



**BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE**

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Fiscal year: 2010

Program period:

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

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GRANT ACTIVITIES

During the period under review the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange continued to work for the implementation of the goals of the Fulbright program as defined in the 1961 Fulbright-Hays Act and the 2003 agreement between the US Government and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria. Its activities were structured and carried out according to the specific objectives outlined in the 2010 program plan:

- Support academic exchanges in all fields.
- Extend outreach to BG universities, schools and other educational institutions to provide a greater number and diversity of applicants.
- Make special efforts to promote the Fulbright program in Bulgaria in the context of increasing competition from European universities.

- Strengthen efforts to increase the number of Bulgarian candidates by broader publicity of the Fulbright program, outreach and diversification of the Fulbright grants format, especially non-degree opportunities for doctoral students.
- Promote the Fulbright opportunity in Bulgaria at US universities and educational institutions so as to increase the number and raise the quality of US applicants in all categories.
- Involve more actively Bulgarian and American Fulbright alumni in the promotion of the Fulbright program.
- Assist Bulgarian universities to develop partnerships with US universities and other institutions;
- Promote the Senior Specialist Program among potential candidates from the US and in Bulgarian universities and educational institutions.
- Increase Fulbright presence in Bulgaria by maintaining local centers and using the resources of American corners and US Embassy-supported libraries.
- Provide English language training services and paper-based and computer-based testing (TOEFL, GRE, LSAT, CFA, EPSO etc).
- Support the activities of the Bulgarian American Studies Association (BASA).
- Maintain efficient communication with ECA and cooperating agencies and educational institutions in the US and Bulgaria to ensure high standards of program administration on the basis of binationalism, peer review and professionalism.

US Grantees in AY 09-10 and AY 10-11

In AY 09-10 the number of US grantees was 14: 6 lecturers, 4 graduate students, 2 English teaching assistants and one senior specialist. The lecturers came from the following fields: law, organic chemistry, computational mathematics, mural painting, education, applied linguistics and gender studies. They were assigned to Sofia University, Veliko Turnovo University, Plovdiv University, and the National Academy of Theater and Film Arts. The senior specialist was hosted by the Balkan Heritage Foundation in cooperation with New Bulgarian University.

Arrangements were also made for the US lecturers to visit and present lectures at other universities and institutions. One scholar gave a lecture at Veliko Turnovo University and presented a paper at the international conference on Comparisons, Interactions and Contestations Within/Across Cultures in Bucharest, Romania, another presented at the international conference of the Bulgarian American Association of American Studies.

The final reports of the US lecturers and the evaluations of the partner institutions are generally positive showing that both sides were satisfied with the exchange and would like to continue the established contacts and relationships. The most common complaint is about insufficient teaching materials and inadequate facilities at host universities.

The Commission also hosted four US graduate students in public administration, psychology, women's studies and area studies. They were placed in appropriate educational institutions, such as the University of National and World Economy, the National Center and the Municipal Center for Addictions, Animus Association and Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. The interim and final reports of the students, the evaluations of their local advisors and the regular communication the Commission staff maintained with the grantees throughout the academic year indicate that all of them completed their projects successfully. Three research students and two teaching assistants attended the Berlin Seminar in Germany; one graduate student participated in the Seminar on EU and NATO in Belgium and Luxembourg organized by the Belgian Fulbright Commission.

The English Teaching Assistantship Program was successful and useful for students and hosts alike. One ETA worked at the German Language High School in Sofia, and the other taught at the Foreign Language High School in Burgas. The teaching assistant at the German Language School in Sofia, in cooperation with one of the visiting scholars, was involved in a research project focused on the development of the writing skills of high school English language learners.

To help the US grantees adjust more easily to the new cultural and academic environment, the Commission staff invited them to attend the annual two-week Fulbright International Summer Institute held in Tryavna in August 2009. At the end of September 2009, the Commission staff organized a two-day orientation with presentations, discussions, briefing from the US Embassy, and a welcome reception. The cultural enrichment program that followed covered the whole academic year and included trips to historic and natural sights, as well as informal meetings with Fulbright staff and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni.

The program for the AY 09-10 US grantees was implemented successfully and contributed to the promotion of the Fulbright program in Bulgaria. The problems we encountered relate to the lack of efficient communication between host institutions and grantees prior to their arrival, as well as during the grant period. The Commission staff made special efforts to improve the working relations between the exchange partners with varying success.

There are still problems concerning the complicated and time-consuming procedure for obtaining Bulgarian entry visas, although the staff made sure that all grantees received useful information and instructions well in advance. Eventually, all of them obtained visas on time and found appropriate housing. The Commission staff will continue to provide the future grantees with timely and updated information, advice and direct help, if necessary.

