

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A RESEARCH MANAGER: AN
INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF
EUROPEAN RESEARCH MANAGEMENT AND
ADMINISTRATION.**

by

Martha Phelan

Master in Education: Critical Perspectives on Education

Supervisor: Professor Damian Murchan

The School of Education

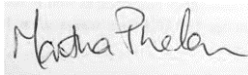
Submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College

12th June 2025

Declaration

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Abstract

Research management was officially recognised as a profession by the Council of the European Union (C/2023/1640), December 2023. Despite this recognition, the profession remains unfamiliar outside the research ecosystem, and the roles and responsibilities of research managers differ significantly across European countries. Existing literature and discourse highlight the complexities and challenges faced by research managers, prompting further investigation into these issues. This interpretative phenomenological study seeks to explore the meaning of being a research manager or manager of a research support function. The researcher has formulated four guiding sub-research questions to gain insights into the motivations behind the transition from researcher to research manager, as well as the professional experiences encountered in their current roles. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is the qualitative methodology employed for data collection and analysis in this study. A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used for participant recruitment, targeting up to 20 individuals, which resulted in 16 interviews. From these, seven participants were selected representing Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Romania. Their transcripts were anonymised and analysed, enabling the identification of experiential statements that resulted in the development of individual Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). Seven personal narratives were co-created incorporating the participants experiences and direct quotations alongside the researcher's interpretations. The Group Experiential Themes (GETs) were derived from the PETs, culminating in four key themes that formed the foundation for the discussion. The essential interpretations of what it means to be a research manager revealed to be a research manager means having *self-efficacy*, the confidence in your ability to lead projects and teams, along with the *competence* required to navigate complex research environments. It involves finding *fulfilment* in your work, which drives motivation and commitment to advancing research goals. The study's findings could inform research organisations on the challenges researchers face when transitioning into management roles. Word count limitations hindered full implementation of the IPA methodology, which could have been mitigated by using specialised IPA software to support data analysis and interpretation.

Key words: Research Management, Research Management and Administration, Professional Preparedness, Professional Identity, Transferable Skills, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Idiography, Experience.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the contributions of research managers and managers of research support functions from Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Romania. I thank them for sharing their professional experiences, which offered valuable insights into the field of research management and administration.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Damian Murchan, Associate Professor of Education, University of Dublin, Trinity College, whose guidance, support and expertise has enabled me to complete my master's degree within the given period available. I would like to acknowledge other M.Ed. programme lecturers who influenced my thinking, increased confidence and expanded my professional horizons, Dr. Conor McGuckin, Dr. Aidan Seery, Dr. Melanie Ní Dhuinn, Dr. David Limond, Professor Andrew Loxley, Dr. John Walsh, Dr. Susan Pike, and Dr. Keith Johnston. A special thanks Jess Freeman, and the recently retired Keara Eade for their administrative professionalism.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Director of Research Support and Policy, Dr David O'Connell, for his professional advice and support throughout the dissertation process. In addition, I would like to acknowledge and thank Professor John Cryan, Dr Siobhan Cusack, Mary Kate O'Regan, HR Research Manager (& CARDEA project coordinator) and colleagues at UCC Office of Vice President for Research and Innovation, and university-wide colleagues for their camaraderie.

I would like to thank my former Director Dr. Christopher Brown, UCC International Office and referees Professor Maria Sousa Gallagher, Dr. Gerard Mullally, and Dr. Fiona Dukelow of University College Cork who supported my application to join the TCD M.Ed. programme.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supportive husband Fred, daughters Hannah and Isabella, my mother Christina (and late father Jackie), brothers John and Robert, along with their families, as well as my extended family and friends for their encouragement in helping me reach the finish line.

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Abbreviations

AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
CARDEA	Career Acknowledgement for Research (Managers) Delivering for the European Area
CE	Common Era or AD (Anno Domini)
CERN	Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire
COGR	Council on Government Relations
COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
EARMA	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators
EC	European Commission
EMBL	European Molecular Biology Laboratory
ERA	European Research Area
ERAC	European Research and Innovation Area Committee
ESA	European Space Agency
ESPRIT	European Strategic Programme on Research in Information Technology
ESO	European Southern Observatory
EU	European Union
FP	Framework Programme
GET	Group Experiential Theme
INORMS	International Network of Research Management Societies
IRMAA	Irish Research Managers and Administrators Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIH	National Institute of Health
NSF	National Science Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PET	Personal Experiential Statement
RA	Research Administration
RAs	Research Administrators
RAAAP	Research Administration As A Profession
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RMA	Research Management and Administration
RMAs	Research Managers and Administrators
RM	Research Management
RMs	Research Managers
RM-ROADMAP	Research Managers Roadmap
RSF	Research Support Function
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCC	University College Cork
UK ARMA	UK Association of Research Managers and Administrators

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Chapter 1. Introduction

“The ethos of the [RMA] profession is carried by the integrity necessary when standing in the center of gravity between the researcher, your institutions, and the research funder; it is carried by the ability to see things in new perspectives every day, absorb rejections and celebrate successes, make things happen.”

Jan Andersen, Kristel Toom, Susi Poli and Pamela Miller (2018)

1.1 Starting point

The choice of topic and motivation for this study emerged from two lived experiences; the researcher’s professional experience of working in the central research support office at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland, and concomitantly their postgraduate learning experience during the M.Ed. in *Critical Perspectives on Education* programme at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Ireland. The M.Ed. programme modules included educational philosophy, educational psychology, history and historiography of education, sociology, academic literacy and research methods. Practice and theory converged into a research area of interest, namely research management and administration. Through the lens of higher education, the researcher embodies the critical perspectives programme by drawing on international perspectives and taking a multidisciplinary approach in the formulation and execution of this dissertation.

1.2 Methodological approach

The researcher adopts interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the qualitative approach for data collection and analysis. The parameters of this piece of research includes a recruitment campaign targeting up to twenty professional practitioners that identify as RMs or managers of RSFs from up to eight European countries (Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Spain) across five different research sectors (government, non-government organisations, higher educational institutions, industry and research centres/institutes). The research instruments for data collection include an eligibility questionnaire, interview guide, one-to-one semi-structured interviews providing transcripts as the output.

IPA is theoretically grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Some fundamental principles in the IPA analytical process emphasise interpretation as central,

with a particular focus on understanding the participant's point of view and how they make sense of their experiences. The idiographic approach requires the data for each person, to be fully analysed on its own terms, interpreting each transcript case-by-case and writing narratives from personal experiential statements (PETs). Once all cases have been individually analysed, the researcher aims to compare across cases for common patterns and differences crafting a new table of group experiential themes (GETs) (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 51).

1.3 Rationale for the study

In 2021, the European Commission Horizon Europe programme funded two projects from the call HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-20, project acronyms: CARDEA and RM ROADMP (European Commission (1), 2022). Both projects focus on the professionalisation of 'research management' with a shared goal of strengthening the capacity for research management in the European Research and Innovation (R&I) system across the entire European Research Area (ERA). The researcher's awareness of these two projects ignited their interest to take a deep dive into the literature and discourse on the topic of research management and administration.

Preliminary literature and discourse reveal an interesting phenomenon whereby the career path of research managers and administrators (RMAs) is a career that happens not as a first choice, suggesting an element of serendipity to entering the profession (Zsár & Balázs, 2020; Acker et al., 2019; Andersen et al., 2018; Lewis, 2014; Green & Langley, 2009). The researcher aims to explore individuals' experience of such career transitions. In addition, the literature and discourse suggest there are complexities around communication and interpretation of research management, in addition to challenges experienced by professionals working in this area such as professional preparedness, professional identity, lack of consistency in career development, precarious contracts and inconsistent remuneration across different countries (Poli, 2018, pp. 6-29). These matters collectively provide a rationale for the study and the researcher's curiosity to hear the voices and opinions from research managers or managers of research support functions to glean insights into their professional experiences.

1.4 Contextualising RMA

This research is framed within a European context, focusing on the field of Research Management and Administration (RMA). The study takes the position that research management is a profession underpinned by research administrative processes. The researcher's situatedness is from a research support perspective – support that enables researchers to conduct research. Empirical research indicates that European research managers and administrators (RMAs) possess many guises of titles, roles and responsibilities depending on geography, history, culture, and language that have evolved over time. These many facets cause ambiguity with identity amongst research professionals. The rationale for these differences are complex and may depend on the persons positioning or hierarchical level of work, namely: administrative/operational, management, and leadership/strategic (Drennan, 2018, p. 78; Kerridge & Scott, 2018, p. 2). Abbreviations include 'RMA,' 'RMAs' 'RM' and 'RA' and are used interchangeably in different situations, but they will be contextualised in the writing for clarity. The acronym RMA originated from a professional association established in 1995 known as the European Association for Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA). The research professionals represented in this study are research managers (RMs) and/or managers of research support functions (RSFs).

1.5 The research question

The preliminary literature review reveals a lack of qualitative research employing an interpretative phenomenological approach to gather and analyse data from practitioners in the field of RMA. This research methodology gap is an opportunity to present the lived experiences from RMA practitioners working across Europe. The overall aim of the study is to explore what it means to be a research manager or manager of a research support function working in their respective research ecosystems within the broader EU research and innovation, and international research landscape. The main research question is as follows:

What does it mean to be a Research Manager: an interpretative phenomenological exploration of European research management and administration.

From this main question, the researcher divides it into four sub-questions to explore the professional lived experiences of research managers and research support managers in greater depth as follows:

- 1) What factors influenced their decision to become a research manager or manager of a research support function?
- 2) To what extent does professional preparedness and professional identity shape individuals' experiences on being a research manager or manager of a research support function?
- 3) To what extent does organisational and regional influences shape individuals' experiences?
- 4) What are the essential interpretations of their experiences?

Firstly, the researcher aims to gain insights into the factors that influenced their decision to make a career transition from being a researcher to becoming a research manager. The study is exploratory by nature with a focus on discovery and understanding making it an essential approach in the field of RMA where knowledge is still developing about this profession.

1.6 Theoretical and philosophical framework

A theoretical and philosophical framework underpins the research methodology orientation and provides a context for the process involved as well as a basis for its logic and criteria. The researcher draws on Heideggerian philosophy, as an approach to inquiry and a starting point to ask the question "What is it that calls on us to think?" (Heidegger, 1954). The researcher engages in critical thinking about their research area of interest and considers a research paradigm that best reflects the entire research plan (the aim of the study, research questions, instruments and measurements used, as well as methods of analysis). The researcher selects the constructivist-interpretative paradigm because reality is constructed through interactions between the researcher and the research subject, there is no single reality or truth but rather multiple realities, therefore realities need to be interpreted. The researcher draws on two theories: *Phenomenology* (philosophical approach to the study of experience) and *Hermeneutics* (theory of interpretation) to explore the meaning of research

manager's experiences working in the profession of research management, and how these two ideas merged into 'interpretative phenomenology' which underpins the research methodological orientation taken for this piece of research, known as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

1.7 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research topic and Chapter Two provides background literature on the topic of research management and administration. Chapter Three describes in more detail the methodology applied for data collection and analyses. The findings are presented in Chapter Four using tables and personal narratives. Chapter Five discusses the essential interpretations of the research findings, drawing inferences from the research conducted and positing recommendations for further studies. The conclusion ends with a reflection demonstrating the researcher's experience and sense-making from the praxis of interpretation.

Chapter 2 presents the literature reviewed from multiple perspectives of scholarly writings, books, conference proceedings, reports, as well as a selection of relevant studies to provide an overview of current knowledge on the topic of research management and administration.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

“Education, research and innovation will be key to our competitiveness and our ability to lead in the transition to a climate-neutral economy and new digital age. It is about equipping people with the knowledge, life experience and skills they need to thrive. Our world-leading science, research and innovation capacity can help us find European solutions to the most pressing global issues.”

Mission letter to Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner-designate for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. Brussels, 4th July 2023.

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two presents literature from journal articles, books, conference proceedings, reports, and empirical studies to provide an overview of current knowledge on the topic of research management and administration. The researcher aims to give a brief account of the evolution and development of research management and administration (RMA) in Europe and factors that may have contributed to The Council of the European Union (EU) decision to adopt the European Commissions (EC) recommendations recognising research management (RM) as a profession and viable career path for researchers and research professionals (Council of the European Union, 2023). The researcher argues that this development did not happen as the result of one action, instead it was the cumulation of several actions, the sum of many parts that gained momentum over time that led to this successful outcome. The chapter is structured in a way that invites the reader to think broadly in the first instance, from the international and EU research landscape to the national and local research ecosystem, gradually bringing their thoughts to the particular, to the core topic of this study – ‘the professional self’ as it pertains to research managers, and relevant literature on this concept is explored. Initially, the scholarly literature will be examined to understand the key factors that influenced the evolution of RMA across European contexts.

2.2 Factors that influenced the evolution of RMA in Europe

From the early 1940s, there was a major change in the role of research in U.S. society through science. Sanctioned by US President Roosevelt, Dr. Vannevar Bush produced a report *Science the Endless Frontier* (Bush, 1945), proposing the co-existence of military and non-military research that “touted basic research as a ‘peacemaker’ and recommended

a two-track research system, where the state on one side requires research for its own purposes and on the other side have a bottom-up system, where researchers themselves can develop their own ideas based on the state of the art within their field” (Andersen et., 2018, p. 112). This recommendation was believed to be the catalyst for the role of the U.S. research administrator (Zink, 2023).

Today, the role of the research administrator (RA) is an established profession in the US with three basic functions that include: supporting researchers to enhance their success, administrating the institution’s research mission, and working with sponsors to achieve their goals and abide by the regulations (Beasley, 2006, p. 17-18). Figure 2.1 shows the connexion between the role of the US research administrator and the EU research manager or manager of a research support function operating in the middle described by Beasley as “a milieu, consisting of the researcher, the institution and the sponsor” and described by Andersen et al., as “the research administrator ‘Bermuda triangle’” within the research institution (Andersen, 2018; Beasley, 2006).

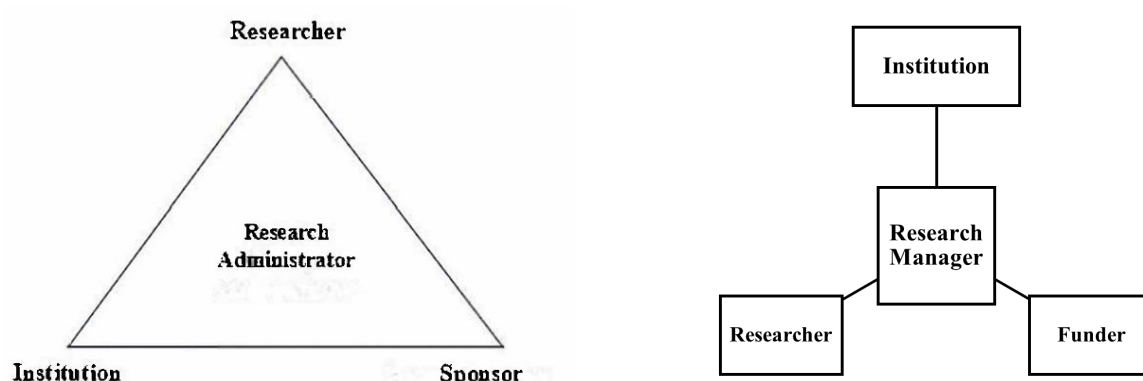


FIGURE 2.1 THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER

Source: 2.1 (a) Kulakowski & Chronister (2006, p. 18) and (b) Andersen et al., (2018, p.324).

Bush’s report led to the establishment of a number of U.S. national funding agencies in different fields (National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Atomic Energy Commission), where the need for research results were identified and funded, and at the same time could fund bottom-up research. The two-track research system became a “strategic research funding system” and “the model was copied in most Western European countries as a key to gain competitive advantage” (Andersen et al., 2018, p.112).

U.S. support to western Europe was instrumental to its' pathway to recovery post-World War II. The American Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced an economic reconstruction programme for Europe (1948-1952), officially known as the European Recovery Programme (ERP) (Marshall, 1948). During the same period, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was created to administer the ERP funding. To mitigate the reoccurrence of military threat on democracy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was established in 1949, an intergovernmental security alliance between the United States, Canada and 10 western European countries. Western Europe felt secure in leaving the war years behind and move forward with economic redevelopment. The next section explores literature about the evolution of RMA through the advancement of the European Union.

2.3 Development of RMA through the advancement of the EU

RMA in the context of the European Union (EU) has evolved and developed through various treaties, policies, and institutions. Researchers claim the development of RMA manifested through intrinsically linked components such as policy transitions from science to technology to innovation, in conjunction with the establishment of institutions and programmes (Groeninx van Zoelen, 2024; Ulnicane, 2015, pp. 37-38). The foundation for organised research in Europe began with a few visionary scientists who aimed to create a world-class physics facility to prevent brain drain to the U.S. after World War Two I, culminating in the establishment of CERN in 1955 (Groeninx van Zoelen, 2024, p.69).

The EU, initially formed as the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 with six member states and became known as the EU in 1992. Treaties reflect the importance of the rule of law in the EU. Key treaties underpinning EU research and innovation (R&I) include the Treaty of the European Coal and Steel Community (1951), Treaties of Rome (1957), and the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (2009) wherein *Article 187* (ex. Article 171 TEC) states:

The Union may set up joint undertakings or any other structure necessary for the efficient execution of Union research, technological development and demonstration programmes. (European Union, 2016)

Article 187 laid the foundations “to acknowledge and develop specialised roles, including that of the research manager to facilitate the effective implementation of European Union research initiatives” (O’Regan et al., 2024).

The Council Recommendation (C/2023/1640) was adopted having regard to the TFEU, and in particular Articles 182 (5) and Article 292, the European Charter and Code for Researchers, and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R).made 42 proposals. (Council of the European Union, 2023).

Relevant legislation and policies were regarded:

- European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (2020)
- A new ERA for Research and Innovation (2020)
- Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality (2021)
- Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2122 ‘a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe’
- The ERA Policy Agenda annexed to the Council Conclusions on the ‘Future governance of the European Research Area’ (2021)
- A European Strategy for Universities (2022)
- A new European Innovation Agenda (2022)
- Council Recommendation (EU) 2022/2415 on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation
- The European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp) (2024)

In particular, point 17 recognised the need for research support to effectively manage research and innovation:

“Performing high-level research and innovation requires the support of other professional. Amongst them, research management and research technician careers deserve proper recognition, including by way of further analysis and alignment at the level of the Union. Research management capacity should be strengthened by defining required skills and competences, developing relevant training, fostering comparability, and

allowing their holders to effectively manage and support research and innovation” (Point 17)

The Council of the European Union adopted the European Commission recommendation (C/2023/1640) which included 44 points, where in particular, point three states:

“Research management careers can be undertaken by researchers and other professionals to manage and support research and innovation activities. Research management careers should be adequately framed and recognised at the level of the Union, by defining relevant skills and competences, in order to strengthen research managers’ professional capacity, to enable the development of relevant training, and to foster comparability. Research managers can perform different tasks, for example:

- (a) streamlining or facilitating the planning, development, management, FAIR data management, administration, monitoring, communication and valorisation of research and innovation;*
- (b) ensuring compliance with policy objectives, funding programme requirements, financial rules and legal regulations;*
- (c) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of research and innovation projects or systems;*
- (d) enhancing the impact of research and innovation on policy and society;*
- (e) supporting the design and implementation of research and innovation policies, programmes and projects.”*

It is important to highlight these EU legislations and policies because of their relevance to the field of RMA within the broader context of EU research and innovation and its impact on members states.

Technology Revolution

The European Joint Research Centre (JRC) was established in 1958 to address technological gaps identified during the 1960s influenced by what was happening in the U.S. where technology was revolutionising industry and society, “the inescapable conclusion – for Europe to meet the American challenge the countries must come together, creating a whole greater than the sum of parts” (Groeninix van Zoelen (2024) p.70). In 1963, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published the first issue of the *Frascati Manual* providing the definition of basic, applied research and

experimental development (Andersen et al., 2018, p.113). The EU's push for economic integration led to collaborative efforts among member states, resulting in various institutions and programmes like European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), European Space Agency (ESA), European Southern Observatory (ESO), European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST).

