

RM ROADMAP

Consensus Document for Country Community Denmark

Co-Creation Session 1: Understanding the landscape: National Networks and Associations

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RM ROADMAP

“Creating Framework Conditions for Research Management to Strengthen the European Research Area”

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landscape: National Networks and
Associations**

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Understanding the landscape: National Networks and Associations

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1. Introduction

This is an important moment for the research management (RM) community in Europe. The European Commission (EC) and countries across Europe want to better understand the current research management landscape to further strengthen the European Research Area (ERA).

Research management includes a broad range of professionals supporting researchers to achieve excellence in research. For the purpose of this co-creation exercise, Research Managers (RMs) are to be considered as broad as possible including: research policy advisers, research managers, financial support staff, data stewards, research infrastructure operators, knowledge transfer officers, business developers, knowledge brokers, innovation managers, etc. For simplicity, we use the term research management but this exercise covers also other terms such as research support, research management and administration, professionals at the interface of science and other terms which are used as the norm in the national landscapes across Europe.

The RM Roadmap Knowledge and Community Platform (KCP) brings research managers together to shape the future of the profession and support the strengthening of an inclusive research management community in Europe. The KCP is a place where research managers share their views and introduce issues for discussion in a solution-focused endeavour. RM Roadmap Ambassadors lead the discussions for each country on the Knowledge and Community Platform, supported by national and regional RM networks.

This co-creation exercise is the biggest collaboration between RM networks ever to take place in Europe. With a focus on learning insights from RMs, the co-creation exercise seeks to establish a robust framework that can support professional growth and collaboration across the EU and associated countries.

By 2023, 40 country communities have been established within the RM Roadmap Ambassador Network. The RM Roadmap project will use the outcomes from this co-creation exercise to make a roadmap for the future of research management in Europe and to build and exchange solid knowledge on career framework opportunities, upskilling and networking for research managers. RM Roadmap will ultimately build a value proposition for policy makers and institutional leaders who want to strengthen and modernise their research support departments.

This **consensus document for Country Community Denmark** contains the outcomes of the **First Co-Creation Session - Understanding the landscape: National Networks and Associations**.

A short summary of the main outcomes from the co-creation exercise is included in section 2. More information about the topic of RM National Networks and Associations is detailed in section 3. Recommendations about best practices, challenges and lessons learnt about (formal or informal) national networks, associations, communities are provided in section 4.

For more information about the RM Roadmap initiative, the reader can consult the following website: www.rmroadmap.eu

2. Summary of Co-Creation Session 1

The Danish group has 24 members. Ten of them participated to the discussion, either by describing themselves (six persons) or by providing input to the 1st co-creation session (eight contributions).

Most contributors mentioned working with research support either pre- or post-award. Roles include legal advisor, contract management, project advisor, manager of Project coordination & Administration, manager for a unit supporting EU collaborative proposals work, research advisor. Some participants have a specific focus such as health research or open access. Most contributors work at universities or universities hospital such as Aalborg University, Aarhus University, University Hospital Herlev, Odense University Hospital, University of Copenhagen. One participant works at the Danish Technological Institute (DTI).

While the Danish Association of Research Managers and Administrators (DARMA), EU-DK, and EU-ERFA were the most mentioned networks, contributors discussed the help they receive from other (local or specialised) networks and the challenges they encounter in their specific area of work. A list of national networks was provided, but no list of policy documents and funding was included, as participants were not aware of anything specifically targeted at the RM profession.

3. Discussion Outcomes of Co-Creation Session 1

This consensus document for Country Community Denmark contains the outcomes of the First Co-Creation Session - Understanding the landscape: National Networks and Associations.

1. If you have a national network (formal or informal), how did it help you? If you don't, please say how you have built your (internal) network and are using it.

Denmark has several national networks. Respondents explained that these networks helped them by providing opportunities for sharing knowledge, networking, and training.

