

## Chapter 5.21

# Research Management and Administration in Cyprus

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### Abstract

Research managers and administrators (RMAs) should not be forgotten as part of the professional workforce populating today's research ecosystems of universities or research institutes, with interactions and contributions that matter (Poli, 2018a). Unfortunately, since they are still often regarded as employees who are neither senior management nor researchers, their role still suffers vagueness and ambiguity (Allen-Collinson, 2009). Consequently, RMAs are still unrecognised and unacknowledged, and often misunderstood as support staff or bureaucrats (Rhoades, 2010). This country-specific case study of Cyprus introduces the readers to the Cypriot research ecosystem, so as to contextualise the landscape within which the Cypriot RMAs operate professionally. After briefly discussing the evolution of the RMA profession in Cyprus and glimpsing at what might be the current Cypriot RMA community, the chapter elaborates on RMA demographics derived from the 'RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire', which was formulated based on the RAAAP-3 survey. At its closure, the chapter proposes the establishment of the 'CyARMA – Cyprus Association of Research Managers and Administrators', as

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the body to advocate the standardisation, professionalisation and, more importantly, the recognition of the RMA profession in Cyprus.

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## Research Ecosystem

Cyprus' accession to the European Union in 2004 signalled a gradual and steady growth of the national research, technological development and innovation (RTDI) system. Macroscopically, perhaps the most symbolic indication of this growth is the increase from one public university and few private tertiary education colleges in 2004, to the current (2022) existence of three public and five private universities, three large research institutes, several private higher education colleges, as well as more than 40 research and innovation (R&I) performing enterprises, while there are also seven departments of the government which carry out scientific/research activities. Subsequently, the human capital employed in RTDI also steadily increased, as showcased by the relevant statistics of the Cyprus Statistical Service presented in Fig. 5.21.1.

As referenced by EURAXESS Cyprus (2022), up to 2012–2013, the total research and development (R&D) expenditures were estimated at approximately €83 million, corresponding to 0.47% of gross domestic product (GDP), with researchers constituting 0.46% of the workforce; numbers that were quite low in comparison with the EU27 averages of 2% and 1.07%, respectively. In the field of innovation, Cyprus was ranked 28th internationally in 2012 (according to the Global Innovation Index, Dutta, 2012) and 14th in relation to EU27 in 2013 according to the Innovation Union Scoreboard (Hollanders & Es-Sadki, 2013). Nevertheless, the Cypriot RTDI system managed to competitively achieve an absorption of approximately €79 million from the European

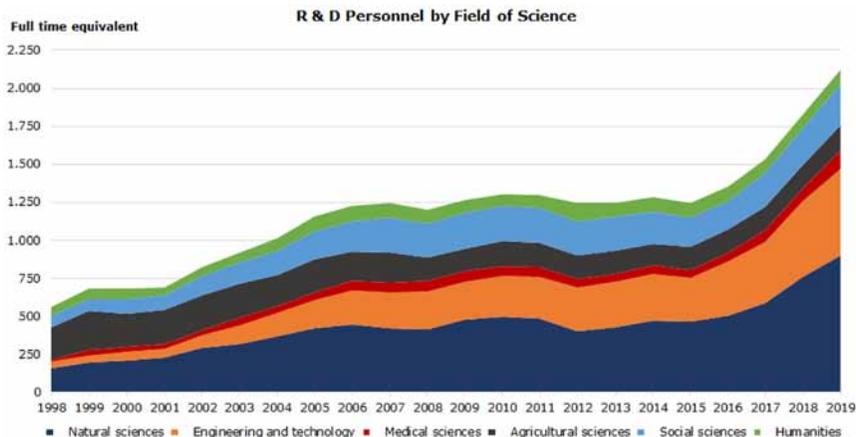


Fig. 5.21.1. R&D Personnel by Field of Science in Cyprus 1998–2019.

Source: CYSTAT: Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/SubthemeStatistics?s=49>.

Commission’s 7th Framework Programme (FP7) during the period 2007–2013. By comparison, for the same period, the Cypriot Tourism sector managed to accumulate revenues of €12,453.3 million (CYSTAT, 2022), but it should be noted that the expenditures corresponded to well above 5% of GDP (which was more than an order of magnitude from the 0.47% GDP for R&D).

