

Opportunities and challenges of EU-Russian scientific co-operation: lessons learned from INTAS

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Training Course – RUSERA EXE

Yuri MELNIKOV
Scientific Officer



INTAS aisbl in liquidation
International Association for the promotion of co-operation with scientists from
the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union (NIS)

58/8 Avenue des Arts, B - 1000 Brussels
T: +32 2 549 01 11 - F: +32 2 549 01 56
info@intas.be - www.intas.be

INTAS: 1993 – 2006



Mission & Activities

- Non-profit international association for the promotion of scientific cooperation between researchers in the EECA (12 former USSR republics) and its members (EC, EU-27 + 5 AS);
- Helps preserve scientific potential in the EECA countries through international cooperation

Actions & Policy

- Supporting *multilateral partnerships* between research institutes, universities & industry in EECA countries and the INTAS member states;
- Funding fundamental or applied research in *all areas of exact, natural and human sciences*;
- Offering *grants* aimed at enabling scientists to engage in international scientific cooperation, with particular *focus on young scientists*.

ACTIONS and POLICY



- Submission of *project proposals* and *individual grant applications* in the frame of calls and ***selection by peer review*** on the basis of scientific quality, good management, mutual benefit & socio-economic relevance;
- INTAS developed ***tailor-made, targeted programmes & instruments*** suited to country-specific needs in post-Soviet science;
- INTAS developed flexible ***co-funding arrangements***, involving partners both from INTAS member countries and EECA partner countries.

Instruments & Implementation



INTAS has provided **> 273 million Euro** funding for:

- Calls for research project proposals (**47** calls)

**Collaborative
Calls**

**Innovation
Grants**

Open Calls

Thematic Calls

Regional Calls

> 3,300 research projects & networks

> 18,800 teams of scientists

- Young Scientists Fellowships (**22** calls, **1389** YSFs)
- Conference Organization Grants and Conference Individual Attendance Grants (**281** Conferences & Workshops)
- Summer schools (**66**)
- Infrastructure actions (**33**)

INTAS calls for research projects



- Consortium should include at least two institutions from **two different** INTAS MSs and at least **one** institution from a EECA country (for **collaborative calls** – at least one institution from the partner state or organization)
- Duration of the project should be 12, 18, 24, 30 or 36 months
- Funding is arranged as an **advanced payment** (up to 50% of the budget) plus **annual payments** after the approval of the intermediate reports plus **final payment** (10%) after the approval of the final report
- Reimbursement of Labour Costs for EECA partners are arranged through **individual grants**
- For **collaborative calls**, the share of the partner organizations is paid by partner organization according to the convention concluded between INTAS and the partner organization

Questionnaire addressed to the Team Leaders of INTAS Research Projects (879 responses)



Impact of the project on your team / laboratory / institute:

0 = negligible; 1 = minor; 2 = significant; 3 = very important

Issue Score	0	1	2	3	Mean score
1. Bringing new ideas and objectives, techniques, ways of thinking	0.2%	6.8%	39.1%	53.9%	2.47
2. Helping to reach or consolidate a state of the art research level	0.7%	9.2%	40.7%	49.4%	2.39
3. Contributing to the establishment of equipment and techniques matching international standards	14.0%	26.9%	32.2%	26.9%	1.72
4. Contributing to the young scientists formation / scientific career	3.8%	16.6%	35.4%	44.2%	2.20
5. Helping to further submit projects through the EU framework programmes and/or other national and international programmes	5.7%	17.3%	39.5%	37.6%	2.09
6. Opening the way for future long-term and ambitious projects	1.1%	9.3%	37.7%	51.9%	2.40

Questionnaire addressed to the Team Leaders of INTAS Research Projects (824 responses)



Comments in free format can be generally summarized in terms of five groups of recommendations