Networking and knowledge sharing opportunities were highlighted as follow:

- *“DARMA provides a network of RM people with different backgrounds and areas of expertise, who are eager to share their knowledge and develop the RM profession”.*
- *“My experience as Board member of DARMA and EARMA, and then as DARMA's Chair, opened up networks that simply couldn't have been accessed in any other way, networks that ultimately made it possible for me to start my own business two years ago (...) So for me, RMA networks have been all-important, going from nice-to-have back in 2010 to crucial resources today.” (It should be noted that the respondent is: “answering here with the caveat that I participated in formulating the questions”)*

Training events were also mentioned, in particular EU-ERFA and EU-DK SUPPORT events, which are organised biannually.

A participant mentioned joining a study trip to Brussels organised by DARMA and Danish EU Research Liaison Office (DANRO) while another one mentioned Greater Copenhagen EU Office (GCPHEU), which serves as a platform for e.g., training sessions for both researchers and RMA.

“Leaning on the knowledge of colleagues” and **local networks** was also seen as important:

- *“At my current place of work, University Hospital Herlev, a “research administrators network” across departments has been established, although it is fairly new. The aim of this network is to address topics of local interest and exchange of experience and the agenda will vary from meeting to meeting.”*

- *“On a more informal level, the RMAs who are members of GCPHEU's working group use meetings etc. as an informal forum for exchange of ideas, knowledge etc.”*

The help available varies depending on each respondent's role, as described here: *“I would say that the meetings and training sessions organised by DARMA, EU-erfa and EU-DK helped me a lot in my first job (funding advisor). Once I became EU project manager, I mainly relied on my immediate colleagues (we are a team of 5 Project Managers) and I focused on attending EU-erfa meetings.”*

In the specific case of OPEN (a research support unit that assists health researchers in the Southern Region of Denmark with data collection, biobanking, registry data, and administrative aspects related to their research projects), there is no formal national Network that cover all their areas of support but some networks cover part of it. *“There is a formal Gcp-Network which our Gcp unit is part of, and which is very active. The Danish Regions have different initiatives e.g. A group working on legal issues in health research. There are national initiatives such as “bedre brug af sundheds data” (which OPEN is a part of), there are different WP's, e.g., one on how to make it easier to access health data and one on guidance.”* OPEN is also meeting with “similar” units such as *“The research support in Aalborg and legal advisers from the “Region Midt”. We soon have a meeting with Aalborg again in regard to our development of a CTU (Clinical Trial Unit) in Odense. These meetings are not formalised, but they give us inspiration on other ways to do things and insight into other types of support”*. They also have monthly meetings with Odense Universitetshospital (OUH) legal officers, are part of the Regional Network on information security which meet approx. 4 times a year and meet with the epidemiologist's at depart. for Clinical Epidemiology at OUH on a regular and formalised basis.

One participant summed up the situation: *“The various national network possibilities can be used with their different foci and strengths. You many times meet with the same people but do get input/inspiration for the many different questions and assignments within European Funding in general”*.

2. What challenges do RM networks and associations encounter in contributing to national and European R&I systems? If there are no networks, please elaborate if there have been networking initiatives and if not, please state why you think that is the case.

Time and (sometimes lack of) support from management were listed as challenges by contributors. It was mentioned that management must back up RMs, including by allowing staff to use time participating in networks and associations:

- *“Lot of the tasks associated with providing input to both national and EU systems takes time, and in my extensive experience (31 years as RMA) this type of work is not prioritised by research institutions, especially when we talk about the EU R&I system.”*
- *“ I do not see any challenges besides having time to join all relevant networks besides working at home institution. The backup from your management is essential in this aspect.”*
- *“ I find that the importance of the RM role is somewhat overlooked by management and this can make it difficult to gain acceptance from employers and colleagues to fully participate in national and international networks (e.g. time spent, funds for participating in physical meetings and conferences). With more acknowledgement of the role, I believe (hope!) more doors to participate will open up.”*
- *“ There are still (too) many places where research support is seen as either an amateur version of financial officers or that executive management at institutions has vague or unrealistic (crazy, to be honest) ideas of research support as some sort of low-cost money-making machines.”*

The positive impact of the existing networks and associations was highlighted as follow:

- *“DARMA gives the members a platform to contribute to – at least – national systems. DARMA has a good collaboration with the national funders, research institutions, etc.”*
- *“The ministry /EUROCENTER recognises the significance of RMs and I feel we have a solid platform to provide specific and strategic feedback to EU through them.”*
- *“Denmark is better situated here than most countries, at least that’s my impression. Research support has gained much more widespread recognition and understanding in the past decade, then what it was only 10 years ago (and to be a bit self-congratulatory, I think DARMA has played an important role (...).”*