The scoping and competitiveness of the Cypriot RTDI system were further focussed and more strategically honed through the formulation of the ‘S3Cy’ – Smart Specialisation Strategy for Cyprus, for the period 2014–2020, which was a European Commission’s prerequisite for the utilisation of European Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF) for R&I (RIF, 2022). The new strategic approach had a very positive impact, as the country’s total R&D expenditure in 2019 reached approximately €164 million, corresponding to 0.74% of GDP, while the country also presented one of the highest average annual growth rates in R&D expenditure; achieving 11% within the period 1998–2019 (CYSTAT, 2021). More notably, within the period 2014–2022, the country achieved considerable successes by establishing six Centres of Excellence (DMRID, 2022a) through the Horizon 2020 ‘TEAMING’ Programme, while also scoring an overall Horizon 2020 success rate of 13.62% (higher than the programme’s average of 12.02%) that yielded an impressive net ‘income’ of approximately €255 million during the period 2014–2020 (RIF, 2020). The latter has led Cyprus to ‘rank first in absorption of (Horizon 2020) funds on a per capita basis’, as declared by the Cypriot Chief Scientist (2020). In 2019, there were 2,121 persons (in terms of full-time equivalent) engaged in R&D activities in Cyprus, of which 39% were women, and 33.1% PhD holders (CYSTAT, 2021).

The main funder of R&I remains the Research and Innovation Foundation, which is the operational and implementation carrier of the national RTDI governance structure illustrated in Fig. 5.21.2. The national R&I governance system was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus in 2018, and as of 2020 it is politically integrated and comprehensively coordinated by the dedicated R&I Directorate of the Deputy Ministry for Research, Innovation and Digital Policy. The R&I governance structure (DMRID, 2022b) comprises of:

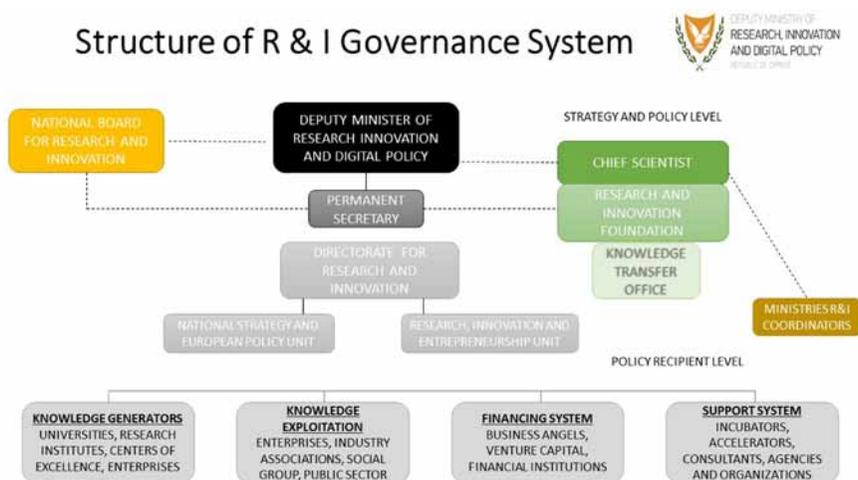


Fig. 5.21.2. Structure of the Cypriot R&I Governance System.

Source: RIF: Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.research.org.cy/en/strategic-planning/rtdi-governance/#toggle-id-3>.

- a strategy level, entailing the Deputy Minister of R&I and the National Board for R&I;
- a policy level, entailing the Chief Scientist for R&I of the Republic of Cyprus and the dedicated Directorate for R&I of the Deputy Ministry;
- an operational level, entailing the Research and Innovation Foundation (and the future National Technology Transfer Office); and
- a policy recipient level, entailing universities, research institutes, centres of excellence, R&I-performing enterprises, the public sector, industry, incubators and accelerators, consultants, associations, agencies and organisations.

## Evolution of the Profession

Although the first and largest public university in Cyprus, UCY, the University of Cyprus, has been a long-standing institutional member of EARMA since 2000, the term ‘RMAs’ has only recently started to be more frequently used in Cyprus, and in fact, after 2019, when one more institutional member from Cyprus joined EARMA, that is, the Cyprus Institute (CyI). Until then, the most widely used terms are those of ‘Project Managers’, ‘Project Officers’, ‘Administrative Officers/Assistants’, ‘Scientific Officers’, ‘Special Scientific Personnel involved in Funded Projects’, ‘Research Officers’, ‘Research Programmes Officers’, ‘Funded Programmes Officers/Support’, etc.