Throughout the period under review, the Fulbright Commission staff maintained

regular communication with the officers from CIES and IIE Alexandra Squitieri and Rachel Holskin. We appreciate their efficiency, responsiveness and willingness to solve problems promptly.

In AY 09-10 one American senior specialist visited the Balkan Heritage Foundation and New Bulgarian University to lead seminars and workshops, and provide expert help with digitalizing photo archives of medieval artifacts and sites. The Senior Specialist Program again proved its usefulness and effectiveness. It is to be regretted that due to frequent change of on-line platforms, the program was not as accessible as usual. Another problem was the last-minute withdrawal of a request caused by lack of funding on the part of the host institution. To increase the number of successful applications, the Fulbright Commission staff will do their best to make information about the senior specialist opportunity even better known to potential hosts all over Bulgaria.

The AY 10-11 competition resulted in the selection of 20 US grantees, most of whom are already working in Bulgaria. In the senior scholar category, there are 6 lecturers in American studies, art, journalism, employment law and mural painting. There are four students in international studies, psychology and neuroscience, violin performance and theology. The English Language Teaching Assistantship Program has been significantly expanded through the co-sponsorship of the America for Bulgaria Foundation and comprises of 10 students who work in foreign language schools throughout Bulgaria in the towns of Sofia, Plovdiv, Blagoevgrad, Stara Zagora, Pleven, Smolyan, Shumen, Lovetch, Haskovo and Dobritsch.

Bulgarian Grantees in AY 09-10 and AY 10-11

In the academic year under review there were 15 Bulgarian grantees in the following categories and fields: six scholars in sociology, Bulgarian studies, pharmacology, computer linguistics, political science and applied linguistics; seven students in art (2), law (3), communications and business administration; one recipient of the research grant for the study of civil society recently established between the Fulbright Commission and the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe; one New Century scholar.

The scholars were awarded 5-month grants to prestigious US universities and research centers: George Washington University, Indiana University, Rush University - Medical Center, Stanford University, George Mason University and Georgetown University. All of them have returned to Bulgaria. Their final reports are generally positive and express great satisfaction with the Fulbright experience. A common complaint that recurs in the comments but also in the messages that the Commission staff received from the scholars during the grant period is about insufficient funds to cover housing and other costs. To resolve the issue, the Commission

decided to revise the grant levels and adjust them according to location. The regional monthly maintenance rates were coordinated with CIES as a result of which the senior scholar grants were raised by an average of \$ 300 per month. The payment schedules too were restructured to enable grantees to cover extra expenses, especially during the initial months of the grant period.

Of the seven students, three have returned to Bulgaria after completing one-year LLM programs. The others are still studying in the US. Their periodic reports indicate that they are doing well and most probably will complete their degree programs successfully.

The recipients of the Study for Civil Society Scholarship and the New Century Scholar Award both presented interesting reports on their research results. Their findings hold promise for successful future publications.

The publicity campaign for the AY 2010-2011 competition yielded a total of 47 applications: 30 for graduate study grants, 13 in the senior scholar category, and four for Hubert Humphrey fellowships. Six scholars were finally selected in the following fields: chemistry, mural painting, plant pathology, geography, ethnology and literary theory. Two of them have already started their projects at prestigious US institutions: Stanford University, and the Agricultural Research Service USDA. Four scholars will begin their programs in January and February 2011. Their host institutions are: the University of Pittsburgh-Bradford, Ohio State University, Harvard University, and University of Pennsylvania.

In the student category, 6 students were approved and are currently enrolled in master's, doctoral and non-degree programs in political science, communications, law, business administration, sociology and social psychology. As usual, our graduate students are very strong and highly motivated, and it is not surprising that they were admitted to prestigious universities with financial support: Boston University, Fordham University, The New School-For General Studies, University of Pennsylvania, DePaul University, and the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

Three six-month non-degree study grants were awarded to doctoral students for the first time. The recipients are now working on their Ph.D. theses in literary theory, finance and molecular biology at the University of California-Berkeley, University of Pennsylvania-Wharton School, and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The joint scholarship with Thanks to Scandinavia Institute was awarded for a fourth consecutive year. The grantee is enrolled in a master's program in communications at the New School - For General Studies at New York, NY.

Our nominee for an AY 10-11 Hubert Humphrey fellowship, a promising law

expert, was successful in the final stage of selection and is currently based at American University, Washington, DC.

