

# RETLAMI-SEE

## Deliverable 2.3 – Manual: Best practices and weaknesses in project cycle management for Horizon Europe projects

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## List of abbreviations used in this document

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CRPI – Centre for Development and Research Support

D - Deliverable

EARMA – European Association of Research Managers and Administrators

IOS - Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg

IP - Intellectual property

RMA – Research Management and Administration

RMAAs - Research Managers and Administrators

RSO – Research Support Office

SEE – Southeast Europe

UNIBL – University of Banja Luka

UNIVIE – University of Vienna

ZRC SAZU - Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts – Institute of Culture and Memory Studies



## Executive summary

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This Deliverable is based on study visits by UNIBL's research support staff to leading research support offices (RSOs) at UNIVIE, ZRC SAZU and IOS. Its primary purpose is to significantly enhance effective Horizon Europe project cycle management, from proposal development to project implementation, by integrating best practices and addressing identified weaknesses. The Manual provides a comprehensive guide for anyone seeking to establish, optimize, or enhance a research project office as a research support function, offering especially valuable guidance for research institutions in Widening countries looking to strengthen their participation in Horizon Europe. In the first section exploring RMA roles, the manual defines the professional skill sets, from budget auditing to conflict resolution, required to support researchers throughout the project lifecycle. The next section comparing institutional models examines the developing support structures at the University of Banja Luka alongside the established systems used by RETLAMI-SEE partner institutions. Following the structural overview, the text shifts to a step-by-step guide for managing proposals and implementations offering concrete strategies for consortium building and financial management. Finally, the section on capacity building offers targeted recommendations to overcome understaffing through mentorship and engagement with pan-European networks like EARMA.



## Introduction

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This Manual is a key deliverable (T2.4) of the RETLAMI-SEE project, representing a significant step towards bolstering effective Horizon Europe project cycle management. Its foundation lies in the intensive study visits undertaken by UNIBL's Research Management and Administration (RMA) staff to leading research support offices at UNIVIE, ZRC SAZU and IOS. These visits were designed to facilitate the integration of best practices and the proactive addressing of identified weaknesses within the realm of research project support.

At its core, the Manual aims to be a comprehensive guide for institutions in the early stages of developing RMA support, such as those in the Western Balkans countries providing a contextualized approach to their specific needs and challenges. The Manual directly addresses shared challenges in project cycle management, offering concrete prevention mechanisms and solutions derived from the collective experience of all partners, while also acknowledging varying structural conditions among institutions. It emphasizes the importance of a collaborative network among administrative, financial and legal services across partner institutions, fostering continued knowledge exchange and setting the foundation for future successful collaborative projects. By distilling collective expertise and adopting best practices, this Manual will serve as a vital resource for RMA staff for all interested peer-RMA staff across Widening countries and other stakeholders seeking to improve their institutional capabilities in securing and managing Horizon Europe projects.

This Manual also provides additional contextualization by highlighting how the review of various approaches and functioning modes of RSOs—showcased by the diversity of our partner institutions—can offer significant insight for institutions in Widening countries, especially those in the Western Balkans region. This insight is crucial for them to either establish or enhance their own research support offices. The nascent but growing Research Management and Administration (RMA) profession in the Widening countries faces unique challenges and opportunities, as detailed in recent research focusing on its development and recognition.<sup>12</sup> By examining the varied models presented, this document offers a practical framework for improving research support capabilities in these regions.

