

# Fulbright Commission Activities in 2012

## Message from the Executive Director

**D**ear Fulbright alumni and grantees,  
We are at the threshold of another year in the second decade of the 21st century and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fulbright Commission. Looking back, nothing much seems to have changed in terms of our goals, objectives and priorities. We have added one more year of hard work and purposeful activities to our working life records, and to the history of the Fulbright program and the Fulbright Commission in Bulgaria. Now, as it has been the tradition so far, it is time to report and analyze the results, learn our lessons, and plan for the future and for the better.

In 2012 the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange continued to serve the goals of the Fulbright program as defined in the 1961 Fulbright-Hays Act and the 2003 agreement between the US Government and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria. All its manifold activities aimed to implement the objectives outlined in the 2012 program plan:

1. Promote academic exchanges in all fields.
2. Extend outreach to BG universities, high schools and other educational and research institutions to provide a higher quality, a greater number, and diversity of applicants.
3. Popularize the Fulbright program in Bulgaria in the context of increasing competition from European universities

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**Prof. Dr. Julia Stefanova**  
Executive Director Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

- by strengthening educational advising and broadening the use of Internet resources and social networks.
4. Strengthen efforts to increase the number of Bulgarian candidates by diversifying the Fulbright grants format, especially non-degree opportunities for doctoral students, young researchers and NGO officers.
5. Disseminate information about the Fulbright opportunity in Bulgaria at US universities and educational institutions so as to increase the number and raise the quality of US applicants in all categories.
6. Involve more actively Fulbright alumni in the promotion of the Fulbright program in Bulgaria and the US.
7. Assist Bulgarian and US universities to develop partnerships with US universities and other institutions.

8. Increase Fulbright presence in Bulgaria by maintaining local centers and using the resources of American Corners and US Embassy-supported libraries.
9. Continue fund-raising activities.
11. Continue to organize the annual Fulbright International Fulbright Institute.
12. Continue to offer English language training services and paper-based and computer-based testing (TOEFL, GRE, LSAT, CFA, EPSO etc).
13. Participate in international events relating to the Fulbright program and international education.
12. Maintain good communication with ECA, cooperating agencies and educational institutions in the US and Bulgaria, and other Fulbright Commissions to ensure high standards of program administration on the basis of binationalism, peer review and professionalism.

## US Grantees in AY 11-12 and AY 12-13

In AY 11-12 the number of US grantees was 30: five lecturers, four graduate students, one of which was recipient of the Bulgarian-Romanian Fulbright grant, twenty English teaching assistants, one Fulbright-Hays researcher and two senior specialists. The lecturers came from the following fields: law, dance, business administration, applied linguistics and creative writing. They were placed at Sofia University, New Bulgarian University, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Sofia Opera and Ballet. The senior specialists were experts in the field of occupational therapy and speech language pathology and were hosted at University of Ruse and South West University in Blagoevgrad. The final reports of the US lecturers and the evaluations of the partner institutions are very positive showing that both sides were satisfied with the exchange and would like to continue the established contacts and relationships.

The Commission also hosted four US graduate students in film studies, ethnomusicology, art studies and music (vocal performance). They were placed at appropriate institutions, such as "Vreme" Film Studios, the Institute for Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, The Red House Centre for Culture and Debate and the National Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. Their research projects led to collaboration with other local and international institutions, as well as to community involvement organized at several high schools in Sofia.

With the financial support of *America for Bulgaria* Foundation, the English Teaching Assistantship Program was significantly expanded and proved extremely useful for students and

hosts alike. Twenty ETAs taught English at language high schools Sofia, Stara Zagora, Pleven, Lovech, Haskovo, Dobrich, Vidin, Shumen, Montana, Kardzhali, Vratsa, Pernik, Bourgas, Rousse, Dimitrovgrad, Sliven, and Varna.