<u>There is a need in specific instruments focused on scientific collaboration with the EECA countries. Existing FP7 instruments, although allowing broad involvement of third countries, including EECA, not always take into account specific features of these countries and, therefore, limit the possible benefits from EU-EECA scientific co-operation</u>	35.8%
<u>There is a need in specific instruments for small-scale targeted research projects, demanding less administrative effort</u>	19.8%
<u>There is a lack of programmes focused on fundamental research and covering all areas of research fields</u>	18.5%
<u>There is a need in specific instruments for scientific co-operation both inside Europe and involving third countries, which would demand much lower administrative effort compared to existing FP7 instruments. FP7 instruments are so effort-consuming at the stage of project proposal preparation, that many small universities and research institutes can not afford investing such effort</u>	16.0%
<u>There is a need in instruments promoting thematic bi- or three-lateral thematic scientific co-operation involving third countries, based on common simple, transparent, reliable and efficient organization scheme (project proposals submission, evaluation and project administration)</u>	9.9%

The INTAS YSF Programme



- *Directly addresses young scientists from EECA institutions*
- *Aimed in international training of young scientist fellows without interruption of their research activity at their EECA institutions*
- *Promotes future research of young scientists at EECA institutions*
- *Establishes new links and perspectives for collaboration between INTAS countries' and EECA institutions*
- *Allows flexible financial schemes, including Collaborative Calls with INTAS (CERN, DESY, GSI) and EECA (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Tomsk Region Universities, Ukraine) organisations and involvement of co-funding by INTAS institutions*
- **Complementarity to the FP Marie-Curie Programme**

INTAS YSF Programme: Basic Principles



- A scientist must be **35 years** of age or less
- A scientist must be a **citizen and permanent resident** of a EECA country
- The duration of an INTAS fellowship is **two years**, to carry out research in an EECA scientific institution and during **two visits** at a scientific institution in an INTAS member state
- INTAS fellowship grants consist of **a basic fellowship grant**, covering the full 2-year period, **a living cost allowance**, whilst in the INTAS countries, and **a travel grant**, covering the travel costs incurred
- Two types of fellowships: **PhD** (for young scientists already registered as working towards a PhD degree) and **PostDoc** (for young scientists holding a doctoral or candidate degree and wishing to continue their research at a EECA institution according to a work programme of high scientific quality). Since 2006 – also open for **PhD students of 2nd or 3rd year**, in order not to have a gap in their international scientific collaboration.

Questionnaire addressed to INTAS YSF grantees (233 responses)



The most important features of INTAS Young Scientists' Fellowship Programme as seen by current and former YSF grantees

Financial support to a young scientist when s/he is in the EECA country, allowing continuation of research at the EECA host institution	14.9%
Convenient financial scheme, including advanced payments and payments directly to the young scientist	11.1%
Minimal bureaucracy compared to other national and international programmes supporting young scientists' mobility	7.6%
Gaining experience in management of an independent research project	6.0%
Friendly, professional, flexible and efficient administration of fellowship grants by INTAS Secretariat	5.0%
Establishing/strengthening of collaboration between INTAS and EECA institutions involved in the YSF	4.7%
Strengthening of the young scientist's position at the EECA host institution	3.8%
Fair and professional evaluation procedure	3.5%
Practical independence from local EECA institution authorities	2.5%
Openness for young scientists with different backgrounds (PhD and PostDoc Fellowships) and from all scientific fields	1.9%
Availability for young scientists who have not yet established international contacts	1.3%

Most important features of INTAS YSF Programme and relevant problems as seen by the grantees' supervisors in INTAS' Member States (358 responses)



