

Mobility

First!

A travel grant for artists
and cultural professionals
in Asia and Europe

Changes to the Grant Scheme

2020

ASEF Mobility First! 2020: A Note on Some Changes to the Grant Scheme

2020 marks the 4th year of [Mobility First!](#) – the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)’s travel grant for artists and cultural professionals in Asia and Europe.

As many of you are already aware, **Mobility First!** is publicly funded by 51 countries in Asia and Europe, the EU and the ASEAN Secretariat, through the [Asia-Europe Meeting \(ASEM\)](#), an informal intergovernmental dialogue process established in 1996.

We launched **Mobility First!** to support multilateral cultural exchange among the 51 countries that are part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEM established ASEF to promote “better mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges” ([Dublin Principles](#), 19 Dec 1996, last amended on 6 Oct 2004, 5th ASEM Summit, Hanoi, Viet Nam).

ASEM Culture Ministers prioritised professional networking among Asian and European cultural professionals and tasked ASEF to facilitate networking, artistic exchanges and co-productions between Asian and European cultural practitioners ([Action Plan](#), 2nd ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting (ASEM CMM2), Paris, France, 6-7 June 2005). In line with these recommendations from Ministers of Culture from Asia and Europe, ASEF launched **Mobility First!** in 2017.

At the most recent 8th ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting ([ASEM CMM8](#), Sofia, Bulgaria, 2018), **Mobility First!**, ASEF’s travel grant for artists and cultural professionals, was particularly acknowledged for its contribution to enhanced Asia-Europe connectivity.

Every year, we re-shape **Mobility First!** based on the feedback we receive from applicants and partners, as well to respond better to issues and trends in the cultural sector. The changes impact several different aspects of the project such as selection criteria, selection methodology, travel routes, application forms, partnerships etc. This year, you will notice the following key changes to **Mobility First!**

Key Changes to Mobility First! 2020

Rolling applications

Instead of fixed funding cycles, applications are now reviewed on a rolling basis. You will receive feedback approximately 6 weeks after you submit your application.

Improved online application form

We have improved the online application form to create a more logical flow of questions. We have also re-worded some of the questions for improved clarity.

Shift of weightage in selection criteria

Instead of focusing on the type of activity an applicant will participate in (e.g. residency, festival/biennale, workshop/training, conference/forum, research trip/partnership meeting, networking), we will be more interested in how closely applications reflect & fulfil **Mobility First!**'s 4 focus areas:

- Skills transfer/knowledge exchange
- Innovation in arts and culture
- Contribution to local development (in home and destination countries)
- Deepening the role of the arts & artists in society

Alignment with these focus areas will be at the centre of our assessment regardless of the type of activity you wish to undertake. Activities undertaken could also be a combination e.g. residency + partnership meetings.

See our [FAQs](#) for more information about our focus areas

Air travel vs. environmental sustainability

ASEF firmly believes that cultural mobility is the backbone of international cultural cooperation. While advancing this cause through our **Mobility First!** grant, we are also keenly aware of the negative impact of air travel on our environment. This year, our application form will directly address this issue by asking for your thoughts on how we – i.e. you as a potential artist-traveller and us, as mobility funders – could jointly address and hopefully reconcile the urgent need for international cultural exchange **and** concrete action on the climate crisis. We have added 2 questions on this topic at the end of the application form.

Mobility routes

In previous years, we have supported Asia-Europe, Europe-Asia and intra-Asia travel. This year, our general call for **Mobility First!** will only support Asia-Europe and Europe-Asia mobility routes. As you are aware, our general calls have been complemented by open calls with partners in the last years. These special thematic open calls with our partners will continue to include intra-Asia routes:

- [Special open call](#) for cultural professionals from Bangladesh, India,

Lao PDR, Myanmar, Pakistan and Vietnam (supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) – currently open; deadline for travel is 15 April 2020.

- Stay tuned for more!

Funding caps

In previous years, we published budget caps for each mobility route. This year, we will be asking applicants to send us the amount they would like to request from ASEF to support their travel. This amount must be stated in the application form. This method will, we hope, enable applicants to request a more realistic amount for their journey. ASEF will take note of the request, make its own assessments and due diligence before deciding the final grant amount to be provided to successful applicants.

Application types

In previous years, we accepted 2 kinds of applications: from individual cultural professionals (to travel to a certain country for cultural exchange) and from arts organisations (inviting up to 5 cultural professionals to participate in their event). This year, we will only be accepting applications from individual cultural professionals for outbound cultural mobility.

As a key objective is to promote wider and more balanced exchanges that benefit citizens of many ASEM Partner countries to travel to a wide range of destinations, we feel that supporting individuals would fulfil this purpose more closely. Arts organisations and organisers of arts events should encourage artists to make individual applications, should several be planning to travel to the same event. All applications will be assessed on their merits.

Call for Partnerships

The long-term sustainability of mobility funding schemes is only made possible through alliances with other like-minded funders, both public and private. Since 2018, other organisations have joined us as co-funding partners to increase our support for the mobility of cultural professionals in Asia and Europe via Mobility First!'s [special thematic open calls](#). We want to build up on this model and increase such collaborations. In this vein, we will be launching a call for partnerships this year. Stay tuned!