On June 18, 2010, the Fulbright Commission staff conducted a one-day orientation for the departing Bulgarian grantees. Participating in the program were Commission staff members, US Embassy officials, US Fulbright grantees, and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni.

The grants competition for AY 11-12 was announced in December 2009, with a deadline on June 1, 2010. The Commission staff publicized the program as extensively and effectively as possible using all available means and media: the Internet, the press, posters, letters to alumni, oral presentations by the executive director, the educational adviser and the program officer at universities in and outside of Sofia, press conferences, consultations in the local centers and FISI (Fulbright International Summer Institute). In order to attract more applicants in the graduate student category, the competition deadline was scheduled earlier in the year to allow selected candidates to present test scores after the nominations. This strategy proved successful as the total number of candidates was even higher than the number in AY 10-11.

A total of 48 applications were received by the deadline: 32 applications for graduate study grants, 13 in the senior scholar category, and three for Hubert Humphrey fellowships. The interviewing committees nominated eight principal and five alternate candidates for graduate study programs in business administration, e-commerce, graphic design, international development, law, comparative literature, film directing, economics and ethnology; five principals and one alternate candidate for senior scholar grants in philosophy, animal breeding, biogeochemistry, dental medicine, environmental science and robotics; two principal candidates for H. Humphrey fellowships in journalism and finance, and two principal candidates for the Research Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society co-sponsored by the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe.

Grantee Accomplishments in AY 09-10

Fulbright lecturer Kong Ho presented the first collaborative community mural painting at the National Academy of Art, Sofia. The project will remain on the wall of one of the Academy's auditoriums as a perfect example of Fulbright exchange of expertise, vision and talent.

Fulbright lecturer Judge Maureen Duffy-Lewis of the Los Angeles Superior Court shared her valuable experience on mediation, court and case management with students and faculty from Sofia University, and judges at the Sofia Regional Court. During her course in Criminal and Civil Law in the Courtroom, Judge Lewis

organized a mock trial for her students. The event was a great success and received ample media coverage.

Fulbright lecturer Dr. Iona Sarieva trained a large group of students and faculty from Sofia University to use MOODLE in the teaching and learning process and initiated a collaborative research project on the development of writing skills of high school English language learners. Participating in the project is a Fulbright ETA and teachers and students from the German Language School.

Fulbright Scholar Prof. Georgi Dimitrov completed a successful research project at George Washington University. As a result of his studies, a reader in American sociology for Bulgarian students is prepared for publication. The renowned journal *The American Sociologist* also acknowledged Prof. Dimitrov's expertise and accepted his article *Know Thy Heroes - the 20th Century American Sociology*.

Fulbright alumnus Dr. Boyan Dobrev developed the interactive Internet portal *Virtual Bulgaria*. The project is endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth and offers prolific information on Bulgarian culture, history, education, tourism and services (<http://www.bulgaria-vr.com/en/project.html>).

Bulgarian Fulbright student Dimitar Kaldamukov was invited to present the Fulbright program at the Dean's Dinner at George Washington Law School. The dinner was a charitable event attended by distinguished Law School alumni.

NON-GRANT ACTIVITIES

During the year under review educational advising remained a vital component of the Commission's non-grant activities. In the context of Bulgaria's gradual integration with the European Union, the strong competition still coming from European universities, and the ongoing economic and financial crisis, it is essential to have an effective instrument of promoting the American educational system and the Fulbright program.

In AY 09-10 the Commission continued to expand outreach all across Bulgaria and especially in the underserved regions. Our attention was focused on three target audiences: university students, high school students and representatives of ethnic minorities. The visible result of this activity is the dramatic increase in the number of contacts with institutions and individuals.

Here is a cross-section of educational advising, language training and testing activities in AY 09-10 according to type of communication and territorial distribution:

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CONTACTS	SOFIA CENTERS			REGIONAL INFO-CENTERS									
	TOTAL	ADVISING CENTER	LANGUAGE CENTER	TOTAL	Veliko Turnovo	Plovdiv	Sliven	Smolyan	Vidin	Shumen	Kardzali		
IN-PERSON	4234	3310	115	809	93	25	50	211	340	40	50		
OUTREACH	5089	4500	-	589	30	5	0	10	410	4	130		
BY PHONE	3974	2470	1100	404	139	36	60	34	89	15	40		
BY E-MAIL	2942	2050	750	142	47	35	7	27	20	6	0		
WEBSITE VISITORS	34246	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
LANGUAGE TRAINING	452	-	364	88	15	0	13	8	12	33	7		
COMPUTER TESTING AT PTC, SOFIA	566	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
EPSO TESTING	1788	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
CFA TESTING	289	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL	53580	12330	2430	1656	324	101	130	290	862	98	227		

