

EA Russia: Plans and Goals (v. 0.3.2)

[Meta: Adaptation, Strategy, Operations. \(priority: very high\)](#)

[Community Growth and Sustainability \(priority: medium\)](#)

[Talent Pipeline to High-Impact Careers \(priority: medium\)](#)

[Technical AI Safety Outreach \(priority: high\)](#)

[General Research & Other Projects \(priority: low\)](#)

This document is WIP. The following steps are:

1. Section restructuring
2. Introduce talent pipeline model
3. Actions and metrics should be structured around a funnel & divided into lead/lag.
4. The purpose for Meta
5. We will have a gathering on Jan. 24–25 to discuss our strategy and open questions.

About Us: Context and Resources [as for Oct. 2018]

- We are a national level group based in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg.
- Most activities are organised by 5–7 committed organisers
- We translated 80K book, MacAskill's TED (Sep. 2018) and a few articles from EA Handbook; TLYCS & DGB were translated by official publishers in 2018.
- Online resources
 - 1.5k followers at vk.com page
 - 2k emails of people who downloaded 80K
 - An access to 200k followers of vk's pages with desirable demographics
- Comparative advantages are
 - Good students of hard sciences are centralized
 - HPMoR is quite popular among math-campers; active LessWrong, Sceptics and Transhumanism communities
 - One of a few countries where working on nuclear security is a possibility
- Comparative disadvantages are
 - Salaries are small → donations & 'earnings to give' are not a priority
 - Student unions and activism are not popular → outreach is harder
 - Russia's '[anti' NGO laws](#) are similar to Chinese
 - We decided to operate as a for-profit → 13% tax on EA Grants
 - [Moral trade](#) with HNWIs might be a solution
- Risks, downsides, counterfactuals...
 - [Dilution of ideas & EA brand](#)
 - Philanthropy organisation, who sponsored the translation of TLYCS, might promote inaccurate interpretation of 'effective altruism'.
 - Should we separate EA brand into many?
 - Ownership of the single goods: VK page & Telegram & Websites & emails

Meta: Adaptation, Strategy, Operations. (priority: very high)

Goals:

- Adopt the EA messages to Russian realities
- Understand who would be the talent in our «talent pipeline».
- Finish this document; write media strategy document; movement building strategy.
- Establish the project/operations management routines: (a) prioritising/triaging our actions/goals [with \approx explicit time division] (b) start tracking the metrics described in this document (c) making a progress estimates for the key metrics over time... Build the core organisers' connections with the general EA movement [required for talent-pipelining] & increase their capabilities.

Metrics:

- Strategy document should be sent to the CEA & similar EA groups for the feedback.
- Communications document should be reviewed by PR & Russian speaking EAs.

Actions:

- Write/finish the documents. Get the feedback.
- For each 80K path try to think where relevant people go to realize their potential.
- Go to EA-heavy events [ex. EAGx; retreats: China, Czechia, Estonia/Finland]
- Setup Operations [software, calls, check-lists, RCAI, ...]
- Individual growth trajectories for core: EA reading list, [EA Pitch](#), courses/workshops
- Outsource as much as possible to LEAN

Community Growth and Sustainability (priority: medium)

Massive outreach is not the best way to promote EA. The ideas of EA contain many nuances and details, it is important to spread them without losing the meaning in the process of popularization and simplification. A small group of heavily involved participants can do much more than hundreds who are only superficially familiar with ideas and do not do much [2]. We should frequently state that the movement is apolitical, cause-neutral and compatible with various cultural backgrounds to avoid associations (\approx 'lock-in') with any idea/group EA is not primarily about.

Translation of materials is not a priority [we translated: 80k book, a few articles from EA Handbook, MacAskill's TED (Sep. 2018); TLYCS & DGB were translated by official publishers]. But we are translating EA Handbook v2, because we have a volunteer, semi-professional translator, who otherwise will not be engaged in EA. Probably, we should translate and promote more [involving materials](#) (expected reach is 20–100k views) or make short posts from "Prospect for Gold" (good for SMM).

