(Proposed) European Charter for Research Managers

The European Charter for Research Managers is a set of principles designed to establish and promote the development of professional and rewarding careers in research management, thereby supporting excellence in research and innovation across the European Research Area (ERA). This charter aligns with existing frameworks, namely the European Charter for Researchers, but it explicitly focuses on the rights and responsibilities of research managers (RM), employers, funders, and policymakers. It consists of 26 key principles.

Basic Principle: RMs play a crucial role in supporting the performance and impact of research activities across institutions. This charter establishes principles and guidelines to enhance research management through recognition, development, and effectiveness as a critical professional role within the ERA, in direct correlation with the researchers' role. The RM Charter is a text of reference to reinforce the activity of RMs in research organisations and companies to support and improve research performance. The best research necessarily requires the best support, which means excellent RMs, in a common framework following the continuously evolving research context.

Purpose and Scope of the Charter: This charter provides a framework to support and promote the visibility of RMs' positive role within the European research ecosystem. It aims to outline RMs' rights, responsibilities, and professional development opportunities while also detailing the responsibilities of employers, funders, and policymakers in fostering a collaborative, innovative, and effective research environment. This charter is necessary to increase the capacity for professional excellence in research management and to improve the overall ERA.

Definition of RMs:

It is important to define what the term RM means. RM is an umbrella term "which encompasses a wide range of research management roles and specialisations at the "interface of research"[1] under a single classification. It groups together multiple research management

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[1] Margarida Trindade - Head of ITQB NOVA Science Funding Office

roles/activities and specialised subject matter experts who share common role objectives and competencies within public and private sector research-performing organisations.

This is our definition: "***Research managers enable, facilitate and support the performance of research in all its applications. Research Managers hold generalist or specialized roles within the research and innovation ecosystem.***"

Based on the policy contexts, the results of recent investigations, and a Europe-wide co-creation in the frame of ERA Action 17 and RM Roadmap, we initiate an inclusive and flexible approach enabling the reflection of emerging fields and job profiles when defining Research Management. Thus, RMs can work as research policy advisers, pre-award and post-award officers, project managers, impact managers, science communicators, financial managers and advisors, legal advisors, contract and compliance managers, data stewards, open science officers, research infrastructure managers and operators, equality, diversity and inclusion advisors, research ethics advisors, knowledge and technology transfer officers, innovation managers and business developers, knowledge brokers, human resource managers in research, AI experts, and leaders of research support offices, etc.

Importance of Research Management in the Research Ecosystem: Research management is vital to the sustainability and growth of the European research ecosystem. Effective RMs ensure that research is conducted efficiently within known and explicitly assumed ethical boundariesand in line with strategic objectives. They support researchers in navigating complex administrative, financial, and regulatory landscapes, enhancing the overall quality and impact of research outcomes.

The European Charter for RMs consists of key principles grouped under the following six pillars:

(a) **Ethics, Integrity, and Professional Standards**

(b) **Rights, Responsibilities, and Accountability**

(c) **Professional Development and Career Progression**

(d) **Collaboration, Networking, and Mobility**

(e) **Working Conditions and Work-Life Balance**

(f) **Recruitment and Recognition**

The Charter for RMs is directed at all RMs, research performing/management sectors, and their respective umbrella organisations (stakeholders). This includes:

a) **RMs in all sectors** – academia, public, and private organisations performing /conducting/ research activities;
b) **Employers of RMs** in the public and private sectors;
c) **Research and RM funding entities** in the public and private sectors.
d) **Policymakers** concerned with policies relevant to the Charter for RMs.

In line with the Charter for Researchers, it comprises RMs across all disciplines, including Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). It covers all types of research, from frontier to targeted, strategic, applied, and close to market.

