



**BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE**

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

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Program period:

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BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

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BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

GRANT ACTIVITIES

During the period under review the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange continued to implement the 2003 agreement between the US Government and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria based on the 1961 Fulbright-Hays Act. Its manifold activities were planned and carried out in conformity with the objectives outlined in the 2012 program plan:

- Promote academic exchanges in all fields.
- Extend outreach to BG universities, high schools and other educational and research institutions to attract more and better candidates with diverse background.
- Popularize the Fulbright program in Bulgaria in the context of increasing competition from European universities by strengthening educational advising and broadening the use of Internet resources and social networks.
- Increase the number of Bulgarian candidates by diversifying the Fulbright grants format, especially non-degree opportunities for doctoral students, young researchers and NGO officers.
- Disseminate information about the Fulbright opportunity in Bulgaria at US universities and educational institutions so that more and better quality candidates may apply for grants in all categories.
- Involve more actively Fulbright alumni in the promotion of the Fulbright program in Bulgaria and the US.
- Assist Bulgarian and US universities in developing partnerships.
- Promote the Senior Specialist Program in Bulgarian universities.
- Increase the Fulbright presence in Bulgaria by maintaining local centers and using the resources of US Embassy-supported libraries and American Corners.
- Maintain and expand the productive cooperation with *America for Bulgaria* Foundation, especially with regard to the ETA program and the Fulbright International Summer Institute.
- Continue to organize the annual Fulbright International Summer Institute as a powerful tool of promoting the Fulbright program, raising the profile of the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, attracting more US grantees, and involving Fulbright alumni in follow-up activities.
- Continue to offer 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 good communication with ECA, cooperating agencies and educational institutions in the US and Bulgaria, and other Fulbright Commissions to ensure high standards of program administration on the basis of binationalism, peer review and professionalism.

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

In AY 11-12 the number of US grantees was 32: five lecturers, four graduate students, one of which was recipient of the Bulgarian-Romanian Fulbright grant, 20 English teaching assistants, one Fulbright-Hays researcher and two senior specialists. The lecturers came from the following fields: law, dance, business administration, applied linguistics and creative writing. They were placed at Sofia University, New Bulgarian University, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Sofia Opera and Ballet. The senior specialists were experts in the field of occupational therapy and speech language pathology and were hosted at University of Russe and the South-West University in Blagoevgrad.

Most senior scholars volunteered to visit other Bulgarian universities and institutions. Greg Harris gave a lecture to graduate students at Sofia University. Dr. Nora Madjar-Nanovska conducted three multiple session seminars attended by master and doctoral students, faculty and independent entrepreneurs. She was also invited as a guest speaker at other faculties and departments of Sofia University and participated in an international conference in Israel. Dr. Larry DiMateo presented at three international conferences in Spain, Germany and the Netherlands, and provided training to three classes of students at *VOUGA* College, Portugal, as part of the inter-country program. Dr. Wei Zhu gave a paper at the Mathematical Faculty of Sofia University. She also served on the interviewing committee during the AY 2013-14 Fulbright competition and took part in the pre-departure orientation for Bulgarian Fulbright grantees.

The final reports of the US lecturers and the evaluations of the partner institutions are very positive showing that both sides were satisfied with the exchange and would like to continue the established contacts.

There was a problem with the visa extension of Dr. Wei Zhu's dependents because of unanticipated change in the Bulgarian visa regulations for foreign visitors. The situation was resolved successfully with the assistance of the Commission's staff and the support of the U.S. Embassy. Subsequently, a series of consultations were initiated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bulgarian Embassy in Washington D.C. to facilitate and speed up visa issuance for US grantees.

The Commission also hosted four US graduate students in film studies, ethnomusicology, art studies and music (vocal performance). They were placed at appropriate institutions, such as *Vreme* Film Studios, the Institute for Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, The Red House Center for Culture and Debate, and the National Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. Their research projects led to collaboration with institutions, and involved the local community. Fred Guerrier conducted film workshops for high school students in the town of Montana and the Roma community in Sofia and took part in diversity workshops organized at several high schools in Sofia. All four grantees finished their projects successfully, which is

evident from their mid-term and final reports and their presentations at the *One Hundred Days in Bulgaria* meeting organized by the Commission's staff.

The difficulties some of the students report to have faced in the course of their work seem to have originated in their limited knowledge of the Bulgarian language, cultural differences, as well as insufficient technical resources. All graduate students attended the *Berlin Seminar* in Germany and a Fulbright cultural enrichment program in Thessaloniki, Greece (see attached pictures).