The AY 12-13 competition resulted in the selection of 32 US grantees: five lecturers in journalism, Slavic studies, law, geology and American studies, and four students in anthropology, history, urban development and music. The ETA program was further expanded through the sponsorship of *America for Bulgaria* Foundation and included 23 students who are working in foreign language high schools in Sofia, Vratsa, Vidin, Montana, Blagoevgrad, Dimitrovgrad, Kardzhali, Stara Zagora, Pleven, Shumen, Lovech, Haskovo, Sliven, Ruse, Razgrad, Gabrovo, Yambol, Smolyan, Varna, Bourgas, Pernik, Targovishte and Dobrich.

## U.S. Grantees' Accomplishments

Fulbright scholar Kathryn Olive Posin staged the ballet "Scheherazade" at the National Opera and Ballet as a part of the American Ballet for Bulgaria initiative. Her work received wide media coverage. Graduate student Jamie Dahman sang at the gala concert concluding the 58th edition of the Berlin Seminar. Along with their teaching assignments, many ETAs created or participated in a variety of extracurricular projects, such as volunteering with non-profit organizations; helping students establish partnerships with local orphanages; organizing sports events for charity; staging plays at school; tolerance and diversity workshops etc.

## Bulgarian Grantees

A total of 15 Bulgarian grantees were selected in the following categories and fields: five scholars in philosophy, animal breeding, biogeochemistry, material science and environmental science; 6 graduate students in electronic commerce, graphic design, business administration, law and comparative literature; one non-degree doctoral researcher in economics, one Hubert Humphrey Fellow, and two Civil Society research scholars in media studies and photography.

The scholars and the civil society researchers were awarded 3-5 months grants to prestigious US universities, research centers and non-governmental organizations: The Catholic University of America, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, University of Florida, Rice University, University of California, National Endowment for Democracy, and Crow Indian Reservation. All of them have returned to Bulgaria and their final reports express great satisfaction with the Fulbright experience.

Both recipients of the scholarship for the study of civil society (joint with CEE Trust) also had very productive grant periods,

resulting in outreach activities, public presentations, lectures, radio interviews etc. Of the seven graduate and non-graduate students, four returned to Bulgaria and Europe after completing their programs. The others are still studying in the US. The recipient of the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship, a leading Bulgarian radio journalist, successfully completed her research program at the University of Maryland.

The publicity campaign for the AY 2012-2013 competition yielded a total 80 applications: 54 for graduate study grants, and 26 in the senior scholar category. This almost twofold increase from last year could be accounted for by the visible publicity campaign, the good outreach of the Commission staff, the accessibility of the online application platform, as well as the general stagnation in the educational sphere in Bulgaria. The highly competitive selection process resulted in the nomination of 5 senior scholars, 5 graduate students, one non-degree PhD researcher, and one recipient of the Research Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society. The scholars came from the following fields: linguistics, Slavic studies, soil chemistry, sociology/national defense and logopedics. Three of them have already started their projects at prestigious US institutions: University of California-Los Angeles, CA, University of Kansas - Lawrence, KS, and Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), Patrick Air Force Base, FL. Two scholars will start their programs in February, 2013 at University of Georgia, Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, GA, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Communication Science Research Center, OH.

In the student category 5 students were approved and are currently enrolled in master's programs in organizational psychology, law, urban planning and journalism. Our graduate students were admitted to prestigious universities with financial support: Baruch College -The City University of New York, Tulane University, Columbia University, Washington University in St. Louis, and New York University. One six-month non-degree study grant was awarded to a doctoral student in management at Columbia Business School. The joint scholarship with *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute was awarded for a sixth consecutive year. The grantee is enrolled in a master's program in organizational psychology at Baruch College-CUNY. One research scholarship for the study of civil society was awarded for AY 2012-13 to the president of an NGO promoting road safety.

The AY 2013-14 grants competition was announced in November 2011 and a total of 52 applications were received: 33 for graduate study grants, 14 in the senior scholar category, and 5 for the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship. The interviewing committees nominated 7 principal and three alternate candidates for graduate study programs in business administration, architecture, law, screen-writing, finance, entrepreneurship, and

graphic design; five principals and one alternate candidates for senior scholar grants in engineering, molecular biology, history, linguistics, theology, and philosophy; two principal candidates for the research scholarship for the study of civil society in music studies and sociology; three principal candidates for the Hubert Humphrey award in human trafficking, human rights, and media management.