A significant shift occurred in the mid-1980s with technology transfer becoming a focus area, influenced by the U.S. Bayh-Dole Act, which prompted European countries to revise their Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) laws and establish Technology Transfer Offices (Groeninx van Zoelen, 2024, p.72). EU Framework Programmes (FPs) were introduced to address research gaps, improve RMA efficiencies and improve information flows between the European Commission, and its research stakeholders. These FPs have evolved significantly over time, increasing in budget and scope from FP1 (1984-1987) with a budget of €3.3 billion to FP9 (2021-2027) with €95 billion allocated. The EU's institutional framework consists of seven key institutions, seven bodies, four services, and over 30 decentralised agencies and its' political structure¹ plays a crucial role in determining the budget for European research and innovation framework programmes. The largest revenue source for the EU budget comes from Member States Gross National Income-based contributions (European Commission, 2024f). The European Commission drafts the budget which is then approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Initially focused on technological development, EU research policy has increasingly emphasised innovation since the late 1990s (Hallonsten, 2020). The next section explores literature regarding the role of the European Research Area (ERA) and highlights the policy initiatives driving the professionalisation of research management.

2.4 ERA and Professionalising Research Management

The concept of the European Research Area (ERA) initially introduced by Ralf Dahrendorf and later revived by Antonio Ruberti and Philippe Basquin, sought to create a "single market" for research, facilitating data sharing and collaboration among researchers

¹ The European Parliament elections held from June 6-9, 2024; citizens elected their representatives, and of the countries represented in this study, a total of 231 out of 720 seats were held. (European Parliament, 2024) On July 18, 2024, Ursula von der Leyen was re-elected as president of the EC, becoming the first woman to serve consecutive terms, leading the EU's law-making and enforcement body until 2029.

(Ulnicane, 2015, p. 45). Launched in 2000, the ERA initiative aimed to enhance European cooperation in scientific research across various fields, including medical and environmental studies. Under FP6 (2002-2006), ERA policies were implemented to promote scientific excellence, competitiveness and innovation by fostering collaboration between universities, research centres and industry both in the EU and in non-EU countries (especially candidate countries). The governance of the ERA includes several bodies such as the ERA Forum (European Commission, 2024d), ERAC (European Commission, 2024e), and the Council (European Union, 2024). The Pact for Research and Innovation outlines ten common principles (European Commission, 2021c).

In light of the post-COVID-19 landscape and ongoing geopolitical challenges there was a need to renew the ERA to sustain a borderless research agenda. The ERA Policy Agenda for 2022-24 identified four priority areas along with 20 specific actions aimed at enhancing open access to knowledge, facilitating researcher mobility, and coordinating national research efforts (European Commission, 2024c). Notably, Action #17 focuses on recognising research management as a profession and establishing a European network for research and innovation managers to address the effective management of research funding and projects across the EU.

- *Action #17. Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's public research performing organisations.*

ERA Action#17 was designed as a science management initiative involving at least one hundred participating institutions with the goal of enhancing the strategic capacity of public research organisations. According to the EU, “Science Managers can take many shapes: research policy advisers, research managers, financial support staff, data stewards, data analysts, specialised research infrastructure operators, knowledge transfer officers or knowledge brokers, business developers, innovation managers, etc” (European Commission, 2021d, p. 19). This initiative is in line with the European Skills Agenda, which encompasses 12 flagship actions designed to promote skills development (European Commission, 2024b). The ERA Monitoring 2023 report assessed the progress made in the first 18 months regarding these actions. Through the newly established ERA Monitoring Mechanism, the ERA Dashboard and ERA Country Reports offer comprehensive insights into the specific ERA actions that each country has pledged to implement, thereby

facilitating evidence-based policymaking. Table 1 shows the countries targeted for participant recruitment in this study and their commitment to implementing ERA Policy Agenda 2022-24 actions.

TABLE 2.1 RESEARCH PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES COMMITTED TO ERA VOLUNTARY ACTIONS

Country	ERA Voluntary Actions
Belgium	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15, 16, 17,18,19,20
Croatia	1,3,4,5,7,16,17
Greece	1,4,8,10,11,14
Ireland	1,3,4,5,6,7,9,11,12,19
Italy	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,19
Poland	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16
Romania	1,3,4,8,9,10,16,20
Spain	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,19,20

Source: European Commission ERA Dashboard and Scoreboard (European Commission, 2023)

From the ERA monitoring 2023 results, the voluntary uptake on Action#17 for countries targeted in this study include just two: Belgium and Croatia, but the overall EU commitment to Action#17 is far greater, results confirming commitment from Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia. To achieve their action goals, the European Commission and ERA governing representatives have committed to implementing the professionalisation of research management by funding research projects through the FP Horizon Europe Coordination and Support Actions (CSA). Several RMA related consortium projects are underway, such as, CARDEA (European Commission, 2021a), RM ROADMAP (European Commission, 2021b), and INSPIRING ERA (European Commission, 2023a). In addition, under the Twinning Call, actions are being prioritised to establish ‘Research Support Offices’ and enhance the capacities of technical and administrative staff in widening countries, with over 100 projects funded per Twinning Call. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show the key features of the EU Horizon Europe funded projects in progress:

TABLE 2.2 HORIZON-WIDERA-ERA\ COORDINATION & SUPPORT ACTIONS\PROJECTS

Acronym	CARDEA	RM ROADMAP	INSPIRING ERA
Project Title	<i>Career Acknowledgement for Research (Managers) Delivering for the European Area</i>	<i>Creating Framework Conditions for Research Management to Strengthen the European Research Area</i>	<i>Breathing Life into the New European Research Area and the ERA Policy Agenda Through Engaging Awareness-Raising Initiatives</i>
Programme	Horizon Europe	Horizon Europe	Horizon Europe
Topic	HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-20	HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-20	HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-05
Type of Action	HORIZON Coordination & Support Actions	HORIZON Coordination & Support Actions	HORIZON Coordination & Support Actions
Coordinator	University College Cork, Ireland	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators, Belgium	Deutsches Zentrum Fur Luft-Und Raumfahrt EV, Germany
Consortium Partners	Belgium, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain	Hungary, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland, Cyprus, Belgium (2)	Sweden, Slovakia, Poland, Austria, Lithuania
Project Timeline	01 June 2022 – 31 May 2026	01 September -31 August 2025	30 November 2023-29 November 2026.
Overall budget	€1,498,312.50	€1,499,997.00	€2,166,762.50
EU contribution	€1,498,312.00	€1,499,997.00	€2,166,762.50

TABLE 2.3 HORIZON-WIDERA-ERA\ COORDINATION & SUPPORT ACTIONS\PROJECT AIMS & KEY DELIVERABLES

	Project Aim	Key Deliverables
CARDEA (CARDEA, 2023)	Create alternative career paths for both researchers and research support staff by	CARDEA International Online Survey (2022) n=855

	highlighting research management as a viable career option outside of academia.	Framework Report for a “Competency Based Approach for Research Manager Career Development in the European Research Area.” Career Framework RM1-RM2-RM3-RM4: Eight main competence areas (42 competences in total, 672 learning outcomes, four proficiency levels).
RM ROADMAP (RM ROADMAP, 2024)	Create a roadmap for the future of research management (RM) in Europe and a community to support its delivery	RM ROADMAP International Online Survey (2023)n=1,483 A state-of-the-art pan-European network of research managers, supporting the establishment of strategic, cross-border partnerships between research managers in industry, Research Funding Organisations, higher education and research institutions Online co-creation space for the research management community aimed to: 1) create and inform a bottom-up consensus on the future of RM in a roadmap, and 2) inform the community about existing training, networking, funding and mobility opportunities.
INSPIRING ERA (INSPIRING ERA, 2024)	Create and support a culture of mutual learning, to build and strengthen a viable community of practice for ERA that thrives through from insights, and to maximize the broad uptake of valorisation of results stemming from the ERA Policy Agenda actions through the elaboration of recommendation and guidance for policy-makers.	Leverage and accelerate the valorisation of results from the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 through a service-oriented hub that connects and supports Member States, Associated Countries and Stakeholders with regard to their joint implementation of the ERA actions in close collaboration with the European Commission. INSPIRING ERA Conference September 2024.

Note. A. CARDEA survey results are publicly available on dashboard (O'Regan et al., 2023).

Note. B. RM ROADMAP Preliminary results available (Csite & Zsár, 2023).

RMA Project Success Stories

The most notable international empirical study is the RAAAP project (Research Administration As A Profession), a longitudinal piece of research using surveys for in-depth examination of particular RMA areas. RAAAP-1 (funded by NCURA, led by the UK and US) 2016; RAAAP-2 (endorsed by INORMS) 2019, and RAAAP-3 (2022). The latest concluding comments from RAAAP-3 survey reveal “RMA profiles have diverse backgrounds and identities, the career path to the profession is non-linear with a multitude of experiences gained along the way, and RMA’s are passionate about their work” (Dutta et al., 2024, pp. 126-139).

In addition, the ERASMUS+ programme has funded RMA consortium projects, such as FoRMation and StoRM. Briefly, the FoRMation project (2019-2022) was led by HÉTFA Research Institute (Hungary) together with 4 other partners, developed an international curriculum entitled *Research Manager as a profession in the EU ecosystem: concepts, tools and practice*. The curriculum consists of “four modules available for all students as an elective course (accredited 3 ECTS) at undergraduate bachelor level but open to all” (Oliveira, et al., 2022).

The StoRM project (2016-2020) was led by South African Stellenbosch University’s Division for Research Development (Research Office) together with ten other partners focussed on the professional development of RMA staff, as well as staff exchanges with other RMA offices in universities located in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the EU. They developed a *Postgraduate Diploma in RMA* for early to mid career staff members working in research offices (or equivalent structures) with a curriculum content focussed on RMA in the African context (Frantz et al., 2022).

Remaining on the African continent, a prominent leader in RMA is the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA). They have recently published a handbook, the second edition, authored by Robin Drennan. It outlines a professional competency framework consisting of nine key competency areas, each associated with three hierarchical levels of work commonly found in the research management environment. This transitions the reader into the next section., which explores

the relationship between professionalism and RMA networks, associations, and organisations.

2.5 RMA associations and networks

The connection between professionalism and networks, associations and organisations is evident throughout history. The role of associations emerged from the collaborative efforts of professionals to address the need for skills development initiatives. Professionalisation theories have been evolving for over two centuries, with significant research emerging in the last century. This historical backdrop provides a framework for understanding how professional networks have developed alongside these theories (Curnow & McGonigle, 2006; Acker et al., 2019). Flexner's early criteria to determine if an occupation was a profession highlighted the importance of "intellectual operations with large individual responsibility...and self-organisation" with an emphasis on "professional spirit" suggesting that a shared ethos within a network can enhance professionalism (Flexner, 1915). A century later, Curnow and McGonigle argue that much of the research focused on the formation of professions rather than the processes of skill identification and development. Instead, they categorise theories of professionalisation into three models: Attribute, Process and Power. They suggest "as occupations professionalise, specific human resource practices emerge to support their development, making organisations accountable and fostering skill identification and training aligned with professional standards" (Curnow & McGonigle, 2006).

EARMA

EARMA was officially founded in 1995, Genoa, Italy (EARMA, 2024). The association was created to provide a forum for RMAs to meet, network, and share their experiences, addressing a growing need within the European research community. Research Institutions, Italy's Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (INFN) and France's Institute Laue-Langevin (ILL) were instrumental in its establishment (Groenininx van Zoelen, 2024, p. 76). EARMA was initially established under Italian law, reflecting its origins, but later moved its headquarters to Brussels as it grew in scope and influence across Europe. EARMA represents RMA members from approximately 350 institutions across 40 countries. The

association plays a crucial role in lobbying for the RMA community and the broader European research sector (EARMA, 2000-2023). Research conducted by Zsár confirms a well-established RMA network across Europe and beyond (Zsár, 2024). A reputable figure in the European RMA network, is Dr. Sean McCarthy, Director of Hyperion Ltd., he was awarded the *EARMA Professional Recognition Award (2017)* for his 'outstanding contribution to the research management and administration profession' for over thirty years by delivering training courses to RMAs and demystifying the FPs (Groeninx van Zoelen, 2024, p. 77). EARMA and stakeholders actively lobbied at a European Commission level for ERA Action#17 to advance the mission to formally recognise research management as a profession by publicly disseminating information highlighting its importance to the RMA community, and advocated for EU Member States to support its voluntary implementation. To conclude this section, the researcher has highlighted many factors that led to the Council of the European Union adoption of the European Commission recommendations set out in '*a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe*' C/2023/1640 recognising research management as a profession. The next section explores the literature and discussions related to the lifeworld of research managers, focusing on its components: cultural background, social structures, and intersubjectivity.

2.6 The Research Manager

Research Support Office (RSO)

The phenomenology concept of the lifeworld (or lived-world) was introduced by Edmund Husserl which refers to the pre-reflective, taken-for-granted realm of everyday experiences and meanings that form daily lives. Husserl (1927) as cited in Charlick et al., (2016) suggested that during data collection and analysis the researcher should 'bracket,' or leave aside their previous knowledge and investments, and also the taken-for-granted world, in order to see phenomena as experienced (Charlick et al., 2016, p.206). Smith et al., (2009) as cited in Charlick et al., 2016 says interpretative phenomenology aims to reveal and interpret the embedded meaning in a lived experience (p.207). Instead, Martin Heidegger (1962) suggested that knowledge of the lived world can only happen through interpretation grounded in the world of things, people, relationships, and language. This is because we cannot step 'outside' the world, as we are already engaged and involved in the world

(p.207). The research support office (RSO) can be seen as a lifeworld for research managers in several ways:

- It is the cultural background from which research managers accede to values, beliefs and practices related to supporting research.
- The office provides the social structures and norm that research managers navigate, such as institutional policies, roles and hierarchies.
- Through interactions with colleagues, research managers develop a shared understanding and mutual recognition of their work environment.

RSOs can shape individuals everyday experiences and preconceptions. They are pressurised, deadline driven environments and extensive knowledge, skills, and competences are required to navigate the different functions supporting research and innovation. Table 2.4 shows the many functions of a RSO which reflects the need for 'generalist' and 'specialist' knowledge, skills and competencies required by research managers and managers of research support functions.

TABLE 2.4 FUNCTIONS OF A RESEARCH OFFICE SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research Support Functions
Pre-award skills, research development and costing methodologies.
Horizon scanning.
Development of research strategy and themes.
Benchmarking.
Internal peer review.
Contract negotiation.
Consultancy.
Using knowledge about individual and collaborative disciplines.
Networking with funders.
Portfolio management and reporting.
Project management of large contracts and bids.
Clinical research and governance.
Post-award management and adherence to funder and statutory terms and conditions.
Relationship building with international funders (philanthropy).

Knowledge transfer and intellectual property.
 Spinouts and commercialisation.
 Auditing (of technology, project progress and finances).
 Business information systems.
 Management information and reporting.

Source: (Drennan, 2018, P.8)

From Reseacher to Research Manager or Manager of a RSF

The career change from being a researcher to the profession of research management can be challenging. This study examines how professional readiness, and identity influences individual experiences in their roles. The literature conveys that professional preparedness and professional identity are closely interconnected concepts in the context of career development and professional growth. Understanding their linkage can provide insights into how individuals can better prepare for their careers and develop a strong professional identity within their profession of research management. Fellenz (2016) suggests “becoming a practitioner in any profession...involves the acquisition of the requisite skills and knowledge, as well as of relevant contextual understandings, and the familiarisation with the situated practices that are enacted by members of the profession...thus members of professions are expected to practice at the proper (‘professional’) quality standards and to do so in socially acceptable and ethically appropriate ways (Fellenz, 2016, p.268). Brint (1994) as cited in Fellenz (2016) says professional practice, and being a professional, has both a technical and a moral aspect and comes with requirements regarding both performance and conduct: professionals are expected to ‘do well’ *and* ‘do good’(P.268). The epistemological concern of what does it mean to be a research manager and how they know, is central to this interpretative phenomenological exploratory study. Satre (1956) as cited in Charlick et al., (2016) says ‘we are always becoming ourselves’ (Charlick et al., 2016, 207).

Forming the Professional Self

Taylor, 1989 as cited in Seery, 2010 says the notion of the western “self” has a long and complex history rooted in classical antiquity, and education has been associated with the formation of individuals or “self” (Seery, 2010). Fellenz (2016) denotes the term ‘professional self’ to either “the self of the professional in its totality (I will call this the

general self), or alternatively to the part of the self that refers to the particular stable dispositions and action patterns (possibly including skills, motivations, perspectives, interpretative schemas, understandings, ethical and value orientations, etc.) that contribute to a person's professional identity...and also on their ability to enact the thoughts, decision, emotions and actions associated with professional practice (I will refer to this as a *particularity* self)...the professional self (as a particularity self) is fully nest within the general self" (P274). A strong professional self contributes to enhanced performance, job satisfaction, career advancement, and ethical practice, making it a crucial component of professional development.

Professional Preparedness

Sirokha (2020) claims professional preparedness refers to an individual's "readiness for work" which is considered a crucial mental state for successful professional activity. This concept is rooted in psychology, pedagogy, and philosophy. The term "readiness," dates back to the mid-14th century, signifying a state of preparation or getting ready (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2024). Figure 2.2 shows the building blocks for professional preparedness as follows:

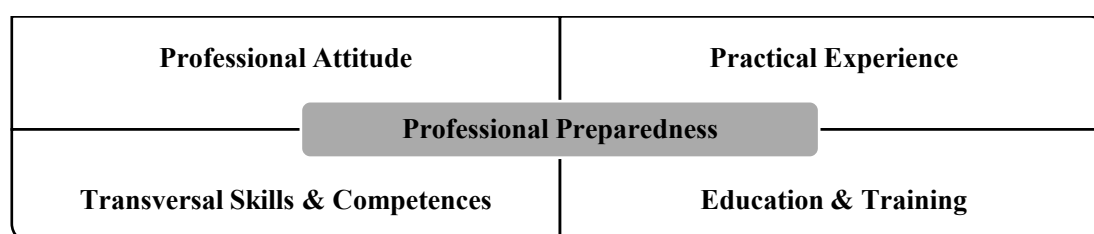


FIGURE 2.2 BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Source: (Hart et al., 2022)

A state of readiness enables individuals to adapt quickly and perform their professional duties effectively, promoting professional development. It encompasses not only professional skills and characteristics, but also personal traits which can be demonstrated at different levels.

Professional Identity

The term "identity" originates from the Medieval Latin word *identitatem*, meaning "sameness," and is derived from the Greek and Latin words *idem*, which also signify "the

same" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2024). Professional identity is a crucial aspect of our overall identity, especially in the context of our work and career. Trindade and Agostinho (2014) claim "research managers at science-intensive institutions appear as a continuously evolving group of professionals whose identity is somewhat fragmented, even to themselves" (Trindade & Agostinho, 2014, p.1). This reflects the complexity of professional identity because it is deep rooted in an individual's self-concept and sense of belonging that is developed in relation to their roles, encompassing their values, beliefs, norms, and self-perceptions associated with their profession. Theories associated with professional identity are complex and tend to overlap with the notion of the professional self which have been explored across various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Table 2.5 lists some of the key theories and thinkers associated with these concepts as follows:

TABLE 2.5 KEY THEORIES ASSOCIATED WITH PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

<i>Philosophical Ideas</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>Thinker & Era</i>
Identity Theory	James distinguished between the "I" (the self as a thinker) and the "Me" (the self as an object of thought). His work laid foundational ideas for understanding personal identity. James influenced the phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl.	William James (1842 - 1910)
Theory on Identity	Heidegger thinks of the problem of identity by questioning the principle of identity using Leibniz's formal notation $A=A$ expressing the equality of A and A, as a principle of thinking. It is through the principle of thinking that Heidegger wants to find out what identity is.	Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976)
<i>Psychological Ideas</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>Thinker & Era</i>
Self-Determination Theory	This theory concerns with human motivation, personality and optimal functioning. Rather than just the amount of motivation, SDT focuses on different types of motivation emanating from 3 psychological basic needs: competence, autonomy, relatedness.	Edward L. Deci (1942 -) Richard M. Ryan (n.d.)

