

Chapter 5.27

Areas of Research Management and Administration in Austria

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Abstract

Austria has not yet established a single national organisation for research management and administration (RMA). Various research related institutions are organised in individual professional networks within their categories of organisational structure – public, private, and industry. Hence, the creation of a joint RMA association is a good aim to target in the near future. The obvious need of a strong networked community of RMAs across disciplines and organisational structures, especially in a setting of a growing global research arena, shall exemplify the development of such an Association of Research Managers and Administrators-Austria (ARMA-T). Furthermore, external factors play an increasingly important role in research development and RMAs. It depends on how their home organisations – universities, industry, and intermediaries – will understand the need for cooperation, platform building, and continuous development and professionalisation. Vision and foresight from several constituents and stakeholders will have to play a starring role as well as supporting the whole community. On top of it, international knowledge exchange helps to create those necessary conversations and networks for such a development.

Keywords: Austria; research management and administration; AUFOS; AURAM/ARGE FoFoe; OEPUK WG-RM; EFF; ARMA-T

The Austrian Research Ecosystem

The Austrian Research Ecosystem has a long-stemming tradition with the founding of the first university in the 14th century, University of Vienna¹ in 1365 as Alma Mater Rudolphina. For the longest time, there has been a stronghold of public university education and research, in alliance with the Austrian Academy of Sciences² founded in 1847 and other research institutions to follow suit. Furthermore, the Austrian research scene is also strongly driven by industry-led scientific development.

In recent decades, policy changes in the higher education landscape brought forward new creations of tertiary institutions. In addition to public research and scientific endeavours, a new environment took shape in various forms of new higher education institutions. Namely with the foundation of 21 universities of applied sciences (FHs) since the early 1990s, and with the installation of the private university law in 1999, a further 16 private higher education and research institutions. Furthermore, several industry-led research centres, as well as a series of public–private–partnership organisations mainly focussing on fundamental research (LBG,³ CDG,⁴ ISTA,⁵ Vienna Biocenter/IMBA/IMP,⁶ etc.), were created. Governing bodies and organisations for research management thereof are now manifold; the University of Applied Sciences FFH-Forum, public universities' AURAM,⁷ industry-led AUFOS,⁸ or OEPUK⁹ for private universities are some of the examples and will be described in the next sections. The developments of new institutions, in parallel and coupled with a strong industrial driven research area, have also brought changes into the overall national research funding institutional structures, combined with a stronger focus on European and international cooperation since the late 1980s and early 1990s with Austria becoming a full member when joining the European Union (EU) in 1995.

In 2022, there are roughly 5,570 research executing institutions (including companies) as stated by Statistics Austria. The estimated research volume is EUR 14.15 billion, up 0.9% since 2020, consisting of roughly 32% public sources, roughly 50% industry-sponsored research, and the rest being international funding sources (Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research, n.d.).

The following institutions are the main Austrian public funding agencies:

The *Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)*¹⁰ is the national funding agency for industrial research and development in Austria. FFG was founded on

¹<https://www.univie.ac.at/en/>

²<https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/1/austrian-academy-of-sciences>

³<https://lbg.ac.at/?lang=en>

⁴<https://www.cdg.ac.at/en/>

⁵<https://ist.ac.at/en/home/>

⁶<https://www.viennabiocenter.org/about/vbc-at-a-glance/who-is-here-members/institute-of-molecular-biotechnology-imba/>

⁷Arbeitsgemeinschaft Forschungsförderung (ARGE FoFoe)/Austrian Universities' Research Managers and Administrators Network (AURAM), www.forschungsservice.at.

⁸AUFOS – Ausseruniversitäre Forschungsorganisationen und Services non-university research organisations grant office services.

⁹OEPUK – WG-RM – Austrian Conference of Private Universities, Working Group on Research Management.

¹⁰<https://www.ffg.at/en>

1 September 2004 (pursuant to the FFG Act on establishing a research promotion agency, Federal Law Gazette I No. 73/2004). FFG is wholly owned by the Republic of Austria, represented by the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology (BMK) and the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW). As a provider of funding services, however, the FFG also works for other national and international institutions. FFG offers free training and consulting for the Austrian RMA community through specific workshops or information multiplier events in research organisations (as members of AURAM, OEPUK, AUFOS, or other stakeholders).

The *Austrian Fund for Scientific Research (FWF)*,¹¹ founded in 1969, is the national funding body for basic research programmes. The purpose of the FWF is to support the ongoing development of Austrian science and basic research at a high international level. In this way, the FWF makes a significant contribution to cultural development, to the advancement of our knowledge-based society, and thus to the creation of value and wealth in Austria.

The *Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft (aws)*¹² is an Austrian federal development and financing bank for the promotion and financing of companies. The bank provides around €1 billion (2008) in development aid, mainly as grants, loans, and guarantees to finance projects in the value of almost €11 billion. aws is focussed on four different areas: technology and innovation, equity and capital markets, promotion and financing, as well as services for research and development management. According to the OECD (2021c), official development assistance from Austria increased by 8.7% to EUR 1.5 billion, representing 0.31% of gross national income.