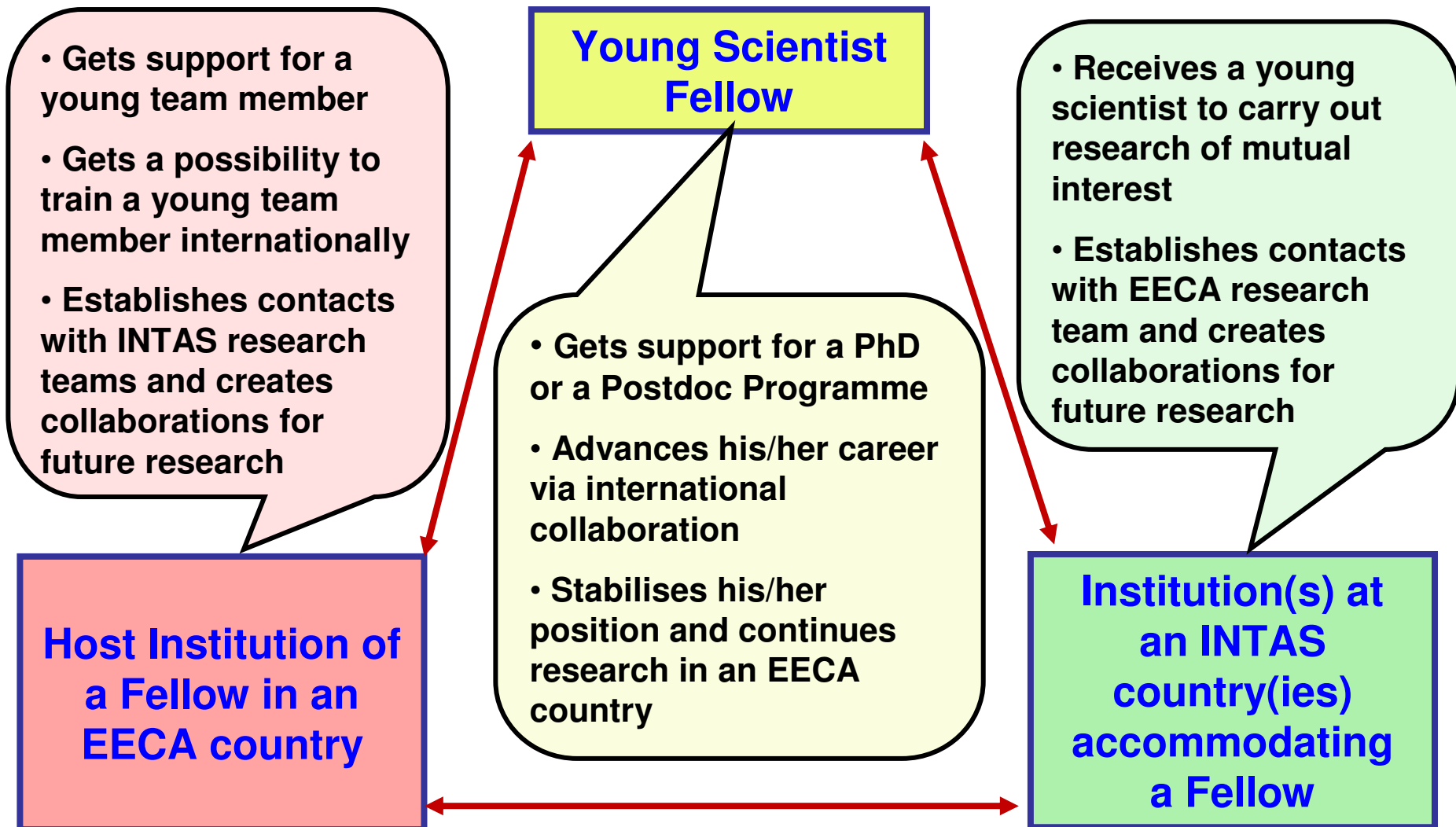
a. Programme objectives	
a1. Focus on young scientists from the EECA countries, providing the possibility to involve young scientists from the EECA countries in research at INTAS MS institutions, which probably would be not possible or much more difficult in the framework of other programmes	45
a2. Possibility to establish or strengthen long-term scientific collaboration between INTAS MS host institution and EECA home institution initiated by common supervision of the YSF project	44
a3. Possibility for European researchers to gain new ideas and techniques, not always present in Europe, through receiving highly qualified young scientists from EECA countries and establishing links with his/her home institution	33
a4. Focus on basic research, the freedom to pursue novel ideas and approaches	5
b. Programme structure and scope; application, selection and reporting procedures	
b1. Simple and short application procedure, minimal bureaucracy and administrative effort needed in preparation and running a project compared to other national and international programmes supporting young scientists	52
b2. Flexibility, dedication and aiming at real scientific contribution	25
b3. Friendly, professional, flexible and efficient administration of fellowship grants by INTAS Secretariat	24
b4. Efficient visiting scheme, including two visits and specific travel grants	18
b5. Fair, independent and professional evaluation procedure allowing selection of really dedicated and talented young scientists	13