Career Construction Theory	This theory explains insights into how individuals construct and adapt their professional self-concept in response to career experiences and changes.	Mark Savickas (n.d.)
Hierarchical Theory	Maslow's theory describes the progression of human need from the most basic psychological needs to higher-order needs to self-actualisation (self-fulfilment, personal growth).	Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)
Self-Efficacy Theory	Bandura defined self-efficacy as a personal judgement regarding how well one can execute courses of action necessary to deal with prospective situation. Self-efficacy influences professional identity and is associated with greater motivation, resilience, and achievement across various domains, including education and work performance leading to better career decision-making and job satisfaction.	Albert Bandura (1925-2021)
<i>Sociological Ideas</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>Thinker and Era</i>
Competence	Weber's sociology, Chomsky's linguistic theory	Max Weber (1864-1920), Chomsky (1928-2008)

Sources: ChatGPT² and Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia³

While not directly linked to professional preparedness and identity, Jean Paul Sartre's existential theories provide a framework for understanding how individuals actively construct and develop their professional selves through conscious choices, reflection, and ongoing engagement with their career paths. McGuckin proposes that theories coexist and exert influence on one another, as illustrated in this table (McGuckin, 2021). The issue of identity remains as relevant in the 21st century as it was in the classical antiquity era. Identity is a dynamic process influenced by shifts in roles and expectations within the evolving research landscape (Yang-Yoshihara et al., 2024, p. 1). Professional preparedness

² ChatGPT Prompts "What theories and thinkers are associated with the notion of identity?"; "What are the theories and thinkers associated with the concept of the "professional self"?"

³ Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia used to validate theories, thinkers and their date of births and deaths.

and professional identity are codependent; being well-prepared in skills and knowledge enhances professional identity, while a strong professional identity motivates individuals to pursue further education and training. Together, they create a cycle of continuous professional growth, where preparedness strengthens identity, and a robust identity encourages further preparedness.

Challenges and complexities

The role of a research manager “has evolved as research has become more complex, and this in turn, is attracting more candidates with research-level qualification and experience. Today’s managers and administrators need knowledge and experience of open science, equality and diversity, ethics and public engagement – as well as of more conventional areas such as accounting, project management and research policy” (Nature, 2021).

Research managers can experience challenges and complexities working in European research performing organisations and the general research ecosystem. Veles and Carter (2016) present an interesting overview of debates around professional staff and the discourse shifts from “contestation (nomenclature and titles – narratives of invisibility, marginalisation, exclusion and under appreciation), reconciliation (professional and academic staff tensions and emerging partnerships), to reconstruction (professional staff identities fragmentation and reconstruction, first typology, professional staff as a group, professional staff maturity, professionalisation and career choices, and third space professionals)” over 20 years (Veles & Carter, 2016, p. 4).

From the literature and discourse around the field of RMA, there seems to be a lack of focus on the aspect of “management” from the perspective of people management, not only supervisory management but management of internal and external stakeholder relationships. Garrett and Davies (2010) argue that “culture” and “people” contribute much to the complexities in a research environment “replete with remarkable intellects, passion, arguments, politics, and prejudice”, and advise research managers/leaders to accept and embrace the qualities of their (metaphorical cats) and work with them to reach an outcome with “agility and success” (Garrett & Davies, 2010). Managing research support staff can present challenges if not equipped with the appropriate skills to navigate different situations. Lawler, 1986, as cited in Jain & Triandi, 1990 advocates for a “participative

management approach”, and suggests research managers/leaders should have a “management philosophy” or a management style “based on value characteristics, such as, the importance of treating people fairly, encouraging participation, recognising that employees are valuable resources with ideas and knowledge, making a long-term commitment to the development of people, create a trusting environment, promote autonomy, acknowledge and reward satisfactory work performance. This approach leads to better solutions and greater organisational commitment” (p. 41). From the literature review, other challenging areas associated with the role of a research manager include professional identity insecurities, research office politics, inconsistent salaries, lack of HR policy, career development and progression constraints, and repercussions of inadequate national and European policies.

Summary

To summarise, the literature review examined the development and transformation of Research Management and Administration (RMA). It explored how the United States influenced the evolution of Research Administration (RA) and its subsequent impact on European Research Management. Additionally, the review analysed the factors that shaped RMA development in the context of the European Union's advancement. The ERA initiative and policy actions in conjunction with lobbying by RMA associations, networks, organisations, and research stakeholders led to the Council of the European Union adoption of the European Commission recommendations set out in ‘*a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe*’ C/2023/1640 recognising research management as a profession.

The literature and discourse review reveals a scarcity of IPA methodology as a qualitative tool in Research Management and Administration (RMA) studies. This gap presents an opportunity to employ the IPA methodology to capture the authentic voices, opinions, and narratives of research managers. The research question *what does it mean to be a research manager or manager of a research support function: an interpretative phenomenological exploration of European research management and administration* aims to collect narratives from the lived experiences of research managers and/or managers of research support functions that may provide insights into the research sub questions outlined in section 1.5. Chapter 3 presents the IPA research methodology, and its underpinning

theoretical philosophy. It elaborates on the qualitative approach including the design of the study, data collection instruments, and the iterative process of data analysis inherent to IPA.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

“Whatever presents itself as a unit in the flow of time because it has a unitary meaning, is the smallest unit which can be called an experience. Any more comprehensive unit which is made up of parts of a life, linked by a common meaning, is also an experience, even when the parts are separated by interrupting events.”

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)
Trans. Rickman (1976)

The first part of this chapter presents the theoretical philosophy that underpins the choice of qualitative methodology selected for this piece of research, namely Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The researcher, an IPA self-taught novice, references the IPA manual, authored by Smith and Nizza (2022) published by the American Psychological Association, as a guide to executing the IPA methodological process. IPA is an iterative process of sense-making to interpret the essence of participants experiences of what it means to be a research manager or manager of a research support function working in their respective research sector. The remaining chapter outline includes the design of this IPA study, the method deployed for data collection, and analysing the data case-by-case to compile the individual tables of personal experiential themes (PETs) presented as individual personal narratives. The final part of the IPA data analysis is to draft a new table of group experiential themes (GETs) forming the basis for writing up the analysis (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p.51). The last section of the chapter reviews the validity and reliability checks taken to ensure research quality and rigour. The next section explores the meaning of experience.

The essence of this study is about ‘experience’ – the lived experience of research managers or managers of research support functions working in the area of RMA across different European countries. At the beginning of this chapter, Dilthey (1911) defines the essence of ‘*an experience*’ (translated by Rickman (1976, p.210) as something which can manifest from “the smallest unit” to a more “comprehensive unit”. This piece of research is concerned with Dilthey’s more “comprehensive unit” (Smith et al., 2022, p. 2). The

research is focussed on understanding the professional experiences of individuals, particularly in the context of their career transitions from research into research management and administration. An IPA approach will enable the capturing of the core meaning and significance of their experiences to delve into factors influencing career decisions, and how career transitions into research management affect individual's self-perception and readiness for their new roles.

Selection of a Paradigm and Research Approach

O'Donnell suggests "considering and understanding the philosophy of research is important in that it provides the researcher with a context in which to place their research objectives" (O'Donnell, 2015). In the context of social research, Crotty claims when developing a research proposal two questions need to be considered. "First, what methodologies and methods will we be employing in the research we propose to do? Second, how do we justify this choice and use of methodologies and methods?" (Crotty, 1998). Crotty suggests the basic elements of any research process include epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and method where each element informs one another. Although absent from Crotty's framework, he believes ontology would "sit alongside epistemology informing the theoretical perspective, for each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding what is (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding what it means to know (epistemology) – ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Figure 3.1 shows the selected and adapted research paradigm and research approach of constructionism/interpretivism applied to this piece of research as follows:

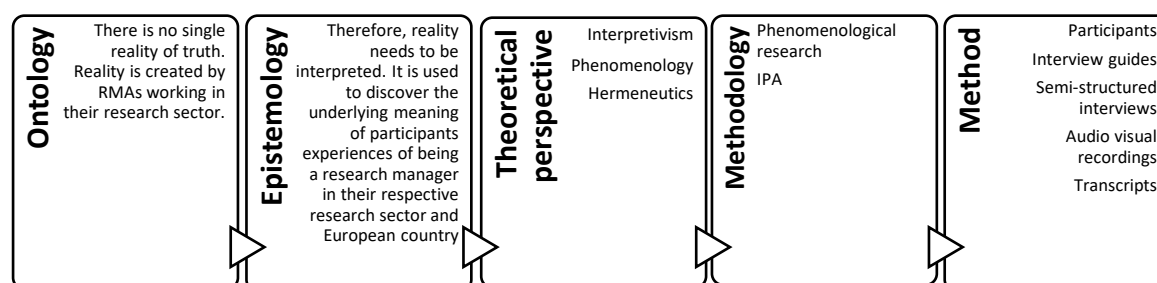


Figure 3.1 Research Paradigm – Constructionism/Interpretivism

Source: Adapted from (Patel, 2015; Crotty, 1998).

This research is centred around the following epistemological question: *what does it mean to be a research manager: an interpretative phenomenological exploration of European research management and administration*. Instead of using other qualitative approaches, for example, thematic analysis (TA), the researcher selects IPA because it has a particular theoretical background in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, whereas TA is not connected to one particular theoretical position; IPA is centrally concerned with understanding experience at the individual case level, whereas TA is not; and IPA themes are always experiential, whereas TA themes can have a varied focus” (Smith et al., 2022, pp. 39-40).

3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

While earlier IPA studies were primarily rooted in psychology, the approach has now been adopted in different disciplines to address many research questions, for example, the following PhD students reflect the diverse applications of IPA around the world (Ojikutu, 2017; Fendt, 2015; O'Donnell, 2015). IPA is the preferred approach for the data collection and analysis of this research study because the researcher, from their situatedness of working in a research support office, aims to make sense of the participant's sense-making of their professional experience (s) working as research managers or managers of research support functions. IPA is an approach to qualitative, experiential research which is underpinned by three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Smith et al., (2022) suggests IPA has evolved from a set of core principles:

- “It is an approach for researchers who are aiming *to make sense of experience* from someone else's perspective.
- It treats in-depth, first-person accounts as data, and in doing so, IPA foregrounds the importance of meaning, context and nuance.
- As a consequence of this foregrounding, it includes a commitment to an *idiographic* level of analytic work (i.e. attention to the individual case) which is inevitably *interpretative* (i.e. it involves the researcher's active input)” (p. 119).

Characteristics of these principles include a degree of homogeneity in sampling, data collection by one-to-one interviews, and a preference for smaller samples. Figure 3.2 shows illustrates the three key philosophical influences of IPA as follows:

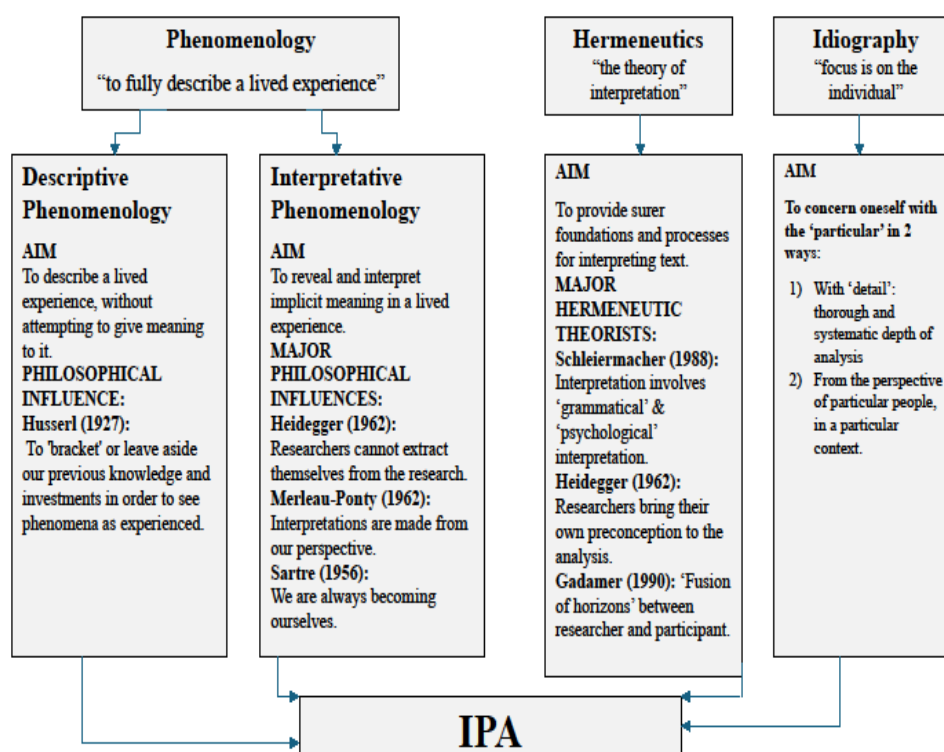


Figure 3.2 Three influences of IPA

Source: Table replicated from Charlick et al., (2016) adapted work authored by Smith et al., (2009)

Phenomenology

The first theory underpinning the methodology of IPA is Phenomenology described as a philosophical approach to the study of human experience. The term phenomenology is derived from the word ‘phenomenon’ meaning appearance and deployed to describe how something appears in the subject’s consciousness – from the first-person point of view, a theory reflecting ideas from the 18th century philosopher, Immanuel Kant (Demeterio III, 2001, p. 7). Edmund Husserl is acknowledged as the founder of the phenomenological

movement in the early 20th century. He famously urged phenomenologists to ‘go back to the things themselves’, ‘the things’ meaning the core components of our consciousness, linked to the first-person point of view (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 7). Building on Husserl’s ideas Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre make their own contributions to phenomenology by taking “a view of the person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects, and concerns” (Smith et al., 2022, p. 16). They move towards “a more interpretative and worldly position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directedness of our involvement in the lived world” (Smith et al., 2022, p. 17). Heideggerian phenomenology is often referred to as ‘interpretative phenomenology’ and sets out the beginnings of the hermeneutic and existential emphases in phenomenological philosophy (Koch, 1995).

Hermeneutics

The second theory underpinning the methodology of IPA is ‘Hermeneutics’ meaning the theory of interpretation derived from the Greek word ἑρμηνεύειν (hermeneuein), meaning to interpret. Grondin (2016) claims “hermeneutic theory and issues were often discussed within the realm of rhetoric’s” by philosophers such as Plato in his *Phaedrus* (370 BCE), Aristotle in his *Poetics* (335 BCE), Quintilian in his *Institutes of Oratory* (95 CE) (p. 4). Grondin says, Chladenius (1710-1759) is recognised as one of the founders of hermeneutics. His idea emphasised the importance of an author's perspective in interpretation (p.5). Ancient Greek philosophers paved the way for thinkers such as Boeckh, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur to develop and refine the theory of hermeneutics to how it is understood and applied in the twenty-first century. Hermeneutics is understood as a second-order reflection, and in the context of IPA, it considers “the participant’s *meaning-making* as first-order, while the researcher’s *sense-making* is second order” (Caputo, 2018; Smith et al., 2022).

Demeterio III (2001) developed a flow chart to depict the evolution and development of hermeneutics from pure reflective praxis that is focussed on religious themes only, to a highly systematic and reflective praxis that can be applied to any text or text-analogue as seen in figure 3.3 as follows:

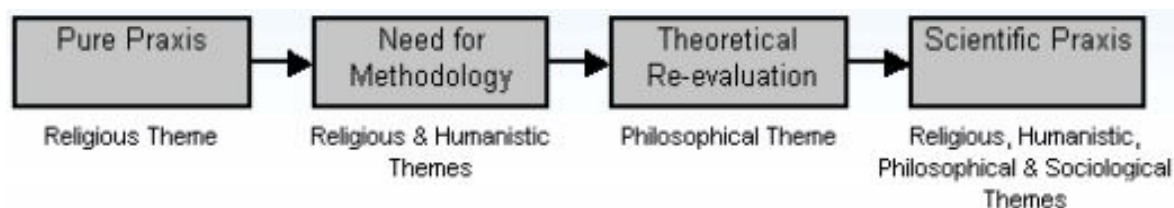


Figure 3.3 Evolution of hermeneutics from pure reflective praxis to reflective praxis

Source: Demeterio III (2001)

Demeterio III demystifies the complexity of hermeneutics and suggests five categories of hermeneutic systems: romantic, phenomenological, dialectical, critical and post-structural. These systems of interpretation contain variations of three structural components of interpretation itself: the interpreter or the subject (*subjectivity*) i.e. the thing being interpreted or the object that is either a text or text analogue (*textuality*) and the goal of the interpretive act which is either truth or meaning (*truth/meaning*). Figure 3.4 illustrates the development in thinking from the phenomenological to dialectical system of interpretation, reflecting Heidegger's idea of the hermeneutic circle of sense-making. In terms of IPA and hermeneutics, the most significant system to mention is *dialectical hermeneutics*.

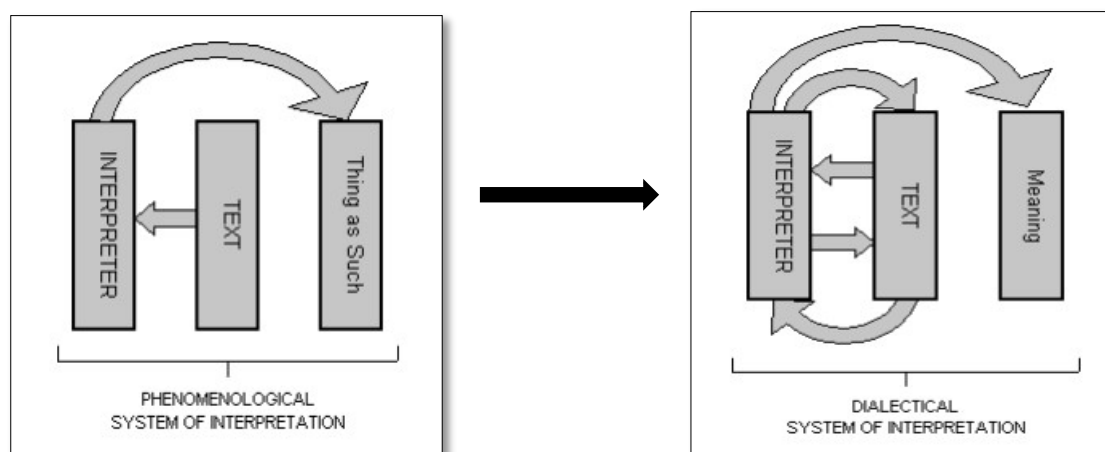


Figure 3.4 Development from Phenomenological to Dialectical System of Interpretation.

Source: (Demeterio III, 2001)

Caputo described Martin Heidegger as “the game-changer in contemporary hermeneutics” (Caputo, 2018, p. 18). The term *dialectical* derives from Greek and Latin etymology meaning *conversation* and *discourse*. This is the nexus to IPA because ‘interviewing’ is the

preferred qualitative tool for data collection – conversation as a way of meaning-making. The transition between ontology (Husserl) and epistemology (Heidegger) perspectives reflects the idea that there is no single reality or truth because reality is created by individuals in groups, therefore, reality needs to be interpreted. For this study, the researcher uses Demeterio's definition of "text" as "transcripts" as a key structural element in the interpretation of this research.

It is important to highlight Heidegger's two essential notions: firstly, *historicality of understanding* in terms of the following:

- *"Background* means a person's history or background is what culture gives a person from birth.
- *Pre-understanding or Fore-conception* means the organisation of a culture (including language and practices) which are already in the world before we understand, it is a structure of our 'being-in-the-world' (*Dasein*) and it is not something that can be bracketed or eliminated, it is already in the world.
- *Co-constitution* is a process – a way of seeing the person and their world as co-constituting each other. It is one of the most important Heidegger philosophical assumptions of indissoluble unity (person-world).
- *Interpretation* means we are "self-interpreting beings" – we are what we take ourselves to be and how we interpret ourselves in our practice" (Koch, 1995, p.831)

Secondly, the notion of *the hermeneutic circle*, the relationship between the understanding of a text as a whole and its individual parts. Instead of a linear step-by-step approach to analysis, a key tenet of IPA is that the interpretation process is *iterative* – a circular motion style of thinking. The concept of the hermeneutic circle operates at several levels to describe a number of relationships. The researcher "enters into the meaning of a text [e.g. the transcript] at different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text" (Smith et al., 2022, p. 23). Table 3.1 shows the interplay between the dynamic relationship between 'the part' and 'the whole' which provides a Heideggerian way of thinking about method (p.29) as follows:

TABLE 3.1 THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE

<i>The part</i>	<i>The whole</i>
The single word	The sentence in which the word is embedded
The single extract	The complete text
The particular text	The complete oeuvre
The interview	The research project
The single episode	The complete life

Source: (Smith et al., 2022, p. 29)

Hans-Georg Gadamer's contributions to IPA focuses on the nature of conversation in research contexts. Key ideas include the following:

- Spirit of Openness: emphasises the approach in dialogue (Gadamer, 1990 [1960], p. 367).
- Fusion of Horizons: suggests “researchers cannot be separated from the researched because we engage in the world, the world changes us” (Charlick et al., 2016, p. 208).
- Seeing What is Questionable: suggest this is “the real power of hermeneutical consciousness” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 13).

