



FULBRIGHT
Bulgaria

BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE



Academic Year

2022-2023

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Contents

History & Mission	03
The Fulbright Commission Board	04
Messages from the 2023 Board Chair and the Executive Director	05
Year At-A-Glance	06
Maps of BG and U.S. Grantees' Host/Home Institutions	07
U.S. and BG Fulbright Grantees	08
Fulbright International Seminar	11
Bulgarian Scholar Program	12
Bulgarian Student Program	14
U.S. Scholar Program	16
U.S. Specialist Program	18
U.S. Student Program	20
The English Teaching Assistant Program	22
EducationUSA Advising Center	25
Fulbright Testing and Training Services	27
Fulbright 30th Anniversary	28
Major Program and Enrichment Events	30
Summer Camps for High Schoolers	32
Fulbright Media Presence	33
Budget	34
Staff & Sponsors	35

History & Mission



Fulbright Bulgaria staff at the 30th Anniversary Gala

US Congress established the Fulbright Program in 1946 with an ambitious goal — to increase mutual understanding and support peaceful relations between the peoples of the United States and other countries. Over the past 75 years, the Fulbright Program has enabled more than 400,000 Scholars, students, educators, artists, professionals and civil society representatives to participate in international exchanges.

The Fulbright Program awards approximately 8,000 grants annually, seeking out individuals with potential who represent the full diversity of their respective societies and selecting nominees through open, merit-based competitions.

“ *International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace – eventually even to cooperate in constructive activities rather than compete in a mindless contest of mutual destruction.... We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.”*

– **Senator J. W. Fulbright,**
from remarks on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fulbright Program, 1976

Educational exchange between the United States and the Republic of Bulgaria under the Fulbright program started as early as 1967. In 1993 the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange was officially inaugurated under a bilateral agreement. With nearly 40 Americans and 25 Bulgarian grantees annually, the Fulbright Bulgaria alumni community currently numbers nearly 1,500 strong.

OUR MISSION:

Through innovative and inclusive educational exchange, Fulbright Bulgaria invests in human potential, teaching excellence, advancing scientific and cultural knowledge, and building a community of like-minded individuals who remain intellectually curious and committed to contributing to a just, prosperous, and peaceful future for the peoples of the United States and Bulgaria.

OUR VISION:

A robust and inclusive educational exchange program that promotes teaching and learning, open communication, and collaboration between just, peaceful, and prosperous partner nations.

The Fulbright Commission Board

The Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission board consists of ten members, five American citizens and five Bulgarian citizens. They represent the major areas of state and public activity: government, education, the arts, and business. The Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Bulgaria and the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria serve as honorary chairpersons of the Commission and appoint the regular board members. The board members during Fiscal Year 2023 included:

Honorary Chairs

Professor Nikolai Denkov

Bulgarian Minister of Education and Science

Herro Mustafa

Ambassador of the United States to Bulgaria

Chair

Jeff Weinschenker

Public Affairs Officer, US Embassy in Bulgaria

Treasurer

Brent LaRosa

Cultural and Educational Affairs Officer,
US Embassy in Bulgaria

US Members of the Board

Eric Halsey*

Managing Director, Halsey Company

Sarah Perrine*

Executive Director, Trust for Social Achievement

Dr. Traci Speed*

Department of English, Sofia University

Bulgarian Members of the Board

Karina Angelieva

Head of Cabinet, Ministry of Energy

Radostina Chaprazova

Country Director, Arete Youth Foundation

Professor Svetla Danova*

Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology, BAS

Professor Guenka Petrova

Deputy Minister of Education and Science

Tzvetomir Todorov*

Managing Director, Bulgarian American
Management Company

**Fulbright alumni*

Front cover photo:

Fulbrighters and friends celebrating
at the 30th Anniversary Gala



From the FY 2023 Board Chair Jeff Weinshenker

2022-2023 was a banner year for Fulbright Bulgaria. Together we celebrated the Commission's 30th anniversary – 30 years of building mutual understanding through academic and people-to-people exchanges. The U.S. Embassy was honored to join Commission staff, grantees, alumni, partners, and friends for a gala celebration in April that paid tribute to this institution's profound impact on American and Bulgarian societies.

The phrase "return on investment" is often used in financial circles, but I would argue that nowhere have we seen higher return on investment than in programs like those of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission. With every scholarly exchange, with every connection forged between English Teaching Assistants and students in small towns across Bulgaria, with every media literacy project or speech and debate competition, Fulbright Bulgaria is investing in – and exponentially increasing – our most valuable asset: our human capital, the leaders of tomorrow.

That is why the launch of the Fulbright Leaders Grants program this past year is so important. It demonstrates the Bulgarian government's commitment to cultivating the next generation of innovators and social thinkers through academic collaboration – in other words, investing in Bulgaria's future. We are proud to work with our Bulgarian partners to build on this program through exciting new exchanges in fields like STEM, cultural preservation, and education for persons with disabilities.

2023 marks 120 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bulgaria. As we celebrate our rich history, I'm certain that Fulbright will continue to play a central role in shaping our shared future.



From the Executive Director Angela Rodel

Fulbright Bulgaria at 30 – time flies when you are having fun building academic, professional and personal bridges that draw our two nations closer! Our 1,500-strong community had many opportunities to celebrate throughout this past year, both in person at our Gala in Sofia as well as online through our monthly Orbiit one-on-one meet-ups, which allowed us to continue to strengthen ties while creating new collaborations and opportunities for partnerships. This year's annual report offers a glimpse of some of our activities and programs, including the Fulbright International Seminar, summer camps for high school students, expanded exchange such as ETAs at five Bulgarian universities, and the first cohort of our new Bulgarian Leaders grant, made possible by the generous and visionary support of the Bulgarian government.

We are extremely grateful for all the partners who have helped us expand our outreach and impact throughout the past three decades, including the Bulgarian and US governments, the America for Bulgaria Foundation and all our sponsors, our university and school partners, as well as NGOs and other institutions that open their door to host Fulbrighters both here and in the US. Of course, none of our programming would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the amazing Fulbright Bulgaria staff. I am glad they were all able to join me on stage at the 30th Anniversary Gala to take a well-earned bow! We look forward to working together with all of you to advance scientific knowledge, to improve the lives of our communities, to enrich the cultural contexts we live in, and to increase mutual understanding for many decades to come!

Fulbright Bulgaria's YEAR AT-A-GLANCE:

75

FULBRIGHT
BULGARIA
GRANTEES

53 US/22 BG

GRANTEES BY CATEGORY

U.S.: 53

6 Scholars

7 Specialists

2 Students

38 ETAs

BG: 22

7 Visiting Scholars

3 Civil Society Scholars

4 Graduate Students

3 Visiting Researchers

2 Humphrey Fellows

3 FTEAs

80

IN-PERSON OUTREACH
VISITS TO 30+ CITIES:

28 for Fulbright Competition
(including FTEA)

38 for ETA School Visits

14 to Schools and American
Corners for EducationUSA

*Plus dozens of online information
sessions for Bulgarian students,
scholars, teachers, NGO reps and
candidates for all awards

9,550

BULGARIAN
STUDENTS

taught by

38 ETAs

in 27 cities

22,760

Classroom Contact
Hours at:

21 Foreign Language High
Schools

5 K-12 Schools

4 Math And Sciences Schools

3 Professional Schools

5 Universities

PMP STATS

Program Highlights

- 6 Training Sessions
- 57 Participants
- 100% Exam Success Rate

Volunteering

- PMI Bulgaria Chapter
- Pet Sisters Animal Shelter
- Corplus Fundraising
- AUBG Innovation Starter

