



FULBRIGHT
Bulgaria

BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE



Academic Year

2024-2025

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

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History & Mission



The AY24-25 ETA US student cohort at orientation with Deputy Minister of Education Natalia Miteva and H. Martin McDowell, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., U.S. Embassy

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 80 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 breadth of their respective societies and selecting nominees through open, merit-based competitions.

Educational exchange between the United States and the Republic of Bulgaria under the Fulbright program started as early as 1967, with approximately 180 grantees between 1967 and 1993. 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 wide-ranging 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 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 AY24-25 included:

Honorary Chairs

Prof. Galin Tsokov (until January 2025)

Krassimir Valchev (after January 2025)
Bulgarian Minister of Education and Science

Kenneth Merten (until January 2025)
Ambassador of the United States to Bulgaria

Chair

Eric Halsey*
Managing Director, Halsey Company

Treasurer

Eric Brassil
Cultural and Educational Affairs Officer,
US Embassy in Bulgaria

US Members of the Board

Emily Sargent-Beasley
President, American College of Sofia

Nicole Fox
Public Affairs Officer,
US Embassy in Bulgaria

Dr. Traci Speed*
Associate Professor,
Sofia University Department of English

Bulgarian Members of the Board

Karina Angelieva
Former Deputy Minister of Education and Science

Doriana Basamakova
Chief of Staff, Trust for Social Achievement

Dr. Svetla Danova*
Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology,
BAS

Dr. Neli Koleva
Chief Officer of Public Partnerships
at Teach for Bulgaria
Advisor to Ministry of Education and Science

Prof. Nikolay Vitanov
Deputy Minister of Education and Science

**Fulbright alumni*

Front cover photo:

The AY24-25 US cohort and their Bulgarian mentors
at the Wrap Up Meeting in Burgas



From the AY2024-25 Board Chair
Eric Halsey

Reflecting on the year Fulbright had in 2025, the word “resilience” comes to mind. Whether looking at the grantees or the commission itself, Fulbrighters had to adapt to meet the wide range of political, social, technological, and cultural changes impacting Bulgaria and the US alike. We entered Schengen, prepared to change currencies, and so much more. It’s good to remember that resilience doesn’t mean you don’t struggle or fail, it’s about how you react and adapt to those challenges. We expect that grantees will struggle, projects will hit roadblocks, etc. But when we hit those roadblocks, it’s helpful to have a north star to point us in the right direction and inspire that resilience we need so much. For Fulbright, that north star is our values. No matter what happens in the world around us, our commitment to cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and leadership that crosses borders and creates impacts that resonate in Bulgaria, the US, and around the world remains steadfast. It’s useful to remind ourselves that even as the world changes around us, we know why it’s worth working so hard to ensure the Fulbright program lives and thrives far into the future.

Personally, it’s now been over 10 years since my own Fulbright grant and it’s truly remarkable to reflect on how the program has grown and evolved alongside the countries it serves. Today, the commission has far more funding from a wider range of sources, helping ensure it can continue to fulfill its mission no matter what challenges come our way. That also means more grants and greater impact, with 70 grantees annually (~50 US and ~20 BG), and a commission staff that’s using technology more than ever to find outstanding candidates and ensure their grants are successful. It’s a reminder that despite all the challenges we face, the future of Fulbright looks bright.



From the Executive Director
Angela Rodel

The year 2025 marked my ten-year anniversary as executive director of Fulbright Bulgaria—the adage that time flies when you are having fun certainly applies here! My experience with Fulbright began way back in 1996 as a US Student; it continued as a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Researcher in 2004, followed by alumni community participation and a term of board service. Taking the helm of the Fulbright Commission in 2015, especially after the long and successful tenure of founding ED Dr Julia Stefanova, was an incredible opportunity to see and serve the Fulbright program from yet another perspective.

I often like to say that I have the best job in the world—supporting brilliant scholars, professionals and educators from all walks of Bulgarian and American life. Of course, my work has not been without its challenges—moving to a new office, navigating a dynamic political landscape, and engaging with new technologies that change the way we teach, learn and communicate. Yet there have been successes to celebrate—the tripling of the Bulgarian governmental allocation, the increase of the number and size of awards, and the overhaul of our social media, website and communications strategy, to name just a few. None of this would have been possible without the support of the fantastic Fulbright staff, the US Embassy and the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the America for Bulgaria Foundation, as well as dozens of dedicated Fulbright board members. The past decade has been an incredible journey for me as a Fulbrighter, leader, and (eternal) student of Bulgarian culture. The hundreds of grantees I have had the pleasure to collaborate with have given me a far deeper and nuanced understanding of both the nations I call home. I offer my deep gratitude to everyone who has supported me over this past decade and look forward to working together to expand educational exchange!

Fulbright Bulgaria's YEAR AT-A-GLANCE

69

FULBRIGHT
BULGARIA
GRANTEES

48 US/21 BG

GRANTEES BY CATEGORY

U.S.: 48

7 Scholars

5 Specialists

6 Students

30 ETAs

BG: 21

Visiting Scholars: 6

Graduate Students: 8

Visiting Researchers: 2

Court Interns: 2

FTEA: 2

Hubert Humphrey: 1

71

IN-PERSON OUTREACH
VISITS TO **30+** CITIES:

21 for Fulbright Competition
(including FTEA)

30 for ETA School Visits

20 to schools and American
Corners for EducationUSA in
16 cities

Dozens of online information sessions
for Bulgarian students, scholars,
teachers, and candidates for all awards

9,200

BULGARIAN
STUDENTS

taught by

30 ETAs

in 26 cities

18,480

Classroom Contact Hours at:

19 Foreign Language High
Schools

2 English Language High
Schools

4 K-12 Schools

1 Math And Sciences School

3 Professional Schools

1 University

PMP STATS

Program Highlights

- **6** Training Sessions
- **65** Participants
- **100%** Exam Success Rate
- **4** PM Community Events

Volunteering

- PMI Bulgaria Chapter

Fulbright.bg Website YOY

- Organic search clicks skyrocketed by **320.56%**
- Active engagement time per session rose by **61.52%**
- Events per session rose by **52.15%**

These results point to higher visibility and more importantly, higher-quality engagement.

Social Media Impact

- **LinkedIn** growth from 4,169 to **5,274** followers
- **Facebook** marked an **11.5%** growth in content interactions
- **Instagram** profile visits rose by **55%**