Pillar 1: Ethics, Integrity, and Professional Standards

> **1. Professionalism and Integrity**
> **2. Upholding Ethical Standards**
> **3. Conflict of Interest**
> **4. Compliance with Regulations**
> **5. Gender, Equality and Diversity**

This pillar encompasses the core principles of the Charter for RMs and the commitment to advancing the highest ethical standards and integrity in research and inclusive research environments. In this context, it focuses on developing the best possible research management practices, creating teams and projects free from gender bias and other forms of discrimination, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering an inclusive culture. The principles under this pillar are designed to build a solid foundation for a vibrant ERA, inspiring RMs, employers, funders, and policymakers to uphold the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and fairness. Given the cross-cutting nature of these values, they are intended to be integrated and upheld throughout all other principles of the Charter, ensuring they are reflected in every aspect of research management practices.

1. Professionalism and Integrity

RMs are tasked with a demanding role that requires them to apply advanced analytical techniques, compliance, and ethical considerations to all research activities. They are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, nurturing a culture of transparency and accountability across all aspects of their roles.

2. Upholding Ethical Standards

RMs are responsible for upholding the highest ethical standards and promoting fairness, integrity, and respect for all parties involved in the research process. This consists of managing and disclosing conflicts of interest, navigating complex research environments, and ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines, professional codes and institutional policies.

3. Conflict of Interest

RMs should develop and implement strategies for identifying, managing, and disclosing conflicts of interest, ensuring impartiality and fairness in all decisions and actions. This includes understanding the legal implications and maintaining a transparent conflict resolution process. RMs need to ensure impartiality and fairness. All stakeholders need to define and manage potential conflicts of interest.

4. Compliance with Regulations

RMs must be proficient in applying relevant national and international laws and regulations. They should also promote adherence to these regulations within their teams, leveraging their legal skills to ensure all research activities meet compliance standards. All stakeholders should strive to ensure professional, research and academic integrity with the largest associated coverage for their terms of reference.

5. Open Science

RMs should support the Open Science principles by promoting transparency, accessibility, and reproducibility in research management practices. This includes encouraging open access to publications, FAIR data principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable), and fostering an open collaboration culture within their institutions, to the highest possible extent in the local research context

6. Gender Equality and Diversity

RMs, employers, and funders are jointly responsible for fostering gender equality and diversity. This includes implementing inclusive recruitment and promotion practices, ensuring gender balance in decision-making, and integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of research management. They must combat gender-based discrimination and harassment through clear policies, training, and accountability while creating a welcoming and equitable workplace for all.

Pillar 2: Rights, Responsibilities, and Accountability

7. Rights Of RMs **8. Responsibilities of RMs** **9. Clear Definition of roles and Responsibilities** **10. Accountability and Transparent Decision-Making** **11. Freedom to Innovate** **12. Support for Mobility**

This pillar establishes RMs' essential rights and responsibilities, emphasising their role in fostering an inclusive, supportive, and innovative research environment. It underlines the need for a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, transparent decision-making, and freedom to innovate. These principles aim to empower RMs by ensuring they have the necessary support and resources to lead their teams and contribute to the research ecosystem effectively. Given their fundamental importance, these principles are expected to guide the development and implementation of all other aspects of research management.

7. Rights of Research Managers

Supportive and Inclusive Work Environment: RMs have the right to a work environment that is inclusive, supportive, and free from discrimination. This includes being involved in decision-

making processes and accessing mental and physical well-being programs (e.g., policies on diversity and inclusion, mental health support, opportunities for cross-functional collaboration).

Raising Awareness and Valuing the Role of RMs: Employers, funders, and policymakers should actively raise awareness about RMs' critical role in supporting research excellence and innovation. They should promote the value of research management through internal and external communication channels, recognising their strategic contributions in planning, compliance, funding acquisition, project execution, and stakeholder engagement. Employers should develop and maintain a supportive research environment and a working culture where all the actors involved in the research cycle (researchers R1 to R4, senior and junior research managers) are valued, encouraged and supported. This also implies that employers should recognise the role of research managers (other than that of the rest of the administrative and technical staff) and valorise them regarding career recognition and valorisation. Employers should also take adequate measures to raise awareness among the research community and stakeholders of the role and added value that RM can give to the institution and its local ecosystem and foster collaboration between researchers and researcher managers.

