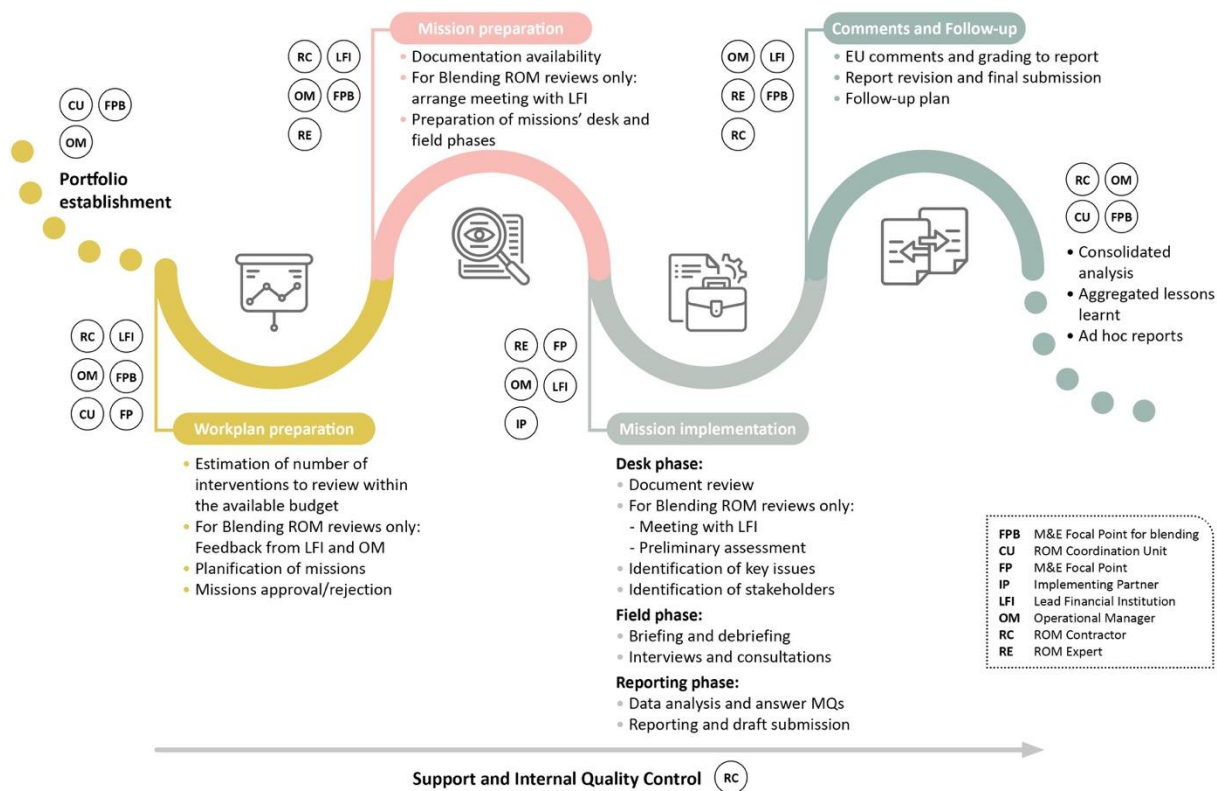
Figure 7. ROM reviews' process

4.2. The portfolio of interventions for ROM reviews

The ROM review exercise begins with the establishment of the portfolio of interventions, which can be subject to ROM reviews. This is an internal process involving several services of the Commission. The process takes place every year, based on the ROM reviews requested by OMs through the EAMR exercise. This list is transferred to the functionality in OPSYS for the management of ROM Reviews (ROM-OPSYS[43]), and further updated by OMs, who can cancel ROM reviews if they consider that they are no longer needed. Additionally, OMs can also request "on demand" ROM Reviews should they see a need for it.

---

[43] https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ROM+in+OPSYS

Primary Intervention Questionnaire (PIQ)

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. For the EAMR, several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are computed using the **Primary Intervention Questionnaire** (PIQ). KPIs 10 and 11 are used to flag ongoing interventions that have problems and may potentially require a ROM review, through a "traffic light" scoring system which combines input from OMs and logframe data to generate a score for the performance of the intervention.

The first traffic light (KPI-10) measures the current performance by combining an assessment of relevance with an assessment of effectiveness and efficiency.

The second traffic light (KPI-11) measures expectations for future performance by combining the assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency with sustainability.

Various IT tools (progressively integrated into OPSYS) support this process. The Primary Intervention Questionnaire is the tool used for extracting the list of interventions to be subject to ROM reviews (as detailed in the above). At DG NEAR, the Management Information System (MIS) provides additional information through a systematic risk assessment. Finally, ROM-OPSYS 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 portfolio of interventions for ROM review includes five different categories:

- Interventions flagged as having **implementation problems** through the Commission's internal reporting systems (EAMR and MIS).

- A **sample** of interventions (excluding blending and budget support operations) in their **early stages of implementation** is selected by HQ, irrespective of the traffic light they may already have on the EAMR.

- Other interventions for which the Commission services request a ROM review **"on demand"**. There can be several justifications for this request, for instance, a ROM review can be necessary for interventions which could not be visited by OMs, or for which sector expertise at Delegation/HQ level may not be available at a given point in time, or to draw lessons for future interventions.

- **Blending interventions** for which the Commission services identify the need for a ROM review. **For the selection of blending interventions eligible for ROM,** the ROM coordination units conduct a consultation with both HQ and Delegations to identify interventions:

  o With implementation difficulties, as recognised by the OM and/or by the Commission -Headquarters, including interventions for which communication/reporting processes pose difficulties whether at HQ or EU Delegation level.

o In need of re-assessment, following changes in the project design, structure, or the sector national policy framework that may influence the implementation of the intervention.

o Of specific interest, but for which the EU could not yet organise a visit or has not the required expertise to do it.

o 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 blending interventions.

The ROM contractors receive the list of blending interventions **separately** from the work plan for standard missions.

▪ For DG NEAR, **budget support operations** for which the Commission services identify a need for ROM review. ROM reviews on budget support operations will be limited to a certain number of selected operations per year and will focus on the assessment of the extent to which results (direct outputs, induced outputs, and to the extent possible outcomes and impacts) have been achieved and/or are likely to be achieved as a contribution to the socio-economic development of the country, as well as to the EU assistance priorities.

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

Table 3. Characteristics of interventions included or excluded from the ROM reviews portfolio

In	Out
▪ Interventions with at least one **orange or red flag** for KPI-10 and/or KPI-11. ▪ Interventions with green traffic lights in the EAMR, 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. ▪ Interventions in a final stage of implementation (less than 8 months to the end) for which the **Delegation/HQ Operational Unit has a justified request for** a ROM review. The justification cannot be linked to delays in planning/implementing the ROM review. ▪ Blending and Trust Fund interventions selected through an internal consultation process. ▪ Budget support selected by DG NEAR.	▪ 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 takes precedence over monitoring). ▪ Interventions with an orange or red traffic light, for which the risks or reasons of underperformance are well known, and a ROM **review would be unproductive**. This can occur in cases of civil war, natural disaster, or other circumstances. ▪ Interventions that have **just started** and not included in the sample 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 review.

Once the portfolio of interventions selected for ROM reviews is compiled, it is shared with the ROM contractors, operational managers and ROM CUs via ROM-OPSYS.

4.3. The ROM review work plan

The following figure presents an overview of the main steps in the work plan preparation.

Main steps in work plan preparation | **Status ROM-OPSYS**

ROM contractors estimate the number of reviews that can be implemented within their budget and submit this information within the set period of a maximum of 14 working days. ROM Reviews are created in ROM-OPSYS.
Draft

OMs confirm the ROM reviews providing required information such as: contact details of the IP/IPs, countries to be visited for multi-country ROM reviews, most suitable dates for the mission and general information/security concerns (timeframe: up to 14 working days from completion of previous step).
Confirmed

ROM contractors indicate the proposed experts (ROM expert/s and QC) and mission dates (timeframe: up to 14 working days from completion of previous step). The ROM Contractor can also signal any conflict of interest at Consortium-level (if any).
Expert (s) selected

OMs validate the experts or signal conflicts of interest at the level of the expert (s), if any (timeframe up to 14 working days from completion of previous step).
Expert (s) Confirmed

The ROM coordination unit approves or rejects (with justification) the mission (timeframe: up to 14 working days from completion of previous step).
Approved

Figure 8. Work plan steps

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 in consultation with the ROM coordination units, which must approve every mission. **For blending interventions,** additional actors are M&E focal points for blending and the Lead Financial Institutions (LFIs) that implement the intervention. These actors also participate in the planning of the mission.

In case of absence of the OM in charge, to avoid delays, a M&E focal point may act as backup in ROM-OPSYS.

The collaboration of Delegations/HQ Units is essential, especially for the organisation of group or remote missions.

The decision to carry out a **remote mission** is taken jointly, in consideration of security or health issues (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) that would impede travelling or the nature of the intervention (policy dialogue, support to multi-country organisations, capacity development Technical Assistance facility, etc.). The decision to hold the mission remotely, with adequate consultation of Implementing Partner and relevant stakeholders involved, is only taken if the ROM review can be effectively undertaken at distance and/or the involvement of in-country experts can take place in the respect of the "do no harm" principle and the security and safety prescriptions included in the Duty of Care of the ROM contractors. Specific information is presented in Annex 8.

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

a.   Identification and solution of conflict of interest at consortium level

A preliminary task for the ROM contractors is to identify any potential conflicts of interest while reviewing the listed interventions. This issue arises when a consortium member has taken part in the intervention to any significant degree, which could raise concerns of bias. After alerting the ROM coordination unit, the ROM contractor proposes a solution to neutralise the conflict of interest, by engaging another contractor to perform the review. The contractor who has the conflict of interest delegates to the alternate contractor all actions in ROM-OPSYS related to the mission.

b.   Budget estimation and draft work plan

Following a preliminary desk study, ROM contractors proceed to estimate the number of reviews that can be implemented within their budget and submit this information within the set period of a maximum of **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 ROM-OPSYS. ROM contractors can also add experts at a later point in time.

The budget estimation is based on:

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

Standards

- Coverage

In terms of **country coverage**, the maximum number of countries to be covered for multi-country interventions is four.

Ideally, field visits should be organised to group ROM reviews, whilst also meeting the needs of the services concerned.

- <u>Expertise and number of ROM experts per ROM review</u>

In terms of **expertise**, for operations other than blending and budget support, ROM contractors preferably assign one ROM expert per ROM review for each single-country (incl. regional interventions implemented in one country[44]) and for multi-country interventions, a maximum of three ROM experts can be assigned to cover the different countries in this case, one of the experts will have the role of the mission leader.

Generally **blending interventions** are monitored by two experts: one with a specialisation in financial intermediaries and financial products, and one with expertise corresponding to the sector of the 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.

For **DG NEAR, budget support operations** are also monitored by more than one expert: one expert in Public Financial Management (PFM)/macroeconomics and the appropriate number of sector experts[45].

- <u>In country experts</u>

When applicable, a non-travelling ROM expert may be supported by **in-country experts** performing a variety of activities in-situ while respecting safety and security conditions. Following a division of work between the non-travelling ROM expert and the in-country expert(s), these activities may include:

- Facilitation of virtual interviews (agenda setting, hosting calls and video conferences via their own IT equipment, translation, interpretation, etc.);
- Collection of information;
- Administration of surveys, or;
- Facilitation of additional interviews and/or focus group discussions.

- <u>Senior and medium ROM experts</u>

Non-key experts performing ROM reviews can be either **senior** or **medium**. ROM medium experts shall implement between 40% and 60% of the total number of ROM reviews within the contractual year.

In case of **group field visits**, the group of experts proposed by the ROM 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

---

[44] When the intervention has an overall objective of a regional or sub-regional scope and its outputs are implemented in one country. These interventions cover, amongst other, support to regional institutions and organisations such as the African Union, Andean Community, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur – Mercosur), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

[45] For the number of working days for the ROM review of a budget support, please refer to the respective Terms of Reference.

scheduled within each field visit. The mission leader is a senior expert. **ROM reviews of blending interventions** are performed by either **key or non-key senior experts.**

Senior experts in the **core team** are responsible for **internal quality control.**

- Allocation of working days

In terms of **working days**, the standard **allocations** for ROM reviews of interventions other than blending and budget support are given in the table below.

Table 4. Allocation of days for ROM reviews for single and multi-country interventions

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 EU Delegation or HQ)	9 [***]	20 [****]
Drafting of report and QC phase [*****]	2	4
Total days	**12.5**	**26.5**

[*]   *For multi-country interventions, working days are specified as maximum allocations per ROM review with up to three experts assigned and/or up to 4 countries visited.*

[**]   *For remote missions, the distribution between desk and field days is flexible - the overall allocation can be used for documentary reviews and remote interviews by the ROM expert, support tasks by an in-country expert, as well as coordination activities between the two.*

[***]   *For missions assigning only in-country experts the field days allocation is fixed to 7 days.*

[****]   *For multi-country interventions, up to 4 country visits of 5 person-days each is the standard.*

[*****]   *These days do not include the QC done by the ROM contractor's QC expert but only the work carried out by the ROM experts.*

In terms of **working days**, the standard **allocations** for **ROM reviews** for blending interventions are given in the table below.

Table 5. Allocation of days for ROM reviews of blending interventions

Allocation of days per expert	For single country interventions	For multi-country (*) interventions
Preliminary assessment and desk phase (including meetings at the LFI HQ)	4	4
Field phase (**) (including travel time, briefing and debriefing with EU Delegation or HQ)	9 (***)	20 (****)
Drafting of report and QC phase (*****)	3	4
Total days	**16**	**28**

- ## ROM contractors' core team

For the preparation of the mission (agendas as well as documentation research), the ROM contractor's core team provides support to the ROM expert, the latter being fully involved in the process and carrying responsibility for the final mission agenda.

For centrally managed interventions, briefing and debriefings are attended by one of the core team experts, for whom the allocation of days is not included in the aforementioned standards. For interventions managed by EU Delegations, the mission leader (or expert, in the 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 remotely.

Deviations

Deviations from the standards can be requested by the ROM contractors. This can be the case for interventions in particularly distant or dispersed locations, or for multi-country interventions in which more than four international travels are required, or for attending briefing and debriefing meetings in each country. Deviations can also be considered to allow additional preparatory time for mission leaders, for complex or remote modality missions involving in-country experts in support of ROM experts, or to elaborate on learning aspects through the new templates. A certain degree of flexibility may be considered in the application of standards. Deviations are acceptable if duly requested and justified.

