RM ROADMAP

Report from the third co-creation session of the RM Roadmap project

Training and Career Development Framework

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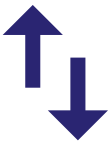
1. Executive summary



RM Roadmap Ambassadors in 28 European countries and in 6 RM thematic communities contributed to this co-creation exercise.



RM Comp was acknowledged as a tool to facilitate professional development, standardise RM competencies, support career planning, and promote the recognition and value of RM roles across Europe.



A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is required to induce adoption and adaptation of a competence framework for RMs.



All relevant stakeholders - including research-performing organisations (RPOs), research funding organisations (RFOs), competent ministries, policy makers, and professional RM networks/associations - play a crucial role to ensure coordinated implementation.



In order to unlock potential future action towards enhancing the professional development of Research Managers, two different schemes/formats for a potential EU-wide training and mobility programme for RMs were analysed in terms of feasibility, relevance and impact: an individual mobility and training grant, and an institutional collaboration model.



While both schemes/formats were recognised for their complementary value, a clear tendency emerged to prioritise the institutional collaboration model for its long-term institutional impact - though many stakeholders emphasised the need to implement both an individual mobility and training grant scheme and an institutional collaboration model, so as to address different but equally relevant dimensions of professional development in research management.

Summary

The report describes the outcomes of the third RM Roadmap co-creation exercise aimed at engaging the Research Managers community in assessing how to i) adapt or adopt the European Competence Framework for Research Managers (RM Comp) published in 2025; and ii) design a suitable EU-wide training scheme to enhance the professional development of Research Managers.

The co-creation exercise was led by the Roadmap Ambassadors in 28 European countries and in 6 RM thematic communities and gathers the views of the RM community expressed in the 34 consensus documents generated between November 2024 and March 2025. It provides a robust basis for formulating policy and defining initiatives at the European, national, regional, or local level on Research Management in Europe.

The **RM community acknowledged the RM Comp as a tool** to facilitate professional development, standardise RM competencies, support career planning, and promote the recognition and value of RM roles across Europe.

A **combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is required to induce adoption and adaptation of a competence framework for RMs**, but all relevant stakeholders - including research-performing organisations (RPOs), research funding organisations (RFOs), competent ministries, policy makers, and professional RM networks/associations - play a crucial role to ensure coordinated implementation.

RPOs (including universities, research centers, etc.) **can act as "early adopters"** implementing the RM Comp framework and promoting its benefits, by implementing specific HR policies and internal career frameworks, introducing incentives for RM recognition and professional development, and guidelines for hiring RMs, raising awareness and initiating pilot programmes for RMs, among other measures. The impact of RPOs as “early adopters” can extend widely beyond the institutional level.

RM associations and networks have a clear role in the awareness raising process **to advocate** at the institutional, national, regional, and European levels for the incorporation of the RM framework in training programmes, HR policies, funding schemes, etc., while providing multiple direct opportunities for professional development, training, knowledge exchange, networking.

RFOs have a critical role in setting standards and good practices by introducing RM Comp into their policies and funding programmes, and by evaluating its impact. Examples of measures in funding programmes could be the inclusion of a dedicated budget line for RM personnel in grants and/or requirements for applicants to explain how RMs contribute to project implementation and outcomes. Specific funding strategies could focus on creating adequate structured career frameworks for RMs.

Collectively, the action of individual RMs, RM associations and networks, RPOs and RFOs raises awareness and supports national and European policymaking institutions to incorporate RM recognition and RM Comp into national and international policy towards better RM recognition, professionalization, career development and standardisation of practices (e.g. certification, exchange of best practices) all over Europe.

The RM community has also shared insights into existing initiatives or practices that could leverage the adaptation or adoption of the RM Comp framework. For example, some countries reported informal discussions taking place within RPOs regarding professionalization of RMs.

However, no systematic efforts have yet been initiated at the national level. Others expressed that the legal recognition of RMs would require a complex and lengthy political and legislative process; others mentioned that this issue is not on the current political agenda. This input, although not extensive, provides understanding about potential challenges for the integration of the framework across diverse settings.

In order to unlock potential **future action towards enhancing the professional development of Research Managers**, two different formats for a potential EU-wide training and mobility programme for RMs were analysed in terms of feasibility, relevance and impact: **Scheme A envisages individual grants** to support the induction and development of individual RM careers across Europe and upskilling through training and mobility (following the model of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and ERA fellowships); **Scheme B aims at strengthening Research Management through institutional application** for funding to support staff exchanges and training opportunities across organisations (following the model ofMSCA Staff Exchanges and ERA Talents).

The features that would ensure feasibility, attractiveness and impact at individual and institutional levels of scheme A and B were clearly identified and this information can be used to guide the design of each of these two types of funding schemes specific for RM professionals.

Regarding Scheme A there were clear convergent views - but also divergent ones - regarding attributes important to take into consideration when designing this type of funding scheme. Agreed priorities include guarantee of return to post; focus on short - term and flexible mobility (weeks to 1 month, some support to 3 - 6 months stays too); focus on training through mentoring, courses, and job shadowing; targeting early - and mid - career RMs; provision of adequate financial support (emphasis on salary coverage, mobility costs, and family allowances); inclusion of all types of RPOs (universities and non - university research organisations); need for clear eligibility criteria and straight forward transparent processes; focus on opportunities for individual development and international experience.

Summary continued

Regarding Scheme B there were clear convergent views, but also divergent ones, regarding attributes important to take into consideration when designing this type of funding scheme. Agreed priorities include institutional engagement (formal endorsement, resource allocation, designated contact points); institutional capacity and a culture of inter - institutional collaboration; focus on short-term and flexible mobility, peer learning and good practice exchange; targeting mid and senior-level RMs; inclusion of diverse organisation types (universities, research institutes, funders, and private sector actors to ensure cross -sectoral benefit).

While both Scheme A and Scheme B were recognised for their complementary value, a clear tendency emerged to prioritise Scheme B for its long-term institutional impact - though many stakeholders emphasised the need to implement both schemes to address different but equally relevant dimensions of professional development in research management.

List of Abbreviations

CARDEA	Career Acknowledgement for Research (Managers) Delivering for the European Area
EARMA	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators
EC	European Commission
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
KCP	Knowledge and Community Platform
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
R&I	Research and Innovation
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
RM	Research Management / Research Manager
RM Comp	European Competence Framework for Research Managers
RPO	Research Performing Organisation

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). The aim of the RM Roadmap project is to create a consensus on the understanding and way forward of the Research Management (RM) profession.

RM Roadmap consists of 8 partners: European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (Belgium); HETFA Research Institute (Hungary); Nova University Lisbon (Portugal); Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals (Netherlands); Crowdhelix Limited (Ireland), The Cyprus Institute (Cyprus) and associated partners Janssen Pharmaceuticals (Belgium) and Una Europa (Belgium).

The RM Roadmap Knowledge and Community Platform (KCP) brings research managers together supporting a co-creation process aimed at shaping the future of the profession and 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 co-creation discussions for each country or thematic group on the Knowledge and Community Platform, supported by national, regional and thematic RM networks.

Research management includes a broad range of professionals supporting researchers to achieve excellence in research. For the purpose of the RM Roadmap co-creation exercise, research managers (RMs) are to be considered as broad as possible including, but not limited to: 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 endeavour covers also other terms such as research support, research management and administration, professionals at the interface of science and other terms which are used regularly in the national landscapes across Europe.

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

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.

The RM Roadmap project has identified the following three topics to be addressed from 2023 to 2025:



Figure 1. Co-creation sessions

The main aim of the 1st co-creation exercise was to outline the national landscapes for research managers in the 40 country communities involved in the project, in particular in regards to: (1) Existence (or not existence) of national RM networks, associations, laws, policies or initiatives in Europe; (2) Perceived value of national RM initiatives by RM staff; (3) Challenges encountered by RM professionals in their national frameworks. An overview of existing associations in Europe based on the national consensus documents was then provided and information was gathered of a total of 263 initiatives which comprise existing networks and associations from 29 countries, as well as a total of 91 national RM laws and policies from 23 countries collected in the report. The analysis of the data concluded with the added value of existing networks and associations to the RM community.

The 2nd co-creation exercise provided a nuanced overview of the varied and evolving nature of Research Management (RM) across Europe, highlighting key areas and national specificities that influence the profession. The results of the co-creation exercise confirm that RMs operate in a wide range of roles, from proposal development and project support. The RM Roadmap survey and subsequent co-creation session aimed to capture these roles' diversity and complexity, noting the fluid and hybrid nature of the profession. National communities emphasised the need for a broad definition that acknowledges emerging fields and the blend of administrative, management and support tasks. Issues such as the lack of recognition, inadequate policies, and insufficient funding for RM were recurring themes influencing the national landscape. These challenges are compounded by varied HR policies and a lack of standardised career frameworks, which hinder career progression and professional recognition.