## Grantees' Accomplishments

Fulbright civil society scholar Ivo Danchev achieved great public outreach for his visit to the Crow Indian Tribe. His photo-essay and report were published in the National Geographic - Bulgaria. He appeared on national radio and was involved in a number of public presentations on the community and contemporary life of the tribe. The culmination of his work is the travelling photo exhibition *Indian Summer* inspired by his Fulbright visit and co-sponsored by the US Embassy in Bulgaria and America for Bulgaria Foundation.

## Non-Grant Activities

During the period under review educational advising continued to play a central part in the Commission's non-grant activities. The results are very good in spite of the intense competition from Europe: in FY 2011 the number of users of Commission-offered services was 12,540; in FY 2012 it reached 16,445. More than 150 international education professionals from around the world visited the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission's special stand at NAFSA's 64th Annual Conference & Expo Poster Fair and EducationUSA Country Fair. The number of website visits has also steadily increased: 18,288 in AY 2009-10, 58,938 in AY 2010-11, and 63,266 in AY 2011-12. In AY 2011-12, eleven of the regular visitors of the Fulbright advising center were accepted to US universities and colleges, with a total scholarship amount of over \$ 2 million USD (\$ 545,316 x 4 years = \$ 2,181,264). Five of all accepted students were granted full scholarships and six received financial aid. Among the schools where our advisees will be studying are: Stanford University, CA; Yale University, CT; Princeton University, NJ; New York University in Abu Dhabi. During 2012 the Commission continued to expand outreach all across Bulgaria and especially in the underserved regions. The result of this activity is the sizable increase of contacts with institutions and individuals: 2,110 in AY 2010-11 and 6,953 in AY 2011-12.

The eleventh Fulbright International Summer Institute ([www.fisi-bg.info](http://www.fisi-bg.info)) took place at the RIU Pravets Resort on August 13-24, 2012. The event attracted 113 students with various academic backgrounds from the US, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Serbia, Kazakhstan and Greece. FISI 2012 was designed and implemented by the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission in

collaboration with the following institutions: *America for Bulgaria* Foundation, Sofia University and its Centre of Excellence *Dialogue Europe*, the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Monmouth College in Illinois, USA. Among the participants were 27 MBA students from the Ross School of Business led by Professor George Siedel. They were offered a special program that involved meetings with prominent Bulgarian entrepreneurs and visits to business companies. FISI offered a total of 14 interdisciplinary courses conducted by 24 distinguished professors from prestigious universities and institutions such in the US and Bulgaria. Along with the courses, the new group of American Fulbright lecturers, graduate students and English Teaching Assistants were offered cultural orientation, professional training and a course in Bulgaria culture, and an intensive two-week training Bulgarian.

Special recognition and gratitude is due to America for Bulgaria Foundation for its generous financial support. The contribution of the Centre of Excellence Dialogue Europe at Sofia University is also greatly appreciated.

The Fulbright Commission continued to offer preparatory courses in English, SAT, TOFL, GRE and GMAT at its language center in Sofia, and some of its local info-centers, e.g. in Shumen, Veliko Turnovo, Sliven, Smolyan, Kurdjali.

## Fund-Raising Activities

Over the last four years the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission has established very productive cooperation with the *America for Bulgaria* Foundation. Since 2009 the Commission has received about \$ 700 000 from ABF to expand the ETA program and the

Fulbright International Institute. From ten in FY10, the number of ETAs in FY12 rose to 23. In FY 2013 their number will reach 28 and the Commission will receive another grant of \$ 379 000 for the program. We highly appreciate the ABF support because the results of the Fulbright presence at the Bulgarian languages schools are highly motivating. It is worth noting that because of the increased number of ETAs, Bulgaria is now on the list of the 25 most popular destinations in Europe for US students.

In FY 2012 the Commission also received \$ 20,000 from the *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute to support one Bulgarian Fulbright graduate student. Our excellent relationship with TTS dates back to 2007 and so far the Commission has received a total of \$ 140 000 for the support of Bulgarian students. We are deeply grateful to TTS.

