

RM ROADMAP

Consensus Document for Country Community Spain

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 also covers other terms such as research support, research management and administration (RMA), 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 Spain** 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 four Ambassadors for Spain met prior to the opening of the Knowledge Community Platform (KCP) to share our views on this mission and develop a joint strategy to encourage maximum participation from our RMA community.

- We disseminated the call to contribute to the KCP through different communication channels, emails, LinkedIn, and Twitter.
- We sent direct announcements to the networks and working groups in which we are involved or that we acknowledge.
- We contacted the different RMA networks individually, asking them for their particular position and encouraging the participation of their members in the KCP platform.

After this first Co-Creation session, the Spanish community is currently the second largest group in the KCP with 108 members and 1035 views. These results give evidence of the awareness campaign which has been addressed at the RMA Spanish community. Despite this, very few people contributed to the discussion in the KCP in this first Co-Creation session (10 contributions/comments were posted in the KCP platform). Thus, the information gathered from the platform has been complemented with some relevant network positions and individual feedback received by their members, to have a more consistent representation for issuing this position document, as an excellent opportunity to raise our voice in Spain and Europe.

We regret the limited time for elaborating this position document and we would like to encourage the Spanish contributors to vote in this paper and actively get engaged by sharing their thoughts in the following discussions.

3. Discussion Outcomes of Co-Creation Session 1

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

The discussion was organised around the following four questions.

3.1 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.

There are several networks and working groups related to research management in Spain, either regional or sectorial (only for Universities or Research Performing Organizations -RPOs). There is one association which supports Knowledge Transfer, but there is no a formal association which supports 'Research Management' as such for the whole country (see details at [Section 3.3](#))

These networks have been created to support the RMAs role and upskilling training needs. They aim is to tackle the need to boost the research management capacity of Higher Education and/or RPOs.

Most of the networks offer thematic workshops and/or annual conferences for their members, addressed at knowledge exchange and acquisition of skills in RM.

Contributors mentioned the following aspects as **main added values** of the RM networks/working groups they belong to:

- i. They are a forum for the *exchange of knowledge and best practices among Research Managers*, a valuable space to share common doubts, ask questions and receive support from people who do similar work in other institutions. Contributors benefit from exchanging tools, learning from others who had similar challenges or validating actions where appropriate.
- ii. They enable *communication and constructive interaction with public research funding bodies*, providing the basis for attempting to influence research policy and thus directly contributing

to the strengthening of the Spanish Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) ecosystem.

- iii. They help *create a stronger identity for the RMA role*, and an opportunity to *invest in professional development*. They help promote best practices, offer networking opportunities, and advocate for the recognition of research management as a distinct profession.
- iv. They facilitate the creation of *new synergies and collaborations* between different institutions.

3.2 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.

As commented before, there are several networking initiatives across the country which are created as forums to share experiences and insights about the RMAs tasks and support their members on daily problems.

Contributors identified the following **main challenges** for the RM networks/working groups they belong to:

- i. Need to *devote resources* (e.g. time of coordinators, budget for organising activities/periodic meetings within the networks/working groups, budget for organising tailored training offers for RMAs) to ensure accomplishment of the objectives defined by each forum. Ideally extra hours dedicated to coordinate a network/working group should be remunerated.
- ii. Need for *proper communication tools/channels*, both internal to each forum and towards external audiences.
- iii. Need for *lobbying skills* and *clear advocacy actions*: contributors shared common difficulties in reaching out to public administrations, funding agencies, and political actors at both regional, and national level. Despite the fact that current networks/working groups facilitate these interactions, there is little communication between the different networks/groups, and it remains very difficult for the community of RMAs to have their voice heard to actively contribute to the creation of regulations that would support the RMAs sector. In line with this,

contributors expressed the need to have a voice also at a *European* level, so that key findings that emerge from these networking initiatives can have an impact there. A *more integrated structure or approach* is needed.

- iv. Need for *proper/formal recognition of the RMA networking initiatives* from governmental bodies and institutions (this is linked to the previous point).
- v. Need to *provide a consistent range of training courses for the RMAs community*, addressing both the regional, national and European RDI system.

3.3 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 to your knowledge.