With the financial support of *America for Bulgaria* Foundation, the English Teaching Assistantship Program was significantly expanded and proved extremely useful for students and hosts alike. Twenty ETAs were placed in the following schools: *Academic Lyudmil Stoyanov* Foreign Language High School, Blagoevgrad; *Romain Rolland* Foreign Language High School, Stara Zagora; Foreign Language High School, Pleven; *134 Dimcho Debelyanov* High School, Sofia; First English Language High School, Sofia; *Ekzarh Yosif* Foreign Language High School, Lovech; *Prof. Assen Zlatarov* Foreign Language High School, Haskovo; *Geo Milev* Foreign Language High School, Dobrich; *Yordan Radichkov* Foreign Language High School, Vidin; *Tsar Simeon Veliki* Secondary School, Vidin; *Nikola Vaptsarov* Foreign Language High School, Shumen; *Petar Bogdan* Foreign Language High School, Montana; *Hristo Botev* Foreign Language High School, Kardzhali; *Otets Paisii* High School, Kardzhali; *Ioan Ekzarh* Foreign Language High School, Vratza; *Simeon Radev* Foreign Language High School, Pernik; *Geo Milev* English Language High School, Bourgas; *Geo Milev* English Language High School, Rousse; *Dr. Ivan Bogorov* Foreign Language High School, Dimitrovgrad; *Zaharii Stoyanov* Foreign Language High School, Sliven; *Ioan Ekzarh* English Language High School, Varna.

The Commission staff maintained regular contact with the grantees and host institutions, providing timely support and guidance. Between October and November, 2011, the Executive Director and staff members visited all ETAs in their host schools to ascertain that all program parameters are observed, and to encourage grantees' adaptation and adjustment. These efforts were positively reflected on in the US students' final reports.

Upon the invitation of ECA, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Commission organized a three-day workshop for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistants in Central, Northern and Eastern Europe. The workshop was presented by two Regional English Language Officers and two English Language Fellows, and was held in Sofia on November 9-12. The participants were 45 Fulbright English Teaching Assistants from 8 countries: Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

The workshop focused on teacher training and teaching English as a second language. The participants were offered a sense of the local culture through a bus tour of Sofia

and a farewell dinner with folk style program. The seminar was a successful event that allowed young American teachers to improve their professional performance and to share their experience with fellow Fulbrighters from across Europe.

A wrap-up seminar was also held in April 2012. It offered participants the opportunity to present their work, discuss a wide range of issues and strengthen the network of mentor teachers and principals. The attending principals had a round-table discussion on the results and impact of the program, and proposed steps for improvement and increase in schools' commitment.

Fulbright ETAs excelled not only in English language instruction, but also in community service. Melissa Chedid, ETA in Stara Zagora, engaged her school and students in offering language lessons to children from the local children's home. ETA Michael Tsidulko in Dimitrovgrad organized the innovative social media *TweetDrive* charity campaign to benefit the town children's home. These initiatives heightened the Bulgarian high-school students' sense of social engagement and responsibility.

As credit to professional success and academic potential, ETA Cascade Tuholske was selected to attend the annual Seminar on the European Union and NATO organized by the Fulbright Commission of Belgium and Luxembourg.

In AY 11-12 the Commission hosted a grantee under the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program. Elana Resnick, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Michigan, worked on a project related to waste collection, waste management and recycling in Sofia.

Two Fulbright senior specialists worked in Bulgarian institutions during the period under review: one at the University of Russe and another at the South-West University in Blagoevgrad. Their projects combined lecturing with faculty consulting, curriculum development, workshops and seminars participation. Both grantees were instrumental in initiating cooperation between their institutions in the US and the Bulgarian hosts that would involve consultations on curriculum development, joint projects, teleconferences, and joint case studies. It is to be regretted that the senior specialist program has been suspended for Bulgaria. We hope that it will be restored in the foreseeable future and will continue to give its valuable share to the Fulbright program.

To help the US grantees' adjustment to the Bulgarian cultural and academic environment, the Commission staff invited them to attend the annual two-week Fulbright International Summer Institute held in Bansko in August 2011. Fulbright scholars, students, and ETAs were offered an introductory course to Bulgarian culture, Bulgarian language training, and a wide variety of interdisciplinary courses, a workshop, and guest lectures. All grantees were highly satisfied with their FISI experience.

At the end of September 2011, the Commission staff conducted 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 11-12 US grantees was implemented successfully and contributed to the promotion of the Fulbright program in Bulgaria.

There are still problems concerning the complicated and time-consuming procedure for obtaining Bulgarian entry visas, although the staff did make 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.

The AY 12-13 competition resulted in the selection of 32 US grantees. In the senior scholar category, there are five lecturers in journalism, Slavic studies, law, geology and American studies. There are four students in anthropology, history, urban development and music. The ETA Program has been significantly expanded through the sponsorship of the *America for Bulgaria* Foundation and includes 23 students now teaching at language high schools in the towns of Sofia, Vratsa, Vidin, Montana, Blagoevgrad, Dimitrovgrad, Kardzhali, Stara Zagora, Pleven, Shumen, Lovech, Haskovo, Sliven, Russe, Razgrad, Gabrovo, Yambol, Smolyan, Varna, Bourgas, Pernik, Targovishte, and Dobrich.

Bulgarian Grantees in AY 11-12 and AY 12-13

In the academic year under review there were 15 Bulgarian grantees in the following categories and fields: 5 scholars in philosophy, animal breeding, biogeochemistry, material science and environmental science; 6 graduate students in electronic commerce, graphic design, business administration, law and comparative literature; 1 non-degree doctoral researcher in economics, one Hubert Humphrey Fellow, and two Civil Society research scholars in media studies and photography.