Worth mention is the Commission's regular participation and involvement in national and international educational exhibitions and fairs. A notable example is the October 2009 QS World Grad School Fair in Sofia in which prestigious graduate schools from the US, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK promoted their programs. In October 2009, we also participated in the *Education without Borders* Fair in Sofia; over 2000 visitors stopped at the Fulbright booth. In March-June 2010, the Commission was represented at the 2010 QS World MBA & Grad School Fair, Begin Group International Education Fair, Education Beyond Borders, Career Fair at Sofia University and Job Tiger Career Fairs in the cities of Sofia, Burgas, Plovdiv, Svishtov and Veliko Turnovo. The events offered a great opportunity for 4 020 students, scholars, parents, educators, international relations officers, scholarship administrators, career officers, and others interested in international education professionals to find out more about studying in the US.

Outreach activities also included meetings of educational advisor Snezhana Teneva with over 390 students at the Technical University of Sofia; the University of National and World Economy, Sofia; *William Shakespeare* English Language School, Sofia; Sofia High School of Mathematics and First English Language High School in Sofia.

During the International Education Week (November 16-20, 2009) a number of activities were carried out attracting the attention of students, professors, high-school teachers, educators, professionals and parents.

A highlight of 2009 IEW in Bulgaria was the participation of Ken Moskowitz, Chairman of the Fulbright Commission Board, and Prof. Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission, in an international conference at Sofia University dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth.

In addition, over 2200 students and professionals visited the Fulbright stand at the QS World Grad School Fair and the *Education Without Borders* Fair in Sofia. Fulbright Commission adviser Snezhana Teneva presented on *Undergraduate Study in the US* at the Fulbright Advising Center.

During and around the IEW, the advising center in Sofia was visited by representatives of two U.S. institutions of higher learning: George Washington University, D.C. and Wellesley College, MA. They presented their institutions and the American educational system to interested students. Milena Mareva, Admissions Officer of Wellesley College joined educational advisor in high school visits to *William Shakespeare* English Language High School, the Sofia High School of Mathematics, and the First English Language High School in Sofia.

To sum up, over 2400 individuals and representatives of institutions interested in international education and academic exchanges attended the 2009 IEW events and learned about study opportunities in the United States.

On December 15, 2009, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, in collaboration with the US Embassy, conducted a one-day seminar for librarians from American Corners/Shelves throughout the country. The seminar was an important part of the ongoing effort to make educational opportunities in the US better known and accessible to more potential candidates from underserved regions and diverse social groups. The following regional libraries were represented at the seminar: Varna Regional Library (American Corner); Razgrad Regional Library (American Shelf); Silistra Regional Library (American Shelf); Turgovishte Regional Library (American Shelf); Shumen Regional Library (American Shelf); Russe Regional Library (American Shelf); Pleven Regional Library (American Shelf); Haskovo Regional Library (American Shelf); Gotze Delchev Library (American Shelf); Dobrich, Albena College; Montana Regional Library (American Shelf) and Sofia City Library (American Corner). The staff members of the participating libraries have become good local contacts.

Dr. Julia Stefanova presented on *The Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and EducationUSA*. Following the seminar, Fulbright Commission adviser Snezhana Teneva visited the Regional Library (American Shelf) in Turgovishte. Over 60 students, English teachers and professionals attended the presentations on *Why Study in the US*, *Welcome to the US*, and *The Undergraduate Application Process*, *The Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and the AY 2011-2012 Fulbright Grants Competition*.

A one-day workshop was also conducted for local Fulbright coordinators on 29 January, 2010. Seven Fulbright coordinators from the Fulbright local information centers in Veliko Turnovo, Shumen, Sliven, Smolyan, Vidin, Kurdzhali and Plovdiv took part in it and updated their knowledge and skills related to promoting the Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and EducationUSA.

In AY 09-10 the Commission's outreach was boosted by two competitive grants from ECA/A/S/A amounting to \$ 26,950.

They contributed a lot to the improvement of the quality of the services offered at the Fulbright advising center, the Fulbright language training center, and the Commission's local offices. The visible result is further expansion of contacts and a tangibly increased number of students, faculty and professionals interested in educational opportunities in the US. The additional funds were used to purchase books, materials, equipment, software, promotional items, publicity materials; to upgrade the website and develop communication through the social media; to expand English language training and outreach to youth and underserved audiences. We deeply appreciate the help of our esteemed colleagues and partners at ECA/A/S/A.

The summer of AY 09-10 was marked by two important events of national and international significance: the 9th international Fulbright conference and the 9th Fulbright International Summer Institute.

