

# RM ROADMAP

Consensus Document for Country Community: MALTA

***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”**

***Funded by the European Union’s Horizon Europe Programme***

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landscape: National Networks and  
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# Co-Creation Session 1

## 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 and Administrators (RMAs) 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 RMAs 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 RMAs 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 RMAs. 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 Malta** 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 and communities are provided in section 4.

For more information about the RM Roadmap initiative, the reader can consult the following website: [www.rmroadmap.eu](http://www.rmroadmap.eu)

## 2. Summary of Co-Creation Session 1

The Co-creation exercise for County Community Malta started as scheduled on October 2. A first set of replies was formulated by some of the ambassadors/associate ambassadors and posted to the Community Group. RMAs from the main research entities in Malta started being encouraged to join the Group as contributors. Up till now, Malta is characterised by a relatively fragmented and disconnected RMA community. The ambassadors felt that this co-creation exercise provided the right opportunity to reach out to the various RMAs and, besides asking them to contribute to the objective of the RM Roadmap project, start laying the foundations of a network of RMAs, albeit largely informal. Reach-out to the RMAs was conducted initially via emails and followed by personal contact. It is evident that not all RMAs in the local community understood the concept behind the RM Roadmap initiative and not all consider themselves as part of the RMA community. Thus, the Maltese ambassadors will be following up with regrouping the local community of RMAs, as much as possible, initially through building and maintaining a database of RMAs, and subsequently holding regular catchup meetings and activities/events.

### 3. Discussion Outcomes of Co-Creation Session 1

**a. 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.**

The answer to question one concerning the national network of RMAs, highlighted the fact that in Malta there is no formal or informal national network of RMAs but networking is carried out on a regular basis within the particular research entity. Consequently, engagement in the profession is very much fragmented and on an own-initiative-basis. Nonetheless, there are a number of individuals employed in research management roles who are being/can be targeted by RM Roadmap and other similar initiatives. These research managers are mostly employed at the University of Malta (UM) and the Malta College for Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) as the two main public research performing institutions in Malta. However, the scope of research management can easily be extended to individuals working in support of research in other public and private entities in Malta. As part of the RM Roadmap project, the ambassadors will be reaching out to a number of individuals and entities in Malta to devise a list of people who can form a network of RMAs in Malta.

The discussion highlighted the fact that RMAs in Malta do not communicate on research management matters between them. Thus an essential step in the building and maintenance of a local network of RMAs would be strengthening the internal communication within the entities where RMAs are employed and the external communication between the entities employing RMAs. It is also crucial to reach out and engage with individuals/groups who are somewhat involved in research management activities but are not yet aware that they can also be part of the RMA community.

**b. 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.**

RMA networking initiatives in Malta have so far been very limited to the very own institutions where the RMAs are employed, with no attempt or very limited attempt to interact with other RMAs outside their intimate group (where the research management profession is concerned). This is rather evident in the participation of RMAs in supranational events such as the EARMA conference or similar events. The Maltese context is very small and for many years the University of Malta has by far been the only public research performing organisation in Malta. However, with MCAST embarking on its research mission and other public and private entities engaging more in research activities, and the acknowledgement that individuals working for

public funding bodies such as the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) are also largely RMAs, there is scope for widening and building an active network of RMAs in Malta. RM Roadmap is being used as a launchpad for this objective. Contributors to this discussion argued that the widening and building of an active network of RMAs in Malta should be presented as an exciting initiative to stimulate interest and engagement.

- c. 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.**

There are no formal and informal networks and associations of RMAs in Malta. But there is ample ground for exploring further the local landscape and get different RMAs in contact with each other in a local informal network. This will hopefully be achieved by the ambassadors through the RM Roadmap initiative.

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

By virtue of the replies to Questions 1 to 3, it is not surprising that no policy documents and funding which mentions research management or equivalent could be identified in Malta. Nonetheless, one must note that job titles and job descriptions in the two main research performing organisations in Malta, namely the University of Malta and MCAST, largely reflect research management roles. Job titles and job descriptions pertaining to Research Support Services Manager / Officer at the University of Malta and Senior / Research Officers at MCAST are directly linked to research management and support activity in these main research performing entities in Malta

## 4. Recommendations

The findings reported above indicate clearly that there is a strong potential to build, acknowledge and enhance a Maltese community of RMAs. In spite of the challenges that such infancy in the recognition of the research management profession in Malta presents, the following recommendations have the potential to increase visibility and awareness towards the profession in Malta and in other countries with similar characteristics:

1. Identifying and keeping record of entities conducting research activities;
2. Identifying and keeping record of entities who are involved in research policy and possibly in supporting research, directly or indirectly;
3. Building and maintaining a database of individuals involved in and carrying out roles in research management;
4. Reach out to the identified entities and individuals
5. Organize regular touchpoints, activities that would bring the local research management community together to discuss and share common challenges, best practices and initiatives
6. Encourage attendance to supranational events/activities that expose the local community to the wider research management community, such as EARMA's annual conference, conferences organized by other RMA organisations and other public (incl online) events for RMAs.
7. In view of the infancy of the network of RMAs and the challenges identified, supranational support or initiatives driving RMA engagement, such as RM Roadmap and ERA Action, give a strong helping hand to a small community like that of Malta

## 5. References

N/A.

## 6. Acknowledgements

This consensus document has been prepared by the Maltese ambassadors and associate ambassadors for the RM Roadmap project, Dr Christian Bonnici – Director of Research Support Services at the University of Malta, Dr Tatjana Chircop – Deputy Principal for Research and Innovation at the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, Dr Elena Sultana – Research Project Manager at the University of Malta in consultation with Prof. Ing Simon G. Fabri, Pro-rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Malta.



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