Professional Development Opportunities for Research Managers across Europe

Context

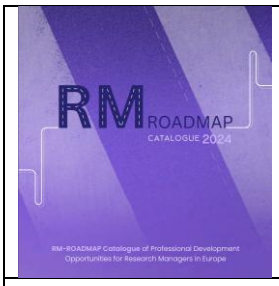
Between **April 2023 and July 2024**, **Universidade NOVA de Lisboa** conducted a comprehensive **online mapping** to collect data on the professional development opportunities available to **Research Managers (RMs) across Europe**. This study aimed to identify existing **training, mobility, networking, funding, and RM network opportunities**, providing a structured overview of the landscape while highlighting key gaps and challenges in RM professionalization.

The data was collected through a **multi-source approach**, ensuring a broad and representative mapping of opportunities. The key sources included:

- **Direct contributions from stakeholders**, including institutions that provide RM-related professional development opportunities.
- **The RM ROADMAP ambassador network**, which facilitated outreach and data collection across multiple European countries.
- **Desk research**, incorporating official institutional reports, existing databases, and direct contact with organizations offering RM opportunities.

Main outputs of the RM Professional Development Mapping

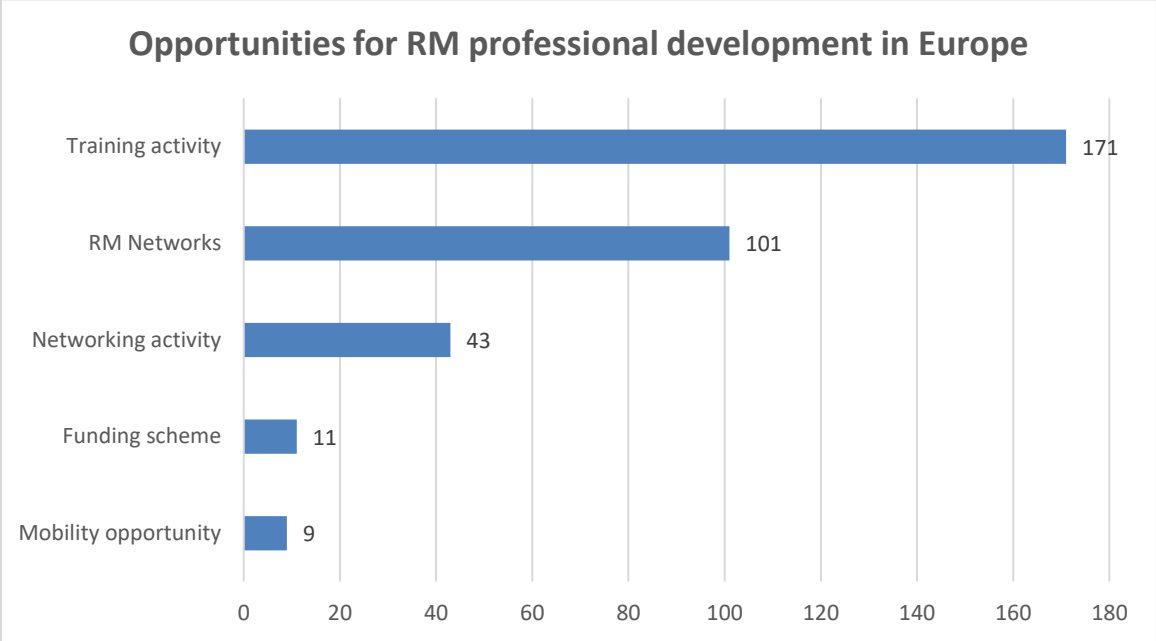
A total of **335 professional development opportunities** for Research Managers (RMs) across **39 European countries** have been mapped, creating a **comprehensive overview** of training, networking, mobility, and funding opportunities in the field, allowing RMs and institutions to **easily explore and leverage** existing opportunities:

			
The **RM Roadmap PDF catalogue** provides a **detailed overview** of each opportunity and a broader analysis of the professional development landscape.	The **interactive online dashboard**, developed in collaboration with the **CARDEA project**, offers a **user-friendly and dynamic** way to explore the data.	The **fully anonymized database** is publicly available on **Figshare**, supporting further analysis and research.	A **comprehensive report**, including **trend insights and gap analysis**, is available on the **RM ROADMAP website** as **Deliverable 2.2.**

RM-ROADMAP project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement number 101058475.

Overview of Professional Development Opportunities for RM

A total of **335 professional development opportunities** were mapped across **39 European countries**.