The Contributors mentioned the following networks or working groups:

i) at the national level:

- **RedOE**, network for the European Project Offices for the Spanish Universities, <https://www.crue.org/comision-sectorial/idi/>
- **RedOTRI**, national network for Universities Research Results Transfer Offices, <http://www.redotriuniversidades.net/>
- **SOMMa Research Managers WG**, the 'Severo Ochoa' Centres and 'María de Maeztu' Units of Excellence Alliance, Working Group for Research Managers, <https://somma.es/news/el-iii-encuentro-gestors-somma-reune-a-80-representantes-en-bilbao/> This group has evolved into a space for discussion for Research Managers in its broadest sense.
- **Research projects' Network in CSIC**, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, State Research Performing Organisations. <https://www.csic.es/en/investigacion/catalogo-de-servicios-cientifico-tecnico/servicios/management-research-projects-entire>

- **MSCA COFUND Grants WG**, National working group run by NCPs.
beneficiarios-cofund@googlegroups.com
- **MCAA RM group**, Marie Curie Alumni Association Research Management Working Group, <https://medium.com/marie-curie-alumni/research-and-project-managers-the-unsung-heroes-in-the-second-row-f0d4972f43c> EU group (and not Spanish level, but founded by a Spanish research institute).
- **Alumni networks from RMA trainings**, per example CDTI-SOST (The Spanish Office for Science and Technology, <http://www.sost.es/>),
- **Linkedin groups**, with around 500 alumni from a postgraduate course on European Research Management www.upm.es/researchmanager

ii) at the local and regional level (i.e. at the level of the “Comunidades Autónomas):

- **RedOTRI Andalucía (ROA)** regional network of Public Universities in Andalusia, integrated by the Research Results Transfer Offices of the Andalusian Public Universities. <http://www.redotriandalucia.es/>
- **Catalan Research Managers network (CARMA)**, regional network in Catalonia, which supports 2 Working groups for the Professionalization of Research Managers in Catalonia and a Working Group for Research project Management.
https://agaur.gencat.cat/en/internacional/support_for_European_projects/xarxa-de-gestors-00001/
- **CERCA WGs**, Centres de Recerca de Catalunya, Working Groups, <https://cerca.cat/qui-som/grups-de-treball-cerca/>
- **Research Managers at various universities, Research Parks etc work in informal internal working groups.**

Additionally, at the national level, it is worth mentioning there is an Association:

- **Redtransfer**, Association on Knowledge transfer and innovation management professionals, <https://www.redtransfer.org/>

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

Laws at national level:

- The new Spanish Science Law (Law 17/22), approved in August 2022, modifies Law 14/2011, of June 1, on Science, Technology, and Innovation. Article 2 recognizes the express inclusion in the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System of technical staff and staff performing management, administration and service functions, as fundamental and essential elements of the same. Article 23 bis identifies the indefinite contract which includes a so-called, scientific-technical activities contract, meant for the hiring of research technical or management personnel. The contracts will be concluded for an indefinite period, independently of the Public Employment Offer.
<https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2011-9617>

Laws at local/regional level:

- The first Science law in Catalonia 9/22, approved in December 2022 (LLEI 9/2022, del 21 de desembre, de la ciència). Articles 17 and 19 incorporates a specific regulation for research support staff, named “technologist and technical research support staff, and administrative staff with functions in research collaboration and assistance, research development and innovation”, and it highlights the important role of research support staff in supporting and strengthening research, development and innovation (RDI). The law recognises the need for research support staff to have sound training and experience that enables them to carry out tasks that require specific skills. As such, the law recognises the need to facilitate their professional development. As well, Article 78 points out the need to promote the training of undergraduate students and, more intensively, of postgraduate students in the

management of research.

https://portaljuridic.gencat.cat/ca/detalls/noticia/llei_ciencia_dogc

Contributors identified the following **initiatives**:

- National Call for the Preparation and management of European projects and facilitating the attraction of international talent 2023 (Budget 12 million euro). Aimed at providing public and private research organisations with the structure and knowledge, to support the management of international projects, improve participation in Horizon Europe, as well as facilitating the attraction of international talent. Its purpose is to strengthen the structures of the applicant institutions by providing them with tools to attract international research management personnel, their incorporation, and their consolidation.

<https://www.aei.gob.es/convocatorias/buscador-convocatorias/preparacion-gestion-proyectos-europeos-facilitar-atraccion-1>

- National call for the recognition of Knowledge Transfer Offices (OTCs) in RPOs. OTCs act as an interface in the science-technology-business system. The main objective of the OTCs is to act by favouring and facilitating the transfer of technology between the public and private sectors. OTCs are responsible for managing technology transfer activities abroad such as the negotiation and preparation of contracts, the preparation of patent applications, the organisation and dissemination of the technological offer, direct contact with companies, start-ups creation and other related matters.

