



MAPIT Mobilizing Advanced Partnership for Digital Innovation and Transformation

D4.2 Future Studies Programme Evaluation *

WP4: Future Studies for HR Development

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4	HÉTFA - HÉTFA KUTATOINTEZET KFT
5	KTO – Karatay University
6	METU – Middle East Technical University
7	ATAP - Anadolu Teknoloji Araştırma Parkı San. ve Tic. A.Ş
8	TalTech - Tallinn University of Technology
9	IFR - Institute for Future Research

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List of Abbreviations	
Abbreviation	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATAP	Anadolu Technology Park
CORDIS	Community Research and Development Information Service
D	Deliverable
EARMA	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable (data principles)
FSP	Future Studies Programme
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IFR	Institute for Future Research
IP	Intellectual Property
IZTECH	İzmir Institute of Technology
KTO	KTO Karatay University
MAPIT	An acronym for the project funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101158945, entitled “Mobilizing Advanced Partnerships for Digital Innovation And Transformation”
METU	Middle East Technical University
NCP	National Contact Point
R&I	Research and Innovation
RM	Research Management
RMs	Research Managers
RM ROADMAP	An acronym for the project funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101058475, entitled “Creating Framework Conditions for Research Management to Strengthen the European Research Area”

MAPIT D4.2 Future Studies Programme Evaluation

RSO	Research Support Office
RSS	Research Support Service
SCID	Systematic Curriculum and Instructional Development
SME	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WIDERA	Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area
WP	Work Package

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1. Overview

1.1 Deliverable Objectives

The D4.2 Future Studies Programme Evaluation document constitutes the second deliverable of Work Package 4, Future Studies for HR Development, and reports on Task 4.2, which focused on the development and delivery of the Future Studies Programme (FSP). Task 4.1 was responsible for programme design, while Task 4.3 extended the programme into mobility activities; Task 4.2 developed the learning materials and made it available to support professional development of partner organisations. The deliverable summarises the progression of the Future Studies Programme, detailing the process by which the training material was developed, from the assessment of existing resources to the identification of new content requirements. It further reports on the evaluation conducted by beneficiaries and outlines how partners intend to sustain the programme following the conclusion of MAPIT.

The task was based on four activities: individual learning process relying on the sources provided by the catalogue of existing research management (RM) learning materials available in Europe; a structured feedback mechanism enabling partners to assess these materials and identify gaps; training delivered to partner institutions focused on building research support services (RSS) with the use of digital tools; and the development of interactive online learning materials specifically addressing the deficiencies identified through the assessment in terms of research support services.

This deliverable is primarily intended for the MAPIT beneficiary partners, documenting their development throughout the programme. Additionally, it targets research support offices in widening countries operating under similar conditions, for whom the materials and templates are made openly available.

2. Introduction

2.1 MAPIT Project Overview

MAPIT facilitates connections among innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), research performing organisations, and European research and innovation (R&I) networks based in Widening Countries, where limited resources and access to networks impede internationalisation. Building on investments funded by European Structural Funds that established four digital innovation centres at Turkish research entities and one in Estonia, the project aims to increase participation of these entities in Horizon Europe Programme and enhance university-industry partnerships.

The project runs on two strands. The Roadmapping Strand employs action research and a conversational artificial intelligence tool to identify complementary partnerships and to build clusters in collaboration with National Contact Points. The Future Studies Strand focuses on capacity development by implementing an upskilling programme for international research managers and administrators, supplemented by transformative study visits and short-term secondments. Task 4.2, reported in this deliverable, covers the development and delivery of the programme, while the mobility component is documented in D4.3.

2.2 Work Package Description: WP4 Future Studies for HR Development

Work Package 4 (WP4), entitled “Future Studies for HR Development” is led by HÉTFA and designed to co-create and deliver the Future Studies Programme, with a focus on advancing Research and Innovation (R&I) managerial skills in alignment with ERA Action 17 launched under the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2022-2024. The programme aligns with the future-oriented agendas of established European Research Management (RM) communities, such as the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), and anticipates the evolving professional landscape of the RM profession. WP4 enables research managers from Widening Countries to participate actively in ongoing European RM initiatives, contribute to community building, develop new skills and competencies, as well as strengthen R&I capacity for the future. (Figure 1). As a targeted support measure, the programme is delivered to personnel from project partner widening research entities and their associated Innovation Centres that were beneficiaries of cohesion policy funds. The five beneficiary research entities are: IZTECH, KTO, METU, ATAP, and TalTech.



Figure 1 The work package and task structure of the MAPIT project

WP4 is organised into three tasks, with the peer learning activities of T5.2 linked to them: T4.1 established the evidence base and co-designed the curriculum, T4.2 developed and delivered the programme, and T4.3 extended it into experiential learning through study visits and secondments.

Figure 2 presents the programme as a whole. The first step is co-creation, during which the partners' needs and priorities are established. Next comes training, involving the production of a course catalogue and organisational development learning material for the partners. Mobility then enables participants to be placed within other institutions via study visits and short-term secondments. Peer learning then brings the partners together through the Peer Learning Activities and the associated exchanges. Institutional action brings the sequence to a close, each partner implementing the programme in-house and incorporating the results into its own action plan. This chapter deals with the first two stages. Each stage provides the input needed for the next one, and the final stage returns the programme to the institutions with which it started.



Figure 2 The sequence of the Future Studies Programme, from co-creation to institutional action

2.3 Task Description: T4.2 Development and Delivery of the Future Studies Programme

Task 4.2 is implemented from month 9 to month 24 under the leadership of HÉTFA, with participation from IZTECH, KTO, METU, ATAP, and TalTech. This task transitions the Future Studies Programme from design to implementation. The gap analysis conducted in T4.1 identified areas where partner institutions' research management capacity is insufficient; T4.2 is responsible for translating these findings into targeted learning opportunities and institution-specific interventions.

The task initially identifies existing research management training available in Europe, including materials produced by other projects, initiatives and training providers, to ensure the programme builds upon established resources. Partners subsequently assess these materials and report any gaps, which then inform the development of new content. Delivery is adaptive, employing a hybrid format and designed to facilitate institutional ownership. Responsibility passes to the institutions themselves before the task closes: the assessment tasks require participants to produce outputs their own offices can use, and the in-house template hands the full annual cycle to the institution. The task concludes in month 24 with the present deliverable, which reports how the programme was developed, delivered and evaluated.

In line with the original T4.2 concept, the delivery model follows a three-step logic: first, individual online RM training builds on existing European learning materials and educational offers; second, tailor-made solutions are developed to address the specific gaps identified by partner assessments; and third, the programme is transferred into institutional ownership through in-house FSP implementation. This approach avoids unnecessary duplication while recognising that many existing RM materials were not designed specifically for widening-country contexts. Therefore, the hybrid and adaptive delivery model combines online learning, in-person training and institution-specific outputs, ensuring that the Future Studies Programme remains relevant, usable and sustainable beyond the project lifetime.

2.4 The Objectives of the Future Studies Programme

ERA Action 17 was part of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 aimed at strengthening research support capacity in public research organisations through the establishment of a continent-wide framework defining the future of the Research Management profession. The Action had 4 main priorities, i.e. upskilling, capacity building, networking and recognition. Given the importance of the topic, the current ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 has also a dedicated action to the topic, called “The new ERA of Research Management”. European initiatives such as , foRMAtion,¹ RM Roadmap,² CARDEA,³ RM Framework,⁴ and the two recently launched projects, ERMA⁵ and REMAP⁶ contribute evidence and various interventions to support ERA Action 17.

Together, these initiatives tackle key challenges like the variety of organisational settings in research support, lack of training and education opportunities, lack of access to networks, the uneven resource distribution across institutions as well as the lack of recognition of professionals working in Research Management. ERA Action 17 has proved to be a flagship policy initiative: relying on the intense mobilisation of the RM community and the volunteering power of professions, the Action led to more collaboration within the RM community and the professionalisation of research support services, enabling research have a greater impact on society and the economy across Europe. At the same time, universities, businesses, and other organisations have started to invest more in research managers locally, rethinking how research support offices work and how they support institutional strategy and programme growth.

To keep up with these changes, MAPIT project aimed at developing research and innovation (R&I) staff with a particular focus on the future skills needed for R&I management. The Future Studies Programme recognises the role of professional RM communities across Europe, like EARMA as well as national associations, in supporting professional growth and building skills together, which strengthens R&I capacity over time. The programme’s goals match these broader agendas, aims to maximise synergies, but provides tailored actions to the specific needs of its beneficiaries.