The scholars and the civil society researchers were awarded 3-5 months grants to prestigious US universities, research centers and non-governmental organizations: The Catholic University of America, Iowa State University of Science and Technology,

University of Florida, Rice University, University of California, National Endowment for Democracy, and Crow Indian Reservation. All of them have returned to Bulgaria.

The visiting scholars' final reports express great satisfaction with the Fulbright experience, especially in terms of academic achievement, professional co-operation and cultural interaction. Against this positive background, only one scholar reports problems with apartment deposit remission. Her experience reinforces the importance of careful approach to signing lease contracts.

Both recipients of the joint Fulbright-CEE Trust scholarship for the study of civil society had very productive grant periods, resulting in outreach activities, public presentations, lectures, a publication in National Geographic - Bulgaria, radio interviews, and a travelling exhibition about contemporary life in the Crow tribe. The program's evident contribution encourages the Commission to continue offering the award, despite the withdrawal of our co-sponsoring organization, the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe.

Of the 7 graduate and non-graduate students, four have returned to Bulgaria after completing their 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. One student was granted permission to postpone her final semester with one year due to pregnancy, while another was granted one semester extension to complete a dual MBA/MS degree in management information systems.

The Commission staff worked very well with the IIE Foreign Fulbright Department in the graduate students' placement process. As a result, the waivers offered to five principal candidates by US universities totaled \$ 156,666.

Irina Nedeva, recipient of the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship and a leading Bulgarian radio journalist, completed successfully her research program at the University of Maryland. Her recent commentaries on US political affairs and especially the Presidential elections have provoked strong public interest.

The AY 2012-2013 competition for Fulbright grants yielded a total of 80 applications: 54 for graduate study grants, and 26 in the senior scholar category. This almost twofold increase from last year could be accounted for by the effective publicity campaign, the extensive outreach activities of the Commission staff, the accessibility of the online application platform, as well as the general situation in the educational sphere in Bulgaria.

The highly competitive selection process resulted in the nomination of 5 senior scholars, 5 graduate students, one non-degree PhD researcher, and one recipient of the research scholarship for the study of civil society.

The five scholars came from the following fields: linguistics, Slavic studies, soil chemistry, sociology/national defense and logopedics. Three of them have already started their projects at prestigious US institutions: University of California-Los Angeles, CA, University of Kansas - Lawrence, KS, and Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), Patrick Air Force Base, FL. Two scholars will begin their programs in February, 2013, at the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory in the University of Georgia, and the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Ohio.

The five students are currently enrolled in master's programs in organizational psychology, law, urban planning and journalism at Baruch College - The City University of New York, Tulane University, Columbia University, Washington University in St. Louis, and New York University.

Two candidates for the Fulbright-Oklahoma MBA scholarship withdrew from the program for personal reasons. One six-month non-degree study grant was awarded to a doctoral student to work on her dissertation in management and franchising at the Chazen Institute of International Business at Columbia Business School.

For the first time in three years, when the non-degree grant for doctoral students was introduced, the Commission staff encountered serious difficulties in candidate placement. The efforts of the IIE officers were not successful and a host institution was finally found by the Commission staff and the grantee herself. It seems that from now on we should require from candidates for this grant to provide letters of invitation in advance, as is the practice with senior scholars.

The joint scholarship with *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute was awarded for a sixth consecutive year. The grantee is enrolled in a master's program in organizational psychology at Baruch College - The City University of New York.

One research scholarship for the study of civil society was awarded to the president of an NGO promoting road safety. His visit in AY 2012-13 will be hosted by the National Organization for Youth Safety in Gainesville, VA.

On June 29, 2012, the Fulbright Commission staff conducted a one-day orientation for the departing Bulgarian grantees. Participating in the program were staff members, US Embassy officers, US Fulbright grantees, and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni.

The grants competition for AY 13-14 was announced in November 2011, with a deadline on May 2, 2012. The Commission staff publicized the program as extensively as possible using all available means and media: the Internet, including social media as YouTube and Facebook, the press, radio and television, posters, outreach, consultations, and press conferences. The competition deadline was scheduled earlier in the calendar to allow candidates with no test scores to take the required standardized tests before the IIE deadline at the end of September.

As a result, a total of 52 applications were received: 33 for graduate study grants, 14 in the senior scholar category, and 5 for the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship. Although the number of applications has decreased from last year (80), it still remains higher than in previous years, marking a return to the normal pattern of applicant activity. This year two notable trends have been observed:

1. A significant number of the candidates for graduate study grants had BA degrees from European universities. Their motivation to apply for Fulbright grants was based on their foreign academic experience and their belief that the quality of graduate education in US, especially in the spheres of their interests, is higher than in Europe.
2. Unlike the previous year, there was a marked interest in the Hubert Humphrey fellowships. The candidates were highly qualified experts and leaders in media management, human rights and human trafficking. They showed knowledgeability and great commitment to their work and interest in learning about best practices in their respective areas.

