



FIRST+ 2020–2021: THE FINNISH-RUSSIAN STUDENT AND TEACHER MOBILITY PROGRAMME

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

1 GENERAL

1.1 BACKGROUND

Russia is a significant partner for several higher education institutions in Finland and it also holds a prominent place in different national strategies and programmes. Russia is a longterm bilateral focus country in bilateral higher education cooperation in the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) and one of the Team Finland Knowledge network's focus areas. The FIRST+ programme is run by EDUFI and fully financed from Finland.

The FIRST+ programme builds on higher education institutions' network collaboration. FIRST+ networks must involve at least one institution from Finland and another from Russia, but bigger networks are welcome. A Finnish higher education institution or several institutions together establish partnerships with a Russian higher education institution or several institutions in order to implement mobility activities in cooperation with each other. Cooperation is envisaged to be implemented with the higher education institutions in Russia which are relevant partners and have a strategic significance for their Finnish counterparts. The coordinating Finnish higher education institution submits a funding application to EDUFI for the whole partner consortium. The co-ordinating institution is also responsible for the use of grants and will report to EDUFI after the agreement period. Grants are awarded to the coordinating institution, which will allocate them further to the students/teachers. Higher education institutions in both countries will offer waivers for possible tuition fees.

1.2 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

All Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences are eligible to participate in the programme as coordinators or partners.

Higher education institutions on the Russian side may participate in the FIRST+ programme through their partnerships with Finnish higher education institutions. In principle, all Russian higher education institutions are able to participate in the FIRST+ programme if they have passed the Russian state licensing and accreditation procedures for higher education and have the right to carry out educational programmes and award degrees. For Russian institutions, it is necessary to submit a FIRST+ statement (please see paragraph 10 for more information) by the application deadline, wherein they describe their institution's participation in FIRST+ and provide a list of all the Finnish partners included. Each Russian institution shall submit only one FIRST+ statement.

2 THE APPLICATION ROUND

The FIRST+ programme promotes **both long-term and short-term student mobility at BA, MA and PhD levels**. The programme is open to **all fields of education**. Also, it is possible to apply for funding for



teacher mobility as well as intensive courses. The overall emphasis of the FIRST+ programme is on long-term student mobility activities. See paragraphs 4-6 of “Activities” for more details.

The main criterion of successful FIRST+ projects is **the quality of the application.** See paragraph 7 of “Quality Assessment Criteria” for more details.

3 DISTANCE CATEGORIES

The level of an individual mobility grant (all types of mobility) will be determined according to two distance categories.

CATEGORY 1: North-western Russia

CATEGORY 2: All the other parts of Russia

Republic of Karelia
Komi Republic
Arkhangelskaya oblast
Vologodskaya oblast
Kaliningradskaya oblast
Leningradskaya oblast
Murmanskaya oblast
Novgorodskaya oblast
Pskovskaya oblast
Nenetsky autonomous okrug
Saint Petersburg

4 ACTIVITIES: STUDENT MOBILITY

The following principles should be complied with in the implementation of both long-term and short-term student mobility.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS FOR THE MOBILITY

Sending institution chooses the students participating in mobility. The receiving institution makes the final decision about accepting the students.

RECOGNITION OF STUDIES AND STUDY FEES

Studies completed during the exchange will be recognized as part of a student’s degree. The study plan of each outgoing student is agreed and confirmed in writing by the relevant institutions. After completing the studies, the receiving institution gives the participant a certificate that shows studies completed and grades. The network institutions will not charge any tuition fees from participating students.

GRANT AND CITIZENSHIP

The grant can be given to degree students enrolled in a FIRST+ network institution. Students enrolled in a FIRST+ network institution are eligible to participate in the activities irrespective of nationality. However, as a rule, students may not undertake an exchange in their home country; students who have the citizenship of the host country must have conducted their comprehensive school and/or general upper secondary education in the sending country.

PRACTICAL TRAINING AND JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Mobility period can also consist of practical training, if it is fully recognised as part of the student’s degree. The programme also supports mobility in joint educational programmes (e.g. double degrees).



THE LEVEL AND FIELDS OF STUDY

The FIRST+ programme supports both long-term and short-term student mobility at BA, MA and PhD level. The programme is open to all fields of education, including students majoring in Russian language (e.g. philology or translation studies) with the following condition; students majoring in the mother tongue of the host country are not allowed to choose their major subject for their studies in a Russian institution.

INSURANCES AND ACCOMMODATION

FIRST+ grants do not include any insurance for residence abroad. The sending institution must ensure that the students take sufficient insurances for their needs. The receiving institution commits to help the incoming students in finding accommodation.