The biennial conference on *Education for the New Age: Tradition, Reform, Innovation* took place in the town in Bansko on August 7-8. The conference was officially opened by Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission, Susan Sutton, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, and Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko. A total of 85 participants from Bulgaria, the US, Greece and Poland took part in panels, plenary sessions and workshops covering a wide range of topics relating to the global and regional trends in education, the increasing role of international education, the ongoing reform in Bulgarian school and university education, good practices and innovative projects, and many more. The conference was closed with a lecture on Education at Sofia University by Professor Ivan Ilchev, Rector of Sofia University. The conference proceedings are now available at <http://conference.fulbright.bg>.

The ninth edition of Fulbright International Summer Institute also took place in the historic town of Bansko immediately following the Fulbright conference. Between August 9 and 21, a total of 96 participants from 15 countries (Bulgaria, the U.S., Afghanistan, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Macedonia, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, and Sweden) attended sixteen courses in a rich variety of fields such as political science, sociology, international relations, finance, cultural studies, history and art. The importance of the topics can be easily illustrated by the course titles: *American Foreign Policy and the International System in the Era of Globalization, Peace and Conflict Resolution in the 21st Century, Projects Writing and Projects Management, Seeing Films Philosophically, Logic in the Continental Tradition, The Philosophical Issues of the XXI Century, Words and Worlds of Thinking and Art, North America and Europe in the Indochina Conflict, Canadian Studies: Culture, Literature and Identity, Cultural Traditions in Bulgaria* (specially designed for the new group of US Fulbrighters), *Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Debate. Argue. Reason. Examine, International Investing: Opportunities and Risks, Perspectives on Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, Development Struggles in a Globalized World: The Political Economy of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, Court Annexed Mediation* (introduced jointly with the Sofia Regional Court). The Ambassador of the US to the Republic of Bulgaria James Warlick participated in the closing ceremony of FISIDCM Susan Sutton delivered a greeting address at its opening; US Embassy PAO and Commission Board Chairman Ken Moskowitz conducted a workshop on practical cultural diplomacy, and press officer Vincent Campos made a presentation on US foreign policy and cultural diplomacy.

The 9th summer institute was yet another memorable continuation of the FISIDCM tradition started in 2002. Once again it fulfilled its many-faceted goals: to promote the

Fulbright idea and program; to promote international education; to improve the quality of education; to introduce the new US Fulbright grantees to the Bulgarian cultural environment; to promote Bulgaria by showing its beautiful nature, rich culture, long history, and promising future.

Our efforts to create and develop a unique innovative educational product were rewarded at the 28th conference of Fulbright Executive Directors from Europe held in Berlin on May 8-12 this year. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the US Department of State conferred the newly established *Innovator Award* on the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission "in recognition of outstanding innovation in designing and implementing the Fulbright International Summer Institute". We are very proud of our achievement and deeply appreciate the decision of our ECA partners to select us for this high distinction.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission participated in the 28th conference of Fulbright Executive Directors from Europe on *Fulbright Today – The Changing Landscape of Higher Education Exchanges* held in Berlin on May 8-12, 2010. PAO and Board Chairman Ken Moskowitz also attended.

Educational adviser Snezhana Teneva took part in the EducationUSA Triennial Workshop in Prague, March 21-25, 2010. At the EducationUSA Country Fair Bulgaria had a special stand that was visited by over 30 US university representatives.

Program officer Maria Kostova attended the annual NAFSA conference on *The Changing Landscape of Global Higher Education* held in Kansas City, MO, May 30–June 4, 2010. The event attracted over 7,000 international educators from more than 100 countries. Bulgaria was represented at the EducationUSA Pavilion in the International Exposition and at the EducationUSA Country Fair with a special stand visited by over 150 participants.

GENERAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROGRAM

Economic crisis and BG education

Even though some EU countries are showing positive signs of overcoming the recession, Bulgarian economy is still experiencing serious difficulties. Foreign investments are far below the level of previous years; unemployment is close to 10%; the rate of

economic growth in 2009 was negative (- 4.9%); the budget deficit is 3.8% and social reforms (health care and retirement policies) are slow and ineffective. These factors are severely affecting the general standards of living and Bulgaria still remains the poorest country in the European Union.