The main objectives of the 3rd co-creation exercise were two-fold:

- Involve the RM community in one of the key objectives of the RM Roadmap project: recommend an EU-wide training scheme designed to enhance the professional development of Research Managers;

- Assess what the RM community believes are necessary steps – at national or thematic area level - in order to adapt or adopt a Europe-wide professional development framework.

This report is based on the results gathered in the 34 consensus documents generated between November 2024 and March 2025 in 28 European countries and in 6 RM thematic communities. The main aims of this report are to summarise the information gathered in the co-creation exercise (with no changes made to the content of the consensus documents) and to draw conclusions about the most consensual opinions of the community. This is intended to create a solid and participatory basis for formulating new pathways for political action and/or initiatives at the European, national, regional, or local level.

The report is structured in two parts: the first examines the main findings concerning the adoption or adaptation of a professional development framework, while the second focuses on analysing the key findings related to the proposed training scheme. The final section presents the resulting recommendations and conclusions, emphasising potential areas of overlap and synergy between the two topics.

Figure 2 shows which RM country communities have been involved in the RM Roadmap project.

Figure 3 is the map showing which country communities submitted consensus documents for the 3rd co-creation exercise.

Figure 2. RM Roadmap 40 country communities on the Knowledge and Community Platform

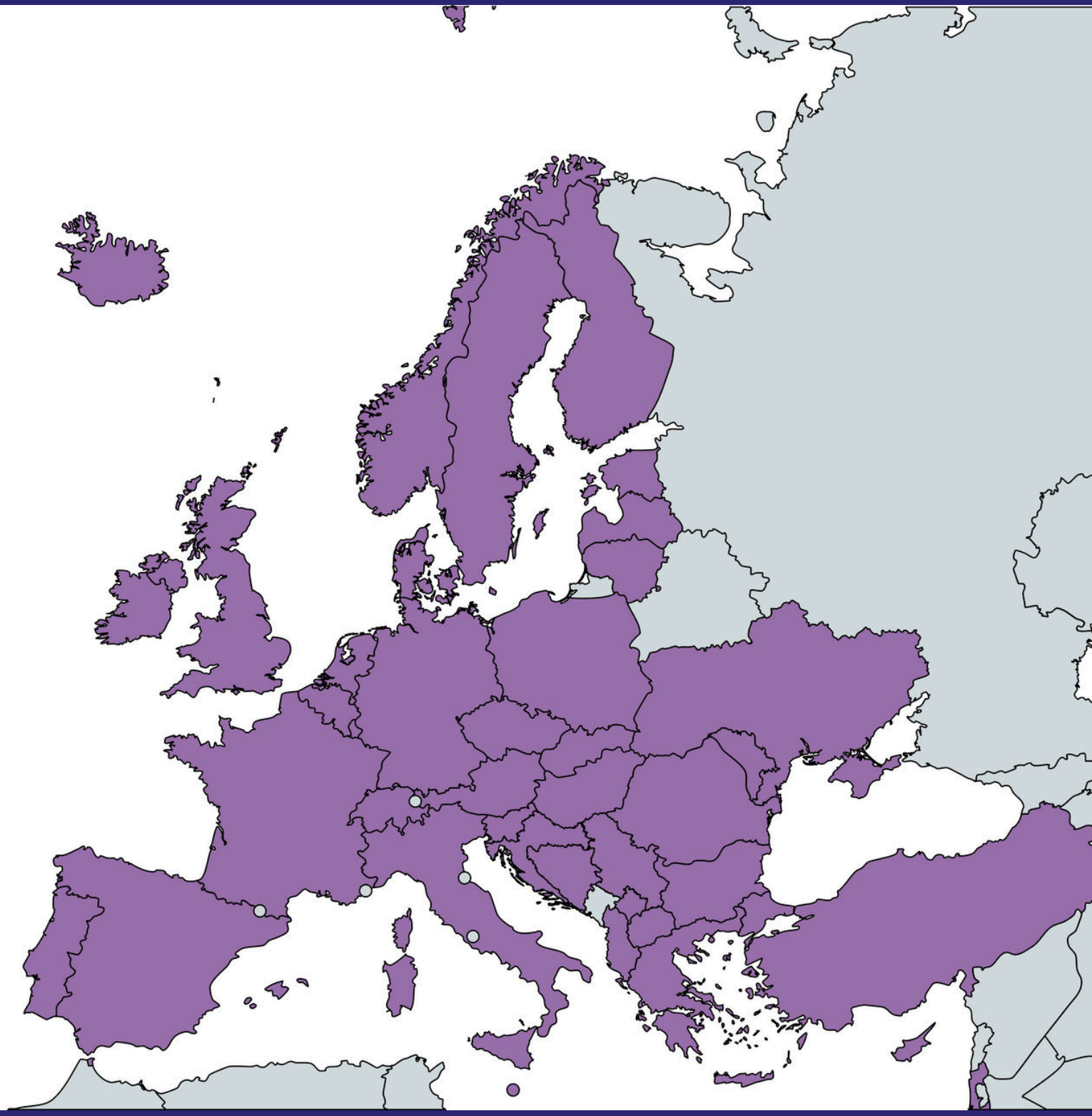


Figure 3. 28 country communities that submitted consensus documents for the 3rd co-creation exercise



National and thematic co-creation consensus documents

Twenty-eight national communities and six thematic communities submitted consensus documents for the 3rd Co-creation Session, as listed in the following table:

COUNTRY COMMUNITIES			
AUSTRIA	AT	ITALY	IT
BELGIUM	BE	LATVIA	LV
BULGARIA	BG	LUXEMBOURG	LU
CROATIA	HR	MALTA	MT
CYPRUS	CY	NETHERLANDS	NL
CZECHIA	CZ	NORWAY	NO
DENMARK	DK	PORTUGAL	PT
FINLAND	FI	ROMANIA	RO
FRANCE	FR	SERBIA	RS
GERMANY	DE	SLOVENIA	SI
GREECE	EL	SPAIN	ES
HUNGARY	HU	SWEDEN	SE
ICELAND	IS	SWITZERLAND	CH
IRELAND	IE	TÜRKIYE	TR
THEMATIC COMMUNITIES			
RESEARCH TRAINING / CAREER DEVELOPMENT (Thematic: Training)			
RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER (Thematic: KTT)			
RESEARCH IMPACT (Thematic: Impact)			
RESEARCH GRANT OFFICER / ADVISER (PRE-AWARD) (Thematic: Pre-Award)			
RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGER (POST-AWARD) (Thematic: Post-Award)			
RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY (Thematic: Ethics)			

Methods used by the RM communities

The content of this document is based on data collected through a range of methodological approaches, as detailed in the table below. This data was gathered by the RM Ambassadors, whose dedicated efforts are instrumental to the success of this initiative and the RM Roadmap project at large. We express our profound appreciation for their commitment, professionalism, and invaluable contributions. Without their active engagement and support, it would not have been possible to present the comprehensive and relevant information presented here.

The majority of the Ambassadors used the Knowledge and Community Platform made available by the RM Roadmap project, whereas several Ambassadors complemented the co-creation process using other methods for data collection such as on-line surveys, online and face-to-face meetings, and individual consultations. The full consensus documents for each country community and each thematic community will be available on the project website.

Please note that we will be using the abbreviations mentioned in the table below throughout the document for ease of reading.

Table summarising methods used by the RM communities

KCP	Online Survey (No. of responses)	Online meeting (No. of participants)	Face-to-face meeting (No. of participants)	Individual consultation
National communities: AT, BE, CH, CZ, DK, FI, FR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, RS, SI, SE, CH, TR Thematic Communities: Research Ethics and Integrity, Research Grant Officer/Adviser (Pre-award), Research Impact, Research Project Management (Post-Award), Research Training and Research Career Development	National communities: HR (80) IE (28) PT (45) Thematic Communities: Research Impact (23) Research Training and Research Career Development (15)	National communities: CZ (50) FR (14) IE (32) IT (22), TR (1) Thematic Communities: Research Impact (25 + 33)	National communities: BE, FR (22), HU (80+), PT (30), RS (36), TR (2 hybrid (42, 67)) Thematic Communities: Research Impact (2 events in Brussels (25, 33))	National communities: AT, IS, ES, CH, DK, NL, NO

RM Roadmap 2nd Ambassador Meeting group photo in Lisbon/Portugal March 2024
(Photo by Jenniffer Pais)



The 3rd Co-creation exercise

The co-creation exercise was divided into two parts, each characterised by specific goals and approaches. These parts were analysed separately to facilitate a comprehensive and differentiated assessment of the outcomes emerging from each stage of participant interaction and content generation.

PART 1 - Professional Development and Career Path

The Competence Framework for Research Managers initiated by CARDEA has been adjusted with the inputs from RM Roadmap. The current version of the possible European Competence Framework for Research Managers (RM Comp) has recently been published, after being validated with stakeholders, including policy-makers, RPO leaders and Research Managers under the coordination of Action 17, the Research Management Initiative. RM Comp aims to facilitate professional development by offering clear learning outcomes and progression models, encouraging Research Managers to enhance their skills and competences. The framework aims to standardise RM competencies, support career planning, and promote the recognition and value of RM roles across Europe.