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<sup>1</sup> [Marčić, S.](#) and [Pepić, A.](#) (2023), "Research Management and Administration in the Western Balkans", [Kerridge, S., Poli, S.](#) and [Yang-Yoshihara, M.](#) (Ed.) *The Emerald Handbook of Research Management and Administration Around the World*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 641-646. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80382-701-820231060>

<sup>2</sup> [Marčić, S.](#) and [Pepić, A.](#) (2023), "A Profession in the Making: Insights from Western Balkan Countries", [Kerridge, S., Poli, S.](#) and [Yang-Yoshihara, M.](#) (Ed.) *The Emerald Handbook of Research Management and Administration Around the World*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 385-394. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80382-701-820231031>



## Setting up Research Support Office/Services – A Step – by – Step Guide

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Establishing and strengthening RSOs is paramount for research institutions aiming to enhance their capacity for successful participation in competitive European funding programs, such as Horizon Europe. This Manual offers a structured, step-by-step approach to developing and enhancing such support structures, drawing on successful models and best practices that can be contextually adjusted to fit diverse institutional needs.

The insights gained from Task 2.4, specifically the study visits to RSOs at UNIVIE, ZRC SAZU, and IOS, provide a comprehensive framework for developing and enhancing such support structures. The core idea is to explore and apply successful models of research management and administrative best practices aiming to ensure that RMA staff is equipped with the necessary skills and networks to thrive.

The establishment and enhancement of effective RSO support is driven by several key objectives:

- To significantly bolster the research management and administration capabilities of an institution's RMA staff, enabling them to navigate the complexities of EU funding programmes with greater efficiency and compliance
- To facilitate the systematic transfer of practical expertise from experienced RSOs to the institution's own RMA personnel, covering critical financial, legal and administrative aspects of project lifecycle management
- To achieve an increase in the efficiency of project management processes, leading to improved proposal success rates and smoother project implementation
- To cultivate a durable network among administrative finance, and legal services, fostering future collaborative projects and ensuring sustained mutual support

### Methodology for Establishing/Enhancing RSOs

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The step-by-step methodology for setting up or improving RSOs draws directly from the successful model of the study visits:

- Securing the institutional support for establishing an RSO, by implementing meetings with the University/Faculty management, in which the expected outcomes, impact and added value of an RSO, as defined below will be clearly presented.
- Employing personnel with relevant skills for performing the role of a research manager. The required skills are defined in the next chapter.
- Implementing short-term, intensive training visits for RMA staff to establish RSOs with proven track records in managing EU projects. The visits should be highly structured, incorporating a clear work plan that covers foundational understanding, masterclasses,



and interactive discussions focusing on open questions, effective strategies and the specific challenges that need to be addressed in each particular institutional context.

- Fostering direct networking and experience exchange among RMA staff from different institutions to share financial, legal, and administrative insights
- Encouraging the synthesis of learned experiences into practical, actionable resources, achieved by documenting these diverse insights into standardized operating procedures that guide future project implementations.
- Establishing a framework for ongoing assessment of RSO performance, regular updates to internal guidelines, and continuous professional development for RMA staff, informed by evolving EU funding landscapes and best practices.

### Expected Outcomes and Impact

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A well-established Research Support Office is expected to yield significant benefits:

- Increased efficiency in project management directly translates to improved success rates in securing competitive EU funding
- Streamlined processes and clear guidelines minimize administrative errors and compliance issues
- Establishment of strong professional networks facilitates future partnerships and mutual support in complex international projects
- The creation of open-access resources, such as best practice manuals, contributes to broader capacity building within the European Research Area, particularly benefiting institutions in Widening countries

By systematically addressing these areas and adopting a collaborative, knowledge-sharing approach, institutions can effectively set up and continuously enhance their Research Support Office services, thereby maximizing their potential for impactful research and successful participation in European initiatives.

### Essential Functions and Responsibilities of Research Managers and Administrators

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Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) are critical to the research success in a wide range of organizations, including higher education institutions, dedicated research institutes, government agencies, and even private sector companies actively engaged in research and development. They provide the essential support infrastructure that enables researchers to focus on their scientific endeavours, navigate complex regulations, and secure funding. Their roles are



multifaceted, requiring a blend of administrative expertise, scientific understanding, and interpersonal skills.

