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**FEDERAL UNIVERSITY'S ROLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION "SOFT POWER" CONCEPTION  
IN CENTRAL ASIA (THE CASE OF NORTHERN (ARCTIC) FEDERAL  
UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER M.V. LOMONOSOV)**

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**Abstract. Introduction.** Currently the notion of the "soft power" is perceived as an effective way of nation's non-forcible influence on other countries with a view to implement one's own objectives. Suchlike implementation is confined to particular spheres to form a positive image of the nation. Higher education today is one of the most efficient instruments of the "soft power" implementation in the countries of Central Asia, for it allows securing friendly political and economic elite as well as enhancing the quality of labour migrants to the Russian Federation. The aim of the research is to analyze particular features of the "soft power" implementation in the domain of higher education in case with the region of Central Asia on the example of Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov (the city of Arkhangelsk, Russia, henceforth NArFU). *Methods and materials.* The study is based on systematic and comparative approaches to the analysis of the Russian "soft power" strategy in the domain of higher education. The study in hand also draws on general approaches to the "soft power" implementation in the region of Central Asia. The main sources for the analysis are annual reports on implementing the NArFU programme of development. These reports pay a great deal of attention to academic recruiting and academic mobility. *Analysis.* The Central Asia region is crucial from the view point of Russia's interests. The region is rich in hydrocarbon deposits, it boasts a great transit potential in international trade, and this is the region where the biggest number of migrants come from to Russia. For these reasons Russia is strengthening its "soft power" influence on Central Asian countries in general and in the sphere of higher education in particular. From the very day of the NArFU foundation in 2010, the region of Central Asia has been considered as a high-priority region. The example of NArFU demonstrates that the number of international students in the total number of full-cycle students has risen by 8.4 times, wherein the growth is secured mainly by students from Central Asian countries. Central Asian students' percentage of the total number of international students is 82–89.3%. The percentage of students from the region in question, doing short-term educational programmes is also high – 49.5–61.4%. Diverse mechanisms are exploited to attract would-be students to NArFU: agreements with educational establishments of the region; visits of NArFU's representatives (both lecturers and students) to the region; NArFU's participation in international exhibitions on education; presenting NArFU's educational programmes on the basis of "Rossotrudnichestvo" regional offices; inviting school graduates to study within the quota for fellow-countrymen residing abroad; arranging off-site university testing and multi-disciplinary intellectual contests; higher educational allowances and medical insurance compensation; active promotion with the help of social media. The international Friendship Club and the team of tutors were set up to ensure better social and cultural adaptation, regular events and excursions take place on the same purpose. *Results.* Despite the fact that there is no general state-level integral concept on attracting school graduates from the countries of Central Asia to the universities of Russia, NArFU managed to occupy the niche on the educational market of the region. University's administration has been pursuing a clear course towards attracting would-be students from Central Asia, exploiting a wide range of mechanisms to enhance academic recruiting, relying upon the advantages of Arkhangelsk region in the sphere of

migrants' adaptation. Over the recent ten years the factors mentioned above have brought about more than eight times growth of students from the region of Central Asia in NArFU.

**Key words:** "soft power", diplomacy, higher education, Central Asia, NArFU named after M.V. Lomonosov.

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## РОЛЬ ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА В РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ КОНЦЕПЦИИ «МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ» РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ СЕВЕРНОГО (АРКТИЧЕСКОГО) ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ИМЕНИ М.В. ЛОМОНОСОВА)