¹ <https://www.formation-rma.eu/>

² <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101058475>

³ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101058572>

⁴ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101188073>

⁵ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101259888>

⁶ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101291134>

3. Development of the Future Studies Programme

The content of the Future Studies Programme was determined through empirical assessment and tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the partners. Partners initially reviewed the catalogue of research management trainings available across Europe. The catalogue was developed in the frame of the RM Roadmap project providing an in-depth overview of existing, open-source learning materials (see at the Chapter 3, Section 3.4).⁷ The aim was not to overlap the materials designed within the frame of the FSP but to identify the gaps and address the particular needs of MAPIT partners. Concurrently, the institutional gap analysis conducted under T4.1 examined the existing capabilities of partner institutions rather than their learning needs. These two exercises demonstrated that while available functional training was adequate, partners' challenges primarily concerned the development and the operation of research support services: specifically, the structure, the operation, the services provided, as well as capacity building and professional development within the research support offices. The result of the exercise proved that available resources do not cover this particular topic. The programme's learning materials were developed to address this gap, and this chapter details the process by which this conclusion was reached.

The chapter begins with the training model on which the Future Studies Programme rests: a three-step sequence running from individual online study, moves on to solutions developed for the individual partner, and ends with institutional ownership. The chapter then describes the learning materials already available to research managers in Europe and the way in which the largest of these collections arranges its content according to various thematic fields. Next comes the partners' assessment of that material, including the ratings they provided, the themes mentioned in their written comments, and the conclusion reached from those comments. Then looks at the second line of evidence, namely the institutional gap analysis carried out as part of Task 4.1, and considers the curriculum design resulting from the two exercises carried out together. It finishes by referring to the face-to-face training given in addition to the online material and the combined findings on the basis of which the programme's own learning materials were developed.

3.1 Development and Delivery of the Future Studies Programme (T4.2)

The Future Studies Programme (FSP) is an advanced research management training initiative developed within the MAPIT project. It targets organisations of varying sizes and levels of institutional maturity, aiming to strengthen the strategic role of research managers in a context where evolving EU funding mechanisms, digital transformation, and global challenges continually increase research funders' requirements, thus professional demands.

The underlying model consists of three sequential steps:

- 1) It begins with **individual online research management training**, utilising existing, freely available European learning materials, thereby avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- 2) The next step involves the **development of tailor-made solutions**, addressing the needs indicated by partners assessment and defined gaps for their specific contexts.

⁷ <https://www.rmroadmap.eu/rm-resource-platform>

- 3) The final step is **institutional ownership**, in which training transitions from being externally delivered to being managed internally through the in-house FSP programme described in section 7.2. Each step progressively narrows the focus and increases institutional responsibility.

The starting point carries a known limitation. Most of the available materials are focused on specific RM fields and was not designed with widening countries as the primary audience, thus do not reflect their specific institutional contexts or systemic constraints. As a result, gaps may persist even when coverage appears comprehensive.

The delivery model was intentionally adaptive. Modules were offered in a hybrid format, integrating self-paced online study with in-person training and peer exchange across the consortium. The sequence was structured to allow beneficiary institutions to participate in parallel. Institutional ownership was the intended outcome: assessment tasks required participants to produce outputs usable by their own offices, and the in-house FSP template transferred responsibility for the full cycle to the institution.

Four key features describe this model:

- ❖ First, by assessing the existing materials, any unnecessary overlaps and waste of resources is eliminated.
- ❖ Second, the programme's content is derived directly from partner input and addresses their particular needs, as partners reviewed available training and identified unmet needs.
- ❖ Third, the gap analysis and needs assessment highlighted the need to develop materials that would benefit not only MAPIT beneficiaries but also other RPOs across Widening countries facing similar challenges.
- ❖ Fourth, the materials are designed for sustainability beyond the project duration; lessons, performance tasks, and institutional templates enable partners to independently implement the programme with their own staff in the future.

3.2 Presenting existing learning materials

As mentioned above, the guiding principle of T4.2 was to avoid duplications with existing materials and address beneficiaries' particular needs. Thus, HÉTFA gathered all existing learning materials already available for research managers in Europe. Four main resources were identified as especially relevant for MAPIT partners. These resources are open source available for any professionals aiming to expand their knowledge and competencies in RM.

The **RM Resource Platform**⁸ was developed by the RM ROADMAP project (Horizon Europe, GA 101058475, 2022-2025). The Resource Platform aimed to collect and organise existing learning materials and provide a one-stop-shop for Research Managers. It includes various types of learning materials, e.g. online courses, slidedecks, handbooks, toolkits, guidelines, and recorded sessions. These materials are divided into thirteen RM fields covering the work of research managers throughout the full research project lifecycle.

⁸ <https://www.rmroadmap.eu/rm-resource-platform>

The **foRMAtion learning platform**⁹ was developed by the Erasmus+ project (2019-2022) coordinated by HÉTFA. It focused on initial education, offering an international module for university students interested in research management. This module was tested at partner universities and included mentorship and blended learning. The curriculum consists of four modules over two semesters: Research Methodology and Design; Research Funding, Policy and Governance; Project Integration and Management; and Research Impact and Public Engagement including twenty-four lessons. The university curriculum was transferred to online learning platform to help early career RMs to get a helicopter overview on the profession and is available as Online Learning Resources at the project website, where users can study, test, and get certified independently. While aimed at newcomers to the profession, the material is also useful for MAPIT partners, especially for onboarding new staff in developing research support offices.

The **CARDEA Academy**¹⁰ focuses on the other end of the spectrum. CARDEA (Horizon Europe, GA 101058572) is designed to promote professional recognition for research managers. The academy offers seventeen on-demand, open-access training modules for people already working in research support, with open badges and micro-credentials given upon completion.

The **EARMA Academy**¹¹ was launched at the EARMA Conference in Utrecht in May 2026 and consolidates continuing professional development for the European RMA community. It combines open-access modular training, online certification pathways, in-person workshops and a mentoring scheme, aligned with the RM Comp¹² and structured along the professional levels from RM1 to RM3. Thus, that the same hub serves those entering research management and those leading research support functions. The interactive online learning materials are organised into six modules so far: Introduction to Research Management and Administration; Funding Landscape and Proposal Development; Research Ethics and Research Integrity; Open Science and Research Data Management; Communication and Stakeholder Engagement; and AI in Research Management and Administration. These online learning materials are open source and available for anyone interested in individual professional development.

The **RM Resource Platform** was used as the main reference to identify gaps, since it included CARDEA, foRMAtion, and other freely available resources as of the third quarter of 2025.

3.3 The thematic fields of the Research Management

The RM Resource Platform organises the collected materials into thirteen fields of Research Management (Table 1). This classification merits detailed presentation, as it is based on the fields of the profession identified through RM Roadmap survey and the related co-creation exercise.

⁹ <https://www.formation-rma.eu/>

¹⁰ <https://www.cardeahub.eu/>

¹¹ <https://www.cardeahub.eu/>

¹² RM Comp is a competence-based framework for Research Managers in the European Research Area (ERA). The tool was developed by two projects funded by the European Union CARDEA and RM ROADMAP. It is designed to support research managers in developing key skills, fostering career growth, and aligning practices with European standards. (Source: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/jobs-research/rm-comp-european-competence-framework-research-managers_en)

#	Field	Scope
1	Research Grant (Pre-Award)	Funding opportunities, proposal preparation, budgeting, submission
2	Research Project Management (Post-Award)	Implementation, reporting, amendments, consortium coordination
3	Finances	Cost eligibility, financial reporting, audit
4	Research Impact and Science Communication	Impact planning, dissemination, public engagement
5	Research Infrastructure	Access, governance and management of research facilities
6	Research Data and Information	Data management, FAIR principles, information systems
7	Research Knowledge and Technology Transfer	Valorisation, IP, industry cooperation
8	Research Policy and Strategy	Policy frameworks, institutional and national strategy
9	Researcher Training, Researcher Career Development	Development of the research workforce
10	Research Support Delivery	Day-to-day provision of support services
11	Research Ethics and Integrity	Ethical review, integrity, compliance
12	Research Evaluation and Assessment	Assessment of research, researchers and institutions
13	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Gender equality plans, EDI strategy and legislation, inclusive research design
14	Other fields	Cross-cutting material: RM curricula, competence frameworks, soft skills, career resource

Table 1 The thematic fields through which the RM Resource Platform organises its material

This omission reflects a structural characteristic of the available resources for RMs, rather than an oversight specific to a single collection. A similar focus is evident in the other platforms discussed in section 3.3: foRMAtion prepares individuals for entry into the profession, CARDEA provides a general overview on most of these RM fields and certifies individuals against RM Comp, and the EARMA Academy supports professional development across various career stages in different RM fields. All four platforms conceptualise the research manager as the primary unit of development, rather than the **research support office as an organisational entity**. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 demonstrate that the MAPIT partners' needs are situated precisely at this **organisational level**.

3.4 Evaluation of the existing RM materials

For each partner institution, research management staff were asked to check and evaluate a minimum of five of the learning materials available on the RM Resource Platform, selecting the most relevant materials from the thematic fields for their own activities. This exercise had two objectives simultaneously: it resulted in the assessment set out here and it created a documented baseline of research management knowledge, which was a necessary condition for applying for the study visits and the short-term secondments covered by Task 4.3. The assessments were recorded using a short questionnaire, reproduced in Annex 2, which required two ratings on a five-point scale – one for the knowledge value of the material and the other for its relevance to the individual's institutional and professional requirements – as well as an open-text response indicating any topic that the respondent felt was missing. The responses were gathered anonymously from 4 August 2025 to 10 January 2026, a total of sixty-six assessments were submitted, relating to fifty-three different resources. The primary

objective was to collect feedback on the materials rather than to obtain a representative sample of the consortium's staff.