Given the fluid and flexible nature of the profession, with constantly emerging roles and fields, the RM Comp also underlines several key aspects: entry into the profession can occur at various levels based on educational background and expertise; professional development should be possible both vertically and across specialisations; leadership in research support services should be recognised as a specialized expertise, while leadership skills should be acknowledged across all competency areas; and RM Comp should remain a dynamic document that evolves with the profession.

RM Roadmap Ambassadors were invited to reflect on the steps required to facilitate the adoption or adaptation of the proposed framework and career path for Research Managers (RMs) within their respective communities - whether national or thematic. They were also encouraged to share insights into current initiatives, programmes, or policies already in place in their countries or thematic areas that could support or align with the implementation of this framework. This input aimed to provide a clearer understanding of the contextual needs, opportunities, and potential challenges that might influence the successful integration of the framework across diverse settings.

PART 2 - Funded schemes at the EU level

One of the key objectives of the RM Roadmap project is to recommend an EU-wide training scheme designed to enhance the professional development of Research Managers. To ensure that the recommendations are relevant and grounded in the needs of the RM community, we presented two potential scenarios for consideration. The scenarios envisaged the future implementation of one of two training schemes, each with particular features, which have been adapted from well-established researcher-focused programmes, thus ensuring familiarity and ease of adoption by the RM community and policymakers.

The proposed schemes for EU-level funding were as follows:

Scheme A - This initiative focuses on supporting the entrance and development of individual RM careers across Europe by providing long-term financial support for individual grants for upskilling through training and mobility. Like the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and ERA fellowships, Scheme A would offer individual grants, providing flexibility for personal career development without requiring institutional commitments.

Scheme B - This initiative aims at strengthening Research Management through institutional collaboration. Institutions would apply for funding to support staff exchanges and training opportunities across organisations, following the model of MSCA Staff Exchanges and ERA Talents. Unlike Scheme A, Scheme B requires a strong institutional commitment, fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices between organisations and sectors. The focus here is on building institutional capacity while also advancing the professional development of RMs involved in these exchanges.

The RM community was asked to comment on which features would need to be introduced so that each one of these scheme formats would be feasible to implement and attractive to RMs in their national/thematic community.

They were also asked to consider the potential impacts of each initiative on the professional development of the RM community, and invited to provide feedback on which of the schemes should be prioritised and the reasons thereof.

MAIN FINDINGS - PART 1

Professional development and career path

Research Managers (RMs) play a vital role in enhancing the quality, efficiency, and compliance of research, while also amplifying its social and economic impact. Therefore, making Research Management (RM) roles more visible and valued within the research ecosystem is essential. The European Competence Framework for Research Managers (RM Comp) aims to facilitate professional development by offering clear learning outcomes and progression models, encouraging Research Managers to enhance their skills and competences. The framework aims to standardise RM competencies, support career planning, and promote the recognition and value of RM roles across Europe.

In the consensus documents several strategies were mentioned for adopting the RM Comp framework. These share the goal of professionalising Research Management (RM) and enhancing career development for Research Managers (RMs), however, they also differ in many ways taking into account national differences and specificities. For a better overview, in this report these strategies are categorised along three levels: **the institutional, the national and the EU levels**. The successful implementation of these measures is essential for advancing the overall European R&I ecosystem and strengthening Research Management as a profession. Additionally, they shall provide a structured, recognised, and sustainable career trajectory for research management professionals across Europe.

Institutional Level

Based on the feedback, there are two possible ways to introduce a competence framework for Research Managers. The first approach is top-down, building on the collaboration of professional associations, ministries, and funding organisations. “The true initiative can only be launched by competent authorities, using a top-down approach while other stakeholders can contribute through informing, communication, and lobbying.” (HR)

On the other hand, the process can start at a local level (MT, IS), where RPOs and universities act as "early adopters," implementing the framework and promoting its benefits. “To ensure that the RM profession is valued and supported, universities must acknowledge the distinct nature of these roles and create a clear, structured career path for RMs.” (IS)

The lack of formal career paths for RMs hinders professional growth in the field. Establishing a structured RM career framework including defined job titles and recognition systems can enhance their professional status. Institutions should play a vital role in this process. “Institution can find ways for promoting professional growth and recognition of this job, but there should be an institutional commitment.” (IT)

Institutional career path and professional development framework

Based on the consensus documents, there are multiple ways to introduce and adopt a career path and professional development framework for RMs at institutional level, such as:

- Developing and implementing HR policies within RPOs **that recognise and reward the competencies outlined in the professional development framework** (IT, SE, NL, FR, CY). This would ensure that RMs are valued and supported within their organisations.
- Implementing **internal frameworks to better define RM roles** and distinguish these roles from general administrative staff by emphasising competencies and specialised expertise (IT, SE, NL, PT).
- Establishing **clear career progression pathways for RMs** based on the framework, including opportunities for continuous professional development, making roles and progression paths transparent (IT, NL, CY, Thematic: Post-Award, Impact).
- Introducing **institutional incentives to ensure recognition and standardisation** (IT, CZ).
- Institutional strategic plans should include **strategic goals that emphasise and promote the importance of research management** (TR).
- Introducing **competency-based recruitment** in institutions and **developing guidelines for hiring RMs** based on the professional development framework (IT, NL).
- **Aligning the framework with existing organisational structures** to ensure seamless integration (Thematic: Ethics).
- **Create dedicated RM units** within institutions (where it is reasonable) (IT).
- Encouraging universities and RPOs to develop internal RM career policies aligned with the European framework. (PT)

Raising awareness and pilot programmes

The institutional adoption of the career path and professional development framework should be supported by dedicated awareness raising and pilot programmes, such as:

- **Introducing the framework** in selected institutions **to test its applicability and to assess its impact**. Developing case studies from these pilot programmes would provide an opportunity for showcasing successful implementations and sharing best practices (BE, CY, RS, Thematic: Impact).
- Launching communication campaigns, organising workshops, seminars, as well as building on existing professional networks **to promote the framework** as a guiding tool for job descriptions, recruitment processes, and performance evaluations and ultimately to support its wider adoption (FR, TR, RS, PT, Thematic: Training, Impact).
- **Individual research managers** also play a key role by **initiating change locally and spreading awareness within their professional communities** (NL).

National Level

The implementation of the career path and professional development framework largely depends on national legal framework conditions. Some countries (NO) have expressed that the recognition of RMs by law would require a complex (and presumably lengthy) political and legislative process. Other groups added that this issue is not even on the political agenda (DE, CZ, DK, IT, CH).

Several countries (EL, RS) have reported that informal discussions are taking place within RPOs regarding the professionalisation of RMAs; **however, no systematic efforts have been initiated yet on the national level.**

The measures outlined below can help to further professionalise RM roles and promote the adaptation of the professional development framework.

National policies and legal recognition

The gradual inclusion of RM roles in national policy discussions is an important step towards legal recognition. Proven measures and national best practices may serve as orientation for other countries and inspire measures in other Member States to set up a structured career path for RMs.

- Advocating for the development of **standardised job descriptions and classification for Research Managers within the national employment framework** (FR, BE, NL, SE, IT, RO, PT, Thematic: Post-Award, Ethics) respecting regional and cultural differences.
- **Integrating** the professional development framework **into national research and education policies** (IT, EL, CY, PT). This would ensure that the framework becomes a standard for professional development across research performing organisations (RPOs).
- Proposing **amendments to existing labour laws to formally recognise the role and competencies of RMs**, ensuring they are acknowledged as a distinct professional category (AT, FR, RS, RO, BE, IT, EL) and eliminating inconsistencies in RM roles across institutions.
- **Formally integrating RMs into labour policies and national research strategies**, ensuring that their contributions are acknowledged and supported (AT, CY).
- Establishing **structured career progression pathways** that allow RMs to advance based on their competencies and achievements (BE).
- Creating **National Action Plans** aimed at developing the necessary infrastructure and securing funding **for professional development of RMs** through setting priorities, developing a career model for non-scientific staff and increasing visibility for RM activities (IT, BE).
- **Participating in EU-level working groups** enables a country to actively contribute to shaping RM professional standards (IT).

- Engaging with and facilitating **discussion among national stakeholders** (competent ministries, policymakers, universities, RPOs, organisations employing RMs) (CY, RS, IT).
- Enabling institutional adoption mainly through strengthening institutional policies and advocating for the allocation of resources, both financial and human (RS, CY, IT). These measures would enhance job security, career satisfaction, and retention of highly skilled personnel in research management.

Involvement of national funding agencies

Research Funding Organisations shall also play an active role in encouraging the adoption and adaptation of the career path and professional development framework for RMs.