Fulbright.bg Website YOY

User acquisition rose by
42.5%

Visted pages/sessions grew by
64.5%

Visited pages per
session grew by
55%

Users who visited two or more
pages increased by
43%

Social Media Impact

LinkedIn growth from 2277 to
3329 followers

Facebook page reach rose by
139%

Instagram page reach rose by
197%

New FB page followers
963

New Instagram followers
349

Email marketing
7,065 subscribers

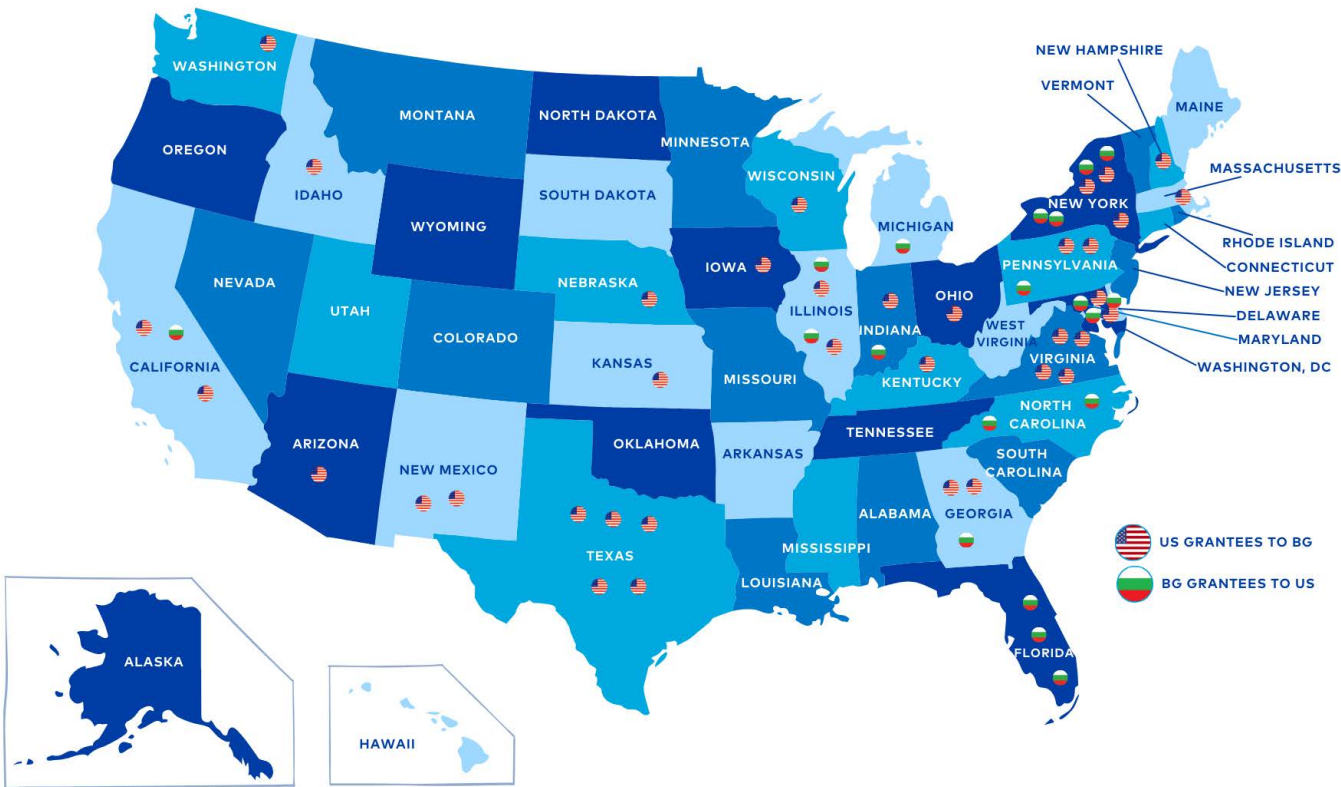
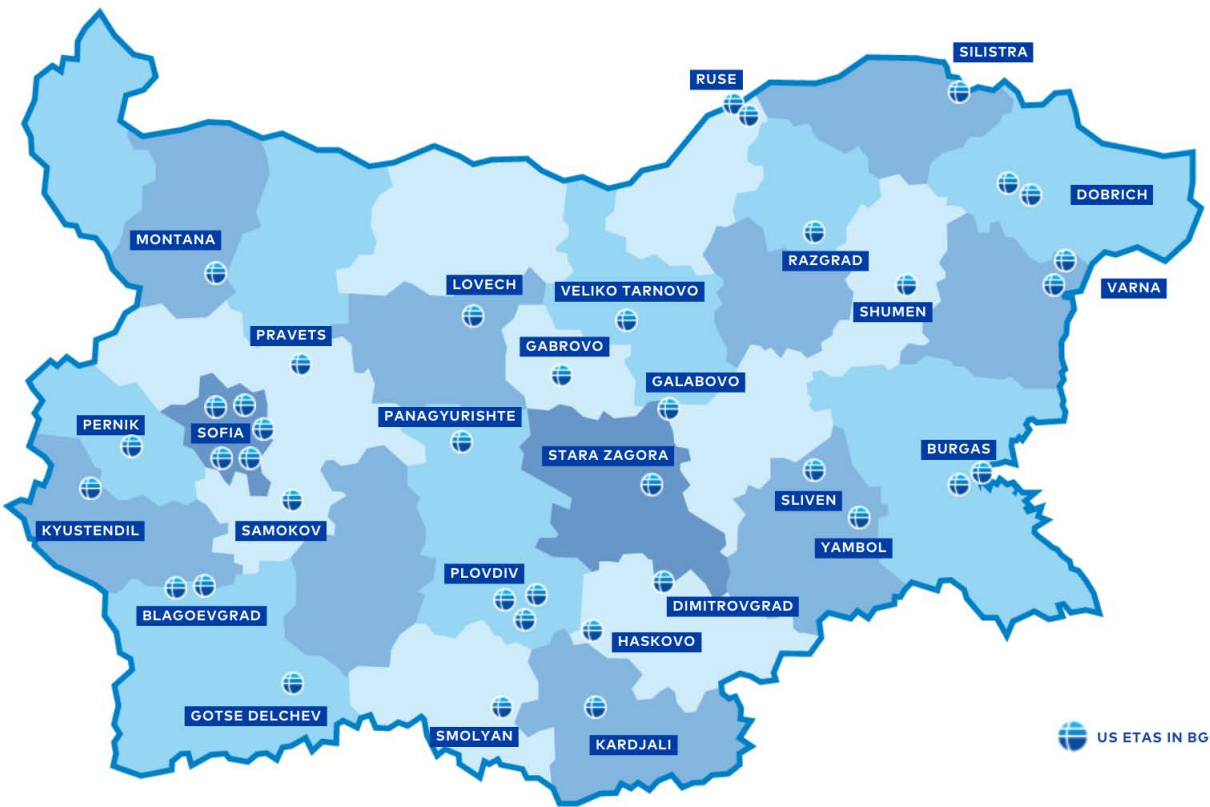
EducationUSA Undergrad Scholarships

\$4,600,000

in scholarships for 11 students
in the Virtual Advising and
Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria

2 full-ride
scholarships to MIT and
Princeton University

Maps of BG and U.S. Grantees' Host/Home Institutions



U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2022-2023

SCHOLARS

Matthew Cronin

Field of Specialization: Law

Home Institution: Office of the National Cyber Director, Washington, DC

Host Institution in Bulgaria:

American University in Bulgaria and Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Dr. Tanya Ivanova-Sullivan

Field of Specialization: Linguistics

Home Institution: University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Charles Murdock Lucas

Field of Specialization: Theater

Home Institution: San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia Puppet Theatre and National Academy of Arts, Sofia

Dr. Virginia O'Keefe

Field of Specialization: Public Health

Home Institution: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Trust for Social Achievement, Sofia

David Sandson

Field of Specialization:

Communications

Home Institution: US Department of the Air Force, Washington, DC

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University and Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia

Dr. Natalia Velikova

Field of Specialization: Business

Home Institution: Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

Host Institution in Bulgaria:

University of Food Technologies, Plovdiv

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Ryan Grieser

Field of Specialization: Music

Project Title: Digitally Preserving the Folklore and Melodies of Traditional Bulgarian Chordophones

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, and Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv

Elizabeth Meshel

Field of Specialization: Archaeology

Project Title: Comparing Funder and Institutional Heritage Conservation Priorities in Bulgaria

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Balkan Heritage Foundation, Sofia

ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Finlay Adamson

Host: Dr. Petar Beron High School of Mathematics, Varna

Amanda Adinolfi

Host: Professional High School of Energy and Electrical Engineering, Galabovo

Dante Ankney

Host: South-West University Neofit Rilski, Blagoevgrad

Forough Askarirad

Host: St. Sofia 33 Foreign Language School, Sofia

Sophia Brewer Thompson

Host: Petar Bogdan Foreign Language High School, Montana

Rosasharn Brown

Host: Vocational School for Computer Programming and Innovation, Burgas

Anne Bruebach

Host: Asen Yordanov Private School of Entrepreneurship and Natural Science, Sofia