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**Аннотация.** *Введение.* В настоящее время понятие «мягкой силы» рассматривается как эффективный способ несилового воздействия на другие страны с целью реализации собственных задач через сотрудничество в определенных сферах, направленное на убеждение и формирование позитивного восприятия. Высшее образование сегодня является одним из важнейших инструментов «мягкой силы» в Центральной Азии, поскольку позволяет закрепить в данном регионе дружественные политические и экономические элиты, а также качественно улучшить поток трудовых мигрантов в Российскую Федерацию. Целью исследования является анализ специфики применения «мягкой силы» в отношении выходцев из Центральной Азии на примере Северного (Арктического) федерального университета им. М.В. Ломоносова. *Методы и материалы.* Исследование базируется на системном и компаративистском подходах к анализу стратегии российской «мягкой силы» в сфере образования и общих подходах к ее применению в Центральной Азии. Основными источниками для анализа стали ежегодные отчеты о реализации программы развития САФУ, в которых большое внимание уделяется вопросам академического рекрутинга и академической мобильности. *Анализ.* Центральная Азия является важным регионом с точки зрения российских интересов. Она располагает большими запасами углеводородов, обладает большим транзитным потенциалом в международной торговле, отсюда приезжает наибольшее число трудовых мигрантов. В связи с этим Россия усиливает воздействие своей «мягкой силы» на страны региона, в том числе и в сфере образования. С момента создания в 2010 г. САФУ его руководство определило регион Центральной Азии в качестве приоритетного. На примере САФУ видно, что общее количество иностранных студентов в общем числе обучающихся полного цикла выросло в 8,4 раза. При этом в первую очередь этот рост дают как раз студенты из стран Центральной Азии, доля которых составляет 82,0–89,3 % от общего числа иностранных студентов. Велика доля уроженцев данного региона и среди обучающихся на краткосрочных образовательных программах – 49,5–61,4 %. В качестве средств повышения привлекательности учебы в университете используются договоры с учебными заведениями региона, визиты преподавателей и студентов в страны региона, презентации образовательных программ на образовательных выставках и в представительствах Россотруд-

ничества, приглашение на учебу в счет квоты для соотечественников, проживающих за рубежом, выездное тестирование и олимпиады для абитуриентов, повышенные стипендии, возмещение затрат на медицинское страхование, реклама в социальных сетях. Для повышения социальной и культурной адаптации иностранных студентов созданы тьюторская команда и Клуб интернациональной дружбы, проводятся мероприятия и экскурсии. *Результаты.* Несмотря на то что единая концепция привлечения абитуриентов и последующего удержания на российском рынке иностранных специалистов (бакалавров и магистров) из стран Центральной Азии в Российской Федерации не разработана, САФУ самостоятельно смог занять нишу на рынке образовательных услуг региона. Четкий курс руководства университета на привлечение студентов из центральноазиатских республик, использование широкого спектра методов по увеличению академического рекрутинга, использование преимуществ Архангельской области в сфере адаптации мигрантов позволили за 10 лет увеличить поток студентов из стран Центральной Азии более чем в 8 раз. *Вклад авторов.* Р.Ю. Болдырев разработал общую концепцию статьи, подготовил разделы «Введение», «Методы» и «Результаты», подготовил статью к публикации, С.Ю. Болдырева подготовила раздел «Анализ», Н.Н. Белошицкая осуществила перевод статьи на английский язык.

**Ключевые слова:** «мягкая сила», дипломатия, высшее образование, Центральная Азия, САФУ им. М.В. Ломоносова.

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**Introduction.** The current dynamics of international relations developments dramatically reveals that to exercise political influence on the world arena a country does not necessarily have to coerce, that is to resort to 'hard power' by means of military offensives or imposing economic sanctions. In contrast, alternative techniques of pursuing one's interests, the so-called "soft influence" or "soft power" have proved their effectiveness. The notion of "soft power" contradicts conventional ways of political influence. Having come into existence in the USA, the conception of "soft power" has gained popularity over a relatively short period of time. It is being successfully implemented by the leading states. Some analysts doubt whether suchlike "soft power" under certain circumstances may become the basis for exerting other means of influence. We argue that it is feasible as one of the main objectives of the "soft power" is to compensate the lack of military force by resorting to alternative ways of pursuing one's interests. The mere interpretation of the term "soft power" illustratively demonstrates this idea. Joseph Nye, currently Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor, Emeritus, coined the term and back in 2004 stated that "soft power" is 'the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction of one's own culture, political values and foreign policies rather than coercion or

payment' [4]. Yet, in 2011 Joseph Nye expands the notion adding that one of the main aims of the "soft power" is 'getting desired outcomes via collaboration in particular spheres' [4]. In other words, suchlike influence is tantamount to the ability to influence other countries with the view to accomplishing one's own aims by co-operation in certain areas, shaping positive perception and acquiescence. One should note that this may lead to perilous implications as modern states are quite pragmatic and reasonable in pursuing first of all their own national interests, and what is good for one country, might be a disaster for another.