Idiography

The third theory underpinning the methodology of IPA is idiography, an approach defined as a focus on “the particular” and in contrast to a nomothetic approach, which is concerned with “the general” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 8). The researcher aims to preserve the richness of individual experiences rather than producing a singular summary of group experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 10). Instead, through an idiographic, case-by-case methodology, the researcher aims to create an analytical account that highlights both similarities and differences in participants' experiences of a shared phenomenon being their career transitions from being a researcher to becoming a research manager, and subsequent professional experiences of being a research manager. To conclude this section, “IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights because without phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret, and without hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen” (Smith et al., 2022, p. 31) .

3.3 Designing the IPA study

The starting point for designing this IPA study began with deciding what experience the researcher wanted to explore, who would be able to tell the researcher about it, and deciding the best way to obtain their account. The parameters of this piece of research aimed to recruit up to twenty participants, professional practitioners that identified as '*Research Managers* or *Managers of a Research Support Function*' from up to eight European countries (Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romain, and Spain) across five different research sectors (government, non-government organisations, higher educational institutions, industry, and research centres/institutes).

Sampling and Recruiting

The sample structure and size have particular characteristics related to IPA data collection. Sampling tends to be small, and it is usually kept small on purpose because the aim is to have a homogenous sample (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The recommendation is “a sample size of five for a Master’s level IPA” (Smith et al., 2022, p.46) but there is no fixed rule for what kind of sample is ideal because it much depends on the research question and the quality of the data obtained. The researcher targeted up to n=20 participants which was determined for several reasons:

- Mitigate potential low participation rates from various countries.
- Mitigate dropouts due to illness, busy schedules, or lack of motivation.
- Ensure the recruitment of participants met the eligibility criteria.
- Achieve a gender balanced representation among participants.

Given the complexities around RMA professional identity, a non-probability purposive sampling structure was used for recruitment that would provide a degree of flexibility for participant selection for subsequent data analysis. To support purposive sampling, the researcher created an eligibility questionnaire that included the minimum requirements needed to identify eligible participants.

Recruitment Campaign

The recruitment campaign consisted of three different communication approaches: electronic mailing lists, networking (conversations and presentations) as well as social

media. The researcher contacted eleven RMA networks and sent emails to $n=301$ people. In addition, the researcher added a social media advertisement to their work signature which increased exposure. The researcher introduced their research topic at the EU Horizon CARDEA project launch, June 2022, as well as delivering a short presentation at an EARMA Early-Stage Research Administrators master class held in the Czech Republic, February 2023 requesting their support to recruit participants. In addition, the researcher attended an event and met with the guest speaker, Romanian Ambassador to Ireland, HE Laurențiu-Mihai ȘTEFAN, September 2022 to ask for their support to encourage RMA participation from Romania. The researcher found the most successful methods for recruitment included email distribution lists and networking.

Ethical Approval

A rigorous ethical review process was conducted as part of the requirements for submitting a research dissertation to Trinity College Dublin (TCD). The researcher submitted an ethics application via the new Research Ethics Application Management System (REAMS) on March 31, 2023, seeking Level 2 ethical approval, which indicates a "moderate to high-risk" classification due to potential emotional risks from probing questions about professional experiences along with the research being conducted outside Ireland. The researcher completed training on research integrity and data protection, obtaining certification for both. Along with the ethics application, an informed consent form, participant eligibility questionnaire, and participant information leaflet were submitted. Ethical approval was granted on April 12, 2023. Any identifiable data collected during the research process are retained securely on TCD Microsoft Office Cloud for a period of two years in accordance with TCD Policy on Good Research Practice and Policy for Retention, the Irish Data Protection Act 2018, and General Data protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.

3.4 Data Collection

A prerequisite for effective research is high-quality data. In the context of IPA, this entails obtaining rich and detailed first-person accounts of specific experiences. The researcher aims to make the participants feel comfortable, promoting a safe space and garnering trust to share their stories openly and on their own terms, allowing them time to reflect and articulate their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment (Smith & Nizza,

2022, p. 19). Keeping in line with IPA best practice, semi-structured interviews were selected as the appropriate data collection technique. According to Smith et al., (2022) one-to-one interviews are often described as "conversations with a purpose" because they facilitate rapport-building, allowing participants the space to think, speak, and feel heard (p. 54).

Interview Guide

To accompany the semi-structured interviews, the researcher decided to use an interview guide as a secondary data collection tool. It is structured in two parts: part one captures interviewee profile details, and part two comprises of five sections each one representing a different topic (incorporating both written and reflective questions) relating to the research and sub-research questions. (see Appendix A) The interview guide provides three key benefits: firstly, it facilitates quick and easy capture of essential data in the form of bullet points; secondly, it includes thoughtfully reflective scenario-based questions that encourage participants to consider their responses before discussing them during the interview; and thirdly, it will underpin the development of thematic areas during the data analysis process. IPA discourse recommends the use of an interview guide because "the preparatory process initiates the researcher's imagination being the interviewer...this frame of mind helps to design the questions and frame them appropriately, identify potentially sensitive topics, and reframe complex questions to optimise the collection of data" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 20).

Semi-Structured Online Interviews and Transcripts

For practical and logistical reasons, as well as to address potential unforeseen circumstances such as the pandemic experienced from 2020 to 2022, the researcher opted to conduct online interviews via TCD Microsoft Teams (MS) instead of in-person interviews. This decision was made in accordance with TCDs research data protection policy. TCD Microsoft Teams (MS) is a secure password protected platform that allows access only to the researcher and their supervisor. A pilot interview was performed to check accessibility to the platform and resolve Wi-Fi connection issues as far as reasonably possible. Microsoft Teams provides a transcription tool to capture recordings and transcribe each conversation. After each interview, the original transcripts were anonymised and

securely stored in the researcher's TCD One Drive account. "To make a transcript truly anonymous, it is not enough to replace the participant's name with a pseudonym; you should also change the names of any person they mention and any other potentially identifying information, such as the name of their employer or specific locations and events" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 30).

3.5 Data Analysis: Case-by Case

According to Smith and Nizza, "IPA's idiographic approach requires data for each person to be fully analysed on their own terms by performing a single case analysis of each transcript." (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 31) This entails the following steps:

- Step 1. Reading and making exploratory notes (descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual).
- Step 2. Formulating experiential statements from the exploratory notes.
- Step 3. Finding connections and clustering experiential themes.
- Step 4. Constructing an individual table of personal experiential themes for each case.

Table 3.2 shows a template for analysing each transcript that includes a central column, containing the original transcribed text, the right column reflects exploratory notes on the participants accounts, and the left column contains the formulated experiential statements.

TABLE 3.2 TEMPLATE FOR DATA ANALYSIS CASE-BY-CASE TRANSCRIPT EXPLORATORY NOTES AND EXPERIENTIAL STATEMENTS

EXHIBIT X Adding Experiential Statements in the Left Column				
Experiential statement	#	I or P	Original transcript	Exploratory notes
	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			

Source: (Smith & Nizza, Essentials of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, 2022, p. 41)

Note. # = line number, I = Interviewer, P = Participant.

Formulating personal experiential statements should achieve the following:

- Capture the essence about the meaning of the experience to the participant in the portion of text.
- To be sufficiently specific to be grounded in the data but also conceptual so that they capture the psychological substance of the text.
- To be dense and rich – pointing to both the important psychological process and the context or content of the process being invoked by the participant's response

“The aim of the analysis process and write-up is to proceed through a systematic series of steps that are recorded in such a way that someone else could review the audit trail of that process. The aim of that audit is to check that the analysis presented is warranted as a result of the documented analysis process” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 32). In chapter 4, the researcher presents the personal narratives pertaining to the participants' particular professional experiences, exemplifying key themes while maintaining the idiographic focus by including key quotes for validation purposes. According to Smith and Nizza (2022), “there is no prescribed way of presenting results” (p.58). By using a narrative style, the researcher aims to ‘reconstruct’ the experience in such a manner that it can be re-lived by the reader and “through reconstructed experience, we are likely to align our feelings and previous experiences, thus developing a thicker texture of understanding the problem at hand” (Nielsen, 2000, p. 10). By using this approach, the researcher aimed to remain true to each participants' lived experiences and make the research more relatable to the reader. The final part of the IPA analytic process is to start comparing across cases.

3.6 Cross-Case Analysis

The researcher aims to analyse the PETs to identify common patterns and unique differences among them, exploring how insights from one PET could inform the other. The result of this process provided a new table of group experiential themes (GETs) contributing to the findings in chapter 4. Figure 3.5 shows the manual process of the cross-case analyses to conduct a first-pass review of the PETs for each participant. The PETs tables are printed, and themes physically cut out to facilitate easy movement and review on a surface to identify commonalities and connections at a more conceptual level, while still acknowledging the unique differences between cases.

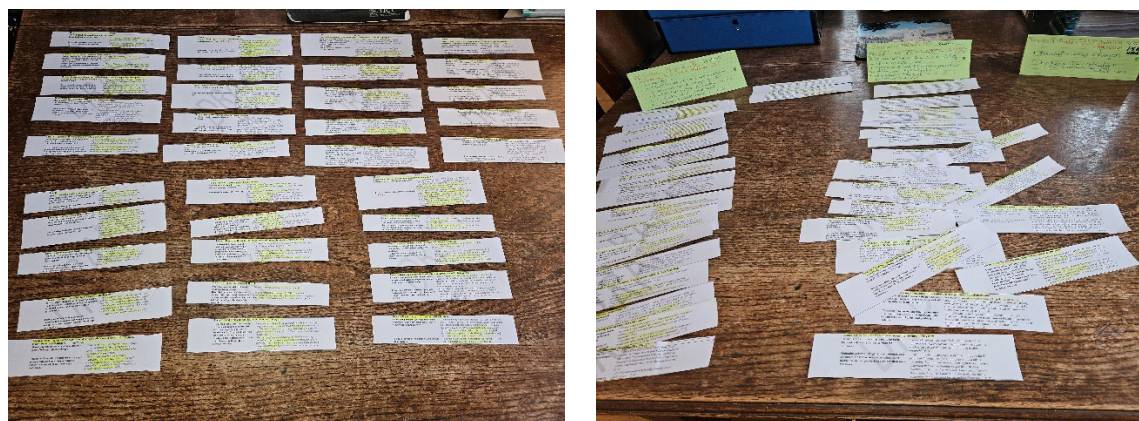


Figure 3.5 Categorising PETs to GETs.

The final step in the process is to create a table of General Experiential Themes (GETs). This process is not linear. The underlying questions in the process of identifying GETs are:

- “What are the key aspects that explain what this experience is like for these individuals?
- What similarities exist among them, and what distinguishes them from one another?” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 56).

Of course, there are many qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) tools on the market that can support phenomenology research for example, Delve⁴ (a free 14 day trial offered but subsequent monthly subscription charges are applied). Other QDASs tools include nVivo and Atlas.TI (John Hopkins University, 2021). The researcher is a novice IPA researcher and certainly would be open to enhancing their knowledge on how to navigate different applications because it certainly would be more efficient overall when conducting IPA research.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The purpose of using validity and reliability checks is to ensure research quality and enhance research rigour. The researcher used the IPA methodology as its’ interpretative framework to analyse data collected from the eligibility questionnaires, interview audio-visual recordings, interview guides, and transcriptions.

⁴ What is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)? — Delve (delvetool.com)

The following validity and reliability actions include:

- Transcripts were carefully cross checked against the audio file.
- Transcripts were fully anonymised.
- A pilot interview was conducted to identify potential pitfalls in relation to the platform Microsoft Teams for audio and visual quality, as well as Wi-Fi difficulties as far as reasonably practicable.
- The researcher was completely upfront with the expected outcomes of all data collected. Each participant was provided with a participant information leaflet which outlined the background to the study; research aim, objectives and research questions; research design/methodology; benefits; disadvantages; risks; participation rights; data protection guidelines.
- Each participant signed an informed consent form agreeing to data collection and analyses processes. They were invited to ask questions and contact the researcher at any stage of the research process to discuss any aspect of the study that concerned them. With the exception of two researchers, one wished to provide more information regards research policies in their own country, while the latter wished to reaffirm anonymity; no other participants contacted the researcher since the interviews were conducted.
- A systematic series of steps was documented to allow others to review the audit trail of the data collected and the analysis process.

Participants are considered experiential experts in the topic under investigation. The participants in this study are considered experts in the field of RMA, therefore their input (stories about their experience (s), thoughts and feelings) was required to better understand what it means to be a research manager or manager of a research support function working in their research environment in their respective European country. All quotations from participants reflect their individual voices and opinions. These quotes were selected excerpts from the full transcripts. This illustrates the dynamic interplay between 'the part' and 'the whole,' offering a Heideggerian perspective on methodology.

In general, some researchers share their transcriptions with their participants to confirm their satisfaction with the interpretation of their narratives, while other researchers do not

agree with this step. Giorgi argues that sharing transcriptions with participants clashes with principles of phenomenology. According to Giorgi, 2006, as cited by Fendt 2015, “participants report their experiences as situated within their life-worlds...validity checks can only be performed by phenomenological procedures which participants cannot be expected to be aware of; ...the purpose of the research is not to clarify the experience that the individuals have for their own sake, but for the sake of the discipline...whether or not the individual participant agrees with the findings is beside the point...the aim of phenomenology is not only to describe what the experience is but also its meanings...returning of results to the participants for reasons of verification and correction ‘is not trustworthy’” (Fendt, 2015, p. 70). The researcher took the position to make the transcriptions and findings accessible to any inquiring participant, although not for the purposes of correction and verification. To date none of the participants interviewed have made such requests; in fact, the feedback at the end the interviews conveyed a curiosity about IPA as a methodology for data collection and analysis.

Summary

In summary, Chapter Three presented the theoretical and philosophical framework that underlies the qualitative IPA method employed for data collection and analysis in this study. The IPA study was designed to explore *what does it mean to be a research manager or manager of a research support function* by taking a deep dive into the research sub questions to gain insights into firstly, the factors that influence a participants’ decision to make a career transition from research into research management and administration; secondly, to examine how professional preparedness/readiness and identity influence individual’s experiences in their roles; thirdly, how the broader organisational and Regional (national/European) influences shape individual’s experiences suggesting that external factors play a significant role in their professional lives. Chapter Four presents the findings from the data collected and analysed.

Chapter 4. Research Findings

4.1 EU Countries and Research Sectors Represented

From sixteen interviews, the researcher selected seven for analysis. Purposive sampling was particularly suitable for this part of the process as it provided the flexibility to access specific perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation, rather than focusing on the broader population of RMAs. The participants were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study:

- Previous experience as a researcher (with a PhD qualification) to explore the factors that influenced their decision to become a research manager or manager of a research support function.
- Gender balance.
- One representative from each EU country.
- One representative from each research sector.

This selection process facilitated the researcher achieving a small sample size in adherence to IPA's recommendations for a Master's level IPA study. The researcher had multiple participants from Ireland, Italy, and Poland, and in this context, it was essential to adhere closely to the specific criteria as outlined. Table 4.1 shows the EU countries and research sectors represented as follows:

TABLE 4.1 EU COUNTRIES & RESEARCH SECTORS

Country	Participant Pseudonym	Research Sector (s) Represented
Belgium	16Belgium	Research Centre (Public)
Croatia	01Croatia	Higher Education Institute
Greece	15Greece	Research Centre (Semi Public)
Ireland	08Ireland	Non-Governmental Organisation (Sponsor/Funder)
Italy	02Italy	Higher Education Institute
Poland	12Poland	Research Centre (Public)
Romania	10Romania	Government & Higher Education Institute

The number of countries represented were $n=7$ and the number of research sectors represented was $n=4$. The researcher was unable to recruit participants from Spain, due to insufficient time to enhance recruitment efforts during the campaign. Additionally, the researcher faced challenges in recruiting participants from the research industry sector. The researcher believes that a different recruitment approach may have been necessary to achieve better engagement. The data collected was anonymised and participants are referred to by a pseudonym (<number> <country>) and their research sector.

Semi-Structured Interview Process

Interviews were conducted online using TCD Microsoft Teams during the months of June and July 2023 in accordance with the participants availability. Before each interview participants were provided with a participant information leaflet, and they completed an informed consent form agreeing to terms and conditions of participation, as well as data protection rights in accordance with TCD policy on Good Research Practice and Policy Retention, Irish Data Protection Legislation and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) either electronically signed or verbally agreed to on camera. The length of interviews varied from a minimum of 55 minutes up to a maximum of 1 hour and 52 minutes. Three different European time zones included Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), Central European Time (CET), and CET⁺². Despite conducting 16 audio-visual interviews, the researcher encountered technical difficulties in just two cases: the first, an unexpected power cut while working from home which was quickly resolved, and the second Microsoft Teams connectivity failure to Greece where Google Meet was substituted for the visual component (without recording capabilities) and mobile devices for audio recording. The audio recording was subsequently uploaded to the TCD MS Teams platform and deleted from the interviewer's mobile device.

Transcription Process

Microsoft Teams captured the recordings and transcribed each conversation. The length of the transcripts varied from a minimum of 53 pages to a maximum of 130 pages. Of the 16 transcripts, seven transcripts were selected and formatted as explained in table 3.2 and analysed using exploratory notes to identify individual experiential statements. The

researcher experienced some challenges during the transcription process. Firstly, the original transcriptions downloaded from MS Teams did not transcribe the conversations verbatim. Despite English being the lingua franca and all participants claimed fluency, MS Teams struggled to capture dialects and conversational nuances. As a result, the researcher had to review and amend the transcriptions against each audio file, which was time-consuming. Nevertheless, IPA experts encourage this step as good practice to read the transcripts while re-listening to the recordings, as this helps to reconnect with the interview context and recall the participant's voice, gestures, tone, and personality, thereby enhancing the iterative interpretation process.

4.2 Participant Profiles

All seven participants were over the age of 18 and did not need to provide any additional consent to participate in the research study. Each participant was in their current role for at least two years and spoke fluent English. However, Microsoft Teams occasionally struggled to accurately transcribe what was said, due to variations in dialect, speed, and word expressions. To address this, the researcher reviewed each transcript alongside the audiovisual recordings to correct any miscaptured words. The participants identified as a research manager, a manager of a research support function or both, and all had experience with national and EU research funding. Each participant holds a Doctorate degree reflecting the third education cycle corresponding to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8 (European Commission(6), 2018). Table 4.2 shows an introductory profile of each participant as follows:

TABLE 4.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

ID	Research Sector	Gender	Contract Type	Gross Salary (€)	Identifies as	Professional Title
01Croatia	Higher Education Institute	Male	Permanent	30-50k	Research Manager	Head of Research Office
02Italy	Higher Education Institute	Female	Permanent	30-50k	Research Manager	RMA

08Ireland	Non-Governmental Organisation (Sponsor/Funder)	Female	Permanent ⁵	50-70k	Research Manager	Research Manager
10Romania	Government & Higher Education Institute	Male	Permanent	30-50k	Research Manager & Manager of a RSF	Government role, Consultant & Academic ⁶
12Poland	Research Institute (Public)	Female	Permanent	20k ⁷	Manager of a RSF	Manager of a RSF
15Greece	Research Institute (Semi Public)	Male	Temporary ⁸	18k ⁹	Research Manager & Manager of a RSF	Technology Transfer Consultant & Project Manager
16Belgium	Research Institute (Public)	Male	Permanent	50-70k	Research Manager & Manager of a RSF	Research Coordinator

Table 4.3 presents the participants descriptions of their role and responsibilities as research managers and/or managers of research support functions. The researcher summarised their data into six category of research support activities.

⁵ Annual roll over contract.

⁶ Performs 3 roles.

⁷ Basic salary + bonus

⁸ Annual renewal contract.

⁹ Basic salary + bonus

TABLE 4.3 RM AND/OR MANAGER OF RSFs ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Participant Identifies as	Education Training	Pre-award	Post-award	Coordination/Project Management	Strategy/Policy/Data Analysis	Communication /Dissemination
01Croatia Research Manager HEI	Provide education for researchers.		Analyse research outputs. Manage projects and acquisition.		Provide guidance to senior management with implementation of strategic objectives. Conduct international rankings analysis and management.	
02Italy Research Manager (RMA) HEI	Support Dept. with design and implementation of training for early career researchers.	Engage with Funding Calls. Support research proposals (draft or revise) at Dept. level. Consortium creation and management. Budget preparation. Administer data and documents.			Assist with strategic orientation for Dept. research by mapping expertise and research fields of the Dept's Faculty; identify EU policy priorities to the relevant Dept; communicate funding opportunities.	
08Ireland Research Manager NGO	Mentor PhD students and Postdoctoral researchers.			Collaborate and coordinate all research activities. Manage research staff.	Report to Board of Directors. Participate on national committees to influence policy development.	Attend, Present and Organise Conferences.

