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Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> USAID Participant Training Program Honors Recent Trainees

On May 22, the USAID Participant Training Program held its final certificate award ceremony to recognize the achievements of participants in recent programs. The period in focus was June 2005 – May 2007, during which more than 900 people participated in 41 programs in 17 countries. Approximately 500 people attended the event at the Kempinski hotel in Sofia.

With PTP Director Matt Brown as moderator, U.S. Ambassador Beyrle opened the event. The other speakers were: Marina Dikova, Member of Parliament, Deputy Chair of the Local Government, Regional Policy and Public Works Committee; Panayot Genkov, Chair of the Court Administration Committee, Supreme Judicial Council; Rumen Georgiev, Deputy Director, National Investigation Service and Member of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; and Krasimir Stefanov, Deputy Executive Director, National Revenue Agency. All of the speakers - recent PTP participants - described how PTP training programs and other involvement with USAID projects contributed to their work.



In a minute, Matt Brown, PTP Director will give the floor to the speakers: (left to right) Krasimir Stefanov from the National Revenue Agency, Panayot Genkov, Chair of the Court Administration Committee, Marina Dikova, Member of Parliament, Rumen Georgiev from the National Investigation Service, and Ambassador John Beyrle

The USAID Participant Training Program has supported the portfolio of USAID technical assistance projects since 1993 with short-term training, study tours and conferences, as well as a small grants program. World Learning has implemented the program since its inception. Several final initiatives are in development for the next few months, and by the end of the program PTP will have trained more than 3,500 Bulgarians - a wide variety of public servants at all levels, as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector.

The Bulgarian Center for Development and Training, as a PTP legacy organization, will continue to offer training and educational programs in support of international and intercultural understanding, democracy, social justice and economic development. ❖

>> Sofia High School Teacher Named 2007 Junior Achievement Worldwide Teacher of the Year

Mita Georgieva of the National High School of Business and Finance in Sofia, Bulgaria, has been awarded the JA Worldwide™ 2007 Teacher of the Year Award based on her ten years of dedicated involvement with Junior Achievement Bulgaria. Her support of JA Bulgaria includes helping to build the relationship between Junior Achievement Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, leveraging her reputation as a noted expert in the field of education.



Mita Georgieva with her students



Ms. Georgieva has also helped raise the profile of Junior Achievement Bulgaria in the local media promoting Junior Achievement's innovative entrepreneurship, work readiness, and financial literacy programs for young people. Since 1997, she taught JA Worldwide programs in her classes, reaching an estimated 1,000 students. She also works with JA Bulgaria to recruit volunteers by sharing her experiences. Ms. Georgieva helped adapt JA Worldwide programs for use in Bulgaria, and developed case studies and exercises which reinforce the program's lessons on entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness.

"Mita's dedication to the mission of JA Worldwide demonstrates the powerful impact that one person can have on our society," said Milena Stoycheva, Executive Director of Junior Achievement Bulgaria. "Not only has Mita taught students the value of entrepreneurship through our programs, but her enthusiastic support of our organization in the halls of government and in the press has helped expand the reach of Junior Achievement Bulgaria." ❖

About JA Worldwide™ (Junior Achievement)

JA Worldwide is the world's largest organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy. Through a dedicated volunteer network, JA Worldwide provides in-school and after-school programs for students in grades K-12. JA Worldwide offers educational programs that focus on seven key content areas: business, citizenship, economics, entrepreneurship, ethics/character, financial literacy, and career development. Today, 140 individual area operations reach approximately 4 million students in the United States, with more than 3.5 million students served by operations in 114 countries worldwide. For more information, visit www.ja.org.

>> Young Entrepreneurs from Sofia Win the Title „BEST STUDENT COMPANY OF BULGARIA”2007

For ten years, Junior Achievement Bulgaria has awarded students from Bulgarian schools for their achievements in business and economics. More than 40 student companies competed to be *Best Student Company of Bulgaria* and tested the competitiveness of their skills, efforts invested, and the realization of their business ideas. The award categories included: responsible business, marketing strategy, best business plan, best team, best stand, and most innovative product.

First place went to *JA Experts*, a company founded in 2006 by 13 students from Sofia High School of Construction, Architecture, and Geodesy. The company produces work clothes and accessories for construction and building. *JA Experts'* President, seventeen-year-old Peter Stoyanov said: "This award gives us strength to fight with even more fervor to make our dreams come true. Our efforts are really appreciated and this fact gives us hope that the business in Bulgaria will open space for us – the young talented people."

The students from *JA Experts* will represent Bulgaria at the Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise Europe trade fair for student companies, July 26-29 in Berlin. This is an annual event for student companies in Europe.

"Early management education and practice prepares Bulgaria's young generation for the business challenges of the next day and will provide the best management staff for tomorrow to lead the country to its successful future", says Thanasis Katsiroubas, CEO of GLOBUL who will be sponsoring the participation of *JA Experts*.



The winners from JA Experts with Nikolai Nedelchev, Managing Director of Publicis MARK Group and a member of the jury.

During the current academic year, ambitious young people from over 40 locations in the country founded 78 student companies and made their first steps in the world of business. ❖



>> USAID Team Honored By National Institute of Justice

In recognition of seven years of support from USAID, the Bulgarian National Institute of Justice (NIJ) awarded three USAID leaders in Rule of Law development the Institute's highest honor on May 29 in Sofia. Mission Director Michael Fritz, Democracy and Local Governance Chief Gene Gibson, and USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative Director Ken Stuart were each given the "Sign of Honor" by NIJ Director Pencho Penev at a private ceremony Tuesday morning at the Institute. The NIJ Board voted unanimously to bestow the honors to Fritz, Gibson, and Stuart for their years of support for the training institution's facilities, and professional development of the scores of NIJ staff and trainers.



Humble beginnings led to the founding of the National Institute of Justice. The one-room Magistrates Training Center was housed in the attic of the President's Office Building in 1999.

The ceremony brought to a close years of USAID support for the Institute. Earlier in May, JSI Deputy Director Virginia Leavitt completed her tour of work in Bulgaria: seven years with the JSI and the earlier USAID Judicial Development Project. Those years saw the NIJ grow from its roots as a small NGO, called the Magistrates Training Center, into a government-mandated and funded institution providing mandatory training for all new Bulgarian magistrates. USAID Director Michael Fritz noted that the small NGO had grown into "The premier judicial training institution in all of Eastern Europe, without question." ❖

>> The Bulgarian Commercial Register – a hard test for the Bulgarian authorities

On May 31, 2007 more than 30 journalists attended the press-conference organized by the Bulgarian Registration Agency with the assistance of TARA – a USAID project designed specifically to help the Registration Agency in developing the new centralized electronic commercial register. The commercial register was initially expected to start functioning in October last year, but the launch date was postponed because of the voluminous list of tasks which the Registration Agency had to perform. The managers of the implementing agency reported that the IT system is ready, office locations are identified and staff will be hired within weeks to observe the new July 1st deadline.

After the press-conference the head of the Registration Agency, Emil Stankov, and the USAID Commercial Law Advisor, Svetozara Petkova awarded certificates to the winners in a media contest on best coverage of commercial registration reform. ❖

The winners in the media contest:

National TV Category: Reneta Nikolova – BNT, The law and us;

National Radio Category: Silvia Velikova – Bulgarian National Radio, Horizont;

National Print Media Category: Krasimir Dobrev, SEGA and Antoaneta Nikova, 24 hours

Regional Media Category: Sashka Puskova, Radio Darik – Plovdiv

Additional awards:

Overall contribution in the Coverage of the Commercial Registration Reform – Stoimen Chakalov, Banker

Best Title for "July Morning for the Commercial Register" – Valentina Simeonova, Legal World magazine



>> *Anti-Trafficking Study Tour Organized by PTP (8 - 17 May 2007)*

Trafficking in human beings is a serious concern for Bulgaria, a country with growing problems as a "source" of traffic victims -- mostly young women; a "destination" country and a "transit" country.

Recently, as part of USAID Bulgaria's support for anti-trafficking efforts, the USAID Participant Training Program organized a study tour to Italy and Ukraine for 13 experts from 11 different institutions -- all people who support the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. Hosted in each country by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the group studied effective anti-trafficking practices in coordination between government and NGOs, as well as details regarding international cooperation. The program was designed in close collaboration with IOM in Bulgaria, which receives substantial USAID support. Using Italian and Ukrainian examples and taking advantage of the unique opportunity to spend several days focused on these issues, the group developed a clear list of next steps to improve Bulgaria's national anti-trafficking efforts. ❖



The Combating Trafficking in Human Beings group taking a break to see Kiev from the Dnieper River (clockwise: Matt Brown, USAID PTP/World Learning, Veronika Imova, Supreme Court of Cassation, Rumien Georgiev, National Investigation Service, and the interpreters team)

>> *A story with a happy ending*

On May 28, 2007 Ardino, a small Bulgarian town, became the setting of a documentary film entitled "The Solution". The film tells the story of Zorka Palagacheva, the head of a professional training organization, who needs municipal permission to build modern sanitary facilities at her training center. For more than two years Zorka tried in vein to get the necessary approvals. In her anger she decided to file a lawsuit against the municipality. In the film the family starts heated discussions on the next steps they should take. The husband suggests calling a mediation center, offering dispute resolution services -- a novelty he has found on the Internet. This decision turns out to be the reason for the happy ending. The mediator helps the two parties analyze the situation, generate solutions, reach an agreement and drastically improve their communications. When the TV crew went to Ardino, the municipal permission had already been granted and Zorka was happily showing the journalists what changes she would like to make to the premises.

"The Solution" is a joint production of USAID and the Bulgarian National Television (BNT) which will be broadcast at the end of June. The film will present the development of mediation in Bulgaria and the role which USAID played: assisting in the development and the adoption of the Bulgarian Mediation Act, training mediators, helping them establish mediation centers and court-referred mediation programs, and finally popularizing the method among the relevant Bulgarian audiences. The interest of the national television in co-sponsoring this film is an indication that the American-born idea of mediation is gradually finding a place in the Bulgarian culture. ❖