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Bi-weekly Newsletter

## >> USAID and the German Marshall Fund of the United States Launch a New Grant-Making Initiative

The Bulgaria Fund, USAID final initiative in the country will be launched on November 15 at an official ceremony in Sheraton, Sofia. The Bulgaria Fund is a three-year, \$3 million grant making initiative to support key areas of reform and development in Bulgaria. Non-governmental organizations seeking funding to implement Bulgaria-based programs in the areas of *good governance, support for vulnerable populations, education and competitiveness* are the targeted candidates for Bulgaria Fund grants. Ambassador John Beyrle and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, Miglena Tacheva will speak at the ceremony which will also provide the participants with information on the Bulgaria Fund's core objectives, strategic focus, and the first call for proposals. ❖

## >> IT Experts Receive U.S. Masters Degrees in Bulgaria



*Elena Gerdjikova addresses the audience on behalf of the first group of alumni.*

The first 16 Bulgarian students to successfully complete the Master of Science in Information Systems of the Stevens Institute of Technology, one of the oldest private engineering institutions in the U.S., received their diplomas on October 30 at Sofia University. USAID supported the program, which was facilitated by a joint team of professors from Stevens Institute and Sofia University between January 2006 and July 2007.

The degree recipients are all leading experts in the field of information technology. They received their diplomas from Professor Jerry Luftman, Associate Dean and Distinguished Professor at Stevens Institute of Technology, School of Technology Management. Alexander Karagiannis, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy, addressed the

diploma recipients.

The goal of the program was to upgrade the business and management capacity of Bulgarian ICT managers in order to increase their competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy. Stevens Institute of Technology was founded in 1870 and has engaged in partnership with Sofia University since 1992. ❖

## >> Poll Shows Increased Public Awareness of USAID in Bulgaria

Public opinion polling conducted in late October by the research firm MBMD on behalf of USAID revealed that public awareness in Bulgaria about USAID has increased dramatically in six months since the last poll was conducted. The increase is most likely attributable to the USAID Bulgaria public awareness campaign that ran from mid-September to late October and included print, internet, TV and radio ads.

To the question "Are you aware that the US is providing technical and financial assistance to Bulgaria," in May 2007, **12.6 percent** of those polled answered yes, while in October, **24.8 percent** said yes. To the question "Are you familiar with the activity of USAID in Bulgaria," in May **2.6 percent** said yes; in October, **12.3 percent** said yes. In the October poll, twenty-five percent of respondents recognized the USAID logo. Fifty-three percent of respondents said that knowing that the American people have provided more than \$600 million in aid to Bulgaria improved their opinion of the United States. The poll surveyed 1,208 Bulgarian citizens of voting age in face-to-face interviews. ❖