



UTRECHT NETWORK 11TH RESEARCH MANAGERS' WORKSHOP

Simplify to Amplify

Practical Ways to Streamline Research Management

2 – 4 June 2026
University of Latvia, Riga



The Research Managers Task Force cordially invites you to attend the 11th Annual Research Managers Workshop, to be held at the Campus of the University of Latvia on **2 to 4 June 2026**.

Venue: House of Science, University of Latvia
Jelgavas iela 3, Rīga, LV-1004
Level 8, Room 804
[View on Google Maps](#)

The programme will focus on the theme **“Simplify to Amplify: Practical Ways to Streamline Research Management”**, offering practical insights into how research management and support can be made more efficient, effective and impactful. Sessions will address key topics such as lump-sum funding in practice, AI applications in research support and proposal assessment, research and impact evaluation, international collaboration under changing geopolitical conditions, and opportunities to strengthen collaboration within the Utrecht Network.

PROGRAM

DAY 0: MONDAY 01/06/2026

07:30 pm Optional welcome dinner (at own expenses),
Venue: [Folkklubs ALA Pagrabs](#)

DAY 1: TUESDAY 02/06/2026

08:30 **Registration & Welcome Coffee**

09:00 **SESSION I**

Welcome & Participant Introductions

Chaired by: Lina Ekere – University of Latvia

Prof. Guntars Kitenbergs, Vice-Rector for Research - **Welcome to the University of Latvia**

Antra Boča, Director of the Research Office, University of Latvia – **How cultural context influences research management**

09:20 **Tour de table**

Each participant briefly introduces their institution and role (max. 5 minutes per organisation) and shares one example of a process or practice that has been simplified at their institution.

10:30 Coffee break

10:45 **SESSION I (continuation)**: summary of key themes emerging from the tour de table

11:15 **SESSION II**

Lump Sum Funding in Higher Education

Policy framework, lessons from pilot projects, and implications for institutions.

Ulrich Genschel, Head of Sector, European Commission (DG RTD)

12:00 Lunch

13:00 **Institutional Experiences with Lump Sum Projects**

Facilitated discussion among member universities, focusing on challenges and good practices

SESSION III

AI in Research Management

- 13.30 **AI in Research Support: Implementation Choices and Practical Lessons**
Dana Behmane & Lauris Borodovskis, University of Latvia
- 14.00 (30 min) **AI Solutions in Research Management Systems: Successes and Challenges**
Mārite Seile, University of Latvia
- 14.30 (1 h) **AI in Proposal Development and Impact Assessment**
Paulo Soncini, EU Research Development Officer at the ADAPT Centre
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Facilitated Discussion: AI Opportunities and Limitations in Research Management
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 15:45 (2 h) **Guided tour of Riga**
- 17.45 **Free time**
- 19:30 **Networking Dinner** (Venue - tbc)

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY 03/06/2026

- 08.30 Welcome Coffee

SESSION IV

Research and Impact Assessment

- 09:00 **Institutional Approaches to Research Impact Management**
Vera Barron, Manchester Metropolitan University

Facilitated exchange of experiences among participants, focusing on challenges and good practices
- 09:50 (30 min) **Implementing Impact Assessment in Practice: Industry Perspective**
Gert V. Balling, Novo Nordisk
- 10.20 Coffee Break
- 10.35 Discussion and examples from member universities - moderated by Gert V. Balling

- 10:55 **Research Impact and AI: Emerging Developments (COARA Perspective)**
Hiwa Målen, University of Bergen
- 11.30 Discussion and examples from member universities – moderated by
Hiwa Målen, University of Bergen
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 **Aligning EU Funding and Impact Frameworks: Implications for Research Management and Leadership**
Luca Polizzi, United Nations University – CRIS
- Discussion and examples from member universities – moderated by
Luca Polizzi
- 13.50 Coffee Break
- 14:00 **SESSION V**
- Visits to research Centres and Laboratories** - from Infrastructure to Impact
Chaired by: Astra, Lina (University of Latvia)
- Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia** – research, conservation, and science outreach
- 17:00 **SESSION VI**
- Research Managers Task Force Meeting**
Chaired by: Emmanuel Babatunde, University of Bergen
Only for Task Force members and organizing committee
- 20:00 **SOCIAL PROGRAM (😊)**
Evening Social Programme – Dinner (Venue - tbc)

DAY 3: THURSDAY 04/06/2026

- 08.30 Welcome Coffee
- 09:00 **SESSION VII**
- Proposal Writing & Evaluation in Practice**
Hands-on session on:
- structured proposal drafting
 - evaluation criteria and “red team” review approaches
 - AI-supported tools for proposal development
- Elena Sultana, University of Malta

10:00

SESSION VIII

International Cooperation – Options and Restrictions

Chaired by: Antra Boča, University of Latvia

The Situation in Latvia's Cyberspace: Implications for Research and Academia

10:45

Coffee break

11:00

SESSION IX

Strengthening Collaboration within the Utrecht Network

Interactive Session: Joint Initiatives, Staff Exchanges, Shared Tools & Thematic Cooperation.

12:00

SESSION X

Outlook for the future and Evaluation

Chaired by: Emmanuel Babatunde, University of Bergen

Reflection on the workshop and priorities for the next year.

12:45

Lunch and end of the workshop

13:45

Departure of Participants

[Registration link](#)

Hotels

Hotels Near Academic Centre / House of Science (Jelgavas iela 3)

1) Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Daugava Riga – close to the National Library & House of Science

Approx. ~ € 115 / night (breakfast included) [expedia](#)

2) Park Inn by Radisson Riga Valdemara – well-reviewed mid-range option near the Daugava River [expedia](#)

Approx. ~ € 110 / night (breakfast included)

Hotels in Central Riga / Old Town

3) Radisson Blu Latvija Conference & Spa Hotel, Riga – central, business-friendly hotel [Radisson Hotels](#)

Approx. ~ € 130 / night (breakfast included)

4) Radisson Hotel Old Town Riga – excellent central location

Approx. from ~ € 120 / night (breakfast included)

5) Radisson Blu Elizabete Hotel – excellent central location

Approx. from ~ € 160 / night (breakfast included) [expedia](#)

6) Pullman Riga Old Town – well-reviewed, stylish Old Town hotel [expedia](#)

Approx. from ~ € 140/ night (breakfast included)

7) Hilton Garden Inn Riga Old Town – comfortable, good value in Old Town [expedia](#)

Approx. from ~ € 140 / night (breakfast included)

8) Wellton Riverside SPA Hotel – central with spa, excellent reviews [expedia](#)

Approx. from ~ € 125/ night (breakfast included)

9) Neiburgs Hotel – highly rated boutique option in Old Town [expedia](#)

Approx. from ~ € 115/ night (breakfast included)

Premium / Higher-End Options (central Riga)

10) Grand Hotel Kempinski Riga – luxury option in historic centre [expedia](#)

Approx. from ~ € 290 / night (breakfast included)