- Funding programmes operated by national agencies could require:
  - to **include RMs in their grant applications** and to **provide a dedicated personnel budget line for these professionals** in the budget table (AT, SE, CY). This will further support the hiring and career progression of certified RMs.
  - to include a section in grant proposals where applicants must **outline how RMs will contribute to efficient project execution and outcomes** (SE). This would acknowledge the valuable contributions of RMs throughout the project lifecycle.
- **Funding strategies should focus on building a structured career framework** for RMs (IT, AT, RS, CY). Instead of just increasing the number of RM professionals, efforts should support the development of a well-structured framework that addresses different professional needs (ES).

Monitoring and evaluation

- Both national policymakers and RFOs can support these efforts through monitoring and evaluation processes that encourage RPOs to adopt and implement career paths and professional development frameworks for RMs. Launching new initiatives is not essential, as these aspects can be integrated into existing actions. **Establishing channels for RPOs to provide feedback on the framework**, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation (BE).
- **Conducting regular surveys** to gather insights on the framework's effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement (BE, ES).
- Establishing **structured evaluation mechanisms** with institutions implementing the framework to ensure dynamic updates aligned with evolving needs (BE, EL, PT).

National professional networks and associations

Professional associations play a significant role in reinforcing the recognition of the profession while providing multiple opportunities for professional development, training, knowledge exchange, networking, etc. Therefore, their role in the adoption and adaptation of a career and professional development framework cannot be ignored as they can act as a bridge between professional, RPOs, ministries and RFOs.

- Most countries where such networks exist (IT, NL, FI), mentioned the professional associations as key players in advocating the standardisation and professionalisation of RMs. The need for such an association has been expressed in several countries (HR, PT, IE, SI). In HR and PT, the establishment of a formal RM network is anticipated to enhance the recognition and promotion of the profession while also facilitating the adoption of the framework. In IE, discussions started in 2024 to establish the Irish Research Managers Professional Association, representing the Irish community of Research Managers and contributing to the recognition and career advancement of RMs. In SI, an initiative (KOsRIS) has been already launched to gather RMs from research institutions; however there is an expressed need for a national RM association that unites professionals from both research institutes and universities. In CY the recently launched Cyprus Research and Innovation Managers and Administrators Network is aiming to ensure open communication between RMs and national stakeholders.
- National RM networks and associations can **promote the visibility of the profession, as well as the career path and professional development framework** through webinars, conferences, and newsletters. This fosters a sense of community and ensures a platform for knowledge exchange, ultimately strengthening RM capacity and contributing to define RM as a distinct professional category (HR, Thematic: Pre-Award, Training).
- **Engaging with** already existing and well-established **national professional associations and networks to share best practices and build a collaborative approach** for implementation (BE).

Awareness raising and collaboration

Similarly to the institutional level, awareness raising is important on any measures taken at the national level.

- **Raising awareness about the existence and importance** of the competence framework (AT, FR, NL, CY, TR, RS, HR, Thematic: Training, Impact).
- Organising workshops, seminars, webinars and career development events to foster greater professional knowledge exchange as well as to **inform RPOs about the professional development framework, highlighting its benefits** and the ways it can enhance the career paths of RMs (BE, HR).

- Launching **awareness campaigns targeted at policymakers, RPO leaders, and HR professionals** to enhance visibility and recognition among students (especially PhD candidates to make them aware of this career path), hiring institutions, researchers, relevant ministries, and policymakers (FR, BE, TR).
- Promoting **collaboration between public and private sector**s, universities, labour unions, professional associations and research institutions to harmonize practices and regulations (SE).

Training and mobility programmes

National stakeholders could enforce the adoption and implementation of the career frame and professional development frameworks through various actions, such as:

- **Launching training and mobility programmes** based on the framework, available at different proficiency levels, to improve knowledge exchange and professional growth, ensuring that RMs have access to continuous learning opportunities (CY, AT, PT, Thematic: Pre-Award, Training).
- **Building on and integrating the framework into existing training programmes** will further solidify the framework's adoption (CY, IT, RS).
- Launching **formal training/education programmes** would establish a clear pathway into the profession (SE, FR, RS, IT), ensuring that fewer individuals enter the field by chance.

Certification and accreditation

Certification and accreditation efforts should build on existing training programmes, ensuring that the skills and knowledge gained through these initiatives are formally recognised. This alignment could further strengthen the professional development pathway for RMs and support broader adoption of the framework, such as:

- **Developing a national certification system for RMs** based on the framework, recognised by both public and private organisations to further harmonize RM roles (IT, CY, TR, PT).
- **Strengthening links between the framework and national accreditation bodies** would promote institutional adoption and harmonization of professional development pathways across Europe (Thematic: Pre-Award).
- Encouraging adoption of nationally recognised accreditation for RMs **through partnerships with higher education institutions or professional organisations**, while ensuring the validation of acquired experience at the national and European levels. (FR, IT, EL, CY)

EU Level

In order to effectively address the challenges and differences identified at the national level, measures must be sufficiently flexible and broad at the EU level.

Actions for EU policymakers and RFOs

Thanks to the efforts of several Member States and the European Commission, recognition, upskilling, capacity building and networking of Research Managers became part of EU level policy discussions over the past 3-4 years. Given the recent emergence of these discussions and the varying levels of maturity across the profession, continued efforts are essential to support the broad adoption and implementation of a career path and professional development framework for RMs.

- **Launching targeted policy discussions** at EU level emphasizing the need for political and national-level reforms (BE).
- To encourage the adoption of the framework across Member States, (voluntary) **guidelines and supportive measures** should be established (ES, IE). This process requires translating the framework into national languages and **adjusting it to national legal systems** while considering national specificities. Since there are significant differences between countries in many aspects, it is not possible to introduce a one-size-fits-all framework on all existing systems.
- **Flexibility and inclusivity** are keywords in the adaptation process, thus assessment of the local context is essential (RS). On the other hand, some countries also emphasised the **need for a standardised approach at the European level**, rather than fragmented, country-specific strategies (IT). **Collaborating with Europe-wide professional associations**, such as the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), to promote the framework and encourage its adoption across Member States (BE).
- **Aligning the framework with EU initiatives, policies and programmes**, such as Horizon Europe and ERA, to ensure relevance and uptake (Thematic: Impact). Where feasible, specifications should be incorporated in calls for proposals that favour institutions that have adapted the framework (ES). The framework can also be linked with some Coordination Support Actions and other actions which advocate development of RM skills (e.g. Twinning projects, MSCA projects, ERA chairs) (CY).
- **Encouraging grant providers and RFOs to require proposals to allocate RMs person- months** in their budget (IS, CY) and to provide a **dedicated work package for "Research management"**. This is particularly important in case of high-budget, multidisciplinary projects with a large number of partners and would enable a more holistic and coordinated approach to managing research processes (TR).

Awareness raising

Further actions are required from the European Commission to raise awareness on the professional development framework and its potential adoption and adaptation at the national and institutional levels. Key stakeholders, such as RPO and RFO leadership and national policymakers, may be more effectively engaged through advocacy and support from the European Commission rather than solely by members of the RM community.

- **Awareness raising among ministries, political bodies and also researchers** (FR, CY, RS, Thematic: Post-Award, Training) in order to highlight the importance of RMs' roles in securing funding, ensuring compliance and managing large-scale projects.
- A **centralised digital platform** could be created, where institutions and professionals could access resources, training, and mobility opportunities linked to the framework, fostering its implementation and visibility (ES).

Monitoring and evaluation

According to the consensus documents, monitoring and evaluation efforts should be carried out at the European level as well, as it is listed below. The emphasis is not on launching new actions as all these can be incorporated into existing ones.

- Setting up **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of the framework** and ensure its sustainability and alignment with emerging needs (CY, RS).
- **Introducing regular surveys, performance reviews, and case studies** will help refine and improve implementation, ensuring the framework's effectiveness in professionalising RM roles. Establishing a central platform for data collection and benchmarking could support continuous improvements and highlight best practices in RM capacity building. A respective extension of the EURAXESS Talent Platform could be an appropriate tool (Thematic: Pre-Award).

Enabling free circulation of RMs across the European Research Area (ERA)

Further efforts to standardise training programmes and accreditation could play a key role in facilitating the free movement of Research Managers across the ERA, contributing to the realization of the Fifth Freedom, introduced by the Letta Report "Much more than a Single Market".[1]

- Standardised accreditation mechanisms across Member States would support knowledge transfer and cross-border mobility of RMs (Thematic: Pre-Award).
- The recognition of skills and qualifications makes it easier for professionals to transition between institutions, sectors and countries within the ERA (Thematic: Pre-Award).
- Establishing EU-wide training programmes, as outlined in the following section, would contribute to support and enhance the mobility of research managers. Furthermore, incorporating the RM Comp into these programmes would further strengthen their effectiveness in achieving this goal.