The "soft power" conception is in great demand in Russia at the present stage. The outbreaks of armed conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Syria, Donetsk Basin, inclusion of the Crimea to the Russian Federation as a subordinate entity – all these events of the recent history immediately demonstrate that force incentives may only secure meeting foreign policy aims in a short-term perspective. As for long-term mutually beneficial cooperation, it requires far more effective mechanisms, "soft power" being the leading one.

Central Asia is a priority region for the RF foreign policy and, consequently, "soft policy" implementation, higher education being the main instrument of the latter. Understandably, higher education is a crucial indicator of a state's

competitiveness as well as the key to a country's prosperity. It is the tertiary education domain that is the pivotal point in the "soft power" implementation as it ensures establishment of the political and economic elite in the target area who will maintain a friendly approach to Russia. On the other hand, it is indeed the type of cooperation to qualitatively change the migrant flow to Russia from the countries of Central Asia. Low-qualified work force from Central Asia with poor command of the Russian language may gradually be replaced with high-level specialists trained to fill the niches on the Russian labour market and willing to live and work in Russia on a permanent basis.

The ultimate aim of our research is to analyse the effectiveness of the instruments exploited in Russia to exert "soft power" in the domain of higher education in case with the region of Central Asia.

The international activity of Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov has been chosen as a subject of the research. The choice of the university is determined by the fact that despite geographical remoteness from the area of interest, professional training of students from the countries of Central Asia is one of the priorities on the international agenda of the university.

**Methods.** Both theoretical underlining and practical issues of "soft power" wielding have been profoundly studied by M. Fraser [6], C. Hayden [8], A. Lennon [13], J. Melissen [16]. Significant contribution to the conceptualization of "soft power" as a foreign policy theory has been made by Russian scholars Yu.P. Davydov [2], E.V. Efanova [5], O.V. Krasina [9], O.G. Leonova [14], A.P. Tsygankov [30]. The following authors – I.G. Dezhina [3], M.M. Lebedeva [12], V.A. Masich [15], E.P. Panova [25], A.V. Torkunov [29] mainly concentrated on the domains of higher education and scientific research as the most promising resources of Russian "soft power". V.A. Gerasimova [7], M.M. Lebedeva [11], Z.T. Muratalieva [17], D.S. Plotnikov [26], Z.S. Sarimsokov [28] devoted their researches to different aspects of the "soft power" application on the territory of Central Asia.

Comprehensive presentation of the "soft power" issue here is beyond the scope of the paper's objectives. Yet, even the reference to the works above allow concluding about insufficient research of such "soft power" institutions as the

Russian language promotion programmes in the former Soviet space, cultural projects programmes, youth exchange programmes, collaboration in science and research, international students training in the universities of Russia.

Methodology of the set scientific issue draws on both systemic and comparative approaches. Thanks to the former one we managed to carry out analysis of the role and significance of the higher education as an instrument of "soft power" in current international relations and in particular in the international activity of Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov. The historical-genetic approach is exploited to consider academic recruiting policy forming and developing in case with students from Central Asia over the period 2010–2020.

For this study the authors used analytical reports on implementing the NArFU Programme of Development. These reports allowed to understand the "soft power" conception in the educational space of the university under analysis and in general for the country. In addition, internet websites of different information agencies were put to use, mainly those which are often utilized by the Russian political elite to give explanations on their foreign policy position and the way they shape public opinion abroad.

**Analysis.** The Central Asian region consists of the former USSR republics; thus, these states are near abroad countries for Russia.

This is the region where the greatest number of migrants comes from to Russia. The Russian language has preserved its significant presence there as the language of international communication. From the perspective of the integration processes development, this region is a constituent part of the CIS, it is also presented by Kazakhstan and Kirghizia in the Eurasian Economic Union. Thus, it is only logical that Central Asia has remained to be a strategically critical region for Russia.

Naturally enough, the region of Central Asia is not easy to be influenced. This is determined by strong cultural distinctiveness – ancient customs, rituals, and traditions, which, in case they are neglected, may bring about disastrous implications. Other challenges include clannishness of social relations; the feature exacerbates realization of "soft power" traditional mechanisms.

Nowadays, Russia is strengthening its “soft power” impact in Central Asia. In 2016 the Russian Federation was included for the first time into the list of nations, successfully exerting their influence on other countries by means of “soft power” by the British PR-agency ‘Portland Communications’. Russia took the 27<sup>th</sup> position in the list. Russia is ranked eleventh in respect of digital technologies spread in the region of Central Asia; the country is fourteenth on the cultural impact indicator; it is the eighth in the field of international cooperation, as for cultural-educational exchanges, Russia takes the twentieth place [27]. This seems to be a fairly good performance, revealing Russia’s progress in the cultural and humanitarian field.

Another way of one’s “soft power” efficiency increase is a real growth of achievements rather than any kind of ostentation and deliberate promotion of these achievements. What is taken into consideration here is not only development of national culture and science, assistance in successful economic model design, domestic policy implementation, but close cooperation with other nations in tackling transnational issues and holding peacekeeping actions, as these are also objective indicators of the country’s “soft power”.

Russia’s contribution in settling Batken’s events in Kirghizia in 1999–2000, peacekeeping role in ethnic conflicts resolution in Tajikistan, annual counter-terrorism drill within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization – all these actions have highlighted Russia’s role as a security guarantor in Central Asia. This leads to the conclusion that notwithstanding the historical background, Russia is not perceived as an enemy in Central Asia. Together with demographic and language factors, culture and education until this very day have been playing their positive role for Russia in this region.

Culture and education are key factors shaping a person’s outlook. Thus, appearing of a social group sharing similar value system is one of the main objectives for the state policy in the sphere of the nation interests’ advancement by co-opting rather than coercing. Thus, the higher education domain opens up great opportunities for the “soft power” implementation on the world stage and regional one in particular. International students training presupposes participation in forming political, economic and social elite of other countries.

Currently, the number of students from Central Asia in Russian universities makes up significant percentage from the total number of international students from former Soviet republics.

The data in Table 1 demonstrate growth of international full-cycle students (bachelor and master degree levels) in NArFU over the period 2010–2018 from 68 to 570, i.e. by 8.4 times; the proportion of international students of the total number of university students over the same period rose from 0.8% to 8.16%, that is just over tenfold. The number of countries, from where students come to study in NArFU increased threefold – from 21 to 64. By far the most successful international students recruiting was in 2012 – 58% increase over the previous year, in 2013 (+37%), in 2014 (+40%) and in 2016 (+43%). Central Asia states are precisely the target group, securing these significant figures of the international students increase in NArFU. The number of students from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizia accounted for 82.0–89.3% of the total number of full-cycle international students in 2016–2018.

Taking into account international students participating in short-term educational programmes (preparatory department, semester-long programmes, Russian as a foreign language courses, winter, spring, summer and autumn schools) as well, then over the analyzed period of 2010–2018, the number of international students in NArFU grew dramatically – from 121 to 862, i.e. by 7.11 times. And here the proportion of students from Central Asia remains the most significant – 49.5–61.4%. The following years turned out to be the most effective in attracting international participants for short-time programs: 2011 – an increase of 49% over the previous year, in 2013 (+76%), in 2014 (+45%) and in 2016 (+40%).

The number of international bachelor and master degree graduates in 2018 was 63; the majority of them are citizens of Central Asia states [20].

In 2018 66 foreign lecturers from 23 countries, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan were invited to teach in NArFU [20]. There were not only university employees among lecturers, but also diplomatic officials, representatives of business and cultural organisations. For reference, only 2 lecturers worked in NArFU on a reimbursable basis in 2017 [10].