We need to be aware of our local advantages and disadvantages: potential of Earning to give in Russia is small, but there are many talented students, free higher education. At the same time, most EA organizations limited by the lack of talent more than the lack of funding [3].

We think that many people are already familiar with EA (by our efforts or by reading/watching TLYCS, DGB, 80K, TED Talks) and we need to establish the tighter connections with them. Because of that, we are moving our focus from lower-fidelity outreach methods (social media + weekly lectures & discussions) to higher-fidelity outreach methods (EA Weekends/EAGx & more thoughtful series of lectures); we are doing 1-on-1 and would continue to do them.

Goals: Promoting a quantitative approach to evaluating the success of socially beneficial projects. Building a viable community with an active core of participants.

Metrics:

- **Longevity:** [bus factor](#) for core organisers, bus factor for meet-ups, ...
- **Growth:** Google Analytics; statistics in social networks; number of newsletter subscribers; survey (local analogue of EA Survey), event attendance
- **Centrality:** core organisers connections to EA leaders, attendance of EAG & other international EA events, ...

Actions:

- Gain more credibility
 - Publish strategy / plans online
 - Share our & movements successes online
- Improve EA Russia's social media & other online outreach tools.
 - Polish «Intro into EA» newsletter.
 - Write the guest posts on ACE, [climate charities](#) on relevant vk.com pages.
 - Translate EA Handbook. Or translate & publish more [involving materials](#) on [«Newochem»](#) (they translate foreign press into Russian; 120k subscribers).

- Further website improvements: [priority: low]
 - SEO: we need to dominate EA related queries to mitigate risks from media
 - info & support for local organisers [≈ «if you want to start local EA group — please contact Alexander/Alexey/Misha at vk.com for support & information»];
 - add calendar of upcoming events;
 - make section on GiveWell list & Giving What We Can [but we should de-emphasise them].
- Offline events
 - Workshops or retreats or [intense EA weekend](#) (1–2 days, 2–4 times per year).
 - Accumulate human resources & ↑ understanding & involvement in EA
 - Build a sense of community & give positive associations with EA
 - Start collaborative projects, share knowledge, figure out strategy
 - Make lists of opinion leaders, universities, organizations and events with whom we can cooperate with. Communicate with them, hold events together and make use of information support.
- [Join key adjacent communities](#): animal advocacy, AI, climate change activists.

Approximate Schedule ([action biased](#)):

Date	Name	Information
Weekly	EA discussions in Saint-Petersburg	Alexey or Alexander gives a talk on EA topic.
Once a month	Intro lectures at the universities	This would allow us to build connections with the universities.
23–25 Nov. 2018	EA Dacha	3d retreat for the core organisers focused on strategy and getting aligned.
22 Dec. 2018	Winter Solstice	1d retreat for the core organisers focused on fun and operations.
12-14 Apr. 2019	EA Weekend	1–2d event to establish contact with people who know EA, but are not engaged. We expect that such event would increase core and foster a few diverse projects. Similar event in Czechia .
Spring 2019	Lecture Series on EA	We are less sure about this event. We think series of lectures have higher fidelity than other one evening events. Inviting general experts as a co-speakers would allow us to build productive connections.
Spring/Summer 2019	EA Weekend	Same event in the different city (in Moscow or Saint-Petersburg).
Sep–Oct 2019	Active outreach at the universities	Student societies are not popular in Russia, so we would need to make lecture tours to universities.
Oct or Nov 2019	EAGx	1–2d. High-profile foreign speakers might attract students and inspire them to switch careers or join us.

Talent Pipeline to High-Impact Careers (priority: medium)

We want to inspire talented people to make progress with world's most important problems, guide them, introduce advanced ideas and meet each other. Help them in building a career and in personal development. Invest in those people who are already committed to EA so that they can bring even more impact. According to the recommendations of the CEA, focus on being local and in-person [1].