## **Responsibilities of Research Managers and Administrators**

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The responsibilities of RMAs can be broadly categorized into the following areas:

- **Pre-Award Management**

- Proactively identify relevant national, international, and internal funding calls; synthesize and disseminate information to researchers.
- Assist researchers in understanding funding guidelines, developing project narratives, preparing budgets, and compiling necessary documentation (e.g., CVs, letters of support).
- Conduct thorough administrative and compliance reviews of proposals before submission, ensuring adherence to funder requirements and institutional policies. Coordinate timely submission through relevant online portals.
- Support the identification and establishment of collaborations with external partners (academic, industry, government) for joint research proposals.
- Advise researchers on ethical approvals (e.g., human subjects, animal welfare) and other regulatory requirements that need to be addressed in the proposal stage.

- **Post-Award Management**

- Facilitate the activation of awarded grants, including setting up internal project accounts, communicating award terms, and initiating necessary contracts.
- Monitor project expenditures against budgets, prepare financial reports, manage cost transfers, and ensure compliance with funder's financial regulations.
- Track project progress, ensure timely submission of scientific and financial reports to funders, and manage deliverables as per grant agreements.
- Ensure ongoing compliance with funder's terms and conditions, institutional policies, and relevant ethical and regulatory guidelines throughout the project lifecycle.
- Facilitate requests for grant amendments, no-cost extensions, and other changes to project terms.
- Guide researchers through the administrative and financial closeout of projects, including final reporting and documentation.

- **Research Policy, Ethics, and Compliance:**

- Contribute to the development, review, and implementation of institutional research policies, procedures, and guidelines.
- Provide administrative support to the Ethics Review Board, managing applications, scheduling meetings, and communicating decisions.
- Promote best practices in research integrity and responsible conduct of research, addressing potential issues as they arise.



- Provide initial guidance on intellectual property matters, linking researchers with relevant legal and technology transfer support.
- Advise researchers on developing robust data management plans in line with funder requirements and institutional policies.
- **Research Promotion and Communication:**
- Support the dissemination of organisation's/university's research achievements through various channels (e.g., website, newsletters, annual reports).
- Facilitate effective communication between the research office, researchers, faculties, and other administrative departments.
- Represent the organisation/university at relevant national and international research administration networks and events.

### **Essential Skill Sets Required for Effective Research Support**

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To effectively perform the aforementioned tasks, RMAs require a diverse set of skills:

- Meticulous attention to detail, excellent record-keeping, ability to manage multiple tasks and deadlines simultaneously.
- Understanding of budgeting principles, financial reporting, and grant accounting.
- Excellent written and oral communication for clear and concise interactions with researchers, funders, and colleagues. Ability to interpret complex guidelines and convey information effectively.
- Ability to build rapport and trust with researchers, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.
- Ability to identify issues, analyse problems, and propose practical solutions.
- Familiarity with national and international funding agencies, their priorities, and application processes.
- Strong grasp of ethical principles in research, regulatory frameworks, and institutional policies.
- Competence in using various software (e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, presentation tools) and online grant management systems.
- Willingness to stay updated on evolving funding landscapes, regulations, and technologies.
- Ability to anticipate needs and take initiative to improve processes and support services.
- English language proficiency.



## Overview of Research support across RETLAMI-SEE project partners

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### University of Banja Luka

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The University of Banja Luka (UNIBL) is increasingly committed to a project-oriented approach in its research and development endeavours. Year after year, UNIBL has seen a significant increase in the number of both national and international projects, reflecting its growing engagement in research and collaborative initiatives. This positive trend, however, brings with it a corresponding increase in the demand for professional research support services.

#### 1. Centre for Development and Research Support (CRPI)

To meet this evolving need, the Centre for Development and Research Support (CRPI) stands as the central service provider for research support at the University. Established in 2017 (originally as the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology Transfer), and evolving from the University Entrepreneurship Centre founded in 2009, CRPI has, over the past eight years, become a key service provider for all UNIBL staff and students across its 16 faculties, Academy of Arts and Institute of Genetic Resources. The Centre's mission is to empower UNIBL's academic and growing RMA community by providing comprehensive support in project cycle management, knowledge transfer, and intellectual property protection.