At present, the titles of the Departments/Units/Offices employing the above are most frequently along the terminology of: ‘Research and Innovation Support Service’, ‘Office of Sponsored Research Programmes Support’, ‘(Funded) Projects Management Office/Support’, ‘Research Administration Support’, ‘Research and Innovation Support Office/Unit’, among the main ones. Hence, it can be deduced that the term ‘RMA’, and subsequently the RMA ‘as a profession’, is still to be established and accepted in Cyprus as such. How RMAs are (still) being called in Cyprus strongly indicates that they are (still) widely considered not belonging to a specific ‘profession’ *per se*, but rather having auxiliary and/or secondary set of skills supporting the implementation of funded research projects.

## Current Community

As recorded by [CYSTAT \(2021\)](#), in 2019 there were 4,082 persons (2,121 in terms of full-time equivalent) engaged in R&D activities in Cyprus. Out of these, the authors may unfortunately only roughly estimate the size of the RMA community, as there is no formal network and no formal certification system. There are of course certification courses and modalities available regarding ‘Project Management’ (such as the Project Management Institute’s PMP®), but not a nationally established or approved certification like, for example, the US Certified Research Administrator, or the European Certificate in Research Administration/Management (EARMA CRA/CRM) and its ARMA UK equivalent. As such, there are no lists of certified RMAs from which the authors could potentially deduce the size of the Cypriot RMA community in more precise numbers. In terms of participation in international RMA networks and associations, there are only two institutional members from Cyprus to EARMA – the UCY and the CyI. And CyI is the only member of the BESTPRAC<sup>1</sup> COST Action, where

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bestprac.eu/>

one of the authors of this chapter works. Then, the European University Cyprus has one individual member to EARMA,<sup>2</sup> that is the Deputy Chair of the Policy & Representation Committee and the second author of this chapter (also a member of NCURA<sup>3</sup> since 2020).

## Demographics

The current RMA community of Cyprus may only indirectly be estimated, as also mentioned above. Based on *CYSTAT* (2021), it could be inferred that there are perhaps approximately 250–300 RMAs in Cyprus; however, the authors would like to underline that this number remains a highly arbitrary and subjective estimation roughly deduced from personal experience and informal networks. With no formal RMA network or professional association, and with informal networks that are mainly respective to the workplaces of RMAs, the RMA community in Cyprus is quite fragmented; even for this reason, RMAs are expected to have more a ‘sense-of-belonging’ to their institution rather than a common sense of collegiality to the community of Cypriot RMAs. This, however, has fortunately not stopped RMAs from research institutions/organisations in Cyprus to build their professional network and to keep working on it. This has been of course favoured by the sheer size of the research landscape and of the country itself; so national R&I events, conferences, workshops and meetings do indeed constitute opportunities for RMAs to meet, discuss and exchange views on common issues and challenges of their work. To put it plainly: ‘it is a small place, and people know each other’, but the RMA community in Cyprus still has progress to make until the state of self-consciousness as a concrete and distinct professional group.

In addition to the points above, and in order to formulate a better understanding of the numbers and types of RMAs in Cyprus, as well as of the overall demographic and anthropogeographical composition of the Cypriot RMA community, the authors examined the results of the first two ‘Research Administration As A Profession (RAAAP)’ surveys of 2016 and 2019, which they received from the *INORMS* (2022) RAAAP-Taskforce. Unfortunately, the Cypriot replies to both RAAAP and RAAAP-2 were minimal, that is, below 5. The authors then proceeded to disseminate the RAAAP-3 survey in Cyprus, but until mid-March of 2022, the Cypriot replies were again minimal (below 5). To be able to investigate the size and nature of the RMA sector in the country, the authors then received the permission of the RAAAP-Taskforce to utilise the RAAAP-3 survey and based largely upon that to formulate an ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’, which was then created as a Google-Form. The link to the questionnaire was then sent via electronic mail to 50 RMA professionals in Cyprus, as per purposive and convenience sampling. The ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’ received 20 replies, out of which the authors present the following analysis:

Approximately 53% of the respondents identified themselves as female and approximately 47% as male. Around 70% of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years of age when first starting as an RMA, and 20% were 24 and under, while currently there are 55% who are between 35 and 44 years of age and 25% who are between 45 and 54 (Fig. 5.21.3).