Ariel Burtley

Host: Acad. Mihail Arnaudov, 119 Secondary School, Sofia

Olivia Cashman

Host: Yoan Ekzarh Fifth Foreign Language School, Varna

Andrea Childs

Host: Ekzarh Yossif Foreign Language School, Razgrad

Katie Cones

Host: Dr. Ivan Bogorov Language High School, Dimitrovgrad

Jack Corby

Host: Hristo Botev Foreign Language School, Kardzhali

Benjamin Custer

Host: Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski, Plovdiv

Grace Evans

Host: Medical University of Plovdiv, Plovdiv

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2022-2023

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

2022-2023

Ashlyn Freemyer

Host: Vassil Karagyzov Foreign Language School, Yambol

Hannah Gilson

Host: Peyo Yavorov Foreign Language High School, Silistra

Sonja Haakonsen

Host: St. Cyril and St. Methodius University, Veliko Tarnovo

Courtney Haubert

Host: Aprilov National High School, Gabrovo

Kadia King

Host: Geo Milev English Language School, Burgas

Ana Klicic

Host: Yane Sandanski Secondary School of Mathematics and Science, Gotse Delchev

Ekaterina Kovatsenko

Host: Baba Tonka Mathematical School, Ruse

Charlotte Kramer

Host: Geo Milev English Language School, Ruse

Alexander Levine

Host: Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Shumen

Brianna Lopez

Host: Ekzarh Yossif Foreign Language High School, Lovech

Julia Lynch

Host: Geo Milev Foreign Language High School, Dobrich

Camilla Martinez

Host: Ivan Vazov Foreign Language School, Smolyan

Anna McIntyre

Host: Romain Rolland Foreign Language High School, Stara Zagora

Pilar Monfiletto

Host: Thomas Jefferson Second English Language School, Sofia

Pearl Morttey

Host: Elisaveta Bagryana 51 Secondary School, Sofia

Hannah Petersen

Host: St. Kliment Ohridski High School of Arts, Dobrich

Devon Rancourt

Host: Simeon Radev Foreign Language School, Pernik

Morgan Rowe

Host: Acad. Lyudmil Stoyanov Foreign Language School, Blagoevgrad

Grace Shevchenko

Host: Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov Foreign Language High School, Haskovo

Michael Smith

Host: Dr. Petar Beron Foreign Language School, Kyustendil

Tessa Stolz

Host: Zaharii Stoyanov Foreign Language School, Sliven

Sofia Syed

Host: Acad. Kiril Popov High School of Mathematics, Plovdiv

Emil Zakarian

Host: Aleko Konstantinov Foreign Language School, Pravets

Nimra Zubair

Host: Professional School of Industrial Technologies, Management and Tourism, Panagyurishte

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Maria-Magdalena Markova

Field of Specialization: Law

Host Institution: Harvard University

Degree: LLM

Alexander Leshev

Field of Specialization: Law

Host Institution: Harvard University

Degree: LLM

Trayana Kaleycheva

Field of Specialization: Media and Communications

Host Institution: Florida State University, School of Communications

Degree: Master of Arts

Botyo Dimitrov

Field of Specialization: Materials Science

Host Institution: Georgia Institute of Technology, Graduate School

Degree: Master of Science

VISITING RESEARCHERS

Gabriel Georgiev

Field of Specialization: Aerospace Engineering

Project Title: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) aerodynamics

Home Institution: Technical University, Sofia

Host Institution: University of Maryland, College Park

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2022-2023

Desislava Nikolova

Field of Specialization: Data Science
Project Title: Human Action Recognition for Pose-based Attention
Home Institution: Technical University, Sofia
Host Institution: Carnegie Mellon University, The Robotics Institute

Sevar Ivanov

Field of Specialization: Cultural Economics
Project Title: Financial policy of the State Cultural Institutes in Bulgaria in the Performing Arts
Home Institution: University of National and World Economy, Sofia
Host Institution: City University of New York, Baruch College

VISITING SCHOLARS

Vesela Chalova-Zhekova

Field of Specialization: Food Science
Project Title: Protein Mediated Encapsulation of Biologically Active Substances
Home Institution: University of Food Technologies, Plovdiv
Host Institution: North Carolina State University

Ivan Landzhev

Field of Specialization: Slavic Literature
Project Title: Artist vs Preacher: Tolstoy's Poetics of Self-Overcoming
Home Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
Host Institution: University of Chicago

Vladislav Slavov

Field of Specialization: Engineering (Education)
Project Title: Ethical principles on AI in Education/PBL
Home Institution: Technical University, Sofia
Host Institution: University of Western Carolina

Todor Lazarov

Field of Specialization: Computational Linguistics
Project Title: Domain Specific Corpus Annotation
Home Institution: New Bulgarian University
Host Institution: Indiana University-Bloomington

Stefan Lalkovski

Field of Specialization: Nuclear Physics
Project Title: Nuclear Data for Astrophysics and Applications
Home Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
Host Institution: Argonne National Laboratory, IL

Alexander Petkov

Field of Specialization: Mathematics
Project Title: String Theory and Related Geometries
Home Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
Host Institution: University of Miami, Institute of Mathematical Sciences of the Americas

Milena Bozhikova

Field of Specialization: Musicology
Project Title: Research of the Archive of Boris Kremenliev
Home Institution: Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Host Institution: University of Rochester

CIVIL SOCIETY RESEARCHERS

Rumyana Grozeva

Field of Specialization: Economic Development
Project Title: Paving New Paths for Development and Sustainability
Home Institution: Regional Economic Development Agency of Stara Zagora
Host Institution: International Economic Development Council, Washington DC

Hristina Katsipidou

Field of Specialization: Sign Language
Project Title: Building Bridges of Deaf Leaders of Tomorrow
Home Institution: Listen Up Foundation
Host Institution: Gallaudet University, Washington DC

Kristina Hristova

Field of Specialization: Journalism
Project Title: Civil Society's Active Involvement Against the Disinformation Campaigns
Home Institution: Factcheck.bg
Host Institution: Poynter Institute, St. Petersburg FL

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees 2022-2023

HUBERT HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIPS

Ana Bachurova

Field of Specialization: Sustainable Development

Home Institution: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Host Institution: University of California- Davis

Konstantina Kalaydzhieva

Field of Specialization: Economic Development

Home Institution: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria

Host Institution: Michigan State University

FTEA IN MEDIA LITERACY

Galya Papazikova

Field of Specialization: TEFL

Home Institution: Tzar Ivan Assen Vocational School, Pazardzhik

Host Institution: University of Wisconsin – Madison

Nina Tsoneva

Field of Specialization: TEFL

Home Institution: Hristo Botev Secondary School, Kubrat

Host Institution: University of Northern Colorado, Denver

Yoana Kostadinova

Field of Specialization: TEFL

Home Institution: Ivan Vazov Secondary School in Mezdra

Host Institution: University of Northern Colorado, Denver



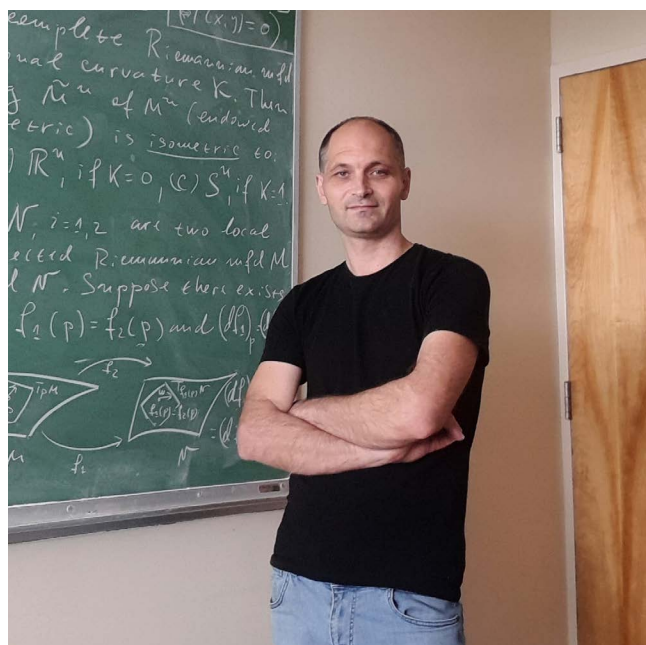
Fulbright International Seminar participants are deep into the discussion

Fulbright International Seminar on Strengthening Democracy

The 2022 International Seminar on Strengthening Democracy (October 20-22) was held in partnership with Bulgarian judges Evgeny Georgiev and Konstantin Kunchev and the support of the Bulgarian Union of Judges. This was the third seminar dedicated to contemporary issues of democracy in Eastern Europe; the previous two explored the crisis of democracy and the crisis of representation. The title of the hybrid seminar “Justice, Civic Awareness and Rule of Law in Young Democracies” reflected the awareness that post-communist countries still face challenges in this sphere, even after years of transformation.

The program featured the outstanding Hungarian sociologist and politician **Dr. Balint Magyar**; the US host for the Fulbright court internship program in New Orleans, **Judge Jane Milazzo**; as well as Fulbright alumni such as **Judge Maureen Duffy-Lewis** and **Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova**. The lectures, panel discussions and workshops by top legal experts from academia, the International Criminal Court, the EU Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the EU, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court, the Appellate Court of Sofia, and legal professionals in corporate and forensic law provided a rich and in-depth material for reflection, implementation, and co-operation. The Union of Judges in Bulgaria continues its cooperation with the Fulbright Commission, not only via the Fulbright Court Internship Program, but also in terms of joint activities and participation of its representatives at the FIS events.

