



October 24, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> USAID Recognizes Journalists for Reporting on the US-Bulgaria Partnership

Ambassador John Beyrle and USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz recognized 13 national and regional journalists for their objective and informative reporting on U.S. assistance to Bulgaria at Sofia's Sheraton Hotel on October 11. The awards ceremony was the culmination of a competition conducted from January to June 2007 and open to all Bulgarian print, broadcast, and online media. Articles and broadcast reports were evaluated by a committee with representatives of USAID, the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section, and the Broadcast Training Center. Following is a complete list of award recipients and their winning entries:



Angel Nikolov from the newspaper Isprihski Vesti (right) receives his award from Ambassador Beyrle and USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz.

Regional Media

Angel Nikolov, Isprihski Vesti. Several articles about the Interethnic Interaction Program supported by USAID and implemented by the Partners Bulgaria Foundation.

Maria Petrova, Maritsa Plovdiv. An article about U.S. assistance to Bulgarian agricultural producers.

Biliana Vesselinova, TV Shumen. A documentary about the functioning of the Shumen court and assistance it received from USAID.

National TV

Reneta Nikolova, Bulgarian National TV. A special episode of her program *The Law and Us* focused on USAID assistance in the area of judicial and legal reform.

Alexander Raykov, TV7. A news item on improvements in municipal services and transparency in Gabrovo municipality as a result of USAID assistance.

National Radio

Elena Beykova, Info Radio. A report about how USAID assistance has helped the city of Veliko Tarnovo improve public spaces and street lighting in residential areas.

Antoaneta Nenkova, Deutsche Welle Radio. A report about improvements to the court system in Veliko Turnovo as a result of USAID assistance.

Tsvetelina Stoyanova, Bulgarian National Radio. An interview with Mike Fritz about the closing of the USAID Labor Market Project and labor market issues in Bulgaria .

National Print

Petar Kanev, 24 Hours. An extensive interview with Mike Fritz covering USAID achievements and work in specific sectors.

Neyka Krasteva, Legal World. An in-depth look at how the Veliko Tarnovo court has improved efficiency and transparency thanks to USAID assistance.

Beynur Suleyman, Zaman. A collection of articles about USAID assistance to student companies, small businesses, and municipalities, with a focus on human-level impact.

Online Media

Apostol Apostolov, Econ.bg. A detailed article about various USAID projects in Gabrovo.

Dessimira Mitkova, BTA. A concise report about projects assisted by USAID in the town of Gabrovo. ❖

>> National Association of Municipalities Opens New Training Complex

On October 12, the Day of Bulgarian Municipalities, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) officially launched its new training center in the village of Gergini, near Gabrovo. The center was inaugurated by Ambassador John Beyrle and Krassimir Mirev, Mayor of Targovishte and Chair of the NAMRB Board.



October 24, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

The NAMRB has entered a new stage of institutional development thanks to increasing interest in its services. The newly renovated training facility is the biggest NAMRB investment to date. Renovation of the building cost more than \$600,000, with USAID contributing \$150,000. The Bulgarian government provided the building.

Local government practitioners from all 264 Bulgarian municipalities will directly benefit from training activities conducted in the center. Training topics include municipal asset management, urban development, municipal finance, legal issues, and communications. The Center consists of a complex of three buildings on a land plot of 7,500 square meters, and includes an additional plot of 4,120 square meters designed as sport and recreation fields. After renovation, the Center will have six training halls with a total of 180 seats. The residential wing will accommodate 76 guests. The Center is expected to ensure the sustainable development of NAMRB in the future by generating additional revenues. The first training courses will start in November 2007. ❖



The renovated NAMRB building will host trainings in local government development.

>> Anti-Trafficking Commission Launches Work in New Offices



Antoaneta Vassileva, Executive Secretary of the National Anti-trafficking Commission (left), Boris Velchev, Prosecutor General, and Daniel Valtchev, Deputy Prime Minister (right) address journalists.

On October 23, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings celebrated the opening of its new office on Dimitrov Boulevard with a press conference and a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The event was part of the ten-day initiative "Human Traffic: Time for Action" connected to the European Day for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The premises of the National Commission were renovated with the assistance of USAID and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The opening was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Daniel Valtchev, Prosecutor General Boris Velchev, U.S. Ambassador John Beyrle, Executive Secretary of the National Commission Antoaneta Vassileva, and IOM Chief of Mission Ilyana Derilova.

In addition to funding renovation and furnishing of the Commission's new office space in the amount of 96,000 leva (approximately \$70,000), USAID and IOM assisted the National Commission in developing its action plan for 2007, which the Council of Ministers adopted in September. They will also support the Commission in its implementation of a public awareness campaign, development of a communications strategy, and in the establishment of local anti-trafficking commissions. The U.S. State Department annual trafficking in persons report currently identifies Bulgaria as a Tier 2 country, meaning that the Government of Bulgaria does not yet fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. ❖



October 24, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> **Survey to Assess Students' Career Goals and Expectations**

At an October 15 press conference, the Business Foundation for Education, Hewitt Associates, the Bulgarian American Credit Bank, and USAID announced the launch of the first nationwide survey that will assess the career goals and expectations of Bulgarian university students. The survey, conducted through the USAID-supported network of university career centers, will include questions on students' career focus, salary expectations, and education. At the press conference, Gergana Rakovska, Managing Director of the Business Foundation for Education (BFE), noted that interviews with Bulgarian students reveal that many students have unrealistic expectations about their career development, are unaware of how to acquire the necessary skills and education for their future careers, and overemphasize pay as a criteria for job selection.

The survey will begin in October 2007 and will be conducted over a one-month period. Results are expected in January 2008 and will be available to the general public, Ministry of Education, universities, and businesses. The Bulgarian American Credit Bank and USAID provided funding for the survey.

Hewitt Associates is an international human resources consulting firm which has conducted similar surveys in other countries. The BFE, a legacy of the USAID Labor Market Project, is leading efforts to institutionalize career services at universities and establish stronger links between students and potential employers. ❖