The interviewing committees nominated seven principal and three alternate candidates for graduate study programs in business administration, architecture, law, screen-writing, finance, entrepreneurship, and graphic design; five principals and one alternate candidates for senior scholar grants in engineering, molecular biology, history, linguistics, theology, and philosophy; two principal candidates for the research scholarship for the study of civil society in music studies and sociology; three principal candidates for the Hubert Humphrey award in human trafficking, law (human rights), and media management.

Grantee Accomplishments in AY 11-12

Fulbright scholar Kathryn Olive Posin staged the ballet *Scheherazade* at the National Opera and Ballet as part of the *American Ballet for Bulgaria* initiative. Her work received wide media coverage, including a press-conference, interviews for nationally distributed newspapers and magazines and a two-hour talk show on national television.

Graduate student Jamie Dahman was selected by the German Fulbright Commission to perform at the gala concert concluding the 58th edition of the Berlin Seminar.

Many ETAs created or participated in a variety of extracurricular projects, such as volunteering with non-profit organizations (Hannah Puckett); helping students establish partnerships with local orphanages (Melissa Chedid and Mikhail Tsidulko); assisting their schools in administrative affairs and writing grant proposals (Vincent Hyland); teaching personal finance and entrepreneurship (Mikhail Tsidulko); preparation of and participation in sports events for charity (Colin Powers); school plays preparation (Vincent Hyland); language cafes, cooking/ baking clubs (Amy Lindquist); tolerance and diversity workshops (Sophia Kleinsasser).

Fulbright civil society scholar Ivo Danchev achieved great public outreach for his visit to the Crow Indian Tribe. His photo-essay and report were published in the National Geographic - Bulgaria. He appeared on national radio and was involved in a number of public presentations on the community and contemporary life of the tribe.

The culmination of his work is the travelling photo exhibition *Indian Summer* inspired by his Fulbright visit and co-sponsored by the US Embassy in Bulgaria and *America for Bulgaria* Foundation.

NON-GRANT ACTIVITIES

During the period under review educational advising continued to play a central part in the Commission's non-grant activities. The results are very good in spite of the intense competition from Europe: in FY 2011 the number of users of Commission-offered services was 12,540; in FY 2012 it reached 16,445. Here is their breakdown: individual visits - 2,215; telephone inquiries - 2,942; mail, e-mail and fax inquiries - 2,740; library users - 1,595; attendees at outreach activities - 6,953.

More than 150 international education professionals from around the world visited the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission's special stand at NAFSA's 64th Annual Conference & Expo Poster Fair and EducationUSA Country Fair.

The number of website visits has also steadily increased: 18,288 in AY 2009-10, 58,938 in AY 2010-11, and 63,266 in AY 2011-12.

Here is a cross-section of educational advising, language training and testing activities in AY 2011-12 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	3,306	2,215	190	901	157	31	50	213	380	10	60		
OUTREACH	7,525	6,801	-	724	140	7	0	15	430	2	130		
BY PHONE	4,676	2,942	1,350	384	75	47	90	24	60	38	50		
BY E-MAIL	4,480	2,740	1,570	170	38	46	27	31	20	6	2		
LIBRARY USERS	1,695	1,595	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
US UNIVERSITY PRESENTATIONS	152	152	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
WEBSITE VISITORS	63,266	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
LANGUAGE TRAINING	330	-	277	53	17	0	15	7	0	7	7		
COMPUTER TESTING AT PTC, SOFIA	534	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
EPSO TESTING	1,264	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
CFA TESTING	259	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL	87,487	16,445	3,487	2,232	427	131	182	290	890	63	249		

In AY 2011-12, eleven of the regular visitors of the Fulbright advising center were accepted to US universities and colleges, with a total scholarship amount of over \$ 2 million USD (\$ 545,316 x 4 years = \$ 2,181,264). Five of all accepted students were granted full scholarships and six received financial aid. Among the schools where our advisees will be studying are: Stanford University, CA; Yale University, CT; Princeton University, NJ; New York University in Abu Dhabi (NYUAD); University of Richmond, VA; Grinnell College, IA; Colby College, ME; St John's University, NY; Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA; Ramapo College, NJ; Suffolk University, MA, Dickinson College, PA, and University of Pennsylvania, PA.

During the period under review the Commission continued to expand outreach all across Bulgaria and especially in the underserved regions. Our target audiences were university students, high school students and representatives of ethnic minorities. The visible result of this activity is the sizable increase of contacts with institutions and individuals: 2,110 in AY 2010-11 and 6,953 in AY 2011-12.