For the specific case of OPEN, there are no Network initiatives to the knowledge of the respondent. ”*The kind of support we deliver has traditionally been spread out on different departments/UNITS both in the regions and at the universities, but the landscape is changing and with the national initiative on Personalised Medicine all regions must have a data support center, it seems these centers will be more like OPEN and strive to deliver a boarder research support, like a “one-stop shop”. These data support centers will probably establish a more formalised network, but right now it is formalised around Personalised Medicine.*”

3. Please list all of the formal and informal networks and associations of research managers in your country and link to their websites or online groups. Skip if there are no networks your knowledge.

At Danish level, most respondents listed DARMA, EU-ERFA and EU-DK.

- [DARMA](#) is the national RMA organisation.
- [EU-DK](#): the Danish Education & Research Agency runs a EU network (+20 years old) focusing on the framework programmes, and a more recently created network that also covers e.g., Creative Europe, Digital Europe etc. Under Universities Denmark, there is a working group on EU, which also functions as a coordination network of EU related issues. The group also liaise with Danish Education & Research Agency on EU matters.
- [EU-ERFA](#): a group for administrative staff in the Danish public sector working with Horizon Europe.

In addition, it was explained that there are partly overlapping and/or very specialized networks. For example, open science has its own networks, in the context of the university libraries (no link provided).

Respondents also mentioned local/internal networks consisting of colleagues from other departments in their own institution (mentioned both from respondents from University Hospital Herlev and DTI).

The following links were provided for the health science area:

- [Gcp-units](#) in Denmark
- [OPEN](#)
- [Regional work groups](#)
- [National initiative on better use of health data](#)

Besides the Danish and local level, one respondent mentioned that: *“the work as ARMA Assessor which among other things made me reflect on how Denmark and the Danish Universities perform/organise our work but also gave some interesting insights in the different way you work with Research Support and Management around Europe”*.

4. Please list and link to any policy documents and funding which mentions research management or the equivalent national name(s) for research management.

In Denmark, research management is normally referred to as ‘forskerstøtte’ (literally “researcher support”), ‘forskningsstøtte’ (literally “research support”) or ‘forskningservice’ (“research service”). This is reflected in the names of many research support offices in Denmark. A few selected examples include Copenhagen University (“[Forskningsstøtte](#)”), Aarhus University (“[Forskningsstøtteenheden](#)” – ‘research support unit’), Aalborg University (“[Forskningservice](#)”), DTU (“[Forskningservice](#)”). Research support can thus be regarded as the established term used in Denmark, with the variations that are outlined above.

In official documents, research support is rarely referred to explicitly by name, but some examples include a report from Danish Regions with the title “Forskningsstøtte i sundhedsforskningen – Status og anbefalinger” (‘Research support in health research – status and recommendations’) from 2013 (PDF available on request), or a series of reports from the think tank DEA, for example ‘[International research funding](#)’ and two other related reports, which is in English and the term ‘research support’ is used. Research support is referred to in strategy documents, e.g. the current Region of Southern Denmark “[Strategy for Health Research](#)” (using “forskningsstøtte”).

In summary, whenever research management is referred to in Denmark in any formal or semi-formal setting, the terms research support, researcher support, or research services are typically used.

Most respondents were not aware of specific policy documents or funding that mentioned research management. It was stated that: *“On institutional level, RMA is seen as a part of the overall administrative set-up, and as such mentioned in internal rules, policies etc., but only as being gatekeepers, service providers and so on”*.

One respondent mentioned that he: *“feels that the work establishing the reference groups supporting the ministry explicitly recognised our role”*.

A [link](#) to Danmarks Forskningsportal Advisory Board was provided (probably because DARMA is a member).

4. Recommendations

If associations or networks do exist in your country, what recommendations would you share to support colleagues in setting one up in countries without associations or networks?

Based on the Danish example, it is clear that setting up and working with associations and networks is time-consuming. To be successful, these initiatives must receive support from management, as the persons leading this work will require both time and resources.

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to the colleagues who took time contributing to this first co-creation session.



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