Central Asia region involvement in NArFU's international academic mobility

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
The number of countries, students from where consumed NArFU's educational services *	21	29	29	49	45	52	47	64	62
The number of full-cycle bachelor or master degree international students	68	80	126	172	241	305	435	522	570
Proportion of international students (bachelor, master degree, post-graduate degree) of the total number of students **		0.8%	2%	1%	3.08%	4.13%	5.62%	7.60%	8.16%
Proportion of Central Asia students of the total number of international full-cycle students **							82%	86%	89.3%
The total number of international students-consumers of NArFU educational services *	121	180	184	324	469	505	706	795	861
Proportion of Central Asia students of total number of international students-consumers of NArFU educational services**				53.3%	61.4%	49.5%	54%	59%	59.1%

Note. Based on [1; 10; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24]. \* Including short-term academic mobility programmes, preparatory courses and language schools in NArFU. \*\* The data are provided for academic years, included into NArFU's analytical reports.

Since 2012 rigorous analyses of CIS and non-CIS countries' educational markets have been carried out by NArFU specialists. According to their findings, there is strong interest in Russian education, further employment and residence on the territory of the RF. The percentage of would-be students having a good command of Russian from these countries is especially high. The directions of studying in great demand are management, construction, and oil and gas industry. As a consequence, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Ukraine have been designated as top-priority countries for NArFU. A recruiting department was introduced into the structure of NArFU, it allowed the university to build a framework for attracting international students first of all, as well as to promote and brand educational products.

Over the recent years the work has been in progress on NArFU's integration into international scientific and educational space by means of holding large-scale international events, increased

presence on the Internet, and participating in high-profile events of non-CIS and CIS states, including Central Asia states. Such research and education institutions of Uzbekistan as Namangan Civil Engineering Institute, Navoi State Mining Institute have become partners of NArFU. Partner relations are also being developed with other organisations from the region in question. Interaction with knowledge institutions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has been significantly enhanced.

A comprehensive approach has been undertaken to secure competitiveness of students enrolled and attracting talented youth from among foreign citizens and Russian fellow-countrymen, residing abroad, to take different level programmes:

- the university staff and students regularly monitor and analyze international educational markets with the help of available information sources, databases, and review of the participation in international exhibitions on education, thematic forums, conferences, and interaction with expert

organisations. Central Asia states (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan) have also been designated as potential strategic educational markets for recruiting international students;

– employing financial mechanisms to support foreign citizens and Russian fellow-countrymen, residing abroad. NArFU's representatives have joined the working group on foreign citizens' selection for studying in universities in Russia within the quota on the basis of the representative office of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' in the Republic of Tajikistan. As a result, the upward trend of would-be students from Tajikistan enrollment in NArFU has remained. Annually, under the Federal law no. 99-FL dated May 24, 1999 "On the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning Fellow-Countrymen Residing Abroad" enrollment campaign takes place. A crucial mechanism for foreign citizens' enrollment is arranging information platforms abroad together with off-site university testing. As additional mechanisms to attract foreign school-leavers to take educational programmes in NArFU a special allowance was allocated 'First-Year Student 5.0' (for those who had special academic achievements at school) as well as social assistance in the form of medical insurance compensation for international students;

– since 2013 the university has been regularly participating in international exhibitions on education and international information events. So, representatives of NArFU regularly take part in international exhibitions on education in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and in off-site launch events of various formats almost everywhere in Central Asia [20];

– collaboration with Russian and International partner organisations on attracting international students. For several years already there has been active interaction with the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs on fellow-countrymen residing abroad and with the international humanitarian cooperation ('Rossotrudnichestvo'), as well as with regional representative offices of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' within the framework of the current bilateral agreement. Under the auspices of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' representative offices NArFU has been promoting its educational services by presenting educational programmes on the basis of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' regional

offices and in different educational organisations (both secondary schools, vocational schools, institutes) in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan. NArFU has been placing information on its educational opportunities on official websites of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' representative offices, on social media. The university has been sending informational newsletters in both paper and electronic formats to the offices of 'Rossotrudnichestvo'. NArFU has been contributing greatly into foreign citizens and Russian countrymen residing abroad enrollment procedure within the quota established by the Russian Federation Governmental Decree no. 891 (e.g., Tajikistan). Off-site testing has been carried out as well as in-presence stages of the NArFU multi-disciplinary intellectual contest 'The Future of the Arctic' among foreign citizens and Russian countrymen residing abroad within the framework of enrollment campaigns (mainly Uzbekistan, Tajikistan). The information on the university is regularly updated in reference books "Higher Education Establishments in Russia", which are published with the support of 'Rossotrudnichestvo' [1; 10; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24];