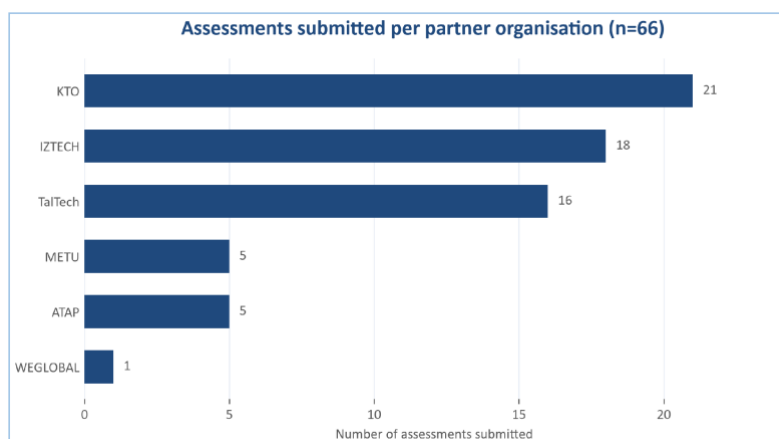


Figure 3 Assessments of training resources submitted per partner organisation

Both dimensions received similarly high ratings. The average knowledge value was 4.47 and relevance was 4.50, with a median score of 5 for both (Figure 4). Fifty-five out of sixty-six assessments rated both dimensions as 4 or 5, while four assessments rated either dimension as 1 or 2.

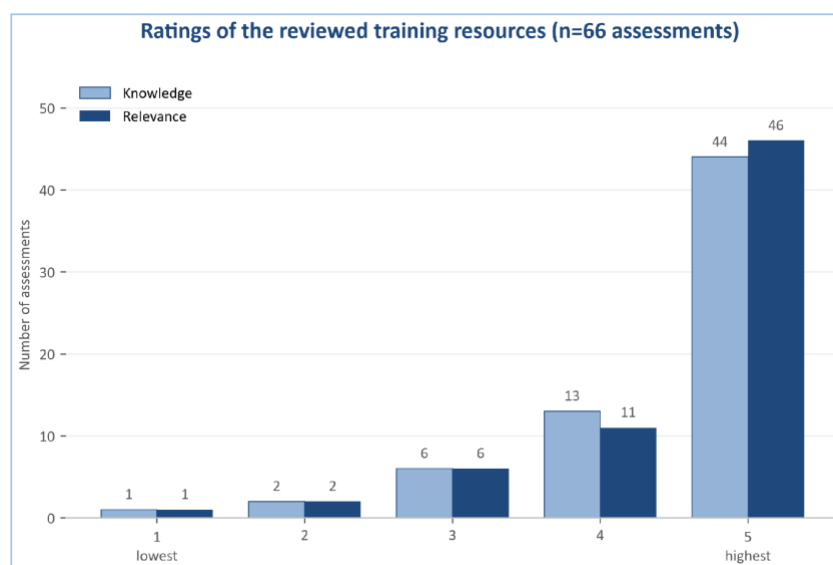


Figure 4 Ratings given to the reviewed training resources on the RM Resource Platform

The free-text responses provided more nuanced insights than the quantitative ratings. Twenty-nine respondents indicated that nothing was missing, while thirty-seven offered substantive feedback, of which twenty-five included criticisms or concrete suggestions. Six recurring themes were identified (Table 2).

Theme	Assessments
Guidance not directly applicable: examples, templates, checklists, comparisons	8
Level mismatch: material too general, or already familiar	6

Theme	Assessments
Format or maintenance problems: broken link, text-only resource, outdated content, promotional framing	4
No local, legal or sectoral context	3
Topic absent from the material	3
Competence held to require practice rather than material	3

Table 2 Themes in the free-text assessments of RM Resource Platform materials (25 assessments carrying a criticism or suggestion; a response may carry two themes)

The most frequently cited theme relates to the gap *between general guidance and practical application*. Colleagues requested worked budget examples, illustrative project cycles, sample proposal excerpts, and pre-submission checklists. One participant articulated the limitation of descriptive material as follows: "The most critical question for a manager is: 'Which costing method is more advantageous for my organisation?'. No comparative analysis has been proposed on this matter."

The second group *concerns level*. Experienced colleagues found parts of the collection pitched below them, restating established guidance without adding operational insight; one assessment recorded simply that the resource was "way too basic". This judgement is based on the participants' level of seniority rather than on the material itself, and it highlights a characteristic of any carefully selected open collection—that it cannot be tailored to the individual.

The third and fourth themes are particularly relevant to the **widening context**. Colleagues observed that some materials did not consider the specific legal and administrative environments in which they operate, such as national regulations on personnel cost calculation or country-specific eligibility restrictions. Additionally, certain resources appeared to assume a corporate rather than an academic context. For example, one participant commented that a proposal-writing resource "seemed more tailored to companies than research institutions" and requested strategies for co-authoring proposals with research partners possessing complementary expertise. These responses provide empirical evidence for the concern raised in section 3.2: much of the material available to widening institutions was developed elsewhere, resulting in a mismatch at the point of application.

The evaluation of the existing learning materials has to be read with one further consideration in mind. The materials consolidated into the RM Course Catalogue were sourced from the training materials previously described, with the RM Resource Platform serving as the initial reference point. These materials originate from various providers, each targeting distinct groups and developed with different learning objectives. As a result, they effectively address general knowledge needs; however, individuals requiring more in-depth expertise must pursue specialized training. This observation aligns with the findings of Virág et al. (2020), who note that early-career research managers and administrators benefit from a general overview initially, while further development necessitates education materials tailored to specific professional areas¹³. The present exercise is not intended to provide representative data. Instead, it serves as a preliminary step that expanded the beneficiary

¹³ Virág, Enikő, Virág Zsár, and Zsuzsanna Balázs. "Research management and administration: The relevance of specific education and training programmes." 2020,

partners' awareness of available resources and supports both the format and several learning objectives of the FSP Online Learning Material described above.

All sixty-six responses focused on practical knowhow, including requests for improved examples, alignment with national regulations, increased content depth, inclusion of working links, and coverage of missing sub-topics such as technical reporting standards. These requests shaped the MAPIT Online Learning Module, resulting in an interactive, case-based, AI-supported format that concludes with a practical checklist for direct application in the learner's workplace.

3.5 Collaborative Curriculum Design

Following the gap analysis, partner institutions participated in a collaborative curriculum design process that included reviewing findings, identifying thematic priorities, and jointly defining learning objectives. This co-creation methodology emphasized inclusive participation and iterative feedback to ensure alignment with diverse institutional contexts. Multiple learning modalities were explored and integrated. Institutional partners actively contextualized the curriculum to reflect their specific operational realities, resulting in a methodology that balances a shared structure with local adaptability.

3.5.1 *What the gap analysis found*

Under Task 4.1, Co-creation Process for Programme Design, HÉTFA carried out a full assessment of the beneficiary partners. It combined two surveys: an institutional survey of the partners' research management and research support offices, and an individual survey of staff members' own research management knowledge. An interview was then held with the beneficiary partners in which the difficulties facing their offices were examined directly. A gap analysis was produced from these three sources and set out institution by institution in Deliverable D4.1, The Co-Created Future Studies Programme. Because that deliverable is classified, its findings are summarised here in aggregate, grouped into the four areas below. Those four areas became the basis of the MAPIT Online Learning Module, and they are the reason its learning material was tailored to the partners:

Strategy and processes. Research management strategies were missing or only weakly formalised, with limited alignment to institutional priorities. Pre-award and post-award workflows were not standardised, and service definitions and standard operating procedures were sparse across the partner institutions.

People and roles. Research management was often carried out in hybrid roles, with capacity distributed unevenly within institutions. Professional recognition of research management staff was low, career frameworks were unclear, and pathways for professional growth inside research support offices were limited.

Knowledge management. Institutional memory was weak. Repositories were limited, practice depended on what individuals knew rather than on shared systems, and expertise was lost when staff changed roles or left.

Networks and digital tools. Access to international research management networks and to peer learning beyond the project was limited. Digital tools were fragmented, weakly integrated, and supported by few dashboards or knowledge management systems.

The analysis also positioned the partners along a scale of maturity ranging from the emerging stage, in which research management tasks are carried out on an ad hoc basis and knowledge is dependent on individuals, through the transitional and structured stages, to the advanced stage, at which services are aligned with strategy and continuous improvement is incorporated. The partners occupy different positions on this scale (Figure 5). In the case of a programme carried out across the consortium this constitutes a practical situation rather than a hindrance since it shows that there is no single kind of content that will be suitable for all partners and it enables substantial peer learning among them because the partners at a more structured level have already overcome the problems that the more emerging ones are encountering.