In duly justified cases, **non-core team experts** may perform **QC tasks**. Prior approval by the ROM coordination unit is required.

Table 6. Indicative allocation of days for QC

Indicative allocation of days for QC	For single interventions	For multi-country interventions
Quality Control	1.5	2

c.   OMs and/or M&E focal points provide additional information

Once the contractor has confirmed the list of reviews in ROM-OPSYS, the OMs are also requested to add complementary information in the system, 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, the OMs also explain why in the general comments section.
- **Preferred time for ROM review**: the OMs give the ROM contractors an indication of the most suitable time frames to be considered when organising the field mission.
- **General comments and security concerns** and the consequent recommendation on the modality to be followed for the field phase (i.e. in-person or remote). A ROM review may be postponed or cancelled if the conditions do not allow gathering sufficient information.

Other information that must be added:

- **Contact details** of the IP(s) to allow the ROM contractor to start organising the field mission.
- **Reason for fewer/more days** (deviation from standard allocation of working days, if applicable).

The OM and/or M&E focal point have **14 working days** to provide additional information.

Only for ROM Reviews of blending interventions, M&E focal points for blending interventions inform the LFIs of the launch of the ROM review exercise. They provide a concise presentation of the blending ROM review process, including the methodology and tools used, and the list of missions foreseen involving the same LFI.

In this initial communication, the M&E focal points for blending specify that the ROM experts will have to meet with the different units of the LFIs involved in the blending intervention and, accordingly, request the contact details of the LFI HQ manager of each intervention and the contact details of the LFI's local representatives, key partners and stakeholders. The LFIs are also alerted on the need to prepare all relevant documentation pertaining to the blending intervention, including logical framework (if any), governance framework, implementation reports, studies, risk assessments, and any other documents that may be relevant for the planned ROM reviews.

The LFIs may indicate that some of the interventions under their responsibility are not yet mature enough for a ROM review. In this case, the M&E focal points for blending, OMs and ROM coordination units may decide to replace the intervention with another one that may benefit from a ROM review. Nevertheless, a ROM review can be beneficial even if the blending intervention is at its very beginning, therefore, whether to replace an intervention with another should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

At this stage, LFIs may request additional information on the confidentiality clauses under which the ROM experts operate and may request that additional confidentiality statements are signed. EU M&E focal points for blending interventions assist during this process.

At the end of this stage which should take **up to 14 working days**, the list of possible blending ROM reviews is confirmed by the OM in ROM-OPSYS.

d.   Experts are selected for specific reviews, and mission dates proposed

ROM contractors are requested to plan the specific missions, assigning pre-approved experts and proposing mission dates. They encode this information in ROM-OPSYS and indicate whether the mission will rely on additional in-country support. The period allocated to complete this step is up to **14 working days**. The ROM contractor identifies the Quality Control (QC) expert in charge of supporting the mission as soon as possible, but no later than start of the desk phase.

e.   ROM review of blending interventions: Meetings at the LFI HQ and preliminary assessment

Financial institutions (FIs) can be organised very differently; some institutions centralise the management of the intervention, others delegate to regional or local branches. It is important to know about this before organising the preliminary assessment.

When blending interventions are subject to centralised decision-making processes, the LFI intervention managers, as well as the internal stakeholders of the interventions, work in the LFIs' HQ. Therefore, meeting with the LFI HQ is necessary to have a clear understanding and assess the status of implementation of the intervention.

During the meetings, the LFIs are expected to share detailed information about the intervention, including information on the conditions and the structure of the arrangements among the LFI, the co-financiers and the implementing partner(s). Additionally, the meetings provide an opportunity to learn more about the LFI monitoring and reporting practices, as well as its contractual obligations and provisions on the matter.

The following documents are key for the successful completion of the blending ROM review and should be made available to the ROM experts by the ROM contractors as early as possible, preferably before the preliminary assessment:

The Application Form

The LFI fills in an Application Form to formalise the proposal for the blending intervention that requests the EU contribution[46]. The Application Form contains a detailed justification of the EU support to the blending intervention, along with a justification for the amount being sought. It provides the majority of information that ROM experts need to check or analyse for the preliminary assessment. It helps to:

▪ Get a clear overview of the project in its different components (context, background, location, main activities, IFIs and other stakeholders involved, indicative budget etc.).

---

[46] A new template for the Application Form was published in 2023.

- Prepare the different meetings with the LFI.
- Preliminarily answer to some of the Monitoring Questions.
- Assess the preliminary results chain/list of results indicators.

The contracts

The main contract to be consulted is the **contract signed between the EU and the LFI** (the delegation/contribution agreement). It contains in its Annexes, a Description of the Action, (DoA) summarising the information contained in the Application Form, including the justification, additionality, leverage and multiplier effect of the EU contribution, the translation of the blending intervention ambitions into a results chain/logical framework or a list of results indicators, as well as additional information on the LFI and other stakeholders' responsibilities, and the monitoring and reporting obligations.

Other contracts that could be interesting to consult are: (i) the contract/agreement between the LFI and the country or the entity involved, providing additional information on the implementation set up, and (ii) the contract/agreement between the EU and the country, providing information on political dialogue and political leverage aspects.

The sub-contracts

These are the contracts between the LFI and the entities involved, whether they are partner financial intermediaries or the final clients. These contracts are useful for assessing market conditions and financial additionality.

After meeting the LFI HQ, 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 M&E focal points for blending, **within 7 days** from the completion of the meetings at the LFI HQ. The Preliminary Assessment contains additional information and justification for the proposed work for the ROM review. The Commission services concerned must send their comments on the Preliminary Assessment to the ROM contractor **within 14 working days**.

The importance of preliminary assessment phase

The preliminary assessment phase is specific to the blending ROM review methodology. In the case of blending interventions, this phase is deemed necessary because of the complexity of blending interventions.

The preliminary assessment consists of document analysis and a meeting between the ROM expert/s and the LFI. During this meeting, the LFI is expected to share detailed information about the intervention. The preliminary assessment also provides additional information and justification for the proposed work for the ROM review.

The LFI often manages the blending intervention centrally from its HQ, with one or several project managers (banking, legal, sector, and country, region, etc.). Because of the number of relevant stakeholders on LFI side, a preliminary meeting is essential to understand the management of the intervention. The preliminary meeting must not be limited to meetings with the team officially in charge of institutional links with EU (donor relationships teams). Based on the experience accrued by past ROM reviews of blending interventions, the preliminary meeting proved to be very useful as a coordination tool between the LFI, the EU and the ROM blending experts. They are essential to understand and clarify the status of implementation of the intervention under a ROM review. They are also necessary to properly assess the most suitable format of the ROM review in terms of number of days and number/skills of ROM experts.

In case the ROM work plan foresees more than one blending intervention managed by the same LFI, the ROM contractor can propose to tackle in one meeting all the preliminary meetings foreseen for each blending intervention. This approach, to be agreed with the EU and the LFI in advance, could allow the ROM contractors to preliminary assess well in advance, the most suitable configuration and duration for several ROM missions to the same LFI.

As soon as a Preliminary Assessment is approved, the ROM contractor has up to **14 working days** to propose the mission schedule and team's composition (ROM experts) in ROM-OPSYS.

f.   OMs check that experts have no conflict of interest

ROM contractors propose the most suitable expert(s) for each ROM review, among those who are available. ROM contractors are the first responsible for verifying any potential conflicts of interest.

It is not the duty of the OMs and/or M&E focal points to assess the quality of CVs to approve or reject the proposed ROM expert(s). They only provide an opinion on any potential conflict of interest of the proposed expert(s). If necessary, they can alert the ROM coordination unit on any other issue they deem relevant (e.g. for interventions that require a rare expertise), concerning the proposed expert(s).

The independence and quality of judgement of ROM experts is crucial for the credibility of the system. Therefore, ROM experts cannot review any intervention in which they have been previously involved to any significant degree, as this could raise concerns of bias. If there is any doubt, the ROM

coordination unit can share the experts' CVs with the Unit or Delegation concerned, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation provisions.

In case of conflict of interest, ROM contractors must replace the expert(s) concerned. If there is no indication of conflict of interest reported **within 14 working days**, the expert(s) is (are) confirmed and the ROM coordinator can approve the mission.

g.   The ROM coordination units approve the ROM reviews

Once all previous steps are completed, the relevant ROM coordination unit approves the ROM reviews **within 14 working days**. While deciding whether to approve a mission, the ROM coordination unit will consider all elements, in particular the association between the ROM expert(s) and the sector of the intervention, the involvement of in-country support experts, any issues raised by the contractor or OM (including security matters), and any deviation from the ROM standards. Missions may be rejected with a justification.

4.4. Preparing the ROM review missions

During this phase, contractors make the necessary preparations for the missions. They provide the ROM experts with the tools and methodology for the ROM review, as well as the contacts of the OMs and IPs. The OMs provide all relevant documents and inform the key stakeholders of the beginning of the ROM review mission.

a.   Preparation for the desk phase

The OMs share all relevant documents related to the interventions under review and which must be available for the ROM contractor **no later than three weeks before the start of the ROM review mission.**

The Monitoring Questions template (Annex 4) includes a table on sources of information. The ROM experts will later use this list and tick the documents that were available. Note that the documents listed on the MQ template are not necessarily distinct documents, they are sometimes included or attached to other documents (e.g. Technical and Administrative Provisions (TAPs) are generally attached to a Financing Agreement). If some key documents are missing, the experts can request them from the OMs and/or the IPs during the desk phase. Furthermore, ROM experts will generally access additional documents throughout the course of the field phase.

The ROM contractors will save all documents collected throughout the mission into a database specific to each of the contractors.

This archive serves the purpose of the ROM contractor's internal QC as well as external quality assurance by the QA contractor (who must be able to access all documents) and, if necessary, for easy reference in discussions on the ROM review reports. The archive remains the property of the Commission. The ROM contractors and 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, the QA contractor and Commission staff, without prior approval of the Commission. At the end of their contract, the ROM contractors submit the archive to the ROM coordination unit.

b.   Preparation for the field phase

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

Table 7. Preparation for the field phase

Actor	Breakdown of tasks	When
OMs	- Share project documentation in a timely manner. - 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 to ROM contractors contact details of the IP(s) and other key stakeholders. - Ensure that all key documentation is made available to ROM experts.	At the latest, 3 weeks before the field phase starts. Ideally as soon as possible.
ROM contractors	- Provide appropriate training, guidance, and tools to ROM experts, including guidance on security issues and virtual monitoring modalities. - For multi-country interventions, update the sample of countries to be visited, if needed, based on the preliminary analysis of the available documents. - Arrange first contacts with ROM experts and Commission services to schedule meetings prior to the start of the field phase.	Once the ROM review has been approved by the ROM coordinator.
ROM experts	- Based on their documentary review of the intervention, identify specific areas for collecting additional information during the following phase. - Prepare a draft agenda of the mission.	During desk phase.

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

4.5. Implementing the ROM reviews

ROM reviews are implemented by the assigned ROM experts, following a well-established methodology inspired by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. ROM experts screen the progress and performance of the selected interventions applying different assessment lenses and the **ROM monitoring criteria** with a specific questioning that is articulated through a set of fixed **Monitoring Questions** (Annex 1).

For the ROM reviews of blending interventions, the monitoring criteria and MQs are the same as for standard ROM reviews, but the guidelines for answering the MQs are adapted to the specific features of blending interventions (Annex 3).

The ROM monitoring criteria

Since the 2020 revision of the methodology, there are eight ROM monitoring criteria: four are OECD DAC criteria (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability), one criterion on coordination, complementarity and EU added value inspired from the new OECD DAC criterion of Coherence, and three criteria are specific to the priorities of the EU external action, i.e., the quality of the monitoring frameworks/systems and learning, the inclusion of cross cutting aspects such as gender equality, climate change, environmental priorities, human rights and fragility issues, and the communication and visibility aspects. The criteria with the corresponding area of questioning are listed below:

- **Relevance:** Is the intervention adapted to needs, rights, priorities, and capacities?
- **Coordination, complementarity and EU added value**: Is the EU adding value to the intervention and fitting coherently into the context?
- **Intervention logic, monitoring and learning**: Is the intervention designed so as to allow monitoring, learning, and reporting of results?
- **Efficiency**: Are results being delivered in an economic and timely way?
- **Effectiveness:** Is the intervention achieving the intended results?
- **Sustainability**: Will the benefits of the intervention last after EU support ends?
- **Cross-cutting issues**: Are gender equality, human rights, fragility, climate change and environmental issues adequately addressed?
- **Communication and visibility:** Is the intervention ensuring the required visibility of the EU?

Each monitoring criterion uses several Monitoring Questions to assess a specific aspect, and all aspects are covered through 30 MQs.

ROM review missions are implemented through three main phases:

- The **desk phase**, involving document and logframe analysis and preparation of the interviews. For ROM reviews of blending interventions this includes the meeting with the LFI and the elaboration of the Preliminary Assessment, as well as the preparation of the interviews.

- 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, performed with the guidance provided by a set of MQs, converges into a ROM report by the ROM expert, which is the key deliverable of each ROM review. This phase is completed by an internal QC of the ROM report and submission to the Commission services for comments on the draft and final versions via ROM-OPSYS (see following sections).

EXECUTION OF ROM REVIEWS

Field phase

Desk phase — Reporting phase

Internal QC

Submission & comments by the Commission services

Follow-up

Each ROM review takes approximately 3 months, including internal QC and comments by the Commission services.

When ROM reviews are carried out in **remote modality**, the distinction between the phases is less rigid, to ensure the most efficient use of the available time. The timeline for the interview phase should be fixed from the outset and clearly communicated to all parties, to ensure the closure of the ROM review in due time. That field visits do not take place on site should not result in an excessive dilution of the meeting agenda.

Throughout all three phases, ROM contractors provide technical and methodological support to ROM experts.

a.   The desk phase

Duly prepared by the ROM contractors, this phase allows the ROM experts to:

- **Review all documents** related to the intervention context, design, and implementation. **For ROM review of blending interventions**, assess of the blending intervention as a whole.
- **Identify key issues** that need to be addressed and further researched during the field phase, in order to answer the Monitoring Questions. **For ROM review of blending interventions,** this is done taking stock of the meetings with the LFI HQ and the additional information obtained.
- **Identify key stakeholders** who should be consulted during the field phase. **For ROM review of blending interventions,** this is based on the preliminary assessment findings.
- **Prepare the briefing(s)** by developing a preliminary list of specific questions to ask the OM and other relevant stakeholders, who will be attending the meetings.