#### CRPI's Scope of Work

- Providing end-to-end support for project development (proposal writing, expert advice, administrative-technical compliance, budget review) and implementation (administrative and financial management, reporting to funders) for all UNIBL members, as well as independently developing and managing projects for CRPI/Rectorate.
- Knowledge and Technology Transfer: Facilitating the protection and application of innovations, technologies, and knowledge, with a strong focus on intellectual property management, including organizing relevant trainings.
- Policy Development: Actively contributing to UNIBL's policies, especially those concerning scientific research and development, and intellectual property protection.
- Capacity Building: Organizing training sessions for university staff on project writing and management.
- Assisting other university-level services, particularly the Office of Vice-rector for Science and Development
- From the description of CRPI's duties and activities, it is clear that various expert competencies and knowledge are required for quality performance of all these tasks. The level of support that CRPI currently provides can be maintained as long as the number of projects from all sources remains relatively small. However, despite offering this wide array of crucial services across UNIBL, the Centre is currently understaffed. This



significantly impacts the level of support it can provide. The number and competencies of CRPI staff must keep pace with any potential increase in the number of projects.

Additionally, the Centre actively contributes to the development of policies at UNIBL, particularly concerning scientific research and development, and intellectual property protection. Its employees also undertake supplementary activities that support other university-level services, notably the work of the Office of Vice-rector for Science and Development.

## 2. Overview of Research Support Services at UNIBL Faculties

While the University of Banja Luka aims for a comprehensive and centralized research support system through CRPI, the current situation at individual faculties is not uniform. Some faculties have managed to develop their own internal research support services with RMA staff. These personnel are partially trained for RMA duties, including project management in an administrative manner. This kind of dedicated support allows these faculties to participate more effectively in research activities and better utilize available funding.

However, most faculties at UNIBL, including the Faculty of Political Sciences, currently lack dedicated staff trained for RMA roles. This often leaves researchers and academic staff at these faculties to navigate the complex procedures of project development, application, and implementation on their own or with CRPI support.

Through the RETLAMI-SEE project, the intention is to build staff capacities primarily (but not only) at the Faculty of Political Sciences. The goal is to train and empower individuals through workshops and mentorship, enabling them to provide the necessary administrative, financial, and technical support to researchers. This will ultimately enhance the overall scientific research potential of the University of Banja Luka and ensure more consistent and higher-quality research support across all its organizational units.

### University of Vienna

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The University of Vienna (UNIVIE), being the oldest university in Austria and one of the oldest in Europe, is at the forefront of third-party funding acquisition in Austria. Its success is backed up by the figures: around 150 million € is acquired via national and international third-party funding per year. A large part of this amount comes from EU funding, making UNIVIE the top participant in Austria in both Horizon2020 and Horizon Europe. Additionally, on the national level, UNIVIE is hosting the largest number of ERC and MSCA PF projects. This success is supported by well-developed third-party funding support services, both at the Faculty and University level.

#### 1. Research Services and Career Development Department

The Research Services and Career Development Department of the University of Vienna acts, among others, as a first point of contact for questions regarding research funding on a national and international level, technology transfer/knowledge exchange and academic entrepreneurship. It is a central unit that supports researchers applying for larger national and



international funding opportunities, mainly focusing on the pre-award side of the process, while the smaller projects (i.e. with the UNIVIE budget lower than 100,000€) are backed locally at faculty levels. The support at the central level includes the following:

- Helping the researchers to prepare and submit national, EU and international third-party funded projects
- Creating and running workshops, info events and awareness raising campaigns about different funding opportunities at different career stages, both at individual faculties and at the central level
- Performing budget checks and internal approval processes, which are mandatory for projects with the UNIVIE budget >100,000 €
- Informing, advising and supporting the Rectorate in strategy processes and policies in relevant areas
- Implementing own projects of the department from various programmes, including MSCA COFUND, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe Widening projects
- Providing proposal checks and mock interviews for the ERC projects, as well as the proposal checks for the MSCA PF projects where UNIVIE is a host institution

Additionally, the department includes a paid service in the form of the post-award project management, which is limited to the big coordinated projects or ERC projects and needs to be planned/budgeted in the application stage.