Access to Professional Development: RMs should have opportunities for continuous professional development, including training in specialised areas such as data management, research ethics, and AI for research. The European Charter for Researchers states that researchers should have access to continuous professional development, lifelong learning, and career progression pathways; RMs should have the same provisions in their professional development.

Provision of Adequate Resources and Support: Employers and funders are encouraged to provide employees with adequate resources and support tools to perform their roles effectively. This includes access to appropriate technology, including communication technology, sufficient staffing levels, training budgets, professional development opportunities, and dedicated funding from well-defined channels, not overlapping/impacting the research funding.

8. Responsibilities of Research Managers

Promotion of a Culture of Excellence and Innovation: RMs are responsible for nurturing a culture of excellence and innovation, supporting themselves as individuals and their teams in developing competencies across diverse areas such as research project management, community engagement, and strategic planning. Employers and funders should provide the resources, support, and infrastructure necessary to enable innovation, including access to training, development opportunities, and a collaborative environment that encourages creativity and strategic thinking. They should create an ecosystem where innovative practices are recognised, rewarded, and continuously cultivated to enable RM excellence.

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9. Clear Definition of roles and Responsibilities

RMs, employers, and funders are jointly responsible for defining roles and responsibilities and implementing these standards. Frameworks like the CARDEA Framework Profile for RMs and RM Comp can be used to define roles clearly and ensure transparency in decision-making processes.

As with the European Framework for Research Careers[2] in the CARDEA Framework Profile for RMs, there are four broad profiles for RMs, which are independent of any particular sector with the following working titles:

First Stage Research Manager (RM 1)

The term First-Stage RM refers to RMs in the first two years (full-time equivalent) of their research management activity, often interwoven with intricated research tasks, who demonstrate the competencies and skills for successful performance in the role. The role requires a basic understanding of the research/business structures and operations and includes responsibility for implementing and achieving results.

Recognised Research Manager (RM 2)

The term Recognised Research Manager refers to RMs with an intermediate level of experience in their research management activity whilst demonstrating competencies and skills for the successful performance in the role. The role requires a moderate understanding of overall research/business operations including responsibility for monitoring the implementation of research strategy. This has limited or informal responsibility for colleagues and / or needs to consider broader approaches or consequences through own actions rather than through others.

Established Research Manager (RM 3)

The term Established RM refers to RMs with an advanced level of experience in their research management activity whilst demonstrating competencies and skills for the successful performance in the role. The role requires a strong understanding of the organisation's environment, operational plans, current strategic position and direction with strong analytical skills and the ability to advise on strategic options for the research/business. This includes formal responsibility for colleagues, institutional partners in and their actions; and that their decisions have a wider impact.

Senior Research Manager (RM 4)

The term Senior Research Manager refers to RMs with an expert level of experience in their research management activity whilst demonstrating the competencies and skills for successful performance in the role. The role requires expert knowledge to develop strategic vision and provide unique insight to the overall direction and success of the research/organisation. This

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[2] Towards a European Framework for Research Careers
towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf (europa.eu)

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is formal responsibility for research/business areas and his / her actions and decisions have a high-level strategic impact.

For the purposes of the Framework, RM 1 and RM 2 profiles should be considered early to mid-stage RMs and RM 3 and RM 4 profiles should be considered leadership level RMs.

The RM Comp Framework identifies eight core competency areas critical to research management: Cognitive Abilities/Transversal Skills, Technical Proficiency, Subject Matter Expertise, Research Project Oversight/Management, Community Engagement, Line Management and Talent Development, Communication, and Relationship Management. Each competency area includes specific skills required for effective performance in research management roles.

As this conceptual model is in line with other competence frameworks developed by the European Commission, particularly [Research Comp,](#) it follows a similar structure, including four levels of proficiency for each of the 53 competences that specify where RMs can position themselves and what is required to progress to the next level:

- **Foundational**: developing expertise with guidance;
- **Intermediate**: building independence;
- **Advanced**: taking responsibility and guiding others;
- **Expert**: driving transformation, innovation and growth.

