

Capital: Sofia**Population:** 7,450,349 (July 2005 est.)**GDP (Purchasing Power Parity):** \$66.96 billion (2005 est.)**Population below national poverty line:** 13.4% (2002 est.)**GDP per capita:** \$9,000 (2005 est.)**GDP growth:** 5.4% (2005 est.)**Religion:** Bulgarian Orthodox 83.9%, Muslim 12.2%, Roman Catholic 0.6%, Jewish 0.008%, Protestant 0.5%, Gregorian-Armenian 0.1%, others 0.1% (2002)**Language:** Bulgarian, secondary languages roughly correspond to ethnic breakdown**President:** Georgi Parvanov**Prime Minister:** Sergey Stanishev**Ambassador to U.S.:** Elena Poptodorova

National Interest: Bulgaria is important to U.S. national security and foreign political interests due to: its role in helping the U.S. in the global war on terrorism and its support on regional stability, non-proliferation, organized crime, corruption, and military contingencies in the Middle East. Bulgaria's potential for a strong market economy is essential for Bulgaria's reform efforts as it recently joined NATO (April 2004) and now prepares to join the European Union. USAID priorities are: rule of law (including judicial reform, anti-corruption, and anti-trafficking); economic growth and job creation; and local governance.

OVERVIEW OF USAID'S FOCUS IN BULGARIA

FY 2006: Total AEEB - \$20.1 million, USAID Total - \$16.77 million

Rule of Law and Democratic Governance (FY06 \$9.055 million, 54%):

Rule of Law is the centerpiece of U.S. assistance to Bulgaria. USAID leads the effort in judicial sector reform, anti-corruption and anti-trafficking. Programs in justice sector reform address the lacking institutional capacity to apply the law equally and expeditiously by training legal professionals; formulating codes of ethics for judges, prosecutors and attorneys and providing technical assistance in the administration of justice. USAID launched an anti-corruption Open Government Initiative to increase citizen trust in the judicial system and government. The anti-corruption activities aim to strengthen the institutional capacity of Bulgaria's government to prevent corruption and enhance transparency and accountability, particularly in the area of government audit, internal control, and public procurement.

USAID has been the only donor to comprehensively support local municipalities. Assistance focuses on: supporting fiscal decentralization; building capacity within municipalities to cope with increased responsibilities and supporting NGO's which advocate on behalf of local governments. Community level programs, using public-private partnerships, promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups, encourage conflict prevention, and address ethnic integration issues. Building stronger civil society organizations, strengthening parliamentary practices, and improving advocacy of independent media are elements which further support Bulgaria's transition to a strong democratic society.

Economic Growth and Job Creation (FY05 \$4.82 million, 29%):

USAID fosters the development of a competitive and thriving market economy as a vehicle to distribute the benefits of increased prosperity. USAID programs enhance the business enabling environment, contribute to job creation through strengthening the private sector, and improve access to financial resources. USAID continues to assist the government to plan and implement forward-looking economic reforms in the areas of small and medium enterprise growth, competitiveness enhancement and foreign direct investment. By continuing its support to strengthening the capacities of the private sector and particularly small and medium enterprises, the Mission strives to promote growth and job creation in a sustainable manner. Efficiency of the labor market in Bulgaria has been addressed as a way to significantly reduce the skills mismatch between the supply of and demand for workers.

Special and Cross-Cutting Initiatives (FY05 \$2.898 million, 18%):

USAID's special and cross-cutting initiatives portfolio addresses urgent needs of the country by promoting national and regional stability. This includes training and professional expertise for Bulgaria's human capital, advocacy and public awareness through media, healthcare financing, and water and waste water training programs. USAID has also supported the academic and institutional development of the American University in Bulgaria – the only American-style liberal arts education institution in Southeastern Europe.

USAID/Bulgaria: Michael Fritz, Mission Director
 American Embassy, USAID, 16 Kozyak Street, Sofia 1407, Bulgaria
 Tel: 359-2-937-5101, Fax: 359-2-939-5748
 USAID/Washington Bulgaria Desk Officer: Ramsey Day 202-712-0825
http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/bg/index.html