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Russia Increases Foreign Student Quotas

By The Moscow Times

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Russia is opening up more places for tuition-free study at its institutes of higher education, as it sees more applicants from further abroad. **M. Stulov**

Russia has increased its quota for foreign students who can be admitted for a tuition-free education to the nation's colleges and trade schools to 15,000 a year, up from the previous 10,000.

The directive, signed off by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, aims to promote Russian culture and expand the country's influence abroad, said Mikhail Margelov, head of the Federation Council's international relations committee.

Besides people from the former Soviet republics, most foreign students studying in Russia under the scholarship program come from China, Vietnam, Mongolia, Iran and Palestine, according to data from the Education and Science Ministry. The ministry also noted an increase in applicants from Germany, the Czech Republic and Italy, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Margelov said that although military and economic resources are still important factors in determining the strength of a country, the changing nature of the world means that culture and education are becoming just as significant.

In June, the Kremlin sanctioned an increase in spending on foreign cultural and educational projects from 2 billion rubles ($62 million) to 9.5 billion rubles by 2020, as part of its plans to improve its image abroad using so-called "soft power."

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