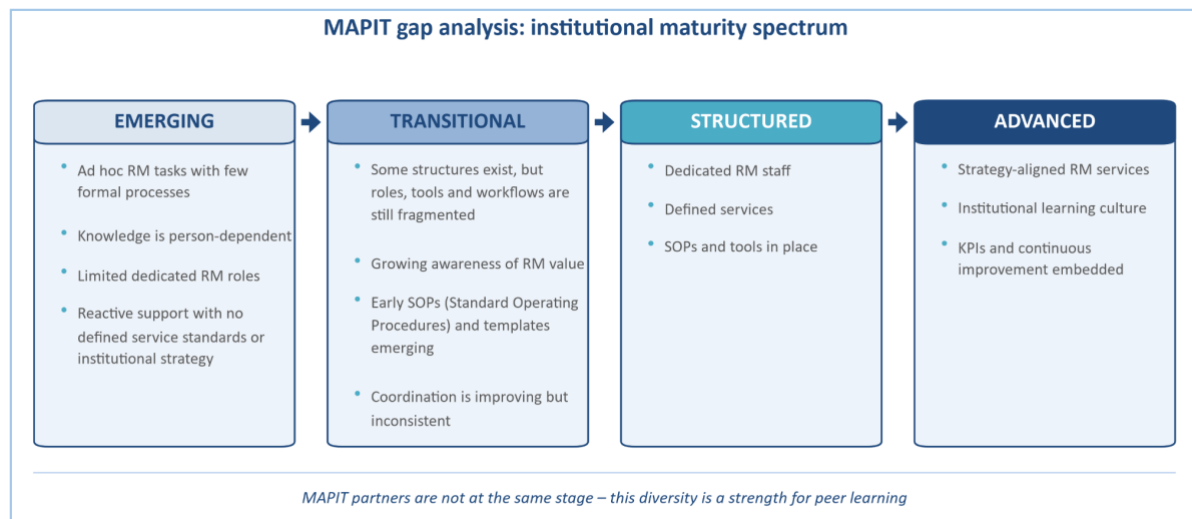


Figure 5. Institutional Maturity Spectrum of the MAPIT Beneficiary Partners

3.5.2 Research Management Offline Trainings

Beside the evaluation of the existing online learning materials in different RM fields and the assessment of the beneficiary partners' RM offices and RM capacity (through the interviews and questionnaires set out under Task 4.1), the FSP was complemented by learning in person: HÉTFA delivered a range of training sessions on research management topics at the Peer Learning Activities and the study visits, tailored to the partners' needs. These sessions are presented in detail below.

The first two RM trainings were delivered at the Tallinn PLA on 16–17 March 2026, attended by seventeen participants from METU, ATAP, TalTech, IZTECH and KTO.

1) From Planning the Impact Pathway to Knowledge Valorisation

The training focused on how Horizon Europe projects can plan, communicate, disseminate and exploit their results in order to maximise impact. Participants received an introduction to the differences and connections between **communication, dissemination and exploitation**, and discussed how these activities relate to the impact pathway of EU-funded projects. The session also addressed strategic planning, target groups, key exploitable results, knowledge management, IP protection and practical routes towards knowledge valorisation. Through examples and interactive exercises, participants

explored how project results can be made visible, accessible and useful for different stakeholder groups.

The related workshop took the form of a World Café discussion, in which participants worked in three groups and discussed the three core areas of **communication, dissemination and exploitation**. For each topic, they reflected on what makes these activities effective, what skills and knowledge are needed for success, and what challenges may influence their implementation. The discussion supported a shared understanding of how C&D&E activities can contribute to stronger project impact.

2) European best practices in setting up and reinforcing Research Support Offices

The training focused on European good practices in building up and reinforcing **Research Support Offices and Services**, based on the findings of the RM Roadmap interviews¹⁴. It introduced practical approaches for offering high-quality research support, strengthening internal research support structures, supporting the professional development and career advancement of research managers, and increasing the recognition of RM work. The session highlighted the importance of trust-building, standardised services, central–decentral cooperation, internal knowledge sharing, peer learning, mentoring, and demonstrating the added value of research support.

During the **interactive part**, participants reflected on their own institutional practices through short group discussions. They shared good practices in providing tailor-made research support, motivating research support teams, empowering colleagues, and demonstrating the impact of their work. In the main group work, participants were divided into two groups – **Researchers** and **Research Managers** – and prepared for a debate on their goals, priorities and responsibilities, as well as on how both sides can better understand each other and upgrade collaboration between researchers and RMs. As a follow-up action, participants were asked to define the five most important actions they would implement in their own organisation, focusing on research support provision, team building, professional development and recognition.

The third RM training was held in the framework of the Istanbul University Study Visit on 21 July 2026, with 16 participants from METU, IFR, IZTECH, KTO, HÉTFA and WEG.

3) Initiatives for Community Building, Training and Networking of European Research Managers

The training provided an overview of the European Research Management landscape, focusing on the role, diversity and professional recognition of Research Managers. It introduced key European initiatives supporting **RM community building**, training and networking, including BESTPRAC¹⁵,

¹⁴ D1.2 Final report on ERA-wide landscape, Chapter 6. Good practices in RM. Source: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/633ae0b47dc8ac471e5978a9/t/6984ccf469f22649184d053a/1770310900911/RM+Roadmap_D1.2_HETFA_Report+on+ERA-wide+landscape.pdf

¹⁵ <https://earma.org/thematic-group/bestprac/>

foRMAtion, CARDEA, RM Roadmap, RM Framework¹⁶ and SECURE2¹⁷. The session also highlighted the relevance of ERA Action 17 and the new ERA agenda for strengthening research management capacity, upskilling, networking and recognition across Europe. In addition, the training connected these European developments to the MAPIT project and its Future Studies Strand, including training, study visits and short-term secondments.

The final training was held in Izmir on 22 July 2026, with 19 participants from almost the entire consortium: ATAP, IZTECH, KTO, SHU, WEG, METU and HÉTFA.

4) Challenges of Organisational Development, Lessons Learned & Action Plans for Research Support Offices

The training focused on how organisational development can strengthen Research Management and Research Support Offices. It introduced organisational development as a way to improve everyday work and processes, support people, roles and capacities, and make organisational learning sustainable. The session connected MAPIT gap analysis findings with practical development directions, including RM strategy, standardised workflows, knowledge management, professional development, impact and valorisation support, and digital tools. The training guided participants from reflection on lessons learned towards concrete institutional action planning.

The workshop attached to this training consisted of the FSP evaluation workshop and the sustainability workshop, both described in detail in Chapters 6 and 7; the lines below serve as an overview: Participants first reflected individually and in pairs on their own role in research support, their expectations towards the Future Studies Programme, and the one change they would immediately introduce in their Research Support Office. In the institutional evaluation exercise, groups discussed which MAPIT activity had the strongest impact, what they had learned from study visits, secondments, trainings or peer exchange, what became clearer about their organisation's RM capacity, and what challenges remained still difficult to change. The main group task was to build an **Institutional Action Plan**. Each institutional group selected one priority challenge from the MAPIT Gap Analysis or their reflection exercise, chose 3–5 relevant action cards from the Action Card Library, and completed the Action Plan Canvas with concrete priorities, actions, responsibilities, timelines, resources, quick wins and success indicators. The session ended with a gallery walk, where groups shared and improved their action plans by identifying useful ideas, possible risks, and suggested partners or resources.

3.5.3 Combined findings

The evaluation of the resources found the existing learning materials in the relevant areas sufficient: the beneficiary partners rated the material on preparing proposals, project management, finances, ethics, data and impact highly, and the only requests for improvement referred to the need to adjust that material rather than to its lack. The gap analysis, on the other hand, showed that the partners' difficulties are almost entirely outside these functions; aspects such as strategic service provision, roles and recognition, institutional memory and the management of change are characteristics of the research support office as an organisation and none of them are covered by the training provided.

In addition to this, the last FSP training held in July 2026 in Izmir included the various institutions' own interpretation of the issue. The partners stated that they had moved from a reactive to a proactive

¹⁶ <https://rm-framework.eu/>

¹⁷ <https://secureproject.eu/>

approach to research support, emphasised the need for specialised research management staff, pointed out the burden of the internal administrative procedures, noted the difficulty of retaining knowledge within the organisation, and expressed a desire to more deliberately involve researchers, industry and other universities.

Based on this, the learning material developed by the Future Studies Programme itself was aimed to address the needs at the organisational level which the current offerings do not cover – that is, at the development and the operation of the research support office. The material regards the RSO as the unit to be developed and looks at four questions in turn: what makes up a well-functioning research support system, how it is possible to provide consistent and high-quality support, how a competent and motivated research management team can be built, how professional development of colleagues can be ensured, and how the office can be made sustainable and its value shown – one question per lesson (see below at Chapter 4), the five questions as a whole covering the challenge areas mentioned above. The learning and training materials were specifically developed for the MAPIT partners but relying on the findings and good practices identified by the RM Roadmap project (Zsár, Koltai, Skublicsné Balázs, 2025)¹⁸. However, given the fact that the challenges of research support is very similar in dozens of RPOs across Widening Countries, the material has a huge potential for further use by these entities.