On the other hand, all the faculties and centres of UNIVIE have a dedicated office or a person to act as a third-party funding coordinator for the respective faculty/centre. They provide support services for smaller projects (<100,000€), including supporting the researchers with preparing and submitting both national and international projects, as well as performing the budget checks and internal approval processes at the faculty level.

### Leibniz – Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg

The Institute of East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) is one of the largest and longest-established non-university research institutions of its kind in Germany. IOS has been a member of the Leibniz Association since 2017. Its primary goals are to conduct innovative research on an international scale, develop and provide infrastructure services that benefit the research community, and to inform the public about the region of East and Southeast Europe

IOS is a foundation under civil law and a legally completely independent entity.

As of 2025, IOS must ensure that third-party funding covers 25% of our total expenditures. This was stipulated by the federal and state governments and the foundation board. It is also regulated in the IOS annual program budget. Compliance with this quota is also a criterion of the Leibniz Association's evaluations. IOS is responsible for meeting this quota. This is just one reason



why the area of third-party funding is becoming increasingly important for the IOS Administration Department.

Research support at IOS encompasses much more than just third-party funding; the IOS research support division is also responsible for the following functions:

- Human Resources Department
- Cost and personnel controlling
- Travel expense management
- Financial accounting
- Cost and performance accounting
- Procurement and Purchasing Department (focus on public procurement)
- Public Relations Department (over 100 IOS articles in the media each year)
- Events Department (over 100 scientific events annually)
- IT Department
- Supporting guests and fellows

IOS's infrastructure services include a public, specialist library for humanities and social sciences research on Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Housing around 360,000 media items, it also provides extensive digital services, including specialized databases and research portals. The library supports researchers by providing literature both within the Institute and across the international scientific community, for which it offers interlibrary loan services. These research-driven services support the entire specialist community and play a key role in advancing the study of (South) Eastern Europe. Working with the Institute's research departments and external partners, the library is helping to build a cutting-edge digital research environment for humanities and social sciences studies of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. IOS supports researchers by providing a wide variety of digital services, including LaMBDa, a research data portal containing new research datasets from IOS projects.

### Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts

The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) was established as an independent public research institution in 1981 and has since become the leading research and educational centre in Slovenia, mainly in the humanities and social sciences, and one of the most prominent academic institutions in central and southeastern Europe. More than three hundred researchers work within eighteen interconnected institutes that create a dynamic



transdisciplinary research network. ZRC SAZU researchers conduct outstanding research that spans from linguistics to philosophy and archaeology to biology. Their findings are of tremendous importance for a better understanding of cultural, social, and natural phenomena in Slovenia and the world.

Apart from publishing their results in academic publications, research groups also engage in data collection, documentation, and presentation to audiences beyond the academic sphere. ZRC SAZU has its own publishing house, bookstore, and several laboratories; it houses the Geographical Museum, and boasts numerous collections. ZRC SAZU publishes around 60 to 90 monographs annually and from 25 to 30 volumes of each title from an array of their science journals. Among its rich publishing activity, five academic journals are listed in Thomson Reuters and twelve in Scopus. ZRC SAZU is an active supporter of open science.

Research support for researchers is provided by the Research Office, which offers comprehensive and centralized assistance to all ZRC SAZU institutes.

The Research Office consists of three departments:

- National Research Department
- International and Applicative Research Department (pre-award office)
- Project Implementation Department (post-award office).