[1] See at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf

MAIN FINDINGS - PART 2

Funded schemes at the EU level

Scheme A: Individual Grants for Upskilling and Mobility

This initiative focuses on supporting the entrance and development of individual RM careers across Europe by providing long-term financial support for individual grants for upskilling through training and mobility. Like the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and ERA fellowships, Scheme A would offer individual grants, providing flexibility for personal career development without requiring institutional commitments.

Feasibility and Attractiveness of Scheme A

The feasibility and attractiveness of Scheme A are strongly interlinked and broadly acknowledged by the Research Management (RM) community as dependent on a coherent set of structural and functional conditions. These conditions must support both the individual professional development of RMs and the operational realities of their institutional environments.

A fundamental requirement for feasibility is the **guarantee of return to the original position** following participation. This measure is widely seen as essential to mitigate concerns about job security and to foster institutional trust, particularly in settings where employment continuity is not assured. While the scheme is centered on individual mobility, **institutional commitment is indispensable**. Organisations must be willing to release staff, **recognise the skills and experience gained**, and, when necessary, **adjust internal policies** to accommodate and reintegrate returning participants. Alignment with human resources frameworks will be critical to ensuring institutional engagement and long-term sustainability.

Equally vital is the scheme's **flexibility in the duration and structure of placements**. Most RMs express a preference for short-term mobility - typically lasting from a few weeks to one month - due to existing work and family obligations. Nonetheless, the option for **medium-term stays of three to six months** remains important for those seeking more intensive or specialised development. The possibility of **maintaining part-time responsibilities** at the home institution during the placement is viewed as a valuable solution to facilitate continuity and minimize disruption.

Scheme A's feasibility also relies on **comprehensive financial support.** Full coverage of training costs, salary, travel, and, where applicable, **family-related allowances**, is considered essential - even for shorter stays. The long-term **financial sustainability of the scheme** is another key factor, as fragmented or project-based funding models could limit accessibility and discourage participation over time.

From an operational standpoint, **clear and simple administrative procedures** are a prerequisite for both feasibility and attractiveness. Defined criteria for eligibility, funding, and duration - paired with low bureaucratic burden - are critical to ensuring accessibility, particularly for institutions or professionals with limited support infrastructures.

In terms of attractiveness, Scheme A is seen as particularly relevant for **early- and mid-career RMs**, where structured learning experiences can significantly enhance skill development, career progression, and international exposure. It is also valued by individuals **entering the RM profession or transitioning between roles**, offering a credible and supportive framework for professional integration.

The scheme's appeal is strengthened by its **flexibility to tailor training pathways**. Participants can design individualized development experiences through diverse formats, including **mentoring, job shadowing, specialised courses, and both in-person and digital workshops**. The inclusion of structured elements - such as **mentoring or buddy systems -** is particularly beneficial for those at the beginning of their careers, offering guidance and integration into new professional environments.

Participation in Scheme A is also perceived as a driver of **enhanced employability and professional recognition**. The availability of **certification for completed activities**, coupled with potential **career benefits** such as promotions or expanded responsibilities, acts as a strong incentive. When reinforced by **institutional or sector-wide recognition mechanisms**, the value of participation becomes even more visible.

However, for **senior RMs**, the scheme's attractiveness may be more limited due to family obligations, institutional leadership responsibilities, and reduced flexibility for prolonged absences. To remain inclusive, the scheme should therefore offer **adaptable formats and clearly defined benefits** that respond to the motivations and constraints of this group.

Expected impacts at individual level:

- **Individual Skill Development and Career Progression:** Enhances individual competencies and credibility, offering tailored opportunities for training, mentoring, and mobility that support personal growth and employability across all career stages. Particularly empowers early-career RMs through intensive skill-building and structured exposure to diverse professional practices.

- **Independent and International Upskilling**: Enables RMs to independently pursue professional development in international contexts, fostering autonomy, cross-border learning, and adaptability in a global research environment.

- **Community of Practice and Networking**: Builds a dynamic community of experts and reinforces peer learning by promoting networking, communication capacities, and the exchange of knowledge and best practices across institutions.

- **Visibility and Value of the Profession**: Raises awareness of the strategic role of Research Managers and strengthens the value proposition of the profession by investing in individual excellence and internationalisation.

Expected impacts at institutional level (arising from individual participation in Scheme A)

- **Gradual Strengthening of Research Management Capacity**: As individuals return from mobility and training experiences with enhanced skills and new perspectives, institutions benefit from improved professional practices, contributing to more consistent and effective research management support.

- **Knowledge Transfer and Cross-Institutional Learning:** Participating individuals bring back insights and methods acquired from host institutions, enabling local adaptation of best practices and stimulating peer learning within their home institutions.

- **Staff Motivation and Retention:** By enabling professional growth, Scheme A contributes indirectly to staff satisfaction and motivation. Institutions that host returning grantees may see higher retention among RM professionals who feel their career development is valued and supported.

- **International Connectivity and Visibility:** Through the mobility of individual RMs, institutions gain greater exposure and connections within the European and international research management community, potentially leading to future collaborations and increased institutional presence in cross-border networks

Conditions for Effective Implementation of Scheme A

For Scheme A to be successfully implemented, several operational requirements must be addressed to ensure both institutional alignment and individual participation, while also anticipating potential barriers. A **structured approach for early-career RMs** is considered essential. Support mechanisms such as mentoring or buddy systems can enhance guidance during placements and ensure that participants acquire meaningful, goal-oriented learning experiences. The scheme should support **short-term placements -** typically lasting a few weeks to one month - accompanied by **dedicated funding and committed host institutions**. These shorter durations are more compatible with the daily responsibilities of RMs and are therefore more likely to encourage broad uptake. A **diverse range of training methods**, including **in-person and digital formats**, is recommended to promote accessibility and inclusiveness. E-learning and hybrid solutions can help overcome constraints related to time, geography, or caregiving obligations. Scheme A should primarily focus on **practical, hands-on learning opportunities**, such as **job shadowing, mentoring, and specialised courses**. These should be tailored to meet the **specific developmental needs of RMs at different career stages**, allowing for progression across various levels of expertise and responsibility. Another key condition for implementation is the **integration of mobility and training activities into institutional Human Resources policies**. Recognizing the outcomes of Scheme A within performance evaluations, promotion pathways, and institutional training plans will foster internal legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

Despite this potential, **several challenges must be addressed**. The **difficulty RMs face in being absent for extended periods**, due to both professional and personal responsibilities, can limit participation. Additionally, providing a **guarantee of return to employment -** especially in the private sector or under fixed-term contracts - may be complex and require tailored solutions. The **long-term sustainability of the scheme** is another critical concern. While early stages may be supported by pilot funding or external grants, ensuring continuity will demand **stable and diversified funding sources**, including institutional contributions and national-level support. Without this, the scheme risks becoming episodic or inaccessible to many. Furthermore, **aligning individual training plans with the strategic needs of employers** may present tensions that need careful negotiation. Clear communication and institutional engagement will be necessary to ensure coherence between individual development goals and organisational expectations. Finally, the scheme must be designed to **avoid creating disparities between participants and non-participants**. If access is perceived as unequal, or if benefits are not extended across teams, it may negatively affect internal dynamics. Ensuring **simple application procedures**, transparent eligibility criteria, and wide accessibility - especially for RMs with demanding schedules - is crucial to uphold equity and inclusion.

Convergent and Divergent Views on Scheme A Implementation

Convergent Views – Widely Agreed Priorities for Scheme A

Topic	Summary of Converging Views
Guarantee of Return to Position	Broad agreement that job security is crucial for feasibility and attractiveness (AT, HR, CY, EL, HU, IE, SI, ES, SE, Thematic: Impact, Ethics, Post-Award).
Short-Term, Flexible Mobility	Strong support for short-term placements (weeks to 1 month) to reduce disruption (AT, BE, HU, PT, RO, ES, NL). Some support for medium-term stays (3–6 months) to allow deeper development (NL, Thematic: Training).
Focus on Training (Mentoring, Courses, Job Shadowing)	Training activities are considered essential; mentoring often highlighted as central (AT, HR, CY, EL, LU, PT, RO, Thematic: Post-Award).
Targeting Early- and Mid-Career RMs	Scheme seen as particularly suited to these career stages (BG, CY, EL, LV, ES, Thematic: Post-Award).
Adequate Financial Support	Emphasis on salary coverage, mobility costs, and family allowances, even for short stays (AT, CZ, EL, LU, PT, RO, Thematic: Training).
Inclusion of All Research Organisations	Scheme should be open to universities and non-university research organisations (AT, CY, EL, CZ, NL).
Opportunities for Individual Development and International Experience	Expected impact on professional growth and exposure (CY, EL, ES, SI).
Transparent Application Process	Need for clear eligibility criteria and a straightforward process (IE, LU).