- **Training activities dominate the landscape (51.04% of all opportunities)**, reinforcing the profession's strong focus on skill development.
- **RM Networks** account for **30.15%** of opportunities, playing a crucial role in community-building and knowledge-sharing. Countries like Italy, Spain, Belgium, France, the UK, and Germany have a strong presence of RM networks, which are often linked to training initiatives.
- **Networking activities account for 12.84%** of the mapped opportunities, offering Research Managers key spaces for peer exchange, collaboration, and professional growth. Conferences, workshops, and structured networking events facilitate the sharing of best practices and career development.
- **Mobility opportunities are severely underrepresented (2.69%),** limiting cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange. Only a few countries (e.g., Switzerland, Poland, Malta) offer structured mobility programs, with most RMs relying on institutional or external funding.
- **Funding opportunities (3.28%)** are limited and unevenly distributed, with only a few national schemes (e.g., Albania, Croatia and Italy) and EU initiatives (e.g., Erasmus+, Horizon Europe) providing support for RM professional development.

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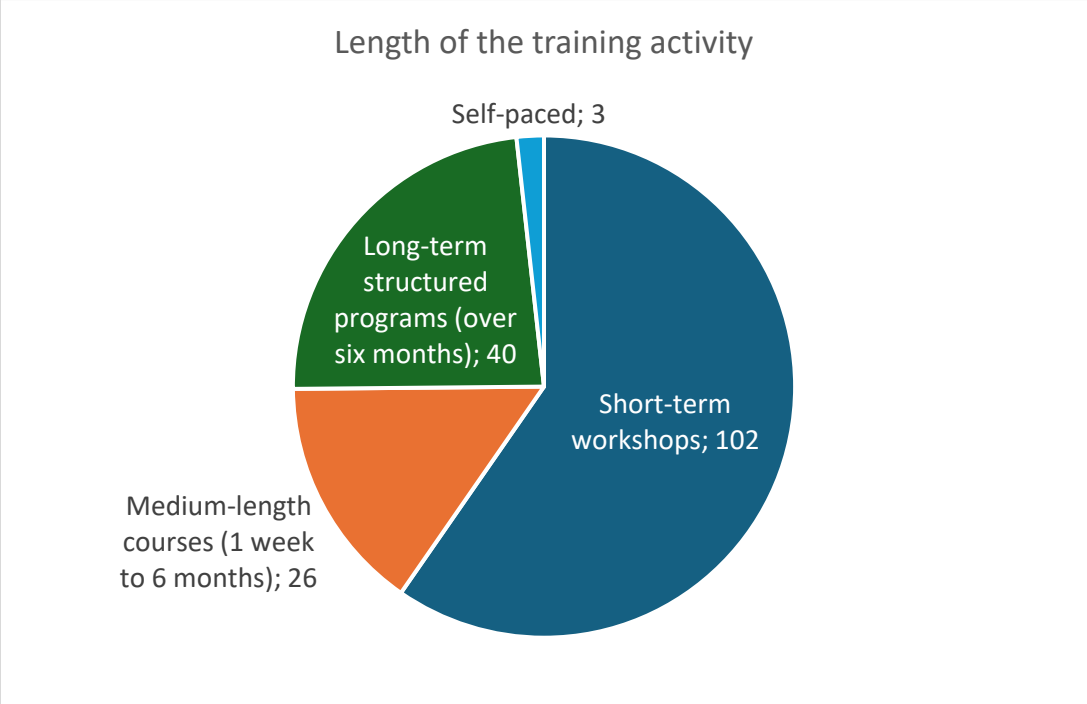


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Training and Networking – The Backbone of RM Professional Development

Training represents the **largest share** of professional development opportunities for RM, accounting for **51.04% (n=171)** of all mapped initiatives. This strong focus reflects the increasing demand for **capacity-building, skill enhancement, and knowledge acquisition** in the field.

- **Diversity of Formats**: Training is delivered in multiple formats, ranging from short-term workshops to long-term accredited programs. **Short-term training** (less than one week) is the most common (102 programs), while long-term programs (over six months) are less frequent (40 programs).
- **Accreditation and Recognition**: **85 programs** issue certificates of participation, while only **15 programs** offer degrees with ECTS credits, and **4 programs** provide professional accreditation. This suggests a need for further formalization of RM career pathways.
- **Integration with RM Networks**: A significant number of training programs (**n=174**) are **directly linked to RM networks**, reinforcing the role of professional associations in delivering and supporting training.



