



International Research Training Groups (IRTGs) as a tool to establish best practice in cross-border doctoral education

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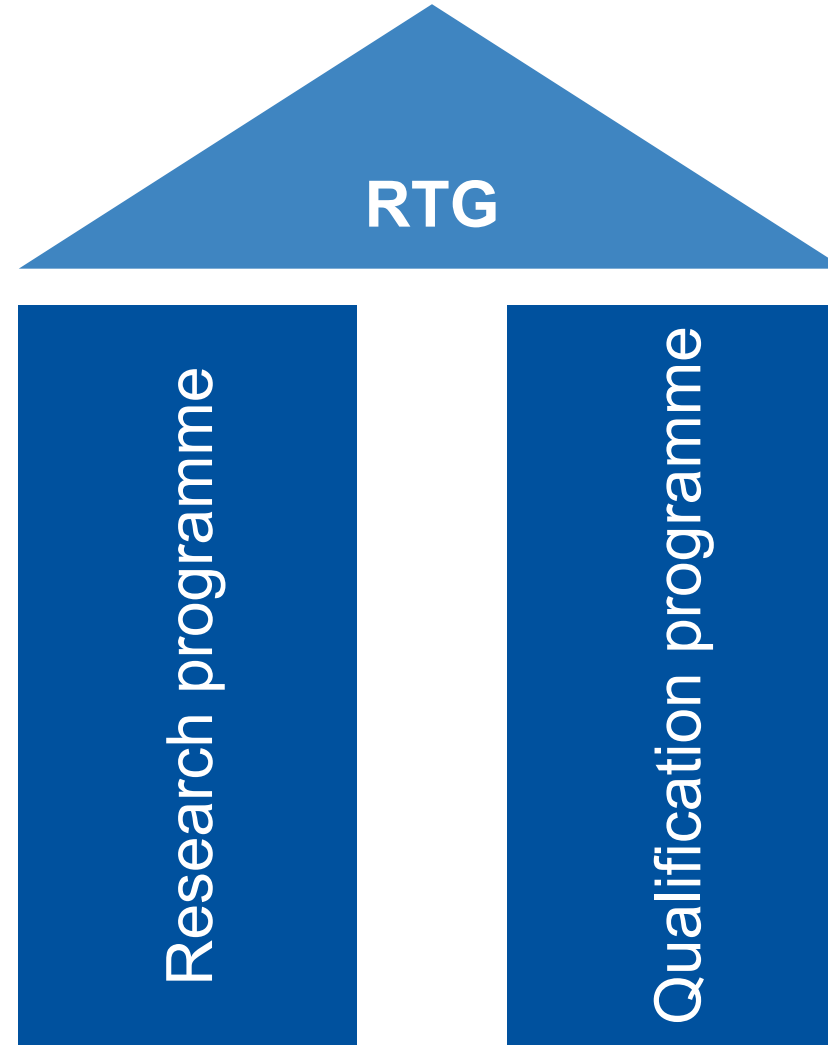
Structured research and training programmes for doctoral researchers at German universities

Total duration of **9 years**; around **30 doctoral** researchers (+associated)

Team of 5-12 experienced researchers at one research site in Germany (Professor/Junior Group leader)

Research Component: innovative, focused, and coherent research programme suitable for doctoral researchers

Qualification Component: Training programme, supervision concept, best practices in doctoral education
→ structural innovations





Structured research and training programmes for doctoral researchers at German universities in cooperation with partner institutions abroad

Total duration of **9 years**; around **30 doctoral** researchers (+associated) in each country

Team of 5-12 experienced researchers each at the research site in Germany and abroad (Professor/Junior Group leader)