Divergent or Nuanced Views – Points of Debate and Differentiation

Topic	Summary of Diverging or Nuanced Views
Mobility Duration	While short durations are preferred, some suggest 3–6 months as ideal (Thematic: Training), while others reference the original idea of 12–24 months (ES).
Target Audience (Seniority)	Some suggest inclusion of senior RMs (IS, SE), though most emphasise early/mid-career focus.
Excessive Flexibility	Concerns that too much flexibility may reduce institutional alignment (Thematic: Ethics).
Suitability for Specific RM Profiles	Some argue formal training may not meet the needs of senior RMs with industry/policy backgrounds (CH, IT).
Risk of Brain Drain	Concerns that without strong re-integration, mobility may lead to loss of talent (ES).
Eligibility of Unemployed Candidates	Implied debate on whether Scheme A should target only affiliated individuals or also those entering/re-entering RM careers (LU, various thematics).
Nature of Return Guarantee	Some advocate for return as a possibility rather than a rigid requirement (SE, ES), in favor of mobility and career progression.
Level of Structure vs. Autonomy	Some call for clearer structure and shorter formats (AT), while others favor the MSCA-inspired autonomy (SE, Thematic: Pre-Award).
Suitability for Senior RMs	Differing views on whether Scheme A can meet the needs of senior professionals given time and institutional constraints (IS, SE, ES).
Institutional Growth vs. Career Change	Diverging views on whether the scheme should foster advancement within institutions or enable transitions to new ones (IT, ES).

Scheme B - This initiative aims at strengthening Research Management through institutional collaboration. Institutions would apply for funding to support staff exchanges and training opportunities across organisations, following the model ofMSCA Staff Exchanges and ERA Talents. Unlike Scheme A, Scheme B requires a strong institutional commitment, fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices between organisations and sectors. The focus here is on building institutional capacity while also advancing the professional development of RMs involved in these exchanges.

Feasibility and Attractiveness of Scheme B

Scheme B is broadly regarded by the RM community as a feasible and strategically valuable initiative, provided it is supported by strong institutional commitment and offers tangible benefits to both individuals and organisations. Unlike individually focused programmes, Scheme B seeks to foster institutional transformation through knowledge exchange, shared practices, and capacity-building efforts.

Institutional endorsement is central to its feasibility. Participating organisations must formally endorse the scheme, not only by supporting individual participants, but also by allocating resources - such as time release, travel funding, or in-kind contributions - and by designating a **dedicated institutional contact point**. This ensures operational coordination and signals that participation in Scheme B is aligned with institutional priorities. More broadly, the **integration of RM staff development into human resources planning and strategic objectives** is viewed as a key success factor.

The scheme's **flexibility** is also a critical enabler. Given the diversity of institutional structures and resources, the ability to adjust the format and duration of exchanges - particularly through short-term or hybrid arrangements - is key to facilitating participation without disrupting core activities.

Scheme B is particularly **attractive to mid- and senior-level RMs**, who are positioned to act as agents of change. These professionals can contribute directly to institutional development by introducing best practices, initiating process improvements, and fostering internal collaboration. The scheme enables a shift from individual learning to organisation-wide advancement.

To ensure feasibility, there must also be a **clear value proposition for the institutions themselves**. Participants and host organisations should engage in structured **knowledge-sharing mechanisms**, including the co-development of tools, processes, and strategic frameworks. Establishing incentives - such as **recognition schemes, awards, or access to further funding opportunities -** can strengthen institutional buy-in. Host institutions, in particular, must be adequately recognised and supported for their role in enabling effective exchanges.

In terms of attractiveness, Scheme B is considered highly promising by many RMs due to its **focus on institutional capacity strengthening**. By facilitating the **exchange of knowledge and good practices**, it holds the potential to enhance both operational efficiency and strategic alignment in RM offices. This, in turn, may lead to broader **organisational modernization** and greater coherence in how research is supported and managed.

The scheme also provides an opportunity to enhance the **professional standing and employability** of experienced RMs by reinforcing leadership skills and expanding institutional visibility. For some, Scheme B is seen as a **more strategic and longer-term investment** than individual training schemes, with benefits that extend beyond the immediate participants to entire departments and networks.

Conditions for Effective Implementation of Scheme B

The effective implementation of Scheme B relies on its capacity to support structured institutional collaboration, ensure equitable access, and embed learning into organisational practices in a sustainable way. As an initiative focused on institutional transformation, its success depends not only on individual engagement, but on the alignment of processes, priorities, and commitments across participating organisations.

A foundational condition is the establishment of **robust inter-institutional collaboration**. Participating institutions must jointly co-design and deliver exchange programmes based on clearly defined goals and **shared expectations**. To ensure meaningful and lasting outcomes, the knowledge and practices acquired through the scheme must be **systematically integrated into institutional workflows**, rather than remaining isolated or ad hoc experiences.

The scheme must provide **tailored learning opportunities** for RMs at different stages of their careers. This includes junior professionals, who benefit from structured exposure, as well as mid- and senior-level RMs, who are expected to apply and disseminate acquired knowledge internally. Ensuring **differentiated learning paths** is vital to maximising the impact across diverse institutional settings.

Flexibility and scalability are equally essential. Exchange models should accommodate a range of institutional capacities and working arrangements, including **short-term placements, hybrid formats, and possibly international partnerships beyond Europe**. This flexibility will enable the participation of institutions with varied structures and staffing realities.

The scheme should explicitly aim to **reduce disparities between more and less developed RM structures**. Institutions with limited internal capacity or smaller RM offices may face barriers to participation and should therefore be supported through targeted mechanisms that promote inclusivity - such as capacity-building funds, mentorship models, or flexible administrative requirements. Particular attention should also be paid to staff in **fixed-term or part-time contracts**, ensuring they are not excluded.

Ensuring **adequate financial support** is critical. The scheme must cover direct costs - including travel, accommodation, and personnel time - so that participation does not place undue strain on institutional or individual resources. In parallel, establishing **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** is essential to assess the effectiveness of exchanges, measure outcomes, and ensure accountability at both the individual and institutional levels.

The **recognition and valorisation of mobility experiences**, through formal certification or institutional acknowledgment, further strengthens the scheme's relevance. Visibility and internal validation of these experiences help consolidate institutional support and incentivise participation.

However, several challenges must be addressed. There is a **risk that institutional leadership may not prioritise engagement**, especially where benefits are not immediately visible. **Smaller or resource-constrained institutions** may also struggle to participate due to staffing limitations or administrative workload. Additionally, ensuring that **acquired knowledge is not lost**, but actively reinvested in organisational development, requires explicit internal processes and leadership backing.

Another potential difficulty lies in **matching institutions with compatible expertise and interests**, which is essential for effective knowledge transfer. Finally, **reluctance to release RM staff for extended periods**, especially in smaller teams, can hinder participation unless flexible arrangements and replacement strategies are in place.

Addressing these barriers will require **structured coordination, targeted support**, and where appropriate, **differentiated mechanisms** to ensure that all types of institutions - regardless of size or maturity - can engage meaningfully and benefit from Scheme B.

Expected impacts at individual level (within the context of institutional collaboration):

- **Skill Development and Career Progression:** Improves technical and soft skills, strengthens transferable competences, and supports professional development and specialisation. Participation leads to increased employability and facilitates career advancement through broader experience and knowledge sharing.

- **Strategic and Organisational Insight:** Supports the development of strategic leadership and policy-making skills through structured institutional collaboration and exposure to diverse organisational contexts.

- **Contextual Learning and New Work Practices:** Enables the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and new work processes, strengthening technical expertise through hands-on learning in different institutional environments.

- **Professional Recognition and Community Building:** Enhances professional valorisation and career recognition. Creates opportunities for individuals to build lasting professional networks and contribute to cross-institutional community building.

Expected impacts at institutional level:

- **Structural and Long-Term Institutional Growth:** Fosters sustainable institutional transformation by embedding research management within organisational structures. It promotes leadership engagement, formalises research management career paths, and strengthens institutional capacity, contributing to long-term stability and reducing disparities in RM recognition across Europe.

- **Knowledge Sharing and Cross-Institutional Collaboration:** Encourages cross-border and cross-sector collaboration, enabling institutions to adopt best practices and benefit from shared expertise. It supports capacity building in less-experienced institutions and widening countries, fostering a more balanced and cooperative European RM landscape.

- **Standardisation and Professionalisation of Research Management:** Drives the harmonisation of research management practices across institutions, promoting structured approaches and the development of robust policies in areas such as research integrity and ethics. It contributes to the modernisation of institutional RM systems and the emergence of professional communities of practice.

- **Institutional Efficiency and Strategic Competitiveness:** Improves institutional agility and preparedness to respond to evolving challenges, including those related to ethical AI and innovative research support services. By optimising work processes, Scheme B enhances the overall effectiveness and competitiveness of research management operations.