For 50% of the respondents, the reason for becoming an RMA was because they applied for the job, perhaps within many that they were looking for, while 25% of the responders were moved into RMA by their supervising management or leadership. For

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.earma.org/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.ncura.edu/>

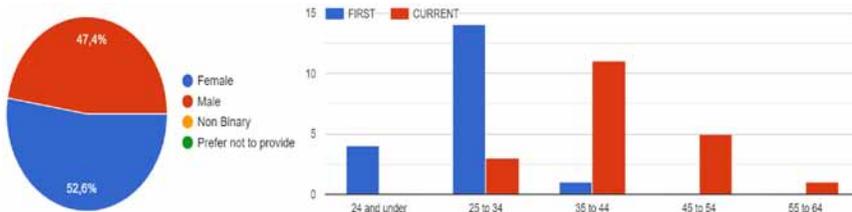


Fig. 5.21.3. Gender Identification and Age Ranges of When First Becoming an RMA and Currently in Cyprus.

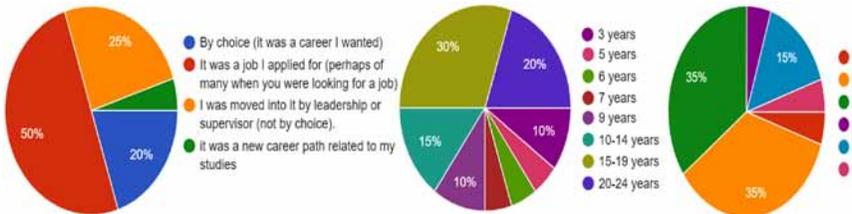


Fig. 5.21.4. Reason for Becoming an RMA, Years Employed as an RMA, and RMA Jobs During Those Years in Cyprus.

another 25% of the responders, becoming an RMA was a career that they wanted or a new career path that related to their studies. Although the ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’ did not inquire about the exact field of studies prior to becoming an RMA, the responders were nonetheless prompted to provide an indication of the broader area(s) of their qualifications. Regarding these qualifications, note that multiple selection was possible; however, the degrees and fields of ‘Engineering (including computing)’ scored 35%, ‘Business’ scored 35%, ‘Sciences (natural and life sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology and maths)’ scored 30%, ‘Social Sciences’ scored 20% and ‘Humanities’ scored 10%. Regardless of the reason why they became an RMA, 30% of the respondents have been employed as an RMA between 15 and 19 years, 20% have been working as an RMA between 20 and 24 years and 15% have been employed as an RMA between 10 and 14 years. During the years that they have been employed as an RMA, 70% of the responders have had 2 or 3 RMA jobs, while there are also 15% of the responders who have had 5 RMA jobs (Fig. 5.21.4).

Out of the respondents to the ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’, 40% work as an RMA in Research Active or Research Intensive (‘top tier’) universities, 25% work in research institutes, 15% in private companies, 15% in a research funder or other government department and 5% work as an RMA in nongovernmental organisations. About 45% of the responders work for a private nonprofit institution, 30% are employed as an RMA in a public institution/organisation, while 25% work in a for-profit institution (Fig. 5.21.5).

Overall, 65% of the responders had attained a Master’s degree before becoming an RMA and 5% a Doctorate. During their employment as RMAs, 40% of the responders obtained a Master’s, while 40% managed to achieve a Doctorate degree. In comparison with RAAAP-3 results, 33.5% managed to obtain a Master’s, while 30% managed to obtain a Doctorate degree. Before becoming an RMA, 30% of the responders had an academic background in Sciences (i.e. natural and life sciences, such as physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, etc.), 35% in Engineering (including computing),



Fig. 5.21.5. Type and Nature of Institutions Where RMAs Are Employed in Cyprus.