			Collaborate with research teams to promote fundraising.	
10Romania <i>Research Manager and Manager of RSF (Government &HEI)</i>	Consortium creation - identify, select and create networks of stakeholders, include public and private entities for EU partnerships.			At a government level, write, implement and evaluate reforms to improve Romanian R&D sector.
				Participate in meetings to influence partnerships with Romanian organisations.
12Poland <i>Manager of RSF (Research Centre Public)</i>	Search for potential funding opportunities.	Manage administrative aspects of grant.		
	Support grant applications.	Oversee financial management of grant.		
15Greece <i>Research Manager and Manager of RSF (TT Consultant) (Research Centre Semi Public)</i>	Proposal writing.	Project manage deliverables of 5 projects.	Consultancy services for technology transfer activities, IP management and service offerings.	
	Business development activities, attract contracts from external clients.	Attend meetings.		

16Belgium Research Manager of RSF(Coordinator) (Research Centre Public)	Support research staff across the Dept.	Support research staff across the Dept.	Encourage engagement in research activities at multiple levels.
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IPA is inherently a qualitative method that emphasises rich, detailed content. However, given the word count limitations of this dissertation, it is impractical to present a comprehensive account of each individual's experiential statements. Instead, personal experiential themes will be integrated in to the group experiential themes in Section 4.4. Quotations associated with each individual's experiential account are included in the personal narratives and will be integrated into the discussion in Chapter 5.

The PPT slides in the following section are designed to help the reader understand the personal meanings that have influenced the participants' professional experiences as they transitioned from research to research management and administration, their sense of professional readiness and identity, the broader organisational and regional influences that shape their experiences in their roles, while still keeping the shared aspects of their experiences within the group. The results are seven unique texts, a blend of male and female voices from Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Romania and my words highlighting each research manager or manager of a research support function, and my attempts to make meaning from their experiences. This aligns with IPA core principles and Heidegger's essential notion of historicity of understanding, especially the concept of co-constitution mentioned in section 3.2. The format of each PPT slide includes the participants country flag, their pseudonyms, and a meaningful statement extracted from their transcript. Any identifiable information was omitted to ensure anonymity.

4.3 Participant Personal Narratives

01CROATIA

"Nobody teaches this in school"



01Croatia identifies as a research manager at a higher education institution. At the age of 32, he assumed this position and has held it for the past nine years. He earns a gross salary of approximately €30,000, and holds a permanent contract. His role is a blended one which involves some teaching (equivalent to an associate professor) and primarily research management responsibilities *"this is how my role becomes blended role where I do teaching and science and also do research management [10:90]" (P.31)*. He recognises that Croatian salaries are much lower than other EU Member States and thinks it's *"craziness"*. Upon finishing his undergraduate studies, he began his career as a HR manager, but he quickly found the position unfulfilling, and in his late twenties, he decided to return to university to pursue a PhD in psychology *"I was a human resources manager for construction company and everything, and then I got bored with this job and then I started my PhD as a researcher" (P.19)*. He completed his PhD while working as a researcher on an EU FP7 project which was *"a complex research study"* (P.20). Coincidentally, at the end of this project, a research manager position was publicly advertised which involved a two-stage recruitment process that included psychometric testing followed by an interview. The previous research manager encouraged him to submit his application *"the recruitment process, of course, a public contest, and actually, the former research manager ...contacted me [to ask] if I want to apply because he knew that my PhD was over and that I was looking for a new job" (P.27)*. He had robust data analytical skills, with a specialisation in quantitative methodologies and project management, as well as strong people management abilities, making him an ideal candidate for research management. The former head of research office said, *"you are somebody we want" (P.30)*. 01Croatia says to be a research manager you need to have *"legal knowledge, you have to know the laws, the byelaws, the rules...you have to be versed in finances regarding how the university gets money, how we spend it, how we decide, and especially what the specific knowledge is about the European Research Area. What is going on in Europe? How this influences us? So, this is a skill set that is relatively hard to acquire because nobody teaches this in school" (P.15)*. Although he was well-educated, he felt poorly prepared for the politics associated with working as a research manager. *"What I wasn't prepared for is that I wasn't very, very good at politics, understanding politics and participating in politics, so this was something I had to learn and I'm still learning" (P.20)*. To overcome this challenge, 01Croatia supports continuous professional development and networking *"I really mix networking and knowledge acquisition...I feel because of this networking, I feel more empowered." (P.23)*. He plays jazz music to unwind and alleviate his stress levels from such a busy role.

Figure 4.1 01Croatia Personal Narrative

02ITALY

“The practical and the experience part... is maybe the most important”



02Italy identifies as a research manager but professionally refers to her role as an RMA in the higher education sector. She earns a salary range €30-50k reflecting her administrative seniority but considers this low in comparison to somebody performing the same role in the private sector *“it’s difficult to have an idea, but yeah, but for sure our salaries is very low”* (P.43). Her family and friends say, *“when they have to explain what I do to other people, they say, ok, she’s an architect and she works in the university and that’s it”* (P.9) without recognising the complexities of her role. She experienced difficulties trying to navigate a career path as a Postdoctoral researcher within academia and recalled the moment where her professor could not facilitate her advancement to research fellow due to funding limitations and advised *“you can’t go [forward] you won’t have the opportunity to go on that way, you have to find yourself, a way to stay or to go”* (P.12). She understands resources have improved for researchers due to the “NextGenerationEU” funding initiative, however, 10 years ago, this was not her experience. She considered her options and reflected on her interests, ultimately realising that grant proposal writing was what captivated her *“I found this kind of work like interesting and challenging”* (P.12) and decided to *“have a freelance profession as a consultant”* in international and local development projects. This decision reflected her self-motivation and adaptability in seeking opportunities outside traditional academic roles. However, this leap to self-employment was not easy *“at that time, I was trying to work as a freelance consultant in European project management, but it was the right after the [Covid19] lockdown, and after my maternity leave, so it was difficult”* (P.9). Subsequently, she took up a position at a state university as a part-time consultant on a temporary contract. After five years working as a consultant, she reached a pivotal point in her career. Marred with historical temporary contracts, she was reluctant to return to a university environment, but circumstances forced a change of mind. She came across a job posting on her university’s alumni website and applied through Italy’s public competition process (concorso pubblico) for a permanent research fellow position, which turned out to be an RMA role *“and I started working as an RMA, and I liked it”* (P.13). She recognises how much added-value she brings to the role because of the combination of her formal education, CPD and most significantly, experience *“the practical and the experience part is [like] many professions, evening in architecture, is maybe the most important”* (P. 15) She feels supported by her organisation, as there is ample opportunity to propose ideas within her specific area. Additionally, she is about to transition into a new role that will bring her increased responsibility and visibility *“about our organisation, I feel we are very supportive in our ideas”* (P.30). She understands assuming leadership and responsibilities requires a new lens and sees power struggles between central office and departments *“the centre and the periphery, and it’s a power issue”* (P.50) that leads to conflict situations *“I’d say I’m now more involved in the political life of the university and the department, I started to understand better these subtle, yeah, issues and so it’s in progress”* (P.50) If uncertain about how to interpret a situation, she’s seeks input from multiple trusted colleagues to gather diverse perspectives. Her management approach is *“being impartial and try to find a mediation in my role of representative”* (P.52), and she believes *“a good manager should aim for the better possible results but also, uh, evaluation of the contribution from everybody”* (P.46).

Figure 4.2 02Italy Personal Narrative

08IRELAND

“I’m finding it really fulfilling”



08Ireland identifies as a research manager working in a non-governmental organisation. She has a permanent, annual rolling contract, and earns a gross salary ranging from €50,000 to €70,000. She holds a PhD in science. She began her career as a Postdoctoral researcher in health research, but faced numerous challenges, including unstable contracts which marred her experience. She shared a troubling account of her decade-long tenure at a public research centre. She recalled the root of the distressing experience was due to a precarious contract *“the kind of dodgy contracts, you know, the kind that, get your own money in, and, you know, and working 80 hours a week...I had no employment rights whatsoever because they kept changing my title”* (P.14) which affected career progression opportunities and chances of securing a permanent contract. After seven years, authorship of 50+ publications, and secured substantial grant funding, she felt she was being unfairly treated. She questioned the Director about the situation. *“I suppose, I was angry, and he stopped talking to me then...so then my confidence was destroyed completely, and it was so destroyed that I stayed for another three years...you know, what I was like, who else is gonna hire me now?”* (P.18). Through her professional network, she connected with supportive individuals at a university who offered her research space to apply for grants, allowing her to hire research assistants and supervise PhD students. While she appreciated the autonomy to conduct research, she found the situation unsustainable. She sought a specialised training programme on research career development which helped her make sense of what she valued and wanted from a career. She weighed up her career options and decided to relinquish being a researcher and work towards becoming a research manager. The decision to change careers was challenging for her, as she struggled to articulate her feelings. *“It took me 2 years, but I made the decision ‘to move’, ‘trans’, ‘to move out of’, after doing my own research”* (P.14). Initially, she chose to transition from her previous role to become a research officer, accepting a €40,000 salary for greater job security *“but I was valued and have a bit of security versus, like, this state of mind”* (P.19) and the ability to facilitate impactful research *“I can facilitate important research, you know, and not just do it but it’s still making a difference”* (P.15). Despite the pay cut, she felt satisfied with her choice and has found a sense of belonging in her new research organisation *“because like I was fortunate in that this is a great fit.”* (P.19). After two and a half years of hard work, she was promoted to research manager, with a salary that reflects her responsibilities, along with a transformative sense of fulfilment *“I think it’s actually a great career, it’s very fulfilling, I’m finding it really fulfilling”* (P.37). The role is demanding, and she actively seeks ways to alleviate stress by swimming in the sea weekly which improves mental clarity and overall health and well-being.

Figure 4.3 08Ireland Personal Narrative

10ROMANIA

“I love it, this is my life”



10Romania identifies as both a research manager and a manager of a research support function due the complexity of his contract *“it's not a common practice compared to other countries; I know”* (P.6). He performs three roles, the first two are in the government, and the third role is at a higher education institute, working as a professor & principal investigator for the past 12 years. He holds a permanent contract, and earns a gross salary range between €30-50k. He highlights the difficulties faced by the Romanian research sector, noting that the government, in collaboration with the European Commission, is actively working to retain current research talent while also attracting new professionals to the field *“based on that [NextGenerationEU] mechanism of recovery and resilience, we have projects to attract experienced researchers from other countries... large projects...worth €1.7M for three years”* (P.13). He is conscious of Romania's lagging position in R&I indicators relative to the rest of the EU, acknowledging *“this is a huge problem”* which can be attributed to several historical factors such as political and economic instability, lack of investment in R&D, fragmentation of research institutions, cultural attitudes towards research, limited collaboration with industry and brain drain *“if you go to the US, top 10% on mathematics departments, you'll notice that almost everyone, yeah, speaking Romania language; they are Romanians”* (P.24-26). Regrettably, he says *“the number of researchers tend to decline not to increase, we are one-of-a-kind in Europe”* (P.84). However, he remains optimistic because *“[Romanian PIs]...who cooperate with professors from other universities from US or western countries, come with, let's say, pragmatical approach regarding how to manage a project and they start to win those projects”* (P.15-17). He recognises opportunities to create synergies between public institutes and SMEs because *“[Romania] is on the first place in EU, in terms of SMEs who attract many money for research...and we want to focus mainly on startup SMEs because the private companies want it [too]...they have idea's”* (P.27-29). He is confident that his expertise, transferable skills, and competencies will contribute positively to this mission. His latest roles in the government ministry, these past two years have provided a transformative sense of fulfilment and belonging *“I feel valued...our job it's so diverse, we have to mix knowledge...you have to know how to write a government ordinance, no one teach you that; you have to write the application guide, no one train you how to do it; ...there are so many interesting things...of course, at the university, you have your friends, your colleagues, yeah, you work on articles with colleagues from other countries but it's not the same thing”* (P. 110). What sustains his passions for the work is because he says, *“I love it, this is my life, working with persons, with expertise, with smart people”* (P.129).

Figure 4.4 10Romania Personal Narrative

12POLAND

"I have influenced this change"

12Poland identifies as a Manager of a Research Support Function; the function being the management of pre and post ward research funding processes. Since 2018, she has worked at a publicly owned research centre. She holds a permanent contract and earns a basic gross salary of €20k per annum plus bonus *"our salaries are, they are made of different components...the basic part [baseline for Polish public institution salaries]...the pay range are extremely low, so we have like, we get to top up on that...based on experience and competence... and that's information won't be public"* (P.11), still, she thinks she is fairly remunerated for her work. Her educational background includes a B.Sc., M.Sc., and a Ph.D. She reflected on her decision to leave her research career for a more stable job, stating, *"the insecurity that is linked to the job simply like it's never a stable position...you go from Postdocs to Postdocs, going abroad and moving from one institute to the next...when you're starting to settle down...it's actually not very compatible with having a partner, children...I think being a woman doesn't help here...I didn't want to leave science altogether...but at the same time I'm having a stable position"* (P.25-27). As a manager of a research support function, she is responsible for supporting 12 research groups. She described her time allocation to each activity *"let's say 70% of our time is dedicated to post award, that's where we need to support our researchers the most...we have like small amount of time looking for new possibilities [pre award grant funding]...[but] basically once you know what are the possibilities, you know them and that's all"* (P.15). Having previously worked as a researcher, she believes she adds significant value to her team of researchers *"I understand maybe a little better what are their needs...kind of the pressures they can be under when looking for funding...if they don't get grants, then that's basically the end of the work...when you've been through that yourself, well, I think [you] understand that better"* (P.15-16). She speaks highly of continuous professional development (CPD) courses, stating that when someone approaches her with questions, she feels equipped and confident to provide answers because of the training *"I feel thanks to [CPD courses] I do have the answer, or I know how to deal with the situation...[CPD] does help with feeling confident in my position, yes"* (P.29). She described why the institute's research focus shifted towards translational research. She believes she played a significant role in advocating for this transition from basic research to translational research, primarily to align with EU funding priorities necessitating the institute's strategic pivot essential for continued growth and sustainability *"I think I can say...I have influenced this change [that] I've been trying to show for quite some time...if we want to get fundings from the European Union, [it] focuses on translational research...if you want to apply for ERC or things like that...we have to go into translational research and that triggered discussion between our directors...that's the direction we have to go...I mean, that wouldn't have happened if I didn't say like, if you want to have European money, well then, that's what you have to do"* (P.82-84). As a part of this transition, her institute aims to establish new research groups specifically dedicated to translational and biomedical research expanding the institute's research capabilities. This reflection encapsulates the crucial role of a research manager or manager of research support function.

Figure 4.5 12Poland Personal Narrative

15GREECE

"It is not very well understood"



15Greece identifies as a research manager and a manager of a research support function *"I work in both, I work like 40% the second [Manager of a RSF "Technology Transfer Consultant"], and 60% the other [RM "Project Manager"]"* (P.1). He works a research centre, which is a semi-public organisation *"so we have 10% income from the government and the other from competitive programmes, the other 90%"* (P.2). For the past ten years, his contract remains classified as temporary, yet it is renewed each year. He earns a basic salary of €18k plus a *"performance bonus, which can be up to one salary, and this is decided by the manager; and we also have a bonus, which is like 2-4% if we attract project, EU funding, so we have like, 2-4% of the budget that we receive from a project"* (P.3). After a B.Sc., he pursued various roles in the ICT industry, including web development, systems administration, and marketing. He reached a pivotal point in his career and made the decision to return to academia *"afterwards I did my MBA, and I jumped to my PhD "* (P.17). He noted he was unable to take advantage of the ERASMUS+ student programme at that time due to his mandatory service in the Hellenic Army but says his current role makes up for this lost experience *"I have a lot of mobility now, I do like two or three trips per month...Europe, China, Africa, everywhere".* (P.13) As a Postdoctoral researcher, he was unable to secure a job in academia *"because it was a bit competitive, I could not find a job in academia"..."it's a bit difficult, usually, at least in my field, the most researchers that are employed here come from USA, you might apply for a position, have someone from like MIT...take the position"* (P.10). Due to limited teaching opportunities, low salaries in research and family commitments in Greece, he felt compelled to apply for unrelated projects, which prevented him from focusing on his research *"you are forced sometimes to apply for projects that are irrelevant to your work, so you cannot focus on your research, you must work in other things that do not have to do with your interests, so you cannot dedicate time to write papers and so on"* (P.11). He believes there is a lack of understanding about the field of research management in Greece *"it is not very well understood, that's why it's difficult to find a job. If you leave your position as a research manager you cannot easily explain to the others, what do you do, so it's difficult...its very specialised, scope is narrow and you cannot easily find other people to do it, so, if somebody leaves, it's difficult to build such an experiences capacity, in my opinion"* (P.3). The senior management at his research centre can exert significant influence over their staff due to their authority in deciding performance bonuses. He says, *"the manager might have better relationships with some people than others because their characters fit in a better way, it's natural...some people might have had more opportunities in some case, or their voice might be stronger than mine just because they are closer to the manager"* (P.22). Consequently, he sometimes felt overlooked compared to colleagues with stronger ties to management, *"you might be more invisible than others"* (P.22). Nevertheless, he maintains an optimistic perspective, acknowledging that *"your turn might come, and you might be more visible than others, so it's life"* (P.22). His sense of value is derived from *"the work that we do in providing support to researchers, to business etc...you have real results that help those people, makes you feel valued, of course, this is something that you feel gratitude, you feel that you offer something"* (P.23). His sense of camaraderie *"I run, most of the colleagues here, we are runners, so we run marathon, hiking on the mountains..."* (P.14) and belonging to his organisation *"I showcase the spirit and momentum that my organisation has"* (P.21) is magnanimous.

Figure 4.6 15Greece Personal Narrative

16BELGIUM

“Bringing added value”



16Belgium identifies as a manager of a research support function and for the past 13 years performs the role of a research coordinator in a publicly owned research institute. He holds a permanent contract and earns a gross salary range between €50-70k. Over the past 30 years, he has become an expert in his scientific field, and effectively wears two hats within the institute. Being a research coordinator was not a chosen career profession, he says *“you have to realise that it was never my ambition to have an administrative career or position in Government, let’s say that was not my objective”* (P.55). He took a position at a university as a Postdoctoral researcher, but it was a temporary contract funded by industry with no likely job security *“the contract...was a temporary contract, well, really short-term temporary contract... so there was no real future, well opportunities that I could see at that time...and so I had to make decisions at that moment, where to go?”* (P.57). Being a university professor working in a laboratory didn’t interest him because it involved *“teaching students, grading exams, and making exams”* (P.57). In the early 1990s, Belgium reorganised its federal government, adopting a model where subdepartments were led by individuals with fixed-term mandates, akin to industry practices. A university colleague applied for and secured the position of Director at the institute, and their first task was to draft a strategic plan, which

16Belgium reviewed and found lacking in scientific management focus. He recommended creating a “research coordinator” position to oversee research, which was approved, leading him to apply for the role he had defined. After a 14-month selection process, he was chosen as the best candidate. He was drawn to the innovative aspect of the position *“it was something completely new...we had all these opportunities ... to go to America, to see how they were doing things over there, to make contacts... and so we were going to start off with something new... that was not just for academics but also really applied to real world problems, judicial investigation and casework”*(P.57). While formal education is important, he believes that it is just the beginning *“your education and training, that is the start, but it doesn’t end there”* (P.38); continuous learning is essential for enhancing resilience and competitiveness in a constantly evolving research landscape *“training yourself and training your colleagues...adds value because you tend to remain flexible and keep an open eye on what is going on around you in technological development”* (P.16) Metaphorically, he compares himself to an *“airline pilot”*, understanding the importance of leadership readiness for responsibility and accountability *“you first have to fly the plane before you can become a captain of an airbus”* (P.33). His competences bring added value to his role by having *“this kind of overarching or helicopter view”* (P.12) and actively engaging in diverse environments *“I keep my tentacles and my fingers in all kinds of different environments”* (P.19) which offers insights to his researchers. He is certainly aware of the numerous challenges and complexities that researchers encounter at his institute, which contributes to his frustration coming from a lack of authority *“[section chiefs, lab chiefs] have to give permission to the researchers to spend time on research instead of analysing a case...that is one of the problems, I don’t have too much control and hierarchical power over these people to say [give them research time]”* (P.91).