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Dear colleagues, as you can see, the balance of our activities and results in 2012 are again positive and encouraging. I would like to thank the members of the Fulbright Commission Board for their help and commitment and the Fulbright staff for their professionalism and dedication to the Fulbright program. We also deeply appreciate the support of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State, and the excellent cooperation with our partners and colleagues from the Council of International Exchange of Scholars and the Institute of International Education.

I cordially wish all of you a healthy, peaceful and productive New Year 2013!

*Dr. Julia Stefanova*  
Executive Director



## БЪЛГАРО-АМЕРИКАНСКА КОМИСИЯ ЗА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЕН ОБМЕН "ФУЛБРАЙТ"

### УЧЕБЕН ЦЕНТЪР КЪМ КОМИСИЯ "ФУЛБРАЙТ"

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- Компютърна самоподготовка за iB TOEFL, GRE, GMAT
- Справочна библиотека

### БЕЗПЛАТНИ УСЛУГИ ЗА КУРСИСТИ

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- Отстъпки при записване за повече от един курс
- Безплатни 10 часа работа с компютър
- Консултации за обучение в САЩ
- Библиотека с учебна и справочна литература

За информация: София 1504, ул. Панайот Волов 1, етаж II, тел. 944 0441, E-mail: [studycenter@fulbright.bg](mailto:studycenter@fulbright.bg), [www.fulbright.bg](http://www.fulbright.bg)

## Fulbright Office News

### Extended Outreach of the Fulbright Program and EducationUSA in Bulgaria

Over 3800 students and professionals interested in international education and exchange activities attended the Fulbright Commission's 2013 January-March outreach events and learned about study opportunities in the United States. Educational Adviser Snezhana Teneva and Program Officer Maria Kostova presented the Fulbright Program and EducationUSA at *Discover US Expo* in Sofia, *JobTiger National Career Days* in Sofia, Veliko Turnovo, Russe and Svishtov, and *Education Beyond Borders International Education Fair* in Sofia. Snezhana Teneva visited the University of Veliko Turnovo, D.A. Tsenov Academy of Economics in Svishtov and the University of Russe, giving presentations and engaging in productive discussions about the 2013-2014 Fulbright Grants Competition and educational opportunities in the US.



Program Officer Maria Kostova at Discover U.S. Expo, Sofia, March 7, 2013



EducationUSA Adviser Snezhana Teneva at Education Beyond Borders Fair, Sofia, March 15-17, 2013

### Cultural Enrichment Activities for U.S. Fulbright Grantees



Informal party at the Fulbright Language Training Center in Sofia to mark the Bulgarian National Holiday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>.



Trip to Koprivshitsa

## FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE 2013



**August 12-24**  
**Pravets**  
**Bulgaria**

[www.fisi-bg.info](http://www.fisi-bg.info)

The Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI) is a two-week academic program organized annually by the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange. It offers one-week interdisciplinary courses and a rich cultural program. All courses are taught in English by an international team of distinguished lecturers. The FISI courses are addressed to a broad audience of graduate students, junior researchers, university faculty and young professionals. A limited number of slots will be available for undergraduate students in their third and fourth year of study.

This year the Fulbright International Summer Institute will be held at the RIU Pravets Resort, Pravets, on August 12-24.

Participation fee per week: BGN 350 for Bulgarian students and BGN 550 for Bulgarian professionals; EUR 400 for students from other countries and EUR 600 for professionals from other countries. The fee covers accommodation and meals for six days, tuition, study materials, cultural program. Partial financial aid will be available on a competitive basis.

Information about FISI 2012 and application forms can be found at [www.fisi-bg.info](http://www.fisi-bg.info).

You can also visit the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange: 1000 Sofia, 17 Al. Stamboliyski Blvd, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, rooms 9 and 15, tel. (+359 2) 981 6830 and (+359 2) 980 8212.

Visiting hours: 2pm – 4pm, Monday – Friday

Please send your applications to: [jstefanova@fulbright.bg](mailto:jstefanova@fulbright.bg) with a copy to [idimitrova@fulbright.bg](mailto:idimitrova@fulbright.bg).