– distribution of information on educational opportunities in NArFU has taken various forms: meetings with colleagues from partner universities, official trips of NArFU staff, international visits of NArFU staff as a part of Arkhangelsk region delegations within the framework of inter-regional agreements, visits to other educational establishments, including those promoting the Russian language and culture abroad, visits of diplomatic officers of foreign states to NArFU, interactions with the Arkhangelsk region Council of Nationalities and expat communities, meetings with foreign participants of international events held on the site of NArFU [20];

– other mechanisms of promoting NArFU's educational services abroad. A multi-disciplinary intellectual contest "The Future of the Arctic" is regularly held, following the result of the 2018 over 600 citizens of CIS states with the majority of Central Asia participants took part in the contest [20]. In comparison with 2017 the number of participants increased by 3.5 times [10];

– NArFU actively resorts to students' help in promoting the university ("The Ambassador of NArFU"). Those students who go abroad on academic mobility programmes and international

students leaving for home places on holidays are provided with the supply of information materials to make presentations on sites of different educational establishments;

– Internet promotion of NArFU is being carried out with the help of the official university website, social media “Facebook”, “VK”. International students receive support and guidance throughout academic year by means of electronic mail, phones, messengers, relatives and fellow-countrymen, NArFU graduates.

Relatively low crime level in Arkhangelsk together with the absence of xenophobic feelings is conducive to maintaining and strengthening cooperation with Central Asia states. In contrast to numerous regions in the South and Central Russia there have not been registered any severe offences or social protests against migrants either in NArFU or Arkhangelsk region.

The university administration pays close attention to social and cultural adaptation of international students. There have been teams of tutors since 2014 to support and guide international students [23]. Not only do tutors meet the international students on their arrival, but also help them do all the paperwork and take around the city to familiarize with the local infrastructure and assist in arranging daily issues.

The International Friendship Club was established in NArFU to promote tolerance towards international students and to kindle Russian students’ interest in cross-cultural communication and embracing new cultures. The Club is aimed at boosting creative activity of international students as well. The Club members arrange numerous events devoted to national customs and traditions, hold guided excursions for international students to acquaint them with social and cultural life in Russia. Undoubtedly, all these activities contribute to creating comfortable and friendly atmosphere for international students, facilitate their integration into academic society, and encourage informal connections with other students, all these things shape positive image of Russia and Russian education in the world [20].

**Results.** Although in the Russian Federation there has not been developed a general state-level concept on attracting school graduates from Central Asia countries yet, NArFU has managed to occupy its own niche on the educational market of the region.

Over the period since 2010 to 2018 the international students’ proportion of the total number of students at the university went up by 10.2 times. The most rapid growth characterized the period covering 2012–2016, at that time the annual increase was around 40–50%. In the first place, this increase was ensured by school graduates from Central Asia countries. They comprised above 80% of the international students’ total. Regrettably, however, the staff academic mobility from the region in question lags behind the students’ mobility. The wide range of mechanisms has been used to attract students from Central Asia: participation in international educational exhibitions and forums; signing direct agreements on cooperation with universities of the Central Asia region; information assistance of ‘Rossotrudnichestvo’ regional offices; arranging off-site university testing and multi-disciplinary intellectual contests for school graduates; financial assistance for international students; target promotion on the social media.

Regular activities are held to facilitate social and cultural adaptation of international students, which together with establishing informal connections with Russian students and tolerant attitude of Arkhangelsk region local residents to foreigners not only encourage further growth of students’ academic mobility, but also contribute to strengthening a positive image of the Russian Federation in the region of Central Asia.

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