Worth mention is the Commission's regular participation and involvement in national and international exhibitions and fairs:

- Job Tiger National Career Days in Sectors IT, Telecommunications, Business Process, Outsourcing, October 2011, SOFIA
- Education Beyond Borders - International Education Fair, October 2011, SOFIA
- Career Days at the Technical University of Sofia, November 2011, SOFIA
- Job Tiger National Career Days in Finance and Insurance, Marketing and Sales, Customer Support, November 2011, SOFIA
- Meridian 22 Education Fair, February 2012, SOFIA
- Job Tiger National Career Days, March 2012, SOFIA
- Job Tiger National Career Days, March 2012, VARNA
- Job Tiger National Career Days, March 2012, VELIKO TURNOVO
- Job Tiger National Career Days, March 2012, SVISHTOV
- Job Tiger National Career Days, April 2012, PLOVDIV
- University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy Career Days, April 2012, SOFIA
- Technical University Career Days, April 2012, SOFIA
- University of National and World Economy Career Days, May 2012, SOFIA

The education fairs presented a great opportunity for over 5,100 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 adviser Snezhana Teneva

with over 1,750 students, lecturers and researchers, giving presentations and engaging in productive discussions about the AY 2012-2013 Fulbright competition and educational opportunities in the US. Bulgarian alumni of the Fulbright program and American universities, U.S. Embassy officers and volunteers were actively involved in the activities. Following is a list of visited universities, institutions and high schools:

- Sofia University
- The Technical University, SOFIA
- The University of National and World Economy, SOFIA
- New Bulgarian University, SOFIA
- D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, SVISHTOV
- University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, SOFIA
- American Corner, Sofia City Library, SOFIA
- Pathways, Center for Education and Entrepreneurship, PAZARDZHIK
- National Math & Science High School, SOFIA
- Sofia High School of Mathematics
- 1st English Language High School, SOFIA
- 2nd English Language High School, SOFIA
- "Nikola Vaptsarov" Foreign Language School, SHUMEN
- "Yordan Radichkov" Foreign Language School, VIDIN
- "Tsar Simeon Veliki" Secondary School, VIDIN
- "Professor Assen Zlatarov" Foreign Language High School, HASKOVO
- "Zachary Stoyanov" English Language School, SLIVEN
- "Otets Paissi" High School, KARDZHALI
- Foreign Language School, PLOVDIV
- "Exarch Yossif" Foreign Language High School, LOVECH
- "Acad. Lyudmil Stoyanov" Foreign Language School, BLAGOEVGRAD
- "Simeon Radev" Foreign Language School, PERNIK
- "Geo Milev" English Language School, ROUSSE
- Foreign Language School, PLEVEN
- "Ioan Exarch" Foreign English Language School, VARNA
- "Petar Bogdan" Foreign English Language School, MONTANA
- "Ioan Exarch" Foreign English Language School, VRAZA
- "Romain Rolland" Foreign Language High School, STARA ZAGORA
- "Dr. Ivan Bogorov" Foreign Language School, DIMITROVGRAD.

During the twelfth annual International Education Week (November 14-18, 2011) a number of activities were carried out attracting the attention of students, professors, high-school teachers, educators, professionals and parents.

A highlight of the IEW were the visits of Fulbright Commission Executive Director Dr. Julia Stefanova and staff members to twenty English language schools hosting ETAs.

During the meetings with school principals, mentor teachers and US grantees a number of issues were discussed with a view to maximizing the impact of the program. EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva made presentations on undergraduate study in the US attended by a total of 1,100 high school students, teachers and administrators.

In addition, over 3,900 students and professionals visited the Fulbright stand at the *Job Tiger* National Career Days, the Technical University of Sofia and the *Education Beyond Borders* Fair in Sofia.

During and around IEW, the Fulbright advising center in Sofia was visited by representatives of three US institutions of higher education: Stanford University, CA; St. John's University, NY and Wellesley College, MA. They promoted their institutions, explained undergraduate application process and talked about opportunities for international students at American liberal arts & sciences colleges. The sessions were held at the Commission advising center, the National Math & Science High School in Sofia, the Sofia High School of Mathematics, and the 1st English Language High School in Sofia.

To sum up, over 5,000 individuals and representatives of institutions interested in international education and exchange activities attended the IEW events and learned about educational opportunities in the United States.

In FY 2011-2012 the Commission succeeded in attracting a competitive US Department of State (ECA/A/S/A) grant of \$ 6,000 for the Fulbright EducationUSA Advising Center. As a result, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission considerably expanded its network nationwide and encouraged more high school students and university graduates to apply to US colleges and universities. The funds were also used for participation in national and international education fairs, books and promotional materials.

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission greatly appreciates the financial support from ECA/A/S/A and is strongly motivated to continue to work for the further improvement of educational advising and the promotion of US education in Bulgaria.

Fulbright International Summer Institute

The eleventh Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI) took place at the RIU Pravets Resort on August 13-24, 2012. The event attracted 113 students from the US, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Serbia, Kazakhstan and Greece. Their backgrounds ranged from political science, law, economics, international relations, history and business administration to information technology, philosophy, biopsychology, anthropology, linguistics, eco-chemistry, sociology, and music.