> The questions in the preliminary checklists are not to be confused with the MQs. They are non-formal questions tailored to each type of interviewee. They feed into only parts of each relevant MQ.

- **Prepare the field interviews** by drafting preliminary checklists of questions for the different categories of stakeholders, in view of building up the answers to the Monitoring Questions. The monitoring interview matrix presented below is one of the tools that could be used to prepare the field interviews (optional).
- **Draft the mission agenda** to constantly update and modify during the field phase.

Table 8. Monitoring interview matrix

	Checklist 1, Interviewee type 1 (ex. IPs)	Checklist 2 Interviewee type 2 (ex. Ministries)	Checklist 3 Interviewee type 3 (ex. Beneficiaries)	Checklist N Interviewee type N
MQ 1	▪ Question n. ▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n
MQ 2	▪ Question n ▪ Question n		▪ Question n ▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n
MQ …	▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n ▪ Question n		▪ Question n ▪ Question n
MQ …		▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n ▪ Question n	
MQ 30	▪ Question n ▪ Question n	▪ Question n	▪ Question n	▪ Question n ▪ Question n

When ROM reviews are conducted in **remote modality**, preliminary (virtual) meetings with the OM and the IP (**for blending interventions,** LFI representatives in the country, partner FI, implementing partners, other donors) can take place already in this phase to confirm the interview agenda, source additional background material, request additional implementation documents from the IP as early as possible, and discuss the modalities for deploying in-country expertise (when applicable).

For standard missions, ROM experts review during the desk phase all relevant documents, such as action documents, intervention logic reflected in the most recent logframe(s), implementation plans, resources allocated to the intervention and budget (annex to the contractual agreement), progress reports by IPs and internal progress reports by the OM, visibility and communication plan(s), any previous ROM report as well as, evaluation reports (e.g mid-term evaluation, evaluation of previous phases). In the case of interventions involving a call for proposals, the ROM experts analyse the guidelines for the call for proposals, as well as the concept note, the evaluation report and assessment conclusions from the evaluation of proposals. When reviewing the documentation, the ROM experts pay attention to the fact that interventions at action level may consist of several contracts.

Two aspects are analysed in detail, namely: (i) the intervention logic and the logical framework, and (ii) the progress reports. Both feed into the answers to the relevant Monitoring Questions and the corresponding sections of the ROM report.

- **For ROM reviews of blending interventions,** the core activity to be carried out during the desk phase is a **documentary analysis,** initiated already with the preliminary assessment. ROM experts collect all relevant documents and insights, not only on the specific activities financed by the EU, but on the entire investment project to which the EU contribution is expected to bring leverage and additional economic and social value. The ROM experts analyse the following documents (non-exhaustive list):
  - Blending proposal as approved by the regional blending boar.
  - The relevant agreements signed between the EU and the LFI, including its
    - Description of the Action with the list of indicators (for agreements signed pre-EFSD+), or results frameworks/ logframe(s) (for EFSD+ funded agreements);
    - The implementation plans;
    - The allocated resources and budget;
    - Other relevant agreements;
    - All progress reports submitted by the LFI andother implementing partners;
    - Documents provided by the EU, OMs;
    - Any previous ROM review and/or mid-term evaluation.
  - If relevant, the related EU programming and action documents to which the blending intervention refers (if any), gathering insights on the intervention development objectives.
  - Strategic documents produced by the LFI and other relevant donors in the same country/sector.

The Intervention Logic and logframe analysis

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 an early stage of implementation, its main purpose being to improve the logical framework and future monitoring systems. To check the quality of a logical framework and recommend improvements, the ROM expert should refer to the specific guidance, provided in chapter 6 of this Handbook, and the related methodological annex. The findings of intervention logic and logframe analysis will feed into the answers to the relevant Monitoring Questions dealing with the intervention logic, monitoring, and learning.

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

When the implementation is delegated to agencies that have their own intervention cycle management methodologies (e.g. UN agencies), logframes can exist in different formats and can use different terminology. In this case, for elaborating findings and drawing conclusions, the ROM experts ensure that all the key elements of the EC logframe template are well identified and taken into account.

When a logframe does not exist or is of poor quality, the ROM experts prepare concrete suggestions for its elaboration/improvement to be discussed with the OM during the field phase. If appropriate, the ROM expert recommends that the OM requests the dedicated ROM service "Support to Design and Monitoring Systems" described in detail in chapter 6.

The intervention logic and logframe analysis for blending interventions

The analysis of the intervention logic of a blending intervention is based on the DoA attached to the Contribution Agreement (Annex I), and the information provided by the LFI regularly via the progress reports. In case relevant, it could be of interest to also look at the original application form submitted by the LFI and approved by the relevant regional blending Board – for instance to see if there is any meaningful change that was brought to the intervention between Board approval and signature of the Agreement.

ROM experts identify the causal links assumed by the theory of change of the blending intervention and assess their internal logic and their consistency with the social, economic, environmental ambitions of the blending intervention.

The analysis of the logframe in the context of blending interventions is slightly different from standard interventions and requires some precautions, to adequately answer MQs 3.2 and 3.3 which are linked to the vertical and horizontal logic of the intervention.

Blending interventions are not always endowed with a fully-fledged logframe or an explicit results framework. Depending on the submission date of the blending application and the signature of the Contribution Agreement, ROM experts can face a variety of situations when carrying out the analysis of the logframe for Blending ROM reviews.

Up to the establishment of EFSD+, the Application Form template for a blending proposal (dates 2016) did not require to fill in a results framework/logframe, but to provide a list of relevant indicators, selected from a predefined list, and propose additional indicators customised to their intervention. However, the choice of indicators selected did not explicitly refer to the results of the intervention logic. Consequently, blending applications approved by the regional blending Boards and eventually contracted by the EU did not systematically include a results framework in its DoA (Annex I), but most likely the same list of indicators as per application.

Following the establishment of EFSD+, and the need to comply with the NDICI-GE Regulation requirements in terms of reporting on actual results of EFSD+ funded interventions, the EU and Development Finance Institution (DFIs) engaged in a dedicated dialogue which brought to the design of the EFSD+ Results Measurement Framework (ReMF) and its use for the design of the results framework of blending interventions and budgetary guarantees approved in the framework of NDICI-GE [47]. Accordingly, the Application Form template for a blending proposal was revised in 2023 to allow the completion of fully fledged results frameworks in line with the EFSD+ ReMF. Consequently, blending applications approved by the regional blending Boards and eventually contracted by the EU systematically includes a results framework in its DoA (Annex I).

Additionally, the results framework of all blending interventions (pre or under EFSD+) have been encoded in OPSYS.

---

[47] https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=102630481

In the case of Contribution Agreements missing a logframe in Annex I, such encoding has been done in collaboration with OMs "reconstructing" a results chain taking as starting point the indicators in the Agreement.

In the case of Contribution Agreements that include a logframe in Annex I, the same should have been encoded in OPSYS by the LFI.

The findings of the intervention logic and logframe analysis feed the answers to the relevant Monitoring Questions dealing with the intervention logic (MQs 3.1 and 3.2). If appropriate, and in cases where the results framework is very weak or outdated, the ROM expert could recommend the OM to request the dedicated ROM service "Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems" as described in detail in chapter 6.

The analysis of the implementation progress reports

IPs issue periodical progress reports, on a quarterly, six-monthly, or annual basis, depending on the provisions in their contract. Implementation progress reports include the activity and resource schedule of the successive reporting period and the provisional activity and resource schedule of the next period. The quality of implementation reports differs. Whenever relevant, ROM experts may request clarifications or complementary information from the IPs. Another important source of information is internal documents, including reports drafted by OMs.

The ROM experts review the actual progress of activities, in terms of content and timing, as well as the use of resources (amounts and timing) against what is planned and examine whether this also corresponds to what may reasonably be required. Progress reports, including structured and cumulative data according to the logframe, are most useful. Where data are not cumulative, the ROM experts will need to consolidate data produced during each period, analysing the whole set of progress reports at their disposal, 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 reports.

b.   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. The table below summarise the standards for the briefing and debriefing sessions:

Table 9. Briefing and debriefing standards

Type of intervention	Location	Timing of the briefing	Timing of the debriefing	Attendees
For single country interventions managed by Delegations	Delegation or online for remote missions.	On the first day of the ROM review field phase or as early as possible in remote modality.	On the last day of the ROM review field phase, or as soon as the interviews are completed in remote modality.	ROM expert and OM (and/or M&E focal point or any other Delegation staff)[48]. In remote modality, ROM contractors (core team or QC) can attend.
For multi-country interventions managed by Delegations	Delegation or online for remote missions.	On the first day of the ROM review field phase or as early as possible in remote modality.	On the last day of the ROM review field phase, or as soon as the interviews are completed in remote modality.	ROM expert and OM. In remote modality, ROM contractors (core team or QC) can attend.
	In each country or online for remote missions.	On the first day of the country component visit or as early as possible in remote modality.	On the last day of the country component visit, or as soon as the country interviews are completed in remote modality.	ROM expert and main stakeholders in each country-component, the Delegation being systematically invited. In remote modality, the OM and the ROM contractors (core team or QC) can attend.
For centrally managed interventions	HQ or online for remote missions.	Some days prior to the ROM expert(s)' field mission or as early as possible in remote modality.	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 remote modality, the ROM expert attends, and the ROM contractors (core team or QC) can attend.
	In the country or online for remote missions.	On the first day of the country component visit or as early as possible in remote modality.	On the last day of the country component visit or as soon as the country interviews are completed in remote modality.	ROM expert and main stakeholders in each country-component, the Delegation being systematically invited. In remote modality, the OM and the ROM contractors (core team or QC) can attend.

Briefing meeting

It is crucial to hold briefing sessions at the very latest at the beginning of the field phase to clarify the setting of the ROM review. Briefing meetings are used to provide guidance to ROM experts about the context of the intervention, the key stakeholders, the progress or lack thereof, any changes introduced, as well as specific aspects/areas of interest for the ROM review. The OM's knowledge of the intervention(s) will be instrumental to the refinement of the needs of information that the ROM expert had identified during the desk phase. The table below details the role of each actor in the briefing:

---

[48] If considered relevant by the EUD, key stakeholders could also be invited to this meeting in specific situations.

Table 10. Checklist for briefing

Actor	Checklist for briefing
OMs	▪ Restate the reasons and purpose of the ROM review. ▪ Introduce further elements of context which are important to the ROM experts (changes in the implementing team, reorganisation in the beneficiary's organisation, new developments in the sector, quality of policy dialogue and donor coordination, etc.). ▪ Inform on the follow-up of recommendations emanating from previous ROM reviews and/or evaluation. ▪ Inform on the status of potential upcoming amendments to relevant contracts. ▪ Review with the ROM experts the list of key documents to be consulted and ensure their availability. ▪ Underline issues of special interest that are relevant to the ROM reviews and stress the specific points to be analysed by the ROM experts. ▪ Brief the ROM experts on previous phases of the intervention and/or any complementary support, as deemed important for the ROM reviews. ▪ Provide a progress summary of the interventions on the basis of benchmarks and indicators, their strong elements and weaknesses in terms of results. ▪ Recall the last major events regarding the interventions including mitigation measures already undertaken, specific follow-up and internal monitoring efforts implemented. ▪ Set a date for the debriefing and define its format.
ROM experts or TL /core team experts (for centrally managed interventions)	▪ Check with the OMs if they are in possession of the last update of the documentation provided during the desk phase already. ▪ Ask for any clarification needed from the OMs on the ROM reviews. ▪ Share initial views on the quality of the intervention logframe. ▪ Discuss with the OMs how the ROM review may add value in terms of support to the interventions management. ▪ Share with the OMs 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 while giving due consideration to security issues.
OMs & ROM experts	▪ *For interventions at an early stage of implementation*: identify the specific focus of the ROM reviews selected for the representative sample by Headquarters. ▪ *For interventions having problems*: establish the specific purpose of the ROM reviews e.g. whether they aim to identify or confirm any preliminary solutions to implementation issues. ▪ *For interventions not visited by the EUD or HQ services in the year:* identify the reasons and concerns 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 new phase is scheduled, or specific elements of innovation or good practices are to be identified and transferred to other interventions under preparation in the country. ▪ Review together who is to be involved in the field phase, and if meetings other than those already scheduled during the desk phase are needed. ▪ Agree/confirm if transport offered by implementing partners (e.g. to project offices, project sites or groups of beneficiaries is acceptable.

The Commission services can invite IPs to a briefing meeting 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 must be taken into account when organising the mission leader's agenda.

After the briefing, ROM experts:

- Study the briefing notes, especially if the briefing is attended at HQ by the TL or other core team member in the case of centrally managed interventions.
- Prior to starting the field phase, finalise their itinerary for visits and interviews, taking into account logistical constraints and the provisional budget provided by the ROM contractor (i.e. for transport/fuel, accommodation, meeting rooms, etc.). Confirm interviews with stakeholders, if not already done with all of them.
- Based on the elements obtained through the briefing/debriefing notes, revise and finalise the preliminary checklists of questions that they will address to stakeholders.

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.

For **remote missions**, interviews can be confirmed with the support of in-country expert(s) who will facilitate first contacts with key informants, agenda management, virtual interviews, support for interpretation/translation, etc. If it is safe for the in-country expert to conduct surveys, interviews or focus groups, the ROM expert will prepare the checklists of questions to be administered and will brief the in-country expert on the objectives and desired results of the support activity. The ROM contractor will have briefed and adequately trained the in-country expert prior to the start of the interview phase.

Field visits and interviews

ROM experts tailor the field visits to the nature of the intervention. During field visits, the ROM experts meet with key stakeholders and check the quality of the outputs and outcomes with an emphasis on:

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

In a wider sense, **field visits serve to collect evidence.** This can be challenging when the field phase is conducted in remote modality (see next section).

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 intervention. In some cases, the presence of an IP may be advisable, to

overcome the beneficiary's reticence or shyness of speaking in presence of the ROM expert. In some cases, interviewing women separately from men may encourage them to speak more freely, and adapting the timing to their availability can deliver more fruitful interviews.

ROM experts can visit civil society groups and local authorities, even if they are not directly involved in the intervention. The information the civil society and local authorities may share can be a valuable additional source of insight into what is happening within the broader environment of the interventions. 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, which collect information relevant to the ROM review. For example, departments of finance and planning or, and national statistics offices may have information, which can complement data collected through internal monitoring systems.