Converging and Diverging Viewpoints for Schemes B

Converging Points (many Ambassadors agree):

Topic	Summary of Converging Views
Institutional Commitment	Broad agreement that institutional engagement is crucial, including formal endorsement, resource allocation (financial or in-kind), and designated contact points. Seen as central to the feasibility and legitimacy of the scheme (AT, BE, DE, IE, LU, NL, SI, SE, Thematic: Ethics).
Institutional Capacity and Collaboration	Scheme B is widely seen as a tool to strengthen institutional RM capacity and foster inter-organisational collaboration, with an emphasis on structured learning and strategic planning (BE, BG, DE, FI, HU, IE, LV, NL, RO, SI, Thematic: Impact, Ethics, Post-Award)
Short-Term and Flexible Mobility	There is strong support for short, flexible exchanges that accommodate professional constraints, institutional realities, and various implementation capacities (AT, CZ, FI, IE, LV, NL, SE, Thematic: Training)
Peer Learning and Good Practice Exchange	Recognised as a major added value of Scheme B, allowing cross-border benchmarking, institutional learning, and mutual development (DE, BE, HU, IE, IT, LU, NO, SI, SE, CH, Thematic: Ethics, Post-Award).
Target Group: Mid- and Senior-Level RMs	Scheme B is seen as best suited to experienced RMs capable of influencing institutional practices and implementing improvements (AT, DE, CZ, IE, LV, Thematic: Ethics)
Inclusion of Diverse Organisation Types	Broad support for participation from universities, research institutes, funders, and private sector actors to ensure cross-sectoral benefit (AT, CZ, HU, NL, Thematic: Ethics).

Divergent or Nuanced Views – Points of Debate and Differentiation

Topic	Summary of Diverging or Nuanced Views
Funding Structure and Sustainability	While commitment is widely supported, views differ on funding models, including co-financing responsibilities, national vs EU contributions, and long-term sustainability - especially for smaller institutions (AT, IE, IT, NL, PT, NO, HR, GR, ES, LU, Thematic: Ethics, Post-Award).
Administrative Complexity	Concerns were raised about the administrative burden of inter-institutional coordination and scheme management, particularly for small organisations; calls were made for simplified procedures and clearer guidance (CZ, IE, NO, LV, Thematic: Ethics).
Scheme Focus and Strategic Alignment	Some emphasised alignment with institutional strategies and reducing disparities, while others proposed targeted hubs or more open models depending on regional or organisational needs (GR, LV, PT, NO, LU, Thematic: Ethics).
Post-Mobility Use of Acquired Skills	Questions were raised about whether institutions will effectively integrate new knowledge into workflows. Concerns also included whether participation will be rewarded institutionally (BE, CY, PT, Thematic: Post-Award).
Role of Different Types of Institutions	Mixed views on the scheme's ability to serve different institutional profiles and sectors, and the need for harmonising roles and capabilities to ensure meaningful exchanges (DE, FI, CH, NL, Thematic: Ethics).
Impact on Smaller Institutions	Smaller institutions may be disproportionately affected by resource constraints, staffing shortages, and administrative complexity; some found Scheme A more manageable (IE, SE, IS, NO).
Preference for Bilateral Models	Bilateral or reciprocal models were suggested as a practical solution, especially for smaller institutions, to ensure balance and reduce complexity (SE, CH, CY, ES, Thematic: Ethics).
Need for Monitoring and Evaluation	Some communities stressed the importance of robust frameworks for tracking institutional outcomes, learning impact, and accountability (RS, Thematic: Ethics, Post-Award).

While both Scheme A (Individual Grants for Upskilling and Mobility) and Scheme B (Institutional Collaboration and Capacity Building) were recognised for their complementary value, a **clear tendency emerged to prioritise Scheme B for its long-term institutional impac**t - though many stakeholders emphasised the need for both schemes to address different but equally relevant dimensions of professional development in research management.

Scheme A was recognised for its contribution to individual career development, particularly for early- and mid-career professionals or those transitioning into research management roles. It offers flexibility and personalisation without requiring strong institutional commitments, which makes it particularly attractive in contexts where institutional support structures are still developing. Countries such as Austria (AT), Cyprus (CY), Croatia (HR), Czechia (CZ), Iceland (IS), Serbia (RS), and Switzerland (CH), along with several thematic communities including Pre-Award and Training, highlighted Scheme A's relevance for enhancing individual competencies and career progression.

Nevertheless, **a stronger and more consistent preference emerged for Scheme B, which focuses on institutional-level interventions to support the exchange of best practices, capacity building, and long-term collaboration.** Countries such as Bulgaria (BG), Finland (FI), Greece (GR), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Latvia (LV), the Netherlands (NL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Spain (ES), and Sweden (SE), alongside Thematic: Ethics, Post-Award, and KTT, emphasised Scheme B's potential to strengthen systemic structures and enhance the sustainability of RM professionalisation across institutions.

At the same time, **a substantial number of national communities and thematic groups advocated for the combined implementation of both schemes, emphasising their complementarity**. This perspective was expressed by countries including Belgium (BE), France (FR), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Norway (NO), Portugal (PT), Serbia (RS), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH), and Türkiye (TR). These contributions argued that while Scheme A enables individual empowerment and skill development, Scheme B provides the institutional scaffolding necessary for translating these gains into lasting organisational improvements.

In conclusion, although Scheme A remains essential for supporting individual RM career trajectories, Scheme B was more frequently prioritised due to its potential for systemic and sustainable impact. The most broadly supported recommendation across national and thematic consultations was the parallel implementation of both schemes. This dual approach is considered the most effective way to address the diverse and interconnected needs of the RM community, by simultaneously advancing individual competencies and institutional capacity within the evolving European Research Area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Professional development and career path

The consensus documents present various strategies for leveraging the European Competence Framework for Research Managers to advance the professionalisation of research management and support the career development of research managers across Europe, with broad agreement on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.

All relevant stakeholders - including research-performing organisations (RPOs), research funding organisations (RFOs), competent ministries, policymakers, and professional research management networks and associations - have a critical role to play in ensuring a coordinated and effective implementation.

- **At the institutional level**, research-performing organisations (RPOs) - including universities, research centres, and similar entities - can lead by example. By piloting initiatives such as adopting or adapting the RM Competence Framework, implementing dedicated human resources policies for research managers, establishing institutional career pathways, or introducing other forms of recognition and professional development incentives, RPOs can generate a catalytic effect that extends beyond their own institution.

- **Research management associations and networks** play a key role in advocacy efforts at institutional, national, regional, and European levels. They are well-positioned to promote the integration of the RM Competence Framework into training programmes, human resources policies, and funding mechanisms, while also fostering continuous professional development opportunities for research managers.

- **At the national level**, research funding organisations (RFOs) hold significant influence in setting standards and promoting good practices. By embedding research management recognition and the RM Competence Framework into their policies and funding programmes, they can drive systemic change.

- **Collectively**, these stakeholders can sustain momentum, raise awareness, and collaborate with national and European policymaking institutions to integrate research management recognition and the RM Competence Framework into policy and strategic instruments. This coordinated approach is essential to advancing recognition, professionalisation, career development, and the harmonisation of valued research management practices across Europe.

Funding schemes for Research Managers at the EU level

As we have seen above, RM communities have found that both schemes offer distinct advantages: **Scheme A** provides flexibility and individualized growth, ideal for RMs without institutional backing or for those looking for personal career development. **Scheme B** focuses on institutional collaboration and systemic improvement, benefiting institutions looking to enhance their research management processes. And both can thus contribute towards the professional development of the research management community. Yet the overall analysis has found that there is a tendency to **prioritize Scheme B due to its potential for sustainable and long-term institutional impact**, especially in countries needing to strengthen their research management infrastructures.

Regardless of the approach, the RM communities across Europe emphasise some **general recommendations that are seen as key for a successful implementation**:

- Simplifying application processes to reduce the administrative burden.
- Ensuring inclusivity, particularly for underrepresented groups and regions.
- Providing tailored training through e.g. mentoring, courses, and job shadowing.
- Recognizing the RM profession officially and offering financial support for mobility.
- Addressing institutional buy-in and securing sufficient funding for long-term success.

The key lies in developing a **comprehensive, Europe-wide framework** that provides a consistent foundation while remaining flexible enough to be adapted to the specific needs of both research managers (RMs) and research institutions across diverse national contexts. Such a framework should aim to maximize the mutual benefits for individuals and organisations by addressing persistent challenges - such as fragmented professional development pathways, uneven institutional support, and lack of standardisation in recognition and career progression. By fostering alignment across states, this approach can help dismantle long-standing institutional and systemic barriers to recognition, enabling smoother mobility and collaboration across borders. Ultimately, it would contribute to the creation of a cohesive and inclusive ecosystem that not only elevates the visibility and value of the RM profession but also ensures its long-term sustainability and integration within the European Research Area.

Annex 1. 3rd Co-creation Questions for National and Thematic RM Communities

RM-ROADMAP 3rd co-creation session

14th of November until 19th of December 2024
Career Development Framework Co-Creation Questions for National and Thematic Communities

Recommended funded schemes at the EU level:

One of the key objectives of the RM-Roadmap project is to recommend an **EU-wide training scheme** designed to enhance the professional development of Research Managers. To ensure that the recommendations are relevant and grounded in the needs of the RM community, we are presenting two potential training schemes for consideration. They have been adapted from well established researcher-focused programmes, thus ensuring familiarity and ease of adoption by the RM community and policymakers.