¹⁸ RM Roadmap D1.2 Final report on ERA-wide landscape. Source: https://earma.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/RM-Roadmap_D1_2_Report-on-ERA-wide-landscape_watermark-1-1.pdf

4. Materials of the MAPIT Online Learning Module

The materials developed under T4.2 centers on the research support office as an organisation, examining its structure, functions, personnel, and the means by which it establishes and maintains its institutional role. Entitled ***Building Strong and Sustainable Research Support Services***, the material is organized into 5 lessons (see Table 3), each structured around a central question and addressing one or more dimensions identified during the programme: the ecosystem, the structure and service, people and team, professional development, and recognition.

Lesson	Focus	Guiding question
1. Understanding Research Support	Ecosystem and organisations	What is the environment in which research support is embedded? What constitutes a well-functioning research support system?
2. Designing High-Quality Research Support Services	Processes and services	How can we provide high-quality research support?
3. Developing High-Performing Teams	People and team	How can we build a motivated and collaborative research management team?
4. Providing structured professional development pathways	Skills, competencies and careers	How can we ensure that research managers have personalised training path leading to career advancement?
5. Leading Change and Demonstrating Value	Leadership, change and recognition	How can we make the research support office sustainable and demonstrate its value?

Table 3 Structure of the MAPIT Online Learning Module

Each lesson begins with defined learning objectives and concludes with a knowledge check and a practical output for application within the learner's institution. The material incorporates several visual models, each adapted from established management frameworks to the research support context. The following sections present the lesson contents.

4.1 Lesson 1 – Understanding Research Support

The first lesson examines the research support ecosystem – the relationships between the office, institutional leadership, researchers and external stakeholders – and then the organisational models through which research support is provided, from centralised offices to decentralised and hybrid arrangements. The research support system is presented through an adaptation of the McKinsey 7-S framework, which allows structure, staff, skills, systems and shared values to be examined as interdependent rather than one at a time. The lesson then addresses organisational culture in research support, using a set of culture models to make visible what is normally left implicit in how an office works.

The lesson closes with a diagnostic exercise in which learners assess their own research support office, followed by a knowledge check and reflection.

4.2 Lesson 2 – Designing High-Quality Research Support Services

The second lesson moves from the office to what and how it delivers. It begins with the attributes of a high-quality research support service, treating the knowledge that a service embodies as an organisational asset rather than an individual one – for instance, the response to the loss of institutional memory identified in the gap analysis. It then works through understanding what researchers actually need, what are the best techniques to communicate funding opportunities and services, and how it is possible to provide individualised support.

Learners map the research support journey from the researcher's perspective, design the proposal support process using an adaptation of the critical path method, and address the coordination of central and departmental services, which is the point at which support most often falls between units. The lesson then treats various possibilities for the standardisation of services, for instance, through a service catalogue: an explicit statement of what the research support office does, what it does not do, and what remains with the researcher. This is the instrument that converts person-dependent practice into defined service provision, and it responds directly to the absence of service definitions reported by the partner institutions.

The remaining part of the lessons deals with the components of a defined service: prioritisation, triage and workload management where demand exceeds capacity; benchmarking and continuous improvement; and the construction of a case for a new service. The lesson ends with partnership, trust and shared ownership between research managers and researchers, presented through an organisational learning model, followed by a knowledge check and a practical application task.

4.3 Lesson 3 – Developing High-Performing Teams

The third lesson addresses the team who delivers the services designed in Lesson 2. The lesson focuses on building the team providing research support services particularly in academic environment. Team development is presented through a staged model of how groups form and become effective; communication and active listening, feedback and psychological safety, and the management of conflict within research support teams follow – and what kind of specificities have to be taken into consideration in academic environments for professionals lacking recognition. The lesson closes with workload, stress and well-being, a subject that follows directly from the workload management treated in Lesson 2 and from the hybrid roles reported across the consortium. The final part is a knowledge check and a team development plan that the learner drafts for their own office.

4.4 Lesson 4 – Providing structured professional development pathways

The lesson aims to address the lack of structured professional development opportunities and career path in research management and provide guidance on how to overcome the current gap – relevant for MAPIT partners but for many other RPOs.

It opens with the routes by which people enter research management, a profession for which few people are trained intentionally resulting in several implications for recruitment: what to look for when

the specific experience does not exist in the labour market, how to assess and recognise transferable skills. Onboarding follows, then the core skills and competences of research managers which are relevant for all. Then how to provide structured, tailor-made, continuous professional development opportunities through enabling colleagues specialisation through trainings, peer learning, mentoring and coaching.

4.5 Lesson 5 – Leading Change and Demonstrating Value

The last lesson focuses on how a Research Support Office can move beyond an operational support function and become a strategic actor within the institution. The central question of the lesson is how to make the Research Support Office sustainable while clearly demonstrating the value it creates for researchers, leadership, and the wider research and innovation ecosystem.

The lesson first explains why Research Support Services need to evolve in a changing institutional and European R&I environment. It introduces the basic logic of organisational change, including why change is often difficult and why resistance may emerge. The practical part of the lesson focuses on implementing and embedding new practices. It helps participants understand how to analyse driving and restraining forces, introduce new routines, and ensure that change becomes part of everyday institutional practice.

The lesson also addresses recognition and sustainability. It shows how Research Support Offices can strengthen their visibility and legitimacy at institutional and national levels, and how they can position themselves as strategic contributors to research performance. Finally, the lesson supports participants in developing a business case for RSO development, including resource development, institutional commitment, and potential revenue-generating activities. The final knowledge check and action plan help participants translate the lesson into concrete steps for their own institutional context.

5. Integration of the learning material to interactive online learning platform

The interactive online learning material developed under T4.2 is embedded into the foRMAtion online learning platform, on a subpage dedicated to MAPIT which is interlinked to the MAPIT website page. In that way the MAPIT Online Learning Module can be reached by two routes, each serving a different audience. The lessons are available from the Future Studies Programme subpage of the MAPIT website, at <https://mapitproject.eu/future-studies-programme>, where they reach the project's own stakeholders. They are also available under a new sub-menu on the foRMAtion platform, at <https://formation-rma.eu/mapit-future-studies-programme>, which places them in front of research managers already using an established training platform, alongside the other materials they come there for.

This is the main website which hosts the EARMA Academy too. The choice of host follows from the arrangement described in section 3.3: foRMAtion already maintains an open Online Learning Resources section in which each module has a page of its own and each lesson can be worked through independently, it operates under an established open-access licence, and HÉTFA is the operator. Publishing there places the material where research managers already look for training, and keeps it available after the end of the project without a new platform having to be built and maintained.

The online interactive learning material has been developed with self-paced online learning in mind and not taken from the slides that are used in classroom settings. It was developed in Articulate 360 that has numerous features enabling interactive online learning. It is accessible on laptops, tablets and mobile phones, automatically adapting to the different screen sizes. Articulate 360 offers an intuitive interface, clear navigation and built-in progress indicators guide learners through the content.

The introductory page of the modules welcomes users with a user-friendly interface. Learners can immediately find what they need thanks to smart navigation and a clearly organized structure. Built-in progress indicators and guidance make it straightforward to track achievements and continue learning at your own pace.

Storyline-driven modules guide learners through a coherent educational narrative, combining structured content with branching scenarios that adapt to user decisions. This approach transforms complex topics into memorable stories and practical applications, helping participants connect information to real-world skills and organizational challenges. Each step builds effectively on the previous, with dynamic progress tracking and personalized feedback to keep learners motivated and on track.

Responsive multimedia elements support different learning styles. Interactive features include branching scenarios, flip cards, slideshows, audio explanations, modal pop-ups and drag-and-drop sorting activities, alongside quizzes and knowledge checks using varied question formats. A

Progress throughout each module is easy to monitor, guiding learners step-by-step to full completion. Any adjustments or update to the content of the modules can be done anytime easily.

MAPIT D4.2 Future Studies Programme Evaluation

The learner is able to access layered content. After each of the five lessons there is a practical output – a diagnosis of the learner's own research support office, a service design task, a team development plan, a professional development plan and an action plan – so that the course results in something that can be used within the learner's organisation rather than just a record of completion.

All the five modules are released open source and will be sustained beyond the project lifetime as the material covers a significant niche in terms of learning resources available for the research management professionals, and not only to the development of the MAPIT partners.



6. Evaluation of the Future Studies Programme

At its final training session in Izmir in July 2026 with the consortium partners, the Future Studies Programme was assessed to support partners in identifying lessons learnt and developing individual and organisational development plans. The workshop consisted of three sections: a discussion of the organisational problems which make it difficult for research to support development; a systematic review of the insights the programme had given about their own institutions; and the preparation of an action plan for the following year. Evaluation occurred in the second section, at two levels and by means of two distinct tasks.