For interventions implemented jointly with one or more EU Member States, ROM experts will Include in the list of interviewees the European implementing partners, to assess the level of coordination benefiting the intervention and reflect specifically on the efficiency, effectiveness and value added of working in a Team Europe approach.

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

Interviews with the National Authority (where applicable), IPs, other key stakeholders, including donors and EU Member States, working in the same sector, and direct beneficiaries are carried out separately. Conducting interviews on an individual basis is preferable, to avoid potential "bias".

It is advisable to inspect a sample of outputs spread across different locations.

The primary purpose of all interviews is to obtain reactions and suggestions from the key stakeholders 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 compile a list of the names and positions of all key stakeholders and ensure with the OM that the list is complete.

Where necessary and possible, Commission services continue to provide advice on the availability of transport means, security matter, and internal travel authorisations. Although Commission services are not responsible for the security of ROM experts, they should ensure that the experts receive assistance and advice in this regard throughout the ROM review mission, complementing, where applicable, the support and advice provided by the contractor.

Should the OM conduct a field mission at the same time as the ROM expert, this will be organised so that the ROM expert's independence is not compromised.

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 intervention offices, to intervention activity sites or to groups of beneficiaries, if agreed in advance with the OM.

ROM experts should make sure that they briefly remind and, where needed, clarify the objectives of the ROM review to prevent stakeholders from having false perceptions. ROM reviews are often confused with audits or evaluations. They should also recall that findings, conclusions, and recommendations are the sole responsibility of ROM contractors, do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU, and that the subsequent implication for the stakeholders will remain the OM's responsibility. ROM experts must also be very clear regarding the dissemination of reports, which remains the responsibility of the Commission services.

The ROM experts must be able to contact the ROM contractor at any stage during the mission for advice or technical backstopping.

Remote interviews

Remote interviews with stakeholders can be carried out via telephone or through video conferencing tools. In some cases, they can be facilitated by an in-country expert (if applicable) or an interpreter who can facilitate the communication. Unnecessary overlap of activities of the ROM expert, in-country expert or interpreter is to be avoided.

When interviews take place remotely, a challenging aspect is the lack of direct observation to verify the physical evidence of the outputs, or their quality, or any other soft aspects related to the stakeholders' relationships and coordination that can only be understood through non-verbal communication. To compensate for this, ROM experts must access additional documents and sources, and triangulate the information received through additional or repeated interviews, supplemented by audio-visual data, when possible, with geotagging.

The organisation of the remote meeting agendas relies heavily on support by IPs'. Early contact with them is critical to this end. However, this dependence can introduce a bias in the assessment of the situation by the ROM expert and a potential accountability deficit. Intense triangulation with data from different sources (interviews, audio-visual, Global Positioning System (GPS), survey data, and secondary data obtained through data sharing agreements or public sources), and/or the support of in-country experts for gathering primary data (interviews, photos, video calls showing physical infrastructures, equipment, communication items) can be used to mitigate the risk of bias.

The difference in time zones can compromise the effectiveness of the remote interviewing when this takes place outside working hours. To address this challenge, in-country experts can carry out the interviews directly, if deemed safe, or remotely during local working hours. Remote surveys can also be conducted individually, distributed via e-mail, phone or any other communication tool without the need for enumerators in the field. Since they have low response rate, such surveys se large samples and must be adapted to the literacy levels as well as to the stakeholders' access to phones and internet.

The availability of adequate communication facilities to conduct remote interviewing/surveys is a challenge in the context of unreliable, poor, or absent connectivity. A good practice is to let the interviewees choose the platform/communication tool they use best. However, in some cases their equipment is not adequate, or they do not have the technical knowledge to participate in virtual meetings. When the meeting locations are accessible by in-country experts, an alternative solution is

to have them host the call or video conference on a performing device and connection at the meeting location. This lifts the main connectivity difficulties and offers a mixed presence/virtual interview modality. For focus group discussions, smart phones can be effective, using video calls to establish the human connection, with a loudspeaker placed at the centre of the group.

Virtual meetings call for additional emphasis on interview techniques aimed at building trust, avoiding bias and enhancing inclusivity. For instance, to facilitate human connection, ROM experts can share information about themselves and their background at the beginning of the interview, specify that no recording or name quoting will take place without consent, or let beneficiaries send audio recordings with their answers. A good practice to build trust and collect the necessary information, is to plan more than one remote interview with the same person, in particular in case of key stakeholders (e.g. IP).

Time management is another challenge linked to remote interviews, which take longer to arrange and require a good deal of flexibility. Preparing the script of the interviews in advance, sharing key discussion points before the interview, testing equipment ahead of time, preparing for a back-up plan if the foreseen platform does not work, can limit the time needed to set the interview going. In principle, an interview should not take more than an hour, and the daily agenda should be limited to maximum 4-5 interactions, allowing for at least a 30-minute break between interactions, to write down the key points and conclusions.

Debriefing meeting

Debriefing takes place following consultations with the stakeholders. Ideally, the key stakeholders are debriefed separately (first the IPs and/or beneficiaries and then the OM/EU Delegation), but in consideration of time constraints, the Commission services could convene a joint debriefing. In this case, the ROM experts inform the OM of any sensitive issues that need to be discussed in a confidential environment, so that a separate meeting can be organised.

If a joint debriefing is planned, it should not be used to develop a consensus assessment on the findings of the ROM review; it mainly serves to clarify issues and correct factual errors. In any case, the OM moderates the exchanges with the ROM experts and key stakeholders, respecting the independence of ROM experts. In the case of centrally managed interventions, a joint briefing and/or debriefing will only be possible via an online meeting.

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

Table 11. Checklist for debriefing

Actor	Checklist for debriefing	When
ROM experts with OMs	▪ May, where needed, meet/contact the Contracts and Finance section to assess the feasibility of the recommendations presented to the OM and later drafted in the ROM reports.	Prior to debriefing

Actor	Checklist for debriefing	When
ROM experts 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. ▪ Present a snapshot of strong and weak points of the intervention, and if possible, preliminary conclusions and recommendations.	During debriefing
OMs	▪ 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

c.   The reporting phase

Reporting begins already during the desk and field phases with the logframe analysis, the preliminary answers to relevant monitoring questions and the drafting of relevant sections of 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** thereafter.

During the reporting phase, ROM experts conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses prompted by the Monitoring Questions under the various monitoring criteria and draft the answers to the MQs.

They summarise the findings on each assessed monitoring criterion in the ROM report, in which they put forward the main conclusions and actionable recommendations to tackle the potential design or implementation issues of the intervention, observed by the ROM review. These are the basis for the elaboration of a follow-up plan for the review. At the same time, ROM experts identify key elements to learn and share beyond the implementation context through the learning fiches (see chapter 8 and Annex 5).

3 Key deliverables:

▪ ROM Report
▪ Monitoring Questions
▪ Learning fiches

following standard templates

All deliverables must follow standard templates presented in Annex 4 (ROM Report and MQs) and Annex 5 (optional – learning fiches). ROM contractors and experts download the ROM report and MQs templates from ROM-OPSYS, which automatically pre-fills them with key information. ROM-OPSYS templates have a character limit that reflects the indications provided in Annex 4. The reports should be in one of the following languages: French, English, Spanish or Portuguese.

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

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

In addition, for each mission, the ROM expert submits a quality checklist as an attachment to the report and QC experts draft an internal QC report using the templates provided in Annex 6 (see paragraph 5 of chapter 4.6 "Internal Quality Control").

Main tasks for completing the reporting and approval | **Status ROM-OPSYS**

Once the mission starts, ROM contractors update the status in ROM-OPSYS. — Desk Phase Started

ROM experts conduct a number of quantitative and qualitative analyses, answer the MQs, summarise findings in the ROM report, draw conclusions and put forward recommendations. If a new logframe is needed, they propose adjustments or recommend the request of the SDL service.

ROM experts and QC experts respectively quality control the draft deliverables. They interact as necessary to improve the report.

The ROM contractors and/or assigned ROM Expert (s) fill in and submit the Draft ROM Report and Draft Monitoring Questions (timeframe: no later than 14 calendar days after the end of the field phase). — Draft report

OMs download/view/comment on the Draft ROM Report submitted by the ROM Contractor and submit their comments through ROM-OPSYS (timeframe: at the latest 21 calendar days after ROM Contractor submitted the Draft ROM Reports). — Draft Report Commented

ROM contractors and selected ROM Expert(s) address the comments received from the OM and submit the Final Report (timeframe: 14 calendar days after receipt of OMs comments). — Final report

OMs provide and submit comments on the Final ROM Report (timeframe: at the latest 21 calendar days after ROM Contractor submitted the Final ROM Reports). — Completed
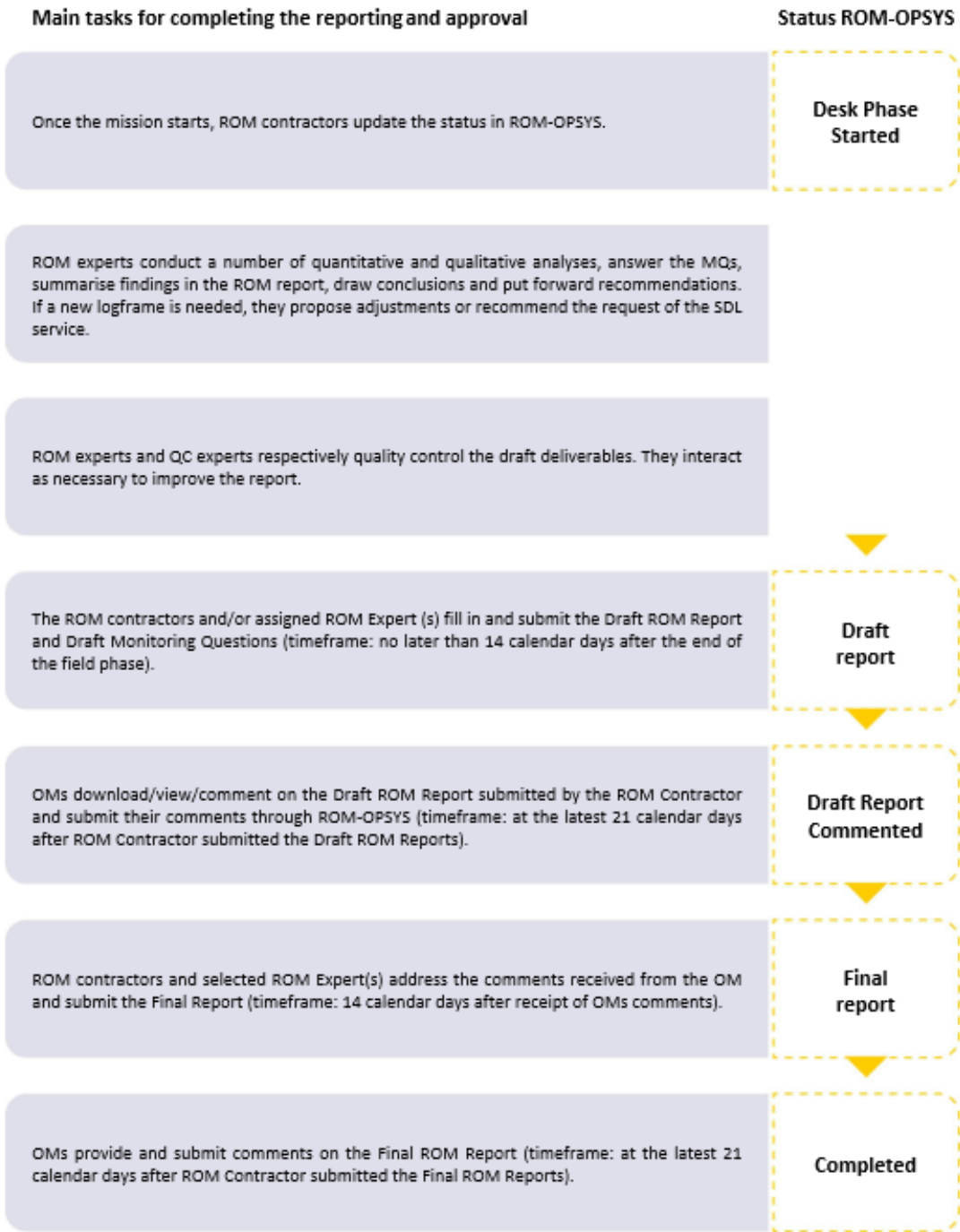
Figure 9. Reporting and approval tasks

The following sections provide a detailed description of the above-mentioned tasks and the steps necessary to complete the reporting.

Analysis of key documentation and information gathered through interviews

A mix of quantitative and qualitative analyses 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.

  A good indicator of how close one is to achieving what was initially planned is to measure the percentage of an output or milestone achieved versus those planned. Low figures immediately highlight areas of concern and trigger an analysis of the 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 to provide an insight as into why the intervention cost 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 to explain any delays.

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

- Analysing qualitative data:
  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 complements the analysis of quantitative 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.

  To ensure 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 intervention, observations of final beneficiaries) are cross-checked, 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

The monitoring questions (MQs) document is a key component of the ROM methodology. The MQs provide guidance for the analyses to be conducted by the ROM experts and support the synthesis to be included in the ROM report.

The MQs are presented in Annex 1, whilst a detailed guidance for each monitoring question is provided in Annexes 2 for standard ROM reviews and 3 for ROM reviews of blending interventions.

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 the MQs report is a working document supporting and structuring key findings and conclusions, ROM experts answer the monitoring questions before drafting the ROM report, bearing in mind that the MQs report is submitted together with the ROM report. Both deliverables are subject to internal quality control.

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

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

- Green – good or very good.
- Orange – with issues to be addressed.
- Red – off-track or with serious deficiencies.