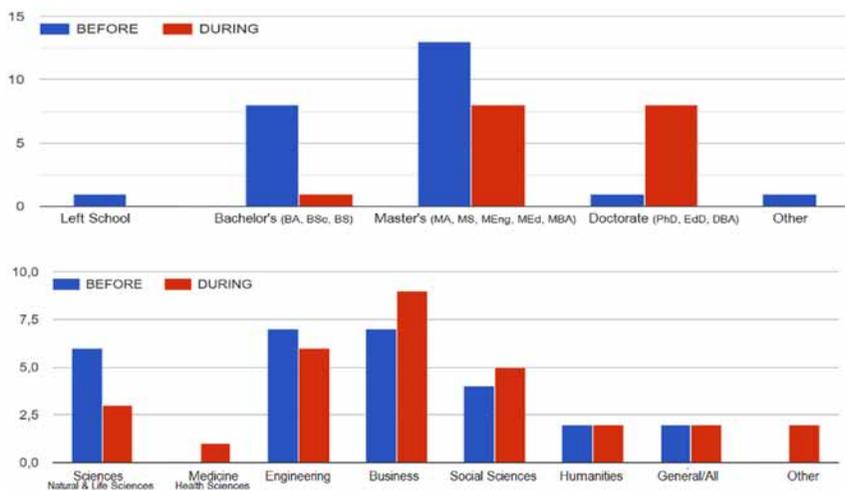


Fig. 5.21.6. Educational Attainment Level and Academic Background in Cyprus: before Becoming an RMA and During Employment as RMA.

30% in Business and 30% in Social Sciences or Humanities. During their employment as RMAs, 15% attained a background in Sciences, 30% in Engineering, 25% in Social Sciences, 10% in Humanities and 45% in Business (Fig. 5.21.6).

Although the vast majority of respondents do not have a professional RMA accreditation (such as the European CRA/CRM – Certificate in Research Administration/Management), there is very high participation in professional development classes/courses relating to ‘Project Management’. Also, professional development classes/courses regarding: ‘Communication Skills, Presentations, Reporting’, ‘Teamwork and Collaboration’, ‘Problem Solving and Suggesting Solutions’, ‘Adaptability and Change Management’ and ‘Coaching and Providing Advice and Support’ are also very popular among RMAs responding to the ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’. Such classes/courses are usually provided by paid professional external (to the RMAs’ organisations) trainers, consultants and counsellors (Fig. 5.21.7).

In the adaptation of the RAAAP-3 survey into the ‘RMA in Cyprus Questionnaire’, the authors also included questions enquiring whether the creation of a ‘Research Managers and Administrators Association of Cyprus’ would be favoured, and whether there would be interest for membership. It should be noted that the large majority of respondents replied to both with very positive expressions and remarks, stressing the

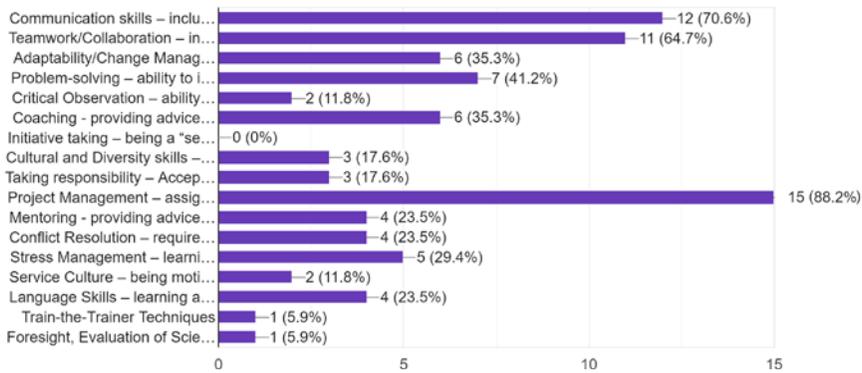


Fig. 5.21.7. Professional Development Classes Taken by RMAs in Cyprus.

importance of such an association for setting guidelines, providing support and sharing best practices, as well as for advocating and helping recognise the ‘profession’ of the RMA in Cyprus, which has increased in numbers, especially after the establishment of H2020-TEAMING and other Centres of Excellence in research. The remarks section contained enthusiastic comments, showcasing that the responders greeted the suggestion for the creation of a Cypriot RMA association with excitement; indicatively: ‘YES, by all means’, ‘Yes, 100% and active involvement’ and ‘Yes, I would be very much interested in being one of the establishing member of such an association’.

## Summary and Future Directions

In conclusion, it can be expected that the research landscape in Cyprus will continue to enlarge, the volume of R&D expenditures to increase, hence also the numbers of people engaged in R&I activities will go up in the upcoming years. Subsequently, the number of RMAs are also expected to increase, while there will be a growing need for RMA skill-sets of higher and more competitive qualifications, thus underlining the requirements for homogenising, standardising and professionalising the RMA services in Cyprus. Within an RTDI ecosystem as the one depicted above, the authors put emphasis on the necessity to establish the ‘CyARMA – Cyprus Association of Research Managers and Administrators’, as the body that would advocate the standardisation, professionalisation and indeed the recognition of the RMA profession in Cyprus.

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