



March 28, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

## >> National Institute of Justice Begins New Prosecutor Class With USAID-Supported Curriculum



*Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev addresses the new entering class of junior prosecutors at the National Institute of Justice. Supreme Court of Cassation Chair Ivan Grigorov (center) and NIJ Director Pencho Penev also addressed this third class of young magistrates.*

The newest entering class of junior prosecutors began its studies at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) on March 19 – the first class to use the new curriculum designed with the support of the USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative. Based on the new Criminal Procedure Code, the Prosecutor Initial Training Manual includes 41 separate training modules covering 115 topics, and is the first systematic training on the new Criminal Code offered by the NIJ. The ceremony welcoming the new class featured addresses by NIJ Director Pencho Penev, Supreme Court of Cassation Chair Ivan Grigorov, and Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev.

The Prosecutor Initial Training Manual is the latest national-level product of the ongoing bilateral relationship between American and Bulgarian rule of law partners. USAID collaborated with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the National Advocacy Center on the American side, and the Bulgarian Chief Prosecutor's Office and the NIJ provided local expertise. Led by the Training Coordinator of the Prosecutor's Office, Margarita Popova, and NIJ Permanent Trainer Judge Nikolai Enchev, the collaboration resulted in both the Manual and its approval by the NIJ Board. This combination of best practices in donor coordination and local involvement ensures that the curriculum is up to date with the latest developments in criminal law. ❖

## >> Mission Reaches Out to Media in Bourgas and Sofia

Mission Director Michael Fritz participated in a March 14 ceremony marking the transition of Bourgas Regional Court to Model Court status. The ceremony was followed by a panel of local USAID Rule of Law partners who work with the court. The goals of the joint event were to honor the new USAID Model Court, and to demonstrate to the press and public the several areas of USAID support for Rule of Law development in Bourgas. The Rule of Law panel with the local press included speakers from three other USAID-supported groups: Bourgas Bar Council (former Model Bar Council of ABA CEELI), Chamber of Private Enforcement Agents (CLRP partner), Legal Clinic (ABA-CEELI partner), and Journalists against Corruption (the regional office of a JSI grantee).

At a March 21 roundtable at the U.S. Ambassador's residence, the Mission Director briefed journalists from national print, broadcast and online media about upcoming USAID graduation events and encouraged their efforts to raise public awareness about the impact of USAID assistance in Bulgaria. Editors and news directors from Kapital Weekly, Mediapool, Bulgarian National Radio, Info radio, and Novinite.com participated in the discussion. ❖



## >> *Sneak Preview of Film Showing Study Tour*



*Left to right: Michael Fritz, USAID/Bulgaria Mission Director, Chris Thompson, Chief of Party of USAID Commercial Law Reform Program, and His Excellency van Ee, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bulgaria*

On March 8, the USAID Commercial Law Reform Program (CLRP) organized an advance public viewing of Bulgarian National Television's "The Law and Us" program, featuring a recent USAID study tour to the Netherlands. Media representatives and 40 guests, including the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bulgaria, His Excellency Willem van Ee, the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Justice, Ms. Sapundjieva, the Chair of the Chamber of Private Enforcement Agents, Mr. Georgi Dichev, and others had the chance to preview the film produced by journalist Reneta Nikolova. The official broadcast of the program on National Television occurred in the second and third weeks of March.

The program provided a vivid account of the study tour, organized for the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice and the Chamber of Private Enforcement Agents by the USAID Participant Training Program and CLRP. Both the study tour and the program focused on the need to introduce professional quality standards and effective monitoring and control systems for the new profession of private enforcement agents in Bulgaria. The Dutch judgment enforcement system, which served as a model for the new Bulgarian system, is among the best European examples of effective financial control and supervision over enforcement agents. Upon their return, the Bulgarian participants demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to undertake the necessary steps to incorporate best European practices into the Bulgarian judgment enforcement system.

In his opening remarks at the advance viewing, USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz thanked Ms. Nikolova and all attending media representatives by saying that "because of the active interest and close scrutiny of the press, the reform has had positive results." ❖

***Mission Director Mike Fritz displayed several photos from his travels throughout Bulgaria at a March 23 art exhibit held at the American Embassy for the Embassy community.***



*The photo shows the remains of the Assenova Fortress near Plovdiv*