



European Commission
Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid
Director-General

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NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF DEVCO DIRECTORS B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Subject: Implementing simplification of QSG1 process

The objective of this note is to present the first, preliminary steps necessary for the implementation of the decision taken by Management in its meeting of 1 July 2014 concerning the simplification of the Quality Support Groups (QSG) process for identification and formulation of actions. The completion of these first steps will be followed by a revision of the overall instructions on the QSG process, to be submitted to for internal consultation in September and for subsequent Management approval (as part of related revised Chapters and annexes of the DEVCO Companion).

The revised instructions will integrate the present simplification measures as well the revised templates for the documents to be used during QSG process. This will include the revised template for the Action document and related guidance for completing these documents. The drafts of these revised documents are presently under consultation with the services.

1. Management decision to simplify and focus QSG1 on cases considered important

The recent exercise to review all DEVCO core processes with the aim to identify simplification opportunities concluded that there is room for simplification of the QSG process, more particularly in relation to QSG1. In this respect, it was decided to focus QSG1 on the following cases:

- When the proposed action is in a new sector/thematic area compared to or when there are substantial changes in the concerned sector/thematic area;
- When a new aid modality or an innovative approach is introduced in a given sector compared to the ones in which the Delegation or operational HQ unit is currently managing in the same sector in the country/region or in the same thematic area (for example, a first budget support programme);
- Upon the request of a Delegation for actions covering their own geographic area;

- Upon the request of a Director:
 - either for actions covering their own geographic/thematic area;
 - or for actions of another Directorate (for example, a thematic Director requesting QSG1 for a geographic programme covering his/her thematic area, or a geographic Director requesting a QSG1 for a thematic programme covering that geographic area).

The possible reasons for such requests could include politically sensitive or fragile situations in a given country or cases where there is perceived lack of capacity or expertise necessary for the specific type of action in a given sector in a Delegation/HQ unit.

2. Improved planning of the identification and formulation process as a pre-condition

A pre-condition for putting in place this revised QSG process is the establishment of rolling pipelines of all actions to be prepared by each thematic and geographic directorate in a given time period. This pipeline planning should cover a 24 months period so as to cover the full preparatory and decision making process of all actions to be processed over that period. These pipelines will be the main tool for identifying the cases where QSG1 review is planned to take place and for allowing other Directors to request a QSG1 where it has not been foreseen by the responsible Director. It may also serve to identify where upfront of presentation to QSG thematic support is requested. The planning should identify the quarter in which QSG meetings are to take place for at least the first 12 months.

Most directorates already manage a pipeline planning in the form of an Excel document. Where a pipeline planning does not yet exist, the Directorate could use the template in Annex 1 of this note as an example. All directorates are requested to make sure that their pipeline planning includes at least the following elements (in accordance with the Annex 1):

- Sector of the action (presented in the form of DAC code and sector);
- Whether the action will be presented to QSGs at all (Y/N);
- If the action is not to be presented to a QSG, the reasons for it, referring to the footnote 1 in Annex 1 (which footnote should figure in all tables to ensure good understanding and appropriate monitoring) - for example, TCF, replenishment investment facility, etc.;
- Whether the action is to be presented to a Budget Support Steering Committee (Y/N) and in which quarter of the year (only for geographic programmes);
- Whether the action will be presented to a QSG1 (Y/N);
- If yes, tentatively in which quarter of a given year (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4);
- Specifying to which of the criteria specified in section 2 the submission to QSG1 corresponds, using the menu as contained in the relating column in Annex 1;
- Indicative quarter for QSG2 meetings (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4);
- Request for thematic support (Y/N), mentioning:
 - when such support is required (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4);
 - what form it should have (support mission remote support).

3. The procedure for the internal consultation on the draft pipeline planning tables

The procedure for the internal consultation during preparation of the pipelines shall be as follows:

Task	Timing	Responsible
Each Directorate sends a draft pipeline for the next 24 months with a specific planning of QSG meetings for at least the next 12 months to the existing QSG functional mailboxes of Unit 06: DEVCO 06 OQSG-B DEVCO 06 OQSG-C DEVCO 06 OQSG-D-E DEVCO 06 OQSG-F DEVCO 06 OQSG-G DEVCO 06 OQSG-H	The first pipelines are to be sent by 1 September 2014. Further pipelines to be sent one month before the start of each semester (1 December and 1 June of each year).	Pipeline coordinators or QSG Focal points in thematic and geographic Directorates
Unit 06 uploads these pipelines on intranet (QSG intranet page)	In the beginning of the first week of December and June of each year. For the first time this will take place in the first week of September 2014.	QSG coordinator of Unit 06
The other Directorates review the pipelines and send their requests for additional QSG1, where those are not planned, mentioning the reason for each request. These requests are sent to the relevant Directorate (with Unit 06 QSG functional mailbox of that directorate in copy).	Within two weeks from publication of the pipelines	Thematic and geographic Directorates
Directorates update the final pipeline and send it to the abovementioned QSG functional mailboxes of Unit 06.	Within two weeks after the deadline for feedback from Directorates	Pipeline coordinators or QSG Focal points in thematic and geographic Directorates
Unit 06 uploads the final pipelines on intranet.	As soon as the final pipelines are made available.	QSG coordinator of Unit 06.

To implement this first step of the revised QSG process, all thematic and geographic directorates are requested to send to Unit DEVCO 06 **by 1 September 2014 at the latest**

- their draft pipelines (as indicated in the table above);
- the name of the pipeline manager/coordinator for their Directorate.

4. Additional simplification measures

Management also decided the following additional simplification measures:

- QSG1 should take place earlier in the preparation process through improved planning and in any case in year N-1, N being the year of commitment;
- there should as a rule be no resubmissions to QSG1, as issues regarding the proposed action that need to be further addressed need to be highlighted at this meeting. These issues will as a rule have to be tackled during formulation;
- to further streamline process, Directors may delegate the chairing of QSG1 meetings to his/her Heads of Unit.

5. Up-front support by thematic units to Delegations and geographic operational HQ services

For those actions where a QSG1 meeting would not take place, the preparation of the action would need to include, like before, the necessary context analysis as an important part of identification. More in general, both for identification and formulation, thematic support should be provided by the thematic units from the start where possible and where requested. Geographic Directors should include such requests in the pipeline planning table as much as is reasonably possible. To facilitate Delegations' access to and identification of the relevant thematic experts for such support, thematic directorates should clarify the sector and geographic responsibility of each thematic expert, and update this information on intranet.

Thematic units should do their own planning of support missions based on the requests expressed in the pipeline and in accordance with the available human and mission credit resources. This information should be shared with the other Directorate(s) concerned by the action.

6. Monitoring of the simplification

Early 2015, Unit DEVCO 06 will provide the Management with a monitoring report on the first months of implementation of the above simplification, as part of a wider report on the functioning of the QSG process following the upcoming revision.

I look forward to your commitment to make the above a success.



Fernando FRUTUOSO DE MELO

Enclosure 1: Template of pipeline

Cc: DDGs; Directors A, R; Heads of Delegation
D. O'Sullivan, EEAS

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(*) Mention one of the exceptions presented in the list in annex 2 to the existing QSG instructions (to be revised in Autumn)