Figure 4.7 16Belgium Personal Narrative

4.4 Results of GETs and Subthemes

This stage of the data analysis process is to see whether “there are common patterns and idiosyncratic differences within those similarities and how one case may shed light on another, the end result being a new table of group experiential themes (GETs) forming the basis for the discussion in Chapter 5. Table 4.4 lists the GETs and subthemes.

TABLE 4.4 GETs AND SUBTHEMES

Factors influencing decision to become a research manager	How professional preparedness and identity influence individual's experiences
Job insecurity Precarious contracts Navigating a Postdoctoral career path New opportunities Unequal opportunities	Job security, inconsistent salaries Adapting knowledge, skills, competences Engaging in continuous professional development Bringing added-value Workplace relationship dynamics Management and Leadership Managing power, politics and conflict Organisational culture Encouraging networking Job Title Prejudice and judgment Personal biases Imposter syndrome Personal health and well-being
Organisational and regional influences on research managers experiences	Essential meaning of their professional experiences
Inconsistent salaries Organisational culture Public awareness professionalising research management Prejudice and judgment Talent attraction and retention Lack of investment Limited resources National v EU/ERA policies and actions EU funding opportunities EC Assessment and Evaluations Public v Private sector Leadership Politics and conflicting perspectives Organisational strategies and policies	Job satisfaction, sense of fulfilment and belonging Self-efficacy and self-motivation Agency Adaptive mindsets Dynamic environments Career progression constraints Professional networks Research management sectoral inclusiveness

Summary

In summary, Chapter Four presented an opportunity to hear the voices and opinions of the seven participants working in Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Romania and their unique professional experiences from their perspectives. The personal narratives did not unpack all aspects of the participants “lived worlds,” however, from their PETs, the researcher endeavoured to frame the participants unique experiences as research managers or managers of research support functions. Observing the core principles of IPA as outlined by Smith et al., (2022), the researcher aimed to: firstly, make sense of experience from the participants’ perspective; secondly to consider first-person accounts as data; and finally, committed to an idiographic level of analytic work which was interpretative. The researcher adopted the dialectical system of interpretation reflecting Heidegger’s idea of the hermeneutic circle of sense-making, a circular motion style of thinking – an iterative process of meaning-making between the researcher and the participant. In addition, the researcher embraced Gadamer’s “spirit of openness” throughout the one-to-one interviews. The GETs and subthemes draw the reader back to the main focus of the research study to explore what does it mean to be a research manager working in the EU. Chapter 5 considers the implications of the findings of this study, discussing these findings in relation to theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter One, Section 2.6 as well as relevant national/ EU policies pertinent to the findings

Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter aims to analyse and integrate the findings presented in Chapter 4 within a broader context. It will draw on connections between these results and the existing literature reviewed earlier, while also incorporating relevant scholarly discourse and additional research pertinent to the findings. This synthesis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's implications and its place within the wider field of European research management and administration. By integrating the narratives from the lived experiences of research managers and/or managers of research support functions across Europe, this study aimed to enrich our understanding about their diverse roles that they perform in different research environments. These findings may validate, enhance, and advance the existing literature on RMA, particularly the emerging body of work focused on the profession of research management.

Research managers 'make sense' of their work-world (lifeworld) through cultural background, social structures and intersubjectivity which shapes their professional identity and lived experiences. This research provided a mechanism through IPA that enabled research managers to openly discuss their professional experiences without prejudice and judgment. To achieve the purpose of this chapter, it has been organised into three sections to answer the following four questions:

Q1) What factors influenced their decision to become a research manager or manager of a research support function?

Q2) To what extent does professional preparedness and professional identity shape individuals' experiences on being a research manager or manager of a research support function?

Q3) To what extent does regional and organisational policies shape individuals' experiences of being a research manager or manager of a research support function? What suggestions would each of the participants make to a EU policy maker to improve their professional experiences?

Q4) What are the essential interpretations of their experiences?

The aim of the research is to explore what does it mean to be a research manager, using an interpretative phenomenological framework. The current research first investigated the motivations driving these individuals to become research managers and/or managers of research support functions and subsequently explored their lived experiences in these roles.

Figure 5.1 illustrates Heidegger's hermeneutic circle, emphasising the iterative nature of interpretation between the 'part' and the 'whole.' This concept parallels the career transition from researcher to research manager, reflecting the many lived experiences that shape an individual's professional identity throughout their journey. This is further encapsulated by Sartre's (1956) notion that "we are always becoming ourselves", a key concept in his existentialist philosophy, emphasising the ongoing nature of human identity and self-creation represented in the circular framework.

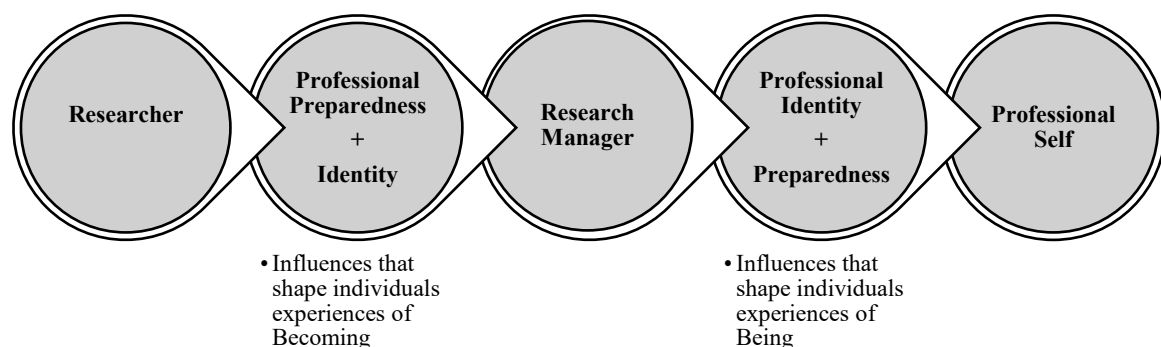


Figure 5.1 Forming the Professional Self

In Chapter 3, Rickman (1975) translated Dilthey's explanation of the concept of "experience." This study aligns with Dilthey's perspective, as the findings suggest that participants' experiences represent a culmination of diverse professional encounters. The synthesis of these experiences allowed for an interpretation of their fundamental meanings, providing insights into the essence of being a research manager.

5.1 Becoming a Research Manager

Q1) What factors influenced their decision to become a research manager and/or manager or a research support function?

From the Group Experiential Themes, the following themes emerged as factors that influenced their decision to make a career change to research management:

- Precarious contracts and job insecurity.
- Navigating a Postdoctoral career path within academia.
- Unequal opportunities.

This was a critical moment in the participant's careers when they were on a certain career trajectory but experienced events that prompted them to make a career change. The research explores how expected or unexpected circumstances can reshape professional identities and aspirations. Their lived experiences include personal, professional and contextual elements.

Factor #1 Precarious contracts and job insecurity

Notably, precarious contracts and job insecurity are interconnected because both underscore financial implications forcing researchers to make career decisions. Participants 02Italy, 08Ireland, 12Poland, 15Greece and 16Belgium reflect this shared experience. The lived experiences of the participants reveal a common theme of job insecurity, and the challenges associated with temporary contracts. Participants described various forms of precarious employment, such as short-term contracts that hindered career progression and limited opportunities for advancement “*the professor... that [I] was working with couldn't give us the opportunity to move on*”. For instance, one participant noted the difficulty of securing stable positions, often transitioning from one postdoctoral role to another while moving between institutions “*it's never a stable position...you go from Postdocs to Postdocs*”. The pressure to generate funding was also highlighted, with individuals working excessive hours under “*dodgy contracts*” that required them to secure their own financial support. This situation often forced them to apply for projects unrelated to their primary research interests, detracting from their ability to focus on meaningful work and publish papers “*you cannot focus on your research, you must work in other things that do not have to do with your interests*”. Moreover, some participants expressed that pursuing an administrative career was never their original ambition “*you have to realise that it was*

never my ambition to have an administrative career". The lack of long-term prospects in temporary roles compelled them to make difficult decisions about their career paths, leading them to reconsider their professional objectives in light of these constraints *"so I had to make decisions at that moment, where to go?"*

Factor #2 Navigating a Postdoctoral career path within academia

Participants 10Romania, and 15Greece found it difficult to progress their research careers and felt there were limited alternative career choices. 10Romania expressed pessimism about alternative career opportunities for researchers in Romanian public institutions *"what incentives exist for the researcher to remain in if they're not researching, what else do they do? Where do they go"*. 15 Greece wanted to remain in Greece and academia *"it was a bit competitive, I could not find a job in academia"* and faced challenges because of the highly competitive nature of the academic job market in Greece *"you might apply for a position, have someone from like MIT...take the position"*.

Caterine (2020) as cited by Roche (2022) claims "the percentage of doctoral students who progress to tenured academic posts is not as high as might be expected – it varies by country and discipline, but it is generally less than 10%" (Roche, 2022, p.162). Roche suggests that setbacks are inevitable because permanent posts in academia attract a high volume of applications increasing the level of competition but reframing them as learning opportunities rather than failures can increase the chances of success, "that is easier said than done, however, if our self-confidence is unsteady and if we are prone to occasional bouts of imposter syndrome" (162). These experiences can undermine the researcher's ability to view setbacks as growth opportunities and instead negatively shape their professional identity. Laudel and Gläser (2008), Gaughan and Bozeman (2019) as cited in Roche (2022) write "being a newly qualified, accomplished, and professional researcher in academia can lead to wide-ranging employment opportunities, but many of those positions will come with temporary or short-term contracts, with little job security and uncertain future employment options (Roche, 2022, p.152). The research findings from this study reflect this assessment of the situation.

Factor #3 Unequal opportunities

02Italy and 12Poland are female, and both shared similar experiences highlighting the challenges faced by women in academia, particularly in balancing personal and professional aspirations. Following the conclusion of their temporary research contract, 02Italy recounted the challenges faced in launching a freelance consulting career in European project management. This transition coincided with two significant life events: returning from maternity leave, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown. The participant's narrative highlighted the struggles of attempting to regain professional footing linked back to a precarious contract. *"I was trying to work as a freelance consultant in European project management, but it was right after the [Covid19] lockdown, and after my maternity leave, so it was difficult"*. This reflects the pervasive challenges confronting researchers who must continually navigate complex professional terrains marked by contract uncertainties, intermittent work opportunities, during periods of heightened economic volatility. Participant 12Poland emphasised the incompatibility of a research career with personal life, particularly for women balancing professional aspirations with family obligations. *"I didn't want to leave science altogether...but at the same time I'm having [wanted] a stable position"* This sentiment underscores the tension many women face between pursuing their career goals and managing family responsibilities, which can be particularly challenging in fields that demand significant time and commitment such as a research career. This participant felt a career move to research management and administration offered a better work life balance while still feeling connected to their research field of expertise. The collective experiences revealed a common struggle for stability and fulfilment in both career and personal life.

A secondary question related to this sub-research inquiry asked whether researchers' decisions to transition to the RMA profession was serendipitous or not?

The findings from this piece of research indicated each participant started their careers as researchers before becoming a research manager therefore these findings would concur that their transition to RMA was serendipitous. However, from another viewpoint, because each participant intentionally applied for an RMA position, it could be argued that their transition was not serendipitous but rather a deliberate choice to become a research manager.

- 01Croatia was headhunted, applied and successfully interviewed.
- 02Italy discovered the job advertisement on the university's website and applied through the 'concorso pubblico,' a competitive examination process used in Italy to recruit candidates for public sector roles, including academic positions in public universities, and successfully interviewed.
- 08Ireland discovered the job advertisement for a research officer on a non-governmental organisation website, applied and interviewed successfully.
- 10Romania did not explain how he came to learn about the open position but says the recruitment process was competitive and intense.
- 12Poland did not explain how she came to learn about the open position, but it is clear that she consciously decided to apply and successfully interviewed.
- 15Greece appears to have "fallen into" the role through involvement in project work.
- 16Belgium had a distinctive experience, as he created his own research management position by integrating it into a strategic plan. After applying for the role, he successfully navigated a 14-month selection process before being recruited.

These research managers were forced to reconstruct their occupational personality and embrace career adaptability to become another kind of professional. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) as cited in Wang and Li (2024) claim occupational personality refers to an individual's career-related abilities, needs, values and interests and career adaptability is described as "a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, transitions, traumas", the difference between the two being occupational personality emphasises the content of a career, while career adaptability emphasises the coping process of constructing a career (p.2). All seven researchers successfully reconstructed a new career as research managers and/or managers of research support function.

5.2 Being a Research Manager

Q2) To what extent does professional preparedness and professional identity shape individuals' experiences of being a research manager or manager of a research support function?

The EU geographical and institutional context in which a researcher operates can significantly influence their professional experiences upon transitioning into research management. This variability in background may impact their level of preparedness for the role and shape their professional identity as research managers. The diverse pathways into research management can lead to a range of competencies, expectations, and approaches to the role, potentially affecting how individuals navigate and perform in their new positions.

Q2 (a) How Professional Preparedness shapes individual's experiences on their role

Professional preparedness significantly influences individuals' experiences in their roles, shaping their ability to navigate challenges and excel in their positions. Hart et al., (2022) propose that professional preparedness comprises several key building blocks: professional attitude, practical experience, education and training, transversal skills and competences. These components emerged as prominent themes during participant interviews when asked to interpret their understanding of professional preparedness. For example, 01Croatia said professional preparedness *“means being up to date with the new information and knowledge in the field. Being aware of the future events and adequately strategise on the possibility of outcomes”*. 08Ireland said *“professional preparedness is that for me, is the ability to do the job, now that is, if you have the skills already, or if you are a professional. It is knowing what you don't know and finding route to know that as well and your strengths and weaknesses, you know”*.

As Sirokha's (2020) conceptualisation of professional preparedness as an individual's "readiness for work" aligns closely with the findings of this research. The narratives shared by participants regarding their professional preparedness revealed several recurring themes, emphasising the critical nature of ongoing learning, skill enhancement, and personal investment in one's role. These individual accounts collectively underscore the dynamic nature of professional readiness, highlighting that preparedness is not a static state but rather a continual process of growth and adaptation.

Participants emphasised the necessity of staying updated with the latest information, knowledge, and policy priorities in the field. This includes being aware of funding programmes and future events, which enables research managers to strategise effectively for potential outcomes. Professional preparedness encompasses a range of skills essential for success in research management. This includes not only technical skills related to project management but also soft skills such as leadership, group management, and motivation. Many participants noted that their backgrounds as researchers contribute significantly to their preparedness, providing them with firsthand insights into the dynamics of academic research; 02Italy says *“having been a researcher myself adds to those skills a first-hand knowledge of the dynamics of academic research, and this also forms part of my professional preparedness”*. Self-awareness and adaptability are fundamental components of professional preparedness, enabling individuals to navigate the ever-changing landscape of their fields. As 10Romania aptly notes, *“at a university, always you have to be prepared, yeah, to know, state of the art in your field”*. This statement underscores the importance of continuous learning and staying current with the latest developments in one's area of expertise.¹⁵Greece emphasised the importance of a sense of ownership in project management, viewing it as crucial for ensuring accountability and successful project delivery. They articulated this perspective succinctly: *“What I believe is that when you run a project, I think that you must have the sense of ownership”*.

¹⁶Belgium expressed the need for a clearer framework to define professional preparedness in the field of research management *“to my knowledge at least, there is no such thing as an official description of the requisites, the schooling and training that research managers should have in order to be stated into that position”*. ¹⁶Belgium's statement highlights a critical gap in the field of research management: the absence of a standardised framework defining professional preparedness. This observation underscores the need for a more structured approach to defining the qualifications, education, and training required for research managers. The lack of an "official description of the requisites" for research management positions reflects a broader challenge in the field. This absence of standardised criteria can lead to inconsistent hiring practices across institutions, difficulties in assessing candidate qualification, challenges in designing targeted professional development programmes, and potential variations in the quality of research management across different organisations. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, recent developments

demonstrate that efforts are being made to address this gap. For instance, the CARDEA Matrix Framework for Research Manager Careers, developed in June 2023, aims to support the research community by providing a structured approach to research management careers. This framework could serve as a starting point for establishing more standardised criteria for professional preparedness in research management.

In summary, given the ever-evolving nature of the research ecosystem, research managers' need to maintain a continuous state of readiness regarding their knowledge, skills and competences. These findings validate the group experiential themes of continuous professional development, adaptability, and necessity of adding value to their roles. This approach is essential for staying current with advancements in technology, changes in funding priorities, emerging scientific discoveries, and evolving needs of society. These elements collectively enable research managers to effectively support researchers and contribute to successful project outcomes.

Q2 (b) How Professional Identity shapes individual's experiences on their role

Deci and Ryan (2017) published *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*, which is composed of self-determination mini-theories, such as, basic needs theory (BNT), and relationship motivation theory (RMT) which are evident in the participants' motivation in personal growth and development. The theory suggests that a strong professional identity and preparedness can enhance motivation to engage in peer support activities, creating a cycle of continuous improvement (Positive Psychology Program, 2016).

In Chapter 2, section 2.6 the researcher suggests professional preparedness and professional identity are codependent; being well-prepared in skills and knowledge enhances professional identity, while a strong professional identity motivates individuals to pursue further education and training. Together, they create a cycle of continuous professional growth, where preparedness strengthens identity, and a robust identity encourages further preparedness. The individual experiences shared regarding professional identity in their roles underscore the importance of support systems, organisational culture, and personal attributes in shaping their role and sense of belonging within the RMA profession.

Participants highlighted the significance of support from upper management, mentorship, and guidance as foundational elements in developing a strong professional identity “*the support from upper management, resource, mentorship and guidance*”. Access to resources and encouragement from leaders fosters an environment where individuals feel valued and empowered to grow in their roles. The value of peer learning and exchanging best practices emerged as a crucial aspect of professional development. Engaging with colleagues “*peer learning and exchange of best practices*” allows for the sharing of knowledge and experiences, which can enhance competencies and build a sense of community within the organisation. A positive organisational culture characterised by shared values, respect, inclusion, and a sense of belonging plays a critical role in shaping professional identity “*Organisational culture – values and standards, professional development, continuous self-reflection, permanent contract with commensurate salary in line with the role and responsibilities, being valued, respect, inclusion, sense of belonging, role fulfilment, and collegiality*”.

Participants emphasised that continuous self-reflection, opportunities for professional development, and fair compensation are vital for fostering an environment where individuals feel fulfilled in their roles. One participant expressed some conscious biased behaviour but was completely honest with their point of view regards behaviour compatibility and the importance of interpersonal dynamics “*behavioral compatibility...if I don't like a person from the first few seconds, I never like him or her, I know it's a problem*” ...[I prefer somebody that has] “*complimentary knowledge*”. In summary, these experiences illustrate that professional identity in research management is shaped by a combination of supportive leadership, collaborative culture, personal attributes, and opportunities for growth. Together, these factors contribute to a fulfilling professional experience that aligns individual aspirations with organisational goals.

Q3) To what extent does regional and organisational policies shape individuals' experiences of being a research manager or manager of a research support function? What suggestions would each of the participants make to a EU policy maker to improve their professional experiences?

The study revealed EU programmes and policies implemented by Member States can have a substantial impact on regional and organisational policies, which consequently affect how

research managers experience their roles in research support functions. A prime example of this influence is the *EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation* mentioned in Chapter Two. This collaborative initiative, shared among EU member states, plays a significant role in forming policies at both organisational and regional levels. As a result, it indirectly shapes the experiences and responsibilities of research managers working in research support in several key ways:

EU FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES supported by Member States <i>influences</i>
Regional and Organisational policies <i>that indirectly shape the experiences of Research Managers and/or Managers of Research Support Functions by the following key ways:</i>
Strategic Alignment
Funding Structures
Collaborative Research Ecosystem
Professionalisation of Research Management
Innovation Focus
Open Science and Data Management
Impact Assessment
International Cooperation
Structuring Effects on National Systems
Policy Support and Reform

The researcher examined crucial Research and Innovation (R&I) indicators for *Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Romania* using the Horizon Dashboard. This analysis encompassed data from all Framework Programmes and focused on the most recent R&I metrics from Horizon 2020 (FP8) to evaluate these countries' performance. The Horizon Dashboard provided comprehensive insights into various aspects such as proposals, projects, participants, and success rates for each country profile. (see Appendix B)

16Belgium

Belgium's participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 5,060 grant agreements were signed, including 289 ERC principal investigators, and 1,142 MSCA participants.
- Highest participation (4,510) was in 'Societal Challenges' thematic priority.
- Belgium ranked 7th out of 28 EU countries in FP participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Belgium's R&I intensity was 3.2%, over and above the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 2nd out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

The R&I performance results significantly impact the experiences of research managers working in Belgium because it is among one of the most research active EU Member States in this study. The metrics reflected Belgium's strong competitive advantage translating into increased opportunities and resources for research projects. With 5,060 grant applications signed, it allowed for greater flexibility in project selection and resource allocation. With 289 ERCs and 1,142 MSCAs, these numbers reflected Belgium's strong talent pool with an abundance of experienced researchers that could enhance the potential for innovative and impactful projects. Belgium is a leader in research activity which attracts more international collaborations and funding opportunities. The high R&I intensity of 3.2% suggested a supportive national policy for R&I, potentially leading to more stable and long-term funding for research and research support.