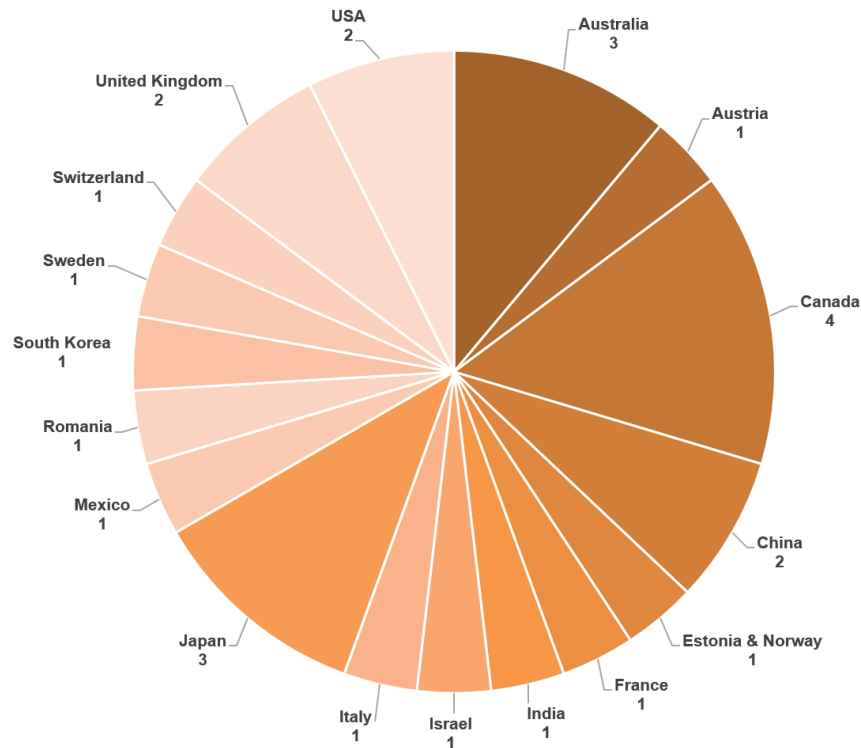
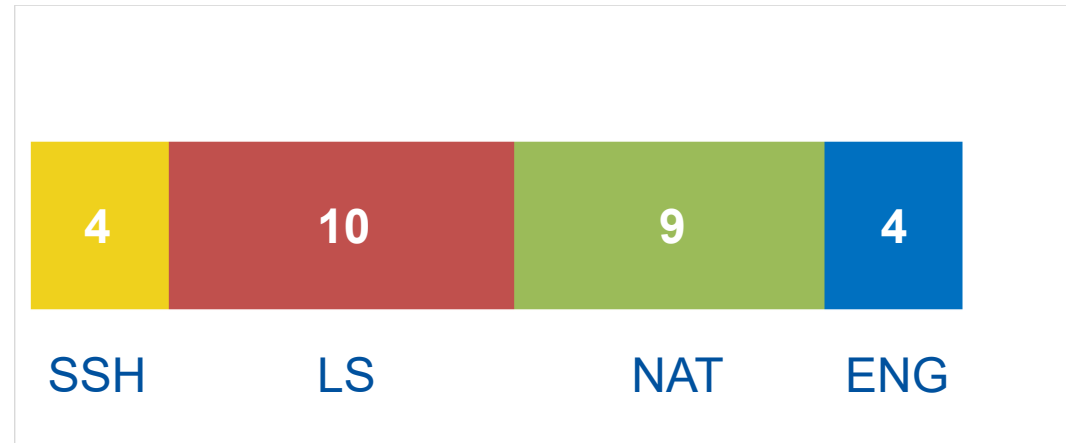
Research Component: innovative, focused, and coherent joint research programme suitable for doctoral researchers

Qualification Component: Joint training programme, joint supervision concept, best practices in doctoral education → structural innovations, long-lasting university partnerships

reciprocal **research stays** at partner site (6-12 months)

