

Russian-Speaking Research Diaspora: Experience and Stimulus to Cooperate with Russia

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Russian Government Approach

- **Goals** of collaboration with Diaspora:
 - Involve them in expert evaluation of proposals and projects to make reviews more objective
 - Conduct joint research projects to make outcomes more visible and of higher quality
 - Involve Diaspora in creation of new institutional units (labs, technology transfer offices, etc.)

Initially idea was to bring Diaspora back to Russian permanently

Later focus shifted to mutually beneficial collaboration

Key Government Initiatives

- **2009 – current** – Diaspora participate as consultants in research projects (Rosnano, Ministry of Education and Science - MoES, Russian Science Foundation)
- **2009 - 2013** –research projects led by Diaspora (MoES)
- **2010 – current** – creation of new labs at Russian universities by world leading researchers (MoES)
- **2011 – current** – inviting Diaspora as professors to Skoltech (MIT model)
- **2014 – current** – creation of new interdisciplinary labs chaired by RASA members (financed through 5-top100 Project)

Research Projects Led by Diaspora: Goals and Conditions

Goals:

- Sustainable and effective interactions with Russian researchers working abroad temporarily or permanently,
- **Integrate Diaspora members into Russian science,**
- Employ their experience, knowledge and skills for development of Russian science, education, and high technologies.

Conditions:

- 1.7 billion RUR for 2009-2013,
- Diaspora should spend at least 2 months per year in Russia, during 2 years

Research Projects Led by Diaspora: Assessing Results

- Impact of invited scholars (**based on self-assessment**): **“idea generators”**, better training of graduate students, introduction of new research techniques to Russian scholars.
- Impact of invited scholars (**based on opinion of Russian scientists**): **introduction of new research techniques**
- Rough estimate of results: average citations per publication within this project was 7.7 whereas a similar indicator for Russia as a whole is 5.46 (data from HSE)

Creation of New Labs in Russian Universities by World Leading Researchers

- 160 new labs are established. Financing – up to 150 million RUR for 3 years – **about 5 million USD** (since 2012 – up to 90 million RUR for 3 years and co-financing is required)
- PI should spend at least 4 months per year in Russia
- **35.6% of labs are chaired by Diaspora members**
- Result: for 2010-2014, 2845 articles published in journals indexed in Web of Science. No data on their citations and distribution by fields.
- Qualitative results: research culture has changed, Western ethical standards introduced, new research directions emerged.

Creation of New Labs: Criticism from Diaspora

- First reactions were skeptical. Later attitudes have changed to more positive.
- Major criticism: bureaucracy, way money are spent, **lack of researchers in certain fields**, and qualification level of Russian researchers.

«I have to admit that in the University of San Diego alone we have five times more experts on bioinformatics than there are in whole of Russia. This is not only my opinion but also an opinion of leading Russian experts with whom I have talked about it” (translation from Russian)

- Created labs are usually valued by Diaspora and thus the common claim is to guarantee their financing beyond promised 3-5 years.

Creation of New Labs: Anecdotal Evidence of Attitudes in Russia

- No surveys were conducted to find out attitudes to Diaspora's activities within Russian research community. This attitude may be judged based on interviews of Russian scholars in press and opinion blogs.
- Criticism is more common than positive opinions.
- **Major comments:**
 - Diaspora is too expensive (high salary)
 - Its input is highly questionable
 - They left the country in difficult times and are back when Russia got money to pay them

It is not an easy relationship

Diaspora at Skoltech

- By February 2016 – total 74 professors from which 35.1% - from Diaspora
- Applicants for positions of Professor in 2015:
 - from abroad (without Russian-speaking) – 54
 - from Russia – 36
 - from Diaspora – 23 (20%)
- Who are applicants? Mostly post-docs after 2-3 terms (> 40 years old)
- *The share of applications from Diaspora is increasing*

