RESEARCH MANAGERS

WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY DO, AND THEIR ROLE IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA (ERA)

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FORTH-ICS

WHO ARE RESEARCH MANAGERS?

- Professionals who enable and drive research and innovation
- Support the full research lifecycle (from idea → funding → impact)
- Act as connectors between researchers, institutions, funders & society
- Provide expertise in funding, strategy, project management & impact
- Turn research ideas into successful, funded and impactful projects
- They are the “architects and enablers” of modern research systems

WHAT DO RESEARCH MANAGERS DO?

They work across the full research lifecycle:

1. Before funding
   - Identify funding opportunities
   - Build consortia
   - Design project concepts
   - Write proposals

2. During projects
   - Manage budgets, timelines, deliverables
   - Coordinate partners
   - Ensure compliance with EU rules

3. After / beyond projects
   - Dissemination & communication
   - Exploitation & impact
   - Policy alignment

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

- Increase success in competitive funding
- Allow researchers to focus on science, not administration
- Ensure projects are well-managed, compliant, and delivered on time
- Strengthen institutional capacity and international collaboration
- Bridge the gap between research, policy, industry, and society
- Maximise impact, visibility, and real-world value of research

WHAT IS THEIR TYPICAL BACKGROUND

- Academic background: Often PhD or Master's (STEM, social sciences, humanities)
- Former researchers: Many have experience in research before moving into management
- Interdisciplinary profiles: Combine science with skills in management, policy, or business
- Additional expertise: Project management, EU funding, communication, innovation, policy
- International experience: Familiar with European programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe)

There is no single path — diversity of backgrounds is a key strength of the profession

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA (ERA)

- The EU’s framework for a unified research and innovation system across Europe
- Enables the free circulation of researchers, knowledge, and technology
- Promotes cross-border collaboration and excellence in research
- Aligns national and EU policies through a shared research agenda
- Supports open science, innovation, and societal impact
- Implemented via Horizon Europe and the ERA Policy Agenda

ERA aims to make Europe a single, competitive and connected research ecosystem



ERA POLICY AGENDA – ACTION 17

- Recognising and strengthening the research management profession
- Supports the professionalisation of Research Managers (RMs) across Europe
- Promotes skills development, training, and career pathways
- Introduced the RM Comp framework (EU competence framework for RMs)
- Aims to improve institutional capacity and project performance
- Encourages recognition of RMs as key actors in the research system

GENDER IN RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

- Research management is a female-dominated profession

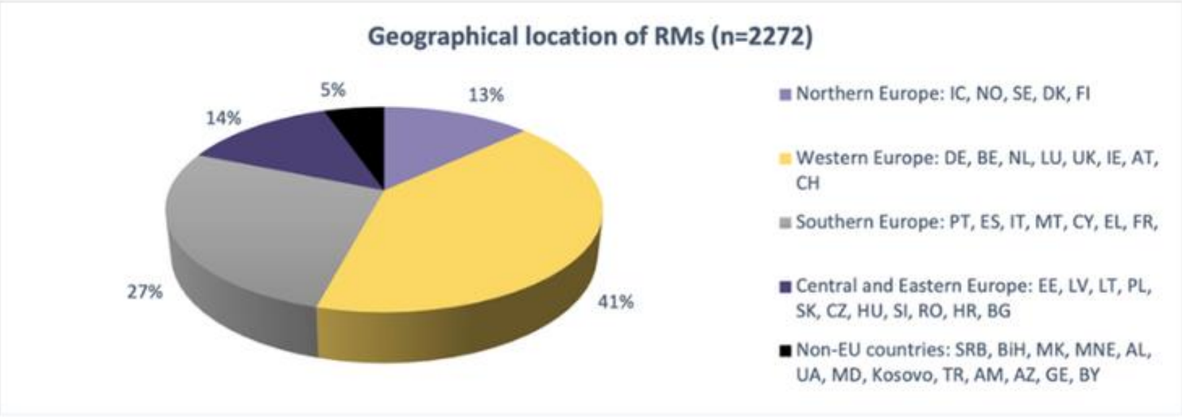
- Surveys (e.g. CARDEA / RM Comp ecosystem) show: ~60–70% of research managers are women (Europe-wide estimates)

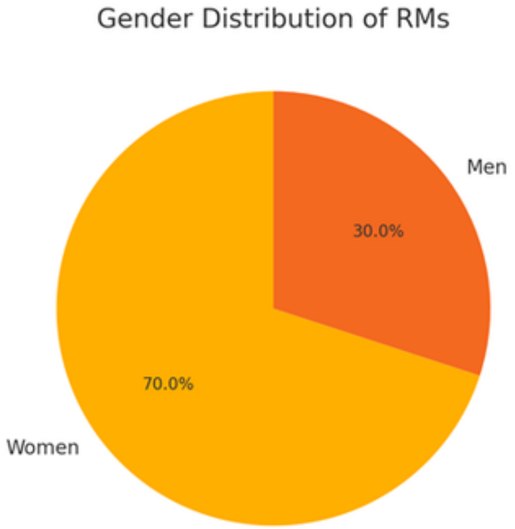
- However: Men are still more present in senior / leadership positions (pattern similar to academia)

RM ROADMAP SURVEY

Main messages:

Three-quarters of Research Managers are women. The majority of them are between 35 and 54 years old and half of them have spent at least 10 years in the profession. Research Managers across Europe primarily speak English as a foreign language, and the majority of them confirmed the importance of English knowledge for their job.





GENDER GAPS IN RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM AFFECT RMS

- Gender gaps in research ecosystem affect RMs
- Only 9% of inventors are women
- Women are underrepresented in STEM and innovation leadership

Research managers often:

- Work in environments where gender imbalance already exists
  - Play a role in promoting gender equality policies (e.g. GEPs)

GENDER IMBALANCE PERSISTS AT HIGHER LEVELS

In the wider research & innovation system:

- Women represent only ~33% of researchers in Europe
- Strong underrepresentation in leadership roles and decision-making

This pattern also reflects in research management:

- Many women in operational roles
- Fewer in strategic / director-level RM roles

POSITIVE TREND: INCREASING AWARENESS & INCLUSION

Gender equality is now:

- A core ERA priority
- A requirement in Horizon Europe (Gender Equality Plans)

Both men and women RMs actively engage in:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) actions

Research management is one of the few areas in R&I where women are highly represented — but leadership gaps still remain, reflecting wider inequalities in the research system.

RM ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

- Institutional recognition
- Training & certification
- Integration in ERA policies
- Strengthening networks

THANK YOU

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