There are deficiencies which are so serious that, if not addressed, they may lead to failure of the intervention. Major adjustments and revision of the intervention logic and/or implementation arrangements are necessary

There are issues to be addressed, otherwise the global performance of may be negatively affected. Necessary improvements do not however require a major revision of the logic and implementation arrangements

The situation is considered satisfactory, but there may be room for improvement. Recommendations are useful, but not vital to the intervention
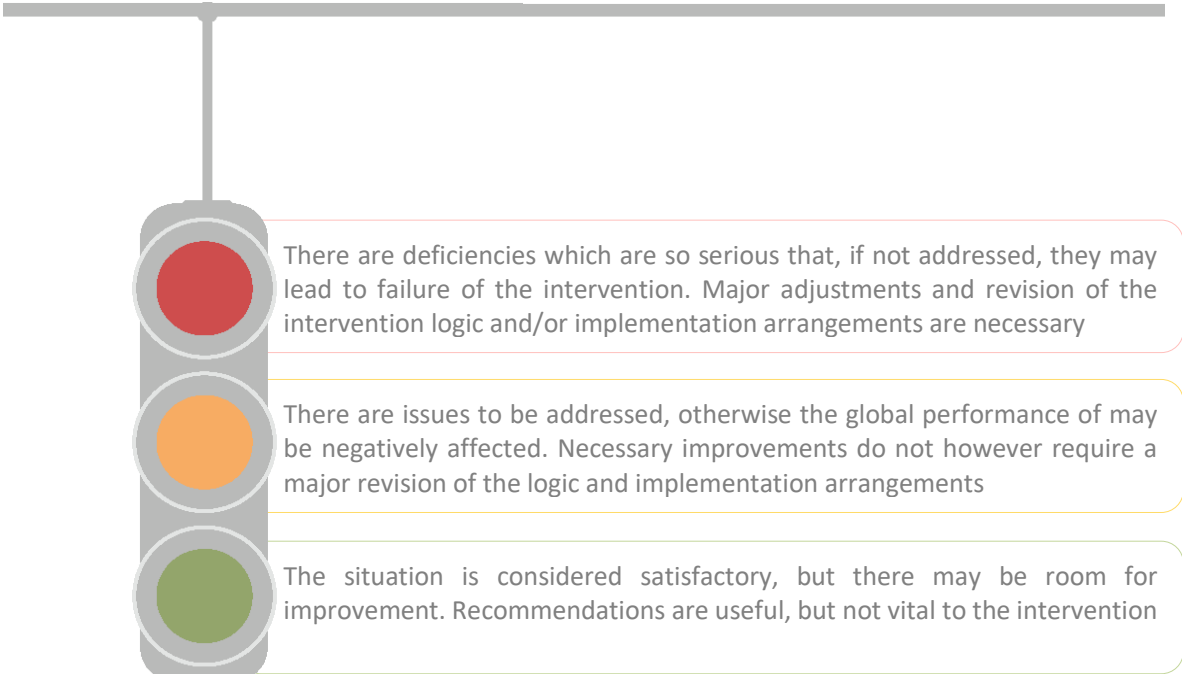
Figure 10. Grading reference for MQs

The grading must be coherent with the findings; the justification of the grading must emerge clearly from the analysis.

ROM experts comment specifically on cross cutting issues (mainstreaming themes) and on the possible identification of lessons learnt and good/promising practices. The MQ on lessons learnt and good/promising practices (MQ 3.5) is not graded; it must be answered with Yes/No. If the answer is yes (lessons learnt or good/promising practices exist and are worth sharing beyond the context of the intervention), a specific form is to be completed (see chapter 8 and Annex 5).

The ROM report

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

Throughout the ROM 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 MQs 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, not just the components visited by the ROM review. The synopsis does not include assessments and observations on issues related to the intervention implementation, it is purely descriptive.

  > ROM experts put forward findings that:
  > - Are evidence based
  > - Include the necessary technical content
  > - Are based on state of the art knowledge of a given sector or topic

- 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 be coherent with the answers to the MQs. The link between the findings and answers to be MQ must be easy to understand for the person reading the ROM report.

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

Pursuant to DG INTPA and DG NEAR **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 or fraud to the anti-fraud Focal Point in the Delegation concerned, or to the Unit in charge of audits at Headquarters (DG INTPA R3 and DG NEAR R3).

- Conclusions and recommendations:
  In this part of the report, ROM experts present the main conclusions and recommendations stemming from the findings of the review.

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

  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.

4.6. The internal quality control by ROM contractors

Deliverables from ROM experts are subject to internal quality control by the ROM contractors. It is essential to conduct internal QC of ROM reviews at various stages of the ROM review process, **starting as early as the desk phase**. Therefore, the internal QC by the ROM contractors begins by establishing a systemic approach for such a control with regard to the day-to-day implementation of the contract.

The internal QC covers:

- The availability of intervention documents and background documents as a basis for the review and any problems encountered by the expert in this respect.
- The preparation and documentation of briefings/debriefings and other aspects related to the mission organisation.
- The completeness of the ROM report and its quality, including in terms of language and clarity.
- The adequacy and reliability of the data used, including the data provided by in-country experts, in case of remote missions.
- The adequacy and reliability of the data assessment by ROM experts; 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 findings and the consistency of the narrative with the grades.

- The coherence between the conclusions and the recommendations and ensuring 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, providing the necessary templates and checklists. To ensure an appropriate level of information amongst ROM experts and QC 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 of ROM reports.

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, and for each review, ROM experts complete a **quality checklist** as provided in Annex 6.1, where they assess the conditions of the mission/country visit, in particular in terms of the 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 the Monitoring Questions and ROM report.

Upon receipt of the draft ROM report, the assigned QC expert assesses the quality of the ROM report and MQs, completes a **QC report** (proposed template presented in Annex 6.2) and shares it with the ROM expert concerned. The ROM expert modifies the MQs and ROM report accordingly and returns them to the QC expert. The ROM expert and the QC expert may have to exchange reports several times before they reach agreement on the final version of the reports to be submitted to the Commission.

In the **QC report**, all aspects of procedural quality issues are documented (e.g. meeting deadlines, revising draft and final ROM reports as required) as well as quality control efforts undertaken. The QC expert provides a score for the different 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. This enables tracking f the quality control efforts undertaken by the ROM contractor.

> Quality Control by ROM contractors takes place outside ROM-OPSYS. Records of all QC documentation must be made available upon request to the ROM QA contractor and to the Commission

The duration of an overall internal QC process for a ROM review 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 only uploaded in ROM-OPSYS once the internal QC process is completed.

ROM reports written by ROM experts who are part of the core team (and therefore are themselves QC experts) should preferably be quality controlled by the Team Leader or Deputy Team Leader. ROM contractors adopt all the necessary measures to verify the quality of the process at their level, as part of their backstopping function and during the quality control process.

The comments provided by OMs on draft reports are equally important to the overall quality improvement process. Therefore, ROM experts and ROM contractors take them into account in the framework of their own quality care and control.

The draft and final versions of the reports are available to the ROM QA contractor[49] via ROM-OPSYS. Other documentation, related to the internal QC process, must be archived by the ROM contractors and made available upon request.

4.7. Comments by Commission services

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

The OM provides feedback on the draft report taking also into consideration the comments made by partners and stakeholders. The feedback includes an overall assessment of the quality of the ROM report and comments on each of its components. For each recommendation, the OM indicates to what extent (Yes, Partially, No) s/he agrees with the recommendation and reports the opinion of the consulted stakeholders. It is crucial that the OM provides comments at this stage of the process when the ROM

> The ROM report relates to the situation found when the field visit was conducted. IPs should avoid correcting factual errors with data linked to activities that were conducted after the ROM review visit

expert is still fully involved in the ROM review and can act promptly and meaningfully. The OM sends his/her comments to the ROM contractor **within 21 calendar days** from the moment the draft report is available in ROM-OPSYS (see figure 9).

The ROM expert takes note of the comments and, following consultation with the QC expert, s/he decides whether to revise his/her report accordingly. When applicable, the ROM expert explains briefly why comments were not/could not be taken on board. Within **14 calendar days** from receipt of the OM's feedback, the contractor uploads the final version of the ROM report in ROM-OPSYS. The OM has **21 calendar days** to provide comments on the final report.

---

[49] Independent External quality control is under a separate contract, see chapter 5.

4.8. Dissemination of ROM reports

ROM contractors and experts are not entitled to share ROM reports (draft or final). If they receive such requests, they transfer them to the OM in charge, or to the relevant ROM coordination unit.

In principle, all ROM reports are shared with the IPs by the Commission services during the elaboration process. Sharing ROM reports with IPs is essential in transmitting the ROM experts' recommendations and improving the performance of the interventions. The MQs, on the other hand, are an internal document, and OMs are not expected to share them with the IPs.

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

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 Financing Agreement for the implementation of actions on its sovereign territory, asks for documents related to the implementation/monitoring/follow-up of this action, the request should be treated according to the principles governing the cooperation between the EU and the partner country.

5 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ROM REVIEWS

This chapter describes the role of **external, independent quality assurance** in the ROM system

In addition to the internal quality control performed by ROM contractors and supervision provided by the Commission services, the Commission engages Quality Assurance contractors, independent from the ROM contractors. Their role in the quality management of the ROM process is described in the following sections.

> **The importance of quality**
>
> Each ROM service has its own quality assurance cycle. The QA contractor contributes to the quality of the ROM system in its entirety, with specific focus on ROM reviews. The ROM coordination units, supported by their technical assistance services, provide QA for the Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems (SDL) and Support to Results Data Collection services.

5.1. Scope of the QA contract

The QA contractor assists the ROM coordination units in ensuring that services delivered within the ROM system meet the quality standards set out in this Handbook, and that the ROM methodology is sound and up-to-date. More specifically, the QA contractor:

▪ Contributes to the **quality management of the ROM process** by reviewing the quality systems put in place by ROM contractors and, where appropriate, providing recommendations for their improvement.
▪ Provides an external and independent **quality assurance of a sample of ROM reviews** and **consolidated analyses reports**.
▪ Contributes to **improving and updating the ROM methodology**: the ROM process and methodology are analysed regularly, and recommendations are issued on internal coherence, alignment with the prevailing needs and priorities of the Commission, with global challenges, and with methodological/technological innovations in the field of M&E.

INTPA.D4 is responsible for the direct supervision of the QA contract, in collaboration with NEAR.A4. This includes supervising the application of corrective measures that may be recommended by the QA contractor.

The QA contractor participates in regular online/in-person coordination meetings with the ROM coordination units and, at the request of the latter, in coordination meetings with the ROM contractors.

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 and ROM reviews for which they provide quality assurance services. No QA expert may review an intervention in which they, or the firm employing them under this contract, has been previously involved to any significant degree, which could lead to suspicion of bias.

5.2. Tasks and deliverables

External QA activities include:

- Analysis of the ROM contractors' internal QC system.
- Quality assurance of a sample of ROM reviews.
- Quality assurance of ROM consolidated analyses.
- Drafting of methodological reports.
- Knowledge sharing.

The work of the QA contractor is embedded in various ROM processes, particularly in the **quality cycle of ROM reviews**, which is represented in the following figure.
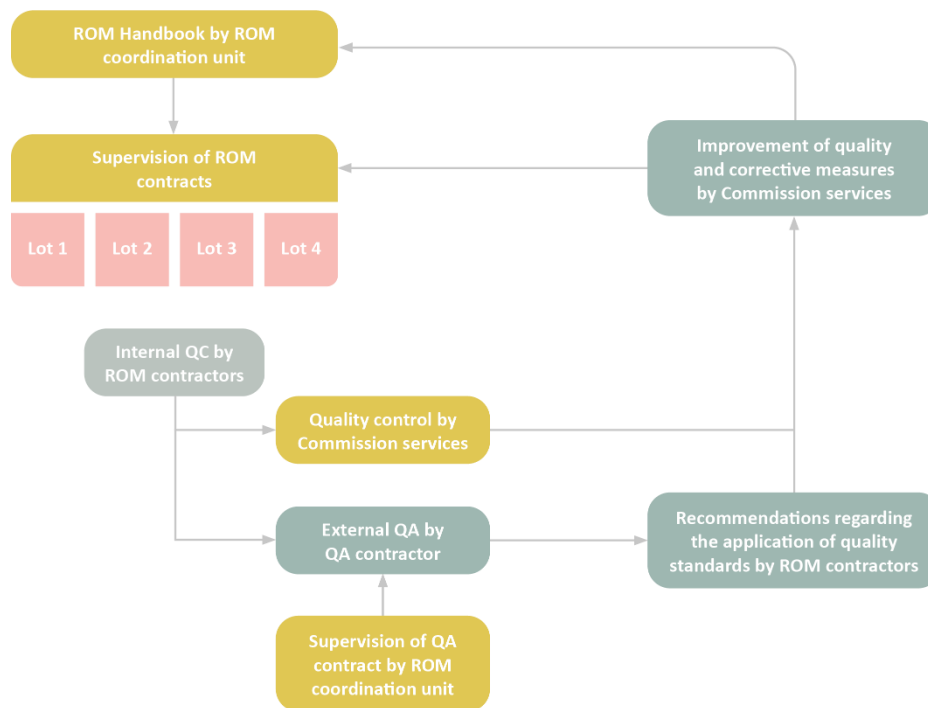
Figure 11. The ROM reviews' quality cycle

The quality cycle for ROM reviews includes:

- The quality standards described in this ROM Handbook.
- The internal quality control system put in place by each ROM contractor (see chapter 4).
- The comments on the ROM reports by the Commission services.
- The external Quality Assurance assessing the quality of ROM reviews services.
- The overall supervision by the ROM coordination units (at DG INTPA and DG NEAR).

The specific responsibilities of the QA contractor and the expected deliverables are further described below.

a.   Analysis of the contractors' internal QC system

Within this activity, the QA contractor verifies the extent to which the ROM contractors comply with the standards detailed in the ROM Handbook, how these standards are applied, as well as the quality of the overall support and backstopping provided by ROM contractors for ROM reviews. The QA contractor also identifies and reports on good practices and lessons learnt.

The analysis is conducted through a desk review of relevant documents (e.g. the internal quality manual/training material of ROM contractors, checklists and QC reports for individual ROM reviews, QC quarterly and annual reports). These documents are made available to the QA contractor upon request, as foreseen in the ROM contractors' contracts. In addition, the QA contractor conducts observation of ROM reviews (shadow missions) and interviews with concerned individuals (ROM contractors, ROM experts, ROM coordination units, TA experts as applicable).

b.   Quality assurance of a sample of ROM reviews

The QA contractor screens a sample of ROM reviews. The sampling procedure is agreed with the ROM coordination unit and accommodates also specific cases for which the ROM coordination units require an independent opinion.

The QA contractor receives all key information on the ROM reviews to be screened. Draft and final ROM deliverables can be downloaded from ROM-OPSYS while the QC documentation is provided by the ROM contractors.

The QA review is based on a desk review. Interviews with ROM stakeholders can be conducted on a needs basis and as stipulated in the tools for the quality screening of individual ROM reviews.

> In shadowing the ROM reviews, the QA expert maintains an observer's attitude and does not interfere with the work of the ROM expert.