«The main goal of this approach is to identify, attract, and develop top talent—and help them have more impact [...] Focus on the most engaged members of the group and their career planning, as opposed to continuously trying to onboard new people». [5]

At this moment we don't have clear mental models of acquiring and routing talent [except for AI Safety, see the following section]. Our best guess is that initially, we should engage motivated people with EA and later connect them to EA non-profit or researchers relevant to their personal fit. To do so core organizers should establish connections with the broader EA community. Local research projects might be beneficial to explore new directions or working on the subproblems (\approx Effective Thesis) and to evaluate people based on their actual performance.

Goals: talent pipeline to high-impact careers.

Metrics: numbers of participants; a survey of participants in career meetings (and where they learned about us); the number of people downloaded the 80,000 Hours book; the number of people who have applied for 80,000 Hours coaching; number of significant career plan changes.

Actions:

- Organize events at universities focused on introduction to EA, 80000 hours career research and world most important problems. About finding career with positive social impact. Beginning: November. Frequency: at the beginning once a month [to refine the presentation]; once in each universitie at the beginning of academic year.
- Career planning groups. Discussions, development of career plans based on an 80,000 Hours template of (A/B/Z plan). Participants can present their plans to the group and receive feedback. Start with meetings devoted to individual chapters from the 80,000 Hours book. The best outcome would be forming small groups of 3–5 aspiring EAs, who would do Hamming questions & serve each other as motivation buddies.
- Seed and help to run reading groups on selected causes.
 - Invite the experts from overseas to do the series of talks (or Skype).
- Include in the newsletter and publish in social networks available vacancies and volunteer programs in the EA organizations, especially remote jobs.

Technical AI Safety Outreach (priority: high)

This section is a subpart of the previous one but is more concrete & detailed, because we have a better understanding of AI Safety & comparative advantage in attracting math talent to the problem.

Giveaways

Through successful LessWrong Russia's crowdfunding, we plan to give out thousands of copies of HPMoR to libraries and gifted students [we collected ≈ 650 emails of the winners of national/international competitions like IOI/IMO — math, CS, physics, economics, biology, chemistry] and have funding to give out the translated 80K book & relevant materials to the students.

We have the oral agreements with [IMO 2020](#) (Saint-Petersburg, Russia) & [EGMO 2019](#) (Kyiv, Ukraine) organizers to give HPMoRs to the medalists of the competitions. Unfortunately, organizing CFAR event at IMO 2020 seems unlikely due to the bureaucracy.

Goals:

- Passively inform gifted students about Rationality, EA, AI Safety
- Actively involve Russia's talent to AI Safety & EA [see the following subsection]

Metrics:

- Number of ESPR/SPARC attendees influenced by giveaways
- Number of attendees of Moscow's AIS seminar [see the following subsection] influenced by giveaways

Actions:

- Select the materials for Russian gifted youth
- Find funding for IMO 2020 & EGMO 2019
- Try to outsource HPMoR editing to CFAR

Technical AI Safety Community Building

AIS is not seen as a Luddite or philosophical topic by Russian practitioners/researchers (or at least they didn't share their strong opinions publicly and hence cannot change it without reputational loss), so us being the first to attract and move their attention in the productive direction of technical AI Safety might prevent 'lock-in' that has happened in the West. Furthermore, one of the top Russian AI researchers is sympathetic to AI Alignment and the cybersecurity billionaire sponsored translation and wrote a foreword to «Superintelligence».

Agreeing with Brian Tse's vision [7], we think that we should present AI Safety as a mostly technical problem [instead of philosophical] and aim our outreach on computer scientists and mathematician. We think that mentioning philosophical concerns (\approx x-risks) might be beneficial in follow-up one-on-one conversations.

We anticipate AI Safety related activity to dominate our Moscow's discourse and in order to prevent the [founders effect](#) we would partially separate AI Safety from EA.

Goals:

- Inform and attract people to technical AI Safety research.
- Create a supportive environment for gifted Russian students to start to think/learn/participate more in AIS.