From a research centre (public) perspective, if 16Belgium met a European policymaker, he would advocate for the re-evaluation of criminal science and budget increase, *“as discussed, national policy makers could re-assess and re-evaluate the role of [criminal] science for the Belgian citizens and increase the budget to more workable levels”*. His observations align with ongoing efforts to strengthen criminal science capabilities in Belgium. There is a broader issue in the criminal science field with lack of advanced technologies, he says *“I would urge them to try to find out the exact reason(s) to the lack of uptake of new tech by [criminal justice] areas”* indicating a gap between available innovations and their implementation in criminal justice practice. 16Belgium's insights reflect the evolving nature of criminal science and the need for continuous adaptation to meet the demands of both criminal and civil investigations in Belgium.

01Croatia

FP8 marked Croatia's first participation in an EU Framework Programme, following EU accession in 2013. Croatia's participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 585 grant agreements were signed, including 4 ERC principal investigators and 73 MSCA participants.
- Highest participation (495) was in 'Societal Challenges' thematic priority.
- Croatia ranked 24th out of 28 EU countries in FP8 participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Croatia's R&I intensity was 1.2%, below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 19th out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

These performance results indirectly shape the experiences of research managers working in Croatia by influencing available resources, collaboration opportunities, and competitive pressures. Policy suggestions from 01Croatia reflected the need for improved support structures, interdisciplinary approaches, and enhanced career opportunities to address the challenges faced by research managers in Croatia's evolving R&I landscape. If 01Croatia met a European policymaker, he would advocate for the research management profession by amplifying the need to support mechanisms that create opportunities for "*education, networking and working in international bodies*" in research management. His perspective aligns with recent EU initiatives to professionalise and recognise research management, such as ERA 2022-2024 Action 17.

Secondly, he would call for the review of research institutional procedures by emphasising the need for "*simplification of procedures, prioritisation of policies, and acknowledgement of all fields of science*". This perspective echoes ongoing efforts in Croatia to streamline bureaucracy and optimise research funding impact within the ERA. Thirdly, 01Croatia would amplify the need for "*equal salaries, regional development, and diversification of strategic points*" in the higher education research sector. His thinking aligns with current EU goals to strengthen research management capacity across the entire ERA, including in regions of lower R&I intensity. 01Croatia's perspective aligns with the broader aims of recent EU research management initiatives, such as the RM-ROADMAP project, which seeks to define the future of research management in Europe and enhance support for research programmes.

15Greece

Greece's participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 2,904 grant agreements were signed, including 39 ERC principal investigators, and 594 MSCA participants.
- Highest participation (2,720) was in 'Societal Challenges' thematic priority.
- Greece ranked 8th out of 28 EU countries in FP participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Greece's R&I intensity was 1.5%, below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 16th out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

The R&I performance results significantly impact the experiences of research managers working in Greece by leveraging a strong competitive position translating to increased opportunities and resources for research projects. Research Managers in Greece have access to a growing pool of high-quality talent, however, the numbers are still relatively low. Greece's R&I intensity of 1.5% below the EU average presented challenges but the R&I ranking indicated room for growth. Significant investment in R&I is needed to improve Greece's metrics and secure more resources for projects. Broader socioeconomic issues, for example, labour market challenges, and educational concerns may affect the pipeline of future researchers and innovators potentially impacting long-term research capacity.

If 15Greece met a European policymaker, he would advocate for increased stakeholder engagement with policymakers to direct impact of policy changes. He claims *"so of course, we talk to the policymakers about our interests because we want our interests to change the legal framework so that we operate more smoothly.... of course, we are a public organisation, so we are working under a ministry, so, policy development affects us directly because we are in the public sector and a change in the legal framework might affect everything here..."* The desire for a changed legal framework reflects the bureaucratic challenges faced by Greek research institutions. His perspective aligns with reports of extremely austere and complex control procedures in Greece that were implemented post-

financial crisis, which consume significant time at the expense of research activities (Stamatakis et al, 2024). 15Greece perspective demonstrates an awareness of the systemic issues in Greek research management and the complex interplay between research institutions and policymakers in shaping the research landscape.

08Ireland

Ireland's participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 2,162 grant agreements were signed, including 112 ERC principal investigators, and 666 MSCA participations.
- Highest participation (1,220) was in 'Societal Challenges' thematic priority.
- Ireland ranked 14th out of 28 EU countries in FP participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Ireland's R&I intensity was 1.1% well below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 21st out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

Ireland's ranking of 14th out of 28 in FP8 participation indicated a moderate competitive position, which significantly shapes the experiences of research managers in Ireland by influencing how they are perceived and positioned within the research landscape. Funding challenges suggest Irish research managers supporting researchers are likely to face intense competition for limited funding opportunities; talent development and retention. Even though Ireland has access to some high -quality talent, the numbers are relatively low, potentially limiting the pool of experienced researchers available for projects. Ireland's R&I intensity of 1.1% could represent significant challenges for research managers, such as, increased competition, pressures to deliver high impact results, improved strategic planning, improved attraction and retention of top talent.

Nevertheless, there are opportunities for Ireland, and national policy priorities aim to increase SME participation. Representing the NGO research health sector, if 08Ireland met a European policymaker, she would advocate to shape research priorities and funding allocation in the Irish research landscape by increasing engagement in "*national lobbying to influence the Government health agenda*". 08Ireland would advocate for researcher

career development which aligns with ongoing efforts in Ireland to develop more structured career paths for researchers through national policy, for example, the ‘Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework’ implemented by the Irish Universities Association, and research career frameworks to support researcher’s professional development and career progression.

In addition, 08Ireland would advocate to maximise the impact of research investments by promoting sustainable research “[research] *longevity*, [because] *the research waste after 3 years, you know, of a Post doctorate or a PhD and the amount of resources and knowledge waste...*”. Her perspective, shaped by both lived experience and a leadership role, focused on advocating for improved conditions for researchers and highlighted the increasing emphasis on structured professional development programmes designed to enhance researchers’ skills and employability beyond academia.

02Italy

Italy’s participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participant and Performance:

- 7,903 grant agreements were signed, including 467 ERC principal investigators, and 2,702 MSCA participations.
- Highest participation (1,680) was in ‘Smart, Green and Integrated Transport’ thematic priority.
- Italy ranked 3rd out of 28 EU countries in FP8 participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Italy’s R&I intensity was 1.5%, below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 15th out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

These performance results significantly impact experiences of research managers working in Italy by competitive positioning, diverse funding opportunities, excellence in specific fields. However, the lower R&I intensity presented challenges for research managers that resulted in increased competition for limited resources, pressure to deliver high-impact

results with less funding and highlighting the need for strategic planning to maximise resources.

Italy has access to high-quality talent, but they face retention challenges due to the lower R&I intensity. There are opportunities for improvement to increase investment in R&I. If 02Italy met a European policymaker, she would advocate for the research management profession by supporting the “*recognition [of] the RMA profile, professionalism, and salary adjustment*”. Her perspective aligns with Italy’s ongoing efforts to professionalise research management which is reflected in Italy’s National Research Programme 2021-27 emphasising the need for a more structured and efficient research system (MUR, 2020).

In addition, 02Italy would advocate for an “*increase in national public funding to research*” to support investment in research infrastructure and human capital, and finally she would advocate for improved research evaluation by creating a more open, transparent, and inclusive research system that prioritises the “*revision of research evaluation frameworks*”.

12Poland

Poland’s participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 1,961 grant agreements signed, including 28 ERC principal investigators, and 440 MSCA participants.
- Highest participation (263) was in ‘Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy’ thematic priority.
- Poland ranked 14th out of 28 EU countries in FP participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Poland’s R&I intensity was 1.4%, below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 17th out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

The R&I performance results significantly impact the experiences of research managers working in Poland by leveraging a moderate competitive position suggesting reasonable access to EU funding opportunities compared to top-performing EU countries. Poland’s

focus on energy research reflects Poland's efforts to improve environmental initiatives. There is a growing pool of high-quality talent however the numbers of ERCs and MSCAs are low and potentially limiting the availability of experienced researchers for projects.

Poland's R&I is 1.4% below the EU average, it's ranked 17th out of 28 which indicated room for growth. While challenges remain, there are signs of improvement and potential growth in Poland's R&I ecosystem. If 12Poland met a European policymaker, she would advocate the need for investment and recognition for research management, stating *"research management is almost non-existent in Poland"* reflecting the emerging nature of the profession in the country. RMA in Poland has a relatively short history of about 20 years, with significant developments only starting around 2007. This aligns with the research undertaken by Kerridge et al. indicating an increased need for highly qualified RMAs and professional Research Support Offices in Poland (Kerridge, Poli, & Yang-Yoshihara, 2023,p.613-620). 12Poland observes that *"research is definitely very much improving in Poland, and we're going into the right direction"*. This idea aligns with Poland's political support for research and recent efforts to reform science and increase funding for research. 12Poland's perspective reflects the current state of research management in Poland, highlighting both challenges and the positive developments in the field.

10Romania

Romania's participation in Horizon 2020 (FP8) can be summarised as follows:

1. Participation and Performance:

- 1,058 grant agreements were signed, including 12 ERC principal investigators, and 172 MSCA participations.
- Highest participation (194) was in 'Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy' thematic priority.
- Romania ranked 16th out of 28 EU countries in FP participation.

2. Research and Innovation Intensity:

- Romania's R&I intensity was 0.5%, below the EU average of 2.3%.
- Ranked 28th out of 28 EU countries in R&I intensity.

These performance results significantly impact the experiences of research managers working in Romania due to multiple factors: limited funding opportunities, talent scarcity exacerbated by the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon, and later EU membership impact. Focus on energy research, economic development focus, international collaborations and increased national investment are critical to improve Romania’s standing.

Severe R&I intensity challenges lie ahead for Romania presenting significant hurdles for research managers with extreme competition for limited resources, minimal funding to deliver high-impact results, and difficulties in attracting and retaining top talent due to lack of resources and opportunities. These factors have created a challenging environment for research managers in Romania, requiring them to be highly resourceful, strategic, and persistent in their efforts to secure funding and manage research projects within the EU Framework. There is potential for growth to create a more supportive ecosystem for R&I.

If 10Romania met a European policymaker, he would advocate for the reform for researchers, change the PI/Researcher reward systems, and change the management culture within Romanian institutes, he posits *“create a new body of investors, an agency for funding innovation, to focus mainly on startup SMEs”* and *“rewrite some laws, never allow a person to stay on a position for more than two mandates, and for God’s sake, at least for five years, use foreign experts to manage our system in cooperation with the young researcher with measurable results, and in five years, it’s enough to change the things; Romanian’s [then] become the manager of the system.”* These ideas demonstrate 10Romania’s keen awareness of the systematic issues in Romanian research management and he proposes bold, transformative solutions to address them.

In summary, these lived experiences and views of the seven participants reveal how regional and organisational policies deeply influence the roles of research managers and research support managers; factors like inadequate national infrastructure investment (building, technology, equipment), challenges in acquiring and retaining research talent, inconsistent salaries, and precarious contracts affect their professional identity, workload, opportunities, motivation, and job satisfaction in varied ways.

5.3 What are the essential interpretations of their experiences?

This section seeks to synthesise the lived professional experiences of the seven participants into three shared essential meanings:

- Self-efficacy
- Competence
- Fulfilment

These shared essential meanings are the result of unpacking the participants' collective experiences and appreciating that each carries equal significance. There are solid interrelationships among them, and the process of categorising the professional experiences from seven participants across seven European countries working in different research sectors was challenging due to the extent of the data collected. The meanings themselves are intricately linked and overlap in ideas but all three speak to the main research question: what does it mean to be a research manager or manager of a research support function?

Self-efficacy

Bandura (1986) as cited in Artino Jr. (2012) claims self-efficacy beliefs lie at the core of human functioning. Individuals need the necessary knowledge and skills to perform a task but also the belief in their ability to succeed, especially in challenging situations. Effective performance relies on both skills and self-efficacy beliefs, which develop together as individuals grow and learn (Artino Jr., 2012, p.77).

08Ireland expresses belief that her effectiveness in this position is measured by tangible results. She is committed to excellence and personal growth in their role, reflecting a results-oriented mindset combined with a dedication to continuous improvement.

“On being a research manager, to me, it’s nearly measured on success, you know it’s outcome, it’s what I’m doing successfully...what I want to do is to do it to the best of my ability”

Bandura hypothesised that self-efficacy affects an individual's choice of activities, effort, and persistence (Artino Jr., 2012, p.78).

12 Poland takes initiative rather than waiting for instructions from others. She can anticipate potential challenges and actively seeks solutions in advance. This approach suggests a strong sense of responsibility and leadership instead of being passive or reactive. She demonstrates self-efficacy, and persistence (Artino Jr., 2012, p.78). *“I think, I can see that I’m very proactive. I like trying to, you know, foresee somethings and try to figure out like solutions beforehand and like in the meetings, I don’t usually wait until it’s like someone tells me what to do, you know”*.

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory posits that individuals form beliefs about their capabilities based on four primary sources of information: a) enactive mastery experiences, b) observation of others, c) forms of persuasion, and d) physiological and affective states. Success in these experiences builds strong self-efficacy beliefs, while failures can undermine them.

02 Italy emphasises that her experience as a researcher enhances her skill set by providing them with direct, firsthand knowledge of the complexities and dynamics involved in academic research. Her lived experience is an example of Bandura’s enactive mastery experience. *“Having been a researcher myself, adds to those skills a first-hand knowledge of the dynamics of academic research, and this also forms part of my professional preparedness”*

Competence

Klieme & Leutner (2006) as cited in Glaesser (2018) describe competence as “a skill which may be conceived of as a disposition which enables a person to cope with particular situational demands. The disposition may not be directly observable, but actions resulting from its existence are” (Glaesser, 2018, p.71). Klieme & Hartig (2007) as cited in Glaesser (2018) suggest that use of the term competence in the social sciences has three independent origins: a) Weber’s sociology b) Chomsky’s linguistic theory, and what they both refer to as the c) ‘Functional-Pragmatic Tradition’.

Competence, according to Weber’s sense, meant legal responsibility with associated means of enforcement (competence as standards), whereas in both linguistics and psychology, competence is understood to mean ‘capability and readiness’ (p.73).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) categorises two broad areas of competence: a) general and b) communicative language. The general competences are (1) declarative knowledge (*savoir-être*); (2) skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*); (3) existential competence (*savoir-être*), and (4) ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*). The communicative language competences are (1) linguistic competences; (2) socio-linguistic competences, and (3) pragmatic competences (Glaesser, 2018, p.71)).

08Ireland shows how personal ambition is intricately linked to competence. It underscores the importance of striving for achievement while also fostering a culture where others are encouraged to pursue their professional goals, enhancing collective competence within the organisation. 08Ireland demonstrates knowhow, existential competence. *“You know, I’d like other people to have that professional ambition as well and you know, enjoy, the attainment and you know, the achievement as well you know, and so, I’m very ambitious”.*

12Poland encapsulates a pivotal moment of strategic insight that aligns organisational goals with funding opportunities, emphasising the importance of developing competencies that support growth and innovation in research practices. *“So, I said that like, if you want to apply for those grants then we have to go into translational research and that triggered discussions between our directors that started to see that’s true that if you want to continue growing, well, that’s the direction we have to go”.*

Question 5.3 asks for the essential interpretations of the participants’ lived professional experiences. The theme of competence reflects a key aspect of how researchers perceive and develop their professional identities within their roles. This aligns closely with the European Commission’s recent launch of the ResearchComp Framework, which provides a structured tool for assessing and developing researchers’ transferable skills to support career growth. By linking these shared meanings to ResearchComp, the framework offers a practical approach to enhancing the very competencies highlighted by the participants, fostering career development inside and beyond academic institutions.

Fulfilment

According to Maslow’s theory on hierarchy of needs, he says people are motivated to fulfil their needs in a hierarchical order (Level 1 representing the lowest need, and Level 5 being the highest): 1. Physiological 2. Safety 3. Love and belonging 4. Esteem needs, and 5. Self-

Actualisation. He believed that a person needed to completely satisfy one level to begin pursuing further levels; recent expanded theories suggest these levels overlap.

Maslow separates Level 4 - Esteem into two categories: the need for respect from others, and the need for respect from oneself. Respect from others relates to achieving fame, prestige, and recognition. Respect from oneself related to dignity, confidence, competence, independence, and freedom (CFI, 2022).

All seven participants shared a common sense of fulfilment in their roles as research managers and/or managers of research support functions. They bring significant value and a wealth of lived experiences to their current positions, enriched by their diverse backgrounds, which enhances their effectiveness in research management. This highlights themes of adaptability, shared experiences, and the critical role of prior knowledge in shaping their current responsibilities. Their sense of fulfilment stems from self-confidence, which was evident in their final remarks when the researcher asked them for any last comments or career advice for other aspiring research managers, their responses were: *“I love it, this is my life”*; *“I think it’s a great career path”*; *“I think it’s very worthwhile, it’s very mentally interesting and challenging environment to work in”*. These insights reflected a shared belief among participants that the profession of research management is a dynamic and rewarding career path, characterised by opportunities for personal growth, collaboration, and impactful contributions to the research community.

Recommendations

The researcher advocates for the incorporation of research management curricula into higher education postgraduate degrees across all disciplines to raise awareness of research management as a viable alternative career path for researchers. Brännvall, suggests, “one helpful step towards better recognition for RMAs would be to reposition how their contribution is funded. It should be treated as part of the grant, with RMAs, where relevant, made equal partners in projects rather than having their work hidden away in an overhead” (Brännvall, 2023). Lastly, the researcher encourages national research performing organisations to establish frameworks for implementing emerging ERA policy actions, such as the *European Competence Framework for Researchers*, to enhance education and training for research managers and other research support professionals.

In early 2024, Deloitte reported that U.S. research administration has reached an inflection point and is on the verge of "large-scale disruption due to a technological shift." They indicate that research administration is evolving through this innovative technical transformation, identifying eight dimensions of change that will define the future of research administration. These dimensions include *technology*, *the future of work*, *data*, *globalisation of research*, *the faculty of the future*, *agile organisations*, *the pursuit of R1 status* (a classification by US Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Higher Education characterised by extremely high research activity and output, significant research funding, awarded minimum 70 PhDs annually, and substantial research staff, particularly in science and engineering fields), and *research commercialisation* (Steil & Swan, 2024). Given that the U.S. significantly influences research and innovation in the EU, this prediction serves as a timely prompt for EU research managers and institutional leaders to prepare in terms of building knowledge, skills and competences for these upcoming challenges.

Summary

To recap, Chapter 5 discussed the findings that linked the participants' lived experiences to the concepts of professional preparedness and identity within relevant theoretical frameworks. It explored how these concepts help explain the development and negotiation of professional identity among research managers. By grounding the discussion in theory, the chapter provided a deeper understanding of how individuals construct and enact their professional selves. This approach highlights the interplay between personal agency and organisational influences in shaping professional identity. The findings were explored and discussed in the form of *becoming* and *being* a research manager and/or manager of research support function, and the essential interpretations of those professional experiences in relation to philosophical, psychological and sociological ideas, as well as the broader European Commission, Research & Innovation, and European Research Area policy actions. The next section will recap on the research study and reflect on the researcher's experiential learning.

Conclusion

In summary, Chapter One provided the rationale for the research study, established the context of research management and administration, formulated the research question (and sub-questions), and outlined the theoretical and philosophical framework guiding the study.