To observe ROM reviews' implementation issues and quality factors first-hand, QA experts implement a limited number of **'shadow missions'**, where they act as silent observers of the work of the ROM contractor and experts, from the desk phase to the delivery of the final report and final feedback by the Commission services. The QA experts observe both standard and remote reviews within the sample designed for QA, justifying the reason for the proposed selection. The ROM contractors are informed of the ROM shadow missions early enough for the QA experts to be involved in all communications preparing the field mission. The ROM CU informs the OM and the the IP is informed by the OM in charge that a QA expert will accompany the ROM expert during the field mission and act as an observer of the exercise.

For each ROM review screened and each shadow mission, the QA contractor drafts a QA fiche based on a template approved by the ROM coordination units. This covers at least:

- A review of the quality of the ROM review concerned and the related process as implemented by the ROM expert.
- A review of the quality and consistency of the internal QC provided by the ROM contractor, taking into consideration the QC checklist and QC report.
- Conclusions on quality issues and possible recommendations for improvement.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations are summarised in six-monthly QA reports.

c.   Quality assurance of ROM consolidated analyses

ROM consolidated analyses are screened by the QA contractor for quality issues. Within two weeks of receiving the consolidated analyses, commented reports and a summary of key comments and main areas of improvement are delivered for each consolidated analysis. This includes analyses based on *ad hoc* terms of reference and reports/fiches jointly drafted by more than one ROM contractor.

d.   Methodological reports

Every year, a single methodological report is drafted, gathering all methodological observations by the QA contractor, which may bring changes or improvements to the ROM system. This report covers all regions, with the purpose of improving the results achieved by ROM. It may be used by the ROM coordination units, together with other elements, as a reference for steering the ROM system.

Observations and proposals in the annual methodological reports should concern not only the ROM system itself, but also its positioning in the wider M&E context. They should take into account (among others): advances in the M&E sector at global level and across major donor organisations, international organisations and IFIs, M&E practices at the Commission and within DG INTPA and DG NEAR, EU Delegations and interventions as well as the political and operational context. Special attention must be paid to new financing instruments and implementation modalities.

Every two years, the annual methodological reports are enriched by broader **internal reviews of the ROM system**. The methodology for these internal reviews includes primary data collection through field missions and other methods for remote and in-person data collection. The internal reviews are expected to cover questions such as: *Does ROM lead to improved monitoring systems? Does ROM lead to improved project design/implementation? Does ROM result in higher project performance? Does ROM effectively contribute to accountability and learning?* Internal reviews shall include in-depth case studies, representative of the different regions covered by DG INTPA and DG NEAR and of the different delivery methods.

Each year, a follow-up on the recommendations of the previous years is required.

e.   Knowledge sharing

This activity entails:

- Technical workshops with ROM contractors, ROM coordination units and other Commission's M&E specialists.
- Knowledge sharing and methodological events with a wider audience (M&E focal points, other Commission staff, IPs etc.).

Knowledge sharing activities are implemented according to a plan established in collaboration with the ROM coordination units. The knowledge generated may be shared, whenever relevant, through Capacity4dev in the form of online articles, videos, and infographics.

f.   Contractual reporting

In addition to the deliverables described above, progress reports are submitted by the QA contractor, together with their invoices, to provide an overview of the progress of the assignment and an analysis of the problems encountered during the implementation. Methodological issues with respect to the QA are also addressed.

6

SUPPORT TO DESIGN OF LOGFRAMES AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

This chapter presents the service that supports OMs to improve the design of interventions logframes, M&E and reporting systems. The chapter presents:

- The **purpose** of the service and timing of delivery;
- The **scope** of the work and the **key actors;**
- The **process** and **standards** to be observed by the ROM contractors and experts.

The ROM Support to the Design of Logframes and monitoring Systems (SDL) was introduced in 2019 to help operational managers and implementing partners in the design of intervention logics, logframes, M&E and reporting systems. It serves the EU wider objective of promoting a results-based monitoring and reporting for increased transparency and accountability of the EU external action (see chapter 2 on monitoring and reporting along the intervention cycle).

The logframe matrix and the M&E and reporting arrangements of an intervention are agreed between the Commission services and the implementing partners at contract signature. Implementing partners can apply different methodologies and tools to develop the intervention results framework. The SDL service can help with harmonising the terminology used, ensuring the quality of the results chain, selecting indicators, setting M&E and reporting systems and confirming the coherence with the programming and action level documents. Operational managers can request the SDL service at contract signature, during the inception phase or at a later stage during the implementation of the intervention.

The following sections present the main features of the service, whilst Annex 11 presents the specific technical guidance to be followed by ROM experts for each element of the SDL service (logframe, M&E system, reporting requirements).

6.1. Actors, scope and timing of the SDL

Actors

The key actors involved in the SDL service are described below:

SDL's key actors

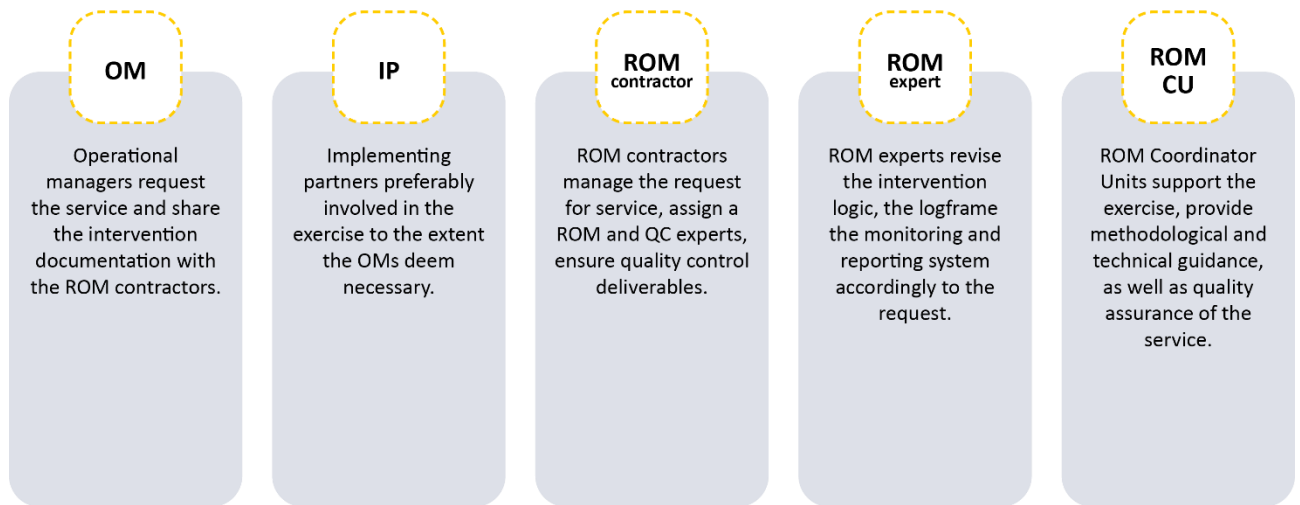| OM	IP	ROM contractor	ROM expert	ROM CU
Operational managers request the service and share the intervention documentation with the ROM contractors.	Implementing partners preferably involved in the exercise to the extent the OMs deem necessary.	ROM contractors manage the request for service, assign a ROM and QC experts, ensure quality control deliverables.	ROM experts revise the intervention logic, the logframe the monitoring and reporting system accordingly to the request.	ROM Coordinator Units support the exercise, provide methodological and technical guidance, as well as quality assurance of the service.

Figure 12. SDL's key actors

Scope of the service

SDL is an on-demand service carried out remotely by the assigned ROM experts. OMs in HQ Units and EU Delegations contact the ROM contractors to request the service.

The service is available for:

- At DG INTPA: Interventions with a budget above EUR 1 million.
- At DG NEAR: Intervention with a budget above EUR 500,000.
- Blending interventions: Upon prior approval of the relevant ROM coordination unit.

The SDL service is not available for budget support modality or for new Action Documents.

The scope of the SDL service covers three elements: intervention logic and logframe, M&E system, and reporting requirements; when requesting the service, the OM specifies the elements to be revised. The revision can focus on one specific element (for example, only the intervention logic and the logframe), or on a combination of them (for instance, the logframe and the M&E system). The output of this service is a revised set of documents which become part of the implementation arrangements between the Commission and the IP. The three elements of SDL are briefly presented below, while a more detailed technical and methodological guidance is presented in Annex 11.

Design of logframes

The ROM expert revises the intervention logic and the results chain to ensure that the correct terminology is used and that the hierarchy and the logical links between results are respected. More specifically, the ROM expert i) improves the formulation of the results statements; ii) checks that outputs/outcomes/impact are framed at the right level along the results chain and that realistic assumptions are drawn; iii) identifies relevant and measurable indicators with clear units of

measurement, disaggregation categories and specific sources of verification. The assessment also includes verifying the availability and adequacy of baseline and target values.

Definition of M&E systems

The ROM expert assesses the adequacy of the M&E system, to ensure that the intervention results are appropriately monitored. To this effect, the ROM expert can recommend data collection tools/methods to inform on the respective indicators (e.g. studies or surveys needed to collect baseline and progress data, dedicated M&E expert in charge of collecting progress data). The ROM expert can also discuss the management arrangements (for instance, among implementing partners), the available resources (e.g. specific needs of dedicated staff for monitoring functions) and mechanisms (e.g. Steering Committee composition, ad hoc monitoring meetings for complex interventions), which are relevant to the monitoring function.

Definition of reporting systems

The ROM expert provides feedback on the reporting requirements applicable to the intervention (e.g. as outlined in the special conditions of the contract. The ROM expert suggests any changes and, if relevant, additional reporting requirements (e.g. increase the frequency of reporting, include annexes or documents in progress reports).

Timing

The OM can request the SDL service at different stages: at the intervention contract signature, at the inception phase, or during the implementation. It is a remote service, undertaken via online exchanges between the OM, the ROM expert and possibly the IPs, which takes place in a short timeframe.

In addition, if during a ROM review or a results data collection exercise ROM experts come across poorly formulated logframes, inadequate M&E or reporting systems, they can recommend the SDL service to address these issues.

The OM introduces the request for the SDL service following the procedure described in the next section.

6.2. Process

The SDL service follows a three-step process: (i) preparation; (ii) implementation; and (iii) monitoring and quality control. The entire process is represented graphically in the figure below and, the different steps are described in detail in the following sections.
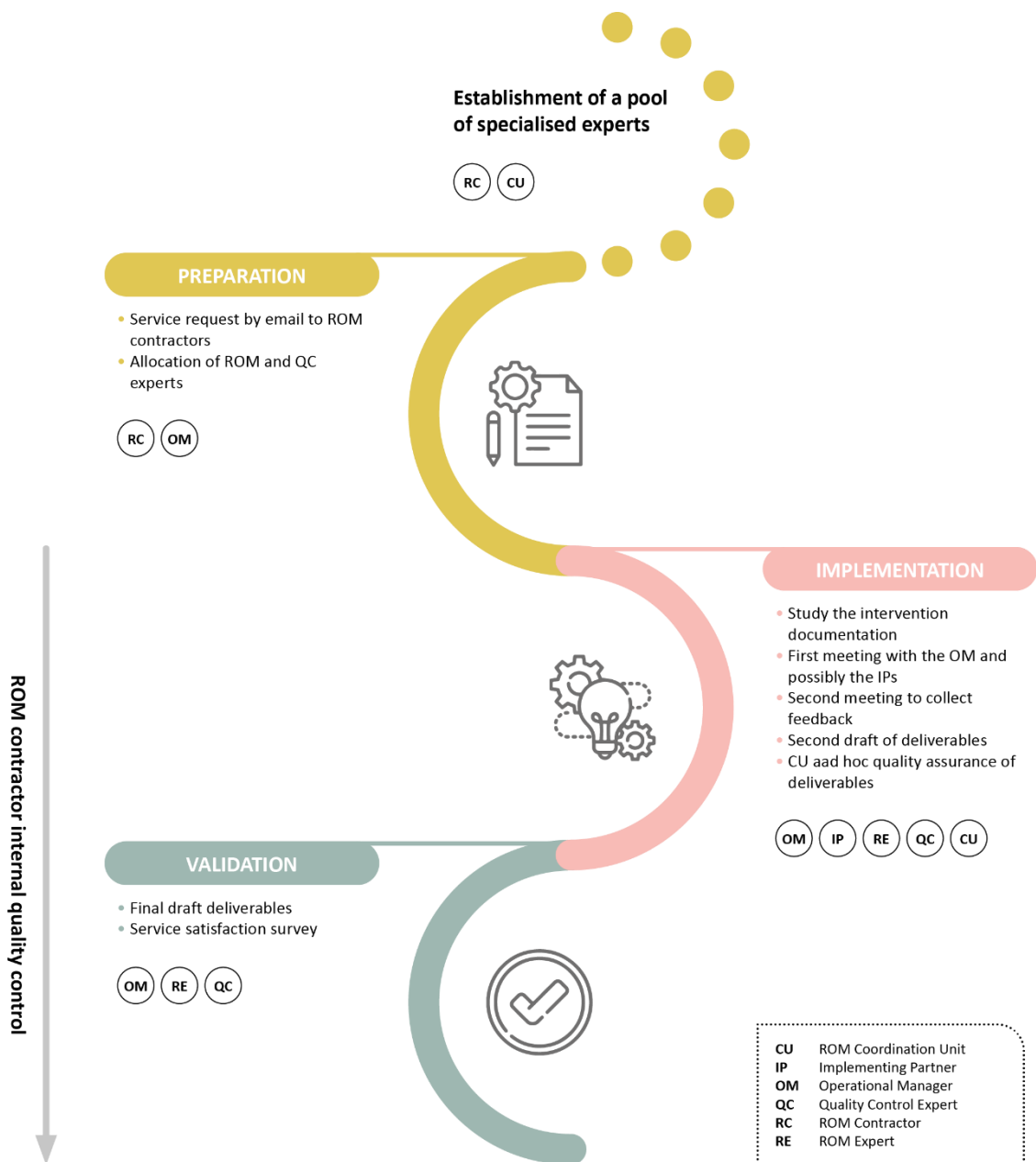
Establishment of a pool of specialised experts

(RC)(CU)

PREPARATION
- Service request by email to ROM contractors
- Allocation of ROM and QC experts

(RC)(OM)

IMPLEMENTATION
- Study the intervention documentation
- First meeting with the OM and possibly the IPs
- Second meeting to collect feedback
- Second draft of deliverables
- CU aad hoc quality assurance of deliverables

(OM)(IP)(RE)(QC)(CU)

VALIDATION
- Final draft deliverables
- Service satisfaction survey

(OM)(RE)(QC)

ROM contractor internal quality control

CU	ROM Coordination Unit
IP	Implementing Partner
OM	Operational Manager
QC	Quality Control Expert
RC	ROM Contractor
RE	ROM Expert

Figure 13. The SDL process

a. Preparation of the service

Establishment of a pool of specialised experts by ROM contractors

ROM contractors establish a pool of experts available for this service, with a strong background in the formulation of intervention logic narratives, logical frameworks as well as experience in monitoring and evaluation. The pool of experts should cover the different thematic and geographic areas. Sector experts are not required for each of the thematic areas covered by ROM, but the ROM contractor should, nevertheless, ensure as much diversity as possible.

