



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

RM ROADMAP

A ROADMAP FOR RESEARCH MANAGEMENT (RM) TO STRENGTHEN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA (ERA)

Enabling the success of European research by providing a *Roadmap* for Research Management (RM) to support the objectives in ERA Action 17—as well as the other actions—of the ERA Strategic Agenda.

31 August 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

Research Management (RM) is a profession defined by its inextricable relation to research (see Figure 1). RM contributes unique expertise and skill set without which the Research and Innovation (R&I) system will not function. RM is not defined by laws and rules but emerges in response to real and intrinsic needs in the R&I system. This is reflected in the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda¹, where well-functioning RM is a prerequisite to achieve the goals set out in all the twenty Actions. RM is specifically targeted in *ERA Action 17 RESEARCH MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE – Enhancing the strategic capacity of Europe’s public research performing and funding organisations*.

Europe can now strengthen the R&I system by strengthening European RM, which is already a large and vibrant community. However, Europe is lagging behind the USA, where RM has been an established profession for at least 70 years and is recognised as a necessary component for the success of the R&I system². As confirmed by *Preliminary report on ERA-wide landscape* from the [RM Roadmap project](#) (Deliverable 1.1), European RM needs a commonly accepted definition, improved framework conditions, and better establishment in many regions in Europe.

The consequences for the current ERA include (selected examples):

- European research and innovation systems that are slow and inefficient in adapting and responding to challenges.
- Reduced research productivity due to lack of support, leading to inefficient innovation and knowledge transfer.
- Talent drain from Europe due to inadequate RM expertise and support for researchers.
- Lost networking and collaboration opportunities due to inadequate facilitation.

The RM Roadmap project is addressing the challenges using an ambitious co-creation approach to produce an evidence-base for strengthening the ERA and drawing up a roadmap for harnessing the full potential of European RM.

2. EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The RM Roadmap project is designed to be the most comprehensive co-creation exercise for RM that has ever been performed in Europe. As the RM Roadmap has started in 2022, only preliminary results are available at the time of writing this policy brief, but the data are well aligned with conclusions from other similar studies, including CARDEA⁴ (the sister project of RM Roadmap), and RAAAP surveys⁵.

Together, collected data provide a clear and coherent picture of the state of the RM profession, a picture that is familiar to the RM community from scattered evidence. This picture can be summed up in four points:

- i. Lack of a coherent and generally agreed-upon description of RM as a profession;
- ii. Unclear description and evidence base of the value proposition of RM;
- iii. Lack of recognition of RM as a profession;
- iv. Insufficient framework conditions to enable a strong RM community, including lacking career paths, inadequate resources, and insufficient training opportunities.

Each item in the list amplifies the subsequent items. This results in a complex and disjointed total picture that is negatively impacting the potential and long-term future of the ERA. Since the realisation of all the Actions of the ERA Policy Agenda depends on RM expertise, this picture should be a matter of immediate concern and priority.

Using preliminary data gathered by the RM Roadmap project, RM can be explained as the profession connecting other, traditional professions in the R&I ecosystem, also acting as a catalyst and connector for and within research:

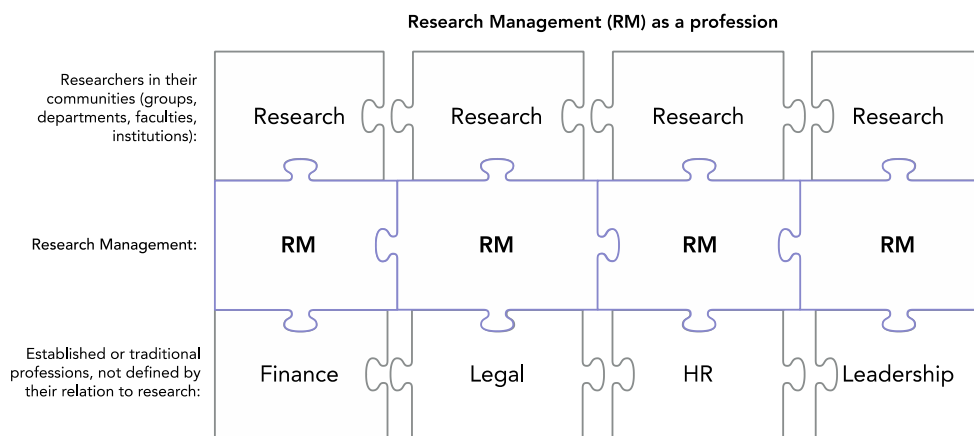


Figure 1. RM is defined by its inextricable relation to research, connecting all the parts of the R&I system, also research. This is in contrast to established or traditional professions.