**Deadline for submitting applications: May 26<sup>th</sup> 2013.**

### Facts about the Fulbright International Summer Institute

- FISI started in 2002 and since then it has hosted a total of 692 students from 39 countries;
- Since 2002 a total of 109 lecturers from 45 universities or professional institutions in Bulgaria, UK, USA, Canada, Pakistan and Ecuador have taught at FISI;
- In 2010 the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission received the Fulbright Innovator Award of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State “ in recognition of outstanding innovation in designing and implementing the Fulbright International Summer Institute”.

## FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE 2013

August 12-24, RIU Pravets Resort

### Proposed courses and workshops

#### Week 1, 12-16.08.2013

**Course 1:** Intercultural Communications: How to survive and thrive in the global workforce

**Lecturer:** Prof. Dan Fellner, Arizona State University, AZ

**Course 2:** Project Writing and Project Management

**Lecturer:** Dr. Danail Danov, Senior Project Consultant, Communications and Human Resources Development Center, Sofia

**Course 3:** Personal Finance and Investing Decisions

**Lecturer:** Prof. Chenchu Bathala, Cleveland State University, OH

**Course 4:** Hollywood in the 21st Century

**Lecturer:** Dr. James Deutsch, Program Curator, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington, DC

**Course 5:** Bulgarian Culture: history, politics, media (lectures twice a week)

**Lecturers:** team

**Course 6:** Introduction to Bulgarian Language

**Lecturers:** Stefka Buchvarova, New Bulgarian University, Sofia; Diana Fingarova, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

**Course 7:** Philanthropy and Fundraising for NGOs

**Lecturer:** Dr. George Kosar, Associate Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, MA

**Course 8:** Peace and Conflict Resolution in the 21st Century

**Lecturer:** Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

#### Week 2, 19-23.08.2013

**Course 9:** Crisis Management: Prepare for the Unknown

**Lecturer:** Assoc. Prof. Timothy Ilg, University of Dayton, OH

**Course 10:** Negotiations and Conflict Resolution

**Lecturer:** Prof. George Siedel, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, MI

**Course 11:** Philosophical and Social Dimensions of Imagination (two-day workshop)

**Lecturer:** Assoc. Prof. Alexander Gungov, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

**Course 12:** Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights in the EU and Its Neighborhood

**Lecturer:** Prof. Mark Kramer, Harvard University, MA

**Course 13:** Bulgarian Culture: music, folklore, science (lectures twice a week)

**Lecturers:** team

**Course 14:** Introduction to Bulgarian Language

**Lecturers:** Stefka Buchvarova, New Bulgarian University, Sofia; Diana Fingarova, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

## To Chicago and Back

### Daniel Vankov

Chairman of "Open Youth" NGO, Bulgaria

Recipient of the research scholarship for the study of civil society, AY 2012-2013

Host institution in the U.S.: National Organizations for Youth Safety, Gainesville, VA

Field of specialization: Road Safety

Research Project: ICT in road safety and innovative youth work

**D**ecember 6th, 2012 – a beautiful sun is shining on the rural roads outside Ruckersville, Virginia. It is a bit after 11 o'clock when I lead my eyes on a magnificent piece – the 2013 model Jeep Wrangler. Twenty seconds later it was in pieces after suffering a crash, described as "25% overlap". What a pity! Fortunately the accident was part of an experiment, conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which invited me to their Vehicle Research Center to get a firsthand experience from what they are doing to ensure we have a greater chance of survival on the road. I do not think I will buy my next car without a closer look at its results from the crash tests. But let's start from the beginning...

My job is to make sure that less people need to count on the capabilities of their vehicles to save their lives on the road. Most car crashes are preventable and predictable with those, caused by human ignorance, being preventable at 100%. According to the World Health Organization's "World Report of Road Traffic Injury Prevention" "it is a human-made problem amenable to rational analysis and countermeasure". Over-speeding, impaired and distracted driving are the major reasons for the dark chronicles, we are so used to see on the news that they have become a normal part of our daily live. Is it normal? Road "injuries represent 12% of the global burden of disease, the third most important cause of overall mortality and the main cause of death among 1-40-year-olds" (WHO, 2004).