New Facebook followers **863**

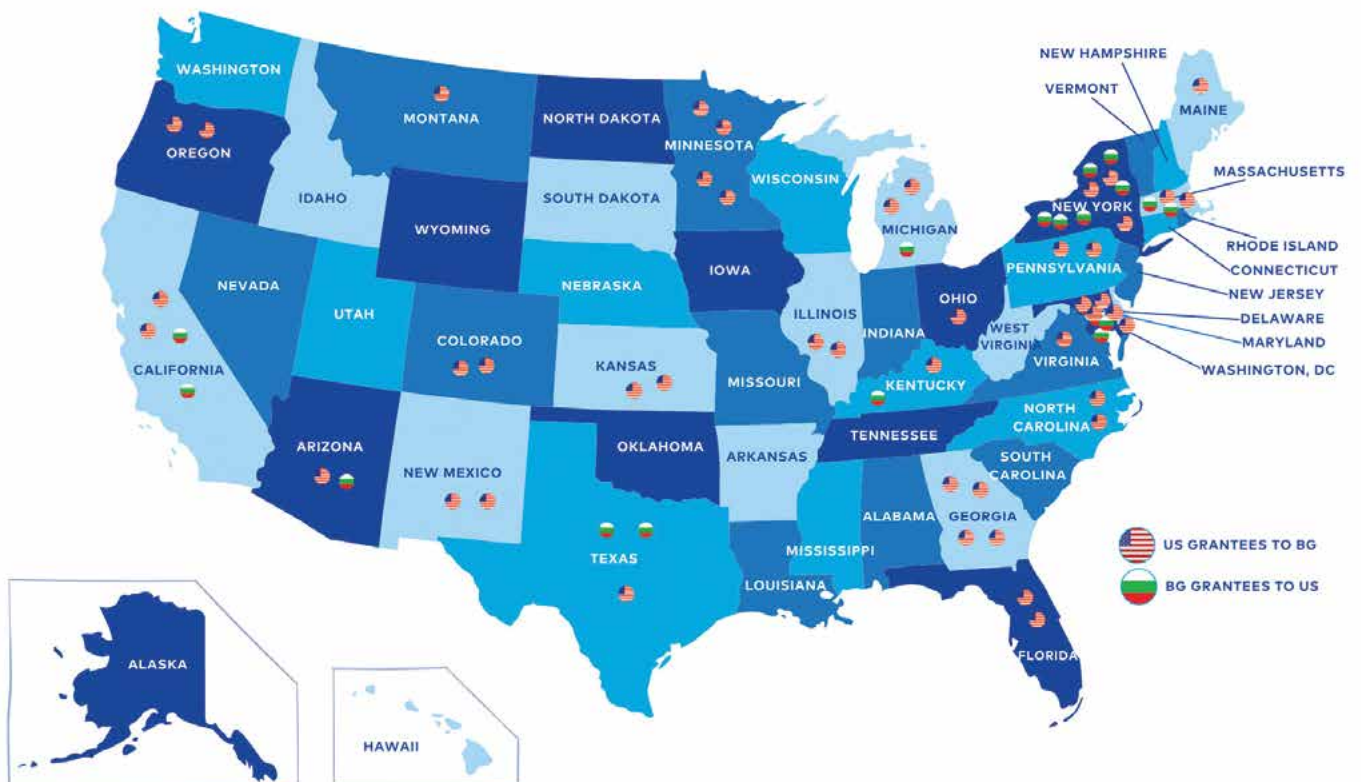
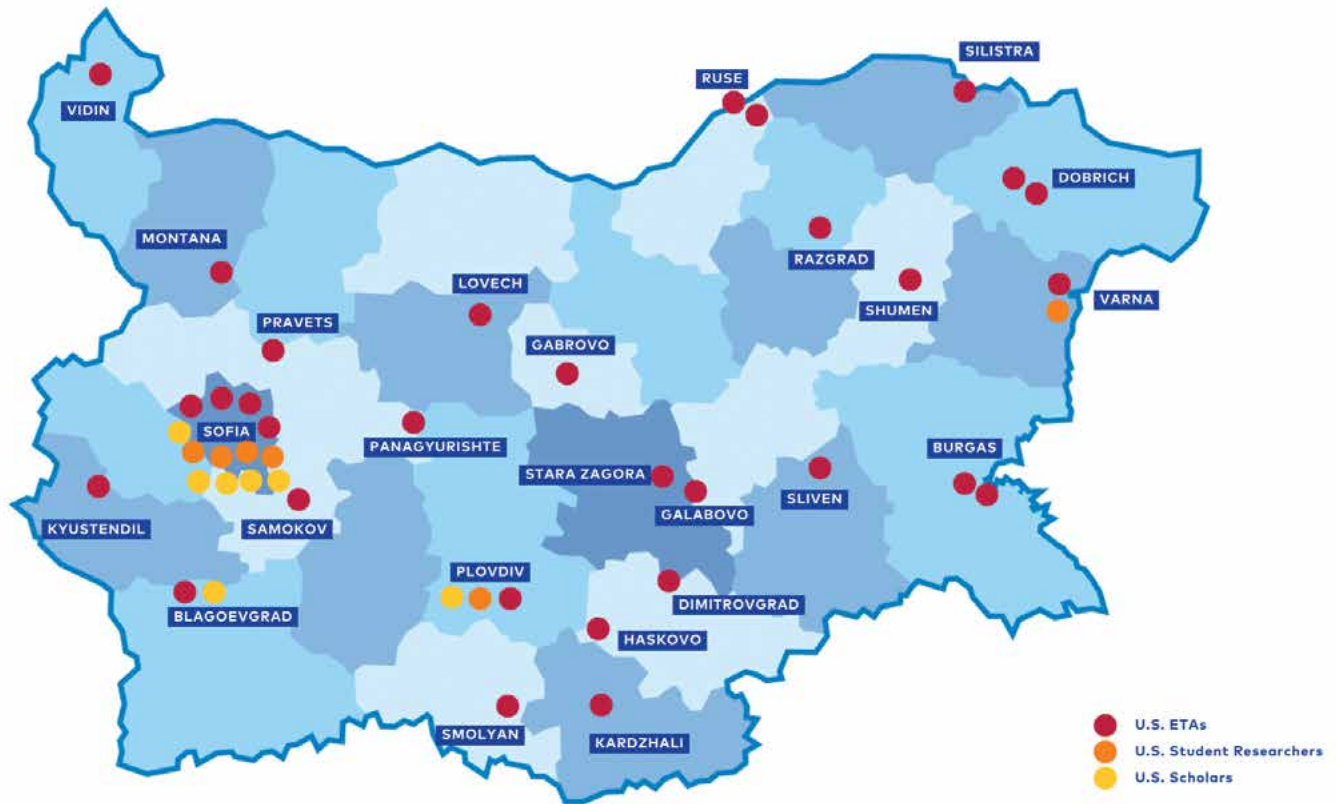
New Instagram followers **326**

EducationUSA Undergrad Scholarships

Around **\$341,000** in
annual scholarships
offered to seven students
in the Opportunity Funds-
Bulgaria program

2 full-ride scholarships to
UPenn and Yale University.

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



U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2024-2025

SCHOLARS

Dr. Viktoria Basham

Academic Field: Anthropology, Folklore

Project Title: Preserving and Popularizing Bulgarian Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Bloodline of the Vampire

Home Institution: Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD

Host Institution: University of Library Studies and Information Technologies and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Dora Fichter

Academic Field: Law, Criminal Law

Project Title: Human Trafficking of Roma in Bulgaria

Home Institution: Missouri Attorney General, Jefferson City, MO

Host Institution: National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Sofia

Dr. Damla Isik

Academic Field: Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology

Project Title: Making Sense of Gendered Peri-Urban Development and Change in Plovdiv

Home Institution: Regis University, Denver, CO

Host Institution: Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski, Plovdiv

Dr. Andrew Knighton

Academic Field: Literature, American Literature

Project Title: Literature at Large: Experimental Engaged English in Bulgaria

Home Institution: California State University, Los Angeles, CA

Host Institution: American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad

Clint Margrave

Academic Field: Writing

Project Title: Teaching Creative Writing, American Literature, and US Cultural Studies

Home Institution: California State University, Long Beach, CA

Host Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Sofia

Dr. Petia Yanchulova Merica-Jones

Academic Field: Physics, Astronomy

Project Title: Student Recruitment and Retention, and a Bridge of Cooperation in Astronomy and Physics

Home Institution: Space Telescope Science Institute, Baltimore, MD

Host Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Sofia

John Bussey

Academic Field: Journalism

Project Title: The Transition to Democracy from Authoritarianism: Lessons for Today's Politics

Home Institution: The Wall Street Journal, New York City, NY

Host Institution: Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Kyla Baal

Academic Field: Museum Studies

Project Title: The Politics of Subsidiary Symbols on Amphorae and Currency Between Thrace and Greece

Host Institution: Balkan Heritage Foundation, Sofia

Nathan Bernacki

Academic Field: Ethnomusicology

Project Title: A Musical and Political Analysis of Contemporary Bulgarian Folk Music

Host Institution: Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv

Eleonora Edreva

Academic Field: Art

Project Title: Rewilding Textiles: Passing Down Ecological Knowledge Through Natural Dyes

Host Institution: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Jolie Greer

Academic Field: Ancient Studies

Project Title: The Presence of Equine Preference in Bulgaria and Romania in the 2nd Century BCE

Host Institution: National Museum of Natural History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Jordan Halpern

Academic Field: International Studies

Project Title: Local Insights, Global Implications: Bulgaria's NCS Development and Impact