4.1 LONG-TERM STUDENT MOBILITY (OUTGOING AND INCOMING)

The FIRST+ programme supports long-term student mobility both from Finland to Russia as well as from Russia to Finland. The duration of a long-term mobility period is 2-12 months.

The maximum student grants for long-term mobility are:

CATEGORY 1: maximum 560 € / month

CATEGORY 2: maximum 650 € / month

The grant can only be given for full-time studies or traineeship in the destination country.

The amount is the maximum FIRST+ grant that can be paid to one beneficiary each month. The networks can decide on the final grant level. However, the monthly grant paid to outgoing students may not exceed the monthly grant paid to incoming students. Only one long-term student exchange grant can be paid per student.

The grant payment for the network will be based on an average number of four months of a mobility period, in other words one long-term student mobility grant will consist of the monthly grant multiplied by four (4):

CATEGORY 1: 4 months x 560€ =2240€

CATEGORY 2: 4 months x 650€ =2600€

In the final report stage the final grant will be calculated according to the realized long-term student mobilities in months.

4.2 SHORT-TERM STUDENT MOBILITY (OUTGOING ONLY)

The FIRST+ programme supports short-term student mobility at BA, MA and PhD level from Finland to Russia. The short-term mobility can extend from 5 to 59 days of continuous studies/traineeship.

Short-term mobilities must support the students' studies, participation in plain language courses or cultural excursions is not a subject for support. Support can be used for example for intensive study courses in a certain study field or practical training.

The maximum student grants for short-term mobility are:

CATEGORY 1: days 5-7 maximum 50 € / day, days 8-59 maximum 20 € / day.

CATEGORY 2: days 5-7 maximum 70 € / day, days 8-59 maximum 20 € / day.

The grant can only be given for full-time studies or traineeship in the destination country.



The amount is the maximum FIRST+ grant that can be paid to one beneficiary per day. The networks can decide on the final grant level.

The grant payment will be based on an average number of 14 days of a mobility period, in other words one short-term student mobility grant will be calculated as follows:

CATEGORY 1: (7 days x 50€) + (7 days x 20€) = 490€

CATEGORY 2: (7 days x 70€) + (7 days x 20€) = 630€

In the final report stage the final grant will be calculated according to the realised short-term mobilities in days.

5 ACTIVITIES: TEACHER MOBILITY (OUTGOING AND INCOMING)

The FIRST+ programme supports teacher mobility both from Finland to Russia and from Russia to Finland. The minimum duration of a teaching exchange is five teaching hours.

The teaching provided during an exchange must be an integral part of the hosting institution's curriculum. Teaching may be given at any degree level.

Teachers who are part of network institution's staff during the mobility are eligible for teacher grant. Teacher mobility grants can be used to cover travel and subsistence costs.

The maximum teaching grants are:

CATEGORY 1: maximum 100 € / day

CATEGORY 2: maximum 120 € / day

The amount is the maximum FIRST+ grant that can be paid to one teacher per day. The networks can decide on the individual grant level.

The grant payment will be based on an average number of five (5) days of a mobility period, in other words one teacher mobility grant (CAT1 or CAT2) will be calculated as follows:

CATEGORY 1: 5 days x 100€ = 500€

CATEGORY 2: 5 days x 120€ = 600€

In the final report stage the final grant will be calculated according to the realised teacher mobilities in days.

6 ACTIVITIES: INTENSIVE COURSES

Intensive courses are short study periods which provide students and teachers with an opportunity to work together in a Russian-Finnish group. All intensive courses in the FIRST+ programme should take place in Russia as a joint effort of two or more institutions (at least one Finnish and one Russian partner).

The minimum duration is one week (five working days + travel days). There must be an equal number of participating students and teachers from Finland and Russia. Studies completed on an intensive course



must be recognised as part of a student's degree. Intensive courses cannot consist of language studies or research alone.

There are three categories for an intensive course budget: a) travel costs, b) accommodation and subsistence costs and c) organisational costs. Organisational costs can form maximum 20% of the total intensive course budget.

Accepted travel costs are additional costs due to travel such as trips, travel agency costs, visas and insurances. Accepted accommodation and subsistence costs are costs due to accommodation and other subsistence of intensive course participants and possible daily allowances. Organisational costs must be directly due to the organisation of main activities of the intensive course such as facility or material costs.

The funding cannot be used for higher education institution's administrative expenses, entertainment/representation expenses, business gifts or salaries and fees. These and possible other costs must be funded by the higher education institutions' own funding.