Evolution of the Profession in Austria

The Austrian RMA Community

As initially stated, there is no formal organisation that ties those working as RMAs in public, industry-led, private institutions in Austria. What follows is an overview of the RMA communities for the main categories of research institutions – public, industry-led, private, and applied.

AURAM – ARGE FoFoe

Legal changes in the late 1990s into the early 2000s mentioned above led to a multitude of new tasks for Austrian universities, for example, research evaluation, knowledge transfer and exploitation of inventions, research marketing, and the development of research databases.

In reaction to these new developments, the AURAM was first established in 2001 in a bottom-up initiative, led by Medical University Graz. AURAM was set up as and still remains as an informal network of university employees who work in research support and management units at public universities, offering space for exchange of experience, best practice, and discussion of new developments in the funding landscape and research management. Today, general AURAM meetings are held twice a year, and meetings of working groups take place as needed.

¹¹ <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/>

¹² <https://www.aws.at/>

Over the years, several topics initially covered by AURAM warranted the establishment of specialised networks, dedicated, for example, to technology transfer or research information systems. At the heart of AURAM is support, information, and management of and for researchers in research projects funded from national and European programmes. In addition, contract research, and the growing number of topics surrounding these projects, for example, open and citizen science, gender dimensions in research, or Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) are also covered.

AUFOS

In 2015, RMAs of the eight biggest non-university research organisations met for the first time for an informal meeting and knowledge exchange. Years later, the group grew to a total of 12 organisations working informally and on a voluntary basis. The community has grown to 40 RMAs, dealing with organisational issues (internal processes and structures for research management) and best practices in the management of funding programmes (national and EU). The portfolio of exchanges ranges from legal and financial issues, discussion on ethical and open science matters to issues surrounding interinstitutional networking. The AUFOS community includes organisations that are mainly active in basic research (e.g. ÖAW Austrian Academy of Sciences and ISTA Institute of Science and Technology Austria) or in applied research (e.g. AIT Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH and Joanneum Research).¹³ Austrian research organisations accounted for 25% of all Austrian participations in the past 8th Framework Programme, HORIZON 2020.¹⁴ This can also be seen as an indicator of the high-quality work of RMAs in supporting their researchers, in terms of the success rate of participation.

OEPUK WG-RM

Private universities are currently active in 12 working groups with the aim of tackling the challenges and developments in the sector, comprehensively across universities. With the latest addition in 2020, the OEPUK has established its own RM WG. Its members, RMAs representing the 17 institutions, meet three times per year to foster knowledge exchange, learn, and establish guidelines for cooperation. The general purpose is to make RMAs' working structures more efficient by sharing and exchanging good practices.

FFH¹⁵

Creating impact – jointly becoming effective. The motto of the latest annual forum of over 340 RMAs from 21 FHs – universities of applied sciences – is showcasing the different dimensions which are important factors in this university sector: cooperation and impact for joint resilient research with a strong focus on industry uptake and application, with a local focus and cross-border impact. This vehicle for the exchange of knowledge started over 15 years ago, with FHs in existence since the mid-1990s, strongly supporting the network is the Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences, which was established in 1996.

¹³ ÖAW, ISTA, AIT, and Joanneum Research.

¹⁴ FFG: Monitoring Report to Austrian Performance in H2020, March 2021.

¹⁵ FFH – Forschungsforum der FHs – Research Forum of Universities of Applied Sciences; <https://www.fhstp.ac.at/en/newsroom/news/research-forum-of-universities-of-applied-sciences>

Austrian RMA Demographics

The RAAAP-3 data (Kerridge, Dutta, et al., 2022) shine a little light on the RMA demographic in Austria, but with only 41 responses cannot be seen as representative. However, of those responses 30 (73%) identified as female, consistent with the picture for Europe as a whole where the profession is predominantly female (77%, of $n = 1,004$). In terms of age range, only 7 (17%) Austrian responses were in the 25–34 bracket, with none under 25; the European picture is similar with 14% (of $n = 992$). At the other end of the spectrum, only 15% of Austrian responses were 55+ with the European-wide picture being 12%. The gender and age of Austrian RMAs appear typical of the overall European picture.

The Future of RMA in Austria

As stated in the beginning, the creation of an ‘ARMA-T’ consisting of representatives of existing professional RMA organisations might be the most beneficial path towards platform establishment, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning. Hence, streamlining activities, uptaking platform thinking, learning, sharing, and taking into consideration a global setting of research management is the name of the game.

Summary

In this chapter, we presented the backdrop of RMAs in Austria as well as a scope for a necessary development: a joint professional society of research managers and administrators in Austria – the ARMA-T comprising various organisations and networks of research managers from public, private, and industry-led institutions. We have presented the current status of the research ecosystem and hinted at possible scenarios for research management in a global future – hence, the need for a globally interconnected international community of RMAs.

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