FISI 2012 was designed and implemented by the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission in collaboration with the following institutions: *America for Bulgaria* Foundation, Sofia University and its Centre of Excellence *Dialogue Europe*, the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Monmouth College in Illinois, USA. Among the participants were 27 MBA students from the Ross School of Business led by Professor George Siedel. They were offered a special program that involved meetings with prominent Bulgarian entrepreneurs and visits to business companies. Fulbright alumna Brenda Tooley from Monmouth College and FISI alumnus Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi from the University of Peshawar, Pakistan, also brought students from their home institutions. Doctoral and postdoctoral students from the Centre of Excellence at Sofia University attended special team-taught courses and participated in a research forum.

FISI offered a total of 14 interdisciplinary courses conducted by 24 distinguished professors from prestigious universities and institutions such as Harvard University, University of Michigan, University of Peshawar, Sofia University, New Bulgarian University, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, University of Oklahoma, University of Veliko Turnovo, Monmouth College, South-West University in Blagoevgrad, the American University in Bulgaria, the New York District Court, and Foresight Alliance.

Along with the courses, the new group of American Fulbright lecturers, graduate students and English Teaching Assistants were offered cultural orientation, professional training and an intensive two-week course in Bulgarian language. The Bulgarian culture course introduced the participants to Bulgaria's long and rich history, music, art, education, tourism, media as well as the current political and economic situation.

A visit to the *Saeva Dupka* Cave and the scenic Ribaritsa resort village revealed the unique beauty of Bulgarian nature while classical music lovers had the chance to enjoy the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* and the ballet *Don Giovanni* on the lake stage at RIU Pravets Resort as part of the eighth edition of the annual Mozart Festival.

We would like to thank all students, lecturers and participating institutions for making FISI such a memorable experience.

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

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Executive Director Dr. Julia Stefanova participated in the meeting of European Fulbright Executive Directors hosted by the Austrian-American Commission in Vienna on March 13-15, and the annual NAFSA conference held in Houston, TX, May 27-June 1, 2012.

EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva participated in the annual NAFSA conference held in Houston, Texas, May 27-June 1, 2012.

GENERAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROGRAM

Ongoing economic crisis

During the period under review the global economic crisis continued to affect negatively the Bulgarian economy and all other spheres of socio-political and cultural life, including education. Unemployment increased to 12%; although the rate of economic growth slightly recovered in 2011 (1.7% compared to +0,2% in 2010) and the budget deficit of 3.1% in 2010 dropped to 2,1% in 2011, the general standards of living remained low and Bulgaria continues to be the poorest country in the European Union. According to 2012 statistics, 23% of the Bulgarians (1.66M) live below the poverty line (\$ 375 per month).

To cope with the deficit, the Bulgarian government introduced dramatic cuts in the budgets for education and culture in 2011. The situation did not change much in 2012 either and the share of education in the GDP remains very low. In the proposed budget for 2013, its share will remain more or less the same (3.5% of the GDP). The planned slight increase of about USD 121 M in the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science will be used mostly to support schools.

Inadequate funding and the still slow appropriation of EU resources continue to erode the quality of teaching and learning and discourages young university graduates from pursuing academic careers; lots of university faculty are looking for professional realization abroad or outside the education sector; thousands of school leavers choose to work rather than go to university because of financial constraints; the declining educational standards force the best and the brightest to seek study opportunities at

foreign universities; the low birth rate and the high emigration rate are demographic factors that also account for the decreasing number of potential students. Since the state funding of universities is determined on the basis of enrollment figures, Bulgarian universities are engaged in strong competition for students that inevitably leads to lowering of admission requirements.

Educational opportunities in Europe

European education continues to attract Bulgarian undergraduate and graduate students for obvious reasons: affordable tuition fees, geographic proximity, inexpensive travel, no visa problems, and hopes for professional realization after completion of studies. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science does not keep track of statistics of Bulgarian students in Europe. According to the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad, however, currently there are between 24,000 and 30,000 young Bulgarians studying abroad which is approximately 8-9% of the total student body. Germany continues to top the list of most popular destinations followed by UK, the Netherlands, Spain, Austria, France etc.

European colleges and universities continue to aggressively advertise their programs through periodic educational fairs, visits of their representatives to Bulgarian schools and universities, and extensive information on the Internet.

It is noteworthy however that recently the number of students who want to study abroad has been dropping. This is evidenced by the number of applications for legalization of high school diplomas submitted to the Ministry of Education. Compared to the last couple of years, this year they have gone down by 24%. This negative trend can be explained by the ongoing economic crisis in Europe and the consequent reduction of job opportunities for university graduates, the high cost of living in the EU as well as the unsatisfactory academic credentials and low level of foreign language proficiency of prospective candidates due to the declining standards in Bulgarian education.

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). The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission is actively involved in the effort to upgrade English language training services by offering preparatory courses in English, SAT, TOEFL, GRE and GMAT at its language center in Sofia and some of its local info-centers, e.g. in Shumen, Veliko Turnovo, Sliven, Smolyan, Kurdjali. The expanded ETA program contributes significantly to upgrading the level of English language teaching and learning.