The National Research Department handles all aspects of support related to funding from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

Tasks of the International and Applicative Research Department (pre-award office) are:

- Monitoring and informing researchers about current calls for proposals
- Establishing contacts with potential project partners
- Providing professional support throughout all stages of project applications – identifying suitable programs and calls, assisting in the development of project proposals, and preparing administrative and financial sections of applications
- Enhancing researchers' skills through relevant trainings and workshops.

Tasks of the Project Implementation Department (post-award office) are:

- Monitoring project documentation and preparing financial reports (including coordination of financial reporting for international projects)
- Monitoring working hours (reviewing project staff coverage – 1,700 effective hours per person annually).

The current organization of the Research Office has developed over several years of work and improvement. It evolved gradually to meet the growing needs of the organization.

Today, the main features of the Research Office's support are:

- Specialized roles distributed among several team members
- Integrated software providing all information in one place
- Automated and streamlined reporting tools
- Continuous, close collaboration and communication between departments
- Clear roles with shared responsibility and expertise
- Centralized digital access to all project documents.

ZRC SAZU is aware of the high importance of effective research support and continues to strive for further improvement.

## Best Practices and Lessons Learned from Partner Institutions and Study Visits

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This section provides a comprehensive overview of successful strategies for both supporting a Horizon Europe proposal from its initial concept to submission and managing the subsequent project implementation. The discussion draws on real-world experiences to highlight effective methods for strategic planning, proposal writing, legal and administrative compliance, and efficient project management.

### Supporting a Horizon Europe Proposal: From Idea to Submission

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- Strategic Project Planning Processes: Best practices in identifying calls, consortium building, and aligning project ideas with funding priorities

The process begins with strategic project planning, where the primary goal is to align a researcher's expertise with the specific priorities of global funding bodies. At this stage, institutional support acts as a compass, identifying relevant calls for proposals and facilitating the building of international consortia. Success here depends on ensuring that the project idea not only pushes the boundaries of science but also addresses the socio-economic goals of funding programs.



- **Effective Proposal Writing Support: Guidance on structuring proposals, technical and financial coherence, and common pitfalls to avoid**

As the idea takes shape, the focus shifts to effective proposal writing. This is a collaborative effort to ensure that the project narrative is both ambitious and realistic. RMA staff provide guidance on structuring the proposal to maintain technical and financial coherence, meaning the work plan must be perfectly mirrored by a justifiable budget. By identifying common pitfalls, such as vague impact assessments or inadequate risk management, the university ensures that the proposal stands up to the scrutiny of international peer reviewers.

- **Legal and Administrative Pre-Award Best Practices: Ensuring compliance and smooth submission processes**

Before an application can be submitted, it must pass through a formal legal and administrative review. This stage acts as a quality-control mechanism. For substantial projects, specialized units perform mandatory budget checks and internal approval processes to ensure compliance with both national laws and the specific regulations of the funding agency. This professional oversight guarantees that the institution can fully support the project's commitments, providing a smooth path toward submission and eventual contract signature.

### **Supporting a Horizon Europe project implementation**

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- **Efficient Financial Management and Reporting: Strategies for budget control, cost eligibility, and audit readiness**

Once the project moves from the planning stage to active implementation, the focus shifts to ensuring a stable operational environment. This begins with efficient financial management and reporting, where the priority is to maintain budget control. By establishing clear strategies for monitoring cost eligibility, the institution ensures that all expenditures align with the funding agency's rules. This proactive approach maintains "audit readiness" throughout the project's lifecycle, preventing financial surprises during final reviews.

- **Facilitating effective internal communication channels among partners**

For a consortium to thrive, partners across different institutions and countries must remain synchronized. This is achieved by creating dedicated communication channels and organizing and documenting consortium meetings. From the initial energy of the Kick-off meeting to the strategic decision-making of the Steering Committee and General Assembly, these gatherings serve as the formal backbone of the project, ensuring that every decision is recorded and every milestone is tracked.