An estimated budget for the intensive course should be included in the application. The level of funding for one intensive course is circa €10,000.

The FIRST+ programme cannot give repeated support to an intensive course which is exactly the same from one year to another. If a network seeks support for more than one intensive course, the courses need to be prioritised in the application.

7 QUALITY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The main criterion of successful FIRST+ projects is the quality of the application. The following quality criteria are considered in the selection process:

RELEVANCE

- The composition of the network is well justified, and the planned activities are relevant for the cooperation plans of the higher education institutions involved.
- There is added value of the planned cooperation activities compared to already existing cooperation.
- Higher education institutions involved have institutional commitment and interest in the network activities (e.g. through strategic priorities).
 - The FIRST+ statement submitted by the Russian partner institution(s) should be coherent and relevant and should demonstrate the commitment of the partner to the network activities.

THE QUALITY OF THE COOPERATION, ACTIVITY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- There is a balanced partnership and reciprocal student and teacher mobility in regards with the number of higher education institutions involved and the plans for implementing the mobilities are realistic.
- The description of the responsibilities, roles and tasks of the higher education institutions involved is clear and the planned communication channels are functional.
- The support services for marketing, preparation, implementation and follow-up of the applied mobility activities are in place.
- The mechanisms envisaged for the recognition of student learning outcomes (e.g. ECTS or other mechanisms) are in place.
- If applicable, the following criteria will be considered in the selection process of intensive programmes:



- Course theme and contents: the added value for individual participants and higher education institutions.
- Recognition of the studies completed on the course.
- Careful planning and implementation of the course.
- Evaluation of the intensive course and dissemination of the results and experiences.
- The cost-effectiveness of the proposed activities.
- In the case of previous experience: changes, development and justification for future funding.

IMPACT

- The expected results/outcomes are described in a concrete and realistic manner.
- The potential impact of the planned activities is described in terms of the participants and organisations both in Finland and Russia.

8 ACCESSIBILITY GRANT

The FIRST+ programme welcomes applications for accessibility grants for students and teachers participating in the programme. Accessibility grants support the participation in the programme of persons with special needs whose participation – for reasons of physical or mental health – calls for additional financial assistance.

Accessibility grants are applied for on a separate form. There is a rolling deadline for these applications, to be handled by EDUFI on a case-by-case basis. More information is available on EDUFI's web-pages at <https://www.oph.fi/fi/ohjelmat/esteettomyystuki-korkeakoulujen-kansainvalisessa-liikkuvuudessa>.

9 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Eligible applications must have at least one higher education institution from Finland and one from Russia participating. The application form must be filled in using the electronic system by the due date (see below). Please note that there is no need to send hard copies of the applications by post. The application documents can be found on EDUFI's web-pages at <https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/first-programme>.

Applications must be submitted to EDUFI by the coordinating institution on behalf of all the partners. The Russian partner institutions are expected to submit a separate FIRST+ statement letter on behalf of their participation in the network activities (more information see paragraph 10).

The deadline for submitting the application is 2nd March 2020 (the electronic system will close at 16:15). Late applications will not be eligible. The selection result should be made within two months after the application period has ended.

10 FIRST+ STATEMENT: LETTER OF INTENT FROM THE RUSSIAN PARTNERS

Each Russian higher education institution willing to participate in the FIRST+ programme as a partner is advised to submit a FIRST+ statement to EDUFI in connection to the application round.

In the FIRST+ statement the participating Russian institution will describe their internationalisation strategy in regard to Finland. The electronic template for the FIRST+ Statement is available on EDUFI's web-pages at: <https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/first-programme>.



Each Russian higher education institution will fill in only one FIRST+ statement template, even if the higher education institution takes part in cooperation with several different Finnish institutions or faculties.

The FIRST+ statement should be duly signed by a legal representative of the Russian institution, then scanned and submitted to EDUFI using the address first@oph.fi. **The deadline for submitting the statement is 2nd March 2020.**

11 AGREEMENT PERIOD AND REPORTING

The funding awarded may be used within the period from 1 June 2020 – 31 August 2021. An interim report must be submitted to EDUFI in November 2020 and a final report in October 2021. The networks will also have the possibility to apply for additional funding in connection with the interim report.

The reports consist of a narrative report, a mobility report and a financial report. In connection to the final report the higher education institution must also provide EDUFI with an extract of its accounts, showing the costs allocated to the project.

12 FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about the programme and application guidelines are on EDUFI's website at: <https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/first-programme>.

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