Experts are subject to the approval by the ROM coordination units, which may also request expansion of the pool as needed.

b. Implementation

Service request

The OM submits a request to the ROM contractor, copying the ROM functional mailbox of the relevant DG (INTPA: INTPA-04-ROM@ec.europa.eu, NEAR: NEAR-EVAL-MONITORING @ec.europa.eu).

The service request will include a justification, all relevant intervention documents (e.g., depending on the type of contract: the Description of the Action, Organisation and Methodology, Terms of reference, Technical and Administrative Provisions), the related 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[50] and some indicators at each level, as well as a list of activities.

The logframe template presented in the PRAG[51] should be used, unless the OM specifies otherwise in the service request (i.e. in some cases, the EU Delegation may accept following the logframe template of a pillar-assessed organisation[52] or of another donor).

Assignment of the ROM expert and QC expert

Within two working days of receipt of the request, the ROM contractor identifies a ROM expert from the designated pool and assigns a QC expert. The standard allocation of working days per expert is presented in the table below.

Table 12. Allocation of working days for SDL

Allocation of working 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

---

[50] 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.
[51] The Logical Framework Matrix Template is available in the List of Annexes of the PRAG https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/Annexes
[52] Pillar assessments are institutional compliance assessments which the European Commission requires partner organisations to undergo successfully before entering into indirect management funding agreements with them.

Any deviation from these standards must be agreed with the ROM coordination unit.

ROM contractors and experts use an online platform to manage the different steps of the process and stock the different versions of the deliverables for internal QC and follow-up. This platform is only for ROM contractors' internal management, it is not used by OMs: therefore, all communication and exchange of documents and deliverables with the OM take place by email.

Service provision

The ROM contractor forwards the request and the relevant documentation to the confirmed ROM expert and the mission starts. Within 2 working days of receipt of the documents, the ROM expert schedules **a first remote meeting** with the OM and provides initial feedback on the elements for revision (e.g. depending on the request: the intervention logic and logframe, the M&E system and/or the reporting requirements). The OM confirms the elements to be revised and informs whether there are other experts (for instance, thematic experts involved in the intervention development) with whom the ROM expert should coordinate. It is recommended that the OM invites the IP(s) to this meeting.

> The ROM expert is not expected to be part of the negotiations between the OM and the IP(s) on the intervention design.

Involvement of IPs

The OM advises on how to involve the IPs in the revision: he/she can act as interface between the ROM expert and the IP (for instance, when contract negotiations are ongoing) or let the ROM expert liaise directly with the IP. Involvement of the IP(s) is recommended to foster ownership and mutual understanding of EU expectations on logframe, M&E and reporting.

Following the first communication exchange, the ROM expert produces the first draft of deliverables for submission to the QC expert. Upon validation by the QC expert, the first draft of deliverables is transmitted to the OM for feedback.

The ROM expert schedules a **second communication exchange** with the OM (and the IP(s), if relevant), to discuss the comments and possible changes to the first draft of deliverables. If necessary, the ROM expert addresses the OM's comments and submits the revised draft of deliverables to the QC expert for revision (the ROM QC expert uses the template in Annex 12). Once the quality control process is completed, the ROM contractor sends the final deliverables (both a track-change and a clean version in Word) to the OM, with a request for feedback.

Once the OM validates the final deliverables and completes the short questionnaire, the request is considered finalised. In case the OM does not approve or provides negative feedback on the final deliverables, the ROM coordination unit and the ROM contractor will discuss corrective action.

c. Performance monitoring and internal QC

The ROM contractor designates a pool of QC experts for internal quality control. The QC focusses on: a) the technical quality of the inputs provided and their alignment with the standards detailed in the ROM Handbook and its Annexes; b) the completeness and clarity of the comments. The quality control follows the checklist in Annex 12 and is completed within two working days from reception of draft deliverables from the ROM expert. Furthermore, the QC process must be documented, and internal QC documentation must be made available to the Commission's QA, upon request.

The ROM contractors produce internal process and quality guidelines to support ROM and QC experts to perform the service.

OMs provide their feedback on the service through a quick satisfaction questionnaire, which they receive together with the final version of the deliverable (questions are enclosed in Annex 12). The purpose is the continuous improvement of the quality of the SDL service and its methodology.

d. Quality assurance by the ROM coordination units

The relevant ROM coordination unit can carry out a quality assurance on the final draft of deliverables before these are submitted to the OM for final validation. The quality assurance is not systematic but conducted on a case-by-case basis. The aim is to ensure internal follow-up of the process and the respect of the quality standards.

7 ROM SUPPORT TO RESULTS DATA COLLECTION

This chapter summarises the role of ROM contractors and ROM experts in the Support to Results Data Collection

Since the adoption of the EU Results Framework (EURF) and IPA Results Framework (IPA RF) in 2015, and throughout their evolution into the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF) and IPA III Results Framework in 2022, results data have been collected from a large sample of EU-funded interventions and disseminated through annual institutional reports. The EURF/GERF and IPA PF/IPA III RF contribute to fostering accountability and communication on progress towards achieving the strategic objectives of the EU external action.

The purpose of the ROM service is to support the collection and quality assurance of results data achieved by the EU-funded interventions.

The ROM system has supported the results data collection effort since 2017, assisting OMs in drawing results data and links to the EURF/IPA indicators from intervention logframes and monitoring systems. Whilst initially only applied to a sample of closed interventions, the ROM Support to Results Data Collection has progressively extended to a very large sample of ongoing and recently completed interventions, including blending and budget support. Over the years, the results data collection has contributed to paving the way towards systematic logframe-based monitoring and reporting.

The latest evolution of this service has proceeded in conjunction with the expansion of OPSYS, allowing for regular and structured monitoring of the results achieved by EU-funded actions, based on logframes and on the concept of Primary Interventions as the key unit of reporting (See chapter 1).

Since 2021 ROM contractors support OMs and IPs during the results data collection in OPSYS. The support is related to the creation of Primary Interventions (PINTVs), encoding of logframes and the quality assurance of the reported values, in particular the results data informing the EURF/GERF and IPA/IPA III indicators.

The ROM coordination units provide methodological and technical guidance for the exercise. As results data collection evolves regularly due to OPSYS, specific guidelines are provided separately from the ROM Handbook and shared with the ROM contractors at the beginning of each results data collection exercise to promote the ownership of the results data collection among the OMs and IPs.

8 LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH 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 interventions under review through the ROM services.

The Commission places great emphasis on the development of a corporate learning culture, as reflected in DG INTPA "Knowledge Management Strategy 2020-2024"[53] and in DG NEAR "Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation".

Building on the 2014-2020 "Learning and Knowledge Development Strategy", the Knowledge Management Strategy 2020-2024 has confirmed DG INTPA commitment to being **a learning organisation** which draws lessons from its experience and promotes the capitalisation of knowledge and expertise. Capitalisation is considered crucial to: (i) make real use of the abundant knowledge produced by the Commission services; (ii) maintain and nurture an institutional memory; (iii) avoid repeating mistakes, duplicating efforts, and wasting resources; (iv) seize opportunities for spreading innovation and improved practices; and eventually, (v) reinforce the Commission's credibility and ability to progress and adapt to change, in a complex development context.

ROM activities offer the opportunity to contribute to DG INTPA and DG NEAR learning process and knowledge capitalisation, through the respective ROM services (ROM reviews, Support to Results Data Collection, Support to Design of Logframes and Monitoring Systems) and in particular, through the ROM consolidated analyses. Collecting and sharing learning across ROM contracts helps fine-tune the ROM services themselves and improve the ROM process. It also contributes to improving the way the Commission services incorporate learning into the design and management of interventions, and eventually build in-house actionable knowledge on development strategies and decisions.

Considering the wealth of practices that were put in place during the past ROM cycles, as well as the stocktaking initiatives that have followed the first year of implementation of the new ROM cycle[54], this chapter presents the concepts, actions and products that support the incorporation of ROM-derived learning into the Commission's knowledge management cycle.

---

[53] https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/intpa-km-strategy-2020-2024_en.pdf

[54] Knowledge Management and Learning in the Resulted-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) system, Report on the Stocktaking Workshop, prepared by Ann-Murray Brown - June 2021

8.1. Learning concepts

Learning is the engine of any knowledge management cycle aimed at using experience to improve knowledge, decisions, and operations. The vectors of learning are of three types:

- Lessons learnt
- Good practices
- Promising practices

Although interlinked, these concepts have a different scope, depending on the time in which they are observed during the life of an intervention.

Lessons learnt

A lesson learnt documents the experience gained any time during an intervention. Lessons learnt come from working with or solving real-life problems during an intervention. They document identified difficulties and solutions that have relevance beyond the intervention in which they have been observed. Below is the definition provided by the OECD-DAC[55].

> **Lessons learnt**
>
> **Lessons Learnt (LL)**: generalise findings and translate analysis into relevant knowledge that should support decision making, improve performance and promote the achievement of better results in other settings. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in the preparation, design, and implementation of interventions that affect their performance, outcomes, and impact. A lesson may be positive or negative (*OECD DAC, 2021*).

Typically, lessons learnt are negative, with respect to identifying **processes, practices, or systems to avoid** in specific situations and they are positive with respect to **identifying processes, practices, or systems** that represent a solution or reinforce a positive result if followed.

One can simply think of a lesson learnt in this way: "What would we do differently next time? And what would we do the same in a similar situation?". One should think of a lesson learnt, as much as possible, in terms of its usefulness or its relevance for other settings. The relevance of a lesson learnt can be twofold: (i) to the intervention in which the lesson has appeared and is likely to become a recommendation for improving performance, or (ii) beyond the initial intervention, when the lesson bears understanding and knowledge useful for other settings. The purpose of **collecting and disseminating lessons learnt** is linked to the second scope, wider than that of recommendations addressed to the intervention.

Collecting good quality lessons learnt that are useful to other practitioners or interventions can be challenging. Often, lessons learnt are poorly presented, confused with the mere description of a good

---

[55] OECD DAC Glossary of key terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, 2nd edition, 2024.1

or a bad result, or they are platitudes that are put forward just to comply with some institutional requirements in terms of learning and knowledge. At times, they are so generalised and abstracted from the context that it is impossible to understand their relevance.

To be of good quality, lessons learnt need to satisfy the following attributes[56]:

- They succinctly describe the context in which they have emerged.
- They are based on experience (which may be positive or negative).
- They are verifiable (because the events involved are documented).
- They are owned (by people who are ready to talk about them).
- They are useful to others (who read or hear about them).
- They have wide applicability (wider than recommendations).
- They make a difference (when acted upon).
- They are interesting, not boring.

Linked to a positive lesson learnt, there could be a future good or promising practice but for this, the lesson might need further elaboration or testing.

Good practices

Good practices are **validated** processes, practices, or systems that have proven successful in several settings and for which patterns of positive experiences have been recorded from a variety of similar interventions and programmes. A formal definition by the FAO[57] and UNCHR[58]is presented below.

> **Good practices**
>
> **Good Practice (GP)**: A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but one that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience which has been tested and validated in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it. (*FAO, 2016)*. It is a successful process or methodology that is ethical, fair and replicable. (*UNCHR, 2018)*. It is not to be viewed as prescriptive, it can be adapted to meet new challenges, becoming better as improvements are discovered.

One could think of a good practice like answering the question "What is a successful methodology that has produced positive results in several contexts and settings, and that could be recommended as a model"? To answer this question a good practice should have the following attributes[59]:

---

[56] Expectations about identifying and documenting "Lessons Learned", Rick Davies, 2009
[57] FAO, Good Practices Template, 2016
[58] UNCHR, Good Practices for Urban Refugees, 2018.
[59] FAO, Good Practices Template, 2016

- Effective and successful: has proven to be the most effective way to achieve an objective, has been successfully adopted and has had a positive impact on beneficiaries.
- Environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable: it does not compromise the ability to address future needs.
- Gender sensitive: shows how it has affected the lives of men and women.
- Technically feasible: it must be easy to learn and implement.
- Participatory: it has to support a joint sense of ownership of decisions or actions.
- Replicable and adaptable: has the potential for further replication and adaptation.

Since socio-cultural factors, the stage of programme development, resource availability and other specific elements determine the degree of relevance of a good practice to a particular situation, good practices are **relative and not necessarily compatible od the "best"**. They are also **constantly evolving** with socio-economic changes at local and international level and require updating as new lessons are learnt and new data become available. Lessons learnt are a key input into good practices.

The identification of good practices for the collection and sharing is a process that a "learning organisation" puts in place in the long run. It involves a dedicated implementing team and the support of punctual internal/external assessments, which highlight promising practices, as explained below, and paths for further testing, replication, and validation.

Promising practices

Promising practices are **documented** processes, practices or systems, that have proven successful in a specific context and show the promise of producing good results in other settings, but have yet to be sufficiently analysed and replicated.

They should also be ethical and fair, at least in the context in which they have been observed.

Below is a formal definition provided by the FAO[60].

> **Promising practices**
>
> **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 does not have enough research or replication to support wider adoption or upscaling. As such, a promising practice incorporates a process of continuous learning and improvement. (*FAO, 2016).*

Promising practices can be identified through anecdotal evidence, testimonials, articles or reports and are therefore easily detected by an external observer. They are often linked to a lesson learnt that

---

needs to be further elaborated. Their replicability or adaptability in different contexts is risky, but there is potential for further investigation.

The table below summarises the differences between the three learning concepts:

Table 13. Distinctive features of the three learning concepts

	Lessons learnt	Promising Practice	Good Practice
It can be negative	✓		
It is based on verifiable evidence	✓	✓	✓
It is replicated in the same setting	✓	✓	✓
It is testable	✓	✓	✓
It is replicable in multiple settings	✓		✓
It is a tested methodology/practice that has proven to have good results in different contexts/multiple settings			✓

8.2. Actors, objectives and limitations of learning through the ROM system

Actors

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

- **ROM experts**, primarily responsible for identification and collection of learning evidence that stems from the implementation of interventions. This is done through technical expertise and advice provided with the three ROM services.
- **ROM contractors**, responsible for the validation, analysis, consolidation, reporting and dissemination of knowledge and learning evidence on the design and implementation of interventions, as well as on the ROM process itself.
- **ROM QA contractor**
- **IPs**, who establish progress and final reports documenting learning evidence, provide information to ROM experts, and take knowledge into account in the design/implementation of their operations.
- **OMs,** who inform the learning collection phase and manifest their specific learning needs at intervention level, at sectoral/thematic or regional level.
- **Commission services**, OM and HQ Units in DG INTPA and DG NEAR, responsible for feeding knowledge into the Commission system.