Host Institution: University of National and World Economy, Sofia

Stuart Williamson

Academic Field: Economics

Project Title: Building Bulgaria's Trade Infrastructure Capacity on the TCITR

Host Institution: Varna University of Economics, Varna

ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Sylvie Antal

Host: Dr. Petar Beron Foreign Language School, Kyustendil

Veda Balaji

Host: Vocational School of Tourism, Samokov

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2024-2025

Eva Basile

Host: Vocational School for Computer Programming and Innovation, Burgas

Lauren Buddie

Host: Dr. Ivan Bogorov Foreign Language School, Dimitrovgrad

Caroline Cassell

Host: Ivan Vazov Foreign Language School, Smolyan

Margaret Cavanaugh

Host: Nikola Yonkov Vaptsarov Foreign Language School, Shumen

Lillian Dammann

Host: Geo Milev English Language School, Ruse

Annabelle Fortine

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

Kyla Gates

Host: Acad. Lyudmil Stoyanov Foreign Language School, Blagoevgrad

Mia Griffin

Host: Elisaveta Bagryana 51 Secondary School, Sofia

Beatrice Handlin

Host: Ekzarh Yossif Foreign Language School, Razgrad

Zunayra Hemani

Host: Ekzarh Yossif Foreign Language School, Lovech

Allyson Hom

Host: Aleko Konstantinov Foreign Language School, Pravets

Mercedes Janis

Host: Simeon Radev Foreign Language School, Pernik

Joseph Johnson

Host: Yordan Radichkov "Foreign Language School, Vidin

Emma Joswiak-McLaughlin

Host: Geo Milev Foreign Language High School, Dobrich

Soraya Keiser

Host: Zaharii Stoyanov Foreign Language School, Sliven

Joya Kumar

Host: Hristo Botev Foreign Language School, Kardzhali

Naeman Mahmood

Host: First Language School, Varna

Devon Nielsen

Host: Romain Rolland Foreign Language School, Stara Zagora

Maya O'Boyle

Host: Baba Tonka Mathematical School, Ruse

Jonathan Phalen

Host: Acad. Mihail Arnaudov 119 Secondary School, Sofia

Adelaide Randall

Host: Aprilov National High School, Gabrovo

Suzu Schlosberg

Host: Peyo Yavorov Foreign Language High School, Silistra

Gabrielle Shell

Host: Yoan Ekzarh Fifth Foreign Language School, Varna

Prachi Soni

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

Haley Strom

Host: Geo Milev English Language School, Burgas

Lillian Tzanev

Host: Petar Bogdan Foreign Language High School, Montana

Leo Williams

Host: Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski, Plovdiv

Sindhu Yegappan

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

FULBRIGHT SPECIALISTS

Christina Ferwerda

Project Title: Muse Academy and MA in Contemporary Museum Exhibits

Host Institution: America for Bulgaria Foundation, Sofia
Dates of the Visit: 10/12/2024 - 11/4/2024

Hannah Lieb

Project Title: Better Mental Health for Students

Host Institution: Regional Center for the Support of the Process of Inclusive Education, Sofia
Dates of the Visit: 4/24/2025 to 5/24/2025

Michael Miklaucic

Project Title: Fostering Information Integrity

Host Institution: Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia
Dates of the Visit: 5/5/2025 - 6/5/2025

Raleigh Sadlier

Project Title: Capacity Development for Occupational Therapy Services

Host Institution: Karin Dom, Varna
Dates of the Visit: 9/07/2025 - 9/24/2025

Kenneth DeHaan

Project Title: Building Bridges for Deaf Leaders of Tomorrow

Host Institution: Listen Up Foundation, Sofia
Dates of the Visit: 9/14/2025 - 10/11/2025

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2024-2025

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Alexander Ivanov

Thanks to Scandinavia

Academic Field: Linguistics

Host Institution: Gallaudet University, Washington DC
Degree: MA

Slavina Ancheva

Academic Field: Public Policy

Host Institution: Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Degree: MA

Mila Ivanova

Bulgarian Leaders

Academic Field: Education

Host Institution: Columbia University, New York, NY
Degree: MA

Rayna Emilova

Bulgarian Leaders

Academic Field: Education

Host Institution: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Degree: MA

Eduard Kayn

Bulgarian Leaders

Academic Field: Law

Host Institution: Columbia University, New York, NY
Degree: LLM

Dimo Rezashki

Bulgarian Leaders

Academic Field: Financial Mathematics

Host Institution: Columbia University, New York, NY
Degree: MA

Plamen Galinirov

Bulgarian Leaders

Academic Field: Computer Science

Host Institution: Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Degree: MA

VISITING RESEARCHERS

Kristian Stoyanov

Academic Field: Law

Home Institution: Durham University, UK

Host Institution: Columbia University, New York, NY

VISITING SCHOLARS

Svetoslava Toncheva

Academic Field: Environmental Science

Project Title: Mapping the Future of Conservation: A Comparative Study of Culture, Economics, Land Use, and Wildlife in Bulgaria and California

Home Institution: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Host Institution: University of California - Santa Barbara, CA

Mariana Borukova

Academic Field: Sports Education

Project Title: Unified Basketball in Special Olympics - An Innovative Model for Sports Development and Inclusion in Sport

Home Institution: National Sports Academy

Host Institution: University of Massachusetts - Boston, MA

Sotir Chervenkov

Academic Field: Physics

Project Title: Coherent X-rays for Semiconductor Metrology and Imaging of

Advanced Quantum Materials

Home Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Host Institution: University of California - San Diego, CA

Borislav Stankov

Academic Field: Engineering

Project Title: Optimization of Residential-Scale Microgeneration Systems for Advancing Towards a More Sustainable Energy Infrastructure

Home Institution: Technical University of Sofia

Host Institution: Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Nikolay Kolev

Academic Field: Food Science

Project Title: Red Clover Silage Supplementation of Ruminants – Effect on Color, Texture, and Oxidative Stability of Lamb Meat

Home Institution: University of Food Sciences, Plovdiv

Host Institution: University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Hristiyan Atanasov

Academic Field: History

Project Title: Bulgarians and Ottoman Parliamentarism – from Liberalism and Conservatism to Nationalism

Home Institution: National Library of Bulgaria; University of National and World Economy

Host Institution: University of Texas at Austin, TX

HUBERT HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIP

Lyudmil Karavasilev

Academic Field: Media/ Communications

Home Institution: Ministry of Environment and Water

Host Institution: Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2024-2025

CIVIL SOCIETY SCHOLARS

Elena Nikolova

Academic Field: Business

Project Title: A FEBulous Journey ahead for Female Founders

Home Institution: Female Entrepreneurship Bulgaria; Bulgarian Angels Club

Host Institution: Endeavor, New York, NY

Denitza Petrova

Academic Field: Environmental Science

Project Title: Campaigning for the Protection of Oceans and Biodiversity - Exchange of Practices

Home Institution: Greenpeace Bulgaria

Host Institution: Greenpeace USA, New York, NY

COURT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Yoan Uluzov

Academic Field: Law

Home Institution: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Host Institution: United States District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana

FTEA IN MEDIA LITERACY

Enitsa Karpicheva

Academic Field: Teaching English as Foreign Language

Home Institution: Profiled Mathematics and Natural Sciences High School, Burgas

Host Institution: Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Meyers, FL

Stella Vasileva-Petkova

Academic Field: Teaching English as Foreign Language

Home Institution: Geo Milev Secondary School, Varna

Host Institution: University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND

Court Internship Program



Fulbright intern Yoan Uluzov in front of the US District Court in New Orleans

The 2024–25 Fulbright Court Internship Competition winner was **Yoan Uluzov**, a promising young lawyer from Sofia University, who completed a two-month professional training at the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. With experience as a legal associate and participant in international law competitions, Yoan gained valuable insight into the workings of the U.S. judicial system and expanded his professional skills through close observation and mentorship from American judges and legal practitioners. Beyond the courtroom, his stay in New Orleans, Louisiana offered vibrant cultural immersion—from exploring the city's rich musical heritage and live jazz scene to discovering its renowned Creole and Cajun cuisine. This blend of professional growth and cultural discovery made his Fulbright experience both educational and unforgettable.

Bulgarian Scholar Program



Dr. Sotir Chervenkov taking in the UC San Diego Campus

Innovation, collaboration, and global impact defined AY 2024–25 for Fulbright Bulgaria’s scholars and civil society fellows. Across disciplines and continents, Bulgarian scholars deepened partnerships with U.S. institutions, advancing research and inspiring new ideas on both sides of the Atlantic.

Connecting Communities Through Research

In wildlife conservation, **Dr. Svetoslava Toncheva** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) compared Bulgaria’s coexistence-based traditions with California’s protected parks at the University of California–Santa Barbara, sparking new conversations among scholars, students, and local communities. In physics, **Dr. Sotir Chervenkov** (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski) collaborated with UC San Diego on cutting-edge X-ray techniques for quantum materials, while sharing his laser and spectroscopy expertise to build lasting partnerships.