Bulgarian Scholar Program



Prof. Alexander Petkov hard at calculation

May 3, 2023 at 7:30pm

Renee Granville-Grossman Residential Commons East Lounge
6031 S Ellis Ave (enter at 61st & Greenwood)

May 10, 2023 at 5:30pm

Foster Hall Room 103
1130 E 59th Street

HOPE JUNKIES



Join poet **Ivan Landzhev** for selected readings of his recent work. Ivan is a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at UChicago from Sofia, Bulgaria. He has degrees in Philosophy (BA), Cultural Studies (MA) and his PhD is in Russian Classical Literature (XIX c), focused on the later works of Leo Tolstoy. His book "Poetics of Self-overcoming: Narrative Strategies in the Later Leo Tolstoy" was published in his native Bulgaria in 2017. Ivan is also one of Bulgaria's leading contemporary poets and essayists. Author of three collections so far, his poems have been translated into several languages and have earned him numerous honors and awards. Before coming to UChicago, Ivan was a writer-in-residence at LCB (Literarisches Colloquium) Berlin.



Division of the Humanities
Department of Slavic
Languages and Literatures

Dr. Landzhev reading at University of Chicago

AY 2022-23 was dynamic and successful for the Bulgarian scholar program. A diverse group of a specialists in Food Science (Vesela Chalova), Slavic Literature (Ivan Landzhev), Engineering (Vladislav Slavov), Computational Linguistics (Todor Lazarov), Nuclear Physics (Stefan Lalkovski) and Musicology (Milena Bozhikova) made up the illustrious cohort of Bulgarian academics. Assoc. Prof. **Alexander Petkov** was the first holder of the University of Miami Award for Mathematicians. All scholars completed their programs successfully and some, like Dr. **Ivan Landzhev** and Prof. **Vladislav Slavov**, began contributing to Fulbright community events and selection efforts as soon as they returned.

They had also impressively diverse US hosts: our 2022-23 scholars worked in North Carolina State University; University of Chicago; University of Western Carolina; University of Rochester; Indiana University – Bloomington; Argonne National Laboratory, IL; and the University of Miami. From protein encapsulation through Tolstoy's poetics of self-overcoming, ethical principles on AI, nuclear data for astrophysics, Bulgarian-Macedonian folk music, to string theory and domain specific corpus annotation, our Bulgarian scholars found in their host institutions the support and access to information that allowed them to complete their innovative research projects.

Dr. **Ivan Landzhev**, who presented his literary works to audiences at University of Chicago and the Bulgarian Consulate in New York, shares his impressions of the Fulbright visit:



I want to thank you once again for this amazing opportunity, for the invaluable experience and knowledge I gained. I can't even begin to describe how influential and rewarding it was. Fulbrighters unite!"

Civil Society Program

Our three 2022-23 Civil Society grantees had very successful grant periods. Dr. **Rumyana Grozeva**, a leader in the sphere of regional economic development from Stara Zagora completed her exchange of best practices at the International Economic Development Council, Washington DC; **Hristina Katsipidou**, a representative of Deaf.bg, an NGO developing sign-language education, completed an outstanding specialization at Gallaudet University, inspiring members of the Bulgarian deaf community to participate in academic exchanges; and a journalist fact-checker, **Kristina Hristova**, gained new skills at Poynter Institute. The effect of their increased capacity is already visible in their professional and social communities. Kristina Hristova completed a joint follow-up project for her home institution Factcheck.Bg and the Association of European Journalists in Bulgaria. Hristina Katsipidu will continue her collaboration with Gallaudet University, while Dr. Grozeva is a frequent participant at high-level international conferences and projects.



Prof. Slavov instructs his students at WCU



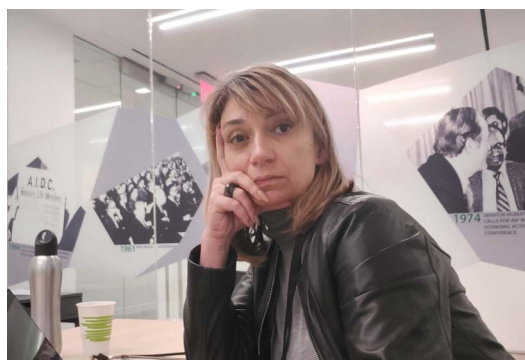
Hristina Katsipidou tells about her Fulbright experience

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship

The 2022-23 Hubert Humphrey grantees in the fields of Economic Development and Environmental Development were impressive: **Ana Bachurova**, an international specialist in Sustainable Development completed her visit to the University of California – Davis, while **Konstantina Kalaydzhieva**, a promising government expert in Agricultural Development completed her visit to Michigan State University. Both participants shared their satisfaction with the program and the professional training opportunities and joined recruitment and selection activities for the 2024-25 cycle.

I had the opportunity to attend the World Food Conference and meet some of the Food Nobel Laureates there and even take a picture with the current one - Mrs. Cynthia E. Rosenzweig. This participation has been a highlight so far.

- **Konstantina Kalaydzhieva**, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow



Dr. Grozeva contemplating new projects



Konstantina at the World Food Conference

Bulgarian Student Program



Botyo Dimitrov at Georgia Tech

The AY 2022-23 Bulgarian degree-seeking students' program featured four impressive participants in the fields of corporate law, materials science, and communications. Two illustrious law graduates from Sofia University, **Maria-Magdalena Markova** and **Aleksandar Leshev**, were admitted to Harvard Law School and completed their studies successfully, joining the growing group of Bulgarian Fulbright Harvard graduates. Architect **Botyo Dimitrov** was admitted to the Georgia Institute of Technology with impressive support for his work in the field of Materials Science; his host institution has invited him to continue his studies in a PhD program. Botyu has also taken part in an initiative publicizing science, as well as promoting awareness of Bulgarian culture and history. Our grantee in psychology and communications **Trayana Kaleycheva** successfully completed her MA at Florida State University and will also continue on for her PhD.



Trayana embarks on the path of communications

“Everything at Georgia Tech exceeds expectations – I just can't get enough of it! It's an ocean of knowledge and opportunities, and I often find myself regretting that the day isn't 48 hours long: every second is worth it so far.”

- Botyo Dimitrov, Fulbright Student



Gabriel feels studious at University of Maryland

The 2022-23 Visiting Researcher program for Bulgarian PhD students once again showed impressive results. Three Bulgarian visiting researchers took part in this cycle. **Gabriel Georgiev**, a specialist in aerospace engineering from the Technical University of Sofia, carried out a research project at the University of Maryland – College Park. **Desislava Nikolova**, a PhD student in data science also from the Technical University, was hosted by a former Fulbrighter, Dr. **Stanislav Panev**, who is currently a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University. Desislava found her stay fruitful and has been an enthusiastic contributor to our current recruitment campaign and newsletter. The third participant, **Sevar Ivanov**, was a PhD student at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia in the field of arts management. Sevar was hosted by the City University of New York. Upon his return he successfully defended his PhD thesis, contributed to our recruitment campaigns, and being one of Bulgaria's most renowned young actors, he joined ED Angela Rodel in hosting the Fulbright 30th anniversary concert event. All three young scholars remain engaged and dedicated to promoting the Fulbright program.



Sevar defended his PhD thesis with honors

Court Internship Program

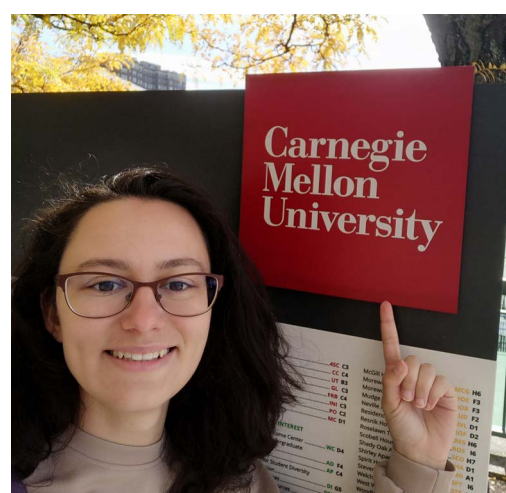
The 2022-23 cycle of the highly successful Fulbright Court Internship Program featured two talented nominees: **Tihomir Raychev** and **Pavla Sivova**, who pursued two-month professional training at the Eastern District Court of Louisiana in New Orleans. Pavla started in January 2023 (just in time for Mardi Gras), while Tihomir began his visit in July 2023. Their host, **Judge Jane Milazzo**, was a guest speaker at the 2022 Fulbright International Seminar on Justice organized by the Fulbright Commission, so she had had the opportunity to meet her interns in advance.

“As it was my first time in the US, my visit there was an adventure of a lifetime. From the lively streets and bridges of Pittsburgh to the vibrant energy of New York City, the historical significance of Washington, D.C. and the beautiful beaches of California, each destination offered a unique and captivating experience. The memories created during this exchange program and the people I met there will forever hold a special place in my heart. Embarking on a study exchange in the United States was a dream come true for me, and the opportunity to study at Carnegie Mellon University made it even more special as it is the best school for robotics in the world. I will be forever thankful to everyone who helped me before, during and after this Fulbright experience!”