RM Roadmap is currently creating a strong interactive and inclusive European community by establishing a network of RM Roadmap Ambassadors, to deliver solutions to the challenges listed above and the goals in ERA Action 17:

- a. Upskilling
- b. Recognition
- c. Networking
- d. Capacity building

This exercise is supported by the main data collection efforts of RM Roadmap, including surveys of the existing training and career development opportunities for the European RM community. For the ongoing main data and information collecting effort, the newly established Ambassadors' Network and a tailor-made digital Knowledge and Communication Platform will be used to assist and support the data collection of the project through surveys, desk research, and other methods.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations aim to support the goals outlined in the ERA Policy Agenda Action 17, ‘Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe’s public research performing organisations’, pursued by RM Roadmap to contribute to the success of the entire ERA Policy Agenda. The recommendations are based on preliminary data from RM Roadmap, input from the RM Roadmap Ambassador Network, the CARDEA survey, and other sources.

At this early point in the RM Roadmap project (2023), recommendations are by necessity general. A second RM Roadmap policy brief (2025) will include more specific recommendations, based on the upcoming 5 co-creation sessions* on the digital Knowledge and Communication Platform. The four main recommendations below draw on input from the RM Roadmap Ambassador network’s first meeting in Budapest, Hungary in May 2023. The four recommendations below relate to the four goals of ERA Action 17 and the RM Roadmap project:

- A. **Upskilling.** Contribute to *developing more and better training opportunities for RM in Europe*. Preliminary information from RM Roadmap indicates that a small number of institutions in Europe currently offer training, and that RM associations and organisations provide the majority of such training. Preliminary data from RM Roadmap, CARDEA, and RAAAP also indicate that only a small fraction of RM staff in Europe has access to RM-specific training, due to limited financial opportunities, limited time, and the lack of recognised certification programmes. Actions that may contribute include:
 - a. *Mapping training* available to RM in Europe and making this knowledge available to the widest possible audience.
 - b. Incentivising a dialogue between ministries, research funding organisations and research performing organisations to *support the training and education of RM staff*.
- B. **Recognition.** Promote the recognition of RM as a profession that is *a necessary component of a well-functioning research and innovation system*. Many actions may contribute, and RM Roadmap will provide further detail for each, including for example:
 - a. Facilitating the development and promoting a short, easy-to-understand description and definition of the RM profession as the *catalyst of the research and innovation process*. This should include a segmentation or classification of the different parts of research management.
 - b. Raising awareness about RM as a *strategic investment*, not as an *administrative cost*. A common barrier to investing in RM is the widespread misconception that supporting research is an (unnecessary) administrative cost, contributing to increased bureaucracy, whereas the opposite is true.
- C. **Networking.** Resources for networking for RM staff are scarce and often seen as unnecessary, as indicated by e.g. focus group discussions in the RM Roadmap Ambassador Network, *Preliminary report on ERA-wide landscape* from the [RM Roadmap project](#) (Deliverable 1.1), and the CARDEA survey. Expecting RM staff to provide excellent expertise without adequate opportunities to communicate and collaborate is unrealistic. Networking for RMs should be as natural as it is for researchers, leadership and other professions. Sharing

* The 5 Topics Include: (1) Understand The Landscape: National Networks And Associations; (2) Who Are Research Managers/ Skills And Competences; (3) Training, Networking And Professional Development Opportunities; (4) Career Development Framework; (5) RM Value Proposition. Full timeline [here](#).

best practices would benefit the whole R&I ecosystem, creating a positive environment. Possible actions include:

- a. *Mapping networking opportunities* available to RM in Europe and making this knowledge available to the widest possible audience.
 - b. Providing adequate funding and conditions for networking, both from research funders, ministries and employers of RM.
 - c. Promoting networking activities both in-person and online. RM Roadmap's Knowledge and Communication Platform is intended as an arena for such networking activities. National and regional RM associations are important for encouraging and enabling networking activities.
- D. **Capacity building.** Inadequate resourcing emerges as a major challenge for RM all over Europe. Building capacity by a solid evidence base will support the goals of the ERA Policy Agenda. Even before the final results from the RM Roadmap project can be presented, these actions will support more balanced capacity building:
- a. Developing a *structured value proposition description* for RM at the European level, which can be adapted to each country, region, and organisation. Such a value proposition should be based on data-supported evidence produced by RM Roadmap, CARDEA, and other sources.
 - b. *Starting or intensifying the dialogue between research performing organisations, research funding organisations, ministries, RM associations and RM experts* to raise awareness of the role and the value proposition of RM.