“It was a real pleasure to interact with my U.S. colleagues—both leading scholars and young, enthusiastic, motivated students. This interaction became a source of motivation for me as well.”

— **Dr. Sotir Chervenkov**,
Fulbright Visiting Scholar at UC San Diego

At Texas A&M University, **Dr. Borislav Stankov** (Technical University of Sofia) studied how renewable systems like solar panels and microgrids can balance energy supply and demand, advancing sustainable solutions on both continents. Meanwhile, **Dr. Mariana Borukova** (National Sports Academy) worked with the University of Massachusetts Boston to develop a Unified Basketball toolkit, promoting inclusion, teamwork, and athlete development across borders.



Dr. Nikolay Kolev explores meat quality

“Actually, the exchange went both ways. There was a moment when I felt proud of what we are doing at home. My U.S. colleagues were amazed at how multifunctional Bulgarian sports lecturers are, and how we manage to cope with a multitude of tasks.”

— **Dr. Mariana Borukova**,
Fulbright Visiting Scholar at UMass Boston

Dr. Nikolay Kolev (University of Food Technology–Plovdiv) brought home innovative methods in meat-quality research after his fellowship at the University of Kentucky, establishing the first-ever institutional partnership between the two universities. In the social sciences, **Dr. Hristiyan Atanasov** (University of Library Studies/National Library) joined UT Austin to explore Bulgarians’ participation in early Ottoman parliaments, linking archival research with U.S. scholarship to illuminate the roots of democracy and constitutionalism.

Civil Society at Work

The Fulbright Civil Society Fellows tackled pressing social challenges. **Denitza Petrova** studied how Greenpeace USA mobilizes large-scale environmental campaigns, adapting their strategies to strengthen Bulgaria’s Black Sea Sanctuary movement. **Elena Nikolova** examined women’s entrepreneurship ecosystems through her work with the Female Entrepreneurship Bulgaria Foundation, applying U.S. insights to empower female founders and grow a supportive startup community.

Humphrey Fellowship Program

For Bulgarian professionals, the Humphrey Fellowship is more than a year of study in the United States—it is a life-changing journey that continues long after they return home. In 2024–25, **Lyudmil Karavassilev**, a media and communications specialist, spent his fellowship year at Arizona State University. The experience gave him new skills, fresh perspectives, and lasting professional connections. But perhaps even more inspiring is what happened after his return. Lyudmil immediately began giving back: he joined recruitment webinars, mentored potential applicants, and even sat on the interview panel for the next cohort. His dedication reflects not just gratitude for the opportunity, but a deep belief in the power of international exchange to spark change.



Dr. Mariana Borukova, right at home in the Boston Environment



Lyudmil Karavassilev celebrating Christmas in Arizona

Bulgarian Student Program



Dimo exploring the corridors of knowledge at Columbia School of Engineering

Academic excellence, leadership, and innovation characterized AY 2024–25 for Fulbright Bulgarian graduate students and researchers. From law and education to technology and the arts, this new generation of Fulbrighters is expanding transatlantic cooperation and shaping Bulgaria's future.

Graduate Students: A New Generation of Leaders

Seven Bulgarian graduate students began their studies at leading U.S. universities through the Fulbright Program, each bringing distinct expertise and vision. Their backgrounds range from EU policymaking to teaching, legal advocacy, and technology. At Gallaudet University, **Alexander Ivanov**, a Deaf researcher, is pioneering the academic study of Bulgarian Sign Language. After contributing to major EU legislation on artificial intelligence, **Slavina Ancheva**, at Harvard Kennedy School, is exploring ways to protect democracy in the digital age.

I am currently pursuing a Master's in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, where every class combines theory with real-world practice. Our professors bring experience from the U.S. government, foreign ministries, and international organizations, creating a dynamic and inspiring environment. Everyone here has ideas, causes, and a vision for the future. If you want to make a difference, become part of the Fulbright exchange."

—**Slavina Ancheva**,
Fulbright Graduate Student, Harvard Kennedy School



Slavina during her presentation at Harvard Kennedy School

Educators **Mila Ivanova** (Columbia University) and **Rayna Emilova** (University of Michigan) are integrating innovative teaching and leadership practices to strengthen Bulgarian schools. **Eduard Kayn**, a rising legal professional and moot court champion, is advancing his expertise in international arbitration at Columbia Law School. The

Fulbright Bulgarian Leaders Grant, established by the Bulgarian government, has made it possible to support more students at world-class universities. Three IIE-placed students—Mila, Rayna, and Eduard—received this competitive award, alongside two self-placed grantees whose achievements highlight Bulgaria’s growing talent pool. **Dimo Rezashki**, a first-generation university graduate, combines experience in London’s financial sector with a new focus on financial engineering at Columbia University School of Engineering.

“ I was deeply impressed by the facilities at Columbia—especially the access to advanced financial analysis data and the opportunity to work closely with dedicated tutors and lecturers. I am truly grateful to the Fulbright Program and the Bulgarian Leaders Grant for making this experience possible.”

— **Dimo Rezashki**, *Fulbright Graduate Student, Columbia University School of Engineering*

Plamen Galinov, an award-winning computer scientist and economist, continues his work on responsible AI and entrepreneurship at Cornell University.

“ The master’s program in Computer Science at Cornell is exceptionally dynamic and innovative. We work on diverse projects that combine deep theoretical knowledge with hands-on application. I am truly grateful to the Fulbright Program for giving me the opportunity to experience this world-class academic environment.”

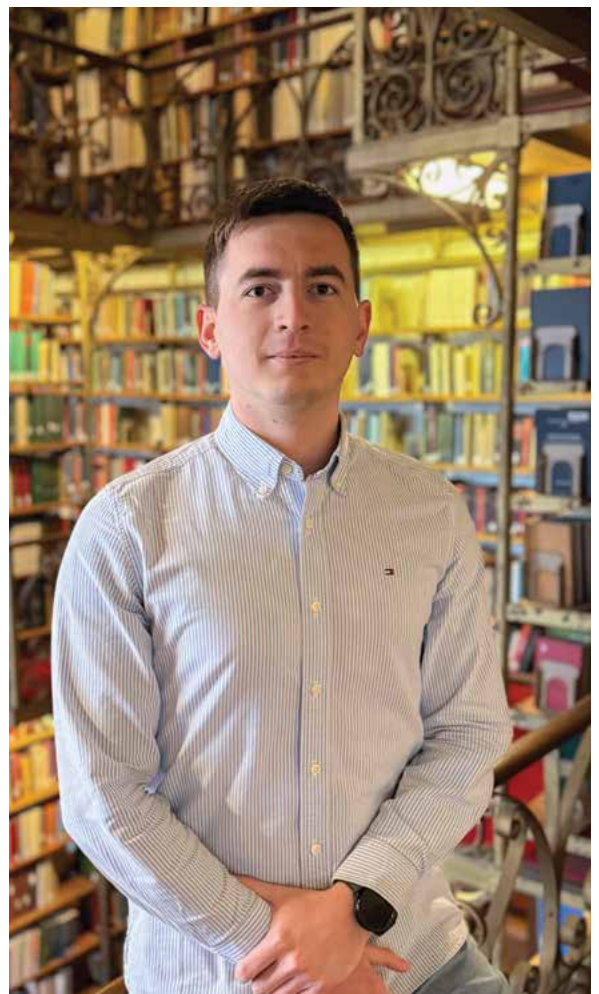
— **Plamen Galinov**,
Fulbright Graduate Student, Cornell University

The 2024–25 Visiting Researcher Program welcomed **Kristiyan Stoyanov**, a PhD researcher and lecturer at Durham University, whose law research was welcomed by Columbia University, which waived the visiting researcher fee in acknowledgment of his academic excellence.

The Bulgarian Fulbright graduate students and visiting researchers of AY 2024–25 embody the spirit of curiosity, leadership, and global engagement. Their studies in diverse fields across top U.S. universities mark the beginning of careers that promise to shape Bulgaria’s academic, professional, and civic landscape.



