



February 27, 2008

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> **Second Wave of Public Awareness Campaign Uses New Internet Advertising Method**

USAID Bulgaria has launched the second phase of its final public awareness campaign with a more focused approach aimed at youth and business audiences. In addition to featuring USAID internet banners on popular lifestyle, entertainment and social networking sites, USAID will also launch a “traffic campaign” using the Pay Per Click advertising model, which is relatively new to Bulgaria. When internet users on certain sites type in one of numerous specified keywords, a sponsored link will appear next to or above the search engine results. The internet campaign launched on February 21 and will run over a six-week period. Concurrently, USAID radio spots will run on radio stations Vesselina, Darik, and Radio 1. ❖



>> **Survey Points to Need for Bulgarian Students to Prepare for Job Market**



Mission Director Mike Fritz comments on the student survey results.

On February 14, the results of the first national research on the professional orientation and motivation of Bulgarian students were presented at a press conference at Sofia University. Students, academics and more than 50 business representatives took part in the presentation.

The survey was commissioned by the Business Foundation for Education and Monday Insight, a strategic partner of Hewitt Associates, with support from USAID. The survey was conducted among 12,477 students in 37 universities across Bulgaria. The results confirmed the criticism of many companies regarding the poor preparation of students. A large percentage of young people have insufficient computer skills, do not speak foreign languages and start looking for a job only after graduation.

The Ministry of Education and Science expressed their satisfaction with the thoroughness of the survey and declared their intention to use the results to design and implement a strategy that will better synchronize higher education with labor market demands. ❖

>> **Municipalities and Business Explore Common Interests at FLGR Conference**



Experience from Alabama is shared with Bulgarian municipal and business leaders.

The Foundation for Local Government Reform, a USAID legacy organization, held its second annual conference “Municipalities and Business: Partners for Economic Development” on February 18-19. More than 150 government officials and business representatives discussed the role of Bulgarian municipalities in promoting local economic development. The conference highlighted best Bulgarian and international practices for attracting investment at the local level, human capital development, and high-tech industry.

Phillip Dunlap and Megan McGowen, Director and Assistant Director respectively of Local Economic Development for Auburn, Alabama, discussed Auburn’s experience with initiating public-private partnerships between businesses, universities, and scientific institutions for the development of high-tech parks. Bulgarian government officials presented ongoing and upcoming funding opportunities for municipal investment projects with EU structural funds. ❖



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>> *Informoney Tool Presented to SMEs throughout Bulgaria*

A national promotional campaign for Informoney, an SME financial clearing house that launched in October, kicked off in mid-February. Informoney Information Days targeted SMEs throughout the country, primarily from agriculture, tourism, and industry. Informoney is a project implemented by BC Serdon and supported in its early stages by the USAID Business and Trade Development program implemented by Vega.

Informoney Information Days began with a presentation in Lovech on February 12. The Municipalities of Dobrich and Veliko Turnovo hosted seminars on February 13 and 14. BC Serdon partnered with organizations such as the UNDP Job Centers in Lovech and Dobrich. In Veliko Tarnovo, the promotional event was co-organized with the Bulgarian Villages Association. The events were well covered by regional media. More than 85 representatives of SMEs, nongovernmental organizations, as well as the municipal structures took part in the Informoney Information Days. The interest generated by the events led to a significant increase in the number of visits and inquiries on the Informoney website. Written inquiries to the BC Serdon team increased by 75 percent.

Informoney Information Days played an important role in the promotion of financing opportunities for Bulgarian SMEs. The campaign reached a large part of the target group and had an immediate effect on the popularity of Informoney as a useful tool. The campaign also helped establish collaboration with local organizations, which will benefit Informoney in the future. For more information: www.informoney.org.



USAID Financial Sector Advisor Rayna Dimitrova talks with SME owners as part of the Informoney Information Days campaign.

Upcoming Events

March 18: Junior Achievement Bulgaria Manager for a Day initiative in Sofia, Varna, and Burgas. More information is available at www.jabulgaria.org.

April 21–May 16: The School for International Training Certificate Course in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at the Bulgarian Center for Development and Training in Sofia. More information is available at www.bcdt.bg. Please direct questions to Matt Brown at (+359 2) 987 2040, or by e-mail: mbrown@bcdt.bg.