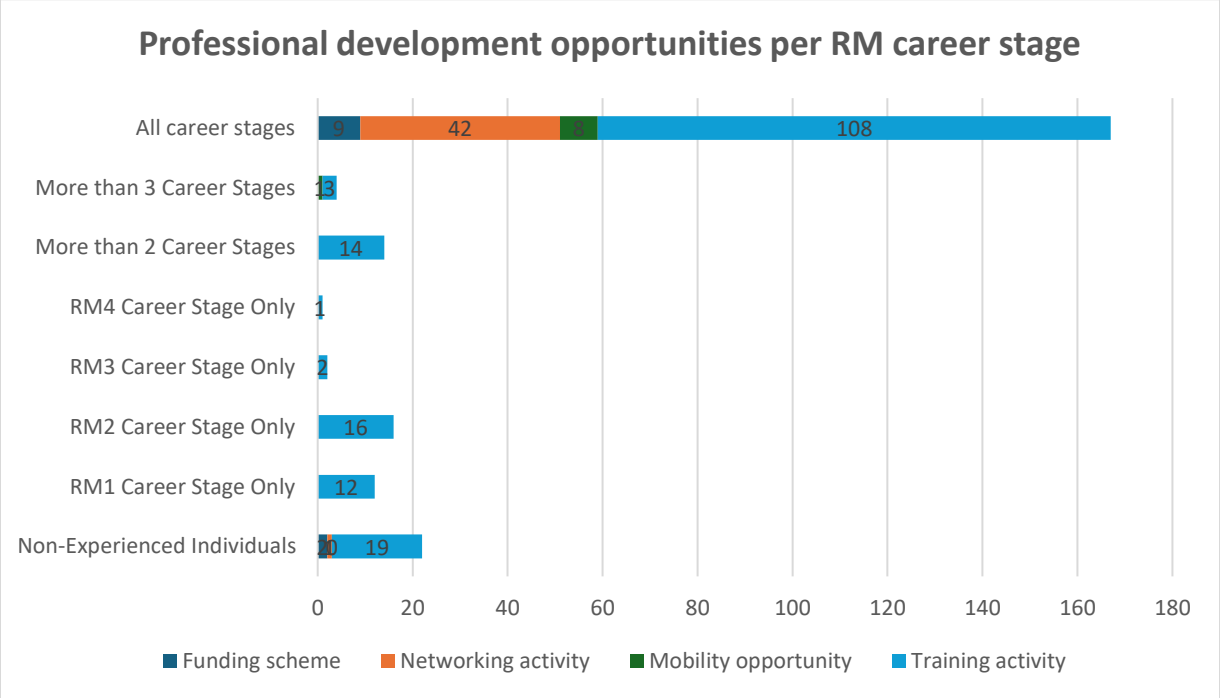
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Professional Development by Career Stage

97.7% of the training opportunities (n=167) target all career stages

While broad accessibility is beneficial, overly generalistic programs may fail to address the specific skill development needs of mid-career and senior RMs, limiting their ability to transition into leadership roles effectively.

- **RM1 (Early-career)** – **12 programs** target foundational training.
- **RM2 (Mid-career)** – **16 programs** mostly focused on collaboration.
- **RM3 (Established RMs)** – Only **2 training activities** are exclusively available for Established RMs, highlighting a critical gap in leadership and strategic management training.
- **RM4 (Senior RMs)** – Only **1 training activity** specifically for senior RMs. Without specialized training, senior RMs may struggle to develop strategic oversight and policy-shaping capabilities, impacting the advancement of the profession as a whole.



The publication of RMComp by the European Commission provides an opportunity to establish a competency-based framework for research management training. Aligning professional development programs with this framework can enhance career mobility, skill specialization, and leadership readiness.

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Cost of Professional Development Opportunities