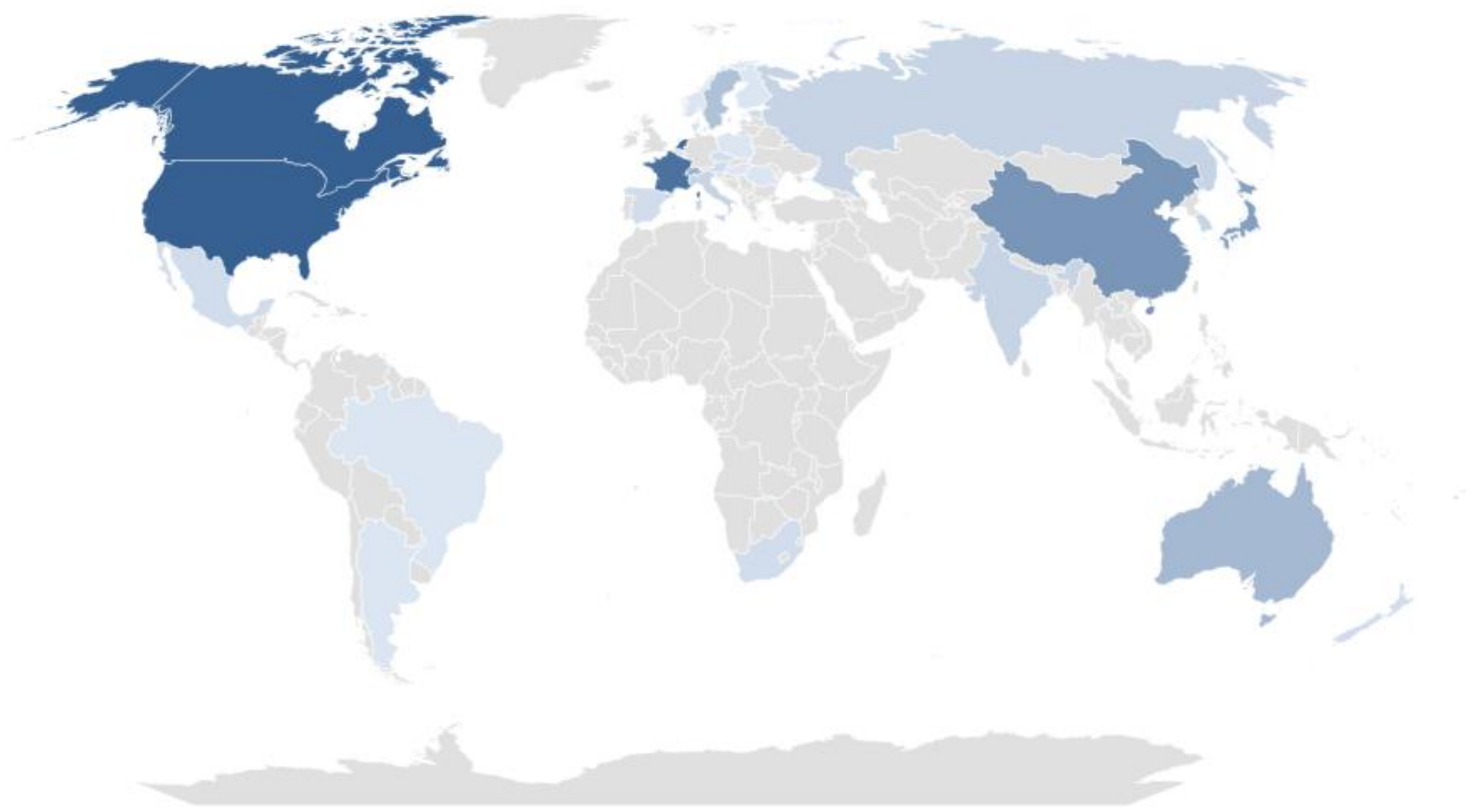


- total budget for IRTGs and RTGs: ~224 M€ (2024)
- open to all fields of science & humanities
- bottom-up: no IRTG quota, no priorities for topics or countries!