Metrics:

- Number of events; number of event participants; number of one-on-one talks; quick event feedback afterwards;
- Number of people working on AIS-related problems as a thesis at university; number of people attending AISC/ESPR/MIRI SFP;
- Number of people employed by DeepMind, OpenAI, CHAI, FHI, MIRI; number safety minded people working at Russian top-tier IT companies/military/etc (\approx [mission hedging](#)).

Actions:

- Misha is willing to [he applied to EA Grant with this project] dedicate Dec–Mar to an intensive study of technical AIS. And over the course of the following 6–8 months
 - Prepare several safety talks for the Moscow's RL seminar at Yandex aimed at researchers & practitioners
 - Lectures will be based on [AI Alignment Forum](#)'s sequences and on the key papers from the field.
 - Teach 2–4 mini-courses at math-camps for the gifted high-school students.
 - Start & facilitate AIS weekly reading group/environment in Moscow aimed at involving winners of math/CS competitions in AIS. The reading group will be based at leading [AI institution](#).
 - Do one-on-ones with promising attendees and invite them to participate in [AI Safety Camp](#) & [ESPR](#) & [AI Summer Fellow Program](#).

General Research & Other Projects (priority: low)

Research skills (generalist research) remains one of the most requested [3]. Research projects allow participants to improve these skills, check how good they fit for research and strengthen the understanding of EA-related ideas. But such projects require many hours of independent research and advanced level of participants, and now are the least priority of the core organisers.

Actions: Talk to (a) EA Thesis (b) Rethink Priorities (c) Charity Entrepreneurship

[Friends foundation](#): cause prioritization (status: active)

Saint-Petersburg's EAs (with «Friends» foundation, one of the founders shares some EA principles) are working on evaluating charities and finding Russia's neglected issues.

We think this project is worth pursuing, because

1. It is a good research experience.
2. It is a good project to show to
 - a. general public [≈ EA sales funnel: much shorter inferential distance than to other key EA concept like long-termism]
 - b. media [≈ to emphasise EA's focus on research over donating overseas]
 - c. official [I hope we would not need to]
3. «Friends» foundation might attract resources, which otherwise would be spent much more inefficiently.

Introducing [REG](#) to Russian-speaking poker community (status: active)

Russia has a strong domestic poker community. Poker players incomes are compatible around the world. We are considering working on donation-matching and pledge-drive project with REG. We can ensure a donation matching of at least US\$250k.

A few well-known Russian poker professionals are sympathetic towards EA and x-risks reduction; also, it would be plausible to cooperate with a well-known professional poker forum. The best time to run a campaign is the upcoming New Year holidays, because Russians have a strong cultural norm of giving New Year presents & finishing/starting a year with good deeds.

Mental health & CBT outreach (status: contacted UpLift)

Mental health & happiness is one of the EA's cause areas. MH&H is especially neglected and stigmatized in Russia compared to other European countries. Online CBT tools, s.a. Spencer Greenberg's [uplift.app](#) are shown to be effective in reducing depression, anxiety and suicide rates.

We have connections with quite popular [killpls.me](#) (2M views over 6 months) dedicated to anonymous confessions and [vk's public page](#) (5k subscribers) dedicated to behaviorism and CBT.

Marcin Kowrygo suggested to facilitate high-quality, international research on [anxiolytic nootropics](#).

Attracting local academia to EA research (status: idea)

Russian wages are small, so it might be easy to direct theoretical research into the directions proposed by [EA Thesis](#).

Sidenote: we are going to put EA Thesis' bookmark in each book from «HPMoR for gifted youth» project.

Programming projects (status: idea)

In personal communications Jan Kulveit suggested a few programming projects related to the infrastructure of EA community. Example: the database of the project suggestions for the local groups.

Promote EA among animal welfare groups (status: active, coordinator: Alex Ivanov)

Full report is here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W4NSlhA_bVdzISde3GH1DiRegqkK-tNwMttav94-I4k/edit?usp=sharing

References

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