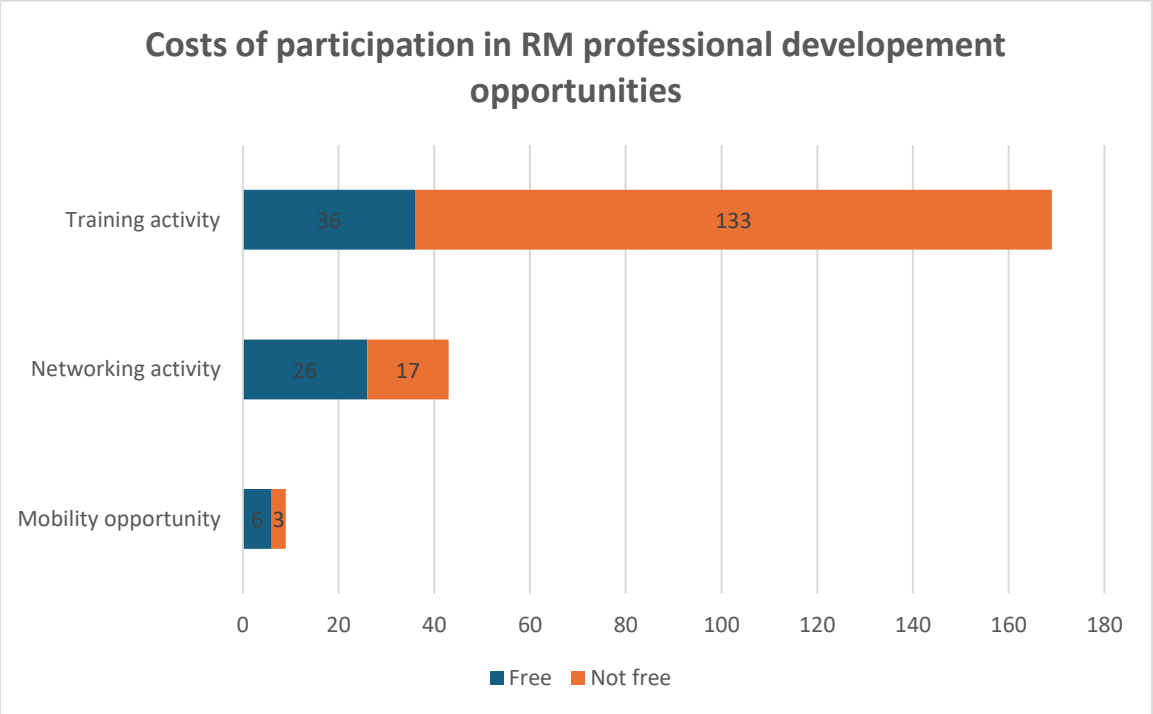
69.23% of professional development opportunities require payment, creating financial barriers, particularly for RMs in underfunded institutions.

Training activities are the most expensive, with costs varying widely based on format and duration:

- **Short-term workshops**: Typically range from **€50 to €500 per session**.
- **Mid-range courses** (multi-day or in-person training): **€1,100 to €4,350**.
- **Accredited degree programs**: **€250 to €15,000 per year**.
- **Executive and high-level certifications**: Can exceed **€20,000**, reaching up to **€25,300 for EEA students**.

Affordability & Accessibility:

- **62.22% of networking opportunities are free**, making them key enablers for RM community-building.
- **Membership fees for RM networks** range from **€20 to €200 per year**, but additional costs may apply for exclusive events and specialized activities.



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Emerging RM Opportunities Across Europe

RM training courses and networking opportunities have expanded notably over the past decade, with steady growth continuing in recent years:

- **10 new RM networks were established in the last five years (2019-2023)**, demonstrating the ongoing growth of RM professionalization, particularly in Central Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
- **Approximately 25% of recorded RM training programs were launched in 2021**, highlighting a rapid response to emerging professional needs.
- **21 training programs were launched in 2024 alone**, confirming the continuous expansion of RM professional development.

A Call for Action: Strengthening RM Professional Development in Europe

The **RM-ROADMAP project** highlights significant progress in expanding RM professional development, yet persistent challenges remain. To build a stronger, well-connected, and professionalized RM community across Europe, the following actions are needed:

1. **Expand funding for RM training and mobility opportunities**, particularly for long-duration, accredited programs and international exchanges.
2. **Strengthen RM networks as career development actors**, ensuring they have **financial and institutional support** to sustain training and networking activities.
3. **Increase European and international-level opportunities**, particularly in structured training and mobility schemes, to foster cross-border professionalization.
4. **Address career stage-specific gaps**, developing tailored programs that support **mid-career and senior RM professionals** in leadership and strategic management.
5. **Ensure equitable access to professional development**, particularly for Research Managers in **underrepresented communities**, by **reducing financial barriers and increasing outreach efforts.**

Oliveira, Cristina Isabel; Dias, Fatima; Varela, Carolina; Hourmat, Bernardo; Carrapato, Ana; Trindade, Margarida; et al. (2024). *RM-Roadmap: Professional Development Opportunities* (Data Collected Through Mapping Exercise - anonymized). figshare. Dataset. https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.27094096.v2

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