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Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> **Business Foundation for Education Wins a European Commission Grant to Promote International Internships**



The Business Foundation for Education will raise awareness among Bulgarian students about international opportunities to gain job skills.

The Business Foundation for Education (BFE), a USAID-supported legacy organization that is continuing the work of the USAID Labor Market Project, successfully competed against more than 300 proposals to win a European Commission grant for a project that will raise awareness about opportunities for Bulgarian students to study abroad and participate in paid internships under the EU-sponsored Erasmus Program. Most Bulgarian students are unaware of the possibilities to gain international experience through the Erasmus Program. At the same time, surveys show a gap between the requirements of employers and the skills of young specialists entering the labor market.

The project will include an information campaign among students, professors, and employers; round-tables; a traveling exhibition; and a questionnaire for assessing the Erasmus Program's popularity in Bulgaria. A Students' Guide and Universities' Management Manual for organizing and implementing Erasmus practices will be printed. A website created under the project will connect students, Erasmus alumni, employers, and universities. International internships will contribute to the preparation of competitive and qualified young specialists and competent professors with contemporary knowledge and adaptable skills.

The project will target at least 50,000 students and professors and at least 10,000 employers. BFE will partner with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Council of Rectors of Higher Schools in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Human Resource Management and Development Association, the Career Consultants Association in Bulgaria, and the National Representation of Student Councils. ❖

>> **Can Private Enforcement Agents Help the State Collect Claims More Effectively?**

The Law on Private Enforcement Agents, adopted two years ago with USAID technical assistance through the Commercial Law Reform Program (CLRP), entitles government collection agencies to use the services of the new profession to collect public claims. Currently, the total amount of public claims exceeds 2 billion Bulgarian leva. In spite of this, assignment of collection to private agents is still sporadic. One of the few pioneers is the State Receivables Collection Agency, which has assigned 100 cases to 10 private enforcement agents since September 2006.

On September 19 the USAID CLRP conducted a discussion with government representatives to discuss the possibilities of effective use of private enforcement agents in collecting public claims.

Experts at the roundtable cited the lack of clear procedure for selecting private enforcement agents and the need to pay advance fees for their services as the main obstacles.



Deputy Minister of Finance Kiril Jeleu and the Director of the State Receivables Collection Agency Ventsislava Petkova share their experience with collection of claims



The participants were unanimous that the new profession should be used more often to increase efficiency in collecting public claims. They proposed a draft procedure for assigning cases to private enforcement agents by government collection agencies. The participants also agreed to solicit the views of the National Audit Chamber and the Agency for Internal Financial Control, whose positive reaction may lead to a breakthrough in the use of private enforcement agents. ❖



Georgi Sabev, moderator of the meeting, summarizes the problems in collecting public claims through private enforcement agents

>> USAID Fills in Gap in Judgment Enforcement in Bulgaria

On September 14, the Chamber of Private Enforcement Agents presented the first issue of a case book on selected court judgments. The book, the result of assistance provided by the USAID Commercial Law Reform Program (CLRP), was eagerly awaited by the legal community in Bulgaria, and its launch was attended by judges, attorneys, private and state enforcement agents, and other legal professionals.

The project started with a survey of different stakeholders in the enforcement process, aiming to identify the most disputed topics and court practices. An editorial board collected an impressive database of court decisions and analyzed existing jurisprudence.

In her opening speech at the launch event, Deputy Minister of Justice Sabrie Sapundjieva, also a member of the editorial board, said that “The case book comes to replace an existing vacuum in legal space, since District Courts’ decisions on enforcement of judgments usually remain in the folders and are not subject to commentary or public discussion.”

The ambition of the Chamber of Private Enforcement Agents is to turn the publication into a regular issue illustrating and providing solutions to complicated cases and problems on enforcement matters. ❖