- **Dessislava Nikolova**, Fulbright Visiting Researcher



Alexander Leshev at Harvard Law School



No mistake where Desislava specializes

Annual Pre-departure Orientation

The annual pre-departure orientation was held on June 23, 2023, in hybrid format (in person with online access) for the departing Bulgarian students and scholars. After the dynamic, friendly, and informative session, a reception for the Bulgarian Fulbright alumni took place. The party encouraged the Fulbright alumni to meet the new cohort and reconnect with other colleagues. For the second year in a row, the whole event was accessible to our deaf Bulgarian grantees in AY 2023-24, as translation into sign language was provided by the Commission.



U.S. Scholar Program



“The most appealing thing for me was the opportunities for direct networking and understanding of the state-of-the-art of scholarship in my area there. This is an invaluable experience, which cannot be replicated only by attending conferences and workshops. A longer stay in the country is necessary to achieve all that.”

- Dr. Tanya Ivanova-Sullivan



Six US Scholars were awarded Fulbright grants to teach and undertake research in their respective fields in AY2022/2023. The first to arrive in country was Dr. **Tanya Ivanova-Sullivan**, a linguist from the University of New Mexico, who researched agreement attraction in native and L2 Bulgarian sentence processing at Sofia University. Tanya also presented two public lectures in the university and was invited to give presentations in front of students in various departments. She connected with colleagues interested in her experimental work with students using an eye-tracking methodology and wanted to implement it in their work. As a result, they have submitted a joint grant proposal to a local scientific organization for collaborative work on a follow-up project.

Matthew Cronin from the Office of the National Cyber Director at the White House arrived in April 2024 to teach a course about cyber threats and ways to protect civil society at the American University in Bulgaria. After the completion of the university course, Matt focused on sharing expertise on cybersecurity issues with cyber-focused organizations in Bulgaria. He also plans to return as an expert under the Fulbright Specialist Program to work with various institutions on critical issues at the intersection of cybersecurity and the rule of law.

David Sandson, an expert with over 30 years' experience in national security, defense, and international relations, combined his new role as the Federal Emergency Management Agency Attaché at the U.S. Mission to NATO with a Fulbright flex grant. David traveled to Sofia several times for his research project that examined the interaction between digital privacy, disinformation, and polarization in order to better inform the public policy debate on the most efficient means to combat disinformation. David also participated in a policy roundtable organized by his hosts from the Center for the Study of Democracy, joining a discussion about a strategic reengagement with the Western Balkans.

Another scholar arriving for the first semester was Dr. **Virginia (Gena) O’Keefe**, a consultant for a non-profit in Baltimore, MD. Gena’s research aim was to understand how maternal and child health and early childhood systems work in Bulgaria and how her host organization (Trust for Social Achievement, a Bulgarian NGO focused on the Roma community) works within the broader context of public systems and NGOs. Gena drafted numerous projects and participated in roundtables and meetings with her hosts. She also delivered public lectures in Plovdiv, Sofia, and Veliko Tarnovo. Her work turned out to be so valuable that she was awarded a grant extension, and a Fulbright Specialist grant to continue her work with TSA.

Scene designer **Charles Murdock Lucas** (San Diego State University) chose the second semester to teach at the National Academy of Arts. In addition to teaching and working on the set, Murdock conducted a series of interviews with six nationally recognized Bulgarian theatrical scenographers and stage directors and watched many stage performances to identify and understand the Bulgarian aesthetic in stage design. The final product of his design work, “Spongebob – the Musical” at the Sofia Puppet Theatre, will be a cultural connection for years to come, offering perspectives on friendship and working to save your community.

In October 2022, Dr. **Natalia Velikova** (Texas Tech University) arrived for the first segment of her flex grant. She wanted to conduct a survey of Bulgarian and US consumers on attitudes towards Bulgarian wines, and to interview Bulgarian women winemakers. During the second segment of her grant (spring 2023), Natalia delivered a workshop for the industry on strategic regional brand development and provided consultancy for individual wineries. She was able to visit over 20 Bulgarian wineries and engaged with various winemakers, which will hopefully lead to various collaborations.

“Bulgaria is a country that was always very near and dear to my heart, but I never had a chance to connect with it professionally. The Fulbright award allowed me to further my current stream of research, giving me the precious opportunity to help the Bulgarian wine industry with a better business footing.”

- **Dr. Natalia Velikova**



Dr. Gena O’Keefe’s public lecture at the Medical University of Plovdiv

“The Fulbright allowed me enough space from my home institution, and the opportunity to focus specifically on maternal and child health and early childhood, that I am now moving into a new phase of my career. I will be an independent consultant in these content areas. I am VERY happy to be making this change, and Fulbright allowed me the independence of thought and confidence to do it!”

- **Dr. Gena O’Keefe**



Murdock Lucas exploring Sofia’s cultural heritage



Dr. Natalia Velikova attending a wine exhibition

U.S. Specialist Program



Fulbright Specialist Dr. Kathleen Wood (left) and Fulbright Civil Society Researcher Hristina Katsipidou (right) on Gallaudet University's Washington, DC, campus (Photo credit: World Learning)

After the world reopened for travel, we were delighted to observe an increased interest in the Fulbright Specialist Program. In AY 2022-2023, seven experts were able to visit the country and work on joint projects with their hosts.

Cathy Scutta, an occupational therapist and behavior analyst, head of the CLM Center of Excellence, conducted trainings, in-class modeling of instruction working with the learners, and in-vivo coaching of the instructors from one of the first progressive schools for autistic children in the country. She also gave a lecture at New Bulgarian University, a radio interview, met with Sofia City Council to discuss a pilot project, and had two meetings with regional special education programs interested in the Competent Learner Model, developed and used by her home institution.

Dr. **Kathleen Wood**, an English professor at Gallaudet

University, was engaged in several projects with the Listen Up Foundation, a deaf-led NGO that advocates for the rights of deaf Bulgarians. Kathleen was the keynote speaker at the Sign Language and Deaf Education conference and had meetings with faculty from Sofia University. She also conducted workshops for deaf teachers and trainers, advocated at the Ministry of Education for exchange programs with Gallaudet University, provided consultations to special schools for the deaf in Bulgaria for the importance of hiring deaf teachers, and consulted the Inclusive Education Center of Sofia on how to improve deaf education practices at mainstream schools.

Dr. **Yoto Yotov**, a Professor at the School of Economics at Drexel University, has been planning ways to give back to his alma mater, the D.A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, for some time. He arrived in October 2023 to teach, participate in a conference, and consult with students and faculty at the Academy. This project helped the host institution to get acquainted with the recent advances in quantitative trade policy analysis and the Structural Gravity Model of international trade.

Dr. **George Miaoulis**, a retired Management and Marketing Specialist, worked to provide business and academic networking for Sofia University. During his visit, George consulted on US accreditation standards and reviewed Sofia University's AMBA application and taught six MBA lectures, inviting US CEOs to the classroom to encourage cross-cultural management discussions.

After the success of his first visit several years ago, museum exhibition developer **Paul Orselli** was invited on a second Specialist grant to Bulgaria in March 2023. He helped to initiate the first edition of the MUSA Academy project, created by his hosts from the America for Bulgaria Foundation to help train and educate Bulgarian museum workers and

related cultural arts practitioners. Paul worked with 36 participants in a five-day set of intensive, participatory workshops.

An expert in motor speech disorders, dysphagia and cognition from Auburn University, **Gregory Spray** was invited to Bulgaria by the Medical University of Plovdiv to teach medical students how to evaluate and treat motor speech disorders. Gregory trained colleagues in how to use newly purchased laboratory equipment, consulted on curriculum development and provided lectures and workshops to students at the Medical University of Plovdiv.

Given the lack of adequate green infrastructure in Sofia, the Municipal Foundation Sofia Plan invited urban planner **Diana Daskalova** to give insight into land use planning instruments and practices for financing, funding, development and implementation of green infrastructure. Diana was able to develop ideas and produce analysis to determine feasibility and adequate ratio of per capita green space to support healthy and vibrant neighborhoods, and to perform a sociological survey to guide the strategy for expanding and improving access to green space in densely populated neighborhoods.



Fulbright Specialist Gregory Spray with colleagues from the Medical University of Plovdiv

U.S. Student Program



Cultural enrichment program for US grantees – wine tasting

Two US students conducted research in Bulgaria in AY 2022-2023. With the help of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, **Ryan Grieser** studied the musical practices of Bulgarian chordophones and filmed and recorded music for digital archives. He attended multiple folk music festivals and filmed performances. He also studied gadulka at the Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts in Plovdiv; given his swift progress, he was invited to perform at folklore festivals and even received a special recognition award at one of them.