*Daniel Vankov with his family at the United States Botanic Garden*

What we need is a change of culture and it has to be done in an interesting, positive and interactive way. I work for "Open Youth" – the NGO that has just won the 2012 Bulgarian Road Safety Award. For years we have been focusing on promoting road safety among the young people. Everyone sees that information and communication technologies (ICT) find their way in all aspects of our lives. When used properly they are an incredible intermediary for passing awareness raising messages to young people. ICT developments have been used for years in many of our European initiatives. Some of the most successful road safety tools come from the United States of America.

## A project like no others

Usually I have to develop an idea, prove that it works and offer it as a solution. The Fulbright programme gave me a chance to turn the process upside down. With my project I have to look at the solutions, see how they work and develop ideas to bring back with me in Bulgaria. The overall aim is to study the newest developments in road safety related ICT in the United States, including tools that are developed in other fields but can be applied in road safety, and to explore the opportunities for their practical use in voluntary youth work both in US and the European Union. The research also looks into the attitudes of local volunteers for the use of such ICT. Last but not least it explores the US practices of building partnerships and attracting sponsorship for obtaining those ICT.

Exciting, isn't it? ... and I have found the best possible partner. National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) is partnering with Open Youth to make the project work. The most exciting part of it being that it is not a pure academic project but a field research where you get to meet people, see how they work, ask questions, participate... Together we make "NOYS noise" in our common battle for safer roads. Speaking about "battle", it all started close to the Manassas National Battlefield Park where the Civil War history main pages have been written 150 years ago. May be we also write history without realizing it! On November 01st a hotel just next to the Battlefield was the first stop of my family and me from the forthcoming US adventure. Then I met with Sandy, the NOYS CEO, and Joe, a former high-positioned government official in the field of transport management. Sandy is a real social entrepreneur with endless energy, a lot of enthusiasm and great ideas, which under her management are becoming real ventures. Joe has recently retired from his government position in the transport field and decided he may do something better in his life, dealing with... transport, but this time as a volunteer in the position of Senior Adviser for NOYS. In fact this was not my first meeting with Joe. Everything happens for a reason. It came out that Joe and I had met exactly three years ago during one of the lunch breaks of the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, which took place in Moscow, and where the beginning of the United Nations present Decade of Action for Road Safety was put.

I am sure everyone has heard the expression "Take most of every opportunity!" The Fulbright programme is giving me one and this is exactly what I am trying to do. I have even brought my family with me and my three-year-old son has already a vocabulary of about ten English words with his favorite "apple juice" as most commonly used ones. Mentioning my family, we had a genuine US road safety experience ourselves. During a walk, we were having during a wonderful evening in Washington, a driver



*At the entrance hall of the Inter-American Development Bank. From left to right: Diana Mary, IADB; Daniel Vankov, and Dr. Bella Dinh-Zarr, FIA Foundation.*

speaking on the phone almost run over us on a cross walk when the priority was all ours. See, we have a common problem although the roots may defer awhile. Distracted driving is a major issue in the United States, while for Bulgaria I would say it is the over-speeding and the drink-driving.

Was I prepared for what I found in the States? No! Is it an endless opportunity? Yes! I am already using bits and pieces from what I have learned in my Bulgaria-related work. In particular that is the NOYS "Act out loud" method of motivating and empowering young people to make a change to their local communities. "Open Youth" has recently submitted a project, using the working method as a backbone for developing citizenship activities by young people on local level. If approved and proved successful, we will deploy it in pure road safety activities. I cannot wait for next opportunities for project proposals for Bulgaria to come, so that I can put down on paper all the ideas I have in mind. I am also very grateful for the doors that NOYS opened before me as there is no other coalition like NOYS in US. It is the longest operating coalition of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in America. It has a network of partners that cover the whole range of activities, related to road safety, from grass root actions, through research, lobbying on national level and legislation initiatives. Sandy and Joe helped me arrange personal visits and explore the experience of representatives of institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the FIA Foundation, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, the Governors Highway Safety Association and many others. I have also attended press conferences and coordination meetings such as the Highway Safety Partnership Venture meeting and the Global Road Safety Month monthly planning meeting.