<https://www.ciencia.gob.es/home/Estrategias-y-Planes/Plan-de-Recuperacion-Transformacion-y-Resiliencia-PRTR/Transferencia-de-conocimiento;jsessionid=E1326452D358C053105EB5D09D34839B.1>

Publications and reports to consider:

- The professional and curricular profile of the Research Manager of International and Innovation Projects in Catalonia (2010). Report AGAUR.

https://agaur.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Internacionalitzacio/2010_11_29_perfil_del_gestor_de_projectes.pdf

- The International Research Manager in Catalonia (2020) Report AGAUR.
https://agaur.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Internacionalitzacio/informe_IRMA_AGAUR_2020_final-en-GB.pdf
- Professionalising Research Management in Catalonia (October 2023). RM Ambassadors for Spain. Case study based on the good practices, challenges and reflections shared by research management staff within the event which took place on June 15, 2023.
[Project Result \(crowdhelix.com\)](https://agaur.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Internacionalitzacio/Informe_PROFRES_en_final_accessible.pdf)
https://agaur.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Internacionalitzacio/Informe_PROFRES_en_final_accessible.pdf
- The importance of being a Research Manager (October 2023). Post by Gabriele Picarella (Preaward Coordinator at the CRG, Barcelona) and Joana Porcel (Head of the Projects Unit and Research Manager at ISGlobal, Barcelona).
<https://ellipse.prbb.org/the-importance-of-being-a-research-manager/>

4. Recommendations

There is an **important milestone towards supporting RMA's recognition** in the Spanish Science Law 17/22, which recognizes the express inclusion of staff performing management, administration and service functions, as fundamental and essential elements of the same. As well, the improvements in the labour conditions and support measures will impact their career perspectives.

Besides this, the RMAs that contributed in this first co-creation exercise consider there is still a need for better RMA recognition, a clear definition of the job, as well as dedicated strategies and resources to secure their career development and stability.

As mentioned in this document, Spain counts on several RMAs networks, either sectorial or regional, as well as working groups which facilitate interactions with public administrations and political actors, but this is not enough. A more integrated approach is needed, and a more formal RMA network should be officially recognised to have higher influence at the political and legislative level.

It is essential that the role of RMAs within the R+I community and their contribution to the success of funding attraction and science of excellence is clearly recognized by all R+I actors, including: State government (Ministries of Science and Universities), regional governments, private and public funding bodies and agencies, networks and associations of employers, NCPs, European parliamentarians, and, importantly, researchers themselves.

Most of the contributors agreed that **the creation of a formal Spanish RM association mirroring EARMA would be feasible and useful in overcoming current obstacles**, highlighting that a formal national association would allow us to:

- *Unite our voices* and thus ensure *higher impact and political influence*: a Spanish RMA association should work on *coordinating existing and future actions* (at both communities and State level) to support the professionalisation of RMAs on the one hand, and to support the recognition of the profession on the other hand (e.g. by developing a structured learning framework at national level with a common curriculum and standards covering all aspects of R+I management; through awards/contests, external communication/visibility actions, representation/advisory during the design of R+I policies of the local administration, etc.).
- *Discuss local problems considering the national specificities of the Spanish R+I system*. Enabling the interchange of ideas, outcomes and results between RMAs at a national level would be useful to discuss the problems we share under the same political and legal environment (labour rules, working needs, infrastructures).
- Contribute to the *internationalisation of Spanish RMAs*. It is necessary to be present in international networks and actively contribute to them.
- Work on *overcoming the existing territorial imbalances* in training, mentoring, mobility, cooperation, career prospects, etc. for RMAs in the different Autonomous Communities.
- *Get more local RMAs involved in the discussions at the national level*. At European level, EARMA

has built a strong community and many Spanish RMAs are EARMA members, but are not part of any of our local and informal current networks and working groups. A formal Spanish association could help to engage more members.

A Spanish network like this should be instigated by a more formal organisation that could invest resources mainly dedicated to its establishment in a useful way.

Therefore, if there is a formal Spanish RMAs association, they recommend:

- *Not to lose the European and broader perspective* while addressing national issues regarding the RM profession.
- *Define a specific roadmap and clear objectives* for the association, in order not to overlap with the current work of existing networks. *An initial mapping of the current networks/working groups* - how they are organised, who's involved, what are their specific objectives and activities, etc. - would be a useful starting point.

In conclusion, the role of RMAs in research is crucial for R+I ecosystems, and if we were better organised, we would contribute more effectively to the implementation of research and its outcomes in Spain (with a comprehensive approach to all the processes involved in research management), in line with other European R+I systems.

5. Acknowledgements

We thank all those who have contributed to the content of this document, both as individuals and as part of RMA networks/working groups.



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