Elizabeth Meshel was awarded the Special Grant for Archaeology/History to conduct a survey and interview Bulgaria's main cultural heritage funders and a representative sample of cultural institutions in Sofia to determine where and how the interests of funders intersect or diverge from the institutions and communities they seek to support. Liz also engaged with colleagues at the Bulgarian Donors Forum, exchanged ideas, and created a list of resources for them regarding US nonprofit and philanthropic culture. This collaboration turned out so productive that Liz received a grant extension and a mini-grant to organize a conference on fundraising practices in the field of cultural heritage preservation.



Ryan Grieser presenting at the Fulbright Wrap Up Seminar

“ *With the connections that I made with the Fulbright community, I expect that our professional lives will converge again at some point in the United States. The network that I was able to build with the community around me has made me a stronger advocate of new experiences and has given me a wealth of opportunity to positively impact the host community I have lived in in Bulgaria.”*

- **Ryan Grieser**



Cultural enrichment program for US grantees – trip to Plovdiv

“My professional connections, particularly that with my host institution, are likely to lead to unique professional opportunities including the option to continue to work with them. If I am able to do so, this will lead to a series of incredible opportunities in the cultural heritage field that I would never have been able to access from the States. My personal contacts have already given me great joy, and I know I will always have a home and friends in Bulgaria whenever I come back.”

- Elizabeth Meshel



Scholar Natalia Velikova and student Elizabeth Meshel advertising the Fulbright Program

FTEA in Media Literacy

For yet another year the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission participated in the selection and administration of the Fulbright Teaching Excellence Awards in Media Literacy. This involved designing the recruitment campaign and reaching out to potential Bulgarian high-school teachers interested in developing their students' media literacy skills.

The 2022-23 cycle included three dedicated and committed Bulgarian teachers: **Galya Papazikova** from Tzar Ivan Assen Vocational School in Pazardzhik, **Nina Tsoneva** from Hristo Botev Secondary School in Kubrat, and **Yoana Kostadinova** from Ivan Vazov Secondary School in Mezdra. Yoana and Nina visited the University of Northern Colorado, Denver, while Galya was placed at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. They have returned with innovative teaching methods and enthusiasm for sharing this knowledge.

ETA Program



Orientation for U.S. Grantees with Ambassador Herro Mustafa

Fulbright and the America for Bulgaria Foundation funded 32 English Teaching Assistantship awards in AY 2022-2023, while three ETAs were corporate sponsored, and three were sponsored by the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Our successful partnerships with ContourGlobal Maritsa East 3 TPP in Galabovo, and Asarel-Medet JSC, Opticoelectron Group JSCo, and the Lachezar Tsotsorkov Foundation in Panagyurishte continued. A total of 38 ETAs taught in 27 cities, five of them at the university level.

Teaching for up to 20 hours weekly, our ETAs focus mainly on developing students' communicative skills. They have around 300 students each on average, and most teach independently. ETAs incorporate American culture into their regular classes or make specially themed presentations on topics ranging from holidays such as Halloween and Thanksgiving to typical American foods, sports and music, American regional dialects and urban slang, the political system, election processes and

pop culture. They also include a lot of interactive games and quizzes and creative projects to encourage competition and learning.

Many ETAs also have regular meetings with students interested in studying abroad, as well as leading them through the college application process and assisting with essay writing. ETAs continued to support students applying for the YES, ASSIST and Benjamin Franklin exchange programs and to work



Ben Custer at the Fulbright Conference on Diversity in Higher Education



Andrea Childs as Spelling Bee announcer



Grace Shevchenko and Julia Lynch at the EU-NATO Seminar in Brussels

with our EducationUSA advisor to assist students interested in continuing their education in American universities.

In their free time, they are encouraged to develop their own side projects and activities, which are supported by the Commission through mini-grant competitions at the beginning of every school term. In AY 2022-2023, fifteen ETAs received funding to develop extracurricular activities such as: a community English class; clay club; cleaning up the Maritsa riverbanks; photography club; movie club; table tennis club; a day trip to Aladzha Monastery with Roma children from a community center in Varna; painting workshop; crochet club in Plovdiv, which attracted over 50 high school and university students; day trip to Plovdiv for students from Kardzhali; English language book clubs; Dungeons and Dragons game club; cooking club; and chess and speed cubing club. These extracurricular activities allow students to communicate with their teachers in English in a more informal setting, while developing additional skills or following their passion.

Personally, I have grown in creativity, resourcefulness, and I have learned a lot professionally to improve my future teaching. I hope my students will come away from this experience with improved confidence in their English skills, additional knowledge about the U.S./the world, and a genuine human connection.

- Devon Rancourt

Throughout the year, ETAs continued to promote a healthy lifestyle, support good initiatives, and engage with their local communities. In October, five ETAs ran the Plovdiv Marathon, and four ETAs ran the marathon in Varna. Three ETAs in Razgrad, Silistra and Dobrich joined local choirs, participating in local performances and even international tours. Many ETAs also joined local folk dancing or hiking groups, and volunteered with local NGOs, the Red Cross, refugee and community centers.

“Fulbright showed me that I want to dedicate my life to preparing the future generations for the world that awaits them.”

- Michael Smith

“I am a more open-minded, adaptable, and enriched person following my Fulbright, and I am so grateful to be able to take my newfound learning and understanding of Bulgaria with me going forward.”

- Julia Lynch

“I have grown immensely as an individual, scholar, professional, and global citizen. I feel much more confident to take on new experiences that are out of my comfort zone and to challenge myself further in my ongoing academic and professional career.”

- Forough Askarirad



Forough Askarirad at the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar



Grace Evans with her Crochet Club in Plovdiv



Hannah Petersen with the Teachers' Choir in Dobrich



Hannah Ekaterina Kovatsenko with Red Cross Volunteers in Ruse
Petersen with the Teachers' Choir in Dobrich

Fulbright EducationUSA Advising Center

The EducationUSA Advising Center at the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission is a full-service center which offers on-site as well as virtual, individual and group advising.



Advisor Snejana Teneva with students

EducationUSA advising is a major component of the Commission's grant-supporting activities. It is an effective and time-tested instrument of promoting the EducationUSA brand, the strengths of the U.S. educational system and the Fulbright program in Bulgaria by providing up-to-date information and competent guidance on educational opportunities in the U.S., admission procedures at U.S. universities, financial aid, testing, language training, the annual Opportunity Funds and other competitions. The Fulbright EducationUSA Advising Center has acquired an even greater importance in the context of Bulgaria's integration with the European Union and the strong competition from European universities. Annually, the center services over 5,000 inquirers.

EducationUSA-Bulgaria Virtual Group Advising Program

Since 2013, the EducationUSA Advising Center has implemented an innovative virtual educational group advising program, which prepares high school students from all over the country to successfully apply for admission with financial aid to fully accredited U.S. colleges and universities. The program is run in partnership with the Fulbright English Teaching Assistants, the American Spaces, Fulbright graduate students/scholars, and others. It has both a virtual and in-person component and was developed by the adviser to make educational advising available to students beyond the capital city of Sofia. Currently, the advising program has had very good results. This past academic year, there

were 230 students in grades 8-12 in the program. During the past application cycle, seven program participants were accepted to Brown University, RI; Case Western Reserve, OH; Dartmouth College, NH; Drexel University, PA; Harvard University, MA; NYUAD, United Arab Emirates; Rice University, Houston, TX; St. John's University, NY; Trinity College, CT; University of Pennsylvania, PA, and Yale University, CT, with a total scholarship amount of \$436,951 USD for the first academic year (\$1,747,804 for the four years of Bachelor's education). They will be studying Applied Physics, Biological Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Mathematics.

Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria Program

The Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria program, which helps ten to twelve talented students from economically disadvantaged communities apply to U.S. universities, has again showed strong results. Duke University, Harvard University, MIT, Princeton University, Stanford University, University of Pennsylvania, University of South Florida, Washington University in St. Louis, and

Yale University offered acceptance to four 2022 Opportunity Funds program participants with a total scholarship amount of \$701,740 USD for the first academic year (\$2,806,960 USD for the four years of their Bachelor's education), including two full-ride scholarships to MIT and Princeton University (Iliyas Noman). The admitted students will be studying Computer Science, Criminology and Mathematics.

EducationUSA Outreach

Throughout FY2023, EducationUSA adviser Snejana Teneva took full advantage of the digital networks she has created over the past decade and offered many online events, which has greatly improved and expanded communication with prospective students using social networks and social media. Students in Bulgaria are active users of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social media. To reach out to them, we are keeping our social media presence up to date (EducationUSA Facebook and Twitter pages, an EducationUSA YouTube channel and a blog).

Other efficient tools utilized for educational advising in Bulgaria include the Fulbright Commission's website, email marketing and Skype/Zoom sessions. Hundreds of Bulgarian students attended virtual international college fairs on Common App, Visas and Student Athlete Recruitment to explore colleges and universities in the U.S., chat with admissions reps and current college students, get personal questions answered and gain advice on test prep, essay writing, college search, financial aid, and more relevant topics from experts.



Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria Certificate Awards Ceremony

Fulbright Testing and Training Services



Fulbright PMP alumni at Spelling Bee Charity event



PMP alumni at animal shelter fundraiser



Women in Agile community event

During FY2023, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission continued to operate a Prometric Testing Center in Sofia, where prospective candidates can take the GRE and TOEFL exams. The center is also the exclusive national provider of the Chartered Financial Analysts Institute exams. In recent years, our test center has consistently been ranked as one of the top ten Prometric Test Centers in Europe. For FY2023, a total of 570 tests were administered at the Fulbright Test Center, a solid 20% increase compared to the previous year, achieved despite the fact that most of the test providers in the Prometric network are now offering home delivery of the tests. Alas, due to the unfavorable financial conditions offered by Prometric, the Commission will be forced to close the test center at the end of calendar year 2023.

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission continues to offer GRE, GMAT and other test preparation courses, but this remains challenging due to new test formats and the transition to online, at-home testing. Yet despite this, Fulbright Bulgaria's project management training program continued to deliver quality training. Throughout the year we conducted six training sessions with a total of 57 participants, as well as in-house advisory services by Fulbright PMP trainers. The team also served as volunteer coaches during the American University in Bulgaria's two-day Better Community Club Annual Innovation Starter campaign in February 2023. An in-house Project Management Fundamentals training was organized for Sanmina Bulgaria in May 2023. A new Agile Certified Practitioner training course was launched in February 2023 and two training sessions were conducted with 18 participants.



Current and former ETAs and friends of Fulbright at the 30th Anniversary Gala

Fulbright 30th Anniversary

On April 21, 2023, Fulbright Bulgaria celebrated its 30th anniversary with a gala concert at the Military Club in downtown Sofia, attended by more than 200 grantees, guests, partners and friends. Fulbright executive director Angela Rodel was joined as gala host by fellow Fulbrighter and prominent actor Sevar Ivanov to lead a joyous evening filled with recollections of Fulbright's past and well-wishes for the program's future.



Audience enjoying the gala program

The program opened with a greeting address from the freshly arrived US Ambassador, HE Kenneth Merten – we are proud that Fulbright's birthday party was his first official public appearance in Bulgaria! Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Education Albena Chavdarova also congratulated Fulbright on behalf of the Bulgarian government.

The incredible musical program featuring Bulgarian and American music from Gershwin to Pancho Vladigerov was the brainchild of piano virtuoso John Thomas (US student researcher, 2019-2020), who was joined on stage throughout the evening by fellow musicians Martin Dafinov, Ali Kelov and Dr. Ana Borisova (BG Scholar, 2017-18) for a thrilling program of original as well as classic compositions.

During the gala, we were able to present just a small sample

of the nearly 1,500 Fulbrighters in our community. Two legacy programs won the newly created Alumni Impact Award to recognize the multiplier effect these initiatives have had in Bulgarian society: the Fulbright Sofia Regional Court Internship Program, founded by Judge Evgeny Georgiev (BG Student, 2002-2003), which has trained more than 600 Bulgarian law students since its founding in 2010; and the Bulgarian Speech and Debate Tournaments Foundation (BEST), created in 2012 by a group of six ETAs and one Bulgarian alumna. As a special treat for the gala audience, two “Besties,” Reni Petrova and Zori Dimitrova from Petar Bogdan Foreign Language School in Montana, performed a duo interpretation of “Beauty and The Beast” that roused a standing ovation.

No celebration of Fulbright Bulgaria’s history would be complete without the participation of Dr. Julia Stefanova, the founding executive director who led the Commission in its first 23 years. Dr. Stefanova’s recollections were also supported by remarks from two prominent alumni, computational physicist Ani Proykova and theater director Javor Gardev.

The gala program also showcased the Fulbright Bulgaria’s future expansion, which comes largely thanks to the Bulgarian government’s decision in 2022 to triple its annual allocation to \$1.1 million. With this new funding, in 2023 we launched the Fulbright Bulgarian Leaders Award, which supports Bulgarian students admitted to MA and PhD programs at top US universities. At the gala, Fulbright alumna and former head of cabinet Lena Borislavova and former Prime Minister Kiril Petkov announced the winners of the first Bulgarian Leaders grants.

Throughout the evening, Fulbright Bulgaria also celebrated its many partners. One unique sponsor was singled out for special recognition: the America for Bulgarian Foundation, which over the past fifteen years has been instrumental in expanding the English Teaching Assistantship program from a mere two teachers to a network of 30 ETAs per year.

The whole team at Fulbright Bulgaria would like to thank all of our partners, sponsors, grantees, alumni and friends who made our 30th anniversary celebration such a success. Here’s to many more decades of Fulbright exchange between Bulgaria and the US!



BESTies performing at the Gala



Sevar Ivanov and Angela Rodel as gala concert hosts



The first Bulgarian Leaders grant cohort with Kiril Petkov

Major Program and Enrichment Events

**US GRANTEES
ORIENTATION IN SOFIA**

**FULBRIGHT
INTERNATIONAL
SEMINAR "Strategies for
Strengthening Democracy"**

**OPPORTUNITY FUNDS
MODULE: Essay Writing and
Common App Training**

**VISITS TO ETA
PARTNER SCHOOLS**

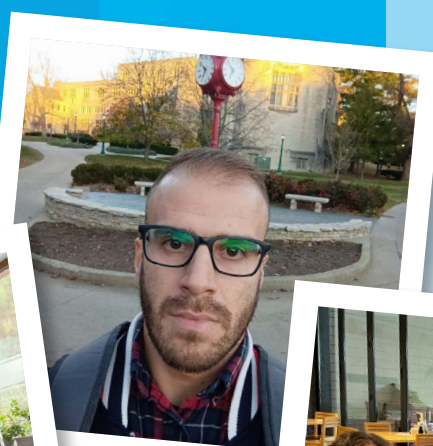
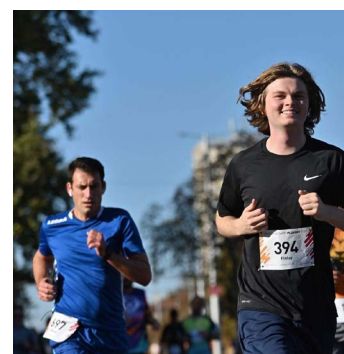
**ORIENTATION for Fall
Semester US Scholars**

**LAUNCH OF AY23-24
CAMPAIGN for BG Scholars,
VRs and NGO Reps**

**VISITS TO ETA
PARTNER SCHOOLS**

**REGIONAL ETA
CONFERENCE ON
MEDIA LITERACY**

**BEST FALL
TOURNAMENTS
ONLINE**



Sep

Oct

Nov/Dec



MID-TERM MEETING for US Grantees in Sofia

ORIENTATION for Spring Semester US Scholars

ONLINE INTERVIEWS with US Candidates for AY23-24

FULBRIGHT 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA IN SOFIA

OPPORTUNITY FUNDS MODULE: SAT Preparation

BEST NATIONALS TOURNAMENT LIVE at AUBG

IN-PERSON WRAP-UP SEMINAR in Burgas with US Grantees and Host Schools

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION for Bulgarian AY23-24 Grantees

BULGARIAN AY24-25 STUDENT INTERVIEWS AND SELECTIONS

sCool MEDIA BOOTCAMP for High School Students at AUBG

BEST DEBATE CAMP IN BANKYA

OPPORTUNITY FUNDS MODULE: IELTS/TOEFL Preparation



Jan/Feb

Mar/Apr

May/Jun

Jul/Aug

Summer Camps for High Schoolers



Final day of the media bootcamp at AUBG in July



Student journalists creating videos for their project



Opportunity Funds training module

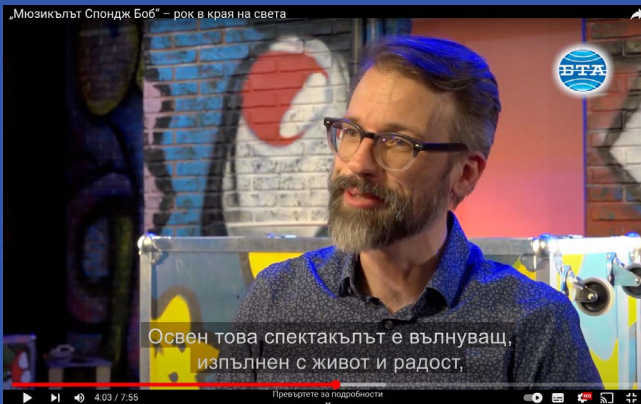
Although the Fulbright program in Bulgaria does not award scholarships to high school students, providing high-quality educational opportunities to teenagers in Bulgaria is nevertheless an important part of our mission, as demonstrated by our robust English Teaching Assistant program and our dynamic EducationalUSA and Opportunity Funds offerings. And what better way to get kids excited about American education than a summer camp experience?