*Daniel Vankov (left) and Sandy Spavone, CEO of NOYS at the 2012 Teen Distracted Driving Summit.*

The most enriching part, however, was the opportunity to have a closer look on how the 2012 Teen Distracted Driving Summit was prepared and carried out. I am quite lucky at the Summit was postponed this year not to coincide with the presidential elections. Yes, I was there when Barack Obama won his second term in the White House. The Summit was preceded by an action day for the young participant that performed road safety audits on five hot spots around the Washington Union Station and I head the pleasure to lead one of the youth teams. The results of the audit were stunning. Around a third of the drivers were performing some kind of traffic rules violation. This was an incredibly useful exercise for the young people in order for them to become aware of the magnitude of the problem. To face the last NOYS gathered over 250 youth and adult leaders who traveled in from all around the United States to convene and work together to prevent distracted driving. Industry leaders presented on topics such as Engineering, Enforcement, and Education, and victim advocates spoke on how their lives were impacted as a result of texting while driving. Over 30 organizations, companies, and federal agencies showcased valuable resources and products at the exhibit booths. I have come back with two bags of sample materials. I believe I will need an extra suitcase at the end of my stay so be able to bring back with me that huge source of good ideas.

Another huge positive from the Summit was that my presence created a buzz about the Fulbright programme and me. I was often introduced as the person who traveled the longest distance to attend the Summit. Both young people and colleagues showed interest in the programme. I was sharing my own experience but at that point I had no concrete information how it works in the States. Now I have done some background

research and I am ready to answer the questions that most often arise during my introductions and presentations.

The most fruitful of all meetings, I would say, came on the day after the Summit took place. It was the NOYS Annual meeting. In a much smaller group, with a lot of energy in the air and getting a bit more informal, NOYS members and staff (and a Fulbright scholar) met to review the achievements in 2012 and to present the 2013 plan of activities. There I got to speak with people that will help me in the next stage of my research. During the kick-off of my project we discussed with my hosts that after acquiring all possible information about NOYS activities, it will be of my best interest to explore one of NOYS's greatest strengths, namely building partnerships, by visiting in person their partners and collaborators and learning about their motivation and road safety activities, which can complement the information, I can find on the Internet.

## Culture

I may be repeating myself but I keep on saying with kid's excitement "Yes, I have seen that on the movies!" and it is true. Since I came to the States I keep discovering in reality things I have seen on the movies. I must admit that the best experience my family and I had in here is the Thanksgiving dinner Sandy invited us to spend with her family. My son Lyubomir is still very excited about his new flash light, he received as a gift. We also attended a gathering at Joe's place where we had the chance to experience The Toole's Holiday Party together with a hundred other people. We also never miss a chance to complement any of my DC meetings with a visit to a Smithsonian museum, which for my greatest pleasure are free to enter.

## More to come

My head is a boiling pot of ideas, I want to develop. Nevertheless I believe my discoveries are far from over... and I still have space for good ideas in that new suitcase, I am planning to buy. Some of the interesting ideas, I find, are already home. The one, coming from "Act out loud" is in the pipeline. Two more to go very soon! I am also looking forward with curiosity to the coming of one of the most important transport-related event in the US, the 2013 Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, which takes place in January. I am also eager to use the opportunity of going beyond the DC and Virginia to visit NGOs, university research institutes and companies in order to explore their contribution to the US battle for road safety. 2013 Bulgarian Road Safety Awards: I am coming!!!

### **Disclaimer:**

*The text is published in its original and unedited version.*

*Out of America*

## Fulbright Conference *Reflection, Networking and Collaborating in Europe* Berlin, March, 2013

**Edward Raven**

**U.S. Fulbright graduate student in world music  
Host institution: Academy of Music,  
Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv**

The Berlin Fulbright conference was a great experience, and I'm grateful that it allowed me to connect with the greater Fulbright network throughout Europe. The conference featured several interesting activities and lectures that addressed topics as wide ranging as the impact of social media, EU/US relations, to immigrant dynamics in Berlin, and the innovative research being done by Fulbrighters around the world. In addition, there was a large representation of the arts, starting with a night of performances by six Fulbright musicians and dancers, and an art opening featuring various Fulbright artists. By attending these events I gained a much deeper understanding and wider perspective of German, EU, and global issues, and how the Fulbright program fits in to expand awareness and offer solutions.