6.1 Individual evaluation of FSP

In the individual round, participants were asked to work in pairs. They had to share:

- their role in research support,
- the challenges they experience in this area,
- what their greatest expectation had been when joining the programme and whether or not it had been met, and
- what single thing they would change right away in their own research support office.

Participants mentioned three types of benefits. The first of these was **gaining access to people and networks**, including the forming of new connections and networks at conferences and events, making contact with other colleagues acting as peers, and establishing working relationships with colleagues from other partner organisations. Many of them confirmed that these contacts would last beyond the activity which had brought them about, enabling new forms of collaborations.

The second was **knowledge** which had been incorporated into practice. Participants unequivocally reported that they had internalised what they had learnt and gave examples of concrete applications: coordinating an incubation programme, running trainings for their colleagues, and engaging different stakeholder groups and making them to work together.

The third aspect was a **change in the way the participants saw their own role**. A common way of putting this was to say that they gained self-confidence thanks to the knowledge gained and the peer learnings carried out, thus, they started to work more proactively in the research support office, with the reservation that major institutional changes take more time.

The two objectives which MAPIT has at the individual level are reflected in these three advantages. The first of these is internationalisation, which results from the mobility programme. The second and third relate to what the Future Studies component is intended to achieve, namely, a practical understanding of how research support is organised and how it can be professionalised.

The secondment evaluation in D4.3 records the same two effects in the same cohort. All twelve participants reported that their professional network had expanded as a result of the mobility, and ten of the twelve rated themselves higher across the thirteen research management areas afterwards than before.

6.2 Institutional effect of FSP

In the institutional round, each institutional group was asked to reach agreement on three key observations concerning four questions:

- which MAPIT activity had the greatest impact on their thoughts about research support,
- what they had learned from the study visits, secondments, training and peer exchanges,
- what had become clearer about their institution's research management capacity, and
- what still remains difficult to change.

These observations were then presented in the plenary session and recorded by the HÉTFA team. The institutional observations were more specific, and each partner named a different effect.

KTO identified the change in the perception of research support as the principal effect: research support at the institution had moved from a reactive to a proactive understanding unit. The need for dedicated research management staff followed from this, and the institution intends to act on it. Its secondments produced outcomes of the same kind, reported in D4.3: a signed one-year hosting agreement with a European host institution, and an agreed research dataset transfer.

METU identified networking as the most important effect. They also described a gain in confidence: the institution now is more confident in approaching potential partners and project opportunities while previously they hesitated to do so. Their remaining challenge was located outside the research support office, in adapting researchers to the changed environment the office is now creating.

ATAP reported the most concrete institutional outcome the fact that they had become a Horizon Europe information point in Türkiye during the FSP. They also highlighted the knowledge gained on the European research management community, pre-award and post-award practices, with a special proposal writing and consortium formation – mostly through the structured meetings at a European Business and Innovation Network congress recorded in its D4.3 secondment report.

IZTECH reported effects on its capacity to convene. It pointed to the cluster event it organised and to the range of perspectives that different researchers brought to it, and to a growing ability to build connections between universities and industry, to develop project ideas and proposals, and to engage academics and companies together – a capacity resting directly on the contacts its secondments established.

6.3 Conclusions from the evaluation

What the institutions regarded as important was a change in position and role perception; they stated that research support had moved on from responding to initiating and from administering to convening. Each institution expressed that change in its own words and placed it in a different section of its own activities.

The organisational constraints they mentioned were in fact those which the gap analysis had already identified and relevant in most academic environments: the existence of internal administrative procedures and the difficulty of involving researchers in a changing office environment. These challenges are not particular for MAPIT beneficiaries. While it is possible for a twelve-month programme to make a change in individual and unit based role perceptions, however, changing the

procedures and cultures acting as a barrier might take longer time, thus partners themselves shall act as change managers and make this distinction.

The various institutions drew different lessons learnt from the same programme given the fact that their initial positions on the maturity scale - outlined in section 3.6 - were different. One acquired a formal external role, another obtained convening capacity, one altered its mode of operation, and the fourth overcame its reluctance to get involved. Although they all started with the same materials, what varied was the diagnosis each institution made of its own role and the part of that material which it therefore made use of. It is important to note that these were based on their own assessments, in which they each highlighted one aspect that had an effect on their organisation. This does not, however, replace an in-depth impact assessment, for which there was no scope given the short duration of the programme. This proves the fact that the programme is flexible enough to be tailored to individual needs: the customisation takes place at the institution, based on its own evaluation, and the in-house programme template mentioned in section 7.2 is designed so that this can be repeated.

7. Sustainability

The Future Studies Programme runs to the end of MAPIT in month 24. In order that the capacity developed during the programme may be used at the partner institutions after that time, two arrangements have been put in place. The first arrangement consists of institutional action plans prepared at the last FSP training event, according to which each partner committed to making one organisational change over the next twelve months. The second is a template for running the Future Studies Programme on an internal basis, which enables the institutions to go through the entire cycle with their own staff and to train the future peer trainers who will deliver the following programme in the next years.

7.1 Institutional Action Plans

An action plan serves as a practical roadmap which specifies what the institution aims to change and the reasons for doing so, identifies who is responsible and what resources are required, and explains how it will be possible to tell when the change has taken effect. Purposefully, during the last training session participants used that structure. When developing the research support office, the focus is on altering the conditions in which research managers work. Moreover, any change only becomes real when it is assigned to an individual, given a deadline and linked to an indicator. The Action Plan Canvas employed during the Final FSP Training outlines the ten elements of such a plan (Figure 6).



Figure 6 The Action Plan Canvas based on the Lean Canvas structure and the MAPIT Online Learning Material

The last training session on FSP organised by HÉTFA ended with a commitment: each institution then drew up its own action plan to deal with a challenge in the next 12 months that it had previously identified.

The task was structured to ensure focus and clarity. Each institutional group selected a priority challenge, either from the gap analysis or their own workshop reflection, and answered a key question: what is the most important change needed in the next twelve months? Groups then drew on an Action Card Library, a set of prepared actions organised under strategy and governance, processes and services, knowledge and digital tools, people, skills and networks, and impact, intellectual property and collaboration. The cards were developed from the material of the lessons, and are reproduced in full in Annex 4. Each group selected three to five actions that fitted its challenge and that could begin within existing resources, and completed an action plan canvas naming the priority challenge, the twelve-month goal, the planned actions, the timeline, the responsibilities and the success indicators. A gallery walk followed, in which groups marked each other's plans with reusable ideas, suggested partners and possible risks, and each institution then stated one concrete first step in plenary. The time available did not allow every institution to work through all ten elements of the canvas. In practice the session was therefore a mutual learning exercise: institutions compared similar challenges and the responses they were considering, and each took the canvas away to complete internally, so that the effect of MAPIT on their organisational development continues beyond the project.

Three plans have been completed, involving four beneficiary institutions. Each deals with challenge areas identified in the analyses, which is exactly what the diversity of the maturity spectrum would predict.

IZTECH and ATAP worked jointly, on the difficulty of bringing together actors from different sectors around a single topic. Their twelve-month goal is one call participation involving an entity from a different sector, approached through a roadmap for co-participation, identification of a suitable call, a concept note, partnering events, and proposal writing and submission. The timeline allocates a month each to the roadmap, call identification and concept note, three months to partnership building and six to consortium formation and proposal writing. Success is measured by at least three cluster events, three new project ideas and one project participation.

METU addressed the retention of knowledge within the organisation, the challenge the gap analysis had identified as the most widely shared. Its goal is to build organisational mechanisms that keep knowledge inside the institution: identity documents supporting applications, reports and submissions; document templates; automated processes including document archiving and a platform for storing documents; training for researchers on European funding and intellectual property awareness; and an internal community of practice. The plan is dated month by month, beginning with community of practice meetings, followed by a first call application and then an internal Future Studies Programme. Its success indicator is that research managers are working confidently with standard operating procedures by the end of the twelve months.

KTO addressed the absence of a research management strategy, with colleagues working on projects without connection between them and without clear roles. Its goal is an approved research management strategy, reached by defining research management roles, establishing planning cycles and setting key performance indicators. The plan allows three months to convene an advisory group,

months three to six to draft the strategy, and months seven to twelve to set indicators and secure approval. Success is defined as an officially approved strategy with sixty per cent of its indicators met.

The four beneficiary institutions each took away from the workshop a series of clear objectives for the next twelve months. Consequently, the Future Studies Programme has provided not only a diagnosis of the gaps in the partners' research support offices, training and learning material, but also a practical planning tool, together with the workshop which put this tool into action.