Develop Professional Development Pathways*:* This pathway provides a pathway for RMs to progress through various levels of proficiency, from foundational to expert. This should include development opportunities such as targeted training, mentorship, job shadowing, and peer-to-peer learning to enhance competencies in specific areas.

Support Performance Management and Evaluation: Establish clear criteria for assessing the performance of RMs at each proficiency level. Learning outcomes are provided for each competency, which can be used to set goals, measure progress, and identify areas for further development.

For example, based on RM Comp:

> ***Cognitive Abilities/Transversal Skills:*** *Assess creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.*
>
> ***Technical Proficiency****: Evaluate skills in data management, legal and regulatory field-related knowledge, and IT for research activities.*
>
> ***Line Management and Talent Development:*** *Measure effectiveness in team performance, change management, and coaching skills.*

Facilitate Cross-Organisational Mobility: Employers and funders should follow the framework, which facilitates the mobility of RMs across institutions, sectors, and countries by offering a standardised competency framework. The framework encourages a common language for describing skills and competencies, making it easier for RMs to transition between roles and organisations.

Encourage Continuous Learning and Adaptation: Encourage RMs to engage in continuous professional development. It includes a progression model that outlines specific learning outcomes and competencies for each level, enabling managers to self-assess and plan their growth. This model supports vertical progression (advancing to a higher level) and horizontal mobility (specialising in a different area of research management).

Promote Recognition of Diverse Career Paths: The framework acknowledges that career progression in research management is not linear. It allows for specialisation in multiple areas, recognising diverse career trajectories, such as moving from post-award management to impact assessment or technology transfer to strategic policy development. This flexibility ensures that RMs are recognised for their unique skills and contributions. Moreover, their career might also include one or more research trajectories.

10. Accountability and Transparent Decision-Making

RMs must establish clear and transparent decision-making processes, maintain accountability, and ensure that all actions are justifiable and open to scrutiny. Employers and funders are responsible for creating an environment that supports accountability and transparency in research management. They should provide frameworks, tools, and resources that enable RMs to make informed decisions and regularly monitor and evaluate these processes. Employers and funders should also promote open communication channels, encourage ethical conduct, and establish systems that facilitate oversight and accountability at all levels.

11. Freedom to Innovate

RMs should have the freedom to innovate in their management practices to enhance the effectiveness and impact of research projects. They should be empowered to implement new methodologies, tools, and frameworks that best support the research teams they manage. Employers and funders are responsible for creating an environment that encourages innovation in research management. This includes providing the necessary resources, flexibility, and support for RMs to experiment with novel approaches and adopt innovative practices. Employers and funders should recognise and reward innovative and effective management practices, promote a culture that values creativity, and remove barriers that may hinder the implementation of creative ideas.

12. Support for Mobility

RMs, employers, funders, and policymakers should encourage geographical, disciplinary, inter-sectoral, and inter-organisational mobility for RMs. The institutional environment of RMs

should provide opportunities for mobility or exchanges for short periods to allow discussion, training and networking to upskill their competencies. RMs need to connect and network with external colleagues and researchers of institutions and industries to create and maintain channels to learn, upskill and support in an environment of open science and innovation, with an *inter-pares* approach.

Promote mobility programs and exchanges to enhance professional development and exchange best practices across Europe. Employers and funders should encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among RMs within and across institutions to foster innovation and best practices.

This can include:

- **Mobility Programs**: Supporting mobility programs that enable RMs to work across different institutions, sectors, or countries. Such programs could be short-term secondments, exchanges, or fellowships promoting knowledge and skills transfer.

- **Networking Opportunities**: Facilitating participation in professional networks, conferences, and forums where RMs can share experiences, learn from peers, and build valuable connections.

- **Cross-Institutional Collaborations**: Encouraging and funding cross-institutional collaborations, joint projects, and research management initiatives to promote knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving.