Fulbrighters Alexander Ivanov and Prof. Kathleen Wood welcome Angela Rodel to Gallaudet University



Plamen immersed in books at Cornell Library

Teaching Excellence Awards



Photo caption: Spring 2025 FTEA participants

Teachers are at the heart of every thriving society. Through the Fulbright Teaching Excellence Awards (FTEA), we are able to empower outstanding Bulgarian educators to grow professionally, exchange ideas, and bring fresh energy into their classrooms.

In 2024–25, two remarkable teachers represented Bulgaria in this global program. **Enitsa Karpicheva** of the Mathematical High School in Burgas spent her fellowship at Florida Gulf Coast University. She returned not only inspired, but also determined to support others: Enitsa now helps recruit future participants, leads webinars, appears in promotional videos, and even reviews applications. Her journey shows how one teacher's growth can quickly ripple outward to benefit colleagues and students across the country. **Stella Petkova** from Geo Milev Secondary School in Varna departed in September 2025 for an exciting academic adventure at the University of North Dakota. After

a period of exploration, learning, and professional growth, she has returned to Varna, bringing back fresh ideas, innovative teaching methods, and new technologies—ready to energize both her school and her wider community with her creativity and passion for education. The next recruitment cycle for 2025–26 built on this momentum. A nationwide outreach effort—combining digital campaigns, support from the Ministry of Education, newsletters, and personalized letters to school principals—generated remarkable interest. We received 27 applications from dedicated teachers eager to innovate and inspire. After a rigorous selection process, nine candidates advanced to interviews, four were nominated to represent Bulgaria, and two were ultimately selected for participation.

Nasko Stamenov, a chemistry teacher at the National High School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, will join the Spring 2026 FTEA cohort at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. **Maria Georgieva**, a chemistry teacher at the First Language School in Varna, will join the Fall 2026 cohort. Both teachers are ready to bring back new skills and perspectives that will strengthen Bulgarian education for years to come.

Awards Ceremony for AY25-26 Bulgarian Fulbright Cohort

On June 25, 2025, the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange held its Pre-Departure Orientation and Awards Ceremony for the AY2025–26 Bulgarian Fulbright students and scholars at the Central Military Club in Sofia. The hybrid event brought together outgoing grantees, alumni, partners, and supporters to celebrate the start of a new academic journey across the United States.

The program opened with words of encouragement from **Eric Halsey**, chair of the Fulbright Bulgaria Commission Board, and Executive Director **Angela Rodel**, who presented certificates to the departing grantees. The ceremony also featured recently returned alumni, who shared advice and reflections on their Fulbright experiences in the U.S., creating a lively and supportive atmosphere for the new cohort. A total of seventeen Bulgarian Fulbrighters received their certificates and farewells during the event.

Eight graduate students will pursue advanced degrees in fields ranging from law, international relations, and economics to fine arts, fashion business, and dance/movement therapy at some of America's leading universities, including Harvard, UC Berkeley, the University of Pennsylvania, Boston University, Syracuse, Rutgers, Sarah Lawrence, and The New School – Parsons. Two visiting researchers, six visiting scholars and one Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow will undertake academic projects in areas such as bioengineering, business, law, history, archaeology, and literature at host institutions including Duke University, the University of Georgia, George Washington University, and Texas Tech University, among others, located across New York, Washington, D.C., South Carolina, Nebraska, Missouri, and Texas.

The celebration concluded with a cocktail reception in the historic halls of the Central Military Club, attended by more than 120 guests, including grantees and their families, alumni, and partners. The event marked both an official sendoff and a warm welcome into the global Fulbright community—a testament to the enduring power of educational exchange and international collaboration.



Angela Rodel and Eric Halsey awarding Fulbright certificates



Visiting Researcher Stella Nikolova greeting her cohort



The Fulbright community welcomes every generation!

U.S. Scholar Program



Fulbright Scholars and Students share a traditional Bulgarian meal they cooked together

The six American scholars hosted in Bulgaria in AY 2024-2025 brought new perspectives and inspired students and communities alike. Their projects ranged from literature, law, science, and cultural heritage, demonstrating the breadth of the Fulbright Program's impact.

At the American University in Bulgaria, **Dr. Andrew Knighton** introduced writing-intensive and discussion-based classes that encouraged students to take an active role in their learning. Beyond the classroom, he worked with the university library on a public humanities project and described his Fulbright as "transformative both professionally and personally." His efforts strengthened curriculum design and fostered a culture of collaboration among colleagues. **Clint Margrave**, an author and lecturer, brought creative writing to life for Bulgarian students. His courses focused on the theme of place, and his workshop "Writing Poems that Travel," co-hosted with the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, opened doors for cross-cultural exchange between American and

Bulgarian writers. He mentored graduate students, developed new curricula, and plans to publish poetry inspired by his Bulgarian experiences. **Dr. Damla Isik** carried out anthropological research on gender and urban development in Plovdiv, exploring how the city has evolved since being named European Capital of Culture. She mentored students at the University of Plovdiv, delivered guest lectures at other universities, and engaged with local NGOs. Her work connected academic theory to real-life community issues, enriching dialogue about sustainable development.

Other scholars tackled pressing contemporary challenges. Missouri Assistant Attorney General **Dora Fichter** examined how Bulgaria addresses human trafficking cases involving Roma communities, collaborating with prosecutors, NGOs, and government officials. Her project combined law enforcement insights with victim advocacy and is expected to inform future publications and training initiatives. **Dr. Petya Yanchulova Merica-Jones**, a physicist and astronomer, shared her passion for science with broad audiences, giving over 20 public talks and workshops aimed at inspiring Bulgarian youth. **Dr. Viktoria Basham** turned folklore into innovation through her project on vampire legends, creating a bilingual digital

platform of stories, maps, and research materials while also teaching and publishing academic articles.

Alongside six core U.S. scholars, Fulbright Bulgaria welcomed **John Bussey** of the *Wall Street Journal* as a Global Scholar. Hosted by the Center for the Study of Democracy, he researched Bulgaria's transition to democracy, engaging with political leaders, civil society, and academics, while contributing to public discussions on democratic resilience.

In spring 2025, **Dr. Ryan Habermeyer**, Associate Professor of English at Salisbury University and a Fulbright Scholar in Poland, visited Sofia through an Inter-Country Travel Grant. He delivered lectures at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, connected with colleagues, and was invited to contribute to the journal *Bulgarian Folklore*, strengthening academic ties between Bulgaria and Poland.

These diverse projects underline the transformative role U.S. Scholars play: bringing new knowledge, building enduring partnerships, and engaging Bulgarians in open, creative, and inspiring exchange.



Fulbright Scholar Victoria Basham presenting at the Wrap Up Seminar



Fulbright Scholar Petya Yanchulova Merica-Jones presenting at the Wrap Up Seminar



Fulbright Scholar Clint Margrave (right) and poet Tom Phillips bring together poetry reading and a discussion on creative writing at Sofia University.

“Living in Bulgaria felt like an almost spiritual return to my childhood and my roots in Turkey in the 1980s–90s... Bulgaria made me rediscover my creative self again, which was such a treat for me and such a blessing. Overall, this whole experience has been very positive for me both personally and professionally.”

— Prof. Damla Isik, U.S. Scholar in Anthropology

“The flex grant was the best option for me because I could not take an extended leave from my employment. Dividing my work into two separate segments was suitable for my project and allowed me to concentrate on two correlated aspects of my project—law enforcement and protection of victims’ rights.”

— Dora Fichter, Missouri Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Scholar in Law

“It was extremely rewarding to contribute in such a capacity to the efforts in the country to build Bulgaria into an important science center in Europe, and to get young people to seek astronomy and physics as an educational and career path... The experience has been life-changing for me and my family.”

— Dr. Petya Yanchulova

U.S. Specialist Program



Wine-tasting event for Fulbright Scholars, Students, and Specialists

Fulbright Specialists provide short-term expertise that meets urgent institutional needs while strengthening long-term professional ties. Despite global funding challenges, Bulgaria hosted four impactful projects in 2024–25.

Content strategist and exhibition designer **Christina Ferwerda** co-led the Muse Academy in Vratsa. Over 30 museum professionals, artists, and educators learned how to design exhibitions that engage audiences through storytelling and inclusive practices. She also ran workshops with the National Polytechnical Museum, helping them envision new permanent exhibits that highlight Bulgaria's heritage in innovative ways. Her hosts praised the collaboration as a model for ongoing partnerships.

Hannah Lieb, a mental health specialist and ETA alumna, worked with the Regional Center for Inclusive Education in Sofia. She delivered seven trainings and four supervision sessions for over 160 teachers and psychologists, introducing new approaches to adolescent mental health and classroom strategies. Participant feedback highlighted the value of learning to distinguish between stress, anxiety, and depression, and of having practical tools to better support students.

In the field of democratic resilience, **Michael Miklaucic** partnered with the Center for the Study of Democracy to strengthen responses to hybrid threats and disinformation. He delivered high-impact lectures, mentored young researchers, and organized international speaker events that connected Bulgarian scholars with U.S. experts. His appointment as a Senior Fellow at CSD ensures the collaboration will continue.

Occupational therapist **Raleigh Sadlier** worked with the Karin Dom Foundation in Varna to modernize therapy services for children with special needs. Though her visit was shortened due to scheduling constraints, she succeeded in introducing new therapy models and fostering collaboration across disciplines, and the hosts were immensely grateful for her commitment and dedication.

These projects show how Specialists can create powerful ripple effects in a short time—building skills, shaping practices, and leaving behind networks that will keep growing.

“Christina’s expertise brought fresh perspectives on engaging audiences effectively, which is essential for the evolution of museum practices. The Fulbright Specialist program provides an excellent framework for developing long-term collaboration between American professionals and Bulgarian museum experts.”

— **America for Bulgaria Foundation about Christina Ferwerda**

“My lectures provided a geopolitical overview for the staff relevant to the work they are engaged in, as well as providing a historical context of global democratization efforts from an American perspective. The speaker series I initiated is aiding the Center in developing a defense and security-oriented work stream within the organization.”

— **Michael Miklaucic,
Specialist in Information Integrity**

“This experience was truly one of the most rewarding of my life—personally and professionally. And I’m already dreaming up a Part Two focused on supporting teacher-parent communication in schools.”

— **Hannah Leib,
Specialist in Child and Adolescent Mental Health**



Fulbright Specialists Paul Orselli (2023) and Christina Ferwerda (2024) leading creative workshops at the Muse Academy to boost engagement in Bulgarian museums



Fulbright Specialist Hannah Lieb (sixth from right) joins Scholars and Students on a visit to Bachkovo Monastery and Assenova Fortress



Fulbright Specialist Raleigh Sadlier shares insights with her Bulgarian colleagues during a talk at the Karin Dom Foundation

U.S. Student Program



Trip to Melnik for the US Student and Scholar cohort

The AY24-25 US Student Program gave six young Americans the chance to immerse themselves in Bulgarian culture, history, and communities while pursuing original research. Their stories reflect both academic discovery and deep cultural exchange.

Eleonora Edreva studied traditional natural dyeing practices, learning directly from master weavers in Chiprovtsi. With Fulbright mini-grants, she organized community workshops where locals experimented with natural colors and techniques. Her project not

only preserved cultural knowledge but also brought heritage to life for new generations.

Jolie Greer, originally planning to study another site, pivoted when archaeologists unearthed a rare Roman chariot burial. She joined the excavation team, applying osteobiography and material culture analysis to shed light on ancient practices of death and commemoration. Her adaptability and expertise impressed her hosts at the National Museum of Natural History, who invited her to continue collaborating beyond her Fulbright term.

In Varna, **Stuart Williamson** combined economics research with community service. While studying international trade and regional development, he

also coached an American football team, led cultural workshops at the American Corner, and hosted U.S. holiday dinners. His outreach work demonstrated how cultural exchange happens not only in classrooms but also on sports fields and in community spaces. **Jordan Halpern** examined Bulgaria's cybersecurity posture but soon shifted to researching Black Sea security, presenting at conferences, publishing policy papers, and giving a media interview. PhD student in ethnomusicology **Nathan Bernacki** performed with a folk orchestra while researching Bulgarian music traditions, enhancing both his scholarship and his Bulgarian language skills. **Kyla Baal** explored historical narratives in museums and, later, underwater archaeology, eventually creating a short documentary film about her experiences.

Together, these students proved that Fulbright is as much about flexibility and curiosity as it is about academic excellence—leaving Bulgaria with new knowledge, friendships, and stories to tell.

“Without this fieldwork experience, writing my PhD dissertation would not be possible. I expect that the research conducted under the Fulbright grant will continue to be the main source of academic publications for many years onwards.”

— **Nathan Bernacki, U.S. Student in Ethnomusicology**

“The people who I met on the journey have altered my perspective on the world, my knowledge of the world, and the way I would like to spend my time in the world... all for the better. I have a new home now in Varna that I know I will return to someday.”

— **Stuart Williamson, U.S. Student in Economics**

“I have become much more self-sufficient, a more creative and outspoken problem solver, gained a greater and more sustainable work ethic, and I have learned to think both more critically and empathetically regarding socio-economic politics and government policy.”

— **Jolie Greer, U.S. Student in Archaeology**



Fulbright Scholars and Students enjoying a soap-making workshop during spring orientation

The Fulbright|America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistants Program



Returning ETAs at Orientation for U.S. Fulbright Grantees

In September 2024, Fulbright Bulgaria welcomed 30 English Teaching Assistants (ETAs), including four returning grantees, for an orientation featuring intensive Bulgarian language classes, pedagogical workshops, and cultural sessions with mentor teachers. During AY24–2025, ETAs were placed in 30 host institutions across Bulgaria, ranging from high schools and vocational schools to a university in Plovdiv.

Throughout the year, program officers conducted school visits to observe lessons, provide feedback, and assist with classroom management and community adjustment. At the Midterm Meeting in January 2025, ETAs shared creative video reflections on their teaching experiences, received professional development training and participated in a classroom management workshop with alumni mentors.

Several ETAs represented Bulgaria at international Fulbright events, including the EU and NATO Seminar, the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar, and the From ETA to Educator Enrichment Seminar in Brussels. Fulbright Bulgaria also hosted its fifth Regional Media Literacy

Seminar, welcoming 65 ETAs from ten European countries, with expert sessions led by the Poynter Institute's MediaWise team and the U.S. Embassy's English Language Fellow.

This year, 18 ETAs received mini-grants totaling over BGN 12,000 (\$7,000), supporting extracurricular projects such as film, drama, hiking, and cooking clubs, student newspapers, art and literary magazines, and community engagement initiatives. ETAs also played a vital role in the BEST Foundation's English speech and debate tournaments, serving as coaches, judges, and organizers for events involving more than 500 students nationwide.

Beyond the classroom, ETAs actively contributed to their host communities—organizing sports and wellness clubs, joining local choirs and folk dance groups, volunteering with NGOs, and even running in the Sofia Marathon. Their participation strengthened cultural ties and promoted Fulbright’s mission of mutual understanding. The year concluded in June 2025 with a Wrap-Up Seminar in Burgas, featuring creative presentations, interactive workshops, games with the audience and a professional development training for Bulgarian mentor teachers on Social-Emotional Learning.

Meanwhile, preparations began for the 2025–2026 cohort, with 55 recommended applicants and 31 finalists selected for placements in 25 Bulgarian cities. The Commission held several pre-departure webinars, refreshed program resources, and continued to strengthen partnerships—most notably renewing a co-sponsored ETA position in Panagyurishte, supported by local businesses, the Luchezar Tsotsorkov Foundation, and the municipality.

Despite challenges such as visa delays and changes to legislation, the 2024-2025 cohort demonstrated resilience, professionalism, and dedication. With continued support from the America for Bulgaria Foundation, the program remains a cornerstone of educational and cultural exchange, fostering cross-cultural learning and long-lasting partnerships between Bulgaria and the United States.

“As I see it, Fulbright is the art, and you are the artist. So I viewed this whole year as just one big opportunity to make connections, and share my culture, and learn about Bulgarian culture.”

— **Adelaide Randall, ETA in Gabrovo**

“I became much more confident and outgoing as a result of this year. My public speaking skills have improved. Teaching English to Bulgarian students mirrors the way I will be working with patients as a physician in the future so this was helpful professionally as well.”

— **Sindhu Yegappan, ETA in Dobrich**

“I feel more empowered to move to the beat of my own drum; I feel empowered that I can adapt and make an impact in challenging, novel environments; I feel the power of enthusiasm and optimism to create change.”