7.2 Institutional Future Studies Programme

While the action plans commit institutions to a change, the in-house Future Studies Programme template commits them to repeating the programme that produced it. The template, reproduced in full as Annex 3, sets out how a research performing organisation runs its own annual cycle, and is written so that each partner completes it with its own descriptions, deadlines and responsibilities. Together the two instruments make the programme repeatable inside each institution and from one cycle to the next, so that the knowledge survives changes of staff. This is basically the practical implementation of the content of Lesson 4 of the interactive learning module, focused on professional development and career path for research managers.

The template includes nine actions over a twelve-month period (Figure 7). It begins with assigning roles: this involves naming the institutional coordinator, the management sponsor, the current peer trainer and the responsible departments, as well as determining the roles, the arrangements for making decisions and the system for internal communication. It also calls for **surveys and a gap assessment** at the institution's own level, analysing the existing competences, structures and development needs in relation to the expected research management functions – once again using the same diagnostic approach that is employed in MAPIT, but having the institution apply it to itself.

On that basis the institution **develops performance tasks and customises the modular training**, learning pathway and assessment rubrics; it then **enrols participants** and publishes the annual training agenda, including the peer learning activities, study visits and assessment activities. This part can focus on professional development in any of the RM fields where gaps are identified within the institutions. Those **peer learning activities and study visits** are organised with host institutions during months three to seven, with defined learning objectives, documentation requirements and follow-up – as it was implemented in T4.3, aiming to provide hands-on knowledge and experience exchange, as well as build peer connections and international networks. Progress is **tracked and the performance tasks assessed** through months four to eight, with peer trainer support and identification of participants needing more help.

The final three actions make the cycle self-sustaining. The institution **selects new peer trainers** from participants who completed the modules and demonstrated the capacity to train others, and endorses them institutionally. It then **arranges short-term secondments** for those peer trainers in experienced research performing organisations, with defined learning objectives, host supervision and knowledge transfer responsibilities. It closes by **evaluating, institutionalising and renewing**: assessing delivery, learning outcomes and institutional effects, integrating the materials, performance tasks, templates and procedures into the institutional knowledge repository and staff onboarding system, and approving the next annual cycle.

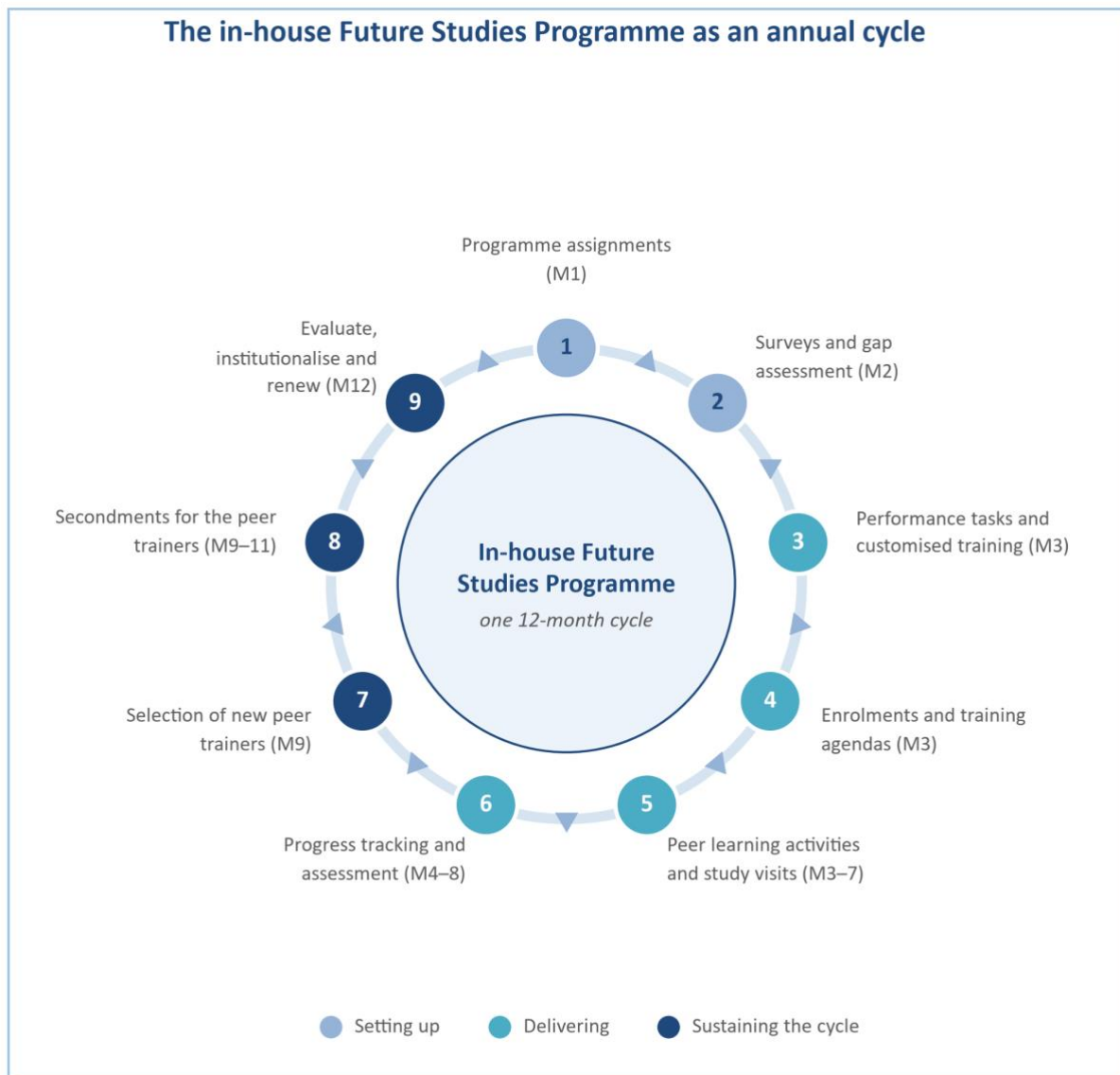


Figure 7 The nine actions of the institutional template across a twelve-month cycle, from assigning roles to approving the next cycle

The structure reproduces MAPIT's own sequence – diagnosis, customised training, peer learning and mobility, assessment, institutionalisation – at the scale of a single institution. Its central anchor point is the peer trainer: each cycle is required to produce the professionals who will deliver the next sessions, which allows the programme to continue after the project's lifetime. Whether the cycle is in fact repeated is a matter for the institutions, and the template is written to make the decision an explicit one.

8. Summary

The **Future Studies Programme** was developed as a result of two assessments carried out in collaboration with beneficiary partners. The first of these, which took place from August 2025 to January 2026, asked partner staff to submit evaluations of open learning resources available on the RM Resource Platform. The second assessment, an institutional gap analysis carried out as part of Task 4.1 and based on questionnaires of institutions and individuals as well as interviews, found problems relating to strategy and process, roles and recognition, institutional memory, and the use of networks and digital tools. Together, these assessments show that the main difficulty experienced by the partners lay at the organisational level of the research support office.

The **MAPIT Online Learning Module** material, titled **Building Strong and Sustainable Research Support Services**, was created in line with the specifications given and has the research support office as its main focus of development. Each lesson ends with a practical output suitable for use within an institution, comprising an office diagnostic, a service design, a team development plan and an action plan. The material was designed for self-directed study using Articulate, organised in the form of branching cases with built-in knowledge checks, and made available as open source on the foRMAtion platform, thus allowing research managers access beyond the consortium. In-person training sessions were held to meet the needs identified in the evaluation. These included interactive in-person sessions by HÉTFA on impact planning, knowledge valorisation and European practices for setting up and strengthening research support offices, as well as a session on organisational development for research support offices.

The Future Studies Programme contributed to the development of beneficiary partners at multiple levels: both individual and institutional. Participants report wider international networks and specific knowledge acquired. Institutions report a change in how research support is understood, from responding to requests towards planning, and from administering projects towards convening those who develop them. These are the institutions' own assessments, each highlighting one aspect of the effect on the organisation concerned, and they do not replace an in-depth impact assessment, for which the duration of the programme left no scope. Each partner nevertheless identified a concrete effect, and in each case it falls within the areas the material was written to address.

Two instruments were developed alongside the MAPIT Online Learning Module to carry the programme beyond the end of the project. Each institution completed the final training with an action plan of its own design, setting out a priority challenge, the actions to be taken, a twelve-month timeline and the indicators against which progress will be judged. The in-house Future Studies Programme template sets out nine actions across a year, from the assignment of roles to the approval of the following cycle, and requires each cycle to produce the peer trainers who will deliver the next. This requirement is what allows the programme to continue after the staff who first ran it have moved on.

Statement on the use of artificial intelligence

In preparing this deliverable, we employed a large language model (Claude, Anthropic) to support drafting, language editing, and copy-editing. We determined the content, structure, and arguments of each section, directed the drafting process, and revised all resulting text. The tool also assisted in developing code for processing anonymised questionnaire exports and generating the tables and figures included. All figures and reported numbers were verified against the source data by the authors. Grammarly was utilized for spelling and grammar checks.

All data were anonymised prior to processing. Personal identifiers were removed from the questionnaire exports, and participants are referenced in this deliverable solely by their role and institution.

We reviewed and edited all AI-assisted content and accept full responsibility for the deliverable's content. Neither tool is considered an author of this work.

This statement aligns with the ERA living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research (third version, May 2026).



9. Annexes

9.1 Annex 1: Research Data Management

HETFA collects data upon the expression of consent of the participants. One can choose to voluntarily provide personal data in the context of the following project activities: a) responding to the MAPIT survey; b) participating as an interviewee. This data enables HETFA to deliver the project activities for which it is responsible. The data provided is only used for the purposes of the MAPIT project. Voluntarily provided personal data may also be used by HETFA for the purpose of contacting the respondent for possible future consultation related to the theme of the respective project activity. HETFA will treat personal information with the strictest confidentiality and in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), effective as of 25 May 2018. After anonymization, results of the research activities carried out by HETFA will be published open access in research reports (D4.1, D4.3). Access and storage data will be either collected in an anonym way (survey) or will be anonymized (interview). Any information that could lead to an individual being identified will be completely and irreversibly removed. Access to personal data one directly provides is limited to the appropriate staff within HETFA who are involved in the respective project activity. This data is kept for a maximum of 5 years after the end date of the MAPIT project.

More information:

You can find more information on HETFA's GDPR policy [here](#).

Contact:

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9.2 Annex 2: Feedback Survey

The instrument below was used for the review of the RM Resource Platform reported in section 3.5. Each nominated participant completed a minimum of five training resources and submitted one response per resource. The survey was administered online and is now closed.

Survey title: MAPIT_T4.2_Future Studies Program_Feedback Form

Introduction and consent

Objectives. This survey supports the goals of the MAPIT project (funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101158945) under Work Package 4: Future Studies for HR Development, which focuses on enhancing research management (RM) capacities in widening country institutions. It is designed to gather feedback on the training materials provided through the Future Studies Programme (FSP), specifically, how useful they are in practice and how well they align with participants' professional and institutional needs.

Participants are encouraged to evaluate the materials and identify any missing content. The feedback will directly inform the improvement and potential development of additional modules tailored to the evolving challenges of research support professionals in diverse R&I environments.

Data management. The data collected will be used exclusively for the purposes outlined in the Objectives section and will be handled with strict confidentiality and care. All responses will be collected anonymously and processed to ensure that no personally identifiable information is retained. Any data that could potentially lead to the identification of an individual will be permanently and irreversibly removed during the data cleansing process.

The results of this research will contribute to the development of the Future Studies training materials under the MAPIT project.

All data will be stored securely, accessible only to authorised project personnel, and retained only for as long as necessary to fulfil the research objectives. After this period, the data will be safely deleted or archived in accordance with applicable data protection regulations and institutional policies. Participants' rights to access, correct, restrict or delete their personal data will be fully respected throughout the process.

Contact. Questions or complaints about the survey or about participation are directed to the research team at HÉTFA.

Questions

– I have read and understand the information provided above.

– Izmir Institute of Technology

– Stichting Hogeschool Utrecht

– Weglobal Danismanlik Anonim Sirketi

– Hétfa Research Institute

– KTO Karatay University

– Middle East Technical University



– ATAP Anadolu Teknoloji Arastirma Parki A.S.

– Tallinn University of Technology

– Institute for Future Research

4. How would you rate the relevance of the training material in relation to your institutional and professional needs? *(required)* Two dimensions, each rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with a "not applicable" option: knowledge, and relevance.

5. Were there any topics you felt were missing from the training material, based on your institutional needs or professional experience? If yes, please specify. *(required, free text)*

9.3 Annex 3: Institutional Future Studies Programme template

The template below is completed by each partner research performing organisation with its own descriptions and deadlines; the descriptions given here are examples. Month numbers run from the start of the institution's own programme cycle, not from the start of the MAPIT project.

ID	Action	Description	Outcome	Deadline
A1	Programme Assignments	Identify and formally assign the institutional programme coordinator, management sponsor, current peer-trainer, supporting staff and responsible units. Define roles, responsibilities, decision-making arrangements and internal communication channels.	Approved implementation team, role allocation and RPE implementation plan.	End of M1
A2	Surveys and Gap Assessment	Administer the institutional and individual RMA surveys. Analyse existing competencies, organisational structures, staff development needs and gaps against the expected RMA functions and programme objectives.	Institutional gap-assessment report and prioritised competency needs.	End of M2
A3	Development of Performance Tasks and Customisation of the Modular Training Programme	Develop practical performance tasks and their outcome rubrics through which participants will demonstrate competence. Select, adapt and sequence the modular training content in accordance with the gap assessment, institutional	Partner-specific curriculum, customised learning pathway and approved set of performance tasks.	End of M3

ID	Action	Description	Outcome	Deadline
		context and participant profiles.		
A4	Enrolments and Release of Training Agendas	Select/Recruit and enrol participating personnel. Establish individual learning pathways, communicate participation requirements and release the detailed agenda for modular training, PLAs, study visits and assessment activities.	Confirmed participant cohort, baseline records and published annual training agenda.	End of M3
A5	Organisation of Peer Learning Activities and Study Visits	Plan and organise Peer Learning Activities and Study Visits with suitable host institutions and experienced research-management teams. Define learning objectives, participant responsibilities, agendas, documentation requirements and follow-up activities.	Completed PLAs and Study Visits, with participation records, learning reports and institutional adaptation recommendations.	M3–7
A6	Tracking of Modular Training Progress and Assessment of Performance Tasks	Monitor participant engagement, module completion and feedback. Provide peer-trainer support and assess the performance tasks against agreed criteria. Record individual progress and identify participants requiring additional support.	Training-completion records, assessed performance tasks, participant feedback and progress report.	M4–8; final assessment by end of M8
A7	Selection of New Peer-Trainers	Identify participants who have successfully completed the required modules and demonstrated	Formally selected and approved peer-trainers for the next programme cycle.	End of M9

ID	Action	Description	Outcome	Deadline
		the necessary competencies as best in their class. If they have shown the capacity to train and mentor future cohorts, confirm their willingness and availability as new peer-trainers. Provide institutional endorsement and prep for short-term secondments.		
A8	Implementation of Secondments for the Peer-Trainers	Arrange short-term secondments for the selected peer-trainers in experienced research-performing organisations. Define individual learning objectives, host supervision arrangements, expected outputs and knowledge-transfer responsibilities.	Completed secondments, peer-trainer learning reports and institutional improvement or knowledge-transfer plans.	M9–11
A9	Evaluate, Institutionalise and Renew	Evaluate programme delivery, learning outcomes and institutional effects. Integrate the resulting materials, performance tasks, templates, lessons and procedures into the institutional knowledge repository and staff-onboarding system. Revise the programme and approve the next annual cycle.	Annual evaluation report, updated institutional training package, embedded knowledge resources and approved plan for the following cycle.	End of M12

Table 4 Actions of the in-house Future Studies Programme cycle

9.4 Annex 4: Action Card Library

Future Studies Programme • Organisational Development & Action Plans

Action areas and selectable actions consolidated from the MAPIT Action Card Library.

STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE

☐ Develop an institutional RM Strategy	☐ Define RM roles and responsibilities
☐ Create an annual RM planning cycle	☐ Establish an RM Advisory Group
☐ Define and monitor 3–5 RM KPIs	☐ Align RM priorities with institutional R&I strategy
☐ Map RM services against researcher needs	☐ Introduce regular RM reporting to leadership

PROCESSES & SERVICES

☐ Standardise workflows	☐ Create SOPs for recurring RM tasks
☐ Develop templates	☐ Introduce internal proposal review checkpoints
☐ Launch a Research Support Helpdesk	☐ Create a Research Support Service Catalogue
☐ Collect researcher satisfaction feedback	

KNOWLEDGE & DIGITAL TOOLS

☐ Build an RM Knowledge Repository	☐ Create a shared template library
☐ Introduce Lessons Learned meetings	☐ Develop onboarding materials for new RM staff
☐ Create an internal RM wiki	☐ Set up a funding opportunities calendar
☐ Develop a simple project dashboard	☐ Improve document archiving & handover routines

PEOPLE, SKILLS & NETWORKS

☐ Develop an annual, structured RM training plan	☐ Launch peer mentoring or buddy systems
☐ Organise job shadowing opportunities	☐ Create an internal Community of Practice
☐ Join EARMA, ASTP and national RM networks	☐ Organise peer-learning visits with another research offices
☐ Create short internal training sessions for researchers	☐ Strengthen negotiation, communication and leadership skills

IMPACT, IP & COLLABORATION

☐ Organise impact planning workshops	☐ Create a stakeholder engagement map
☐ Strengthen cooperation with TTO & communication units	☐ Introduce IP awareness sessions for researchers
☐ Track exploitation and uptake indicators	☐ Develop partnership profiles for key research areas
☐ Organise industry-academia networking events	☐ Build a database of strategic partners