- **Building partnerships** with other institutions and industries

- Participation **in international research networks**

Pillar 3: Professional Development and Career Progression

13. Training and Development **14. Career Progression** **15. Fair Assessment and Recognition** **16. Management, Supervision and Mentoring**

This pillar advances RMs' continuous growth and advancement through structured professional development and clear career pathways. It highlights the importance of ongoing training, mentorship, and fair recognition of diverse career trajectories. The principles under this pillar aim to support a dynamic and skilled workforce that is well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of research management. As a cornerstone of the charter, these principles support a lifelong learning and adaptability culture, which is integral to the ERA's success.

13. Training and Development

RMs should have access to training programs that develop core competencies identified in the RM Comp framework, such as cognitive abilities, soft skills, technical proficiency, subject matter expertise, and more.

Institutions should adopt a culture of lifelong learning, encouraging RMs to pursue continuous professional development through various channels, such as workshops, conferences, mentoring, e-learning, and access to accredited training, in a similar manner researchers adopt by default professional development in the specific research context

14. Career Progression

Clear Pathways for Career Advancement: Establish clear pathways for career progression aligned with the four proficiency levels outlined in RM Comp and the Career Progression Framework.

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RM1: First Stage RM
            Foundational
RM2: Recognised RM
            Intermediate
RM3: Established RM
            Advanced
RM4: Senior Stage RM
            Expert
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Recognition of Diverse Career Trajectories: Employers, funders and policymakers should acknowledge and value diverse career paths, including vertical advancement and horizontal specialisation across various research management areas. This acknowledgement should be considered through fair assessment and recognition procedures and in recruitment processes, and should be made open for the entire research community within the institution.

15. Fair Assessment and Recognition

RMs have the right to be evaluated based on the results of their work, individual or collective, produced in their offices or institutions. At the same time, research evaluation of institutions should include the evaluation of management and support.

The development of fair assessment and recognition procedures for RMs should reflect the diversity of their contributions, including leadership, team management, strategic planning, and community engagement. Therefore, we must ensure that the assessment is based on qualitative evaluations supported by using quantitative indicators.

Recognition and Reward of Effective Research Management (RM1 to RM4)

Employers and funders should establish systems to recognise and reward effective research management at all levels (from RM1 to RM4). This may include:

- <u>Awards and Honors</u>: Creating awards or honours for RMs to recognise excellence in project management, strategic planning, compliance, and innovation.
- <u>Promotion Pathways</u>: Providing clear pathways for promotion within the research management career structure, acknowledging diverse contributions and skills at each level.
- <u>Financial Incentives</u>: Offering financial incentives such as performance bonuses, salary increments, or grants for continuing education to reward exceptional performance.
- <u>Professional Recognition Programs</u>: Supporting professional recognition programs that highlight the achievements of RMs, both within the institution and at national or international levels.
- Acknowledge and value diverse career paths, including vertical advancement and horizontal specialisation across various research management areas.

16. Management, Supervision and Mentoring

Adequate supervision and mentoring in research management should be considered, including training in people management, conflict resolution, and leadership skills. Senior RMs should mentor junior colleagues and foster a positive and inclusive team environment.

Pillar 4: Collaboration, Networking, and Mobility

17. Internal Collaboration
18. External Collaboration and Networking
19. Public Engagement
20. Promoting Innovation
21. Measuring Impact
22. Sustainability in Research Management

This pillar promotes a collaborative research management approach, encouraging internal and external partnerships across disciplines, institutions, and sectors. It emphasises the importance of knowledge sharing, public engagement, and active participation in international networks to advance innovation and best practices. These principles are designed to strengthen the interconnectedness of the European Research Area, ensuring that RMs can effectively navigate and contribute to a complex, multidisciplinary landscape.

17. Internal Collaboration

RMs, researchers, employers and funders should promote a culture of collaboration and teamwork, encouraging interdisciplinary projects and partnerships within their institutions and beyond. As outlined in the RM Comp framework, they should be skilled in community engagement, line management, and relationship management.

Research institutions are complex ecosystems, with several offices of RMs, research teams and individual researchers. The collaboration between different teams and offices must be promoted to explore successful and effective approaches to institutional challenges

18. External Collaboration and Networking

Actively building partnerships with other institutions, industries, and stakeholders (e.g., cross-institutional projects and public-private partnerships) should be encouraged. Engaging in international research networks, promoting the mobility and transferability of RMs across borders, and leveraging competencies in communication, networking, and strategic planning should also be encouraged. RMs can leverage European networks or programs to promote mobility and knowledge exchange.