— **Haley Strom, ETA in Burgas**



Wrap Up Seminar for U.S. Grantees



ETAs at the Sofia Marathon



ETAs with their Bulgarian Language Certificates



ETA Allyson Hom at the Pravets Film Festival Award Ceremony

“ I learned so much about cultural exchange and the experience of living in new places —I never would have visited so many countries or met so many new people, and I also gained so much confidence in being able to handle challenging and isolating circumstances as well as further developing my teaching skills. While there were challenges, my time was wonderful and I hope to stay connected to my students and friendships for the rest of my life.”

— Beatrice Handlin, ETA in Razgrad



In addition to welcoming new grantees, in September 2024 Fulbright Bulgaria also welcomed a new colleague, Viktoria Dailova, as ETA Program Assistant. A native of Plovdiv, Viki graduated from Sofia University in English Philology, followed by an MA in Communications Management from UNWE. Her own Erasmus exchange experiences in Poland and Portugal have made her a valuable addition to the Fulbright Bulgaria staff, while her Gen Z sensibility have endeared her to grantees—welcome on board, Viki!

Fulbright EducationUSA Advising Center



EducationUSA Advisor Filip Lyapov with students at a training module

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. 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.

Since 2013, the EducationUSA Advising Center has implemented an innovative **Virtual 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 ETAs, the American Spaces, Fulbright graduate students/scholars, and others. It has both a virtual and in-person component to make educational advising available to students beyond the capital city of Sofia.

The virtual component of the program relies on reaching prospective students via social networks and social media, the Fulbright Commission's website, email marketing, online webinars and meetings, as well as individual one-on-one Skype/Zoom/Teams sessions. In addition to the growing virtual component of the program, EducationUSA advisor Filip Lyapov personally visits schools from which EducationUSA's main pool of participants come from, fostering excellent relations with students, teachers and the administration in those schools. This past academic year, 280 students in grades 8-12 took part in the program. Some of the program participants were accepted to prestigious U.S. colleges and universities where they received generous financial aid packages.

Since 2016, Bulgaria has hosted the **Opportunity Funds (OF) competition**, which provides small grants to 10 to 12 highly competitive academically talented students who are likely to be awarded full financial aid from U.S. colleges and universities but lack the financial resources to cover the up-front costs to apply, such as testing, application fees, or airfare. This year again, the OF program has shown strong results. The American University in

Bulgaria, Berklee College of Music, Duke University, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University offered acceptance to seven 2024 Opportunity Funds program participants with a total scholarship amount of more than \$341,000 USD for the first academic year (more than \$1,355,000 USD for the four years of their Bachelor's education), including full-ride scholarships to UPenn, Duke University and Yale University.

Fulbright Training Services



Fulbright Coordinator Lyra Konstantinova (back row, second from left) with successful PMP trainees

Fulbright Bulgaria's project management training program continues to deliver quality training. Throughout the year we conducted six training sessions with a total of 64 participants, as well as in-house advisory services by Fulbright PMP trainers. The team also organized four PMP alumni community meetings with more than 70 attendees. The team continued its volunteering for PMI Bulgaria Chapter.

Community Building

A core part of Fulbright Bulgaria's mission is "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." Again this past year, we were blessed with a robust network of partners to help us fulfill this mission.

We kicked off the academic year in September 2024 with a **Partners Fair** during Orientation—an opportunity for newly arrived US Fulbrighters to discover avenues for community engagement. CorPlus, the US Peace Corps legacy organization, recruited ETAs for their annual Spelling Bee and Creative Writing Competition; sCool Media offered support for student journalism clubs; BEST, the Trust for Social Achievement, and Arete Youth Foundations shared ideas for youth empowerment, while YES and ASSIST provided information about exchange opportunities. Throughout the year, US grantees became involved in many projects around the country, some of their own design and others through our partner network.

In November 2024, we once again hosted our **Fulbright Open Lectures** due to popular demand. This TED-talk-style forum featured a dozen recently returned Bulgarian alumni discussing topics ranging from special education and neuropsychology to mRNA vaccines, virtual reality and biotechnology, as well as female entrepreneurship. The event concluded with a presentation and live performance of Bulgarian folk singing, followed by a Thanksgiving Cocktail Celebration.

In March 2025, Fulbright Bulgaria and EducationUSA partnered with the Yale Club of Bulgaria to support the spring tour of the **Society of Orpheus and Bacchus**, Yale University's oldest undergraduate a cappella group. The 25-member mixed choir sang in Sofia, Blagoevgrad and Plovdiv, meeting Bulgarian high

school and university students in each city for educational outreach events. Many thanks to the American College of Sofia, the American University in Bulgaria, Southwest University, the Municipality of Blagoevgrad, Detska Kitka Choir, and the Bishop's Basilica in Plovdiv for helping support this unique musical exchange!

Of course, Fulbright Bulgaria would not enjoy the impact and success without the robust support from our core partners: the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, the US Department of State, and the America for Bulgaria Foundation. We also deeply appreciate all universities, schools, organizations and foundations who host and support our grantees both in the US and Bulgaria—the wider Fulbright Bulgaria community truly builds avenues of hope and bridges of mutual understanding



ABF Executive Director Desislava Taliokova inspires grantees at the Wrap Up Seminar



ETA Veda Balaji with colleagues from Arete Youth Foundation

Major Program and Enrichment Events

**US GRANTEE ORIENTATION
IN SOFIA**

**HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
SELECTIONS**

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

**VISITS TO ETA
PARTNER SCHOOLS**

ORIENTATION for Fall
Semester US Scholars

**LAUNCH OF AY25-26
CAMPAIGN** for BG Scholars
and Visiting Researchers

**FULBRIGHT OPEN
LECTURES AND
THANKSGIVING PARTY**

**REGIONAL ETA MEDIA
LITERACY CONFERENCE**

**FULBRIGHT STAFF TEAM
BUILDING RETREAT**



Sep

Oct

Nov/Dec



MID-TERM MEETING
for US Grantees
in Sofia

ORIENTATION
for Spring Semester
US Scholars

ONLINE INTERVIEWS
with US Candidates
AY25-26

BEST NATIONALS TOURNAMENT IN PLOVDIV

YALE CHOIR TOUR
to Support EdUSA
Outreach

OPPORTUNITY FUNDS MODULE: IELTS/TOEFL Preparation

FULBRIGHT STAFF AI TRAINING

PDO AND AWARDS CEREMONY
for Bulgarian
AY25-26 Grantees

WRAP-UP SEMINAR
in Burgas with US
Grantees and Hosts

sCOOL MEDIA BOOTCAMP
for High School
Students in Pernik

BEN FRANKLIN LEGACY CAMP
at AUBG

OPPORTUNITY FUNDS MODULE: IELTS/TOEFL Preparation



Jan/Feb Mar/Apr May/Jun Jul/Aug

Camps and Workshops



Yuliy Yuliev (far left), Angela Rodel and AUBG's Kostadin Shopov giving awards at the BFL camp

Summer camps are a time-honored tradition in the United States that combine learning and personal development along with lots of fun. They are also an important way to raise Fulbright Bulgaria and especially EducationUSA's visibility among high school students, as well as to offer additional educational opportunities to our ETAs' network of nearly 9,000 students nationwide.

Thus, for the fifth time, Fulbright Bulgaria, in partnership with the America for Bulgaria Foundation and the Association of European Journalists—Bulgaria, sponsored the **sCOOL Media Summer Bootcamp** for high school students. This year's camp was held from July 1-8, 2025, at the Pernik Youth Center and engaged nearly 30 students from around the country. Over the course of the week, seasoned Bulgarian journalists led groups of student reporters in finding "scoops" and developing stories that were then presented to a jury and awarded prizes.

For the first time, Fulbright Bulgaria also had the honor of supporting the annual **Benjamin Franklin Legacy Summer Camp** for high school students organized by rising star Yuliy Yuliev, himself a former EducationUSA participant. From August 8-13, 2025, forty Bulgarian teens from 15 cities gathered for a week of entrepreneurship and leadership training. ED Angela Rodel joined the final day to give out certificates and to present EducationUSA and Fulbright opportunities to this target group of highly motivated students.