8/2026

- Currently: 27 IRTGs = 13% of 210 RTGs, partners in 18 countries and regions worldwide
- In total to date: 152 IRTGs funded with >30 partner countries and regions worldwide





Up to 9 years (two funding periods: 5 + 4 years)

People

- 3 consecutive cohorts of ~10 PhD students each (funding for up to 48 months)
- ~~Postdocs (1-2)~~
- Participating undergraduates

Resources

- Research cost: consumables, literature, documentation etc.
- Qualification and mobility: research stays, curricular activities, joint workshops, guests....
- Support funds: e.g. for coordination, recruitment, gender equality measures...

→ foreign partner needs complementary funding!

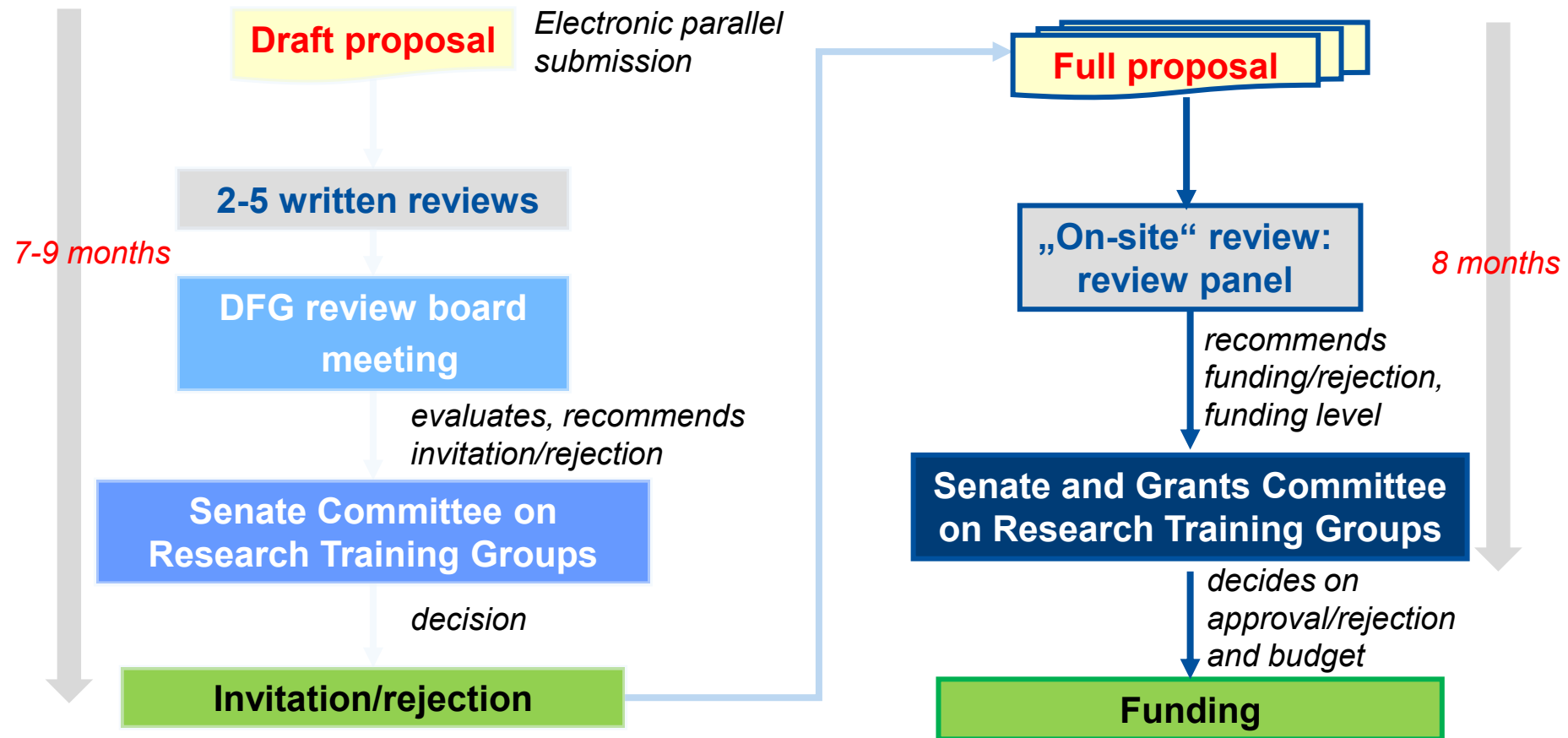


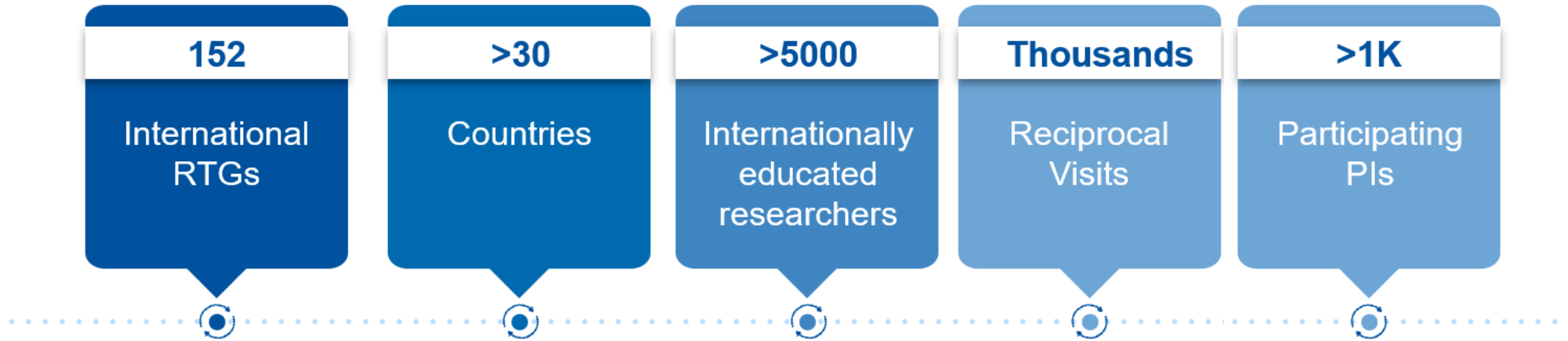


- support the (+/-) same number of doctoral candidates as on German side (fellowships/positions)
- cover the research cost of doctoral candidates (e.g. consumables)
- provide travel funds for doctoral mobility and allowances for the research stay in Germany
- include means for all joint training activities
- waive tuition fees in partner country (if any)
- be available throughout the whole funding period!
- be provided by a DFG partner institution or other funds (e.g. university funding, internationalisation programmes, strategic programmes)



In a number of countries, the DFG has reached agreements with partner organisations that allow for parallel application and funding for an IRTG from both organisations. In other cases (e.g. Australia and most European countries), the complementary funding has to be provided from other sources. The DFG Head Office will formally check a definitive proof of co-funding, regardless of the funding source. Co-funding can also be combined from several sources.





What have we learned?

- Conference on September 8th, 2026 in Bonn (DFG Head Office)
- Exchange with spokespersons of current and former IRTGs as well as national RTGs that work internationally

- IRTGs are a highly valued funding instrument
 - Long-term collaboration is essential
 - Two partners meet on equal footing
 - Long-term commitment → quality of cooperation, preferred over looser networks
 - **Sustainable** partnerships → scientific output
 - **Sustainable** partnerships → institutional structure-building and networking
 - **The general set-up does not need changing**
 - IRTGs are a well-recognized “**brand**”
 - Funding decisions do not discriminate between IRTG and RTG
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- Current challenges (beyond the DFG)
 - Bureaucracy, visa regulations
 - Geopolitical challenges
 - Loss of partners, re-nationalization
 - Decline of opportunities for complementary funding across the world

Interested?





Further information:
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