Most important features of INTAS YSF Programme and relevant problems as seen by the grantees' supervisors in INTAS' Member States (358 responses)



c. Specific benefits for young scientists	
c1. Financial support to a YS when he/she is in an EECA country, allowing continuation of research at EECA host institution and establishing international cooperation between INTAS MS host institution(s) and young scientist's home institution in an EECA country	25
c2. Possibility for young scientists to get trained internationally and simultaneously to finish a PhD or terminate a PostDoc programme in their home country	18
c3. Possibility for young scientists to gain experience in management of an independent research project	6
c4. Possibility for young scientists to work at host institutions in different INTAS MSs	3
c5. Availability for young scientists who have not yet established international contacts	2
c6. Openness for young scientists with different background (PhD and PostDoc Fellowships) and from all scientific fields	2
d. Disadvantages and problems concerning INTAS YSF Programme	
d1. Insufficient funding for young scientists during their stay at INTAS MS institutions (especially in expensive cities like London, Paris, etc.)	30
d2. Absence of funds for INTAS MS host institutions, in particular no overheads or bench fees and no funds for INTAS supervisor's visits to YS' home institution in EECA country (which would essentially contribute to establishing/strengthening scientific collaboration between INTAS and EECA institutions)	21
d3. Too short a funding period in INTAS Member States	18
d4. Absence of funds for experimental work (consumables and small equipment) and for attending conferences	15

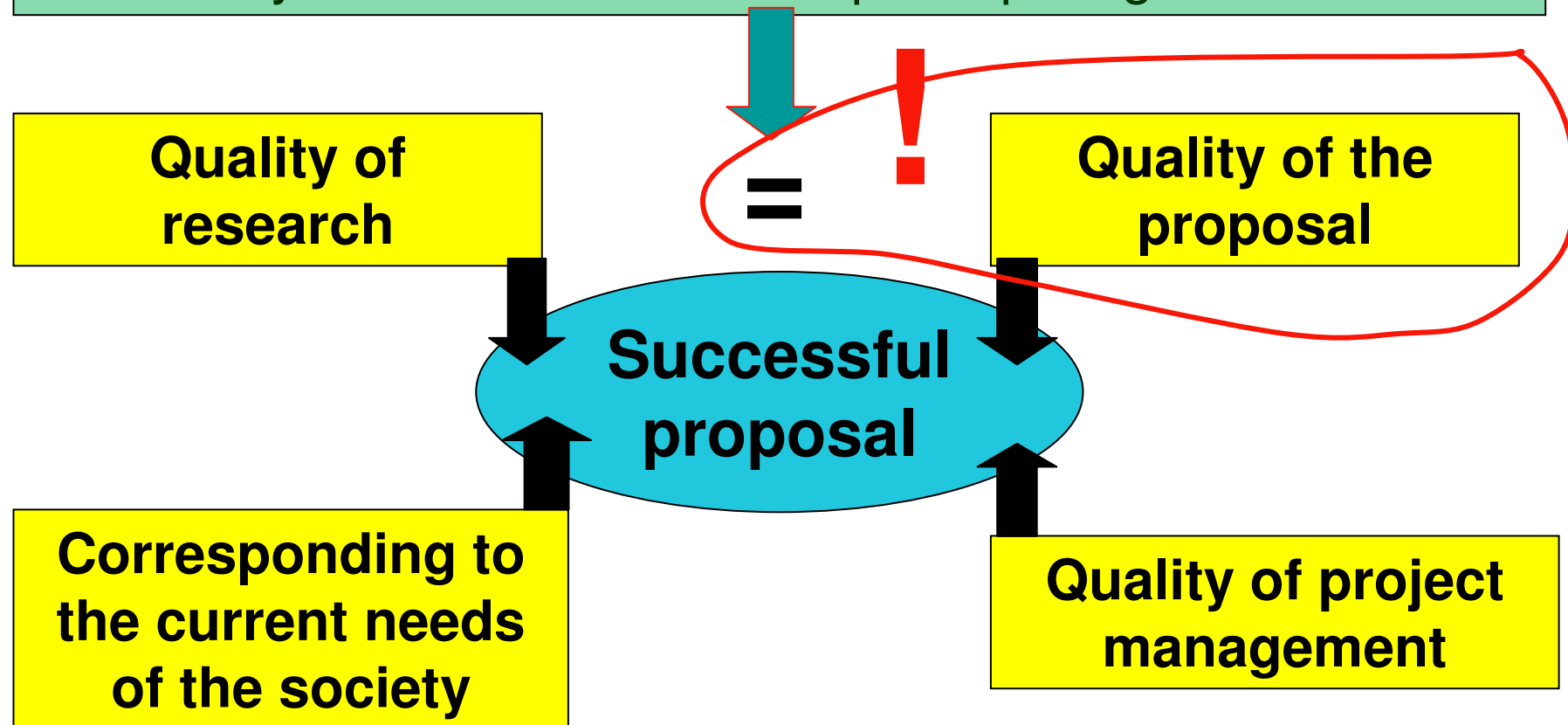
INTAS YSF Programme: Three lateral benefits