The local, national, and international communities of RMs have the right to meet to discuss the challenges of their professional activities, benchmark, and share problems and solutions.

19. Public Engagement

All stakeholders should encourage RMs to facilitate public engagement by promoting open communication of research activities and their impact on society. RMs should support initiatives that make research understandable and accessible to non-specialists and involve the public in co-creation and citizen science projects where appropriate.

20. Promoting Innovation

Encourage creativity and innovation in research management by developing an environment that supports strategic planning, problem-solving, and decision-making, as outlined in RM Comp. Support facilitate translating research findings into practical applications and contribute to developing institutional research strategies on equal standing role with that of researchers.

They should:

- Encouraging creative and innovative approaches
- Support the translation of research into practical applications
- Support (including with participation rights) to creation/establishment/ of spin-off[s]

21. Measuring Impact

It is recommended that metrics be developed and used to assess the effectiveness and impact of research management activities beyond the traditional measures that omit RMs' key activities. These outcomes should be regularly reported on to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

22. Sustainability in Research Management

Encourage RMs to implement sustainable practices in their management activities, aligning with broader initiatives such as the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes promoting practices that reduce environmental impact and enhance the sustainability of research projects, and propose research avenues.

Pillar 5: Working Conditions and Work-Life Balance

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23. Supportive Policies for Work-Life Balance
24. Stability of Employment

This pillar focuses on creating a supportive work environment that prioritises the well-being and stability of RMs. It advocates for work-life balance policies, such as flexible working arrangements, and calls for stable employment conditions that reduce job precarity. These principles are essential for attracting and retaining talent in research management and fostering a productive and motivated workforce that contributes to the sustainability and growth of the research ecosystem.

23. Supportive Policies for Work-Life Balance

Implement work-life balance policies, such as flexible working arrangements (e.g., remote work options, flexible hours) and well-being initiatives. Encourage RMs to develop stress management, prioritisation, and time management competencies, supporting a healthy work environment, replicating the institutional approach adopted for researchers.

24. Stability of Employment

Employers should provide stable employment conditions, reduce precarity, and support career continuity through targeted career development services and opportunities for skill enhancement (e.g., mentorship programs, career coaching, or skill-building workshops).

Pillar 6: Recruitment and Recognition

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25. Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment
26. Recognition and Reward

As with HR Excellence in Research, this pillar underscores the importance of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment practices that recognise diverse competencies and career paths in research management. It also calls for systems that appropriately recognise and reward the contributions of RMs, from entry-level positions to senior leadership roles. By establishing these standards, the principles under this pillar aim to create an equitable and inclusive environment where all RMs are valued and supported in their professional journeys.

25. Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTMR)

Establish recruitment practices that recognise the diverse competencies outlined in RM Comp and the CARDEA Career Framework, valuing professional experience and non-linear career paths (e.g., transitioning from academia to industry and back, moving from research management to policy roles).

26. Recognition and Reward

Develop systems to recognise and reward (e.g., awards, public recognition, bonuses, promotions), effective research management, ensure fair evaluation criteria aligned with the four proficiency levels (RM1 to RM4), and promote career progression, in a strong correlation with the institutional approach for researchers' rewarding schemes

Conclusion

This charter integrates the RM Comp framework to provide a structured, competency-based approach to RMs' rights, responsibilities, and professional development.

Call to Action for Adoption and Implementation

All research institutions, employers, and funders are encouraged to adopt and implement this charter, recognising research management as a critical profession (e.g., conducting audits of current practices, setting up task forces to promote these principles, etc.) In addition, the charter should be considered in the HRS4S assessment.

Vision for the Future of Research Management in Europe

Envision a future where RMs are fully integrated into the research ecosystem, recognised for their contributions, and provided with the resources and support necessary to excel.

Working Towards Career Acknowledgement for Research (Managers) Delivering for the European Area

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH