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consequences of this migration for Russia — mainly the links that grow up between Russian and Western labs as a result — there are signs that these links are under strain. “Most of us grew up, studied, and launched our careers in Russia and later benefited from support and political stability in the West,” says Valery Yakubovich, a sociologist and management scholar at the ESSEC business school in Cergy-Pontoise, France. “Maintaining connections is getting more difficult, but even more important in these turbulent times.”

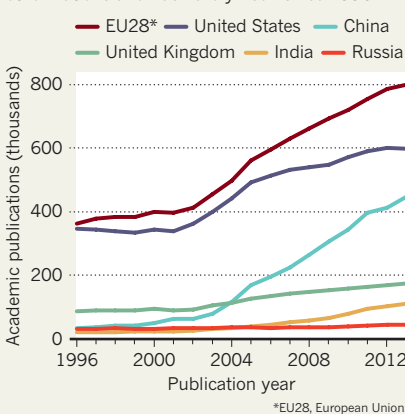
At the meeting there were suggestions that the political climate in Russia is interfering with attempts to lure foreign scientists to work there, and to encourage expatriates to return. In 2010, the government launched a ‘mega-grant’ programme worth 12 billion roubles (US\$428 million at the time) to attract scientists from abroad to do research at Russian universities.

But “why would anyone who lives a decent life abroad decide to do science in Russia at a time when fear and intimidation interfere with everything in this country?” asked Maxim Frank-Kamenetskii, a biomedical engineer at the University of Boston in Massachusetts. He fears that Russia risks falling back to Soviet-era scientific isolation.

Some say that the way to reverse the brain drain is to change things from within. Gelfand

### WIDENING GAP

Russia’s scientific output trails behind that of other nations and has hardly risen since 1996.



has previously joined Moscow rallies of young Russian scientists and members of the RAS. He called on scientists to have the “moral courage” to create a political environment in which science can flourish. “With a more pronounced civic stance, many bad things here might not happen,” he told the meeting.

But not everyone there saw discussion of politics as fruitful. Elena Grigorenko, an epidemiologist at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, and one of only four

women who succeeded in the competition for the mega-grants, chose not to discuss politics. “I’m a Russian citizen and I do care about politics, but it’s my choice when to express my opinions,” she said.

And at least one émigré sees the political situation in Russia as a reason to return. Artem Oganov, a Moscow-born computational materials designer formerly at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, relocated to the Russian capital this month. He will take up a faculty position at the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech), an English-language research university that was set up in 2011 in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. Oganov is keen to help Russia to restore its science output.

“I’m not a refugee, nobody treated me badly, and I am perfectly at peace with my country,” he says. “I do worry about the sanctions and the growing economic problems here, but I could never forgive myself if Russia needed me and I was not there.” ■

#### CORRECTION

The News Feature ‘Ebola’s lost ward’ (*Nature* **513**, 474–477; 2014) incorrectly stated that nurse Veronica Koroma contracted Ebola.