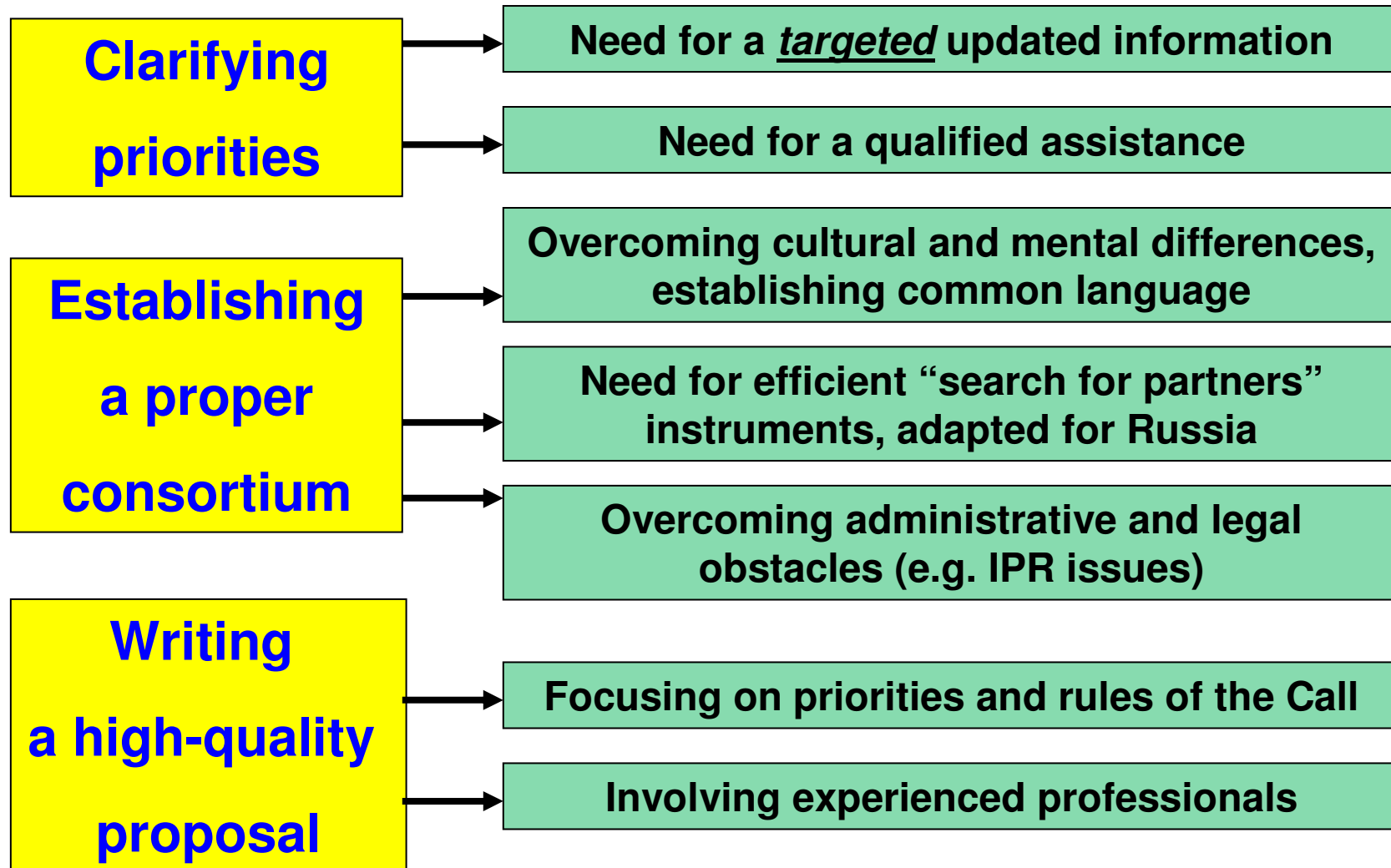
International R&D projects: components of success