Rising cost of US education

The tuition in most public US universities continues to increase. From AY 2010-2011 to AY 2011-2012 it rose 8.3%. Financial aid, teaching assistantships and job opportunities on campus are still limited, especially for international students. These factors tend to discourage Bulgarian students from applying to US universities and divert them to Europe. Since 2005 the number of Bulgarians studying at US universities has decreased steadily: in AY 2005-2006 there were 3,633 students; in AY 2006-2007 they were 3,478; in AY 2007-2008 the number dropped to 3,205; in AY 2008-2009 it was 2,889; in AY 2009-2010 - 2,450; in AY 2010-11 - 1,957, and in AY 2011-2012 - 1,694. It is important to note however that Bulgaria (pop. 7,350 M) is still high on the list of European countries sending students to the US. For example, it is ahead of the Czech Republic (pop. 10M), Hungary (pop. 10M), Poland (38M) and Romania (23M).

Because of financial restrictions more and more US universities require 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 of the Fulbright Commission and requires urgent efforts to identify additional resources or else decrease the number of grants.

Support from *America for Bulgaria Foundation*

Over the last four 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 were involved in English language training at language high schools all over Bulgaria. In AY 2010-11 the Commission received another grant of \$ 240,000 from the Foundation to host 20 ETAs in Sofia, Pernik, Blagoevgrad, Sliven, Burgas, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Kurdjali, Lovech, Plevan, Rousse, Vidin, Varna, Vratsa, Montana, Dimitrovgrad, Shumen, and Dobrich. In 2012 the Commission received a new three-year grant of \$ 120,000 from *America for Bulgaria Foundation* for the Fulbright International Summer Institute. In AY 2011-12 the Foundation granted another \$ 279,000 to host a new group of 23 ETAs in Sofia, Pernik, Blagoevgrad, Sliven, Burgas, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Kurdjali, Lovech, Plevan, Rousse, Vidin, Varna, Vratsa, Montana, Dimitrovgrad, Shumen, Dobrich, Gabrovo, Razgrad, Turgovishte, Smolyan and Yambol.

Although the administration of the ETA program places more responsibility and effort on the Fulbright staff, we highly appreciate the ABF support because the results of the Fulbright presence at the host schools are more than visible and highly

motivating. It is worth noting that largely because of the increased number of ETAs Bulgaria is now on the list of 25 most popular destinations in Europe for US students.

We strongly hope that our relationship with ABF will continue and further expand because it substantially helps the ongoing reform in Bulgarian school and university education.

Support from *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute

In FY 2012 the Commission received \$ 20,000 from the Thanks to Scandinavia Institute to support one Bulgarian Fulbright graduate student.

We greatly 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 2012 the total Commission budget amounted to \$ 1,179,030, including:

- \$ 656,430 funding from ECA/US Department of State;
- \$ 140,000 funding from the Bulgarian government;
- \$ 279,000 grant from America for Bulgaria Foundation to support 23 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;
- \$ 6,000 EducationUSA advising grant;
- \$ 37,500 left-over funds and \$100 interest earned

Students at the Fulbright International Summer Institute paid a total of \$ 43,550 participation fees; New Bulgarian University sponsored the participation of one student in FISI by \$ 390; Sofia University provided sponsorship for FISI to the amount of \$ 4,560.

An in-kind contribution of about \$ 61,500 was added to the FY 2012 Fulbright program budget by host Bulgarian high schools and universities for free housing and free 50-hour Bulgarian language training to English Teaching Assistants; US lecturers' salaries; housing, meals and transportation for 2 US senior specialists; free office space and utilities for five regional Fulbright centers.

The administrative costs in FY 2012 amounted to 15.13% of the total funding (15.25% in FY 2011). The share of administrative and advising costs in FY 2012 was 18.27 % of the total funding, as against 19.57% in FY 2011, 18.36% in FY 2010 and 21.97% in FY 2009.

Some of the AY 2012-2013 Bulgarian students found sponsors for their programs and contributed a total of \$ 32,000 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, IELTS, GRE, GMAT and SAT. This is the 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 2012 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 in Bulgaria. The financial crisis resulted in a significant drop in the number of corporate clients for English language training. Nonetheless, the overall result of the income-generating activities of the Commission is positive with a net cash flow of \$ 9,400.

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. 12*).

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 Mary Ellen Koenig, Micaela Iovine and Scott Righetti, and all our partners and colleagues from CIES and IIE.

November 2011

Regional European Workshop for English Teaching Assistants



November 2011

International Education Week

Visits to Foreign Language High Schools Hosting ETAs



Stara Zagora

November 2011 International Education Week

Visits to Foreign Language High Schools Hosting ETAs



Sliven



Russe



Lovech



November 2011 — International Education Week

Visits to Foreign Language High Schools Hosting ETAs



Vidin



Outreach to High Schools and Universities



High School of Mathematics, Pazardzik



High School of Economics, Pazardzik

Participation in International and National Education Fairs



JobTiger National Career Days, Sofia



Education Beyond Borders, Sofia

November 2011 --- International Education Week

U.S. University Presentations and Interviews



Stanford University, CA and Wellesley College, MA
at the Fulbright Advising Center and Sofia High School of Mathematics