But perhaps the most valuable aspect of the Berlin conference was the "networking," meeting American Fulbrighters from throughout Europe, as well as many Germans who will be studying in the US this fall. It was no accident that there was lots of time to explore Berlin and socialize, as Berlin is a city to be explored with its amazing history, diversity, food, and eccentricities. The main German organizer even said, "I organize events around the coffee breaks," (somewhat figuratively speaking because there



*Edward Raven in front of the Berlin Wall at the East Side Gallery*

was only water or beer at most of them), because that is where innovative ideas happen, people create lasting friendships, and the real excuse to travel from far and wide. And boy did Germany have good coffee.

## Lisa Le Fevre

### U.S. Fulbright graduate student in anthropology Host institution: Institute for Population and Human Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

With reflections on networking and collaboration as part of the central themes for this year's Fulbright gathering in Berlin, the German Fulbright Commission invited teachers, scholars, and other grantees to come together to discuss change and action as not only part of the international exchange experience, but also as key players in a variety of fields once the granting period finishes. Highlighting a first for the conference, collaboration meant that workshops were held, led and reported on by the participants themselves. These participants included not only the largest contingency of Fulbright grantees (those teaching both in Germany and in the US from Germany), but also representatives from all over the European Union. Grantees were brought together in order to reflect on cross-cultural comparisons; political questions and theory involving the European Union; and finally how they might one day adapt their future goals and experiences from abroad at "home."

Given these goals in mind, an example of one workshop highlights how the conference organizers brought together Fulbrighters in order to organize their diversity. The workshop, which asked participants to decide upon whether the European Union is a democratic entity or not, proved a suitable stepping point toward focusing on better collaboration and understanding among Fulbright grantees and their thoughts

of living in Europe. Having spent the majority of their time only in German, it became apparent that not only did many of the participants not know the European Union's history, but that they also needed to understand that the "union" included smaller countries (such as Bulgaria) as well as the larger. Many people, for example, had heard of the recent events within the EU involving horse meat sales, yet few had realized that Bulgaria had lost its government. Many people also thought of the European Union in terms of only economic and political systems, without thinking of it within a total system including social and historical trajectories. By the end of the session, conclusions were drawn to pay attention to different national/cultural histories, different human and "European" realities, and different definitions involving democracy among a grouping of countries and not only the EU's key players.

In essence, the workshop participants decided to stop thinking in terms of only "one" European entity, and to start paying attention to all the many complex pieces that make up a constantly changing and complex whole. Thus they set new aims for the rest of their Fulbright experience. And, as the participants came upon these conclusions on their own terms, one could say that the conference organizers also met their aims – networking and collaboration as part of a reflexive and fuller Fulbright experience.

## Eric Halsey

### U.S. Fulbright graduate student in modern history Host institution in Bulgaria: Faculty of History, Sofia University

Snowy Berlin was the site for the 2013 Fulbright Conference. The conference itself served three main functions, to allow Fulbrighters to interact in discussions on major European issues, to allow them to network, and to show off Berlin as a unique, historical city. For the first task I was involved in discussions around European and American national identities and how we believed they might change in the future. I will writing a report on this and submitting it for the website, so you will be able to see more details there later. For the second the organizers didn't have to do much, I made some great connections with Fulbrighters from Germany, Hungary, and especially Turkey. German Fulbrighters often took the time to

show other around Berlin, while some others put on an excellent art exhibit during the conference. Finally, between the tour we were given of the city and the panel presentation by representatives of many different quarters of Berlin we received an excellent introduction to what is truly a unique world city. Lots of German, Indian, Turkish, and Middle Eastern food, and lots of kind people confirmed Berlin's reputation and a global city with open arms. Lots of great conversations and connection confirmed Fulbright's reputation for bringing the best the US has to offer to the world.

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