

EIRMA'S INSIGHTS IN 2012

Advice, experience and insights from leading R&D practitioners gathered at EIRMA meetings in 2012



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The European Industrial Research Management Association was formed to enable senior R&D practitioners to share their knowledge and expertise openly, in a spirit of mutual support. That founding principle was much in evidence during EIRMA's meetings in 2012, at which members discussed key issues in current R&D management. Their discussions have been reflected in a series of *EIRMA Insights*, short reports that distil each discussion into a narrative explaining the issue, reporting how colleagues are addressing it, and drawing out some conclusions and immediate Action Points.

2012's meetings, which included, among others, the Representatives' Round Table, the Annual Conference, four Special Interest Groups, a Learning Group, 'EU Meets EIRMA' and three general Round Tables, were each closely tailored to a specific theme. Considering the year as a whole, however, it is clear that several topics are of particular concern to R&D practitioners at the moment: how to strengthen collaboration at all levels; how to improve management effectiveness; dealing with the evolution of R&D roles; managing IP issues in an increasingly collaborative environment; and the impact of technology on knowledge protection and sharing.

COLLABORATION

Managing effective collaboration was a concern at every level. The first meeting of the [Special Interest Group on Intellectual Asset Management](#), held in Vienna in June, looked at ways to build effective collaborations with the start-ups from which so many disruptive technologies and processes flow. The meeting considered the best ways to bridge the gulf between large and small, old and new, and how to manage the IP implications of such deals.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight on this event](#).

A [Round Table Meeting in Paris in April](#) took a step up the ladder from start-ups by looking at ways to use business processes to access technology from larger organisations. Members discussed the use of business processes such as corporate venturing, mergers and acquisitions, and alliances to discover and access technology, and as a way of experimenting in new sectors.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight](#).

The second 'EU Meets EIRMA' meeting happened in Brussels in April. It is expected to become a [regular series of meetings](#) between EIRMA members and senior European Commission policymakers. The focus this year was collaboration at a much broader scale, between the public and private sectors in Europe, and especially the Commission's role as an enabler of this.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight on 'EU Meets EIRMA'](#).

Finally, at the [Annual Conference in Istanbul in May](#), members discussed how to build the dialogues and complex webs of relationships that are now necessary in order to develop attractive new products and services. The discussion ranged from metals recycling to the structure of future cities, and also, thanks to the Focus Group project, looked at the way in which Turkey and Brazil are developing their innovation infrastructures.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight on the Annual Conference](#).

MANAGEMENT

Good managers are always trying to update their skills and EIRMA members are no exception to this rule.

The [Representatives' Round Table in St Paul de Vence in January](#) discussed ways in which companies can change the structure of their organisations and their underlying strategies to make R&D more effective. Strategies discussed included taking on work from outside the traditional scope of R&D, creating new roles for R&D line managers, evolving the R&D function as companies globalise, and using strategies such as corporate venturing to enable more effective R&D.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight on the RRT.](#)

A [Round-Table Meeting in Zurich in March](#) considered ways to measure the output, value and progress of the R&D function. It found that there are many ways to measure R&D, such as in terms of its scientific success, technical success or revenue generated, but that each type of measurement exerts a selective pressure on the organisation. Users should be aware of this, and also prepared to evolve their measures as a project progresses.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight.](#)

Finally, a [Learning Group held in Paris in September](#) looked at applying lean principles to R&D.

The meeting explored whether lean management techniques, developed for controlling production lines, are appropriate for the much less deterministic work of R&D, learnt about the five basic principles of a lean strategy, and discussed the realities of putting them in to practice.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight.](#)

THE PERSONNEL ANGLE

R&D is undertaken by people, and the better they are managed the more effective they are likely to be. EIRMA hosted two activities that looked specifically at personnel issues in 2012.

A [Round Table Meeting in Brussels in November](#) looked at ways to adapt HR processes and strategies to the changing reality of R&D, focusing on issues such as attracting, motivating and retaining the best talent; making a distributed workforce more effective; and issues such as diversity and inclusiveness.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight.](#)

The Annual Conference was also used as a venue for presenting the results of three meetings held by EIRMA's Special Interest Group on Human (F)Actors in Innovation. The resultant EIRMA Insight discusses how companies can improve their capacity to innovate by developing a better understanding of human motivations and behaviour, understanding the way that the changing demands of industrial innovation are challenging individuals and companies, and discovering a structured process for getting the most from people.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight.](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

IP has already featured in this round-up of EIRMA's 2012 activities, in the context of building effective collaborations with start-ups. The Special Interest Group on Intellectual Asset Management also took an explicit look at using IP to share, as well as shield, knowledge, during [its second meeting of the year held in Toulouse in November 2012](#).

The meeting discussed the way in which the role of IP is evolving as R&D becomes increasingly collaborative, from being primarily a tool for controlling the use of knowledge into a tool that can also be used to promote the sharing of that knowledge. Working in this more flexible way takes a new set of skills that many IP managers may not have and will have to develop if they are going to succeed in a world of sharing, as well as shielding, knowledge.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight](#).

This SIG also ran a working group on managing IP risk in industrial collaboration over the past years, and crystallised its findings in another EIRMA Insight, this time thinking through the IP issues involved in working with partners to develop new technologies. The resultant guidelines cover issues such as what to do to protect your IP before you start collaboration, how to manage and protect your IP during a collaborative project, and why it is important to define how IP is handled after a project has ended.

Members can download [here](#)  [this dedicated EIRMA Insight](#).

NEW CHALLENGES

The R&D function is always evolving, but new technology is bringing new challenges. In 2012, these new challenges fell most heavily upon the knowledge management function, which is having to cope with rapidly changing information technology and rapidly changing attitudes to knowledge sharing, secrecy and privacy.

In the first [Special Interest Group on Knowledge Management meeting of the year, held in Paris in March](#), members considered the impact of cloud computing technologies on their discipline. Cloud computing should bring two key benefits - a better infrastructure for sharing information, and an easier way to access domain expertise - if concerns about the security of information held on cloud servers can be overcome. With Generation Y entering the workforce with different attitudes to sharing information, knowledge managers will have to recognise that their ultimate protection comes through trust.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight](#).

The second [SIG meeting, held in Brussels in November](#), looked more closely at this issue of knowledge management and human behaviour in a digital world, discussing topics such as how to choose the right tools for online collaboration, six steps to ensuring that introducing a new sharing technology leads to more effective knowledge sharing, and how to build effective online virtual teams.

Members can download [here](#)  [the EIRMA Insight](#).

Members will continue to share their concerns and discuss the burning issues on R&D management in 2013. The full programme of EIRMA events for **2013** is available [here](#).

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