Fulbright workshops were not limited to summer camps, however. Throughout the academic year, US grantees shared their knowledge and expertise to the wider public outside their host institutions. For example, US Scholar Clint Margrave teamed up with the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation to offer creative writing workshops for students, while US Student Eleonora Edreva hosted a series of open lessons in traditional Bulgarian textile dyeing techniques. Such opportunities multiply the impact of each Fulbright grant and demonstrate the value of and interest in educational and cultural exchange at all age levels.

Fulbright Media Presence

During the 2024–2025 academic year, Fulbright Bulgaria grantees again enjoyed strong media visibility. US Scholar **Victoria Basham** was prominently covered on Bulgarian National Television (BNT) and Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), where she discussed her research on folklore, myth, and the cultural dimensions of the vampire. **Dr. Petya Yanchulova Merica-Jones** also enjoyed coverage on MediaBricks.bg and on BNR's Hristo Botev program, where she spoke about interstellar dust and astronomy education. Fulbright Scholar **Dora Fichter** was profiled by the Global Alliance Against Human Trafficking (GAHTMO), which published her research and perspectives on human trafficking in Bulgaria, further extending the public reach of her work.

Fulbright US Students also received notable media attention. **Jordan Halpern** was featured on Bloomberg TV Bulgaria's program *The World Is Business*, where he discussed artificial intelligence and its expanding role in society. Eleonora Edreva was highlighted by Bulgarian National Radio's *Radio Bulgaria* and by Town.bg for her research on traditional dyeing techniques in Bulgaria, inspired by her studies of Native American practices.

Three Fulbright Bulgarian scholars were featured in national media for their professional achievements and public engagement. **Assoc. Prof. Mariana Borukova** from Vasil Levski National Sports Academy presented a hybrid digital platform and mobile app developed under the Team Up project to support youth coaches, emphasizing the integration of technology and pedagogy in sports education (news.nbu.bg). **Dr. Svetoslava Toncheva** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences / Sofia City Library) discussed the growing public interest in libraries and reading culture, highlighting initiatives such as Green Libraries that bring books and learning into parks and community spaces (bnr.bg). **Assoc. Prof. Hristiyan**

Atanassov (historian) reflected on Bulgaria's historical progress and current prosperity, noting that the country today enjoys the most stable and prosperous period in its modern history (nova.bg).

Bulgarian MA Student **Slavina Ancheva** at the Harvard Kennedy School participated as the host of the Road to GEM podcast episode "Bridging the Digital Divide: AI, Equity, and Global Development," where she led a public conversation on AI, equity, and global development with a Harvard SEAS expert: <https://podcasts.apple.com/ge/podcast/bridging-the-digital-divide-ai-equity-and/id1167557519?i=1000708465753>

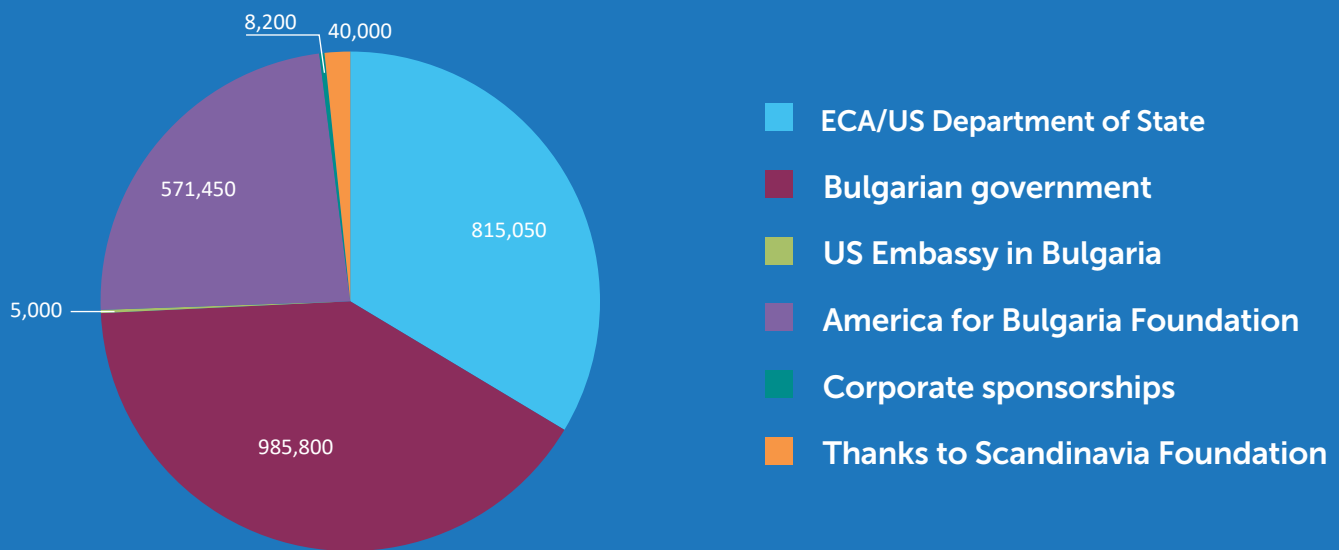
ETAs once again attracted very positive media interest; around half of the ETA cohort were featured in local and national news outlets in a total of 26 publications. To highlight just a few—**Veda Balaji**, ETA at a vocational in Samokov was featured in a 12-minute segment on Bulgarian National Television: <https://bitly.cx/4mLY0>. **Adelaide Randall** in Gabrovo was featured on the website of her alma mater, the Arizona State University: <https://bitly.cx/Os6uo>. **Beatrice Handlin** in Razgrad was interviewed by the local newspaper Ekip 7 in the eve of Halloween, praising her intelligent and empathic students, and sharing about her passion for traveling and soccer: <https://bitly.cx/kGgl>. **Joey Johnson** in Vidin was interviewed by the Bulgarian National Radio: <https://bitly.cx/TUwd>, and received special thanks at the end of the year for his coaching of the school's English speech and debate team: <https://bitly.cx/JCuYo>.

EducationUSA Advisor **Filip Lyapov** was invited to publish an article for a nation-wide online media, Dnevnik, discussing in detail the process and components of applying to U.S. higher education institutions.

Fulbright Bulgaria Budget

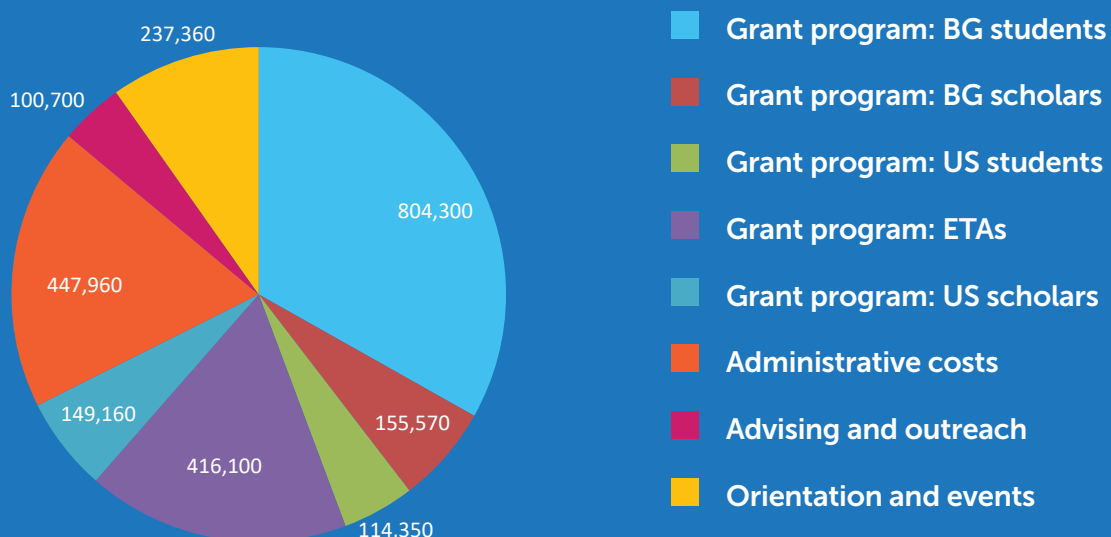
Fulbright Programs Funding Sources

Total Funding (Oct 2024- Sept 2025): 2,425,500 USD



Fulbright Programs Costs

(Oct 2024- Sept 2025): 2,425,500 USD



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Back cover photo:

The 2024-2025 Bulgarian mentor teachers for the ETA program

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