Chapter Two reviewed the literature in the field of Research Management and Administration (RMA). It took a historical perspective on the factors that have influenced the evolution of RMA in Europe and highlighted its development alongside the advancement of the EU. The central section of the chapter examined EU policies and actions from the European Research Area (ERA) that support the professionalisation of research management, as well as the extensive RMA network both within the EU and internationally. The final part of Chapter Two focussed on the research manager as a professional, exploring the elements that constitute their "lifeworld", the role of research support offices, and the concept of the professional self, along with the factors that shape professional identity.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology—Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Traditionally employed in psychology, IPA is increasingly being applied in other disciplines, including education, medicine, business, and other social sciences. The central section detailed the design of the IPA study, the data collection instruments used, and the implementation of specific IPA processes that led to data analysis. Interpretation was central to the analytical process that required a particular focus on understanding the participants point of view and how they made sense of their experiences. It was important to maintain an idiographic and inductive approach so that the data for each participant was analysed on their own terms. Interpretation was central to the analytical process, necessitating a specific focus on understanding the participants' perspectives and how they made sense of their experiences. It was essential to adopt an idiographic and inductive approach, ensuring that the data for each participant was analysed according to their unique context (Smith and Nizza, 2022). Experiential statements were identified, forming the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). The final section of this chapter addressed the validity and reliability of the data collection methods and analysed how these factors contributed to establishing the research findings.

Chapter Four presented the results in various formats, including tabulations and PowerPoint slides that served as personal narratives or case studies of the participants' lived experiences from Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Romania. This represented the first critical point in the IPA process, where the researcher utilised Heidegger's hermeneutic circle—an iterative sense-making approach. The researcher integrated participants' quotations with their own storytelling and interpretative skills. Together, the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and personal narratives enabled the tabulation of the Group Experiential Themes (GETs) and subthemes.

Chapter Five presented the discussion by integrating various data analytic outputs, including transcripts, interview guide responses, Personal Experiential Themes (PETs), personal narratives, tables, and Group Experiential Themes (GETs). This synthesis of information formed a cohesive discussion about the significance of the results, ultimately narrowing the reader's focus to the essential meanings of the participants' lived experiences and providing insights into what it means to be a research manager – being a research manager means having self-efficacy—the confidence in your ability to lead projects and teams—along with the competence required to navigate complex research environments. It involves finding fulfilment in your work, which drives motivation and commitment to advancing research goals.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy to recognise that the profession of research management is still in its early developmental stages in Europe. With the introduction of new EU ERA measures, the profession is set to grow and adapt alongside its professionals—research managers and managers of research support functions—in response to the continually evolving research landscape.

Reflection on experiential learning experience

Brozak (1981) quoted in Brookfield (1983) as cited in Smith (2001, 2010) writes Kolb's 'Experiential Learning Cycle' refers to the type of learning experienced by students who actively engage in acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and emotions in relevant contexts. "Experiential learning thus involves a 'direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something about it' " (Smith, 2001, 2010). According to Houle (1980), as cited in Smith (2001, 2010) another form of experiential learning is defined as "education that occurs through direct participation in life events." The researcher focuses on experiential learning that involves direct encounters with the phenomena being studied and interprets these learning experiences as first-person accounts of *meaning-making*. Kolb's experiential learning is based on four elements: concrete experience (*doing/having the experience*), reflective observation (*reviewing/reflecting on the experience*), abstract conceptualisation (*concluding/learning from the experience*), and lastly, active experimentation (*planning/trying out what you have learned*).

The starting point of this experience is surprisingly my end point for reflection. The choice of topic and motivation for this study emerged from two experiences; my professional experience of working in the central research support office at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland, and concomitantly my postgraduate learning experience during the M.Ed. in *Critical Perspectives on Education* programme at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Ireland. The M.Ed. modules included educational philosophy, educational psychology, history and historiography of education, sociology, academic literacy and research methods. Practice and theory converged into a research area of interest, namely research management and administration.

In terms of Kolb's concrete experience, I focussed on the experiential learning that involved the direct encounter with *Interpretative phenomenology Analysis (IPA)*, the qualitative methodology used in this piece of research for data collection and analysis. My theoretical interest in phenomenology and hermeneutics stemmed from lectures delivered by Dr Aidan Seery at TCD. The lectures on the 'self' and 'identity formation through education' deeply resonated with my experiences. Additionally, the introduction to the philosopher Martin Heidegger, particularly through his exploration of identity and thinking in his works

Identity and Difference and *What is Called Thinking?* influenced my decision-making to use IPA.

Reflecting on my experience using IPA as a qualitative methodology, I found it challenging due to my novice status and the complexity inherent in the approach. I encountered several difficulties: first, differentiating between interpretative phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis required significant critical thinking. Second, during research design, I successfully recruited 16 participants for one-to-one interviews, but this number proved too large for in-depth analysis, especially since the recommended sample size for a master's study is around five. Lastly, conveying the meaning and value of the IPA methodology to others, along with managing the unexpected intensity and effort needed for data analysis, interpretation, and discussion, were demanding aspects of the process.

These experiences formed the basis for abstract conceptualisation, guiding the development of strategies to overcome the challenges I encountered with IPA:

- I learned to clearly distinguish between interpretative phenomenology and IPA and organised relevant literature and notes electronically for future reference.
- I recognised the value of adhering to expert recommendations, such as limiting the sample size to five cases for a master's study, as detailed in the book entitled: *Essentials of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*.
- To enhance my understanding and communication of IPA, I plan to prepare a PowerPoint presentation for colleagues., I am more confident in discussing IPA than I was during the earlier stages of the study.
- I aim to explore qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), focusing on tools suited for phenomenological research to improve my digital proficiency in IPA data collection and analysis.

I believe I have learned how to conduct research using IPA as a qualitative methodology, and I feel confident that I could repeat the process with greater ease in the future. I see potential opportunities to apply and experiment with these new skills across many facets of my professional career.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Guide

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A RESEARCH MANAGER

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Part 1. Interviewee Profile

Research Sector	
Country	
Contract Type	
Salary Range	

Part 2. Five Sections

Section 1. Understanding Context language.

- From your perspective, how would you define “Research” in the context of your sector?
- In your own words, how would you define “Research Management” in the context of your sector?
- Describe your role as a “Researcher Manager” or “Manager of Research Support Function”

Section 2. Professional Preparedness

- In context of your role, what does ‘Professional preparedness’ mean to you?
- List your two most recent job titles?
- List three most recent professional and personal training and development courses that you have completed.
- Knowledge, skills, and competencies - in your opinion, what are the most important characteristics in being an effective Research Manager or Manager of Research Support functions?
- How were you recruited for your role? *(Please do not write an answer, let’s talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*
- Can you describe a scenario where you felt your professional preparedness helped you fix a problem or innovation/create something new? For example, a systems/process problem, staff conflict, senior management conflict, a policy issue, or other. *(Please do not write an answer, let’s talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*
- In contrast, can you describe a scenario where you lacked professional preparedness and wished you were better prepared to fix a problem or innovation/create something new? For example, a systems/process problem, staff conflict, senior management conflict, a policy issue, or other. *(Please do not write an answer, let’s talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*

Section 3. Professional Identity

- From your experience, what are the most important professional identity characteristics in your role as a research manager or manager of a research support function?
- From your experience, what factors influence professional identity development?
- Do you feel a valued member in your organisation? Does your organisation recognise

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Interview Guide

you as a specific professional figure? How does your organisation recognise and reward you? How to you recognise and reward your team (if relevant) for their contributions to the success of the team/unit organisation? *(Please do not write an answer, let's talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*

- How would you describe your management philosophy? *(Please do not write an answer, let's talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*

Section 4. Organisational (Research) Strategy

- Are you aware of your organisation (research) strategic plan? (If yes, provide weblinks.)
- Are you aware of your National (research) strategy plans relevant to the research sector? (If yes, provide weblinks.)
- From your lived experiences as a Research Manager or Manager of Research Support functions, what national policies would you introduce that would have a positive impact on your profession, organisation, research sector un your country, if you had the opportunity to meet a policy maker?
- How would you describe your organisational culture?
- Does your organisation have a human resource manager/management team dedicated to research and research support staff matters in your organisation?
- How does power, politics, and conflict impact on you and your role in your organisation? *(Please do not write an answer, let's talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*
- How do you support your organisation's strategic plan and priorities? *(Please do not write an answer, let's talk during the interview about your reflections/experiences.)*

Section 5. European Commission (EC), and the European Research Area (ERA).

- Are you aware of Regional/European(research) strategies/policies relevant to your research sector? (If yes, provide weblinks.)
- In what way, does the European Commission (&ERA) impact your organisation, and your profession?
- Are you or your organisation a member of a European network for Research Manager or Manager of Research Support functions?
- To what extent do you keep up to date with policies from the European Commission and European Research Area?
- From your lived experiences as a Research Manager or Manager of Research Support functions, what European policies would you introduce that would have a positive impact on your profession, organisation, research sector un your country, if you had the opportunity to meet a (EU) policy maker?

Appendix B.

European Commission CORDIS EU Funding & Tenders Portal

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Horizon Dashboard\Country Profiles

Appendix E. (1) Horizon Dashboard\Country Profile\Sheet 1\Key R&I Figures\All Framework Programmes (1984-Current)

Member State Country	Net EU ¹ Contribution	Signed ² Grants	Part. ³	Unique ⁴ Part.	Success Rate ⁵	Eligible ⁶ Proposals	Applications ⁷	ERC ⁸ Principal Investigators	Net EU ⁹ Contribution to ERC PIs	ERC ¹⁰ Part.	MSCA ¹¹ Part.	MSCA ¹² Unique Part.
Belgium¹³	9,12B (4.97% of All)	20,580 (16.24% of All)	31,078 (4.54% of All)	2,968 (4.06% of All)	22.37% (19.54% of average)	54,352 (10.07% of All)	79,039 (4.05% of total)	734 (4.27% of All)	975,7M (3.87% of All)	232 (3.22% of All)	2,248 (3.48% of All)	428 (3.44% of All)
Croatia¹⁴	346,1M (0.19% of All)	1,348 (1.18% of All)	1,862 (0.30% of All)	453 (0.62% of All)	15.29% (11.96% of Average)	6,971 (1.32% of All)	9,302 (0.43% of All)	9 (0.05% of All)	10,87M (0.04% of All)	9 (0.12% of All)	145 (0.22% of All)	64 (0.51% of All)

¹ Funding received by the project participants after deduction of their linked third parties.² Number of grant agreements signed, including "suspended", "terminated" and "closed" grant agreements.³ Number of organisations involved in EU R&I programmes. The act of involvement of a legal entity in a grant application. A single participant can be involved in N grant agreements and therefore being counted as N participants.⁴ Number of unique organisations involved in EU R&I programmes. One organisation participating in N projects is counted 1 time.⁵ Ratio of the retained applications to the total number of eligible proposals received. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, the success rate of an organisation is not displayed in the dashboard. Instead, you will see the success rate of the region where the organisation is located.⁶ Proposals that have not failed at the eligibility or admissibility step of the evaluation, that have not been withdrawn, that are not duplicates nor not fully evaluated yet.⁷ Number of organisations applying for EU R&I programmes grants. One organisation applying in N proposals is counted N times.⁸ Number of European Research Council (ERC) principal investigators involved in host organisations from the selected country. Principal investigators are researchers applying for an ERC grant.⁹ Funding granted to ERC principal investigators through the host organisations where they are involved.¹⁰ Participation of a legal entity in a grant agreement selected from the European Innovation Council specific calls for proposals.¹¹ Number of organisations involved in EU R&I programmes projects financed under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. One organisation participating in N projects is counted N times.¹² Number of district organisations involved in EU R&I programmes projects financed under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. One organisation participating in N projects is only counted once.¹³ Belgium, EU Member State since 1957.¹⁴ Croatia, EU Member since 2013.

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Horizon Dashboard/Country Profiles

Greece¹⁵	5,12B (2.79% of All)	14,255 (11.25% of All)	23,290 (3.40% of All)	1,847 (2.53% of All)	15.90% (12.64% Average)	43,182 (8.00% of All)	74,595 (3.76% of All)	105 (0.61% of All)	136,5M (0.54% of All)	94 (1.30% of All)	1,220 (1.89% of All)	245 (1.97% of All)
Ireland¹⁶	2,99B (1.63% of All)	8,614 (6.80% of All)	11,264 (1.64% of All)	1,169 (1.60% of All)	17.93% (14.98% Average)	25,211 (4.67% of All)	33,659 (1.70% of All)	228 (1.33% of All)	331,9M (1.32% of All)	175 (2.43% of All)	1,331 (2.06% of All)	254 (2.04% of All)
Italy¹⁷	15,58B (8.50% of All)	33,338 (26.31% of All)	64,353 (9.40% of All)	6,523 (8.93% of All)	15.72% (10.97% Average)	115,547 (21.40% of All)	209,495 (10.47% of All)	1,075 (6.26% of All)	1,36B (5.40% of All)	729 (10.12% of All)	5,166 (7.99% of All)	994 (7.98% of All)
Poland¹⁸	2B (1.09% of All)	7,276 (6.09% of All)	9,946 (1.51% of All)	1,629 (2.23% of All)	16.28% (12.18% Average)	28,214 (5.30% of All)	37,007 (1.81% of All)	82 (0.48% of All)	108,3M (0.43% of All)	100 (1.39% of All)	892 (1.38% of All)	262 (2.10% of All)
Romania¹⁹	779,9M (0.43% of All)	3,398 (2.84% of All)	4,773 (0.73% of All)	1,008 (1.38% of All)	14.58% (1.38% Average)	16,117 (3.02% of All)	22,338 (1.05% of All)	17 (0.10% of All)	21,84M (0.09% of All)	27 (0.37% of All)	317 (0.49% of All)	113 (0.91% of All)

Note. Part is an abbreviation for Participation.

¹⁵ Greece, EU Member State since 1981.

¹⁶ Ireland, EU Member State since 1973.

¹⁷ Italy, EU Member State since 1957.

¹⁸ Poland, EU Member State since 2004.

¹⁹ Romania, EU Member State since 2007.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A RESEARCH MANAGER

Horizon Dashboard/Country Profiles

Appendix E. (2) Horizon Dashboard\Country Profile\Sheet 1\Key R&I Figures\Horizon 2020 (FP8)

Member State Country	Net EU Contribution	Signed Grants	Part.	Unique Part.	Success Rate	Eligible Proposals	Applications	ERC Principal Investigators	Net EU Contribution to ERC PIs	EIC Part.	MSCA Part.	MSCA Unique Part.
Belgium	3,39B (4.97% H2020)	5,060 (14.28% H2020)	8,484 (4.73% H2020)	1,776 (4.24% H2020)	18.98% (16.12% Average)	27,413 (9.67% H2020)	40,167 (4.01% H2020)	289 (3.70% H2020)	443.7M (3.69% H2020)	110 (2.54% H2020)	1,142 (3.45% H2020)	282 (3.26% H2020)
Croatia	137.7M (0.20% H2020)	585 (1.65% H2020)	824 (0.46% H2020)	269 (0.64% H2020)	13.55 (9.12% Average)	3,697 (1.30% H2020)	4,843 (0.48% H2020)	4 (0.05% H2020)	5.04M (0.04% H2020)	2 (0.05% H2020)	73 (0.22% H2020)	46 (0.53% H2020)
Greece	1,73B (2.53% H2020)	2,904 (8.20% H2020)	5,534 (3.09% H2020)	1,019 (2.43% H2020)	13.94% (9.77% Average)	20,054 (7.07% H2020)	34,609 (3.45% H2020)	39 (0.50% H2020)	43.37M (0.36% H2020)	46 (1.06% H2020)	594 (1.80% H2020)	183 (2.11% H2020)
Ireland	1,2B (1.76% H2020)	2,162 (6.10% H2020)	2,977 (1.66% H2020)	655 (1.56% H2020)	14.84% (11.02% Average)	13,296 (4.69% H2020)	17,848 (1.78% H2020)	112 (1.43% H2020)	168.8M (1.40% H2020)	106 (2.45% H2020)	666 (2.01% H2020)	149 (1.72% H2020)
Italy	5,71B (8.36% H2020)	7,903 (22.31% H2020)	17,301 (9.65% H2020)	4,002 (9.56% H2020)	13.02% (8.68% Average)	62,023 (21.88% H2020)	109,415 (10.92% H2020)	467 (5.98% H2020)	611.6M (5.08% H2020)	434 (10.01% H2020)	2,702 (8.17% H2020)	679 (7.84% H2020)
Poland	743.8M (1.09% H2020)	1,961 (5.54% H2020)	2,874 (1.60% H2020)	898 (2.14% H2020)	13.67% (9.90% Average)	13,939 (4.92% H2020)	18,214 (1.82% H2020)	28 (0.36% H2020)	36.4M (0.30% H2020)	53 (1.22% H2020)	440 (1.33% H2020)	176 (2.03% H2020)
Romania	300.2M (0.44% H2020)	1,058 (2.99% H2020)	1,623 (0.91% H2020)	540 (1.29% H2020)	13.05% (10.32% Average)	7,656 (2.70% H2020)	10,636 (1.06% H2020)	12 (0.15% H2020)	12.67M (0.11% H2020)	17 (0.39% H2020)	172 (0.52% H2020)	78 (0.90% H2020)

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Horizon Dashboard/Country Profiles

Appendix E. (3) Horizon Dashboard\Country Profile\Sheet 5\R& D Landscape\Innovation Performance\Horizon 2020 (FP8)

Member State Country	R&I ²⁰ Intensity	R&I ²¹ Intensity Ranking	Private ²² R&I Intensity	DESI ²³	Ease of Doing Business Rank ²⁴	Researchers Ratio ²⁵	Patent Applications Rate ²⁶	Top Cited Publications Rate ²⁷	Knowledge- Intensity ²⁸ Employment
Belgium	3.2% (2.3% EU Average)	2nd out of 28 among EU	1.8% (0.8% Public)	12.58 (17 th out of 28 among EU)	45th out of 190	6.569 (4 th out of 28 among EU)	2,4 (3.3 EU Average)	12.1% (11.1% EU Average)	38.6% (36.5% EU Average)
Croatia	1.2% (2.3% EU Average)	19th out of 28 among EU	0.4% (0.4% Public)	11.89 (22 nd out of 28 among EU)	58th out of 190	2.462 (23 rd out of 28 among EU)	1,8 (3.3 EU Average)	3.4% (11.1% EU Average)	31.6% (36.5% EU Average)
Greece	1.5% (2.3% EU Average)	16th out of 28 among EU	0.6% (0.6% Public)	9.73 (26 th out of 28 among EU)	72nd out of 190	4.237 (16 th out of 28 among EU)	2,1 (3.3 EU Average)	8.6% (11.1 EU Average)	28.8% (36.5% EU Average)

²⁰ Total intramural R&D expenditure (GERD) as percentage of GDP.²¹ Ibid²² Total intramural R&D expenditure (GERD) as percentage of GDP between Private (Business Enterprise) and Public (Government & Higher Education Expenditure on R&D).²³ The Digital Economy and Society Overall Index is a composite index on country digital performance.²⁴ World Bank index ranking the country on the ease of doing business.²⁵ Number and ranking of a country based on the number of researchers per million of population.²⁶ Patent applications per billion GDP in current Purchasing Power Standards (PPS in Euro).²⁷ Percentage of scientific publications within the 10% most cited scientific publications worldwide.²⁸ Percentage of employment in Knowledge Intensive Activities.

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Horizon Dashboard/Country Profiles

Ireland	1.1% (2.3% EU Average)	21st out of 28 among EU	0.7% (0.3% Public)	15.65 (5 th out of 28 among EU)	23rd out of 190	4.544 (14 th out of 28 among EU)	0.9 (3.3 EU Average)	11.4% (11.1% EU Average)	42.2% (36.5% EU Average)
Italy	1.5% (2.3% EU Average)	15th out of 28 among EU	0.8% (0.5% Public)	12.31 (19 th out of 28 among EU)	51st out of 190	2.926 (22 nd out of 28 among EU)	2.5 (3.3 EU Average)	10.8% (11.1% EU Average)	37.8% (36.5% EU Average)
Poland	1.4% (2.3% EU Average)	17th out of 28 among EU	0.7% (0.4% Public)	10.14 (25 th out of 28 among EU)	33rd out of 190	3.603 (19 th out of 28 among EU)	1.5 (3.3 EU Average)	4.3% (11.1% EU Average)	31.8% (36.5% EU Average)
Romania	0.5% (2.3% EU Average)	28th out of 28 among EU	0.3% (0.2% Public)	7.65 (28 th out of 28 among EU)	52nd out of 190	1.004 (28 th out of 28 among EU)	1.0 (3.3 EU Average)	4.9% (11.1% EU Average)	26.5% (36.5% EU Average)