Objectives

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

- **To enhance the effectiveness of the ROM services**: The ROM Handbook is regularly updated, and the ROM services integrate continuous learning from implementation.
- **To improve performance at intervention level**: Through the ROM system, the collected learning can be transformed into knowledge for future identification and formulation, for the elaboration of Action Documents and guidelines for Calls for Proposals, and for Quality Review Meetings (QRM) 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 ROM reviews or SDL or Support to Results Data Collection. This evidence has limitations because the learning is mediated by the context of the specific intervention. However, ROM contractors have access to a significant number of interventions, 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…).

8.3. The learning process in the ROM system

With the wealth of information that it produces, the ROM system can be a valuable source of learning. It has a role to play in corporate knowledge management, alongside other initiatives with an evaluative or reflective perspective. This role is represented in the figure below and can take place at the level of: (i) identification/collection of learning, (ii) analysis/validation of learning, (iii) consolidation of learning into knowledge, (iv) dissemination of learning, (v) retrieval of learning, and (vi) application of learning.
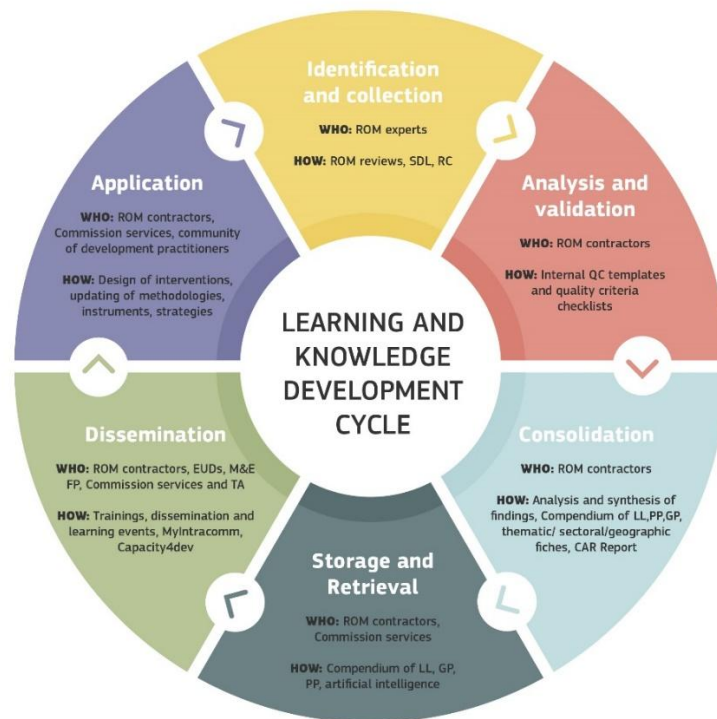
Figure 14. The role of ROM in the learning and knowledge management cycle

a. Identification and collection of learning

The identification of learning by the **ROM experts** takes place through the implementation of the **three ROM services**, although with different intensity and modalities. With ROM reviews, the identification of learning can concern all aspects of the design and implementation of interventions. For SDL at contract level and Support to results data collection, the focus will rather be on the design of logframes and M&E systems. Or the performance of existing interventions in terms of results achievement and contribution to the EURF/GERF and IPA PF/IPA III RF.

For ROM reviews, the collection of learning is done through the answers to the MQs and a specific learning template (Annex 5), documenting lessons learnt (LL), good practices (GP) and promising practices (PP). For SDL and Support to Results Data Collection, learning information is gathered by the ROM contractors and ROM experts, during the reporting phase of both services.

All learning data is conveyed in progress, quality reports and consolidated analyses reports (CAR). In some cases, the collection of learning is based on specific demands expressed by the Commission services via specific Terms of Reference, addressing knowledge needs at portfolio level, sector/thematic level, or regional/sub-regional level.

Finally, the three ROM services contribute to the identification of learning on the implementation of the ROM system itself, feeding the process of continuous adjustment of the ROM services. This learning is collected during implementation, stock taking exercises, training, and is also conveyed in the progress, quality, and CAR reports.

Focus on ROM reviews and the learning template

ROM reviews are key in identifying learning at intervention level (expressed in the conclusions and recommendations of the ROM reports), as well as beyond, through the dedicated learning questions (MQ 3.1 and 3.5) and learning template (Annex 5) to be filled in when MQ 3.5 receives an affirmative answer. In particular:

- MQ 3.1 invites the ROM expert and the interviewed stakeholders to reflect on the application of previous lessons or good practices, by asking: *"To what extent does the intervention, as currently designed and implemented, take into account **past experiences** in the sector, best practices and lessons learnt from previous interventions?"* On the one hand, the answer contributes to the assessment of the quality of the design of the reviewed intervention. On the other hand, when there is evidence of the application of lessons or good practices derived from previous experience, and that they are instrumental for the reviewed intervention's good results, it can be worth recording them though the learning template (below). Since the information on good practices is fragmented, rapidly obsolete and not universally accessible, even confirmed practices can be worth sharing, focusing on the adaptations and improvements that have been brought through implementation.

- MQ 3.5 invites the expert to identify LL/GP/PP and document them by asking *"Are there any **lessons learnt and good practices** that would be useful to share beyond the intervention context?"* This question refers to lessons learnt, good and promising practices, that emerge from the intervention implementation and that are worth sharing for their wider relevance. It refers also to the good practices singled out by MQ 3.1 that are worth recording and sharing.

The learning template was revised in 2021, based on feedback from ROM contractors and experts after the first year of implementation. Learning concepts were clarified and additional guidance and checklists to help identify and document LL/GP/PP are now provided at the beginning of Annex 5, just before the three learning templates (one per learning concept).

In identifying LL/GP/PP, ROM experts should reflect on the information collected during the briefing meeting. The briefing meeting allows the identification of areas on which the OMs need information, which helps focus the collection of LL/GP/PP to match the Commission's operational priorities. It can also be worth accessing the lessons and practices deemed worth sharing from the previous year(s), to have a benchmark and avoid duplications.

In detecting LL/GP/PP with a wider relevance, ROM experts should concentrate on elements that can teach something or be inspirational beyond the specific intervention. Learning is all about repeating (or avoiding) "something" in the future. This "something" should be as tangible as possible and is usually a methodology (or practice, process, or system). ROM experts should always detect the

tangible learning element behind a good result (or bad result) that is interesting to be analysed and shared, if it is confirmed by evidence, and plays a significant role in that good or bad result.

Therefore, even if the occurrence of good results is one of the first areas to look at for detecting LL/GP/PP, the mistake of merely describing a good result should be avoided. The revised template and guidance support the ROM expert in the documentation/description of the detected lesson or practice, avoiding this common oversight. Techniques such as the Most Significant Change,[61] or Outcome Harvesting,[62] during the interviews can also be used to detect the methodologies or practices that would qualify as LL/GP/PP behind the observed changes/outcomes.

To ensure consistency in the identification of LL/GP/PP, the role of the ROM contractor's QC is crucial. Before answering "Yes" to MQ 3.5, ROM experts seek the advice of the ROM QC expert, briefly outlining the lesson or practice that complies with the criteria checklists and that, in their opinion, is worth sharing. The ROM QC expert checks the relevance of the LL/GP/PP and, if the lesson or practice has been already detailed in the past, advises the ROM expert to highlight the elements of innovation or differentiation. If the ROM QC expert gives the green light, the ROM expert will complete the learning template <u>after</u> submitting the draft ROM report and MQs.

b.   Analysis and validation of learning

The various elements of learning collected during the implementation of the ROM services are analysed and validated by the ROM contractors before synthesising them in the various reports or consolidated analyses.

Focus on ROM reviews and the learning template

The collected LL/GP/PP should respond to the quality criteria in the checklists presented in Annex 5, such as being evidence-based and well documented. This implies, among others, an adequate description of the context, evidence of positive results, identification of a tangible methodology or practice to be recommended (or discouraged), the determinants of its usefulness, wider relevance, and replicable nature, as well as the success factors or potential constraints for its application.

The ROM contractors screen the compliance with the quality criteria and ensure that the description of the LL/GP/PP is adequately detailed to convey the learning elements to other contexts. If needs be, the information initially provided by the ROM expert, is completed and expanded by the core team experts, who may contact the IP (cc. the OM in charge of the intervention) to gather more information on specific practices or possibly undertake some additional desk research and analysis.

---

[61] An explanation on the technique - Davies, R and Dart, J (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A guide to its use. April 2005.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275409002_The_'Most_Significant_Change'_MSC_Technique_A_Guide_to_Its_Use

[62] Further reading to explain Outcome Harvesting can be found in this publication, Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt (2013). Outcome Harvesting. https://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/outcome-harvesting

To facilitate analysis, comparison, and retrieval, it should be possible to categorise each learning fiche under different possible categories, depending on the knowledge needs. These can range from geographical/sectoral/thematic categories to ROM monitoring criteria or OECD-DAC criteria, intervention cycle phase, type of implementing partner, type of beneficiary, DAC codes, SDGs, Commission priorities, intervention type (budget support, blending, TEI), budget of the intervention, duration of the intervention, key words, etc. The categorisation by ROM monitoring criteria can be further expanded in several sub-categories, if this is relevant for the analysis and presentation of LL/GP/PP. Examples of sub-categories are illustrated in the box below.

Sub-categories per monitoring criteria

Relevance

- Design process of the intervention proposal/methods to involve local stakeholders (local ownership).
- Successful synergies and networking with stakeholders inside and outside the intervention.

Coordination, complementarity, and EU added value.

- Coherence.
- Coordination. complementarities.
- EU added value.

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.
- Funding modalities (when conducive to ensuring relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and/or sustainability of the intervention).
- Implementation modalities found particularly innovative, efficient and/or cost-effective (i.e. functioning of CSO partnerships).

Communication and visibility

- Visibility practices.

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 predefined support packages).

Sustainability

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

Cross-cutting criteria

- Gender-responsive practices.
- Green and climate responsive practices.
- Fragility-responsive practices.

The ROM contractors are expected to (i) validate such categories; (ii) add any relevant category based on their wider perspective of the collected learning fiches; and (iii) choose the most significant category to classify each learning fiche.

The validated learning fiches are presented by the most significant category into a **Compendium of LL/GP/PP**, completed at the end of each ROM exercise, and updated throughout the cycle.

c.   Consolidation of learning

At the end of each yearly exercise, ROM contractors consolidate findings and learnings from the implemented ROM services in the Consolidated Analysis Report (CAR) if relevant, cumulating the current year with the previous ones in the same ROM cycle. The analysis of consolidated information involves the following steps: i) formulation of the scope of analysis; ii) translation of the scope in terms of data; and iii) finding, verifying, and grouping data. The synthesis of information should produce both quantitative and qualitative information and further learnings, derived from the consolidation of findings.

The consolidation concerns:

- Statistics and general findings from the implemented ROM services.[63]
- Learnings on the ROM process implementation and on specific aspects linked to the monitoring and results mandate of INTPA.D4 and NEAR.A4.
- Learnings from the validated LL/GP/PP fiches, analysed per relevant categories.[64]
- Findings and learnings from the ROM services, grouped at geographic or sectoral/thematic level, as demanded by the operational managers and/or proposed by the ROM contractors, based on the observation of recurrent trends/features in the implementation of the ROM services.

Every year, the ROM coordination units update the terms of reference for preparing the CAR, to fit the of Commission services' changing needs for information, allowing sufficient flexibility for **on-demand analyses**. Delivery of these on-demand products can take place during or at the end of the exercise, taking into consideration the needs of the Commission and the ROM contractors' workload.

d.   Storage and retrieval of learning

The Compendium of LL/GP/PP constitutes a database of information on learning, that would otherwise be dispersed in a multitude of ROM reports at intervention level. The standardisation and categorisation allow for easier retrieval for reference, communication purposes, training activities, and further analysis.

CARs, compendium of LL/GP/PP, and on-demand analyses are stored by ROM contractors and shared with the ROM coordination units and with the ROM QA contractor LL/GP/PP are cited in the reports,

---

[63] This corresponds to the 'Part I' of the consolidated reports produced in the previous ROM cycle.
[64] Since 2020, this corresponds to the consolidated analysis contained in Part II of the CAR Report and the relevant annex containing the Compendium.

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.

The sectoral/thematic and geographic fiches, prepared every year as part of the CAR, should also be stored as standalone products under the relevant sector/theme or country/region categories.

DG INTPA also stores the learning material on their internal systems, making it available for further consultation and perusal. DG INTPA is piloting the utilisation of an insight engine to efficiently search through Monitoring and Evaluation materials that could further facilitate the retrieval of learning.

e.   Dissemination of learning

There are various channels for the dissemination of learning.

At the level of ROM contractors

- Internal guidance on ROM services, regularly updated.
- Internal training to ROM experts.
- During the process of the elaboration of the CAR.
- QC process.

ROM contractors may be required to present ROM findings, validate recommendations with relevant Commission services and implementing partners, and to participate in conferences and other events for dissemination purposes.

At the level of DG INTPA /DG NEAR

- Dissemination of findings and recommendations from ROM and CAR.
- Stock-taking events, including those organised within the ROM QA contractor.
- Adapted training and communication material.
- Compendium of LL/GP/PP.
- On-demand analyses.
- MyIntracomm news.
- Capacity4dev groups and news.

At the level of IPs

- Validation of findings and recommendations from the three ROM services.
- On-demand presentations by ROM contractors.

At the level of the development and international partnerships community

- Capacity4dev.
- Practitioners network.
- Institutional exchanges with other development and international partnerships actors.

f.   Application of learning

ROM contractors should regularly update their internal training and materials used to mentor and provide guidance to ROM experts with the validated LL/GP/PP. ROM contractors provide a summary description of all activities undertaken to apply learnings as part of their regular progress reports. In addition, they include in the list of consulted documents, the sources of LL/GP/PP that are utilised during ROM operations.

The various Commission services can use learning from the ROM system for programming, design or evaluation activities, to inform training materials and methodological guides, as well as for annual reports and briefings for Commissioners.