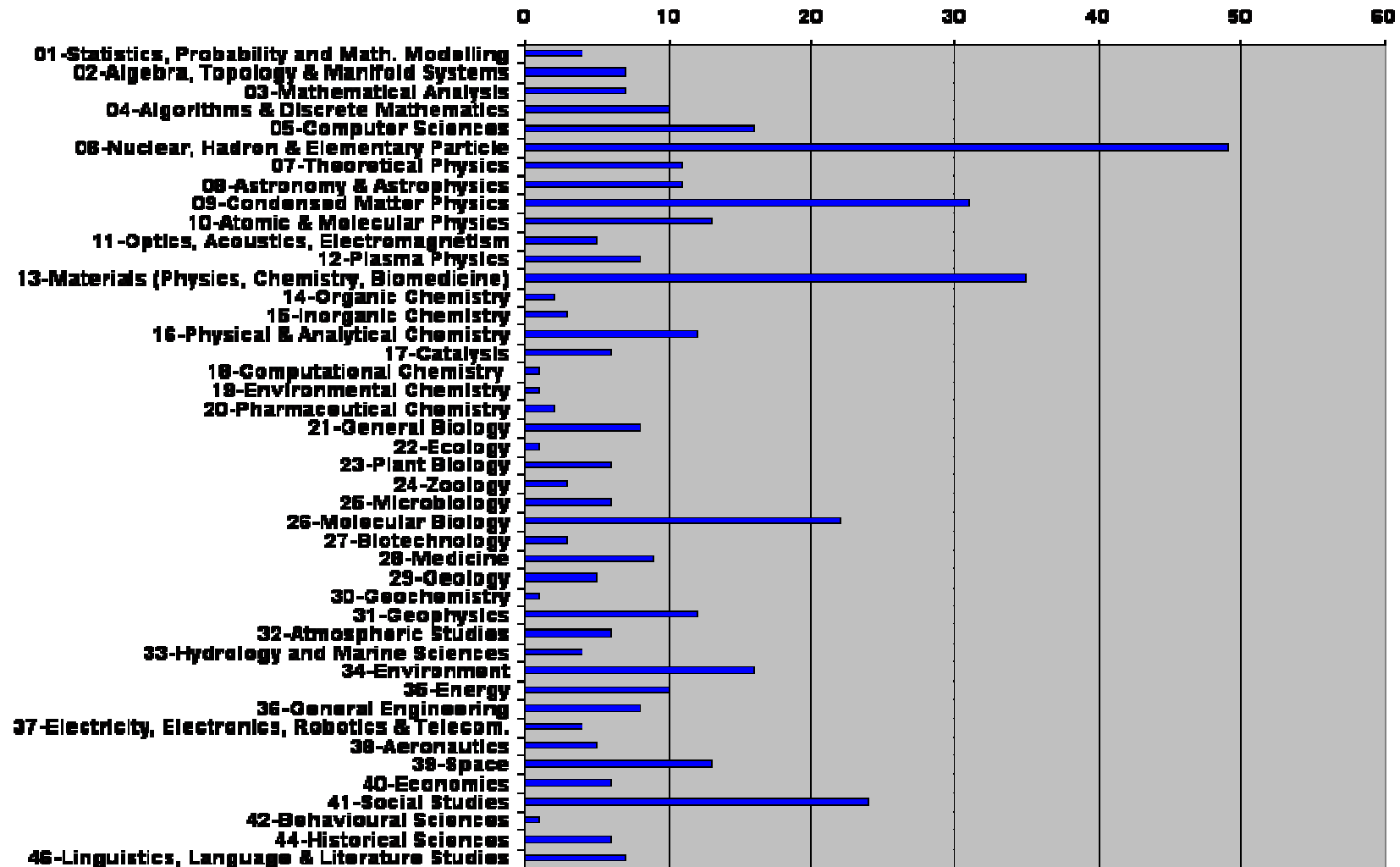
PURPOSE: To promote high-quality research demanded by the society for mutual benefits of participating countries