The proposed schemes for EU-level funding are as follows:

Scheme A - This initiative focuses on supporting the entrance and development of individual RM careers across Europe by providing long-term financial support for individual grants for upskilling through training and mobility. Like the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and ERA fellowships, Scheme A would offer individual grants, providing flexibility for personal career development without requiring institutional commitments.

Scheme B - This initiative aims at strengthening Research Management through institutional collaboration. Institutions would apply for funding to support staff exchanges and training opportunities across organisations, following the model of MSCA Staff Exchanges and ERA Talents. Unlike Scheme A, Scheme B requires a strong institutional commitment, fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices between organisations and sectors. The focus here is on building institutional capacity while also advancing the professional development of RMs involved in these exchanges.

1. Which features need to be introduced so that each one of these scheme formats are feasible and attractive to research managers in your national/ thematic community?

Annex 1. 3rd Co-creation Questions for National and Thematic RM Communities

1. Which features need to be introduced so that each one of these scheme formats are feasible and attractive to research managers in your national/ thematic community?
These features **can** include:
• Career stage of RM candidates
• Type of institution
• Type of training (mentoring, courses, job shadowing,…)
• For scheme A: a guarantee to return to the initial job
• For scheme B: institutional commitment
• Others that you rate as crucial

2. What are the expected impacts of each one of these initiatives on the professional development of the RM community? And how do you rate both initiatives in terms of priority?

Professional Development and Career Path

The Competence Framework for Research Managers initiated by CARDEA has been adjusted with the inputs from RM ROADMAP. The current version of the possible European Competence Framework for Research Managers (RM Comp) is being finalised and validated with stakeholders, including policy-makers, RPO leaders and Research Managers under the coordination of Action 17, the Research Management Initiative.

RM Comp aims to facilitate professional development by offering clear learning outcomes and progression models, encouraging Research Managers to enhance their skills and competences. The framework aims to standardise RM competencies, support career planning, and promote the recognition and value of RM roles across Europe.

Given the fluid and flexible nature of the profession, with constantly emerging roles and fields, the RM Comp also underlines several key aspects: entry into the profession can occur at various levels based on educational background and expertise; professional development should be possible both vertically and across specialisations; leadership in research support services should be recognized as a specialised expertise, while leadership skills should be acknowledged across all competency areas; and RM Comp should remain a dynamic document that evolves with the profession.

Annex 1. 3rd Co-creation Questions for National and Thematic RM Communities

Accordingly, the European Competence Framework for Research Manager defines 9 competence areas, 53 competences and 843 learning outcomes along 4 proficiency levels (foundational, intermediate, advanced, expert).



The inputs from RM ROADMAP includes the elaboration of the definition of research management, adding one additional competence area (soft skills/personal attributes) and the inclusion of several subject matter expertise, including Research Infrastructure Management; Research Ethics and Integrity; Research, Strategy and Policy Development; and Research Support Service Delivery, as well, as the separation of Pre-award and Post-award, and the related learning outcomes.

Disclaimer: The co-creation 3 exercise was initiated prior to the publication of the RM Comp: The European Competence Framework for Research Managers by the European Commission. The Recommendation was officially published on 27 January 2025. For more information, please visit the European Commission's website.

Annex 1. 3rd Co-creation Questions for National and Thematic RM Communities

Q3.1: Once a Europe-wide professional development framework and career path is formulated, what actions would be necessary for the adoption or adaptation of this framework and career path for Research Managers to your national/ thematic community?

NATIONAL: What is needed to make the professional development framework recognised by law or by relevant regulations at country level so that it provides clear career path to research performing organisations when employing RMs overcoming the current situation when RMs are employed under some sub-categories of administrative staff, for instance?

THEMATIC: What is needed to make the professional development framework recognised by research performing organisations so that RMs working in your thematic field have clear and specific career path within the RPOs overcoming the current situation when RMs are employed under some sub-categories of administrative staff, for instance?

Q3.2: Are there any existing initiatives in your country/thematic community that could support the adoption and adaptation? For instance, are there any plans to change legislation related to the recognition of RMs?

NATIONAL: Or are there any discussions at national level to address the currently missing career framework for RMs? Please elaborate if you are aware of any initiatives.

THEMATIC: Or are there any discussions at national or institutional level to address the currently missing career framework for RMs in your specific field? Please elaborate if you are aware of any initiatives.

ADOPTION: the decision to start using something – in our case the professional development framework is being recognised and used either at national or institutional level

ADAPTATION: the action or process of changing something, or of being changed, to suit a new purpose or situation – in our case the professional development framework is being tailor-made to the specific needs and assets at national or institutional level

Annex 2. 3rd co-creation timeline

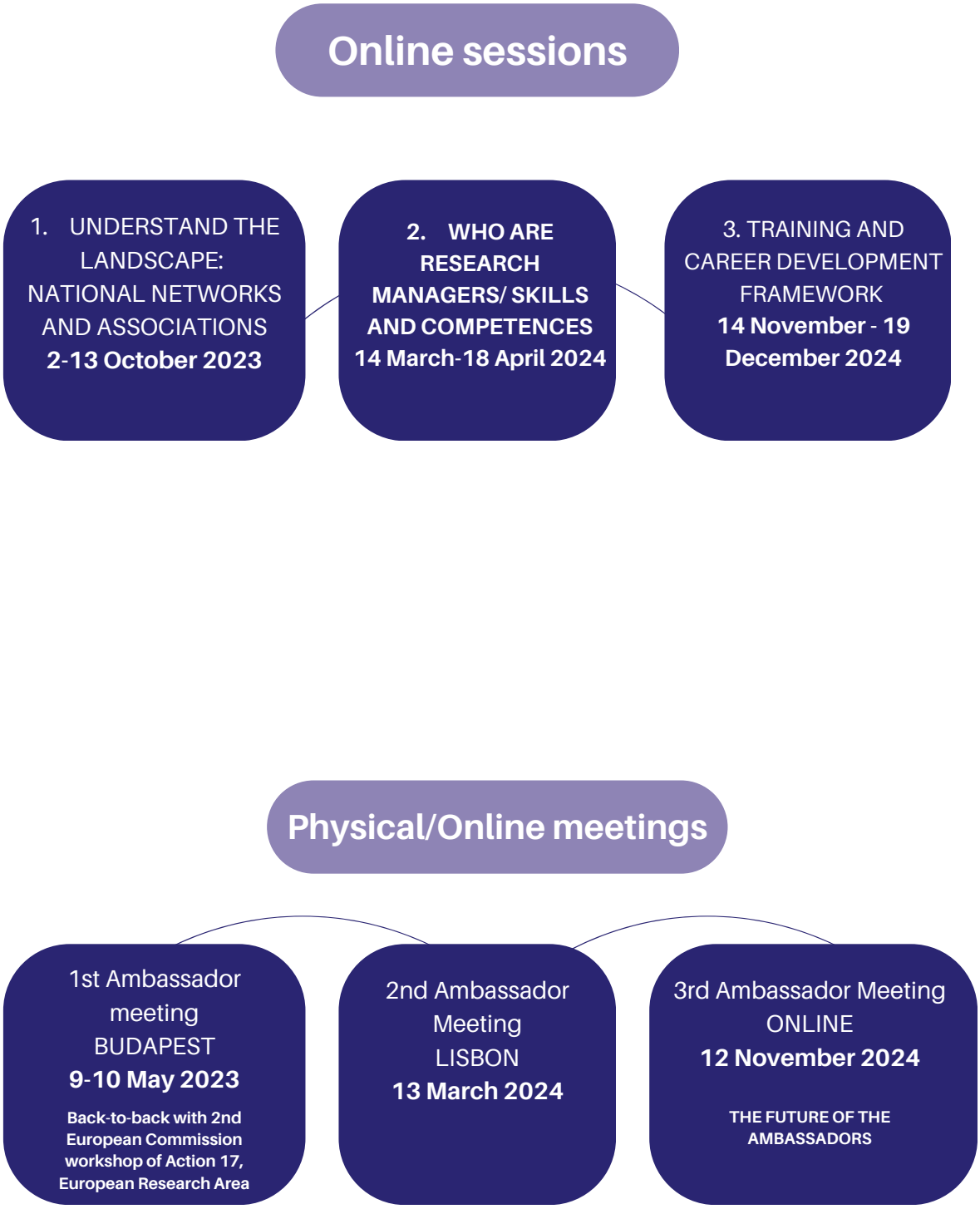
RM Roadmap co-creation timeline

Session 3 on the Knowledge and Community Platform
Training and Career Development Framework
November 14- December 19, 2024

Ambassadors work on a consensus document
December 20, 2024- February 4, 2025

NO Voting on the consensus document

Annex 3. Co-Creation timeline overview



















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