After two successful camps in 2019 and 2022, Fulbright Bulgaria was proud to sponsor a third Media Boot Camp for high school students in partnership with sCool Media (Association of European Journalists-Bulgaria) at the American University in Bulgaria from July 1-9, 2023. Staying in the AUBG dormitories and attending lectures by leading Bulgarian and foreign journalists, the 24 participants learned the basics of fact-checking, storytelling, shooting videos, interviewing, podcasting and much more. The students produced final projects that were presented to a judging committee at the end of the week.

The Commission also sponsored the Fulbright legacy BEST Foundation's third annual Summer Camp from July 30 to August 5, 2023. The camp, aimed at developing participants' critical thinking and public speaking skills, gathered almost 30 students from all over Bulgaria and took place in Bankya. Former ETA and BEST Management Team leader Morgan Rowe returned to Bulgaria as camp director, while Program Officer Rada Kaneva, Executive Director Angela Rodel and Board Member Eric Halsey all participated as lecturers or in workshops. According to BEST Executive Director Vanya Zlateva: "It was a week full of fun activities, karaoke nights, hikes and of course, plenty of debating! The campers were taught the structure of World Schools Debate and got to show off what they learned at the camp tournament."

Congratulations to all the talented students who took part in Fulbright Bulgaria's summer camps and courses! We hope to keep in touch as you continue your education, perhaps as Fulbright students pursuing MA degrees in the United States, like two former BESTies, Ekaterina Fakirova and Rukiye-Ayshe Egeli, who both won Fulbright Bulgarian Leaders grants in 2023!

Fulbright Media Presence



There was increased media interest in Fulbright Bulgaria programming and grantees, both Americans and Bulgarians. Our 30th anniversary and the overall impact of the Fulbright program found a spot on the **Bulgarian National Radio**, while the newest and most generous Fulbright grant for Bulgarian students, the Bulgarian Leaders Award, was also announced in the media: https://www.karieri.bg/news/40423_do-100-hil-dolara-ot-fulbrayt-za-studenti-v-sasht

“Spongebob the Musical” with fantastic scene design by US Scholar Murdock Lucas was featured in several news outlets, including <https://www.bta.bg/bg/videos/15841>

ETAs were once again popular in local media. Jack Corby in Kardzhali was featured in <http://www.novjivot.info/> as well as on his home university's website. ETAs in Dobrich Julia Lynch and Hannah Petersen were featured in a local newspaper as well as [https://pronewsdobrich.bg/Julia Lynch and Hannah Petersen](https://pronewsdobrich.bg/Julia%20Lynch%20and%20Hannah%20Petersen). ETA in Plovdiv Grace Evans posted an article about sustainable tourism on a local portal: <https://openvratsa.bg/en/sustainable-tourism-in-vratsa/>

This year, thanks to our focused social media and visibility campaign, we saw a marked increase in interest in Bulgarian Fulbright grantees and alumni: Iglia Atanasova shared about her Fulbright experience at Harvard University, while Sevar Ivanov gave an interview for the Bulgarian National Radio

talking about his research in New York as well as about his views on Bulgarian culture. Martina Novakova talked about the time she spent in New York pursuing an MA in Educational Theater where she also staged the play she authored entitled “Once You Cross the Ocean” <https://www.bta.bg/bg/bg-world/rezhisiorat-martina-novakova-v-nyu-york-na-den-mozhesh-da-se-sreshnesh-s-deset>

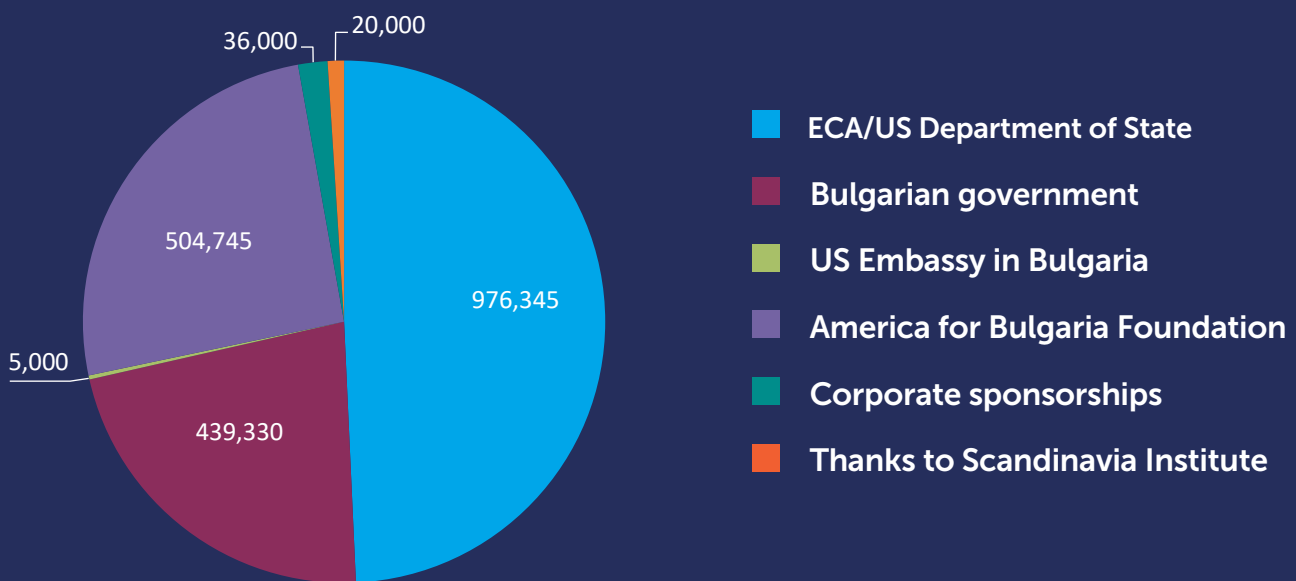
Our Fulbright Sofia City Court Judge Internship program also got positive coverage from Defakto.bg, a popular online portal for the Bulgarian legal community: <https://defakto.bg>. Tihomir Rachev, Fulbright Alumnus from the Court Internship Program was appointed Junior Judge at Burgas Regional Court shortly after completing the program at the Court of Louisiana: <https://www.iskra.bg/okrazhen-sad-burgas-popalni-ekipa-si-s-dvama-novi-mladshi-sadii/>

Fulbright ED Angela Rodel also continued to maintain an active media presence throughout the year, being invited as a regular guest by various media. Interview opportunities increased considerably in May after she was awarded the 2023 International Booker Prize for her translation of Georgi Gospodinov's novel Time Shelter, with notable interviews on Bulgarian National Television's “Panorama News Hour” and bTV, the country's largest private network, as well as on Bulgarian National Radio, Radio Free Europe and in the newspapers Dnevnik and Kapital.

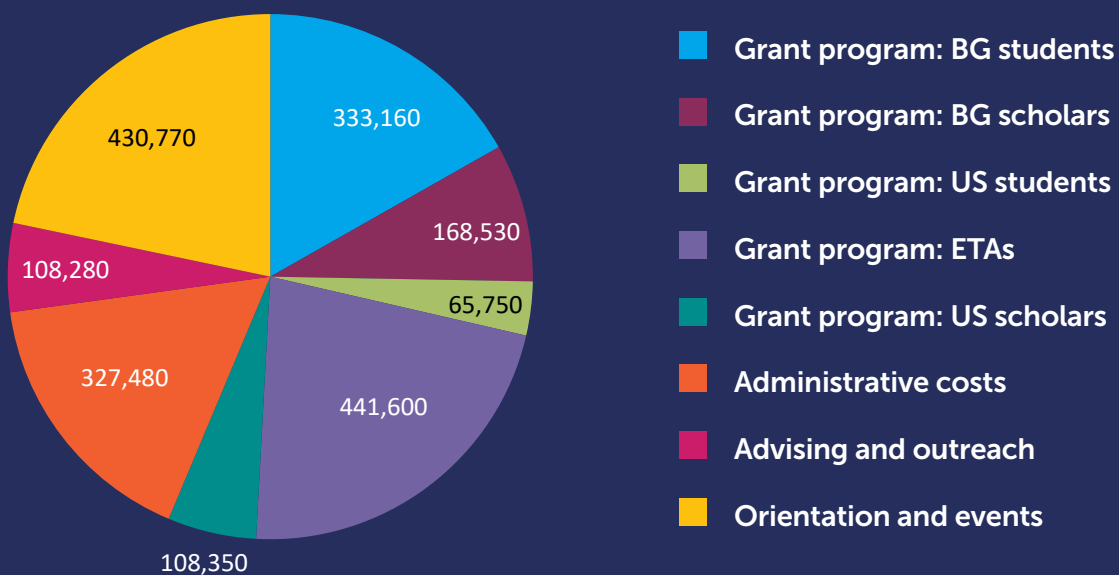


Fulbright Bulgaria Budget

Fulbright Programs Funding Sources (Oct 2022- Sept 2023)



Fulbright Programs Costs (Oct 2022- Sept 2023)



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