December 2011 ---

After Three Months in Bulgaria



AY 2011-12 grantees reporting
on the progress of their projects



January 2012

Press Conference



From left to right: ED Dr. Julia Stefanova, US Ambassador James B. Warlick, and PAO Ken Moskowitz



Media representatives

March 2012

Cultural Enrichment Activities for US Grantees



Informal party at the Fulbright Language Training Center to mark the Bulgarian National Holiday, March 3rd



Trip to Borovets

March 2012

Outreach Activities



Official opening of *Meridian 22*
International Education Fair:
Richard Damstra, CAO, US Embassy



Meridian 22 International Education Fair
in Sofia



Sofia University: joint presentation of EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva and Fulbright alumni Mariya Mihaleva and Nikolay Bebov



New Bulgarian University:
joint presentation of EducationUSA adviser
Snezhana Teneva and Fulbright alumna
Dr. Albena Bakratheva



April 2012

Wrap-up Seminar for Fulbright English Teaching Assistants, AY 2011-12



Official Opening: From right to left, Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, Ivanka Tzankova, Director, Programs for Education and Libraries, America for Bulgaria Foundation, and Ken Moskowitz, Counselor for Public Affairs, US Embassy, Sofia



Participants



ETA Vincent Hyland and his mentor teacher Reneta Petkova from “Tsar Simeon Veliki” Secondary School in Vidin

May-June 2012



2012 NAFSA Annual Conference & Expo, Houston, TX

ED Julia Stefanova and EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva at the EducationUSA Country Fair

June 2012

Pre-departure Orientation for Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees, AY 2012-2013



ED Julia Stefanova and CAO Richard Damstra opening the pre-departure orientation for the new group of Bulgarian Fulbright grantees

Final Nominations for Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees in AY 2013-14

Fulbright Interview, June, 2012

Members of the nomination committee (from left to right): Neda Kristanova, Board member, Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, and Angela Rodel, Board member



August 2012

Orientation for US Grantees at FISU 2012



Richard Damstra, CAO and Board member, talking to the new group of US Fulbright grantees

August 2012

Fulbright International Summer Institute, Pravets



Official FISi Opening
From right to left: Dr. Julia Stefanova, FISi Director; Petya Evtimova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science; Ivanka Tzankova, Program Director, *America for Bulgaria* Foundation



FISi participants



FISi class



Trip to Saeva Dupka Cave



Trip to Blue Ostrich Farm, village of Brestnitsa

August 2012

Fulbright International Summer Institute, Pravets



Farewell party



FISI Closing
Awarding certificates
to 2012 FISI graduates



2012 FISI
participants

September 2012



DAS Meeting with Board Members

(From left to right) Bay Fang, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Press and Public Diplomacy for the Bureau of European Affairs, Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, Maria Metodieva, John Tennant, ED Julia Stefanova

Cultural Orientation for US Grantees



US Embassy briefing: (from left to right) Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, Public Affairs Officer, Deborah Campbell, Consular Section Chief, Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Seth Green, Regional Security Officer



The US grantees in AY 2012-13

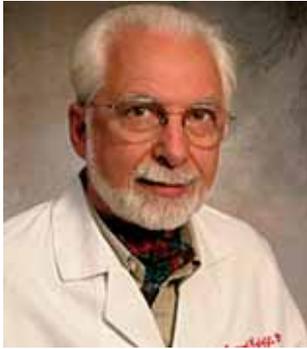


Visit to the National History Museum



Trip to Plovdiv

Fulbright Accomplishments



A Fulbright Senior Specialist Wins the Fred Conrad Koch Award

Samuel Refetoff is Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics and Director of the Endocrinology Laboratory at the University of Chicago Medical Center. Recently he received the 2012 Fred Conrad Koch Award from the Endocrine Society in recognition of his exceptional contributions to endocrinology. In 2011 Prof. Refetoff visited the Medical University of Sofia as a Fulbright Senior Specialist.

Fulbright Enrichment Seminar



Lyubomir Minkov, Fulbright graduate student at Emory University-Goizueta Business School in Atlanta, at the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar in Denver, March 2012

Berlin Seminar



Fulbright graduate student Jamie Dahman (first from left to right), at the gala concert of the 58th edition of the Annual Berlin Seminar for American Fulbright Scholars

Fulbright Accomplishments

Fulbright Visit to the Crow Tribe

Fulbright researcher Ivo Danchev presents a photo-essay on his visit to the Crow Indian Tribe



Poster for Ivo Danchev's exhibition "Indian Summer", inspired by his Fulbright visit to the Crow Tribe



"Martenitsa" class in Rice University



Fulbright scholar Dr. Tsanka Dikova teaches international students from Rice University how to make "martenitsas"

Sheherazade



American Ballet for Bulgaria

Choreographer: Kathryn Olive Posin, Fulbright scholar, AY 2011-2012



Kathy Posin (second from right to left) and students from New Bulgarian University



Fulbright student Lisa Le Fevre dressed in a Bulgarian national costume at a performance of the Bulgarian Folk Dance group in New York City



BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Fiscal year: 2012

Program period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012