R&D co-operation involving Russian partners: specific features and challenges



Limits of a bottom-up approach: distribution of INTAS research grants per topic



THE INTAS MODEL: PLUS & MINUS



Most appreciated features of INTAS

(basing on external reports and recent surveys)

- ☺ ***Simple***, and (up to 2002), ***unique*** legal frame for multi-lateral cooperation with EECA countries;
- ☺ Flexible ***tailor-made instruments*** adapted to an evolving context and flexible ***funding arrangements***;
- ☺ ***Light structure***, with ***lean management***; minimal administrative efforts for proposal submission and project monitoring;
- ☺ ***Responsive*** to the needs of the scientific communities owing to: 1) a scientific body; 2) permanent contacts with INTAS scientific staff seconded by MS.

THE INTAS MODEL: PLUS & MINUS



Most criticized features of INTAS were addressing the policy rather than the tool, e.g.

- ☹️ Dominant *bottom-up approach*. Lack of common policy to steer trans-national activities;
- ☹️ Optimized for *fundamental research*; not well-suited for market-oriented technology development;
- ☹️ Lack of links with national programmes;
- ☹️ Lack of consolidation with other Community-funded programmes;
- ☹️ Lack of sustainability: (almost) fully dependent of Community funding.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE



In short, could be kept from the INTAS experience:

- ❖ The *flexibility, versatility and responsiveness*, which made INTAS easy-going and efficient for all stakeholders.
- ❖ In general, a *scientific culture* (scientific committee **and** staff), which made INTAS user-friendly for the scientific communities (West **and** East).
- ❖ The concept of a similar *tool* dedicated to *delivering services* for managing joint trans-national programmes, with particular focus on those opened to “third countries” (incl. EECA).
- ❖ More generally, the coordination of trans-national funding programmes may be realized through establishing a *dedicated programme management structure*, to provide expertise and administration of joint calls, using experience gained from INTAS and ongoing ERA-NET activities.

CONTACT



INTAS aisbl in liquidation
Avenue des Arts 58/8, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

info@intas.be

www.intas.be

Tel.: +32-2-5490111

Fax: +32-2-5490156