Survey of Russian-Speaking Research Diaspora

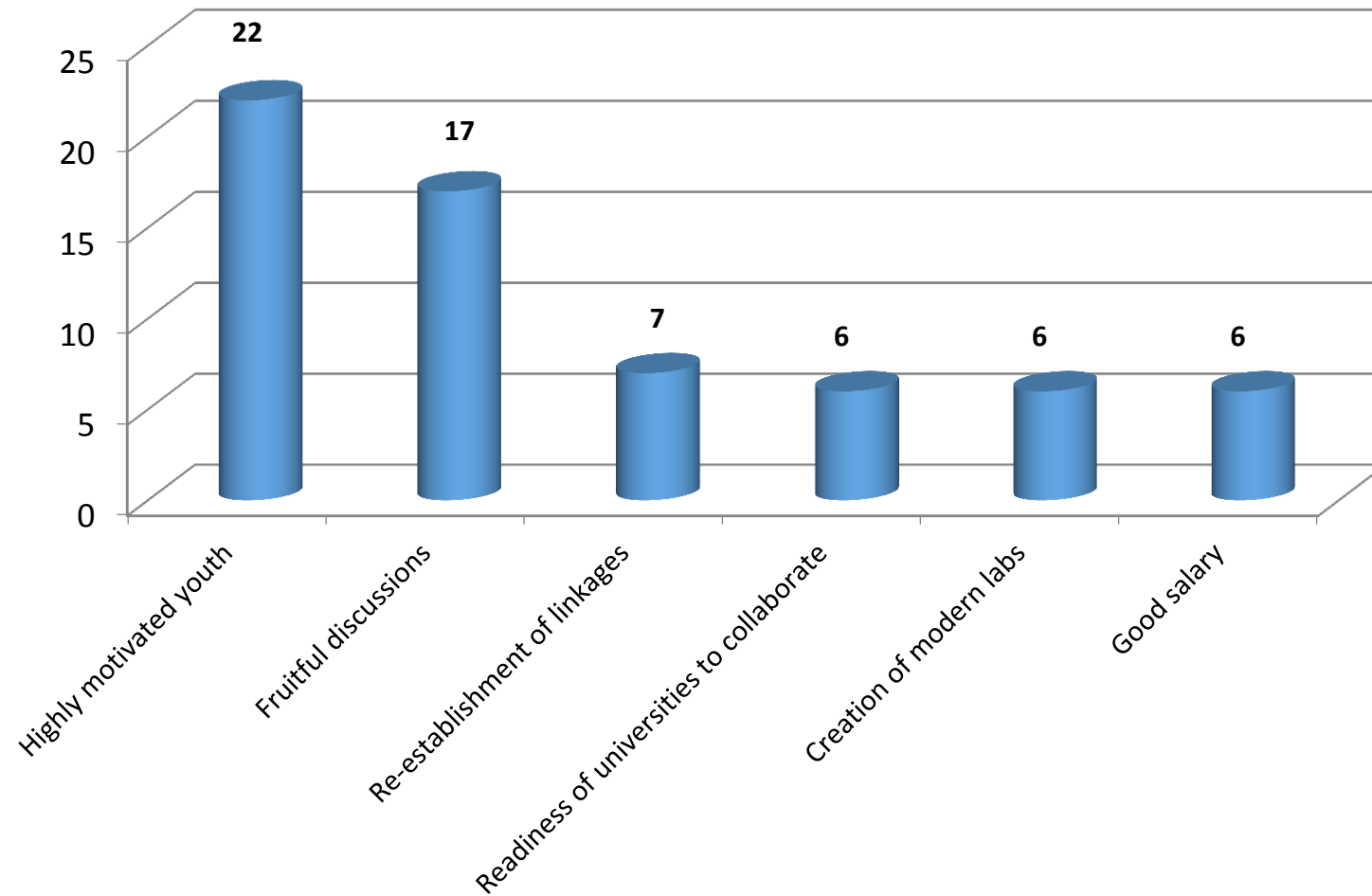
February-March 2015 survey of 150 respondents

Some characteristics:

- 97.3% left country >10 years ago
- 87.4% - from natural sciences, 8.6% - social sciences and humanities, 4% - engineering
- 32% USA, 12.7% Germany, 8.7% France, 18% other European countries
- 72% in universities, 50% professors
- Most of respondents participated in government initiatives, i.e. represent *active Diaspora*

Positive Aspects of Collaboration with Russia

(most frequent answers)



What Is Research Diaspora Ready to Do in Russia?

Type of Activity	Number of respondents
Teaching	69
Joint research projects (including international)	63
Training of graduate students	22
Expert work	17
Reviewing articles, books	13
Organizing conferences/workshops in Russia	10

What Is Research Diaspora Ready to Do Without Compensation? (top 5 most frequent answers)

Type of Activity	Number of respondents
Training of graduate students	97
Reviewing of grant applications	89
Short-term teaching	88
Participation in discussions concerning Russia's strategic development in science	88
Participation in editorial boards of Russian scientific journals	83

Major Obstacles for Cooperation

- Bureaucracy
 - organization of work,
 - reporting procedures,
 - material (infrastructural) support of research
- Lack of financing
- Inefficient system of funding research (budget restrictions)

Stimulus for Cooperation

- Diaspora is active and ready to collaborate on different occasions and issues but *not to return back permanently*
- Financial benefits is not the leading stimulus for cooperation
- Exchange of ideas and attracting talented youth are major stimulus
- In 2016 joint Research Group was established by the Ministry of Education and Science and RASA (Russian-Speaking Academic Science Association) to identify new activities / directions for collaboration