To cope with the budget deficit, the Bulgarian government has introduced dramatic cuts in the budgets for education and culture. The state subsidy for education and science has been curtailed by 25%. The allocation for BG universities has been reduced by over 10%. If last year the share of education in the GDP was 4.2%, in 2011 it will drop down to 3.3%. The current economic downturn and the financial policy of the state have a deeply negative impact on the entire academic community - students, professors, administrators, teachers, and scholars. The lack of funds erodes the quality of teaching and learning and discourages young university graduates to pursue academic careers; university faculty are forced to quit and get jobs outside the education sector; financial problems demotivate school leavers to continue their studies at university level and they prefer to work; the low educational standards make the best and the brightest seek study opportunities abroad; demographic issues are also a factor that accounts for the decreasing number of potential students. Universities are engaged in strong competition for students that often leads to unwarranted liberalization and even minimization of admission requirements.

The analysis of the results of the AY 2011-12 competition shows that the number of applicants has even slightly increased over last year when the Commission adopted more effective measures to counteract the negative trend. The strategy involved improving and expanding Internet resources and communication; extending outreach, especially in underserved regions; offering English language training and preparation for the standardized tests to potential candidates; identifying possibilities for more direct partnerships with US universities and institutions; using the Fulbright Summer Institute for promoting the Fulbright grants; diversifying the menu of Fulbright grants, including non-degree programs for doctoral students; encouraging alumni to get more actively involved in the promotion of the Fulbright program and US education; reaching BG students studying in Europe etc.

Ongoing reform in BG education

The Bulgarian educational system is still going through structural changes aimed at harmonization with EU standards and requirements. They are part of the Bologna Process that Bulgaria joined in 1999: introduction of the Diploma supplement; two-tier university education (Bachelor's and Master's level), introduction of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) and the Diploma Supplement; integration of curricula, assessment systems, quality assurance and accreditation methodology; increase of student and faculty mobility etc. In May 2010 a revised Act on Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions was passed by Parliament. It introduces broader decentralization policies, new national standards and requirements that have already

started a long and dramatic process of inter- and intra-institutional transformations. Long-term the reform will bring Bulgarian education closer to international practices and in this sense it is necessary; short-term however it is posing great challenges to universities and research institutions all over Bulgaria.

Educational opportunities in Europe

European education continues to be a great attraction for Bulgarian undergraduate and graduate students. The reasons for this fairly stable trend are: low tuition fees, geographic proximity, inexpensive travel, no visa problems, prospects for professional realization, and a heightened sense of cultural belonging to Europe. Recent statistics indicate that 24% of the Bulgarian students would like to continue their education outside of Bulgaria. Thus Bulgaria, along with Austria, tops the list of countries whose students would like to study abroad. The preferred destinations remain more or less the same: Germany, UK, Austria, France, Spain, and more recently the Scandinavian countries. European colleges and universities are actively advertising their programs through periodic educational fairs, visits of their representatives, and extensive Internet information. In 2011 grants amounting to 16 billion Euros will be awarded to students enrolled in European universities.

English language proficiency

The level of English language proficiency is still a problem and an increasing financial challenge, especially with regard to the fees for preparatory courses and computerized tests (TOEFL, GRE, and GMAT). As mentioned earlier, 24% of Bulgarian students would like to study abroad but only 11% have actually succeeded in obtaining grants. The major reason is still the inadequate knowledge of foreign languages, especially English. The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission is actively involved in the effort to expand and upgrade English language training services by offering various courses at its Language center in Sofia and some of its local info-centers, e.g. Veliko Turnovo, Sliven, Smolyan, Vidin. Free language training sponsored by the Commission is offered to Roma children in the town of Vidin and children from orphanages in the town of Gabrovo. Arrangements are now being finalized for organizing English language training for Roma children at a village school near Botevgrad.

High cost of education in the US

The tuition in most US universities has dramatically gone up because of the economic crisis at the expense of financial aid, teaching assistantships and job opportunities on campus. These factors, together with occasional visa restrictions, are diverting Bulgarian students from applying to US universities in favor of European institutions. Since 2005 the number of Bulgarian students studying at US universities has decreased steadily: in AY 05-06 there were 3633 students; in AY 06-07 they were 3478; in AY 07-08 their number dropped to 3205, and in AY 08-09 they were 2889.

Because of financial problems, quite a few US universities require evidence and guarantees of financial support for the second year from the Bulgarian Fulbright students as a condition for admission or partial financial assistance. This is posing a serious challenge to the grant budget and the general grant policy of the Fulbright Commission, viz. urgent need to identify additional funding resources or else decrease the number of graduate study grants.

Support for the Fulbright Program by the *America for Bulgaria* Foundation

Over the last couple of years the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission has established very productive cooperation with the *America for Bulgaria* Foundation. In 2009 the Commission received a three-year grant of \$ 120 000 from the Foundation to expand the Fulbright International Summer Institute. As a result, the number of participants has almost doubled. In 2010 the Commission received another grant of \$ 100 000 to increase the number of ETAs in Bulgaria. Thus, a total of 10 US students are now involved in English language training at language high schools in Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Smolyan, Lovech, Pleven, Shumen, and Dobrich. This is a dramatic increase in this strategic category and the ABF support is deeply appreciated.

We strongly hope that our relationship with ABF will continue to develop. The Commission relies on ABF support not only for FISI and the English teaching assistants but also, hopefully, for support for the second-year study of Bulgarian Fulbright students in the US.

Support from *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute

In FY 2010 the Commission received \$ 20 000 from the Thanks to Scandinavia Institute to support one Bulgarian Fulbright student. We deeply appreciate the assistance of our US partners and hope that our cooperation will continue in spite of financial constraints.

ADMINISTRATION, BUDGET, FUND-RAISING, INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

In FY 2010 the total Commission budget amounted to \$ 1,076,000, including:

- \$ 712,000 funding from ECA/US Department of State;
- \$ 140,000 funding from the Bulgarian government;
- \$ 28,000 central funding from IIE for one US student and one ETA;
- \$100,000 grant from America for Bulgaria Foundation to support 10 English Teaching Assistants in language schools in Bulgaria;
- \$ 40,000 of the three-year grant of \$ 120,000 from America for Bulgaria Foundation to support the Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI);
- \$ 20,000 support from the Thanks to Scandinavia Institute for the joint grant to a Bulgarian graduate student established in 2007;.
- \$ 7,200 cost-sharing by the Trust for Civil Society in Eastern Europe for a joint scholarship to a Bulgarian NGO officer established in 2008;
- \$ 1,900 interest earned in previous year on Commission funds;
- \$ 26,950 EducationUSA Europe regional grants.

The slight increase in the dollar exchange rate in FY10 relative to FY09, and the increase of funds in FY10 resulted in a reduction of the share of administrative and advising costs to 18,36 % of the total funding, as against 21.97% in FY 2009. In FY 2008 they were 24.93%.

The Commission continued to receive cost-sharing from Bulgarian universities and high schools for the US grantees, and in-kind support for some of our regional centers.

Some of the AY 10-11 Bulgarian students found sponsors for their programs and contributed a total of \$ 44,000 to the BG student grant budget.

During the period under review, the Fulbright Commission continued to carry out income-generating activities: iBT TOEFL, GRE and EPSO exam administration, English language training and preparatory courses for TOEFL, GRE, GMAT and SAT. This is the local contribution of the Fulbright staff to the Fulbright program that directly goes into the Commission's Program Development Fund.

The general factors impacting the program in FY 2010 continued to negatively affect the Commission's supplemental activities. Income from testing (TOEFL and GRE) remained low because of the competition from other iBT testing centers all over Bulgaria. Nonetheless, the overall result of the income-generating activities of the Commission is positive with a net cash flow of \$16,000.

The administration of the EPSO (European Personnel Selection Office) exam at the computer-testing center for recruiting Bulgarian citizens to work at EU institutions in Brussels continued to be quite successful (see statistics on p. 10).

The Commission expanded its language training activities by attracting new corporate clients: Tokuda Hospital, United Bulgarian Bank, Sofia Regional Court. English language training continued to be offered at the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We do believe in the importance of the Commission's supplemental activities because:

- they help enhance the image of the Commission all over Bulgaria
- they help popularize the Fulbright program by offering a complete service cycle: English language training from elementary to advanced level, preparation for all US standardized tests, paper-based and computer-based testing, information and advising on educational opportunities in the US, including the Fulbright and other related programs, the actual Fulbright competition and a good chance to receive a Fulbright award.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of the Fulbright staff for their professionalism, responsibility and dedication to the Fulbright program. I would also like to personally thank all the members of the Fulbright Commission Board for their help, cooperation and commitment to the Fulbright goals. Their contribution of time, support and guidance are crucial for the successful administration of the program.

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission deeply appreciates the support of ECA to the Fulbright program in Bulgaria, the efficiency and commitment of its officers, above all Scott Righetti, and our partners and colleagues from CIES and IIE.

November 2009 — International Education Week

Educational Fairs



Over 200 students and professionals visited the Fulbright stand at the QS World Grad School Fair at Hilton Hotel, Sofia



Over 2000 visitors stopped at the Fulbright Commission booth at the Education Without Borders Fair, National Palace of Culture, Sofia



High School Visits

Visit to *William Shakespeare English Language High School* in Sofia

U.S. University Visits



Kristin S. Williams, Assistant Vice President for Graduate and Special Enrolment Management at George Washington University in Washington D.C. presenting on graduate study in the U.S. at the Fulbright Language Training Center

Milena Mareva, Undergraduate Admissions Officer at Wellesley College, MA, presenting on "Opportunities at American Liberal Arts & Sciences Colleges" at the Fulbright Center in Sofia



November 2009

Cultural Enrichment Activities for U.S. Fulbright Grantees

One-day trip to
Koprivstitsa



December 2009

After Three Months in Bulgaria



U.S. Fulbright grantees reporting on the progress of their projects at the Fulbright Commission office

December 2009

Fulbright Commission/U.S. Embassy Seminar



Executive Director Dr. Julia Stefanova presenting on "The Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and Study Opportunities in the U.S."



Twelve librarians from American Corners/Shelves in Bulgaria attended a one-day seminar organized by the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy

January 2010

Fulbright Commission Workshop for Local Fulbright Coordinators

Coordinators from seven Fulbright Local Information Centers in Veliko Turnovo, Shumen, Sliven, Smolyan, Vidin, Kurdzhali and Plovdiv attended a one-day workshop in Sofia



January 2010

English Classes for Students at Hristo Raykov Children's Home in Gabrovo



English classes supported by the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission at Hristo Raykov Children's Home in Gabrovo

Extended Outreach of the Fulbright Program in Bulgaria



Program officer Maria Kostova presenting at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

February 2010

Extended Outreach of the Fulbright Program in Bulgaria



Visit to Regional Library in Turgovishte

March 2010

Extended Outreach of the Fulbright Program in Bulgaria

Over 40 students from the Technical University, Sofia, attended Snezhana Teneva's presentation on "The Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and the AY 2011-2012 Fulbright Grants Competition"



April 2010

Cultural Enrichment Activities for American Fulbright Grantees



Trip to Melnik and Rozhen Monastery

Book Launch



Fulbright alumnus and member of the Fulbright Commission Board Randall Baker presenting his books "Bulgaria" and "Why America isn't Europe" at the Bulgarian Architects' Club in Sofia

May 2010

Fulbright Innovator Award



The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission received the Innovator Award recently established by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State "in recognition of outstanding innovation in designing and implementing the Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI)". The award was conferred at the 28th conference of Executive Directors of Fulbright Commissions in Europe held in Berlin, May 8-12, 2010.

May 2010

"Young Talent" Award Winners



ED Julia Stefanova and the two winners of "Young Talent" National Competition organized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth, and supported by the Fulbright Commission

June 2010

Pre-departure Orientation for Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees, AY 2010-2011



PAO and Commission Chairman Ken Moskowitz addressing the new group of Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Final Nominations for Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees in AY 2011-12

Fulbright Interview, June, 2010
Members of the nomination committee (from
left to right): Dr. Randall Baker, Dr. Julia
Stefanova, PAO Ken Moskowitz



June 2010

NAFSA 2010 Annual Conference & Expo, Kansas City, MO

Program officer Maria Kostova at the
EducationUSA Country Fair



August 2010

Ninth International Fulbright Conference, Bansko "Education for the New Age: Tradition, Reform, Innovation"



Conference Participants



Official Conference Opening. From left to right: Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission; U.S. Embassy DCM Susan Sutton; Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko, and Diana Leseva, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth



Panel Session on "Tradition and Reform in
Secondary School"



Prof. Ivan Ilchev, Rector of Sofia University,
delivering a closing lecture on "Education at
Sofia University"

August 2010

Ninth International Summer Institute, Bansko



Official FISCI Opening. From left to right: Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, Susan Sutton, DCM, U.S. Embassy; Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko; Ivanka Tzankova, Program Director, America for Bulgaria Foundation



FISCI Class



FISCI Class



David M. Korn from Phelps Dunbar LLP, New Orleans, LA, teaching a class on "D.A.R.E. -- Debate, Argue, Reason, Examine"

Trip to Okoto Lake, Pirin Mountains



August 2010

Ninth International Summer Institute, Bansko



Trip to Dobarsko Village



Dancing at the farewell party



FISI Closing

U.S. Ambassador James B. Warlivk, Jr. and Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, awarding certificates to 2010 FISI Graduates

2010 FISI Participants



Grantee Accomplishments



Dr. Kong Ho, Bulgarian students and professors, and members of the Fulbright Commission staff in front of a collaborative community mural painting at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia



Mock Trial at Sofia University with Judge Maureen Duffy-Lewis of the LA Superior Court



Dr. Iona Sarieva introducing students from the German Language High School in Sofia to her Sofia Learners Corpus project



BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Fiscal year: 2010

Program period: October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010