- **Managing partner responsibilities and deliverables according to the Consortium Agreement**

Operational success also depends on managing partner responsibilities. By closely following the Consortium Agreement, the management team ensures that every partner provides their

promised deliverables on time. Finally, to protect the project from unforeseen challenges, formal Strategies for Conflict Resolution are put in place. These dispute management frameworks provide a professional roadmap for resolving disagreements over resources or intellectual property, ensuring that the consortium remains unified and focused on its scientific objectives.

## Recommendations for staffing and capacity building within research support offices in Widening Countries

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Institutions in Widening Countries often face similar challenges, including a shortage of trained research support staff. Addressing these challenges calls for adoption of more strategic measures in staffing and capacity building tailored and adjusted to each institution individually. These recommendations are based on the study visits (WP2) and also mapping done in the WP1 (D1.1) of RETLAMI-SEE project.

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### Staffing Expansion and Targeted Training

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To address the common issue of understaffing, RSOs should prioritize the recruitment of additional qualified personnel, or training the existing staff. Once new staff is onboard, structured training programs are crucial for their quick integration and skills development. This will include foundational training covering the essentials of the full grant lifecycle, from initial application to project closeout.

Beyond the basics, a research support office should offer advanced modules that delve into specific areas crucial for a lead team. This includes specialized training on funding schemes, as well as critical topics such as intellectual property, data management, and contract negotiation.

Recognizing that effective research management extends beyond technical knowledge, research support RSOs should also focus on soft skills development. Training should be provided in vital areas like effective communication, negotiation tactics, conflict resolution, and project management. To keep everyone current and foster a collaborative environment, RSOs can hold regular internal workshops led by experienced Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) or external experts.

To further support continuous learning, institutions can leverage online learning opportunities and platforms. These resources offer a flexible way for RMAs to gain new skills and stay current in their field:

- [foRMAtion project](#) provides a comprehensive educational module to train university students as future Research Managers and Administrators.
- [V4+WB Network of Research Managers and Administrators offers](#) a repository of learning materials and a database of experts to support knowledge sharing and networking, particularly for professionals in Visegrad and Western Balkan countries.



- [RM ROADMAP](#) is a pan-European initiative defining a roadmap for the research management profession and creating a community to support its delivery.
- [EARMA Academy](#) serves as an open-access online hub for resources and learning, dedicated to supporting the professional development of the European RMA community.
- [CARDEA hub](#) provides open-access online training resources and modules, delivered by experienced RMAs, to support the professional development and career progression of research managers.

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### Mentorship and Peer Learning

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To maximize the impact of the existing team and quickly integrate new members, the office should cultivate a supportive learning environment through mentorship and peer learning. A mentorship program can pair new RMAs with experienced colleagues, utilizing also the established contacts and networking with partners. This initiative aims to facilitate knowledge transfer and provide ongoing guidance, helping new staff quickly get up to speed. The RSO should also encourage peer-to-peer exchange, fostering a culture where RMAs openly share best practices and collectively solve problems during team meetings and informal discussions, thereby leveraging existing knowledge more effectively.

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### Professional Development and Networking

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To truly broaden their horizons and bring new expertise into the understaffed environment, RSOs should prioritize professional development and networking. It will encourage and support RMAs in gaining membership in professional associations, whether through establishment of national organizations or through participation in international bodies like [EARMA](#) (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators). Attending these associations' events and conferences is key. The research institution should actively fund attendance at relevant conferences and workshops, giving their RMAs the chance to learn about new trends, network with peers from other institutions, and bring back innovative ideas that can help bridge knowledge gaps.



## Annexes

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### Photos and links to the published news about RMA study visits

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First study visit to UNIVIE - 07-10 April 2025 ([link](#))



Second study visit to UNIVIE - 21-24 October 2025 ([link](#))



First study visit to ZRC SAZU 28-30 May 2025 ([link](#))



Second study visit to ZRC SAZU - 15-17 December 2025 ([link](#))



First and second study visit to IOS - 24-27 November 2025 ([link](#))