References:

1. [European Research Area Policy Agenda – Overview of actions for the period 2022-2024](#) (link to PDF). ISBN 978-92-76-43733-8 doi:10.2777/52110. European Commission 2021.
2. [The Role of Research Administration](#). NCURA Micrograph, 5th Edition. National Council of University Research Administrators, 2021.
3. RM Roadmap project website: <https://www.rmroadmap.eu>
4. CARDEA project website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cardea/>
5. RAAAP Surveys output: <https://inorms.net/activities/raaap-taskforce/raaap-outputs/>
6. D1.1 Preliminary report on ERA-wide landscape: <https://www.rmroadmap.eu>
7. D2.1 Preliminary report on professional development opportunities: <https://www.rmroadmap.eu>

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	Creating framework conditions for research management to strengthen the European Research Area (RM Roadmap)
COORDINATOR	Nik Claesen, European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), Brussels, Belgium, nik.claesen@earma.org
CONSORTIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA)• European Association of European Science & Technology Transfer Professionals (ASTP)• Crowdhelix Limited• The Cyprus Institute• HETFA Kutatointezet KFT• Universidade NOVA de Lisboa• Janssen Pharmaceutical companies of Johnson and Johnson• UNA EUROPA
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BUDGET	EU contribution: € 1 499 997,00.
WEBSITE	https://www.rmroadmap.eu
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact Nik Claesen, nik.claesen@earma.org and Borana Taraj, borana.taraj@earma.org



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Annex 1: Success stories

1. The RM Roadmap Ambassadors' Network

To support the goals of the ERA Policy Agenda's Action 17 as outlined in this brief, one of RM Roadmap's main goals is to establish a network of engaged RM experts from all over Europe, covering as much as possible of the very wide variation of roles and expertise included in the RM profession. The establishment of the RM Roadmap Ambassadors' Network and the overwhelming interest in this network is a clear indication that RM Roadmap and Action 17 are addressing real needs of the RM community, and the European R&I system.

The Ambassadors' Network was designed and established in late 2022-early 2023 through open calls and interactions with existing research managers and administrators' associations and networks throughout Europe. By August 2023, the Ambassador's Network include 71 ambassadors and 44 associate ambassadors, 115 in total, from 40 European countries. The remarkable level of enthusiasm reflects how important the issues presented in e.g. this policy brief is for European experts in research management and the R&I system.

The first face-to-face meeting took place in Budapest, Hungary, on 9 May 2023, and was attended on-site by 60 ambassadors and associate ambassadors, and many more through the broadcast of the official launch, which is available on [EARMA's YouTube channel](#), and presented on [RM Roadmap's web pages](#).

The RM Roadmap Ambassadors' Network reaches a larger section of European research managers and administrators than any previous network, and will be used to provide input and design solutions to challenges facing the RM community and the European R&I system.

2. The RM Roadmap Knowledge and Communication Platform (KCP)

By the end of August 2023, EARMA and RM Roadmap are launching the new Knowledge and Communications Platform (KCP) to support reaching the goals of the project, and also to provide a long-lasting impact beyond RM Roadmap's project period.

The KCP is a new online co-creation space, designed to provide a platform where RMs can share their views, and information on available training and funding, and introduce issues for discussion with a focus on solutions. The KCP is not just another online forum, but a structured arena for co-creation by combining EARMA's website with the [Research Management Helix](#) on the Crowdhelix Open Innovation platform.

The RM Roadmap KCP will also present relevant RM news and developments from e.g. other projects and associations. The KCP is the result of an intense development process, resulting in a novel technical solution that matches the RM Roadmap Ambassadors' Network, providing unique conditions for unprecedented progress in strengthening the role of RM in European R&I and contributing actively to reaching the goals set out in the ERA Policy Agenda. Specifically, RM Roadmap is onboarding the wider RM community to join five co-creation sessions on the following themes: (1) Understanding The Landscape: National Networks And Associations; (2) Who Are Research Managers/ Skills And Competences; (3) Training, Networking And Professional Development Opportunities; (4) Career Development Framework; (5) Rm Value Proposition. Each of the sessions will generate country-specific consensus documents reflecting the current state of the RM profession in Europe.